

**Postcolonial reading of 1 Kings 21:1-29 within the context of  
the struggle for land in Zimbabwe: From colonialism to  
liberation, to the present**

**By**

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## Declaration

I, Rev. Kennedy Gora, a Master of Theology (Biblical Studies) student in the School of Religion and Theology, University of KwaZulu Natal, Pietermaritzburg, Republic of South Africa, declare that: Except for quotations indicated in this text and such help as acknowledged, this thesis is wholly my own work and has been submitted for a Master's degree.

## Acknowledgements

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## Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to people in Zimbabwe, who, due to the unresolved land issue, have suffered in the struggle for land in Zimbabwe, especially women and children, who, due to the collapse of the socio-economy in Zimbabwe, are exposed to terrible hardships.

## **Abstract**

This thesis conducts postcolonial readings of 1 Kings 21:1-29 within the context of the struggle for land in Zimbabwe. It is an attempt to investigate the historical and sociological contexts of Zimbabwe and Ancient Israel. The thesis traces the land issue trajectory across both the colonial and post-colonial terrain of Zimbabwe. In the process, this thesis identifies four key moments which it considers as major in the struggle for land in Zimbabwe, which are: the historical moment of the colonization of Zimbabwe; the moment of the Second War of Liberation; the moment of the independent Zimbabwe; and the moment of the current land invasions and land grabbing in Zimbabwe.

The thesis has made an attempt to explain the significance of land in Ancient Israel, in an endeavour to understand why Naboth the Jezreelite would not easily succumb to Ahab's demand for his family land. In this way the Naboth story is located within its socio-historical context. It has also demonstrated that the advent of the monarchy introduced a tributary socio-economic system which replaced the egalitarian social order. In addition, this dissertation has shown that the monarchy introduced land expropriation in Israel and Judah, which was a departure from the inalienability of land, a concept very popular with pre-monarchic Israel and Judah. The issues of the abuse of power and the injustice that was prevalent under both the united as well as the divided monarchies were also discussed

At the end, the thesis has attempted to bring the context of the struggle for land in Zimbabwe in dialogue, contrapuntally with the context of the confrontation over land between Ahab and Naboth the Jezreelite, that is, allowing both similarities and differences to manifest or emerge in this dialogue, so that a complete interpretation of the text may be achieved by allowing the context and the text to interrogate and investigate each other.

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# **Chapter One-Introduction**

## **1.1 Title**

Postcolonial readings of 1 Kings 21:1-29, within the context of the struggle for land in Zimbabwe: from colonization to liberation, to the present.

## **1.2 Short descriptive title**

This thesis seeks to do postcolonial reading of 1 Kings 21:1-29 within the colonial and post-colonial contexts of the struggle for land in Zimbabwe. This thesis traces the land issue trajectory from the colonial through the liberation war to the present context of Zimbabwe. The research will identify both key historical and current moments in the experience of Zimbabwe and engage each of these key moments with the text (1 Kings 21: 1- 29).

## **1.3 Background and outline of research topic**

Postcolonialism has been defined as “scrutinizing and exposing colonial domination and power as these are embodied in the biblical text and interpretation, and as searching for alternative hermeneutics while thus overturning and dismantling colonial perspectives” (Kgalemang 2006: 218). According to Musa Dube, cited by Kgalemang; “the word postcolonial was coined to describe the modern history of imperialism, beginning with the process of colonialism, through the struggles for political independence, the attainment of independence, and to the contemporary new colonialist realities” (2006: 219). It is not only about dwelling on the crimes of the past and their continuation, but also about seeking transformation and liberation for the present (Kgalemang 2006: 219). Based on this understanding, this thesis seeks to trace the land issue trajectory from colonization to liberation and to the present, highlighting issues of injustice and abuse of power by those both in positions and possession of power.

The land as the basis of human livelihood cannot be separated from issues of socio-economy, power, justice and empowerment, issues of injustice, disempowerment and

alienation. The land issue trajectory is very much enshrined and entangled within these issues.

The land issue is a trajectory that runs through the history of Zimbabwe, through the colonial period (1890-1980) and the post-colonial period (1980-up to this day). What this suggests is that land was and is an important issue in the minds of the African citizens of Zimbabwe (Bakare 1993: iv, Gundani 2002: 122, *Zimbabwean Kairos Document* 1998: 23, *The Zimbabwe We Want Document* 2006: 30).

The fundamental character of the land issue in Zimbabwe is demonstrated by the numerous wars that were fought to alienate the native population, to defend land from colonial grabbing or regain the lost land from the settler community. (Gundani 2002: 122) argues, “For about one hundred and fifteen years, blacks in Zimbabwe struggled to attain land through both legal and extra-legal means but with limited success.” For example the native population engaged in a war to defend the land from colonial grabbing in 1890 when the colonial land grabbers arrived. However, the natives were defeated and the land that we now know as Zimbabwe was annexed by the British South African Company, headed by Cecil John Rhodes (Gundani 2002: 123, Chigara 2004: 15, Banana 1989: 116, Moyana and Sibanda 1989: 36). After the defeat of the Shona tribes, the company conducted another offensive against the Ndebele State, which saw its demise in 1893 (Palmer 1968: 6).

Soon after the wars of conquest and after failing to get the promised goldmines, the company turned its attention to the land and herds of cattle possessed by the native population, and then land alienation and dispossession ensued (Chung and Ngara 1985: 44). Acts after acts were decreed and systematically the indigenous population lost the best land to the colonialists (Chung and Ngara 1985: 44, Brown 1959: 5). The Zimbabwean native was pushed to the periphery and margins where the soil was poorer, where there was very low rainfall and where the land was prone to droughts. To force the native population into labor force the colonialists imposed upon them taxation and expropriation of the herds of cattle (Chung and Ngara 1985: 44, Moyana and Sibanda 1989: 43).

The loss of the best land, the herds of cattle, goats, sheep, taxation, forced labor, abuse of African women, and the natural disasters that befell the nation, as well as the

general discontent caused by the arrival of the colonial settlers were enough to set off the first war of liberation that was coordinated by the spirit mediums, for example Mbuya Nehanda, Sekuru Kaguvi, Mukwati and others (Mukanya 1991: 107). Mbuya Nehanda and Sekuru Kaguvi were spirit mediums as well as traditional leaders in the area of Mashonland. Mukwati was a spirit medium and a traditional leader who operated in Matebeland. These were both political and religious leaders who were popular during the period of colonization of Zimbabwe

However, this First War of Liberation did not yield the required results. The natives were defeated and marked brutality was exercised upon them. The spirit mediums that coordinated the war (1986-7) were brutally killed. Mbuya Nehanda and Sekuru Kaguvi were hanged on April 27, 1898 (Mukanya 1991: 115, Moyana and Sibanda 1989: 48).

However, the defeat in the First Chimurenga provided the required impetus and inspiration for the waging of the Second Chimurenga (Moyana and Sibanda 1989:50, Gundani 2002: 125). From the background of the First Chimurenga the Second Chimurenga (1970-1980) was launched. The primary and central issue for this war was to regain and repossess the lost land. This made the land issue central to the political, social, economic and cultural history and current Zimbabwean situation (Gundani 2002: 135). The natives looked forward to getting the land back once they had won their liberation. This made the necessity of land redistribution an absolute imperative. This war of liberation came to an end in 1980, April 18 when Zimbabwe was declared independent from the British rule. History has it that more than 30 000 people were killed while 850 000 were left homeless (Gundani 2002: 137).

The end of the second Chimurenga was a disappointment for those that were aware of what the independence package enshrined. The Lancaster House Constitution failed to rise above a pernicious act of political subterfuge, argues P. Gundani (2002: 139). For him, “it essentially lulled the black people by granting them a hollow form of independence, but at the same time making them bonafide baby-sitters of their erstwhile oppressors” (Gundani 2002: 139). This is echoed by Gann and Hendrickson cited by Gundani, who said, “The liberation war had been a “war of the flea” that tormented a settler government to surrender without (as yet) stinging it to death”

(Gundani 2002: 137). The land issue was not redressed and recurred in the post-colonial period.

At independence, Mugabe's government inherited a land tenure system that divided the land along racial lines, that is commercial large scale farms owned by individual settlers and communal land owned by the African community (Bakare 1993: 55). In the early years of independent Zimbabwe, Mugabe's government with British assistance managed to settle some 55 000 families on 2.7 million hectares (Gundani 2002: 140). These were mostly settled on the farms that were abandoned due to the intensity of the war. The Lancaster House Constitution is blamed as a barrier to land reform. This means no change could be realized because of the Lancaster House Constitution entrenched clause that protected the white ownership of land (Gundani 2002: 140; Derman & Hellum 2007:164). For these scholars all that the politician could do was to promise people that change would come some day.

However, Meredith (2002: 16) and Blair (2003: 176) argue that Mugabe's government replaced the white farmers with a black elite group. For the two, land was not redistributed to the poor and the landless but to Mugabe's cronies and party-card-holders. The list included his spokesman, two cabinet ministers, provincial governors and retired generals including for example, Air Marshal Perence Shiri, commander of the Air Force and former commander of the fifth brigade. This land reform was bound to be a failure. For Meredith, Mugabe joined the fray but his real obsession was not personal wealth but power. For this reason he ruled through a vast system of patronage, favoring loyal aids and cronies with government positions, contracts and even land (Meredith 2002: 17). D. Blair echoes the same sentiments when he says, "until 1987 Mugabe's consuming obsession was securing his grip on power by crushing ZAPU and imposing one-party-state" (Blair 2003: 177). This means that the land issue received no serious attention from the government in the post-colonial Zimbabwe.

From another point of view, P.Gundani argues that when the Lancaster House Constitution entrenched clause expired in 1990; the government's urgency with land redistribution could not be noticed. For him the government remained quiet and this loss of focus raises questions about the government's commitment to lasting land reform (Gundani 2002: 141). From 1991-1996 no funding came from Britain and the

land reform programme was hamstrung (Gundani 2002: 142). Thus, the land issue trajectory continues unaddressed or redressed. As a result of the withdrawal of the British government from funding the land reform project, the failure of the 1998 donor conference held in Harare, which was convened by the Zimbabwean government to mobilize the international donor community to finance the land reform programme and the failure of the constitutional referendum, that is the proposal by the Mugabe government to have the constitution of Zimbabwe changed, the land issue took another twist.

In February 2000, the majority of black Zimbabweans resorted to extra-legal means, possibly with state support or sympathy (Gundani 2002: 122). The war veterans, the rural poor, urban residents and elites within the party, and the military invaded the farms to reclaim the land lost (Alexander 2006:191). While it seems like this time the century old goal has been achieved, the methodology of land acquisition and redistribution has been under and is under both national and international spotlight. This has to this date plunged Zimbabwe into critical and desperate political and economic problems.

This dissertation will trace the history of the land issue since the colonization of the land we now know as Zimbabwe, looking at policies adopted by successive colonial regimes and their consequences and ramifications on the black majority population. The policies adopted by the post-colonial government of Robert Mugabe in an attempt to redress the land imbalances will also be studied (Gundani, 2002: 122). Since we have noted above that postcolonialism is not confined to crimes of the past and their continuation but also about seeking transformation and liberation for the present, this thesis endeavors also to address both the past and the present in the struggle for land in Zimbabwe. As a vehicle for analysis and reflection a biblical text about land struggle will be read against four key moments of the land struggle in Zimbabwe.

The reason for choosing this text (I kings 21:1-29), is that, this is a well known text about the land. Though, there are many scholars who have used this text on their discussions on the land issue, it has been used in passing and not in much depth within the Zimbabwean land context. In addition, there are close resonances between the text and the struggle for the land in Zimbabwe. The Bible is a significant voice

that is understood in the Zimbabwean context, as it speaks to various situations, that includes the struggle for land.

In postcolonial biblical criticism the Bible is perceived as a problematic document. It is regarded with suspicion. The Bible is perceived as a literary product of the ancient world, both embodying and legitimizing colonial intentions and assumptions (Sugirtharajah1998:18). Most of the Bible's writings are thus set in imperial context and are made to serve the militaristic, expansionist impulses of Israel and to respond to those of Egypt, Assyria, Persia and Rome. These various contexts have much influence on the production of the biblical text. Further, the Bible was produced under the courtly supervision of the Davidic and Solomonic dynasties (Sugirtharajah2006:251). For the above reasons, imperial and colonial traits dominate and determine the interest of the biblical text and we could reasonably describe the Bible as a colonial document (Sugirtharajah1998:19). What postcolonial biblical criticism is trying to do is to interrogate and investigate the biblical narratives and interpretations for colonial assumptions imperial impulses, power relations, hegemonic intensions, the treatment of the subaltern, stigmatization of women and the marginalized, land appropriation and the violation of minority cultures. It also seeks to scrutinize the biblical text and interpretation and expose the ideological content hidden behind its claim to neutrality (Sugirtharajah 2006:67). As a vehicle of analysis and reflection four moments of the land struggle in Zimbabwe will be read against a biblical text about land struggle. By bringing the text and context into dialogue around a common concern, the study will explore how these intertexts mutually interrogate each other and what such dialogue suggests for an ongoing project of social transformation.

#### **1.4 Preliminary literature study and reasons for choosing the topic**

As a Zimbabwean national, I am very much challenged by the political, social and economic situation that is going on in Zimbabwe. I am one of those people who want to see the land issue resolved once and for all so that the Zimbabwean family may live in peace and harmony, eradicating the culture of racial hatred that has been created by the unresolved land issue (*The Zimbabwe We Want Document 2006, 38*). Through this research I hope to contribute in building a peaceful Zimbabwean society whose land is shared and distributed evenly among the people regardless of race, gender, tribe

and/or political affiliation (*The Zimbabwe We Want Document 2006*, 39). In this research works on the land issue in Zimbabwe, theological/biblical works on land in Ancient Israel, general works on 1 Kings 21:1-29 and postcolonial works on 1 Kings 21, will be drawn from as we endeavor to understand the land issue in Zimbabwe.

On the land issue in Zimbabwe the following scholars will be drawn from: Canaan S. Banana (1989), Ian Phimister (1985), Sam Moyo (1999), and Keith Beavon (2000). They all address the land issue and colonial history showing how the Zimbabwean black population was alienated from their mother land. Closely related to these scholars are H. Moyana and M. Sibanda (1989), S. Mukanya (1991) and H. Moyana & M. Sibanda (2000) who have traced the land issue from the arrival of the colonizer, highlighting the systems that were put in place to dispossess the native population. Claire Whitmore (1981) does not only address the land issue, she has done further work by highlighting how the natives understood land. Allen Isaacman (1977), Fay Chung & Emmanuel Ngora (1985) and B. Ankomah (2000) echo the same sentiments as the above, as they focus on colonial history of land alienation demonstrating how the natives ended as poor peasants in their backyards. Further, Ken Brown (1959), R.H. Palmer (1968) and Roger Riddell (1980) are in unison as they write on the uneven land distribution in (Rhodesia) Zimbabwe. They highlighted the problems created by a racial land distribution systems and warned those in positions and possession of power to address and redress the unbalanced land distribution.

The following works on land in Zimbabwe come out of the current situation in the country. Paul Gundani (2002) writing on the crisis in Zimbabwe traces the land issue trajectory from the colonial to the present period. He highlights the colonial land grabbing policies that were used to alienate the natives, looks at the two wars of liberation, the post-independent land distribution, the abortive donor conference (9-11 September 1998), cessation of grant from Britain (195/6), the failure of constitutional reform (1999-2000) and the land invasions by the rural poor and war veterans. He sees the land issue as both a historical and current question that requires to be addressed. The following scholars have joined Paul Gundani, in this current history. Martin Meredith, (2002) in his book, *Robert Mugabe: Power, Plunder and Tyranny in Zimbabwe* have followed the life of Robert Mugabe, showing how he could change from personality to personality. For example, Martin Meredith (2002:13) notes that,

he (Mugabe) was feared as a socialist ogre and then changed to a moderate model at independence. For Martin, Mugabe was/is capable of changing his personality to suit the tide of the day. Martin Meredith (2002) is also in common with Catherine Buckle (2001) and David Blair (2003) as they write on land invasions in Zimbabwe, highlighting how the land invasions were conducted and who were to lose and who were to get the land and why. These, together with Paul Gundani are in agreement on the issue that the land issue has taken another twist. Land is now distributed to ZANU-PF supporters and to government officials, together with Central Intelligent Agents, Police and military top brass.

The second group of scholars in the literature review is those scholars who look at the land issue from a biblical or theological point of view. In his publication, S. Bakare (1993) looks at the theology of land in Zimbabwe. He traced the land trajectory from the Old Testament through the New Testament and ended by contextualization and appropriation of the land issue in the Zimbabwean context. He challenged those in power and the church to redress the land issue, so that the past continuing social injustice rooted in now both colonial and post-colonial Zimbabwe could be obliterated (Chigara 2004: xvi).

Graham Philpott (1999), Gunther Wittenberg (1991) and Walter Brueggemann (1996) are in common with Bakare as they attend to the land issue from a theological point of view. However, Wittenberg (1991) and Brueggemann have paused to look at the significance of land in the Old Testament showing the injustice inherent in the Naboth Jezreelite story (1 Kings 21: 1- 29).

This research also draws from works that have been published or unpublished on the text (1 Kings 21). Elelwani Bethuel Farisani (1993) and Rowanne Marie (2004) have both submitted dissertations on the land issue in South Africa, reading 1 Kings 21:1-29 within the context of South Africa. Farisani submitted his thesis in the context of apartheid South Africa and Marie submitted in post-apartheid South Africa. The two looked at issues of power, injustice and alienation. They also dealt with how land was understood in Ancient Israel. Farisani (2005) has done a sociological study of 1 Kings 21:1-29 giving attention to how the Hebrews understood land in the time of Naboth the Jezreelite. Further, Elelwani B. Farisani and Dorothy Farisani (2004) published an article on 1Kings21:1-29, looking at issues around administration of justice in the

biblical text that they have applied on the post apartheid South Africa. Though the above have been written with a South African context in mind, they shed light on the text that can be used in the context of my research, which are the colonial and post-colonial contexts of Zimbabwe.

Obed Kwalotswe (2006) who writes on the story of Naboth's vineyard demonstrates how land grabbing has caused social and economic dislocation in Botswana. This article, though written with the context of Botswana in mind shares the same nuances with the social and economic dislocation experienced by the Zimbabweans in the history of colonial as well as the post-colonial land grabbing that have since plunged the Zimbabwean economy into desperate economic levels, which this thesis is made to address.

M. Nelumbu (2006), writing from the Namibian context, looks at the land ownership from a biblical perspective. He argues that the land is solely owned by God who has allowed humanity to be custodians on God's behalf, for my research he has made reference to the law of Nahalah (inheritance) which is central to my research because of Naboth's response to Ahab, which is "The Lord forbids that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers" (RSV). For this thesis the loss of land (inheritance) created both social and economic dysfunction since religion (God), land (inheritance), and ancestors (forefathers) are in a close relationship that should not be disturbed. Disturbances to this relationship lead to disharmony in almost all sectors of life.

Alexander Rofe (1988) has published an article in which he has done an internal study of the story of Naboth's vineyard, so as to detect the origins of the story, on whose basis he sort to find out and interpret the message of the story. For him (Rofe 1988, 102) the story voices the complaint of the oppressed. For my thesis, the grabbing of the land both within the colonial and post-colonial periods has marginalized and submerged the voices of the oppressed in the context of Zimbabwe and using postcolonial tools this thesis seeks to listen to these voices of the oppressed.

