

**THE CASE FOR INDIGENIZATION:  
ANALYSING PRE-COLONIAL TRENDS IN AGRICULTURE AND  
POLITICS IN ZIMBABWE**

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## ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the agricultural productivity and policy trends from pre-colonial Zimbabwe to modern times (1400-2018). Drawing upon a diverse body of literature and statistical data the study seeks insight into important intervention areas and the trends that prompted them. Precolonial agriculture reveals significant dependence on native cereals, diversified polycultures, rotational cropping and grazing and terracing. Local knowledge informed post-production preservation and insect and pest management methods. Production was competitive comparable to other same time societies, although there are great labour inefficiencies. Famine was irregular in comparison to the colonial period. Colonial agriculture was productive and focused on profitable export crops such as tobacco, cotton and the introduction of large-scale maize production. Policies such as the Native Labour Act demonstrate an exploitative functionalist bias in these policies. Locals were moved to areas with low quality soils. Post-colonial agricultural trends illustrate lows in production and profit influenced by caustic trade politics surrounding land redistribution and structural adjustment programs. The Green Revolution and the present bioengineering revolution have increased the competitiveness of the global agricultural economy. To address these myriad and intricate obstacles, innovative, interdisciplinary measures will have to be taken in the areas of crop diversification, domestic and export market growth, land and trade policy, indigenized political structures and country-based research.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Krystal Zwiesineyi Chindori-Chininga is a Zimbabwean researcher and international development practitioner. With a diversity of skills, experiences and interests all geared towards African development, she is an agriculturalist, international business expert, writer, program management professional and African literature enthusiast. She completed her Bachelor of Science at Cornell University in International Agriculture and Rural Development, and now her Masters of Professional Studies in Global Development with a specialization in Agricultural Development. Her experiences include working for Google, the Ministry of Agriculture in Ghana, the United Nations Development Program, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization and CARE USA, amongst other NGOs, International Development Consulting Firms and contracting for USAID. She has focused her academic career in deepening her knowledge of indigenous cultures and how this informs development programming, economic stability and steady business growth in Africa.

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# INTRODUCTION

**Background.** As Zimbabwe enters its 38<sup>th</sup> year of independence, conversation about new and enlightened frameworks for reimagining the method of its development is fervent and frequent. Without a doubt, as a Zimbabwean, these discussions necessarily implicate the future of my livelihood and that of the many Zimbabweans within the country and across the globe. As such, a deep-seated interest to add value to this conversation inspires this agricultural strategy proposition, building on agricultural trends in Southern Africa to mould and contextualize the theoretical mechanism of this strategy.

Many agronomists and development professionals profess the necessity of restructuring or at the very least, innovatively addressing, the way that agriculture factors into the development dynamic. Kandeh Yumkellah, previous Director-General of the UN Industrial Development Organization, is noted for having just that view when he was quoted as saying, "Agriculture is the most important aspect of the African economy and will have to be its driving engine out of poverty (Imara Africa Securities Team, 2012)." In a similar vein, transdisciplinary researchers have shown that an analysis of past agriculture allows for a holistic evaluation of its impact on the multiple dimensions of the society in question in the long term and as such allows for future strategy projections that are tempered with great foresight (Delgado, et al., 1998).

Consequently, this study was designed to gain a more nuanced understanding of agricultural trends in Zimbabwe through the developing and compounding effects of its precolonial and colonial history along with more recent green revolution and biotechnological developments. The agricultural practices as well as the sociopolitical environments that nurtured them will be relevant to the study of how these past agricultural trends contribute to what agriculture in Zimbabwe and Southern Africa looks like today and what it could look like tomorrow. The philosophical tenets of the

**Outline** .forward moving strategy and how they helped to characterize the strategy during three stages in agricultural history -- precolonial, colonial, postcolonial -- are examined. Progressing through these 3 stages of the agricultural trends, we examine questions pertaining to the current state of indigenous agricultural knowledge in Zimbabwe, how did colonial agriculture shape the present agricultural systems, and how have the global agricultural developments of the past 80 years negatively and positively affected Southern African agriculture on the regional scale.

**Framework.** The relationships between these past and compounding trends are being analysed to isolate the sociopolitical as well as agricultural dynamics that merit consideration for informing agricultural policy, as well as priorities for research and development in Southern Africa today and in the future. Only through a thorough understanding of the multidimensional history of agriculture in Southern Africa, can we:

1. Have an accurate depiction of the systems, philosophies, traditions and practices that govern present agricultural processes
2. Have an increasingly focused and higher resolution image of the ideal way forward for agriculture in Zimbabwe.

For the purposes of this study, this framework translates to 3 main objectives:

○ Objective 1

Identify consequential dynamics and components of past agricultural trends, specifically looking at precolonial agriculture, colonial agriculture and post Green Revolution & HYV agriculture, and elucidating the structure of those systems in a way that presents their general mechanism and clearly highlights factors that prove relevant to the present state of agriculture in our 3 target countries.

○ Objective 2

Characterize in a more nuance way the features of present agriculture. Attention will be given to the way in which current biotechnological developments relate to the characteristics and agricultural trends of the past.

○ Objective 3

Glean some major philosophical or practical perspective that build upon the past to inform current and future strategy that moves agriculture in Zimbabwe in a direction that supports the economic development and cultural heritage of the nation.

Essentially, the overall goal is to compile, in a single document, a reasonable depiction of past agricultural trends, an image of present trends and an understanding of what these factors plus current agricultural developments read for the future of agriculture in Zimbabwe.

**Criteria.** A secondary, literary analysis is conducted to achieve these goals and survey the range of information relevant to the above objectives. Sources of information will primarily be peer-reviewed academic materials, other research-based studies, government surveys, non-profit and international organization fact sheets, as well as some selected grey literature corroborated by oral tradition and personal experience. To value the consequentiality of the past agricultural dynamics we weigh them against two overarching questions; firstly, what and how much of those agricultural systems have been retained, and/or secondly, were there any major socio-economic, cultural or political impacts of those trends on the societies in question. This information would be gleaned from the literature as well as formal or informal documentations of national ethos and attitudes relating to certain social or cultural factors presented by the continuation, or even, loss of certain past agricultural trends. Collating this information under the umbrella question of how past has shaped present and where to progress from there, the final leg of this study involves positing a forward-moving strategy that is specific, systematic, innovative and the product of learning from other agricultural models and strategies utilized by development organizations, private entities and government projects.

# CHAPTER 1

## PRECOLONIAL AGRICULTURE 1500-1890

**Setting.** The area presently known as Zimbabwe had been peopled for centuries prior to colonization. The nuance and detail of the cultures that existed in this area for thousands of years are understood confidently by very few. In fact, many deliberate and implicit efforts have been made to wipe what little understanding remains in the oral tradition (Owomoyela, 2002). Nonetheless, the centuries just prior to colonization are much better documented and understandings of the social and political organization of the Great Zimbabwe Empire of 1050-1490, Mutapa Empire of 1450-1760 and Rozvi/Torwa Empire of 1684-1834 are much more confident (Mlambo, 2014). For the purposes of this study, we therefore focus on these latter civilizations, ranging from the 1500's and the time of the Portuguese trade relationships with the then Mutapa Empire, to the late 1800's at the time of the slow dismantling of the Rozvi/Torwa Empires just before the signing of the Rudd Concession that gave the British settlers power over these Southern African lands, they deemed Rhodesia (Mlambo, 2014). To understand in detail the impact of the colonial agriculture system and Zimbabwe's present 21<sup>st</sup> century agriculture system, it is important to grasp the precolonial agricultural dynamics that were lost in the process and, recognize those that have persevered and why.

**Precolonial Agriculture.** As the essential agenda of this study is to empower the new Zimbabwean nation to recognize and capitalize on certain histories and forward moving strategies that can aid the economic development and cultural enrichment of the country, this focus on the agricultural practices of the precolonial period necessarily admits and reemphasizes the value of indigenous knowledge systems and traditional practices in the country's development. Where many to most agricultural development perspectives seek to innovate without heeding the history of the context in which they are operating, this study recognizes the importance of recognizing the holistic story of a community before endeavoring to revolutionize it. Much more, by focusing on a specialized area of the precolonial civilization, we add complexity to a body of knowledge that notoriously shallows out the description of precolonial Zimbabwe to generalized statements and broad summaries as opposed to detailing the many intricate socio-political dynamics of the cultures in question. The oversimplification of precolonial dynamics only adds to a diseased culture of oversimplifying the people of that heritage and corroborates the false propaganda of an Africa that was 'unpopulated', 'uncivilized' or 'without any sociopolitical organization' as insisted by many early settlers (Pikirayi, 2012). Essentially, apart from a genuine, and confirmed, belief that many precolonial agricultural practices are important considerations for agroecological, sustainable and/or climate change adaptable farming strategies for the future, this study also aims to exemplify the cultural respect implied by seeking to suggest a forward moving strategy that derives some of its philosophy or propositions from the traditional knowledge of the people that the strategy aims to

support (Bezner-Kerr, Shumba, Dakishoni, Chirwa, & Msachi, 2007). In this way, we respect the fact that the indigenous peoples of the land have the intellectual wherewithal to troubleshoot and address some of the issues that arise in their agricultural systems. As such, this study recognizes the great value in seeking out these agricultural practices that centre around local resources, indigenous crops and local ecosystem dynamics including the relationship between the environment and the native society.

**Outline.** To this end, this section surveys the crops and cropping systems of the period 1500 through 1800's and then discusses the socioeconomic dynamics related to them. With this we establish the platform upon which colonial agriculture developed and gain a sense of the natural agricultural inclinations of the indigenous people as they seemed to be at this time. This informs a forward moving strategy for the 21<sup>st</sup> century by identifying the crops and practices which have naturally flourished for centuries. It also suggests the cultural norms and values surrounding agriculture that may still be at play in many Zimbabwean rural communities and are important to understand, respect and incorporate. Considering these is foundational to making 'development' a culturally enriching process, as much as an economically progressive one, which is indeed, this author's intention.

## CROPS AND CROPPING SYSTEMS

**Introduction.** The cropping systems used across the Southern African region were diverse and well developed over 'generations of experience, informal experiments and intimate understanding of their biophysical and social environments' (Mapara, 2009). Further, the main crops consisted of a large variety of indigenous grains and legumes, primarily millet, types of beans and rapeseed, and minimal maize. Essentially, several sources have found that on average the collective, precolonial agricultural practices that characterized farming from 1500 to the late 1800s, had a high yield to seed and yield to land acreage ratio (Thornton, 2000). This level of productivity is believed to be comparable to European production at the time. Central elements of these systems suggest a cropping system and innovation processes that were localized and adapted to suit the nuances of the geographical and historical context.

