

ZIMBABWE



This paper concentrates on those aspects of modern Zimbabwe of interest to the toponymist: modern history, people, language, and geographical names. It is not otherwise a specialist text. The paper is drawn together from an assortment of material, from a wide variety of sources, all contained in the PCGN *Zimbabwe* country file.

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SECTION A:

Outline of Recent History: From Company Rule to Independence

- 1 Southern Rhodesia¹, as today's Zimbabwe used to be known, had been controlled by the British South Africa Company (BSAC) since the 1890s, when the company had arrived to mine gold and had eventually wrested power from the ruling Ndebele² people. Upon the expiry of the BSAC's royal charter in 1922, the white population of the land voted in a referendum to become a British self-governing colony, rather than to join the Union of South Africa, and 1923 saw the birth of the British colony of Southern Rhodesia.
- 2 The supremacy of the white immigrant minority of the colony was reinforced by the introduction of two laws. The Land Apportionment Act in 1930 excluded Africans from ownership of the best farming land, forcing them into specifically designated "Native Reserves"³. A labour law was also passed in 1934 prohibiting Africans from working in skilled trades.
- 3 The colony was incorporated into the Central African Federation of Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia⁴ and Nyasaland⁵ (also known as the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland) which was formed in 1953. This federation was to last only ten years before its dissolution.
- 4 In May 1965 the white-dominated Rhodesian Front party, led by Ian Smith, was elected to power and sought independence. The British Government refused to grant this⁶, and in response Ian Smith, as Prime Minister, announced a Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) in November 1965 under the name Rhodesia. The resulting economic sanctions imposed by the British Government and later endorsed by the United Nations were mostly ineffective; Rhodesia's economy in fact strengthened⁷.
- 5 Civil unrest was rife. The two principal military groups fighting against the government for black majority rule were the Ndebele-dominated Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) led by Joshua Nkomo, and the Shona⁸-dominated Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) headed initially by Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole and later by Robert Mugabe. These groups resorted to guerrilla tactics to highlight their cause and operated out of neighbouring countries⁹. The two sides were joined in a short-lived and uneasy alliance in 1976 as the Patriotic Front.

¹ named after Cecil John Rhodes, the founder of the British South Africa Company

² see paragraphs 20 & 21

³ these were turned into the Tribal Trust Lands in 1965 and were renamed "Communal Areas" after independence

⁴ now Zambia

⁵ now Malawi

⁶ Britain demanded voting rights for the black majority

⁷ a contributing factor was that sanctions were ignored by commercial elements of a large number of the country's trading partners, including Britain

⁸ see paragraphs 18 & 19

⁹ ZANU forces were based in Mozambique; the ZAPU army was in Zambia

- 6 The guerrilla uprisings and resulting exodus of the white population, combined with regional and international pressure, finally persuaded the government to take a more conciliatory view. Internal discussions between the government and a number of black nationalists took place alongside international negotiations, and a constitution was drafted for the new country, which, as a concession to the nationalists, was to be called Zimbabwe-Rhodesia. Multi-racial elections¹⁰ were held in early 1979 amid continuing unrest, and the post of Prime Minister was awarded to Bishop Abel Muzorewa. Later that same year a lengthy conference held at Lancaster House in London¹¹ finally agreed upon terms for independence. This agreement was signed on 17th December 1979.

SECTION B:

Outline of Recent History: Independence to the Present Day

- 7 Free elections held in February 1980 resulted in victory for Robert Mugabe's ZANU PF party, with ZAPU also winning a proportion of the seats. Ian Smith's Republican (formerly Rhodesian) Front party took all the seats reserved for whites under the terms of the independence agreement. On 18th April 1980 the independent country of Zimbabwe emerged. The largely ceremonial role of President went to Reverend Canaan Banana, and Robert Mugabe became Prime Minister of the coalition government. A new flag was adopted which represented different elements of the country: the green standing for the land, the yellow its mineral resources, the red the blood spilt during the struggle for independence, and the black representing the black majority. The soapstone bird was included, being the national symbol, and a white triangle stood for peace and the "way forward".
- 8 Initially, Mugabe adopted a conciliatory approach towards all of Zimbabwe's peoples. However within a short time the early years of independence were to be marked by disagreement within the government and subsequent conflict. Nkomo was dismissed from his position in the coalition government in 1982 after arms were discovered on ZAPU-owned properties in Matabeleland. A particularly severe drought contributed to the period of unrest which ensued, as acts of violence perpetrated by mostly Ndebele pro-Nkomo dissidents were countered by the Shona-dominated government troops of the Fifth Brigade. It is estimated that up to 25,000 civilians were killed as they were caught up in the four years of violence.
- 9 The troubles in Matabeleland finally abated in 1987 with an agreement between the ZANU PF and ZAPU, which led to the merging of the two parties under the ZANU-PF banner. In autumn 1987, constitutional changes took place as Mugabe called for a one-party state and took over as President in what was now an executive role. Nkomo became one of the two figurehead Vice-Presidents, a position he retained until he retired through ill health in 1996¹². The previous clause reserving seats for whites was revoked.

