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Bernardo Paci

SOVEREIGN CORPORATIONS

Intellectual History and Political Philosophy of the British South Africa Company

with a foreword by Teodoro Tagliaferri

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Foreword

The Company-States as a Typological Variant of the «Empire-Form»

Teodoro Tagliaferri

This essay is the result of research on the British South Africa Company that Bernardo Paci conducted – partly in continuation of a previous work[1] and partly by developing new approaches, with a sharper focus on the historiographical and political-philosophical dimensions of the subject –, in close connection with the Research Project of Relevant National Interest (PRIN 2020) "Myths of Legitimation and Government of Difference in the European Imperial Regimes during the Modern and Contemporary Age" (EURIMPER)[2]. The inclusion of the BSAC within the thematic scope of the Project is motivated by the conviction that exploring aspects such as the Company's indigenous politics, its interaction with British imperial and colonial authorities, and the corresponding rhetorics of ideological self-justification, along the lines expounded by the author in the introduction, can contribute to shedding original light on a specific mode of the so-called «expansion of Europe»[3] – that mode which for three centuries, starting in the early seventeenth, albeit in alternating phases, saw the privileged or chartered companies as protagonists and which only recently has begun to be studied systematically in its generality and in terms of both diachronic and synchronic comparison. The trajectory of the BSAC can in fact be considered, in important respects, as the salient episode of a brief period of limited revival of the institutional model of the «company-state», which took place in Africa and the Pacific during the 1880s and 1890s, after the exhaustion of the first phase of intense and fecund

[1] B. Paci, *Razzismo, colonialismo e mitologie bianche. La storia rubata di Grande Zimbabwe*, Verona, Ombre Corte, 2022.

[2] https://www.eurimper.it/

[3] T. Tagliaferri, *Recent Developments in the Tradition of the Cambridge School of Imperial and Colonial History*, in *Nations in the Empire: The Many Faces of Indian Nationalism*, Proceedings of the International Conference held in Naples, Federico II University, Department of Political Sciences, 20-21 June 2023, edited by M. Griffo, D. Maiorano, T. Tagliaferri, Naples, Federico II University Press, 2024, pp. 153-182.

flowering that had lasted until the middle of the eighteenth century and had been followed by a long interval of eclipse[4]. The aim of this Foreword is to outline the conceptual coordinates of the approach to the theme of «company-states» adopted by our Project, within which Paci's significant contribution now finds its place in fruitful autonomy.

The PRIN EURIMPER is divided into five local research units based in five Italian universities (Naples Federico II, Florence, Trento, Trieste, and Venice Ca' Foscari) and involves medievalists, modernists, contemporary historians, geographers, area historians, historians of political doctrines and institutions, historians of international relations, and historians of art and literature. Its scientific objective is to take advantage of the variety of specialist skills of the numerous participants in order to conduct, through the examination and comparison of a selection of case studies, including both continental and overseas empires, a wide-ranging survey of Europe's colonial and imperial past – from the sixteenth century to its ubiquitous and sometimes incandescent legacies today, without neglecting its medieval background –[5], based on the integration of the methodological perspectives of imperial history, global history and cultural history and focusing on two interrelated aspects of the historical phenomenon under investigation: the strategies deployed by the empires when coping with the problems of management of diversity and differences inherent in their peculiar expansionary dynamics, power structures and institutional morphologies; the discourses and representations developed and disseminated, through a wide range of languages, channels and practices, to legitimise (or delegitimise) the solutions tried and tested for this purpose by the imperial authorities.

It goes without saying that the entire project presupposes, or at least rests on the falsifiable hypothesis, that the several imperial regimes, systems and expansionisms that it sets out to examine and compare – Spanish, Ottoman, Habsburg, Napoleonic, British, Russian, French Republican, Italian – actually share, however different and distant in space and time, some essential characteristics (beyond the insidious and certainly not innocent linguistic con-

[4] A. Phillips, J.C. Sharman, *Outsourcing Empire. How Company-States Made the Modern World*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2020; D. Armitage, *When Companies were Kings. New Perspectives on Imperial History*, in «Times Literary Supplement», 8 January 2021.

[5] R. Delle Donne, *Oltre l'origine. "Etnogenesi" e processi etnici slavi tra archeologia, genetica e memoria culturale*, in *Memoria, identità, politica della storia nei contesti europeo e (post)-sovietico*, edited by G. Cigliano and T. Tagliaferri, Naples, Federico II University Press, 2025, pp. 15-50.

vention that would have us group together under the same category a very long series of "empires" and "imperialisms" ranging from Sargon of Akkad to Vladimir Putin and Darth Vader). In this regard, the Project adopts an operational definition of the concept of empire, or rather of the «empire-form» as a category of world history[6], towards which the historiographical currents that have fuelled the revival and renewal of imperial history since the end of the Cold War (the so-called *imperial turn*) seem to converge, drawing inspiration from the perception that the state of the world after the epochal watershed constituted by the collapse of communism and the dissolution of the Soviet Union conferred unexpected political relevance on empires understood as regimes based on various and changing forms of «government of difference» – from the «polycentric monarchies» of the early modern age to the British Commonwealth of Nations of the interwar period[7].

According to the conceptualization adopted by the Project, as a theoretical assumption to be critically tested in the empirical studies conducted by the participants, imperial regimes are composite political entities (i.e., comprising a multiplicity of «political societies» within them), hierarchical (in which one of the components actually holds ultimate authority over the others) and pluralistic (in the sense that subordinate societies retain a corporate identity and an effective margin of collective autonomy). Within such large territorial polities, which in some cases tend to be coextensive with an ecumene, a multifaceted and stratified sovereignty is exercised over institutionally diverse and culturally heterogeneous or mixed geo-historical spaces, often in the name of some universal mission pertaining to the predominant group, with the decisive contribution of, and through incessant negotiation with, networks of collaborators and intermediaries recruited from the ranks of the «imperialized» communities[8].

The «politics of difference» characteristic of imperial regimes, and the corresponding rhetorics of legitimisation, therefore aim, in essence, to preserve the unstable balance between centripetal and centrifugal forces on which depends the existence of that complex and delicate mosaic of asymmetrical

[6] S. Pollock, *Axialism and Empire*, in *Axial Civilisations and World History*, edited by J.A. Arnason, S.N. Eisenstadt, B. Wittrock, Leiden, Brill, 2005, pp. 397-450.
[7] G. Muto, *Il governo delle differenze: i regni iberici e l'Italia spagnola*, in *Discorsi di delegittimazione: percorsi dell'antispagnolismo nell'Europa moderna*, edited by G. Scarpato and T. Tagliaferri, Naples, Federico II University Press, 2025, pp. 11-23.
[8] M.W. Doyle, *Empires*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1986, pp. 12-13, 19.

relations of reciprocity or partnerships that lies at its core and gives imperial systems their characteristic aspect of «kaleidoscopes moving through space and time» – according to Dominic Lieven's evocative metaphor – as they are engaged in a perpetual effort to reconcile, in ever new forms, the hierarchical unity of the whole and the plurality and diversity of its parts[9] .

The basis for the definition of the concept of empire outlined above is therefore that «theory of collaboration» which, having subsequently proved susceptible to fruitful application in the study of a wide range of imperial histories, was formulated after the Second World War to express the new sense of the limits and fragility of European imperial power brought about by decolonisation, or rather the need to broaden the analytical context of empire-building processes and the different types of European presence in the non-European world, so as to organically include the contribution of non-European forces which were now recognized as capable of interacting effectively with them[10]. According to its most up-to-date version, even at the height of so-called «mondialità europea» at the turn of the twentieth century[11], colonialism and European expansion never ceased to depend on a multitude of changing forms of collaboration and intermediation – and therefore on perpetual negotiation and compromise – that involved non-European élites: «empire was "made" as much if not more by the local auxiliaries that "empire-builders" recruited as by the imperialists themselves». The need to involve large sections of Indigenous societies in European rule, which were therefore never entirely without bargaining power and the ability to make their voices heard, conferred on colonial institutions a «hybrid» shape arising from the encounter of «conflicting traditions», on «imperial governance» the aspect of a «cross-cultural enterprise», and on the empire as a whole a perennially «improvised and provisional character»[12].

From the perspective of our research project, and in the light of the most up-to-date historiography on the subject, the interest of the company-states – as three-century-old transoceanic vectors of a *sui generis* form of European globalisation that cannot be reduced to the tired stereotype (evoked again a

[9] D. Lieven, *Empire. The Russian Empire and its Rivals*, London, John Murray, 2000, p. XVI; J. Burbank, F. Cooper, *Empires in World History. Power and the Politics of Difference*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2010.

[10] R.E. Robinson, *Non-European Foundations of European Imperialism: Sketch for a Theory of Collaboration*, in *Studies in the Theory of Imperialism*, edited by R. Owen and B. Sutcliffe, Harlow, Longman, 1972, pp. 117-142.

[11] E. Gentile, *Ascesa e declino dell'Europa nel mondo, 1898-1918*, Milan, Garzanti, 2018.

[12] L. Colley, *Captives. Britain, Empire and the World, 1600-1850*, London, Cape, 2002, p. 371; J. Darwin, *Unfinished Empire: The Global Expansion of England*, New York, Bloomsbury Press, 2013, pp. XII, XIII.

few months ago at the highest and most authoritative echelons of Italian political debate) that would like to make them merely synonymous with the concentration of powers abusively removed from public control for the purpose of perpetrating predatory colonialism[13] – therefore lies in the fact that they seem to constitute, in their morphology and physiology, a typological variant in their own right and of primary historical importance of the «empire-form».

From a historical and institutional point of view, in the pioneering and paradigmatic structure it assumed at the beginning of the seventeenth century with the creation of the English and Dutch East India Companies, the company-state presented the «hybrid» characteristics of a kind of commercial association whose specificity emerged from the combination of three elements[14]. Firstly, it was organised, for the purpose of pursuing capitalist profit, in the form of a joint-stock company with corporate legal personality, separate from that of its members and therefore with limited liability, and governed more or less autonomously by a metropolitan management board that conveyed its directives to the most remote extra-European theatres through the intermediation of its own agents operating *in loco*. The company-state was also vested by its articles of association, granted by the metropolitan political authority, with a legal monopoly on trade in certain goods or with certain overseas areas. Finally – and it was this third, crucial element that gave the company-state its peculiarly hybrid character –, by the same act of incorporation, the metropolitan state delegated to it, or allowed it to exercise, a range of «sovereign powers» that the ideal-type of the modern state considers to be the exclusive attributes of the state itself, such as the power to wage war and make peace, to use armed force to implement its monopolistic prerogatives, to conduct diplomatic transactions and conclude treaties, to acquire and colonise networks of coastal bases and maritime and territorial empires, to administer civil and criminal justice, to collect taxes and sometimes to mint coinage[15].

From the perspective of the history of ideas, as Andrew Phillips and J.C. Sharman have shrewdly observed, the early modern archetype of the company-state was based on the combination of two notions characteristic of the culture as well as legal and political practice of the Western Middle Ages. The first of these was the idea of «corporation» as an «association of individuals»

[13] Video message from the President of the Republic Sergio Mattarella at the 51st edition of the Ambrosetti Forum in Cernobbio, 6 September 2025, https://www.quirinale.it/elementi/138365.

[14] A. Phillips, J.C. Sharman, *Outsourcing Empire*, p. 1 and *passim*.

[15] *Ibid*., p. 7 and *passim*.

with a legal identity which is «distinct» from that of its individual members and with the legal «capacity» to own property, to «contract with third parties», to establish a «hierarchical and centralised governance structure» in order to «regulate its internal affairs, discipline its members and resolve their disputes», to make decisions and to invest its own «agents» with authority[16] . The second pillar of medieval origin of the company-state was the pluralist conception of sovereignty as a «bundle of divisible prerogatives, capable of delegation to a wide variety of [...] non-state actors» or «privileged subjects» («Church, Universities, urban municipalities, and merchant guilds») and as «territorially not-exclusive»[17]. The complex geo-historical spaces included in that very broad section of European imperial expansion, which had the company-states as co-architects between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, therefore exemplify a condition in which «multiple centres of power and authority overlap and intersect within the same territorial space»[18]. This is not only because in non-European worlds the influence and power of company-states depended in various ways on the collaboration of Indigenous «polities», which sometimes «hosted» them (as in the case of the East India Company, which was initially vassal to the Mughal Empire), sometimes were subordinate to them, and sometimes served as their allies[19]. The structure of the company-state fits well with the definition of the «empire-form» outlined above also in the particular sense that the privileged companies themselves constitute a particular subcategory of subordinate «political societies» endowed with corporate identity and autonomy, on whose intermediation with both metropolitan society and non-European societies the empire-building efforts of the metropolitan state depended existentially.

On a functional level, in fact, the success (at least in some important cases) and the widespread imitation of the early modern company-state model stemmed from its ability to maximise the capacity of the metropolitan society and the metropolitan state to effectively project their influence and power across oceans, allowing them to overcome constraints and obstacles related to three main types of problems. The first problem concerned the incentivisation of capital investment in commercial activities made extremely risky and insecure by distance, exposure to predatory activities, and competition (includ-

16 *Ibid*., pp. 25-26.
17 *Ibid*., pp. 10, 22, 24.
18 *Ibid*., p. 24.
19 *Ibid*., p. 23 and *passim*.

ing armed competition) from other mercantilist powers. The second problem facing the expansionist metropolitan state concerned the chronic shortage of military resources that afflicted it before the advent of the fiscal-military state. Finally, the metropolitan state had the peculiar need to relate flexibly, on the diplomatic front, with non-Christian powers: a transoceanic "intermediary" such as the East India Company found itself, as an international actor, in a position, which was obviously denied to the English monarch, of being able simultaneously to act as a «suppliant» to the Mughal emperor, whose «universal pretensions» it was ready to recognise, as a «partner» to the king of Madraspatnam on the Coromandel Coast, and as a nominal «suzerain» to «local intermediaries» who guaranteed it control of the coastal areas of Western Sumatra[20].

Such an adaptive strategy reflected a balance between European and non-European military power and warfare technology, which before the mid-eighteenth century was still far from being tipped in favour of the Europeans in non-European theatres, especially in land warfare: the empires built by the company-states in Afro-Eurasia therefore depended, to a decisive extent, on a combination of «deference to strong Asian and African polities» and «maritime supremacy»[21] . In addition to acting in many cases as the vanguard of subsequent European territorial imperialism, in weaving their varied networks of relations with non-European potentates and polities for the purposes of a «politics of difference» greatly conditioned by the relative weakness of the European parties (reflected, for example, in the attitude of respect towards Eastern civilisations prevalent in the European mentality during the epoch of «Eurasia's equilibrium»[22] or in the well-known aversion of the companies to destabilizing Christian missionary initiatives), the company-states effectively fulfilled an indispensable role as «cross-cultural mediators», placing themselves among the main architects of the «world's first global international system», characterised precisely by the coexistence of two distinct models of relations – one for inter-European relations and another for relations between European (or Christian) political societies and political societies rooted in profoundly «"other"» religious and civilizational traditions[23].

[20] *Ibid.*, pp. 54-55.

[21] J.C. Sharman, *Empires of the Weak. The Real Story of European Expansion and the Creation of the New World Order*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2019.

[22] J. Darwin, *After Tamerlane. The Rise and Fall of Global Empires, 1400-2000*, London, Allen Lane, 2007, p. 164.

[23] A. Phillips, J.C. Sharman, *Outsourcing Empire*, p. 15.

The remarkable performance of early modern company-states appears to be linked to a set of temporary global conditions, which, according to Phillips and Sharman, were destined to disappear from the mid-eighteenth century onwards due to four factors. The first of these was the increase in the costs of the companies' political and military activities, to the detriment of profits, due to the intensification of mercantilist competition centred on war and trade between the respective metropolitan states. The second factor was the increased capacity of the nascent metropolitan fiscal-military state to project its political and military power overseas directly, without the old intermediaries. The third factor was the epochal change in the balance of power between European and non-European societies, which marked the end of the age that John Darwin has called the «Early Modern Equilibrium» (1620s-1740s)[24]. The fourth factor was the delegitimisation suffered by the company-states due to the spread in metropolitan public culture of a hostile attitude towards both mercantilist monopolistic practices and the granting of sovereign prerogatives to private associations, which fostered a climate of opinion intolerant of the abuses and corruption now attributed to them.

This overall change in the scenario, while explaining the long-term irreversible decline of the privileged companies of the «first wave»[25], also raises questions about the reasons for and outcomes of the short-lived revival of the company-state institutional model, particularly in Africa, in the context of the "new imperialism" of the late nineteenth century. From the perspective of the metropolitan state, the essential impetus for the creation of privileged companies such as the BSAC seems to have come from the possibility they offered to exploit new opportunities for imperial expansion (or to prevent expansionist initiatives by rival states) through a «colonialism on the cheap», which could «outsource» both its financial and political costs through proxies as much as possible[26]. However, what clearly differentiated this «second wave» of company-states, fundamentally compromising their ability to reconcile economic and political imperatives as in the most successful cases of the «first wave», was the changed attitude of the metropolitan state and public opinion towards the sovereign powers delegated to companies, which tended to be more limited, more rigidly defined, and more subject, in their exercise,

[24] J. Darwin, *After Tamerlane*, pp. 101-156.
[25] A. Phillips, J.C. Sharman, *Outsourcing Empire*, p. 24 and *passim*.
[26] *Ibid*., p. 152.

to the interference and ultimate control of the central imperial authority, as the reader of this essay will be able to verify, among other things, thanks to the skilful guidance of Bernardo Paci[27].

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 14 and *passim*.

Introduction

Rhodesia participated in the Empire Exhibition of Johannesburg in 1936-1937 with a wide set of historical pictures aiming to depict the brief but allegedly glorious history of the colony since its beginning in 1889. The exposition was curated by the British South Africa Company, which had lost power on Rhodesia in 1923, but still existed and flourished as a private corporation. Hence, perhaps unsurprisingly, the Rhodesian catalogue of the Exhibition opens with a foreword written by the then president of the Company, Sir Henry Birchenough, which begins as follows: «A History of the Rhodesias must be for the greater part the story of the British South Africa Company» (BSAC 1936-1937, p. 4).

Something very similar had been argued in one of the first histories of Rhodesia, written in 1926 by Hugh Marshall Hole – a former pioneer and administrator of the Company himself, as well as the secretary of the famous Dr. Jameson, whose infamous raid in the Transvaal at the end of 1895 contributed significantly both to the outbreak of the Indigenous revolt of 1896-1897 and to that of the Second Boer War. The book starts with his complaints about the loss of power of the Company itself in favour of the settlers, who had obtained self-government from the Crown in 1923. In fact, it is said, the settlers «have lately, on their own initiative, shouldered the management of the great estate provided for them by the genius of its founder [i.e., Cecil Rhodes] and by the patient and only partially requited labours of that remarkable corporation the British South Africa Company, whose history is, in fact, the history of the country itself» (Marshall Hole 1967, p. 1).

Both texts continue magnifying the history of the Company, along a line that had already begun with the first chronicles of the conquest and colonisation of the country (De Waal 1896; Leonard 1896; Hensman 1900). Sir Birchenough is sure that the story «will bring to the mind of the reader an appreciation of the miracle which occurred between the years 1888 and 1893, and of the genius and ideals of the men who brought it about», the miracle

Figure 1. The Administrator's Office in Fort Salisbury (1891).

being «the addition to the British Empire of a vast new province without the loss of a single soldier of the British Regular Army or the expenditure of a shilling of the British taxpayers' money» (BSAC 1936-1937, p. 4). Marshall Hole (1967, p. 402) thus closed his book: «Looking back one must admit that, in the building up of these Colonies […] the foundations were well and truly laid by the old Company and the adventurous spirits who clustered round it. Looking forward, what better prayer could one utter than that which the Southern Colony has adopted as its national motto – *Sit nomine digna!*». After all, as mentioned, the glorious destinies of the "Rhodesias" under the enlightened guidance of the Company were part and parcel of any chronicle and historiographic work since the very beginning. In the first full-fledged history of Rhodesia ever written, Howard Hensman (1900, pp. 317-318) dedicated these words to the brief past and the bright future of the country:

> It is but eleven short years since the first pioneers of the British South Africa Company entered the country, and yet there are to-day towns in it […] that need not fear comparison with any others in South Africa. […] With two fiercely contested wars, the rinderpest, the locusts, difficulty of transport, scarcity of native labour, and the thousand and one other setbacks Rhodesia has had to contend with during its brief existence as a British colony, the country is to-day a monument to all the world, as showing what British pluck, skill, perseverance, and aptitude for colonising can accomplish when controlled by one master-mind.

Figure 2. The Administrator's Office in Fort Salisbury (1901).

The fact that current and former representatives of the British South Africa Company – as well as other people salaried by it or associated with it – were so keen to highlight its role in the history of the colony – as well as their ill-concealed contempt for the settlers who had deprived it of its sovereign prerogatives – is clearly trivial in itself, and would not deserve so much attention. Nevertheless, these and other historiographic efforts of Company members and associates can be said to be symptomatic of something deeper. As a matter of fact, not only did the British South Africa Company exercise the prerogatives of a sovereign state in virtually any sphere of public life in Rhodesia from 1889 to 1923, as will be argued in greater detail in the third chapter of this book: it also attempted, with a certain success, to build its own cultural policy, producing texts, institutions, discourses, histories, ideologies, and full-fledged myths aiming to legitimise and justify its political power. In this sense, such historiographic efforts after 1923 can be seen as a material trace of this cultural policy, somehow aiming to continue the work begun during the years in which the Company actually governed Rhodesia.

However, this is obviously something we would commonly expect from any state or political party, but the same does not apply, in conventional wisdom, to corporations. The Company's prerogatives were, after all, based on and guaranteed by the Royal Charter conceded by the Crown, and, formally, it had to be accountable to the Crown only, on the basis of explicit and written criteria. Why, therefore, did the Company and so many of its members feel the necessity to further develop and elaborate their legitimation? Why should a corporation produce – and strive to diffuse – political myths? And how did this cultural policy materially develop in the years of government of Rhodesia by the Company? These are some of the questions this book will try to address. Nevertheless, more generally, these questions show the necessity of an intellectual history of the British South Africa Company, which needs to be conducted primarily on the archive produced by the Company itself.

As a matter of fact, the archive of the Company in itself has been widely investigated by scholars (Hensman 1900; Gann 1965; Marshall Hole 1967; Arrighi 1966, 1970; Galbraith 1974; Phimister 1974, 1976). However, their attention has mainly focused on social and economic history, for which the documents it contains are sources of inestimable value, but their more directly intellectual significance has been substantially left aside. This is particularly true for the series of reports published by the Company, and especially for those produced during the first ten years of its government of Rhodesia (1890-1900), under the title *Directors' Report and Accounts*, together with the detailed and special reports dedicated to specific years and to specific events, such as the First Chimurenga, the great Indigenous revolt of the Shona and the Ndebele in 1896-1897. In fact, besides information about political and military events, economic development in different sectors (in particular agriculture, mining, transport, and communication), juridical aspects, data on tax revenues and expenditures, the state of Indigenous labour, and so on, it is mainly in these reports that the myths of legitimation of the Company's government are developed.

Furthermore, they make it possible to investigate, at the same time, their origins and contradictions, the different sections of the public to which they were directed (the British Parliament, the Crown and the government, the shareholders, the white public opinion in Great Britain and in South Africa, the settlers in Rhodesia, and, indirectly, its Indigenous people, the Shona and the Ndebele), their reception by different agents, and the causes and mechanisms of the shift from one myth to another, as well as the place the Company occupied and envisioned for itself in what Immanuel Wallerstein (1979) called the "capitalist world-economy".

I have identified six myths of legitimation in the archive between 1890 and 1900: lawful occupation; the fight against the slave trade; the protection of the Shona against the Ndebele; the defence and self-defence of white settlers; the "white man's burden"; and the group of myths related to the Indigenous site of Great Zimbabwe. While the bases of all the myths were elaborated since the beginning of the colonisation – often drawing on previous colonial experiences and already-existing principles of colonial government –, their use by the Company has varied considerably throughout the first decade of its rule in Rhodesia. Nevertheless, this mutability, as will be argued here, was far from arbitrary, but determined by material and historical transformations, and especially by the consequences of Indigenous politics. The first two myths were elaborated and diffused – and exerted most of their action – between 1888 and 1893-1894. While the second one exhausted itself when the Arab slave trade was interrupted (and was subsequently highly contested because of the very policies of the Company concerning Indigenous labour), the first entered into crisis with the great Ndebele revolt of 1893-1894. The third myth then took centre stage, remaining crucial until the joint uprising of the Ndebele and Shona of 1896-1897, the First Chimurenga, which completely neutralised it. The fourth and fifth myths therefore entered the picture, and stabilised towards the end of the decade, remaining fundamental – especially the fourth – throughout the entire colonial history of Rhodesia. Finally, the sixth myth, or group of myths, has its own history: initially developed by Rhodes to tempt investors, it subsequently came to be, in its different versions, a foundational aspect of the settlers' identity, and its transformations closely follow the material history of Rhodesia. However, it shares with the fourth and the fifth myths the long duration of its usage and effects.

This first chapter will be dedicated to the first three, short-lived myths, while the second one will be dedicated to the other three, extremely durable. The third chapter will finally discuss the political-philosophical "enigma" posed by chartered companies through the case of the BSAC. In particular, it will discuss how traditional notions of sovereignty in the history of Western political philosophy – and especially in the work of Thomas Hobbes, Max Weber, and Carl Schmitt – are displaced and complicated by the case of chartered companies. Furthermore, it will reflect on the role of hegemony, as analysed within the framework provided by the work of Antonio Gramsci and Giovanni Arrighi, in settler colonial contexts through the specific case of Rhodesia, with particular attention to the role of race and ethnicity in its construction.

Before concluding this introduction, I would like to devote a few words on the relationship between this monograph and the present. Despite the historical nature of the book, there are at least two reasons why I consider the history here reconstructed as relevant to our time.

On the one hand, as postcolonial studies have taught us for a long time, there is a fundamental continuity between the long history of colonial modernity and the postcolonial present: writing these words while a war with deep imperial roots devastates West Asia once again resonates in a sinister way with this claim. However, this is also true in the specific case of postcolonial Zimbabwe: apart from the persistent effects of colonial heritage on agriculture and the distribution of land (Zamponi 1991), one could mention a very recent request by eight descendants of Zimbabwean heroes who died during the First Chimurenga to the National History Museum in London and the University of Cambridge to help them find the skulls of their ancestors, looted by the British after their execution (Batty 2026). Quoting from a passage contained in one of the letters of the descendants: «This is not only about the past. It is about whether institutions today are willing to confront colonial violence honestly and repair its enduring harms» (cit. *ibid*.). Furthermore, the persistence of colonial racism and its heritage in our postcolonial societies is highly significant in this regard: not only concerning what will be described, in the last chapter, in terms of the hegemonic function of whiteness, but also for the role of Rhodesia and Rhodesian settlers in the contemporary racial imaginary of the global far right (Paci 2025).

On the other hand, a more hidden continuity emerged in the course of this research. It pertains to the red thread connecting the long history of "sovereign corporations" such as the one studied in this book with contemporary tendencies of global capital towards comparable forms of political autonomy. Well beyond traditional lobbying activities, and even beyond the direct participation of billionaires in politics, – writing from a country governed by Silvio Berlusconi for twenty years, Donald Trump does not appear as much of a novelty – today we can observe phenomena such as the temporary occupation of the U.S. state apparatus by Elon Musk and his DOGE, the largely unsuccessful attempts by Musk himself, Mark Zuckerberg, and others to create private towns and cities, and Peter Thiel's obsession with the corporatisation of the state – which, however, after forty years of neoliberal policies, is well advanced even without his help – in order to save the world from the Antichrist. As will be further discussed in the last chapter, however, this "temptation of autonomy" appears to have accompanied the history of capitalism since its very beginning in late-medieval Florence and Genoa and the early years of colonisation. Nevertheless, the discussion also highlights the structural shortcomings of such attempts – based on what could be called, looking at the neoreactionary imaginary increasingly pervading

Silicon Valley, "utopias of capital" – will emerge as well: it is my hope that their analysis will be able to offer at least some strategic insights for our global present.

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I
The Short-Lived Myths of Occupation (1888-1896)

1. *The First Myth: Lawful Occupation and Compliance with the Treaties*

The most ancient among the foundational myths through which the British South Africa Company sought to justify its presence and authority in Rhodesia was the myth of lawful occupation – the idea that colonisation occurred not through violence or coercion, but through treaties freely signed by Indigenous rulers. The Company was thus framed not as a conquering power but as a legitimate inheritor of political and territorial rights, obtained peacefully and with Indigenous consent. It was repeatedly claimed – especially in the early reports of the Company – that its expansion north of the Limpopo had occurred without warfare, without displacement, and crucially, without violating the autonomy of Indigenous leaders.

This myth did not merely aim to neutralise potential criticisms in Britain or South Africa; it also functioned as a means of legal and moral legitimation in the eyes of the Crown, the British public, and investors. What emerges from the early *Directors' Reports* is an idyllic story in which treaties with figures such as King Lobengula are portrayed as solemn pacts, substantially equivalent to contracts in international law, and grounded in mutual understanding. The Company's occupation is thereby imagined as both legal and benevolent, as a project of development rather than domination.

But the ideological weight of this narrative far exceeded the formal language of the treaties themselves. Through selective quotation, omission, and strategic reinterpretation – if not direct falsification –, these reports transform complex and often ambiguous agreements into evidence of Indigenous approval – or even enthusiasm – for colonial rule. The repetition of this theme across multiple reports suggests it was not an incidental argument, but a central pillar in the initial intellectual structure of the Company's political project.

It is possible to detect the importance of this self-representation of the Company and of its actions in the preliminary moves taken by Rhodes already in 1888, when he was still uncertain about what institutional instruments would have best allowed him to gain control over the land between the rivers Limpopo and Zambesi before other European powers and the Boers[1] could do the same[2]. For that purpose, he sent a delegation, led by the missionary John S. Moffat, to the court of Lobengula, king of Matabeleland, where the homonymous Moffat Treaty was signed, on 11 February of the same year. The treaty ensured that «peace and amity shall continue for ever between Her Britannic Majesty, her subjects, and the Amandebele people; and the contracting Chief Lo Bengula engages to use his utmost endeavours, to prevent any rupture of the same, [and] to cause the strict observance of his treaty» (cit. in Marshall Hole 1967, p. 54). Furthermore, for Rhodes to have time to obtain the concessions necessary to convince the Crown and the government to concede the Royal Charter, Lobengula was asked to guarantee «*that he will refrain from entering into any correspondence or treaty with any foreign State or Power to sell, alienate, or cede,* […] *the whole or any part of the said Amandebele country under his chieftainship, or upon any other subject, without the previous knowledge and sanction of Her Majesty's High Commissioner for South Africa*» (cit. in Marshall Hole 1967, p. 54, italics in the original).

The same treaty is also referenced in the first report published by the Company in 1892, where it explicitly plays a legitimising role:

> The vastness of the enterprise on which the Company is embarked will be appreciated when it is stated that the Company administers under the British Flag 500,000 square miles, an area exceeding that of France and Germany combined, capable, with development, of supporting thousands of Europeans. The Company has secured the right to all the minerals over nearly

[1] As a matter of fact, the Boers had already tried to make treaties of peace and amity with Lobengula, as well as to penetrate into the country. Marshall Hole (1967, p. 24), author of the already-mentioned history of Rhodesia and sympathetic, as said, with the Company, described these attempts by Paul Kruger, then President of the Transvaal, and Petrus J. Joubert, his vice-president, as «sycophantic protestations».

[2] Hensman (1900, pp. 36-37), describing Rhodes' projects and preoccupations in those years, wrote that he «was filled with an intense desire to unite and consolidate the railways and telegraph systems of South Africa, and to extend both northwards towards the Zambesi, – for even at that early date he saw the great gain that would accrue to the British Empire to have the control of the interior of South Africa. He saw, likewise, that Germany from the west and Portugal from the east were casting covetous eyes on the rich territory of Matabeleland and Mashonaland, while the Boers in the South African Republic showed a disposition to trek over the Limpopo, and he understood what a severe blow it would be to Great Britain's supremacy in Africa if any of these Powers, but more especially Germany, should obtain possession of the new territory. He realised that it was not only necessary to act, but to act quickly, and he conceived the scheme of the Chartered Company, and was fortunate enough to find in England sufficient influential support to enable him to push forward his plans».

> the whole of this area, and in the most valuable part it has obtained surface rights. With these possessions it will be recognised that the possibilities of future wealth are great, and that the large expenditure incurred in securing and maintaining the rights acquired has been fully justified. In the early part of 1888 attention was drawn to Matabeleland as a promising field for British enterprise, and a treaty of peace and amity was made between Great Britain and Lobengula, King of Matabeleland, under which Lobengula agreed that he would refrain from entering into any correspondence or treaty with any Foreign State or Power, without the previous knowledge and sanction of Her Majesty's High Commissioner for South Africa (BSAC 1892, pp. 83-84[3]).

The treaty, therefore, was used not only to legitimise the presence of British settlers in Mashonaland and Matabeleland and the monopoly of the Company on their soil and mineral resources, but also to establish a political monopoly against claims and aspirations by other European colonial powers[4] and the Boers, in the complex context of the last years of the "scramble for Africa". In the same report (BSAC 1892, pp. 91-92), it is affirmed that the Boers had tried for years to annex Matabeleland to the Transvaal, but that Lobengula would have repeatedly refused to sign any treaty with them. Any legitimacy of such attempts is thereafter excluded: «the treaty which he eventually entered into with the British Government precluded any further negotiations being carried on by him with the Boers» (BSAC 1892, p. 91). Clearly, this did not prevent some Boers from trying to occupy a portion of the country in 1891, but they were repelled by the Company's Police, which had been largely increased, it is asserted in the report, precisely «to guard against this threatened invasion» (*ibid.*). The fact that the "invasion" was averted also because of the direct intervention of President Kruger (*ibid.*) can be clearly read as proof of the recognition of the Company's legitimacy in Matabeleland and Mashonaland on the basis of the said treaty[5].

[3] The edition of the first five reports published by the Company, covering the years 1889-1900 and analysed here, presents two alternative systems of pagination: one per volume and a continuous one. References in this book will refer to the latter.

[4] Discussions and even military confrontations with Germany («Pall Mall Gazette», 1 November 1889, p. 1; «Pall Mall Gazette», 28 March 1890, p. 1) and Portugal («Guernsey Star», 25 October 1889, p. 4; «Aberdeen Press and Journal», 8 November 1889, p. 5; «National Observer», 16 November 1889, p. 5; «Worcester Journal», 14 December 1889, p. 4) were an important part of the early history of British colonisation of Matabeleland and Mashonaland. These conflicts were also occasions to vindicate British identity and "colonial style" against other European colonial powers: for example, the Germans were criticised as too cruel («Pall Mall Gazette», 1 November 1889, p. 1) and the Portuguese as indolent and incompetent. Particular attention was given to the denial of early Portuguese relations with African states, in particular the Kingdom of the Mwene Mutapa, in the early modern era, in order to undermine the occupation titles they put forward.

[5] More exactly, it was originally stated that «A Boer expedition is preparing to enter Mashonaland from Zoutpansberg with President Kruger's knowledge» («Warwickshire Herald», 20 February 1890, p. 2), while a few days

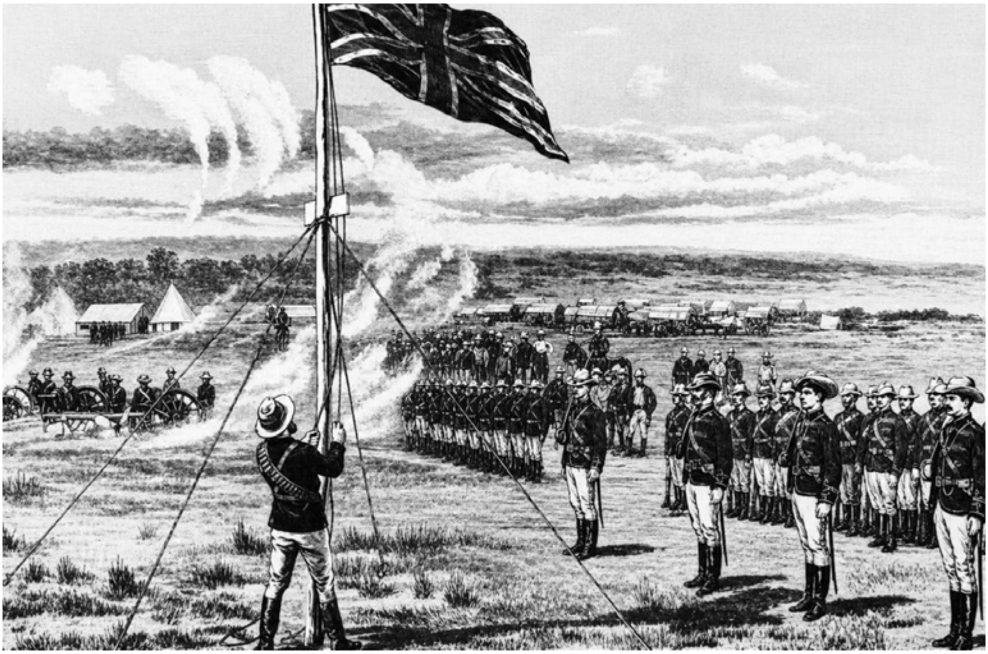

Figure 3. The Pioneer Column takes possession of Mashonaland in the name of Queen Victoria (1890).

