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PEASANTS, CHIEFS AND KINGS: A MODEL OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL COMPLEXITY IN NORTHERN ZIMBABWE

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'Every archaeologist who works on the transition from egalitarian society to ranked society is dealing with a change in ideology.'

(Flannery, K. and Marcus, J., 1993, 263)

Abstract

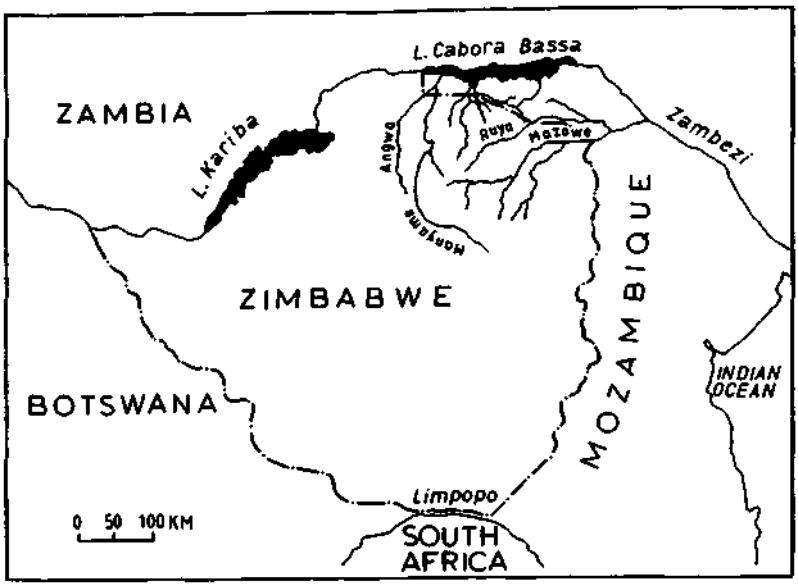
This article examines the nature and causes of socio-cultural changes that took place amongst prehistoric farming communities in northern Zimbabwe. Farming was established in northern Zimbabwe by the fifth century AD as a result of human population movements from further north. For the greater part of the first millennium AD, the early farmers were organised as non-stratified village communities. Early in the second millennium AD, complex forms of socio-political organisation developed in northern Zimbabwe. It is argued in this article that rather than migration, the development of complexity was initially the result of changes in economic practices, ideology and population increase. The development of chiefdoms is associated with populations of the Musengezi tradition who in the 15th century, became subjects of the Mutapa state. This was a secondary state, resulting from the northward expansion of the Great Zimbabwe tradition.

INTRODUCTION

ONE OF THE questions that have dominated archaeological research throughout the world has been the question of why and how ancient societies transformed from relatively simple socio-political organisation to more complex forms. Archaeologists working in Southern Africa have for many years been pre-occupied with the transformations that took place amongst early farming communities in the region around the beginning of the second millennium AD, transformations that ultimately saw the emergence of state societies. This article examines the issue with specific reference to an area in northern Zimbabwe defined by the Manyame river to the west and south, the Mazowe river to the east and the Zambezi to the north (see Figure 1). This research area has been the focus of a long term research project initiated in the late 1980s (Soper and Pwiti, 1988).

I trace developments in this part of the country from the stage at which farming communities were established in the early part of the first

Figure 1
LOCATION OF RESEARCH AREA



millennium AD, through to the second millennium AD, when we see evidence of the emergence of hierarchically organised societies and ultimately the establishment of the Mutapa state. This overall pattern is based on evidence from previous archaeological research as well as the new evidence coming out of research currently in progress (Soper and Pwiti, 1992; Pikirayi, 1993; Pwiti, 1994). I then look at the evidence for different theoretical frameworks to explain the development of complexity.

EARLY FARMING COMMUNITIES IN NORTHERN ZIMBABWE

There is now general agreement that the establishment of settled farming communities in Southern Africa dates from around the second century AD and was a result of the movement of populations into the region from further north (Huffman, 1970; Maggs, 1984a; Phillipson, 1985, 172; Hall, 1987, 31; Pwiti, 1991). While this is generally accepted, there continues to be some debate on the nature of the movements, as well as the area of origin. The old view of the movements being characterised by waves of

migrations, popularly referred to as the 'Bantu migrations', is no longer accepted as a realistic interpretation of the movements. The radiocarbon chronology considered in relation to the distances involved in the movements, as well as studies of the variations in ceramic style, support a model according to which populations have spread spasmodically, and without continuity (Collett, 1982; Hall, 1987, 31). There is also general agreement that apart from introducing farming and settled village life in the region, the communities brought with them knowledge of iron working as well as cattle as part of the domestic animal economy.

Previously, early farming communities in the research area were dated from around the eighth to the tenth centuries AD and associated with pottery of the Coronation and Maxton phases of the Gokomere/Ziwa tradition (Huffman, 1971). This suggested that farming was established at a relatively late stage here compared to other parts of the country. Some archaeologists argued for population movements from the south central parts of the country to the north during the later part of the second millennium AD (Sinclair, 1987, 141). Such models were proposed against a background of very limited research and therefore a general lack of data.