This thesis will also draw from postcolonial works on 1Kings 21:1-29. Western feminists in an endeavour to exonerate Jezebel from the harsh and cruel configuration ascribed to her by the Deuteronomistic narrator have portrayed her as a good counsellor. On the contrary M.K. Nzimande (2007), who reads the story of Naboth's

vineyard from a postcolonial Imbokodo perspective, has challenged this picture of Jezebel. For M.K. Nzimande, western feminists, by configuring Jezebel in this way, have lost the liberationists character of feminist theology, especially with reference to powerless women and in particular reference to African woman. In her article she has paused to listen to the submerged voice of Naboth's wife. For my research, Nzimande's article is a source of inspiration. She has unearthed and introduced new dimensions to the study of Naboth's vineyard. For the purpose of my thesis I endeavour to identify the shifts that the reign of Ahab and Jezebel have taken across the colonial and post-colonial terrain of Zimbabwean history. This research will also draw from works by Musa W. Dube (1998) whose postcolonial reading focuses on decolonization, Richard A. Horseley (1998) who focuses on unearthing the submerged biblical histories and imperial studies as well as Stephen D. More & Fernando F. Segovia (2005), whose postcolonial reading focuses on the voices from the margin.

Although substantial work has been on 1 Kings 21:1-29 on some African countries, no specific and detailed work has been done on the struggle for land in Zimbabwe. My thesis draws on the existing scholarship and applies this information from other African situations on the Zimbabwean context.

### **1.5 Research problems and objectives: Key questions to be asked**

This research traces the land issue trajectory across both the colonial and post-colonial terrain of Zimbabwe. It looks at the land grabbing and alienation within the context of colonial and the post-colonial Zimbabwe. The research problem enshrined within this thesis is whether colonial and post-colonial land grabbing in Zimbabwe are "manifestations" of the reign of Ahab and Jezebel which repeats itself time and again. The objective of this research is to read and interpret 1 Kings 21:1-29 within the contexts of colonial and post-colonial Zimbabwe. In other words, how do four different periods of land struggle in Zimbabwe offer up different readings of this biblical text, and in what ways does the biblical text speak into each of these different periods?

### **1.6 Principal theories upon which the research project will be constructed**

This thesis engages the postcolonial theoretical framework, which is identified with the work of Edward Said, Gayatri Charavotry Spivak and Homi Bhaba (Sugirtharajah 2006: 66). This theoretical framework is not peculiar to biblical studies but is applicable across disciplines. However, when dealing with the biblical text under the postcolonial framework we use postcolonial biblical criticism.

According to Staley (2006:319), postcolonial biblical criticism is that criticism that

puts colonialism at the centre of biblical studies despite the fact that there is a remarkable reluctance among biblical scholars to speak of imperialism as shaping the contours of biblical texts and their interpretations. What postcolonialism makes clear is that biblical studies can no longer be confined to history of textual traditions or to the doctrinal richness embedded in texts but needs to extend its scope to include issues of domination, western expansion and its ideological manifestations, as central forces in defining biblical scholarship

Sugirtharajah (2006:67) argues that postcolonial biblical criticism looks at the narratives and investigates them for colonial assumptions, imperial impulses, power relations, hegemonic intentions, the treatment of the subalterns, stigmatization of women and marginalization, expropriation and violation of minority cultures. Further, Sugirtharajah argues that it is a criticism which “seeks to scrutinize the Biblical interpretation and expose the ideological content hidden behind its apparent claim to neutrality. What postcolonial biblical criticism does is focus on the whole issue of expansion, domination and imperialism as central forces in defining both biblical narrative and biblical interpretation.” In its reading of the biblical text, postcolonial criticism endeavors to revive and reclaim silenced issues and lost causes (Sugirtharajah, 2006: 67).

What this means is that postcolonial biblical criticism sees the Bible as a problem in issues of domination, subjugation, land alienation and the general treatment of the subjugated and marginalized populations. It argues that the Bible is imperial in its own site of production and in its use and needs to be decolonized or liberated for

liberation of the oppressed to be realized. Postcolonial criticism makes it possible for this research to listen to the voices of the silenced and especially to retrieve the identities that were submerged, or see the identities that continue in human communities as they shift from one period to the next in human history. So in this research we will use postcolonial readings of 1Kings 21 to discern how the reign of Ahab and Jezebel manifests itself across the colonial and post-colonial terrain of Zimbabwe. Postcolonial criticism also reads and interprets the text from the perspective of the poor, the dispossessed and the colonized. Therefore, it is appropriate for this research which endeavors to study the identity of Ahab and Jezebel's reign as it was manifested repeatedly in the colonial and post-colonial dispensations in Zimbabwe, reading 1 Kings 21 from a postcolonial perspective.

Postcolonial biblical criticism is particularly an appropriate theoretical framework for this thesis, which takes seriously the post-colonial features of the struggle for land in Zimbabwe and attempts to bring it into dialogue with the biblical text (1 Kings 21:1-29).

Postcolonial criticism upholds that contrapuntal reading should be promoted (Waweru 2005:12). According to Nelson (2008:1), "the adjective 'contrapuntal' is a term that is derived from the musical term 'counterpoint' which ... is defined as the technique of setting, writing or playing a melody or melodies in conjunction with another, according to fixed rules; to emphasize by contrast; or to compensate for." For Said, cited by Nelson (2008:1), contrapuntal reading embodies all the aspects of the above definition, in its effort to bring various interpretive voices into conjunction without harmonization, but emphasizing the uniqueness of each voice in contrast with other voices, and to compensate for gaps in one interpretation. Contrapuntal reading, like secular criticism "provides alternatives: alternative sources, alternative readings, alternative presentation of evidence" (Nelson, 2008:7).

Since the text is a product of its author's interaction with his/her own social world, one cannot interpret a text without taking the author's world into consideration. In this way the text should be read from the social worlds of the former colonizer and that of the formerly colonized. This should be done contrapuntally, that is, without imposing false harmony, but to achieve a counterpoint of various voices. Hence Nelson (2008:11) maintains that contrapuntal readings of biblical text is to create a space in

which critical interpretive texts encounter one another in a manner which allows both similarities and differences to emerge. It is the argument of contrapuntal reading to promote the process of boundary crossing, the process of dialogue which is of unique potential in text interpretation.

The research design for this thesis therefore will be a non-empirical study, which uses and analyses existing data. This research will engage secondary data that we have in the literature review and the biblical text: that is works or publications on land in Zimbabwe, theological/biblical works on land in Ancient Israel, general works on the text (1Kings21: 1-29), and postcolonial works on 1Kings 21:1-29.

### **1.7 Research methodology and methods**

This research is designed to do postcolonial readings and interpretation of 1 Kings 21: 1-29 from the perspective of the Zimbabwean context. This research as indicated before traces the land issue trajectory through colonial history to this day as it endeavors to identify the ‘manifestations’ of Ahab and Jezebel’s reign in both the past and present leadership of Zimbabwe.

This thesis traces the land issue trajectory within four key identified moments which are: the historical moment of colonization, the moment of the Second Chimurenga (Second War of Liberation), the celebrated moment of independent Zimbabwe and the current moment of land invasions/grabbing. These are the different successive socio-historical periods under the focus of this thesis. Each of these key moments will be analyzed historically and sociologically.

The research will proceed as it conducts a historical and sociological analysis of the story of Naboth the Jezreelite, locating the text within its historical and sociological setting. That is looking at the significance of the land in Ancient Israel, the advent of the divided monarchy and the confrontation between Ahab and Elijah. Issues of land, power and justice in the setting of text will be attended to. The third methodological element brings these two socio-historical contexts into dialogue through postcolonial theory and especially the contrapuntal component of the theory.

## **1.8 Outline of Chapters**

### **1.8.1 Chapter One- Introduction**

This chapter seeks to present the thesis title, which it explains or describes briefly. The background and outline of the research topic will be covered in this chapter. That is discussing the background to the struggle for land in Zimbabwe and that between Ahab and Elijah. This chapter also highlights the postcolonial theory, which is the theory that this thesis will use in its analysis of the text. Preliminary literature review and the rationale or justification for this research topic is given under this component of the thesis. The principal theory on which the research is constructed is explained with this section. It also highlights the research problem and objectives as well as the key questions that this thesis will be addressing. The chapter concludes as it highlights the methodology that this research intends to engage.

### **1.8.2 Chapter Two- The land issue in Zimbabwe**

This chapter will trace the land issue trajectory across the colonial and post-colonial terrain of Zimbabwe. This chapter will also deal with the colonial land alienation and dispossession, as well as the struggle for land in Zimbabwe as it was displayed in the Second Liberation War of 1970s. The third component of this chapter will look at what happened to the land during independent Zimbabwe. That is whether land was redistributed to the poor peasants who supported the struggle in the hope of regaining their land or not. This chapter will attempt to explain the reasons that were advanced to explain the failure by the Mugabe government to make radical land restitution or redistributions promised by the guerrillas during the war. The final component of this chapter will cover the current struggles of land in Zimbabwe. That is the current land invasions and grabbing that characterized Zimbabwe since 1999 to this day.

### **1.8.3 Chapter Three- A socio-historical study of 1Kings 21:1-29**

This chapter will conduct a socio-historical study of 1 Kings 21:1-29, in which it will look at the significance of the land in Ancient Israel. It will also cover issues of the change of the socio-economy from the egalitarian system that was popular with the

pre-monarchic period to the tributary socio-economy that were introduced in Israel (Southern and Northern kingdoms) by the advent of the monarchy under both Saul and David. This chapter holds that during the monarchy the peasants lost their land to the State. Through this chapter this thesis will demonstrate that Ahab followed the economic system that was initiated by the previous dynasties. This chapter will make an attempt to explain the abuse of power and the failure of justice in Israel as the Kings become agents of death. Finally, this chapter will focus on the confrontation between Ahab and Elijah over the death and expropriation of Naboth the Jezreelite's family land.

#### **1.8.4 Chapter Four- Postcolonial Readings of 1Kings 21: 1-29 within the context of the struggle for land in Zimbabwe**

This chapter will conduct postcolonial reading of 1Kings 21:1-29 from the perspective of the Struggle for land in Zimbabwe. The postcolonial readings will be offered in four key identified moments: that is the historical moment of the colonization of Zimbabwe; the moment of the Second Chimurenga; the moment of independent Zimbabwe; and the current land invasions and land grabbing in Zimbabwe. In this chapter two different contexts are brought into dialogue with each other, using the postcolonial theory. In this chapter the text is interpreted contrapuntally. In this way the differences and similarities are allowed to manifest and each voice is considered important for complete interpretation of the text.

#### **1.8.5 Chapter Five- Summary and Conclusion**

This chapter will demonstrate in short what the thesis has covered and suggests areas for further research.

## **Chapter Two**

### **The land issue in Zimbabwe**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

This chapter seeks to do a historical as well as a sociological analysis of the land issue in Zimbabwe. The chapter covers the period that stretches from 1890 to the present day Zimbabwe. Four key historical moments within the struggle for land in Zimbabwe will be considered under this chapter. Here are the four key historical moments:

The period of land alienation and dispossession (1890 -1969)

The period of the second liberation war (1970 -1980)

The moment of independent Zimbabwe (1980 -1996/7)

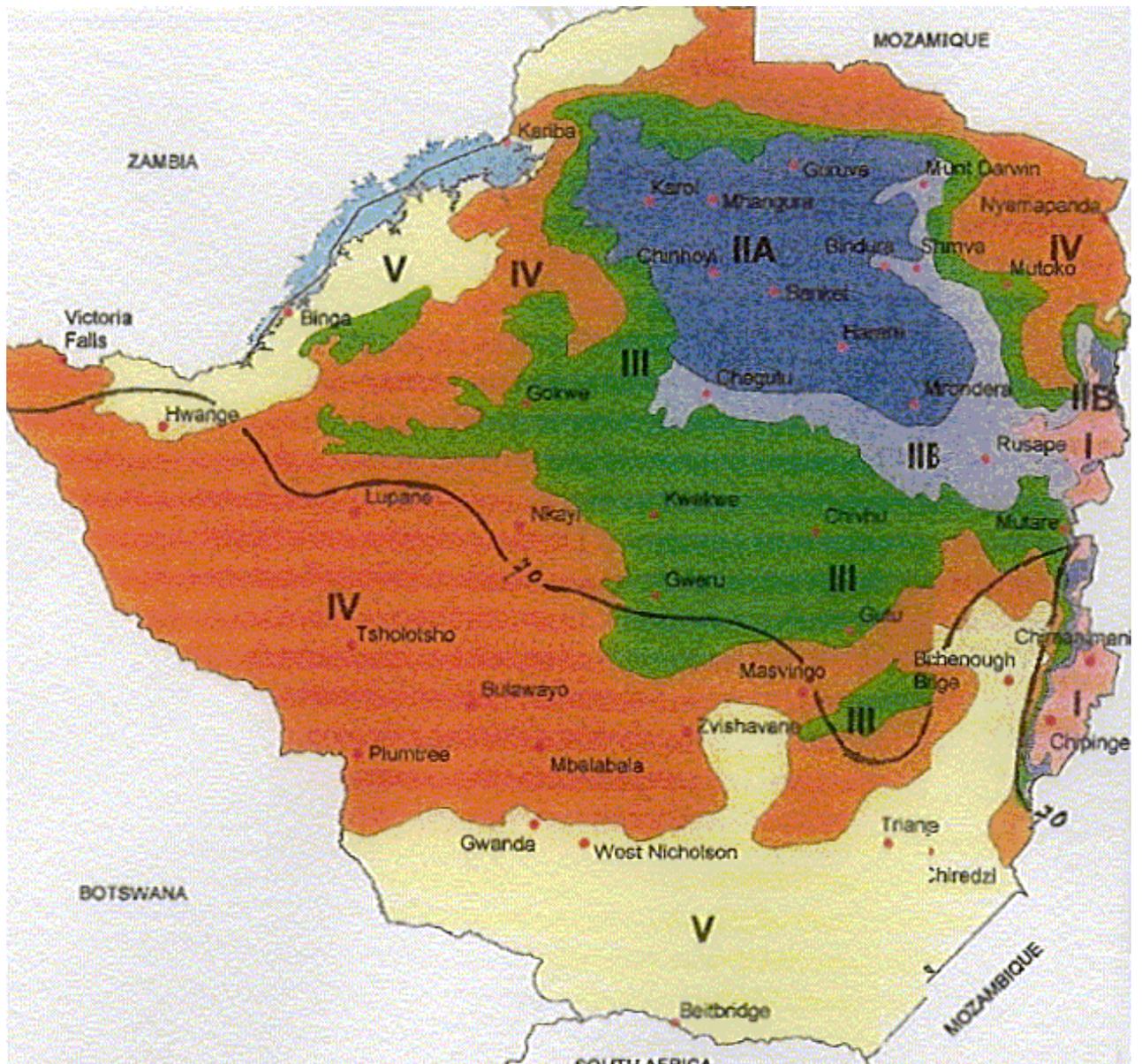
The current struggle for land in Zimbabwe (1997/8 to the present)

#### **2.1 The geography of Zimbabwe**

Before we delve into the analysis of the land issue in Zimbabwe, we make a detour and highlight some key geographical features of Zimbabwe. The rationale for doing this is inspired by the fact that since the inception of colonial rule in the land that we call Zimbabwe today, the country was divided according to these five geographical features or zones or natural regions. It is my argument that struggle for land in Zimbabwe is not simply about land but also about the prime or best land. This geographical information serves as the background to the struggle for land and land alienation in Zimbabwe.

A map showing these natural regions of Zimbabwe is provided below.

**The map showing the five Natural Regions of Zimbabwe**



According to Campbell (2003:97), in his book, *Reclaiming Zimbabwe: The Exhaustion of the Patriarchal Model of Liberation*, Zimbabwe is constituted by five ecological zones. These zones are what Riddell (1978:27) calls the natural regions of Zimbabwe. For Riddell (1978:27) Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) is made up of six natural

regions. Though the two scholars differ on the number of the regions, they are in agreement on their description of the five regions which are important for this dissertation. The sixth region given by Riddell (1978:27) has been incorporated into other regions, especially region five. The two scholars now together with Derman & Hellum (2007:163) are in congruency on their description of five natural regions of Zimbabwe. According to them, Region One which is located on the higher veld and more mountainous part of the country is the best-watered area. The rainfall is above 1000 mm per annum, temperatures are low and the soil is the most fertile. In a nutshell, Region One is the most fertile and has the most reliable rainfall in the country. The region is suitable for specialized and diversified farming (Campbell 2003:97; Derman & Hellum 2007:163; Riddell 1978:27; Stoneman & Cliffe 1989:9).

Region two, which is chiefly found in the North-East of Zimbabwe, receives moderately high rainfall (1000 mm per year), especially in summer. This region has fertile soil which makes it suitable for intensive crop and/or livestock farming (Stoneman 1989:10; Campbell 2003:97; Riddell 1978:27).

Region three, which closely borders region two, receives a lower rainfall of about 650 to 800 mm per annum. The region experiences fairly severe dry spells. This causes this region to be classified as marginal as far as maize, tobacco and cotton are concerned. Thus region three, which constitutes 19% of the total land area, is best suited for semi-intensive crop and livestock production. Vincent & Thomas cited by Riddell (1978:27) are in agreement with Stoneman & Cliffe (1989:10) on this view.

Region four receives fairly low rainfall of about 450 to 600 mm annually, making it highly susceptible to periodic droughts and severe dry spells during the rain season. For Campbell (2003:97) and Riddell (1978:27) this area is suitable for livestock production, but Stoneman & Cliffe (1989:190) are of the opinion that within this region cropping should be confined to drought resistant crops and livestock.

In region five the rainfall is very low and erratic, making this region's production potential very low. Stoneman & Cliffe (1989:10) argue that this region consists of principally hot and dry lowveld, in which cropping cannot be sustained without irrigation. Thus the two scholars agree with Campbell (2003:97) and Riddell

(1978:27) that this region is only suitable for extensive livestock production and game ranching.

Campbell (2003:98), Riddell (1978:27) and Stoneman & Cliffe as well as Derman & Hellum 2007:163) are in agreement that, in general, the agro-ecological analysis of Zimbabwe demonstrates that approximately 38% of the land area in Zimbabwe is suitable for crop production (Regions I, II and III) and about 60% is suitable for livestock production and game ranching and possibly cropping if supported by irrigation (IV and V).

After offering this geographical background to the land issue in Zimbabwe, we now attempt to explain how the African Zimbabwean understood land and what implications land alienation had on the Zimbabwean native population.

## **2.2 The African understanding of land and its implications on land alienation**

### **2.2.0 Introduction**

Before we work on the land alienation and dispossession we make a pause and consider the African Zimbabwean understanding of the land. The justification for doing this is that, this understanding has a great and direct bearing on the African Zimbabwean's behavior in relationship to land alienation and dispossession.

### **2.2.1 The African understanding of land**

For the African Zimbabwean land was understood as intertwined and interwoven within the Zimbabwean African world view of cultural and traditional norms and values. What this means is that before the colonial conquest and land dispossession, land was understood as inseparable from the African Zimbabwean culture. Land was understood as the source and sustenance of the totality of one's life. It was the source of food and wealth. It was understood as the link between the living and the living dead or ancestors. Land had to do with the people's identity, their respect, their security, and their dignity. This explains the African's deep-seated attachment with their land and/or their place of origin. Land was about the social, the economic, the cultural as well as the religious or spiritual. For Gundani (2002:136), it was on the land where the umbilical cord of each member of the family was buried, and where

the beloved ones were laid to rest. It was on the land where the ancestors were buried and where libation was performed as the African Zimbabwean communicated with those in the spirit world (*varikumhepo* in Shona). Further, it was on the land where snuff was poured as the African appeased their ancestors in traditional prayers. Thus for Gundani (2002:136), land constituted a unique sacred place of immense spiritual value. Furthermore, for the African Zimbabwean, “conflict over land was not about an expanse of ground on which things grow, but a deep-seated attachment to the place and identity, exacerbated by economic and other imperatives which are located in a history of expansion and acquisition” (*AFRA News 2006:15*).