**Millet and Sorghum.** Although by most accounts, maize is both the starch and single-most widely produced crop in the Southern African region, historical records show that up until even the mid-1800s this was not necessarily the case. At that time millet and sorghum enjoying the popularity that maize today enjoys (Hogendorn & Gemery, 1991). Varying from bulrush/pearl millet (*Pennisetum glaucum*), finger millet (*Eleusine coracana*) and sorghum (*Sorghum bicolor*), these grain crops dominated grain production for centuries serving as sustenance for both humans and domestic animals, primarily cattle. Further, it is understood that sorghum was the key crop of precolonial Malawi (Bezner-Kerr

R., 2014). The major advantages of primarily millet-based grain production schemes ranged from the cultural dimension of its traditional value, to the ecological dimension of its improved natural drought tolerance over early varieties of maize (Bezner-Kerr R., 2014). Further, being indigenous to the area, millet production is understood to have been beneficial for the overall ecosystem and more intuitive to farmer cultures that had been growing the crop for years.

**Polyculture.** Despite this focus on grain crops, many studies have found that polycultures were very much prevalent and robust in Southern African agricultural systems (Mlambo, 2014). These systems often involved a major grain such as millet or a minor grain, such as maize at the time, along with groundnuts or beans and a root vegetable such as yams or taro (Mlambo, 2014). Particular to these systems was a prominent role for plantain in the intercropping system. This mix of plantain and maize however is still very common in places such as the Mityana district of Uganda, where this author observed plantain and maize intercropping to the benefit of the plantain tree primarily. According to the Dean of Agricultural Studies at Makerere University in Uganda, this system allows for farmers to maximize nutritional uptake for the plantain tree whilst growing decent maize used for mulching the plantain plantation or for livestock feed. As such, this provides an example of such precolonial intercropping systems persisting to the present due to its continued relevance to smallholder priorities and resources. Sources show that these intercropping systems had significant advantages including minimizing soil erosion through greater

interception of excessive rainfall and greater efficiency in the use of soil volume, solar energy uptake and water uptake (Mapara, 2009). Further, many researchers have suggested over recent decades that there is an underground nutrient mutualism that occurs in such polyculture systems, that essentially work to capture available nutrients and cycle them between plants (Krulwich, 2014). There is also the idea of parasite infection prevention as maize is understood to be a deterrent of certain pests and therefore it's inclusion in the intercropping system offers a heightened chance of survival to certain other plants in the system (Poveda & Gomez-Jimenez, 2014). This kind of advantage can be seen with other intercropping systems and the general concept of these precolonial polycultures runs like the well-researched 'Three Sisters' intercropping system practiced by the Iroquois Native Americans in the U.S (Pleasant, 2016). The use of a major grain (maize), squash and bean crop in the Iroquois system is comparable to the use of maize/millet, groundnuts and yams in the Southern African system.

**Soil management & Land use.** Intercropping was one of the major soil management and maintenance systems. In addition, evidence exists that rotational grazing was very prevalent, especially in increasingly established precolonial empires such as that of the Rozvi/Torwa Empire in Zimbabwe the 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century. Having communalized agricultural land, rotational cropping was a simple system orchestrated by the community authorities and allowing for fallow periods of up to 2 or 3 seasons. Livestock grazing schemes were also integrated into this rotation, allowing for some land to be steeped in

manure during at least one of its fallow periods. As contemporary research continues to find, such holistic grazing management schemes can have significant advantages for not only soil quality but for cattle health (Savory Institute, 2011). Combined, intercropping and rotational grazing inclusive of significant fallow and cattle grazing periods, seem to be the key elements of the high yield to seed and yield to land productivity discussed in many assessments of African precolonial agriculture productivity (Hogendorn & Gemery, 1990).

**Weed Management.** Equally instrumental and innovative were some of the pests and weed management practices documented in studies of the main manifestations of indigenous knowledge systems on agriculture (Mapara, 2009). Intercropping is cited as one of the main methods of weed control. Another practice is referred to as selective weed management. In the latter, some weeds are left within the field as a deterrent to pests and more aggressive weed plants. Further, some weeds were maintained because farmers realized that they improved soil moisture (Mapara, 2009). In many of these cases, some of the weeds themselves were then harvested as a means of supplementary food. This was notably prevalent in the Sayadonga region of Northern Zimbabwe (Mapara, 2009). This type of selective weed management procedures also allowed for maximum land use and was less labour intensive than complete weed removal processes.

**Insect and Pest Management.** Insect and pest management processes were also significantly innovative and reveal the practical wisdom within precolonial frameworks of

farmer knowledge, practice and values. Deriving information from the natural world and experience, one of the strategic pest management techniques of the Buhera people in Nyanga, Zimbabwe was to coordinate planting across the community to better spread damage from birds and baboons (Mapara, 2009). The idea here being that the more fields planted at once, the less any one field will see in pest damages whereas, if a single field is planted, all the pests will descend on that crop and the loss is more likely to be crippling. Some other methods of working with the local environment in terms of pest loss mitigation included the planting of fruit such as wild loquat (mazhanje) in far off fields in the periods just before planting and harvesting to encourage baboons to the wild loquat fields and discourage raids on the crop fields. Additionally, many traditional and precolonial methods for insect pest management persist into present-day small holder farmer practice. Recent research into traditional pest management in the Ekwendeni region of Malawi, a project for which this author serves as a research assistant, has found that most small farmers continue to rely on traditional medicines and repellents derived from local plants and trees to repel certain worms and beetles from decimating crops (Enloe, 2018). This system has long been in place and is echoed in many other parts of Southern Africa where the knowledge of what plants and trees to use is primarily communicated through oral tradition and experiential learning.

**Terracing.** Among the most impressive precolonial cropping system adaptations are the stonewall terraces in present day Zimbabwe and South Africa. Some observers have

referred to them as the 'finest archaeological example of varied agricultural systems on the African continent available to study' (Soper, 1996). The Nyanga terraces of Zimbabwe, are still somewhat maintained though currently in very poor condition.

Nonetheless, they demonstrate the complexity and innovation of some precolonial agricultural practices. In this example, the terraces were documented by Europeans in the late 1800s and noted as extending over thousands of hectares of hillside. This further demonstrates the extent to which the precolonial agricultural philosophy was very much a system of adaptation to the environment, in this case the hilly and mountainous terrain of North-East Zimbabwe. The sophistication of the terracing system also included valley cultivation ridges as well as attendant hydraulic works and were integrated with settlement structures. Demonstrating a system where agriculture was very much the basis of the society (Soper, 1996). The effectiveness of the terracing system is implied by the fact that even where stones and stony soil were not available to construct the terraces, improvisation such as the simple creation of a bank filled with refuse from previous harvest, is noted to have been a popular alternative in precolonial Sub-Saharan Africa (Soper, 1996).

**Postproduction/preservation.** Beyond the agronomic and production-oriented element of the precolonial agricultural system, many postproduction practices demonstrated equal innovation. Preservation of crops took many forms. One method for seed preservation allowed farmers to preserve seeds for up to 2-3 seasons by covering them in a soot, a

process initiated and completed by women who were also the main post-production laborers. By hanging dried maize or laying seeds in strategic positions within the cooking hut/structure, with an open fire burning, women would ensure that these seeds were covered in soot and protected from pests, to be used in following planting seasons (Mapara, 2009). Means of storing the excess produce in granaries included ensuring that these storage facilities were built on high, bare rock such as can be found erected by the Hwesa in Nyanga North, Zimbabwe and the Budya of Matoko. These grain bins were lined with cow dung to protect from pests and to prevent loss from fire, and the granaries were extensively sealed (Mapara, 2009). Meat and vegetable drying were also very common in the absence of refrigeration and have also persisted to modern day times, where dried meat (biltong), salted fish and dried rapeseed (mufushwa) are routine elements of the Zimbabwean diet.

## **SOCIOECONOMIC DYNAMICS**

**Introduction.** On this vein of looking at the larger picture of precolonial agriculture beyond the cropping systems themselves, examining agriculture's influence on the broader socioeconomic and cultural dynamics of society are significant. This section investigates the organizational and social elements of precolonial agriculture.

**Communal Lands & Resource Management.** A key element in the structure of land use and agriculture in the latter part of the precolonial period, 1500s-1800s, is the extent to which much of the land and authority over it was centralized by the ruling authorities but understood to be communal land spaces (Dore, 2001). Somewhat like the peasant agricultural system that existed in the United Kingdom prior to the enclosure movement and the privatization of land, land in the precolonial Southern African system was understood to be a community resource. Gennialois & Rasher (1987) note the way this system preempted a governmental philosophy of distributing public goods and communal wealth within the society.

**Labour.** As can be expected, for many precolonial Southern African societies, agriculture was the major basis for community sustenance and work. Although trade in the precolonial Zimbabwean context had begun as early as the late 1400s between Great Zimbabwe and other empires and continued into the mid-1500s with the introduction of significant Portuguese trade channels, agriculture remained the foremost pillar of the society. As such, much of the community and labour force were engaged in agriculture, especially in the post-hunting context where men were less likely to have to hunt for meat in the face of widespread communal cattle rearing. The high number of individuals engaging in agriculture has led some researchers to doubt the rhetoric of a productive precolonial agricultural system; the argument being that although yield to seed measurements may be

impressive yield per capita or yield to labour is likely to demonstrate a drastic inefficiency (Hogendorn & Gemery, 1990).

**Famine.** Despite this, researchers have found that these agricultural methods of the latter precolonial period were largely effective at ensuring the accessibility of some sustenance for the community. Noting 10 periods of significant famine or scarcity for the indigenous Zimbabwean people from 1897-1960, during the time of colonization, Iliffe, 1987, finds that famine mortality was significantly less likely in the 100-year period preceding colonization. Iliffe notes that during the precolonial period, 'environmental variety, extreme localization of rainfall, cultivating skills and storage techniques' protected the precolonial communities from experiencing high, if any, mortality due to famine. Alternatively, Iliffe explores the fact that where famine was caused by drought, during the colonial period, 'drought caused famine due to colonialism' where exploitative, racist and discriminatory social structures exacerbated and isolated much of the indigenous population in time of drought and ecological stress.

## **SUMMARY**

Briefly stated, the integration of indigenous agricultural knowledge holds much potential for informing a forward moving strategy for agricultural development.. Particularly, we note the grand potential of millet and sorghum as an indigenous, drought tolerant, climate

change adaptable substitute to maize. To witness the yield rates that maize has boasted since taking off across the world, millet and sorghum would require great scientific investment and agronomic research to establish competitive high yielding varieties. As far as small holder agriculture and food security goes, these traditional methods of weed, insect and pest management are notable for their effectiveness as well as their accessibility/affordability. However, they could be strengthened by using the tools of science to and farmer-participatory research to promote a culture of testing and adaptation, and of documenting and disseminating the information to smallholders across the country. To advance appreciation, preservation and development of these traditional methods it is important to integrate this type of knowledge, or at least the awareness of its existence, into the consciousness of the younger generations. As a young Zimbabwean, raised in the Zimbabwean education system throughout primary and secondary school, I have firsthand experience of the fact that outside of oral tradition, little detailing of these indigenous philosophies and agricultural methods are made available to the youth.

Further discussion of how lessons from the pre-colonial era can inform contemporary agricultural development strategy will be examined in the concluding section of this paper.