For parts of the current research area, such as the Zambezi Valley, earlier archaeologists (for example Summers, 1960; Robinson, 1965) had thought it unlikely that the hot, dry environment, ridden by tsetse fly, would have attracted any prehistoric populations, particularly farming communities. The area was thought to offer very little by way of environmental resources. These were assumptions largely based on modern and Western assessments of economic potential and preferred areas of settlement. Such assessments failed to take into account the fact that environments which we may see as unfavourable according to our modern perceptions may not have been similarly perceived by past societies.

New research on the northern edge of the Zimbabwe plateau (Pikirayi, 1993) and the mid-Zambezi Valley (Pwiti, 1994) has resulted in revisions of our understanding of the chronostratigraphic framework of early farming communities and their distribution in the area. Archaeological survey as well as excavation in both localities have documented the presence of early farming communities dating from the fifth century AD. Despite earlier assumptions about its economic potential and suitability for occupation, the area was settled by farming communities at about the same time as other parts of Zimbabwe.

In the Zambezi Valley, these early communities are represented by the characteristic comb stamped pottery with thickened rims. While similarities have been noted with the previously known pottery of the Ziwa tradition, differences are evident to the extent that a new ceramic unit known as *Kadzi* (named after the site where the pottery was first excavated and dated — Pwiti, 1994) has been defined. This work has

resulted in a revision of models of population movements on the Zimbabwean plateau towards the end of the first millennium AD. The evidence from the survey and excavation work shows that like other early farming communities in the region, those in the mid-Zambezi Valley grew crops, kept domestic animals, lived in fairly large villages and used iron for a variety of purposes.

SOCIAL ORGANISATION OF EARLY FARMING COMMUNITIES

It has for sometime now been accepted that the early farming communities of Southern Africa were organised as non-stratified village communities (Maggs, 1984a; Hall, 1987), the 'tribal' societies of Friedman and Rowlands (1977, 206). The evidence of settlement structure and patterning from northern Zimbabwe, as well as elsewhere in Southern Africa, shows that the villages were self-sufficient in economic and socio-political terms (see for example Maggs, 1984b). Maggs has suggested from his surveys in the Tugela Basin in Natal that the spatial separation of the villages and the structure of the sites show that each village was almost a model of the locational pattern as a whole. This is a picture comparable to that obtained in the Zambezi Valley. Each village appears to have exploited the agricultural land in its vicinity, produced its own iron and other products and made its own pottery and other things. Essentially therefore, these were egalitarian peasant agricultural people. There is no evidence of elaborate political structures or evidence of social ranking, except possibly along age and sex lines. This form of organisation remains evident until sometime towards the end of the first millennium AD.

How did such a socio-economic system maintain and reproduce itself through time? This is a question which archaeologists in Southern Africa have only begun to address (eg Garlake, 1982; Hall, 1987). In the past, it was a matter which was apparently taken for granted.

The best approach to this question, as with the question of the emergence of social inequality to which it is naturally related, should ground itself within a framework which considers among other variables, the relationship between ideology and economic organisation, although not in a deterministic manner. Egalitarian societies possess an ideology which emphasizes economic and social equality (Flannery and Marcus, 1993), and social rules are in place to make them work. Within our early farming communities, such an ideology would have existed to regulate agricultural production, for example, in a manner which made it difficult for a household to produce too much of a surplus. This could have been achieved by ideological sanctions controlling access to quality and quantity of agricultural land. While members of the community observe these rules, the system can reproduce itself again and again, but only as long as

the economy remains basically the same and individuals do not start to redefine the ideology and negotiate new rules.

In Southern Africa, such egalitarian communities reproduced themselves for most of the first millennium AD. The basic agricultural economy remained more or less unchanged, and livestock numbers, particularly cattle, remained comparatively small.

Some time towards the end of the millennium, a number of changes took place, changes that heralded the development of what I refer to as later farming communities. The archaeological evidence shows that cattle herds increased in number in different parts of the region. In northern Zimbabwe, this has been documented at a number of sites in the current research (eg Guta, 1988; Mawoko, 1995). Exotic goods from distant sources, such as glass beads, started to land on the Indian Ocean coast and to find their way into the interior (Sinclair, 1987, 150). Such exotic goods have been recovered from excavations in the current research area (see Pikirayi, 1993; Pwiti, 1994). These developments represented major changes in the economic organisation of the early farming communities, and they set the stage for changes in social organisation, which I now turn to in a discussion of later farming communities in northern Zimbabwe.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMPLEXITY: LATER FARMING COMMUNITIES IN NORTHERN ZIMBABWE

Our earliest evidence for later farming communities in northern Zimbabwe is represented by the appearance of pottery of the Musengezi tradition currently dated from around the 12th century AD. Partly contemporary is the Great Zimbabwe tradition, evident in northern Zimbabwe from the 15th century AD. Finally, there is the Refuge tradition, which has traditionally been associated with unsettled conditions on the Zimbabwe plateau during the 19th century (see Huffman, 1971). This article is concerned with the two earlier traditions. I start with a discussion of the communities identified with pottery of the Musengezi tradition.

