

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO THE RHODESIAN NOVEL BEFORE AND AFTER 1890

The history of Zimbabwe shows that land was at the centre of the people's lives (as everywhere else in the world), before the arrival of white people; and at the centre of controversy from the time that the white people colonised the country in 1890. It is still at the centre of controversy as I write towards the end of the 20th Century because land has not been adequately redistributed among the black people.

The history of Zimbabwe before the advent of the 1890 colonial experience also reveals what Chinua Achebe calls his fundamental theme. This fundamental theme is that "African people did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans, that their societies were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy of great depth and value and beauty, that they had poetry and, above all, they had dignity. It is this dignity that many African people all but lost during the colonial period and it is this that they must now regain."¹

The pre-colonial history of Zimbabwe further emphasises that "African societies of the past, with all their imperfections, were not consumers but producers of culture."² This is because although the country was not

¹. Chinua Achebe, "The Role of the Writer in a New Nation" in G.D. Killam, ed., *African Writers on African Writing* (London, Ibadan and Nairobi: Heinemann Educational Books, 1973) 8.

². *Ibid* 13

politically organised by one ruler, there were different kingdoms that were under powerful political leaders with a recognisable base and superstructure. This is the land that became the British colony called Southern Rhodesia, named after Cecil John Rhodes; the land that Beach refers to as “The Plateau.” Its positioning is south of the Zambezi River in Southern Africa and it

rises to a great plateau, over three thousand feet high in most parts. On the north-west, north, and north-east it is bordered by the hot, low-lying middle and lower Zambezi valley, on east it runs down to the woodlands that flank the Indian Ocean, and on the south-east it falls away to the great lowveld that stretches as far as Delagoa Bay. Due south lies the Limpopo river and its dry land valley, while to the south-west there is no definite boundary at all, simply a gradual extension into the Kalahari desert. A major feature of the plateau is the presence of the eastern highlands, which run across its eastern end from north to south, cutting off a triangle of high ground.³

This is a beautiful country which, together with its people, is described by Barbosa of the coast of Mozambique who says, “beyond this country [Mozambique], towards the interior lies the great kingdom of Benametapa pertaining to the heathen whom the Moors call Kaffirs. [The people] are Black men and go naked save from waist down.”⁴

³ D. N. Beach, *The Shona and Zimbabwe, 900 to 1850: An Outline of Shona History* (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1980) 1.

⁴ Basil Davidson, *The Lost Cities of Africa*, revised edition (Boston, Toronto: Little Brown and Co., 1959, 1970) 243.

The Shona people occupying this area before the coming of white people are said to have favoured living on the highlands; the Plateau between 3000 and 5000 feet.⁵ Areas that were not favoured were the south-eastern lowveld and the middle Save valley because of low rainfall, “weakly developed or unleached soils, *mupane* woodland and tsetse fly.”⁶ The Zambezi valley also shares these characteristics and so was not favoured. The other areas not favoured for settlement by these indigenous, agriculture-oriented people were the “sandveld,” a triangle to the west of the country where the soil was almost all sandy; the Umniati valley and its surroundings; and the Nyanga plateau in the east where the soils were poor.⁷ Ironically, these are the very areas where the European settlers relegated the indigenous people when they invaded the country in the 1800s and early 1900s.

Geographically, the Plateau was a complete unit but politically, culturally and economically it was not a “united kingdom” under one ruler as we have in present day Zimbabwe. The people lived in separate entities, but they also passed through the different developmental stages that other cultures in different parts of Africa and the rest of the world passed through, namely, the Early and Later Stone Age periods, where people lived on hunting game, gathering fruit and vegetables, painting and living in encampments such as caves. In this particular part of the country, the

⁵ D.N. Beach, *The Shona and Zimbabwe* 2.

⁶ *Ibid* 2.

⁷ *Ibid*, 2-3. For this account of the pre-colonial history, see also Stanlake Samkange, *The Origins of Rhodesia* (London, Nairobi, Ibadan, Lusaka: Heinemann, 1968; Heinemann Educational Books edition, 1973 reprinted 1978), chapters 1 and 2; and T.O. Ranger, *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia, 1896-1897: A Study in African Resistance* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1967) chapter 1.

people were known as the Khoisan. There were people here also in the Early and Later Iron Age periods. It is in the Early Iron Age that a new economy spread rapidly, from about 1000 AD. The new economy was facilitated by the discovery of iron and its mining, smelting and forging which made it possible for people to possess efficient hoes and axes for clearing ground and preparing fields for planting such crops as millet. Pottery was the next innovation and it was used to store water and grain; cook foods and serve them. The pottery was artistically done with different designs specific to the traditions of each group of people.⁸

These new economic developments made it possible for people to stay in one place for longer periods of time as it was necessary for crops to grow and be harvested and hence, they put up buildings to live in: the traditional “hut,” built with poles and hard clay. It is also the Early Iron Age people who kept domestic animals such as sheep, goats and few head of cattle. The people of the early Iron Age are believed to have been the Bantu-speaking people.

Note that “the Late Stone Age people were relatively few in numbers. Because they existed in relationship to a definite territory, their numbers were kept down at a level that the land could support by their own birth control practices and the limitations of their technology.”⁹ This indicates that these people were sophisticated enough to know how to keep their demographic numbers to a level that suited their economic output. In the Early Iron Age period, however, where people could now produce more

⁸ Beach, *The Shona and Zimbabwe* 7.

⁹ *Ibid* 9.

food, keep domestic animals and stay in one place for at least five years, their population increased. Men found it advantageous to marry more than one wife in order to increase their family sizes, especially leaders who could afford it. Larger family sizes also meant more labour for the family fields and, thus, a bigger community living in larger villages. These were people who planned their lives systematically and ensured the continuous survival of their species.

The first excavated village on the Plateau was at a place called Mabveni which existed around 180 AD. It was classified as a village of the Gokomere culture because of the cultural similarity, especially in pottery, with the people named after the site at Gokomere, but which is of the Bambata tradition.¹⁰ The main group was of the Gokomere tradition whose people “lived over most of the Plateau after about 320.”¹¹ From the Later Stone Age people we have Khoisan words in modern Shona. Examples are *gomo*, *hwai*, and *zamu* (that is, mountain, sheep and breast).¹²

By the end of the Early Iron Age period there was evidence of increasing trade with the coast. This trade continued into the Later Iron Age period. The significant difference between the Early Iron and the Later Iron Ages lies in the increase of the numbers of cattle from the former to the latter age. There is evidence of more numerous cattle bones at the Later than at the Early Iron Age sites and also of “a well-developed tradition of making

¹⁰ *Ibid* 12.

