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CIVILISATION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

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IT is common for White historians and other writers to pretend that there was no indigenous culture or civilisation in Southern Africa prior to its colonisation by Europeans. G. M. Theal, the official historiographer of the Government of the Cape Colony, claimed at the beginning of the present century that the Nguni branch of the South-East Bantu peoples "are known to have crossed the Zambesi only a little more than three centuries ago," and that other branches of the Bantu group "cannot long have preceded them." Other historians have repeated this unsubstantiated and false theory of Theal. All historical accounts of Southern Africa—academic, standard reference, school textbook and popular—enshroud the pre-European history of Southern Africa in a veil of mystery[1]. Real history is regarded as commencing with events which led up to the Portuguese voyages of discovery in the late fifteenth century, the chief purpose of which was to discover a direct sea route for trade with India and the spice islands of the East.

This historical amnesia as to Southern Africa is understandable in terms of the cultural pattern and social relations of existence which colonial and later imperialist policies forced upon it from the first years of contact and conquest until the present time. Thus the forceful, imperturbable character of European conquest and later colonization and settlement has been variously glossed over, suppressed or minimized. Simultaneously, an extensive body of historical myths has evolved among the white colonists, settlers and rulers of the sub-Continent to obscure existing or potential historical discomforts. To justify the conquest of the African peoples there are, apart from religiocentric justifications, myths which tell of the savagery of these peoples, their repugnant customs, moral depravity and so forth. The annexation of land was justified by the myth that it was largely uninhabited, and that no one can claim that the Africans, although much in evidence at the time, were themselves anything but recent immigrants with no prior history or rights of occupation.

These myths cannot survive a serious examination of historical documents which have been published and are available for study. There are references in the writings of medieval North African, Persian and

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[1]Theal, G. M., "History and Ethnography of Africa South of the Zambesi," (London, 1907), Vol. I, p. 55 f.

Arabic travellers and explorers. Many important Portuguese texts, dating from the fifteenth century onwards were collected and published in translation by Theal himself. Finally there are the published accounts and conclusions of scientifically conducted archaeological investigations of medieval African settlements and their artefacts, in many parts of South-East Africa.

These main primary sources contain irrefutable factual materials from which it may now be concluded that there existed a pre-European Bantu culture in South-East Africa with impressive technical, social and political attainments.

MUSLIM AND CHINESE LITERARY SOURCES

The earliest pertinent records so far discovered date from the ninth century A.D. From that time onward for about five centuries North African, Arab, Persian and Chinese travellers and scholars left records which, though they contain but few and terse direct references, nevertheless testify to the existence of a Bantu industrial civilization in the interior of South-East Africa. The production of gold and the collection of ivory and their export via the port of Sofala were a vital factor in the complex trading relationships which developed between South-East Africa and many overseas countries from Egypt to China.

The Chinese were clearly aware of Melinde as a great trading port on the East African coast in the ninth century.[2] But according to the Muslim sources, although Melinde was already a trading centre at this time, the chief administrative and marketing centre in this region of the gold and ivory trade was Zanzibar.

Important evidence of the settlement of Zanzibar in the *early tenth century* and of the Sofala gold trade was given by Abdul Hassan ibn Ali, popularly known as El Masudi or Al Masud. While a young man El Masudi travelled in the company of some Indian merchants from India to Kilwa and Zanzibar on the East African coast, and thence to China and back to Western Arabia. He describes Arab sailors who piloted their boats down the African coast as far as Sofala. The environs of Sofala he describes as "lands that produce gold in abundance and other wonders." The indigenous inhabitants who, apart from mining gold, were cattlekeepers, he describes as "Zanji."[3]

A further reference to Sofala in the tenth century is contained in the *Book of the Wonders of Egypt*, by Burureg bin Shariya. It is clear from his descriptions that some conflict had already developed between the Bantu primary commodity producers of the interior and the foreign merchants of the littoral. The growing tension between the African population and the increasing commercial and military power of the immigrant merchant settlers was also referred to by an Arab author Amr ben Bahr El-Jahit in his book entitled *On the National Pride of Negroes and their Disputes with White Men.*

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[2]Tuan Ch'eng-shih, *Yu-yang-tsa-tsu*, transl. Hirth, F., "Early Chinese Notices of East African Territories," J.A.O.S., Vol. XXX, p. 47f.

[3]El Masudi, *Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems*, transl. Sprenger, A., (London, 1841).