Origins of the Musengezi tradition

Huffman (1978) argued that the makers of Musengezi pottery arrived in northern Zimbabwe as part of what he has called the Kutama tradition, consisting of a number of ceramic groupings in different parts of Zimbabwe. He argued that this tradition was the archaeological manifestation of the settlement of ancestors of the Shona people in Zimbabwe from across the Limpopo, introducing the culture of the later farming communities and replacing the previous culture. The argument was essentially migrationist in its persuasion and was largely based on ceramic typology.

Many archaeologists, however, have been skeptical of this as an explanation for the changes observable in the archaeological record around

1 000 AD (eg Garlake, 1982, 12; Maggs, 1984a). The argument has been seen as based on rather dubious ceramic links with groups across the Limpopo. More important, it failed to account for what happened to the earlier communities.

More recently, Huffman (1989) has proposed an alternative explanation for the origins of the Musengezi tradition, this time seeing it as originating from across the Zambezi to the north. This is again based on ceramic typology and cultural practices like burial systems. As with the earlier proposal, this new argument remains grounded within a migrationist paradigm and seems to face the same problems. No explanation is offered for the fate of the earlier communities, and the ceramic links claimed between Musengezi and the parent cultures in Zambia have not been clearly demonstrated. It would thus appear that while migrationist thinking worked very well in accounting for the initial establishment of early farmers in the region, it has not been successful for the later period.

In a refreshing departure from migrationist thinking, Garlake (1982) has proposed that the appearance of cultures attributed to the Kutama tradition in Zimbabwe could be explained in terms of changes in social and economic organisation among the local early farming communities. He argued that the changes that we see in the archaeological record during the period could be a reflection of culture change occasioned by economic growth and fundamental reorganisation of society. This line of thinking appears more promising, taking account of the relationship between ideology, economy and social organisation. Garlake recognises economic change via the evidence for increased numbers of cattle among later farming communities as a major development that led to social transformation. In addition, he sees these changes as related to change in social organisation from matrilineal to patrilineal society. These economic and social changes are used to explain the changes in material culture, such as style and quality of pottery.

Ceramics of early farming communities show better manufacturing techniques and were more elaborately decorated. Garlake explains this in terms of specialist male producers in a matrilineal society. Ceramics of later farming communities are poorly finished and less elaborately decorated and, in Garlake's argument, were made by non-specialist female potters.

Garlake's model is interesting for its attempt to examine cultural change in local terms, but I do not think it fits very well with the evidence on changes in social organisation. Recent work in South Africa has shown that the southern Bantu cattle pattern of settlement can now be traced back to the first millennium AD (Huffman, 1993). This is a settlement pattern that is associated with southern Bantu cattle-keepers and is rooted in an ideology which emphasizes male dominance of society. If the early

farming communities in our region shared a similar ideology, as seems to be the case, then it becomes difficult to accept the changes within the framework proposed by Garlake. I shall now explore the changes in social organisation in northern Zimbabwe in local terms, but in a different way that does not call for a shift from matrilineal to patrilineal society.

Archaeologists now recognise that major changes in socio-political organisation are occasioned, or accompanied by, change in two components of a system — economy and ideology (Price, 1977; O'Shea, 1982; Kipp and Schortman, 1989; Paynter, 1989; Flannery and Marcus, 1993).

Others have given prominence to environmental and demographic change (Cogwill, 1975). While some recent work has argued for several episodes of climatic change in Southern Africa (Tyson and Lindesay, 1992), including the often cited 'Little Ice Age' during the second millennium AD, most of the evidence used in the reconstructions has been derived from South African sites. There is no reason to assume that such climatic changes affected our area. For the moment therefore, in the absence of clear evidence for climatic and environmental change in northern Zimbabwe, it is difficult to consider this variable.

Demographic change remains a possibility, and its contribution to the development of complexity in northern Zimbabwe cannot be dismissed. There is in northern Zimbabwe a clear increase in the number of settlement sites during the second millennium AD which is a reflection of population increase. Such population increase is likely to have contributed towards the evolution of a new form of socio-political organisation.

The main argument presented here is that the fundamental changes witnessed among the early farming communities in northern Zimbabwe, which are manifested by the appearance in the later farming of the Musengezi tradition community and its attributes, were a result of economic change accompanied by a shift in ideology. The ideological shift was characterised by a change in attitudes towards accumulation of wealth, which itself lies at the root of social and economic inequality.

As already noted, major economic changes took place in northern Zimbabwe at the turn of the first millennium AD. Cattle herds increased and exotic goods found their way into the interior from the Indian Ocean. These two developments in themselves, however, should not necessarily result in changes in social organisation. They only provide conditions for change. Such developments can be prevented from resulting in structural transformations in a system which is based on an ideology of equality. It is possible that potential changes arising, the new modes of production may be negated by appropriate mechanisms controlling access to wealth or restrictions of such access. Those who begin to possess large herds of animals, which are a potential source of social and economic power, may

be called on to slaughter them for communal rituals or feasting. In this way, the potential to accumulate wealth is checked and the ideology of equality is maintained and perpetuated. What is being argued for here is a systemic approach to cultural stability where the self-regulatory mechanisms of a system come into play to maintain the basic position.

For our Southern African farming communities, however, the system was not maintained. What seems to have happened is that change in the economic sub-system was accompanied by change in the ideological sub-system. Individuals who realised the advantages offered by the new and developing elements in the economy redefined the rules governing or restricting the accumulation of wealth. As inequalities developed, a new ideology developed to make these inequalities seem natural and acceptable. Within such a context, the egalitarian early farming communities gradually transformed, and society became more complex.