¹¹ *Ibid* 12.

¹² *Ibid* 13.

clay figurines of cattle that was practised by the Later Stone Age people. These figurines, and realistic figurines of women in clay or soapstone, represented a major difference between the Later Iron Age and the Early Iron Age, where figurines had been of a very different type.”¹³

Thus, the settlement of the Shona on the Plateau dates from C900 in the South and C1100 in the north and might have included many people from the Early Iron Age ancestors. The term *Shona* was “first used by the Ndebele and others to the south in the early 19th century to describe the people of the south-west of the Plateau, especially the Rozvi.”¹⁴ Beach uses the term to describe the people of the Later Iron Age period on the Plateau. These Shona people came “from both the north and south; from the original Bantu homeland north of the great basin of the Congo and its tributaries, and from a local area of dispersion, south of the Limpopo.”¹⁵

All this indicates that migrations were occurring in Africa as elsewhere in the world with people moving from different places to settle in others. Thus, some present-day Zimbabweans have ancestors within these borders dating back to the first century BC and beyond, ancestors whose culture, economy and politics were very well developed to suit each era. There is no evidence in these people of backwardness, the type of backwardness that is claimed later by the white colonial settlers. There is, however, evidence of various stages of development. Indeed, Beach says, "it would be broadly true to say that the history of the Plateau since

¹³ *Ibid* 15.

¹⁴ *Ibid* 18.

¹⁵ Beach 21.

about 940 to 1210 was the history of the Shona”¹⁶ in various stages of development as they mixed with other people linguistically and culturally such as the Sotho, the Tswana in the south-west; the Kaa, Khurutshe, the Ngwato, the Ndebele from about 1840, and the Tsonga, and Hlengwe in the south-eastern lowveld in the 19th century. It should be noted that these people depended on good land for agriculture. They also needed land for the extraction of minerals such as gold. Land, therefore, in its various forms, was central to the people’s survival.

The Shona settlement represented a change in population from the Early Iron Age though not “a great change in the way of life in the first century or so.” The early four Shona cultures on the Plateau were the Leopard’s Kopje, Gumanye, Harare and Msengezi. In addition, there were Manyika speaking people in the eastern side of the Plateau. In terms of cultural, economic and political organisation, they were similar to their predecessors, the Early Iron Age people. They “built their pole and mud huts on hilltops in many cases, just as some of the last Early Iron Age people had tended to do and the huts must have been very similar.” Economically they carried out activities similar to modern day activities except that their technology was, naturally, not as advanced as we have today. Beach asserts:

They mined iron, built furnaces and forges, and made iron hoes and axes as their predecessors had done, and like them they cleared fields and sowed their crops. They hunted and kept goats and sheep and in general life must have been much like that of the Early Iron

¹⁶ *Ibid* 21.

Age.¹⁷

TRADE:

The people carried on local trade. For example, the *salt industry* thrived in the saline springs of the middle Save valley, the Mafungabusi plateau, and the sea in the eastern side of the country. “Such places supported a small-scale salt industry and the people living nearby were able to trade the salt for livestock over distances of up to fifty miles.” Over longer distances, it seemed to have become more expensive.¹⁸

COMMERCE:

Commercial activities were carried out in *iron ore*, a commodity that was found in some areas though not everywhere. But “few places were more than fifty miles from an iron ore mine.”¹⁹

INTERNATIONAL TRADE:

These early people engaged in international trade and so the remains of Early Iron Age villages show evidence of trade in beads from the Mediterranean or Asia.²⁰ The early centuries of this age show smaller quantities, for instance, at Makuru village, C690, “only fourteen imported

¹⁷ Beach 22.

¹⁸ *Ibid* 23-24.

¹⁹ *Ibid* 24.

²⁰ Beach 24.

beads were found and it is possible that the people who used them eked them out with the shell beads they made locally.”

There was growth in international trade on the East African coast, especially around Manda “where from about 800 a trading settlement rose on an island off the coast not far south of the Equator.” Evidence of this includes the building of “a masonry sea-wall and some houses for the richest people out of coral rubble. Imported pottery from Islamic Asia was fairly common and it is reasonable to suggest that ...ivory was the main export.”²¹ Besides Manda, there were other trade ports such as Mogadishu, Angoche and Quelimane and as is in today’s business, some were in competition with each other, some in co-operation. Others even rose to the level of cities. The importance of these coastal cities is that “they existed part way along the trade route from the Plateau itself to the ultimate sources of its imports [within the Plateau inland] and ultimate destinations of its exports in Asia especially India.”²² It is to be noted that this trade, including that in slaves, surfaces in at least one of the novels selected for this study.

Far from being an isolated entity to be liberated and publicised by Cecil John Rhodes, the Plateau interacted with other areas regionally and its products found their way as exports beyond its borders. For example, “Round about 915 the traveller al-Mas’udi heard in East Africa of a ‘Zanj’ kingdom near ‘Sofala’ where a great ruler possessed many cattle

²¹ *Ibid* 24.

²² *Ibid* 25.

and was able to trade much ivory and some gold. The only likely source for al-Mas'udi's gold was the Plateau.... In general...trade between the Plateau and the Indian Ocean was increasing....”²³ This is trade that dates back to the Early Iron Age. After the settlement of the Shona, “trade with the East Coast developed steadily. By the 12th century, reef mining was in progress, and it continued up to the 19th century,” with gold constituting “the most important single export from the Plateau,” gradually being overtaken by ivory.²⁴ There were also other exports such as copper. On the whole, “the Shona achievement [in the mining and other industries] was remarkable” as it was carried out by village communities “which mined, washed and milled the gold and reduced it to a condition suitable for export. Hence, it is believed that “all possible advances in mining technology were made relatively early in the Shona period.” It is estimated that gold production before 1500 approximated one and half million ounces a year; 53 125 to 25 571 ounces a year for the 16th and 17th centuries. This wealth was evident in such states as the Zimbabwe and Kilwa states.²⁵

Besides gold, ivory was also traded, with estimates of exports varying from 7 680 pounds from Sofala alone between 1506-1519 to about 970 201 pounds in the 1590s and 69 381 pounds in the 1760s. The other product that was exported on a smaller scale was copper.²⁶ Evidence of all this active trade on the Plateau is still visible, for instance, in “the palaces and mosques of Kilwa [dating back from the 14th century]; the

²³ Beach 25.