The chief *eleventh century* reference is contained in the writings of the Chorasmian scholar Abu Raihan Muhammed ibn Ahmad Alberuni. He describes not only Sofala's prosperous gold export trade, but also the export of rhinocerous horn for the manufacture of knife handles. In addition he referred to the export of African slaves from Sofala.[4]

In the thirteenth century more definite knowledge of Sofala and the gold-mining operations in its hinterland became available. Thus Kazwini (1203-1283) describes Sofala as the last known *town* on the coast of Zanj and said that there were gold mines there. However, he did not discern the exact location of these mines. Abu l'Hassan Ali bin Said al Maghiribi (c. 1208-1274), popularly known as Al Andalusi, wrote that the principal resources of the people of Sofala were gold and iron, mined in the interior. Further evidence of the Sofala gold and iron trade is contained in the work of the thirteenth century Muslim encyclopaedist known as Yakut the Greek, and in the fourteenth century by Nadjm al Din of Egypt, and by Umar ibn Muzaffar ibn Al Wardi who stated that, despite the extensive mining of gold the people of the country wore copper ornaments which they preferred to gold.

In the mid-fourteenth century there are the works of the traveller and historian Mohammed ibn Abd Allah, called Ibn Battuta, of Tangier, who, after travelling to the Near and Far East, made a tour of East Africa. Starting at Mogadishu he continued to Kilwa. There a merchant told him that "the town of Sufala lies a fortnight's journey (south) from Kulwa," and that gold dust is brought to Sofala "from Yufi in the country of the Limis, which is a month's journey distant from it."[5] The author also found evidence of an active slave trade between this coast and India.

We thus have evidence from the ninth to fourteenth centuries that the peoples living in the interior of the African continent to the west of Sofala were engaged in industrial activities, namely, the mining of at least three metals, gold, iron and copper. A lively export trade was conducted through foreign merchants who sent out the local products and in return imported goods from India, China and elsewhere in the East. The records, though in many respects scant and unsatisfactory, are nevertheless remarkable for the consistency of their accounts concerning both the trade with and the settlements on the East African coast from Mogadishu to Sofala. Far too little, however, is known of the great trading operations and routes which led from Canton to Sofala, via the East Indies, the west coast of India, and the East African emporia of Mombasa, Kilwa and Zanzibar. Further documentary research in eastern libraries and archaeological investigation in East and South-East Africa might yield valuable information with which to re-examine and re-assess our present meagre knowledge.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH

The African societies of South-East Africa did not themselves, as far as is known, leave behind any literary documents. For further

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[4]Alberuni, *India*, transl. and ed. Sachau, E. D. (London, 1910.)

[5]Ibn Battuta, *Travels in Asia and Africa*, 1325-1354, transl. Gibb, H. A. R. (London, 1929.)

information it has consequently been necessary to turn to a study of material culture. In this respect the most important evidence is contained in the structural remains of medieval Bantu settlements and in the material artefacts which have been found superficially or through excavation in and near the settlement sites. The scientific examination of these sites has been conducted almost entirely since the closing years of the nineteenth century. Thus the work of archaeological exploration in this region has only just begun. Its initial successes indicate a wealth of material for organised and large-scale archaeological research in the future.

The Zimbabwe ruins were "discovered" in 1868 by Adam Renders, and in 1871 by Karl Mauch, a German explorer who, proceeding from the Cape Colony through what is now the Bechuanaland Protectorate, came across the now well-known masoned stone structures in Southern Rhodesia.[6] The location and existence of these ruins had remained almost unknown since they were mentioned in Portuguese records about three centuries previously. Several German ethnographers, among them Professor Pochs and Pater Paul Schebesta, took an interest in these ruins. Schebesta visited them and later spent several years in Lisbon studying various Portuguese source references.

There has been much speculation about the origin of Zimbabwe, and about whom its builders were. It is not difficult to trace the political bias implicit in this speculation.

By the end of the nineteenth century Rhodesia was subject to the private governance of the British South Africa Company with which Cecil Rhodes was closely associated. The Company was concerned to annex the greatest possible extent of territory. With reference to Zimbabwe, and the other ruins which gradually were discovered, the predominant theory at this period was heavily weighted against any possible connection between the ruins and the local Bantu inhabitants or their forebears. Both J. T. Bent and other explorer-archaeologists were anxious to prove that Zimbabwe and its kindred structures were definitely of non-Bantu origin.[7] Speculation about possible non-Bantu builders of Zimbabwe has ranged since that time from Hamites, Egyptians, Assyrians and South Arabs to Chinese and others.

In the prevailing atmosphere of gradiose imperial expansion in Africa and of Victorian evaluations of pre-literate tribal peoples, it is clear now that Bent's human and political attempts at scientific investigation had affected his analysis detrimentally. These prejudices, coupled with the military defeats of the Bantu peoples of Rhodesia, had the effect of relegating the Shona and other successors to the medieval Karanga to an increasingly impoverished and subservient status. Bent had believed that only the bodily removal of the entire Matabele people from Rhodesia would ensure the Company's exclusive authority in that territory.