The role of treaties in the construction of the Company's rule in Rhodesia was obviously important insofar as the pre-existence of grants, concessions, and proper treaties was a fundamental condition in order to obtain the Royal Charter itself (Speight 1910, pp. 1-3). However, as mentioned, it was crucial even for the construction of this first myth of legitimation as well, inasmuch as the very idea of lawful occupation was strictly bound to that of a peaceful occupation, based on the consent of Indigenous people[6].

In this sense, peace was intended both as a means and an end of the policies of the Company already in the Petition sent to Queen Victoria by Rhodes and his partners and in the Charter she conceded in 1889. On the one hand, among the conditions of the Charter, we find that the Company's government

later it was affirmed that «the Transvaal government has by proclamation forbidden its burghers to have any part or lot in the so-called "Mashonaland Colonization Scheme"» («Pall Mall Gazette», 22 February 1890, p. 2).

6 Many representations of the northwards march of the "Pioneer Column" from South Africa to Mashonaland are to be found in the British press, all sharing the same impressions about Indigenous people: that they were calm, peaceful, and even happy to see the settlers («Bristol Mercury», 14 March 1890, p. 3; «Guernsey Star», 8 July 1890, p. 1; «Huddersfield Chronicle», 12 September 1890, p. 4; «Northman and Northern Counties Advertiser», 27 September 1890, p. 2).

should be based on grants, concessions, and treaties with "native chiefs", and thus still on their consent (Speight 1910, pp. 2-4) and that «the Company shall to the best of its ability preserve peace and order in such ways and manner as it shall consider necessary, and may with that object make ordinances […] and may establish and maintain a force of police» (Speight 1910, p. 4). On the other hand, the very aims proclaimed by the Company appear to include this aspect, these being:

> (i) To extend northwards the railway and telegraph system in the direction of the Zambesi.
> (ii) To encourage emigration and colonisation.
> (iii) To promote trade and commerce.
> (iv) To develop and work mineral and other concessions under the management of one powerful organisation, thereby obviating conflicts and complications between the various interests that have been acquired within those regions, and *securing to the native Chiefs and their subjects the rights reserved to them under the several concessions* (BSAC 1892, p. 84, italics added).

Even more explicitly, it is stated:

> By this amalgamation of all interests under one common control, this Association as a Chartered Company, with a representative Board of Directors of the highest possible standing in London, with a Local Board in South Africa of the most influential character, having the support of Her Majesty's Government, and of public opinion at home, and the confidence and sympathy of the inhabitants of South Africa, *will be able peacefully, and with the consent of the native races, to open up, develop and colonise* the territories to the north of British Bechuanaland, with the best results, both for British trade and commerce, and for the interests of the native races (BSAC 1892, p. 85, italics added).

However, the centrality of treaties, with peace and Indigenous consent as their more or less implicit basis, is even assumed as something characteristic and specific of the Company's policies, which would neatly distinguish them from those employed by analogous colonial agents: «It is never to be forgotten that the policy of the Company, unlike that of expeditions in other parts of Africa, has been to occupy peacefully under treaties with native Chiefs, and not by force» (BSAC 1892, p. 97)[7]. This is one of the reasons why the said insistence on lawful occupation by the Company should not be simply taken as a particular application of a general principle – such as the «dual mandate» (Lugard 1922) –, but as the deliberate construction of a political myth of legitimation specifically related to Rhodesia.

[7] The same idea was conveyed in British newspapers: «[Differently from the Portuguese, t]he trading movements of the British [South Africa] Company are no breach either of European or of native rights. They are made within the well defined limits of our influence, and with the consent of the native rulers» («York Herald», 6 December 1890, p. 5).

Figure 4. The British South Africa Company's coat-of-arms (1889).

Clearly, this does not imply that the colonisation by treaties – or its legitimation as by treaties – is something unprecedented: for example, it is well-known that in the U.S. many territories were at first acquired by settlers through treaties of this kind (Jones 1982). A peculiar aspect of this kind of myth of legitimation is its double-edged nature; as a matter of fact, the representation of colonisation as based on treaties, and thus lawful and dependent on consent, exposes Indigenous peoples to an immediate risk: that of being accused of non-compliance with the treaties, which in turn suddenly allows colonising forces to pass from peaceful to violent occupation *manu militari*[8]. As will be seen, this is exactly what happened in the Rhodesian case here analysed.

[8] Far from being a merely theoretical possibility, signs can be found both among agents of the Company and within British public opinion that the option had been on the table since the beginning, *pace* the myth of lawful occupation. The barbarous and bloodthirsty representation of Lobengula made by Mr. Thompson, a member of the Rudd expedition, after his return to England is quite telling from this point of view («Pall Mall Gazette», 7 August 1890, pp. 1-2). However, even more explicitly, A.C. Stephenson had written from South Africa, a few months before: «The Company are [sic] commencing in a thoroughly masterly style to subdue the country and put it within their grasp. No doubt the Matabele race are [sic] a wild, war-like set of people, and very probably there will be some trouble between them and the white people who will soon be flocking in. The Matabele tribe are a branch of the Zulus, and for pluck and endurance they are well known to even those at home in England. Our sorry experience in Zulu War tells us what sturdy fighting men they are, and how they can fight to the bitter end. *We may yet see the Zulu War repeated in Matabeleland before the country is properly subdued*. Up to the present time

However, in general, the first antecedent of this representation is to be found in the *Relectio de Indiis*, written in 1538 by the Spanish philosopher and jurist Francisco de Vitoria (1669/1904), who justified the conquest of the Americas on the basis of the supposed failure by Indigenous authorities to respect natural rights such as the freedom of movement, commerce, and proselytism. No one would have accepted such an argument as valid on the basis of the natural right at the end of the nineteenth century within the British Empire: however, on the basis of an actual, positive treaty, the justification appeared perfectly acceptable.

In this sense, before analysing how this myth entered into crisis and was substituted by the third one (i.e., the protection of the Shona from the Ndebele), it is worth considering how the myth was received by different agents with different interests throughout its brief history, from 1888 and 1893-1894. The reception of such myths, given their political nature and their scope of legitimation, should in fact be considered as part and parcel of their own history, that is, of the intellectual history of the British South Africa Company.

As mentioned at the beginning of this paragraph, it should be considered that such a history is inevitably based on strategies of selective quotation, omission, and reinterpretation, if not full-fledged falsification, both on the part of the Company and of some sections of the public to which the myths were directed. In this sense, the «effectuality of the false» should not be undervalued, especially when it comes to the effects of political lies and political myths (Paci 2022). For example, the very recognition of the Charter (as well as of the Moffat treaty and the pre-existing concessions acquired by Rhodes, such as the Rudd one) by the Transvaal government produced probably unexpected effects on Indigenous politics, which in turn indirectly favoured the subsequent affirmation of the third myth by the British South Africa Company after the Ndebele revolt of 1893-1894.

As a matter of fact, the attempt by Boers to occupy Mashonaland in February 1890 – almost immediately blocked by President Kruger – was not abrupt, but based on a concurrent concession obtained in 1888 by Mr. Louis Bowler (precisely the Bowler Concession) from Mashona chiefs. While British newspapers such as the «Pall Mall Gazette» (22 February 1890, pp. 2, 6) also denied the very existence of such a concession – whereas a copy of which, instead,

the Chartered Company have [sic] sent forward from here only a pioneer party, and several troops of mounted police» («Blackburn Standard», 31 May 1890, p. 8, italics added).

appears to exist, being conserved with other documents of the Mashonaland Colonialisation Scheme at the Cory Library for Historical Research of the Rhodes University (Register n. 30, PR 2997) –, the strongest argument against it was perceived to be that «[a]s Mashonaland is a mere fief of the Matabele, and every chief in the country a submissive vassal of King Lobengula, the British South Africa Company, holding their concession from the King himself, regard Mr. Bowler's claims as non-existent» («Pall Mall Gazette», 22 February 1890, p. 2). Obviously, the existence of the Bowler Concession does not demonstrate the legitimacy of the Boers' projects in Mashonaland (just like the existence of the Rudd Concession does not legitimate British projects), but it shows that at the time the Shona and the Ndebele had quite different points of view about the respective spheres of political power.

As a matter of fact, far from being a mere objective statement, the position of the Company (and of Transvaal once Kruger accepted it as legitimate) validated the point of view of Lobengula and the Ndebele, completely ignoring the Shona's one; this also implied, as will be seen, the ascription to Lobengula of sovereignty and property rights on Shona land, and thus his power to cede or concede it to settlers and the Company's agents. In fact, as the subsequent research of Terence O. Ranger (1967) and David N. Beach (1974) has widely shown, the submission of the Shona to the Ndebele was claimed by the latter, but far from accepted by the former:

> Although the Ndebele have been examined more closely, several factors have affected both the available evidence on the Ndebele relations with the Shona and the viewpoints of historians. Firstly, most European observers of Shona-Ndebele contacts were influenced by the fact that they approached the subject both literally and figuratively from the angle of the Ndebele state itself, which added to the preconceptions they already possessed. Secondly, exaggerated estimates of the number, scope and brutality of Ndebele raids on the Shona were later used to justify the conquest of the Ndebele by the British South Africa Company in 1893. Thirdly, *Rhodes's claims to the Shona country were based upon an exaggeration of the extent of Ndebele power* (Beach 1974, pp. 633-634, italics added).

Therefore, the interested choice of the Company – based on a classic British colonial scheme dividing colonised people in "good", innocuous and defenceless, and "bad", aggressive and warmonger, such as in the Indian case (Loomba 1998) – brought to the recognition of Ndebele claims on the region and the silencing of Shona perspectives and interests, with severe consequences for both peoples during the colonial era and even after, such as in the Gukurahundi massacre. As in many other colonial contexts, tensions between different peoples were exasperated (and in some cases even created) by colonisers in order to facilitate their government, sometimes with terrible consequences for social relations in post-colonial states (Amselle and M'Bokolo 1985/2005). As mentioned, and as will be shown, the Company's positioning in this case also laid the basis for the subsequent construction of the third myth (i.e. the protection of the Shona from the Ndebele). From the point of view of the analysis of this first myth of legitimation, this is all the more interesting insofar as the myth was clearly not directed to Indigenous peoples, and for sure they did not take it seriously in the early period of colonisation: after all, Lobengula himself thought he had given the British only mineral concessions, while the colonial project was far more ambitious – well beyond the boundaries of the treaties with the Ndebele – from the beginning.

Another important example of falsification is to be found by examining the issue of land concessions in Mashonaland and Matabeleland. As a matter of fact, the Moffat treaty did not allow land concessions to settlers nor to the Company; analogously the concessions acquired by Rhodes for the purpose of obtaining the charter all concerned mineral rights, still excluding the concession of lands. A fortiori, any transfer of sovereignty from Lobengula or other Indigenous chiefs to the British South Africa Company or the British Empire was completely absent from the treaties, which, on the contrary, were formally based on the full recognition of Indigenous sovereignty. The text of the Rudd concession, republished as an appendix in the first report issued by the Company, says, among other things:

> I, Lo Bengula, king of Matabililand [sic], Mashonaland, and other adjoining territories, *in the exercise of my sovereign power*, and in the presence and with the consent of my Council of Indunas, do hereby grant and assign unto the said grantees, their heirs, representatives, and assigns, jointly and severally, *the complete and exclusive charge over all metal and minerals situated and contained in my kingdoms, principalities, and dominions*, together with full power to do all things that they may deem necessary to win and procure the same, [...] and whereas I have been much molested of late by divers [sic] persons seeking and desiring to obtain grants and concessions of land and mining rights in my territories, I do hereby authorise the said grantees, their heirs, representatives, and assigns, *to take all necessary and lawful steps to exclude from my kingdoms, principalities, and dominions all persons seeking land, metals, minerals, or mining rights therein*, and I do hereby undertake to render them such needful assistance as they may from time to time require for the exclusion of such persons and to grant no concessions of land or mining rights from and after this date without their consent and concurrence (BSAC 1892, pp. 104-105, italics added).

Even the report itself is quite explicit in this sense, although the Company strategically reinterprets the text of the said concession in order to authorise itself to concede lands. More specifically, they illegitimately extend the clause according to which the Company is authorised by Lobengula «to take all necessary and lawful steps to exclude from my kingdoms, principalities, and dominions all persons seeking land, metals, mineral, or mining rights therein», transforming it into an authorisation to concede lands. A somewhat strange limitation nevertheless accompanies this "right":

> The Directors were advised that under the clauses of the Rudd Concession above mentioned, the Company might grant occupation rights over vacant lands which would be good *as against any other white claimant, though they did not enable them to effect a permanent land settlement*, as it was clear that under this concession the land could not be completely dealt with, without the joint consent of Lobengula and the grantees (BSAC 1892, pp. 95-96, italics added).

The very legitimacy of government and rule – if not sovereignty – of the Company on Mashonaland and Matabeleland was subject, before 1893, to similar forms of ambiguity and falsification, as is clearly visible in two crucial groups of sources: the British press and parliamentary debates.

Concerning the former, the concession of the charter was taken by some as a substantial cession of sovereignty to the Company not only by Lobengula, but even by the Queen Victoria, although with some limitations, as well shown by a long editorial published on the «Northern Echo» on 2 November 1889. Here, the comparison of the British South Africa Company with the British East India Company, quite a commonplace in its first years among praisers and critics («Exeter Flying Post», 1 November 1889, p. 1; «Pall Mall Gazette», 1 November 1889, p. 1), assumes in this sense a partially critical nuance.

The issue of the treatment of Indigenous people is considered particularly sensible – a preoccupation that, as will become clearer in the next paragraphs, was evidently well grounded – but the very idea to rely once again on a private company to conduct such a delicate political enterprise like African colonisation appears to be criticised in some instances. Furthermore, while overestimating the power formally attributed to the Company by the charter, land concessions are here clearly framed as illegal, other than as the potential origin of a war against the Ndebele:

> The British South Africa Company is indeed in its first aims more ambitious than were the merchant adventurers who opened up India. […] These gentlemen are to have practically absolute power over «that region of South Africa lying to the north and west of the South African Republic, and to the west of the Portuguese dominions». […] Of this vast and vague stretch of country the Company, subject to the supervision of the British Government, are *to be Sovereign*. They are to use the British flag on buildings and vessels; to preserve peace and order in any way deemed necessary; to control the liquor traffic; […] and to have power to grant concessions for banks, railways, telegraphs, tramways, docks, waterworks, &c. *The life, liberty, property, homes, possessions of the dwellers in this part of Africa are in effect at the mercy of the handful of gentle-*

> *men* – worthy, no doubt – who have secured this charter with a view, not to philanthropy, but to dividends. […] *Meantime the granting of these powers over a vast unsettled country to private persons is a grave responsibility* […]. [F]or the honour of England there should be not a nominal but a real supervision over the dealings of the Company with the aboriginal population. By creating an opening for British capital and enterprise, the Company may do good; but justice must not be sacrificed for dividends. […] *Better were it for many savage races that they had never heard of the white man. On that score we have guilt enough on our heads.* […] The promoters have not, we presume, overlooked the fact that the richest portion of their estate is in the hands of strong men who apparently have not been consulted about the disposal of their land. Lobengula, King of the Matabele, is a familiar name to those who follow South African affairs. The jurisdiction of the Company is apparently set up in his lands without permission from him. He has 15,000 trained warriors, by whom death in battle is regarded as the highest honour. Do the Duke of Fife, Mr. Albert Grey, and his colleagues intend to personally board this lion in his den? Or is the British taxpayer to bear the expense of a bloody war to put the Company in possession? («Northern Echo», 2 November 1889, p. 3, italics added)

As the last sentence reminds us, the financial preoccupations for the costs of the Empire were crucial within British public opinion. In this sense, the fundamental principle, in the words of Giovanni Arrighi (2007, p. 193), was to «make empire pay for itself», as the macroscopic case of colonial India well demonstrates (Arrighi 1994/2010, pp. 245-278; Arrighi 2007, pp. 136-138, 245-246). Exactly for the same reason, the Company is instead celebrated by Henry de Worms, then Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, in the same period: «the British South Africa Company, although it has not yet commenced to receive profits from its operations, has already relieved her Majesty's Treasury from expenditure by undertaking a very heavy outlay on telegraphs, police, and railway constructions» («Bristol Mercury», 14 March 1890, p. 6).

Nevertheless, the extent and diffusion in the British public opinion – and even in the Parliament – of the overestimation of the powers formally conceded to the Company by the Crown must have been so wide – and probably originated even by the nonchalant conduct of the Company itself – that the same Baron de Worms, a few months later, was forced to clarify:

> No territory is placed under the control of the British South Africa Company by the Royal charter. The effect of that charter is to enable the company to exercise as a corporation any concessions and any powers of control granted by local rulers. Mr. Rhodes is no chairman of the company. As one of the officers of the company (managing director in South Africa), he is bound under section 18 of the charter to communicate freely with the High Commissioner, and to pay due regard to any requirements, suggestions, or requests which the High Commissioner may make to him («Home News for India, China and the Colonies», 27 June 1890, p. 6).

The ability of the High Commissioner for South Africa to act as a counterweight to the power of the Company and especially of Rhodes was however undermined very soon: less than a month after Baron de Worms's clarification, Rhodes was elected Prime Minister of Cape Town – an event that led to many controversies precisely because of its simultaneous role in the British South Africa Company («Pall Mall Gazette», 19 July 1890, p. 4) –, while the role of High Commissioner was statutorily held by the same person holding the role of Governor of Cape Colony from 1847 to 1901. Although the Governor had formally continued to exert the functions of a head of state, since the colony had obtained "responsible government" in 1872, most executive powers were actually in the hands of the Prime Minister: therefore, a complex entanglement of conflicts of interests was created, and the ability of the High Commissioner to control the power of Rhodes and thus of the Company was seriously limited.

The conduct of the Company since its first years of operations was accordingly, as mentioned, quite nonchalant, often disregarding the limits of the charter as well as those of treaties and concessions formally enabling and legitimising it. This clearly contributed to undermining the first myth of legitimation (i.e., lawful occupation and compliance with the treaties) quite soon. Although, as will be further discussed, its final abandonment by the Company coincided with the 1893-1894 Ndebele revolt, many doubts on it were cast from the beginning, as parliamentary debates well show.

Already on 7 July 1890, Mr. Baumann, member of the House of Commons, polemically asked the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies Henry de Worms «whether he is aware that Sir Sidney Shippard has recently been in the Bechuanaland Protectorate trying to persuade certain chiefs to grant the British South Africa Company rights and facilities of constructing a telegraph line, which are inconsistent with the concessions already granted by those chiefs», «whether it is part of the duty of the Administrator of Bechuanaland to act as the agent for the British South Africa Company», and «whether this conduct is held to be compatible with Clause 2 of the charter[9]» (*Hansard*: Mr. Baumann, *The British South Africa Company*, 7 July 1890, Vol. 346, Col. 926). On this basis, Baumann cast doubts upon the legitimacy of the Company's conduct, asking whether, according to the Under-Secretary, «the rights of concessionaires are respected by the company, in accordance with the terms of its charter» (*ibid.*). As the Government did many other times in the subsequent

[9] Concerning this point, the said clause provided «that nothing herein contained shall prejudice or affect any other valid or subsisting concessions or agreements which may have been made by any of the chiefs or tribes» (Speight 1910, p. 2).

years, the line of Henry de Worms was to defend the conduct of the Company, sometimes also avoiding direct responses to members of the Parliament: the construction of the telegraph line was already in the plans of the Government, and it had been simply entrusted to the Company; against the suspect that the conduct violated the Clause 2, the Clause 30 was invoked, according to which «this Our Charter shall be acknowledged by Our governors and Our naval and military officers and Our consuls, and Our other officers in Our Colonies and Possessions […] and they shall severally give full force and effect to this Our Charter, and shall recognise and be in all things aiding to the Company and its officers» (Speight 1910, p. 8).

Since, on the following day, Baumann insisted, asking «what jurisdiction Her Majesty has in the Bechuanaland Protectorate» and «by what right, or under what Instrument, the Administrator of Bechuanaland can compel chiefs in the Protectorate to consent to the construction of a telegraph line across their territories against their will», the Under-Secretary resorted to «the natural right of the protecting Power to do all things essential to the safety of the protected area», since «Her Majesty […] has the usual authority possessed by a European Sovereign who assumes the duty of protecting native African chiefs against violence» (*Hansard*: Mr. Baumann, *Bechuanaland*, 8 July 1890, Vol. 346, Col. 1097).

Two years later similar and graver issues were raised again and more violently, still in the House of Commons, by Mr. Labouchere – a rather contradictory character who soon became the fiercest adversary of the Company in the Parliament –, who directly asked «whether the Company possesses any power to legislate in regard to the natives of these countries [i.e., Mashonaland and Matabeleland]» and «if so, from whom it derives this power». In the same occasion, he cast serious doubts upon the already-mentioned, vexed question of alleged land concessions by Lobengula, of which the «worthless character» is affirmed (*Hansard*: Mr. Labouchere, *The British South Africa Company*, 10 March 1892, Vol. 2, Col. 540). The Under-Secretary then aligned with the Company's extensive interpretation of the charter, reaffirming the value of land concessions and arguing that the «power of the Company to legislate for the preservation of peace and order, which involves to a certain extent the exercise of authority over natives, is derived from the Crown by Clause 10 of the Charter[10]»

[10] This Clause, already cited above, affirmed that «[t]he Company shall to the best of its ability preserve peace and order in such ways and manners as it shall consider necessary, and may with that object make ordinances […] and may establish and maintain a force of police» (Speight 1910, p. 4).

(*ibid.*). This is clearly not entirely consistent with the already-cited affirmation by the same Under-Secretary two years before, according to which, as said: «No territory is placed under the control of the British South Africa Company by the Royal charter. The effect of that charter is to enable the company to exercise as a corporation any concessions and any powers of control granted by local rulers» («Home News for India, China and the Colonies», 27 June 1890, p. 6).

It seems therefore rather clear that the actual freedom of action enjoyed by the Company had brought the Government to change its positions in order to continue legitimising its conduct. The last part of the debate between Labouchere and de Worms manifests quite clearly – and somehow comically – the difficulties encountered by the Government in such an effort:

> Mr. Labouchere: Am I to understand that the Crown claims authority over all natives within the sphere of British influence – sovereign authority?
> Baron H. de Worms: No; I said that the power of the company to legislate for the preservation of peace and order is derived from the Crown by Clause 10 of the Charter.
> Mr. Labouchere: But whence does the Crown derive it, and claim sovereignty over all natives within the area of British influence?
> Baron H. De Worms: I must ask notice of the question (*ibid.*).

The issues of sovereignty and land property – as well as that of the actual political relationship between Ndebele and Shona – were raised again by the same Labouchere a few months before the incident that marked the beginning of the Ndebele revolt (on 18 July 1893). Labouchere had seen an advertisement of the prospectus of the Mashona Development (Willoughby's) Company on the press («Pall Mall Gazette», 29 April 1893, p. 1; «Glasgow Herald», 2 May 1893, p. 1), where it was stated that it had obtained «a concession of 600,000 acres in any part of Mashonaland, outside a radius of three miles of any proclaimed goldfield or established township». Labouchere asked therefore Sydney Buxton, the new Under-Secretary of State for Colonies since 1892, «whether the entire land of Mashonaland belongs to the Chartered South Africa Company», «if so, from whom possession had been obtained»; and still, «whether the vendor himself was the owner of the entire land of Mashonaland, and had a right to sell it irrespective of the assent of its inhabitants», and especially «whether this assent was obtained, and, if so, how and when» (*Hansard*: Mr. Labouchere, *The Mashonaland Development (Willoughby's) Company*, 4 May 1893, Vol. 12, Col. 71-72).

Buxton responded that the Company had acquired from Edward Lippert a concession originally made to him by Lobengula and according to which the Company could «grant and lease farms, grazing grounds, and town areas, in

Mashonaland». However, the following part of the response well shows how the ambiguous political relations between the Shona and the Ndebele and the claims of Lobengula has been selectively used to the advantage of the Company:

> If by «vendor» in the third paragraph of the question Lo Bengula is meant, the answer is that Lo Bengula has control, as paramount chief, though he probably has not the sole ownership, of the lands of Mashonaland. *The assent of the Mashonas was not necessary to validate the concession, as it covered only that which Lo Bengula had a right to grant*. […] No investigation of the title of the vendor (Lo Bengula) took place […] but *Her Majesty's Government had already considered the position and claims of Lo Bengula in the Mashona country*, and the right of natives in the company's field of operations had been safeguarded by Article 14 of the Charter[11] […]. The whole Lippert concession appears to be understood by the Chartered Company as referring to unoccupied lands. I may add that the Directors assure the Colonial Office that they have no intention of interfering with native occupation in this sparsely-populated country, and that their local administrator, Dr. Jameson, will be careful not to sanction the selection by Sir John Willoughby's Company of any blocks of land, the acquisition of which would be inconsistent with native rights under the company's Charter (*ibid*., italics added).

The limitations on which Buxton guaranteed in this response were soon to be overcome by the events, since 18 July 1893, when the outbreak of war between the Company and the Ndebele ended – after the death of Lobengula by smallpox in January 1894 – with the defeat of the latter and the substantial military conquest of the country by the former, which deeply transformed both the material and institutional framework of the colonial government and gave in fact free hand to the Company in the management of land.

More generally, it is at this point quite clear how diverse and varied the reception of the myth of lawful occupation was. On the one hand, as expectable, rival European powers obviously tended to refuse it, while the Boers exhibited an oscillating position. On the other hand, it can be seen that a relevant part of the public opinion in Great Britain initially supported the British South Africa Company, but also that critical voices raised from the beginning, usually in connection with a more general scepticism about chartered companies, in

[11] In line with the traditional British approach to colonisation – what Edward Said (1994, pp. 72-75), drawing on the work of Christian Platt, called the "departmental view" – the said article, titled "Native Laws", states: «In the administration of justice to the said peoples or inhabitants, careful regard shall always be had to the customs and laws of the class or tribe or nation to which the parties respectively belong, especially with respect to the holding, possession, transfer and disposition of lands and goods and testate or intestate succession thereto, and marriage, divorce and legitimacy, and other rights of property and personal rights, but subject to any British laws which may be in force in any of the territories aforesaid, and applicable to the peoples or inhabitants thereof» (Speight 1910, p. 4). It is quite clear how Indigenous customs and laws were selectively used and interpreted to the exclusive advantage of the Company.

turn traceable back to the case of the East India Company, which was clearly still well present in British memory (after all, the control of the possessions of this latter had been taken by the Crown only 35 years before, in 1858, and the Company had been formally dissolved in 1874). At the same time, while the Government always appeared to support the Company and its interpretation of the charter and the treaties – and thus the connected myth of legitimation –, the Parliament was more divided since the beginning in this matter, although the persistence of the Conservative majority importantly contributed to contain the protests – sometimes quite vehement – of the opposition. It would make little sense, at this moment, to consider the position of white settlers in Matabeleland and Mashonaland in these first years: they were but a few hundred, barely distinguishable from the ensemble of Company's functionaries, the Colonial Police and the original members of the Pioneer Column. Conversely, as seen, although the myth was not directed to Indigenous peoples, it had relevant effects on them, insofar as it transformed Lobengula's claims in the context of a long-standing series of tensions and wars between the Shona and the Ndebele into the real state of things for international law, with all the consequences that were sketched in this regard.

Before leaving the first myth and passing to the analysis of the second one (i.e., the fight against the slave trade), it is worth briefly considering how the former entered into crisis and was substituted by the third one (i.e., the protection of the Shona from the Ndebele), although the matter will also be discussed in the related paragraph.

It could be said that the very beginning of the war between the Company and the Ndebele marked the crisis of the first myth. This will be perhaps best expressed by resorting once again to Parliamentary debates, and more exactly to the combative Mr. Labouchere. On 20 July, two days after the incident, he asked the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies about

> a telegram […] of the 20th July, from Capetown, in which it is stated that the commanders of an Impi of Lo Bengula, having marched into Matabele, became insolent, and were given one hour to retire, and that when they refused to do so 38 horsemen chased them, killing over 30 of them; whether Matabele is a portion of the territory over which Lo Bengula is Monarch or Chief; by what authority 30 men of the Impi were slain for refusing to withdraw and being insolent to the employés [sic] or colonists of a Company that derives its sole right to exercise any sort of jurisdiction in Matabele from Lo Bengula; whether the Company has any jurisdiction over the armed forces of Lo Bengula; and what steps Her Majesty's Government contemplate taking to prevent such proceedings, resulting in loss of life, and tending to lead Lo Bengula to take retaliatory action? (*Hansard*: Mr. Labouchere, *Lo Bengula and the Matabeles*, 21 July 1893, Vol. 15, Col. 204-205)

As the rest of the debate makes quite clear, not only concessions and treaties founding the Charter are now considered by the Company and the Government as an independent source of authority perfectly separable from Indigenous power and rights: these treaties, until a few months ago considered as the very core of the legitimation of the Company's colonial presence, now appear as Wittgenstein's ladder (1921/2001, p. 89), which must be thrown away after one has climbed up it. Compliance with the treaties – or, more precisely, with the Company's interpretation of the treaties – freed the Company from the compliance with the treaties.

In other words, once the treaties and concessions, obtained on the basis of the recognition of Lobengula's sovereignty – even, as seen, well beyond its real limits – had enabled the Company to obtain the Charter, those very treaties were transformed into the instruments to provoke a *casus belli* against Lobengula, overthrowing its government and assuming full and direct rule on both Matabeleland and Mashonaland, well beyond the limits of previous concessions and treaties, which, overcome by the events, practically became dead letter. Not by chance, the *casus belli* consisted exactly of this: a Shona chief refused to pay the tribute to Lobengula when asked, arguing that he was now under the protection of the Company; this provoked the Ndebele retaliation, the intervention of the Colonial Police and the beginning of the war.

Therefore, like in many other colonial contexts before and after, different Indigenous peoples were played against each other in order to weaken their resistance to the conquest. More specifically, as will become clearer, this event also initiated the brief history of the already-mentioned third myth, precisely based on the alleged necessity for the Company to protect the defenceless Shona against the warlike Ndebele. However, it should be noted that the regime change and the shift between myths of legitimation was far from being a decision from above, taken by the Company against Indigenous peoples. As a matter of fact, the war was extremely expensive for the Company in economic terms, slowing down the pace of development and gravely damaging its finances, and left a durable trauma on the white population (i.e., the massacre of the Shangani Patrol). These events were actually determined, in the first place, by the results of Indigenous political agency, comprising both the strategic use of the charter for their own interests by the Shona and the revolt of the Ndebele. As will be clarified through the analysis of the other myths, Indigenous political initiative has actually always been the crucial element in provoking political changes and shifts from one myth of legitimation to another, forcing in each case the Company to react and adapt to such initiatives.

However, returning, in conclusion, to the 20 July 1893 debate at the House of Commons, Buxton answered Labouchere that the British South Africa Company «have under their Charter powers of administration in Mashonaland and the right to raise armed forces for the preservation of peace», and that this authority «is derived, not from Lo Bengula, but from the Charter granted by the Queen». Therefore, it is said, «[a] large amount of discretion must necessarily be left to those in authority on the spot, and it is to be hoped that the greatest possible forbearance and discretion will be exercised in dealing with the native tribes» (*Hansard*: Mr. Labouchere, *Lo Bengula and the Matabeles*, 21 July 1893, Vol. 15, Col. 204-205). Labouchere immediately highlighted the conundrum discussed above: «[w]as not the Charter given by the Queen because of the concessions granted by Lo Bengula; and, secondly, is it now considered that Lo Bengula […] has lost all paramount rule in the country in question?» (*ibid.*).

The new political order and new freedom of action for the Company – as well as new, different myths of legitimation – started to be visible already before the conclusion of the war against the Ndebele. On 21 December 1893, Sydney Buxton received a telegram from Sir Henry Loch, then High Commissioner for South Africa, concerning the reported expropriation of Ndebele's cattle, one of the main forms of richness for that people at the time. In the telegram, Sir Loch said that the Directors of the Company «assure me that in every case where natives give in their submission they are allowed sufficient cattle to take back with them to their kraals for domestic requirements», and added that «I am making every effort to secure a speedy peaceful settlement of the country». At the question by Labouchere «Who are the judges of what are sufficient cattle?», the Under-Secretary of State for Colonies simply responded: «The judges, I presume, are the persons on the spot» (*Hansard*: Mr. Byles, *The Matabele Cattle*, 21 December 1893, Vol. 20, Col. 232).

2. *The Second Myth: Fight against the Slave Trade*

Before discussing the direct successor of the first myth, i.e. the third one, it is worth giving some space to the analysis of the second one, which revolved around the Company's duty to fight against the Arab slave trade – almost exclusively concerning the lands north of the Zambesi but still part of the Charter, which would later become Northern Rhodesia, i.e., modern-day Zambia – and, at least gradually, put an end to it. In this sense, the British

South Africa Company represented its colonial rule as a part of a broader British effort to uplift, civilise, and morally reform the African continent. In this account, the Company was not only bringing infrastructure, commerce, and governance, but also acting as an agent of humanitarian progress, combatting "barbarism", "despotism", and especially slavery.

In the specific case, the fundamental basis of this myth was already contained in the Charter. On this matter, the Article 11 clearly stated: «The Company shall to the best of its ability discourage and, so far as may be practicable, abolish by degrees any system of slave trade or domestic servitude in the territories aforesaid» (Speight 1910, p. 4). However, as is well-known, anti-slavery was more broadly a crucial justification of British colonialism since the abolition of slavery in the whole empire in 1833 (which followed the abolition of the slave trade in 1807). As a matter of fact, after the Slavery Abolition Act of that year, Great Britain, which had previously been the main agent involved in the Atlantic slave trade and its first beneficiary, came to cast itself as the global enemy of slavery *par excellence*. This disruptive shift in British approach to slavery was usually represented as morally driven and as the result of the pressure of abolitionists on the government.

Nonetheless, in *Capitalism and Slavery* Eric Williams (1944) already dismantled the then widely accepted belief that Britain's abolition of the slave trade and of slavery itself was driven by a moral awakening or humanitarian ideals. Instead, Williams argued that abolition was primarily a matter of economic interest: as British industrial capitalism matured, plantation slavery – once vital to Britain's mercantile economy, especially for the production of sugar – became increasingly unprofitable and politically inconvenient, also because of the growing power assumed in the motherland by absentee planters of the West Indies. At the same time – Williams argued – Britain's rising industrial strength positioned it to benefit more from free labour and open markets than from maintaining a monopoly and slave-based system. Furthermore, abolition allowed Britain to undermine rival empires, such as Spain's presence in Cuba and Portugal's holdings in Brazil, which still relied heavily on slave labour. Therefore, by championing anti-slavery abroad, Britain could simultaneously assert moral superiority and protect its economic interests by limiting competitors' access to cheap labour. This shift thereby allowed the British Empire to rebrand itself, from the world's foremost trafficker in human beings to the self-proclaimed guardian of freedom and civilisation. It is thus within this broader imperial strategy that the Company's anti-slavery rhetoric in Rhodesia must be situated.

Moreover, by the late nineteenth century, as abolitionism gained moral traction across continental Europe – and after the formal end of slavery in Cuba (1886) and Brazil (1888) – even the other European imperial powers found in the language of anti-slavery a powerful tool of legitimation. The very Scramble for Africa – in the framework of which the foundation and action of the British South Africa Company must be understood – was increasingly framed as a humanitarian project, a civilising campaign aiming to root out slavery and despotism across the continent. As a matter of fact, in this context the slave trade was represented as inherent to the African continent itself, even as something naturally bound to African peoples, conveniently ignoring that the main stimulus of the slave trade's origin and persistence had always been the European demand for cheap labour in the colonies (Rodney 1972). Such a narrative was especially convenient for justifying imperial expansion at a time when critical voices against colonialism – and, as far as the British South Africa Company was concerned, also against chartered companies more specifically – had started to multiply both in Europe and in the colonies (Said 1994, pp. 239-261). In this context, therefore, the actions of the Company were easily framed within a larger imperial myth, in which colonisation was paradoxically represented as liberation.