²⁴ *Ibid* 26.

²⁵ *Ibid* 26.

²⁶ Beach 26-27.

Portuguese fortress of Mozambique which was in effect Kilwa's successor as a center [sic] that depended upon the products of the Plateau, and at the other end of the trade route...the impressive stone buildings that are almost all that remains of the Zimbabwe state and its successors.”

The Muslim merchants and the Portuguese captains became rich from the gold, ivory and copper trade, so did the Shona rulers as they imported beads and cloth, “the two basic imports of the entire Iron Age period.”²⁷

Again, this proves that the Shona were people who carried on normal trade nationally and internationally.

Agriculture was “the real basis of the Iron Age economy,” but because once in a while drought and pestilence adversely affected it, the mining industry and ivory were good supports—hence the effort put into export production and trade. Livestock was also an important security against the threat of *shangwa* or *nzara*—famine—in times of grain failure, and “goats were the main livestock of the Early Iron Age people,”²⁸ right up to the 19th century. The Shona communities considered cattle to be very important and they had them in abundance. With cattle, the Shona people experienced greater security economically. Bride price was paid in cattle and up to today, this practice still goes on in modified forms.

As happens in other societies, that of the Shona on the Plateau had wealthy and poor classes, though there does not seem to be any evidence of the wealthy class acquiring that wealth by exploiting the labour of the

²⁷ *Ibid* 27.

²⁸ *Ibid* 29.

poor class, nor is there evidence of enslavement of the poor by the wealthy. Cloth and beads were important luxury imports on the Plateau because of their utility and decorative qualities although the people could weave their own cloth. For example, in the drought stricken areas, people were forced to resort to more manufacturing than even gold mining. Products such as “salt and tobacco were centred on economically poorer areas.”²⁹ In short, “the whole development of trade from the first buildings at Manda and the first imported beads on the Plateau to the palaces of Kilwa and Zimbabwe represented ‘development’ with a strong connotation of approval.” However, it appears as if “Kilwa and Zimbabwe rose on the back of a trade that was ultimately based on the labour of people working very hard in return for trade goods that were worth, whether in India or on the Plateau, only a fraction of the value of the gold and ivory exported.”³⁰ Trade seems to have been conducted on unequal terms in favour of the foreigners.

This situation continued right up to the 19th century when modern capitalism and colonialism overtook it. Conditions were such that this trade imbalance could not be avoided even though the Shona rulers knew that they were being short-changed by the importers of their goods.³¹ Among other objects that were traded on and/or imported onto the Plateau were ceramics, the remains of which can be seen at the Zimbabwe ruins. However, for the people of the Plateau, it was

²⁹ Beach 243 note 63.

³⁰ *Ibid* 33.

³¹ *Ibid* 34-36.

agriculture, not mining that was the central activity of the economy, when droughts or floods did not make harvests impossible.

Besides being organised economically, the Shona people were very soundly organised politically and socially. That is why it was possible for socio-political structures such as the Zimbabwe states to flourish before 1500. These states appear to have involved an elite whose political status was expressed in the size of the cattle herds they owned. The greatness of the kingdoms created then is evident in the ruins to the south of the Plateau; the Torwa “which existed around Khami in the south-west from the late fifteenth to the late seventeenth centuries; its successor, the Changamire state which lasted until the 1840s; and the northern state of Mutapa which survived in one form or another from at least the fifteenth to the late nineteenth century.”³² These states eventually collapsed as a result of a combination of factors including internal strife.

Communication along the trade routes was also good. The great stone walls “were the outer signs of the wealth of the rulers who lived in the huts behind them, screened even more than before from the gaze of ordinary people.”³³

Although other black people moved from area to area within the continent, the coming of the Europeans was more devastating and the impact greater on the African communities. This is because development was disrupted, as the white people tended to plunder the

³² Beach 36.

³³ *Ibid* 43.

continent's wealth, to enslave its population and to halt all positive development in all fields, including the cultural field. Then they drummed into people's minds the falsehood that they were backward savages who would do well to accept western civilisation being brought to them by the benevolent white men. This socio-economic and political invasion took place in Zimbabwe, and we will find the black-white confrontation featuring prominently in some of the novels.

The greatness of black people is sometimes acknowledged by some of the white people such as Gann who notes that the Monomotapa Kingdom became a great big Empire/Confederacy where hoe-cultivation, small scale industries such as weaving, gold mining, pottery and production of ironware enabled it to produce enough goods for itself and surplus for trade in luxury goods that enhanced the country's wealth.³⁴ As time went on,

powerful men could afford richer clothes, finer ornaments and better weapons than their followers....The king himself used great nobles in his household which formed the nucleus of a rudimentary state organization. He also received assistance from a body of tribal intellectuals, part royal spirit mediums and part official historians.... There was a host of office bearers described by a Portuguese chronicler of the sixteenth century as the governor of kingdoms, the captain general, the chief major-domo, the chief musician, the captain-general of the vanguard in wartime, the king's right hand, the chief wizard, the king's doorkeeper and numerous other officers of lower rank.... All these dignitaries held land and vassals, but they resided at the king's court.... Local government remained

³⁴ L.H. Gann, *A History of Southern Rhodesia* (London, 1965) 9.

in the hands of minor chiefs and headmen.³⁵

One can actually notice Gann's own prejudices as he calls the king's advisers, "a body of *tribal* intellectuals" instead of just calling them "a body of intellectuals;" his doctor is called "the chief *wizard*" and so on. Rhodesians tended to belittle the black people's great past, a factor that appears in their numerous novels. The hunter, F.C. Selous, nevertheless, does acknowledge that greatness even though his acknowledgement is actuated by a different motive. He acknowledges the Shona greatness in order to attack the Ndebele who allegedly devastated these Shona societies so that Rhodes's invasion of the Ndebele could be justified. He says, "The Shona Paramounts were then rulers of large and prosperous tribes...whose towns were for the most part surrounded by well built and loop-holed stone walls.... Hundreds of thousands of acres which now lie fallow must then have been under cultivation...while the sites of ancient villages are very numerous all over the open downs."³⁶

RELIGION

The Shona people had sound religious practices but "the Shona of the Mutapa state were emphatically not idolaters, and it is difficult to believe that Zimbabwe's rulers were that different."³⁷ This is worth bearing in

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 9-10. See also D.P. Abraham, "The early political history of the kingdom of Mwene Mutapa, 850-1589" in *Historians in Tropical Africa*, Salisbury, 1962; and "The Monomatapa dynasty" in *Native Affairs Department Annual* number 36, 1959.