## CHAPTER 2

### COLONIAL AGRICULTURE IN ZIMBABWE 1890-1980

**Setting.** The colonial agriculture section of this study focuses on the 90-year period running from the signing of the Rudd Concession in 1890 to the establishment of Zimbabwe as an independent and liberated state in 1980. This period includes both the earlier decades of colonialism whereby Rhodesia was a colony of the British Empire but is also inclusive of the brief pre-independence period in which Rhodesia separated from the British Empire under the British settler governance of Ian Smith (Pikirayi, 2012).

**Colonial Agriculture.** Although mining was the premier economic motivation for British settlements in the area now known as Zimbabwe, agriculture quickly became a booming industry when it was realized that the mining industry might not have as much to offer as it had in the lower Limpopo region in South Africa (Rubert, 1997). Subsequently, great investments were made by settling individuals and governments alike such that large government farms became a norm of the Zimbabwean landscape.

**Functionalist Bias & Outline.** The focus of this section of the study necessarily frames itself within the context of functionalist bias and the pervasiveness that accompanied its application in agricultural policy in Zimbabwe/Rhodesia during the colonial period. As such, the following sections are divided into the 3 main crops of this period and how the

functionalist bias and discrimination of the agricultural policy concerning them manifested itself during the 90-year period of colonization. Because much of the structuring of the agricultural sector and the policies that pillar it today in Zimbabwe were edited, adapted or wholly carried over from the colonial time, this section provides context and philosophy for understanding that structuring. This kind of understanding is necessary to make effective changes to the agricultural sector and to identify some of the fundamental dynamics at play that may need to be adjusted. Where a conventional method of addressing issues in agriculture have allowed for the addition or edition of certain singular policies, understanding the context behind the establishment of the agricultural sector during the colonial period may suggest the need for more fundamental renovations to the agriculture industry.

## **AGRICULTURAL POLICY**

**Tobacco.** The tobacco industry was undoubtedly the economic productivity focus of the colonial period. This was perceived to be the great money-making sector for the many settlers that had moved to Rhodesia/Zimbabwe attracted by the 'get-rich-quick' settler recruitment rhetoric used back in the Queen's country. In fact, it is noted that there was an active correlation between the disappointment of the failed search for gold deposits as large as those discovered just south of Rhodesia in the Kimberley mine fields of South Africa, and the turn to tobacco export that became a palliative for that failed expedition

(Rubert, 1997). From these various motivations, by 1892 there were over 300 registered colonial settler tobacco farmers and by the 1940's the number of tobacco farmers outnumbered the labor force of the gold mining industry (Rubert, 1997). In fact, during the early 1900's many that had committed to growing maize were incentivized by the rapid growth in the tobacco industry such that whole swaths of maize growing land was transitioned to the almost uninterrupted growth of flue cured tobacco; Reports show that between 1913 and 1914 the amount of land engaged in tobacco production grew from 1700 to 5627 acres, a threefold increase (Rubert, 1997). From 1907, this was inspired and supported by the British South Africa Company (BSAC) which played a significant role in establishing a new 'settler capitalist' agricultural industry in Southern Rhodesia (Rubert, 1997).

As historian Rubert notes, "Officials hoped that tobacco represented the type of export crop that could support white agricultural policy," and they came far in achieving this goal. Instead of the Virginia leaf tobacco popular and common for cigarettes, the main variety grown by the colonial settlers was an indigenous dark leaf tobacco that grew better in the local conditions and was used for pipe smoking. To further facilitate the growth of this industry, many dams and reservoirs, of value to the traditions and basic livelihood of many local communities, were cordoned off for the singular use of irrigating tobacco plants on colonial farms (McDermot-Hughes, 2008). Through the great investment and hype that the Southern Rhodesian/Zimbabwean tobacco industry enjoyed during this time, by 1919 there was a preference for Rhodesian tobacco in the United Kingdom and

the Imperial Tobacco Company became heavily involved in playing a brokering position in the export dynamics of the industry. By the time the 1930 tobacco laws and Tobacco Marketing Board came along, the industry had become highly regulated, establishing local tobacco auction floors, subsidizing some farms and establishing production quotas for all registered farmers (Mlambo, 2014). This same general structure of funneling all tobacco production to local auction floors is still very much in place in today's Zimbabwe Tobacco Marketing Board albeit under primarily black Zimbabwean management and with an emphasis on generating income for the new nation.

**Cotton.** With an equally competitive agenda, the cotton industry in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe sought to take on the cotton giant that was the USA at the time and aimed at 'making Lancashire independent of the USA' in so far as cotton production was concerned. At this time, 80% of global cotton exports came out of the USA (Nyambara, 2001). As with the tobacco, the settlers took advantage of the availability of any local varieties, better suited to growing in the area. By the early 1900's the cotton farming was centralized along the Zambezi in what is now Northern Zimbabwe and was then the middle area between Northern and Southern Rhodesia (Nyambara, 2001). To further facilitate the growth of this industry, the British Cotton Growing Association was established to provide support and regulations. Settlers depended on local knowledge and skill as it is noted that cotton spinning, and weaving was already heavily practiced by the indigenous peoples prior to the

colonial period (Nyambara, 2001). This meant that the settlers relied on local familiarity of the crop to manufacture it and often took advantage of the Native Labour Act of 1942, to coerce locals into participating in the cotton production operations (Grier, 2010). Despite establishing a foothold in the cotton export industry to the UK, cotton production never reached a record-breaking level and even its UK exports were surpassed by other British colonies, including South Africa (Nyambara, 2001).

**Maize and Horticulture.** Maize was emphasized as a means of replacing the popular millet and sorghum food crops with the higher yielding maize. Further, it was instituted as a means of catering to the global British settler diet and was primarily exported back to the Queen's country or to other colonies for the consumption of the settlers. As such, where some former British colonies such as Uganda maintained the trend of small holder farming with plots of 1-10 acres being a norm, between massive tobacco operations and large maize production farms, average farm size in Rhodesia extended from the 10s to the 1000s of acres over the years. To accommodate this, government land policy forced many local black people into high density reserves in marginal areas with poor land quality and unhealthy levels of environmental degradation (Grier, 2010). Considering 60% of food consumption for locals at this time came out of small holder farming and barter within the community, poor soil contributed significantly to higher rates of famine mortality than had been witnessed in decades (Iliffe, 1987).

This is elaborated on in the previous section of this paper concerning precolonial agriculture (see *Famine, Socioeconomic Dynamics*, page 15, chapter 1). Food insecurity for local people skyrocketed during this time. Further, these dynamics intensified the potential vulnerability of the economy because the maize export process and its success was very much dependent on the colonial trade network that designated

Rhodesia/Zimbabwe as the primary producer of maize for the Southern African colonies.

Without this network, after the dismantling of the British empire, the deference to Zimbabwean maize that was enjoyed during the centralized cooperation of the colonial empires disappeared and Zimbabwe lost a good deal of its foothold in the maize export market (Iliffe, 1987). As such the agricultural decline of liberation years, 1990s through the 2000s, can be expected to have some ties to the precarity of the maize export relations established during the colonial period, especially alongside the compounding fact of the introduction of widespread maize production. Valuing, to some extent, their labour force, upon realizing the food insecurity facing locals in these high density, low quality reserves, in the 1920's colonial agricultural policy attempted to address this in part by encouraging intensification. One example here includes the way the traditional practice of shifting cultivation, which requires access to much land and the ability to move to entirely new plots during new seasons, was replaced with the encouragement of consecutive crop rotation on single plots of land which was more conducive to the limited land access circumstances that the local people now found themselves with (Iliffe, 1987). Iliffe aptly summarizes this paradox in the colonial government by noting, "Colonialism encouraged

intensifying agriculture to accommodate its segregationist mores and repressive government land policy." This serves as one of the clearest examples of the way that agricultural policy during this period was almost entirely driven by colonial agenda that prioritized the physical and economic health and well-being of the settlers and British Empire over the local people.

**Discrimination in the agricultural policies.** The prioritization of the well-being of the colonial empire can be further gleaned from some overt and other, implicit, features of the land and agricultural policy of the colonial period. Having already mentioned the way segregationist land policy made it so that locals were forced onto low quality land, it is important to note the land enclosures as well, cattle confiscation and forced labor that further disenfranchised the local people (Iliffe, 1987). Most of these initiatives were instituted through the Native Affairs Department of the late 1800's which spearheaded the design of governmental infrastructure that resulted in the systemic institutionalized subjugation of the local people (Iliffe, 1987). One of the most debilitating of these policies, in the way in which it paralysed chances of independent economic progress for much of the local black community, was the previously mentioned Native Labour Act of 1942 (Grier, 2010). Through this policy, the colonial government required that all native peoples, above a certain age and primarily men, be employed with a recognized settler business, farm or institution (Weinman, 1975). As Nyambara argues this was a double-edged sword in that it aimed to both force the local black community into the production of the colonial goods

but also into the consumption of those goods, making profit off of the local community at both ends of the spectrum – “At the ideological level, the colonial agricultural state aimed to turn the Africans into ‘economic men,’ that is, producers and consumers of commodities (Nyambara, 2001).” Nyambara goes on to quote a colonial settler as having summed up this process by asking, “What can be an inducement to make a native work? Create for him as many wants as possible and induce him to adopt to more modern methods of cultivation and tear him away from his bear pots (Nyambara, 2001).” In this way, the way the infrastructure of the land and agricultural policy of the colonial government entailed an economic prioritization as well as a racial exploitation is clear. Looking forward, this is of relevance in establishing to what extent policy, much of which is infrastructurally identical to that established in colonial times, is a significant factor in the ability of modern-day Zimbabwe to use that same policy to establish economic growth and agricultural progress for itself.

## **SUMMARY**

Without delving too deeply into the details just yet, this investigation of the colonial structuring of the agricultural sector communicates the necessity of changes in land policy, to do with farm size, trade relationships and diversification of the agricultural industry. By recognizing the colonial history and colonialist functionalist bias tied up in all 3 of those areas, we recognize how they stifle the development and progress of a liberated

Zimbabwe. Where large governmental farms served the colonial agenda, they fail to address food insecurity and maximize agricultural productivity, which they very well had the potential to do. Due to many dynamics surrounding colonialism but also the post-colonialism collapse of relationships between Zimbabwe and the west, trade relationships have remained weak. However, the emergence of significant economic markets on the African continent as well as, in East and Southeast Asia offer new potential. Further, the diversification of the agricultural industry will allow for greater opportunity in trade as well as potentially in-country market development to compete with imports. This is not to say however, that the tobacco industry be sidelined. Indeed, one of the ways in which we can capitalize on the colonial agriculture system is to make full use of both the technical and institutional infrastructure that the colonialist established to facilitate a booming tobacco industry. With 21<sup>st</sup> century renovations, and changes in policy relative to the global economic market, this industry can be taken full advantage of to the benefit of the country's economic development and trade relationships.

Further discussion of the details of the ways in which this investigation of the colonial agriculture history of Zimbabwe can contribute to development from this point on is included in the final chapter of this paper.

