Religion and Nationalism in the Making of Zimbabwe, 1948 to the Present Day

Special Subject from Michaelmas 2021 taught by Professor David Maxwell

Nationalism has been a powerful force in Zimbabwean history as a mobilising ideology and it continues to play a key part in the arena in which political ideas and participation are imagined. It remains central to debates about who belongs, and who has the right to speak, to vote and to own land.

This paper examines the histories of nationalism as a set of movements and ideologies, analysing how it articulates to struggles of gender, generation, class and ethnicity. It considers alternative political trajectories, such as movements of labour, that were subsumed in the groundswell of nationalism during the 1950s and revived in the 1990s. And, in particular, it examines religious models of liberation and how they articulate to politics. The paper surveys churches and religious NGOs in civil society, forms of development; the Born-again movement; and new digital publics. We will also study how Christian movements can foster solidarities that transcend the nation-state and reject formal politics in favour of emancipation through healing and exorcism, or through self-reliance and the gospel of prosperity.

The paper spans three periods:

A: The General Strike and Nationalist mobilisation, 1948 to 1980

This period commenced with widespread labour unrest and then a phase of open mass nationalism. It ended with a violent war of liberation (1976-80). While much popular passion and commitment to the nationalist cause was evident, nationalist parties exhibited growing authoritarian tendencies. A tolerant pluralist tradition of nationalism was replaced by a more single-minded assertion of national unity which subsumed a variety of subaltern struggles. To some extent guerrillas achieved the legitimate wartime mobilisation of the peasantry by making connection with religious ideas and idioms, or by reviving party structures. But they could also turn to violence and coercion.

B: From Post War buoyancy and development to the fracturing of the nationalist coalition 1980-1997.

Drawing legitimacy from its wartime record, Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe African National Union/ Patriotic Front (ZANU/PF) came to power after a stunning electoral victory in 1980. The ruling party’s early popularity was also derived from the inheritance of Southern Rhodesia’s strong centralised state, notable for its developmental acumen (as well as its repression). Civil servants with a strong professional ethic and technical expertise managed to deliver on some of the ZANU/PF’s
welfarist agenda. Nevertheless, the ruling party’s violent and intolerant nationalism came to the fore in the 1990s as human rights organisations began to publish accounts of its repression of the opposition party, the Zimbabwe African Patriotic Union (ZAPU), in Matabeleland. By the end of the 1990s the nationalist alliance fractured. As the destructive effects of the neo-liberal Structural Adjustment Programme began to be felt, the churches, labour and other elements of civil society became disillusioned with the pace of development. Civil society grew in prominence as churches, the labour movement, consumers, students and war veterans confronted the state with their grievances.

C: The Crisis 1998 to 2008, and its aftermath

Zimbabwe’s crisis began with rising unemployment, stagnating salaries and the decline of rural livelihoods and became a catastrophe of hyperinflation, deindustrialisation, and mass impoverishment. As the ruling party lost connection with the people and grew increasingly incapable of meeting popular expectations for services, a new opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), emerged from the labour movement and civil society. Following its electoral victory in 2008, the MDC was contained by state-led violence, repression and surveillance that limited its ability to organise in rural areas and run political campaigns. Retaining control over the state, the ruling party deployed the War Veterans to politicise the civil service and the judiciary, and to de-professionalise bureaucracies. The MDC was lulled into power sharing with ZANU/PF, signing the Global Political Agreement. A period of stability prevailed under Zimbabwe’s new Inclusive Government, which the MDC hoped would lead to a peaceful democratic transition. Instead, power sharing was used by ZANU/PF to reorganise its party structures and rebuild its constituency via a politics of patronage, enabling it to win the 2013 elections. The paper ends by examining the rise of digital public opposition exemplified by Pastor Evan Mawarire’s #This Flag Movement, and it considers the 2017 coup that replaced Robert Mugabe with Emmerson Mnangagwa.

Sources:
Sources will include human rights documentation, interviews, personal reminiscences of former guerrillas, government propaganda and autobiographies by nationalist leaders, the Zimbabwean press, pastoral letters, press statements and campaigning pamphlets from churches and NGOs, and canonical histories and hagiographies produced by Pentecostals.

Teaching and Learning:
Apart from the opening introductory lecture, the paper will be taught in seminar form. The first hour will be organised around student-led presentations. These presentations will address issues of history, historiography and specific sources. Different students will be responsible for giving a presentation each week. The presentations will be a major task and students will be encouraged to produce powerpoints to accompany their deliberations. In the second hour the whole class will discuss the sources designated for that week. Those not presenting will still be expected to have read the key primary and
secondary texts. I will introduce the class, steer the discussion (if necessary) and sum-up.

