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A COMPARISON OF THE COMMONER  
MATERIAL CULTURE TO THAT OF THE ELITE  
MATERIAL CULTURE AT GREAT ZIMBABWE



Dissertation presented in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MPhil (Masters) in  
Archaeology. | Supervised by Dr. Shadreck Chirikure

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## Declaration

This is to certify that the results and conclusions presented in this dissertation are my own and that where the work of others has been used it has been properly referenced. This dissertation has not been submitted for a degree at any other university.

Liesl Sonnenberg

March 2017

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This dissertation is dedicated to you, Dad.

## Abstract

This dissertation presents the results of a study done on the area situated outside of the Outer Perimeter Wall, believed to be the commoner area at Great Zimbabwe. The methodology used in this study combined archival with artefact studies and archaeological field work. The study aimed to acquire an understanding of the uses at the commoner area at Great Zimbabwe. Focus was aimed at material culture used by the underclass to understand how it compares with that of the upper class. The comparison between the elite and non-elite areas showed that there was not a large difference between the material cultures. The ceramic analysis showed an expansion of Great Zimbabwe over time. These results are important and offer a new perspective on the social stratigraphy of the Great Zimbabwe civilization. The differences found related to objects of power, such as stone walling and soapstone artefacts; these objects only being seen in the elite areas. This study offers a new perspective in the analysis of Great Zimbabwe, and the methodology could be used as a foundation for future studies of ancient civilizations world-wide.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

Archaeology as a discipline has its roots in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, forming part of European intellectual traditions during the Enlightenment period (Trigger, 1989). During this time, there was an enthusiastic antiquarian interest in curiosities from monumental sites such as Pompeii, Herculaneum, and among others, Egypt (Renfrew and Bahn, 2012). Following this antiquarian 'lead', early archaeological studies included excavations of cave deposits, and the ruins of old cities and towns, especially if a connection could be established between these and Biblical places. Sir Flinders Petrie who carried out large excavations at tells and remnants of cities in the Middle East and Egypt early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, personified the exploits of this period (Renfrew and Bahn, 2012). Over time, focus shifted to more recent towns and cities in order to achieve a better understanding of the factors involved in the evolution of complex social and political systems (Childe, 1957; McGhee, 1989). By the 1950s, Gordon Childe's work on the urban revolution formed the basis for understanding the social dynamics of prehistoric cities and towns world-wide (Childe, 1950).

Archaeology, evolved around ancient cities and their occupants. The majority of the occupants in these centres were 'elite'; their material culture held clues to how they lived. The common people who lived on the outskirts of monumental architecture have not been recognised as much in the archaeological interpretations or documentations of either capitals or extant empires (Sinopoli, 1994). The archaeological justification for the neglect of commoners is that elite social groups have a greater percentage of conspicuous material culture and are thus, comparatively easier to identify. Yet the bulk of the population emanating from common backgrounds must

likewise have left their mark on the landscape, even if these marks were of a more subtle nature (Maxham, 2000). Owing to this bias, the archaeology of states, capital cities and other places associated with power in the world only provide but half the picture of the past, because it is elite- centric. However, it is vital not to disregard these often marginal sites as they show how the society at large interacted with one another. They are the key to a better understanding of how societies have interacted and existed over time (Kim and Kusimba, 2008).

As mentioned above archaeologists tend to work on sites which they believe contain the most interesting finds, while still having ease of access and identification. For this reason many sites located in areas which are difficult to access have not been allocated the same amount of resources as sites with easier access. The same could be said about sites which are not easily recognisable. For example, initially, attention would also be paid to areas which can be seen to have been occupied, sites with visible housing, temples, cattle kraals etc. Sites which are not visible on the landscape, such as commoner areas, would not be tackled first, being more difficult to locate (Connah, 2001). This is especially relevant for African archaeological sites. It is for this reason that Connah (2001: 3) states, “As a result, archaeological distribution maps of Africa tend to show the distribution of archaeological research, rather than archaeological evidence”, as is seen in the study of elite areas, and those which consist of monumental architecture.

Monumental architecture has always been a source of excitement for archaeologists. They view it as a reflection of the greatness of civilization and its controlling elite. Elite who had the power to influence a great labour force needed for the acquisition of material goods to match their

affluence, such as monumental architecture. It also reflects an accumulation of wealth by the dominating class, as one would need a large sum of money in order to build such greatness and keep control of the labour force, and is a sign to archaeologists of the society reaching complexity (Pwiti, 1996).

