THE SOTHO, SHONA, AND VENDA: A STUDY IN CULTURAL CONTINUITY

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Introduction

One of the puzzling problems for the student of southern African history is how to determine the nature and extent of the relationships among African peoples. The difficulty becomes more acute as one probes back in time to the earliest Iron Age, a period in which few research tools are effective. In this study, the early history and possible affinities among the Sotho, Shona, and Venda will be considered with the aid of those types of data, principally archaeological, that seem most applicable to the historical time and problem.

For the historian attempting to determine such relationships, cultural rather than genetic data appear to be more valuable. With the limited evidence available, it is presently impossible to ascertain the earliest origins of people and difficult to relate them to one another in terms of common ancestry. To a certain extent, however, broad cultural associations linking separate groups can be defined.

Through the identification of common or similar characteristics in two or more societies, the historian may tentatively associate the groups. Data derived from archaeological investigations, oral traditions, linguistics, and anthropological studies are useful to the researcher in such an exercise. The nature of contacts such as trade between different populations is also important in considering cultural relationships.

Methods

While a discussion of the methodology available to the student of pre-colonial history may seem overly negative, it is always important for a historian to be aware of the limitations of his methods and data. New means of collecting information about the past are being devised and old ones are being

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1. This paper was presented originally to a seminar in South African history given by Professor Leonard Thompson at the University of California at Los Angeles in 1968. Professor Brian Fagan of the University of California at Santa Barbara gave me considerable help and advice during its preparation. I am very grateful to him, to Professor Thompson, and to Professor Robert O. Collins of the University of California at Santa Barbara, who also read and commented on the paper.

African Historical Studies, IV, 1 (1971)
refined; at the moment, however, most of these are useful in studying the more recent past, but of less value when delving further back in time. The following discussion is an attempt to outline the limitations of the major methods of collecting data about precolonial African history.

Archaeological evidence appears to be the most valuable means of studying the early (pre-fifteenth-century or earlier) history of African peoples. Similarities in material culture (as evidenced by pottery, tools, beads, metal smelting and working) can suggest possible links among various groups. Pottery is the principal artifact for comparing societies and is used in attempting to trace cultural relationships. Building techniques and architectural styles are somewhat less useful for this purpose, although they are of some aid in comparing later peoples.

The value of archaeological data depends upon the extent of the excavations and the skill and knowledge of the archaeologist who interprets the material remains. In Rhodesia, the extensive investigation of several locations by competent archaeologists has provided a relatively clear understanding of Iron Age activities. Unfortunately South Africa has not enjoyed such interest, so the correlations between Rhodesian and South African cultures must be tentative.

The other types of data mentioned above are valuable in attempting to discover recent relationships among prehistoric peoples, but should be treated cautiously when studying periods more than a few centuries old. In non-literate societies there are no accurate records from the distant past of customs, events, and forces of change. Influences unknown to the modern researcher may have stimulated important modifications in beliefs and practices over many centuries. Thus it seems advisable to verify customary and traditional evidence of links among groups with more concrete data such as written records or similarities in material remains.

While in many parts of Africa oral traditions can be very helpful to the historian, in much of southern Africa they provide uncertain evidence for him to use, particularly in areas where tremendous political and cultural disruptions occurred during the early nineteenth century. Frequently they are confusing and contradictory. Many traditions of origin reflect relatively recent movements and provide little aid in identifying earlier homelands. Finally, memories are often inaccurate and traditions cannot be trusted as valid beyond a time period of several hundred years, if that long. With these reservations in mind, however, oral traditions can be used in some instances to supplement and illuminate archaeological evidence.