This model is offered as one which accounts for change in social organisation in northern Zimbabwe, without involving large scale population movements. It is also offered as an alternative to Garlake's hypothesis. To support this argument, an interesting ethnographic parallel can be cited which is relevant to the relationship between economy, ideology and socio-cultural change, even though it comes from a somewhat different social formation.

In a study of the integration of herding of small stock into hunting and gathering economies of the !Kung San of north-west Botswana, Yellen (1984) shows how ideology can be manipulated to accommodate new economic conditions that encourage accumulation and thus inequality among a people who previously emphasized equality and an ethic of sharing. The change in the economy and social structure among these people is also physically reflected in the changes in intra-site spatial organisation. The new pattern gives increasing prominence to goats in the settlement structure, the economy and presumably the social standing of people (Yellen, 1984). The system adjusted to a number of changes, which include ideological change to accommodate something new. This ethnographic example is instructive for archaeologists dealing with culture change for two reasons. It is a living example of how economy, ideology and social organisation are intimately related. Secondly, it gives us an example of a social system in transition as a result of changing economic conditions, and how social organisation and ideology will also change if the scale of the changes is such that the system cannot absorb them.

The overall model that I have proposed is one which accounts for transformation in social organisation, but it has not made reference to changes in material culture evident in northern Zimbabwe and elsewhere in the region around 1 000 AD, particularly change in ceramic style. Ceramic style is one of the major items of material culture by which the

changes have been archaeologically recognised and consequently deserves examination and comment. I once again appeal to theory in the attempt to explain this phenomenon in Zimbabwe in general and northern Zimbabwe in particular.

It is now generally agreed that material culture is socially and politically active (Collett, 1987; Hodder, 1982; Ndoro, 1991), and that it carries meanings and messages in the contexts in which it is manufactured and used. In some instances, it makes social statements about the user. This means that changes in ideology and changes in material culture should in some way be related, and change in the latter will be a reflection of change in the former. In this sense, it may become possible to offer an explanation for the change in ceramic style evident not only in northern Zimbabwe, but throughout the region around the beginning of the second millennium AD. The heterogeneity of the pottery of later farming communities, as opposed to homogeneity in earlier periods can be taken as signalling ideological change, from an ideology which emphasized cultural relatedness, to one emphasizing separateness. The result is that we have the more diverse ceramic styles in Zimbabwe, with the different cultures taking different directions.

At the micro level, for example, among people of the Musengezi culture, the meanings and messages contained in this class of material culture have also obviously changed. Techniques of manufacture changed, as part of the new technology, economy and ideology. My argument here is that rather than new populations coming into northern Zimbabwe representing Musengezi pottery makers, what we have is the gradual development *in situ* of a new socio-economic package and culture. The Musengezi tradition is thus presented as a local development.

This model has limitations which should be the subject of future empirical research and theoretical inquiry. At the empirical level, we need to find transitional sites: it is unlikely that the gradual changes proposed would leave no traces. Theoretically, such research should be accompanied by the construction of models which focus on the relationship between internally generated changes in social culture and material culture.

Musengezi culture social organisation

The social organisation of the populations identified with the Musengezi tradition has not been explored, perhaps because it has been taken for granted or because of the limitations of the evidence available. The change appears to have been small compared to that introduced by the Great Zimbabwe tradition. In this section, I use the archaeological evidence from the current research area and from other parts of northern Zimbabwe to see what can be said about the society and its organisation.

Unfortunately, the attempt to reconstruct the nature of Musengezi society must cope with the problems of limited evidence. Although a

comparatively large number of sites of the tradition have been long known and more have been recovered from surveys in the current research, only a few have been excavated. The two settlement sites that have been excavated, Ruanga (Garlake, 1973b) and Wazi Hill (Soper and Pwiti, 1988), do not provide enough data on settlement structure and layout to inform us on the nature of society. No area excavations have been completed. Excavations at Wazi Hill in the Centenary district of northern Zimbabwe attempted to expose settlement patterns, but only recovered clear house remains on the hilltop part of the settlement site. These house remains however, present a rather complex picture, which has been briefly commented on by Soper and Pwiti (1988) and Soper (1992), and which is further examined here within the context of relations between the Musengezi and the Great Zimbabwe traditions.

Fortunately, another class of sites of this tradition has been widely known and more have been found in the current survey work. These are the cave and cleft burial sites common in northern Zimbabwe. I shall use this class of data together with the observed distribution of sites to attempt a reconstruction of the nature of Musengezi society.

The majority of known burials in the Musengezi tradition are in rock shelters, crevices or caves. In most cases they are multiple burials, with three or more individuals in association with a number of pots and bowls and other items of material culture.

The largest of the burial sites, Monk's Kop, was partially excavated by Crawford (1967) and recently interpreted by Mahachi (1986) and Pwiti and Mahachi (1991) using the archaeological data and Shona ethnography. Monk's Kop is a large burial cave located on a hill and dated to the 13th century AD. A minimum of 70 individuals were found during excavation, together with a hundred complete or almost complete pottery vessels. The individuals were adorned with iron bangles on the arms and ankles, as well as bead necklaces (Crawford, 1967). Of importance in the context of this interpretation of the evidence, was the presence of an unspecified number of conus shell discs, known in Shona as *ndoro*, associated with the burials.