Many places once occupied by common people have been transformed by modern occupation, eradicating much of the valuable evidence they might have held. When Wal-Mart planned a new supermarket on the outskirts of the ancient Mexican city of Teotihuacán in 2004 the developer cautiously avoided the monumental Sun and Moon pyramids because they are celebrated as an essential aspect of Mexican heritage (New York Times, 17.12.12). By comparison, the area occupied by non-elites in the ancient city had suffered years of neglect and before the construction of Wal-Mart was buried under small pueblos and farm fields. According to Mexican archaeologists, the supermarket was eventually sited on an area believed to be an ancient commoner settlement and burial ground: allowing the Sun and Moon pyramids to remain in all their splendour and sacrificing something else, which happened to be the where the commoner people resided. (New York Times, 17.12.12).

The same observation can be made about other regions associated with early civilizations such as Egypt, the Middle East and the Indus Valley (Trigger, 1989). Most, of what is known about these sites relates to the ruling classes, whose remains are easily definable through the trait lists put forward by Gordon Childe in the 1930s. Childean traits include monumental architecture, prestige goods, literacy, evidence of bureaucracy and evidence of trade and exchange. In sub-Saharan Africa, studies of ancient cities have focused on elite areas and have drawn extensively

from the Childean framework, from Djenne Djénno in Mali through to Oyo in Nigeria, Khami in Zimbabwe and to Mapungubwe in South Africa (McIntosh and McIntosh, 1999; Connah, 1987). In the studies done on ancient Nubia, excavations have tended to focus more on tomb, palace and temple. Since the 1960s when the construction of the Aswan High Dam occurred, including the formation of Lake Nasser, some attention was paid to settlement sites, yet still there are sizable gaps in the archaeology (Connah, 2001). In Ethiopia, attention has been focused on sites which include Aksumite architecture. Excavations done on residential buildings identified some which were elite and others which housed the ordinary folk (Munro-Hay, 1995; Connah, 2001). In the West African Savannah most research has been conducted within the city walls. In its forests, attention has been focused on sites which were historically documented; this is a result of the difficulty of forest excavations and site location, and reluctance by archaeologists to attempt to locate unknown sites (Connah, 2001). In Ghana, archaeological research has been limited to the Shai-Hiowey royal palace which has yielded numerous samples of imported European goods (Anquandah, 1995).

Most of these elite areas, like their counterparts elsewhere in the world, initially attracted treasure seekers and antiquarians with professional archaeological interest developing as an appendage. Sites which are devoid of monumental architecture, or do not reveal objects of conspicuous consumption and were known to be populated by the common people, have generally been neglected by archaeologists, exposing them to the devices of those who wish to use the land for the purposes of development.

This problem, having long been acknowledged by archaeologists, has resulted in a few recent researchers taking up this challenge (e.g. Hall, 2001, 2000, 1993; Bredwa-Mensah, 1999; Alexander, 2001; Handler and Corruccini, 1983). Dedicated surveys have been undertaken to locate rural homesteads and excavate them in order to better understand the people whose past has been disregarded. For example, analysis of slave remains found in the slave lodges at Vergelegen, Cape Town, illuminated the diet and nutrition of slaves and the underclass at the Cape in the eighteenth century (Sealy et al, 1993). Other studies, focussing on the backyard areas of privileged white home owners in the Cape Town city centre have given us a better understanding of the material culture belonging to slaves (Hall and Markell, 1993), although being primarily attempts to investigate the identity of the residents of these homesteads and to understand the structure of their daily lives. When compared to studies on the topic of slavery, in which there has been a surging global interest, archaeological studies dedicated to a better understanding of free people at capitals and other elite areas are still worryingly few (e.g. Maxham, 2000; Joyce et. al., 2001). In the context of southern African research, Huffman (2014) has done an analysis on “the relationship between Leokwe and Leopard’s Kopje people” (Huffman, 2014: 101). He analyses the differences and relationships between the elite Leopard’s Kopje people residing at K2, which is located in the Mapungubwe National Park, and the commoner Leokwe population residing at what is now known as Leokwe Main Rest Camp, also found within the Mapungubwe National Park.

Despite a slow shift in this direction by international research and an even slower shift in southern Africa, little has been done to investigate the commoner residences at significant places such as Great Zimbabwe, Mapungubwe and other state capitals in southern Africa. This

dissertation seeks to begin to correct this imbalance by considering the non-elite at Great Zimbabwe.