Campbell (2003:85) has this to say about the African understanding of land, “ancestral land was at the core of cultural identity and African culture and it was the ancestor that protected the land.” Kia Bunseki Fukia, cited by Campbell (2003:85), echoes the same sentiments when he says, “there is no valuable condition that could change this inalienability of the ancestral land. Land was not a commodity to be sold. Land was inalienable in the traditional system.” The views above indicate the centrality of land within the understanding of the African. Campbell (2003:84) further argues that land was held in trust by those who were alive on behalf of ancestors and the unborn. Those who lived on the land were regarded as the guardians and custodians of the land on behalf of the ancestors. In summary, land was understood as permeating and central to the totality of the life and the world view of the African Zimbabwean.

### **2.2.2 The implications of land alienation**

Thus, to alienate and to dispossess the African Zimbabwean of the land had a far reaching impact in the totality of both the African world view as well as the African life in general. It created untold dislocations and disturbances within the African Zimbabwean’s world view. The African Zimbabwean experienced dislocations and disturbances within their social, their economic, their cultural, and their religious or spiritual sectors of life. The dislocation from the land created a chain reaction of dislocations in the African world view, which culminated in the tearing of the African’s relationship with their ancestors and consequently with their God, called (*Mwari*) in Shona.

They experienced dislocation from the land because they were removed from the prime land and dumped into regions IV and V where the soil was poorer, where there was very low rainfall, where the land was prone to droughts (Moyana & Sibanda 1989:43). This led to serious economic dislocations since the land on which they were moved had very low production potential. In this way their economic base was destroyed. They experienced dislocations in the cultural, as well as the religious or spiritual, dimensions of their life; because the link with their ancestral graves was also destroyed. They were not allowed to visit the graves of their ancestors and sweep them as a gesture of honor and respect (Gundani 2002:136). It should be understood that almost all misfortunes in the African world view are explained in relationship to the religious traditions. So failure to visit and sweep the graves may mean no rain in the next season.

Furthermore, Africans could no longer visit some forests where the medicine women and men used to dig the special roots to heal some diseases because of the laws of trespass that prohibited them from visiting these forests. This meant that their health was also under threat. In short, for the African Zimbabwean the loss of land was equal to the loss of their total identity, respect, dignity and humanness. For the African, things had fallen apart and the centre could no longer hold.

## **2.3 The period of land alienation and dispossession (1890 -1969)**

### **2.3.0 Introduction**

What we should note from the point of departure is that this thesis is not about the history of Zimbabwe, but it is about the land struggles within Zimbabwe. The fact is that, the land issue is a trajectory that runs through and characterizes the history of Zimbabwe from time immemorial to present day Zimbabwe. But this thesis confines itself to a period stretching from 1890 to the present Zimbabwean land struggles.

The land as the basis of human livelihood cannot be separated from issues of the socio-economic, power, justice and empowerment; issues of abuse of power, injustice, disempowerment and alienation as well as dispossession. The land issue trajectory is very much enshrined and entangled within these issues. They are inseparable,

intermingled, and interwoven together, so that it makes it difficult to study each one of them independent of the other.

### **2.3.1 Land alienation and dispossession**

The history of Zimbabwe is a history of land expropriation, land appropriation, land alienation, land inalienation, land dispossession, and it is a history of land possession. Throughout the history of Zimbabwe land has been changing hands, at one point land belonged to the natives, at another time land belonged to the settlers and so on. The land in Zimbabwe has been on the centre of struggles since time immemorial. It has been a contested space. Many wars have been fought in an endeavor to possess and own the land. Thus scholars are right to argue that land was and is an important issue in the history and current life of Zimbabwe (Bakare 1993: IV; *The Zimbabwe Kairos Document* 1998:23; *The Zimbabwe We Want Document* 2006:30).

Gundani (2002:122) has this to say about the land, “land is an item written in large characters in the desiderata of the average African citizen in Zimbabwe. Moreover, the ink with which it is written was developed from the blood, sweat, and tears of over 30 000 people who died to free the country from settler hegemony.” Riddell (1978: ix) is of the opinion that land is perhaps the central social and economic issue for Rhodesia (Zimbabwe); it plays such a dominant part in the lives of most of the country’s population. De Villiers (1999:7) says, “Land has for many years been the key to empowerment and to disempowerment.” The central idea here is that land is regarded as basic to the lives of the Zimbabwean population.

Furthermore, the fundamental character of the land in Zimbabwe is demonstrated by the numerous wars that were fought, either to alienate the native population, to defend land from colonial grabbing or to regain lost land from colonial settler community. Gundani (2002:122) argues that, “For about one hundred and fifteen years, blacks in Zimbabwe struggled to attain land through both legal and extra-legal means but with limited success.” For example the African Zimbabwean population engaged the settlers in a war to defend the land from colonial land grabbing in 1890. Since this date (1890) to the present the native population of Zimbabwe is fighting for the land. This is a clear indicator that the land in Zimbabwe is a critical subject that cannot be ignored by anyone who wants to establish peace and harmony in Zimbabwe,

eradicating that culture of racial hatred that was and has been created by the unresolved land issue (*The Zimbabwe We Want Document 2006:38*).

### **2.3.2 The Company Rule and the land issue (1890 - 1923)**

In the year 1890, the British South Africa Company, headed by Cecil John Rhodes, took over Mashonaland, and on the 12<sup>th</sup> of September that year, the Union Jack was hoisted in Harare to mark the take over of the country that we now know as Zimbabwe (Gundani 2002:123; Chigara 2004:15; Banana 1989:116; Moyana & Sibanda 1989). After the conquest and take over of Mashonaland, the Company conducted another offensive against the Ndebele state, which saw its demise in 1893 (Palmer 1986:6). The Company Rule was the government that came into play soon after the takeover of Zimbabwe. It was referred to in this name because Zimbabwe was taken over by Cecil John Rhodes' company, which was somehow independent from Britain control by then.

Soon after the wars of conquest and after failing to procure the promised gold mines, the Company turned its attention to the land, and the herds of cattle possessed by the native population, and then land alienation and dispossession ensued (Chung & Ngara 1985:44). Act after act was decreed and systematically the indigenous people lost the prime land to the settler community (Chung & Ngara 1985:5). The African Zimbabwean masses were pushed to the periphery and margins where the soil was poorer, where rainfall was very low and where the land was prone to droughts (Chung & Ngara 1985: 14; Moyana & Sibanda 1989: 43). These are the regions IV and V that are shown on the map above.

Moorcraft & McLaughlin (1982:2) and Palmer & Birch (1992:6) have this to say about the takeover of the land: After the demise of the Ndebele kingdom, the settlers in a barbaric show of power or abuse of power carved the conquered land into farms at will. Those in positions and possession of power distributed land to those that participated in the war of conquest. Those who supported the cause of those in possession of power had to benefit for their service. David Martin (2001:8) informs us that the first group of settlers was granted 3 000 acres of the prime land without compensation given to the African Zimbabwean population. Each member of the Company Police force was granted 4 500 acres of the best agricultural land in

Mashonaland. Land which was acquired through violence was parceled out to those who were the friends of those in positions and possession of power. David (2001:16) informs us that, “Dr.L.S. Jameson, Rhodes’ administrator, started to hand out vast tracks of land to wealthy companies and individuals and syndicates who claimed to have capital to plough in the land. Sir John Willoughby, second in command of the Company Police force, was awarded no less than 600 000 acres.” The one who benefits belongs to those who have the power to allocate the land and one who losses does not belong to them, therefore s/he losses. This explains why the African Zimbabwean did not benefit in such a situation.

### **2.3.3 The First Chimurenga (1896/7) and the land issue**

The loss of the best land, the herds of cattle, goats, sheep, taxation, forced labor, abuse of African women, and the natural disasters that befell the nation as well as the general discontent caused by the arrival of the colonial settlers were enough to set off the First War of Liberation (The First Chimurenga 1896/7). This war of liberation was coordinated by spirit mediums. These included Mbuya Nehanda, Sekuru Kaguvi, Mukwati and others (Mukanya 1991:107). The African Zimbabwean was defeated and marked brutality was exercised on the spirit mediums who coordinated the war. They were brutally murdered. Mbuya Nehanda and Sekuru Kaguvi were hanged on the 27<sup>th</sup> of April 1898 (Mukanya 1991: 115; Moyana & Sibanda 1989:48). The fact that the African Zimbabwean lost the war compounded the feeling of loss and that of dislocation within the African Zimbabwean world view. The loss of the land, the abuse of women, rinderpest, the drought and the locusts and then, the murder of the spirit mediums sent shock waves within the African Zimbabwean population. For the African Zimbabwean it was considered a taboo to kill the spirit medium. This was an abominable by African standards. It was true that things had fallen apart and the centre could no longer hold.

This was a clear indicator that the African world-view had suffered great dislocations. What could a community whose leadership has been liquidated do which was better than submit and wait for an opportune time? What we have to understand here is that that leadership was both political and religious. To kill them, especially by hanging, was an abominable and heinous act. It was an event in the history of the struggle for land in Zimbabwe that the native population would not forget. Thus Phimister

(1985:240) commented that, “The looting carried out by the settlers and Company, as well as the devastation that was experienced in the risings of the 1896/7 disturbed and in some cases destroyed the pattern of indigenous life.”

The land where the umbilical cord of each member of the family was buried, where the ancestors were buried, where the beloved ones were buried and where the medicine women and men fetched some special roots and leaves to cure some maladies had been lost. The land where libation was performed as the African communicated with their ancestors was annexed. Then the leadership who were understood as the custodians of the land on behalf of the ancestors and the unborn as well as on behalf of their God (Mwari) was lost. This created dislocations and disturbances in the minds of the native population that could not be forgotten. The land expropriation was achieved through the use of untold violence and brutality, by those who wielded power and authority in those days.

There is a school of thought which upholds that, the African Zimbabwean cultural and religious world view is not static but dynamic. While this view holds to some degree, it is entangled with weaknesses. The obvious weakness is that this view assumes that the notion of dynamism of the African culture or world view applies in situations in which the African is forced to leave the ancestral land. This was not true in those days and probably even today. This dynamism of African culture is only applicable in a situation in which a family willingly relocates. In such cases beer was brewed for ancestors and rituals were performed in which the spirit world was invoked and the ancestors were consulted or informed of the intended relocation of which they might or might not approve. Thus, to be driven away from the land only created dislocations and disturbances within the African world view. This explains why after close to a century of colonial rule the Zimbabwean population expected to regain and return to the ancestral land. For the African the traditional idioms that maintain the notion that crime will not or does not just disappear or that the crime is not punished on the day it has been committed but that it would be on another day that lay in the distant future, lingered on in their minds. These notions gave the African persevering hope that the future may one day return their land.

#### **2.3.4 The Native Reserve Order in Council of 1898**

To force the African Zimbabweans off the prime land the Company introduced laws. In 1898, the Native Reserve Order in Council was established. This created areas where blacks would live away from the whites (Gundani 2002:126). The areas became known as the Native Reserves. This was followed by a systematic massive expropriation of about one sixth of the total farming land in the country. According to the information shown on the map and that is given under the title, “The geography of Zimbabwe,” the native population was removed from regions I, II, and III and then forced to crowd into regions IV and V.

In 1914 the settler population increased to about 28 000. This increase in population exacerbated the conditions of the indigenous population; they had to make way for the increasing population of the settlers. They had to be moved further off again and again, going deeper and deeper into dryer and dryer regions. Tobela, cited by Werbner (1991:9) recalls the following in connection with the above:

When we were still living there at the mountains, we saw a European coming one day to tell us, “This is my farm. I have been told to look after this farm where you are settled.” We said, “That was alright but where shall we settle?” He said, “Just settle here. But what you shall have to do is give me money.” That was Kesbaum Teit. “We paid tax to Teit, we really paid tax to him ... he took all the country from our place at Bongo up to Malaba, there at Mbakwe near Mpandeni Mission ... that was our good European ... we lived there; and then we found that the farm had been cut and an Afrikaaner had come in ...” He came where we were at Nswebetani and said, “There has never been two chiefs living together. Get up and go. Your cattle are too many and you goats are too many; they are living in this country. This is my country. I have bought it. It is now mine.” It was then they chased us away. We were removed and came to Ndadza. While we were behind Ndadza, we lived there for a time before one named Kala came, “Hua! This farm is now mine.

Remove from here. I don't want you anymore." Ah we were tied of carrying the burdens.

Most of these areas where Africans were located, according to Gundani (2002:127), Derman & Hellum (2007:163) and Phimister (1985:242) spread north and south of the main road and the railway line linking Bulawayo, Harare and Mutare, which became known as the "white highlands." Beyond these lands lie the dry and dryer middle and low-lying areas where Africans were dumped. In 1914, nine million Africans occupied 24 million acres, while 28 000 settlers owned 22 million acres of the best farming land. This means that as small a percentage as three owned 75% of the prime land and as large a percentage as 97 controlled 32% of the arid land (Gundani 2002: 127). The above tells us how unbalanced the land distribution in Zimbabwe by then was.

In 1914 the British Privy Council's judgment legalized the land expropriation that had occurred since 1890. It also endorsed that there would be no room for compensation to the African for the land expropriated thus far. The problems associated with compensation for the land is deep rooted within the history of the struggle for land in Zimbabwe. Due to the fact that the native population was not compensated for the loss of their land, the Mugabe government thinks that it cannot give compensation for the land that was stolen from the native population.

In 1915 the Company expropriated some high potential land that was adjacent to the Native Reserves and created the Reserve Purchase areas. For the African to procure land within this area one had to hold a master farmer's certificate. But the settlers who farmed within the large scale farms did not need a master farmer's certificate or any paper, yet they could own and manage farms; being white was enough (Gundani 2002:128). Here the notion of inclusion and exclusion is engaged. The African whose cause was regarded as inferior and different from that of the settler cause, which was understood as bringing in Civilization, Commerce, Christianity and Development to the African who was perceived as primitive, backwards and in dire need of redemption from this uncivilized state, was excluded.

Good cited, by Phimister (1985) upholds, that land for Africans was only for admiration and nothing else. This view is dismissed by the Phimister (1985:242) who said:

People who could trade their grain at a considerable profit were unwilling to work on the mining industry's terms and the ensuing labor shortages helped to precipitate a major crisis in the Southern Rhodesian mining industry. Obligated by the collapse of the speculative market in Rhodesian shares in 1903 to begin laying the foundation for capital accumulation and reproduction, the Chartered Administration systematically attacked African production structures. Peasant competition had to be curbed, distinguished guests were told, because if he "the native" can work for himself to a great profit he is not likely to work for the white settler for wages.

The above argument rebuts the idea that for the African land was for admiration and not for development. It indicates that the African could farm the land and sell the produce and accrue large amounts of profit. This potential was destroyed when the African experience dislocations from the land. That is because s/he was removed from the best-watered land in the struggle for land in Zimbabwe. A rich patrikinsmen of the chief, cited by Werbner (1991:12), has this to say about the removals, "Our old home was better, in drought years, it was better for maize, and we had the swampy pans (vleis) where maize thrived. The bulrush millet used to keep for very long, as much as twenty-five years. There the weevils kept to the top layers in the granary, and the rest untouched."

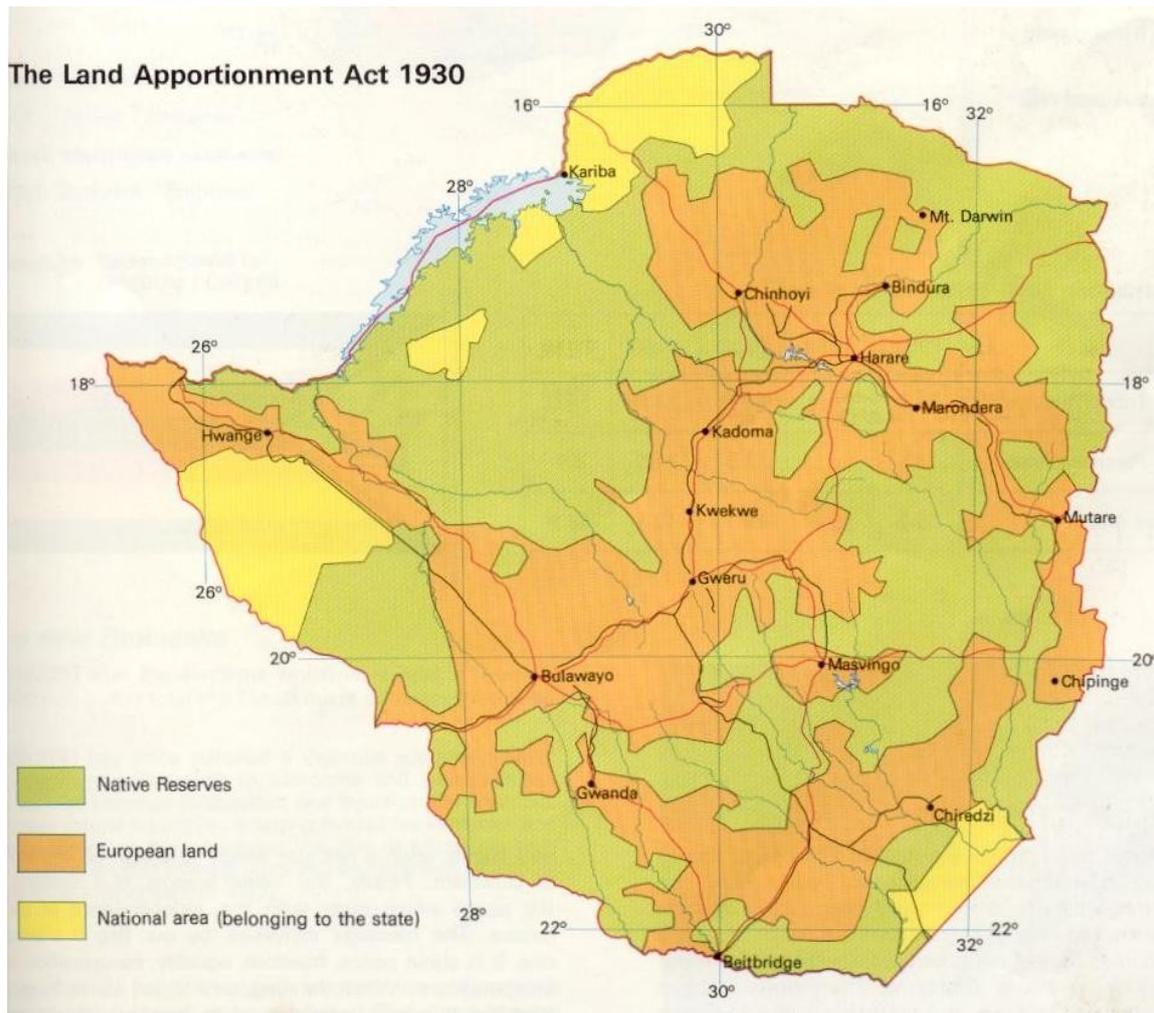
### **2.3.5 The land issue within the period stretching from 1923 to 1969**

The year 1923 marked the end of the Company Rule and ushered in a new dispensation of the government of the Responsible Authority. In this scenario South Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) became a self-governing colony subject to the British government with regard to a few constitutional provisions. Then it began to be governed by the elected government of Prime Minister Charles Coghlan (Gann & Henriksen 1981:14). A new concept of a locally elected administration came into

play. This was a great paradigm shift in the politics of the rule of Rhodesia (Zimbabwe).