³⁶ F.C. Selous, *Travel and Adventure in South East Africa* (London, 1893); R. Summers, "Was Zimbabwe Civilised?" and "Notes on the Economic bases of the Southern Rhodesian Iron Age Cultures" in *Conference of the History of Central African Peoples* (Lusaka, 1963).

³⁷ Beach, *The Shona and Zimbabwe* 45.

mind because in some of the novels, indigenous people are portrayed as having no religion based on personal deities but as people who worshipped idols or nothing at all and, therefore, who needed the western religion to cleanse their souls.

There was no concept of “divine kingship” in Shona tradition.³⁸ “Most of the Portuguese saw Shona religion as a coherent and logical force whether or not they thought it would be possible to use it to convert them to Christianity. In the first place, there was a high-god who was not worshipped through any kind of idolatry.” The high god was called *Mulungu* or *Umbe* (*Muumbe* in Chindau dialect), “ who was recognised as supreme even though he was not prayed to directly but was instead approached by the *Mudzimu* spirits of the dead ancestors. The people turned to the ruler because he had the closest access to the medium of the *mudzimu* spirits of his ancestors.”³⁹ This quotation shows that the Portuguese recognised the existence of religion among the Shona. The ruler passed the message to the ancestors but he himself was never possessed or considered divine. People deferred to the ruler (mainly for political reasons), who in turn, passed the message/deference on to the spirit of the former powerful ruler, not of ordinary people.⁴⁰ It is to be emphasised here that in Shona religion, the ruler *was not divine*. It was (and still is) *Mwari* the Supreme Being, who was divine. His mediums Chaminuka and Nehanda date from late 18th to early 19th centuries.

³⁸ *Ibid* 103.

³⁹ Beach 103.

⁴⁰ *Ibid* 103-104.

TRADITIONS

The Shona people had firm traditions that they passed on from generation to generation and among these was the education of the youth.⁴¹ A number of topics rendered themselves readily for the tuition of the young. Land formed a very important subject. It was so important to the Shona people that their traditions concerned themselves, not only with genealogical relationships, but also with their rights in respect of the land. For example, the Shona child grew up learning about his or her mother's and father's genealogy, neighbours and his or her land and its boundaries with those neighbours. Even if there were no *griots* among these people, there was a strong tradition of oral history.

Therefore, the life of the Shona before 1890 was not a haphazard affair, but a well-organised system with set political and socio-economic goals and practices. It also shows a people with definite traditions and artistic tastes as exemplified by their pottery and sculpture of figurines. Above all, it shows a people whose livelihood derived from the land and its various products.

The people also had solid cultural practices such as those connected with marriage—the bride price system has persisted to this day. The belief that “a woman's place is in the kitchen” did not always apply in this

⁴¹ See discussion on this topic of education for the Shona child and other cultural practices in Michael Gelfand, *Growing up in Shona Society, From Birth to Marriage* (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1979).

society. Women worked in the fields too. In fact, they had a monopoly on agriculture just as they do both in urban areas and in the communal lands today. They also worked in the mines, such as in the gold fields of Manyika and elsewhere.

The Shona had a definite calendar, “a thirty-day lunar month, divided into three ten-day weeks.”⁴² The ruler decided what holidays would be celebrated, for example, the first, sixth and seventh days of each week were holidays, what we call today, a weekend, perhaps. There were festival days, such as the first day of the month, with lots of food, drink, and music which was accompanied by drums, horns, *mbira* and xylophones. Some political, judicial and religious activities were carried out during these festive days. As part of the Shona religious practice, mediums and *n'angas* worked to divine witchcraft and to punish the evil people or witches and wizards in order to make other people's lives and property safe. Hence, witchcraft, theft and adultery were considered to be among the most serious crimes in a community.⁴³ Treason and murder were also very serious crimes. Chinua Achebe in his first novel, *Things Fall Apart*, describes similar cultural practices among his Igbo people in Nigeria.

The residences of chiefs and wealthy citizens were outstandingly built. Beach describes “a hut at the outlying *zimbabwe* Nhunguza to the south of the Mazoe that was built and occupied c1460-1500 [believed to be] a

⁴² Beach 92.

⁴³ Beach 93.

Mutapa's throne building.... It was divided into three compartments with two or even three entrances...one for his wife, one for the cooks... and one for himself and his most trusted servants leading into his own apartments."⁴⁴ In *Things Fall Apart*, the description of Okonkwo's whole compound approximates the above set-up. The closest description of such important residences that appears in Zimbabwean literature is in Ndabaningi Sithole's novel, *Busi* where Twala's home is described as "a very big kraal with eleven huts, five small huts in a row, five still smaller ones in another row. The eleven huts served as bed and living rooms; the five small huts as kitchens and five smaller huts as granaries..."⁴⁵

Twala's wealth is further described as follows:

Twala...the owner of the village, had five good-looking fat wives by whom he had twenty-one children in all. Each wife had a sleeping hut, a kitchen and a granary to herself. His sons had two sleeping huts; his daughters two; he had a hut to himself and his aged mother a sleeping hut to herself. He was a man of substance. He had over a hundred head of cattle; sheep a little below a hundred and goats a little over forty. The granaries of his wives were full of grain and monkey-nuts. Starvation was a stranger to Twala's kraal."⁴⁶

This description reminds one of Okonkwo's wealth in *Things Fall Apart*, or of Nwaka's in Achebe's *Arrow of God*. Twala is also a man with some philosophy of life as he believes that people must rise above their suffering to be better human beings instead of being complacent in life:

⁴⁴ *Ibid* 95.

⁴⁵ Ndabandingi Sithole, "Busi" in *African Parade* Volume 7, part 5, February, 1960, 35-38.

⁴⁶ N. Sithole, "Busi" in *The African Parade* (February, 1960) 36.