In addition, there will be a series of focussed sessions on the primary sources. There will be one session each in Michaelmas and Lent Terms, while Easter will be devoted to gobbets practice. Lastly, we will watch several films and have a virtual session with historian and film maker, James Ault, to consider his documentary film on the life of Zimbabwe’s gospel music legend, Machanic Manyeruke.

Specimen Long Essay Questions:

1) Was there a General Strike in 1948?

2) Why did guerrillas seek religious legitimation from Christian holy men and spirit mediums during the War of Liberation?

3) To what extent was the Civil War [Gukurahundi] an ethnic conflict?

4) Why was the church a willing partner in development in the first two decades of Zimbabwe’s independence?

5) Was the Third Chimurenga Zimbabwe’s Cultural Revolution?

6) What does Patriotic History tell us about the evolution of Zimbabwean nationalism?

7) Why does the Gospel of Prosperity retain such widespread appeal in post-colonial Zimbabwe?

8) ‘It was patronage rather than political violence that secured the ZANU/PF election victory in 2013.’ Discuss.

9) What was the political significance of Pastor Evan Mawarire’s #ThisFlag movement?

10) How did Robert Mugabe remain in power for 37 years?
General Reading

Outline histories: The Cambridge history of Africa (Vols. 7 & 8) and the UNESCO General history of Africa (Vols. 7-8).

The Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History, has hundreds of articles on a variety of relevant themes and topics.

Useful textbook histories on Africa:
Cooper, F. Africa since 1940 (Second edition, 2019)
Nugent, P. Africa since independence (2nd ed, 2012)
Reid, R J. A history of modern Africa: 1800 to the present (2nd ed, 2012)

Useful Secondary Texts on Zimbabwe:
Karekwaikavanane G. The Struggle over State Power in Zimbabwe Law and Politics since 1950 (2020)
Mlambo, A. A History of Zimbabwe (2014)
Michaelmas Term

1. a) Introduction: History & Historiography
b) Flame. [A film about the experiences of a young woman who joins up to fight in the guerrilla war]

(see also Moore, D. 'Flame and the historiography of armed struggle in Zimbabwe' in R. Mendelsohn & V. Bickford-Smith (eds.) Black and White in Colour. African History on Screen (2007))
https://idiscover.lib.cam.ac.uk/permalink/f/t9gok8/44CAM_ALMA21440060280003606

2. The 1948 strike and the Native Land Husbandry Act: Urban and Rural Protest in the late 1940s and 1950s

Guiding Questions:
Who organised the strikes and how?
Was there a permanent working class?
How, if at all, did the strike shape Zimbabwean nationalism?
What social struggles were taking place in towns and cities?
Chikowero, M. *African music, power and being in colonial Zimbabwe* (2015)
*Phimister, I. *An economic and social history of Zimbabwe, 1890-1948* (1988)
Ranger, T *Peasant Consciousness and Guerrilla War in Zimbabwe* (1985)
Ranger, T. *Are We Not Also Men? The Samkange Family and African Politics in Zimbabwe* (1995)

b) Sources:

Correspondence between Charles Mzengeli and Arthur Shirley Cripps on: 1) the 1948 General Strike & African Politics; 2) The Reformed Industrial and Commercial Union Memorandum on the Native Land Husbandry Act (13 pages)


3. **Federation and Early Nationalist Politics 1953-72**

*Guiding Questions:*
Why was there a gap between the General Strike of 1948 and the appearance of Open Mass Nationalism in 1956?
Why was there a quick succession of African nationalist parties?
How did settler politics evolve?
To what extent were nationalists influenced by events outside of Zimbabwe?
How was nationalism divided?
How did Zimbabwean nationalism move in a unitary and authoritarian direction?
To what extent did Zimbabwe's nationalist trajectory differ from the rest of the African continent?

Groves, Z. Malawian Migration to Zimbabwe, 1900-1965 (2020)
Pollak, O. 'Black Farmers and white Politicians in Rhodesia', African Affairs 74, (1975)
*Ranger, T. Are We Not Also Men? The Samkange Family and African Politics in Zimbabwe (1995)

Settler Society & Politics:

Gann, L. A History of Southern Rhodesia (1965)
Leys, C. *European politics in Southern Rhodesia* (1959)
Loney, M. *Rhodesia. White Racism and Imperial Response* (1975)

*Nationalist Writings:*

Nyagumbo, M. *With the People* (1980)
Shamuyarira, N. *Crisis in Rhodesia* (1965)

*Sources:*
Reports of the Director of Native Administration, Salisbury, 1951 & 1962. (19 pages).