Bent's views were in the main shared by Hall whose field studies were probably the most important prior to the first organised and scientific archaeological investigation, carried out by D. R. MacIver in 1905.[8]

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[6]Hall, R. N., *Great Zimbabwe.* (London, 1905.) p.364.
[7]Bent, J. T., *The Ruined Cities of Mashonaland.* (London, 1893.)
[8]MacIver, D. R., *Mediaeval Rhodesia.* (London, 1906.)

MacIver examined numerous superficial structures and artifacts and excavated at Inyanga, the "Niekerk" site, Dlo-Dlo, Nanatali, Khami and at Zimbabwe itself. The main conclusions of this expedition have not been contested, apart from the chronologies, by other trained archaeologists who have since followed MacIver.

Inyanga was found to contain stone-built hill forts, and a number of "pit-dwellings". The latter were not "sunk in the ground," but were "raised up from it." The walls were of unhewn stone masonry, and the floors were found paved with large stone slabs. There is a corridor leading into each pit made entirely of stone. The walls were pierced in places, by lighting holes. These pit-dwellings were an integral part of the fortress, and were connected "on their top surfaces" by "a series of low-walled enclosures."

Though the countryside around Inyanga is fairly well watered, on the basis of the manifest facts MacIver deduced that the settled population "required a more general distribution of the water supply than was afforded by the numerous streams running down from the hills." Accordingly, "the stream was tapped at a point near its source, and part of the water deflected by a stone dam. This gave them a high-level conduit, by which the water could be carried along the side of a hill and allowed to descend more gradually than the parent stream. There are very many conduits in the Inyanga region, and they often run for several miles. The gradients are admirably calculated, with a skill that is not always equalled by modern engineers with their elaborate instruments. The dams are well and strongly built of unworked stones without mortar."

The excavations at Inyanga point to the existence of a settled agricultural community with an intricate system of engineered irrigation works. The inhabitants lived in permanent stone houses, linked to substantial fortresses and fort-dwellings. This community manufactured or imported numerous implements and ornaments of iron and brass. The solidity and permanence of the Inyanga structures testify to the fact that its inhabitants had progressed from a predominantly pastoral-nomadic mode of life to a settled proto-urban existence. The latter was based on cyclic agricultural production, the manufacture of such commodities as clay pottery, metal implements, arms and body ornaments, and on trade. Harvest stores, workshops and other material possessions required the protection of substantial fortifications.

"The Niekerk Ruins" cover an area of about fifty square miles. There are striking stone walls built around nine or ten hills along irregular ascending contours. At the summit of each hill there are remains of elliptical stone-built village settlements of the Inyanga type. In these settlements, above the low circular or elliptical walls, there were "circles of stakes roofed with a thatching of grass." The doors of the huts were found lintelled as at Inyanga. There was also evidence that these stone walls served as foundations for wattle and daub structures. Pieces of clay in which horizontal and vertical flutings were combined "were fragments of the walls which had been made . . . of a circle of stakes, strengthened by wattle lashings inside and outside, against which thick clay is plastered, so as generally to hide the wattlework."

Thus the architecture and mode of construction of the houses in the medieval agricultural and industrial settlements are comparable with the present-day ordinary houses of the Shona and other peoples in the same region. Essentially the same house is built by the high-land Zulu and Sotho-speaking peasants in the Drakensberg foothill areas of Natal, among the Venda in the Northern Transvaal, and elsewhere in the Union of South Africa. In the case of those Venda people presently subject to Chief Mashau in the Letaba District of the North-Eastern Transvaal, there is a fortress, dominating but connected by stone-built passages with the ordinary dwelling houses, which is strikingly similar in design to those of the medieval Rhodesian settlements. Chief Mashau, his family and Councillors, still use the fortress as a royal residence and capital village of the people.

MacIver's conclusions on the "Niekerk" ruins are that "they were inhabited by a people who must have lived in perpetual apprehension of attack, and therefore protected themselves behind one of the vastest series of entrenchment lines to be found anywhere in the world."