“You suffer and then you think, you act, and you come out all right. You don’t suffer, and then you cease to think, you cease to act and you decay, and that’s all.”⁴⁷

The materials used to build the Zimbabwean homesteads were very strong and true to Zimbabwean style: “solid *daga* walls and prestige-type stone work around them” described by Diogo de Alcancova and Ve loso as “built of stone and clay and very large and on one level, and as a fortress of the king of Menomotapa [which] is now made of stone without mortar.”⁴⁸ Later, solid *daga* huts were replaced by “a large wooden stockade” though stone building still went on. The settlements were big and “as early as 1506 Alcancova was calling the Mutapa *Zimbabwe* a “city,” while Santos estimated the population of the bigger Shona ruler’s capital at two or three thousand. Vertua in 1620 wrote that the capital of Mutapa Gatsi Rusere had an outer circumference of more than a league (nearly four miles) with the huts spaced out in stone’s throw from each other.... Nine enclosures belonged to the Mutapa himself and his wives.”⁴⁹ Few Shona, though, seemed to have had more than one wife. Basically the majority appeared to have been monogamous.

The Shona people did not always follow tradition blindly. They reasoned out issues and changed things where change was warranted. For example, traditionally, a ruler had to be physically perfect and was required to commit suicide if disabled in one way or another or if

⁴⁷ *Ibid* 38.

⁴⁸ Beach, *The Shona and Zimbabwe* 95.

⁴⁹ *Ibid* 95-96.

impotent for some reason. Although Santos recorded “a ruler of the coastal land of Danda who killed himself on contracting leprosy, when the ruler of Teve lost a tooth, he simply said that the custom was foolish and that he did not intend to follow it.”⁵⁰ This brings to mind Achebe’s use of the same concept of following tradition blindly as opposed to questioning things that seem unreasonable in his portrayal of Okonkwo and Obierika in *Things Fall Apart*. Evidently the actions of the ruler of Teve demonstrate that the African peoples were capable of making critical decisions and implementing them even though these might contradict traditions.

In terms of clothing, rulers and the wealthy wore richer materials including locally woven, expensive cotton garments. Women wore copper bangles from calf to ankle. It was the same in respect of food where rulers and richer people ate more and better varieties of it. They also kept big pots of beer in their “audience-huts” or entertaining rooms. Ranger quotes a Dr. Kuper who said that “the Shona Paramount was the wealthiest man in his tribe and also the most generous.”⁵¹ Clearly, poverty was not the norm in all of the black people’s lives as the settlers would have us believe.

Pre-colonial societies even had tax collecting systems; revenue for the rulers and their states. Taxation of gold was done at the mining stage and as the gold was exchanged for imports.⁵² Likewise, tribute was paid to the

⁵⁰ Beach, *The Shona and Zimbabwe* 97.

⁵¹ T.O. Ranger, *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia* 16.

⁵² Beach 100.

ruler in grain. This grain was redistributed among the people in times of *shangwa/nzara*. Practically, it may not have been possible to distribute grain to everybody, but the effort was made to do so and the policy was there to be implemented in times of hardships. The hospitality offered by the Shona Paramount and the State he kept were “partly dependent on [these taxes], fines, tribute labour, gifts of ‘royal’ game [and] on the trade with Tete.”⁵³

The Shona had an organised military system evidenced by the rulers who kept armed forces of between 300 and 500 men at any one time. More men were recruited in time of war. Their armies were capable of operating over long distances, too, and there was very good discipline in the army. Military prowess and technique were well developed. For example, in battle, they had self-defensive techniques. Gomes describes one of these techniques when he writes, “...on the blowing of a given signal on a horn, the men would plant their spiked shields in the ground in a formation that made three sides of a square, with the baggage in the middle and an open rear, from behind which they could use their weapons more freely.”⁵⁴ This technique was used for security in case the battle turned against them. This shows that the people thought about their actions. They had a particular civilisation that they wanted to protect and did so effectively. While their weapons originally were spears, clubs, axes, bows and arrows, guns had been in Shona hands and their

⁵³ T.O. Ranger, *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia* 16.

⁵⁴ Beach 106.

neighbours from about 1515. Gun control was legislated in the Mutapa State by the 1590s.⁵⁵

Although the Mutapa Kingdom remained very strong, it was destroyed eventually, partly by the pressure put upon it by the Portuguese colonialists. They made unreasonable demands, so that the Mutapas themselves were caught between resisting these demands and risk facing the Portuguese military strength, and accommodating the Portuguese and risk rebellion from their vassals. Thus, “soon their system began to fall apart.”⁵⁶

The second strong Shona Empire, that of the Rozvi Mambos or the Rozvi Confederacy, came to an end in the 1830s. However, it “was still fresh in the memory of old men in the 1890s...and its legacy played an important part in the uprising of the 1896-7 which broke out largely in those areas where the Rozvi supremacy had been effective.”⁵⁷ The Rozvi Confederacy dates back to the 15th century and coexisted with the Mutapa for a while with a complex relationship between them. It became very powerful in mid 17th to 18th centuries when it “wrested control of external trade from the declining Mutapas and emerged as the only strong state in the Shona speaking area.”⁵⁸ It was centred in “what later became Matebeleland and western Mashonaland where was located its capital, the great assemblage of stone enclosures and walls now known as Great Zimbabwe....” However, Rozvi authority was recognised by the central

⁵⁵ *Ibid* 106.

⁵⁶ T.O. Ranger, *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia* 8.

⁵⁷ *Ibid* 9.

⁵⁸ *Ibid* 9.

and eastern Shona peoples, but did not extend to Korekore or Tavara country, the old stronghold of the Mutapa Kingdom.

The Ngonis invaded the Rozvi Empire under Zwangendaba and fired and ransacked their *zimbabwes*, looting and destroying them as they went.

The reigning Mambo chose to commit suicide in the most dramatic manner, rather than be taken alive.⁵⁹

We must also note that the establishment of the Paramountcies became the essential units of Shona political life: Barwe, Maungwe, Manyika, Mbire under Chief Svosve, Nohwe under Chief Mangwende, Boca under Chief Marange, Budja under Chief Mtoko and so on. They showed what Professor Oliver calls, “vestigial traces of a strongly centralized political

⁵⁹ T.O. Ranger, *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia* 11-12, quoting Citsha’s story, WE/3/2/6. One of Zwangendaba’s *impi* gave the following account of their invasion into the Rozvi Confederacy:

Of all the countries we passed through...there was one which struck us as most desirable. This was the country in which a people called the Abalozwi lived. They built their villages in granite hills which they fortified with stone walls. Their chief, Mambo, put up a stubborn fight and then fled into the very hilly granite country, making it difficult to subdue him and his people.... They threw down beads and skins and hoes and offered us cattle and sheep to go away and leave them in peace...but we were not propitiated.... Next day they came out again on the rocks and directed us to stand below a certain strange overhanging rock.... Hereon were gathered the mambo and his counsellors, jabbering and chattering like a lot of monkeys. This rock stands about a hundred feet above where we were standing with a sheer drop, and it is here that Mambo threw himself down in our midst to fall dead and mangled at our feet.... The next day we found that these people had deserted that part of the country during the night and as we wished to continue our trek northward we packed up and took up the trail leaving Mambo’s mangled remains where he had fallen and named the hills the Ntaba Zi ka Mambo, by which name they are know unto this day [i.e. 1898].