Precisely in this direction, for example, not only do we find the British South Africa Company listed by Lewis Pelly among the colonial agents working «to crush slavery and barbarism» in Africa, together with the British East Africa Company (in which Pelly himself served), Germany, Italy and the Congo Independent State, personally controlled by the infamous Belgian King Leopold II («Glasgow Herald», 29 November 1889, p. 9); the Company also directly participated to the Anti-Slavery Congress at Brussels in 1889-1890 («Daily News», 27 January 1890, p. 5), a Congress promoted by the British Empire itself precisely for the end – according to Portuguese, French, and Spanish fears – of providing an international sanction for its own position in Egypt and for the position of the British South Africa Company in Mashonaland and Matabeleland («Greenock Telegraph and Clyde Shipping Gazette», 19 November 1889).

The Company's activities in fighting the Arab slave trade north of the Zambesi were widely advertised both on newspapers and its own reports. Collaborations were promoted with other British chartered companies and territories, as well as with other European powers, for this end. For example, at the beginning of 1892, a collaboration was announced between the Company and the Congo Free State with the aim of fighting the slave trade in the whole area: «Mr. George Cawston, a director of the British South Africa Company, had an audience of the King of Belgians yesterday, and informed him that the company desired to take active steps, within the sphere of its operations, for the suppression of the slave trade, and to co-operate cordially in any scheme approved by the Anti-Slavery Conference on that purpose» («Pall Mall Gazette», 8 February 1890). As will be seen, this is tragically ironic considering the subsequent developments in both territories.

However, already in the second report, great successes were boasted also thanks to the collaboration with the Imperial Commissioner for British Central Africa H.H. Johnston, who at the time administered Nyasaland (modern-day Malawi) with funds provided by the British South Africa Company itself (Johnston himself being also an Administrator of the Company): «During the past year [i.e., 1892] successful operations were conducted against the slave traders in the district by the Indian Police force under Capt. C.M. Maguire» (BSAC 1894, p. 113). It was furthermore assured that in a few years «[u]nder Mr. Johnston's able and energetic administration […] the power of the slave traders will be effectually broken. Until their raids were stopped no permanent development could take place, but a feeling of security is being fast established, rapid progress is being made, and a steadily increasing revenue is accruing» (*ibid.*).

A more detailed discussion of these operations is to be found on newspapers. In August 1892, the «Glasgow Herald» discussed the last despatch sent by H.H. Johnston to Lord Salisbury, defending him against some accusations made by missionaries of the Church of Scotland in Nyasaland: in particular, his approach was said to be brutal – burning villages and killing Indigenous people – and illegal, since the treaties with chiefs did not imply taxation, while he imposed it nonetheless. Here, it was again said that «[b]oth Arab slave-traders and hostile native chiefs were completely beaten and paralysed for want of ammunition» («Glasgow Herald», 10 August 1892, p. 6).

The main argument used in order to defend Johnston is precisely the fight against the Arab slave trade: «When Mr. Johnston went to Nyasaland, endowed with the dual title of Her Majesty's Commissioner for British Central Africa and Administrator for the British South Africa Company, his main work, apart from, but really identical with, the establishment of the authority of the Crown, was the suppression of the slave trade» (*ibid.*). Accordingly, based on his own despatch, he began «by endeavouring to induce the chieftains to renounce the trade; wherever it was possible he tried peaceable and friendly negotiations in preference to a recourse to force» (*ibid.*). This is also fully in line with the first myth, according to which, as said, the actions of the Company in Southern Africa were based on treaties, consent, and peace, rather than conquest and violence. Nevertheless, it is said, the chiefs soon broke the agreement, beginning again to «capture and sell their neighbours' subjects», so that Johnston «soon came to realise that with the bigger scoundrels […] nothing but force would be a remedy» (*ibid.*).

However, the myth soon lost its usefulness for at least two main, quite contradictory reasons. On the one hand, already in 1897, the Arab slave trade was said to be ended north of the Zambesi:

> In September 1897, the power of the slave-trading Arabs, who acting in concert with the Awemba tribe have been a source of constant trouble in the country to the west of Lake Nyasa, was completely broken. The defeat of the slave-traders has had a most satisfactory effect upon the natives, who have hitherto been *prevented by the Arabs from working for white men*. Now that this adverse influence has been removed *a large supply of labour is available*, by the aid of which it is anticipated that cost of transport will be materially lessened (BSAC 1898, pp. 235-236, italics added).

One could maliciously say that, based on this passage, it almost seems like the real interest of the Company had been to «free» Indigenous people from forced labour imposed by chiefs and «Arab slave-traders» only to employ them in forced labour for «white men». As the international scandal – crucially involving also the Congo Free State – that had emerged a few months before well showed, this would not be particularly far from the truth. In fact, the Company had been severely accused both by the public opinion and a relevant part of the British Parliament, the main allegation being that it would have organised a system of forced labour to the detriment of Indigenous people. This is probably the other important reason why no further mention to the fight against the slave trade is to be found in subsequent reports. It is however worth to consider the said scandal more in depth.

The risk that the new system of government of Indigenous communities, which was introduced after the 1893-1894 Ndebele revolt, could have originated a system of coerced labour was already understood well before the scandal itself emerged. As a matter of fact, in January 1897, Mr. Thomas Bailey, Member of the House of Commons, asked Joseph Chamberlain, the Secretary of State for the Colonies «whether Her Majesty's Government has approved the arrangement […] for paying certain indunas in Matabeleland a salary of £5 a month each in consideration of their assisting the Native Commissioners to maintain order in their several districts, and particularly to collect hut-tax and obtain labour for the mines" and "whether, before the proposed new rules for the collection of hut-tax are sanctioned, he will satisfy himself that they do not afford *opportunities for extortion and a modified form of slavery*?» (*Hansard*: Thomas Bailey, *British South Africa Company*, 28 January 1897, Vol. 45, italics added). Chamberlain minimised, responding: «I shall, of course, satisfy myself that the new policy does not lend itself to extortion or to a modified form of slavery», receiving applauses from the parliamentary majority (*ibid.*).

On the 2 April of the same year, Chamberlain's serenity already appeared as short-sightedness or even connivance. The debate was opened by Sir Charles Dilke, who remembered how European powers, at the Conference of Berlin in 1884-1885 and Brussels in 1889-1890 had bound themselves to fight slavery and despotism in Africa, and that precisely for this reason the Congo Free State, «recognised as an anti-slave and pro-native power», had been officially recognised (*Hansard*: Sir C. Dilke, *Africa (European Powers)* 2 April 1897, Vol. 48, Col. 426-450). The General Act that emerged from the Brussels Conference, he contends, had been widely violated, not only because monopolies had been established on both the river Niger and the Congo, but also and especially because of the practices concerning «fugitive slaves in many colonies and protectorates, including some of our own» (*ibid.*). The gravest situation, nonetheless, concerned the Congo Free State presided by the King of Belgium Leopold II, which «was violating every clause in the Brussels Act, of which our Foreign Office were bound, individually as well as collectively, with the other Powers, to watch the due execution» (*ibid.*).

In his vehement speech he denounces that British complicities with these practices, as well as full-fledged involvement with slavery, were actually diffused throughout the African continent. For example, «[a]t Lagos there existed a practice of following fugitive slaves in the Protectorate, and recovering them by means of the Houssa police»; in East Africa, «the British East Africa Company, composed of philanthropists, were admitted by the Government to have been in the habit of surrendering fugitive slaves up to the very day of the expiring of the powers of the Company» (*ibid.*). Even cannibalism «has been on the increase throughout the Congo basin since the entry of Europeans into the country», to the point that, Dilke says, «far from civilisation being on the side of the Congo State, as the Foreign Office alleged, it had been on the side of the Arabs in these wars» (*ibid.*).

The debate was extremely long, and, at a certain point, the territories controlled by the British South Africa Company were cited as well. Mr. John Dillon declared that clearly «except in certain favoured spots, European Powers went to Africa, not for civilising purposes, but for trading and selfish purposes, because they regarded the millions of Africans as a good raw material for trade», to the point that he «believed firmly that the Mahomedans had been more successful in civilising those parts of Africa where they had gone than the Christians», «[i]f European Christian Powers encouraged cannibalism and slavery, traded in gin, and put arms of precision in the hands of savages so that they could slaughter the neighbouring tribes» (*ibid.*). It is precisely in this context that he turned his attention to the British South Africa Company, because, Dillon says, he «would like a European conference, but at the same time he would like to see this country go into that conference with clean hands; if we were going to claim from other Powers good Christian treatment for the natives of Africa we must commence by setting our house in order» (*ibid.*). He refers for example to the British East Africa Company, which, once deprived of the Charter, admitted that «they were doing their work by slave labour» (*ibid.*).

However, he especially refers to Mashonaland and Matabeleland. Referencing an article in «The Contemporary Review» by the Rev. John Mackenzie, he declares that «*the system of forced labour under the Chartered Company was worse than the old system of domestic slavery*» (*ibid.*, italics added). Dillon continues:

> Apparently, this system was going to be a permanent institution. The natives complained that their country was gone, their cattle were gone, their people were scattered, their women had deserted them, and the white men did what they liked with them. This was the state of affairs in Matabeleland which they had attacked, ruined, and robbed. […] They had brought neither peace, civilisation, nor Christianity to this unhappy people. Except in a few favoured spots they had taken horrors into the land worse than had been experienced under their own tribal wars (*ibid.*).

An even longer debate at the House of Commons, following the infamous Jameson Raid, returned once again to the issue of forced labour as organised by the British South Africa Company. Philip Stanhope (*Hansard*: Mr. Stanhope, *British South Africa Committee*, 26 July 1897, Vol. 51, Col. 1094-1182), referencing the report written by Colonel Richard Martin (1897), declared that if the apologists of the Company read it, they would find that «the administration of the Chartered Company, which was so much lauded by the Colonial Secretary, had been one succession of scandalous maladministration». More specifically, the report is said «to prove that practically a system of slavery existed under the Company, that cattle of the unfortunate natives were improperly confiscated, and that when they protested or resisted they were mown down by Maxim guns» (*ibid.*).

In this regard, despite government's protests, the report by Sir Richard Martin seems to fully confirm this version: at the very beginning of the said text, concerning the «labour question» the report is summarised by saying that «compulsory labour did undoubtedly exist in Matabeleland, if not in Mashonaland», that its organisation was managed by the recently instituted Native Commissioners «for the various requirements of the Government, mining companies, and private persons», and that «the Native Commissioners, in the first instance, endeavoured to obtain labour through the indunas, but, failing in this, they procured it by force» (Martin 1897, p. 3). More in detail, Sir Martin wrote:

> I have it on very reliable verbal authority that after the war of 1893 certain of the Chiefs agreed to supply Native labour but soon ceased to do so, for what reason I am unable to say, but the fact is sufficient to show that at this time the Chiefs still recognised their independence and were not afraid to cross the Government (i.e., the British South Africa Company) in their wishes. The Government then, finding this voluntary labour supply cut off, introduced a practice by which they could obtain it for themselves. It may, perhaps, be urged in support of their action that laws enforcing labour are in existence, in Natal, but the fact must not be lost sight of that the natives of Natal have been under the rule of Europeans for a period extending over between 40 and 50 years, whereas the inhabitants of Matabeleland were for the most part a wild and unbroken people, and had yet to learn the advantages of labour. […] I cannot help thinking that considering the character and previous habits of the Matabele, and the short time that had elapsed since the country had come under European control and the vital importance at that stage of using every endeavour to conciliate the native to their rule, common prudence alone ought to have been enough to deter the Government from introducing a *practice which, viewed in the most lenient light, can only be interpreted as a mild form of compulsory labour*, and which, to the raw and hitherto independent Matabele, must have seemed *nothing less than slavery itself (ibid.,* p. 7, italics added).

The defence of the Company, included as an appendix to Sir Martin's report and quite similar to that used by apologists of colonial violence in Parliament[12], makes things, if possible, even worse, but shows once again the role of the second myth in the legitimation of the Company's rule:

[12] Consider, for example, the apology by Mr. Curzon on behalf of the agents of the Congo Free State: «There can be no doubt that great mistakes have been made in the administration and work of the Congo State, and its agents may, from time to time, have taken steps and adopted methods which are repugnant to the feelings of all Christian men; and, indeed, it does seem that in the heart of Africa passions are roused and deeds are done such as are dissimilar from what we find in other parts of the world, and in those remote and wild territories, far away from any contact with civilisation or with the humanising influences of ordinary social life men are converted into other than the human beings we know» (*Hansard*: Sir C. Dilke, *Africa (European Powers)*, 2 April 1897, Vol. 48, Col. 426-450).

> It would be misleading to condemn methods pursued in uncivilised countries, where Government is only being built up under difficulties, on the grounds of comparisons drawn from countries long civilised or colonised. Arbitrary rule and methods of *compulsion* may in an early stage of Government have to be used in order to suppress arbitrary rule and methods of *slavery*; and natives who have never had any parental discipline, which is the common state of affairs, or anything but an injurious military discipline, may have to be treated as to some extent in the child's state of existence as regards discipline until a more desirable state of things is brought to pass (*ibid.*, p. 53, italics in the original).

Nevertheless, as said, despite the great efforts of the Company, together with its supporters in England, to refute the accusation, the second myth was equally and silently abandoned, not being evoked any more in the subsequent reports. Incidentally, it should be noted that the issue of Indigenous labour remained a fundamental preoccupation for both the Company and the settlers for many years (BSAC 1899, pp. 293-294, 310-311; BSAC 1901, pp. 347-349, 367-371; BSAC 1910, pp. 5-6, 31-36, 49-50), until full-fledged forms of proletarisation led to the construction of a stable Black working class, which, according to Giovanni Arrighi (1966, pp. 46-47, 53-55), did not happen before the end of the 1940s. Until that moment, forms of compulsory labour, together with the gradual increase of the hut tax and the recruitment of workers from surrounding territories, were the only means through which the Company and the settlers could obtain at least a part of the cheap Indigenous labour they desperately needed.

However, during its brief existence, another important role was played by this second myth, making it a residual but still effective part of the third myth that will be analysed in the next paragraph: the accusation of slavery against the Ndebele as a part of the justification of the war of conquest against them in 1893-1894.

3. *The Third Myth: The Defence of the Shona against the Ndebele*

As mentioned, the first myth entered into crisis at the outbreak of the war between the Company and the Ndebele in 1893. The idea that the British South Africa Company had peacefully acquired territory through treaties, with the consent of Indigenous authorities, became untenable once the Company launched a full-scale military campaign against the very kingdom whose supposed cooperation had legitimised its initial claims. Faced with this rupture, Company officials and propagandists quickly reassembled their legitimating narrative. What emerged, as mentioned, was a new justification:

the war was not a colonial aggression, but a "humanitarian" intervention on behalf of the Shona, allegedly oppressed by Ndebele raids and domination[13].

In this third myth, the Company cast itself not as an invader, but as a protector. It claimed that its military action was undertaken to rescue the Shona from systematic violence, enslavement, and pillage at the hands of the Ndebele, and that the war was thus *morally* unavoidable. The Company's agents portrayed the Ndebele people as a militarised, autocratic regime whose treatment of neighbouring peoples, especially the Shona, violated basic norms of civilisation. In contrast, the Company – as seen, like many other European colonial powers – positioned itself as a stabilising force, intervening to stop intra-African violence and ensure the safety of "weaker" groups.

This narrative served several overlapping goals. It allowed the Company to deflect accusations of self-interested aggression, align itself with the humanitarian discourse already central to British imperial ideology at the time, and continue to claim moral high ground even in the context of conquest. By racialising Indigenous conflict, the Company effectively repackaged colonisation as rescue and violence as benevolence. The result was a short-lived (since, in turn, it entered into crisis with the First Chimurenga in 1896-1897 and was essentially substituted by the fourth and the fifth myths, as will be shown in the next chapter) but effective myth of legitimation in which colonial warfare could be justified not despite its brutality, but because of it.

In this sense, the racialisation of Indigenous conflicts and the use, exacerbation and racialisation of pre-colonial divisions have always been a central strategy in the history of European colonialism. As already discussed in the first paragraph, the repression of the Ndebele revolt was in fact represented as a war of defence of an Indigenous people, the Shona – represented as tame, weak, and in need of protection – against another Indigenous people, the Ndebele – represented as warmongering and aggressive. This kind of scheme is to be found very frequently in colonial history, ranging from the representations of Hutu and Tutsi in Rwanda to that of Hindus and Muslims in colonial India (where the concept of Martial Races was fundamental even for the recruitment and composition of the colonial Indian Army) or to the contrast between the Taíno and the Kalinago (i.e., Caribs) in the Caribbean since the time of Columbus. As for the more general use and exasperation of

13 As already discussed in the first paragraph, Terence O. Ranger (1967) and David N. Beach (1974) have demonstrated the one-sidedness and ideological nature of this representation many years ago.

pre-colonial conflicts, examples could be taken since the very first years of the conquest of America as well: consider the alliance between the *conquistadores* and Tlaxcala against Tenochtitlán.

In the specific case, the incident that led to the beginning of hostilities happened in July 1893 (while the war in the strict sense lasted from October 1893 to January 1894) and was peculiarly marked by a reciprocal accusation of violating the treaties both by the Company and the Ndebele. In its report for the years 1891-1893, the Company begins as follows:

> The year 1893 has been an eventful one. At the outset the Company looked forward to a period of gradual and steady development, but the war, which was forced upon the Company, hindered mining development, and prevented that influx of settlers it had a right to expect. The break up of the Matabeli [sic] military system, which has now been successfully accomplished, will permit a more safe and speedy progress than has hitherto been possible, and will extend the area within which mining and other operations can be carried on under the Company's regulations (BSAC 1894, p. 120).

As for the beginning of the hostilities specifically, this is how the Company presents the facts, recalling the treaties signed with Lobengula and the charter whose legitimacy formally depended upon:

> The duty imposed by the Charter upon the Company to maintain peace and order within its field of operations, was made more onerous by the existence of the Matabeli military system, under which that tribe periodically raided the surrounding weaker tribes. It was hoped that the presence of white settlers in Mashonaland would have relieved that district from these raids, and that the work of peaceful development would have gone on. These hopes have not been realised. For a time after the occupation, the number and extent of these incursions are said to have greatly diminished, but the peaceful attitude rigidly enforced towards the Matabeli appears to have been taken for weakness. The raids again increased, and finally culminated last July in an attack upon the Mashonas in the employment of white settlers in the neighbourhood of Victoria. *This conduct of the Matabeli was a distinct breach of the Concessions granted by Lobengula, on the strength of which the Company had occupied the country, and it was necessary to repel the inroad with force*. A collision having taken place between the Settlers and the Matabeli, it became the Company's duty to prepare for future attacks. With this object the Volunteers were called out, further troops enrolled, and adequate number of horses and supplies bought and sent up to the country. These precautions proved to have been most necessary. Lobengula, on hearing of the affair at Victoria, endorsed the conduct of his impi, affirmed his right to attack Mashonas even in white employment, and expressed regret that his soldiers had not made further resistance (BSAC 1894, pp. 122-124, italics added).

The *casus belli* was constructed on the premise that the Company interpreted the border between Matabeleland and Mashonaland as coincident with the division between spheres of operation for the Ndebele and the Company itself, while Lobengula maintained – correctly, from the point of view of the treaties, since, as seen, they only concerned mineral rights and not a cession of sovereignty – that he still had power over Mashonaland, although, as said, the Shona were far from submitting and had continued to fight for decades, something that the Company had, on the contrary, never recognised. Therefore, both sides affirmed that their actions were based upon the treaties, while the counterpart had violated them («Glasgow Herald», 31 July 1893, p. 6).

Just like Lobengula had strategically used the recognition of his sovereignty over Mashonaland by the Company to reinforce his position, some Shona chiefs strategically used the Company's extensive interpretation of the treaties to refuse to pay tribute to Lobengula. In both cases, while the British manipulated Indigenous politics for their own ends, the effects of such manipulation were widely divergent from what the Company desired, precisely because Indigenous political agency heavily intervened on these processes.

However, as said, once the myth of compliance with the treaties was used to create the *casus belli* for the war against the Ndebele, it became unserviceable, inasmuch as the very treaties were considered to be no more in force in order to justify the war of conquest itself. This is immediately visible in the increased effort, both on the part of the Company and of its allies in the motherland, – as British newspapers well show in those months – to construct the ideological bases of the third myth already after the incident and before the actual beginning of the war.

Already in August 1893, while reassuring the public opinion in the motherland about the peaceful character of the situation in Mashonaland, the «Huddersfield Chronicle» published the letter of Dr. Alexander, Bishop of Derry and Raphoe, who wrote from Cape Town and clearly started to prepare the ground for a war against the Ndebele. The letter begins with a quotation from H. Rider Haggard, the writer renowned for inventing the famous character of Allan Quatermain, for publishing many best-selling novels set in Africa, and for disseminating myths about King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba that severely affected the intellectual history of Rhodesia, as will be shown in the next chapter. The quotation concerns the history of the Ndebele people, and thus says:

> The Matabele are descended from a Zulu tribe which emigrated in 1825, under Ummilhquri, father of Lobengula. They form a military state or castle; they are soldiers, not for defence, for raids upon feebler tribes for cattle, slaves, and especially women. Mashonaland is the centre of their raids, their happy hunting-ground. The Matabele loves to kill; lives to kill. […] For 50 years these frightful spectacles have been exhibited again and again. If a stop is not put to them they will continue until the Mashonas are exterminated (cit. in «Huddersfield Chronicle», 30 August 1893, p. 4).

All the already mentioned stereotypes are here invoked: a violent race, who lives for war and indiscriminate killing, peculiarly well-disposed towards slavery and genocide, against a helpless and feeble race, who will end up being exterminated if «a stop is not put to them». At the same time, it is immediately made clear that the compassion for the misfortunes of the Shonas is far from disinterested on the part of the settlers and the Company. As a matter of fact, Dr. Alexander continues:

> The effect […] of these odious raids upon the unoffending Mashonas may easily be conceived. […] But their effect upon an English settlement is no less obvious. *The Mashonas are absolutely necessary for the development of the country, whilst their extermination is growing nearer every year*. The sight of gentle, unoffending servants simply hacked to pieces, their blood spurting over the Englishwoman's gown or the Englishman's coat, is something too terrible for thought to dwell upon. This cloud, big with death, ever threatening to break in a fresh storm, and forming again and again must be *dissipated unless the peaceful development of Mashonaland is to become impossible* (*ibid*., italics added).

While racialisation is used in order to construct the Ndebele as a barbaric enemy against which the war is not only unavoidable but also absolutely justified, it is at the same time used to reassure the public opinion – who still probably remembered with fear the bloody war against the Zulu Kingdom in 1879, as well as the earlier figure of the King Shaka – about the fact that the war will not be particularly harsh. This would be in turn due to the fact that the Ndebele would not be «pure-blooded Zulus» (*ibid*.) any more, but «miscegenated» with the Shona, which would have greatly reduced their military potential and dangerousness. At the same time, as said, the war is all the more necessary not only to protect the Shona and the settlers and to «open up» the territory to «civilisation», but also, with a reference to the second myth, to fight the Ndebele slavery of the Shona:

> The rising generation are half Mashona. They have a certain fierce swagger, but neither Zulu fibre nor the Zulu numbers. The half-bred Mashona has not the same iron in the blood nor the same splendid thews. He has inherited the tradition of the Zulu crescent formation, but not the awful energy, the indomitable courage, which made it so formidable. The right conclusion from these facts it will be for others to draw. Somehow or other the few thousands of Englishmen in Mashonaland must be freed from an ever-threatening danger, if a vast and splendid region is to be opened up to civilisation, to commerce, to Christianity. The conscience of humanity surely will not rest while the most atrocious form of slavery which the world has ever known is worked out every year; while a simple and gentle people are given up to the hand of murder and lust (*ibid*.).

The attempts of newspapers like the «Times» to encourage the Company and the settlers to exercise self-control were counteracted through the rhetoric of the «men on the spot» – already seen to be frequently used even in parliamentary debates –, with the «Cape Times» replying: «It seems to be forgotten in England that Englishmen in Mashonaland are confronted by hordes of naked savages massacring and murdering within a few miles of the seat of the Government» (cit. in «Greenock Telegraph and Clyde Shipping Gazette», 3 October 1893, p. 3). Briefly after the actual beginning of hostilities, the choice of the Company to wage war against the Ndebele is similarly defended, while peaceful approaches are fiercely criticised; at the same time, the dangerousness of the enemy as a consequence of its Zulu lineage is reinforced at the expense of the other pole of the racialisation process. The catastrophic defeat of Isandula during the already-mentioned Zulu War, when 1,500 English soldiers died in the battle (*Hansard*: Lord Thurlow, *South Africa – The Zulu War – The Defeat at Isandula*, 14 March 1879, Vol. 244, Col. 887-892), is evoked precisely for this scope:

> There is always danger in delay, and especially in dealing with savage tribes, whose trade is rapine and pillage. Lobengula's black men are really Zulus, and Isandula records the success of the subtlety and strategy of their race, and the dishonour which they threw upon the British flag. We cannot afford to underrate an enemy at any time, and a Zulu is no mean opponent. But with a «peace-at-any-price Government» in office we shall, ere long, hear much of the sin of extirpating native races who are fighting for their own land. Lubengula [sic] and his men deserve no sympathy. They exist for plunder, and slavery is their trade. Invaders as they are, they threaten the development of Mashonaland, with all its bright promises of civilisation, and it would be an indelible blot upon England's honour if, by the Government's timidity, tardiness, or meanness, Southern Zambesia should be ravaged by Lobengula and his sable warriors («Lancaster Standard and County Advertiser», 13 October 1893, p. 5).

Mr. Bent, the scholar – as will be examined in the next chapter – first financed by Rhodes to explore and analyse the ruins of Great Zimbabwe, as reported by the «Pall Mall Gazette», completely supported the line of the Company, declaring that

> [h]e could not conceive why certain Liberal newspapers should continue to say that Lobengula was an ill-used man, because he had only sold to the Chartered Company the right to take the minerals. It was even said that Lobengula had a perfect right to enter the company's territory and take as many slaves and as much cattle as he chose, and even to murder as many of the natives as he liked. It was monstrous for any Englishman to say that a savage had a right to act in that manner simply because he had not exactly in writing been forbidden to do so. The Company were governing the country, and Lobengula had nothing to do with them; but, on the spur of the moment, he had sent in his impis to raid and destroy, and produce all kinds of misery. The men who upheld such a theory were not justified on the side of humanity. […] In conclusion, Mr. Bent expressed an opinion that, unless the company could drive the Matabeles across the Zambesi further north, and place forts along the line to prevent them coming back again, they would never be rid of the trouble («Pall Mall Gazette», 21 October 1893, p. 7).

It is rather clear at this point how much the first myth had been suddenly and completely abandoned: while the treaties and Lobengula's consent had been the fundamental argument used by the Company to justify its action and policies, now they become a distorted argument used by «Liberal newspapers» to justify savagery and criticise the just war of the Company. The value of the treaties is thus downsized even retrospectively, insofar as any «civilised» man – it is argued – would agree that their limitations and their referring exclusively to the right of extracting minerals disappear in front of the terrible actions of the Ndebele. Simultaneously, the new myth is enacted on the already-mentioned racial bases, as well proved by Bent himself, who in the same discourse held at the weekly meeting of the Balloon Society had also declared that

> [t]he Mashonas were the most cowardly race he […] had ever met with. When working at the Zimbabwe ruins he had from 50 to 100 in his service, and if he rebuked any of them for some slight fault they would run away, even though there might be wages due to them. He never again saw any who thus left him. The wages were certainly not high, a Mashona being content to work for a month, and provide his own necessaries, in return for a blanket costing half-a-crown. Their timidity was solely due to the fear of Lobengula's impis. The country was a perfect desert, and when he […] travelled through it he saw many villages still smouldering after a visit from the Matabele, and could obtain food in no part of it. It was monstrous for people to contend that Lobengula was only maintaining his rights in sweeping over the country, killing, robbing, and bringing down misery on every hand («Home News for India, China and the Colonies», 17 November 1893, p. 18).

Such a rapid substitution of the first myth – as the repeated references to «Liberal newspapers» make quite clear – was not made necessary by some internal and spontaneous force or tendency from within the Company, nor should it be justified on functionalist premises: its necessity directly derived from the fierce and public criticisms against the Company and Rhodes made both in parliamentary debates and on British newspapers.

For instance, in November 1893, Dr. James Johnston, a Scottish missionary who had just returned from a long trip in Southern Africa, was asked his opinion about the current situation in Mashonaland and Matabeleland. His judgment concerning the actions of the Company results in a complete condemnation, while «[h]is warmest sympathies are with the Matabeles» («Aberdeen Press and Journal», 14 November 1893, p. 6). In his own words:

> Could […] English people but know the treatment received by natives at the hands of some of their filibustering representatives in Africa, a more humane system of extending British rule would be speedily inaugurated, while some who aspire to be classed among the heroes of the Dark Continent would be tried at the Old Bailey for their lives. […] The outbreak by Lo-

> bengula and his Matabeles was […] excited by the treacheries, insolence, and rapacity of this monster corporation and the unwarrantable cruelties and brutal licence by its police forces […], [whose actions] are disastrous to the real advancement of the country, although they may be good enough for opening the land to gold miners and speculators (cit. *ibid.*).

Johnston's attack against the practices of the Company – as well as the denunciation of its actions as merely driven by brutally pursued private interests, with nothing but a subtle veneer of public legitimation to hide them – well shows the limits of the influence of the myths of legitimation produced by the Company on the British public opinion. However, while in this case the criticism is based on a direct experience of the abuses of the Company on Indigenous people, fierce attacks against it had also other origins and forms.

For example, still in November 1893, Mr. Labouchere, MP, whose harsh criticisms against the Company were already seen concerning the first two myths, wrote a violent letter to the secretary of the Northampton Radical Association, denouncing not only that the war violated the treaties, but also that it was aimed to take direct control of Matabeleland and to force the Ndebele to become workforce for the mines. As reported by a newspaper, he described the war and its premises in the following manner:

> a gang of adventurers tricked a King in Africa out of a concession giving them mining rights in his kingdom. […] [Then, they] forced on a war against the King in order to seize Matabeleland. […] At present, it would seem, those of the Matabele who have not been killed are to have their lives saved, in Mr. Buxton's poetical words, if they turn their swords into reaping-hooks, or, in more prosaic language, into mining shovels, and work in mines for the adventures. […] For my part, I have always protested against these African massacres in order to enable adventurers to feather their nests, and so long as I have the honour to be one of your representatives I shall continue to protest («Home News for India, China and the Colonies», 17 November 1893, p. 10).

Similarly, a few days later, an editorial was published on «Bristol Mercury» criticising not only the Company's actions against the Ndebele, but also the press that supported them:

> about the atrocities, of which we are being continually reminded by the English press, particularly at this juncture, I believe they have been wickedly exaggerated – first to influence the English public against the Matabele race; and secondly, to push Lord Ripon for Imperial approval of this disgraceful war. […] I believe these people have advanced in civilisation, and that they have a claim to be left alone and to be heard. They have had possession of their territory for over 50 years, and are not «usurpers». This term applies more to Mr. Rhodes and his company. They were born savages and slave drivers from no fault of their own […]. But, as I said before, the British sphere of influence is teaching these people that slavery is inhuman and wrong, and must not be permitted. But civilisation cannot come all at once, and certainly not «by firing maxim guns and mowing down these ignorant people and shooting at them» […] But, as I

hinted before, we have been befooled by the London press and some of our leading provincial papers. Reliable information has been suppressed, and the telegrams have been misleading («Bristol Mercury», 21 November 1893, p. 6).

Attacks and criticisms of this kind were so harsh and numerous that the related report of the British South Africa Company begins precisely mentioning these charges – immediately after the announcement that «[a]t the close of 1893 the defeat of the Matabele was complete» and that with the destruction and subsequent white reconstruction and colonisation of Bulawayo and the «death of Lobengula [by smallpox] […] the military operations may be said to have terminated» (BSAC 1894, p. 136) – to disprove them:

During the war numerous reckless and unfounded charges were made in certain sections of the public press, and elsewhere, as to the conduct of the military operations of the Company, particularly as to the Matabele raid at Fort Victoria, which was the immediate cause of the war. […] The Marquis of Ripon, her Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies, in his despatch of the 23rd August, 1894, forwarding to Sir Henry Loch a copy of the Commissioner's report, said «It has given me sincere satisfaction to find that the result of an enquiry so exhaustive and impartial has been clearly to exonerate Dr. Jameson and the Officers of the British South Africa Company generally from the serious charges which had been made against them in connection with these occurrences» (*ibid*., p. 137).

Nevertheless, a few pages later, the accusations made by Labouchere assume a very concrete appearance, since it is said that «the Matabele, having accepted the new order of government, are proving to be a very valuable factor in the labour supply of the country, much of the mining and agricultural work being done by them» (BSAC 1894, p. 143). Both the alleged Ndebele consent to the new order and their willingness to work for settlers were to be soon disproved by the outbreak of the First Chimurenga, which led the Company to a complete overthrow of the self-confident tone used here, retrospectively denying that peace and industry had ever pertained to the Ndebele, as will be examined in the next chapter.

However, the structure of the third myth is more explicitly sketched out by the Company not in the already-referenced general report related to the years from 1891 to 1893, but in the second volume of the *Report on the Company's Proceedings and the Conditions of the Territories within the Sphere of its Operations*, a secondary and more detailed series of documents produced in the first years of colonisation. Here, concerning the causes of the war, the Company writes:

Every effort had been made from the first occupation of the country to avoid collision with the Natives, and although the safety of a handful of white men living in the midst of savage tribes depended entirely on their prestige, and any forbearance shown by them was looked on as an act of cowardice or weakness to be taken advantage of immediately, yet all serious difficulties were successfully avoided until last year. *The quarrel that then broke out was forced upon the Company by the attempt of the Matabele to enforce their claim to murder or carry off the Mashona men, women and children to slavery. This was the true and only ground of the differences which led to the war. If the Company had not protected the Mashonas, there would never have been trouble with the Matabele*. From the very first the latter have insisted on their right to enslave or murder the Mashonas as they pleased, and during the last year or more the insolence and aggressive acts of the Matabele were very much on the increase (BSAC 1895, p. 17, italics added).

The consequences of the war are therefore said to be fully beneficial for the Company and development of the colony, and appear to be fully in line with the new myth of legitimation of the Company's government of Mashonaland and Matabeleland:

Safety of life and property, which could not be said to exist in the face of the continual menace offered by the presence on the borders of a disciplined and savage army, has been secured. Raids on the Mashonas have been effectually put a stop to, and the Matabele military system has been broken up. These facts have an important bearing on the economical and speedy development of the Company's territories, which necessarily depends so much on the question of labour. Hitherto the only native labour procurable has been that of the Mashonas, who make bad workmen, owing to their physical weakness and want of spirit. Now, however, the Matabele, finding their compulsory occupation as soldiers gone, have offered themselves for work in the mines and elsewhere, for which, owing to their great strength and endurance, they are excellently fitted. Even before the war many of them offered their services, and proved themselves, when not inclined to laziness, to be good labourers (*ibid*., p. 103).

The process of racialisation, already begun, as seen, in preparation of the war, is thus further twisted towards the selective and differential transformation of Indigenous people into a disciplined workforce, where the racial difference is produced and valorised in accordance with the broader framework of «racial capitalism» as theorised by Cedric Robinson (1983/2000).

The criticism expressed by Labouchere in his already-mentioned letter therefore appears fully justified, insofar as the preoccupation for the use of the potential new Indigenous labour created by the (as will be seen, only partial) destruction of the Ndebele military system is fundamental as much as the peace-keeping justification in the Company's reports. However, Labouchere's attacks against the Company did not stop with the end of the war, nor were they limited to the press or to the themes evoked so far.