The burial is unusual in a number of respects. It differs from other known Musengezi burials in northern Zimbabwe because of the large number of individuals. Other sites usually contain three or four individuals together with a limited range of pottery vessels. This fact, and the associated material culture, as well as its location, have persuaded us that it is not an ordinary burial site but a site for the burial of important individuals in society.

This archaeological evidence pointing to the existence of ranking within Musengezi society is supported by Shona ethnographic data. We firstly note that the practice of multiple burials among some Shona groups

of the recent past is associated with chiefs and not ordinary people (Mahachi, 1986). In such cases, successive chiefs and members of their families within a polity are buried in a cave reserved for them as royalty. Secondly, we see the location of Monk's Kop as significant in the context of the association between royalty and hills in Shona belief systems (Mahachi, 1986; Pwiti and Mahachi, 1991). Lastly, the conus shell discs found associated with the people buried at Monk's Kop are part of chiefly regalia among the historic Shona. In all, this large Musengezi burial is suggestive of the existence of the chiefdom level of social organisation during Musengezi tradition times. The use of Shona ethnography in this case is justified because we can trace historical and cultural continuity from the past to some modern Shona people in the northern part of Zimbabwe.

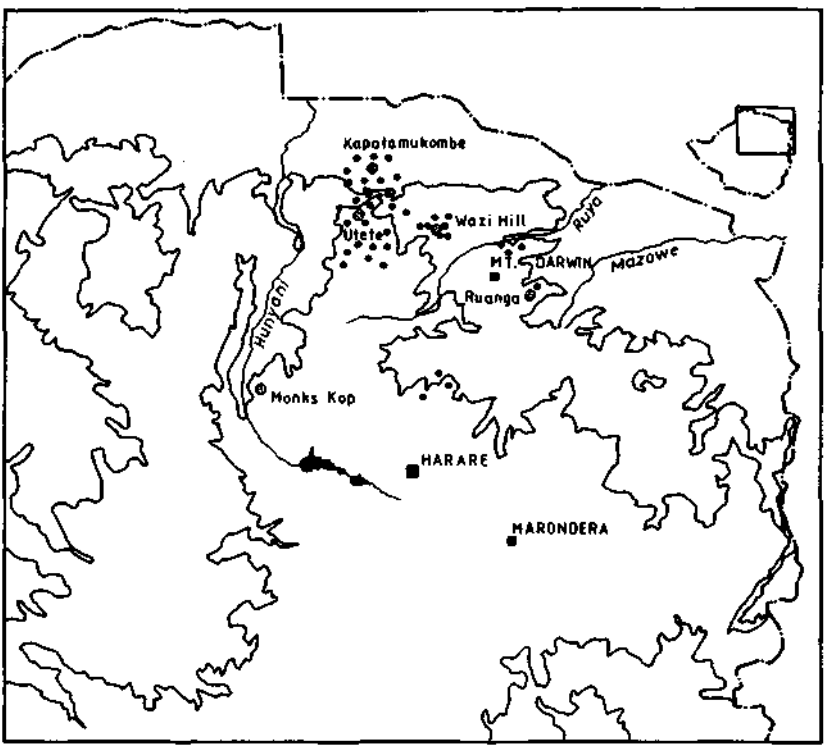
The evidence from inter-site settlement patterning would be consistent with the interpretation offered above, if site size can be accepted as a criterion for ranking. Musengezi sites in the current research area seem to fall mainly into two sizes, large sites covering at least two hectares and small sites usually of less than half a hectare. Large sites are comparatively few: so far, only four large sites have been recorded, compared to over 55 small sites (see Figure 2). This is a settlement pattern consistent with chiefdoms (Renfrew, 1977). Unfortunately we do not have information on the living sites around Monk's Kop, which would have lent more weight to the model.

The picture that becomes possible to reconstruct is one in which the people identified with Musengezi pottery had established small chiefdoms over much of the northern plateau and the Zambezi Valley by the 12th century AD. This process is here argued to have been the result of economic change accompanied by ideological change. The chiefdoms were supported by agricultural production and livestock herding, and chiefly power was enhanced by an element of external trade. This was achieved in part by the redistribution of exotic goods in society. There is evidence that a class of craft specialists had also emerged, working with copper and iron and manufacturing cloth. Sometime during the 15th century, with the extension of the Great Zimbabwe tradition northwards, the relations of power changed, even though the Musengezi people maintained their cultural identity and may possibly have retained a measure of political autonomy.

THE GREAT ZIMBABWE TRADITION IN NORTHERN ZIMBABWE: THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE MUTAPA STATE AND ITS ARCHAEOLOGICAL IDENTIFICATION

In this section, I look at the Great Zimbabwe tradition in northern Zimbabwe and try to relate this to the development and history of the Mutapa state.

Figure 2
MUSENGEZI TRADITION SITES IN NORTHERN ZIMBABWE



I also look at its relationship with the Musengezi people, using data derived from previous research as well as from the results of the current work.

