

THE EMPIRE OF MWENE MUTAPA¹

PHARES M. MUTIBWA*

The empire of Mwene Mutapa was not only a typically early Bantu-speaking kingdom in Central Africa but also, by all accounts, as one scholar has remarked, it was "the most extensive, the most stable and enduring Native State Southern Africa has ever known."² The empire endured from the first half of the fifteenth century until the last independent *Mambo* or *Rozwi* ruler died during the Mapondera Rising in 1902³. The empire of Mwene Mutapa was probably at its peak during the sixteenth century, but from about 1800 it was more in name than in reality. At its height, it was bound on the north by Zambezi River; on the west by the Kalahali Desert; on the east by the Mozambique Channel down to the Sabi estuary; while to the south it extended across Limpopo River into the Northern Transvaal. It was, therefore, by all reckoning an extremely big empire in the very heart of Central Africa. Its centre was originally at the Great Zimbabwe in the south, but it was later moved to the Dande area of the Zambezi Valley.

THE RISE OF MWENE MUTAPA

The people who founded the Empire of Mwene Mutapa were Bantu-speaking people known as Karanga or Shona. They arrived in this region around 1100 A.D., and they are believed to have come from the vicinity of Lake Tanganyika.⁴ It was they who built the Zimbabwe Ruins, those massive dry-stone walls which housed the rulers and many of the sacred objects and regalia of the confederacy of peoples governed by the Rozwis, particularly those of the empire of Mwene Mutapa. The most important and famous of the Zimbabwe Ruins—of which there are an estimated 150—is the Great Zimbabwe which is some 17 miles from the modern town of Fort Victoria and a few miles from the main road which links Salisbury with Johannesburg in South Africa. It was this great Zimbabwe, as we have already noted, which was the original capital or headquarters of the early Rozwi rulers of what later became the Empire of Mwene Mutapa.

Archaeological evidence indicates that before the arrival of these Shona people, the area was inhabited by subsistence mixed farmers. At that level of economic organisation, it is perhaps unlikely that such a society could have given rise to the political structure that later on flourished at Great Zimbabwe. But after the arrival of the Karanga people, who replaced or absorbed the earliest occupants of the site, a new development took place. It was mainly

*Phares M. Mutibwa, is Associate Professor in Makerere University, Kampala.

though the growth of their population that gave rise to this famous centre of culture which gave rise also to the foundation of the Empire of Mwene Mutapa.

Over a long period, through the mining of copper and gold in Rhodesia, the Karanga people developed a rich culture. In the pursuit of their ancestral cult, they established shrines in Rhodesia, "the principal one on a hill called Mhnwa." This they named *Dzimba dzembabwe* (Home of Stone) which became the centre of the people and the dwelling place of their principal Rozwi ruler.⁵ The leader then established his hegemony over the surrounding chiefs who then became his vassals. He started to demand tributes from them, and when the Arab traders on the east coast heard of his prestige they hurried to establish trading contacts with him.

The Shona people carried on trade with the Arab and Indian traders, through Sofala on the east coast. Zimbabwe was not, of course, a gold centre because it was not on a gold reef, and the gold works that have been dug near Victoria, where it is located, do not show any ancient working.⁶ Zimbabwe was, in fact, on the receiving end of the trade between the interior and the east coast. But the occupants of this great centre of culture at Zimbabwe were the controllers of trade in the region—at least during the early part of the fifteenth century. They received imports from outside, which included cloth, beads and glazed ceramics. In turn, they exported gold and ivory, both of which they obtained from the indigenous peoples living in the surrounding region. By the fourteenth century, Arab trade was already well established in Rhodesia. In fact, there is reason to believe that trade contacts between the coast and Rhodesia were established as early as 1000 A.D. "There should be little doubt then," it has been remarked, "that Zimbabwe's origin is due in some way to trade". Religion, of course, was important for the development of the political and social organisation at Zimbabwe and, therefore, for the rise of Mwene Mutapa; but Zimbabwe could not have developed "without the stimulus from the Arab gold trade",⁷ Trade stimulus is a well known mechanism for the formation of secondary states in Africa. At Zimbabwe the chief was the richest person, round whom a privileged social group gathered. This led to more population in the area for which there was a need for a more sophisticated political organisation. There was need, for instance, for officials to maintain law and order and for an army to defend the settlement. Naturally, being surrounded with plenty of superb building material in the form of granite, public projects of Stone Buildings began. The stone walls then became "a typical step in the formation of a state"; the walls, in fact, becoming a method "for organising an existing labour force".⁸ Once the Great Zimbabwe was completed, the prestige of the settlement soared; and its influence spread to other areas in Rhodesia where similar stone buildings, although of lesser quality, were constructed. With contacts having been established with the Arab traders on the east coast, the Rozwi ruler's prestige was enhanced. The Arabs, whose main interest was trade, were not slow to see the advantage of aligning themselves to this