History has it that Prime Minister Charles Coghlan commissioned an enquiry into the land issue with a view to come up with a national land policy and plan (Gundani 2002:126) The Morris Carter Commission that conducted the enquiry elicited views from white farmers, industrialists, land experts, civil servants and missionaries. White commissioners and missionaries gave their views on behalf of the blacks (Gundani 2002:129). In 1926 the Commission finished its work and presented its findings to the government. These findings became the basis for the Land Apportionment Act of 1930 with its gruesome treatment of the native population.

#### **2.3.6. The Land Apportionment Act of 1930 and implications for the land issue**



Scholars like Riddell (1978:5), Walker (1975:56), Gundani (2002:129) and Campbell (2003:96) concur on the idea that the Land Apportionment Act of 1930 was a law that was put in place which formalized the illegal occupation of the land by the settlers and the distribution of land in a racial manner. It also reinforced the colonial resolve to marginalize the Africans from the prime land. The act also institutionalized the racial divisions of the land in Zimbabwe. In this way the African continued to suffer loss of the land while the settlers continue to accrue more and more land. If there was any change in dealing with the land issue, that change continued to benefit the settlers and excluded the blacks. In other words the new elected Responsible Authority was not in anyway different in dealing with the land issue from the Company.

Paul Croorcraft and McLaughlin cited by Gundani (2002:129) have this to tell us about the Land Apportionment Act of 1930,

The Land Apportionment Act of 1930 formerly divided the country between the races. The whites reserved for themselves the more fertile land with high rainfall and “gave” the Africans the poorer more arid areas. These soon teetered on the brink of ecological disaster as rapidly growing African population and its expanding herds of livestock crowded on the overtaxed land.

From the inception and implementation of the Land Apportionment Act of 1930, some Africans were forcibly removed from some previously demarcated native reserves, whose conditions were considered good for settler use and crowded in some reserves whose rainfall and soil was poorer. In the reserves, Africans obliged by poor conditions, were forced to grow a narrow range of crops. The arid soils and sparse rainfall could not guarantee adequate food for the ever growing African population. They could only practice a subsistence type of farming. Food shortages and malnutrition became common among the African communities.

To further weaken the African Zimbabwean income base the Land Apportionment Act of 1930 allowed the Maize Purchasing Board to establish new regulations which discriminated against the African maize. This regulation decreed that the African should not be allowed to sell maize to the market in competition with the settler farmers. With the draconian laws of the day being against the African population, most Africans had no choice but to join the labor market. Thus the Native Reserves became labor conscription reservoirs designed to feed both the farming and commercial mining in Zimbabwe and South Africa. It is proper to conclude that the introduction of the elected Responsible Authority did not address or redress the uneven distribution of land in Zimbabwe; in actual fact it worsened the conditions of the native population (Gundani 2002:130). As the land issue was not addressed it continued on as a contested item in the life of Zimbabwe.

### **2.3.7 The aftermath of the Second World War and the land issue in Zimbabwe**

The period that followed the end of the Second World War ushers another new dispensation in the struggle for land in Zimbabwe. There was a marked influx of immigrants from Britain into Zimbabwe. About 150 000 postwar émigrés were

received in the country from Britain. To create room for them the colonial government had to forcibly remove about 10 000 Africans from the land that was earmarked for the settlers by the Land Apportionment Act of 1930 (Gundani 2002:130).

Compbell (2003:99) says that in 1945 the Land Acquisition scheme was established in order to facilitate the handing out of farms to the World War II veterans. In this instance land again was given out as payment/grants to those who had participated in the Second World War. This idea of giving the land to those who support your cause again is deep-seated in the history of the struggle for land in Zimbabwe and continues as an indelible character of the land. Palmer & Birch, cited by Gundani (2002:132), inform us that by 1960 there were about 220 000 British émigrés in the country. British soldiers returning from the Second World War received salaries and gratuities in the form of land for farming and homesteads in Zimbabwe. On the other hand, their counterparts, the black solders that had fought side by side with them in the war, were not honored in any way.

In order to fine-tune the racist policies of the colonial government, the Land Apportionment Act of 1930 was amended many times. The 1914 amendment then divided the land into four categories: European land, African land, forest land and unreserved land. As the number of whites increased in the country the land loss to blacks also increased. As these laws were implemented more and more Africans lost their land. They ended up crowded in the Native Reserves where they were exposed to poverty, malnutrition, as well as to disease and death.

The amendment of 1951, which became known as the Land Husbandry Act, gave the settler farmers a green light to use forced labor (Chibharo in Shona, direct translation gives you rape) on their farms. It sanctioned the compulsory destocking of the African herd, and limited African families to five herds of cattle and eight acres of land. Every family had to comply or face the confiscation of the total herd. Listen to what Gundani (2002:131) says about the Land Apportionment Act of 1930:

The implementation of the Land Apportionment Act brought about untold suffering in the African society in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe). The major effect was the

weakening of the food security capacity of the African communities, which in turn created a situation of desperation that again forced more black males into selling their labor in towns, mines and a variety of industries in both South Africa and Zimbabwe.

The condition was exacerbated by the introduction of taxation that was supposed to be paid in cash. They had no choice but to go and work in farms or risk being taken into forced labor. This created another dislocation within the African life. Since males had to leave their homes as they joined the labor market, the mothers had to put up with a dual role in the family. That is their roles as mothers and the role of the father, who were horses or oxen in the cities.

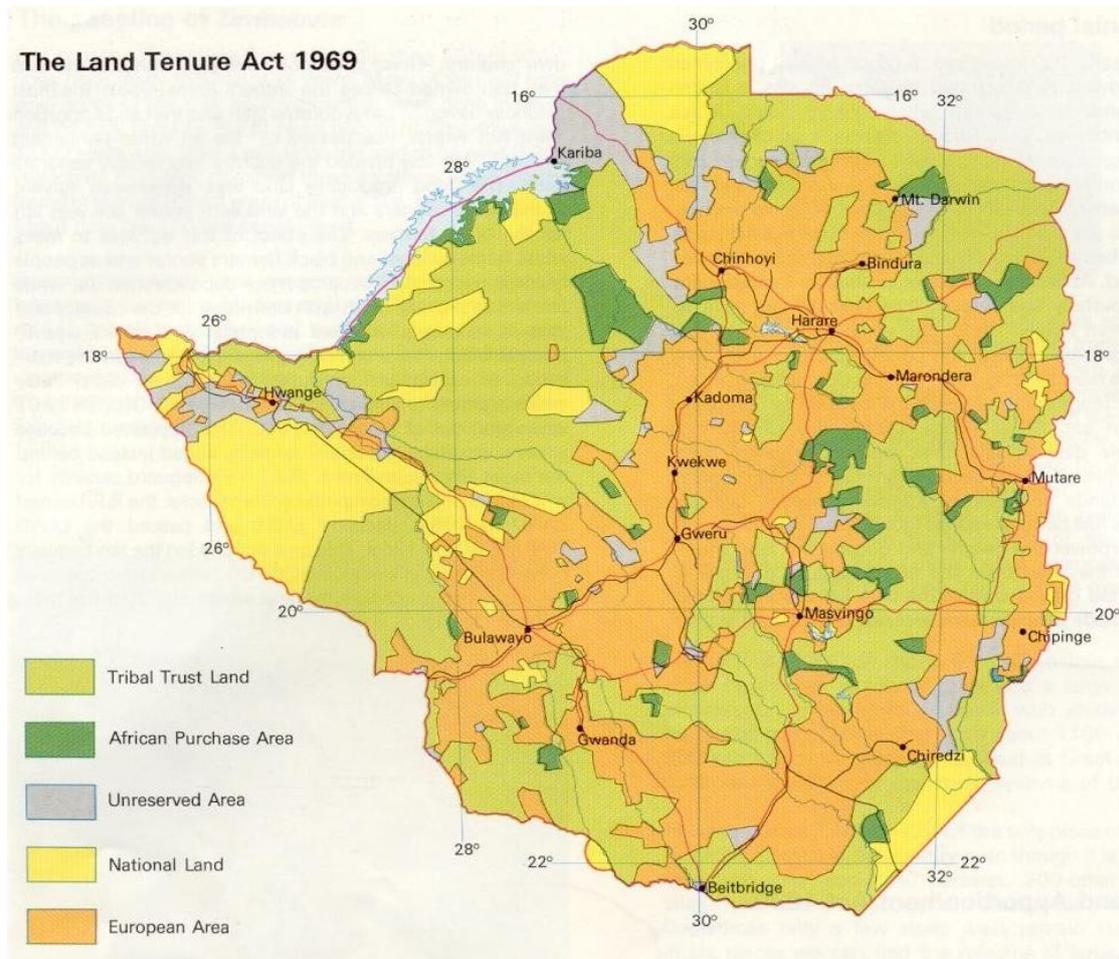
The final amendment of the Land Apportionment Act of 1930 came in 1961. Its purpose was to institutionalize the racial segregation further. During this time the population of European farmers had increased to about 4 600. Under this amendment more and more land was allocated to the settler community (Gundani 2002:132). Statistically, European Areas stood at 49 149 000 acres, Native Areas remained static at 21 600 000 acres. Native Purchase Area was 7 465 000 acres; this was land that could be bought by some natives that had the money to do so. Unassigned Land 17 193 000; this was land which was not allocated to any particular group of people. Forest Land was 591 000 acres; this was the land that was allowed to remain as forest. Undetermined Land stood at 88 000 acres. This gives us a total of 96 686 000 acres (Gundani 2002:132). In spite of the high birth rate and the terrible conditions in the African areas the land apportioned to the African remained static.

To conclude, one would be justified to say, from 1923, which introduced the Responsible Authority, during which elections were also introduced, down to the end of Winston Field's rule in 1963, nothing was done to address or redress the land question, so as to eliminate or obliterate the segregatory/racial nature of the distribution of land in Zimbabwe. Government after government endorsed, formalized, institutionalized and legalized the violent and draconian laws that governed the distribution of land in Zimbabwe from the inception of colonial rule initiated by Cecil John Rhodes' Company Rule. Thus the land issue continued as an unresolved problem into the reign of the next government.

### **2.3.8 Ian Smith's rebellion and the land issue in Zimbabwe (Rhodesia)**

Ian Smith came to power through a coup that was conducted against Winston Field. There are a number of views on this change of leadership. While some scholars uphold the view that Smith waged a coup against Winston Field because he was regarded as a moderate with the blacks with regard their grievances, others are of the opinion that the election was rigged in favor of Smith who had lost the election (Gundani 2002:135). The two perspectives seem to be in accord, however, on the notion that, whether coup or rigged the election, the aim was to eliminate Winston Field who was viewed as not hostile enough in dealing with the black people. Whatever view is correct; as soon as Ian Smith was in control 88 000 blacks were removed from the so called European Lands. This seems to suggest that Smith was a no nonsense leader who dealt violently with the natives.

The map below shows the land distribution according to race; it also demonstrates that the Africans were located in the Tribal Trust Lands which are allocated away from the high veld in regions IV and V. This the Land Tenure Act of 1969.



In 1969 the Land Tenure Act was introduced. This is said to have “finalized for all time” the divisions of the land between the white settlers and the black population as shown by the map above. The Act legalized separate development between the settlers and the indigenous people. With the draconian laws in favor of the settler community, many more African Zimbabweans were evicted to create space for more white immigrants. While half of the country belonged to the whites who constituted about a quarter of a million, the poorer and dryer half belonged to the majority black population which stood at about 5,5 million. Riddell (1978:1) note that at that moment 83% of the country lived in the reserves and about 17% occupied the best land in the country. Thus the conditions in the reserves became serious and unbearable. Smith’s government did not do anything to have the land issue resolved, but the racial divisions were allowed to continue.

But the land issue remained a key subject in the minds of those who suffered dispossession and alienation, the African population, and another war of liberation

was on the horizon; it was unavoidable. The Africans were aware that they were their own liberators and were bound to do something with the problem of the land. With the gruesome life that they experienced in the reserves the possibility of an uprising was inevitable and, yes, there was another war whose key aim was to regain the lost land. Let us now focus our attention on this war of liberation.

#### **2.4 The Second Chimurenga and the land issue (1970 -1980)**

Although, the First Chimurenga (1896/7) was crushed with maximum violence and brutality, it became the impetus and the inspiration of the Second Chimurenga. Many scholars are in agreement on the fact that the land issue was the central, primary and key rationale to explain the need for the Second War of Liberation (Derman & Hellum 2007:163; Gundani 2002:135; Martin & Ranger 1985:29; Lan 1985:37 and Krieger 1992:15). This war was to put an end to the inequality in land holding between the whites and the blacks. In other words, the Second Chimurenga's main objective was to regain the lost land and have the land redistributed to poor and landless blacks. The rhetoric around the idea of "the son of the soil" (Mwana Wevhu in Shona) was engaged by the guerrillas as they appealed to the native population to support the war. Songs that were couched within the African Zimbabwean world view were engaged to conscientise the masses to the reason for the war and to invite many to join the guerrilla forces or simply to educate the masses on the doctrine of the war, as well as to call them to support the cause of the war.

To link the Second Chimurenga with the first, key heroes and heroines of the First War of Liberation were invoked and such figures were brought back to the vivid memory of the African Zimbabwean. Such names include that of Sekuru Kaguvi and Mbuya Nehanda. Mbuya Nehanda in some quarters of Zimbabwe assumed the status of both a god and/or a prophetess. Myths were told that during her time of death she had declared that her bones were going to resurrect and continue the war of liberation and consequently regain the lost land. This also was made to include the bones of the other fallen heroes and heroines. For the guerrillas, they were the bones of the fallen heroes and heroines that had reincarnated so that the war could go on till the land was recovered. Palmer & Birch, cited by Gundani (2002:135), informs us that, "The war of liberation was essentially a struggle to regain the land that had been lost. The

natives looked forward to getting the land back once they had won their war of liberation.”

There are many important names that are associated with the Second War of Liberation in Zimbabwe and the native resistance movement. In this dissertation we shall only highlight the ones that are regarded as the key that ignited the war or the confrontation between the natives and their colonial masters.

Joshua Nkomo, who is understood as “father Zimbabwe,” was the key proponent of the liberation movement. Nkomo who had worked in South Africa and experienced the brutality of colonialism as well as the resistance to the colonial government is one key person in this confrontation. When the Zimbabwe African People’s Union (ZAPU) was formed in 1961, after the National Democratic Party was banned, Nkomo retained the presidency, while Rev Ndabaningi Sithole became National Chairperson (Sithole 1999:14). It was Nkomo who championed the confrontation between the settler government and the native resistance.

Joshua Nkomo is also known as the “son of the soil.” This is because, as we have noted in the previous chapter, the explanation or justification for the liberation war was the land. Though there are other issues that Zimbabwean historians would highlight, land remained the most important. Nkomo was understood as someone with extra-ordinary powers. He was nicknamed (Chibwe Chitedza) translated as “a stone that is slippery.” The implication was that Nkomo had extra-ordinary power that made it possible for him to evade the government authorities, so that he could not be arrested.

The resistance movement with Nkomo as the president denounced the discriminatory laws that gave preference to the whites in many issues. For example, the issue of elections, in which the native were not allowed to participate. The movement denounced the whole system of racial discrimination, and specially, discrimination in land distribution.

Later on, after its formation the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front which came into being in 1964 joined the conflict. At the independence of Mozambique, in 1975, the two parties separated. Zimbabwe African People’s Union

remained in Zambia, while ZANU-PF then headed by Robert Mugabe, relocated into Mozambique. This separation, according to ZANU-PF, was caused by the death of Herbert Chitepo, who was assassinated in Zambia.

On the contrary, some saw the separation as caused by tribal sentiments. ZANU-PF is a party that is made up of the Shona speaking tribes of Zimbabwe while ZAPU was popular among the Ndebele speaking tribe. For this reason according to this school of thought the two tribal grouping failed to work together. A further reason is that the two parties got their training which was different from each other from two different countries. The Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA), the military wing of ZAPU was trained by the Russians and the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA), the military wing of ZANU-PF was trained by the Chinese. The two were trained to execute two different war strategies; ZIPRA was trained in a form of guerrilla strategy that would operate from the towns. They were trained regular warfare, while ZANLA was trained in a guerrilla strategy that allowed them to operate from among the peasantry. Yet, there is another school of thought that argues that, the separation was caused by power struggle between the two parties. In such a situation they became a danger to each other and had to separate.

The two parties, headed by their two respective presidents, Nkomo for ZAPU and Mugabe for ZANU-PF, confronted the white government on the land that we call Zimbabwe. The reasons for this confrontation are many, but the central one of them all was regaining the land. For the two revolutionary parties freedom meant the regaining of the land. They continued to denounce the Acts that were used to grab land from the natives, which included the Land Apportionment Act of 1930 that introduced racial discrimination in land distribution, giving the best fertile and watered land to the settler community, and the poorer and dry land to the natives.

Their slogan denounced and advocated for death of the settler community. The idea of land as the inheritance from the fathers was invoked; names of the former heroes and heroines were invoked to demonstrate the link between the former confrontation and the then current confrontation. The song "Ndeya madzibaba edu nyika ino" translated as "the land belongs to our fathers," was sung during the war over the land in Zimbabwe. Another song that was popular with the war was "Zimbabwe ndeyeropa ramadzibaba," translated as "our fathers died for Zimbabwe."

The sustained Second War of Liberation, though had been some isolated attacks against the white government since 1966, started with the attack on Allen Farm on the 21<sup>st</sup> of December 1972. The attack on the farm is an indication that the war was about the land and was geared to regain the land. For the land that had been lost since 1890, the blacks again engaged extra-legal means to try to regain the land. In this case the barrel of the gun became the best option to force those who wielded the power to return the land to its rightful owners.

According to the doctrine of this war, land was to be distributed to African Zimbabweans as soon as the war was won. The political doctrine taught by the guerrillas made the land the tangible symbol of the war and consequently it became a symbol of freedom. For the African to regain the land was synonymous with gaining freedom. The guerrillas had promised the masses that land would be distributed to the native population as soon as the war came to an end; that all the farms that belonged to the whites were going to be redistributed to the native population, who according to the doctrine of the war were the original and real owners of the land.

With this understanding in their minds the Africans supported the war to its end. On the 18<sup>th</sup> of April the Second Chimurenga came to an end, and Zimbabwe was declared independent from British colonial rule. The Union Jack was lowered and the Zimbabwean flag was hoisted, indicating that another new dispensation, with Robert Mugabe as Prime Minister, had started in the political history of Zimbabwe. History has it that more than 30 000 people lost their lives in this war while 850 000 were displaced from their homes (Gundani 2002:137). The question to be asked in the next section is whether the Mugabe government would deliver the land to its owners? This will be considered in the next section of this dissertation.

## **2.5 The moment of independent Zimbabwe (1980 -1996/7)**

If scholars are right to maintain that the land issue was the key rationale to explain the need for the second war of liberation, then one would also be right to anticipate great and radical change in land distribution in Zimbabwe when the country attained its independence. Since the land had been made the tangible symbol of alienation and dispossession, its recovery implied the attainment of freedom to the Zimbabwean population. This anticipation also explains the support that the guerrillas got from the

African Zimbabwean. They expected to have their land with the dawn of the period of liberation. The lowering of the Union Jack and the hoisting of the Zimbabwean flag was understood by many as an indication that the land had, finally, been recovered as it symbolically suggested the end of the colonial rule and the advent of a new era in the country's history.

