

TOPIC :DEVELOPMENT OF ZIMBABWEAN SOCIETIES.

SUBTOPIC :STATE FORMATION - THE ROZVI STATE.

OBJECTIVES

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

- ✓ Identify factors leading to the rise of the Rozvi kingdom.
- ✓ Briefly describe the role of the army in the Rozvi state.
- ✓ Describe the economic political and social activities of the Rozvi kingdom.
- ✓ Assess factors leading to the collapse of the Rozvi kingdom.

Origins of the Rozvi State



Location of the Rozvi state

- The Rozvi state was a southern African state that began around 1640-1684 and was established as a result of the decline of the Mutapa state.

- The state was formerly organized under Changamire Dombo, who was a man of great military skill and possessed good leadership qualities.
- There a number of controversies on the origins of the Rozvi state as some of the historians state that the Rozvi people were once subjects of the Mutapa state.
- The King of the Rozvi is believed to have been once a cattle herder in the Mutapa state, he became rich, manage to build a strong army and he revolted against the Mutapa.
- Other sources state that the Rozvi leader Changamire Dombo was a descendant of the Torwa people.
- This means that the Torwa state developed and changed its name to Rozvi state.
- His skill made Changamire Dombo able to form his own breakaway state whose capital was at Danangombe (Dhlo dhlo ruins).
- He defeated the Portuguese who had installed puppet kings in the Mutapa state, driving them out of the Zimbabwe interior into the eastern fringes.
- The Rozvi state was known for raiding and a powerful and organized army as is explained by their name "the destroyers."

Reasons for the rise of the Rozvi state

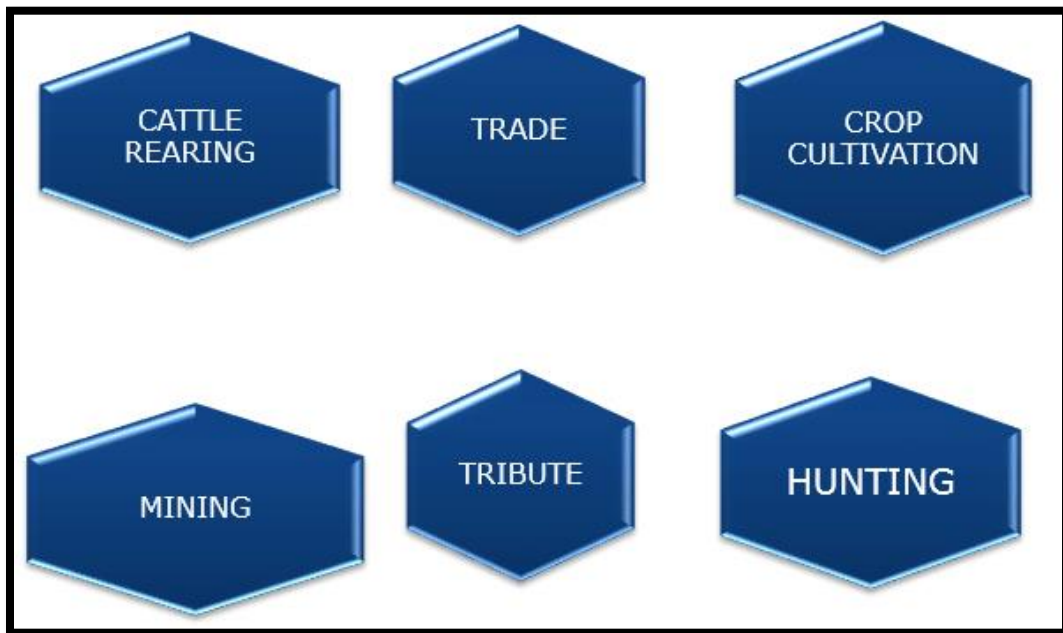
(a)The weaknesses of the Mutapa state

- The Rozvi state was an offspring of the Mutapa state.
- The lack of a large standing army and powerful ruling by the Mutapa Empire towards its decline led to Changamire Dombo breaking away with between 2000 -4000 men.
- He formed his capital in the Khami area, where he first had to dismantle the Torwa people.