See also S. Samkange, *Origins of Rhodesia* 32.

structure.”⁶⁰ These centralised states eventually collapsed because of a combination of external and internal pressures upon them.

The Shona people were, therefore, not rootless in Rhodesia. They had a history going back for centuries, a history which could be traced to the Stone Age period. They also had pride, which manifested itself in their resisting colonialism with its accompanying Christianity being brought in by the Portuguese. On this subject of resistance one Jesuit historian admitted that after a hundred years of dedicated Portuguese missionary effort, nothing was achieved as no converts were reported. The same trend continued right into the 1890s. For example, only two baptisms were realised after three years' work before the Roman Catholics established themselves at Chishawasha. In 1897 a Jesuit missionary confessed, “A closer acquaintance with the Mashona ...shows at all events that they have but little willingness to become Christians.” He blamed that attitude on “their depraved habits and their low intelligence.” But as Professor Ranger correctly observes, “it was rather a manifestation of loyalty to their own concepts of society and the divine; a steady passive resistance which was to turn in 1896 into an armed attack upon the missions and their few converts as well as upon all other whites.”⁶¹

⁶⁰ T.O. Ranger, *Revolt in Southern Africa*, 14, quoting from “Account of the succession of the Makombe,” *Nada*, 1954.

⁶¹ T.O. Ranger, *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia* 25.

THE NDEBELE STATE

Having traced the history of the Shona people before 1890, the writer considers that this section would not be complete without her writing about the other large group of people who came to the Plateau, namely, the Ndebele people. Stanlake Samkange, among other historians, does a very thorough study of these people in terms of their roots and their eventual arrival on the Plateau, and their occupying present day Matebeleland.⁶²

After Zwangendaba, came the Ndebele who were running away from Boer harassment in the south. The Shona attempts to revive the Rozvi Empire were frustrated by the Ndebeles. However, the Rozvi influence lived on well into the 1890s. The Ndebele military state developed after they had scattered the Rozvi around the country and destroyed their zimbabwes, though the provincial units of the Rozvi remained and were heavily involved in the uprising of 1896-97.

The Ndebele State was very different from the Shona State in that it had an authoritarian monarchy and a “highly centralised military system.” The Ndebele made no attempt to establish a trading empire and did not depend on external trade for power and prosperity. Basically, they were soldiers, what the white people call warriors; and ranchers who kept many, many cattle. Mzilikazi was the first Ndebele king in Zimbabwe. He had fled Shaka’s anger in Zululand and what Samkange calls the

⁶² T. O. Ranger, *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia* Chapter 1. See also Stanlake Samkange, *Origins of Rhodesia*. Chapters 2 & 3.

White Problem.⁶³ There had been other Ndebele kings in South Africa, such as Matshobana, Mangede and Ngululu. The Ndebele numbers grew in Zimbabwe as they absorbed many Tswana, Sotho and Rozvi, and other groups of people. For the Ndebele State, “the King was the source of all authority; ... all land, cattle and people belonged to him.”⁶⁴ But we have to understand that he possessed all these in trust for the whole nation. Land, in particular, was a communal property. The king was also the supreme commander of the army and the supreme judge. Only he had the power of life and death over his subjects. He was the centre of the First Fruits Ceremony of the *Inxwala* (a ceremony similar to that at the centre of controversy in Wole Soyinka’s play, *Kongi’s Harvest*), where a king eats the first fruits of a new year’s harvest to “draw the poison out” of that fruit as it were. Everybody else can safely eat the new harvest thereafter. “This idea, that everyone of the nation is gravitating towards their chief, brings in a forcible way home to them that they are a compact mass, a force of collected strength, and therefore invincible,” wrote Father Hartmann in 1893.⁶⁵ Both Mzilikazi and Lobengula were actual directors of their state and they ran a well-organised state.

When the white people came in the 1890s, they did not despise the Ndebele system as they did the Shona one. Rather they admired and hated it bitterly for its self-confidence, self-sufficiency, brutality and for what they considered to be its arrogance. The Ndebele system was conservative in military tactics and in agricultural methods. Hence, the

⁶³ S. Samkange, *Origins of Rhodesia* chapter 3.

⁶⁴ T.O. Ranger, *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia* 34.

⁶⁵ T.O. Ranger, *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia* 34.

Ndebeles justifiably believed that they could learn absolutely nothing from the white people. They exuded pride in their achievements, a pride that was intolerable to and viewed as arrogance by white hunters, traders, prospectors, and missionaries. Selous summed up his hatred of the Ndebele when he wrote to his mother saying that he abhorred them.⁶⁶ When Cecil John Rhodes came to Mashonaland, therefore, he was welcomed by all the whites who had tried and failed to influence the Ndebele people. Elliot and Carnegie of the London Missionary Society, thus, wrote: “We are very thankful for the result [of the Mashonaland occupation by Rhodes]. The hateful Matebele rule is doomed. We as missionaries, with our thirty years’ history behind us, have little to bind our sympathies to the Matabele people, neither can we pity the fall of their power, but we earnestly rejoice in the deliverance of the Mashona.”⁶⁷ It is true that some of the Shona polities which paid tribute to Lobengula saw the white occupation as an opportunity to throw off Ndebele control. Consequently, they marched with the whites against the Ndebele capital in 1893. Chief Gutu, the most important paramount, was one of those whose men joined the white march against the Ndebele as did chief Zimuto.⁶⁸

The missionaries and other whites hoped that somehow the Ndebele State would collapse on its own as, perhaps, the Holi caste among them (the lowest caste) would feel dissatisfied with their lot. Some Zansi aristocracy, they also considered, would be discontented with their lot.