## CHAPTER 3

### POST-COLONIAL AGRICULTURE

#### 1980 - 2016

**Setting.** With the independence of Zimbabwe taking place in 1980, one would imagine that the colonial and British hand over Zimbabwean agriculture has lost its grip over the past few decades. However, in this analysis of the post-colonial dynamics of agriculture from 1980 to the present decade, we see that there continues to be a heavy-handed external influence on the industry.

**Post-Colonial Agriculture.** One of the most pivotal and oft cited events in Zimbabwe's land policy history is the Land Redistribution Act of 1992. This event had a pervasive impact on the agricultural industry but especially trade relationships and economic growth overall. Although this program made changes to the land policy, of significant impact to the economic dynamics of the industry itself was the Economic Structural Adjustment Program of 1991-1995 instituted primarily by the IMF and requiring drastic liberalizing changes to the economic principles that typically propelled the agricultural industry. Further molding the agricultural dynamics into what they are today, the first and, what has been termed, the second green revolution have significantly altered agricultural practice and market dynamics across the world and the impact of these developments on Zimbabwe's ability to keep up with this global agricultural revolution is worthy of analysis.

In comparison, we also look at the rising potency and prevalence of agroecological and food sovereignty movements as they relate to the nation. These major events and trends will be explored in this section of the study to establish the dynamics presently affecting the Zimbabwean agriculture industry. This is crucial to identifying a strategy for moving forward.

## **LAND REDISTRIBUTION**

Land redistribution in Zimbabwe has been one of the most widely criticized events in Zimbabwean history (Chitiga & Mabugu, 2008). With impacts still explicit today, many in the international community have found great fault with the Zimbabwean government for the 'poor orchestration' of this program. In its essence, land redistribution is understood to be an instrument of poverty alleviation and tackling the injustices of feudal or colonial designs (Chitiga & Mabugu, 2008). In fact, in its traditional definition it often entails the dismantling and distribution of large tracts of land previously owned by aristocrats to smallholder farmers (World Bank Group, 2010). In Zimbabwe's case it was understood as a method of rectifying the unfair land distribution and wealth dynamics between white and/or previously colonial farmer and settlers, and the native and/or black smallholders in the country (Moyo, 2007). The leading motivation for the final liberation struggle centred around issues of land displacement and the indignation of native peoples who were being forced to live-in high-density areas with poor soil quality (World Bank Group, 2010). It was these claims of feeling displaced in the land of their ancestors that triggered the final

*chimurenga* and that belie the important role that land redistribution would have in the postcolonial era. Despite portrayals that exclude any benefits of the process, many have found that some village communities, rural families and smallholding individuals have significantly economically benefitted from land redistribution, citing the provinces of Masvingo and Mwenzi as having increased production by 60% as a result of maize land turned over to villages in the area (Scoones, et al., 2011).

Land redistribution in Zimbabwe can be separated into two distinct phases. An original process from the 1980s-1990s where 12 million hectares of land were returned to 203 000 farmers and a second period leading from the 1990s-2000s which was marked with conflict and international condemnation (World Bank Group, 2010). A World Bank analysis deemed the original phase of land redistribution 'well executed' discussing the way the British government worked with the Zimbabwean government to redistribute the land based on a subsidized 'willing buyer-willing seller' WBWS program which oversaw the peaceful transaction of millions of hectares of land (World Bank Group, 2010). The second part of the program deviated from the first in that in 1992, the Zimbabwean government instituted a new policy that centralized land expropriation in the land redistribution program as a result of the fact that the WBWS program had stalled due to minimal government funds in a time of drought and structural adjustment austerity (World Bank Group, 2010). This in turn severed the relationship with the British who refused to support the program under these new dynamics and publicly condemned the Zimbabwean government (Moyo, 2007). In time, the land expropriation was deemed a

human rights offense and political and economic sanctions followed (Moyo, 2007). This is the crux of some of the most detrimental impacts that the land redistribution had on Zimbabwe's international trade. Although many cite the fact that there was minimal training provided for farmers that were given new land, historical sources reflect the establishment of an agricultural department functioning with the sole purpose of offering extension services to the farmers that had received land via the land redistribution program (World Bank Group, 2010). Further, many of the farms were integrated into village settlement development programs and were established as communal grazing and growing lands managed by local authorities (World Bank Group, 2010). As such, it was not necessarily that no infrastructure was provided to support these new farm owners, but instead that with the simultaneous inception of the structural adjustment program, funding became scarce and commercialized farming companies gained a monopoly in the industry. As well, as much as there were extension services offered to the small land holders, politicians and high-income individuals that received or purchased farms via the land redistribution act often purchased them as whole farm projects, in large swaths ranging from 10s to 1000s of hectares (Moyo, 2007). Support services for management of these extensive projects were limited and fragmented, and as such we still find many such farms being underutilized and poorly managed.

## STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT

The Economic Structural Adjustment Program (ESAP) in Zimbabwe was primarily instituted by the IMF but was financed by the World Bank, African Development Bank, USAID, and 9 other governments and institutions, to provide Zimbabwe with a total of 766 million USD, 330 million USD of which was supplied solely by the IMF (African Development Bank, 1997). For all the ESAP efforts to target poverty reduction in Zimbabwe, many sources report the way the conditions of the poorest declined whilst the incidence of poverty increased during the ESAP (African Development Bank, 1997). According to an African Development Bank evaluation of the rationale for the entire program, a major consideration was the fact that the GDP and macroeconomic growth of the nation had dwindled since independence, which was a mere 11 years from the date of the initiation of the ESAP in 1991. As such, when it is reported that the GDP growth over the course of the ESAP, 1991-1995, grew at a mere average rate of 0.74% it raises questions as to the actual efficacy of the program and its impact on those most vulnerable and disenfranchised in Zimbabwe at the time (African Development Bank, 1997).

Understandably, when 1980 and Declaration of Independence came around there was plenty that the native Zimbabwean government was left to address in the wake of the racial and economic segregation that was the legacy of the colonial project on the socioeconomic dynamics of the nation. When we look at the deregulation and privatization, particularly with maize, tobacco and other aspects of the agricultural sector,

that occurred in the implementation of the ESAP, these policies encouraged free trade and competition that was simply unsuited to the economic polarization in this young post-colonial nation (African Development Bank, 1997). Government-funded programs, such as the original successful land redistribution process, that were meant to right the balance of injustice established in the colonial era were weakened or dismantled in order to shrink government expenditure and public programs in compliance with the structural adjustment requirements (World Bank Group, 2010). At the end of the day, competition only further disenfranchises those not in a position to compete in the first place. Hence, when the ADB evaluative report simultaneously details on one page, the 'success' of the fact that many previously public agricultural enterprises such as the Cold Storage Company (CSC), Dairyboard Zimbabwe (DZL) and Cotton Company of Zimbabwe (COTTCO) commercialized and reported significant profits, and then follows this with the fact that poverty, where it existed in 1991 only deepened and broadened, the free trade dynamics of the ESAP benefitted the few (African Development Bank, 1997). As an individual born and raised in Zimbabwe, I recall all 3 of the aforementioned enterprises being household names that eventually, all came upon hard times after the 2008 global financial crisis: At the end of the day even those few that benefitted only did so in so far as the global economy could allow them; A dynamic mimicked on the global scale when we look at other Global South commercialized agricultural enterprises that are eventually crippled by competition from cheap Global North imports.

The free economic principles of the ESAP forced Zimbabweans and Zimbabwean companies to have to compete with international companies, some of which originated from countries that had enjoyed decades of relative stability and others that had fostered the spirit of capitalism and business competition within their own borders. This is a particularly important point because where many black-owned businesses in Zimbabwe were new, and under the ownership of capable but little experienced business peoples, the imports and companies that these companies were now forced to compete with came out of countries such as the USA where competitive economic dynamics, economic stability and political stability gave these companies a quality and production capacity advantage. Much more, the ESAP indebted the nation to several banking groups and International Financial Institutions (IFIs), which would stifle the nation's capacity for growth (Rakodi, 1994).

Essentially, the fiscal austerity and privatization of the ESAP exacerbated the socioeconomic polarity of the nation. Where some measure of socialization was required to at least provide the necessities, such as housing and education, to right the playing field that had been so badly tilted during colonization, instead these competitive economic policies made socio-economic mobility an even steeper climb and actively dismantled systems that attempted to offer some public goods.

## FIRST GREEN REVOLUTION

The Green Revolution of the 1950s-1980s is distinguished from the so-called '2<sup>nd</sup> Green Revolution' of the 1990s-present, by temporal factors as well as the focus of the developments. Where, the first Green Revolution focused on staple crops and seed varieties for traditionally low-income countries, i.e., wheat and rice in Asia, the Second Green Revolution is a much more commercially driven endeavor focusing on high international commodity crops (McMichael, 2013). The first Green Revolution drastically changed the global agricultural market increasing production in Latin America and Asia (Shiva, 2011). Although, the high yielding variety (HYV) seeds were already a feature of US agriculture, the US input industry grew substantially as input needs in Latin America and Asia rose attendant to the use of these HYV seeds (McMichael, 2013). For the most part, the influence of these developments was few and far between in Africa and widely cited as having not been tailored to the social or ecological context of African countries (Ejeta, 2010). Indeed, the bulk of these innovations were shaped to face the ecological terrains of South and South-East Asia, as well as Latin America, particularly, Mexico (Ejeta, 2010).

Despite this general failure, or lack, of a first green revolution in Africa, some sources do credit Zimbabwe with having had a successful green revolution experience with maize in the 1980s (Eicher, 1995) Plant breeding and in situ seed-based research funded by the Zimbabwean government resulted in the introduction of domestic and international hybrid maize varieties (Alumira & Rusike, 2005). This has been to the extent that 100% of

maize grown in Zimbabwe was estimated to be of the hybrid variety and competing well with traditional crop plants such as sorghum (Eicher, 1995). Having established previously in this study the importance of the drought resistant traditional sorghum and millet varieties, some comparisons have found that hybrid maize varieties grown in the lowveld of Zimbabwe maintain a comparable drought resistance (Eicher, 1995).

Nonetheless, these developments pitted against the many political and social changes occurring in the country at the same time made profiting from this success difficult in the face of shifting and precarious land policy and trade relationships. As such, like most of Africa, with the exclusion somewhat of South Africa, Zimbabwe is understood to have been missed by the bulk of the green revolution advantages. As a result, it has been disadvantaged. As agricultural producers and markets grew exponentially across the globe during and because of this green revolution it dwindled in Zimbabwe.

