

TOPIC : COLONISATION OF ZIMBABWE

SUBTOPIC: 1ST CHIMURENGA /UMVUKELA (1896-97) WAR

OBJECTIVES

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

- ✓ Outline the causes of the 1st Chimurenga/Umvukela.
- ✓ Describe the events of the 1st Chimurenga/Umvukela.
- ✓ Examine the role played by the spirit mediums in the 1st Chimurenga/Umvukela.
- ✓ Evaluate the results of the 1st Chimurenga/Umvukela.

Background

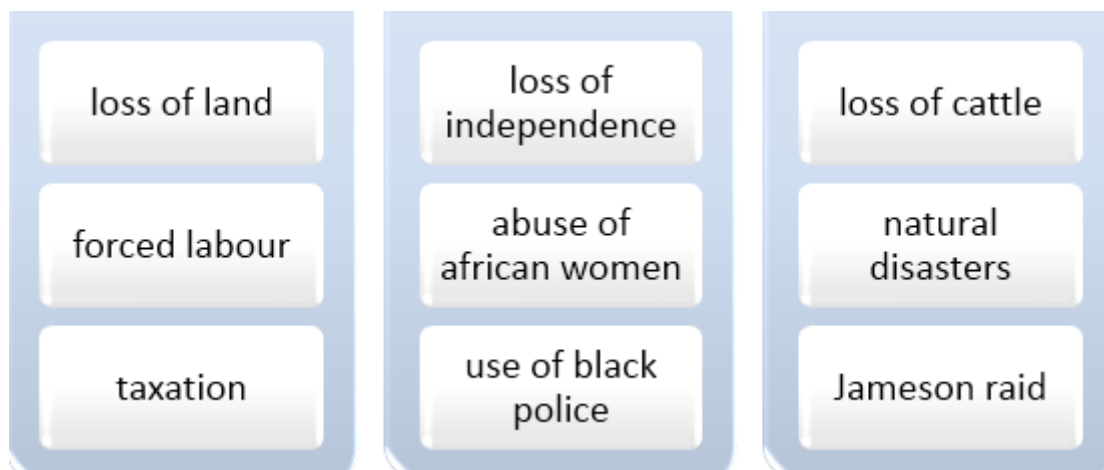


Black Africans

- Active as well as passive resistance was already well- established by 1896 in response to European colonisation in Rhodesia.
- Apart from large scale state organised resistance of the Ndebele in 1893-4, there had been many small, localised forms of resistance.
- These were organised by chiefs against European intervention.

Causes the Ndebele –Shona uprising

- The Ndebele had other grievances largely based on Anglo Ndebele war.
- From March 1896 to October 1897, the Ndebele and the Shona took up arms to fight the settler invaders in a more spirited manner. There were several reasons why Africans resisted settler colonisation in this manner.



Causes of the war

(1) Loss of land

- After the Anglo- Ndebele war, the Ndebele lost their land to the BSAC and white settlers.
- White settlers took all the productive and rich lands to make their farms and the Ndebele were forced to unproductive lands which were created for them.
- The Ndebele were moved into Gwaai and Shangani reserves which were dry, tsetse infected, hot and infertile and they regarded these reserves as the graveyards.
- Living in such conditions meant that the Ndebele people were going to starve.
- Those who remained in the land became squatters and provided cheap semi-slave labour in white farms.

(2) Loss of independence

- The Shona and the Ndebele lost their freedom of life.
- Shona people were considered as weak and cowards by the BSAC.
- After the disappearance of Lobengula, the Ndebele people were not allowed to choose another King.
- This angered the Ndebele as they knew that there is no state without a king or leader to unite and govern state affairs.
- The indunas also lost their powers and importance to their people and this angered them.
- The Ndebele were also forbidden to carry out their raids in Mashonaland hence resulting for a war.

(3) Loss of cattle

- Both the Ndebele and Shona lost their cattle to the whites.
- Cattle were highly valued in the Ndebele State, the BSAC claimed ownership of Lobengula's cattle as well as private owned cattle and sold them cheaply to the white settlers.
- The Ndebele were left with few cattle and this was a great insult to them.

(4) Forced labour

- European settlers needed cheap labour for their mines and farms and the only source of labour available were the Shona and Ndebele people.
- As a result they forced the Shona and the Ndebele to work for them.
- The recruited Africans were beaten with whips/sjamboks made of hippo-hide.