2. In the archaeological context, cultural relationships refers to material culture. Political and ritual links among groups cannot be determined with any degree of certainty during early times, but can be seen in the later periods of Venda and Shona history.
3. Among the Venda and associated peoples in the Northern Transvaal, many traditions cite a southern origin. These reflect the great uprootings of peoples during the Difeqane when Sotho and Nguni groups moved north to the Transvaal. Their earlier origins have been forgotten, however.
### Chart of Cultural Correlations Reflecting Possible Dates

All dates are A.D.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Rhodesia</th>
<th>Northern Transvaal</th>
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| **Earliest Iron Age** (Zimbabwe Period I) | Mahveni 180±120  
Zimbabwe Acropolis 320±150  
Gokomere 530±120  
Malapati 840±100 | Happy Rest                        |
| **Sotho** (Zimbabwe Period II) | Zhizo Hill 1040±130  
Leopard's Kopje 700±100  
Taba Zikamambo 870±100  
(L.K. I)  
(L.K. II) | Bambandyanalo 1055±65  
Mapungubwe Palabora  
Ten dates from 770±80 to 1890±120 |
| **Shona** (Zimbabwe Period III) | Zimbabwe 1380  
Great Enclosure  
Woolandale Farm 1310±90 | Mapungubwe 1380±60  
1420±60 |
| **Rozwi-Venda** (Zimbabwe Period IV) | Khami Ruins | Haddon  
Dzata  
Maryland  
Verdun |
RELATIONSHIPS AMONG THE SOTHO, SHONA, AND VENDA*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Southern Transvaal and Orange Free State</th>
<th>Botswana</th>
<th>Swaziland</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Serowe</td>
<td></td>
<td>Castle Peak 410±60</td>
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<tr>
<td>Toupye</td>
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| Melville Koppies | 1050±50 |  |
| Uitkomst Cave    | 1650±80 |  |
| Buispoort        |         |  |
| Rooiberg (?)     |         |  |

*Correlations are tentative and may be modified as additional archaeological investigations are undertaken. Vertical columns show a general progression from the earliest Iron Age cultures to later ones and reflect possible relationships among the Early Iron Age population, the Sotho, the Shona, and the Venda. Cultures that seem to be similar and broadly contemporary are shown horizontally.
Problems arise when applying other types of customary evidence to the study of early societies. Using linguistic data derived from modern peoples to show relationships among ancient groups may be of questionable validity. For example, can characteristics of modern Sotho languages be ascribed to people living in the eighth century when there is no recorded linguistic data from that period that can be compared to that of the twentieth century?4

Attempts to show associations between groups through similarities in political and ritual customs are suspect, too, when used for early periods. The Venda and people from the Great Lakes region may have similar practices now, but there is no way of knowing if one group derived its customs from the other. The similarities in their political structures may have resulted from the influence on both of a third group (the Shona, for example).

In attempting to determine the relationships among the Sotho, Shona, and Venda, all the methods of analysis discussed above can be used to study the Venda period and, to a certain extent, the later stages of Shona ascendency. For the earlier period of the Shona and that of the Sotho, however, only archaeological evidence provides concrete data. This paper is not meant to be an historical sketch of the Sotho, Shona, or Venda, nor of the three together, but of the possible relationships among the three peoples. The study stresses archaeological evidence primarily because it provides the only tangible data currently available on which to base possible cultural correlations among all three groups. Other types of data are used only briefly to illustrate their integration with archaeological information in studying intergroup relationships during later periods. As a result, this study does not utilize the literature on the oral traditions of the Shona nor that on linguistics. Instead, it concentrates on the archaeological evidence because it is the most relevant to all three cultural groups.

Terminology presents difficult problems in discussing ancient peoples. Modern linguistic terms used to designate different groups today are not very meaningful when applied to the population of the tenth century. Cultures cannot be placed in a neat time sequence -- some merge into others, some exist alongside others, some become extinct. In the following study, cultures in Rhodesia and South Africa that seem to be similar and broadly contemporary have been considered together. Where possible, an attempt has been made to show links between earlier and later societies, but these tentative correlations may apply to only one branch of the overall cultural group. Some peoples and areas discussed have been identified as part of a widespread cultural tradition, but are isolated within it because not enough work has been done to permit firm correlations to be drawn between them and other contemporary or succeeding societies.