(b) Military skills of Changamire Dombo

- The bravery and military skills of Changamire Dombo definitely played a role towards the state formation.
- His ability to motivate and lead a large standing army allowed him to conquer the Portuguese who were now controlling the Mutapa state.
- He was also skilled in weapon use, and is believed to be the founder of the “cow-horn” formation, therefore allowing him to be a militarily superior to his enemies.

A. Economic organisation of the Rozvi state

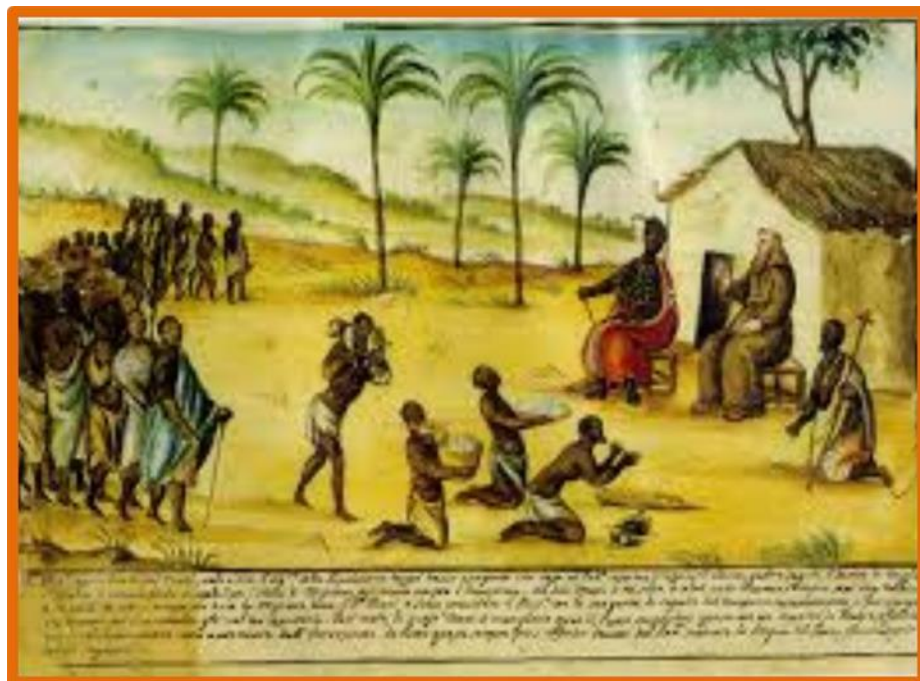


Economic activities

(a) Tribute

- Tribute was an economic activity practiced in the Mutapa state.

- The King received tribute from the vassal chiefs in his territory and external traders were also expected to pay tribute before trading as homage to the Mambo.
- The subjects of the Rozvi king paid tribute in form of cloth, beads, hoes, axes, gold, ivory, cattle, skins, grain, tobacco and salt.
- Tribute was used as a means of making the subjects subservient and loyal to the Rozvi king.
- Food from tribute such as cattle, grain was distributed as drought relief.
- The result of tribute was that it strengthened the king's wealth and his political hold.
- Vassal chiefs who failed to pay tribute were severely punished as this was seen as a sign of open rebellion and moreover those who refused to pay tribute were raided.



Subjects paying tribute to the king

(b)Trade

- Trade was another activity which formed the basis of the Mutapa economy and it was done internally with locals and externally with foreigners.
- They practiced internal trade with the local people and external trade with the Portuguese.
- Trade was done among the subjects in form of barter trade. (For example: an axe for grain). Internal trade was done as a way of unifying the state and to create an independent state.
- In external trade ivory and gold could be exchanged with beads and clothes.



Trading items

- The Portuguese were not allowed to advance too far into the interior of the country.
- African traders called "*Vashambadzi*" were agents who interacted with the Portuguese at the gates and traded with the Portuguese on behalf of the king.
- The Vashambadzi gained wealth because of their interactions with the Portuguese.
- The king was the head of the trade system and trade became a weapon to strengthen his power in the state.

(c)Crop cultivation

- The Rozvi people were small scale farmers and produced for family needs.
- The people Rozvi were skilled farmers who practiced crop rotation and shifting cultivation from time to time to allow the land to rest and gain its fertility.
- Each family was expected to grow enough food to feed them.
- Farming was done by both men and women.
- They grew indigenous and foreign crops such as rice, rapoko, water melons, pumpkins, beans, maize and millet.