rising star among the Rozwis and their assistance played an important role in the rise and consolidation of the Karanga nation at Zimbabwe. The ruler then extended his authority far and wide, moving southwards up to the Limpopo River and eastwards up to the Indian Ocean itself. Around this time, too, the Bechuanaland people were moving eastwards from the Kalahali Desert into the Karanga region, and to combat this threat, the Karanga drew closer together and thereby consolidated their new nation. Great Zimbabwe itself appears to have been at its peak between 1350 and 1450. But the Empire of Mwene Mutapa began to expand and really develop only during the sixteenth century.

The first Karanga leader to assume control of northern parts of what is now Rhodesia was a man of *Soko-Chirongo* (vervet) clan. He extended his control southwards adopting, as he did so, the title of "NeMbire" which he passed over to his descendants. He was assisted in this process by a certain Mutota Charuchamutupa, of the *Shava-Nkula* clan, who was in fact his son-in-law.⁹ Then, in about 1440, this Mutota Charuchamutupa, the new Rozwi King, launched a major campaign to extend his kingdom. By about 1450 Mutota had conquered the Dande in the north and most of the present-day Rhodesia. Because of his spectacular successes Mutota was given by his victims the praise name of *Mwene Mutapa* (or "master pillager"), which the Portugues ecorrupted into *Monomotapa*. From then on the empire which Mutota established became known as Mwene Mutapa or Monomotapa, Mutota's son, Mutope, continued his father's military campaigns during the next thirty years or so, and he was the one who really extended the Karangaland eastwards up to the Indian Ocean. Mutapa Mutope moved his headquarters or capital from the Great Zimbabwe (where Mutota, the first Mwene Mutapa, was probably the last occupant) to the northern parts of his domain, adjoining the Zambezi Valley.¹⁰

Thus by the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Empire of Mwene Mutapa had been established. It controlled, as we shall see later, the local and long-distance trades of the region. D. P. Abraham has had this to say about this Empire:

It is difficult to identify another Bantu state or association of states which can vie with the Empire of Mutapa for length of historical development, variety of ethnic origins and impacts and complexity of problems associated with the catalytic action of not one but two centuries of exotic provenance."¹¹

Now let us see why this empire acquired such glowing praise.

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ORGANISATION

Religion played an important role in strengthening the authority of the Mutapa, the Rozwi King of Mwene Mutapa Empire. The central point of the Karanga or Shona religion was the belief in the ancestral spirits. This ancestor

provided "a means of communication with a Supreme Being" who was the creator of the World and Man. The Shona supreme Being or deity was called Mwari who could only be reached through intermediaries. When a man died, his spirit lived and it could speak to the Creator on behalf of its living relatives left behind on earth. That was why the spirits of the dead were worshipped, for they represented the living to God. If a living person wanted to ask of the Creator a favour, he would pray to him through his ancestral spirit or *vadzimu*.¹²

The whole tribe too possessed ancestral spirits which were called *Mhondore*. It was through these spirits that a tribe could speak to Mwari in time of trouble such as famine or war. Because of the importance of the ancestral spirits—the only channel of communication with the Mwari—the Shona people had great respect for their ancestors. In the same way, the whole tribe too had great respect for the "tribal ancestors" and, above all, for the host or guardian of the tribes' *vadzimu*. The power of the Rozwi chiefs therefore was based "on the intermediary powers, on the control of the hosts of the powerful *mhondoro*, upon whose messages to Mwari depended the fortune of the community."¹³ Among the Karanga, the Mutapa, by divine nature of kingship, was "Lord of the Sun and the Moon, King of the Land and the Rivers and Conqueror of Enemies". He was the representative and custodian on the earth of the Mwari, and Mwari's natural resources could only be exploited with the approval of his representative, the Mutapa. Thus through religious beliefs, the Mutapa became the central point of the Karanga community's well-being. He could manipulate at will this ancestor worship in such a way as to strengthen his own position and that of the nation at large. The concentration of the temporal and spiritual powers in the hands of the Rozwi kings was the secret of their greatness which gave them an undisputed hegemony over other tribes in the region. So strong was the Mwari cult that even when the temporal powers of the Rozwi kings declined and subsequently fell, the ancestral cult itself remained strong. It in fact outlined the *Mambos* and played a big part in the Ndebele rebellion of 1896. It still lives up to this day.