4. The War: Causes, Course and Armies

*Guiding questions:*
How can we periodise the war?
How did popular mobilisation differ in the east and the west?
How did ZANU and ZAPU strategy differ?
What was ZIPA?
What was detente?
What strategies did the security forces use against the guerrilla threat?
What was the civilian experience of the war? How did it differ across regions and social categories?
To what extent is our understanding of the war shaped by the victor's narrative?

*General:*
*Kriger, N Zimbabwe’s Guerrilla War. Peasant Voices* (1992)
*Mugabe, R Our war of liberation* (1983)
*Ranger, T. Peasant Consciousness and Guerrilla War in Zimbabwe* (1985)

*Gender:*

**War in Matabeleland:**
Werbner, R. *Tears for the Dead* (1991)

**Guerrilla Armies and Revolutionary Politics:**
Astrow, A. *Zimbabwe: The revolution that lost its way?* (1983)
Frederickse, J. *None but ourselves* (1982)
Nyathi, A. *Tomorrow is built Today. The Experience of War, Colonialism and the Struggle for Collective Co-operatives in Zimbabwe* (1990)
Raeburn, M. *Black Fire* (1978)
Tungamirai, J. 'Recruitment to ZANLA. Building up a war machinery' in N. Bhebe and T. Ranger (eds.), *Zimbabwe's liberation war (Vol I) Soldiers*, (1995)

**Rhodesian Military Strategies:**
Caute, D. *Under the Skin. The Death of White Rhodesia* (1983)
Cilliers, J. *Counter Insurgency in Rhodesia* (1985)
Flower, K. *Serving Secretly* (1987)
Hancock, I & P. Godwin *Rhodsiens Never Die: The Impact of the War and Political Change on White Rhodesia* (1997)

**Novels and Reminiscences:**
Chinodya S. *Harvest of Thorns* (1989)
Hove, C. *Bones* (1990)

**Sources:**
Mhanda, W., *Dzino, Memories of a Freedom Fighter*, (2011) (30 pages)
5. The War & Popular Mobilisation: Religion, Legitimacy and Coercion

Guiding questions:
Why did ZANLA guerrillas need popular legitimation?
By what processes was traditional religious legitimacy bestowed upon guerrillas?
How did guerrillas mobilise peasants in zones of popular Christianity?
What was the fate of Euro-American missionaries operating in rural areas during the war?
What was the nature of church-state relations at a national level?
What was the Church’s theological response to the war?

General
* Kriger, N. Zimbabwe’s Guerrilla War. Peasant Voices (1992)
Mugabe, R. Our war of liberation (1983)
* Ranger, T Peasant Consciousness and Guerrilla War in Zimbabwe (1985)

The Traditional Religious Response:
Bourdillion, M. 'Taking Structural Analysis too Far' Africa, (1987) 57, 2,
Daneel, M. 'Healing the Earth: Traditional and Christian Initiatives in Southern Africa' (DM)
* Kriger, N. Zimbabwe’s Guerrilla War. Peasant Voices (1992)
Raeburn, M. Black Fire (1978)
Ranger, T. Peasant Consciousness and Guerrilla War in Zimbabwe (1985)
The Church and the War:

Banana, C.  *The Church in the Struggle for Zimbabwe. [From the Programme to Combat Racism to Combat Theology]* (1996)


Bhebe, N.  *ZAPU and ZANU guerrilla warfare and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe* (1999)


Lapsley, M.  *Neutrality or Cooperation? Anglican Church and State from 1964 until the Independence of Zimbabwe* (1986)

Linden, I.  *The Roman Catholic Church and the Struggle for Zimbabwe* (1979)


Ranger, T.  *Peasant Consciousness* (1985)

Tarusarira, J.  *Reconciliation and Religio-political Non-conformism in Zimbabwe* (2016)

Sources:

Interviews conducted by David Maxwell (interpreted by Joseph Chitima and Shupikai Chikutirwe & Samson Mudzudza) with Diki Rukadza, medium of Nyawada, Chifambe, 1989-1991 & Interview conducted by David Maxwell with Augustine Mabvira (*Comrade Rangarirai Mwana We Povo – Remember the Child of the Poor*), Ruangwe 31 May 1988. (20 pages)

The correspondence of Stephen Matewa, 1977-80 (10 pages)

Papers regarding Avilia Mission, Nyanga District 1979-80, Carmelite Archives, Dublin (10 pages)

Interviews conducted by J.Mushayi with Ex-Combatants, War Studies Department, University of Zimbabwe, 1996 (30 pages).