In January 1894, at the House of Commons he asked Mr. Buxton, Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, not only about the methods of warfare pursued by the Company and the Imperial Bechuanaland Police against the Ndebele, – which drew severe criticisms from their Indigenous ally Khama – and the obvious conflict of interests concerning Major Goold-Adams, commander of the Imperial Bechuanaland Police and at the same time a shareholder of the British South Africa Company; Labouchere also called his attention to the violation of any treaty and legal procedure deriving from the actions of the Company itself. Cecil Rhodes, in a speech, would have said «that the volunteers are to be allowed to select 3,000 morgen of land in Matabeleland, and that the rest of the land is to be sold», therefore originating the questions:

> why this disposal of the land in Matabeleland has been announced, in view of the assurances given that no such disposal should take place before the Colonial Office has decided upon the position and rights (if any) of the Company in Matabeleland; whether he has observed that apparently the occupation of Buluwayo [sic] by the invading forces of the Company has been followed by possession of that capital; and whether it is to be understood that the rights of the Matabele to land possessed by them in the late capital of their country have been extinguished by the occupation? (*Hansard*: Mr. Labouchere, *The Settlement of Matabeleland*, 2 January 1894, Vol. 20, Col. 649-650)

However, an even bigger scandal was going to emerge a few days later. Another Member of the Parliament, Mr. A.C. Morton, asked the Under Secretary of State for the Colonies

> whether his attention has been called to the speech made by the hon. Cecil Rhodes at a banquet at Cape Town on the 6th instant, in which he is reported to have said that the achievement now brought to a successful issue was the realisation of an early project formerly discussed by him with Sir Hercules Robinson [i.e., the High Commissioner for South Africa], and approved by that statesman, of securing the Cape Hinterland, and at the same time subjecting one of the most savage portions of Africa to civilised occupation; whether the Government were aware of this *previously arranged subjugation and occupation of Matabeleland*; and, if so, why Parliament was not so informed; whether his attention has been called to the further remarks in the same speech, in which, referring to the question of Imperial control and Republican sentiment, Mr. Rhodes said that he had no objection to the Crown if the Crown would recognise its duties in the Colonies; if not, the Colonies might deal elsewhere; and what steps the Government propose to take in the matter? (*Hansard*: Mr. A.C. Morton, *The Cape Hinterland*, 12 January 1894, Vol. 20, Col. 1447, italics added)

The claim, which appears today to have been true in all evidence, was readily disproved by the Under Secretary of State for the Colonies. For some time, therefore, the Company could rest in a false sense of security, believing stability and peace as bases for the development of the colony had been attained at the expense of Indigenous people and that the Government, the Imperial administration in South Africa, and the public opinion in the motherland would have supported its work even against its critics. The situation persisted instead for three years only, insofar as two events contributed to overthrow the apparent stability of the situation in Mashonaland and Matabeleland: on the one hand, the infamous Jameson Raid, which caused the Second Anglo-Boer War and severely reduced the popularity of the Company both in South Africa and in the motherland, even bringing to the (although temporary) resignation of Rhodes from his positions in the Board of Directors and as plenipotentiary spokesman and to the constitution of a Special Committee of the British Parliament to enquire into the operations of the Company. On the other hand, the First Chimurenga, which saw the joint insurrection of the Shona and the Ndebele against white domination, led to a deep reform of the administration of those territories – which then started to be known as Rhodesia – but also to the crisis of the third myth that had been used to justify the war against the Ndebele, as well as of the stereotype of the weak, feeble, and helpless Shona.

In its place, other myths began to flourish, myths that, differently from the three analysed in this chapter, were destined to a long life, accompanying the colonisation and the existence of the Rhodesian state until the victorious anticolonial revolution in 1979-1980, and, under some aspects, even after. These three myths – the myth of the settlers' self-defence, the myth of the «white man's burden», and the myth of Great Zimbabwe and the legendary ancient white settlers – will be the object of the next chapter.

II
The Long-Lived Myths of Settlement (1896-1980)

As mentioned in the first chapter, the Indigenous uprisings of 1896-1897 – later known as the First Chimurenga – marked a decisive rupture in the ideological framework that had sustained the British South Africa Company's presence in Rhodesia up to that point. Its initial expansion had been based, as seen, on narratives of peaceful occupation and compliance with the treaties, and of anti-slavery "humanitarianism"; these had, in turn, been overcome by the third myth, based on the selective protection of Indigenous people against other Indigenous people. In this framework, the joint rebellion of the Ndebele and Shona against the Company not only exposed the limits of this myth, but completely undermined it.

In the aftermath of this "shock" – and starting already during the uprising itself – the Company and, increasingly, the settler population elaborated new myths of legitimation, partially based on pre-existing material and discourses that had previously remained marginal. It was no longer sufficient or sustainable to represent colonisation as a neutral act of governance or economic development, based on treaties with Indigenous chiefs, on alleged duties derived from international law, or on the "simple" protection of the Shona; as already discussed, this was particularly because, by allying with the Ndebele and revolting against the Company, they had also caused a crisis of the stereotype in which they had been framed. While from the point of view of Indigenous labour policies racial stereotypes continued to be employed, – considering different peoples as more or less adequate to specific tasks, along the lines of racial capitalism as defined by Cedric Robinson (1983/2000) – from a political point of view a dichotomic opposition between the coloniser and the colonised – a defining feature of colonialism according to Frantz Fanon (1961/1963) – increasingly became the fundamental norm. In particular, the Company began to frame white presence in Rhodesia as both existentially threatened and morally defensible, a fragile outpost of civilisation under siege.

From this shift a series of myths emerged that would prove far more enduring than those of the early occupation. As a matter of fact, these were constructed in the late 1890s but actively reproduced and mobilised across the decades – and particularly during periods of crisis – right up until the end of settler rule in 1980.

1. *The Fourth Myth: The Defence and Self-Defence of Settlers*

The first of these long-lived myths was forged in the crucible of the First Chimurenga itself. The Indigenous uprising of 1896-1897 struck directly at the heart of the Company's authority and the safety of the settler population. In what was perceived and represented as a sudden attack on white life and property, the joint revolt of the Shona and Ndebele exposed the vulnerability of the colonial project. In response, the Company reoriented its discourse toward a new myth of legitimation: that of defence and self-defence of settlers.

This myth presented settlers not as agents of conquest but as victims of aggression, peaceful inhabitants forced to take up arms in order to survive. The violence of the Chimurenga was framed not as the result of prior dispossession or colonial brutality, but as the eruption of Indigenous savagery and betrayal. Through this lens, white Rhodesians became the moral protagonists of the colonial story: beleaguered, innocent, and righteous in their struggle. The fourth myth shifted the discourses on extermination and extinction that had been used to describe the risk to which the Shona were said to be vulnerable under the attacks of the Ndebele so as to concern directly the white settler minority, which was thus represented as fundamentally endangered. In doing so, the Company justified not only violent repression but the permanent militarisation of settler society, the expansion of racialised security policies, and the tightening of control over Indigenous people. Furthermore, what began as a reactive narrative in 1896 would soon become a central pillar of white Rhodesian national identity – as will be discussed in greater detail in the final chapter – a discourse mobilised again in the face of later African nationalist movements, and eventually embedded in the ideological core of the Rhodesian regime under UDI. It is even possible to retrace the influence of this myth – and in particular of this fundamental symbolic reversal of the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised, wherein the roles of oppressor and victim are inverted – in contemporary conspiracy theories of "Great Replacement" and "white genocide" (Paci 2025).

In this sense, the crucial episode that can be read as the founding moment of this fourth myth is, however, to be found in the already-discussed war between the Company and the Ndebele, rather than during the First Chimurenga: it is the story of the Shangani Patrol, a thirty-four-soldier unit that had been ordered to advance and capture Lobengula («Glasgow Herald», 14 December 1893, p. 6), but that was instead surrounded and killed by Ndebele warriors near the Shangani River on 4 December 1893 («National Observer», 13 January 1894, p. 11). The British press soon began to glorify the members of the Patrol, with special regard to its commander, Major Allan Wilson. Their "gallant" resistance – soon to be known as "Wilson's Last Stand" – to the attack before perishing immediately struck the imperial imagination: the «Times» dedicated many stories to the Patrol and to Major Wilson and defined the event as the "Shangani massacre", – despite the fact that it was the result of a battle between military groups in the context of a war – a racially connotated characterisation usually applied in a uniform way to killings of white settlers by Black people at the time (MacDonald 1994, pp. 132-135).

The members of the Shangani Patrol were soon identified not only as martyrs of the British Empire in the motherland but also as national heroes in the then rising white Rhodesian national identity. Marshall Hole, in his history, wrote that:

> when a bare half-dozen sorely-stricken men remained alive, they struggled to their feet and sang the National Anthem, and then […], just before the final rush, they were seen to be writing farewell messages on scraps of paper. Not since the disaster of Isandhlwana—though that indeed was a massacre on a far larger scale—had any episode of British arms more profoundly stirred the public. The glory of their fight against overwhelming odds spread a glamour over the whole achievement and raised Jameson and his Volunteers to the highest pinnacle of popularity (Marshall Hole 1967, p. 330).

Indeed, the memory of the Shangani Patrol and of "Wilson's Last Stand" can be said to be the cornerstone on which Rhodesian white nationalism was built, with a role comparable to the subsequent use of tombs of the "unknown soldier" in many European countries. As Gann (1965, p. 118) remarks in his history of Rhodesia, the event «for white Rhodesians became a glorious memory, their own equivalent of the bloody Alamo massacre and Custer's Last Stand in the American West, a symbol of heroic courage and determination in fulfilling the frontiersman's Manifest Destiny».

The memorialisation began immediately after the episode both in England and Rhodesia. As the remains of Major Wilson and his party were recovered from the Shangani, in April 1894, it was immediately decided that they should be symbolically buried within the ruins of Great Zimbabwe («Guernsey Star», 17 April 1894, p. 1), the ancient African city that was instead considered proof of ancient white colonisation by the BSAC and Rhodesian settlers at the time, as will be shown discussing the sixth myth. The interment was actually concluded at the beginning of September 1894 «in consecrated ground near Zimbabwe with military honours», after an «impressive funeral service […] previously held in the English church at Victoria» («York Herald», 4 September 1894, p. 3). On the same occasion, Cecil Rhodes proposed to erect a «memorial to the heroes» (*ibid.*). The monument was actually built in 1904 on the Matopos Hills, an Indigenous sacred site where Rhodes himself was, and still is, buried. Furthermore, the day of the "massacre", 4 December, became a Rhodesian national holiday as early as 1895 (Speight 1910, pp. 160).

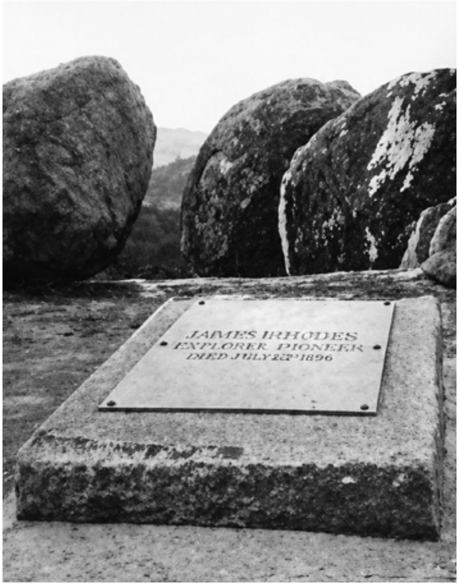

Figure 5. Mr. Rhodes' Grave in the Matopos Hills (1902).

Poems and theatrical pieces were dedicated to the patrol as well. In September 1894, Lord Granville Gordon published the poem *Wilson's Last Stand Across the Shangani River*, which contains triumphally chauvinistic verses such as:

> No mortal tongue can ever say what happened to them then,
> But the natives speak in wonder of those great and glorious men;
> They saw their time on earth had come, they knew they had to go,
> So hand in hand and back to back they faced their savage foe.
> […]
> I guess they sent a prayer to God to comfort those who mourned,
> And died where they stood for their country's good at the hands of a race they scorned (Gordon 1894, pp. 32, 34).

Theatrical pieces about the patrol were represented already in 1895 both in England and the colonies: in this sense, the political relevance attached to it is well visible in an incident that occurred in Maritzburg (Natal) precisely concerning such representations. As reported by newspapers («Colonies and

India», 22 June 1895, p. 17), the representation was suspended at the request of authorities, insofar as they were afraid that «it would have a tendency to so excite the passion of the natives engaged therein as to lead them to carry their mimic triumph over the white man into actual practice, and run amuck in the streets at the close of the performance». In the context of the Savage South Africa exhibition held at Earl's Court in London in 1899, its organiser Frank Fillis also included a representation of some episodes of the two Indigenous revolts in Rhodesia, including the «Major Wilson's Last Stand» (Qureshi 2011, pp. 230-234). Incidentally, it should be noted that African performers for the representation were provided by the British South Africa Company itself, in such a way that it provoked a brief parliamentary debate. These were «50 zulu men [who] have been brought to London from South Africa», and who «had been led to believe that they were to be employed at the Kimberley Mines in Cape Colony»; despite the protests and the rare disapproval of the Secretary of State for the Colonies himself (still Joseph Chamberlain), according to which the Company's «Administrator at Bulawayo, on being informed of the objection of the High Commissioner, refused to sanction the proposal to convey Matabeles to England», it was however impossible «to compel the return of the Natives to South Africa» (*Hansard*: Sir Reid, *Savage South Africa*, 4 May 1899, Vol. 70, Col. 1302-1304). Based on a screenplay by the same Frank Fillis (who also played the role of Major Wilson on screen) and produced by the Warwick Trading Company, a short film was also produced and released in September 1899, with the title *Major Wilson's Last Stand* (curiously, Peter Lobengula, son of the king, interpreted the role of the father in the film). Significantly, seventy years later and in the context of UDI government in Rhodesia, the event was again the subject of a feature-length film titled *Shangani Patrol* (1970).

In this sense, the memorialisation of the Shangani Patrol should be read as the construction of a symbol capable of representing the more general unity and national character of the Rhodesian white settlers under the government of the Company. It should not be forgotten, however, that the insurrection and the subsequent repression themselves were the actual foundation of such unity and national character. Significantly, however, "Rhodesia" as a national name for the territories governed by the Company – already circulating informally since the first days of colonial occupation – was officially recognised only after the First Chimurenga (BSAC 1898, p. 223). This is however made even clearer in the report published after the conclusion of the First Chimurenga, immediately after the detail of the white casualties:

> Your Directors report with deep regret that the total number of casualties due to the rebellion was 639. In addition to 264 white persons murdered or missing, 187 lost their lives through wounds and other causes, bringing the total number of deaths to 451. The number of wounded was 188. Omitting the casualties amongst the Relief Forces and the Imperial troops, the returns show that of the inhabitants of the country 390 were killed and 150 wounded, or about 10 per cent. of the white population. In connection with the rebellion your Directors desire to refer with gratitude and admiration to the manner in which the inhabitants of Rhodesia came to the assistance of the Administration and disregarded all personal considerations in the hour of danger. All alike contributed their services, and by their united and determined efforts averted the more serious disasters with which the country was threatened (BSAC 1898, p. 160).

In fact, at the same time, the necessity to defend white settlers from the threat of Indigenous people, now increasingly represented in such terms of national unity, was also fundamental in justifying the construction of a powerful repressive apparatus for the government of both Ndebele and Shona people. In turn, this apparatus not only greatly reinforced the capacity of the Company to govern Indigenous people materially, but also, as already mentioned, to develop new, often coercive ways to exploit Indigenous labour. After the First Chimurenga, the already-existing system of Native Commissioners was reinforced by importing new ones from Natal and extended to Matabeleland (BSAC 1898, pp. 222-223).

From this point of view, on the one hand, the more hierarchical nature of the Ndebele pre-colonial organisation – a point on which, as seen, colonial functionaries had already much insisted upon in previous years – was said to facilitate their political control, thanks to the transformation of chiefs into salaried employees of the Company, leaving them «a limited control in the different districts» (BSAC 1898, p. 222). As a matter of fact, it is said, the «Matabele have always been accustomed to organized government by important chiefs, who have been in turn responsible to a central authority. They thoroughly understand and are completely satisfied with the new system» (*ibid.*). From the point of view of the Company, in fact, the newly proposed «machinery of Native Government is as nearly as possible the system found existing among the natives on the establishment of British rule in this territory», the difference simply being that the system has been «adapted as to transfer all supreme authority previously enjoyed by the late King to the hands of the Administrator, who in that capacity is called Supreme Chief» (BSAC 1899a, p. 219). Analogously, the hierarchical structure according to which, in turn, the Chief Native Commissioner directly answered to the Administrator himself, while Native Commissioners answered to the former, and each subsidised chief to

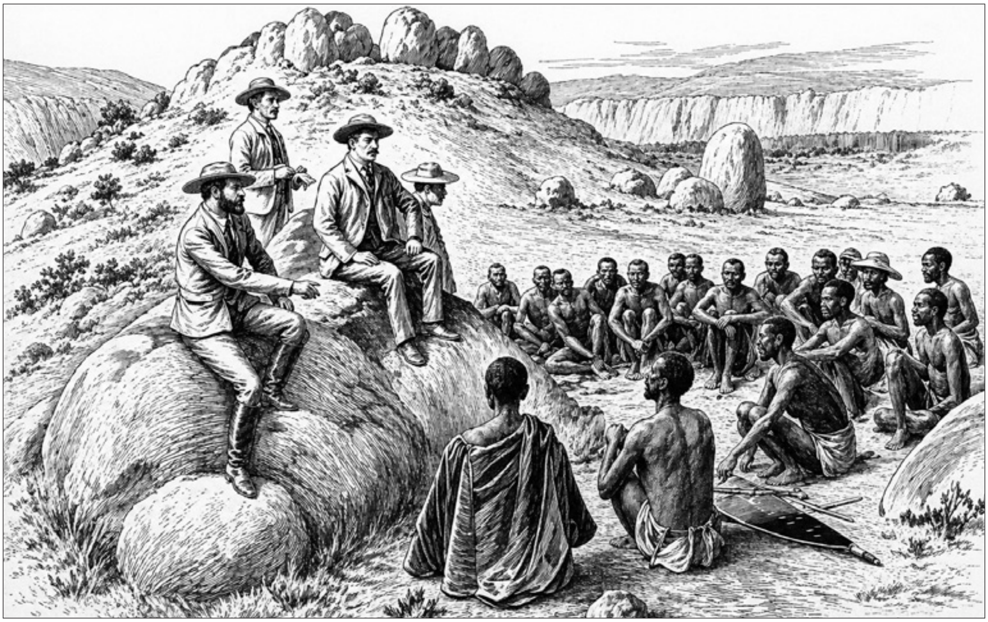

Figure 6. Rhodes meets the Ndebele chiefs in the Matopos Hills (sketch by Robert Baden-Powell, 1896).

his respective Native Commissioner, was considered to be equally based on Ndebele pre-colonial political organisation (*ibid*.).

On the other hand, it was the Shona now who appeared as less governable: «in Mashonaland the task has been more difficult in consequence of the absence of any central native authority to which the various tribes have been accustomed to look for guidance». As seen concerning the crisis of the third myth, the stereotype of the helpless and passive Shona had been in fact reverted by their participation in the insurrection: what colonial functionaries saw as the absence of political unity did not imply docility anymore, but a potential obstacle in the construction of efficient government. Nevertheless, the Company reassures, «now […] that all active resistance has ceased, it is anticipated that the Administration will find little difficulty in settling the natives in such a manner as to remove all danger of any future rising», although it could be necessary to deport and relocate them «on open ground where supervision can be easily exercised» (BSAC 1898, p. 222).

In general, other than reducing the power of pre-colonial authorities and breaking the military power of Indigenous people in every way possible, the new system aimed to create as much divisions as possible not only between Ndebele and Shona – a lesson taught to the colonial administration by the First Chimurenga – but more generally between different African peoples, and also between chiefs and commoners, different territories, and different groups of the same peoples. The 1897-1898 detailed report, containing the 1898 Southern Rhodesia Order in Council, is particularly representative from this point of view.

First of all, the Company attempted to limit to the minimum any contact between the Indigenous communities it governed and other African people: from the end of 1898, «any native who is not an aboriginal native of Rhodesia, or a descendant of one, is prohibited from settling in any Kaffir kraal in Rhodesia without a permit signed by the Native Commissioner of the district, or by the master in whose employ he may be» (BSAC 1899a, p. 7). While the prohibition was formally justified on the alleged basis of cases of deceptions put in practice by «Cape boys» disguised as policemen in Shona and Ndebele villages, it is much more probable that the government aimed to avoid contacts between Indigenous people of different provenance, once again in order to limit the risk of information exchanges and of further insurrections[1].

However, the section of the aforementioned Order in Council titled *Native Regulations* is the most significant, both because of its novelty compared to the previous system and for its very content. In the first place, it extraordinarily amplify the power of the Administrator in Council, who «for the time being exercises over all natives all political power and authority»; among his powers, he «appoints all chiefs to preside over tribes or sections of tribes», and also can divide «existing tribes into two or more parts, or amalgamates tribes or part of tribes into one tribe, as necessity or the good government of the natives may, in his opinion, require» (BSAC 1899a, p. 53). He also has the power to remove any chief from his position, as well as to order «his removal with his family and property from any reserve or vacant land», and to call upon chiefs themselves «to supply men for the defence of Southern Rhodesia and for the suppression of disorder and rebellion within its borders» (*ibid.*). The Administrator in Council can furthermore «divide and sub-divide Southern Rhodesia into Districts and Sub-Districts as may seem to him desirable» (BSAC 1899a, p. 54). A few years later, the subdivision in districts became a further instrument of government and control, limiting the mobility of all Indigenous people, through the General Registration and Pass Law; not only «un-

[1] The justification appears all the more inconsistent once it is considered that these disguised «Cape boys» are also indicated as the real source of all the denounced cases of power abuse by the colonial police: «There is no doubt that the outrages upon natives at their kraals attributed in past years to members of the police force, were in reality committed by these bogus policemen, who have been a constant source of danger and annoyance» (BSAC 1899a, p. 7).

der its provisions, every male native over the age of 14 will be registered, and will receive a certificate of registration, containing all particulars necessary to identify him», but also «[t]he possession of this certificate will entitle him to travel freely *within the district* in which he resides, but *if he desires to leave the district for any purpose, an additional short pass is required*», a measure that almost prefigures similar ones subsequently adopted in apartheid South Africa (BSAC 1903, p. 19, italics added). The more strictly political-philosophical implications of such powers will be further discussed in the final chapter.

At the same time, Native Commissioners received further power on specific districts: they could assign lands for the construction of huts or the realisation of gardens and grazing grounds, to the point that «no new huts shall be built or gardens cultivated without his consent and approval of the position selected»; they also had the power to «fix the number of huts which shall compose any kraal», insofar as they were furthermore responsible for the registration of the huts themselves and the collection of the hut tax (BSAC 1899a, p. 55).

As mentioned, the Chiefs were made dependent from the colonial administration both for their subsistence and authority and *de facto* transformed into low-level colonial functionaries. Not only they were appointed by the Administrator in Council, but could hold their office «upon good behaviour and general fitness» (*ibid.*). These «good behaviour» and «general fitness» were measured by their capacity to fulfil their duties within the machine of colonial administration, ranging from the «general good conduct of the natives under his charge» to the «immediate notification to the Native Commissioner […] of all crimes and offences […], of all deaths and suspicious disappearance, of any epidemic of prevailing disease», from «the prevention of crimes and offences of evasion of taxing or licensing law, of the sale of poisons and love philtres and of the practice of witchcraft or divination» to the «notification to the Native Commissioner […] of all applications by new comers to build and reside within his tribal district» (BSAC 1899a, p. 56).

As a result of this rapid and deep reform of Native Administration, the Company proudly proclaims that the order so deeply broken by the insurrection was soon re-established: for example, the «native peoples throughout Mashonaland have, without exception, shown that they realise the position in which they were left by the operations of 1897, and their obedience to the orders of the Administration, and the readiness with which their taxes have been paid leave little to be desired» (BSAC 1899a, p. 102). Analogously, in Matabeleland, during the past year «the behaviour of the native has […] been uniformly loyal, and nothing has occurred which could point to the existence of any dissatisfaction among them» (BSAC 1899a, p. 108). The reason for this, it is clearly stated, is the new system, with special reference to the appointment of salaried chiefs, which «has proved very successful» (*ibid.*), to the point that the Ndebele people are now said to be consistently peaceful and even «universally desirous of conforming to the laws and regulations imposed by the Government» (BSAC 1899a, p. 109).

An ambiguously double register consistently characterises these and other passages concerning the attitude and behaviour of Indigenous people after the First Chimurenga: on the one hand, the Company seems eager to represent them as finally pacified, on the path of being slowly included within the rising settler state, and substantially interested in being "civilised"; on the other hand, they are represented as peaceful only on the basis of the constant surveillance and threat of violence by the Company itself. If «a far better understanding exists at the present moment between the natives and the Government than before the rebellion», this is because the «rebellion has taught them a severe lesson, they fully realise our power» (BSAC 1899a, p. 204). Multiple reports sent by single Native Commissioners furthermore insist upon the role of the forts now punctuating the whole country, keeping «fresh in their minds the strength of the Government» (BSAC 1899a, p. 205).

Both this ambiguous discourse concerning the government of Indigenous people and the very structure of Native Administration that emerged from the repression following the end of the First Chimurenga were destined to remain part of Rhodesian history for decades, as positively claimed almost forty years later by Ethel Tawse Jollie (1935, p. 975), first woman to be member of the Legislative Council in Rhodesia under the government of the Company, ex-wife of Archibald Colquhon, first Administrator of Mashonaland, and notorious for her white supremacist, anti-suffragist, and anti-feminist positions. In her article we find the first aspect of the representation of Indigenous people being particularly highlighted, in accordance and articulation with the fifth myth that will be discussed in the next paragraph: «Their good nature and willingness to please make them good and pleasant servants, and they are capable of great devotion to their master or mistress besides being very teachable. Almost every Rhodesian of my acquaintance prides him or herself on his success in handling natives, and all old hands have old servants attached to them who are as indispensable, devoted and exacting as family treasures elsewhere» (Tawse Jollie, p. 978).

Nevertheless, the other aspect never disappeared, remaining able to resurface whenever the risk of disorders or signs of unrest made their appearance.

Far from being the result of a mere contingence, this feature appears as deeply imbricated in settler psychology more generally, often discussed in terms of racial paranoia and siege mentality (Paci 2025). From this point of view, in fact, the racial characterisation of settlers and their political unity in terms of whiteness – as will be discussed in greater detail in the final chapter – was fundamental since the first years of the colonisation of Rhodesia, and even for the more general political structure of colonial southern Africa. Its importance emerges quite clearly looking at the account of a meeting, that took place in the last months of 1891 at the Mazoe Gold Fields, of important members of the chartered company, including Cecil Rhodes and Dr. Jameson, with Lord Randolph Churchill, former Chancellor of the Exchequer and Secretary of State for India, member of the House of Commons, and father of the more famous Winston Churchill, as described by David De Waal, a Boer businessman, former mayor of Cape Town, and Rhodes' secretary.

In that occasion, De Waal had a fierce argument with Churchill, who had written articles on the «Daily Graphic» where he described Boers as «lazy, dirty, and barbarous» (De Waal 1896, p. 235), and who was reaffirming the same thesis in De Waal's presence. Rhodes thus spoke in defence of De Waal and criticised Churchill by «bringing to his notice how much evil he had wrought through the articles he had written, and how he was busy stirring up hatred between the rival races [i.e., the British and the Boer] in South Africa» (De Waal 1896, p. 237). On the contrary, Rhodes and De Waal agreed on the absolute necessity to preserve the unity of «white races» in the whole southern Africa, as the latter writes a few pages later: «I trust that the little mistrust and jealousy that some still cherish towards him [i.e., Rhodes] will soon die away, for discord and strife amongst the white population in a country like ours can only tend to injure all parties» (De Waal 1896, p. 282). Even more explicitly, he continues: «Let us remember that we have […] to keep a watchful eye on the internal interests of our land; we live in a land in which there are millions of natives, a fact that gives rise to an obviously serious question. If, therefore, the white races in the different parts of South Africa do not live in harmony with each other the future is certain to yield us bitter fruits» (*ibid.*).

The strict unity of «white races» and the fragmented division of Indigenous peoples are therefore identified as fundamental political aims by the Company as well as by other colonial political agents in southern Africa; both goals are posed as necessary not only in order to make and maintain Indigenous communities governable in general, but more specifically to pursue the end at the very core of the fourth myth: the defence of white settlers, which, as said, will continue to inform Rhodesian policies and to be used as a justification for them until the end of the regime after the Second Chimurenga in the 1970s.

As a matter of fact, the same myth is still to be found in the years of the UDI, after 1965, with reference to the policies adopted by the white suprematist government of Ian Smith in the wake of the civil war for decolonisation. As the journalist John L. Cefkin wrote about president Smith, only a few months after the UDI itself:

> Apprehension, however, is not despair, and Rhodesian whites show no intention of giving up. Indeed, Smith faces the future with considerable resources. Perhaps his most potent support lies in the siege mentality of Rhodesian whites. For the moment, Smith has succeeded in convincing them that the only choice is between the Rhodesian Front and UDI on the one hand, and black African dictatorship and white genocide on the other (Cefkin 1966, p. 45).

In this sense, Cefkin's reference to «white genocide» – a term that has gained prominence in recent years due to its use by far-right politicians and white supremacist terrorists (Paci 2025) – well demonstrates the enduring influence of the racial «siege mentality» embedded in white Rhodesian identity (symbolically inaugurated, as noted, by the story of the Shangani Patrol) decades after the fourth myth had begun to be used for justifying both colonisation in general and specific policies of the Company in particular, with special regard to the construction of the system of Native Administration.

Nevertheless, as seen with reference to the two contradictory aspects of the settler representation of Shona and Ndebele after the First Chimurenga, this fourth myth and its declinations have been contradictorily intertwined with another one since the very beginning, perhaps the most famous among the myths of legitimation of colonialism in its entire history: the civilisational myth, or, in Kipling's words, the "white man's burden".

2. *The Fifth Myth: The White Man's Burden*

From a general perspective, it could be said that the civilisational myth has been part of the history of Rhodesia since the beginning, insofar as it has been part of global colonial history since the beginning (or at least, since its origin as a form of secularisation of the more ancient religious justification provided by the right to spread Christianity as the "true religion"). As a structural part of the colonial enterprise, the civilisational myth was even specifically theorised by colonial functionaries and thinkers; it is enough to consider the major example provided by Lord Lugard in his 1922 work *The Dual Mandate* *in British Tropical Africa*, according to which the British had a double responsibility in Africa: to ensure administration, government, and economic benefits for the imperial metropole and to «uplift» and civilise Indigenous peoples.

Nevertheless, precisely because of the apparent ubiquity of this myth of legitimation in global colonial history, it is all the more surprising to find that, just like the fourth myth, the fifth one was mentioned only two times before the First Chimurenga. As seen in the first chapter upon an examination of the charter, the scope of the Company did not include the "civilisation" of Indigenous peoples. Rather, its government was justified on the basis of the compliance with treaties concluded with them (formally obtained on an equal footing), and its explicit and formal ends were to develop the country economically, with special regard to infrastructures, trade, and extraction.

Significantly, the first reference to be found in the Company's archive is within the detailed report concerning the years from 1892 to 1894, more precisely in a section entitled «General Characteristics» (of the Shona). The characterisation to be found here still reflects the racial stereotype assigned to them prior to the First Chimurenga, thus including a representation of them as weak, passive, and helpless, in accordance with the third myth discussed in the previous chapter.

In particular, the Shona, it is said, «cannot be taken to be a robust race», insofar as «[w]ell-built men are not very common», to the point that «women, as a rule, surpass the men in muscular physique»; it is also asserted that this is not due to the scarcity of food, but «comes from want of continuous exercise on the part of the men» (BSAC 1895, p. 83). Likewise, Shona children, and particularly boys «are frequently found to be bright and clever, but when they reach a certain age, the growth of their mental faculties seems to stop», due to «their monotonous life and want of ambition»; we start to see a subtle reference to the necessity of "civilising" them here, insofar as it is also argued that «[i]ntercourse with whites should have a beneficial effect» (*ibid.*).

What is actually of interest to the Company, however, is the potential of the Shona as labourers: labour and civilisation go hand in hand in the mind of the coloniser, especially because this coupling makes it easy to say that Indigenous people are savage because lazy and lazy because savage, and therefore forcing them to work was also the only way to civilise them. The interest in Shona morals is bound to the same framework: they are in fact lauded for the absence among them of «illicit excesses» and the absence of «habitual drunkards», especially among women (*ibid.*). Concerning labour more strictly, the report says:

> The Mashonas do a certain amount of labour, and are less lazy than the Matabele. A Matabele as long as he has a wife and a slave to work for him, will not work himself; while the Mashona men do their share of work. Some kind of work, in the garden as well as at home, is done by men only, from which no one, not even a chief is excused. White men find sometimes great difficulty in procuring natives to work for them. This arises chiefly from want of confidence in their future master. Men who know how to gain the confidence of natives by justice and fair treatment will have no difficulty in getting native labour, this will have more effect than high wages (*ibid.*).

The construction of the Shona in these terms clearly concurs to identify a certain potential as a worker, and thus, as noted, a potential for civilisation: «the Mashonas may be said to possess good qualities, *capable of development*», and their alleged backwardness is also to be excused due to the fact that «[f]or more than half-a-century he has been the prey of a fierce and warlike neighbour, by whom he has been […] impoverished and demoralized» (BSAC 1896, p. 84, italics added). Nevertheless, the report states confidently, a «just and paternal administration which protects the Mashonas against unfair and harsh treatment will *advance the civilization of a whole nation of natives*» (*ibid.*). This whole description refers specifically to 1894, as manifested by the following passage, a few pages later, where the civilisational myth is evoked again: «The History of Mashonaland and Matabeleland during the year 1894 is, as this Report will have shown, one of constant work in the direction both of civilization and commercial development» (BSAC 1896, p. 103). In this first reference, therefore, the civilisational myth appears as entangled with the third myth rather than with the fourth one; nevertheless, this remains quite an isolated case, as will be seen more clearly below.

Still significantly, the second reference is instead in a section of the report concerning 1895 where the inauguration of a hospital dedicated to the Shangani Patrol was described:

> The general public, and especially those who have lived in newly developed countries, will, it is believed, appreciate the establishment of such an institution as a practical and permanent tribute to the memory of *the gallant pioneers whose names should always be associated with the country which they did so much to secure to civilisation and commerce*" (BSAC 1896, pp. 184-184, italics added).

Nevertheless, this case remains even more isolated, being practically without context. It can therefore be said that the use of the fifth myth is not prior to the war with the Ndebele and, at the very least, extremely occasional before the First Chimurenga.

Conversely, the situation radically changes after the insurrection. This is immediately visible in the *Report on the Native Disturbances in Rhodesia 1896-*

1897, where the causes of the revolt indicated by the Company were two: the «incompleteness of the conquest of the Matabele Nation in 1893»; and, more importantly from this point of view, the «incapacity of a warlike and aristocratic race to give up their old habits, and to accept their *natural place in the peaceful and industrial organization of a settled civilized community*» (BSAC 1898a, p. 7, italics added). The defeat of the insurrection and the repression that followed it – as described in the previous paragraph – is thus immediately transformed into a stage in the history of development and civilisation of the country.

Unsurprisingly, the civilisational discourse formerly concerning exclusively the Shona is now equally applied to the Ndebele as well, precisely in connection with the new system of Native Administration, which is described in the pages previous to the following passage:

> When it is remembered that the Matabele are the product of generations of idleness, it will be realised that it is contrary to reason to expect them to acquire at once a taste for continuous and laborious industry, but the principle of the above proposals would appear to be sound. The aim of the Administration is to initiate a *sound native policy*, calculated in time to produce *industrious habits which are so essential to civilization*, without interfering more than is absolutely necessary with the customs and habits of the natives themselves. […] [T]he Administration hopes to secure the country against a recurrence of disorder, to safeguard the interests of the natives, *to promote their civilization*, and also to meet the *reasonable requirements of the white population* [i.e., of security and of cheap labour] (BSAC 1898a, p. 18).

In the subsequent reports, the civilisational myth returned insistently every year, especially in the sections dedicated to Indigenous labour, that is, to its scarcity, due to the difficulties encountered by the Company in forcing Indigenous people to work in the fields and especially in the mines of the settlers. The "civilisation" of Indigenous peoples, in fact, is represented as necessary for their own good, and, at the same time, as possibly realisable only by making them industrious, which, in turn, can happen exclusively by transforming them into salaried workers for the settlers.

The dimensions of morality and civilisation are thus clearly thought of by the Company and the settlers, first of all, in connection with that of labour (as well as with the security of white settlers, as seen in the previous paragraph). Indigenous behaviours are considered immoral, savage, or barbarous (and thus to be civilised) based on their degree of agreement or conflict with the preservation of social order (sexual and family morality) and the attainment of "industriousness" (labour ethics), as well as with their interconnections. This is one of the reasons why, for example, the Royal Charter already committed the Company to limit and virtually impede the importation of liquors into the territories it administered, as per the article 12: «The Company shall regulate the traffic in spirits and other intoxicating liquors within the territories aforesaid, so as, as far as practicable, to prevent the sale of any spirits or other intoxicating liquor to any natives» (Speight 1910, p. 4). From this point of view, in the words of one of the Native Commissioners, the Shona people is seen as promising:

> As to the morals of the native, he is not worse than his neighbours, and the absence of illicit excesses, and their consequences, speaks much in his favour. Cases of drunkenness do occur, but the kind of beer they have is not very intoxicating. The writer has been four years in the country and has not found a single case of a woman getting drunk. Habitual drunkards are also unknown (BSAC 1896, p. 83).