In the empire of Mwene Mutapa, the king governed through a system of vassalage. This meant the division of the empire among several vassal-lords or *fumos* and other smaller chiefs. The *fumos* were appointed from Mutapa's relatives, advisers and favourites and they remained in office at his own pleasure. Later on, however, when the empire was extended to incorporate the Tonga and Tarawa people, some of the conquered chiefs were appointed by the Mutapa as *fumos*. These latter *fumos* held office through hereditary inheritance, although upon their succession they had to give the Mutapa tribute (*curva*) for their confirmation in office. Even in the case of the other *fumos*, some of them became so powerful that their offices became hereditary. This applies, for instance, to the present paramountcies in Mashonaland in Rhodesia of Mangwende, Mtoko and Makoni.¹⁴ The *fumos* received no salaries, but they were rewarded for their services through land grants, free services and other royal favours. The Mutapa relied on the *fumos* for the proper administration of the country.

They provided labourers for the Mutapa's projects—such as the building of the Great Stone Walls; they governed the territories he placed under their care; they collected tribute for the king; they supplied warriors in time of war; and, above all, they maintained law and order and administered justice on his behalf. The fumos attended the King's court or the *dzimbabwe* during state ceremonies and festivals, and many of them sent their sons to be apprenticed at the King's court at the *dzimbabwe*.¹⁵

The succession to the office of Mwene Mutapa was patrilineal, and in general it was the eldest son who succeeded his father. There were, however, many other factors which had to be taken into account in the appointment of a new King. Sometimes a junior son would be designated heir apparent by the dying Mutapa; and sometimes the Mutapa was chosen on the basis of a purification test. We are told that "physical disability or disease banned at least one major contender, Munyoro Karembera, a leper, from succession, and also eliminated . . . Cariza, who was blind."¹⁶ Custom had a great deal to do with the choice of a Mutapa. Later in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Portuguese could successfully intervene in the choice of a king, when they engineered the succession to the throne of their own puppets.

In general, the administration of the Empire was loose and weak. It all depended on the popularity of the ruling Mutapa. If he was popular and powerful, then he would receive full co-operation from the fumos and the ordinary people, because what the fumos and the people wanted was a Mutapa who could provide them with military protection. This meant, therefore, that the unity and viability of the empire "depended heavily on the charisma, well-being, and political wisdom of the ruling Mutapa".¹⁷ The Mutapa never succeeded, even when he tried, to control the lives of the ordinary people: the ordinary subjects were under the control of the local vassals and so long as the king obtained his tribute from them, he did not bother them. Such a system, however, could not survive in the case of a weak and unpopular ruler. Whenever the fumos became powerful they naturally sought to secede from the central authority.

The main source of the Mutapa's revenue consisted of the tributes which were collected from his own subjects as well as from the Arab and Portuguese traders. All imports into, and exports from, the empire were subjected to customs duties which went into the King's treasury. The King received the *curva* or the confirmation fee from a hereditary fumo. He received also the *empata*, which was an authorised attack on Portuguese traders when their goods would be seized and confiscated. It was a convenient way of collecting badly needed tributes, which the King must have resorted to quite frequently. All these payments enabled the King to live a stately life at his *dzimbabwe* and to raise and maintain an army when necessary. The tributes were important, because, as one scholar has suggested, the unity and integration of his empire "depended very heavily on his ability to promote and control economic activities within his domain, especially the long-distance trade."¹⁸

The nature of the social organisation of the people in the empire remained very much the same throughout the centuries of its existence. The authority of the Mutapa remained strong, towering over all the other chieftaincies in the region. Although the authority and prestige of the Mutapa tended to be exaggerated by the earlier writers, there is no doubt that he did hold much sway over a large part of Central Africa. A Portuguese traveller named Damiao de Goes, who visited the Empire in the sixteenth century, described the Mutapa's authority and prestige in these terms: "When he drinks, coughs or sighs, every person in the house wishes him well in a loud voice, and the same thing is done by those outside the house, the word being passed from mouth to mouth all around the town, so that it is known that the king has drunk, coughed or sighed."¹⁹