Maize

- The VaRozvi used hand axes to clear large tracts of land and hoes were used for tillage, seeding and weeding.
- The royal family benefited from the labour of its subjects under a system called *Zunde ramambo*. This was a form of tribute payment.
- These subjects would prepare the chief's land, plant, weed and harvest the crops which were stored at the chief's compound.

- The communal land was owned by the king, but everyone was given a portion which was for their homestead and agricultural production.

(d)Cattle rearing

- The VaRozvi were herders who domesticated cattle, sheep and goats. These were used as a measure of wealth and the meat was used to augment the diet.
- Cattle ownership was used to measure one's wealth.
- Cattle were kept for several reasons such as
 - Providing meat and milk.
 - To pay roora/ lobola.
 - Paying tribute.
 - To make the kuronzera system.
- The king owned the largest herds of cattle.



Herds of cattle

(e)Hunting

- Hunting was a typical activity of the Rozvi economy.
- They hunted for food sustenance, leisure and to pay tribute.
- Hunting products were usually ivory from elephant's tusks, animal skins and game meat from the kudu, buffalo, eland just to mention a few.
- They used crafted iron implements during their expeditions such as iron spear with poison tips, bows and arrow, the knobkerrie (*induku/tsvimbo*) and hand axe.
- Hunters usually went in packs while the activity would have often taken time to find a successful kill, sometimes days or weeks at most.
- For big animals they dug pits. Meat was preserved and dried with salt.
- Some of the trade products such as leopard skins, lion skins, and ivory were given as tribute to the king as he was the custodian of all land.
- Pangolins were royal game and were surrendered to the chiefs.



Men hunting

(f) Mining

- The Rozvi were a mining community. The main minerals mined were gold, copper, iron and tin.
- Gold was used for trade; copper was used to make ruling class jewellery while iron was used for tools such as spears, hoes and axes.
- The chief was the main custodian of all minerals and wealth in the state.
- Mining commodities contributed to trade particularly external with the Portuguese on the Indian ports of Kilwa, Tete and Sofala.
- Mining was done by men in the community and it was a seasonal activity.
- The main form of mining done was alluvial (surface) mining.

B. Political organisation of the Rozvi state

- The king was the head of the state, and was a figure of great respect and loyalty.
- He was in charge of all communal land and therefore everything in the state was regarded as his (cattle, ivory, grain, war captives) among others.
- He had the power to call up the army and declare war.
- He could also summon communal labour (*zuunde ra mambo*).
- The King ruled with the help of a council called "*Dare*" which consisted of the priests, military leaders and the provincial governors.
- The king also appointed the chiefs to be in charge of the small states.
- The Tumbare was in charge of the army and he was appointed by the king.
- The king also ruled with the help of the Vhazukuru/Mavhudzi who advised the king and also were state messengers.

- Some of the King's wives played a role at the court and some of the son in laws had special duties.
- The kingship was hereditary and the Rozvi people used collateral system. (From father – 1st Son- 2nd Son- 3rd Son).
- Religion and tribute were used to strengthen the king's power and position as supreme.
- His word was final and unquestionable.