There is unmistakable continuity from the culture of the medieval Rhodesian and Transvaal settlements to that of the contemporary African peoples both there and elsewhere in Southern Africa, although it is necessary to bear in mind important differences from one region to another, and the numerous migrations of peoples in the last years of the Karanga civilisation, after the Portuguese had disrupted the whole social economy of East and South-East Africa.[9]

At Umtali, MacIver found the structures on the whole similar to those at the "Niekerk" site, where, in addition, some fine soap-stone carvings of men, birds and animals were found. MacIver said of these artefacts that "their style of work is . . . quite African." Numerous metal implements and ornaments were also found at Umtali. In addition to the iron and bronze found at the more northerly settlements, a considerable quantity of copper was found here, indicating a southern site for the mining and working of this metal.

The results of later investigation indicate that it is probable that the foremost centre of medieval Bantu copper-working was in the Messina district of the Northern Transvaal. J. M. Calderwood has described "extensive ancient workings for copper ores extending over a considerable area . . . from the Limpopo southward for a distance of over 25

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[9]The agro-industrial Karanga civilisation, based on the exploitation of a rich metalliferous plateau, was destroyed by the Portuguese in the sixteenth century when they attempted without success to conquer it and to control its production of precious metals. When, however, the mineral wealth of Central and South America began to pour into Lisbon, the interest of the Portuguese in their hoped-for Eldorado in South-East Africa declined. The exploitation of American mineral wealth and of spice plantations in India led to a fundamental change in policy towards the African colonies. As mineral wealth was not easily produced they became a valuable source of cheap labour for the plantations of India, Brazil and the "prazo" estates of Portuguese colonists and officials in Mozambique and Angola. This profitable slave trade rendered the final blow to the once flourishing agricultural and mining economies of the medieval Bantu states.—Vide *Madagascar, or Robert Drury's Journal.* (London, 1729); Wadstrom, C. B., *An Essay on Colonisation* (London, 1794); Livingstone, D., *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa* (London, 1857); de Graft-Johnsons, J. C., *African Glory* (London, 1954).

miles." The results of his work have shown that "in the same neighbourhood evidence still exists of the copper ores having been smelted by the ancient workers. The bases of crude furnaces, broken clay pipes, slag, ashes and small pieces of ore have been found, and small copper castings have been obtained from natives residing in the district, which it is claimed were the products obtained by crude smelting operations by the old-time workers. . . . The workers appear to have extracted all the rich ore found at the surface and to have continued down by inclined excavations to a depth of about 80 feet in many places. . . . Small vertical shafts have been found, put down through the overlying strata to cut the copper lodes below, and in some cases connected with the larger inclined excavations. . . . The old workers appear to have employed fire to heat the hard rock faces, then cracked the rock by throwing water on the heated furnaces, using short roughly-made iron gads, operated by the aid of unshapen rounded stone hammers without handles, to break down the ore. . . . . When the ore was carried to the surface it is evident that it was broken up and cobbed down to eliminate rock waste, making thereby a rough concentrate which was ultimately carried to the smelting furnaces. Large heaps of this broken waste have been found around the excavations."[10]

In recent times, probably not later than the early nineteenth century, these mine workings were filled in manually. There is much evidence of this in many of the disused workings. Local tradition and historical accounts support these observations. The Venda say that at the time of the Zulu military invasion of their country in the early nineteenth century, their reigning monarch Ramabulana and the National Council "ordered all workings to be closed down and filled in."[11]

The ruins of Dlo-Dlo indicate what MacIver believes to have been a former fortified town. Here the limitations of the topography have been remedied by the construction of three solid defence walls, "rising one behind the other in tiers." These walls were constructed of small granite slabs of very regular size and shape, and mortar was extensively used. In addition to a large quantity of metallic artefacts, MacIver found at Dlo-Dlo some glazed beads, both coloured and plain, and two large fragments of Nankin china. In a large, layered kitchen midden he unearthed iron implements and weapons, bronze wire, a copper ring and bangles, and more fragments of Nankin china with blue patterns on a white background. MacIver considered that the discovery of this Nankin china ware and of various glass and other beads is of the greatest significance, because so far the antiquity of the Rhodesian ruins could not be scientifically established. He believed that the Nankin china fragments found at Dlo-Dlo are "of a style known to be not earlier than the sixteenth century A.D."

Another ruin known as Nanatali, sixteen miles east of Dlo-Dlo on a high hill, is of relatively small dimensions. Its most striking feature is a characteristic patterning in the walls. At the centre of the site there are the remains of a house erected on "a massive platform," so placed

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[10]Calderwood, J. M., MS quoted in Stayt, H. A., in *The Bavenda* (Oxford, 1931).
[11]Stayt, H. A., *op. cit.*, p.63.

that it overlooked both the whole settlement and beyond it across the girdle wall. This was probably the mansion of the ruling dignitary at Nanatali. In pits in the floor near the door of this mansion house MacIver found some fragments of large elephant tusks. It is known both from the Muslim and Chinese sources, and from the later Portuguese sources, that there was a considerable export trade in ivory from Sofala.