(5) Natural disasters

- There was an outbreak of natural disasters like rinderpest, locust plague and drought.

- The rinderpest epidemic killed a lot African cattle and a plague of locust devoured the crops resulting to a severe drought.
- Africans blamed the presence of the whites in their land and also the religious interpretation.
- The spirit mediums told the people that ancestors were not happy with the presence of the whites and nothing would be solved as long as the white settlers were in the colony.
- This made Africans to be eager to drive away the settlers.

(6) Taxation

- BSAC introduced a number of taxes to the Africans such as hut tax, poll tax and dog tax.
- Taxes were introduced to raise money for the BSAC and taxation was a form of recruiting cheap labour from the Africans.
- This forced Africans to look for employment so as to pay taxes.
- The Native boys used brutality to collect those taxes.

(7) Use of black police

- The British South African Company used the tactic divide and rule.
- The BSAC took the Ndebele policeman to work in Mashonaland and the Shona policeman to work in Matabeleland.
- This angered the Ndebele people as they considered the Shona as their servants and fuelled hatred between the two groups.

(8) Jameson raid

- In 1895, Rhodes and Jameson wanted to invade Transvaal Republic under Paul Kruger and force it to join the Federation.
- The Ndebele and Shona took advantage of the Jameson raid and the absence of many white soldiers.
- BSAC failed to win the Boers hence returned to fight the Africans who had started Chimurenga/Umvukela.



Jameson raiders

African leaders involved in the First Chimurenga (1896)

- Mbuya Nehanda
- Sekuru Kaguvi
- Mashayamombe
- Chaminuka
- Mkwati
- Umlugulu
- Gumboreshumba
- Mapondera
- Makoni
- Mangwede

Course of the 1st Chimurenga war/ Umvukela

Ndebele uprising



The Ndebele army

- The opportunity to launch the war was provided by the withdrawal of 600 policemen by DR Star Leander Jameson on 1 January 1896 to fight the Boers in the Transvaal.
- The whites were as a result defenceless and were a prey for Ndebele warriors.
- The war started on March 20, 1896, under the command of the high priest Umlugulu.
- The immediate aims were to repossess lost land, to kill and drive out the Europeans.
- The Ndebele like the Shona concentrated on a limited range of targets like isolated European farm houses, police posts, stores, mission stations and local collaborators.
- The attack on whites in the outlying districts of Bulawayo had begun, twenty two men, five women and three children were killed.

- The uprising united all elements of the Ndebele society, the Zansi, Enhla, and AmaHole groups.
- Most of the later groups who collaborated with the white elements during the 1893-4 war for their own survival, joined hands in the 1896 risings.
- The risings were organised by the Umlimo messengers, Mkwati and Siginyamatshe.
- Mkwati organised in the north-east while Siginyamatshe was in the south of Bulawayo.
- In the absence of a unifying Ndebele King, the Umlimo cult provided the necessary unifying link among the Ndebele ruling elite and the Shona tributary societies.
- Faced with a formidable attacking force which was inflicting heavy casualties on the white settlers, the BSAC forces responded with equal ferocity.
- The Ndebele were first to be defeated at the battle of Umguza River.



The battle of Umguza River

- Sir Fredrick Carrington who became the commander of the settler forces called for the total extermination and deportation of the Ndebele people.
- The starting of April 1896 settler reinforcements began to arrive.

- The tide immediately turned against the Ndebele fighters.
- The Ndebele uprising had been suppressed, by the end of June 1896.

The Matopo indaba meeting

- The Matopo indaba meeting was held between the Ndebele and the white settlers
- Rhodes was worried because of the war which was costing the BSAC government, Rhodes had to bribe the Ndebele indunas by offering them jobs in the BSAC government.
- The Ndebele ruling class deserted their people and agreed on the offer in October 1896.
- They agreed to a peace settlement at Matopo hills.

Terms of the meeting

- The Ndebele were promised their land back if they stopped fighting.
- Indunas were to be paid a monthly salary for their services.
- The spirit mediums were to be punished for their roles in the Chimurenga/ Umvukela war.
- Rhodes was to withdraw white forces in Matabeleland.
- The Ndebele were also promised grain, seeds and food.