### **AGRICULTURAL TRENDS OF THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**

The second green revolution, for this study's purposes, primarily points towards the emergence and dominance of biotechnology in agriculture as a major trend in the last 2 decades. These developments have yet again allowed certain agricultural markets to exponentially grow as opposed to other traditional systems. The result has been the development of new agricultural monopolists, with the means and resources of constructing or purchasing the new technology, thereby leaving small holder farmers

across the globe disadvantaged (McMichael, 2013). At present, Zimbabwe has faced significant pressure from members of the agricultural sector to legalize GM crops (SitholeNiang, 2016.) A major facet of this plea is the fact that, South Africa, a neighbouring country and a major agricultural competitor, has allowed GM crops for years and up to 95% of its cotton, maize and soya bean is produced using GM seed (Sithole-Niang, 2016). Minus, tobacco, these are all of Zimbabwe's main potential exports. Much more, many believe that considering increasing evidence of climate instability, it is doubly important for the country to adopt innovative technologies to address the drought crisis. In-situ research into GM maize varieties better suited to the drought conditions have been taking place in Zimbabwe for many years but this research has never been translated into a widespread program that can benefit those at most at risk (SitholeNiang, 2016). Meanwhile, countries all over the world, are using these biotechnologies to surmount disease, extreme climatic conditions, nutritional deficits and poor crop quality. The result is a competitive advantage over crops grown in traditional settings (Bazuin, Akadi, & Wiltox, 2011).

Alternatively, in the light of these many changing ecological and economic dynamics surrounding the global agriculture industry currently, discussion of agroecological methods to producing high quality food are taking centre field. Because of the socioeconomic injustices brought about by a highly privatized, monopolized biotechnological agriculture industry, it has become increasingly important to look at issues of food sovereignty, protection of traditional livelihoods and the alternative benefits

of strong and thorough agroecological programs in dealing with the climatic and economic stresses being placed on the agricultural industry of many Global South countries. It is worth noting that, Zimbabwe is currently home to one of the offices of Via Campesina, one of the largest food sovereignty organizations in the world (Rosset, 2013). Also, conservation agriculture has been consistently trialed in Zimbabwe for many years. In one of the biggest of these projects, the International Crop Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) conducted a project that evaluated the response of 232 households in 12 districts to the newly introduced agricultural practices (Mazvimavi & Twomlow, 2009). Mazvimavi & Twomlow (2009) show that the introduction of the ICRISAT-promoted practices resulted in a significant increase of the average yield data per household in all the areas where the study was conducted. Much more, the yield increases placed many households in better positions to access more advanced agricultural technology and so continue to increase the efficiency of their farming projects.

Considering the acclaimed detrimental effect of the HIV/AIDS crisis in Zimbabwe, it is also noteworthy that the ICRISAT study found that HIV/AIDS status was not a significant factor in predicting the adoption or success of CA practices.

Contrastingly, the study found that institutional support and agroecological location did have a deciding influence on the rate of adoption and success of CA practices in some areas (Mazvimavi & Twomlow, 2009). This suggests that efforts need to be tailored to meet the socio-political and agroecological demands of each area. Still, Mazvimavi & Twomlow (2009) present an image of the viability of implementing an agroecological project in

Zimbabwe. Moreover, they demonstrate the opportunities to use this kind of project to pivot toward addressing other social aspects of development and socio-economic mobility.

Nonetheless, neither biotechnology nor agroecology have been recognized by the government enough to put in place a robust program to research or implement either. It is of great importance that the government establish and direct the agricultural development and research of the country and commit to that agenda.

Although, it is not necessary that a strategy prioritizing agricultural research be exclusive to agroecology or biotechnological developments, it is necessary to consider the social and economic benefits of each philosophy and practice, and for each crop. Understanding that Europe is unlikely to accept GM crops, investing in agroecological or alternative intensification strategies would bode better for Europe bound trade related crops.

Alternatively, with reference to subsistence farming and a drought crisis, biotechnology may be a worthwhile consideration for crops that are essential to the socioeconomic wellbeing and health of rural smallholders.

## CHAPTER 4

### DISCUSSION:

### What Does This Mean for the Future?

In a markedly fast paced technological and economic generation, so much of the variables that these explorations through precolonial, colonial and post-colonial agricultural dynamics have exposed are now subject to an ever-changing global atmosphere. As such, the development conundrums of today are ever more complex and further, they are new. They are not the same as those that might have existed immediately after the first world war when many of the main international development organizations first came about (IMF, World Bank) and faced a much simpler economic system without the impact of the 'Tech Revolution'. Due to the record-breaking changes that the global society has seen in technology, policy, international economics, despite just being intricate, as agriculture and development has always been, the development issues of today are also fresh faced; The issues of development wracking many emerging economies today are themselves, intricate and original to match the interconnected and innovative new dynamics of global interaction and growth.

With the complicated, compounding history of many different cultural trajectories intertwined, Zimbabwe's agriculture and development questions are no exception. In fact, this history showcases the peculiarities of Zimbabwe's situation and the many ways in which it stands out from the development stories of other countries. Although colonialism

is an experience shared by many countries around the world, and almost all countries in Africa, the unique factors of the Zimbabwean precolonial culture and civilization, the emphases of the Rhodesian government and the unique political and economic dynamics and degradation of trade relationships with the 'West' that paint part of Zimbabwe's postcolonial story place it on untread ground.

It is for this reason that we have undergone this study, to illuminate the indigenous nuances of Zimbabwe's agriculture and development dynamics that may frequently be overlooked and hence render many development initiatives minimally or partially successful. Some key areas that have been highlighted from the study of these 3 time periods include market development, diversification of crops, land, agriculture and macroeconomic policy as well as overall agricultural productivity. Each of these will be further discussed here, firstly, considering the trends and patterns brought to the fore by this study and secondly, with attention to how these findings can inform solutions or perspectives that can give greater momentum and direction to our national agriculture and development strategy.

## **DIVERSIFICATION OF CROPS**

There was a marked decline in the diversity of crops grown as we progressed from the poly cultures of the precolonial period to the large monocultures of the colonial period. In this context, monocropping, at its core, was a project that served and favoured the colonial government but did little for the local community that had survived many decades on

diverse cropping systems. In today's Zimbabwe, this monocultural system still fails to serve the local people. Today, a diversification of crops is paramount to building a nutritious food system and is a key element of addressing rural quality of life in terms of health and malnutrition (Bezner-Kerr R., *Gender and Agrarian Inequality at the Local Level*, 2011). A key area of concern is the maize-dominated diet of many modern Zimbabweans. Although a strong cultural preference has developed around the maize plant, this affiliation is hardly a century old as the key crops of the Zimbabwean diet prior to colonization were millet and sorghum. These grains grew well in all conditions and consisted mainly of indigenous varieties that enhanced their ecological fitness (Bezner-Kerr R., *Gender and Agrarian Inequality at the Local Level*, 2011). Looking into the increasingly climate challenged future, crops that are indigenous have demonstrated increased drought tolerance compared to maize, thus have greater food security potential in unpredictable rains and extreme weather. Maize need not be entirely replaced by sorghum and millet, which would be very difficult in practice and not altogether beneficial given that there are certain areas and now varieties of maize that do well in the country. However, it would be wise to diversify our grains and invest in research on genetic and management improvements for indigenous grains. Polycultures have been well known buffers of unexpected food insecurity and carefully reintroducing such cropping systems to at-risk areas may serve to provide agroecologically sound, accessible options for advancing self-sufficiency and security (Mlambo, 2014). Looking at our short list of main crops grown in Zimbabwe, it is very important to recognize and address the deep colonial explanations for their

prevalence and sincerely evaluate their service to our economic growth. Renewed diversification of crops in modern Zimbabwe can be understood to be ecologically feasible for the fact that it was only during the 90-year reign of colonialism that, to serve the profit driven agenda of the colonial government, the structure, governance and main cropping systems of agriculture in Zimbabwe assumed their present form. This short list and profit-oriented structure was a drastic change from the agricultural systems that existed before and that were oriented towards food security and nutritious value. Maize, the pillar of our agricultural industry, is also the main cash crop, staple or export of countries in most major regions of the world (Crop Trust, 2018). Although a maize-heavy agricultural agenda might have served the colonial government well at that time, today the market is very competitive and exclusive. Amid Zimbabwe's many post-colonial trials and as described in the discussions of the green revolution, innovation and research surrounding corn is plentiful and robust all around the world, leaving Zimbabwe very far behind.

Diversifying our cropping system, albeit a large, intense, lengthy task, is not only important to food security, nutrition and climate change adaptability, but it will be one of the integral steps towards removing the precarity and vulnerability that defines the present economic system. Strong productivity in a diversity of agricultural produce has been the primary element in the success of many high agriculture exporting African countries including Uganda, Kenya and Ghana (Nyamakye, 2016). Emphasis on horticulture, a much less concentrated global market with great export potential to Europe, has strongly supported the agricultural industries of these mentioned countries.

## MARKET DEVELOPMENT AND POLICY

Market-oriented diversification of Zimbabwean agriculture in today's trade driven global economy will be key to reducing the vulnerability associated with dependence on a singular crop for both economic growth and food security. Developing a domestic market will necessitate strengthening the production of a diversity of crops to reduce importation. One of the most necessary, yet difficult prerequisites for national economic development is the establishment and implementation of sound, evidence-based government policy. Examples can be found across Africa. Rwanda's 'strong policy frameworks' and 'implementation of macroeconomic programming' has garnered the praise of the World Bank and the IMF and resonates in the average 7% GDP growth per annum that Rwanda has enjoyed since 2010 (Ministry of Trade and Industry, Rwanda, 2017). To provide small holder farmers with access to large local markets and to provide markets with reliable supply of safe, local produce, the Ghanaian government has launched a suite of initiatives including the Ghana Peri-Urban Vegetable Value Chain Project, for which I interned as a project management assistant in its early stages (World Bank, 2016). This project links small holder farmers to aggregators and entrepreneurs who feed local markets. All steps of the value chain received some form of training, support and incentive from the government. These kinds of projects support local industries and agricultural livelihoods such that the entrenched bias against locally produced goods is discredited enhancing the market for local industries. Policies that protect the domestic market are unnegotiable for a developing nation seeking to enter the next stage of its development and be a major

emerging economy as Zimbabwe once was. An example of leveraging regional relationships includes the fact that where some countries such as Botswana that have required the major South African Bank, FNB (First National Bank) to offer a certain percentage of shares to local citizens in exchange for doing business in the country. Zimbabwe has not consequentially or consistently enforced such or similar policies on foreign entities seeking to do business within the country (Ndulo, 2018). In other examples, the laws in Angola require foreign construction companies to hire a certain percentage of their labour locally and elucidates acceptable work conditions (Ndulo, 2018). The international business and international economic policies in many African countries, including Zimbabwe, are lacking this kind of finesse. It is time for Zimbabwe to enhance its trade leverage in a way that maximizes regional relationships that advance domestic growth.

This is not easy nor new to Zimbabwe, but it will have to be reoriented and innovative to fit the current global economic environment. Policy and policy makers will need to be reliable and business savvy in a way that many strong African emerging economies have boasted of in the last few years. Investment policy will need to be transparent for the sake of minimizing corruption and ensuring sustained national development. With increased investment pouring into Africa from the Middle East and East Asia, opportunities for infrastructural growth and beneficial trade networks are emerging but require African governments to do their part and insist on terms that also protect the African citizens and promote high impact investment. There is no mistaking

that China and other major trade partners have significant leverage in their business relationships with Zimbabwe. Still, there are many resources in Africa of great interest to global trading partners and potential investors. Recognizing this and promoting some regional coordination will further justify domestic growth-oriented terms in large international business negotiations. It has been done by many countries and with transparent, reliable government officials and strong policy, Zimbabwe is well placed and well-resourced to benefit from international investments.