Guiding Questions:

Why did the historic mission churches appear to acquiesce to the state in the 1980s?
How did the historic mission churches change their agenda in the 1980s and what does this tell us about the new Zimbabwean state?
What issues did the church address at local level?
How significant was North American Evangelical missionary activity in Southern Africa?

Banana, C. *The Church in the Struggle for Zimbabwe. [From the Programme to Combat Racism to Combat Theology]* (1996)
Bakare, S *My Right to Land. In the Bible and in Zimbabwe* (1993)
Mutume, D. *The priorities of the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops’ Conference since independence’ in C. Hallencreutz & A. Moyo (eds.) *Church and State in Zimbabwe*, (1988)
Phimister, I. *Background: The Combined and Contradictory Inheritance of the
Randolph, R. *Dawn in Zimbabwe* (1985)
Reynolds, P. *Traditional Healers and Childhood in Zimbabwe* (1996)
Tarusarira, J. *Reconciliation and Religio-political Non-conformism in Zimbabwe* (2016)

**Sources:**

7. The Civil War / Gukurahundi: Violence and Ethnicity

*Guiding Questions:*
Why did post war unity between ZANU and ZAPU fail?
To what extent was tribalism a factor in the Civil War?
Was there a ZAPU plot against the state?
How important was South African destabilisation?
How would you differentiate the so-called dissidents?
What was 5th Brigade strategy?
What does Gukurahundi reveal about Zimbabwean nationalism?

Auret, D. *Reaching For Justice* (1992)
Dzimba, J. *South Africa's Destabilisation of Zimbabwe* (1997)
*Werbner, R. *Tears for the Dead* (1991)

Sources:
pp. i-xviii & 1-113 (131 pages)

8. 1997: The Fracturing of the Nationalist Alliance

Guiding Questions:
What was ESAP and what were its effects?
What happened to the ruling party at local level and in its upper echelons?
How would you characterise the politics of land in the 1980s and 1990s?
What strategies were used by the ruling party to retain power?
What were the antecedents of opposition politics?
Explain the growing influence of the War Veterans.

Politics and the Rise of the Opposition Movement

Chakaodza, A. *Structural Adjustment in Zambia and Zimbabwe. Reconstructive or*
Destructive (1993)
Herbst, G. State Politics in Zimbabwe (1990) chapter 10
Werbner, R. ‘Smoke from the Barrel of a Gun: Postwars of the Dead, Memory and Re-Inscription in Zimbabwe’ in R. Werbner (ed.) Memory and the Postcolon (1998)

Structural Adjustment and the Economy:
International Monetary Fund, *Zimbabwe Recent Economic Developments* (1996)
Maposa, I. *Land Reform in Zimbabwe* (1995)
Mundy, S. *The Urban Poverty Datum Line in Zimbabwe* (1995)

b)

**Sources:**
Balleis, P [SJ], *ESAP and Theology* (1992) pp.1-40 (40 pages)
Renfew, A. *ESAP and Health*, pp-1-30 (1992) (30 pages)

**LENT TERM**

9 *Zimbabwean Society in the 1980s and 90s: Gender and Sexuality*

*Guiding Questions:*
What happened to women’s rights in the 1980s and 1990s?
Why did gay rights become an issue in the 1990s?
What does discrimination against women and gays tell us about Zimbabwean nationalism?
How important was youth as a category of analysis?

Handbook of Zimbabwean Politics (2020).
Weiss, R. Zimbabwe and the New Elite (1994)

Sources:

10. Pentecostalism, Neo-Liberalism and Religious Transnationalism
Guiding Questions:

How do you explain the rise of Pentecostal Christianity in Zimbabwe?
Why did it take-off in the late 1980s?
How significant is its transnationalism?
How does it revise relations of gender, ethnicity and class?
Is it a youth movement?
What it its relation to the state?
Does the Gospel of Prosperity make sense?

Biri, K. ‘Migration, Transnationalism and the Shaping of Zimbabwean Pentecostal...
Gifford, P. *Christianity to Save or Enslave* (1990)

1) ‘Documentary film on the life of Zimbabwe's gospel music legend, Machanic Manyeruke, a story about family, faith, culture and music’ by historian and film maker, James Ault


2) Virtual Session with James Ault.

**Sources:**
11. Zimbabwe’s Crisis: War Veterans, The Third Chimurenga and the Politics of Land

Guiding Questions:
Why did land remain such a potent issue in post-colonial Zimbabwe?
Why did the ruling party side with the War Veterans?
What did President Mugabe mean by ‘Third Chimurenga’?
What constituencies did the Movement for Democratic Change represent?