Matopos meeting

Reasons for the defeat of the Ndebele

- There was disunity among the Ndebele people.
- Poor fighting strategies.
- Poor mode of transport and communication skills.
- Not all the Ndebele people participated in the Chimurenga/Umvukela war.
- The use of brutality by the whites frightened the Ndebele people.
- The white settlers used superior weapons and they had external support.
- Religious leaders mislead the Ndebele people and gave them false prophecies.

Shona uprising



The uprising in Mashonaland

- The 1896 Ndebele uprisings did not really surprise the settlers because the Ndebele were well known for their military prowess (great ability).

- In Mashonaland, this was not the case, Europeans had convinced themselves that the Shona people were grateful to the whites for removing the Ndebele rule.
- They thought the Shona were weak, cowardly and divided.
- The Shona rose against the whites because the white occupation had brought to an end trade relations between the Shona and the Portuguese.
- The Chimurenga movement in Mashonaland began at Chief Makoni's court in Manicaland in June 1896.
- Starting around Hartley (Chegutu), fires began to appear on hill tops all over Mashonaland and it reached Mazowe and Murehwa.
- The tactics slightly differed from those used in Matabeleland as they used a small band to attack the white settlers.
- As in Matabeleland, the risings began with the massacre of small scattered European communities.
- 119 people were killed in the first week of the outbreak.
- Shona used a form of Guerrilla warfare and they targeted the symbol of imperialism and capitalist exploitation.
- The Shona did not fight as a unit therefore the White could not get one leader to negotiate a settlement with.
- Two prominent spirit mediums played the role of coordinating and unifying the people.
- These were Sekuru Kaguvi and Mbuya Nehanda, Nehanda came from the Mazowe area while Kaguvi came from the Hartley area.
- Many chiefs such as Chinhamhora, Mashayamombe, Mangwende, Chihota, and Zvimba were united by these spirit mediums.
- The war thus assumed the proportions of a "holy war".
- Once there is "holiness" in an uprising, its suppression becomes quite complicated.

The role of spirit mediums



Mbuya Nehanda and Sekuru Kaguvi

- The spirit mediums sent agents to infiltrate European farms, mine and fort.
- They gave impression of being friendly to the whites and later attacked them.
- They said to have blamed the Europeans for the natural disasters.
- Spirit mediums were ably supported by chiefs. Some of the chiefs involved in the first Chimurenga include: Zvimba, Makoni, Mangwende, Chiweshe and Nyandoro.
- They helped in organising as well as in providing the logistics needed during the uprising.
- Nehanda was a brilliant strategist who forbade her followers not to touch anything brought in by Europeans.
- When the settlers tried to capture her, she eluded them for a very long time.

- Kaguvi used then same tactics as Nehanda, he operated in the Chishawasha area but his influence was felt as far east as Makoni.
- For a year, he also eluded capture and finally surrendered on October 27, 1897.
- He was executed together with Nehanda on April 27, 1898 and the execution of the 2 led to the end of uprising.



The capture of Nehanda and Kaguvi

- Following Kaguvi and Nehanda execution, the settler army used brutal methods to suppress the uprising.
- The first Chimurenga, as an uprising, convinced the Settlers that Africans in Rhodesia were a dangerous a lot.

Other activities done by the spirit mediums

- They led the struggle against the settlers.
- They organised the people against the whites.
- They supplied the protective medicine.
- Instilled courage in the people.
- Coordinated the fighting.
- They treated and healed the wounded and the sick.

Reasons for the Shona defeat

- The Shona used inferior weapons compared to whites who used guns and artillery.
- They were not united, some of the Shona were against the uprising.
- The Shona did not have a standing army or even a single leader to coordinate them.
- Some Shona were starved into submission.
- The spirit mediums misled the people.
- Whites got help from Britain.

Results of the 1st Chimurenga/Umvukela

- A lot of lives were lost especially of Africans.
- Leaders of the uprising were severely punished and killed.
- Traditional religion was suppressed.
- A resident commissioner was sent by Britain to stay and monitor the activities of the BSAC.
- Railway lines were constructed.
- Cheap labour became available for the whites.
- Segregatory laws were passed.
- The fighting was costly to the BSAC in terms of money.
- The mine and farms were not working during the uprising and the BSAC was losing profits.
- The guerrilla tactics used were very difficult to deal with.
- The white were losing in terms of man power and material resources.