## *1.1 Definitions*

This study has encountered the following terms: Elite; Commoner; Inner Perimeter Wall; Outer Perimeter Wall. For informative purposes definitions are provided below.

**Elite:** For the purpose of this dissertation is defined as those born into a noble or wealthy lifestyle; members of a society who no longer worked the land in order to gain access to goods (Masson and Lope, 2004; Calabrese, 2000).

**Commoner:** Those people who would have made up the remainder of the stable population of a society. They would not have been considered part of the noble upper class (Urban Dictionary, accessed 01.06.17), those that had to work the land in order to gain access to goods.

An important aspect to bear in mind is that culture, social constructs and identity are not static, rather, they evolve dramatically over time. Identities are conditional on the social climate of their environment (Stone, 2003). In this regard one should keep in mind that an individual or a family group's social standing could change over time. This does not mean that an individual could be born a commoner and die a King, only that circumstance could shift positively or negatively with time.



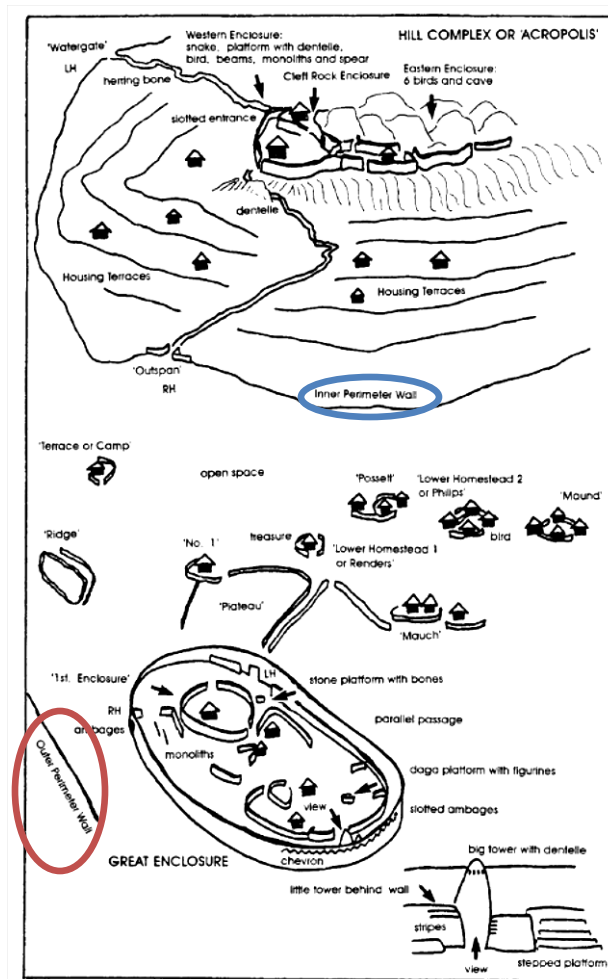


Figure 1.1: Great Zimbabwe Central area showing the Inner and Outer Perimeter Walls. Taken from Beach, 1998.

**Inner Perimeter Wall:** Circled in blue. The inner wall surrounding the Hill Complex.

**Outer Perimeter Wall:** Circled in red. The wall surrounding the stone-walled sites, situated beyond the Great Enclosure.