MATERIAL CULTURE OF THE EMPIRE

The Empire of Mwene Mutapa abounded with mineral resources. There was gold, copper and iron. The soil was fertile for agriculture and the grasslands provided good pasture for wild animals such as elephants which provided ivory, the important item the foreigners were after. For many centuries there were stories circulating in Europe of the abundance of minerals in the Empire of Mwene Mutapa. In Portugal, in particular, these stories gave rise to erroneous beliefs "that the empire was the biblical land of Ophir from which the Queen of Sheba procured the gold she traded with Solomon."²⁰ The Mutapas were aware of the European greed for their mineral resources. They therefore did all they could to keep the knowledge of the existence of the mines from the greedy Portuguese and other foreign traders "lest covetous desire thereof might cause them to take away their country."²¹ The Africans were prohibited, under pain of death, to take away any gold they discovered or to announce to any person other than the king the existence of any such goldmine. And the Mutapas never revealed to their visitors from Portugal the whereabouts of the mines.

From the earliest times gold and other minerals were worked by the indigenous people of the Empire of Mwene Mutapa. The earliest dates for ancient mining of gold in Rhodesia range from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries, although trade contacts in iron and copper items between the east coast and the interior of Rhodesia were established as early as 1000 A.D. That was partly why the rise of Zimbabwe and indeed of the Empire of Mwene Mutapa itself was due in some measure to the Arab trade.²²

There were two types of trade in the Empire—namely, local and long-distance trade. The former involved mainly the indigenous people while the latter involved the Arab and Portuguese traders as well. The life of the ordinary people in the empire was a somewhat simple one. The items they made were not strictly a measure of wealth. They extracted minerals in order to make items for ordinary use. They worked iron for making hoes, arrows, spears, swords,

axes, knives and other domestic implements. They used gold, copper and ivory for making ornaments. The people of Mwene Mutapa were basically subsistence oriented agriculturalists and pastoralists, who supplemented their food by hunting and gathering wild plants. They had rice, wheat sugar cane, coconuts, tarro, oranges, lemons, figs, vines and cotton as well as fowls, pigs, goats and some wild animals. The long-distance trade did not have a big impact on their lives. A man's status in society rested on his mutual sharing with others of what he possessed, and this is how people cultivated social relations and enhanced their social status. Many of the goods which were imported into the Empire did not normally reach the ordinary people. They traded among themselves as well as with their neighbours: the Tonga and Tarawa and even the Maravi peoples on the other side of the Zambezi. This local trade was done in cotton cloth, *jira*, fibre mats, sesame oil, *mafuta* for cooking, and coconut oil for lighting.²³ The system was that of barter carried out through itinerant indigenous traders.

However, the most important activity in which the Mutapa and his close associates were engaged, was the long-distance trade. This trade involved the Arab and Portuguese traders. By the time the Portuguese arrived in Rhodesia at the beginning of the sixteenth century, they found "an extensive trade network between the Arabs and Shona-speaking peoples in the interior."²⁴ For a long time, gold and ivory were exported from Rhodesia—through Sofala on the Indian Ocean—to Kilwa and subsequently to India and Arab countries. The earliest mention of trade through Sofala was made by a man named Masudi in Arab documents in the tenth century. One other spectacular evidence of this early Arab trade was a Kilwan Arab coin with an inscription of "Al-Hasan-bin Sulaiman", which was found at the Great Zimbabwe. This Sultan reigned between 1320 and 1333, which suggests that by the beginning of the fourteenth century, Arab trade with the east coast was well established.²⁵ But at the beginning of the sixteenth century they lost their power and influence in the region as a result of the arrival on the scene of the Portuguese who did everything to drive the Arabs from the trade within the Empire of Mwene Mutapa. ♡

The story of the Portuguese involvement in Central Africa is told elsewhere.²⁶ Here we only need to mention briefly their appearance and the relationship they established with the rulers of Mwene Mutapa. The Portuguese arrived at Sofala in about 1505, with high hopes of reaping the treasures and riches of the region so highly advertised in Europe and the Far East. In about 1514, a *degradado* or pardoned criminal named Antonio Fernandes became the first Portuguese to enter the Empire of Mwene Mutapa. He did not actually visit the Great Zimbabwe but all the same he met Chikuyu, the Mutapa of the day, "and they parted on amicable terms".²⁷ As a result of this visit, the Portuguese increased their trading contacts with Mwene Mutapa so that by the middle of the sixteenth century they had established strong commercial and political relations with the interior, centred on their stations at Sena and Tete in the Zambezi Valley.