⁶⁶ *Ibid* 36.

⁶⁷ *Ibid* 36.

⁶⁸ S. Samkange, *Origins of Rhodesia*, 241-265.

They, therefore, hoped that the pressure within the State itself would destroy it as people would, perhaps, go to work in the opened up mines of Mashonaland and bring in money for themselves. They also believed in another myth that the Ndebele hated their current system where, so they believed, all wealth indirectly or directly belonged to the King.

Alternatively, they believed that the occupation of Mashonaland would restrain the Matabele raids which would provoke a crisis between the young warriors and the King. So in 1890-91 there were speculations of a civil war in Matabeleland in which Rhodes's company hoped to intervene profitably. All this was a figment of the white man's imagination.

When the civil war never happened, the whites, by 1893, began to believe that the military position of the Ndebele state military system should be overthrown from outside. This overthrow was to be done under the guise of *Christianising* the Ndebele, yet, in reality, it was simply to destroy their power by conquest. Thus, when the Ndebeles were invaded in 1893 and defeated, Carnegie and his colleagues supported that invasion and rejoiced over the overthrow of Lobengula. He wrote: "We expect great things. Now is the grand opportunity of Christianizing the Matabele."⁶⁹ Because the Ndebele, like the Shona, had their own strong, viable religious and cultural beliefs, it had been difficult for the missionaries to brainwash them into believing in the white man's god.

After the 1893 war, the whites pampered themselves into believing that the Ndebeles were grateful for the destruction of their military system and

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 36.

for white superiority, and that they were wonderfully so submissive that any thought of resistance (or what they liked to call *rebellion*) was out of the question. Events were to prove this arrogant complacency wrong in three years' time and in the 1960s and 70s.

This complacency is expressed very well in many of the Rhodesian novels that are the subject of this study. In these novels one feels that the real reason for such contentment is ignorance of the history of the Shona and Ndebele people in Zimbabwe before colonialism and, of course, general white arrogance. For example, in one such novel, *Cry of the Fish Eagle*, characters believe that the land they now occupy belonged to no one before them!⁷⁰ That is why the whites, particularly the Native Commissioners, were utterly surprised when they were attacked in March and June of 1896, because they “thought they understood the character of these savages.”⁷¹ The same white unreadiness for the African revolution was apparent in the 1960s to 70s and is well described in the novels.

Reviewing this pre-colonial history has been necessary because, as said earlier, many historical accounts found in many African literary critical texts only discuss Zimbabwean history from 1890 onwards, from the point of impact with the white man.⁷² None to date goes beyond that

⁷⁰ Peter Rimmer, *Cry of the Fish Eagle*.

⁷¹ T. O. Ranger, *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia*, 1.

⁷² George Kahari, *The Search for a Zimbabwean Identity* (Gweru: Mambo press, 1980), Introduction, “Historical Background,” 11-15; M.B. Zimunya, *Those Years of Drought and Hunger* (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1982), Introduction, 2-7; Flora Veit Wild, *Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers, A Social History of Zimbabwean Literature* (London: Hans Zell Publishers, 1992 and Harare: Baobab Books, 1993). In this text there is actually no historical background to the work. The author goes

period to examine how exactly the black people lived before that 19th century crucial date of official colonisation.

When the British colonialists who were led by C.J. Rhodes arrived on the Plateau which the latter renamed Rhodesia, they did not believe that the black people they found here had any history at all, let alone a civilisation boasting of external trade, economic and political organisation and power capable of producing a solid culture and complex structures, evidence of which are the former great cities of the Great Zimbabwe, Khami, Dhlohdhlo, Nalatale and others. White Rhodesians in the 1890s and even after, considered all these achievements to be unthinkably beyond the capabilities of black people, “so that the stone ruins were ascribed to a long vanished race of white colonisers.”⁷³ Even as late as 1996, when the Egyptian daily newspaper, *The Egyptian Gazette*, reported the discovery of the remains of a 16th century black king and queen with possible links to the Great Zimbabwe, the report showed a bias towards Arabs as the builders of that great monument!⁷⁴

After the white people had settled in Rhodesia, they embarked on a serious distortion of African History and for the most part taught the Africans that

directly into the discussion of the literary and biographical background of the writers discussed.

⁷³ T.O. Ranger, *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia*, 10.

⁷⁴ *The Egyptian Gazette*, Thursday, August 8, 1996. Incredibly, the report went on, “Great Zimbabwe’s origins still baffle scientists. Most presume it was built by black Africans but some argue it may be of Arabic origin.” This is long after it was established that Zimbabwean Africans, indeed, built this monument!

...history only began with the arrival of the white man; that before the white man's arrival there was nothing but chaos, starvation and interminable war; that the white man came to Africa solely to christianize, civilize and save [the indigenous people, whom they derogatorily called *natives*, *niggers*, or *kaffirs*] from being exterminated by disease, superstition and witchcraft which all stemmed from [their] abysmal ignorance. [Africans] were taught that the white man had found [them] naked savages, wallowing in poverty and squalor, completely unaware of the minerals on which [they] were sitting; that [they] had no idea about God, government or anything; that [they] had no arts or crafts, no industries, no culture and no civilization; and above all, that in dealings between white and black, the white man was always wise and right while the African was invariably stupid and wrong. In short, [Africans] were taught to despise [their] heritage and everything African.⁷⁵

The pre-colonial history discussed above, therefore, demonstrates what Samkange, among other historians and scholars, has very eloquently summarised, that is,

that the white man did not come to Africa solely for the benefit of the African; that the African, far from being ignorant, had a profound knowledge of medicine, religion and government; that he exploited minerals like iron, copper, gold and silver; that he dealt in ivory; that he had industries which manufactured cloth, pottery and ironware; that he conducted internal as well as distance trade and was in touch with overseas countries of the Orient, centuries before the white man set foot on African soil [and we may add that the African worked his/her land to the full benefit of his/her family and state].⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Stanlake Samkange, *Origins of Rhodesia*, vii.

⁷⁶ *Ibid* vii-viii.