In contrast, for example, Indigenous people from the Portuguese colonies are considered much more problematic: although capable of "industriousness", their free access to liquors would make them prone to bad habits such as theft, as suggested in the section devoted to «Crime» in the 1898-1900 detailed report:

> The large number of petty thefts which have occurred in Salisbury and Umtali during the year are to be ascribed to the Portuguese natives from the Zambesi and Eastern districts. These natives are cleanly and intelligent, and make excellent indoor servants, but many of them are inclined to petty thieving, and steal clothing, drink, and other articles of no great value. These natives have been accustomed to a free liquor traffic in their own country, which may possibly explain their predatory habits (BSAC 1901a, p. 124).

For the same reasons, great attention is directed towards the dimension of religion. While the Charter generally prescribed that the Company and its officers «shall not in any way interfere with the religion of any class or tribe of the peoples of the territories aforesaid», the already vague clause contained in the same article 13 – «except so far as may be necessary in the interests of humanity» (Speight 1910, p. 4) – was freely interpreted by the Company to develop a religion policy aimed at favouring its own goals.

In this sense, the attempts to control Indigenous religion and customs were especially aimed at the regulation of sexual and family morality, even in connection with the dimension of labour. From this point of view, the principles of «limited non-interference» with Indigenous customs adopted throughout the British Empire tended to replicate analogous effects in different colonial territories: that is, the reinforcement, and sometimes actual restoration, of practices based on the exclusive opinion of the Indigenous elite or of those parts of this elite who were in fact allied with or however closer to the colonial government. Particularly notorious is the case of satī, a relatively rare practice in pre-colonial India, the diffusion of which, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, has been ascribed precisely to colonial policies that reinforced and «calcified in new and dangerous ways the existing hierarchies of Hindu society» (Loomba 1993, p. 212). As argued by Ania Loomba, this was especially due to 1813 legislation, which was based upon the exclusive dialogue between British colonial officers and Hindu pundits, and that in turn brought the discussion on satī itself to be conducted exclusively «within the framework of the scriptures» until very recent times (Mani, cit. in Loomba 1993, p. 214).

To a certain extent, something similar was realised in Rhodesia concerning the institution of «lobola», or bride-dowry, according to which the groom pays the future wife or her family in money or cattle, at the time variously and unevenly spread in different peoples of southern Africa (as well as in other continents and times). However, by the Company's own admission, lobola had become rarer and increasingly symbolic, at least during the reign of Lobengula, under which – it is declared – women were however free to marry men of their choice (BSAC 1898a, pp. 95-96). Nevertheless, the Company considered the lobola such a good and useful custom that it considered it in its own interest to revive and reinforce it:

> It is, at the same time, proposed to give legal sanction to the native custom of «*lobola*», *i.e.*, dowry payable for a wife, and to provide that *no native marriage shall be celebrated or legally recognised unless the custom has been observed*. This custom, which was formerly invariably observed, has of late years, from various causes […], fallen into disuse, and *it is the wish of the more enlightened and progressive section of the people that it should be regulated and strictly insisted for the future* (BSAC 1901a, p. 13, italics added).

Two reasons are explicitly stated for this: preventing immorality and «placing upon the father and family of the woman a legal obligation to care for and support her should her husband die, or should she be separated from him» (BSAC 1898a, p. 96). However, the former was considered particularly relevant by the colonial administration as a core element of that sexual and family morality discussed above. In this passage of the same report, the use of the past to describe lobola makes it even clearer how it was considered something to be restored, rather than a living institution:

> The natives, having no moral (as we accept the term) or religious restraint binding their consciences, with reference to immoral relations between the sexes, were only kept from indiscriminate so-called marriage and co-habitation by the «Lobola» system, which is the native form of legal civil marriage, whereby a man or boy was not allowed to marry, without providing

> «Malobolo» (dowry) agreed upon between the father or the legal guardian of the bride elect and himself. This system made it criminal for a man to live or cohabit with a woman or girl whom he had no legal right to so approach, and the system was a great deterrent from immoral practices (BSAC 1898a, p. 95).

The attempts by the Company to restore the institution in its full force were criticised in the imperial metropolis, to the point that this section of the report is accompanied by three annexures, produced by local missionaries of three different Christian confessions (respectively Anglican, Wesleyan Methodist, and Catholic), defending the effort of the Company in the restoration of lobola, as well as of its general treatment of Indigenous people after the First Chimurenga (BSAC 1898a, pp. 96-99). Incidentally, it should be noted that the missionaries do not deny the crimes against Indigenous people nor cases of ill-treatment (although they try to deny the existence of coerced labour), rather justifying them precisely on the basis of the fifth myth[2]. Like in the Indian case briefly mentioned, the policies of the colonial administration were also constructed and justified on the basis of an exclusive dialogue between British colonial officers and a narrow segment of Indigenous society, as well demonstrated by the account written by the Chief Native Commissioner of the discussion concerning the draft Code of Native Law, to which

> [a]ll the principal Indunas in the country attended to give expression to their opinions […]. Every law and custom of the natives obtaining in this country was freely discussed, and the assembled Indunas were unanimous in their desire that a *complete revival of the laws and customs* would be most gladly welcomed, and *I have no doubt myself that this revival would prove in every way most beneficial to the country* (BSAC 1901a, p. 219, italics added).

Furthermore, even the articulation between lobola and labour, still in the framework of the civilisational myth, is made explicit, by means of supporting the official recognition of the former in order to solve the permanent scarcity of the latter; in this regard, in the section concerning «Native Labour» of the same report, it can be read:

[2] This is particularly explicit in the Annexure C, written by the Wesleyan missionary, which shows quite clearly the articulation between civilisation and labour (while arguing that no coerced labour existed in Rhodesia): «No one will contend for a moment that a crowd of idle loafers, whether white or black, is as useful to the community as a company of industrious labourers. But in this country we have thousands of savages living in sloth and who are thus ready for all kinds of mischief, and yet we, who know that *to them the discipline of work for a few months in the year would be of the highest moral benefit*, are helpless to influence them in the right direction without risking a charge of patronising slavery. I have been in Rhodesia since 1891 and I am proud to be identified with the men who have *opened up this part of Central Africa to the light of civilisation*, and I emphatically repudiate the charge brought against us that we as a people have countenanced, or palliated, or even knowingly permitted any form of slavery, whether secret or declared» (BSAC 1899a, p. 98, italics added).

> It is to be hoped that the Government will recognise the «lobola» custom. The natives themselves are anxious that it should be upheld. […] This would, in a great measure, tend to solve the labour difficulty; the young men will then see the necessity of going out to service in order to obtain sufficient means to procure a wife. This custom is lawfully recognised by the Cape, Natal and Zululand Governments (BSAC 1901a, p. 216).

While such policies were generally hidden behind the veil of the civilisational myth, the government of the Indigenous religious life was considered fundamental also in order to prevent the political use of religion for anticolonial struggle, as had already happened during the First Chimurenga (Ranger 1967a, pp. 1-24), and as would happen again in the context of guerilla war for liberation (Ranger 1982; Fontein 2006). In this perspective, the fourth and the fifth myths appear as strictly entangled, insofar as the «civilising process» was meant to remove precisely those elements of Indigenous customs and religion that had been accused of provoking political unrest, or that were otherwise considered as potential obstacles or threats for the colonial government.

The connection between religion and political unrest in the view of the Company is made particularly clear, once again, in the aftermath of the First Chimurenga, when the fear for further insurrections pervaded both settlers and colonial administrators: signs of possible rebellion, as well as their absence, were diagnosed precisely through enquiries about the activities of priests and witch-doctors. Such a strict relationship was especially postulated for the Shona people; since the pre-insurrection stereotype projected onto them, as already discussed, was based on the image of their passivity and docility, their uprising was initially interpreted precisely as the result of instigation "from without" by religious figures. This is declared quite explicitly by J. Hirschler, chairman of the mining enterprise Rhodesia Limited, in an interview he gave in London for the newspaper «South Africa» in 1896, republished by Eric Rosenthal in his unpublished manuscript on the history of Rhodesian Jews:

> [Y]ou know the people there are not afraid of the Natives. Every man is more or less well able to deal with a Native. When once you know a Native is treacherous, you treat him differently. I myself, before the revolt, have ridden from one end of the country to the other, and I have never carried a revolver. I have also slept at the kraals when traveling in the midst of a dense population before the revolt. That was shortly after the first war. I never saw the slightest danger in it […]. [The settlers] felt absolutely safe, and I believe when they know the revolt is broken they will again feel quite as safe, because individually the Native would most likely do nothing. *It is only when instigated by the witch doctors that they break out* – witch doctors such as M'Limo. He is dead now, we're told. I hope it is so (Rosenthal s. d., p. 10, italics added).

Analogously, the shareholders were reassured about the improbability of new uprisings precisely on the basis of the death of religious figures associated with M'Limo, because of the role of its cult in the First Chimurenga:

> The death of Mkwati and capture of Siginyamatshe, known as the children of priests of the M'limo or Spirit, who were used as instruments by the principal instigators of the rebellion, in working upon the minds of the ignorant class of natives in this country, has gone a long way towards eradicating from their minds the wonderful powers these priests were supposed to be possessed of (BSAC 1898a, p. 216).

For the same reason, a few years later, Sir Arthur Lawley, then Administrator of Matabeleland, was quite dismissive about alleged risks of new insurrections, precisely on the basis of the fact that voices concerning «the M'Limo superstition […] being revived» had proved «to have been exaggerated» (BSAC 1901, p. 348). At the same time, however, additional foundations were laid for the fifth myth: while immediately after the rebellion emphasis was put on the advancement of the «civilising process» in eradicating beliefs in the power and social role of witch-doctors, it is now declared that «their superstitions cannot be eradicated in a day, and probably for many years to come we shall hear of isolated cases of witchcraft» (BSAC 1901, p. 349). In fact, as in many other colonial contexts, comments about the alleged savagery and barbarity of Indigenous people are on the one hand multiplied in order to justify the prolonged presence of white settlers for civilisational reasons (so that repression and authoritarian government of Indigenous communities become in turn necessary in order to defend them), while on the other hand they are diminished and carefully calculated to demonstrate that Indigenous people are however capable of civilisation (or the civilisational myth would become groundless): as a result, their civilisation is possible, it is declared, but it will take a very long time, so that the presence of white settlers and colonial government will be justified for an analogously very long time.

As first shown by Silvia Federici (2004), the witch hunt has been an integral part of colonisation since its historical beginning in the Americas, being unescapably entangled with processes of primitive accumulation. While witch hunts have prevalently been directed against women, scholars have shown that, in different contexts, between 25% and 50% of victims were men, both in Europe (Briggs 1996) and elsewhere, for example in Cuba after the Spanish-American War (Destefano 2022, pp. 74-86). Likewise, colonial suspects and enquiries about the secret prosecution of pre-colonial religious and magic practices are as ancient as colonialism: already Bernardino de Sahagún, in the preface to his *Historia General de la las Cosas de Nueva España*, insisted on this point precisely to justify his own investigation about Indigenous religion and customs for the sake of their conversion[3].

Likewise, the prosecution of secret forms of witchcraft under the colonial government is indicated not only as a possible source of political unrest but, even more explicitly, as a cause of crime among Indigenous communities and as a long-standing obstacle onto the path of civilisation for them:

> The practice of witchcraft is being secretly carried on; the witch-doctor or «Bone-thrower» is called Isanusi or Abashayamatambo. The office can be held by male or female; they comprise a distinct order amongst the natives, whose influence for good or evil, and whose power over the native mind is unbounded. The characteristic and distinguishing feature of the office is the faculty of being able by means of necromancy to discover persons guilty of sorcery or other unseen and secret evil deeds towards their fellow men. They offer sacrifices, officiate in superstitious ceremonies, discover and reveal evil doers, give information about lost property, and how it has got lost, but in order to escape the police, they cloak themselves under the character of medicine men. *It is difficult to imagine the enormous influence these witch-doctors have over their fellow-men, who are firm believers in witchcraft and supernatural agencies*; all afflictions in life, sickness, accidents and reverses, are put down to witchcraft. […] *As the witch-doctor is feared by the native, who dare not give information against him, his detection is therefore a difficult matter.* Under the law, any person practising as a witch-doctor is severely dealt with, and where cases have been brought to light the offenders have been severely punished. The implicit faith a native has in an Isanusi is so great, that *it will take years and years before the practice can be stamped out*. I firmly believe that *it will continue notwithstanding all efforts to crush it, as long as they remain a barbarous nation* (BSAC 1898a, p. 220, italics added).

Ten years later, the «civilising process» still appears as something yet to begin. While witch-doctors are not mentioned in the 1907-1909 report, the majority of Indigenous people is represented as "stuck" for its lack of contact with white settlers, i.e., still, for the difficulties encountered in forcing or convincing Indigenous people to become salaried workers in white cities and in the mines. The root of the "problem" was identified, on the one hand, with stereotypic Indigenous laziness and passivity, and, on the other hand, with the absence of private property of land among Indigenous people as an

[3] «The sins of idolatry, the rites of a paganism, the auguries and superstitions connected with it, have not completely disappeared. In order to preach against such practices and learn whether they still exist, one must know how the natives used them in the time of their idolatry, for unless we have acquired knowledge [of these practices], we allow them to commit many idolatrous acts in our presence without our being aware of them, and a few of us try to excuse them by saying that these are only childish, foolish, and nonsensical things. In fact, they are ignorant of the true source of such acts, and, whether it is a matter of idolatry or not, the confessors never call their penitents to account. They know nothing of the language necessary for an investigation, and besides they would not understand the explanations» (cit. in Ricard 1966, p. 40).

incentive to raise productivity and enter the national market. This is why the related report contains several discussions about the possibility to eliminate Native Reserves, dividing their territory into privately owned allotments, on the model of the Glen Grey Act adopted in Cape Colony in 1894: ideally, for the Company, this would have generated, through a process we can clearly analyse in terms of primitive accumulation of land, an Indigenous rural bourgeoisie and an Indigenous proletariat to be employed in fields, mines, and white cities[4]. Once again, these measures are recommended on the basis of the civilisational myth, both in Mashonaland and Matabeleland. For the former, it can be read:

> There does not at present seem any inclination on the part of the Mashona to adopt improved methods of cultivation, the plough being practically unknown among them, though many of them must have had experience of it when working for white men […]. It is not by any means certain that the present system of allotting vast reserves for the natives is the best policy for them or for the Government. It means almost unlimited soil scratched over as long as it lasts, an unrestricted supply of timber more than adequate for their wants, while by the very nature of the case natives residing on reserves are kept far from the progressive influence of the whites, and go on living in their old way without being brought into contact with any of those comforts which we have come, rightly or wrongly, to consider necessary to the existence of a civilised person (BSAC 1910, p. 32).

Analogously, concerning Matabeleland:

> Progress in every direction is most marked among those natives who are being constantly brought into contact with civilisation. In the native reserves the natives do not have the same advantages of acquiring settled habits of industry, and very little progress is noticeable. I am of opinion that the guiding hand of a sympathetic and paternal Government is necessary to improve matters in this direction; more than ample proof has been shown that it is not the nature of the native to spontaneously improve himself on legitimate lines. In the interests of the natives and the country generally, steps should be taken to alter this state of affairs by the introduction of certain regulations applying to reserves, embodying a concrete, well-defined and logical policy on the lines of the Glen Grey Act. I feel sure the chiefs would welcome proposals of this nature, and give them their support (BSAC 1910, pp. 32-33).

On a more general level, this report also marks the transformation of the civilisational myth into an official form of legitimation of the Company's government: while, as said, in the longer term this had been made possible by the crisis of the third myth and the introduction of the fourth and the fifth

[4] The failure of these policies was such that in the 1960s, when Arrighi (1966, 1970) conducted his research in Rhodesia, the construction of an Indigenous bourgeoisie and of an Indigenous proletariat, properly speaking, were still indicated as objectives to be pursued.

after the First Chimurenga, in the shorter term the shift was due to growing accusations against the government of the Company by the British Parliament and, at this point, Government. The Company thus uses this space to respond, reaffirming its positive role in the past, present, and future of Rhodesia in extremely apologetic tones. In this context, rather than diminished, the degree of civilisation of the territories it governs is instead magnified; in the words of Lord Selborne, former High Commissioner for South Africa, cited for this purpose, both the fourth and fifth myths emerge with remarkable clarity:

> Sixteen years ago Mashonaland, and thirteen years ago Matabeleland, were absolutely uncivilized countries. To-day they reproduce on a small scale exactly the same sense of civilized and progressive industry in township, on farm and in mine, as is to be found in the Cape Colony, Natal, the Orange River Colony or the Transvaal. The results strike the new comer as little short of marvellous. […] I travelled through the country with the same safety and in the same atmosphere of the existence of a civilizing influence that I should find in the native territories of Cape Colony or in Basutoland, and I found everywhere the traces of a civilized administration in existence. […] Within fifteen years the most rank atmosphere of barbarism has been superseded by an atmosphere of civilization (cit. in BSAC 1910, p. 51).

However, as said, the use of the civilisational myth to justify long-term colonial settlement structurally implies the *impossibility* of completion for the «civilising process» itself. Decades later, during the era of UDI, the entanglement between the fourth and the fifth myth still dominated discourses of legitimation, to the point that it could be said they had become integral to Rhodesian white nationalism itself. As a matter of fact, in the text of the Proclamation that sanctioned the Unilateral Declaration of Independence itself, one of the main reasons provided for it was the following:

> THAT the people of Rhodesia have witnessed a process which is *destructive of those very precepts upon which civilization in a primitive country has been built*; they have seen the principles of Western democracy, responsible government and moral standards crumble elsewhere; nevertheless they have remained steadfast (UDI 1965, italics added).

Before concluding this chapter and proceeding to analyse more properly the political-philosophical implications of the intellectual history reconstructed here, one last myth needs to be discussed: the myth of Great Zimbabwe and the ancient white settlers.

3. *The Sixth Myth: Great Zimbabwe and the Ancient White Settlers*[5]

Many versions of this myth have existed throughout the history of Rhodesia, some of which will be mentioned in this paragraph. More broadly speaking, such versions share a common structure (other than, as will be seen, a common origin), which can be thus summarised: the stone ruins of Great Zimbabwe and of the many other medieval African cities scattered throughout the entire country would have actually been the result of an ancient settlement of the region by Mediterranean colonists, usually of the late Bronze Age or of the early Iron Age, belonging to the white race, mainly for the extraction of gold; on this basis, the British colonisation would be the ideal restoration of an ancient white settler colonial state, with which it would in fact be in continuity.

In historical reality, as has been known since the first actual archaeological research conducted by David Randall-MacIver (1906) at the beginning of the twentieth century, Great Zimbabwe and the other cities were built during the Africa Middle Ages by the ancestors of the Shona people. Great Zimbabwe, in particular, was built between the twelfth and the fourteenth centuries AD; it was the capital of the Shona Kingdom of Zimbabwe until the end of the fifteenth century and then of the Mwene Mutapa Empire until the end of the eighteenth century, and was still used for religious and political functions in the context of the Rozwi Confederation until its final abandonment in the 1830s (Garlake 1973; Beach 1980; Huffman and Vogel 1991). However, the combination of the old tendency in European thought to deny the very existence of

Figure 7. Representation of the Mwene Mutapa (1680).

[5] I have more thoroughly analysed the history of this myth in my monograph *Razzismo, colonialismo e mitologie bianche. La storia rubata di Grande Zimbabwe* (Paci 2022a).

African history (especially exemplified by Hegel's approach in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*), the biblically informed accounts of European explorers in the area before its colonisation, and the effort and capital expended by Rhodes immediately after the occupation to construct an alternative, racist version of this history produced the sixth myth of legitimation of colonial government in Rhodesia as it later developed.

This myth is the only one that appears scarcely and sparsely within the archival sources analysed for the other five myths. Since, as mentioned, Rhodes attached great importance to this myth and rapidly mobilised money and men to develop it immediately after the first occupation of the country, it can be hypothesised that this quasi-absence is due to the fact that the myth was not much directed to the British Parliament and Government, nor to the general public of the imperial motherland, but rather to the Rhodesian settlers (and prospective settlers), among whom it became extremely popular in a very short time.

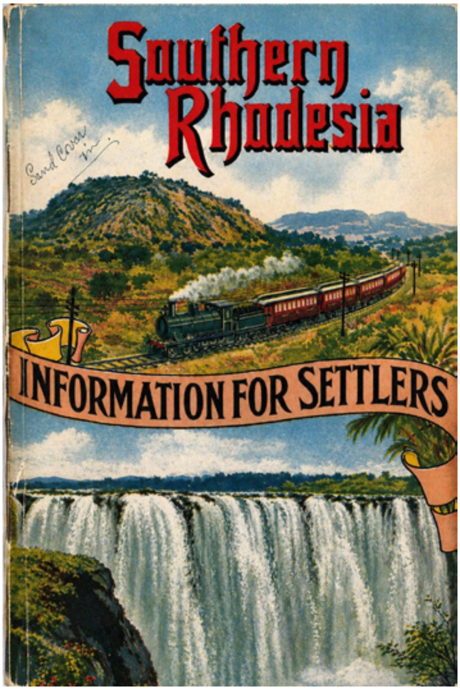

Figure 8. The front cover of the 1903 pamphlet.

In regular reports, the ruins of Great Zimbabwe are mentioned just once, exclusively to locate the place of burial of the Shangani Patrol: «the remains of those who fell in the campaign have been reverently deposited in consecrated ground at Zimbabye [sic], where Mr. Cecil Rhodes proposes to erect a fitting monument to their memory» (BSAC 1895, p. 137). In the detailed reports, a short section dedicated to the ruins appears only in the 1900-1902 report, and merely summarises the research conducted by Richard N. Hall, curator of the site on Rhodes' appointment, more extendedly published by him in papers and monographs (BSAC 1903, pp. 393-395). Interestingly, the ruins appear copiously, instead, in another kind of material produced by the Company during the first decade of the twentieth century: the three pamphlets published in 1903, 1905, and 1908, respectively directed to «intending settlers», «settlers», and «tourists and sportsmen» (BSAC 1903a; BSAC 1905; BSAC 1908).

Figure 9. Great Zimbabwe in a photo from the 1903 pamphlet.

In the 1903 pamphlet, a photograph of the ruins of Great Zimbabwe appears in the last pages of the text, among faunistic images, without any description (BSAC 1903a, p. 88).

Nevertheless, already in the 1905 pamphlet references multiply: photographs of the «ancient workings», i.e., traces of medieval and modern mineral extraction by the Shona, are exhibited to convey the image – already proved false in previous years by the actual scarcity of the promised gold – of a country rich in metals and with great future prospects for development (BSAC 1905, pp. 74-75). Great attention is also paid to the natural richness and beauty of the country: nine pages are devoted to Victoria Falls (BSAC 1905, pp. 135-144). The ruins of Great Zimbabwe reappear a few pages later, but this time the images are several, they are accompanied by a map and by the following description:

> Southern Rhodesia abounds in ancient ruins, and many theories have been advanced as to who the original builders of the forts and temples were. The majority of writers appear to agree that they were Himyarites or Phoenicians, and some affirm that Rhodesia is the Havilah mentioned in Scripture from whence the gold was obtained for King Solomon's Temple. Of the many ruins, those known as the «Great Zimbabwe» are in the best state of preservation. They are situated 17 miles from the township of Victoria, which is reached by coach from the railway terminus at Selukwe, a distance of about 80 miles (BSAC 1905, p. 145).

Two elements emerge clearly from this short text: the already-mentioned, allegedly Mediterranean and white ancient past of the country, laying the foundations for a connection with actually existing modern white settlers; and the richness of the country, testified by the biblical references to Solomon's gold, which is implicitly presented at the same time as both the reason and the proof of the asserted existence of ancient white settlers and as an economic, historical, and even religious justification of modern settlers. The 1908 pamphlet, directed to tourists rather than to prospective settlers, adds further photographic material, restating the same perspective of the previous pamphlet (BSAC 1908, pp. 35-38). For comparison, the 1924 *Guide to Rhodesia*, published after the end of the Company's government, devoted more than fifty pages to the ruins (Beira and Mashonaland and Rhodesia Railways, 1924, pp. 19-34, 109-128, 141-151, 157-164).

The importance and diffusion of this myth would, however, appear diminished if we measured it on the basis of its presence in the Company's own archive. Rhodes was well aware of the existence of the ruins of Great Zimbabwe and of the myths already surrounding them thanks to different sources. One of these was the diary of Carl Mauch, a German explorer who had "discovered" them in 1871: indeed, the purpose of his trip was exactly to find the palace of the Queen of Sheba, which explains why, when he laboriously managed to convince the Karanga chief Mugabe to show him the ruins, he was already certain about the biblical origin of what he had "found". Mauch's convictions were in turn rooted in the Boer reinterpretation of older Portuguese and Arab testimonies concerning stone buildings in the interior, with the aim of constructing a Bible-based myth of the frontier, not coincidentally in the period around the foundation of the Boer republics after they had been forced to leave Cape Colony to the British. Mauch himself had already conflated historical data relating to the Mwene Mutapa Empire with the biblical account (Paci 2022a, pp. 19-29), to the point that, a few months later, after his discovery, he could triumphantly write in his diary: «the Queen of Sheba is the Queen of Simbaoe» (cit. in Mazarire 2013, p. 14).

Nevertheless, both the testimonies on which Mauch's interpretation was based and his very "discovery" also informed a rich literary production in English, ranging from *The Ruined Cities of Zululand* (1869) by Hugh Walmsley – where the connection between the then rumoured ruins of the interior and the biblical Ophir, King Solomon's mines and the Phoenician fleet of Hiram, king of Tyre already appeared – to the more famous *King Solomon's Mines* (1885), *She* (1886), and *Elissa* (1898) by Henry Rider Haggard. The biblical land of Ophir had already played an important role in the mythology of the British Empire: its location had been debated for centuries, ranging from the Americas to India and from East Africa to Australia, and had often been used to attract interest and funds for colonial enterprises (Alborn 2015). Rhodes himself had made such extensive use of the myth that in 1893, when he was running out of funds and struggled to pay the investors, his critics in England started to wonder when he was going to stop inventing «new Ophirs» to «tempt investors» («Bristol Mercury and Daily Post», 11 November 1893, p. 5). Consistently, he ensured that the myth of Ophir and its connection with Mashonaland and the ruins circulated widely within the Pioneer Column that occupied the country in 1890, as is well demonstrated, among the other things, by the interest of its military officers, who visited the ruins during the invasion (Hoste 1965).

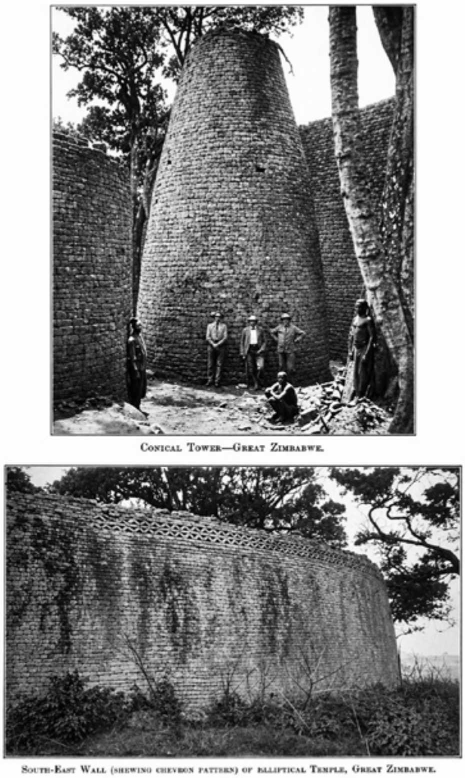

Figure 10. The Bent expedition (1891).

However, Rhodes' effort in this direction continued well beyond the moment of the occupation, formally completed on 11 September 1890. He immediately organised a research trip, also funded by the Royal Geographical Association and the British Association for the Advancement of Science, for the scholar James Theodore Bent, who had previously worked in Anatolia and Bahrein Islands, where he mistakenly thought he had discovered the traces of the origin of Phoenician civilisation. The organisation of the trip was extremely rapid, to the point that Bent, together with his wife, left England already in January 1891, arriving in Mashonaland on 6 May of the same year (Bent 1892/1895, p. 5).

His book *The Ruined Cities of Mashonaland*, first published in 1892, contains a complete description of Great Zimbabwe and Bent's fanciful interpretation of it as an example of Sabaean architecture (in analogy with the seventh century BC temple of Marib in contemporary Yemen). As a matter of fact, while Bent shared Rhodes' belief that the ruins testified the ancient settlement of the country by Mediterranean colonists, to the point that he arrived on the spot already sure of his conclusions in this sense, he considered himself a serious and secular scholar, refusing to adhere to the biblical account. This is perhaps also the reason why he did not conform perfectly to Rhodes' expectations, according to which the site should have been of Phoenician origin to demonstrate the biblical story of Hiram, king of Tyre, as the agent who provided Solomon with his mythical gold: at the same time, Bent's interpretive choice of the site as Sabaean clearly manifests his more or less conscious affinity with the story of the Queen of Sheba (Bent 1895, pp. v-ix).

At the same time, following a trend that would have characterised all Bent's successors (Paci 2022a), he tended to interpret the ruins and to imagine the history of the ancient white settlers whose existence he was postulating on the basis of what he saw of the modern white settlers he could directly observe. In this sense, the imaginary ancient white settlers characterising the sixth myth were but a mirror in which Rhodesian settler could see another version of themselves, ennobled by history and biblical references. From this point of view, Bent's approach is well exemplified by his own chronicle of the arrival in Mashonaland:

> It was immediately on crossing the Lundi River, the threshold of the country as it were, that we were introduced to the first of the long series of ancient ruins which formed the object of our quest. By diligent search amongst the gigantic remains at Zimbabwe we were able to repeople this country with a *race highly civilised in far distant ages*, a race far advanced in the art of building and decorating, *a gold-seeking race* who occupied it *like a garrison in the midst of an enemy's country* (Bent 1895, p. 42, italics added).

Other than the reference to gold, which, as seen, was since the beginning a fundamental connection between modern settlers and their imaginary ancient counterparts, even their condition in the country is imagined based on the same model the settlers envisioned for themselves: a "civilised" white minority of settlers encircled and besieged by a huge number of aggressive and barbarous "natives", something that clearly prefigures the fourth myth analysed in this chapter.

However, Bent's book also contains a diary of his trip, which is very precious for determining the degree of diffusion and influence of the sixth myth, especially in its original biblical fashion, on the settlers in this early period of colonisation. From this point of view, while Bent was quite content of the flux of settlers coming to visit the site of Great Zimbabwe when he was conducting his research, he does not hide his annoyance for the all-pervading references to Ophir, Solomon, and the Queen of Sheba:

> From Fort Victoria came over during our stay a whole host of visitors to see how we were getting on. Prospecting parties going northwards tarried at Fort Victoria for a rest, and came over to see the wondrous ruins of Zimbabwe. Englishmen, Dutchmen from the Transvaal, Germans, all sorts and conditions of men came to visit us, and as temporary custodians of the ruins we felt it our duty to personally conduct parties over them, thereby hearing all sorts and conditions of opinions as to the origin of the same. One of our friends told us that they reminded him forcibly of the Capitol of Rome; another, of a religious turn of mind, saw in them an exact parallel to the old walls of Jerusalem; and a Dutchman, after seeing over them, told me that he was convinced that they must be just «one tousand [sic] year old, and built in the reign of Queen Shabby». *The names of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba were on everybody's lips, and have become so distasteful to us that we never expect to hear them again without an involuntary shudder* (Bent 1895, p. 64).

At the same time, Rhodes funded Alexander Wilmot, a member of his entourage, for him to conduct research in European libraries and archives with the same aim: to demonstrate the truth of his vision on Rhodesian past and the related abundance of gold in the country. Wilmot was more unscrupulous than Bent, and immediately decided to adapt data and interpretations to the Phoenician thesis that Rhodes wanted to see demonstrated. His book, dedicated to Rhodes himself and significantly containing a preface by H. Rider Haggard, was therefore perfectly adhering to the sixth myth in the specific version preferred by his sponsor (Wilmot 1896).

It is therefore quite clear that Rhodes' interest for the site and its mythical history was not limited to Ophir and the connection with gold, although certainly this aspect was extremely important for him. He immediately identified its potential as a full-fledged (and racially characterised) myth of legitimation for the colony he was trying to construct. This is well demonstrated by an episode recounted by his secretary De Waal that we already encountered in this chapter, which deserves some extended citations. During the same 1891 trip in which he and Rhodes met Lord Randolph Churchill, they also visited Great Zimbabwe, just a few months after Bent had left it. The spirit with which the group approached the ruins is transparent even before their arrival; passing through the Mazoe Gold Fields, De Waal recounts:

> We went to see the Gold Commissioner, and he informed us that thousands of lemon-trees were growing on the banks of the Mazoe River, […] and he expressed it as his firm conviction that the Phoenicians of old had introduced them there; and the undisputed fact that the Mazoe Gold Fields had been worked by thousands in past ages strengthened his statement. He was certain that Mazoe was the part of Africa from which King Solomon had obtained

his gold. […] Whether its was the Phoenicians, the Egyptians, or the Portuguese, who introduced the lemon there, I cannot tell; but if there is one thing certain about it, it is this, that it was the *white* man who had introduced it. Equally certain is it that the gold mines there had been worked in previous ages by *white* nations (De Waal 1896, pp. 232-233, italics in the original).

While the group was reaching the area of the site, they were stopped by a group of Indigenous people, who asked them where they were going. Symptomatically, the response of Rhodes was that «the great white chief was coming to visit the home of his ancestors» (cit. in Ndoro 2005, p. 28). Upon their arrival in Fort Victoria on 13 October 1891, along the same lines, De Waal presents a description of the site that cannot appear but delusional to anyone who has actually seen it:

This done, we went to inspect the remains of the old Simbabe temple. Entering its sacred grounds we proceeded through a wide dilapidated porch, on some stones of which certain words were to be seen engraved, but the lapse of ages had obliterated them almost entirely. […] We also went through the aisles leading to the Phallus, the idol […]. How many thousands of people the temple was able to contain is difficult to say, but the number certainly must have been enormous, the dome bearing some resemblance to the Colosseum at Rome [!]. From the discoveries that Mr. and Mrs. Bent had made in that temple there can be left *no doubt that the building had been erected by a white nation*. […] It was strange for me to imagine that what was now the home of the lizard and the weasel was once the *place of glory of Phoenicians* (De Waal 1896, pp. 275-276, italics added).

Obviously, De Waal was the opposite of a neutral observer. Although the text seems to suggest that he genuinely believed in the truth of the myth constructed by Rhodes, he clearly wanted to use to it to contribute to the colonial enterprise, envisioning a rich and extraordinary future for the colony – of course, under the wise guide of the British South Africa Company and especially of Cecil Rhodes:

Now, knowing for a fact that the Phoenician, the Persians, the Moors, the Portuguese, and the natives of whom Monomotapa was king, obtained gold from Mashonaland, a man who has travelled in that country and sat on the walls of the Simbabe temple cannot fail to be convinced that the Mashonaland gold mines are the same from which King Solomon got his gold (through the Phoenicians) […]. Since then, the gold fields have been a source of wealth to so many nations […] we cannot but expect that they will also fill the coffers of the Chartered Company. […] Suffice it for me to say that I am thoroughly convinced that the ruins in and round about Simbabe are a proof to demonstration of the existence in earlier days of thousands, yea tens of thousands, of white men there. […] I say again it is my sincere wish – and I am sure that my fellow-colonists are sharing the wish with me – that Mr. Rhodes – who is now reopening those rich mines of Mashonaland, and by whose means the white man (amongst others the Boer, the best of pioneers) is fast coming into possession of the country – may meet all success and prosperity (De Waal 1896, pp. 279-282).