At this point we ask whether liberation really brought the land back to the African and whether the land was redistributed so as to eliminate the racial division of the land. The answer to this question is a No. The end of the Second Chimurenga was a disappointment for those who knew what the liberation package enshrined. Listen to what Gann & Henriksen, cited by Gundani (2002 137), say about the independence: "the liberation war was a "war of the flee" that tormented the settler government into surrender without (as yet) stinging it to death." This quotation suggests that there was nothing in the liberation package, it was hollow, and the land did not come with political liberation. The land that they were promised during the war was not redistributed at the end of the war.

### **2.5.1 The Lancaster House Constitution and the land issue in Zimbabwe**

At this point we ask, why was the land not redistributed, if the liberation war was waged so that the African could regain the lost land? What was the reason that could have justified the failure to deliver the land? In such a situation one is bound to find a scapegoat to lay the blame on. The scapegoat in this case became the Lancaster House Constitution. There are number of schools of thought concerning the Lancaster House Constitution and the land issue in Zimbabwe. The first school of thought is the one that blames this constitution for blocking the Mugabe government from conducting far-reaching land reform after independence in 1980 (Derman & Hellum 2007:164). According to this school of thought, it was and is the Lancaster House Constitution that should be held responsible for the Mugabe government's failure to redistribute the land. This school of thought is buttressed by the following quotation about the Lancaster House Constitution, "it essentially lulled the black people by granting them a hollow form of independence, but at the same time making them bonafide baby-sitters of their erstwhile oppressors (Gundani 2002:237).

For this school of thought the Mugabe government could not do anything as far as the land issue and land reform were concerned. For this school of thought it was the Lancaster House Constitution entrenched clause (section 16), that protected the white ownership of the land. Section 16 is a clause in the Lancaster House Constitution that ensured that private property was protected from confiscation by the government, and this included the land owned by white commercial farmers which was classified as private property.

For this school of thought, what the politicians could only do was to promise people that change will come someday. In support of the above school of thought, Verrier, cited by David (2003:175), wrote, “The constitution produced by the conference denies any fundamental change in the pattern of land ownership, except in terms which were clearly beyond Zimbabwe’s financial resources. Thus according to this school of thought the Lancaster House Constitution should be held responsible for the failure to deliver the land and of maintaining the status quo.

On the contrary, the second school of thought dismisses the above position as a myth created to discredit the Lancaster House Constitution. For this school of thought, what blocked the land reform and redistribution was not the Lancaster House Constitution, but the growing disinterest in the Mugabe government in small-scale agriculture. (Derman & Hellum 2007:164). This school of thought argues that there was no urgency in the Mugabe government in dealing with the land issue. Meredith (2002:17) in his book, *Robert Mugabe: power, plunder and tyranny in Zimbabwe*, maintains that Robert Mugabe’s real obsession was not wealth but power. Mugabe’s obsession with power is clearly demonstrated by his elimination of ZAPU.

According to this school of thought Mugabe rules through a vast system of patronage, favoring loyal aids, ZANU-PF card-holders and cronies with government contracts and even land. In agreement with Blair (2003:177), Meredith (2002:16) argues that the Mugabe government replaced white farmers with a black elite group. For most of the proponents of this view, land was not distributed to the poor and the landless, those who were moved to regions IV and V by the Land Apportionment Act of 1930 and the other laws, where the soil was poorer and where the rainfall was too low for agricultural production. Instead land was given to government supporters. These included Robert Mugabe’s spokesman, two cabinet ministers, provincial governors

and retired army generals as well as the top brass of the army, the police, the prisons and the Central Intelligent Agents. For example, land was given to Air Marshal Perence Shiri, commander of the Air Force and former commander of the fifth brigade, who ensured the demise of ZAPU to secure Mugabe in power under the one-party-state notion (Blair 2003:171). Thus Blair (2003:177) argues, “Until 1987 Mugabe’s obsession was securing the grip of power by crushing ZAPU and imposing one-party-state.” In such a context, proponents of this view concur that in no way could the land issue have received serious attention from the Mugabe government in post-colonial Zimbabwe. According to this school of thought, when the scapegoat, the Lancaster House Constitution and the dreaded section 16, expired in 1990, the Mugabe government’s urgency with the land issue, land reform and redistribution could not be noticed. This school of thought maintains that the date came and passed and for the Mugabe government it was business as usual and not business unusual. For this school of thought, for the Mugabe government to remain silent and to lose its focus raises questions about the government’s commitment to lasting land reform and redistribution (Gundani 2002:141).

Regardless of the weaknesses that we have seen in the Mugabe government’s dealing with the land, we should acknowledge that, after inheriting a racially divided land tenure system, Mugabe managed to resettle 55 000 families on 2.7 hectares of land which was abandoned due to the intensity of the war (Bakare 2993:55; Gundani 2002:140). What this means is that the Mugabe government distributed 2.7 hectares of land among 55 000 families.

The Mugabe government was pervaded by corruption. Due to the system of patronage he did not imprison the culprits because his rule depended on it. He allowed his cronies to acquire and amass land without redistributing land to the poor and the landless. The land redistribution programme with support from Britain and America was bound to fail and it did fail. When the Mugabe government could not adequately account for the money it had received from Britain, the British government stopped funding the land redistribution programme. Another reason for the stoppage was the Zimbabwe government’s involvement in the war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Still there is a school of thought that upholds that the stoppage was caused by the change of government in Britain that is from the Conservative government of

Margret Thatcher to Tony Blair 's Labour government. From 1991 to 1996 no funding came from Britain and the land reform programme was hamstrung (Gundani 2002:142).

### **2.5.2 The Land Acquisition Bill of 1991 and the land issue**

This Bill came as a result of the amendment of section 16 of the Lancaster House Constitution. The Mugabe government had hoped that when this Bill became law it would allow the government to acquire land for resettlement without compensation for the land but only for the developments made on the farm. This implied that the Mugabe government would not buy the land on which the farm was located. In addition, this Bill provided very limited rights of appeal to the courts of law by the farm owner (Palmer & Birch 1992:25). The Bill created a crisis in the farming community (Gundani 2002:142). The farmers protested and this protest rippled through the banking, the judicial and the financial sectors which were white dominated. The commercial farmers, according to scholars, lobbied the British government to withhold the funding for resettlement programme, which then lobbied the international donor community (Gundani 2002:142).

In spite of all the complaints, in March 1992 the Bill became law, which became known as the Land Acquisition Law of 1992. Gundani (2002:142) writes that this was accompanied by jubilation, Chimurenga rhetoric and songs. Mugabe is noted to have said the following that, "Must we stay as squatters in the land of our birth?" The song "Zimbabwe ndeyeropa ramadzibaba," which when translated means "the blood of our fathers was spilt for Zimbabwe," was sung. This created arguments between the Mugabe government on one side, and the farmers and the British government on the other. This is because, according to this law, it was the British government that was expected to pay compensation for the land that the Mugabe government had earmarked for redistribution.

Between 1991 and 1996 no funding came from Britain (Gundani 2002:142). During this time the Mugabe government went on a mission to scout for land so that it could start the second phase of the resettlement programme. Within this space of time an accelerated National Land Reform Programme was mooted. A National Land Acquisition Committee was formed and was tasked to identify land for resettlement

(Gundani 2002:143). We are told that this committee identified 1772 farms which constituted 4.6 million hectares. In this same period, negotiations with John Major's government were reopened. In response to the negotiations, the British government sent an Overseas Development Assistance Mission to Zimbabwe. Their mandate was to make an evaluation of the first ten years of the resettlement programme. According to the findings of the mission, the first ten years of the resettlement programme demonstrated that the programme had progressed without problems. It then made recommendations for the way forward.

However, there was a change of government in Britain; the government of Tony Blair came into power, before the next funding could be disbursed to Zimbabwe (Gundani 2002:143). It is reported that on the 5<sup>th</sup> of November 1997, the British minister responsible for Overseas Development Assistance, Clare Short, wrote the following to Kumbirai Kangai, the then Zimbabwean minister of Lands and Agriculture: "I should make it clear that we do not accept that Britain has a special responsibility to meet the costs of land purchase in Zimbabwe. We are a new government from diverse backgrounds without links with former colonial interests" (Gundani 2002:143).

This was interpreted by the Mugabe government as abdication of colonial responsibility. This position left the Mugabe government without funds to carry out the Land Reform Programme. Though they had no money, they were prepared to go ahead with the resettlement programme. On November the 28<sup>th</sup>, 1997, the Mugabe government gave out a notice to compulsorily acquire 1471 farms. There ensued court cases between the farmers whose farms were gazetted and the Mugabe government. However, this did not yield any results because the court processes were too long and time consuming. Therefore, till the international donor conference on the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> of September 1998, there was no significant resettlement that had taken place (Gundani 2002:143).

## **2.6 Current land struggles in Zimbabwe (1997/8 - to present day)**

### **2.6.1 The international donor Conference (September 9-11, 1998)**

This was a Conference convened by the Mugabe government, as a form of public relations act, aimed at informing the donor community and mobilizing their support for the land reform and resettlement programme. The Conference made recommendations, but no serious financial commitments were made. In short the conference was a fiasco. It did not yield the much needed outcome (Gundani 2002:144).

### **2.6.2 The abortive constitutional reform (1999-2000)**

The failure of the donor conference was the inspiration and impetus to launch a constitutional referendum. This was because the Mugabe government, which had failed to procure support from the donor community, needed something which could assist it in procuring the land without international donor support. Thus a plan was hatched to have the constitution reformed. The Mugabe government wanted a constitutional framework that would give it a clear mandate to secure the land. They were in positions and possession of power and in 1999 the referendum was launched. As if the gods were against Robert Mugabe's government, a majority of 52% rejected the proposed constitution (Gundani 2002: 145).

Many views were advanced to explain the failure of the constitutional referendum. One view says that less time was invested in preparation and in educating the constituency about what the referendum meant. Another view holds that the referendum failed due to voter apathy. Still another view has it that the failure was an indication that the ZANU-PF government had lost touch with its constituencies. That is, the popularity of the ZANU-PF was waning away and people were fed up with it and its elections. Some thought that the failure was caused by the whites, who being desperate for a "NO" vote, had come out to vote and even transported their farm workers to polling stations. Others blamed the Movement for Democratic Change, the National Constitutional Association, and still others blamed Tony Blair and his government. The proposed constitution failed. The clear mandate which the Mugabe government needed could not be procured. As a result of the refusal by the British

government to fund the project of land reform, the failure of the September 9-11, 1998 donor conference and the abortive constitutional referendum as well as presence of the new opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change, the land issue in Zimbabwe assumed another complexion.

### **2.6.3 Third Chimurenga and the land issue (2000 and beyond)**

It is now a historical fact that the land issue took another twist. In February 2000 the black Zimbabwean resorted yet again to extra-legal means, possibly with state support or sympathy or both (Gundani 2002:122). The war veterans, the rural poor, urban residents, elites from the ranks of ZANU-PF, the military as well as the Central Intelligent Agents invaded the white commercial farms to reclaim the lost land (Gundani 2002: 122; Alexander 2006:191). While some scholars think that this was a spontaneous response by the land-hungry, others are of the opinion that it was orchestrated by the government in its endeavor to procure the land (Alexander 2006:194). While it seems like this time the century old goal has been achieved, the methodology of the land acquisition and redistribution has put the Mugabe government under both the national and international spotlight. This has also plunged Zimbabwe into a critical and desperate political as well as economic crisis. That the Mugabe government did not intervene, either to stop the invasions or to protect the farmers and farm workers from their attackers suggests that this was a deliberate ZANU-PF strategy as it struggled to get the land or to remain in power.

Why did the Mugabe government decide to follow this form of land reform, considering the havoc and the negative effects this would have in the country? Derman & Hellum (2007:177) provide the following six possible answers to this puzzle:

- 1) To remove voters from the farms, that is farm workers and the farm owners. This was because the farmers and farm workers were blamed for the failure of the constitutional reform, and the farmers were also regarded as responsible for the failure of the donor conference. According to such thinking the two groups had to be punished.

2) To remove farmer owners who were viewed as the financial base for the Movement for Democratic Change. From its inception, the Movement for Democratic Change had been seen by the Mugabe Government as a political party that is sponsored by the white farmers. Whether this was only propaganda which the Mugabe government thought it could use to discredit MDC, we do not know, but it was one of the reasons why the white farms were invaded, probably to disturb the MDC financial base, if we subscribe to the thinking that farmers were the financiers of the opposition.

3) To introduce a renewal of the ideology of socialism and the return of the land to its rightful owners. It appears that ZANU-PF, under pressure from the opposition, had to use land in an endeavor to capture the people's support. For this reason it grabbed land from those who were seen as opposition supporters to give to its supporters. This is closely related to the next reason.

4) To use the appropriated property as incentives to party followers at a huge loss to MDC supporters. It used land that it had appropriated from those who were seen as supporters as grants to those who supported their cause. In this way those who were seen as opposition supporters incurred huge losses. In this way ZANU-PF was buying back the lost constituency.

5) To reinvigorate ZANU-PF, which due to the failure of the referendum, was considered as losing its original popularity. Proponents of this position uphold that it was the waning popularity of ZANU-PF and not the land issue that created the land invasions. According to them, the invasions should not be understood as an effort by the Mugabe government to redistribute land but to rejuvenate ZANU-PF, which because of the failure of the referendum was considered as losing its constituency.

6) To create a new caliber of revolutionary followers. Proponents of this argument are of the opinion that the real war veterans are old and many have died. To create a young class of supporters, who could replace the war veterans the Mugabe government used the land invasions. During the land invasions, the youth were gathered in camps where they were inculcated with ZANU-PF propaganda and some training.

To sum up, in my own view the Third Chimurenga had nothing to do with the land issue, land reform or land redistribution, but was tailored to destroy those that were considered as the supporters and financiers of the MDC. This brings to mind the liquidation of ZAPU in the early days of the independence. The implication here is that ZANU-PF does not want an opposition party that competes with it in the politics of governance in the country. It appears that in the mindset of the Mugabe government, there still lingers the ideology of one-party-state. It was also targeted at resuscitating the waning popularity of ZANU-PF.

The above analysis demonstrates in clear terms that those who did not support the cause of ZANU-PF could not benefit from the Mugabe government. In some cases the war veterans who had different views on the way things were going did not benefit and they even lost their former benefits. The expropriation of the land was extended to the blacks who were regarded as supporters of the whites and the MDC. So, the term white assumed another meaning, that is, it came to define everybody, both black and white, that were viewed as pro-MDC and against the cause of the Mugabe government.

The Mugabe government has to this date pushed most of the white farmers from the always contested prime and best-watered-land in the country. This has been achieved by the use of violence. The Mugabe government has distributed this land to its party-card holders. At this point we can only wonder whether what has taken place in Zimbabwe has resolved the problems associated with the land issue that is land reform and/or land redistribution.

In conclusion, the land issue which is characterized by a history of violence, alienation, expropriation and appropriation as well as the abuse of power and injustice seems to continue without being addressed and redressed. As previous governments have done, land continues to be used for the benefit of those in both the positions and possession of power and not the poor peasants.

## **Chapter Three**

### **A socio-historical study of 1Kings 21:1-29**

#### **3.1 The significant of the land in Ancient Israel**

##### **3.1.0 Introduction**

Under this heading I will discuss Ancient Israel's understanding of land focusing on both the pre-monarchic and monarchic periods. Put differently this section investigates how Ancient Israel understood land, that is how important was land or what value did Ancient Israel attach to land? The rationale for this investigation is to locate in context and understand why Naboth the Jezreelite would not easily succumb to King Ahab's demand for his family land.

##### **3.1.1 The significance of land**

Though, there are problems associated with the Promised Land motif, the desert traditions, the conquest and fulfillment traditions as well as the Davidic traditions, which some Old Testament scholars have taken as not agricultural and hence no link to land, Ancient Israel's understanding and characterization of land is informed, influenced and greatly shaped by these traditions (Wright 1990:4; Brueggemann 1987:41). Since the problems associated with the above traditions are important for this dissertation I will give attention to shortly.

According to Wittenberg (1991:58), one of the fundamentals of life in Ancient Israel community was land. This was because the vast majority of the people of Israel were agriculturists and thus lived off the land. Land was the source of all wealth and the basis of livelihood. For Ancient Israel, crops, herds and habitations could be destroyed by drought, war or any other calamity but land would remain and recover. In other words, Israel understood land as that entity that would remain or survive any calamity. For Israel land was their identity. Israel, according to the liberation and conquest motif, was identified as slaves and had no land which they could identify with. They were called slaves, but when Israel got land her status changed. Land for Israel had to do with their social, their economic, their political, their cultural, their religious and their spiritual dimensions of life. It was on the land, where they got their

food, their status, and it was the land that defined Ancient Israel. Land was the inheritance of the fathers.

No one in Ancient Israel owned the land; land belonged to Yahweh who gave it to Israel as a gift. Land was for those in the past, the present as well as for those in the future. Land in this understanding belonged to forefathers, to those in the present as well as to the coming generations. Wittenberg (1991:6) argues that in many texts in the Old Testament this land is called the inheritance of the fathers. It was that property that was handed down from generation to generation as symbolized by the family tomb. According to this tradition land which was given by Yahweh was inalienable. It could not be sold or given up. Land could only be held in the form of patrimony which could not pass out of the family. It was protected by legislation and theologically justified as well as sanctioned (Wright 1990:56). Therefore the dispossession of one's family land was considered as a terrible calamity (Wright 1990). The dispossession created dislocations and disturbances in all the sectors of Ancient Israel life.

Following the exodus, the wilderness, the Promised Land and the conquest traditions, Ancient Israel, through a liberation motif, was given land by Yahweh, who owned the land. The land that was given to Israel was the same land that was promised to their patriarchal ancestor Abraham. This Promised Land motif was fulfilled in the exodus and conquest of Canaan. Brueggemann (1987:47) argues that this land was Yahweh's gift to Israel. While the text holds that Israel was given land by Yahweh, their God, sociological analysis has demonstrated that Ancient Israel got land through uprisings that were conducted against their oppressors and the system that enslaved them. In their understanding, Israel introduced Yahweh as an ideological religious system that legitimated the new socio-economic and political order that they had created through the revolutionary uprisings.

According to West (1999), Gottwald (1985) and Pixley (1991) Israel, that is understood to have emerged as social formation through the successful resistance of various groups against Canaanite city-states, acquired her land through a social revolution of the peasantry. The socio-economic system that sustained the city-states was a tributary mode of production, depended almost entirely on the rural peasant communities (West 1999:14; Gottwald 1985:273; Pixley 1991:239). The Canaanite

kings and the ruling elites, who lived in the cities, extracted taxation, forced labour and military service from peasant farmers and herders (West 1999:14). Gottwald (1985:273) concurs with West (1999:14), when he says, that “A large percentage of communal production, energy and resources went into warfare and the luxuried life of the ruling class.”

In response to this exploitation various Canaanite communities engaged in struggles against the city-states systems in different ways. The peasants resisted surrendering their produce and labour. In some cases, hoping that a new system may bring change, or modify the oppressive systems, the peasants supported invading armies or joined a rebel faction in hope for change. Other communities withdrew to the mountains where they were less exposed to state exploitation. Yet others formed alliances with forces opposing these oppressive systems (West 1999:14; Gottwald 1985:273). According to the above, Israel was therefore, constituted by an ethnically and socio-economically mixed coalition, made up of a majority of tribally organized peasants, together with the pastoral nomads, mercenaries, assorted craftsmen and renegade priests (West 1999:15) as compared to hierarchical tribute imposing structures of Egyptian dominated Canaan.