4. Pottery, however, may sometimes show links between people living in the eighth century and those of the nineteenth or twentieth centuries. This illustrates the importance of archaeological data in attempts to correlate cultures. Material remains do provide concrete evidence from the distant past. Linguistic studies projected into early times can only be conjectural.
Trade

An examination of the processes by which contacts occur between groups and cultures is necessary for definitive analysis. Iron Age communities obtained the basic requirements of life through pastoralism, agriculture, and trade, and each of these pursuits provided contacts with external societies and ideas. In southern Africa, trade appears to have been a major vehicle of cultural expansion and change.5

During the southern African Iron Age, trade was of two kinds, each having different influences and effects on local societies. Long-distance trade occurred between people living on the east coast and the Africans of the interior. Through this medium the Iron Age economy of some parts of the interior was altered radically. Trade with the east coast created new demands: the Arabs and Portuguese sought gold, ivory, and other raw materials while the Africans prized beads, cloth, and china. An exchange developed that altered the nature of trade in the interior and that produced wholly new concepts of cultural organization.

Regional trade has been an aspect of life in Africa for several millennia and probably was the means by which knowledge of iron working was diffused. Once the Iron Age was widespread, the demand for iron ore and for finished iron objects stimulated trade. Salt was another principal requirement and article of exchange. The expansion of trade carried with it fresh ideas as well as new commodities. These aspects of trade should be borne in mind during the following discussion in order to better understand the nature of the relationships between, and the influences on, different cultural groups.

Survey of Archaeological Evidence

A survey of the archaeological evidence is a necessary prelude to a discussion of relationships among the Sotho, Shona, and Venda. The archaeological succession at Zimbabwe in Rhodesia provides a helpful context for understanding the cultural sequence in much of southern Africa, since the remains of the first Iron Age people are found in the lowest levels here. Although this culture cannot be identified firmly in relation to those that succeeded, it may have spread throughout much of southern Africa and perhaps was ancestral to later cultures.

Zimbabwe Period II incorporates a culture that seems to have been widespread in Rhodesia and South Africa. This population appears to have merged with a new group to create the tradition of Zimbabwe Period III, usually considered Shona. From this phase emerged the Zimbabwe Period IV, or Rozwi, culture, to which the Venda also belong. Using this brief sketch as a background, the archaeological pattern of southern Africa can be considered in greater detail.

Zimbabwe Period I: Gokomere

Gokomere is the type-site for Zimbabwe Period I. The Gokomere stamped pottery is described by J. F. Schofield as the earliest Iron Age ware of Rhodesia.6 This pottery tradition, which extends over much of Rhodesia to several sites in the Northern Transvaal,7 has been classified by K. R. Robinson as Zimbabwe Class 1 ware.8 Associated with it are remains of metal smelting and working, some field walling, a few beads, shells, and clay figurines.9 These early Iron Age people probably kept small stock, practiced some form of agriculture and perhaps traded with the east coast through local barter networks. Four sites of the Gokomere culture have yielded radiocarbon dates ranging from 180±120 A. D.10 to 840±100 A. D.11

J. F. Schofield suggests several other sites in the Transvaal and Botswana that might contain pottery related to Zimbabwe Class 1 ware.12 His perception of an evolutionary relationship between some pottery from Botswana and some from the Rustenburg District of the Transvaal13 is supported by the investigations of J. B. de Vaal at Happy Rest in the Northern Transvaal.14 These pottery links provide some evidence that peoples making Gokomere-type pottery lived in many parts of southern Africa, but there are no radiocarbon dates outside of Rhodesia that provide a possible chronology. Recent excavations at Castle Peak in Swaziland have revealed a few iron tools and pottery that may have affinities with Early Iron Age wares. A radiocarbon date of the fifth century A. D. was obtained. Castle Peak could be the most southerly site yet found of an Early Iron Age culture.15

7. Ibid., 90.
12. Sites in the Transvaal are Parma, Pont Drift, and Bambandyanalo; in Botswana, Serowe and Toupye. Schofield, Primitive Pottery, 90-91.
13. Ibid., 99.
K. R. Robinson suggests that Gokomere people came in contact with a new group, yielding the Leopard's Kopje culture\(^1\) which formed the next period of Iron Age occupation in Rhodesia. This appears to be a transitional stage that shares some characteristics with Bambandyanalo in the Transvaal. Robinson divided the Leopard's Kopje culture into three phases. The first is transitional between the Gokomere and Leopard's Kopje Phase II traditions and the third reflects Shona influence.\(^17\)

**Zimbabwe Period II: Leopard's Kopje I and II (Sotho?)**

Leopard's Kopje I is correlated with Zimbabwe Period II, partly on the basis of similarities in beads.\(^18\) Phase I pottery still bears stamped decoration. No stone walling has been associated with it yet, although stone grain bin supports have been discovered. Recent radiocarbon dates indicate that Leopard's Kopje Phases I and II may be contemporaneous, although culturally slightly different.\(^19\) Such a variation may have derived from economic or environmental changes or from contacts with new peoples.