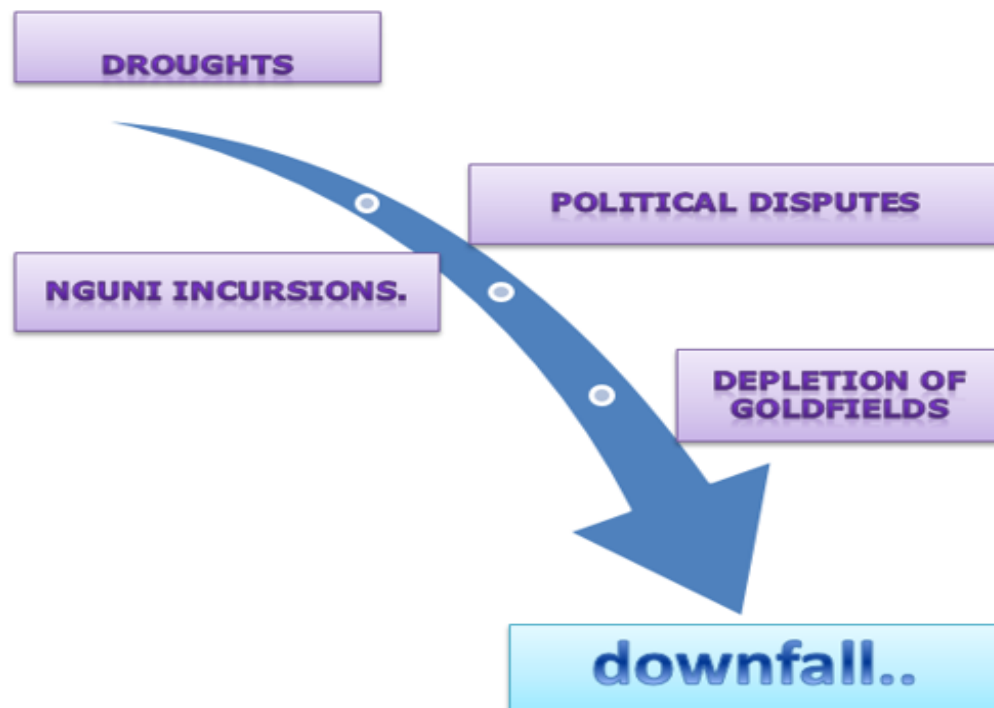
Religion

- The king was the religious leader as well in addition to being the political and legal leader.
- He was assisted by priests who were stationed at shrines such as **Taba-Zika-Mambo and Njelele.**
- The king was believed to communicate with the supreme God, "Mwari" whom he communicated to through the ancestors.
- The priests worked very closely with the mambo and often supported him as being divinely chosen by the ancestors.
- This made the king gain favour from his subjects, his reign was not questioned and respected.
- Thus the role of the shrine leaders of "Mwari" gave the king more power also restricted his authority as they were the ones who installed the Mambo.
- The messengers known as "*Vanyai*" who were under the priests at each shrine were tasked with spreading the divine will of "Mwari" in their respective provinces.
- Their duty was to work as undercover officers spreading and gathering any detail from their respective provinces.

C. Social organisation of the state

- The Rozvi belonged to the Moyo totem.
- The Rozvi homesteads were made of lineages and the class system was determined by herds of cattle.
- The state practiced division of labour based on gender, with women doing cooking, gathering of fruits as well as rearing of children.
- Men on the other hand were responsible for mining, hunting as well as state defence.
- The *states' wealth was based on cattle and land*.
- The people were divided into three castes the rich, middle and low class.
- The state also practiced roora/lobola payment to the bride's family.
- This was paid in form of cattle or other iron implements.

Decline of the Rozvi state



Factors leading to the downfall of the state

(a) Nguni incursions

- The Rozvi were affected by successive invasions from the south which included defeats by Zwangendaba, Nyamazana, Sobhuza, the Butwa and finally the Ndebele under Mzilikazi.
- The royal house scattered to other parts of the country.
- The Rozvi Empire now remained only in Mashonaland but they were finally defeated by the British South African Company settlers.
- Thus external forces contributed largely to the fall of the Rozvi state.

(b) Political structure

- The fall of the Rozvi state can also be attributed from the political system which only served to enrich the royal family at the expense of ordinary people.
- It can thus also be argued that the state alienated its own people leading to its decline and fall
- The Rozvi were also loosely administered without any central power source which made disintegration easier.
- The hatred was worsened by the habitual pillaging (raids) done by the Rozvi army.
- Eventually vassal chiefs refused to pay tribute to the Changamire and broke away forming their own paramount.

(c) Depletion of goldfields

- The exhaustion of gold deposits led to the decline of gold production.
- The deposits of gold had been important in maintaining external trade and without this commodity the Changamire's economic and political influence became reduced leading to the fall of the state.

(d) The state was affected by civil wars

- The death of one of the last powerful remaining kings, Changamire Rupandamanhanga around 1795 led to the unrest over succession in the state.
- Due to the infighting, less time was used in the productive economic sectors such as mining, trade and agriculture leading to the state collapsing.
- Examples of tribal clashes for leadership included the Hiya against the Butwa people and the Zumbo which also affected the long distance trade.

(e) Droughts

- As the former states, the Rozvi Empire was also affected by successive years of in-adequate rainfall.
- It is believed around 1795 the state was affected by drought that lasted five years.
- This led to a devastating shortage of food supplies and grazing lands to feed livestock.
- Eventually vassal chiefs refused to pay tribute, while the shortage of resources led to people moving away in search for better conditions.