In spite, however, of the presence of the Portuguese traders in the Empire of Mwene Mutapa, it was the Mutapa himself who controlled both the political organisation and the international trade of the region. This was particularly true during the sixteenth century. All trading activities, whether of local or long-distance trade, were controlled and took place "in state regulated markets with prices, weights, and measures determined by the state."²⁸ The Mutapa monopolised the production and disposal of natural resources. In fact, he used the long-distance trade as a factor in the political control of the empire and as a means of integration of the villages and paramountcies. The Portuguese were never allowed to trade directly with the indigenous Africans who produced the gold and ivory in which they were interested. With the prior permission of the King, the Portuguese traders sailed inland up the Zambezi through their stations at Sena and Tete. They then bought local produce, mainly gold, iron, copper, silver, ivory and foodstuff. In exchange, they sold to the people of Mwene Mutapa foreign goods which included beads, glazed glass and cloth. They then hired African porters to carry the stuff they had bought down to Sofala on the east coast from where they were shipped to Portugal and India. But, as we have already mentioned, the impact of the long-distance trade was felt by only a small elite that surrounded the Mutapa of the day and the other ruling dynasties of the empire. These were the people who actually acquired the incoming foreign goods and they were the people who had an interest and stake in the international trade. In spite of this, however, they did not become a class of modern capitalist businessmen or entrepreneurs. They remained an agrarian aristocracy.

In the sixteenth century, the Mutapa remained the overall lord of his domain, and the Portuguese never succeeded in whittling away his authority. The residence and activities of the Portuguese were concentrated in a few controllable areas. The capital of Mutapa, in the words of one scholar, "was free from direct foreign influences and intrigues and the Mutapas, therefore, were protected from the kind of foreign pressures that the Ndebele King, Lobengula, faced during the scramble for Africa."³⁰ The Portuguese and their Arab or Swahili agents had always to obtain permission for their activities from the Mutapa. "They were required," we are told, "to enter the capital without arms and to approach the Mutapa barefooted. When they reached him they knelt and prostrated on the ground".³¹ Up to the very end of the sixteenth century, the Mutapa's court was the trading centre of the empire. He was indeed "the gate" of Zimbabwe. All this, however, was to change as a result of wars of succession and the increasing interference of the Portuguese traders in the internal affairs of Mwene Mutapa.

THE DECLINE OF THE EMPIRE OF MWENE MUTAPA

The Portuguese have been seen by some writers as the main factor for the decline and eventual disintegration of the Empire of Mwene Mutapa. It has

often been claimed that their interference in the internal affairs of the Empire made it difficult, if not impossible, for the Mutapa to control his domain. But to say this would be to overestimate the importance and influence of the few Portuguese traders there were in the country at this time. The crux of the matter really is that it was, above all, the internal factors themselves within the empire which eroded the Mutapa's influence and compromised his authority to rule. To begin with, the system of vassalage itself bred problems for the king. By appointing powerful fumos in command of large territories, a base was provided for them to enhance their power, increase their authority and eventually to challenge the authority of the Mutapa himself. The fumos were allowed to handle long-distance trade and in this way they became very rich. Some fumos such as Mushawatu, the founding patriarch of present Mangwende paramountcy, became very powerful especially at a time when the ruling Mutapa was weak. In these circumstances, the Portuguese traders themselves were only too happy to support any ambitious fumo who wanted to assert his independence from the Central authority. The effect of the system of vassalage was the establishment of powerful political centres away from the capital that rivalled the Mutapa's authority. The result of this was the eruption of civil wars—the consequence itself of the weakness of Mutapas—which led to the eventual disintegration of the Empire of Mwene Mutapa.