From this perspective Israel, therefore, acquired her land through a revolution against the oppressive system and structures that exploited the peasants. In an endeavour to introduce change, to extend aid and to absorb newcomers, this new community introduced an egalitarian socio-economic system, in which the entire populace was assured of access to resources, land included. In this system land was held perpetually within the extended families. Within this state of affairs parameters were made to assure that the widow, the orphan and the stranger were taken care of.

In addition, Gottwald (1985:174) argues that the religion of Yahweh became the socio-religious ideology and organizational framework that won over the rebellious elements and helped to produce an effective revolutionary movement that expelled the city-states socio-economic structures. In this way Israel undermined the city-states religio-political propaganda with a superior egalitarian Yahwist propaganda. In this revolution Israel saw Yahweh, their God as supporting their cause and when they possessed the land they understood it as a gift from Yahweh.

Whether Ancient Israel acquired her land by divine conquest, immigration or revolution or a combination of these, Ancient Israel understood land as owned by Yahweh (Wright 1990:4; Flensy 1991:3) This is spelt out clearly: “The land shall not be sold in perpetuity (NIV permanently) for the land is mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with me” (Leviticus 25:23-24). At the back of this view is the idea that Ancient Israel did not own the land, it belonged to Yahweh who gave it to Ancient Israel as a trust, through the process of revolutionary uprisings that were conducted by tribal components of Ancient Israel. This fits well with the notion that Ancient Israel was the chosen people (Nurnberger 1992:3). If it is true that Israel was a chosen people, then Yahweh who chose Israel and set her apart gave her land on which to establish herself as a nation. This land was given to everyone, to the nation, to the tribe, to the clan, and to the family. In this state of affairs everyone in Ancient Israel had access to land. Wittenberg (1991:59) upholds that after the settlement period the whole of Ancient Israel had equal access to land. Ancient Israel was at the same level, no one owned land in excess while others had no land. In other words no one was poor; they all had the basis of livelihood.

Traditional tribal customs, norms and values were developed to ensure that land stayed with the specific tribe and family. The tribal ownership of land was protected by Yahweh who gave out commandments that governed Ancient Israel, for example the tenth commandment: “You shall not covet the neighbor’s house (Exodus 20; Deut.5). This commandment, according to Wittenberg (1991:58) “...does not only mean the physical building, but it equally, refers to the land on which the house is situated.” This is only one of the many laws that were put in place to secure the land from possible land expropriation.

Let us consider another piece of legislation that was put in place to make sure that land remains within the control of Ancient Israel. This one concerns the daughters of Zelophehad (Numbers 27:1-11; 36: 1-12). This law specifies that in the case of a situation where daughters inherit (in the case of the absence of sons) they may only marry within the kin group of their father (Wright 1990:123). In this way tribal land would not be diminished. The land would stay within the tribe as dictated by the laws and commandments of Yahweh.

In addition, the concept of the Jubilee year buttresses the inalienability of the land (Brueggemann 1987:46). The Jubilee Year consists of the returning of land to the rightful owners after period of fifty years (Brueggemann1987:61). This tradition was meant to make sure that Ancient Israel would restart again at the same level. It also discouraged the possibility of some people going without land while others amass land.

The laws and the legislation demonstrate that Yahweh was the sole owner of the land and Israel was only holding land as custodians on behalf of Yahweh. This was confirmed by assigning land to Israel through the use of the lot. This was a device, like a dice that was cast or toast on the ground and specialized elders would interpret or deduce the meaning, depending on how the device lay on the ground. Von Rad cited, by Flensy (1991:3), argues that distributing land through the use of the lot was a confession that Yahweh was the owner of the land, and it was via the lot that Yahweh determined and communicated which land was to be allocated to which tribe.

To demonstrate the inalienability of the land, let us consider the customs that dealt with the boundaries as spelt out by the torah and wisdom literature. These customs were meant to maintain and to keep the boundaries in check. The boundaries were regarded as the fundamental anchor of social fibre (Brueggemann 1987:47). According to (Deut. 19:14), “In the inheritance which you will hold in the land that the Lord your God gives you to possess, you shall not remove your neighbour’s land mark, which the men of the old have set.” In the same vein the wisdom literature has the following to say, “Remove not the ancient land marks which your fathers have set” (Prov. 22:28-29). Prov.23:10-11 concurs, “Do not remove an ancient land mark nor enter the fields of the fatherless; for their redeemer is strong; he will plead their cause against you.”

The basic reason why landmarks could not be moved is that they enacted and asserted social relations that included inalienable guaranteed rights of the weak in the face of the rich and the economically powerful (Brueggemann1987:57), for example the weak like Naboth against the powerful like Ahab. What lies at the back of the above is the idea that no one was allowed to seize land from the other, not even kings.

According to Farisani & Farisani (2004:391), “the inherited land was inalienable according to Israel law, which differed from Canaanite laws (Gen 23; 2Sam 24; 1Kings 16:24), the owner could not dispose of it as he wished.” He could not even sell it (1Kings 21; Deut27:17) because it was not his /her. It belonged to Yahweh in the first instance, to those of the old, the fathers and to the future generation.

Another type of the tribal custom put in place to prevent land from moving out of the tribe was the levirate marriage. This was meant to prevent the property of the deceased brother from passing out of the family. Deuteronomy 25:5-6 has this to say regarding the above,

If the brothers dwell together and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the dead shall not be married outside the family to a stranger; her husband’s brother shall go in to her, and take her as his wife, and perform the duty of a husband to her. And the first son whom she bears shall succeed to the name of his father who is dead, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel.

A further example of the levirate marriage was that of Boaz and the widow of Mahlon in which Boaz intended to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance.

Also Ruth the Moabite, the widow of Mahlon, I have bought to be my wife, to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brethren and from the gate of his native place; you are witnesses to this day (Ruth 4:10).

The Levirate marriages are part of the customs that were made and decreed so that the land would not pass out of a specific tribe. This demonstrates that land was highly regarded in ancient Israel. It was supposed to be protected from the tendency to want to monopolise and amass it. Land was to remain with its original tribe and consequently land neither could pass out of the nation of Ancient Israel.

The laws and the legislations that governed land tenure in Ancient Israel applied to everybody. In this case the kings were not regarded as immune or above these laws. According to (Deut 17:14-20), the king who was appointed by the people was part of the people and could not allow his heart to be above his people. The laws were made to curb the possible excesses of the monarchy.

However, things were not as smooth as entailed in the ideal; the advent of the monarchy introduced many changes to the land tenure system of Ancient Israel. During the time of David and Solomon, a tributary socio-economic system came into being (West 1999:16). According to this system, taxation in the form of grain was paid to the king who was understood as a god who gives life to his people. In some cases those who failed to pay these dues lost their land to state. The introduction of the concept of the specialized crop production within a particular region, which was needed to maximize production of that particular crop created a departure from the egalitarian system that was associated with clans and tribal groupings. Much of the land was taken over by the state from the peasants, which used forced labour to ensure maximum production in these specialized fields.

The advent of the private ownership of land created a situation where more and more land ended up in the hands of a powerful minority population. With the problem of the debts incurred due to the process of empire building the kings of Israel and Judah paid off that debt using land that was either conquered or confiscated from their subjects (Chaney1993:255). According to Chaney (1993:259) and West (1999:16), the advent of the monarchy introduced land alienation in Israel and Judah, creating poverty among the subjects. Hopkins cited by Chaney (1993:259) has this to say about land alienation: “the alienation of land, usually most productive, decreases the farming household’s ability to control a variety of ecological niches and pushes the family, which must somehow provide for its subsistence, onto poorer and poorer lands.”

In conclusion, from the above we can now understand how Ancient Israel understood land. That is land belonged to Yahweh who gave it as a gift to Israel. This land was understood as inheritance of the fathers. It belonged to those in the past, the present and the next generations. The customs, laws and the legislations show that this land was inalienable, it could only be owned through inheritance. From these laws we noted

that the kings were not immune to the laws and all traditions that governed the land tenure in Ancient Israel. On the other hand, this section has demonstrated that the advent of the monarchy introduced a paradigm shift from an egalitarian land tenure system to a system where land could be monopolized by fewer economically powerful people and the State.

## **3.2 The advent of the divided monarchy**

### **3.2.0 Introduction**

In order to locate King Ahab and Jezebel in their context and setting of the narrative, it is a necessity that we give a general overview of the Israelites kings. The history of Israelite kings was initiated by the advent of Saul who became the first king over Israel. Saul, David and Solomon ruled over what Old Testament scholars call the united monarchy.

### **3.2.1 The divided monarchy**

Bright (1981:229), Gottwald 1985, 342) and Rogerson (1999: 93) concur on the idea that, the death of Solomon 922 BC ushered in a new dispensation in the history of Israel. The United Kingdom that was established by David divided into two, a kingdom formed by northern tribes (called Israel) and a kingdom formed by southern tribes (called Judah) (West (1999:16). Gottwald (1985: 342) and West (1999:16) agree, that immediate causes of the demise of the United Kingdom were the oppressive economic and political policies that were followed by Solomon, some of which he inherited from his father David (1Kings 12) . According to Soggin, cited by Marie (2004:31), from the death of Solomon, which took place in about 922 BC, Israel and Judah now exist as two separate entities and this state of affairs lasted till the end of the Northern Kingdom in 722 BC. From now on when I speak of “Israel” I will be referring to the Northern Kingdom that took the name “Israel” as its identity, except otherwise explained.

The Southern Kingdom, which took the name Judah confirmed Rehoboam, son of Solomon as King, and Israel chose the rebel leader, Jeroboam I as their King. According to De Vaux, the two kingdoms followed different notions of a state. In

Israel the charismatic aspect that was popular during the period of Saul was revived. This was principle of divine designation and popular acclamation. According to this principle their rulers were nominated by prophets, speaking in the name of Yahweh (1Kings 2:31, 37) and then the people would give their acknowledgement and acceptance of the king. This is what was done to Jeroboam I (1 Kings 12:20) and also Jehu (1 Kings 19:16) who eliminated the house of Ahab. In the Northern Kingdom Yahweh made and unmade Kings (1Kings 2:20). On the contrary, in Judah the dynastic principle which was started by David continued. In this region the King came from among the sons of the king (Marie 2004:32).

The figure below is an extract from an illustration by Gardner et.al, which shows what the divided monarchy looked like (1981:110).

## **United Kingdom**

Saul (the first king of the United Monarchy)

David (c. 1000-961)

Solomon (c. 961-922)

## **Division of United Monarchy**

### **JUDAH**

Rehoboam (922-915)

Abijam (915-913)

Asa (913-873)

Jehoshaphat (873-849)

Jehoram (849-842) m Athaliah

Queen of Judah (842-837)

### **ISRAEL**

Jeroboam I (922-901)

Nadab (901-900)\*

Baasha (900-877)

Elah (877-876)\*

Zimri (876)\*\*

**Omri (876-869)**

**Ahab (869-850)**

Ahaziah (850-849)

Jehoram (849-842)\*

From the figure above, Ahab was located within the period stretching from 869 to 850 BC. This is a period that was preceded by the period of the reign of his father Omri. Ahab followed the concept of dynasty which was not popular in Israel. He completed the programmes initiated by the father, Omri. Ahab followed and implemented the policies of his father. These were his father's domestic and foreign policies. Now let us look at the dynasty of Omri, Ahab's father and predecessor.

### **3.2.2 The dynasty of Omri**

As we have noted above, Omri was the father of Ahab. Bright (1981:239), Flanders, Jr. et.al. (1988:277) Rogerson (1999: 101) and Gottwald (1987:344) are in agreement that Omri, an army commander, came to power through a military coup. This was a coup against Zimri, who under pressure committed suicide after only a week on the throne. Omri's coup came after a number of assassinations. Gardner (1981:110) writes that, Jeroboam's son, Nadab was assassinated by Baash whose own son Elah was later assassinated by Zimri. The civil war in Israel that succeeded the assassination ended with the victory of Omri, general of the armed forces (Bright 1981:239). Omri was the one who gave the Kingdom of Israel direction through internal consolidation, foreign conquest and alliances which he signed with foreign Kingdoms (Rogerson 1999:101; Flanders Jr. 1988: 277; Gottwald 1987:344).

Omri's origins are not clear. Some scholars argue that he was a professional soldier, possibly of Canaanite origin, while others saw Omri as an Israelite (Gottwald 1987:344). Regardless of the above debate he is listed as the Israelite King who established a centralized monarchy in the fashion of the "Davidic-Solomonic" monarchy. It was Omri who was responsible for the construction of Samaria, which was strategically located. Its strong fortification is said to have withstood attacks from well-equipped armies (Bruce 1967:32).

Within the scope of his foreign policy, Omri re-established Solomon's policy of alliances with foreign nations which were sealed with marriages. For example, the alliance with Phoenicia, that culminated in the marriage of his son Ahab to Jezebel, the daughter of the priest-king Ethbaal (Flanders, Jr. 1988:278). Although this alliance brought about undesired results in the religious and social history of Israel, it benefited Israel in the political and economic sectors. It brought about expanded trade

which ushered in a considerable degree of wealth into Israel. However, Chaney (1993:15) argues that a considerable degree of wealth never benefited the peasant, whose economic conditions countrywide never improved, but if anything became worse as the empire expanded. It was also Omri who advocated and initiated the cooperative development with Judah, which was later sealed with the marriage between Athaliah, Ahab's daughter to Jehoram king of Judah.

Omri was a king who was regarded as politically competent, but a religious fiasco. This is because his foreign policy, which was sealed in marriages, created a conflict between Baal worship and Yahwism. His alliances with foreign nations introduced Baal worship in Israel. His military successes are recorded in the inscription of Mesha King of Moab. This inscription states that Omri humbled Moab for many years, whose king was forced to pay tax annually to the king of Israel (Bright 1981:241).

In conclusion, this section sheds light on who Omri was. That he was the king of Israel who came to power through a coup, that Omri's origins were not clear. We have also noted that he was the general of the armed forces who disregarded and ignored the idea of divine designation and popular acclamation. It was Omri who located the capital Samaria on a strategic position both politically and economically. It was Omri who established alliances with foreign nations and came to some understanding with Judah. After demonstrating who Omri was, we have to show who Ahab was because he is the core character in this dissertation.

### **3.2.3 King Ahab (869-850BC)**

Old Testament scholars agree that Ahab was the son of Omri who was the founder of the Omride dynasty in Israel. Flanders, Jr. (1988:280) and Rogerson (1999:105) both agree that Ahab was another king who received negative evaluation from the Deuteronomist historian. According to Deuteronomist historian, it was Ahab, who through his marriage to Jezebel introduced Baal worship in Israel. For this reason, Ahab is seen as a king, who caused Israel to sin. This blame is explained in two ways.

The first explanation is that which is associated with his marriage. Ahab was the Israelite king who married Jezebel the princess of the priest-king of Phoenicia who was the missionary for Baal worship. The second reason was that he went ahead and

built the temple of Baal in Samaria the capital of Israel. Due to these two reasons he was described as an able political leader but a disaster in religious matters. It was during his time that the building and the fortifications at Samaria were completed. Some scholars uphold that it was Ahab who was responsible for the construction of Megiddo and Transjordan (Flanders, Jr. 1988:280). If it is true that Ahab completed the buildings and fortifications as well as construction of Megiddo and Transjordan, then we can argue that Ahab exploited his subjects. He would have used taxation and forced labour to achieve his goals.

Ahab also continued the foreign policy of his father. He continued the alliances with foreign nations that were initiated by his father. He entered into treaties with both Judah and Syria. Ahab is also recorded as one of the able military commanders whose military successes are remarkable. He is listed as one who defeated Behadad of Syria and as the one who contributed a major force of ten thousand foot soldiers and two thousand chariots in a coalition against Shalmaneser of Assyria at Karkar (Flanders, Jr. 1988:281). This fits well with the idea that many men left their villages and families to serve in the king's army, which exposed many women to widowhood, through the death of their husbands.

However, regardless of all the above political achievements, Ahab is dismissed by the Bible in only six verses as the most evil king following in the foot steps of Jeroboam 1 (1 Kings 16:30). This was due to the religious failures that are listed against his name. He is the one who allowed the Baal worship to flourish in Israel and it was during his reign that the prophets of Yahweh and their religion were put under attack as Jezebel conducted her mission work in the name of Baal.

The third thing that made Ahab unpopular with the Deuteronomist historian is that the land ideology of Israel which has its roots within the liberation and conquest motifs came under attack. Ahab continued the land ideology that had its initial stages within the united monarchy of David and Solomon, which dismissed the inalienability nature of the land (West 1999: 16; Dreher (1997:25). Land that was understood as a gift, a trust or inheritance of the fathers, was regarded as tradable. This is clear in Ahab's own words when he demanded that he could pay for Naboth's vineyard (Brueggemann 1987:46). In this way nobody's land was secure and the assurance of land security was under a challenge.

The land then could be monopolized. The powerful could do whatever they deemed necessary with the poor and the weak. In such a situation some were reduced to poverty, dependence and others to death (1 Kings 21) (Brueggemann 1987:47). The concept and tradition of the God who owns the land and gives is clouded. The imperial system of land known in Egypt and Canaanite city-state, which was followed by David and Solomon, challenged the egalitarian land tenure system in Israel. The concept of the absolute power of the King was taking shape in Israel. Jezebel, Ahab's wife enquires of him whether he was not King over Israel, suggesting that he had absolute power and nothing could be withheld from him whatsoever.

In conclusion, the reign of Ahab, through its tributary socio-economic policies, continued to alienate and to dispossess the peasants off their land as the reign of David and Solomon had done. During Ahab's reign there was a further shift away from the egalitarian land ideology that ensured almost equal access to resources, especially land among the Israelites to a tributary socio-economy in which the privileges of the ruling class were given first preference.

### **3.2.4 The confrontation between Elijah and Ahab**

The conflict between Elijah and Ahab presents two views on the understanding of land in Israel. Naboth represents the traditional covenantal view which upholds that land could not be disposed of easily. For Naboth land was the inheritance of the fathers. It was held in trust from generation to generation, beginning in a gift from Yahweh and continuing so, and land management was concerned with preservation and the enhancement of the gift for the benefit of the coming generations (Brueggemann 1977: 93).

On the contrary, for Ahab and Jezebel everything could be bought, sold, traded, conquered and seized. According to Naboth, he is only responsible for the land, but he is not in total control over it. Though it is true that Naboth had some control over land, he was aware that he could not do whatever he wanted with the land, for example disposing it off. The land did not belong to him but he belonged to the land (Brueggemann 1977: 93). Naboth understands himself as in a covenantal relationship with the land which did not begin with him and could not end with him. The word inheritance for him suggests that the land be understood in the dimension of family

history. The basis of this understanding is that the ancestral property should be viewed as a divine trust (Leviticus 25: 23-24) (Walsh 1996:203). In Naboth's mind the King who was an Israelite was subject to historical and covenantal land laws.

Cronauer (2005:121) and Grar (1970: 439) are in agreement with Brueggemann (1977) that Yahweh and not Naboth was the owner of the land. It was therefore not Naboth's duty or prerogative to sell that land or to part with the land. Israel religious principles and laws forbade the sale of family inheritance (Leviticus 25:23-28; Numbers 36:7ff). According to Von Rand, as cited by Cronauer (2005:75), Naboth's refusal to give away his family inheritance was a demonstration against the socio-economic system that gave first preference to the rights and privileges of the King above the privileges of the subjects. In short, Naboth was resisting the tributary socio-economic order that had created classes among the Israelite society. According to von Rad these were characteristics of Canaanite city-state and foreign to ancient Israel society, which was regarded as more egalitarian. In other words, Naboth refused to allow both foreign and internal pressures to influence and dictate life in the land of Israel. This was some form of resistance to the multiple ways that were used by the monarchy to expropriate land from the peasants.