¹⁰ these elections, officially classed as "non-racial", were boycotted by the Patriotic Front who had been excluded from the internal talks

¹¹ attended by all parties, including the Patriotic Front

¹² he died in July 1999

- 10 The issue of land ownership, a major concern of the country's government since independence, was brought to the forefront in March 1992 with the introduction of the Land Acquisition Act¹³ which allowed the government to make compulsory purchases of land. The government declared that half the land currently belonging to white farmers should be re-allocated to the black majority. At this point approximately 60% of the productive farming land was owned by the white minority who made up less than 1% of the total population.
- 11 The rule of Mugabe's ZANU-PF party and his position as President were reinforced in the mid-1990s with a substantial victory in both parliamentary and presidential elections in 1995 and 1996 respectively. At this time there had been no viable opposition, but in 1999 a new party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), was formed to stand in opposition to the ZANU-PF. This multi-racial party was led by Morgan Tsvangirai¹⁴.
- 12 Meanwhile further economic problems developed. Unemployment figures were rapidly increasing, and on several occasions the army was called in to suppress rioters in Harare who were protesting about high rises in the cost of food.
- 13 Throughout the 1990s Mugabe restated his commitment to land reform, but implementation was retarded due to lack of funds. In early 2000, changes to the constitution allowing the confiscation of white-owned land without compensation were introduced, but a referendum on the amended constitution failed to gather sufficient public support. Despite losing the referendum, the government implemented the changes, triggering the illegal occupation of white-owned farms. A number of white farmers and black farm workers were murdered as the occupations became more violent.
- 14 The results of parliamentary elections in June 2000 showed a fairly even division of the vote between supporters of the ZANU-PF and of the MDC parties. Nevertheless, a prior government-backed violent campaign towards opposition supporters had marred the outcome and the MDC party contested the result for particular seats through the High Court, with some success.
- 15 Throughout 2001 reports of rampaging mobs, looting, violent farm occupations and arrests were abundant, as ZANU-PF supporters, and "war veterans" of the fight for independence led by ZANU-PF MP Chenjerai Hunzvi¹⁵ targeted white-owned businesses. At a Commonwealth Meeting in Abuja, Nigeria, in September 2001, Zimbabwe pledged to end the violence and ensure the lawful transfer of land, and in return the UK would assist in funding the procedure. However, there has been little sign of the implementation of this agreement. Meanwhile, acts of extreme violence and intimidation against the opposition parties, especially the MDC, and their supporters have been perpetrated in the run-up to the presidential elections in March 2002.

¹³ the Lancaster House Agreement had stated that the government could only buy land from whites who were "willing to sell", but this proviso expired after ten years

¹⁴ Shona Secretary General of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions and an ex-ZANU PF official

¹⁵ killed in a car accident in June 2001

- 16 Today, the picture of Zimbabwe is grim. Life expectancy is poor¹⁶ and the prevalence of AIDS is the highest in the world, with an estimated 25% of the adult population being infected. Despite the abundance of natural resources and tourist potential, the economy has been severely weakened by government deficits and mismanagement. Widespread violence and intimidation continue. With two-thirds of the working population employed in agriculture, the land issue remains crucial and the National Land Acquisition and Redistribution Committee continues to promote the resettlement programme, identifying farmland to be redistributed to the “landless people”.

SECTION C: People & Languages

- 17 Zimbabwe’s population of approximately 11,365,000¹⁷ is made up predominantly of two ethnic groups: the Shona¹⁸ who constitute the majority at around 71%, and the Ndebele¹⁹ who make up approximately 16%. The remainder of the population comprises mainly other African groups (11%), with mixed and Asian peoples making up only 1% of the total. Less than 1% of the population is white. English is the country’s official language, but it is the first language of only 2% of the population. The main tongues are of the Bantu group; namely the various dialects of Shona and Ndebele, and there are also several other minor tribal languages.

18 **Shona**

The Shona people migrated into this area in the 10th and 11th centuries from the Shaba Region of the country known today as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and mixed with the Bantu-speaking indigenous population. They are now found predominantly in the east of the country to the north of the Lundi River. The Shona comprise several subgroups, which are then further divided into minor groups. The major subgroups are Kalanga, Karanga, Korekore, Manyika, Ndau and Zezuru²⁰.