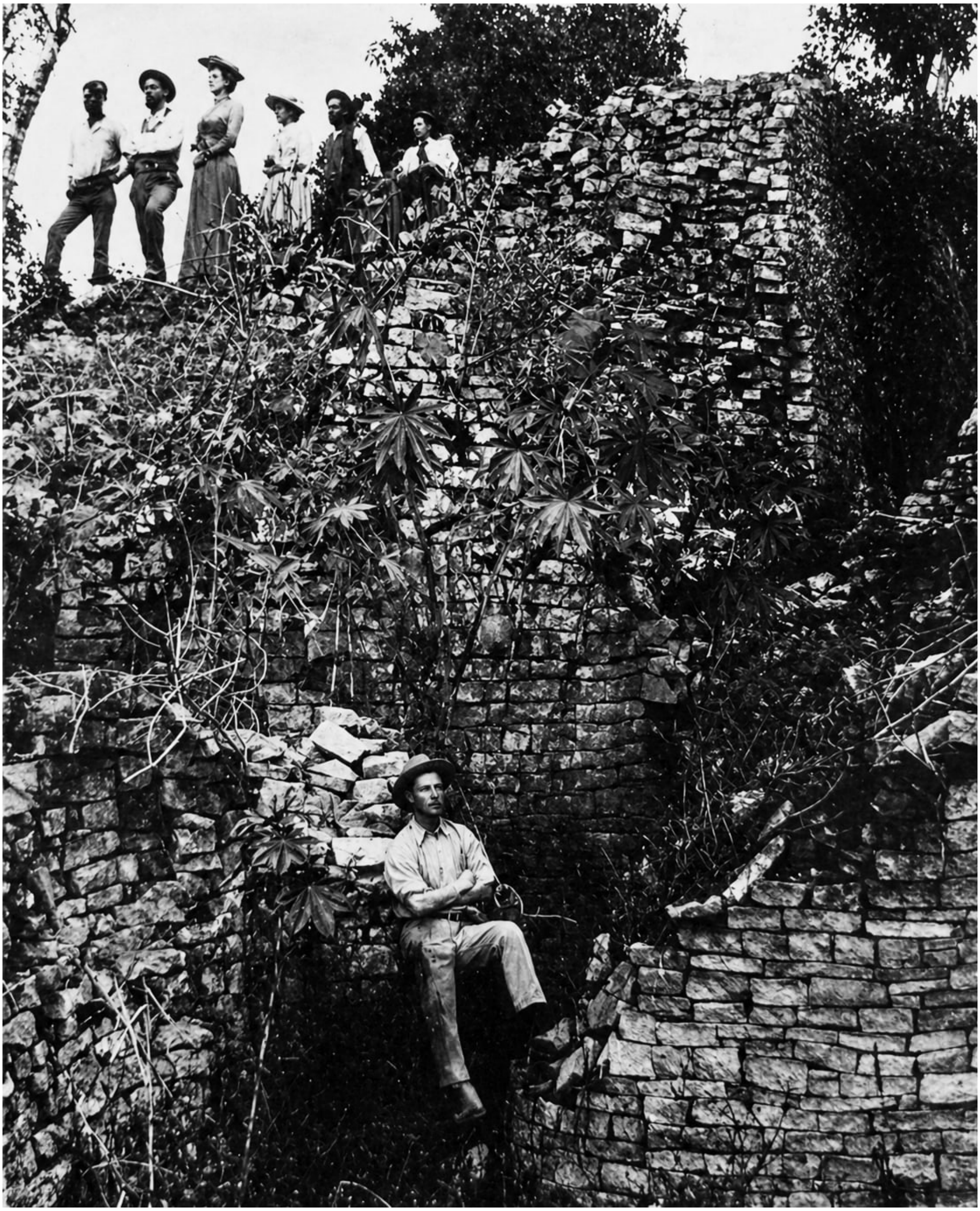

Figure 11. Tourists visit the ruins of Khami.

Significantly, it is immediately after this passage – resonating with the idea of civilising and even "re-civilising" the country through its colonisation – that De Waal positions his reflections about the unity of white settlers against the

Indigenous Black multitudes in southern Africa that we already discussed in the first paragraph of this chapter, providing a further connection between the fourth and fifth myth, on the one hand, and the sixth one here analysed.

Figure 12. Rhodesian Government's Poster (1938).

The "officialisation" of this myth was completed a few years later, when Richard Hall, appointed by Rhodes as the Curator of the site of Great Zimbabwe, systematised the chaotic ensemble of stories we have briefly summarised into one narrative encompassing King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, the historical Sabaean people, and the Phoenicians, clearly continuing to exclude the very possibility of any Indigenous role in the history of the region and constructing an ideological and explicit continuity between this mythical past and the modern white settlers (Hall and Neal 1904; Hall 1907).

The repeated and heated debates between Hall and Randall-MacIver – as said, the first actual archaeologist who studied the ruins, concluding their obvious Indigenous origins – led the former to write a new book re-stating his arguments against a «Medieval Rhodesia» (the title of Randall-MacIver book) and in favour of a *Pre-Historic Rhodesia* (Hall 1909). How this last book was realised is quite symptomatic of the attention and importance attached to the sixth myth not only by Rhodes, his entourage, and the Company, but also by the entire settler society in Rhodesia and South Africa. As a matter of fact, the publication of the book was financed through subscription, and the ten pages long list of the participants is definitely telling: it includes people such as Rudyard Kipling, Mrs. Bent (the husband had passed away in 1897), Alexander Wilmot, the Earl of Selborne (then the High Commissioner of South Africa), Sir Hely-Hutchinson (Govern of Cape Colony), Sir Gould-Adams (Governor of the Orange River Colony), Duncan Baxter (Mayor of Cape Town), and an impressive number of colonial functionaries, judges, military officials, priests, university professors, and school teachers, from both Rhodesia and South Africa, other than several South African public libraries and museums and the Rhodesia Scientific Association (Hall 1909, pp. ix-xviii).

Like in the cases of the fourth and fifth myth, even the sixth one continued to exist and exert its influence in legitimising the construction of Rhodesia as a settler colony and a white nation. Hall's version of the myth informed, as said, official presentations and guides about the site of Great Zimbabwe and the other ruins for decades, as shown by the already-mentioned 1924 guide. Its uninterrupted relevance is also revealed by the production of new versions of the myth still in the 1960s – by the South Africa writer Andries Joannes Bruwer (1965) – and in the 1970s – by the racist anthropologist Robert Gayre (1972): both versions were mobilised specifically in the framework of the struggle for decolonisation, in final attempts to deny Indigenous history and, together, the capacity of Black people to construct their own state and government, precisely in the moment in which they were fighting exactly for this purpose.

Nevertheless, as our reconstruction has shown, the six myths of legitimation of the British South Africa Company's government of Rhodesia were on the contrary a field of struggle themselves, where Indigenous political agency emerges as the main active force since the beginning. As a matter of fact, the crises, transformations, reformulations, entanglements, and juxtapositions of these myths by the Company now appear as always reactive moves in response to political initiatives taken from the Shona and the Ndebele. The final destruction of the three long-lived myths discussed in this chapter was in fact provoked by decolonisation itself. Concerning this sixth and last one, its nature of a field of struggle is particularly evident: as a matter of fact, the decolonisation struggle also entailed the reappropriation of Indigenous history, of which Great Zimbabwe and its soapstone birds became the main symbol, to the point that since 1980 they stand out on the national flag of the post-colonial Republic of Zimbabwe.

III
The British South Africa Company as a Sovereign and Hegemonic Agent: A Political-Philosophical Enigma*

For a long time, chartered companies were regarded primarily as economic institutions. Although it has been widely recognised that they played a central role in European imperial expansion throughout the modern era, traditional scholarship has tended to focus on their commercial and monopolistic nature, interpreting their political functions – in terms of governance and settlement of non-European lands – as a mere extension of the sovereign states to which they belonged (Cawston and Keane 1896; Roberts 1969; Griffiths 1974; Wagner 2018). More recently, however, scholarship has reassessed the history, structure, and function of these institutions, interpreting them instead as hybrid entities that combined economic and political functions in complex relationships with the imperial metropole – that is, as «Company-States» (Stern 2011; Mezzadra and Neilson 2019, pp. 26, 108-112; Phillips and Sharman 2020; Stern 2023; Frapporti 2024, pp. 51-92).

The shift in perspective was anticipated by Giovanni Arrighi (2010, pp. 143-148), who, in *The Long Twentieth Century*, argued that modern chartered companies were «part-governmental, part-business organizations, which specialized *territorially*, to the exclusion of other similar organizations» (Arrighi 2010, p. 74). The territorial specialisation of these institutions, for Arrighi, distinguished them from contemporary transnational corporations, which are instead functionally specialised and therefore engage in competition and/or cooperation within the same territory. However, this territorial specialisation – which structurally tends toward monopolism both commercially and governmentally – also makes them resemble sovereign nation-states. To some extent, Arrighi reinforces this analogy when discussing seventeenth-century

* This chapter reproduces, with some modifications, parts of my article *The Political-Philosophical Enigma of Chartered Companies: Sovereignty and Hegemony beyond the State and the Case of the British South Africa Company*, developed in the context of the same research project and recently accepted for publication by the journal «Archivio di Storia della Cultura» for its 2026 issue.

Dutch chartered companies, identifying as their specificity – in contrast to the preceding Genoese accumulation cycle – the «internalisation of protection costs» (Arrighi 2010, p. 148). Earlier in the book, he had used the concept of «protection costs» to characterise the «protection-producing industry, that is, war-making and state-making» of late medieval Italian city-states. Similarly, but conversely, he describes the alliance between Genoese capital and the emergent Spanish state as an example of «externalization of protection costs» (Arrighi 2010, p. 154)[1], reinforcing the idea that such protection activities are characteristic of a nation-state.

More broadly, Arrighi has suggested that, while in the twentieth century it has been relatively easy to distinguish between nation-states, as power-oriented institutions, and business enterprises, as profit-oriented institutions (although he considered the neatness of such a distinction debatable even in 1900), this distinction was neither absolute nor trans-historical. Rather, it was the result of a six-century-long process of differentiation (Arrighi 2010, p. 86). This implies that for much of history, emergent nation-states and chartered companies were not sharply distinguished but instead operated within a fluid, historically variable, distribution of economic and political functions. This, in turn, supports – and, perhaps, even extends – the idea of chartered companies as hybrid formations, aligning with the arguments found in recent literature.

However, the deep implications of such a conclusion do not seem to have been fully explored from a political-philosophical perspective. Indeed, the vast majority of contemporary reflections on sovereignty (as well as on hegemony) continue to assume, in line with the Western philosophical tradition, that the primary object of political philosophy is the nation-state, and that only the nation-state can be characterised in terms of sovereignty and hegemony. In fact, this centrality of the nation-state has only been seriously questioned in relation to extremely recent developments. For example, in *Empire*, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2000) interpret the crisis of the nation-state and the corresponding emergence of non-state forms of sovereignty

[1] «Whatever the effects of this division of labor on the predispositions and capabilities of Iberian rulers […] its effect on the Genoese capitalist class was to induce it to "externalize" protection costs further. That is to say, instead of becoming self-reliant and competitive in those state- and war-making activities that were necessary to protect their commerce effectively, the Genoese became over-reliant on whatever "free ride" they could squeeze out of the defensive apparatus of their Iberian partners. This seemed a good way of economizing on costs; and indeed it was. In fact, this externalization of protection costs might well have been the single most important factor in the success of the Genoese in promoting, monitoring, and profiting from the systemic cycle of accumulation which we have named after them» (*ibid.*).

in the framework of the crisis of modernity itself, linking it to the increasingly global world emerging from the end of the Cold War[2]. Even in the case of Carl Schmitt (1950/2006), who argued that the crisis of the nation-state began in 1919 with the Treaty of Versailles – marking the end of the *Jus Publicum Europaeum* – the argument remains confined to recent history. Thus, the idea that the state should be "decentred" in political-philosophical debates on sovereignty rarely extends beyond the modern era.

Similarly, postcolonial studies, which in the last few decades have significantly contributed to critiquing the nation-state and its colonial heritage, have sometimes reproduced some of the same limitations as the Western philosophical tradition. In particular, in seeking to expose the coercive nature of colonial power, several postcolonial scholars have tended to exclude the possibility that the category of hegemony could apply to colonial states and societies (Memmi 1957/1965; Chatterjee 1993; Guha 1997; Mbembe 2001). While it is undeniable that colonial power largely consisted of an admixture of domination and collaboration by co-optation (Guha 1997, pp. 20-21, 42-50), such an approach risks obscuring important distinctions existing within colonial contexts. For instance, while this characterisation applies to the relationship between colonial governments and Indigenous peoples, it may overlook the more general complexity of political relationships within colonial societies. In settler-colonial contexts, as the case of the British South Africa Company makes quite clear, colonial governments had to manage not only their relationships with Indigenous peoples but also with the imperial metropole and, especially, the settlers themselves. It is common in postcolonial discourse to conflate settlers with the colonial government from a political point of view; however, the distinction (as well as the convergence or divergence) between their interests, objectives, and strategies was often highly significant throughout colonial history. Nevertheless, far from being a mere analytical error, this conflation may actually be understood as a legacy of the hegemonic strategies employed by colonial governments to integrate settlers while also securing support from the imperial government and civil society in the metropole. Additionally, the Western political-philosophical assumption that only nation-states possess sovereignty and hegemonic initiative may have contributed to the general failure to recognise such hegemonic relationships within

[2] Many other authors have, more or less critically, supported the idea that the crisis of the nation-state coincides with contemporary globalisation (Sassen 1996; Habermas 2001; Held and McGrew 2002; Beck 2005).

colonial societies. Indeed, throughout much of colonial history, most colonial territories were governed by political institutions that differed significantly from the nation-state. Once again, chartered companies such as the British South Africa Company – due to their historical prevalence and significance – offer a particularly promising field for exploring this hypothesis.

On these premises, in this chapter I will argue that contemporary scholarship on chartered companies (building on the foundational work of Giovanni Arrighi) must be brought into dialogue with political philosophy, fully exploring the implications of this intersection. In other words, I hypothesise that non-state entities can be characterised as possessing sovereignty and hegemonic initiative. While this hypothesis is primarily developed through the historical case of chartered companies – and especially the BSAC – it also opens new avenues for thinking about contemporary global politics. Today, the growing influence of private capital, particularly transnational corporations, in shaping national and global politics – far beyond traditional lobbying – calls for new conceptual frameworks to adequately analyse these developments.

In the first paragraph, traditional concepts of sovereignty within the Western political-philosophical tradition will be discussed in contrast with the history of the British South Africa Company, based on the archival reconstruction conducted in the previous chapters. Special attention will be given to the theses of Thomas Hobbes, Max Weber, and Carl Schmitt, which are particularly representative in this regard. In the second paragraph, the postcolonial debate on hegemony will be reconsidered through Gramsci's and Arrighi's reflections on non-state forms of sovereignty and hegemony, and the myths of legitimation analysed in the previous chapters will be reread to substantiate the hypothesis that the Company can be understood precisely as a non-state institution endowed with sovereign powers and a certain degree of hegemonic initiative.

1. *Sovereignty beyond the State? Classical Concepts and the Case of the British South Africa Company*

The concept of sovereignty has long been central to Western political thought. As previously discussed, from the early modern period to contemporary debates, sovereignty has been predominantly associated with the nation-state, which is often defined by its monopoly on the legitimate use of force and its supreme authority over a given territory. Thinkers such as Thomas Hobbes, Max Weber, and Carl Schmitt have played a foundational role in shaping this understanding, constructing theoretical frameworks that tie sovereignty to the state's capacity for command, coercion, and political unity.

However, as the case of the BSAC suggests, such a state-centric perspective may obscure the historically variable nature of sovereignty. The BSAC was neither a traditional state nor a mere economic enterprise; instead, it functioned as a hybrid entity, exercising both political and economic power while engaging in practices typically attributed to sovereign authorities. Its ability to govern vast colonial territories, impose laws, raise revenues, and even conduct military operations raises fundamental questions about whether sovereignty can be meaningfully conceptualised outside the framework of the nation-state.

A useful starting point for reconsidering sovereignty beyond the state is Thomas Hobbes, whose *Leviathan* provides one of the most influential theoretical accounts of sovereign power in Western political thought. As is well-known, Hobbes's work was foundational in defining sovereignty as an indivisible and absolute authority, a notion that became central to modern state formation. His theory, grounded in the concept of the social contract, posits that individuals, in escaping the violence and uncertainty of the state of nature, voluntarily submit to a sovereign who guarantees order, security, and stability (Hobbes 1651/1996, pp. 111-122). At first glance, this vision of sovereignty obviously appears to reinforce the idea that legitimate authority belongs exclusively to the state. However, when examined in relation to the British South Africa Company and other chartered companies, Hobbes's framework invites a more complex reading, particularly when considering the notion of the social contract.

While Hobbes's social contract belongs to the realm of conjectural history, and should not be taken as a literal contract, in the case of chartered companies such as the BSAC we encounter two actual "contracts" that form the basis of their legitimacy and existence: the Royal Charter conceded to the Company is in fact its very act of foundation, while treaties with Indigenous chiefs are conditions of possibility for the concession of the charter itself. In the words of Frederick Lugard (1922, p. 18) chartered companies' «powers, so far as they related to the exercise of sovereignty and jurisdiction over the natives, were based on treaties with the chiefs, and were circumscribed by the necessity of obtaining the assent of the home Government to their local regulations, and the visé of their accounts». Therefore, on paper, the sovereign power of chartered companies appears to have been severely limited by the "double bind" of the treaties with Indigenous chiefs and the charter conceded by the British government.

However, neither the charter nor the treaties with Indigenous chiefs per se can be considered a contract between the Company and the settlers or between the Company and the Indigenous peoples[3]. As seen, while the settlers do not appear – except prospectively – in the charter, it can hardly be affirmed that Indigenous people have given their consent to the "social contract" allegedly instituted by it. Nevertheless, it can be argued that the Company, in its production of myths of legitimation, especially the third one, has attempted to represent its own relationship with the Shona precisely in these terms. However, the treaties with Indigenous chiefs were far from being transfers of power to chartered companies, as the case of Lobengula examined in the discussion of the first myth clearly shows: as seen, the treaties of the Company with Lobengula – even admitting that he could speak for all the inhabitants of the territory – exclusively concerned his foreign policy and mining concessions. Not only do we not observe any transfer of sovereign power, but even land concessions were, as seen, virtually illegitimate.

As a matter of fact, as the Undersecretary of State for the Colonies stated clearly in response to Labouchere's criticisms, «the power of the Company to legislate for the preservation of peace and order, which involves to a certain extent the exercise of authority over natives, is derived from the Crown by Clause 10 of the Charter» (*Hansard*: H. Labouchere, *The British South Africa Company*, 10 March 1892, Vol. 2, Col. 540), and thus, technically, from the authority of the Queen, not from a transfer of power based on Indigenous consent.

Nevertheless, the duty to preserve the security of the subjects by enforcing peace and order – by any means that are deemed to be necessary – is notoriously the very basis of sovereign power for Thomas Hobbes; a passage from the *Leviathan*'s chapter «Of the Rights of Sovereigns by Institution» interestingly resonates with the already-quoted passage of the Royal Charter[4]:

[3] Adhering more strictly to Hobbes's text (1651/1996, p. 114) – according to which the social contract is not between the sovereign and the subjects, but only between the subjects who transfer their power to the sovereign, who otherwise would not be absolute and free from obligations as, for Hobbes, he must be – it is even less possible to identify a contract between Indigenous peoples of Rhodesia that is aimed at transferring their power to the BSAC as their sovereign.

[4] «The Company shall to the best of its ability preserve peace and order in such ways and manners as it shall consider necessary, and may with that object make ordinances (to be approved by Our Secretary of State) and may establish and maintain a force of police» (Speight 1910, p. 4).

> And because the end of this institution [*i.e.*, the Commonwealth], is the peace and defence of them all; and whosoever has right to the end, has right to the means; it belongeth of right, to whatsoever man, or assembly that hath the sovereignty, to be judge both of the means of peace and defence; and also of the hindrances, and disturbances of the same; and to do whatsoever he shall think necessary to be done, both beforehand, for the preserving of peace and security, by prevention of discord at home, and hostility from abroad; and, when peace and security are lost, for the recovery of the same (Hobbes 1651/1996, p. 118).

One could object that the Company's subordination to the approval of a Secretary of State precludes it from being considered a fully sovereign entity: nevertheless, as seen in the first chapter, such an approval was very rarely denied, also because of the personal power of Rhodes, until he was alive, and the strict network of conflicts of interests existing between the Company and the Imperial government. More exactly, based on a passage related to the role of the assent of the High Commissioner for South Africa on Rhodesian legislation from the already-mentioned paper by Ethel Tawse Jollie (1935, p. 974): «With one minor exception we have had no difference of opinion with the Imperial Government in the whole period from 1898 to 1935, and on the whole we have emerged successfully from the scrutiny of critics who attack native policy elsewhere». In fact, the British government assumed that the local knowledge of the Rhodesian situation by the Company – in accordance with the usual rhetoric of the «men on the spot» – justified their decisions. This is especially true for what pertains to the government of Indigenous people: for example, the relocation in reserves and the other limitations to their freedom of movement – such as the already-mentioned Native Passes – instituted after the First Chimurenga directly depended on the approval of the Chief Native Commissioner and the Secretary for Native Affairs[5]. It was also seen that the transformation, still after the First Chimurenga, of Indigenous chiefs into salaried employees of the Company made also their role determined no more by Indigenous law or custom, but the will of the Administrator in Council.

In this sense, while the government of Indigenous peoples of Rhodesia as practised by the BSAC appears to confirm the hypothesis that it can be considered a non-state sovereign agent, at the same time it also appears to reinforce the already-mentioned thesis proposed by many postcolonial scholars, that is, that colonial power is characterised by forms of pure domination, which tend

[5] As seen, both were appointed by the Administrator in Council, who in turn was appointed by the Board of the Company with the ratification of the Secretary of State for the Council, who however never failed to ratify a decision of the Board in this sense.

to exclude hegemonic relationships. It is precisely at this intersection that it is worth reconsidering the issue of the social contract previously evoked.

As a matter of fact, the role of settlers still needs to be clarified in this sense. While the absence of a social contract binding the BSAC with the Shona and the Ndebele is quite evident, the same thing cannot be said in an equally clear manner for white settlers. On the one hand, the responsibilities of the Company towards the settlers in terms of guaranteeing security and order can be said to derive from the charter, just like in the case of Indigenous subjects: the already-cited tenth point of the charter does not specify if the maintenance of peace and order concerns the natives, the settlers, or both, and one of the goals officially announced by the BSAC for its action is «[t]o encourage emigration and colonisation» (BSAC 1892, p. 84). Nevertheless, settlers are never cited explicitly in the charter, with a single exception pertaining to already established ones in the district of Tati, outside the sphere of power of the BSAC (Speight 1910, p. 5). As seen, they are, on the contrary, well represented in the reports produced by the Company, where their presence can be said to assume a politically significant meaning, which will be further discussed in the next paragraph.

The first reference to settlers in the archive of the Company is particularly relevant in this sense, also insofar as it allows us to take into account Weber's concept of sovereignty: in fact, one of the first actions taken by the BSAC, once it had occupied the country thanks to the Pioneer Column, was the «enrolment of a Police Force to afford protection to Pioneer settlers against any attacks by the natives, to keep open communications and to preserve peace and order in territories occupied by the Company» (BSAC 1892, p. 87). This Police Force, at the end of June 1890, amounted to 500 soldiers, whose number and armament was sufficient, with the support of the Volunteer Forces – still at the service of the Company – and of the Imperial Police, to repress the First Chimurenga. One of the further consequences of the latter, as well as of the 1894 revolt, was moreover the progressive disarmament of the Indigenous population, especially, because of the connected racial stereotype, of the Ndebele and, subsequently, of the African refugees arriving from other countries (BSAC 1898, p. 294; BSAC 1898a).

In this sense, it is well-known that Max Weber primarily described the modern state in these terms: «a state is that human community which (successfully) lays claim to the *monopoly of legitimate physical violence* within a certain territory, this "territory" being another of the defining characteristics of the state. For the specific feature of the present is that the right to use physical violence is attributed to any and all other associations or individuals only to the extent that the state for its part permits this to happen. The state is held to be the sole source of the "right" to use violence» (Weber 1919/1994, pp. 310-311, italics added). It is therefore quite clear that in the BSAC's case we have both the already-discussed territorial specialisation – which is, after all, structurally characteristic of chartered companies – and a definite tendency to constitute a «monopoly of legitimate physical violence», which can be easily described as attained after the repression of the First Chimurenga. The only Indigenous people who were allowed to be armed were the members of the Native Police, which was organised in 1895 in order to support the action of Native Commissioners: even in this case, however, they were allowed to exercise violence exclusively on other Indigenous people, under the legitimation of the BSAC, under the command of European officers, and at the service of the Native Commissioners themselves (BSAC 1895, pp. 193-194).

It could also be argued that the rule of the Company in Rhodesia is very near to the ideal type of rational legitimate rule presented by Weber (1922/2019, pp. 338-354) himself in *Economy and Society*. On the one hand, the BSAC formally governed in a well-defined legal framework bound by the charter and through orders in council, thus producing an «impersonal order» where «persons thereby appointed to exercise authority by this order are obeyed by virtue of the formal legality of its ordinances and the domain over which they have force» (Weber 1922/2019, p. 342). On the other hand, as in many other cases in colonial history, a rational, bureaucratic organisation is at the very core of the Company's rule, where the central role is held by colonial professional functionaries; this is far from surprising, if one remembers the famous aphorism by Benjamin Disraeli: «the empire is a career». However, it should also be remembered that Weber has never intended to limit his description of rational legitimate rule to the nation-state: indeed, he identifies this kind of rule as specifically modern, but he believes that analogous forms of authority can be identified «in *large private enterprises*, parties, and armies in exactly the same way as in "state" and "church"» (Weber 1922/2019, p. 344)[6]. In this sense, nothing appears to hinder the recognition of chartered companies as sovereign agents in a fully modern manner:

[6] He discusses other analogies in previous pages (Weber 1922/2019, pp. 347-352). At the same time, it is also worth highlighting that Weber explicitly considers «[p]atrimonial "retainers" separated from the means of administration», «the capitalist proprietor of a mercenary army», and «the private capitalist entrepreneur» as «forerunners of the modern bureaucracy» (Weber 1922/2019, pp. 350).

furthermore, Weber's analogy also brings us back to the relationship – already discussed in the introduction – identified by Arrighi between colonial chartered companies and contemporary transnational corporations. In fact, while on the one hand the «territorial specialisation» brings together nation-states and company-states, on the other hand sharing the structure, functioning, and legitimation of authority brings together the latter and the modern transnational corporations.

Before concluding this paragraph, it is worth briefly considering Carl Schmitt's concept of sovereignty, both for its historical relevance and for the strict and exclusive connection that Schmitt famously identified between sovereignty and the nation-state. Notoriously, one of Schmitt's most influential works precisely begins with this sentence: «Sovereign is he who decides on the exception» (1922/2005, p. 5). Well distant from Weber's approach and against Hans Kelsen's coeval work, it is actually well-known that Schmitt did not characterise sovereignty in terms of a stable, rational, and impersonal order, nor in terms of legal authority or bureaucratic rule, but rather as the power to decide within the state of exception. Crucially, this implies that a sovereign does not simply uphold laws but has the power to suspend them when necessary to preserve order.

On the one hand, this recalls Hobbes' doctrine of legitimation of sovereignty on the basis of the capacity to protect the life and property of the subjects, and thus order and security. On the other hand, it should be read together with another Schmittian concept, that is, the idea that politics revolves around the friend-enemy distinction, which is precisely what defines the very concept of the political for him. In fact, for Schmitt, the power to decide upon this distinction – who is a friend and who is an enemy – exclusively belongs to the state (Schmitt 1932/2007, pp. 29-30, 38-39). In turn, this is strictly bound with the unique power of the state of «waging war and thereby publicly disposing of the lives of men», the *jus belli*. Since «[t]he endeavor of a normal state consists above all in assuring total peace within the state and its territory», «this requirement for internal peace compels it in critical situations to decide also upon the domestic enemy» (Schmitt 1932/2007, p. 46).

In this light, despite Schmitt's insistence on the exclusive connection between sovereignty and the nation-state, one might question whether an entity other than the state can be considered sovereign if it possesses the power to decide on the exception. The question is particularly appropriate insofar as the British South Africa Company has shown to have the power to proclaim the state of exception, where the Board of Directors had the right to impose any measure that was deemed as necessary to protect the life and property of the settlers; and to wage wars against those who the Company identified as enemies, not only Indigenous people but also other white people.

The first point is quite easy to demonstrate: there is clear evidence that the Company had the power to proclaim the martial law, as it did on 19 June 1896 during the First Chimurenga (BSAC 1898a, p. 57). Consistently, the decision to proclaim the martial law was justified on the basis of the threat posed by the revolt to the life of the white population of Salisbury, and implied, for example, the power to confine it within fortified laagers for its own security (BSAC 1898a, p. 82). Concerning the second point, - that is, the power to define the friend/enemy distinction and to wage war accordingly – Schmitt would have probably ignored the case of the war against the Shona and the Ndebele, insofar as he did not recognise the political nature of non-European societies. As a matter of fact, he distinguished «regulated and unregulated wars» (Schmitt 1950/2006, p. 107) on geographical bases: regulated wars were possible exclusively within the *jus publicum Europaeum* developed after Westphalia, while wars against non-European peoples were unregulated, and depended upon the «norms» related to «free spaces» (Schmitt 1950/2006, pp. 54-55, 66, 87, 98-99). Therefore, since having autonomous diplomatic relations and waging war against other European powers was formally forbidden for the Company by the Charter, it could be argued that this requisite for the definition of sovereignty fails to be respected by the BSAC. While the matter is clearly complex in this regard, it should be observed that the Company deliberately violated the conditions of the Charter when Rhodes considered it necessary for the security of Rhodesia and of British people in South Africa: that is, as seen, when he secretly ordered – which he subsequently denied – the Jameson Raid in Transvaal, the famous attempt to overthrow the Boer government through the force of arms. Although the initiative was openly condemned – but probably secretly supported – by the British government, and long discussed in the Parliament as a possible reason to cancel the Charter, only Jameson himself actually paid for the action: a Select Committee was formed to investigate on the abuses of the BSAC, but the enquiry was extremely long and practically effectless; furthermore, the Company was initially forced to formally reorganise itself under some aspects, but, as already seen, maintained its power intact in Rhodesia until 1923.

Therefore, although some limitations to the actions exercised by the Company are clearly to be identified, these limits do not appear such to impede the definition of sovereignty for it in a substantial manner. After all, historically, many political institutions, including sovereign nation-states, had to negotiate some aspects of their power with other institutions, especially for what concerns foreign policy. While Schmitt identifies the period between the Peace of Westphalia and the First World War as the era of entirely autonomous sovereign states under the *jus publicum Europaeum*, it should be noted that despite a clear tendency of nation-states in this direction, they still had to negotiate and conflict with other institutions, – domestic or international – not only in their colonies but also in their metropolitan territories. For instance, the influence of the Catholic Church on European politics continued well after the end of the Middle Ages: while this is particularly evident when considering the powerful role of the Franciscan, Dominican, and Jesuit Orders in the Spanish and French empires, the role of the Inquisition should be considered as well, especially for Spain and the Italian states. Concerning the latter, the various degrees of foreign control and occupation they experienced from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century could be considered examples in this direction.

The next paragraph will shift the focus from sovereignty to hegemony, exploring its possible declinations in relation to chartered companies and the settler colonial contexts in general.

2. *Domination without Hegemony? Gramsci, the Settlers, and Whiteness*

As mentioned, while several postcolonial scholars have tended to dismiss the possibility of hegemonic relationships in colonial societies (Memmi 1957/1965; Chatterjee 1993; Guha 1997; Mbembe 2001), the identification of the settlers as a political group separated from the colonial government could contribute to the complexification of this framework in this sense. As discussed, I am here hypothesising that the conflation usually assumed between the colonial government and settlers is not a theoretical error of postcolonial scholarship, but the historical result of hegemonic projects undertaken precisely by colonial governments.

First of all, it should be noted that both the conflation between colonial governments and settlers and the possibility of identifying a political distinction between them were already to be found in the thought of Frantz Fanon, and especially in *The Wretched of the Earth*. Regarding the first aspect, Fanon famously defined colonialism as «violence in the state of nature» (Fanon 1961/1963, p. 61, modified translation). The philosophical significance of this phrase – lost in the first English translation[7] – can hardly be ignored. In this passage, Fanon is saying precisely that colonialism is "outside" any social contract, and thus in the state of nature that, in the contractualist tradition initiated by Thomas Hobbes precedes any social contract. In other words, colonialism excludes the possibility of government by consent, thus also excluding any hegemonic relationship between the government and the governed. Other passages of *The Wretched of the Earth* appear to confirm this interpretation. For example, when discussing the Marxist categories of structure and superstructure, Fanon affirms that «[i]n the colonies the economic infrastructure is also a superstructure» (Fanon 1961/1963, p. 40, modified translation)[8]. Rather than simply arguing that in the colonies race is unescapably entangled with class, Fanon here also contends that an actual ideological legitimation of colonial power structurally lacks: «The serf is in essence different from the knight, but a reference to divine right is necessary to legitimize this statutory difference. In the colonies, the foreigner coming from another country imposed his rule by means of guns and machines» (Fanon 1961/1963, p. 40). Or, in other words:

> In the capitalist countries a multitude of professors of ethics, counselors and "bewilderers" separate the exploited from those in power. In the colonial countries, on the contrary, the policeman and the soldier, by their immediate presence and their frequent and direct action maintain contact with the native […]. It is obvious here that the agents of government speak the language of pure force (Fanon 1961/1963, p. 38).

These passages clearly resonate with Marx's assertion about colonial India: «The profound hypocrisy and inherent barbarism of bourgeois civilization lies unveiled before our eyes, turning from its home, where it assumes respectable forms, to the colonies, where it goes naked» (Marx 1853/1979, p. 221).

In this sense, everything appears to reinforce the thesis according to which hegemonic projects are simply impossible in colonial societies. Although, as said, this can hardly be denied with regard to the relationship between colonial government and Indigenous people, Fanon himself offers some insights for thinking about a different framework concerning settlers. As is well-known, *The Wretched of the Earth* represents the process of decolonisation through a dialectical succession of stages. While the first stage, still fully immersed in

[7] The unmodified translation is «violence in its natural state» (Fanon 1961/1963, p. 61); but the French text says «la violence à l'état de nature» (Fanon 1961/2002, p. 61).

[8] The text famously continues: «The cause is the consequence; you are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich. This is why Marxist analysis should always be slightly stretched every time we have to do with the colonial problem» (Fanon 1961/1963, p. 40).

colonialism, is characterised by a strict dualism, – «The colonial world is a Manichean world» (Fanon 1961/1963, p. 41) – according to Fanon the scenario should progressively change as the struggle for liberation proceeds. In other words, at the beginning of decolonisation colonial dualism is a necessary aspect of the struggle even in the perspective of the colonised; such a dualism also implies the unity of the colonised on the one hand and the unity of the coloniser on the other hand; this means that it is neither possible to distinguish between different class interests existing within the colonised people, nor to distinguish the colonial government from the imperial metropole or from the settlers, nor to distinguish between different fractions of settlers.

Nevertheless, over time, the colonised people «understand that certain fractions of the population have particular interests and that these do not always coincide with the national interest»; furthermore, on the one hand «[t]he people who at the beginning of the struggle had adopted the primitive Manicheism of the settler – Black and Whites, Arabs and Christians – realize as they go along that it sometimes happens that you get Blacks who are whiter than the Whites» (Fanon 1961/1963, p. 114). Class differences thereby powerfully return to the scene as the central political issue of decolonisation. Even more importantly for the present discourse, Fanon here clarifies that the source of the initial Manicheism of the liberation struggle is the settler himself, which supports our hypothesis according to which the conflation of the colonial government and the settlers is not a datum, but the result of hegemonic projects of the colonial government, to which the settlers give their consent.

At the same time, on the other hand, Indigenous people «notice that certain settlers do not join in the general guilty hysteria; there are differences in the same species. Such men, who before were included without distinction and indiscriminately in the monolithic mass of the foreigner's presence, actually go so far as to condemn the colonial war. The scandal explodes when the prototypes of this division of the species go over to the enemy, become Negroes or Arabs, and accept suffering, torture, and death» (Fanon 1961/1963, p. 114). As a part of the decolonisation process, the Manicheism informing the colonial society starts to fall apart, to the point that political alliances become possible between Indigenous masses and the settlers that decide to fight against their own colonial government. In turn, this shows that settlers have the power to deny their consent to the colonial government, joining the liberation struggle; and at the same time, this shows that they can on the contrary give it, thus implying that a relationship based on the government by consent exists between the two, while it continues to exclude or, rather, to differentially include (Mezzadra and Neilson 2012) the colonised. The very fact that some settlers abandon the colonial government shows the existence of a distinction between the two that pre-exists their conflation, which thus appears as fully contingent and historically determined.

Significantly, this stage coincides with the crisis of racial distinctions, while class distinctions re-emerge in full force: «The barriers of blood and race-prejudice are broken down on both sides» (Fanon 1961/1963, p. 144); a post-racial society suddenly becomes conceivable. In this sense, the coincidence between the crisis of the hegemony of the colonial government on the settlers and the crisis of racial distinctions should not be seen as accidental, but as a hint of something deeper in the structure of settler colonial societies and the role of hegemony in them.