A further fragment of fluted blue and white china was found at Khami, about fourteen miles from Bulawayo. Glass beads, earthenware pottery and a circular lump of tin in a crucible were also revealed in the course of excavation. Altogether four minerals or alloys were in common use for the manufacture of metallic commodities, viz., iron, bronze, copper and tin. The large number of houses at Khami reflect the industrial and commercial importance of this town. Here the ores were brought from surrounding mines, and were smelted. The china ware and glass beads are relics of the imported goods received by the mine owners in exchange for mineral exports.

At Zimbabwe, the greatest and most famous of all the medieval Southern African ruins, the central, approximately elliptical, structure was at first thought to be a temple. Later, however, MacIver wrote that "the 'Temple' is evidently a fort, and may probably be regarded as an elaboration and development on a very large scale of the little stronghold built in the kopjes of Inyanga and the Niekerk Ruins." He thought that it was probably the "royal residence and . . . original capital of the Monomotapan State." He compared it to present-day tribal headquarters or "The Great Chief's Kraal." The massive outer walls of this royal fort are built of trimmed stones laid in careful courses without mortar.

In the foundations of one of the smaller houses in the vicinity of the royal fort, Hall had discovered some fragments of medieval Arab glass and Nankin china. MacIver found some white porcelain in the same place. In the kitchen middens under the cement floors of the palace houses MacIver also found sherds which were similar to those found above the floor level. He could thus find no material evidence in support of the current theory that Zimbabwe had earlier been occupied by a different race or national group, for "the people who inhabited (Zimbabwe) . . . when it was built belonged to the tribes whose arts and manufactures were indistinguishable from those of the modern Makalanga."

The main concentration of population at Zimbabwe was in the valley below the royal fort where there are remains of numerous houses, some great and others small. In the great houses of the valley "lived the wealthy traders who received the gold brought in from neighbouring districts and bartered it with Arab merchants from the East Coast." Though there is no evidence of mining operations at Zimbabwe itself the remains of extensive workings of gold, copper and iron have been found in the surrounding country. There is no doubt that Bantu Africans worked these mines, for, apart from internal evidence, there are corroborative accounts bequeathed by Portuguese writers. One of these describes the mechanism of labour recruitment and mining procedure. "When the Monomotapa wants gold he sends a cow to those of his

people who are to dig, and it is divided among them according to their labour and the number of days they are to work; each one extracts at the most a cruzado or a cruzado and a half a day." This mode of labour organisation is characteristically Bantu and is still to be found, though in a modified form, in most parts of Southern Africa.

The political ruler of the greatest of these states was known as the "Monomotapa" implying either the owner of the mines, or the owner of the mountain. Mineral mining was clearly the determining factor in the development of the medieval Karanga state. Advances in mining, smelting, and metal manufacture gave the Karanga a technological supremacy over their neighbours. By means of their improved tools and the power of the aristocracy over the common people great palaces and fortifications were constructed. The common people were obliged to send their sons to the king for military service. The army was employed to defend the state, to extend its boundaries when desired and where possible, to ensure the allegiance of numerous vassals and to preserve effective internal order.

The level of artistic expression and attainment at Zimbabwe corresponded with the developed industrial technique of its people. Among the outstanding productions so far discovered is a "soapstone beam finely carved with the figures of a bird and crocodile, and with the chevron pattern." In the section he called "the Western Temple," Bent found four soapstone beams carved at the top with figures of birds resembling an eagle or a vulture, in a sitting position.

Among the imported artistic items unearthed at Zimbabwe there is some oriental faience with a Persian inscription which, according to Persian scholars, dates back to the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries. Other items are thin green glass fragments, brilliantly coloured glass beads, and wheel turned pottery. The Chinese porcelain found here and at Dlo-Dlo has been identified as belonging to the middle of the Ming dynasty, about the beginning of the sixteenth century.[12]

In each of the medieval Rhodesian settlements "the huts constitute the essential part of the ruin in every case; the stone wall which the visitor so much admires is only the skin, the huts are the flesh and bone." MacIver continues: "As the prosperity and wealth of the African community increased, the two great strongholds (at Zimbabwe), the Acropolis and the Elliptical Temple, were built and the rich traders erected their luxurious houses in the valley between."

