

**TOPIC : EARLY EUROPEAN CONTACTS WITH ZIMBABWE**

**SUBTOPICS : PORTUGUESE ACTIVITIES IN THE ZAMBEZI VALLEY**

### **OBJECTIVES**

**BY THE END OF THE SUBTOPIC LEARNERS SHOULD BE ABLE TO:**

- ✓ Identify reasons for the Portuguese penetration in the Zambezi valley.
- ✓ Describe the economic, political and social activities of the Portuguese.
- ✓ Outline the features of the Prazo system.
- ✓ Evaluate the relationship between the Portuguese and the Africans.
- ✓ Analyse the effects of the Portuguese activities on Africans.

### **Background**



Portuguese activities

- The role of the Europeans leading up to the colonial era had always been a bone of contention beginning from the Mutapa state in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.
- The Portuguese entered the Zambezi valley soon after the death of Father Gonzalo Da Silveria.

- The Portuguese had several reasons for entering into the interior and during which they were involved in religious, economic, social and political activities which had implications on the livelihood of the early Shona and Ndebele cultures.

### **Reasons for penetration into the interior**

- The Portuguese moved into the interior of the Zambezi valley for a number of reasons which are:
  - (a) The need to control large gold reserves
    - The Portuguese wanted to control gold and ivory resources in the Mutapa state without interference.
    - In 1505, the Portuguese settled at Sofala after receiving information that gold was in abundance there.
    - Fortresses were built there to obtain gold and ivory from the interior.
  - (b) The desire to control trade
    - The Portuguese wanted to take direct control of trade with the Mutapa and getting rid of foreign traders such as the Swahili and Arabs.
    - They did this to enjoy the benefits of trade alone.
  - (c) They wanted to avenge the death of Father Goncalo da Silveira
    - Father Goncalo da Silveira had entered the Mutapa state to spread Christianity.
    - He was murdered in 1561 after he had converted Mutapa Negomo and 300 of his followers to Christianity.
    - Gonzalo Da Silveria's death was not taken lightly in Portugal.
  - (d) The need for land
    - Portuguese wanted to control and grow crops on large plantations.

- They wanted to use black forced labour.
- (e) To form a colony
- Portuguese wanted to form a colony so as to extend their rule.

### The Portuguese invasion of the Mutapa state

- After the murder of father Gonzalo Da Silveria in 1561, the Portuguese government sent an army of 10 000 men to defend and revenge on his death.
- However after being devastated by tropical diseases and other related illnesses (malaria) upon arriving on the Mozambican port of Sofala in 1571, the Portuguese army led by Barreto decided to settle and form friendship relations with sub chiefs of the Mutapa state who were in the east.
- The Portuguese formed alliances with the **Manyika, and Utete**, on hearing of this, the Mutapa king immediately sent an army of 100 000 soldiers which pushed the Portuguese further back.
- The decisive moment: After facing rebellion from his relatives and other groups, in a desperate last attempt, Mutapa Gatsi Rusere asked for assistance from the Portuguese and in return he ceded all gold mining lands.
- This was the ultimate move that allowed the Portuguese to gain not only economic but political dominion as well.

## Portuguese activities in the Zambezi Valley

### Control of trade

- The Portuguese control of trade had some serious negative repercussions on the Mutapa State and its citizens.
- They forced the Mutapa kings to expel the Swahili from the Mutapa so as to gain full control of trade.
- They interfered with the local activities, especially agriculture.
- Labour available for farming was diverted, as people were required to engage in trade related activities during the rainy season.
- The traders expected the Mutapa people to hunt for ivory and mine for gold even during the rainy season when people were supposed to be busy with their farming.
- The natives were seriously exploited and forced to work as slaves on their own land.
- In return they got items not worth the labour and risk involved in terms of value such as beads, glass, cloth and sugar.

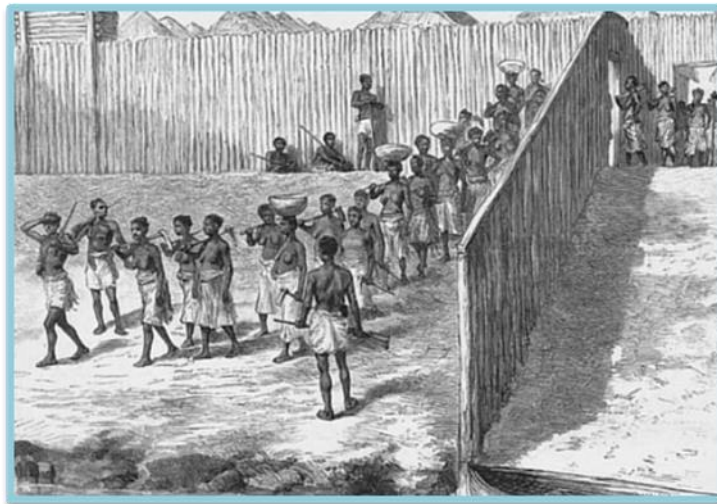
### The credit system



The credit system

- The credit system is a system that allows people to buy/ obtain things on credit.
- These systems of take now pay later bound people and forced them to trade so as to pay off their credits.
- Africans would get goods such as beads, glass and cloth but in return the Africans payed using gold, ivory or leopard skins.
- The Portuguese mercenary agents the 'AchiHANDA' raided those who failed to pay and took all property such as cattle or human slaves.
- The raided slaves worked in the plantations (prazos) or made up the Portuguese army (Chikunda)
- The Portuguese became powerful and wealthy as they took advantage of the natives using this system.