Ironically enough, the disintegration of the empire started almost as soon as it came into being. A man named Changa, who originally had been a herdsman of Mutapa Mutope, was given by Mutope himself the Province of Zezuru as a reward for distinguished services. Eventually, Changa, the Rozwi vassal, became very big and he started planning his secession from the Empire of Mwene Mutapa. When Mutope, one of the earliest Mutapas, died in about 1480, Changa openly defied Nyahuma, the new Mutapa, and asserted his independence from Mwene Mutapa, changing his name to a new title of a new dynasty: Changamire: He went even further. In about 1490, he defeated Nyahuma in a battle and ruled the whole empire of Mwene Mutapa for at least four years. Although Nyahuma's son, Kakuyo Komunyaka, avenged the defeat and humiliation of his father by killing Changamire I, the latter's son succeeded in maintaining the authority of his father's breakaway territory. In fact Changamire II succeeded in persuading some of the other vassals of Mwene Mutapa to shift their loyalty and allegiance from the Mutapa to the new Rozwi Kingdom of Changamire.³² He and his successor usurped the power and credential of Tonga dynasty in the south, and therefore, enlarged his Rozwi kingdom that posed a formidable threat to the Mutapa paramountcy in the north. The power of Changamire vis-à-vis the Mutapa was attested by Antonio Fernandes who travelled into the interior from Sofala around 1520. Antonio Fernandes reported "that the Rozwi King (Changamire) was every bit as powerful as the current Mutapa, Kakuyo Komunyaka".³³ All these problems reduced further the Empire of Mwene Mutapa. This was the position when the Portuguese arrived in the region at the beginning of the sixteenth century.

Although it was not immediately apparent, the arrival of the Portuguese in the Empire of Mwene Mutapa was bound to make matters worse for the Mutapas in maintaining their control over some of their rebellious vassals. The Portuguese, whose first desire was to replace the Arabs as the agents of the long distance trade, were also determined to establish an effective influence in the region that would enhance their economic interests. Their primary interest, it is true, was economic rather than political; yet whenever civil war broke out in the country they were not slow to meddle in the local politics in order to strengthen their own position. During the sixteenth century, the danger of their interference was successfully contained by the Mutapas, but from the beginning of the seventeenth century things became different.

Two instances will perhaps suffice to demonstrate this. In 1607, following a revolt by some of his Rozwi vassals, the Mutapa of the day appealed to the Portuguese for military assistance. The Portuguese were only too glad to be called upon to assist the Mutapa in his troubles, and with their men from Sena and Tete under a commander called Diego Simoes, the insurrection was suppressed. But the Mutapa's victory was achieved at a price. Diego Simoes, the man who really won the battle, extracted a concession from the Mutapa. The latter promised, according to a Portuguese chronicler, "with great liberality to give him [Simoes] all the silver mines in his kingdom, as being what he [Simoes] most valued, and afterwards for these and other greater victories Diego Simoes induced the emperor to make a donation to his Majesty [the King of Portugal] of all the mines of gold or other metals which might be in the whole of his kingdom."³⁴

But this was not the end of the matter. Following a clash between the Mutapa and the Portuguese who had earlier assisted him, the Portuguese engineered the accession to the throne of another Mutapa named Mavura. This occurred in 1628-9. Mavura, we are told, became a christian and a virtual vassal of the King of Portugal. Mavura surrendered to the Portuguese on "all the conditions which the Portuguese considered conformable to the honour of the Gospel and of the crown of Portugal." The Mutapa's weakening position vis-a-vis the Portuguese was evidenced by his acceptance to sign a treaty, on 24 May 1629, which considerably whittled away all his influence and the power to rule as the Mutapa.³⁵ The full story of these sad events cannot be discussed here but it is clear that for some time the Empire of Mwene Mutapa was at the mercy of the Portuguese.

Late in the seventeenth century, another event brought about further erosion of the prestige and power of the Mutapa. There had been, for some time, a series of wars of succession within the Empire of Mwene Mutapa in which the Portuguese had meddled a great deal. The ruling Mutapa had been driven off, through the connivance of the Portuguese. Dombo, the Changamire of the day, was persuaded by the Mutapa's usurper, a man named Nyakambiro, to drive out the Portuguese from the empire.³⁶ Dombo did so, during a campaign which left everyone gasping. Between 1693 and 1695, Dombo ravaged the