Leopard's Kopje Phase II presents a more diversified pottery tradition than Phase I and exhibits beads of wound copper and several of the "garden roller" type found at Bambandyanalo and Mapungubwe.\(^20\) Stone walling of this variant resembles that of the lower levels of the Transvaal sites.\(^21\) These material similarities suggest that the Leopard's Kopje II culture existed over a large area; radiocarbon dates support the possibility that it extended south of the Limpopo.\(^22\)

In South Africa the equivalent stage of Iron Age development is generally thought to be Sotho.\(^23\) There has been too little archaeological investigation to make clear correlations between different areas and peoples, but some cultural associations are apparent.

22. See footnote 19 above. Bambandyanalo date is 1055±65 A. D.
Southern Transvaal and Orange Free State:

In the Southern Transvaal and Orange Free State, thousands of ruins yield evidence of Iron Age occupations. Two cultures that are probably contemporary have been identified in this area on the basis of differences in pottery and in stone building techniques.

Pottery from Uitkomst Cave, the type-site of this culture, is elaborately decorated and may be related to Leopard’s Kopje wares in Rhodesia. Iron Age dates for this culture of 1060±50 A.D. and 1650±80 A.D. indicate its long duration.25

In the Western Transvaal, Buispoort has been designated as the type-site for the second culture. Associated with it are stone enclosures and pottery that is less decorative than the Uitkomst variety.26 The stone structures that characterize both Buispoort and Uitkomst areas may be a response to local environmental conditions that permitted thatched roofs in the Western Transvaal but required stone roofs in the eastern area. Few Buispoort sites have been excavated, however, so that even these tentative ideas must be treated with caution.

Some stone structures in the Orange Free State show similarities with those of the Southern Transvaal while radiocarbon dates provide evidence for contemporaneous occupation of the two areas. Travelers reported that these settlements were occupied until the period of the Difeqane. Thus, a homogeneous (Sotho?) culture may have existed over the Southern Transvaal and Orange Free State for at least a millennium.

Northern Transvaal Mining Areas:

The Northern Transvaal metal working sites are difficult to classify because of insufficient archaeological evidence obtained from them. At most sites only a few sherds have been found and, since no systematic examination has been attempted, any proposed correlations must be speculative.

Palabora in the northeast affords a fascinating series of archaeological discoveries and radiocarbon dates. Charcoal from two mineshafts yielded dates of 770±80 A.D. and 1000±60 A.D. The Palabora sites include living areas as well as mining and smelting locations. Close similarities in pottery between the tenth and nineteenth centuries show that a homogeneous Iron Age cultural group occupied the area for an extended period. The tradition has been identified as

28. Ibid.
Soutpansberg: this food a obtain a trusive dates 31.
represent regions. 34.

The Messina copper miners, about whom very little is known, lived near Mapungubwe. Because there have been no published excavations at Messina, the dates of the workings and the cultural relationships of the miners themselves cannot be determined.

Other extensive metal industries occur southwest of Messina in the vicinity of Rooiberg and Waterberg. Schofield describes pottery from Rooiberg as sharing characteristics with "the stamped wares from Rhodesia and with the intrusive wares at Mapungubwe."31 There has been no systematic excavation in this area and cultural correlations can only be very tentative.

Tons of high-grade ore were extracted from mines at Rooiberg, but only a few ingots were found.32 The smelted tin may have become exchange used to obtain goods required by the tin miners. Perhaps those areas better suited to food production and cattle raising traded their edible commodities to the mining regions for the iron tools and copper ornaments that enriched their lives. If so, a constant interaction of goods, ideas, and techniques would have linked entire regions.