## 1.2 Background to the archaeology of Great Zimbabwe

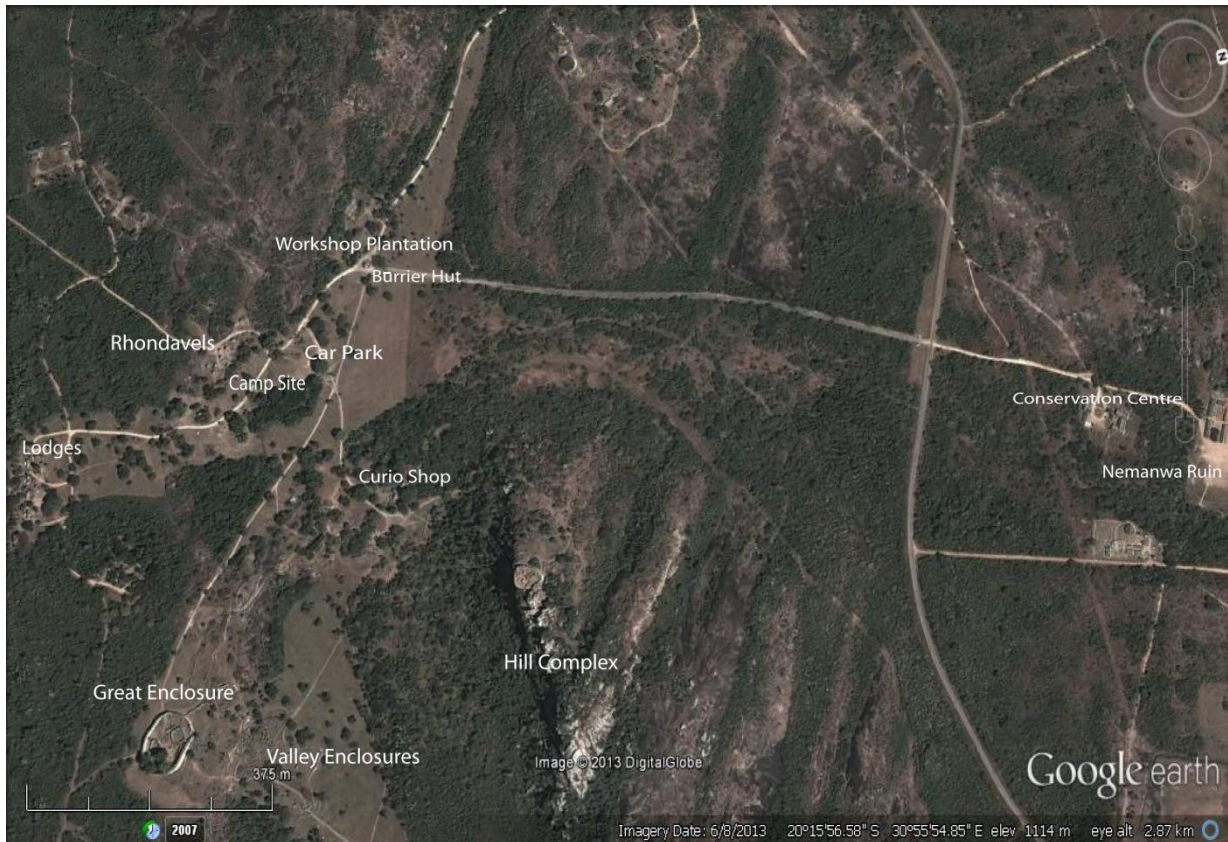


Figure 1.2: Google Earth image of Great Zimbabwe, showing the Hill Complex, Valley Enclosures and the Great Enclosures. Included is the area that would have been occupied by the commoner population. (Accessed, 24.09.13)

Great Zimbabwe is one of the most impressive and well known archaeological sites in Africa south of the pyramids (Hall, 1987). Archaeologists believe that it was built by ancestors of the modern Shona people between AD1200 and AD 1500 (Collett et al., 1992). Great Zimbabwe has two important components – the dry stone walled area on the hill and the valley below including an occupied area outside the enclosures. According to Huffman (1996), while the elites lived in the walled areas, the commoners occupied the un-walled areas; with an Outer Perimeter Wall separating the two (Figure 1.3). The total population during Great Zimbabwe’s florescence has been estimated at 20000 most of whom were commoners living outside the enclosures.



Figure 1.3: View from the Hill Complex downwards to the area outside the Outer Perimeter Wall which is said to have housed the commoner population. Photo: Liesl Sonnenberg

Since the late nineteenth century, when the site was first visited by European explorers, all the research attention has been paid to the area's inside the monumental architecture of the Perimeter Walls. Antiquarians such as R. Hall (1902) ransacked the deposits, collecting valuables and curiosities from within the enclosures and argued that they were of exotic authorship. In trying to repudiate these absurd claims, professional archaeologists restricted themselves to the stone walls thereby ignoring the areas where the non-elites had lived (MacIver, 1906; Caton-Thompson, 1931; Summers et al., 1961; Huffman, 1972; Collett et al., 1992).

For over a century of archaeological encounters with Great Zimbabwe, little attention was paid to the living space of those labelled as the 'commoner population'. The history of activities in this area amply demonstrates this lack. Early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the area outside the Outer Perimeter Wall was turned into a golf course without any effort to salvage the archaeological evidence which it might have held. It was believed that tourists required extra attractions while not viewing the magnificent architecture which comprises the visible ruins of Great Zimbabwe.