The various attributes of the Great Zimbabwe tradition have been described in detail elsewhere (Garlake, 1970). The most well known and distinctive are the stone wall enclosures, enclosing housing units of small ruling elites as symbols of their power and prestige. Those currently known in northern Zimbabwe (Figure 3) show a tendency to cluster in fairly tight groups, with groups or single sites rather evenly spaced at intervals of 60 to 100 kilometres (Soper, 1990).

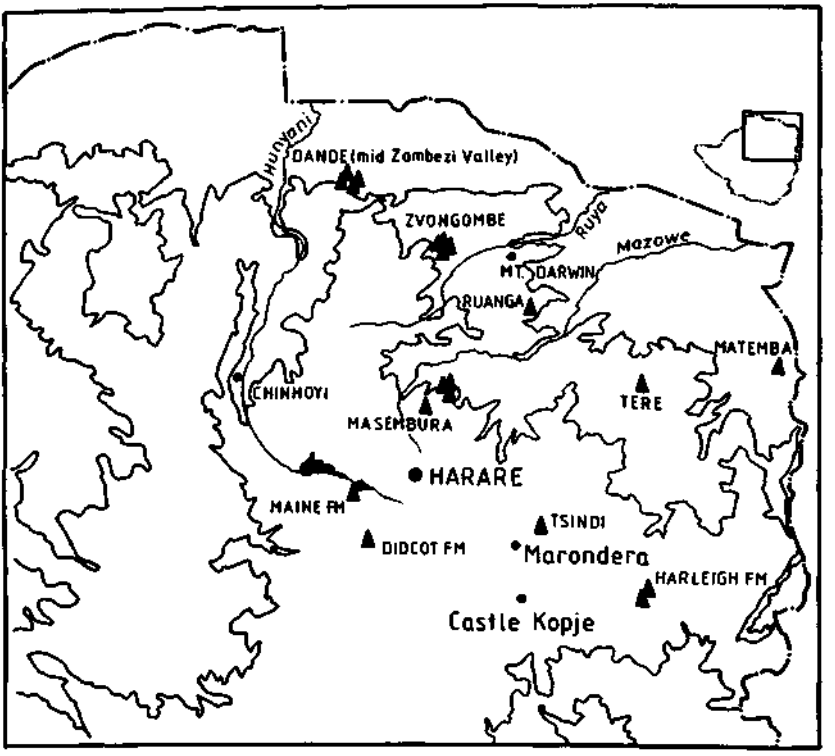
The distribution of sites, and their place in the local context, has been commented on by a number of people in various ways (Garlake, 1973a, 1973b; Beach, 1980, 82; Soper, 1990). At the local level, Garlake has seen the sites and their associated occupants, as representing the superior culture of a small dominant elite lording it over the locals. He argued that the number of people occupying these sites was so small that they had to depend on the local subjects for food, building and other necessities. Essentially, they were 'small ruling groups sustained by the labour and production of a much wider population' (Garlake, 1973a, 134). This conception of enclosure occupants living in isolation from locals seems inconsistent with some of the evidence. Beach (1980, 82) rejects it as inconsistent with how social or political importance, especially of a dominant group, are measured in traditional Shona society.

The yardstick of power and influence was the number of wives and relatives living around you. This necessarily means that settlements of important people had to be large (*musha mukuru* or *muzinda* in Shona). In addition, Portuguese documents of the 16th century refer to Mutapa capitals as large settlements which included stone walled structures (see Pikirayi, 1993, Chapter 5). The picture that is now emerging from current survey and excavation work, and even Garlake's own work at Ruanga, shows that Great Zimbabwe populations were living with the local communities.

At a higher level, considering the settlement pattern, Garlake (1973b) regarded the zimbabwes as representing provincial centres or courts of the Zimbabwe state, reflecting the extension of political and economic control from the centre at Great Zimbabwe. In a later article considering the pastoral economy of the Great Zimbabwe tradition, the distribution pattern of the sites was seen as a strategy for supporting livestock transhumance (Garlake, 1978). Here he revised his earlier view and concluded that it was unlikely that the sites were part of the Zimbabwe state in the sense of a unitary state. The use of Theissen polygons suggested to him that they represented several semi-autonomous or autonomous political units.

Beach (1980, 83) on the other hand saw some of the sites as reflecting the gradual movement of Karanga dynasties northwards, to introduce the

Figure 3
GREAT ZIMBABWE TRADITION SITES IN NORTHERN ZIMBABWE



Zimbabwe culture here, but not necessarily as part of an expanding Zimbabwe state. From one of these dynasties the Mutapa state emerged. Pikirayi (1993) sees the establishment of the state as having been a result of one dynasty subduing the rest. This kind of analytical frame seems more consistent with the evidence now available. The dates now at our disposal from the Zvongombe cluster in the Centenary district of northern Zimbabwe, extending from the early part of the 15th century, seem to fit in within this interpretation. If the Zimbabwe state collapsed around the middle of the 15th century, then quite clearly the Mutapa state was already in the making. Dates from other zimbabwes in northern Zimbabwe range from the 14th to the 16th century.