In dealings between black and white, after all, “the white man was not always the paragon of virtue and the African the epitome of villainy they are [sic] generally portrayed to be.”⁷⁷

Samkange has very thoroughly and sometimes humorously discussed, in convincing detail, how the white people were bent on destroying Lobengula, not only because they wanted to take over his land chiefly for prospecting reasons, but also because he represented organised military power and government that had to be conquered if the Africans on the Plateau had to be subdued. Numerous treaties were signed between Mzilikazi/ Lobengula and different white people in which white people always ended up cheating the former. The Rudd Concession of 30 October 1888, is a case in point, where Lobengula was cheated into giving mineral and land rights in the whole country to Rhodes’ company, yet he understood the Concession to mean something different.⁷⁸

Thereafter, Lobengula was hounded daily until Rhodes and Leander Starr Jameson actually provoked a war between the Chartered Company and the Ndebeles, a war which finally occurred in 1893 and in which the latter were defeated. Thus, the Ndebeles were dispossessed of all their land and property which included many cattle. To mark his military triumph, Rhodes built his own house “on exactly the same spot where Lobengula’s hut stood [and] next to the historic indaba tree, beneath which Lobengula held court and received guests, Rhodes built Government House, the residence, in Matebeleland, of Lobengula’s white

⁷⁷ S. Samkange, *Origins of Rhodesia* viii.

⁷⁸ *Ibid* 9-11.

successors.” The worst humiliation was yet to come in the naming of the country, for Rhodes gave this land a new, foreign name which was his name; “a name so foreign that it [began] with a letter not found in the Matebele language—*Rhodesia*.”⁷⁹ This was to give the fate of this land a final seal of insult to a heroic people who lived and died in defence of their land and dignity.

Once the Ndebele were defeated, effective occupation of the land now called Rhodesia started in earnest with white people displacing black people as they carved out the best land for themselves. The land issue was to remain a thorny subject for the black people of Zimbabwe from this time till 1980 when the country regained its political independence from Britain after two wars of resistance and liberation. The land question persisted even beyond the end of the 20th Century in 1999, right into the dawn of the third Millennium, 2000, onwards. The land question is still an issue as this thesis is being presented for examination in 2001. The first war of colonial resistance which ended in the defeat of the Ndebele and the Shona by the settlers, was in 1896 and 1897. The second and successful was longer, from the late 1960s to 1979 after several decades of unrest, particularly the period in the 1950s. The most painful effect of white colonisation was the enactment of the Land Apportionment Act of 1930 followed by the Land Tenure Act of 1969. The genesis of these Acts and their repercussions on the African

⁷⁹ *Ibid* 265. See also Antony Thomas, *Rhodes, The Race for Africa* (Harare: African Publishing Group, 1996, reprinted 1997).

population are well discussed by many scholars such as Moyana, Floyd and Prothero.⁸⁰

In their acts of segregating Africans while usurping the land, the whites had an ideology and a mission well summarised in the following statement by N.H. Wilson of the Southern Rhodesian Native Affairs Department in 1925: “We are in this country because we represent a higher civilization, because we are better men. It is our only excuse for having taken the land.”⁸¹ Later on it was Sir Godfrey Huggins, one time Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia, who declared that the main purpose of land apportionment was

to see that the European, by his energy, modern knowledge and science, may protect himself in the African environment and preserve all the characteristics of mind and body which he has acquired...and at the same time, under his influence, knowledge and care, he may raise the African to become morally and physically (i.e., [sic] in vigour) like a European.⁸²

Lothrop Stoddard put the issue more starkly in a theory he termed “Congenital Barbarism,” that is, that “'barbarism' is the natural or ‘congenital state’ of the man of colour and that even if civilized, he will

⁸⁰ Henry V. Moyana, *The Political Economy of Land in Zimbabwe* (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1984). See also Barry N. Floyd, “Land Apportionment in Rhodesia” in R. Mansell Prothero, editor, *People and Land in Africa South of the Sahara, Readings in Social Geography* (New York, London, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1972) 225.

⁸¹ *Ibid* 235.

⁸² R. M. Prothero, ed., *People and Land in Africa South of the Sahara, Readings in Social Geography*, 235.

“Comparative Survey of Native Policy,” *British Command Papers* (Cmd., 8235, London, 1951), 79.

again revert to this state at a later period.” He explained this theory of his further by saying,

Deceptive veneers of civilization may be acquired but reversion to congenital barbarism ultimately takes place. To such barbarian stocks belong many of the peoples of Asia, the American Indians⁸³ and the African Negroes.

One D.M. Stanley of Chipinge advocated white people’s supremacy in Rhodesia because of “their proved integrity and their sympathetic power. Furthermore,” he said, “...the influx of lower elements into civilized societies is an unmitigated disaster. It upsets living standards, socially sterilizes the higher stocks and if, as usually happens in the long run, interbreeding occurs, the racial foundations of civilization are undermined and the mongrelized population, unable to bear the burden, sinks to a lower plane.”⁸⁴

Here, we have quoted few of the many outrageous ideas that lay behind the white dispossession of the black people in Zimbabwe. This attitude of denigrating the black people was to be ridiculed by the Southern Rhodesia Select Committee on the Resettlement of Natives in 1960 which said, “It is illogical to reserve land in a particular area for purchase exclusively by members of one race, to the exclusion of members of the other race.”⁸⁵ But then no one really listened.

⁸³ H.V. Moyana, *The Political Economy of Land in Zimbabwe*, 58.

⁸⁴ H.V. Moyana, *The Political Economy of Land in Zimbabwe* 59.

⁸⁵ B.N. Floyd, “Land Apportionment in Rhodesia” in R.M. Prothero, ed., *People and Land in Africa South of the Sahara, Readings in Social Geography* 225.

Another argument that the white people used to justify their occupation of land with the better soils was that “...the indigenous farmer, equipped only with a primitive short-handled hoe, found the red-earth soils difficult to work and, despite their greater fertility, avoided using them.”⁸⁶ Of course, nothing could be more ridiculous and false than such an argument since it has been shown above, which soils were preferred by Africans in pre-colonial Zimbabwe.

It is some aspects of this history of Rhodesia and Zimbabwe from 1890 to the present that is well dramatised and described in some novels by white writers. With the above historical background, the literary works will make more sense to the reader since the authors often refer closely to those events, even though they almost always declare that “any resemblance to actual events or locales or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.”⁸⁷

The next chapter discusses the ideological concerns that surface in the white Rhodesian novel and how these are rooted in the ideology espoused by Cecil John Rhodes, founder of Rhodesia.

⁸⁶ *Ibid* 227.

⁸⁷ Peter Rimmer, *Cry of the Fish Eagle*, copyright page.