In more recent times, it has been transformed into a National Park with sections of the commoner area altered to accommodate the tourists and visitors to the site. After independence in 1980, this area continued to be neglected and presently hosts a car park, fees gate and maintenance workshop (Figure 1.1).



Figure 1.4: The remains of the Outer Perimeter Wall. The forefront of the image is situated within the Perimeter Wall and the background area is situated outside the Perimeter Wall which is said to be the area designated for the commoner population. Photo: Liesl Sonnenberg

From 1980 onwards, the administrators at Great Zimbabwe noted the high concentrations of material culture outside the Outer Perimeter Wall. Rescue excavations were conducted in an attempt to save some of the evidence of material culture in these areas. In addition, Huffman excavated the area that now houses the site museum and curio shop during the years 1972-1976. Huffman did not publish any information on his own excavations, nor did he deposit the excavated material in full with the National Museums. However, frugal bits and pieces of data from his excavations were published by Thorp (1995), who carried out a comparative study of

fauna at the site. Miller (2002) also investigated objects from Huffman's excavations. In the late 1980s the then resident archaeologist David Collett excavated a house floor near the modern fees gate known as the Barrier Hut. The artefacts were archived in the Great Zimbabwe Conservation Centre without any further studies. The area which now houses the camp site (Figure 1.4), was subjected to an impact assessment with the resulting salvaged material being deposited at the Conservation Centre. The National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe Artefact records reveal that close to a dozen researchers have carried out work in the commoner area: Chipunza excavated the Aloe Gardens which straddles the inside and outside of the Outer Perimeter Wall, while Collett and Chikumbirike dug respectively the Chenga Ruins and the area previously used as the Golf Course. Nemanwa Ruins, located adjacent to Nemanwa Primary School, was excavated by W. Ndoro and K. T. Chipunza in the early 1990s (National Museums and Monuments Artefact Records, accessed 27.06.13). No records of these excavations were ever published. The material culture was removed from the site and placed in boxes which were then stored at the Conservation Centre.



Figure 1.5: The camp site at Great Zimbabwe (<http://www.raka.co.za>; accessed 15.10.13)

Many other areas outside the Inner Perimeter Wall have been transformed during the construction of infrastructure to support tourists. Roads and pathways run over Hut floors and other living areas, thus negatively impacting on the material culture which was deposited there. A parking area, just outside of the entrance to Great Zimbabwe is situated on top of material remains (Figure 1.5). An examination of the records shows no evidence of any impact assessments having been done before the area was transformed, although the National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe used to cover the eroding structural remains with sand (Chikumbirike pers comm.). There seem to be no reasons why these sites were destroyed or whether there was important material culture which should have been preserved. An assumption might be inferred that material objects found beyond the confines of the monumental stone enclosures have historically been deemed to have less value than those from within the walls.



Figure 1.6: The parking lot and ticket house at Great Zimbabwe, situated on the commoner area. Photo: Liesl Sonnenberg

The story of Great Zimbabwe is thus consistent with those from other, ancient elite centers in the world. From antiquarians in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the researchers of the present, an over

abundance of research effort has been invested in the walled areas, believed to have been the residence of the elite, with a total neglect of the commoner area. This omission means that the story of Great Zimbabwe told today is incomplete because it excludes the culture of a major proportion of the populace. Against this background of commoner area neglect, this dissertation seeks to achieve the following aims:

1. In the first instance to understand the historical uses of the commoner area at Great Zimbabwe. This will be done through an analysis of the maps produced of this area and by consulting published works relating to the site.
2. Secondly, to identify and classify the ceramics found in the commoner area at Great Zimbabwe by means of an analysis of diagnostic ceramics excavated from the Barrier Hut site, Nemanwa Ruins and the Workshop Plantation. All of these areas are located outside of the Outer Perimeter Wall.
3. Thirdly, to develop a proxy chronology of the commoner area using pottery typology and a framework initially developed by Robinson (1961a) and subsequently modified by Huffman and Vogel (1991).
4. Fourthly, to analyse objects from the elite area. Three sites were used, namely the Great Enclosure, the Hill Complex's Western Enclosure and the Maund Ruins.
5. Finally, this dissertation aims to compare the material culture of the non-elite areas to that of the elite areas in order to achieve a better understanding of the distribution of various activities at Great Zimbabwe.

