

Colonial Knowledge & the Making of “Native” Zimbabwe

ZIMSEC Heritage Studies (Forms 1–4) / Cambridge O/A-Level extension · Knowledge, Administration & Representation

SBP PROBLEM STATEMENT

How did colonial institutions classify, describe and organise knowledge about African people, and how did those practices influence administration and later historical understanding?

1. Curriculum overview & learning objectives

Syllabus / level: ZIMSEC Heritage Studies (Forms 1–4), with O/A-Level source-evaluation extension.

— Identify institutions that produced knowledge; distinguish description from classification; compare administrative, ethnographic, archaeological and scientific records; trace how categories acquire political consequences.

2. Differentiated resource tracks

Track	Core materials	Execution
Local / low-bandwidth	Printed pack, notebook, wall-chart paper.	Teacher-led comparison, practical work and local observation where appropriate.
Diaspora / digital	Digital catalogue, scans and mapping/timeline tools.	Digital source analysis, annotation, mapping and portfolio work.

3. Curated sources · 1–4

1. NADA: The Southern Rhodesia Native Affairs Department Annual (1929) AA-MAG-0140 Primary administrative record Not stated	Why it is here: The 1929 NADA annual is a direct institutional record of Native Affairs administration, agriculture, law, customs and anthropology. Activity: List three subjects the department considered part of "Native Affairs". Critical question: What does the structure of the annual reveal about what the colonial state wanted to know?
2. NADA No. 18, 1941 Annual (1941) AA-MAG-0094 Primary administrative record Not stated	Why it is here: The 1941 NADA annual provides a later administrative snapshot and can be compared with 1929 to identify continuity and change. Activity: Compare one subject appearing in both annuals. Critical question: What changed in the state's knowledge priorities between 1929 and 1941?
3. The Mashona - The Indigenous Natives of S. Rhodesia (1927) AA-WEB-0048 Colonial ethnography Charles Bullock, Native Commissioner and Examiner in Native Customs and Administration, S. Rhodesia	Why it is here: Bullock writes as a Native Commissioner and examiner in customs and administration, making the book a strong case study in official ethnographic knowledge production. Activity: Identify two categories used to describe Shona society. Critical question: How can the categories of an administrator shape the people being described?
4. Rhodesian Botanical Dictionary of African and English Plant Names (1972) AA-BK-0259 Scientific/administrative reference Wild, H. (revised and enlarged by Biegel, H. M. and Mavi, Stephen)	Why it is here: The botanical dictionary records African plant names alongside scientific terms and explicitly discusses the decline of indigenous naming knowledge. Activity: Trace one plant from African name to scientific classification. Critical question: What happens when local knowledge is translated into an external scientific system?

3. Curated sources · 5–8

5. Some Trees, Shrubs and Lianes of Southern Rhodesia (1933) AA-ARC-0092 Colonial scientific survey Steedman, E.C., M.A	Why it is here: Steedman's 1933 botanical survey records plant names across several local language communities, showing both documentation and selective classification. Activity: Find one African plant name and its locality. Critical question: Who gets to standardise local knowledge in a scientific catalogue?
6. Common Trees of the Central Watershed Woodlands of Zimbabwe (1981) AA-ARC-0076 Postcolonial scientific reference Drummond, Robert B.	Why it is here: A Zimbabwean tree reference demonstrates continuity in scientific documentation after independence. Activity: Compare its approach to one colonial-era botanical work. Critical question: How does the framing of environmental knowledge change after independence?
7. Africa in the Iron Age c. 500 B.C. to A.D. 1400 (1975) AA-ARC-0007 Archaeological synthesis Oliver, Roland; Fagan, Brian M.	Why it is here: The Iron Age study provides a counterweight to colonial ethnography by situating African technological and social development in a much longer chronology. Activity: Identify one long-term change described in the work. Critical question: How does archaeology challenge histories based mainly on colonial records?
8. Mashonaland Prehistory Society: Rhodesian Prehistory No. 4 (1970) AA-BK-0050 Historical/archaeological publication Editorial	Why it is here: A Rhodesian prehistory society publication reveals how archaeology was organised and interpreted within the colonial scholarly environment. Activity: Identify the institution behind the publication and its field of interest. Critical question: How can institutions shape the historical questions researchers ask?

3. Curated sources · 9–10

9. Development in Rhodesian Tribal Areas an Overview (1974) AA-BK-0014 Development report J. B. Hughes B.Sc. (London) Ph.D. (Natal)	Why it is here: A study of “tribal areas” shows how colonial and late-colonial development policy translated knowledge about communities into programmes and administrative categories. Activity: Identify one development problem or intervention discussed. Critical question: When does “development” become a form of administrative control?
10. From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe 2: The Land Question (1971) AA-BK-0027 Socio-economic analysis Riddell, Roger	Why it is here: The land-question study allows students to move from knowledge production to the material consequences of colonial classification and policy. Activity: Identify one argument about land. Critical question: How can administrative categories become material inequalities?

4. Project design & source handling

- This pack treats the archive itself as evidence: students study who produced a record, for what purpose, and under what institutional authority.
- It does not assume that a detailed colonial record is an accurate or neutral representation of the people it describes.

5. Source criticism protocol

Students should identify the author/institution, date, intended audience, purpose, and what the source leaves out. Do not treat later histories, reprints, cataloguing profiles or retrospective studies as eyewitness evidence merely because they discuss an earlier event.

6. Catalogue accessions used

Accession register		
AA-MAG-0140	AA-ARC-0092	AA-BK-0014
AA-MAG-0094	AA-ARC-0076	AA-BK-0027
AA-WEB-0048	AA-ARC-0007	
AA-BK-0259	AA-BK-0050	

Editorial note: Catalogue descriptions are finding-aid information. Teachers and researchers should consult the actual item where possible and distinguish the catalogue record from the historical source itself.