Portuguese Port at Dambarare, killing almost all the Portuguese who were living there. As a result of this successful campaign, which had been initiated by the Mutapa himself, the Portuguese traders realised that the future rested with the Changamire rather than with the Mutapa. They, therefore, withdrew their recognition and support from the Mutapa and instead openly supported the Changamire, the man who had inflicted such catastrophes upon them. Here the Portuguese were only playing good politics. They wanted to befriend the new powerful ruler, the "rising star" of the region. As a result of these complications, the Changamire now controlled not only the Portuguese themselves but the whole Empire of Mwene Mutapa itself. No long-distance trade could be carried out in the region without his permission and goodwill.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Portuguese lost interest in the trade of the lower Zambezi Valley and they turned their attention to the north and to the ivory of the Luangwa River Valley. But by the time this occurred, a lot of harm had been done to the Empire of Mwene Mutapa. Thus, as a result of civil wars which were caused in the first instance by the weakness of the Mutapas and the desire of the vassals to assert their autonomy, the Empire of Mwene Mutapa declined and subsequently disintegrated. It was a development that had been hastened, although not necessarily caused, by the Portuguese interference. However, the Empire continued to exist until the beginning of the nineteenth century when even greater forces hastened further its oblivion. Slave Trade and the scramble for ivory introduced new elements "that disrupted the pattern of traditional authority in the interior and so prepared the way for colonial rule."³⁷

The final end of the Empire of Mwene Mutapa came in the 1830s when the Ngoni invasions reached this region. The Karanga power was smashed by the Ngoni hordes of Zwangendaba. The Changamire dynasty in the north-western segment of the Mwene Mutapa Empire was also smashed by the Ndebele of Mzilikazi. The British and the Portuguese colonialists later on picked up the spoils of what had once been the greatest empire in Central Africa.

FOOTNOTES

1. This is part of the author's larger study on Central African History which is to be published later by Uganda Publishing House, Kampala.
2. Fouché, L. *Mapungubwe: Ancient Bantu Civilization on the Limpopo*, Cambridge University Press, 1937, pp. 177.
3. Alpers, E.A. 'Dynasties of the Mutapa—Rozwi Complex', *Journal of African History*, XI, 2(1970), p. 203.
4. Fagan, B. M. *Southern Africa during the Iron Age*, Thames & Hudson, 1965, p. 119, ff.
5. *Ibid.*
6. Caton-Thompson, G. *The Zimbabwe Culture: Ruins and Reactions*, Oxford University Press, 1931, p. 190, ff.
7. Hoffman, T. N. "The Rise and Fall of Zimbabwe", *Journal of African History*, xiii, 3(1972), p. 364.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 364, ff.
9. Vansina, J. *The Historian in Tropical Africa*, Oxford University Press, 1964, p. 107, ff.
10. Fagan, B. M. *Op. cit.*, p. 125.
11. Vansina, J. *Op. cit.*, p. 106.
12. Fagan, B. M. *Op. cit.*, p. 121, ff.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 122.
14. Chanaiwa, D. "Politics and Long-distance Trade in the Mwene Mutapa Empire During the Sixteenth Century", *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, V, 3(1972), p. 425, ff.
15. *Ibid.*
16. Alpers, E. A. *Op. cit.*, p. 203.
17. Chanaiwa, D. *Op. cit.*, p. 428.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 434.
19. Caton-Thompson, G. *Op. cit.*, p. 268.
20. Chanaiwa, D. *Op. cit.*, p. 428.
21. Davidson, B. *The African Past*, Longmans, 1964, p. 162.
22. Hoffman, T. N. *Op. cit.*, p. 353-366.
23. Chanaiwa, D., *Op. cit.*, p. 429, ff.
24. Hoffman, T. N. *Op. cit.*, p. 361, ff.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 361.
26. Axelson, B. *Portuguese in South-East Africa, 1600-1700*, Witwatersrand University Press, 1960.
27. Vansina, J., *Kingdoms of the Savanna*, University of Wisconsin Press, 1966.
28. Fagan, B. M. *Op. cit.*, p. 127.
29. Chanaiwa, D., *Op. cit.*, p. 424.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 432-3.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 433.
32. Fagan, B. M. *Op. cit.*, p. 125, ff.
33. Vansina, J., *Op. cit.*, p. 109.
34. Davidson, B., *Op. cit.*, p. 164.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 165, ff.
36. Fagan, B. M., *Op. cit.*, p. 129, ff.
37. Clark, J. D., *The pre-history of Africa*, Thames & Hudson, 1970, p. 221-2.