This will also aid in developing strong export markets. The tobacco industry in Zimbabwe is a remnant of the colonial system that may now hold potential for economic growth. The current production contributes 3.5% to global exports of tobacco and outcompetes countries such as Uganda, Zambia and Mozambique. It runs closely behind Tanzania (3.8%), Malawi (5.0%), and not too far behind the U.S. (9%) (OEC, 2018). The reinvigoration of this industry matched with strong new, well negotiated relationships with key tobacco importers in China, Belgium and Eastern Europe can bolster the economy. This export market fell away when Zimbabwe-West trade relationships became tense, but as the country reestablishes itself the large and preponderant tobacco growing areas in the country, along with the ideal ecological conditions (warm climate, well-drained soil) for tobacco production provides an untapped advantage.

## RESEARCH AND POLICY

Tapping into our agricultural and trade advantages will require research and strong policy. There are a range of policies, programs and government initiatives that need to be on the government's radar to bolster the agricultural industry and support such things as the growth of tobacco production and export. Key among them is research. Innovation, science, research and tailoring highly productive initiatives to the local environment have become the arsenal of agricultural growth in nations around the world. To grow the industry, it will be necessary to invest reasonably in modernization and agricultural science. In the global conversation regarding the rewards of bioengineering and/versus agroecology, the best route can only be determined by research tailored to the Zimbabwean economy, ecology and specific challenges and choices related to the overall development of the nation. There are no simple answers to these questions, and it is paramount to a deep and sustainable indigenization of our development efforts for us to come up with the answers ourselves. Much knowledge and experience is held by countries in the West, and even in our region of the world, and working with these experts will be key to understanding some innovations, to localize, dismiss or further develop them. Looking forward and being in control of our own development, will require developing and supporting local expertise. Private and government investment in research focusing on agriculture will allow for the innovation catch-up that is essential to sustainably reentering and thriving in the today's competitive agricultural environment.

This research must evaluate the potential socioeconomic impact of agricultural biotechnology. Many regions of the world have made up their minds on these topics but only some have done so while encouraging their own national research institutions to investigate them. There are countless examples of bioengineering supporting developing nations and providing unimaginable opportunities for community and national level growth. There is also a great deal of uncertainty and skepticism surrounding these technologies and many counter propositions of contexts in which agroecological methods out produced more conventional agriculture methods. Localized research will aid the nation in investing in these methods where they fit and will best contribute to the high agricultural productivity and quality goals that must be set for agriculture to efficiently address food insecurity and establish a strong foothold in export.

This kind of research will require the strengthening of relationships between Zimbabwean scholars and researchers, and global and regional experts in agriculture and development. Although Zimbabwe has always boasted one of the highest literacy rates in Africa (ranging from 90-99% and presently 95% for women and 91% overall), and high levels of secondary and tertiary education attainment (73% for women and 85% overall), infrastructure and private or public sector investment in research can ensure that Zimbabwe's competitive advantage in education yields meaningful, sustainable development (USAID Statcompiler, 2015). Many tertiary educated Zimbabweans seek employment abroad contributing to the much-documented brain drain; these are the very individuals with the expertise to strategize and localize development efforts and

incentives. Incentives are needed to encourage this highly skilled demographic to use their expertise to do research for the country.

## **SUMMARY**

By heeding the insights of Zimbabwe's agricultural history, pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial, we can better identify of the most deep-seated issues in contemporary agriculture and food security. Inextricably intertwined among these complex issues are policy and resource allocation decisions and opportunities with potential for advancing national development. Where the colonial period was an indelible scar on the Zimbabwean story, there are lessons and pivots for progress over, beyond and through it.

## CHAPTER 5

### BEYOND AGRICULTURE:

# The Incompatibility of the Indigenous Zimbabwean Ethos and the Colonial Governmental System

A Call to Acknowledge and Re-evaluate How Philosophy Interacts with Systems

Globalization has brought us to a time where living multiculturally is increasingly a staple of life in most places. It is the norm to have systems and societies that serve many groups of people and belief systems. However, this is not to say that those systems are designed with multiculturalism in mind. In fact, in most cases, a dominant and often Anglo or European culture manifest the systems that we abide by. The political systems, educational systems, agricultural systems familial norms and staple lifestyles such as being a father, working '9-5' during the week and watching sports with friends at a bar over the weekend. On the surface, this all seems so normal. We never stop to consider that these various systems are not in fact natural, not for everyone. That a long and deep history of drinking among men on travel trips, of women not being allowed to enter bars in Europe until the 20th century, of 'pubs' being a core community space in Britain for centuries, all contributes to the bar-going culture of the United States. Recognizing the cultural and historical trajectory of this norm helps to see that this is not 'natural' for those who do not share that history or cultural background. Likewise with many other systems, the thinking,

philosophy, ethics and decision-making principles that characterize our government and social systems reveal a cultural and historical basis. When they are supplanted and erected in places, for people who do not share that cultural background, we are essentially forcing the product of one culture's thought processes onto another culture and assuming perfect fit. With the help of insights from Keith Basso's brilliant, *Wisdom Sits in Places*, and Wolfe's *Settler Colonialism*, this chapter describes the damage and incongruity that even structural systems effect on colonized group, particularly Zimbabweans.

The economic truths of the situation in Zimbabwe feel thoroughly incongruous with the intangible riches of the country. A casual stroll through the busy streets of the "Sunshine City", Harare, brings one to the realization that there is a divide: there is something that is not being translated from the bottom up, a missing medium to communicate the hardworking, altruistic, interdependent spirit of the people into tangible wealth and economic growth. This medium is typically the government as it is traditionally and commonly understood as a means of channeling the needs of the people into greater social and political change. In this chapter I argue that the missing link between the ethos of the people and the state of the nation is a supportive political infrastructure and political model. Zimbabwe's current model fails to constructively account for the 'colonial vs precolonial systems' issues described in previous chapters.

"In Africa, the encounters of the past are very much part of the present. Africa still faces the problems of building networks and institutions capable of permitting wide dialogue and common action among people with diverse pasts, of struggling against and engaging

with the structures of power in the world today” – This is the final line of historian Frederick Cooper’s compelling article *Conflict and Connection: Rethinking colonial African history* which features in the anthology of writings titled *The Decolonization Reader*. Cooper ends his article, having described the way African countries were left with this issue of finding the ideal structures for governance, where this chapter begins. Cooper predicted 2 dilemmas: 1) finding political institutions capable of unifying the people into pursuing a common goal; and 2) citizens contradicting themselves by using the very structures that were used to oppress them, to govern themselves freely. Structures are packed with intention, with a worldview and a concept of ourselves in relation to the rest of the world. This is particularly the case for agricultural systems that are notoriously linked to how and where civilizations and their sociological systems develop. The governmental systems erected by the British manifested their goals and perceptions of how humanity worked in relation to the environment and to the different manifestations of itself. We know that the Shona had their own worldview and imaginings of their relationship to the environment that governed the civilizations that existed before colonialism. Keith Basso demonstrates this further when he describes how the changing landscapes, drying rivers and springs, affected how Indigenous Indians/Native Americans understood themselves and organized their societies in response (Basso, 1996). The connection between these things, between ethos and worldview and social organization is integral to the success of that organization and those systems., A community’s understanding, emotional investment and predisposed trust in its systems are borne of its understanding the world.

It is all but shameful the way it is passively recognized that many African countries, Zimbabwe included, continue to attempt to fit their cultural and social dynamics into the political infrastructure of their colonizers. Paying specific attention to Cecil John Rhodes, this premier colonialist colonized most of Southern Africa and was involved in some way in the setup of almost every British colony in Africa (Cohen, 2011). To argue that Rhodes encountered a vastly different culture from his own when he came into Mashonaland (the region in Africa where the primary tribe in Zimbabwe lived before the area became known as Zimbabwe) in the early 1900's is to state the obvious, yet the implicit tensions created by governing that African culture with British political paradigms does not seem to highlight as distinctive an incongruity.

If one describes the way the British colonialist, took over power from the Shona and Ndebele tribes living in modern-day Harare, eventually breaking ties with the British Empire in 1923 in a bid to claim Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) as a land belonging to its star imperialist namesake, Cecil Rhodes, and establish an independent Rhodesian government, a modern audience would detect the injustice and the portentous clash of interests instinctively (Cohen, 2011). The present-day situation digresses from it's past in that Zimbabwe has been renamed, liberated and for practical purposes has been re-gained by its indigenous peoples. However, the political structures remain the same - an inconsistent blemish that, contrary to conventional rhetoric, is of greater significance to the economic and social success of the nation than is immediately perceived by those of us who live in, have lived in or are connected to the country. Demonstratively, Wolfe describes how the

evolution from genocide to the socio-political mechanisms of creating a nation state were no less damaging and far more insidious. Describing the Australian settler colonial process, he writes, "The threat that Aborigines pose to the nation state was not primarily physical (at this point in time). Rather, Aborigines signified a differently grounded rival memory which contradicted the national narrative upon which a homogenous citizenship was predicated (Wolfe, 1999)."

The political infrastructure that I have referenced so far specifically addresses the assignment of the following structure –

- ☐ Governmental departments,
- ☐ The means for settling political disputes and creating political stability,
- ☐ The checks and balances system,
- ☐ The hierarchy of the government,
- ☐ The principles of the government,
- ☐ The limits of government power and the parliamentary system;

-all tenets of the governmental system that were decided upon by the colonial government.

On the other side, we evaluate the communal and family philosophy and practices held at the heart of the Zimbabwean indigenous culture. The idea behind this study is to draw parallels between political structure, social organization and socio-economic instability that individuals that have some prior familiarity with Zimbabwe, may not have considered. This dynamic has contributed to the economic failure and social instability within Zimbabwe and this chapter attempts to set up potential answers to the questions of 'who does this affect?' and 'what alternatives exist?'

**Outline.** To demonstrate how Zimbabwe's political model has a significant hand in the economic and political instability of the state I intend to explore the various ways that the political setup is incompatible for the social dynamics and mindset of the people, whilst pulling on examples of other nations that positively or negatively exhibit a strong correlation between indigenous mindset, political infrastructure and economic success or failure. We want to compare the belief system implicit in the political model to that that is ingrained in the majority of the common people. We also want to illustrate how this incompatibility between political model and nature of much of the indigenous people creates a tension that culminates in political and economic distress and is closely connected to Zimbabwe having been a settler colony, as we will evaluate through Wolfe's analysis of the settler colonial mechanisms (Wolfe, 1999). To prove this point, I compare firstly the traditional values of the country, to the facets of the political morphology where one can see a manifestation of the mindset behind them, in order to highlight their

differences. Furthermore, I call on the experiences of Zimbabwean lawyers and politicians and look at the issue through the perspectives of economists, political scientists, city dwellers and the communities in the rural areas. I determine the traditional values to be evaluated, by selecting the most prominent traditions that I encountered in the 19 years of my life when Zimbabwe was the only country I had ever lived in, having been born and raised there. These are 1) pyramid structure leadership, 2) interdependence and 3) traditional religion. All 3 of these are included among Oyekan Owomoyela's " 8 major aspects of the culture and customs of Zimbabwe" to which he devotes a chapter each in his book, *Culture and Customs of Zimbabwe*. This book is part of a larger series on the 'Culture and Customs of Africa' in which he details the current use of these customs in Zimbabwe.