The character of the dwelling-houses in these stone ruins is unmistakably Bantu as are the objects of art and manufacture except for those which were imported by traders. Nowhere in the architecture, domestic or public, is there any "trace of an Oriental or European style of any period whatever."[12] In the case of pottery, grinding stones, gaming slabs, metal ornaments and various tools, there is a close similarity between the articles that were unearthed in the course of excavating and those of modern African peoples in the neighbourhood. Nor is there any evidence whatever to support the view that these African buildings were constructed "under the dominance of a foreign race."[12]

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[12]MacIver, *op. cit.*

Notwithstanding the far-reaching historical and sociological implications of the scientific discoveries and conclusions of the MacIver archaeological expedition, the opinions of popular writers on the origin and occupation of Zimbabwe continued to be based on unfounded and speculative notions. These emphatically denied both the possibility and the facts of their purely Bantu African past. The conclusions of MacIver were overlooked by many ethnographers and social anthropologists who continued to regard the various peoples whom they studied as though they were without any ascertainable history extending farther back than 150 or 200 years.

The next important archaeological contribution came twenty-five years later with the publication of the results of the Cambridge University Archaeological Expedition to Southern Rhodesia, led by Dr. G. Caton-Thompson.[13] In this work the author points out her debt to MacIver, but explains that his chronology required modification. This had become necessary owing to the considerable advances made in the intervening years in the scientific knowledge of the processes of manufacture, origin and chronology of glass, porcelain, and especially beads which are now regarded as "probably more sensitive chronometers of their period of actual service, than porcelain and glass can ever be." Whereas MacIver considered that in the case of Zimbabwe "the *earliest possible* date for *any* settlement there is the eleventh century A.D.," Caton-Thompson considers, chiefly on the basis of the research of Back, a bead specialist, that some of the beads found *below* the original floor level at which MacIver found his glass and china, have South Indian and Malay affinities "of about the eighth to ninth centuries A.D."

Further support for amending MacIver's estimation in favour of an earlier date has come from palaeontological research. Sir A. Keith studied human remains found in the various Rhodesian sites and concluded that all skeletal remains so far discovered are of the Negro (i.e., Bantu African) type. No trace of Arab, Egyptian, Hottentot or Bushmen remains have been found.

This evidence is regarded by Maufe as testimony that "the Bantu were distributed over Central and Southern Matabeleland as far back as the tenth century, so that the country was in a sufficiently peaceful state to allow its inhabitants to take part in mining operations."[14] This is important as it helps us to reconstruct the political organisation of Bantu society from at least the tenth and possibly the ninth century onwards. Of outstanding importance is the inevitable conclusion that the Bantu working these mineral mines had long since emerged from a tribal form of society based on a hunting and food-gathering mode of existence. Little, however, is known of the time and nature of the transition of these Bantu peoples to their new and more highly evolved industrial productive system.

The peoples surrounding the industrial Karanga appear to have been predominantly pastoralists following their herds in quest of new and fresh pasturage. Their mobility and the ease with which their

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[13]Caton-Thompson, G., *The Zimbabwe Culture* (Oxford, 1931).
[14]Maufe, H. B., *The Early Inhabitants of Southern Rhodesia.* (Salisbury, 1924).

military forces could be mobilised made these neighbouring peoples a constant source of danger to the settled communities of farmers, miners and craftsmen. It is clear that many of the peoples, such as some Mambo groups who bordered the Karanga Monomotapan state and who periodically led predatory incursions against it, were still pastoral peoples in the main.

What was the pattern of work and social relations in these medieval Bantu mining villages and trading centres? To answer this question it is necessary to inquire who were the owners of the mines and who were the workers. On the basis of the evidence available to us, derived from the reports of the Portuguese and the nature and situation of excavated material artefacts from the various Rhodesian and Transvaal ruins, it appears likely that the greatest stock owners, controlling the political machinery, were the only people able to provide the capital equipment and other outlay necessary to finance mining operations. It is further evident from the Portuguese and the later British descriptions,[15] and from the kind of gear found at the mining sites, that a considerable quantity of tools, fuel and other implements were required before actual shaft-sinking and underground extracting could begin. Moreover, it was necessary to mobilise an adequate and steady supply of industrial labour, and to remunerate this labour force. Only the great stock owners could commission smiths to manufacture the necessary hammers, mullers, aces and other metal tools, by paying them with cattle. Underground labour was conscripted by the officers of government acting on behalf of the supreme Karanga ruler, the Monomotapa, in some if not all cases. Whole families, including women and children, were impressed into this labour service. The workers were remunerated not with a part share of the gold or other mineral wealth they extracted, but with cattle or meat, in accordance with the number of labourers provided. The owners of large herds could afford such labour easier than others. Men owning small or no herds were unable to employ labour on the large and continuous scale required for industrial purposes.