Mlambo, A. 'This is our Land: The Racialization of Land in the Context of the Current Zimbabwe Crisis', *Journal of Developing Societies*, 26/1 (2010).

**Sources:**

**12. Patriotic History**

**Guiding questions:**
What is patriotic History?
Who are its authors?
What are its sources?
How does it relate to academic History?
What does it tell us about Zimbabwean nationalism?


Sources:

13. Operation Murambatsvina, the Urban Crisis and MDC Electoral Victory 2008

Guiding Questions:
Why did the ruling party turn on its own citizens in Operation Murambatsvina? What was the impact of Operation Murambatsvina? How did ZANU/PF attempt to manipulate elections in 2008? Why did the ruling party fair so badly in the 2008 elections?


Hany, B. (ed.) *Zimbabwe: Picking up the Pieces* (2011)

**Sources:**
The Zimbabwe Bishops Conference, the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwe Council of Churches, *The Zimbabwe We Want: towards a national Vision for Zimbabwe* (2006) (55 pages)
Human Rights Watch, "*You Will be Thoroughly Beaten": The Brutal Suppression of Dissent in Zimbabwe*, 2006 (55 pages)


**Guiding Questions:**
Why did the MDC join the GPA?
How was the MDC frustrated in its aims?
Outline the MDC's internal weaknesses
What was ZANU/PF strategy during the period of the GPA?
Describe the patronage economy.


Hany, B. (ed.) *Zimbabwe: Picking up the Pieces* (2011)

International Crisis Group (ICG), ‘Resistance and Denial: Zimbabwe’s Stalled Reform Agenda’ (2011)


Raftopoulos, B. 'An Overview of the GPA: National Conflict, Regional Agony and International Dilemma.' in B. Raftopoulos (ed.), *The Hard Road to Reform*, (2013) (see various other essays in the volume)


On the informal / patronage economy see:


**Sources:**


Interviews conducted by Dr Michael Aeby with:

1) Father Frederic Chiromba, Secretary-General of Catholic Bishops Conference of Zimbabwe Date: 10.09.13 Place: Africa Diocese House, Cnr Selous Street & 4th Avenue, Harare.
2) Shadreck Makombe, Secretary General of Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association / Former ZANLA-fighter Date: 19.07.13 Place: History Department, University of Zimbabwe, Harare.
3) Morgan Tsvangirai, Prime Minister & MDC President 03.11.13
4) Rev Dr Solomon Zwana Functions: Secretary General of Zimbabwe Council of Churches Date: 13.07.13 Place: Zimbabwe Council of Churches. (75 pages).

15. The #This Flag Movement and the rise of Digital Religious Publics

*Guiding Questions:*

What is a digital public?

Explain the fleeting success of the #ThisFlag movement?

What were its limitations?

Was it a religious movement?


Gukurume, S. ‘#ThisFlag and This #Gown Cyber Protests in Zimbabwe: Reclaiming Political Space’, *African Journalism Studies*, 38, (2017)

Gukurume, S. 'New Pentecostal Churches, Politics and the Everyday Life of University Students at the University of Zimbabwe', *PhD Thesis*, University of Cape Town (2018) (DJM)


Karekwaivanane, G. & A. Mare, “‘We are Not just voters, we are citizens!’: Social Media, the #This Flag Campaign, and Insurgent Citizenship in Zimbabwe’


16. The Party Coup 2017

Guiding Questions:
What were the dynamics of the succession struggle that underpinned the coup?
To what extent was it a military coup?
Account for the influence of the military in Zimbabwean politics?
Why did the military attempt to ‘disguise their actions’?
Explain Mnangagwa’s assent to power.
What, if anything, changed with arrival of Mnangagwa?

Beardsworth, N, N. Cheeseman & Tinhu, S. ‘Zimbabwe: the Coup that Never Was and the Election that could have been’, African Affairs, 118/472, (2019): 580-96
Mwonzora, G. and E. Mandikwaza. 2019. ‘The Menu of Electoral Manipulation in Zimbabwe: Food Handouts, Violence, Memory, and Fear – Case of


**Sources:**

*Report of the Motlanthe Commission of Inquiry into the 1st August 2018 Post-Election Violence.* (128 pages)

Total pages 1711

**17. Preparing for Gobbets**

b) *Everybody's Child* [Film about HIV/AIDS and the struggles of orphans]

**Easter Term: Revision**

1. Revision (gobbets)
2. Revision (gobbets & HAP)
3. Revision (gobbets)
4. Revision (gobbets)