Soutpansberg:

In the archaeological context, the Soutpansberg is a part of the Rhodesian cultural complex. Mapungubwe and Bambandyanalo are the principal sites and represent two cultural traditions.33 The valley of Bambandyanalo, called K.234 revealed pottery exclusively of one tradition, M2. The site contains copper

31. Schofield, Primitive Pottery, 140-141.
32. R. Mason, Prehistory of the Transvaal (Johannesburg, 1962), 421.
34. The second excavator, Captain Guy Gardner, claims that the culture at K.2 was purely Hottentot, not Bantu, because the inhabitants were Hottentots and this would preclude their practicing a Bantu culture. He bases this theory on a study by Alexander Galloway of skeletons found at K.2 in which the skeletons were reported to be predominantly non-Negroid Bush peoples. Such a skeletal study, however, does not seem adequate for use as firm historical evidence since the bones were often in a very deteriorated condition. Some physical anthropologists question whether racial types can be determined from skeletal fragments (see G. M. Morant, "Mapungubwe: The Skeletal Remains," Antiquity, 13 [1939], 335-341, for a fuller discussion of this problem). In all likelihood, the Bantu immigrants did encounter and intermarry with Khoisan peoples in the Soutpansberg and elsewhere in southern Africa. The dominant culture was Bantu, however, although some Khoisan characteristics may have been incorporated into it.
ornaments, bone articles, and beads of the "garden roller" variety. Although iron and copper are scarce, there is some evidence that smelting took place.35 A radiocarbon test gives a date of 1055±65 A. D.36 Nearby at Mapungubwe, M2 (K.2) pottery was made alongside, and perhaps influenced, the later and finer M1 tradition.37

Correlations between the Soutpansberg and Rhodesia:

The M2 pottery from Bambandyanalo and Mapungubwe has affinities with wares from Leopard's Kopje Phase II.38 As at the two Limpopo sites, areas displaying Leopard's Kopje II characteristics are usually associated with stone stock enclosures sheltered by hills or rocks. The "garden roller" type of bead which occurs at some Leopard's Kopje Phase II locations provides another link with Bambandyanalo where it is quite common.39 If this bead were an exchange commodity, it might reflect the existence of trade relations between the southern portion of Rhodesia and the Soutpansberg. The material evidence cited above does suggest that the Leopard's Kopje culture or its influence extended to Bambandyanalo and Mapungubwe, perhaps as a result of trade.

In Rhodesia, Leopard's Kopje people lived in gold mining areas. Pieces of their pottery have been found in ancient mine shafts and they seem to have been the mine workers.40 The considerable variation in the value of the gold reefs worked could result from groups mining whatever reefs they could find in their own territories, despite their quality. Such a mining pattern indicates that communities were small and self-contained41 since a monolithic power structure would probably have exploited the richer areas to the exclusion of the marginal mines. Bambandyanalo also lacks evidence of a chiefly clan that exerted control over a large area. Neither Leopard's Kopje I or II sites nor Bambandyanalo contain remains of distinctive building or ritual objects that might indicate the presence of a ruling power.

The sequence of Iron Age events at this point can be understood more readily by a brief review of cultural relationships between Zimbabwe and other sites in southern Africa.

39. Ibid.
40. Ibid., 28.
Zimbabwe Period III (Shona)

Leopard's Kopje II potsherds and clay figurines resemble those of Zimbabwe Class 242 and suggest a relatively uniform culture over a wide area. The third period at Zimbabwe displays a number of new features resulting from the influx of new ideas. Pottery forms and decorations are different and clay figurines disappear.43 A change in the beads found probably reflects an increase in trade and wider commercial contacts. Robinson suggests that people bearing a superior culture may have conquered Rhodesia, thereby introducing these new characteristics.44

Relationships between Rhodesia and South Africa:

Leopard's Kopje Phase III exhibits many of the changes recognized during Zimbabwe Period III. Figurines disappear at the later Leopard's Kopje sites as they do at Zimbabwe. The pottery of Leopard's Kopje III has close affinities with Zimbabwe Class 3 and later Mapungubwe wares.45 Beads similar to those of Period III at Zimbabwe are associated with this pottery at many sites in Matabeleland and at Mapungubwe.46 The later tradition at Mapungubwe may have resulted from a southerly extension of Zimbabwe Period III people or perhaps from cultural exchange through trade. Dates from Mapungubwe of 1380±60 A.D. and 1420±60 A.D. conform to a date of 1380 A.D. from the Great Enclosure at Zimbabwe and to a date of 1310±90 A.D. from Woolandale Farm, a Leopard's Kopje III site.47 Shortly afterward the Zimbabwe Period III tradition ended in the north but it may have continued in the south for several more centuries.48 Thus, similarities in material remains, reinforced by radiocarbon dating, link the later period at Mapungubwe with Leopard's Kopje III and Zimbabwe Class 3. The increase in wealth that occurred during Period III at Zimbabwe also took place at Mapungubwe, providing further evidence that the Rhodesian culture had spread to the Soutpansberg.

Burials on Mapungubwe Hill contained quantities of gold and copper ornaments and beads. Elsewhere on the summit beads, weapons, iron slag, and metal ornaments were uncovered.49 Protected by stone walls, the Hill appears to have been an important ritual or chiefly sanctuary to which only a few individuals were admitted.

42. Summers, Robinson, and Whitty, "Iron Age Industries," 214.
43. Ibid., 327.
44. Ibid., 186.
46. Ibid., 18-22.
47. Stuiver and van der Merwe, "Radiocarbon Chronology," 56.
48. See P. S. Garlake, "The Value of Imported Ceramics in Dating and Interpretation of the Rhodesian Iron Age," JAH, 9 (1968), 13-34.
49. See Fouche, Mapungubwe.
The Limpopo sites were probably vital trade links because of their location in a copper, iron, and tin producing area. Their commercial prominence may have stimulated the development of a chiefly cult at Mapungubwe which controlled the flow of raw materials and/or finished products from the Transvaal to Rhodesia, and from there to the east coast. There is little indication of non-ferrous smelting on the Hill but excavators unearthed skeletons adorned with gold and copper ornaments. These ornaments might have been imported as trade commodities from Rhodesia or from neighboring areas in the Transvaal.

Such evidence, substantiated by other cultural associations, points to close ties between the Rhodesian and Limpopo sites. The Umzingwane River provides a possible route for this communication that might be verified by excavations along it.

Although the Transvaal contains gold deposits, the Iron Age miners worked only a few of these, concentrating instead on copper and tin. In contrast, gold mining was extremely important in Rhodesia. Arab demand for gold probably stimulated the search for and exploitation of gold reefs in the north, but this may not have extended south of the Limpopo. The Africans themselves seemed to prefer copper which is easier to work than gold; many more copper than gold ornaments have been discovered in burials and other deposits. Perhaps, then, the Transvaal peoples produced copper for Rhodesian communities as well as for themselves.

Mapungubwe seems to have been an important southerly location of Zimbabwe Period III, possessing its own chiefly clan and participating in both long-distance and regional trade networks. Through this means Shona peoples could have had contacts with the Sotho living in the Transvaal, but the extent, routes, and nature of these contacts cannot be determined without more archaeological data.

Zimbabwe Period IV (Rozwi)

At Zimbabwe, Period III was replaced by Period IV, the time of the most elaborate stone building. P. S. Garlake believes that "economic resources and a desire for ostentation ... must have stimulated this construction." The economic resources required for such a massive project would almost have to be controlled by a small group that could direct the goods and manpower to accomplish its own aims. Probably this was a ruling clan that regulated long-distance trade and through this power was able to accumulate considerable wealth.

52. See J. F. Schofield, "The Ancient Workings of South-East Africa," NADA (1925), 5-12.
The evidence suggests that a homogeneous culture accompanied by a changed political situation supplanted Zimbabwe Period III over a large area. The development of stone building and the greater variety of material remains that characterize this time\textsuperscript{54} indicate that this was a more advanced culture than the preceding one. The concentration of special stone structures and wealth at a few locations seems to show that one group had achieved power over many others. Segments of a ruling clan may have established themselves at locations throughout the kingdom, but these probably maintained some connections with a centralized authority. This change in itself suggests the arrival of new people possessing a stratified political structure, although it may have been just a clan aided by a superior culture or a slow infiltration of small groups, one of which gradually gained power.