These aims will be pursued using a methodological framework that combines archival with artefact studies and archaeological field work. Published data on Great Zimbabwe was consulted to understand the evolution of activities of the different areas. Field walking took place at the Great Zimbabwe site to explore and identify instances of material culture in the commoner areas which were recorded. The observations following these were combined with the analyses of objects in the Great Zimbabwe Conservation Centre. In this way, it was hoped that a robust view of the commoner area would become evident thereby allowing a useful comparison with the well-known elite area. Comparative data on the elite areas was studied from Caton-Thompson (1931), Summers et al. (1961), Garlake (1973) and Collett et al. (1992).

### *1.3 Organisation of Dissertation*

Chapter 2 deals with published data on Great Zimbabwe and is divided into three main sections. The first focuses on explaining material culture theory and the conceptual framework being used in this dissertation. A summary of the archaeological attention paid to the site follows, its focus being the origins debate, sequence building and dating of the site and how these evolved. The last section covered in this chapter focuses on the emergence of cognitive interpretations drawing on the works of Huffman, the responses to his approach and the attempts to consider areas outside the stone walls. Chapter 3 explains the methodology of data collection and its analyses which is focused on that of ceramics. An outline of the resulting observations made from the collected data is recorded in Chapter 4. This is followed by a comparison of the recorded ceramics with that of K. Robinson's delineated ceramic typology. In Chapter 5, the information



that has been gained within the previous chapters, including a comparison of other material culture from the commoner area to that of the elite areas is discussed with concluding remarks.

## Chapter 2: What do we know about the commoner area at Great Zimbabwe?

### 2.1 Introduction

The following historiographical account examines the nature and extent of archaeological work carried out at Great Zimbabwe over the last century. It is based on an extensive review of primary publications which resulted from past excavations at the site. The efforts of later researchers who reanalysed the material culture from the earlier excavations, constituted a further source of information. Unpublished sources curated at the Great Zimbabwe Conservation Centre were also consulted. An audit of this nature facilitates the identification of areas previously neglected, yet having the potential to complement current research and are therefore worthy of conservation.

### 2.2 First European Contact with Great Zimbabwe

*“Zimbabwe is a Shona word that is usually taken to be a contraction of ‘dzimba dzamabwe’, ‘houses of stone’. However, the word is probably better derived from ‘dzimba woye’, literally ‘venerated houses’ and hence usually for chiefs’ houses or graves” (Garlake, 1973: 7).*

In 1871 German explorer, Carl Mauch drew the western world’s attention to Great Zimbabwe. Mauch found the location after gaining information about its existence from a man named Renders. His notes gave evidence that suggest his discovery was the outcome of a search and not

an accidental find (Fontein, 2006). Based on earlier speculative ideas by the Portuguese, Mauch believed that Great Zimbabwe's origins were exotic in nature. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Europeans believed that Bantu populations were recent immigrants to Southern Africa so Mauch's discovery sent writers into a frenzy of comparing the Ruins to those of Solomon's Temple or the domain of the Queen of Sheba (Hall, 1982). Ideas of a foreign origin for the Great Zimbabwe Ruins were transformed by European ideology into a justification for colonization and were used by Cecil John Rhodes to justify Shona subservience, and the moral rectitude of colonization (Fontein, 2006).



Figure 2.1: Valley Enclosures and the Great Enclosure, taken from the Hill Complex. Photo: Liesl Sonnenberg

In 1889, following Mauch's 'discovery', the Ruins were visited by the Posselt brothers, Willi and Harry who were on a treasure hunt. Their search started in the Great Enclosure which yielded nothing of great economic import. Moving to the Hill Complex, they 'discovered' four soapstone carved birds. One of the birds was taken as a prize and later sold to Rhodes. The brothers conducted no formal excavations as they were only interested in the economic gains which might have been forthcoming from the site (Summers, 1965).

The year 1891 sparked an assortment of projects funded by Cecil Rhodes himself which culminated in a commission for the explorer Theodore Bent to visit and investigate the Ruins. This was done in conjunction with the Royal and Geographical Society and the British Association for the Advancement of Science. Bent had no archaeological experience; he was an amateur with antiquarian inclinations (Fontein, 2006). Interest in these early times was confined to the walled areas and the treasure that they were believed to hold.