In this sense, it is worth recalling the original Gramscian meaning of the concept of hegemony. First of all, it should be noted that Gramsci himself criticised the tendency, shared by thinkers such as Giovanni Gentile and Ugo Spirito, to conflate hegemony and state (or political government); Spirito, for example, thereby makes the citizen a «functionary of the state», not really separated from it (Gramsci 1975/2007, III, pp. 10-11). In such a perspective, Gramsci explained, «hegemony and dictatorship are indistinguishable, force is no different from consent, it is impossible to distinguish political society from civil society, only the state exists and, of course, the state-as-government» (*ibid.*, p. 11). The association of hegemony with the «"private" apparatus of […] civil society» (*ibid.*, p. 108) thereby implies the relative autonomy of this dimension from the state properly so called, despite the fact that hegemony exists within its sphere. This is clearly relevant for any attempt to identify non-state hegemonic agents like chartered companies. Furthermore, even more importantly, it implies a relative distinction between political and civil society that concurs with what we said about the relationship between the colonial government and settlers. However, it remains to be seen how exactly hegemony works for Gramsci and how it can be applied to settler colonial contexts in general and to chartered companies more specifically.

At first glance, it could be said that hegemony requires two elements: first, the construction of a «leading class» [classe dirigente][9]; second, the creation by

[9] For Gramsci, the concept of a leading class [classe dirigente] does not coincide with the concept of a ruling class [classe dominante], just as hegemony and domination – force and consent – do not coincide. The two figures can coincide in history, just as force and consent can, when the ruling class is also the leading class or vice versa, but this is not a given, but the result of specific political processes.

this leading class of a «*weltanschauung*» (*ibid*., p. 183), an ideological framework shared by the former and the rest of the dominant «social bloc», – the allied classes – where the interests of the leading class are represented as the universal interests of the entire society. Nevertheless, this is not a mere representation, according to Gramsci: such interests are indeed

> viewed as being tied to the interests of the subordinate groups, as a development of unstable equilibriums between the interests of fundamental groups and the interests of the subordinate groups in which the interests of the fundamental group prevail – but only up to a certain point; that is, without going as far as corporate economic selfishness (Gramsci 1975/2007, II, p. 180).

In other words, «the fact of hegemony presupposes that the interests and tendencies of those groups over whom hegemony is exercised have been taken into account and that a certain equilibrium is established» (*ibid*., p. 183); and so, hegemony presupposes that «the hegemonic group should make sacrifices of an economic-corporate kind» (*ibid*.). In some cases, however, even some political sacrifices could be needed: it is the case of «passive revolution» (*ibid*., p. 232; III, p. 378) where progressive reforms or national wars are conducted instead of a political revolution or a civil war; or, better to say, in order to avoid a political revolution or a civil war. Such reforms could also entail the incorporation of some aspects of the politics and culture of subaltern or subordinate classes – meaning both the co-optation of individuals and of ideological and cultural elements – in order to maintain hegemony (*ibid*., p. 126).

From this point of view, an instance of this kind could well be identified in the history of the British South Africa Company, whose owners, members, and functionaries could be collectively identified as the ruling and leading class in the Rhodesian context: in order to contain the political pressures of settlers towards self-government, in 1896 the BSAC proposed the creation of a Legislative Council with some members elected by the settlers themselves. Nevertheless, the Company retained the right to the direct appointment of the majority of the members of the Council itself, thus maintaining ultimate control of Rhodesia (BSAC 1898, pp. 210-211). In particular, out of twelve members, eight were appointed directly or indirectly by the Company, and only four were elected by settlers (BSAC 1899, pp. 286-287). However, as in Gramsci's words, an equilibrium was created, and the interests of the settlers as an allied and subordinate group of the Company were taken into account, but up to a certain point. It is therefore not difficult to show how the BSAC demonstrated to be able, when necessary, to make political "sacrifices" – «passive revolutions» – in favour of the settlers in order to retain its hegemonic position; the same could be argued concerning economic "sacrifices", for example when it decided to compensate settlers for losses of property happened during the First Chimurenga or when it directly invested in the recruitment of Indigenous labour for private fields and mines (BSAC 1899, pp. 216-233; BSAC 1901, pp. 291-293).

Nevertheless, the issue of whether a non-state entity such as a chartered company can be interpreted as a hegemonic agent – that is, an agent capable of hegemonic initiative – has not been solved yet. In this sense, returning to the Gramscian text is once again useful. A short solution to the issue could be the following: Gramsci does not identify hegemony as exclusively pertaining to actual states, but also states-in-potency, i.e., in his perspective, political parties (Gramsci 1914). Nevertheless, for Gramsci, political parties should not be interpreted in a strict sense, but in a «broad, nonformal sense», that is, as «private associations», «natural and contractual or voluntary», all aiming at «constituting the hegemonic apparatus of one social group over the rest of the population (civil society), which is the basis for the state in the narrow sense of governmental-coercive apparatus» (Gramsci 1975/2007, III, p. 107). Therefore, it seems that Gramsci fully admits the possibility that non-state entities (which neither are formal political parties) are capable of hegemonic initiative. This interpretation can be reinforced by referring to several passages from the *Prison Notebooks*.

First, the role frequently attributed by Gramsci to the Catholic Church and to other religious organisations (ranging from the Jesuits to the YMCA) as hegemonic agents throughout the modern era consistently reinforces this perspective (*ibid*., p. 342; I, p. 169). Similarly, in another passage, Gramsci writes that in certain situations it could happen that «instead of the "modern" political party and economic trade union (as they have developed through the growth of the more progressive productive forces), people "prefer" organizations of a different sort and, specifically, "underworld" types of organization – hence the cabals, the secret organizations, the mafias, whether they be linked to the populace or to the upper classes» (Gramsci 1975/2002, III, p. 121); among these he also includes organisations such as the Freemasonry and the Rotary Club.

However, this interpretation is even more strongly reinforced if one looks at the pages that Gramsci dedicates to the concepts of Americanism and Fordism. In particular, when discussing the differences between the European and the U.S. contexts from the point of view of capitalist development, he explains concerning the latter that

> [t]his preliminary "rationalization" of the general conditions of production which was already in place or was facilitated by history, permitted the rationalization of production, combining force (– destruction of trade-unionism –) with persuasion (– wages and other benefits –), so as to base the whole life of the nation on industry. *Hegemony is born in the factory and does not need so many political and ideological intermediaries* (Gramsci 1975/2007, I, 169, italics added).

Therefore, it seems quite clear that, for Gramsci, it is possible in certain circumstances for industries and companies to be hegemonic agents on their own – «combining force […] with persuasion» just like the Machiavellian Prince who must simultaneously «pigliare la golpe e il lione» (Machiavelli 1532/1961, p. 64) – without the mediation of the state properly said. If this holds true for "regular" industries, it is even more applicable to chartered companies, which exercised sovereign powers typically ascribed to nation-states, as previously discussed. As mentioned, this is also consistent with Giovanni Arrighi's analysis of the analogies between chartered companies and contemporary American transnational corporations (provided that one remembers their different specialisations, respectively territorial and functional): in particular, with his interpretation of such corporations as a fundamental tool in the development of the American global hegemony after the Second World War (Arrighi 2010, pp. 74, 143-148). Furthermore, the analogy between "Americanist" hegemony directly based on industries and the hegemonic projects developed by chartered companies can be pushed even beyond: in fact, the U.S. and territories like Rhodesia share the social structure of settler colonialism, thus including, among the other things, the «nonexistence of […] viscous sedimentations from past historical phases» (Gramsci 1975/2007, I, p. 169) (obviously from the point of view of the settlers) that could have posed obstacles and limits to the accumulation of capital, as happened in Europe.

In addition, they share another feature identified by Gramsci, one that, perhaps surprisingly, also characterised Italian communes between the late medieval and early modern periods: the «corporative phase» (Gramsci 1975/2007, II, p. 395). Gramsci describes this phase – elsewhere called «corporate phase» (Gramsci 1975/2007, I, p. 363) or «economic-corporative primitivism» (Gramsci 1975/2007, III, p. 342) – as an unescapable stage in the formation process of any state; in this phase, «the content of the political hegemony of the new social group that has founded the new type of state must be predominantly of an economic order» (*ibid.*), and «[t]he superstructural elements will inevitably be few in number […] and […] [t]he cultural plan will be mostly negative: a critique of the past aimed at destruction and era-sure of memory» (*ibid.*). Gramsci also characterises this phase as particularly weak from the point of view of hegemony; in the case of Italian communes, he argues that the emergent bourgeoisie, despite seizing power, ultimately failed in its attempt to construct a stable state. In fact, «the early Italian bourgeoisie […] broke up the existing unity while lacking the knowledge or ability to replace it with a new unity of its own» (Gramsci 1975/2007, I, p. 295), that is, it created a crisis of hegemony in the previous order without having the ability to produce a new one; in other words, when «the old is dying and the new cannot be born: in this interregnum, morbid phenomena of the most various kind come to pass» (Gramsci 1975/2007, II, p. 33). The incapacity of the early Italian bourgeoisie to «assimilate the traditional categories of intellectuals» (*ibid*., p. 296) merged with its incapacity to build a hegemonic relationship with the bulk of the urban masses, generating a Renaissance without a Reform, so that «the commune was unable to move beyond the economic-corporative phase – unable, in other words, to create a state based on the "consent of the governed", a state capable of further development» (Gramsci 1975/2007, III, p. 13).

The instability of this hegemonic phase is evident in cases such as Americanism and Fordism in the U.S. – where hegemony might not have been sustained after the 1929 crisis without the intervention of the federal state through the New Deal – as well as in the case of chartered companies, whose weakness in securing consent was apparent both in colonial territories and in the imperial metropole (Phillips and Sharman 2020). In colonial territories, this lack of consent precisely corresponds to the incapacity – as seen, widely analysed and discussed by postcolonial scholars like Ranajit Guha – of the colonial government to establish a hegemonic relationship with the bulk of Indigenous masses. However, this does not imply that these institutions were incapable of hegemonic initiative at all: on the one hand, hegemonic projects can historically fail to work, especially if they fail to take into account the interests of subordinate classes and to build adequately shared ideological frameworks; on the other hand, their failure does not mean that no hegemonic relationship was created, but precisely that it was not able to include effectively the majority of the population.

From this perspective, just like the emergent great bourgeoisie in Italian communes was able to establish hegemonic relationships with the petty bourgeoisie, – e.g., in Florence, through the «governo largo» – but not to do the same with workers, it could be said – *mutatis mutandis* – that chartered companies like the BSAC were able to establish hegemonic relationships with the settlers but not with Indigenous communities. However, if the hypothesis discussed so far is correct, it remains to be examined how the hegemonic relationship between colonial governments – especially chartered companies – and settlers was established from the point of view of the construction of a shared ideological framework. In fact, for what concerns the actual ability of chartered companies to take into account the interests of the settler («up to a certain point»), it was seen that this can be demonstrated quite easily in the case of the BSAC.

The myths of legitimation examined in the previous chapters clearly constitute the field in which the role of a shared ideological framework in shaping the hegemonic relationship between the BSAC and the settlers emerged. As a matter of fact, if the Company can be read as a «political party» in the «broad, non-formal sense» used by Gramsci, then it is possible to interpret its production of myths of legitimation precisely as the result of a full-fledged «cultural policy»[10]. In this framework, as already emerged throughout the book, the fundamental element clearly appears to be whiteness, and, more broadly, the role of race and ethnicity in shaping hegemonic relationships in settler colonial contexts.

In this sense, the hegemonic function of racism is not something new. For instance, Stuart Hall proposed to read it precisely in these terms in his famous 1980 essay:

> One must start, then, from the concrete historical "work" which racism accomplishes under specific historical conditions – as a set of economic, political, and ideological practices, of a distinctive kind, concretely articulated with other practices in a social formation. […] [Such practices] ascribe the positioning of different social groups in relation to one another with respect to the elementary structures of society; they fix and ascribe those positionings in ongoing social practices; they legitimate the positions so ascribed. In short, they are practices which secure the hegemony of a dominant group over a series of subordinate ones, […] [where] racism, so active at the level – «the economic nucleus» – where Gramsci insists hegemony must first be secured, will have to contract elaborate relations at other instances, in the political, cultural, and ideological levels (Hall 1980/2019, p. 213).

Concerning more specifically whiteness, something similar – which, additionally, further reinforces the analogy between the U.S. situation and the Rhodesian one – was already observed by W.E.B. Du Bois in 1935. Towards the end of the book, while discussing the production of political divisions between white and Black labourers after the Civil War, he writes that

[10] «The party is essentially political and its cultural activity in itself constitutes a cultural policy» (Gramsci 1975/2007, III, p. 99).

> [i]t must be remembered that the white group of laborers, while they received a low wage, were compensated in part by a sort of public and psychological wage. They were given public deference and titles of courtesy because they were white. They were admitted freely with all classes of white people to public functions, public parks, and the best schools. The police were drawn from their ranks, and the courts, dependent upon their votes, treated them with such leniency as to encourage lawlessness. Their vote selected public officials, and while this had small effect upon the economic situation, it had great effect upon their personal treatment and the deference shown them (Du Bois 1935, pp. 700-701).

In this example, whiteness works as the middle term in the construction of a hegemonic relationship between capitalists and white workers while excluding (or, more exactly, differentially including) Black workers at the same time. This observation by Du Bois was notoriously further developed by David Roediger (1991/2007), who dedicated an entire monograph to the phenomenon of the «wages of whiteness». Again, similarly, – although not using the concept of hegemony – Theodore Allen (1997/2012) coined the concept of «intermediate stratum» (or, more extensively, «intermediate buffer social control stratum») precisely to indicate those social groups that, in colonial contexts, were ideologically and materially "recruited" by the ruling class in order to create a "barrier" between them and the bulk of colonised and racialised workers; in this framework, the «invention of whiteness» is identified precisely as one of the main practices used for this purpose.

Ultimately, it can therefore be said that the racial dimension has played a fundamental role in shaping hegemonic relationships between colonial governments and settlers in settler colonial contexts, while at the same time performing the function of excluding non-white people from that very relationship. If this is true, the cause of the incapacity of colonial governments to build full-fledged forms of hegemony in a Gramscian sense appears quite obvious. In fact, although colonial functionaries and intellectuals made many efforts to persuade Indigenous people of their supposed racial and cultural inferiority, such attempts have never been politically successful, even though they obviously left traces (Fanon 1952/2008; Memmi 1957/1965). Furthermore, it should be noted that these hegemonic strategies were not only aimed at building an alliance between the colonial government and settlers while simultaneously excluding Indigenous people from it: settlers were constituted as a unitary social group, integrated with the colonial government, precisely by these hegemonic strategies. Indeed, settlers often came from diverse economic, national, and cultural backgrounds, and their interests and identities were not naturally aligned: their political unity could not be presupposed, but needed to be created by the colonial government itself. This is particularly evident in the U.S., where the boundaries of whiteness have been repeatedly redefined to "recruit" new groups of the population within the frontiers of the hegemonic relationship with the state. Irish and Italian immigrants, for instance, were long considered «non-white» or «coloured» before eventually being "co-opted" into whiteness (Guglielmo and Salerno 2003).

As partially seen while analysing the six myths of legitimation produced by the BSAC in the framework of its «cultural policy» in the previous chapters, from this point of view racial constructs, and especially whiteness, played a major role in the Rhodesian context since the first years of colonisation. This is already visible in the context of the first myth: as discussed, it is presented almost in the language of international politics, in terms of a treaty with another, recognised – although subordinate – nation-state. The "idyllic" nature of the Company's presence in light of the treaty was frequently reasserted in the context of the first report, according to which the BSAC would have been able «peacefully, and with the consent of the native races, to open up, develop and colonise the territories to the north of British Bechuanaland, with the best results, both for British trade and commerce, and for the interests of the native races» (BSAC 1892, p. 85). In so writing, – in line, after all, with the «dual mandate» – the Company was clearly interested in convincing public opinion at home and the settlers, present and prospective, on the spot rather than the Shona and Ndebele. Nevertheless, the first myth was framed in a way that "mimics" a social contract, since the consent of the governed is invoked to legitimise the Company's sovereignty. In a manner of speaking, the Company "mimics" a hegemonic relationship with Indigenous people, without concretely attempting to build it. This scheme applies a fortiori to the third myth, where the defence of the Shona by the Ndebele is presented precisely in terms of the protection of the former from the latter: the consent of the Shona is presupposed, mimicking again the form of a social contract without any substance, that is, actual consent. The same clearly applies to the fifth myth.

The fourth and the sixth myths are instead deeply imbricated within the processes of production of whiteness in the framework of the construction of a hegemonic relationship between BSAC and the settlers. As already discussed in the previous chapter, starting from the memorialisation of the Shangani Patrol, the defence of the settlers and the connected racial «siege mentality» became the very core of the emergent white Rhodesian identity. In this sense, it can be argued that whiteness itself as a concept and a mode of subjectivation in that context was deeply shaped by the terror of a reversal of colonial and racial relations of power, materialised by the spectre of the "white genocide" myth, still evoked in the 1960s by the government of Ian Smith (Paci 2025). However, as seen, this specific declination of whiteness not only appears to be fundamental in the structuration of settlers' identity in Rhodesia, but also at the very core of Cecil Rhodes' political strategy for the entire southern Africa.

As a matter of fact, the fourth myth – in legitimising the presence and sovereignty of the BSAC in Rhodesia on the basis of the necessity to protect white settlers – produces settlers as a political unity precisely on the basis of whiteness: as seen when discussing Gramsci's work in the previous paragraph, political unity is properly one of the main effects of hegemony. It was also seen, especially through De Waal's account, that the unity of «white races» was deemed to be crucial by Rhodes for the future of colonisation and British rule in southern Africa. In this regard, it should also be noted that whiteness allowed for the unity between settlers of different nationalities (other than the British and the Boer, in Rhodesia, there were also many German and American settlers), something that Rhodes and his entourage clearly recognised. This is certainly confirmed by the policies of the BSAC in this matter: for instance, the 1899 Naturalisation Act, which made extremely easy for any white settler already residing in Rhodesia to acquire British citizenship (Speight 1910, pp. 33-37).

The effort made by Rhodes in the construction of the sixth myth is perhaps even more revealing from this point of view. It was mentioned that the version of the myth that became in fact official for the colonial government and the settlers was elaborated by Richard Hall in the first decade of the twentieth century through a synthesis of the previous work of Bent and Wilmot; he was thereby proposing a history of Rhodesia in which different white races would have jointly, and at different moments, contributed to the colonisation and development of the country, until they were forced to abandon it because of the fierce attacks of the "natives" or slave rebellions: we are thus remembered that the sixth myth, in all its versions, was also intended as a "cautionary tale" for settlers.

Conclusion

In the course of this book, I have reconstructed the six myths of legitimation produced by the British South Africa Company as a part of its cultural policy within the settler colonial context of Rhodesia, primarily based on its archive, Parliamentary debates, and coeval newspapers. While most of these myths can be said to pertain to more general ideological frameworks and discourses that exerted their influence in other times and places within the long colonial modernity, their concrete articulation within the context of the first years of Rhodesian colonisation has shown some distinctive features: in particular, it was possible to see how different phases of colonisation, international relations, encounters and relations with different Indigenous peoples, and conflicts between different colonial agents and groups of agents have contributed to shaping their shifts, transformations, concatenations, entanglements, and juxtapositions. Overall, these processes have appeared as primarily driven not by the Company itself, but rather as a result of its reactions to political initiatives that were expressions of Indigenous political agency. These myths of legitimation have thus been shown to be a field of struggle rather than a unidirectional narrative, a space of conflict where anticolonial forces have left durable traces, constantly pushing, despite their subaltern position, colonial society on the back foot.

At the same time, this book attempted to solve what I termed the "political-philosophical enigma" of chartered companies; that is, to fully position them within the debate in political philosophy and to read them in such a way as to displace and decentre the border usually assumed to exist between state and non-state agents, especially when it comes to reflecting upon concepts such as sovereignty and hegemony. However, while only the third chapter of this book directly tackles these issues, my purpose in this direction had already emerged from the choice to attempt the construction of an intellectual history of the British South Africa Company, reading it as capable of producing its own cultural policy in the hybrid space constituted by the hyphen connecting the "company-state": such hybridity nonetheless does not leave untouched the extremes of this spectrum, but rather destabilises them, showing their hidden continuities to the point that exceptions reveal themselves to be much more common than any rule.

While from a theoretical point of view this operation has been explicitly inspired by Gramsci's and Arrighi's past reflections on the issue, it cannot be ignored that our global present provides us with several more concrete sources of inspiration in this regard. As a matter of fact, while, as Arrighi clarified, contemporary transnational corporations cannot be equated with chartered companies because of the radically divergent path of their specialisation, – sectorial for the former, territorial for the latter – it is however undeniable that they share deep monopolistic tendencies, the effects of which are today more evident than ever. Analogously, while it cannot be claimed that modern transnational corporations have the power to exert the same sovereign prerogatives exhibited by chartered companies such as the BSAC, it is today possible to observe increasing entanglements between states and transnational corporations, complex forms of contagion and mimesis between their logics, and the growing appropriation of functions and spaces once monopolised by the nation-state, by powerful, global, private agents. This process can furthermore be read as yet another reconfiguration of the always mutable relationship between capitalism and territorialism that originated, for Arrighi, in the encounter between Genoese capital and the Spanish monarchy.

However, more broadly, both chartered companies and the current configuration of transnational corporations in our global present can be understood in terms of the «directly political dimension of operations of capital» (Mezzadra and Neilson 2024, p. 23). Rather than reducing the growing indistinction between the political and the economic to the result of the neoliberal turn, – a frame that also tends to make the present an exception, disconnecting it from the past history of capitalism – Habermasianly understood as the colonisation of new spheres of life by the economic, recognising the properly political nature of the «operations of capital» makes it possible for us to register the current intensification of such processes while at the same time reading them as part of a much longer history.

In this framework, the "political-philosophical enigma" of chartered companies suddenly loses its obscurity and at the same time becomes an instrument that can contribute to illuminating our understanding of the current relationship between capitalism and territorialism in its global configuration, provided that we abandon the reassuring soil of Western history (traditionally conceived), where we are used to recognising homogeneous and distinct entities such as states, nations, political parties, and companies, the political and the economic, the sovereign and the hegemon, and rather follow Frantz Fanon (1961/1963, p. 315) in «seeking the response elsewhere than in Europe».

Appendix

1. *Royal Charter*, 29 October 1889 (Speight 1910, pp. 1-9)

Victoria, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland Queen, Defender of the Faith.

To all to whom these presents shall come, Greeting.

Whereas a Humble Petition has been presented to Us in Our Council by the Most Noble James Duke of Abercorn, Companion of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath; the Most Noble Alexander William George Duke of Fife, Knight of the Most Ancient and Most Noble Order of the Thistle, Privy Councillor; the Right Honourable Edric Frederick Lord Gifford, V.C.; Cecil John Rhodes, of Kimberley, in the Cape Colony, Member of the Executive Council and of the House of Assembly of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope; Alfred Beit, of 29, Holborn Viaduct, London, Merchant; Albert Henry George Grey, of Howick, Northumberland, Esquire; and George Cawston, of 18, Lennox Gardens, London, Esquire, Barrister-at-Law.

And whereas the said Petition states amongst other things :-

That the Petitioners; and others are associated for the purpose of forming a Company or Association, to be incorporated, if to Us should seem fit, for the objects in the said Petition set forth, under the corporate name of The British South Africa Company.

That the existence of a powerful British Company, controlled by those of Our subjects in whom We have confidence, and having its principal field of operations in that region of South Africa lying to the north of Bechuanaland and to the west of Portuguese East Africa, would be advantageous to the commercial and other interests of Our subjects in the United Kingdom and in Our Colonies.

That the Petitioners desire to carry into effect divers concessions and agreements which have been made by certain of the chiefs and tribes inhabiting the said region, and such other concessions agreements grants and treaties as the Petitioners may hereafter obtain within the said region or elsewhere in Africa, with the view of promoting trade commerce civilization and good government (including the regulation of liquor traffic with the natives) in the territories which are or may be comprised or referred to in such concessions agreements grants and treaties as aforesaid.

That the Petitioners believe that if the said concessions agreements grants and treaties can be carried into effect, the condition of the natives inhabiting the said territories will be materially improved and their civilization advanced, and an organization established which will tend to the suppression of the slave trade in the said territories, and to the opening up of the said territories to the immigration of Europeans, and to the lawful trade and commerce of Our subjects and of other nations.

That the success of the enterprise in which the Petitioners are engaged would be advanced if it should seem fit to Us to grant them Our Royal Charter of incorporation as a British Company under the said name or title, or such other name or title, and with such powers, as to Us may seem fit for the purpose of more effectually carrying into effect the objects aforesaid.

That large sums of money have been subscribed for the purposes of the intended Company by the Petitioners and others, who are prepared also to subscribe or to procure such further sums as may hereafter be found requisite for the development of the said enterprise, in the event of Our being pleased to grant to them Our Royal Charter of incorporation as aforesaid.

Now therefore We, having taken the said Petition into Our Royal consideration in Our Council and being satisfied that the intentions of the Petitioners are praiseworthy and deserve encouragement and that the enterprise in the Petition described may he productive of the benefits set forth therein, by Our Prerogative Royal and of Our especial grace certain knowledge and mere motion, have constituted erected and incorporated and by this Our Charter for Us and Our Heirs and Royal successors do constitute erect and incorporate into one body politic and corporate by the name of The British South Africa Company, the said James Duke of Abercorn, Alexander William George Duke of Fife, Edric Frederick Lord Gifford, Cecil John Rhodes, Alfred Beit, Albert Henry George Grey and George Cawston, and such other persons and such bodies as from time to time become and are members of the body politic and corporate by these presents constituted erected and incorporated, with perpetual succession and a common seal, with power to break alter or renew the same at discretion and with the further authorities powers and privileges conferred, and subject to the conditions imposed by this Our Charter: And We do hereby accordingly will ordain give grant constitute appoint and declare as follows (that is to say) :-

1. The principal field of the operations of the British South Africa Company (in this Our Charter referred to as "the Company") shall be the region of South Africa lying immediately to the north of British Bechuanaland and to the north and west of the South African Republic and to the west of the Portuguese Dominions.

2. The Company is hereby authorised and empowered to hold, use and retain for the purposes of the Company and on the terms of this Our Charter, the full benefit of the concessions and agreements made as aforesaid, so far as they are valid, or any of them, and all interest, authorities and powers comprised or referred to in the said concessions and agreements. Provided always that nothing herein contained shall prejudice or affect any other valid and subsisting concessions or agreements which may have been made by any of the chiefs or tribes aforesaid, and in particular nothing herein contained shall prejudice or affect certain concessions granted in and subsequent to the year 1880 relating to the territory usually known as the district of the Tati; nor shall anything herein contained be construed as giving any jurisdiction, administrative or otherwise, within the said district of the Tati, the limits of which district are as follows, viz., from the place where the Shasi River rises to its junction with the Tati and Ramaquaban Rivers, thence along the Ramaquaban River to where it rises and thence along the watershed of those Rivers.

3. The Company is hereby further authorized and empowered, subject to the approval of one of Our Principal Secretaries of State (herein referred to as "Our Secretary of State") from time to time, to acquire by any concession agreement grant or treaty, all or any rights interests authorities jurisdictions and powers of any kind or nature whatever, including powers necessary for the purposes of government and the preservation of public order in or for the protection of territories, lands, or property comprised or referred to in the concessions and agreements made as aforesaid or affecting other territories, lands, or property in Africa, or the inhabitants thereof, and to hold, use and exercise such territories, lands, property, rights, interests, authorities, jurisdictions and powers respectively for the purpose of the Company, and on the terms of this Our Charter.

4. Provided that no powers of government or administration shall be exercised under or in relation to any such last-mentioned concession agreement

grant or treaty, until a copy of such concession agreement grant or treaty, in such form and with such maps or particulars as Our Secretary of State approves verified as he requires, has been transmitted to him, and he has signified his approval thereof either absolutely or subject to any conditions or reservations; and provided also that no rights, interests, authorities, jurisdictions or powers of any description shall be acquired by the Company within the said district of the Tati as herein-before described, without the previous consent in writing of the owners for the time being of the concessions above referred to relating to the said district, and the approval of Our Secretary of State.

5. The Company shall be bound by and shall fulfil all and singular the stipulations on its part contained in any such concession agreement grant or treaty as aforesaid, subject to any subsequent agreement affecting those stipulations approved by Our Secretary of State.

6. The Company shall always be and remain British in character and domicile, and shall have its principal office in Great Britain, and the Company's principal representative in South Africa and the Directors shall always be natural born British subjects, or persons who have been naturalized as British subjects by or under an Act of Parliament of Our United Kingdom;but this Article shall not disqualify any person nominated a Director by this Our Charter, or any person whose Election as a Director shall have been approved by Our Secretary of State, from acting in that capacity.

7. In case at any time any difference arises between any chief or tribe inhabiting any of the territories aforesaid and the Company, that difference shall, if Our Secretary of State so require, be submitted by the Company to him for his decision, and the Company shall act in accordance with such decision.

8. If at any time Our Secretary of State thinks fit to dissent from or object to any of the dealings of the Company with any foreign power and to make known to the Company any suggestion founded on that dissent or objection, the Company shall act in accordance with such suggestion.

9. If at any time Our Secretary of State thinks fit to object to the exercise by the Company of any authority, power, or right within any part of the territories aforesaid, on the ground of there being an adverse claim to or in respect of that part,the Company shall defer to that objection until such time as any such claim has been withdrawn or finally dealt with or settled by Our Secretary of State.

10. The Company shall to the best of its ability preserve peace and order in such ways and manners as it shall consider necessary, and may with that

object make ordinances (to be approved by Our Secretary of State) and may establish and maintain a force of police.

11. The Company shall to the best of its ability discourage and, so far as may be practicable, abolish by degrees, any system of slave trade or domestic servitude in the territories aforesaid .

12. The Company shall regulate the traffic in spirits and other intoxicating liquors within the territories aforesaid, so as, as far as practicable, to prevent the sale of any spirits or other intoxicating liquor to any natives.

13. The Company as such, or its officers as such, shall not in any way interfere with the religion of any class or tribe of the peoples of the territories aforesaid or of any of the inhabitants thereof, except so far as may be necessary in the interests of humanity, and all forms of religious worship or religious ordinances may be exercised within the said territories and no hindrance shall be offered thereto except as aforesaid.

14. In the administration of justice to the said peoples or inhabitants, careful regard shall always be had to the customs and laws of the class or tribe or nation to which the parties respectively belong, especially with respect to the holding, possession, transfer and disposition of lands and goods and testate or intestate succession thereto, and marriage divorce and legitimacy and other rights of property and personal rights, but subject to any British laws which may be in force in any of the territories aforesaid, and applicable to the peoples or inhabitants thereof.

15. If at any time Our Secretary of State thinks fit to dissent from or object to any part of the proceedings or system of the Company relative to the peoples of the territories aforesaid or to any of the inhabitants thereof, in respect of slavery or religion or the administration of justice, or any other matter, he shall make known to the Company his dissent or objection, and the Company shall act in accordance with his directions duly signified.

16. In the event of the Company acquiring any harbour or harbours, the Company shall freely afford all facilities for or to Our ships therein without payment, except reasonable charges for work done or services rendered or materials or things supplied.

17. The Company shall furnish annually to Our Secretary of State, as soon as conveniently may be after the close of the financial year, accounts of its expenditure for administrative purposes, and of all sums received by it by way of public revenue, as distinguished from its commercial profits, during the financial year, together with a report as to its public proceedings and the condition of the territories within the sphere of its operations. The Company shall

also on or before the commencement of each financial year furnish to Our Secretary of State an estimate of its expenditure for administrative purposes, and of its public revenue (as above defined) for the ensuing year. The Company shall in addition from time to time furnish to Our Secretary of State any reports, accounts or information with which he may require to be furnished.

18. The several officers of the Company shall, subject to the rules of official subordination, and to any regulations that may be agreed upon, communicate freely with Our High Commissioner in South Africa, and any others Our officers, who may be stationed within any of the territories aforesaid, and shall pay due regard to any requirements, suggestions or requests which the said High Commissioner or other officers shall make to them or any of them, and the Company shall be bound to enforce the observance of this article.

19. The Company may hoist and use on its buildings and elsewhere in the territories aforesaid, and on its vessels, such distinctive flag indicating the British character of the Company as Our Secretary of State and the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty shall from time to time approve.

20. Nothing in this Our Charter shall be deemed to authorize the Company to set up or grant any monopoly of trade; provided that the establishment of or the grant of concessions for banks, railways, tramways, docks, telegraphs, waterworks, or other similar undertakings or the establishment of any system of patent or copyright approved by Our Secretary of State, shall not he deemed monopolies for this purpose. The Company shall not either directly or indirectly, hinder any Company or persons who now are, or hereafter may be, lawfully and peaceably carrying on any business, concern, or venture within the said District of the Tati hereinbefore described, but shall, by permitting and facilitating transit by every lawful means to and from the District of the Tati, across its own territories, or where it has jurisdiction in that behalf, and by all other reasonable and lawful means, encourage, assist and protect all British subjects who now are, or hereafter may be, lawfully and peaceably engaged in the prosecution of a lawful enterprise within the said District of the Tati.

21: For the preservation of elephants and other game, the Company may make such regulations and (notwithstanding anything hereinbefore contained) may impose such licence duties on the killing or taking of elephants or other game as they may see fit:Provided that nothing in such regulations shall extend to diminish or interfere with any hunting rights which may have been or may hereafter be reserved to any native chief, or tribes by treaty, save do far as any such regulations may relate to the establishment and enforcement of a close season.

22. The Company shall be subject to and shall perform and undertake all the obligations contained in or undertaken by Ourselves under any treaty agreement or arrangement between Ourselves and any other State or Power whether already made or hereafter to be made. In all matters relating to the observance of this Article, or to the exercise within the Company's territories for the time being of any jurisdiction exerciseable by Us under the Foreign Jurisdiction Acts, the Company shall conform to and observe and carry out all such directions as may from time to time be given in that behalf by Our Secretary of State, and the Company shall appoint all necessary officers to perform such duties, and shall provide such Courts and other requisites as may from time to time be necessary for the administration of justice.

23. The original share capital of the Company shall be £1,000,000 divided into 1,000,000 shares of £1 each.

24. The Company is hereby further specially authorized and empowered for the purposes of this Our Charter from time to time-

(i) To issue shares of different classes or descriptions, to increase the share capital of the Company, and to borrow moneys by debentures or other obligations.

(ii) To acquire and hold, and to charter or otherwise deal with steam vessels and other vessels.

(iii) To establish or authorize banking companies and other companies, and undertakings or associations or every description, for purposes consistent with the provisions of this Our Charter.

(iv) To make and maintain roads, railways, telegraphs, harbours, and any other works which may tend to the development or improvement of the territories of the Company.

(v) To carry on mining and other industries, and to make concessions of mining forestal or other rights.

(vi) To improve, develop, clear, plant, irrigate and cultivate any lands included within the territories of the Company.

(vii) To settle any such territories and lands as aforesaid, and to aid and promote immigration.

(viii) To grant lands, for terms of years or in perpetuity, and either absolutely, or by way of mortgage or otherwise.

(ix)To make loans or contributions of money or money's worth, for promoting any of the objects of the Company.

(x) To acquire and hold personal property.

(xi) To acquire and hold (without licence in mortmain or other authority than this Our Charter) lands in the United Kingdom, not exceeding five acres in all at any one time for the purposes or the offices and business of the Company, and (subject to any local law) lands in any of Our Colonies or Possessions and elsewhere convenient for carrying on the management of the affairs of the Company, and to dispose from time to time of any such lands when not required for that purpose.

(xii) To carry on any lawful commerce, trade, pursuit, business, operations,or dealing whatsoever in connection with the objects of the Company.

(xiii) To establish and maintain agencies in Our Colonies and Possessions, and elsewhere.

(xiv) To sue and be sued by the Company's name of incorporation, as well in Our Courts in Our United Kingdom, or in Our Courts in Our Colonies or Possessions, or in Our Courts in Foreign countries or elsewhere.

(xv) To do all lawful things incidental or conducive to the exercise or enjoyment of the rights, interests, authorities and powers of the Company in this Our Charter expressed or referred to, or any of them.

25. Within one year after the date of this Our Charter, or such extended period as may be certified by Our Secretary of State, there shall be executed by the Members or the Company for the time being a Deed of Settlement, providing so far as necessary for-

(i) The further definition of the objects and purposes or the Company.

(ii) The classes or description of shares into which the capital of the Company is divided, and the calls to be made in respect thereof, and the terms and conditions of membership of the Company.

(iii) The division and distribution of profits.

(iv) General Meetings of the Company; the appointment by Our Secretary of State (if so required by him) of an Official Director, and the number qualification appointment remuneration rotation removal and powers of Directors of the Company and of other officers of the Company.

(v) The registration of Members of the Company, and the transfer of shares in the capital of the Company.

(vi) The preparation of annual accounts to be submitted to the Members at a General Meeting.