In this manner the economic divergence between the great cattle and mine owners and the rest of the society grew. In the towns great fortified palaces were built for the mine owners and traders. The labourers lived in ordinary houses with walls of wattle and daub comparable with present-day huts of African peasants in the same area.

In the Portuguese chronicles Duarte Barbosa, who wrote before 1516, and other writers, state that the main payment for the metals and ivory exported from the kingdom of the Monomotapa was coloured cloth and beads. Barbosa wrote that some of the Africans of the Monomotapan kingdom and in the surrounding states "are great traders."

Caton-Thompson believes that this vital trade connection with India was "the primary stimulus which led to the development of the indigenous Zimbabwe culture." It is unlikely that mining and industry had been

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[15] At the end of the nineteenth century British pioneer adventurers in Rhodesia found and described specific instances of indigenous African gold mining at depth with "bucket, rope, wooden roof shaped by a narrow-edged axe, calcinated quartz, charcoal and mullers."—Selous, F. C., *Travel and Adventure in South-East Africa* (London, 1893).

non-existent prior to the commencement of the Indian trade, but there is no doubt that the securement of a steady market for Southern African commodities constituted a vital impetus that led to major developments in the scale and techniques of industrial production.

From time to time local aristocrats and nobles, backed by local traders, tended to rebel against the supreme authority of the Monomotapa who was invested with and attempted consequently to exercise rights of monopoly control over the export of gold and ivory to the foreigners on the coast. In a series of rebellions and secessions, the states of Quiteve, Chikanga and Sedanda emerged independent from the federal Karanga state. In the early sixteenth century Dos Santos reported that before the revolt and secession of these states, the "Monomotapa was . . . a much more powerful king."

Concerning the origin and the original inhabitants of Zimbabwe and other Southern Bantu settlement ruins, Caton-Thompson is in essential agreement with MacIver. "The ordinary black pottery," she states, "has remained unchanged from the lowest stratum to the present day, and challenges any assumption of intrusive culture eccentric to the whirligig of native movements." All the evidence of scientifically conducted excavation and examination of the artefacts "serves to emphasise . . . the uninterrupted continuity of 'Zimbabwe culture' down through the centuries."

SOUTH OF THE LIMPOPO

South of the Limpopo River in what is now the Union of South Africa, the agro-industrial pattern of development extended over a great part of the present Transvaal and Orange Free State. The paucity of archaeological enquiry prevents us from referring to likely pre-European Bantu material relics in Natal and the Cape Province.

In the Rooiberg, Weynek and Leeupoort districts of the Transvaal there is evidence of many hundreds of tin workings of the pre-European epoch. Trevor and Baumann estimated, after making careful field studies, "that two to three thousand tons of pure tin were mined," at Rockpoort in the Rooiberg district. Numerous other workings have been located in the Rooiberg area and along the Crocodile River. There was also evidence that bronze, and also a special bronze containing nickel, were made at Rooiberg. The smiths at Rooiberg had to obtain their copper elsewhere, as it does not occur locally. Thus the metal workers and manufacturers of various districts carried on a trade with one another to secure the necessary mineral supplies required for the forging of needed alloys. In the case of the Rooiberg smiths the supplies of copper were most probably imported from the Messina district. Several early prospectors and later investigators found that the district had been extensively worked by African miners in pre-European times. Trevor cautiously estimated from a portion of the old Messina workings that tens of thousands of tons of copper were extracted in that area alone. Workings have also been found in the Palabora (Phalaborwa) area north of the confluence of the Selati and Oliphants Rivers, and these were

found to be generally larger than those at Messina.[16] The shafts of some disused tin mines Trevor found to have reached a depth of seventy feet. In a nearby modern "location" of the Bapedi people he found many old copper ingots which were called "marali." These weighed about 2½ lbs. each, and were cast in the shape of a tobacco pipe. Ash and slag heaps were found near the copper workings in this area.

After surveying all the discoveries made until 1930, Trevor concluded that the Bantu peoples of South Africa had, before the arrival of Europeans there, mined gold, copper, tin, iron, red oxides and micaceous specularite. A survey of all the ancient mine-workings shows that "in Rhodesia the chief metal worked was gold; in the Northern Transvaal, copper, in the Bushveld, tin, iron ore, red oxides and micaceous specularite; in the Lydenburg district, gold and complex ores of gold and red oxide. The whole country within these areas has been most thoroughly prospected in pre-European times." Concerning the degree of similarity or dissimilarity in production methods and techniques, Trevor could not find "the least essential difference between the skill shown in working the Rhodesian gold mines and that shown in the work done in the Rooiberg or Wyneck tin mines, or in the Messina and Palabora copper mines."