However, this understanding of land that characterized Israel could not save Naboth from death. King Ahab found an alliance that ensured the elimination of Naboth and sadly the vineyard was lost through death and dispossession. Naboth could not have been the only one who suffered such fate at the hands of the Kings, but he could be a type or representative of many people who lost their lands to corrupt and cruel autocracy. In this regard Brueggemann (1977: 11) has this to say,

The very land that promised to create space for human joy and freedom became the very source of dehumanizing, exploitation, oppression and murder. Thus land was indeed a problem in Israel. The land promised became the land of problems; the very land that promised to contain the source of life drove Kings to be agents of death.

The Ahab and Jezebel religious and socio-economic and political policies met resistances from hard core Yahwists. Bright (1981:246) argues that loyal Yahwists

protested against Baal worship and economic policies that went against the religious and economic culture of Israel. This protest culminated in what Old Testament scholars have called the confrontation between Ahab and Elijah the prophet.

For Farisani (2005:51) this conflict is not only between two individuals, but it is a struggle between two different ideologies, that is, Yahwism and Baalism. These two names represent two different social systems in which one could belong. As noted above, the Yahweh social system maintained and upheld the values, norms and customs that were characteristic of the pre-monarchic Israel. In such a society Yahweh was understood as the owner and the giver of land (Farisani 2005:52).

On the other hand, Surgirtharajah (2001:255) is of the opinion that this confrontation, which constitutes Ahab, the Israelite king and Jezebel, his Canaanite queen against Elijah, the Israelite prophet, and a Canaanite woman, the widow of Zarephath, is not about Yahweh/Israel versus Baal/Canaan, but Yahweh the protector of the poor against the rulers who exploited them. Ahab the king of Israel is among the oppressors of the poor. Elijah, in this confrontation, voices the oppression, the exploitation and abuse that were going on for a long time in Israel.

The Baal social order maintained the traditional city-state configurations in which the gods accepted and legitimized the hierarchical structure of King, ruling elite and a highly developed social stratification ( Farisani 2005:52). In the confrontation, Ahab represents the Baal ideology and Elijah stands for the Yahweh ideals. But what was/were the root causes of this confrontation?

According to Farisani (2005:52) there are two root causes to this conflict, which are the introduction of Baal worship in Israel and the tributary socio-economic policies.

### **3.2.5 The introduction of Baal worship**

Ahab's religious policy allowed the construction of the Baal temple in Samaria. This demonstrated that Baal worship was a religion that could be allowed to live side by side with Yahwism, as a recognized religion. This constituted the first root cause of this confrontation. Prophets are regarded as the conscience of a society. Elijah could not accept what was going on without raising a finger. Here two worlds were coming

into contact and there was bound to be conflicts as the new worldview was trying to navigate and find its place in Israel. In this way the prophet of Yahweh, who could not accept the other religion and its influence into Israel, stood against Baal worship.

The religious show down took place at Mount Carmel where Baal worship is shown as an inferior religion against Yahwism (1 Kings 18:1ff). This demonstrated that there was no need for Israel to look for another god from the foreign nations because Yahweh was enough for them. In this event Baal worship was defeated and Israel declared her allegiance to Yahweh and implicitly declared their rejection of Baal worship (Farisani 2005:53). The prophets of Baal are annihilated to further demonstrate that Baal worship had nothing to offer.

Baal worship was located within a context where it justified and sanctioned the absolute power of the king and tributary socio-economic system, which Ahab had decided to continue with. The construction of the Baal Temple in Israel contributed to the debts in the economy of Israel, which further worsened the conditions of the peasants who were made to bear the debts made by the State (Dreher 1997:29).

### **3.2.6 The tributary socio-economic policy**

Socio-economic policy was the second explanation of the conflict between Ahab and Elijah. This policy is demonstrated by the state of the hungry, the poor, the widows and the death of Naboth the Jezreelite (1Kings 21). These socio-economic policies enabled Ahab to kill and to take possession of Naboth's vineyard (1Kings 21), an injustice which could not go unnoticed by the prophet Elijah. In other cases it was both the introduction of the monarchy and the socio-economic policies that created suffering among the Israelite peasants.

This conflict shows two worlds of different understandings of the land. In the one world which included Egypt, Aram, Assyria and Phoenicia private land ownership was common. The overriding commandment was the sovereignty of the king whose power was both absolute and unlimited (Brueggemann 1977:94). In this other world the king was above the other citizens and was somehow immune to the laws that govern that particular world. Put differently, the king could do whatever he deemed necessary without any legal consequences. He was the supreme ruler and his powers

were absolute. In these worlds the king could amass land without problems since they wielded absolute power. These were the tendencies followed by both Omri and Ahab which were initiated by the Davidic dynasty. While the notion of the egalitarian system in Israel was the ideal, things were not that smooth on the ground, kings, since the inception of the monarchy, introduced and changed the socio-economic systems, in their endeavor to exploit and benefit from the peasant farmers.

On the contrary, the above was against Israel's understanding of land which was regarded as the inheritance of the fathers and consequently inalienable. In this view the Naboth story communicates the relative power of the king as compared to that of the peasantry. The Naboth narrative demonstrates a paradigm shift and departure by the ruling class from the traditional social structure to the state of affairs that gave the State advantages over the peasants. The argument that Naboth could not succumb to Ahab's demand of his family land communicates to the reader a fundamental conflict which was raging between the State and the peasantry for a long time (Farisani2005:54). This suggests that Naboth was a representative of those whose land was grabbed or confiscated by the state. The protest by Elijah could be understood as a demonstration that the state of affairs had reached unacceptable proportions.

Farisani (2005:54) thinks that Elijah the prophet understood the Naboth situation and took it upon himself to raise a protest against the king on behalf of both Naboth and whole population of Israel. Farisani (2005: 54) is of the opinion that Elijah belonged to a class of small tenant farmers who owned no land of their own. We are not told how Elijah lost his own land but this state of affairs allows us to guess that his land could have been lost to the State through expropriation, in that period of the monarchy. The protest voice of Elijah as it is raised against the murder of Naboth found support in both the people of Israel and Yahweh. The reason is that Ahab had breached the contract with Yahweh who was the owner and the giver of land. That he had disregarded the laws and the traditions of the fathers as enshrined within the commandments of Yahweh. For example, the key understanding that land was the inheritance of the fathers and that it was inalienable, as well as that the king was not immune to all these laws that govern Israel's land tenure system and the totality of her socio-economic fibre.

The protest voiced by Elijah against the introduction of Baal worship, exploitative socio-economic and the political policies, which was sparked by the execution of Naboth, culminated in the Jehu uprising that then overthrew the Omride dynasty, but continued the socio-economic practices of the former dynasty.

### **3.3 The issues of the injustice and the power of the king**

The confrontation demonstrates the abuse of power by King Ahab who disregarded all Israelite traditions, customs, legislations and ordinances that denounced absolute power in Israel. Ahab, who ignored, the Israelite land tenure system expropriated land from the peasants. He no longer bowed to Yahweh who was supposed to be the sole owner of the land. What Samuel during his late days had warned Israel against their demand for a king was proving to continue with each monarchy? He had indicated that there was a possibility that kings would become corrupt and begin to abuse their power to exploit, oppress, and to dehumanize the people (1Samuel 8:4-22). This is a long text but let me repeat a short part of the warning that Samuel gave Israel when she demanded a king, “He, the king, will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his courtiers” (1Samuel 8:14).

This warning communicated to Israel that there was a great possibility that the king would become corrupt, Israel’s laws would be ignored and all the traditions of Yahweh would be discarded as Israel took a paradigm shift from how she was ruled during the pre-monarchic period, which the Northern Kingdom had claimed to follow since the date of the schism. In such a state of affairs the king who was supposed to be protector of the people and to ensure that the social fibre is maintained became the agent of injustice and proponent of oppressive and abusive laws as well as corrupt policies which supported the execution of the innocent.

In conclusion, the confrontation between Ahab and Elijah are a result of the monarchy’s socio-economic and political policies as well as the introduction of Baal worship in Israel. This also includes the abuse of power by the king, the injustice that was prevalent in Israel which the monarchy perpetrated.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Postcolonial readings of 1 Kings 21:1-29 within the context of the struggle for land in Zimbabwe**

#### **4.0 Introduction**

This chapter intends to bring two socio-historical contexts into dialogue, through the use of postcolonial theory, especially the contrapuntal component of the theory which through dialogue between texts allows similarities and differences to emerge. That is the context of the struggle for land in Zimbabwe and that of the struggle for land between Ahab and Naboth the Jezreelite. In other words, this chapter seeks to demonstrate, through the use of postcolonial theory, how four key different moments of the struggle for land in Zimbabwe offer up different readings of 1 Kings 21:1-29, and in what way 1 Kings 21:1-29 speaks into each of these different moments. In other words, I will read 1 Kings 21:1-29 and the Zimbabwean land contexts contrapuntally.

Contrapuntal reading, as noted in the first chapter, is that kind of hermeneutics that makes an effort to bring various interpretive voices into conjunction without harmonizing them, but emphasizing the uniqueness of each voice in contrast with other voices, and to compensate for the gaps in one interpretation. It is a reading that provides space “for alternatives: alternative sources, alternative readings and alternative presentation of evidence” Nelson (2008:7). In this way contrapuntal reading achieves the counterpoint of various voices. The aim of contrapuntal reading is to engage in critical interpretation of the text that allows both similarities and differences to emerge. It is methods of criticism that promotes dialogue between the context of the author, that of the reader and the text. It is a method of hermeneutics that allows dialogue between the former colonizer and the formerly colonized other.

The following are the key identified moments:

The historical moment of the colonization of Zimbabwe

The moment of the Second War of liberation (Second Chimurenga)

The moment of independent Zimbabwe

The current moment of land invasions and land grabbing in Zimbabwe

By bringing the context and text into dialogue around a common concern, this chapter seeks to demonstrate how these inter-texts mutually interrogate and investigate each other and what such a dialogue will suggest for the ongoing project of social transformation in Zimbabwe.

## **4.1 Postcolonial reading of 1 Kings 21:1-29 within the historical moment of the colonization of Zimbabwe**

### **4.1.0 Introduction**

This section is constituted by two components. The first component seeks to do a rereading of 1 Kings 21:1-29 from key features of this moment of the colonization of Zimbabwe, on which a postcolonial analysis will be done. The second seeks to demonstrate how 1 Kings 21:1-29 addresses the period of colonization of Zimbabwe. My contrapuntal reading is clearly shaped by my own social location. As a Zimbabwean my family was affected by the colonial land grabbing and our lives were changed by that experience. They were moved three times till they were located in the region whose soils and rainfall was poor.

The following are the identified key features which characterize this period of the colonization of Zimbabwe:

The significance of land

The advent of the colonialists and colonisation

The wars of resistance

The introduction of land alienation and dispossession

### **4.1.1 The significance of land**

Chapter Two demonstrates that land, according to the African Zimbabwean, was of immense importance. Land was understood as central to the life of the African Zimbabwean. This land was understood as given to them by God (Mwari) and the living Africans held the land as custodians on behalf of God, their ancestors and the

coming generations. According to the African Zimbabwean, land, therefore, was the source of their identity, their respect, their security and dignity. Land was about the social, the economic, the cultural as well as the religious components of life. In other words, in every sector of native life, land featured as the paramount entity, which defines who or what they were. It was inalienable, and could be owned through inheritance or by allocations by the traditional leaders, who performed this duty on behalf of both God (Mwari) and the ancestors. So, alienating the native from the land created dislocations in the flow of their life.

Similarly, according to 1 Kings 21:1-29, Naboth the Jezreelite, who is here identified by his tribal territory, understood land as key to the life of the Israelite. It should be noted that Israel, both Southern and Northern Kingdoms, was once slaves who revolted against their oppressors. In their capacity as slaves, they had no land, but they only got the land after the revolutionary uprisings, after which they introduced a socio-economic system that gave all Israel equal access to land. Through their new land ideology, Israel managed to establish their identity, and their understanding of land. According to Naboth, land had something to do with the history of a family. For him, land was given to him by God (Yahweh). It was the property of the family. It was understood as inheritance of the fathers. “The Lord forbids that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers” (1 Kings 21:3). Armed with this understanding of the significance of the land, Naboth, like the African Zimbabwean, had no choice, but to resist Ahab’s demand of his family land.

#### **4.1.2 The advent of the colonialists and colonisation**

The advent of the colonialists in Zimbabwe introduced a paradigm shift in the worldview of the African Zimbabwean. A new understanding of land came into play. Contrary to the native population’s understanding of land, the colonialists understood land as something that could be commodified, priced and sold as private property. This colonialist understanding of land was enshrined in their socio-economic system that espoused the notion that everything could be valued in monetary terms. This socio-economic system was replacing the egalitarian order that characterized the African Zimbabwean understanding of land. This socio-economic system that was

followed by the settler community supported imperialist and expansionist ideologies that were popular with their home empires.

In Zimbabwe the change came from the outside, while in Israel the change was internal, with outside support. The outside support came into Israel through the introduction of foreign policies, that is, through alliances, for instance, the alliance between Israel and Phoenicia that culminated in the marriage of Ahab to Jezebel the daughter of a priest-king of Ethbaal. In this case, Jezebel represents a system, not just an individual. Her marriage to Ahab introduced the system of her home State into Israel. This system was religious and socio-economic as well as political.

In the same way, the colonialists also represented the system of the British Empire. Their presence in Zimbabwe demonstrated the presence and the expansion of the British Empire and hegemony. The lifestyle of the Zimbabwean is changed to follow that of the colonialists. The culture that develops in such a situation is British. For example, almost in all Zimbabwean homes, breakfast, which is constituted by tea, bread and butter, begins each day.

Since the colonial master's religion was Christianity, the majority of the native Zimbabweans claimed to be Christian. This is because being Christian and being British were understood as synonymous to civilization and enlightenment. As Christianity took its ground in Zimbabwe against the African Traditional Religion, in Israel, Baal worship engaged in conflicts with Yahwism. In Zimbabwe, the custodians of the traditional religion did resist the new religion. However, with time, the majority accepted Christianity as a religion of the enlightened. Although the majority accepted Christianity, African Traditional Religion did not disappear from the scene. It assumed a low profile and remained popular with men than with women. This is because men are usually the priests of the traditional religion. In Israel, it was the prophets of Yahweh that opposed Baal worship and the result was a confrontation between Elijah and Jezebel as representatives of the two different religious traditions and systems.

In Zimbabwe, Christianity is understood by some people as the religion of colonization, and the Bible is understood as the sacred book that legalized the

imperialist and colonialist character of the British Empire. In this way, the colonization of Zimbabwe should not be understood as an event that is associated with Cecil John Rhodes, as an individual or company, but as associated with the British Crown that championed the colonization programme in Zimbabwe.

In the same way, the advent of the monarchy in both the Southern and the Northern kingdoms introduced a departure from an egalitarian socio-economic order and took on a tributary socio-economic order. According to West (1999:15), Israel's (both the Southern and Northern kingdoms), commitment to egalitarian socio-economic order was fading away and Kings, due to both external and internal pressure, followed the tributary socio-economic system. This new political change carried its baggage into the life and the reign of later kings, who were much more removed from the values and meanings of the struggle for land and consequently their commitment to the order of the revolution waned away (West, 1999:15).

The Omride dynasty, in which Ahab and Jezebel's reign is located, continued some of the tributary socio-economic policies, introduced in Israel (Southern and Northern Kingdoms) by the Davidic dynasty and possibly Saul's (Dreher, 1997:25). The reign of Ahab and Jezebel introduced or continued with the tributary socio-economic system, which made it possible for them to expropriate land from the peasants.

#### **4.1.3 The wars of resistance**

The period of the advent of the colonialists and colonisation was marked by many wars of resistance. The settlers introduced different socio-political and socio-economic systems in Zimbabwe. In response to this, the African Zimbabwean took up arms against the foreigners, in an endeavor to stop the imperialist and expansionist character of the colonialists. The first war was conducted against the Shona tribes in 1890, who, due to inferior weapons, were defeated. In 1893 the colonialists conducted another offensive against the Ndebele kingdom, which was also liquidated. Then, yet another war of resistance, then coordinated by spirit mediums was launched and this came to an end with the defeat of the African Zimbabwean army (Ndebele and Shona in a coalition). In this war Mbuya Nehanda and Sekuru Kaguvi featured as the prophethess and prophet, respectively, who stood for the rights of the weak. However,

the two were arrested and hanged, as a means to show the natives that their power was no more. The wars that were fought against the colonialists failed to stop the expansionist behavior of the British Empire.

Similarly, the expansionist character of the monarchy was clear during the time of Ahab and Jezebel. Naboth, who resisted the expansionist and imperialist character of Ahab and the Queen, like Mbuya Nehanda and Sekuru Kaguvi, was murdered. The reason for the execution of Mbuya Nehanda and Sekuru Kaguvi was that they coordinated resistance against the expansion of the British Empire into Zimbabwe. In the same way, Naboth was murdered because he resisted the King's demand of his family land. Mbuya Nehanda and Sekuru Kaguvi, like Naboth, who resisted against land seizures that were conducted by the settler community, were also murdered. Naboth, the innocent, is arrested, convicted, charged and murdered for refusing to let go of his family land. In the same vein, Mbuya Nehanda and Sekuru Kaguvi were arrested, convicted charged and murdered for coordinating a war of resistance against land grabbing and dispossession. Their crime was to attempt to stop the colonisation of their territorial land. In this way they were accused of defending their rights to land ownership. Unfortunately, this resistance effort was destroyed and the native succumbed to the demands of the settler community.

In Zimbabwe, the spirit mediums, Mbuya Nehanda and Sekuru Kaguvi, who were understood as political as well as religious custodians of the land were arrested, convicted, charged and murdered. In the confrontation between Elijah and Jezebel, it was not the prophets of Yahweh that were murdered but the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:40). In Zimbabwe, the spirit mediums were murdered because they coordinated the resistance against land grabbings, in Israel the prophets of Baal are murdered because Baal, their god, failed to rain fire from heaven to burn the sacrifice. In those two cases we note confrontation over space, which each religion wanted to have control over.

#### **4.1.4 The introduction of land alienation and dispossession**

The end of the wars of resistance, which culminated in the defeat of the native population, ushered in the time of systematic land alienation and dispossession. New Land Acts were introduced. These land laws were discriminatory in nature. They

favored the white community with land that was located in areas whose rainfall, temperature and soil conditions were the best and pushed the native population to the margins, where rainfall, temperature and soil conditions were poor. This system of alienation created suffering among the natives, whose lives were always under the threat of shortage, malnutrition and death.

In 1898, the native Reserve Order in Council was decreed. Under this law the settler authority created reserves where the African Zimbabwean was removed onto. These were located in dry areas whose temperature, rainfall and soil texture would not support crop production. In 1930, the Responsible Authority introduced the Land Appointment Act, which divided the land along racial lines. The whites owned the best-watered areas while the native population was relocated to the worst-watered areas. The other thing that worsened the condition of the African Zimbabwean is the influx of the whites into the country, especially after the Second World War. More land was needed for the white settler community, so the blacks that were allowed to live in some areas whose conditions were best, were removed and forced to crowd in the reserves, which by then were known as the Tribal Trust Lands. The Land Apportionment Act of 1930 was amended many times as the white community endeavored to produce the conditions that favored them. For example, it was amended in 1957 to create the Land Husbandry Act, then it was amended in 1961 and the final amendment came in 1969. As has been demonstrated in Chapter Two, all these amendments promoted the expropriation of land from the native population.