The criteria for proving the worth of this argument and the specific fact that Zimbabwe would encounter greater economic success if it had a more indigenized governmental framework, will be establishing the ways in which the current government has failed to meet the needs of the nation, has disconnected social organization from Basso's construction of 'wisdom in place', and the ways in which an indigenous governmental structure would not make this same mistake (Basso, 1996). Rather, an indigenous governmental structure would sate the literal and metaphorical appetite of the country and fill the authority vacuum that currently exists.

#### TRADITIONAL VALUES

Zimbabwe has not yet configured its governmental blueprint to the traditional values of the people. Where it is expected, for example, that a nation that espouses principles of

liberty at its core may demonstrate its commitment in through its processes for the selection of district leaders (federally selected vs. elected by the people)., In Zimbabwe, the Colonial British system has by and large been accepted arbitrarily. This is concerning because, as long-time authors and scholars of African issues, Donald and April Gordon reiterate in their book '*Understanding Contemporary Africa*', deeply ingrained in the social fabric of Zimbabwe is the veneration of traditional values and religion. In all aspects of life, from business to grocery shopping, traditional social customs are expected and practiced and yet such values are not at all reflected in our political structure.

The Constitution writing process that occurred in 2013 and 1997 allowed for the inclusion of laws that respected the traditional customs and beliefs but no change to the way the government is organized, the architecture of the governmental system, has ever been attempted on a large scale. This translates to the investment of politicians, funds and attention to departments of government ultimately assigned and chosen by British colonialists that had incredibly specious and malignant motives, at least from the view of those that they colonized. In fact, the settler colonial government aim included cultural subjugation and is only further inappropriate for the fact that the structure uses a centralized governmental design for the sake of maximizing British power and creating communication lines that facilitated dominance and easy management of both the native people and resource extraction (Wolfe, 1999). Ultimately, the governmental departments that have been created reflect sectors of government that albeit primarily logically important exclude the elements that are viewed as important by the indigenous people,

for example the burial of kin. Prior to colonization, described in Owomoyela's introduction to pre-colonization culture, the traditional leadership involved a high status *sangoma*, who was considered as nearly omnipotent and whose role included guarding and ruling over all matters pertaining to death. There is no such national societal function reflected in today's governmental structure. There is no national document nor official response to this pertinent issue. Instead, this practice that so dearly reflects a deep and singular approach to death and is imbedded within the present Shona culture has been relegated to the responsibility of each individual family to maintain, isolating the importance of death and the dead from the other matters of the contemporary state. Upon my father's death in 2013, the reality of the issues aroused by the discretionary way the traditional funeral practices that are to be followed are selected, became painfully personal. Although, amongst those attending the dare, traditional meeting of the family/totemic council of elders (Owomoyela, 2002) were top political figures and penultimate national leaders, the customs that were selected were based on oral tradition and as a result took 14 days to confirm, prolonging the funeral and delaying the burial. This process could have benefitted greatly from written instruction and laws incorporated in the legislature. As death is a very emotional process with the ability to unify, the government's involvement in this process, as a symbol of understanding the needs of its people and seeking to serve them in their most pain-stricken moments, could result in overwhelming feelings of patriotism. After all, the role of the chief in modern day Zimbabwe is almost exclusively to make the decisions

pertaining to death and as a result he enjoys the deep respect of his village, making more relevant a contribution to their lives than many formal laws and policies.

In this way, we see that the exclusion of these values from political structure is a departure from the concept of politics as a platform that protects the ideals of the community.

Conversely, the values and main considerations of the politics is inherently contradictory to that of the community and even the personal lives of the men that hold political positions.

This channels the energy of our leaders into departments that exclude the values of the people and any appreciation of how Shona people themselves had structured leadership before the colonization.

A clarification must be made at this point that I am not addressing the issue of the morality of the politicians themselves or the deviation from justice that is primarily the focus of customary political criticism, but the one-dimensional architecture of the politics; the design of the governing mechanism itself. To be sure, this mechanism came from decades of thinking and revising within the United Kingdom and its tenets were devised upon the direct and indirect influence of the commerce, lifestyle and behavior of the British people.

In the same way that the original organization of leadership within the Shona culture reflected the elements of leadership that had proved tried and true over the decades as well the societal values that were appreciated such as the prerequisites of leadership that required one to have been wounded in war before instatement, to have respect for women and be a pleasing model citizen to the gods. In a fundamentally similar fashion, the British political system was structured with British psychology and British culture in mind. The

ideas that gave impetus to its arrangement can be traced to events in commerce, mindset and behavior of British people such as the agricultural revolution of the 1650's, the industrial revolution of the 1850's and the various social/artistic movements that spanned the centuries leading up to the colonization such as the reformation, the enlightenment and the age of revolution -- events that were relevant to the large Western economies and often exclusively pertinent to the United Kingdom. Therefore, to forcibly transplant that political system and use it indiscriminately to govern a people so far removed from the demographics, values and social norms from which the system developed is unjust.

**Traditional Values.** On the topic of the elements that are the most fundamental to Shona culture is the intractable nature of collectivism and interdependence that cannot be fully expressed (Gordon, 2013). Although very powerful, it is an intangible facet of people's everyday lives. As such, it is nearly indescribable and indiscernible. Finding tangible manifestations of these values in the structure and processes of formal contemporary government is difficult at best.

The idea of capitalism depends on the will of individuals to work for themselves and a significantly individualist mindset that is not only largely absent in Shona culture but strongly discouraged (Owomoyela, 2002). Furthermore, the importance of material gain is a contributing factor of the Shona mindset but is neither high ranking or evaluated as practical. There is a stark philosophical difference between the western culture that gave rise to the British form of government and that of the Shona people. The conversation is different, the pace of life, the attitudes towards life, are different.

This kind of stark philosophical dynamic plays out in many settler colonies including, for example, the conflicts between the Indigenous Indian/Native American people and the British-Americans, and between the Aboriginal people of Australia and the British. It is an age-old dilemma and one that showcases just how many cultures are starkly and successfully different from the West and yet the Western philosophical systems are considered somehow universal and appropriate for all places. Just this frame of thinking reflects some major differences – one of the primary premises of Basso's *Wisdom in Places*. The integrity, holism, environmentalism, physical and psycho-emotional health of relating one's society with the environment, of having place, history of place and relationship with place play a meaningful role in a community's worldview and perspective (Basso, 1996). A philosophical premise mimicked in many pre-colonial civilizations, it establishes itself as a predicate for the development of the political systems that govern that community and can be cognizant of the unique ways of life that community abides by.

The great majority of the governmental departments in Zimbabwe are focused on economic advancement and/or other tangible industries and practical functions such as the Ministry of Mines or the Ministry of Finance. All of these are necessary and beneficial to the people, but there is little emphasis or organizational structure oriented towards the psychological, cultural or emotional customs of society. In an ideal situation, as in the previous native Kingdoms that existed pre-colonization that Owomoyela describes, the branches of government are discerned according to the most integral and widespread customs of the people ensuring that there is authority and guidance in respect to these

customs. Structuring one's government this way means allowing for the government to have a sensitive understanding and tight-knit engagement with the everyday activities of the everyday man. This is lacking in the nation currently as the branches of government that are in place instead reflect the needs of the British community that birthed it. The kinds of departments that the government includes reflects a sensitivity to the social customs of a western civilization in the 18th or 19th century, as well as the focus on the economic aspect of the nation that became the great focus of the British Empire following the industrial Revolution of the 1850's. It does not, however reflect the beliefs that the indigenous peoples of Zimbabwe find indispensable or the requirements of nation at the beginning of its economic climb and not at its peak.

### **THE AGENDA OF THE GOVERNMENTAL STRUCTURE**

Having established that there are several discrepancies in the nature of the government as compared to the nature of the people, a subsequent question may be 'Why? Why are they so different?' The response to this question is in the form of another question; a question that every Zimbabwean ought to ask themselves when they drive by the Parliamentary House along 4th Street – 'What was the agenda of our original governmental structure? Who did it serve?' Wolfe's *Settler Colonialism* thoroughly evaluates this aspect of the establishment of the colonial governmental system and details the intentional cultural fracture that colonial authoritative systems were designed to effect (Wolfe, 1999). In a comprehensive dissection of its branches and policies, Helen Taft Manning's *British*

*Colonial Government After the American Revolution*, answers this question repeatedly, explicitly stating at one point that 'the government was set up to optimally extract natural resources from its colonies.' Furthermore, she devotes an entire chapter of her book detailing the nature of the colonial government in South Africa, a neighbouring country to Zimbabwe that was also ultimately ruled by Cecil John Rhodes. In this she lays out the way the branches of government and its form were designed to secure 'The Cape' alluding to the advantageous ports that expose South Africa both to the Indian and Atlantic Ocean. It is clear in her book, which involves a description of several colonial governments including Mauritius and Ceylon, that economic advantage was at the heart of the development of the governmental anatomy. Agreeing with this view is an article published by the Saylor Foundation titled 'An Overview of Politics in the Post-Colonial Era' that elaborates on this idea of the importance of the colonial agenda in structuring governments: Specifically, colonial administrative systems were not based on democratic foundations. Governance followed a 'from the top down' approach that was largely arbitrary and not geared towards the wellbeing of the governed. The purpose of colonial government was to control the population and ensure the continuous exploitation of natural resources for the benefit of the European colonizing powers. This purpose was met with authoritarian rule and bolstered by strong police and military forces. Power rested with the colonial authorities who maintained their authoritarian status with force; consequently, political legitimacy was attached to the unequivocal control of force. This system of authoritarian rule, then, is the political system with which most African leaders were familiar. Colonialism implanted

the notion that authoritarianism is an appropriate mode of political rule, and that force is an acceptable instrument of that rule.

This aptly addresses both the integral contrast between the purpose with which the current governmental structures were made before as opposed to what they are being used for, and the way this has impacted the success of African leaders that arbitrarily adopted these administrative systems. The quintessential example of what the above excerpt details can be found in the case of Idi Amin Dada – the former ruler of Uganda, whose military dictatorship was what some would argue as the result of the application of ‘alien structures hastily superimposed over the deeply ingrained political legacies of imperial rule (Saylor Foundation, 2004)’ in the handover from British colonialist to indigenous rule. It is clear from here that the thought process put into structuring a political system whose loyalty

was to the queen and whose agenda was economic extortion, would not be the same thought process that we can imagine would emanate from a love of the people the government is meant to govern, an effective model of democratic governance, and/or a desire to see those people live comfortably and healthily. To be sure, I do not assume that a corrupt government would never have emerged from the indigenous people had they been allowed to run it themselves from the start, but it is not the people that I am critiquing. I am neither demonizing the actual colonizers of Zimbabwe, nor am I whitewashing the indigenous people. My focus is on the inanimate and yet influential architecture of the political system and how, in the same manner that a blacksmith creates

a tool with its function in mind, our political system was tailored to the agenda of the British expatriates and colonialists. Now in our hands, it needs to be restructured and retailored to suit the needs of the indigenous people.