Following this line of argument, it becomes possible to interpret the occurrence of our different stone-walled sites in northern Zimbabwe in two ways. The earlier sites represent the initial expansion of the culture northwards, at some stage in the early part of the 15th century or even earlier, resulting in the establishment of the Mutapa state. The later sites, like Zvongombe and the mid-Zambezi Valley cluster, dating from the 15th century onwards, can be seen in the context of shifting capitals of an established Mutapa state, as suggested by Beach (1980, 83). Portuguese documents clearly show us that by the end of the 15th century, the state was already established and Great Zimbabwe was no longer a major centre. This suggestion is supported by historical evidence both from oral traditions and written records. These sources particularly associate the later mid-Zambezi Valley cluster of stone structures with the Mutapa state (Abraham, 1959). To this must be added the results of Pikirayi's recent archaeological work in the Mount Darwin area at Baranda, a major 16th century trading site of the Mutapa period (Pikirayi, 1993).

It remains to explore two further questions relating to the Great Zimbabwe tradition and the Mutapa state. One concerns the process by which dominance was established over the local people by the new populations of the Zimbabwe culture. The other concerns the economic basis behind the development and survival of the state.

The archaeological record has unfortunately not been informative on how Musengezi people, constituting the basic populations of our area, came under the control of the Mutapa state. What the archaeological record has permitted however, are possibilities for us to suggest what did not happen, and to offer some suggestions of the possible relationships between the two populations.

It is highly unlikely that the Mutapa state was established by military subjugation of the locals. There is no archaeological evidence for the use of force to establish or maintain power. The plans and other attributes of the stone enclosures themselves do not support possibilities of a defensive function. Very few finds of weapons have been made from the sites. The

few arrowheads found were probably for hunting rather than combat. Thus, while we do not discount the existence of armies in the Mutapa state, as Portuguese records testify to their existence for the later periods, military force remains an improbable explanation for the founding of the state in northern Zimbabwe.

It has been suggested by some that religion had something to do with the process in question (Garlake, 1973a). In as far as religion is an important component of ideology, this suggestion is plausible. It is generally accepted that religion is part of statecraft and plays an important role in reinforcing and maintaining political power. Its role however, should not be considered in isolation and it is difficult to conceptualise how it can successfully be used as an explanatory factor in the present context.

If the establishment of the state was not by military conquest and if it was not a result of the possession of supernatural powers, how was it achieved? Soper (1990) quite rightly concludes that we do not yet have adequate evidence on how this process took place. However, some possibilities can be explored.

Presumably, if the founders of the Mutapa state were expanding from Great Zimbabwe, they were familiar with the potential of two of the state's several branches of production and how they could be used as sources of power. These are external trade and large-scale cattle herding. If they had possessed large herds of cattle during their expansion, or alternatively had built up herds in the north, then it may have been possible for them to use these as a useful power base among the locals. The use of cattle as a source of social or political power among the Shona in Zimbabwe in the distant and recent past is now well known (Mudenge, 1974, 1988). Indeed for the Mutapa state, the Portuguese refer to their importance in this regard.

The hypothesis presented here is that cattle rich immigrant communities settled among a people who were not so rich, but who were very keen to use cattle products or own more cattle herds. The immigrants could easily have used cattle gradually to build up economic power, prestige and social dominance. At some stage they would have translated this into political power, without involving the use of force.

To this scenario should be added the use of the trade goods from a distant source as a way of further developing and building up a strong power base. This would be through the redistribution of such goods among a people who may not have participated in long distance trade on a large scale. This fits in well with the contention that 'luxury goods from a distant source are often distributed to reproduce a system of rank status or offices within a polity' (Kipp and Schortman, 1989). If one of the reasons for the collapse of Great Zimbabwe was indeed the shift in the focus of trade to the north, then it becomes logical to credit the early rulers of the

Mutapa state with the introduction of large scale external trade in northern Zimbabwe. These suggestions are offered as useful working hypotheses which form a basis for the discussion of Mutapa-Musengezi relations which I now wish to explore.

Our spatial data from site distributions, and the chronological data from excavations, are beginning to show that the relationship between Great Zimbabwe and Musengezi communities was one of interaction at various levels in a ruler-ruled context. At Ruanga and Wazi Hill, the evidence suggests that the two communities lived together on the same sites. This suggests a very close relationship indeed, although at Wazi Hill the presence of the Great Zimbabwe tradition seems to have been limited to a few individuals on the hilltop part of the settlement.

This has some interesting implications for Huffman's model of a dichotomy between settlements on the hilltop and those below as a symbolic expression of social organisation. The possibility of the application of the model at Wazi Hill is strengthened by the existence of the Zimbabwe culture type of house on the hilltop. Although the settlement history at Ruanga is not very clear on this, it appears that a similar settlement structure may also be present at this site.

In other situations across northern Zimbabwe, the different populations lived in the same area but not necessarily at the same site.

The two traditions do not seem to have interacted much in ceramic terms. A few graphite burnished potsherds of the Great Zimbabwe tradition occur both on the hilltop and the lower part of the settlement at Wazi. They have also been found at other Musengezi sites in the research area. Similarly, Musengezi sherds have been found on sites in the Great Zimbabwe tradition.