In the same way, the dynasty of Omri, in which the reign of Ahab and Jezebel was located, which followed the system of tributary socio-economy, that was introduced in Israel and Judah by the dynasty of David, allowed land expropriation in Israel to continue. The egalitarian socio-economy that assured equal access to land among the Israelites was being abandoned (West, 1999:15). The State confiscated land from the peasants for specialized farming of specific special crops and fruits. In some cases the peasants who could not pay the required dues to the State lost their land.

A system that favoured class divisions came into existence in Israel. According to this system the ruling class lived luxurious lives at the expense of their subjects, who lived the life of slaves. Corrupt means were also engaged as the ruling class alienated and

dispossessed the peasantry off the land. In the case of Naboth, the king, the Queen, the elders and the nobles, as well as otherwise ill informed community of Jezreel, came together to execute the innocent, whose land King Ahab had coveted. While the elders, the nobles and the general community of Jezreel could be blamed for the murder of Naboth they may be exonerated on the fact that they could have had their own lives under threat from the State, and had no choice but to carry out what they were directed to do. Even the two false witnesses could have been under threat, which meant the loss of their life, their land and exposure of their families to enslavement. So in an endeavor to save their families, they succumbed to what the State ordered them to do. In such a state of affairs, one had no choice but to do what one was ordered to do or risk losing one's own land. In the same way as we have noted under the wars of resistance, Naboth, who refuted the demand of the King, was murdered and land was taken over by Ahab.

The death of Naboth introduced suffering and poverty to his family. In the same way the death of many men who fought in the wars of resistance against land alienation and dispossession created widows and orphans who, in some cases, had to become some form of slaves as they resisted the new socio-economic system. According to Farisani (2005:49), it was the tributary socio-economic system that was followed by Ahab and Jezebel that created the hungry, the poor, the widow and orphans in Israel. But I am of the opinion that it was both the advent of the monarchy and corrupt kings that caused suffering in Israel.

As taxation in Zimbabwe created poverty among the African population, similarly, it also created poverty among the Israelites. It created the loss of land for those who could not pay taxes in Zimbabwe and the same fate befell those who could not pay taxes in Israel. Many families lost their family land in some cases they were sold into slavery (Amos 2:6-7). In the Zimbabwean context many native families lost their land and in an endeavour to resist poverty they ended up as farm workers who lived and worked in terrible conditions, for example, their accommodation and health were terrible as compare to the accommodation and health of the animals and the crops they natured.

The alienation and dispossession of land in Zimbabwe created dislocations among families. The State introduced taxes of all forms on the native population, whose best land and the herd of cattle had been confiscated. Because the taxes were mandatory and had to be paid in cash, the husbands left their villages to work in farms and mines. Similarly, as Naboth was murdered and land annexed, this introduced dislocation in his family. They had lost the head of the family and land which was the source of their livelihood had been confiscated. In such a state of affairs the mother had no choice but to function as mother and father in the administration and in providing for the family.

To sum up, the advent of the colonisation of Zimbabwe introduced a new socio-economic system that espoused land alienation and dispossession, which caused suffering in the Zimbabwean communities. The native people realized that they were their own liberators and as Israel had done when she conducted uprisings against oppressive socio-economic systems, the Zimbabwean community was forced by their conditions of oppression to revolt against the oppressors. At this point we consider our next key moment in the struggle for land in Zimbabwe.

## **4.2 Postcolonial reading of 1 Kings 21:1-29 within the context of the Second Chimurenga (Second War of Liberation)**

### **4.2.0 Introduction**

Part one of this section seeks to conduct a rereading of 1 Kings 21:1-29 from the key features of the period of the Second War of Liberation. Part two seeks to show how the text addresses the Zimbabwean period of this war of liberation.

The following are the key features that will be analyzed in this section:

The rise of the Second Chimurenga

The dawn of independence in Zimbabwe

#### **4.2.1 The rise of the Second Chimurenga**

It was the land alienation and dispossession, as noted above, that inspired and became the impetus of the Second War of Liberation. It was also the death or murder of the spirit mediums and the oppressive system that provided enough pressure that created the need for another revolution. Similarly, though the larger narrative in 2 Kings concerning Jehu is not part of my focus it was the murder of Naboth and the confiscation of his family land that gave the impetus to the Jehu revolution (2 Kings 9:1-37; 10:1-36), and so I will engage contrapuntally with it below, though not in any great detail.

Though some were killed, others rose up, both politically and religiously. In Zimbabwe, as noted in Chapter Two, in the first resistance wars, many people were killed by the colonial authorities, as it tries to put down the rebellion. In Isreal, people like Naboth who resisted the State takeover of their family land were murdered and land expropriated. In Zimbabwe, the murder or killing during these wars did not deter the native people from rising up again. In the spirit of continuing with the First Chimurenga the Second Chimurenga came into play. This war invoked the support of the African Traditional Religion. In Zimbabwe Joshua Nkomo, leader of ZAPU and Robert Mugabe leader of ZANU-PF as representatives of the oppressed and exploited led resistance movements against the colonial authority. This is similar to Jehu (2 Kings 10:1-36) who as representative of oppressed Israel rose up against the house of Ahab.

Joshua Nkomo's ZAPU and Robert Mugabe's ZANU-PF joined forces as they confronted the settler government of Ian Smith over the land issue in Zimbabwe. As we noted above, they criticized and challenged the injustice that was inherent in the discriminatory laws, especially the racial distribution of land as noted above. The war against Ian Smith's government challenged the land dispossession of the previous period, the poverty that came as a result of land alienation and dispossession. In short, the Second Chimurenga vowed to introduce a different socio-economic system in the country as a replacement to the oppressive and exploitative socio-economic order. It was Joshua Nkomo, as explained in Chapter Two, who championed the resistance movement.

According to 1 Kings 21:1-29, it was Elijah the prophet who confronted Ahab for the murder and the expropriation of Naboth's family land. Elijah denounced the king and the socio-economic system that oppressed and exploited the peasants. In Zimbabwe the war was waged and culminated in the independence of Zimbabwe in 1980, in which a black majority government came to power with Robert Mugabe as Prime Minister. Similarly, the confrontation between Ahab and Elijah culminated in the Jehu rebellion that overthrew the reign of Ahab, which he exterminated. In the Zimbabwean struggle for land, the settler government came to its demise and a new dawn opened over Zimbabwe. At this point let us now attend to the third key moment in the struggle for land in Zimbabwe.

### **4.3 Postcolonial reading of 1 Kings 21:1-29 within the moment of independent Zimbabwe**

#### **4.3.0 Introduction**

In the first component of this section I will do a rereading of 1 Kings 21:1-29 from the key features of the celebrated moment of independent Zimbabwe and in part two, I will demonstrate how the text speaks into the Zimbabwean period of independence.

The following are the key features that characterize this period that will be analyzed:

The advent of the black majority government

The hope for radical land redistribution

The end of oppressive and discriminatory laws

Expected change versus real change

#### **4.3.1 The advent of a black majority government**

As noted above, the 18<sup>th</sup> of April 1980 saw the advent of a black majority government, with Robert Mugabe as its first black Prime Minister. This marked a new dispensation in the history of the politics of Zimbabwe. This black government, elected by the people claimed to follow a different socio-political system, socialism against the previous government's capitalism. The new government promised to adopt

a new socio-economic system based on the principles of socialism, in which all people would be assured of equal access to resources, in the case of Zimbabwe, equal access to land. The people who had supported the struggle anticipated great improvements in their social lives. They expected this new government to improve their social life, especially by introducing an economic system that would empower them. An economic system in which they would have access to bank loans which they would use on the land that they hoped the government would redistribute. It is also my contention that the native population expected the government to introduce laws that were non-discriminatory to replace those that were used by the colonial government.

Similarly, the Israelite peasants expected the return of the egalitarian socio-economic order in which all had access to resources, especially land. For example, the family of Naboth that had lost their land during the reign of Ahab, anticipated land restitution as soon as the reign of Ahab came to an end. For the Israelites, the Jehu revolution was an opening into a new social order. The widows and orphans, though they could not get their husbands and fathers back, expected to have their family land, which was confiscated by the State, to be returned to them. They expected to be empowered through the process of land restitution.

As for the Zimbabwean population, the change of government was only the change in skin colour of those in government, because their expectations were not met. It was the principles of the former government that were based on capitalism that continued to be in use by the new government. While in Zimbabwe the new government was headed by one of them, a black comrade; in Israel, Jehu and Ahab came from the same race. In Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe, a soldier, replaced a former Second World War soldier, Ian Smith. In Israel, Jehu, a military commander, also replaced Ahab, who was a commander of the armed forces. In such a situation, the possibility of them following the same principles was great in both cases and they did.

#### **4.3.2 The hope for radical land restitution**

Most blacks who supported the war, including the 30 000 that died during the war, expected a radical land restitution. They expected the new government to return land

to native populations. The reason, as noted before was that, land was primarily the cause of the Second War of Liberation.

Similarly, the family of Naboth and many others that lost their family land to the State expected radical land restitution. In short, they expected the new State headed by Jehu to give back their land. In other words, Israel expected the new king to return all land that the State had confiscated from the peasantry.

#### **4.3.3 The end of oppressive and discriminatory laws**

This was another area that the blacks wanted the new government to address. Some of the laws discriminated the African Zimbabweans in schools, hospitals, access to bank loans and many more areas, but especially the discrimination in land ownership. The whites, who were joined by a new black elite class continued to own the land. The socio-economic system was not changed into socialism. It remained capitalism on paper and socialism in political rhetoric.

Similarly, though the text is silent about what the Jehu revolution brought to the community of Israel as change, it is my argument that Jehu continued with the principles that were followed by Ahab. He even introduced the Jehu dynasty, in which the egalitarian order would not do well.

The text's silence suggests that the author/narrator or both did not consider the issue of the peasants, especially the family of Naboth, seriously, but is concerned about the King or the ruling class. In the narratives, as soon as Naboth is dead and Elijah had disappeared from the scene, the text focuses on the King, who is reported to have repented. The question is, 'was this repentance enough without returning the land that was confiscated from the peasants?' Even Yahweh, who appeared on the scene soon after the death of Naboth, also is silent about the issue of the widow and the exploited.

Similarly, in Zimbabwe, the new government seems to have power, as their first priority item. In such a situation the issues of the poor peasants are ignored or forgotten. The Mugabe government's priority was to crush ZAPU and make sure that there was no opposition that would compete against ZANU-PF in governing

Zimbabwe. This was achieved by the use of the Fifth Brigade (Gukurahundi in Shona) translated as the rain that carries away the chuff that remains on the thrashing floors, and in this case the chuff meant ZAPU which was supposed to be eliminated and the rain was the Korean trained Fifth Brigade. In some sense this is similar to what Jehu (2 Kings 10:1-360) did with the worshippers of Baal. It is reported that he eliminated everyone who was worshipped Baal and everyone from the House of Ahab to ensure that there would no opposition.

#### **4.3.4 Expected change versus real change**

In post-independent Zimbabwe, there was very minimal change. The poor remained poor, or even became worse, while the rich became richer. There was no radical land restitution or redistribution. The urgency that characterized the doctrine of the war as far as land restitution was concerned seemed to have faded away. With the increase in population, the landless increased in the Tribal Trust Lands, now known as the Communal Areas. Under pressure from the almost demographic explosion, the land started to suffer due to erosion and denudation. Now the cause of the poor peasants was no longer an issue. The poor peasants who had supported the war were ignored. Where land was distributed, it was distributed to supporters of the state. Where land was distributed to the poor peasants it was of the same or even worse than their previous areas. The emotion that surrounded the commitment to return land to the native population was not realized. There was generally a blanket of silence as far as the urgency to redistribute the land was concerned.

In the same way, the Israelites who anticipated radical change with the advent of Jehu only saw that change in the destruction of the reign of Ahab, but not in their socio-economy situations. Though the text is silent about the socio-economic system that was followed by Jehu, it is my argument that Jehu, who established a dynasty, followed the footsteps of the Davidic and Omride dynasties.

According to 1 Kings 21:1-29, Ahab was forgiven by Yahweh, but there is no mention that the king returned the land to the family of Naboth. Was the penitent behavior that was shown by Ahab enough without returning the land to its rightful

owners? What kind of a god was Yahweh who allowed Ahab not to return the stolen land to its owners?

Similarly, during the celebrated moment of Independent Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe pronounced reconciliation with the former oppressors. This reconciliation, which was extended by the oppressed to the oppressor, did not challenge or demand that the oppressor return the land to the native population. It actually allowed the whites to retain the land, while the blacks continued as landless in their own country. In short, the Mugabe government had abandoned the commitment to the promises that were enshrined in the doctrine of the war. Though this government engaged in land redistribution, the land on which the people were settled was worse than their former areas. Best land was granted to government supporters, which created a black elite group in the country.

#### **4.4 Postcolonial reading of 1 Kings 21:1-29 within the current struggle for land in Zimbabwe**

##### **4.4.0 Introduction**

In this section I will conduct a rereading of 1 Kings 21:1-29 from the key features of the current moment of the land invasions in Zimbabwe, and in the second part I intend to demonstrate how the text addresses this period of land invasions and land grabbings in Zimbabwe.

In this section the following key features will be analyzed:

The Third War of Liberation (Third Chimurenga)

The land grabbing

The general collapse of the socio-economy in Zimbabwe

##### **4.4.1 Third Chimurenga**

As demonstrated in Chapter Two, the Third War of Liberation that, according to its proponents, sought to return the land to the original owners came into play. Some proponents of this war saw it as a chance to bring the liberation wars into completion.

In this moment, the poor people and some government supporters as well as the war veterans of the Second Chimurenga invaded the farms.

There are two schools of thought to explain these land invasions. The first one upholds that the invasions were spontaneous demonstrations by the peasants who were hungry for land. The second school of thought argues that land invasions were instigated, orchestrated and supported by the State. It was again a confrontation between the white commercial farmers and the black peasant communities. This was peasant uprising, argued the proponents of the Third Chimurenga.

In the same way, it was related to the uprising that Jehu executed if we follow the argument of the first school of thought presented above. In this case, the oppressed were the ones to rise against the oppressors. However, if we are to follow the second school of thought presented above, there would be a difference in that in the Israelite case there are no land invasions, while they are present in the Zimbabwean situation.

#### **4.4.2 The land invasions and the land grabbing**

In the previous section of this dissertation, we noted the revolution, that is, the Second Chimurenga that had promised to restore land to the black majority, but did not yield the results. And again, in the previous chapters, we noted land being expropriated from the black community. In the Third Chimurenga land was taken away from the white communities. The question is whether the land invasions were meant to benefit the poor or the State. It seems the State used the land invasions and land grabbings to advance its needs.

In the same manner, Jehu, like any other Israelite Kings, used the then current problems that bedeviled the State to achieve his own ends. This is probably why the text all of a sudden gets silent about the plight of the peasants and in particular the family of Naboth. Jehu managed to secure the throne for himself. Similarly, the Mugabe government managed to some extent to remain in the governance of Zimbabwe. In the same way, Jehu, who paused as the liberator and savior of Israel, received the needed support to unseat the reign of Ahab. Similarly, the Mugabe

government that received the required support from the peasants retained their positions in government.

#### **4.4.3 The collapse of the socio-economy in Zimbabwe**

On the contrary, the land invasions and land grabbings, which guaranteed the positions of those in governance, created the collapse of the Zimbabwean economy. This has brought untold suffering in the country. While the ruling class retained their positions, the economic situation of the peasants and the general population has worsened.

In the same way as noted above, the murder of Naboth created suffering for the widows and orphans that he left behind. In an endeavor to survive in this current Zimbabwean situation, the majority of the Zimbabwean people have crossed borders to look for employment, which most of them cannot get. The Mugabe government, which claims to empower the masses, has unfortunately disempowered them and exposed them to untold economic hardships and death. The land invasions which were meant to introduce a new socio-economic order, in which the black majority control the economy has failed so far to achieve the desired results, but managed to introduce a terrible socio-economy in which people have no food, no employment, and in which all the facilities have generally collapsed in the country.

In the same way, though Ahab did not create the collapse of the State economy, he caused the collapse of the family economy, for example, the murder of Naboth that exposed his family to poverty and hardship since the State took over the land which was the basis and source of family livelihood.

Also, though Jehu did not cause the collapse of the socio-economy as the Mugabe government did, he did not address the issues of the widows and orphans who lost both their husbands, fathers and land. In the lives of these families they experienced total collapse. They could not provide food to their families, but could live as slaves in their motherland in an endeavour to survive.

To sum up, this chapter has identified key features under each identified key moment of the struggle for land in Zimbabwe and demonstrated how the text addresses the

context of the struggle for land in Zimbabwe under each of the identified four key moments. In this way this chapter has brought the context and the text in dialogue around a common concern.

## **Chapter Five - Summary and Conclusion**

In conclusion, this dissertation has done a socio-historical study of the country of Zimbabwe: as it traced the land issue trajectory across the historical moment of the colonization of Zimbabwe; the moment of independent Zimbabwe; the moment of the Second War of Liberation; and the current moment of land invasions and land grabbing in Zimbabwe. It has highlighted how the land was alienated from the native population who are the original owners, and how government after government continued the land alienation and the impoverishment of the native people and the empowerment of the settler community.

The thesis has also conducted a socio-historical study of the story of Naboth the Jezreelite, showing the injustice that he suffered and the conditions in which his family was plunged by his murder by King Ahab in alliance with his wife Jezebel. It has analyzed the religious, the economic and political policies that created untold suffering among the people of Israel, who then revolted against the House of Ahab which was liquidated by Jehu the commander of the armed forces.

The dissertation has brought these two context in dialogue through the use of the postcolonial theoretical framework, especially the contrapuntal component of this theory, in which the dissertation has demonstrated, using four key identified moments of the struggle for land in Zimbabwe, that the reign of Ahab and Jezebel should not be understood as peculiar to Israel only but be understood as a reign that has “manifested” itself in other areas and countries. In this dissertation this reign has “manifested” itself in colonial, post-colonial and the current state of affairs in Zimbabwe.

The dissertation has demonstrated that it was use of sheer naked power that has characterized the reign of Ahab in Israel. Similarly this thesis has demonstrated that in Zimbabwe it was also the abuse of power that characterized land expropriation. Those whose power surpasses even that of the gods could do whatever they deemed

necessary with their subjects without legal consequences. At the end of all the struggles for land in Zimbabwe, the result is that land has shifted from the hands of the whites into the hands of blacks, who support those in government. Therefore the struggle for the land in Zimbabwe is a struggle that goes on and on. In the same way the struggle for land in Israel was a struggle that continued regardless of the change of those that were in positions of power. Though we do not know what happened to Naboth's family land I am of the opinion that, for the Zimbabwean situation proper land distribution across the races should be conducted to ensure that the land invasions and land grabbing that went on in Zimbabwe may not be repeated.

What has happened in Zimbabwe up to this day has demonstrated that land has shifted from the whites to the blacks, which in other words is not land redistribution because the blacks who got the land now are mostly supporters of the ruling ZANU-PF. In this case I suggest that further research can be done on the on going land invasions and grabbing in Zimbabwe and the caliber of land redistribution that has been done so that we may end up with proper land redistribution in the future.

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