### The Prazo system



Africans working in the Prazo

- The Portuguese also began to control Mutapa land as given to them by puppet Kings.
- The Portuguese took over the duties of the Mutapa kings to distribute land and later refused to pay tribute to the kings.

- Native people were forcibly removed from their ancestry land while the Portuguese engaged in farming, opening maize, tobacco and rice plantations (Prazeros).
- The Prazeros also acted as Portuguese places of settlement, while owners of these plantation became rich and powerful.
- On these Prazos they enslaved the Mutapa people to work for them especially those that failed to meet their credit obligations.
- The Portuguese settlers also got involved in 'womanizing' leading to emergence of a coloured race (mullatos') in the Mutapa.
- This new race suffered from identity crisis and was often discriminated.
- Some Portuguese married the Mutapa women thereby gaining the heart of the kings.



Acts of violence and disputes

- The Portuguese caused succession disputes and installed puppet chiefs like Gatsi Rusere and Mavura Mhande into power.

- They signed treaties and concessions with the Mutapa kings and this made Portuguese to gain more power.
- This interference of the Portuguese weakened the Mutapa kings' position and encouraged disputes and rebellions.
- They increased their demand for gold and ivory on the puppets and caused them to increase the tax burden upon their people.
- The Mutapa hence became unpopular leading to break away factions such as Dombo and his followers.
- The guns, which the Mutapa obtained from trade, encouraged wars, increasing death and violence.
- The vassal chiefs equipped with guns felt strong enough to rebel against the Mutapa.
- Muslim and Christianity: the invasion of religion threatened the existence of traditional religions.
- The Portuguese were also actively involved in the spreading of their religions and denouncing local religions and social systems.
- Father Gonzalo Da Silveira at one time(late 16<sup>th</sup> century) succeeded in converting Mutapa Negomo Mapunzaguta and his mother into Christians denouncing such traditional marriage systems especially polygamy but was eventually murdered for his new doctrines.



Priests baptizing Africans

- It was his murder that ultimately gave the Portuguese a valid reason to forcibly enter and change the way of life of the Mutapa state leading to the decline of the state.

### Problems faced by the Portuguese

- The Mutapa state had a large standing army and was ruled under one powerful regime. As such it was difficult to break up.
- The Portuguese faced resistance from the Swahili and Arab traders who also wanted to continue benefitting from trading with the Mutapa people.
- The presence of strong African religious leaders also meant that the Portuguese missionaries could not easily enter the interior denouncing local customs and spreading Christianity.
- The Portuguese were also not well equipped to with the terrain of the area and were thus severely affected by malaria during their Barreto raid to revenge the death of Gonzalo Da Silveira.

### Effects of Portuguese in pre-colonial Zimbabwe

POSITIVE	NEGATIVE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They brought new products such as clothes, beads, glass which helped advance the natives.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Portuguese interfered in the Mutapa political affairs leading to its decline.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They introduced new crops such as maize, paw paws, water melons, lemons and rice as well as farming methods such as crop rotation and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Portuguese heavily exploited the Mutapa's resources leading to the collapse of the state.</li> </ul>



shifting cultivation.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They vaccinated the cattle of the natives (particularly the wealthy), and cleaned the kings' guns which he used to defend himself.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction of forced labour - the Portuguese enslaved the Mutapa people taking their resources and forcing them to work on the prazoes.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The outcasts became more powerful (chikindas)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The provision of guns by the Portuguese led to succession disputes, bloodier war fares and death of the Mutapa people.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There was emergence of slavery and slave trade.</li> </ul>

### **The weakening of the Portuguese influence**

- The rise of the powerful Rozvi Changamire contributed to the decline of the Portuguese power in the interior.
- The Rozvi ruler managed to drive the Portuguese out of the interior between 1693 and 1695.
- The Portuguese were forced to close their feiras at Dambarare and Tete.
- They later managed to reach a peace agreement with the Changamire which allowed them to do their trading but with many restrictions.
- In the absence of the Feiras, they traded through Vashambadzi.
- This weakened their trading activities and they lost control of trade.
- Portuguese military weakness also contributed to the decline of their influence in the interior.

- The unfavourable climate in that region discouraged Portuguese to settle.