- 19 The relatively ancient language of the Shona is of the Bantu group of African languages. Most of the ethnic subgroups also have their own dialect, but it is the language of the Zezuru which is often perceived as enjoying a somewhat privileged status, being the language spoken in Harare and on national radio. A unified orthography was accepted in 1929 for Shona to be written in Roman script with several modified letters. The grammar is based mainly on Karanga and Zezuru with some elements of Manyika and Korekore.

20 **Ndebele**

The Ndebele people mainly inhabit land in the western parts of Zimbabwe; in the Matabeleland provinces and in Bulawayo. Originating from South Africa, the Ndebele migrated northwards at the beginning of the nineteenth century and for over half a century dominated the more numerous Shona.

¹⁶ average 37 years

¹⁷ see paragraph 25

¹⁸ also seen as Mashona

¹⁹ also seen as Matabele

²⁰ Mugabe is a member of the Zezuru subgroup

21 The language of the Ndebele, which is sometimes seen as Sindebele²¹, belongs to the Nguni group of the southern Bantu languages and is a dialect of Zulu. It is written in Roman script, and its alphabet contains all the letters of the English alphabet with the exception of “r”. The Nguni group is unusual among the Bantu languages, as it employs a variety of “clicks” alongside the plain consonants. Also, a complicated system of tones distinguishes the meanings of certain words.

22 **Whites**

The first white settlers moved into the area following the discovery of gold and the arrival of the British South Africa Company in 1890. There was a further influx of whites, primarily of British origin, upon the establishment of the British Colony in 1923. There are also Afrikaners from South Africa and some European minorities, including Portuguese from neighbouring Mozambique. With independence approaching in the late 1970s many whites emigrated and the number has declined rapidly since then, dropping from 223,000 in the mid-1980s to an estimated 75,000 by 2000. Many of the whites remaining at independence took Zimbabwean citizenship.

23 **Other African groups**

The remainder of Zimbabwe’s population is made up of other African groups, such as Hlengwe, Sena, Shangane, Sotho, Tonga, and Venda. Some of these are third-generation Zimbabweans whose family roots are in Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia. A large number are farm workers.

24 **Asian**

Numbering only 20,000, the Asian population originated principally from India and is now mainly involved in commercial life in Zimbabwe, running shops and factories.

SECTION D: Administrative Divisions & Population Figures

25 This landlocked southern African country covers an area of 390,580sq km²², with an estimated population of 11,365,366 (2001). However, given the unrest and high prevalence of AIDS in the country²³, it is difficult to assess accurately the current figures. Population figures given in the list below are as quoted from the August 1992 census.

26 Zimbabwe currently comprises ten first-order administrative divisions; eight provinces and two cities with provincial status, Bulawayo and Harare. Bulawayo was formerly part of Matabeleland North Province and Harare once fell under Mashonaland East.

²¹ the Ndebele language used in parts of today’s South Africa belongs to a different subgroup of Zulu

²² a little larger than Germany

²³ see paragraph 16

<u>Province</u>	<u>Population of province</u>	<u>Centre</u>	<u>Population of centre</u>	<u>Co-ordinates of centre</u>
Manicaland	1,537,676	Mutare	131,367	18°58'S 32°40'E
Mashonaland Central	857,318	Bindura	21,200	17°18'S 31°20'E
Mashonaland East	1,033,336	Marondera	39,384	18°11'S 31°33'E
Mashonaland West	1,116,928	Chinhoyi	43,054	17°22'S 30°12'E
Masvingo	1,221,845	Masvingo	51,743	20°05'S 30°50'E
Matabeleland North ²⁴	640,957	Lupane	<i>not known</i>	18°56'S 27°46'E
Matabeleland South	591,747	Gwanda	10,600	20°56'S 29°00'E
Midlands	1,302,212	Gweru	128,000	19°27'S 29°49'E
Bulawayo*	621,742	Bulawayo	621,742	20°09'S 28°35'E
Harare*	1,478,810	Harare	1,189,103	17°49'S 31°02'E

* city of first-order administrative division status

See map at Annex A for extent of administrative divisions

The ten **most populous cities**, based on 1992 figures, are:

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>Co-ordinates</u>
1.	Harare	1,189,103	17°49'S 31°02'E
2.	Bulawayo	621,742	20°09'S 28°35'E
3.	Chitungwiza	274,900	18°00'S 31°10'E
4.	Mutare	131,367	18°58'S 32°40'E
5.	Gweru	128,000	19°27'S 29°49'E
6.	Kwekwe	75,400	18°55'S 29°49'E
7.	Kadoma	67,800	18°21'S 29°55'E
8.	Masvingo	51,743	20°05'S 30°50'E
9.	Zvishavane	46,200	20°20'S 30°02'E
10.	Chinhoyi	43,054	17°22'S 30°12'E