The ruins of the most important medieval Bantu settlement south of the Limpopo were discovered on the last day of 1932, at Mapungubwe in the Northern Zoutpansberg. Excavations were conducted during 1933-35 under the auspices of a special Archaeological Committee of the University of Pretoria in the Transvaal.[17] Among the material objects found were gold beads, tacks, pieces of foil, wire, bangles and various ornaments. The gold is almost pure and very soft. There were also iron spearheads, coiled wire and tools, copper wire and tacks, a bronze object and some imported glass beads of Indian manufacture dating from probably the eighth century A.D. Fragments of Chinese celadon porcelain dating from the late Sung period were also found. Clay animal models found resemble closely those made nowadays in most parts of Southern Africa by Bantu children. A study of the vegetable remains has shown that with the exception of maize the vegetable foods of the inhabitants of medieval Mapungubwe differed in no way from those of the present Bantu inhabitants of the region. A study of the pottery found at Mapungubwe, made by J. F. Schofield, gave evidence of "two distinct traditional species of pottery on the site itself," and on other sites visited. One of the species showed a uniformly fine texture and finish, while the other is of coarser fabric and poorer finish. The conclusion of Schofield that this divergent pottery is evidence of two cultural streams overlapping one another is given further support from the report on the contents of the numerous human graves found at Mapungubwe. The finer pottery was found mostly on top of the hill in graves containing

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[16]Dart, R. A., "The Ancient Mining Industry in Southern Africa," *South African Geographical Journal* (Johannesburg, 1934), VII, p. 7 *f.* Trevor, T. G., "Some Observations on the Relics of pre-European Culture in Rhodesia and South Africa," *J.R.A.I.* (London, 1930), LX, p. 396 *f.*

[17]Fouche, L., ed. *Mapungubwe: Ancient Bantu Civilization on the Limpopo* (Cambridge, 1937).

several hundred ounces of gold beads and ornaments. This pottery and gold were almost certainly associated with a chiefly ruling group, related to the Shona-Karanga people of Zimbabwe in Rhodesia. The second group of Mapungubwe, with poorer pottery, different burial customs and an absence of gold ornamentation has been associated by Jones and Schofield with Sotho stock. This picture of social and economic stratification at Mapungubwe constitutes a major advance in our knowledge of the social organisation of the medieval Southern Bantu. The significance of the Mapungubwe material finds is increased by the conclusion that "the culture revealed at Mapungubwe is closely related to Zimbabwe."

DECISIVE EVIDENCE

White South African and other imperialist apologists, strenuously deny that the African people now living in the South of the continent have anything but a savage past. They depict the European conquest of the continent as an unmixed blessing for the Africans and for Africa, and either ignore the ancient evidences of African culture or claim that the mediaeval ruins were constructed by some people other than the present inhabitants—referred to by anthropologists as the Bantu.

The evidence that they are wrong is decisive. As I have shown there can be no scientific doubt that there was in Africa, south of the Zambesi, probably as early as the ninth century A.D., a relatively stable configuration of African (Bantu) societies, whose inhabitants were the forefathers of the people who now live in this area. Although they were at different levels of political and economic development, they carried on, in addition to animal husbandry and agriculture, mining of metals, the manufacture of metalware and trading on a large scale. They had many fortified towns.

The greatest owner of mines, the Monomotapa, established a hereditary suzerainty over several vassal states, and built his own capital at Zimbabwe (near what is now Fort Victoria in Southern Rhodesia). Here the royal and public buildings were of the greatest dimensions and most imposing design. The Monomotapan monarch commanded the largest and most efficient fighting force in the sub-Continent. He permitted a number of Asian traders to establish and maintain trading settlements in the eastern seaboard of his realm. The foreign merchants were at all time subject to the Monomotapa's favour and protection. The Arab, Persian and Indian traders were never able militarily to wrest power from the great African political societies of South-East Africa.

The availability of ready export markets in India, the East Indies and China provided a constant stimulus to the expansion of production and the development of industrial technique. The importation of loom-woven fabrics, glazed pottery, beads, glass and porcelain brought the Southern Bantu peoples, and in particular the wealthy ruling class in the major industrial centres into close contact with the older civilizations of the north and east.

It is clear from this brief introductory survey that a vast amount of work remains to be done on what amounts to a complete reconstruction of South African history. A complete examination of all the known source materials should be undertaken. There is an urgent need to continue the work among known and potential library resources in the Near and Middle East and in Europe. Thorough and systematic archaeological investigation needs to be carried on throughout Southern Africa.

The resources required for such large-scale scientific investigation are inevitably too great for private individuals. It is manifestly the task of a government or a private university, or of more than one such an institution working in unison.

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