(vii) The audit of those accounts by independent auditors.

(viii) The making of bye laws.

(ix) The making and using of official seals of the Company.

(x) The constitution and regulation of Committees or Local Boards of Management.

(xi) The making and execution of supplementary deeds of settlement.
(xii) The winding up (in case of need) of the Company's affairs.
(xiii) The government and regulation of the Company and of its affairs.
(xiv) Any other matters usual or proper to be provided for in respect of a chartered Company.

26. The Deed of Settlement shall, before the execution thereof, be submitted to and approved by the Lords of Our Council, and a certificate of their approval thereof, signed by the Clerk of Our Council, shall be endorsed on this Our Charter and be conclusive evidence of such approval, and on the Deed of Settlement,and such Deed of Settlement shall take effect from the date of such approval, and shall be binding upon the Company, its members, officers and servants, and for all other purposes whatsoever.

27. The provisions of the Deed of Settlement or of any supplementary Deed for the time being in force, may be from time to time repealed, varied or added to by a supplementary Deed, made and executed in such manner as the Deed of Settlement prescribes. Provided that the provisions of any such Deed relative to the official Director shall not be repealed, varied or added to without the express approval of Our Secretary of State.

28. The Members of the Company shall be individually liable for the debts, contracts, engagements and liabilities of the Company to the extent only of the amount, if any, for the time being unpaid on the shares held by them respectively.

29. Until such Deed of Settlement as aforesaid takes effect the said James Duke of Abercorn shall be the President; the said Alexander William George Duke of Fife, shall be Vice-President and the said Edric Frederick Lord Gifford, Cecil John Rhodes, Alfred Beit, Albert Henry George Grey, and George Cawston, shall be the Directors of the Company; and may on behalf of the Company do all things necessary or proper to be done under this Our Charter by or on behalf of the Company: Provided always that notwithstanding anything contained in the Deed of Settlement of the Company, the said James Duke of Abercorn, Alexander William George Duke of Fife, and Albert Henry George Grey, shall not be subject to retire from office in accordance with its provisions but shall be and remain Directors of the Company until death, incapacity to act, or resignation, as the case may be.

30. And We do further will ordain and declare that this Our Charter shall be acknowledged by Our Governors and Our naval and military officers and Our Consuls, and Our other officers in Our Colonies and possessions, and on the high seas, and elsewhere, and they shall severally give full force and

effect to this Our Charter, and shall recognise and be in all things aiding to the Company and its officers.

31. And We do further will, ordain and declare that this Our Charter shall be taken construed and adjudged in the most favourable and beneficial sense for, and to the best advantage of the Company as well in Our Courts in Our United Kingdom, and in Our Courts in Our Colonies or possessions, and in Our Courts in foreign countries or elsewhere, notwithstanding that there may appear to be in this Our Charter any non-recital, mis-recital, uncertainty or imperfection.

32. And We do further will, ordain and declare that this Our Charter shall subsist and continue valid, notwithstanding any lawful change in the name of the Company or in the Deed of Settlement thereof, such change being made with the previous approval of Our Secretary of State signified under his hand.

33. And We do further will, ordain and declare that it shall be lawful for Us Our heirs and successors, and We do hereby expressly reserve to Ourselves Our heirs and successors the right and power by writing under the Great Seal of the United Kingdom at the end of 25 years from the date of this Our Charter, and at the end of every succeeding period of ten years, to add to alter or repeal any of the provisions or this Our Charter or to enact other provisions in substitution for or in addition to any of its existing provisions. Provided that the right and power thus reserved shall be exercised only in relation to so much of this Our Charter as relates to administrative and public matters. And We do further expressly reserve to Ourselves Our heirs and successors the right to take over any buildings or works belonging to the Company and used exclusively or mainly for administrative or public purposes, on payment to the Company of such reasonable compensation as may be agreed, or as failing agreement may be settled by the Commissioners of Our Treasury. And We do further appoint, direct and declare that any such writing under the said Great Seal shall have full effect and be binding upon the Company, its members, officers and servants, and all other persons, and shall be of the same force effect and validity as if its provisions had been part of and contained in these presents.

34. Provided always and We do further declare that nothing in this Our Charter shall be deemed or taken in anywise to limit or restrict the exercise of any of Our rights or powers with reference to the protection of any territories or with reference to the government thereof should we see fit to include the same within our dominions.

35. And We do lastly will, ordain and declare without prejudice to any power to repeal this Our Charter by law belonging to Us Our heirs and successors,

or to any of Our courts, ministers or officers independently of this present declaration and reservation, that in case at any time it is made to appear to us in Our Council that the Company has substantially failed to observe and conform to the provisions of this Our Charter, or that the Company is not exercising its powers under the concessions, agreements, grants and treaties aforesaid, so as to advance the interests which the petitioners have represented to Us to be likely to be advanced by the grant of this Our Charter, it shall be lawful for us Our heirs and successors and we do hereby expressly reserve and take to ourselves Our heirs and successors the right and power by writing under the Great Seal of Our United Kingdom to revoke this Our Charter, and to revoke and annul the privileges, powers, and rights hereby granted to the Company.

In Witness whereof We have caused these Our letters to be made patent.

Witness Ourself at *Westminster,* the twenty-ninth day of *October* in the fifty third year of our reign.

By warrant under the Queen's Sign Manual.

(L.S.) Muir Mackenzie.

2. *Order in Council*, 1891, 9 May 1891 (Speight 1910, pp. 9-12)

Whereas the territories of South Africa situate within the limits of this Order, as hereinafter described, are under the protection of Her Majesty the Queen:

And whereas by treaty, grant, usage, sufferance, and other lawful means Her Majesty has power and jurisdiction in the said territories:

Now therefore Her Majesty, by virtue and in exercise of the power by the Foreign Jurisdiction Act, 1890, or otherwise in Her Majesty vested, is pleased by and with the advice of Her Privy Council to order, and it is hereby ordered as follows: –

1. The limits of this Order are: – the parts of South Africa bounded by British Bechuanaland, the German Protectorate, the Rivers Chobe and Zambesi, the Portuguese possessions, and the South African Republic.

2. The High Commissioner may on Her Majesty's behalf exercise all powers and jurisdiction which Her Majesty, at any time before or after the date of this Order, had or may have within the limits of this Order, and to that end may take or cause to be taken all such measures, and may do or cause to be

done all such matters and things within the limits of this Order as are lawful, and as in the interests of Her Majesty's service he may think expedient, subject to such Instructions as he may from time to tiem receive from her Majesty or through a Secretary of State.

3. The High Commissioner may appoint so many fit persons as in the interest of Her Majesty's Service he may think necessary to be Deputy Commissioners, or Resident Commissioners, or Assistant Commissioners, or Judges, Magistrates, or other officers, and may define frome time to time the districts within which such officers shall respectively discharge their functions.

Every such officer may exercise such powers and authorities as the High Commissioner may assign to him, subject nevertheless to such directions and instructions as the High Commissioner may from time to time think fit to give him. The appointment of such officers shall not abridge, alter or affect the right of the High Commissioner to execute and discharge all the powers and authorities hereby conferred upon him.

The High Commissioner may remove any officer so appointed.

4. In the exercise of the powers and authorities hereby conferred upon him, the High Commissioner may, amongst other things, from time to time by Proclamation provide for the administration of justice, the raising of revenue, and generally for the peace, order, and good government of all persons within the limits of this Order, including the prohibition and punishment of acts tending to disturb the public peace.

The High Commissioner in issuing such proclamation shall respect any native laws or customs by which the civil relations of any native Chiefs, tribes or populations under Her Majesty's protection are now regulated, except so far as the same may be incompatible with the due exercise of Her Majesty's power and jurisdiction.

5. Every Proclamation of the High Commissioner shall be published in the *Gazette*, and shall from and after the date of such publication, or from and after such other ate as may be mentioned in such Proclamation, and thereafter until disallowed by His [soc] Majesty or repealed or modified by any subsequent Proclamation, have effect as if contained in this Order.

6. Her Majesty may disallow any such Proclamation wholly or in part, and may signify such disallowance through a Secretary of state, and upon such disallowance being publicly notified by the High Commissioner in the *Gazette* the provisions so disallowed shall, from and after a date to be mentioned in such notification, cease to have effect, but without prejudice to anything theretofore lawfully done thereunder.

7. (Lapsed).

8. Subject to any Proclamation made under this Order, any jurisdiction exercisable otherwise than under this Order, whether by virtue of any Statute or Order in Council, or of any Treaty, or otherwise, and whether exercisable by Her Majesty, or by any person on Her behalf, or by any Colonial or other Court, or under any Commission, or under any Charter granted by Her Majesty, shall remain in full force.

9. Judicial notice shall be taken of this Order, and of the Commencement thereof, and of any Proclamation made under this Order, and published in the *Gazette*, and of any Treaties affecting the territories within the limits of this Order, and published in the *Gazette*, or contained in papers presented to both Houses of Parliament by command of Her Majesty.

10. This Order shall be published in the *Gazette*, and shall thereupon commence and come into operation; and the High Commissioner shall give directions for the publication of this Order in such places, and in such manner, and for such time or times as he thinks proper for giving due publicity thereto within the limits of this Order.

11. The Orders in Council of the 27th day of January, 1885, for the establishment of Civil and Criminal Jurisdiction in Bechuanaland, and of the 30th day of June, 1890, providing for the exercises of Her Majesty's Jurisdiction in certain Territories in South Africa, shall continue in force until the commencement of this Order and be thereupon revoked, but without prejudice to anything lawfully done thereunder, and any Proclamation theretofore issued under the said Orders shall continue in operation until repealed or altered by any Proclamation of the High Commissioner under this Order.

12. Her Majesty may from time to time revoke, alter, add to, or amend this Order.

13. In this Order, unless the subject or context otherwise requires: –

"Her Majesty" includes Her Majesty's heirs and successors.

"Secretary of State" means one of Her Majesty's Principal Secretaries of State.

"High Commissioner" means Her Majesty's High Commissioner for the time being for South Africa.

"Treaty" includes any existing or future Treaty, Convention or agreement between Her Majesty and any civilised Power, or any native tribe, people, Chief or King, and any Regulation appended to ay such Treaty, Convention, or Agreeement.

"*Gazette*" means any official *Gazette* published by authority of the High Commissioner, and until such *Gazette* is instituted, means the Cape of Good Hope *Government Gazette*.

C.L. Peel

3. *Supplemental Charter*, 8th June 1900 (Speight 1910, pp. 9a-11a)

Victoria by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, Queen, Defender of the Faith.

To all to whom these presents shall come, Greeting:

Whereas by Our Charter or Letters Patent, under the Great Seal of Our United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, bearing date at Westminster, the 29th day of October, 1889, We did grant, ordain and declare that The Most Noble James, Duke of Abercorn, now Knight of the Most Noble Order of the Garter, Companion of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath; The Most Noble Alexander William George, Duke of Fife, Knight of the Most Ancient and Most Noble Order ot the Thistle, Privy Councillor: The Right Honourable Edric Frederick, Lord Gifford. V.C.: Cecil John Rhodes, Esquire, Member of the Executive Council and of the House of Assembly of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope, now the Right Honourable Cecil John Rhodes; Alfred Beit, Esquire, Merchant; Albert Henry George Grey, Esquire, now The Right Honourable Earl Grey; and George Cawston, Esquire, Barrister-at-Law, and such other persons and such bodies as from time to time should become and be members of the body politic and corporate thereby constituted, erected, and incorporated into one body politic and corporate by the name of the British South Africa Company, by which name they should have perpetual succession and a common seal with such powers as in the same Charter mentioned:

And Whereas it is expedient that Our said Charter should be amended as hereinafter provided:

And Whereas the said British South Africa Company has agreed to accept the said amendments:

Now know ye that We of Our especial grace and mere motion have willed, ordained, constituted, and declared, and by these presents for Us, Our heirs and successors, do will, ordain, constitute, and declare, and unto the said British South Africa Company do grant in manner following: –

1. This Charter shall be read and construed as one with the Charter grant-

ed by Us on the 29th October, 1889, to the British South Africa Company, which said Charter is herein referred to as the Principal Charter.

2. So much of Article 10 of the Principal Charter as provides that the Company may take Ordinances to be approved by Our Secretary of State is hereby repealed, but without prejudice to anything lawfully done thereunder. Provided that the Company may continue to make Ordinances to be approved as aforesaid until the date on which Legislative Council to be established for Southern Rhodesia shall assemble, and thereupon such powers shall altogether cease and determine.

3. Article 29 of the Principal Charter is hereby repealed, but without prejudice to anything lawfully done thereunder.

4. Nothing in the Principal Charter shall authorise the Company to establish or maintain any force of military police.

5. Any person or persons duly authorised in that behalf in writing by Our Secretary of State shall at all convenient times have access to all documents of the Company, and shall be furnished by the Company, or its officers and servants, with true copies of any such documents as aforesaid, as and when he may require.

6. The Directors of the Company shall, within eight days from the passing or recording thereof, cause to be transmitted to Our Secretary of State true copies of all resolutions, minutes, orders, or other proceedings of the Board of Directors or of any committee thereof which relate to the administration by the Company of the Territories within its filed of operations, and our Secretary of State may intimate to the Directors at any time his dissent from any such resolution, minute, order, or other proceeding, or may require the same to be cancelled or amended, or the operation thereof to be suspended for such time or in such manner as he shall direct, and thereupon the operation of any such resolution, order, minute, or proceeding shall, as and from a date named by Our Secretary of State, or, if no date is named, as and from the date of such direction, be cancelled, amended, or the operation thereof suspended accordingly, but without prejudice to anything lawfully done thereunder.

7. Any Director, officer, or servant of the Company who in the opinion of Our Secretary of State shall refuse or neglect –

(1) to comply with any of the requirements of Our Secretary of State made under the provisions of the Principal Charter or of any Supplemental Charter: or

(2) to comply with the provisions of the last preceding Article of this Our Supplemental Charter;

shall if Our Secretary of State shall so direct, cease to be a Director, officer, or servant of the Company, and the Company shall not employ in any capacity whatsoever any such Director, officer or servant without the permission in writing of Our Secretary of State first had and obtained.

8. Nothing herein or in the Principal Charter contained shall be deemed to impose upon Our Secretary of State or upon the Lord Commissioners of Our Treasury any liability with respect to any matter relating to the financial concerns or commercial undertakings of the Company.

9. In this Charter and in the Principal Charter, unless the contrary intention appears, "document" shall include "minute", "resolution", "order", "book", "telegram", "letter", "map", "code", "cypher", or any other printed, typed or written matter of any nature whatsoever, or any copy thereof.

In Witness whereof We have cause these Our Letters to be made Patent.

Witness Ourself at Westminster, the eighth day of June, in the sixty-third year of Our reign.

By Warrant under the Queen's Sign Manual.

Muir Mackenzie

4. *The Southern Rhodesia Order in Council*, 20 October 1898 (Speight 1910, pp. 14-32)

Part I

[…]

The Territory for the time being within the limits of this order shall be known as Southern Rhodesia.

[…]

6. (1) The powers and authorities conferred upon the High Commissioner by Her Majesty's Order in Council of the 9th of May, 1891, providing for the exercise of Her Majesty's jurisdiction in certain Territories of South Africa as amended by Her Majesty's Order in Council of the 30th July, 1891, shall continue in force within the limits of the Order concurrently with the powers conferred upon the Company by this Order.

(2) The powers conferred upon the Company by this Order are in augmentation of the powers conferred upon it by the Charter.

Part II. Administration and Legislation

7. The Company shall have and may exercise the general administration of affairs within the limits of this Order, in accordance with the terms of the

Charter and any Charter amending the same or supplementary thereto and the provisions of this Order.

8. (1) The Company may exercise such administration by one or more Administrators, and under him, or them, by such other officers as may from time to time be necessary and may from time to time, with the approval of a Secretary of State, determine the number of Administrators.

[…]

9. The Company shall appoint the Administrator or Administrators, and shall pay his or their salaries and the salaries of such officers as may be required for the administration of Southern Rhodesia; but shall obtain the approval of a Secretary of State before appointing any person to the office of Administrator. The salary of an Administrator shall be fixed by the Company, with the approval of a Secretary of State, and shall not be increased or diminished without his approval. An Administrator may be removed or suspended from office by a Secretary of State or by the Company with the approval of a Secretary of State.

[…]

17. (A) (1) There shall be in Southern Rhodesia a legislative body to be styled "The Legislative Council", composed of the Administrator, the Resident Commissioner, and fourteen other members, of whom seven, hereinafter referred to as "nominated members", shall be appointed by the Company, with the approval of a Secretary of State, and seven shall be elected by the registered voters in the manner hereinafter provided. Provided that the proceedings of the Council shall not be invalid on account of any vacancies therein.

[…]

19. The Legislative Council may from time to time be convoked, prorogued, and dissolved by any instrument under the hand of the Administrator.

[…]

35. It shall be lawful for the Administrator by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Council to make Ordinances for the peace, order, and good government of Southern Rhodesia.

[…]

Part IV. Judicial

49. (1) There shall be a Court of Record, styled the High Court of Southern Rhodesia, with full jurisdiction, civil and criminal, over all persons and over all matters within Southern Rhodesia, subject to the provisions hereinafter contained with regard to native law or custom.

[…]

50. In civil cases between natives the High Court and the Magistrates' Courts shall be guided by native law so far as that law is not repugnant to natural justice or morality, or to any Order made by Her Majesty in Council or to any Proclamation or Ordinance. In any such case the court may obtain the assistance of one or two native assessors, to advise the court upon native laws and customs, but the decisions of the court shall be given by the Judge or Magistrate alone. In all other respects the court shall follow as far as possible the procedure observed in similar cases in the Courts of the Colony.

51. If in any civil case between natives a question arises as to the effect of a marriage contracted, according to native law or custom, by a native in the lifetime of one or more other wives married to him according to native law or custom the court may treat such marriage as valid for all civil purposes, in so far as polygamous marriages are recognised by the said native law or custom

[…]

Part V. Native Administration

79. (1) The Administrator shall appoint an officer to be called the Secretary for Native Affairs and officers to be called Native Commissioners, and, if occasion requires, Assistant Native Commissioners, and may from time to time, with the approval of the High Commissioner subject to confirmation by a Secretary of State, prescribe by notice in the *Gazette* the powers, duties, salaries, and districts to be assigned to such officers.

(2) The provisions of this Order with respect to the appointment, salaries, suspension, and removal of Magistrates shall apply to the appointment, salaries, suspension, and removal of the Secretary for Native Affairs, Native Commissioners, and Assistant Native Commissioners, and any other persons employed in the administration of native affairs, and the High Commissioner and a Secretary of State shall have and exercise the like powers with respect to these officers as under this Order are exercisable by them in the case of Magistrates.

(3) It shall be lawful for the High Commissioner by Proclamation to confer upon any Native Commissioner or Assistant Native Commissioner such jurisdiction not exceeding that exercisable by Magistrates as may from time to time appear to him to be expedient.

80. No conditions, disabilities, or restrictions shall, without the previous consent of a Secretary of State, be imposed upon natives by Ordinance which do not equally apply to persons of European descent, save in respect of the supply of arms, ammunition, and liquor.

81. The Company shall from time to time assign to the natives inhabiting Southern Rhodesia land sufficient for their occupation, whether as tribes, or portions of tribes, and suitable for their agricultural and pastoral requirements, including in all cases a far and equitable proportion of springs or permanent water.

82. All questions relating to the settlement of natives on the lands within Southern Rhodesia shall be dealt with and decided by the Administrator in Executive Council, but all such decisions shall be subject to review by the High Commissioner.

83. A native may acquire, hold, encumber, and dispose of land on the same conditions as a person who is not a native, but no contract for encumbering or alienating land the property of a native shall be valid unless the contract is made in the presence of a Magistrate, is attested by him, and bears a certificate signed by him stating that the consideration for the contract is fair and reasonable, and that he has satisfied himself that the native understands the transaction.

84. The Company shall retain the mineral rights in all land assigned to natives. If the Company should require any such land for the purpose of mineral development or as sites of townships, or for railways or other public works, the Administrator in Executive Council, by direction of the Company and upon good and sufficient cause shewn, may, with the approval of the High Commissioner, order the natives to remove from such land or any portion thereof, and shall assign to them just and liberal compensation in land elsewhere, situate in as convenient a position as possible, sufficient and suitable for their agricultural and pastoral requirements, containing a fair and equitable proportion of springs or permanent water, and as far as possible, equally suitable for their requirements in all respects as the land from which they are ordered to remove.

85. (1) No natives shall be removed from any kraal o from any land assigned to them for occupation, except after full enquiry by, and by order of the Administrator in Executive Council approved by the High Commissioner.

(2) If any persons without such order removes or attempts to remove any native from any kraal or from any land unless in the execution of the process of a competent court he shall, in addition to any other proceedings to which he is liable, be guilty of an offence against this Order, and on conviction before the High Court shall be liable to imprisonment with or without hard labour for any period not exceeding two years, or to a fine not exceeding one hundred pounds sterling, or to both.

86. The High Commissioner may, if he thinks fit, refer any question relating to natives for report to any Judge of the High Court, and the Judge shall thereupon make such enquiry as he thinks fit, and shall report to the High Commissioner the result of such enquiry. The High Commissioner may act with reference to any such report as he thinks fit.

87. (1) The Administrator in Executive Council shall, when so required by the High Commissioner, appoint in any magisterial district a subordinate tribunal, to consist of the Magistrate of the district and two assessors from time to time selected by a Judge of the High Court upon the request of the High Commissioner.

(2) Such tribunal shall report or make recommendations to the High Commissioner upon all questions relating to natives referred to it by or by the direction of the High Commissioner, or by any Judge to whom any question relating to natives has been referred by the High Commissioner. The High Commissioner may deal with any such reports or recommendations as he thinks fit.

88. In the case of a revolt against the Company, or other misconduct committed by a native chief or tribe the Administrator in Executive Council may impose a reasonable fine upon the offender. The Administrator shall forthwith report every such case to the High Commissioner, who may remit the fine in whole or in part; the Administrator shall give effect to any such remission.

89. (1) The High Commissioner shall transmit to a Secretary of State a report upon every case relating to natives dealt with by him under part V of this Order, together with copies of all reports and recommendations and all documents relating to such case and a Secretary of State may review any case and reverse or modify any decision given or order made therein, and may give such directions in the matter as he thinks fit, and due effect shall be given to such directions by all persons.

(2) Provided that such directions shall only be binding where a Secretary of State has within twelve months after receiving the report of the High Commissioner given notice to the High Commissioner that he intends to review any such case.

[…]

A.W. Fitzroy

5. *Southern Rhodesia Naturalisation Order in Council*, 7 March 1899 (Speight 1910, pp. 33-37)

[…]

III. An alien may in Southern Rhodesia purchase, acquire, own or dispose of movable or immovable property of any description in like manner as natural-born subjects of Her Majesty. Provided that this section shall not qualify an alien for any office or franchise which such alien does not no by law possess, nor entitle an alien to any right or privilege expect such rights and privileges as are hereby expressly given to him.

IV. (1) An alien who within such limited time before making the application hereinafter mentioned as may be allowed by the Administrator, either by general order or on any special occasion has resided in Southern Rhodesia for a term of not less than twelve months, and intends if such application to be granted to continue to reside in Southern Rhodesia may apply to the Administrator for letters of naturalisation in the form provided in the first schedule hereto.

(2) The applicant shall adduce in support of his application such evidence of his residence and intention to continue to reside and of the matters set forth in the said schedule as the Administrator may require, and shall furnish proof to the satisfaction of the Administrator that notice of his intention to apply for letter of naturalisation has been published in two issues of the *Gazette*.

(3) The Administrator, if satisfied with the evidence adduced, shall take the case of the applicant into consideration and may, with or without assigning any reason, give or withhold letters of naturalisation as he thinks most conducive to the public good, and no appeal shall lie form his decision, but such letters of naturalisation shall not take effect until the applicant has made a declaration of allegiance to Her Majesty as hereinafter provided.

V. Any person resident in Southern Rhodesia who has previously obtained a certificate of naturalisation as a British subject elsewhere than in Southern Rhodesia may, notwithstanding that he has not resided within Southern Rhodesia for a period not less than twelve months prior to the date of his application, submit such certificate and make an application to the Administrator stating that –

(a) he is the person named in such certificate;

(b) that the certificate has been obtained without any fraud or intentionally false statement;

(c) that the signature and seal (if any) thereto are, to the best of his knowledge and belief, genuine;

(d) that he intends, if naturalised, to reside in Southern Rhodesia;

And shall adduce in support of his application such evidence concerning the matters aforesaid and concerning the matters set forth in the first schedule hereto a the Administrator may require. The Administrator, if satisfied with the evidence adduced, shall take the case of the applicant into consideration, and may, with or without assigning any reason, give or withhold letters of naturalisation as he thinks most conducive to the public good, and no appeal shall lie from his decisions, but such letters of naturalisation shall not take effect until the applicant has made a declaration of allegiance to Her Majesty as hereinafter provided.

VI: Every alien to whom the Administrator may grant letters of naturalisation shall before the delivery of such letters to him make and subscribe before a Magistrate a declaration of allegiance in the form contained in the second schedule hereto, which declaration shall be of the same force and effect as an oath of allegiance.

VII. An alien to whom letters of naturalisation have been granted shall in Southern Rhodesia be entitled to all political and other rights, powers, and privileges, and be subject to all obligations to which a natural-born British subject is entitled or subject in Southern Rhodesia.

[…]

A.W. Fitzroy

6. *Native Regulations*, 25 November 1898 (BSAC 1899, pp. 53-56)

By His Excellency Major-General George Cox, Senior Officer in Command of Her Majesty's troops in the Colony of Good Hope administering the Government of the said Colony and of the Territories and Dependencies thereof and Her Majesty's High Commissioner, &c., &c., &c.

Whereas it is expedient to establish Regulations for Natives within the limits of the "Southern Rhodesia Order in Council, 1898".

Now, therefore, under and by virtue of the powers in me vested I do hereby proclaim, declare and make known as follows: –

1. The regulations styled "Native Regulations" contained in the Schedule to this Proclamation shall be and the same are hereby declared to be in force within the limits of the "Southern Rhodesia Order in Council, 1898" from the date of the taking effect of this Proclamation.

2. This Proclamation shall take effect from the date of its publication in the *Gazette*.

God save the Queen!

Given under my hand and seal at Capetown this 25th day of November, 1898.

George Cox,
(Acting High Commissioner)

[…]

G.V. Fiddes
(Imperial Secretary)

No. 18, 1898

Schedule. Native Regulations

Preliminary

1. These Regulations shall apply to Southern Rhodesia, and shall be entitled "The Southern Rhodesia Native Regulations".

2. In these Regulations: –

"Location" means a settlement of natives on private lands in accordance with the provisions of the Proclamation of 14th October, 1896.

"Reserve" means lands, the property of the British South Africa Company, set apart for the purposes of native settlement exclusively.

"Vacant land" means: –

(1) Land which has been granted to settlers but which is not occupied; and

(2) Land still available for settlement.

"Tribal district" means the portion of vacant land or reserve placed under a chief in accordance with Part IV. of these Regulations.

"Administrator in Council" means the Administrator, or if there are more Administrators than one, the Senior Administrator of Southern Rhodesia acting by and with the advice and consent of the Executive Council.

I. The Administrator

1. The Administrator in Council for the time being exercises over all natives all political power and authority.

2. The Administrator in Council appoints all chiefs to preside over tribes or sections of tribes, and also divides existing tribes into two or more parts, or amalgamates tribes or parts of tribes into one tribe, as necessity or the good government of the natives may, in his opinion, require.

3. The Administrator in Council may, subject to the approval of the High Commissioner, remove any Chief for just cause from his position as such Chief, and may also subject to the like approval, order his removal with his family and property form any reserve or vacant land to another reserve or vacant land; provided that no such removal to vacant land alienated by the British South Africa Company and held under title shall be effected except with the consent of the owner thereof.

4. With the concurrence of the High Commissioner, the Administrator in Council has power to call upon Chiefs and District Headmen to supply men for the defence of Southern Rhodesia and for the suppression of disorder and rebellion within its boders, and may call upon such Chiefs and Headmen to personally render such service.

5. For the purpose of native administration, the Administrator in Council has power from time to time to subject to the approval of the High Commissioner, to divide and sub-divide Southern Rhodesia into Districts and Sub-Districts as may seem to him desirable. Should it be found on so dividing the country that natives of one tribe have been settled in different districts by such division, they shall be allowed to move into the district in which their Chief is settled, or to affiliate themselves to the tribe of a Chief in the district in which they may be living.

II. The Native Department

1. The Secretary for Native Affairs for the time being is the principal executive officer in regard to native affairs.

2. He shall be accessible to and receive petitions whether written or verbal, from all natives, and shall in every case where an injustice or wrong exists (not being a private wrong remediable at law) take the necessary steps to protect and right the person or persons wronged.

3. He shall in all cases of disputed Chieftainship or succession to Chieftainship, and in tribal quarrels or dissatisfaction, make enquiry personally or otherwise, as may be deemed best, for the information of the Administrator.

4. In each province of Southern Rhodesia there shall be a Chief Native Commissioner who shall be responsible to the Secretary for Native Affairs, through and by whom the instructions of the Government shall be communicated and executed.

5. For each District constituted by the Administrator in Council as aforesaid there shall be appointed an Officer styled the Native Commissioner, who shall exercise therein such powers as may from time to time be conferred upon

him by law: provided that the Administrator in Council may, subject to the approval of the High Commissioner, where it appears to be desirable, place two or more districts under one Native Commissioner, and may, subject to the like approval, appoint one or more officers to assist the Native Commissioner in the discharge of his civil functions, except those referred to in the next two succeeding sections.

6. A Native Commissioner may, where such a course may seem desirable, and subject to the approval of the High Commissioner, be appointed a Special Justice of the Peace with the powers and jurisdiction conferred by the law of the Cape Colony upon Special Justices of the Peace, and thereupon all the laws of the said Colony with regard to Special Justices of the Peace, the review of their decisions, or otherwise, shall *mutatis mutandis* apply to the Native Commissioner so appointed, and the Native Commissioner so appointed shall have and exercise all the powers and jurisdiction conferred upon Resident Magistrates of the said Colony under the provisions of Acts No. 18 of 1873 and No. 7 of 1875 of the said Colony. Subject to his possessing the necessary qualifications required by law, a Native Commissioner may be appointed a Magistrate or Assistant Magistrate for the district or districts under his charge.

7. In all civil matters between natives a Native Commissioner, who may be appointed a Special Justice of the Peace, shall have the jurisdiction conferred upon Magistrates by the law at the time in force in Southern Rhodesia; provided that it shall be competent for any native to bring any action either before the Special Justice of the Peace or the Magistrate as he may desire.

8. In civil cases brought by natives in the court of the Special Justice of the Peace an appeal shall lie to the High Court, as if the case had in the first instance been brought in the court of the Magistrate of the District.

9. A Native Commissioner shall control the natives through their Tribal Chiefs and Headmen.

10. A Native Commissioner shall have the power, subject to the approval of the Administrator in Council, of assigning lands for huts, gardens, and grazing grounds for each kraal on vacant land or reserves in his district, and no new huts shall be built or gardens cultivated without his consent and approval of the position selected.

11. He shall, when circumstances require it, arrange and determine, as far as possible, between natives all matters arising out of the flow and apportionment of the water of streams and furrows in his District.

12. He shall from time to time, and subject to the approval of a Chief Native Commissioner, fix the number of huts which shall compose any kraal.

13. He shall be responsible for the proper registration of huts within his district and for the collection of hut tax when due.

14. The receiving of presents from natives or the acquisition of land or stock within his district by any Native Commissioner or Assistant Native Commissioner is strictly prohibited without the consent of the Secretary for Native Affairs first had and obtained.

III. Duties and Discipline of Native Messengers attached to Native Commissioner's Offices

1. A sufficient number of Native Messengers shall be attached to the Office of each Native Commissioner and Assistant Native Commissioner.

2. The duties of the Messengers shall be to convey messages to the Chiefs and District Headmen from Native Commissioners, to warn natives of collection of hut tax, to summon parties to civil cases in any Native Commissioner's Courts and to report to the Native Commissioner any irregularities or crimes that may come to their knowledge.

3. All Native Chiefs and District Headmen shall be instructed to report to the Native Commissioner or nearest Police Station any irregularities, misconduct, or impositions on the part of the Messengers at kraals.

4. The Messengers shall wear uniform distinct from that issued to the Native Contingent, and including a metal badge on the left arm. Messengers shall only carry assegais and sticks.

IV. Chiefs

1. The Chief in charge of a tribe or section of a tribe shall be appointed by the Administrator, and shall hold office during pleasure and contingent upon good behaviour and general fitness. He shall receive such pay and allowance as shall be fixed from time to time.

2. He shall be responsible within his tribal district for: –

(*a.*) The general good conduct of the natives under his charge.

(*b.*) The immediate notification to the Native Commissioner or Assistant Native Commissioner of all crimes and offences or serious attempts at crime, of all deaths, and suspicious disappearances, of any epidemic of prevailing disease either among the members of his tribe or their stock.

(*c.*) The due publication of all such public orders, directions or notices as may be notified to him.

(*d.*) The nomination of a sufficient number of men to act as district headmen for sections of his tribe for appointment by the Secretary for Native Affairs, who shall also have power to remove them and appoint others in their stead.

(*e.*) The prevention of crimes and offences of evasion of taxing or licensing law, of the sale of poisons and love philtres and of the practice of witchcraft or divination.

(*f.*) A cognition and control of natives not being people of his own tribe who may come into the country occupied by his tribe and of cattle other than cattle known to be the property of his tribe.

(*g.*) The notification to the Native Commissioner or Assistant Native Commissioner of all applications by new comers to build and reside within his tribal district.

(*h.*) The prompt supply of men called for under the terms of Clause 4 of Part 1 of these regulations as and when ordered to supply the same by the Administrator in Council with the approval of the High Commissioner through the Native Commissioner or Assistant Native Commissioner.

(*i.*) The discharge of such further and other duties as may from time to time be required by the Administrator in Council subject to the approval of the High Commissioner.

3. Chief in their respective tribal districts shall aid and assist by all means in their power in apprehending and securing offenders of all descriptions.

4. They shall in all cases communicate with the Native Commissioner or Assistant Native Commissioner stationed in the district in which they reside.

5. They shall assist the Native Commissioners and Assistant Native Commissioners in the registration of huts and in collecting the hut tax when the same becomes due.

V. District Headmen

1. The Secretary for Native Affairs shall appoint a sufficient number of District Headmen in each tribal district to assist the Chiefs in carrying out their duties. In making these appointments the nominations submitted by the Chiefs shall, except for good reason to the contrary, be accepted.

2. District Headmen shall be responsible to the Chiefs for: –

(*a.*) The good conduct of the people in the portion of the tribal district placed in their charge.

(*b.*) The prompt notification to the Chief of any unusual occurrence in their sub-districts.

3. They shall rank as constables within their sub-districts and are authorised to arrest any native therein in obedience to any lawful warrant or whom

they may see committing or attempting to commit any crime or offence against persons or property of rioting or defying authority, and to hand over the persons arrested without delay to the Native Commissioner or Assistant Native Commissioner.

4. They shall be required to assist the messengers and other officials attached to the office of the Native Commissioner and Assistant Native Commissioner whenever called upon to do so.

5. They shall prevent the settlement of fresh kraals in or the removal of existing kraals in their districts without proper authority.

6. District headmen and other heads of kraals shall be responsible for the payment of hut tax that may from time to time come due from their respective kraals.

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How can a private company rule a country, wage wars, shape historical memory, and manufacture political legitimacy? In this book, the history of the British South Africa Company becomes a window into one of the central contradictions of modern empire: the transformation of a profit-driven corporation into a sovereign political power. Moving between intellectual history, political philosophy, and settler colonial studies, the book reconstructs the myths through which the Company justified the conquest and governance of Rhodesia from the late nineteenth century onward.
Drawing extensively on the Company's own archives, reports, and propaganda, the book traces six major myths of legitimation: lawful occupation through treaties, the fight against the slave trade, the protection of the Shona from the Ndebele, settler self-defence, the "white man's burden," and the racial mythology surrounding Great Zimbabwe. It shows how these narratives were not static ideological ornaments, but strategic responses to Indigenous resistance, imperial competition, economic interests, and crises of colonial rule. At the same time, the book confronts a broader theoretical question that remains strikingly contemporary: what happens when sovereignty escapes the limits of the state? Engaging thinkers from Hobbes and Weber to Gramsci and Arrighi, the book examines the chartered company as a political form that blurs the boundaries between corporation, empire, and state. Combining archival research with political and philosophical analysis, *Sovereign Corporations* offers a new perspective on colonial power, corporate sovereignty, and the enduring relationship between capitalism and empire.

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