This paucity of ceramic interaction between the two communities may seem a little odd. How do people interact so closely without influencing each other's material culture? The answer may lie in an examination of the meaning of material culture to different people. Material culture, in this case pottery, may be decorated in a particular style for a variety of reasons, including the fact that it is socially active and may be a vehicle by which cultural messages are transmitted. When two cultures live together and interact, at least one of two things can be expected to happen depending on the relationship between them. If there is ideological conflict between them in terms of the meanings of material like ceramic style, then it could be expected that the dominant group will seek to change and bring such material culture in line with what is ideologically acceptable. On the other hand, in the absence of conflict, it is possible for two different groups to maintain their styles, and to continue to make their pots for consumption within their respective communities. This way, they may remain culturally distinct, at least in ceramic terms, for long periods of time despite interaction in other areas.

I suggest that this is one way in which we can account for the continued co-existence of Musengezi and Great Zimbabwe pottery. As long as Musengezi ceramic style, and whatever cultural significance it had, did not threaten the relations of power, then it continued to be acceptable to the Mutapa rulers. On their part, the Musengezi people may have seen it as a way of maintaining their cultural identity, rather than adopting the pottery of the newcomers. This in some ways echoes Hodder's (1982, 35) 'negative reciprocity' theory based on his study of material culture similarities and differences among ethnic groups living in the same area in northern Kenya.

If the model proposed for the establishment of the Mutapa state is acceptable, then it may also be possible to extend this line of thought to the political realm. It has been proposed earlier that Musengezi society was organised into chiefdoms. In this context I suggest that rather than totally destroying this system, the emerging Mutapas used it by making allies of Musengezi chiefs and letting them maintain a measure of political autonomy. This not only ensured good government, but also made political sense for a state of this size. It has been known in the Shona past that big rulers made use of this strategy (Beach, 1980, 113). In return, Musengezi chiefs were assured of continued political power, and access to cattle and trade goods.

ECONOMIC ORGANISATION OF THE MUTAPA STATE

The economic organisation of the Mutapa state has been the subject of a fair amount of historical research (Randles, 1979; Beach, 1980; Mudenge, 1988) and recently archaeological research (Pikirayi, 1993). One of the major advantages we have when studying this state, particularly its economy, is that it has been fairly well documented by the Portuguese. The Portuguese were in Southern Africa for economic motives. Although they did not always get things right, they did record different aspects of the economy of the state in some detail, particularly those branches of production which they saw as directly relevant to their commercial interests, such as mining. In this section, therefore, only a summary of the different branches of production is presented. Focus is more on how they were articulated in the development and life of the state. This is an area that neither historians nor archaeologists have covered adequately, although Mudenge's work is an exception.

Our archaeological evidence from the excavated sites shows that there are several branches of production represented, namely livestock herding, mining, participation in long distance trade and agriculture. Livestock herding is clearly reflected in the faunal remains, while the presence of finished metal products as well as waste from processing

shows the mining activities. Imported goods (mainly glass beads and ceramics) testify to the participation in long distance trade. Direct archaeological evidence for agriculture is very rare, but this economic pursuit can be inferred from the archaeological record through the settlement and some of the artefactual evidence.

One of the main weaknesses of the examination of state development in Southern Africa has been the tendency to view external trade as the prime mover. That the Mutapa state was a major trading power is not in doubt. Apart from documentary data, the site of Baranda in the Mt Darwin district has yielded abundant evidence of this (Pikirayi, 1993). However, to see this as the only key factor in the economy is to ignore the manner in which this factor is related to everything else. Trading activities require that what is sold on the external market be procured in the first place. For the Mutapa state, this is where agricultural production and livestock herding play an important role. We are told in the Portuguese documents that when the Mutapa needed gold for trade, he would give his subjects cattle, and they in return would mine and supply the gold (Randles, 1979, 86). Thus, a look at the relations of production shows that there was an interesting two-way exchange.

There is no doubt that the rulers appropriated a fair amount of goods and services to support their external trading and other activities. But the goods and services were rewarded, and power relations were maintained. There seems to be a clear potential for a systemic analysis here to avoid narrowness in accounting for state development and survival. Livestock production supports trade, which in turn supports the political system. To this we should add agriculture in which, besides producing for themselves, subject peoples produced for the state through the payment of tribute to the rulers either by way of actual agricultural produce or through the provision of agricultural labour. We are told that one day out of each month, different parts of the state offered labour to the royal fields, the *zunde* (Mudenge, 1988, 164). Besides agricultural labour or produce, subject peoples could also pay tribute with hunting products like animal skins. These were used by the rulers themselves or traded. What seems clear is a situation in which many different branches of production related in a complex web, rather than one factor of the economy emerging as the prime mover.

CONCLUSION

I have tried to account for the development of socio-cultural complexity in northern Zimbabwe from the formative years at the end of the first millennium AD to the second millennium AD. I have argued that these developments were a result of economic and ideological changes which

took place among the early farming communities rather than of new population movements.

At a later stage, we see the intrusion of the Zimbabwe culture into the region. The people of the Zimbabwe culture arrived as dynasties. Through time, these became united as a single political entity and as a result, one of Southern Africa's biggest political structures emerged. I have tried to show that its early development and its growth through time was supported by the successful integration of different segments of the economy, rather than by a single element. My approach therefore emphasizes multicausality rather than monocausality.

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