Looking at Zimbabwe specifically, evidence can be found for the agenda of the original introduction of the colonial government in a document retained from former Rhodesian (colonialist Zimbabwe) Prime Minister Ian Smith's correspondence with superstar imperialist Cecil John Rhodes, claiming that the British invaders were 'going into uncharted country...no man's land' inhabited by 'barbarous tribes in picturesque but irrelevant corners of the globe.' In the rest of this correspondence, of which a copy can be found in Alois Mlambo's *a History of Zimbabwe* goes on to imply that a colonial government was necessary in the Zimbabwean region as the people of the region had no leadership or government of their own. As Mlambo argues, this is almost unanimously understood to be false on account of the several kingdoms that did and had existed in the area with Mlambo asserting 'Zimbabwe was for long the home of several polities and civilizations...in addition, in the middle of the 19th century the Nguni (a Southern African Bantu tribe) entered the area, developing with them, a new political organization.' This presents a glimpse at the attitude of the colonialists as they entered the country and clearly demonstrates a stark disregard for the wellbeing of the communities that lived in the area. Consequently, it follows that a government set up by these same individuals, Ian Smith being an integral piece of the machinery that modified and headed the colonialist

government, would not optimally serve a people that it was originally constructed in disregard of.

And this remains the dynamic today. Some 60 plus years since the installment of the colonialist government and 41 years since it was passed into the hands of the indigenous people, the country continues to struggle for breath within the confines of the colonialist structure designed to stifle it. Even though the agenda of the leaders themselves have changed, the infrastructure of the system has not.

### **THE POLITICAL SCIENTIST'S VIEW**

A hackneyed metaphor for the political system of a country is to imagine it as a piece of machinery; a methodical device with the 3 cardinal stages of a system – inputs, processes and outputs. Returning to that introductory befuddlement of the ways in which it is apparent to us as we walk the streets of Zimbabwe, that there is a missing medium to communicate the hardworking, altruistic, interdependent spirit of the people into tangible wealth and economic growth, we can find the diagnosis to this issue by looking at it as a system; imagining the will, the mind, the desires of the people as the ultimate input, and realizing that the process, which is the government and governmental structure is what distorts that input and culminates in an unsatisfactory output, in terms of policies, laws, and economic, social and political change.

In the political scientist, Mark Burton's *'Economy and Planet: A Blind Spot for Community Psychology,'* he ominously outlines the way separating community psychology from economy and politics leads to calamity in both. He expresses what I believe would be some of the main benefits of redesigning the political system by outlining the 'Contributions of Community Psychology' when they are included in the political philosophy and arrangements -

- Contribution to the understanding of the institutional, ideological and social-psychological barriers to making fundamental changes to the economic system.
- Contribution to understanding the impacts of economic and ecological injustice on those most affected.
- Assistance to activists and social movements fighting for economic and ecological justice. –

In this way, Burton identifies the way political science recognizes the necessity of an appreciation of the traditional mindset of a people in political architecture to create a symbiotic relationship in which the government serves the people, and the people are more likely to aid the government. Ultimately, a country cannot move without the backing of its people. It cannot move towards political or economic improvement without the everyday citizens of that country moving their feet in that same direction. Rome, arguably one of the most politicized states in documented history, is consistently understood to have been as successful as it was on account of a philosophy aptly summed up in the

phrase 'The mob is Rome.' That is to say, the political leaders, the political agenda, cannot function without the endorsement of the everyday man. I argue that to garner this endorsement, we must offer the people a political system that does not confound them, one that is not arbitrary or two dimensional; instead, they must have a system that in its layout is analogous or cognate with the most stereotypical of their reasoning complexes.

### **THE ECONOMIST'S VIEW**

From the view of economics, a system that does not serve the people and therefore does not inspire or unify their efforts cannot inspire economic growth. When we look at countries such as Lebanon, we find that a strong, majority-backed government that is tailored to the people has given the economic efforts of the state a firm head and clear direction. If masses of Zimbabwean people, primarily those that are working class or are encountering great poverty, do not feel included or relevant to the government there cannot be a collective effort to build economic success. In support of this opinion is Arthur T. Hadley, a former president of one of the most distinguished Ivy League institutions, Yale University. In his book titled '*The Relation Between Economics and Politics*', which so aptly summarizes the core argument of this chapter, he states (to fellow economists), "If we fail in our influence upon public life we fail in what is the most important application of our studies (economics), and what may also be said to constitute their fundamental reason for

existence.” In this way, Hadley asserts the inextricable relationship between being able to reach and influence the common man (ideally through a political structure, I would argue) that he understands and identifies with, and the potential for economic success, such as is the goal of Zimbabwean political and social movements. The renowned political economist of African heritage, Samir Amin, offers supporting insights. Although acknowledging the benefits of capitalism for certain communities, Amir is a committed Marxist himself that emphasizes the role shedding a government’s capitalistic political overtones has in promoting economic growth. Amir might have spoken particularly of Zimbabwe, when he said, “Capitalism strangles growth in the developing world”. But it should not take quotations from economists that have worked in two post-colonial African governments, namely Senegal and Mali, as well as having worked in the government of the power that colonized them, France, to prove that a political structuring that does not identify with the masses of the people cannot inspire economic mobility. Logic would show us that if a people are not unified, patriotic and united behind a leader that encompasses the values that are relevant to their everyday life, it is difficult to reach a position where everyone is working together for the greater economic good of the country. Instead, with a redesign of the political anatomy, such that it mimics the leadership models we find in the native Zimbabwean community, we could inspire greater political support and therefore an audience with the people, which can be used to influence economic growth.

## DISCUSSION AND PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

At this juncture I endeavor to introduce the largest hurdle in this entire discussion, the biggest question, the most intimidating dilemma and the most daunting challenge - What can be done?

Some may still ask, what does this mean? Why does this matter? Who does this affect? It affects people like Constance; whose ability to be involved in politics and contribute in the design of her own life is currently limited by the disconnect between her life philosophy and that of the government. It means that she has not, does not and has no desire to vote for a system she does not understand. It means, that she would much rather call herself Shona rather than Zimbabwean, recognizing her tribal identity rather than her nationality because the one she understands and the other she does not. It means that we have at the crux of our nation, at the most essential influential stage of the factory line, from which all prosperity or despair develop, a contradiction tantamount to self-sabotage – our people, their lives, their collective philosophies, are unable to be expressed or targeted by our government as the framework to do so, the political blue print in place, is incompatible with the indigenous mentality.

It means that our efforts for political change, social change, economic change may be well intentioned but doomed unless we develop, first and foremost a governmental system with a combination of morphology and nuance that our culture is sensitive to.

Having been born and raised in Zimbabwe, I was there for the 2008 economic crash. I was amongst those that witnessed queues that stretched for the length of entire streets, consisting of hungry and hopeful individuals waiting to receive, after their 3-hour wait, a single 2kg bag of sugar. I have lived both lives, visiting my grandmother who refused to live in a modern household, thrice a year, I have become familiar with the rural areas. As my father worked arduously to achieve relative success, I have also seen the high life of Zimbabwe.

That economic divide is about as stark as the remarkable and pure sense of happiness and enjoyment that I only feel with my family in Guruve, our family's village imbedded deeply in the rural areas. But my experience is not unique, I know that there are many out there, Zimbabweans, who have witnessed the refreshing sensation that imbues any journey to the rural areas. But we tacitly accept this, attributing it to their remarkable ability to find contentment with life. We imagine that they do not want to be bothered, that we should leave them out because they are not interested in anything more than the life that they know. Here, I admit that there is a remarkable ability to find fulfillment and joy from other aspects of life in some of the most poor corners of the country. But where I disagree, is with an argument that insists there is nothing more that they desire. If, and there are exceptions to these cases, some people truly do not viscerally desire to acquire grand economic wealth, there is at least a desire to be a part of national level community. There is at least a desire that I have witnessed in my family and in my community, to be relevant to the governmental powers and the rules and policies that come about as a result.

## CONCLUSION

3 primary conclusions are drawn from this research.

- 1. We do not yet know the real potential of indigenization because we have not yet funded or prioritized this research enough. The research that exists presents interesting, unique and indisputably relevant discrepancies and cultural indicators that reveal large holes in the body of largely European-written African history that currently informs development theories. These holes must be studied and filled in the interest of both ethics and impact.*

One of the major barriers to indigenization and the integration of indigenous knowledge into our development systems is access to this information in the first place. A good deal of indigenous knowledge is captured in oral tradition or native vernaculars that are rarely accessed by the scientific and research publishing world of today. A whopping 80% of the research produced in academic journals around the globe are by academics based in western institutions. Of the remaining 20%, 5% is produced in institutions where English is the or one of the main languages. There is an incredible systemic bias against indigenous knowledge. In many countries, such as Zimbabwe, people are discouraged from speaking Shona at school and condemned for practicing native belief systems because of the strong Christian influence in the country. Capturing oral tradition and precolonial philosophies is incredibly difficult and this difficulty only goes to show just how much of this information we may be lacking in our contextual frameworks. To move development forward we will need to explicitly, intelligently and committedly engage in research on indigenous ethos

and practices. Based on the development efforts to date, we have assumed that well-being, progress and success are defined the same across cultures, but we know that values and goals vary across philosophies; this suggests that our development efforts may be inherently pushing philosophical tenets on recipient communities and contributing to cultural fragmentation, erosion and ultimate lack of wellbeing. It is of the utmost importance that as we move forward in development, that we define well-being contextually, empower local leadership animated by indigenous philosophy to carry out their role in the governance and cultural life of the community. It is only in working with communities on what they care for and value that we create sustainable and meaningful impact, and development moves further away from its neo-colonial implications to allyship.

2. *Pre-colonial agricultural practices offer an abundance of suggestions, information and solutions, especially regarding the increasing need for climate resilience techniques.*

By heeding the insights of centuries of agricultural knowledge and practice in the region that now comprises contemporary Zimbabwe, we are ensuring that a nuanced understanding of the compounded effects of agricultural history better informs our identification of the most deep-seated issues in agriculture development. Inextricably intertwined in the complexity of those issues we identify key resources and opportunities that will aid us in addressing the problems and moving forward. Where the colonial period

was an indelible scar on the Zimbabwean story, there are lessons and pivots for progress over, beyond and through it. Although many agricultural innovations and economic policies have facilitated exclusive and competitive markets, those changes, properly tapped into, present opportunity for Zimbabwe to once again claim its position as 'Breadbasket of Africa.'

3. *Indigenization efforts are multidimensional and require analysis and expectations at the philosophical and cultural level as well as the practical and tangible.*

Consequently, we have a responsibility as the generation that is aware of this discrepancy and in touch enough with both our traditional heritage and ability, handed down to us by our liberation fathers, to be the masters of our nation.

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