BOUNDARIES OF ZIMBABWE

Botswana	813km
Mozambique	1,231km
South Africa	225km
Zambia	797km

TOTAL BOUNDARY: 3,066km

²⁴ the administrative centre of Matabeleland North was recently moved from Bulawayo to Lupane

SECTION E:**Selected Name Changes since Independence**

26. In the years immediately following Zimbabwe's independence many name changes took place, not only of towns and rivers, but also of buildings and streets, as the authorities aimed to erase any vestiges of the "colonial era". The opportunity was also taken to alter the spellings of some features to reflect more accurately their pronunciation in an African manner.
27. The list below gives a selection of the more important name changes. For a more detailed list of changes, see PCGN's document *Zimbabwe: List of Name Changes Since Independence* March 1987.

<u>New name</u>	<u>Old name/s</u>	<u>Designation</u> [see page 9]	<u>Co-ordinates</u>	
Amanzamyama	Nata/Manzamyama	STM	20°14'S	26°10'E
Chegutu	Hartley	PPL	18°08'S	30°09'E
Chimanimani	Melsetter/Mandidzudzure	PPL	19°48'S	32°52'E
Chinhoyi	Sinoia	PPL	17°22'S	30°12'E
Chivhu	Enkeldoorn	PPL	19°01'S	30°54'E
Chrome Mine	Explosives	PPL	19°40'S	29°58'E
Esigodini	Essexvale	PPL	20°18'S	28°56'E
Guruve	Chipuriro/Sipolilo	PPL	16°40'S	30°42'E
Guruve District	Sipolilo District	ADM2	16°20'S	30°35'E
Gwai River	Dahlia	PPL	18°37'S	27°10'E
Gweru	Gwelo	PPL	19°27'S	29°49'E
Gweru	Gwelo	STM	18°46'S	28°37'E
Harare	Salisbury	PPLC	17°50'S	31°03'E
Harare District	Salisbury District	ADM2	18°00'S	30°55'E
Hwange	Wankie	PPL	18°22'S	26°29'E
Hwange District	Wankie District	ADM2	18°45'S	26°30'E
Kadoma	Gatooma	PPL	18°21'S	29°55'E
Kadoma District	Gatooma District	ADM2	17°40'S	29°25'E
Kahuhute	Kaoute	STM	17°11'S	28°57'E
Kwekwe	Que Que	PPL	18°55'S	29°49'E
Kwekwe District	Que Que District	ADM2	18°45'S	29°30'E
Makonde District	Lomagundi District	ADM2	17°10'S	30°05'E
Manyame	Hunyani	STM	15°37'S	30°39'E
Marondera	Marandellas	PPL	18°11'S	31°33'E
Marondera District	Marandellas District	ADM2	18°15'S	31°30'E
Masvingo	Fort Victoria/Nyanda	PPL	20°05'S	30°50'E
Masvingo District	Victoria District	ADM2	20°30'S	31°00'E
Masvingo Province	Victoria Province	ADM1	21°00'S	31°00'E
Mukumbura	Mkumvura	STM	c.16°00'S	31°10'E
Munyati	Umniati	STM	17°30'S	29°23'E

Mutare	Umtali	PPL	18°58'S	32°40'E
Mutare District	Umtali District	ADM2	19°10'S	32°25'E
Mwenezi	Nuanetsi	PPL	21°25'S	30°44'E
Runde	Lundi	STM	21°19'S	32°24'E
Sango	Vila Salazar	PPL	22°03'S	31°42'E
Save	Sabi	STM	21°00'S	35°02'E
Shamshangwa	Nyajecheni	STM	20°21'S	30°21'E
Shurugwi	Selukwe	PPL	19°40'S	30°00'E
Shurugwi District	Selukwe District	ADM2	19°45'S	30°10'E
Suri Suri Dam	Hippo Pools	RSV	18°05'S	30°09'E
Thuli	Tuli	STM	21°48'S	29°04'E
Tshakabele	Mjakwili	STM	21°29'S	30°04'E
Zangose Range	Kiamkosi Range	HLLS	17°23'S	29°44'E
Zvishavane	Shabani	PPL	20°20'S	30°02'E

Key to designation codes:

ADM1	province (= first-order administrative division)
ADM2	district (= second-order administrative division)
HLLS	hills
PPL	populated place
PPLC	capital city
RSV	reservoir
STM	river; watercourse

ZIMBABWE

