

## **Abstract**

Women have always played a vital role in the environment of pre-colonial Zimbabwe especially as they constituted the backbone of traditional agriculture. Pre-colonial studies have either ignored or understated that fact. This article seeks to demonstrate that pre-colonial Shona politics and even violence have always involved struggles and competition over environmentally productive areas, that although politics were dominated by men, it rested upon the productive and reproductive power of the women. Among other things, women were exchanged to foment political alliances or to conclude peace, while male status in political hierarchies depended on who their mothers were. In most cases, as Chivi history will show, female status was only hailed where it served to buttress male hegemony, which also implied male control of environmental resources.