The Khami Ruins in Rhodesia were occupied later than Zimbabwe and seem to have been built by a group related to the rulers of the last period at Zimbabwe.\textsuperscript{55} Beads from the ruins similar to types found at Zimbabwe indicate that long-distance trade had become a far more important activity than ever before. Perhaps these beads reflect a situation at Khami similar to that at Zimbabwe several centuries earlier in which the ruling clan or dynasty seemed to control commercial relations. Such a trade monopoly may have been an important factor in the rise of the Rozwi, as perhaps it was earlier with the Shona.

**Relationship between Zimbabwe Periods III and IV (Shona and Rozwi)**

At Khami, the Leopard's Kopje culture is stratigraphically beneath the Khami Ruins culture and thus is earlier. Probably it did not cease to exist when the new tradition supplanted it, but was absorbed or subjected by the newcomers. There is no evidence that earlier residents fled and established themselves elsewhere. Instead, the characteristics of their culture seem to have changed through external influences and then disappeared as the people of Zimbabwe Period IV dominated the area.

Culturally Zimbabwe Period IV seems to have evolved from Period III, keeping many characteristics of the former tradition. Thus it is likely that people of the Khami Ruins period were related to, if not one branch of, the Leopard's Kopje-Mapungubwe-Zimbabwe Period III population. This last phase is generally attributed to the Rozwi who ruled much of Rhodesia from about the fourteenth or fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries.

At Khami, the Hill Ruin seems to have been designed primarily as a residence for a chief. As such, it includes several features found at Zimbabwe and also at Mapungubwe. The Hill occupies a prominent position in the area and within the community, but the construction of the buildings demonstrates a desire for privacy and secrecy.\textsuperscript{56} Roofed passages lead to the chiefs' sanctuary at both Zimbabwe and Khami. Although Mapungubwe does not possess this

\textsuperscript{54} Summers, Robinson, and Whitty, "Iron Age Industries," 286.
\textsuperscript{55} Robinson, Khami Ruins, 115.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid, 114.
particular architectural trait, it did provide seclusion similar to that at the two Rhodesian sites. This suggests a further relationship between Zimbabwe Periods III and IV: the chiefly cults of both periods demanded privacy, which was perhaps a ritual requirement as well.

With the archaeological data, the additional fact that the Rozwi speak a Shona dialect makes it evident that they were a branch of the Shona.\textsuperscript{57} Unfortunately no linguistic correlations can be made with the late Mapungubwe population but the cultural remains provide strong evidence of Shona occupation.

Venda:

In South Africa, the Shona and Rozwi cultures seem to have been concentrated within the Soutpansberg area although their influence may have spread beyond. Near Mapungubwe, Venda exhibit ritual objects and pottery that are characteristic of the Khami Ruins (Rozwi) artifacts.\textsuperscript{58} These ruins also exhibit stone building techniques that are very similar to those employed in Rhodesia. Until the nineteenth century Venda and Shona peoples visited the same religious sanctuary but in recent times, the Venda have revered a similar shrine in their own area.\textsuperscript{59} A curious ritual feature offers further evidence of close ties between the two groups. Girls possessed by ancestor spirits speak a special language during their possession which they claim is Karanga,\textsuperscript{60} and according to C. M. Doke, Karanga is one dialect of Shona.

The cultural correlations between the Rozwi (Shona) and the Venda are strengthened by oral traditions. According to H. A. Stayt, all Venda traditions speak of migrations from the north. He supports this claim by the fact that there are many sibs among the Karanga in Rhodesia whose names have counterparts in Vendaland.\textsuperscript{61}

Relationships between the Venda, Rozwi, and Shona

According to tradition, the Senzi (Karanga?) moved from their pre-Rhodesian heartland to the land of the Nyai where they lived for three years, intermarrying with the indigenous inhabitants.\textsuperscript{62} The Nyai and Senzi probably combined cultural practices as well as blood, perhaps yielding Period III (Shona) in Rhodesia. The Senzi chief became the mambo (Monomotapa?). A succession battle between his two sons forced one, Mulozwi, to flee south where after many

\textsuperscript{57} See C. M. Doke, \textit{The Southern Bantu Languages} (London, 1954).
\textsuperscript{58} Schofield, \textit{Primitive Pottery}, 179; Robinson, "Khami Ruins," 114.
\textsuperscript{60} N. J. van Warmelo, \textit{Contributions towards Venda History, Religion and Tribal Ritual} (Pretoria, 1960), 141.
\textsuperscript{61} H. A. Stayt, \textit{The Bavenda} (London, 1931), 9.
\textsuperscript{62} N. J. van Warmelo, \textit{The Copper Miners of Musina} (Pretoria, 1940), 20.
adventures, he married the daughter of the Lemba chief. From there the Lemba and Rozwi (Rozwi) emigrated to Vendaland. Although the time sequence is telescoped, the events have meaning. Archaeological investigations indicate that the Rozwi were a part of the Shona, the people of Monomotapa. They were a branch of the ruling clan, in all likelihood, because they immediately established their authority over the southern portion of Rhodesia, maintaining a political structure apparently like that of the Shona. Venda and Rozwi pottery types are practically identical, indicating a common tradition. Probably the Venda broke away from the Rozwi and wandered south to the Sourpansberg.

Conclusion

A tentative relationship among the Iron Age peoples of southern Africa can be postulated from the above discussion. Gokomere potters have been identified as the first Iron Age residents and probably are ancestral to later cultures in Rhodesia and the Transvaal.

The Sotho appear to have lived in many parts of the Transvaal and Orange Free State at an early date. The pottery and radiocarbon dates from supposed Sotho sites suggest correlations with the Leopard’s Kopje culture in Rhodesia. Bambandyanalo and the lower levels of Mapungubwe also exhibit evidence of a culture similar to that of Leopard’s Kopje. Perhaps a widespread pattern of regional trade networks linked the Uitkomst and Buispoort peoples of the Southern Transvaal and Orange Free State with the mining areas of the Northern Transvaal and indirectly with the Leopard’s Kopje people of Rhodesia. In this way cultural traits might have spread throughout much of southern Africa.

In Rhodesia, Leopard’s Kopje Phases I and II seem to have merged with a new cultural influence that probably yielded the third period at Zimbabwe. This is generally considered to be the time of Shona ascendancy. The Shona appear to have extended their influence to Mapungubwe where it was manifested in M1 pottery and a chiefly cult. Archaeological evidence indicates that Mapungubwe was an important center in a trade pattern that linked the Transvaal and perhaps indirectly the Orange Free State with Rhodesia. Through this means, Shona contacts with the Sotho may have occurred.

Zimbabwe Period IV followed the Shona period and is represented at Zimbabwe and, in a later form, at Khami. The Rozwi were a clan of the Shona that attained power during Zimbabwe Period IV, perhaps partially as a result of controlling commercial relations. Archaeological and ethnological evidence demonstrate a close relationship between the Rozwi and the Venda. This would indicate that the Venda are a part of the larger Shona group. In the Transvaal, Venda people lived with Sotho and Shona.

63. Ibid., 52.
Tentatively, it might be proposed that the Sotho and Leopard’s Kopje people (who may be early Sotho or their counterparts) formed a part of the Shona. Political and commercial contacts probably resulted in intermarriage and, although no definite statement can be made, it is conceivable that the Shona in the Transvaal and the Sotho of South Africa mingled genetically as well as culturally. In Rhodesia, it is very likely that Leopard’s Kopje people and Shona intermarried. Finally, Venda can be considered a branch of the Shona. While concrete genetic links among the Sotho, Shona, and Venda cannot be demonstrated, cultural relationships do seem to occur.

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AFRICAN RELIGIOUS HISTORY NEWSLETTER

The African Studies Center at the University of California at Los Angeles is pleased to announce the inception of a biannual newsletter in the field of traditional African religious history, edited by Madoda Hlatshwayo and Terence Ranger. The first issue, to be published in March, 1971, will contain lists of research, notices of forthcoming conferences, and review articles.

Persons interested in the historical study of African religious systems are asked to write the editors informing them of their work or plans. Requests to be placed on the circulation list are also being accepted. Please write

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