### *2.3 Origins Debate: local verses external origins*

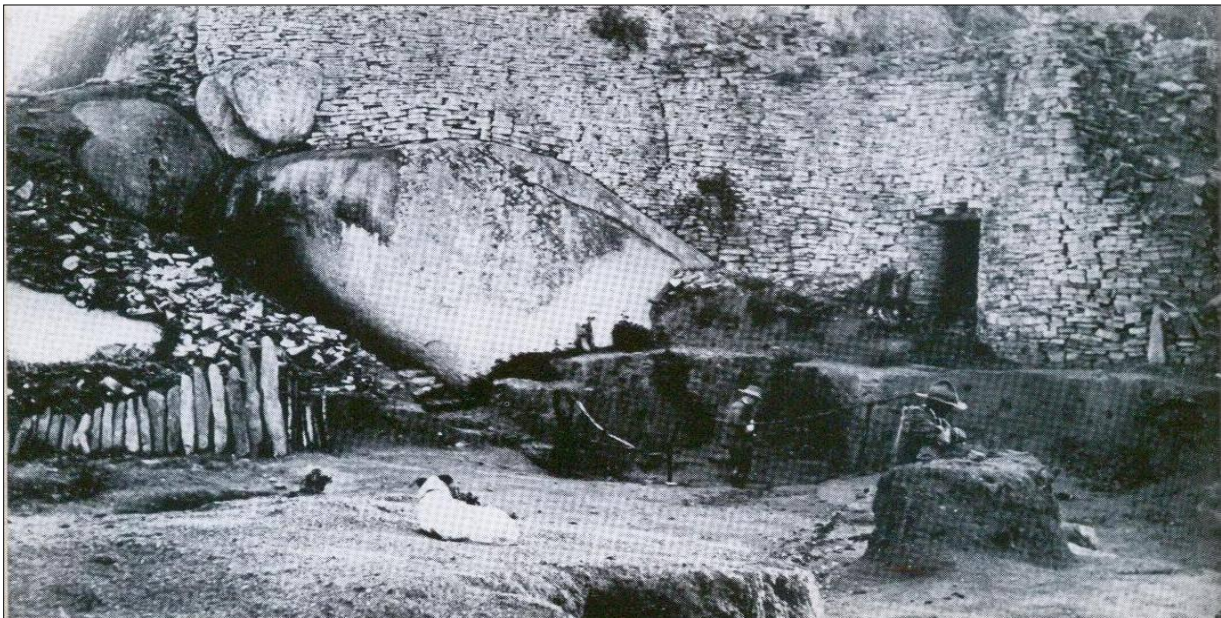


Figure 2.2: The Western Enclosure part of the Hill Complex, soon after Hall had completed his excavations. Image taken from Garlake (1973).

The exotic origins theory encapsulates the ideas that African people were not only incapable of having built Great Zimbabwe, but rather that a more advanced civilization was responsible for its existence. Such racist ideas were the backbone of one side of what was to become known as the ‘Zimbabwe Controversy’. These ideas of exotic origin were formally introduced by Bent, who had spent time during his life travelling the Mediterranean, tracking down information on

the origins of the ancient Phoenicians. When he was sent to Great Zimbabwe, he took with him preconceived ideas about the origins of the Ruins and the civilization that built them. Foremost was the belief that the builders were not of African descent.

Bent excavated in June 1891 and his subjective attitude led him to the conclusion that the carved birds and other soapstone artefacts found in the eastern Enclosure in the Hill Complex provided evidence that foreigners had built the Ruins. No similar objects had ever been seen in sub-Saharan Africa (Bent, 1892; Garlake, 1973). The next excavator of Great Zimbabwe to publish his results and conclude that the Ruins were exotic in origin was Richard Hall in 1902. His motives included the aspiration of unearthing conclusive evidence of the original occupants of the site (Ndoro, 1994). By the end of his excavations Hall held to the theory that these Ruins were probably ancient Semitic in origin. He made various comparisons throughout his book in an attempt to show how the artefacts from Great Zimbabwe resembled those found in the Semitic region (Hall, 1905; Garlake, 1973).

The complete disbelief that Great Zimbabwe could be African in origin resulted in any indigenous material culture being dismissed as unimportant by the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century explorers. This point of view facilitated the destruction of most of the archaeological evidence within the stone walled areas. Thus, when Major Sir John Willoughby, in 1892 carried out an excavation at Great Zimbabwe, his efforts brought about the devastation of three ruins in the valley. He then progressed to an area just inside the north-west entrance of the Great Enclosure. His main intent had been to carry out his research as quickly and as thoroughly as possible,

performing this task by gutting the Ruins where he had excavated thus leaving nothing behind for future generations of researchers.

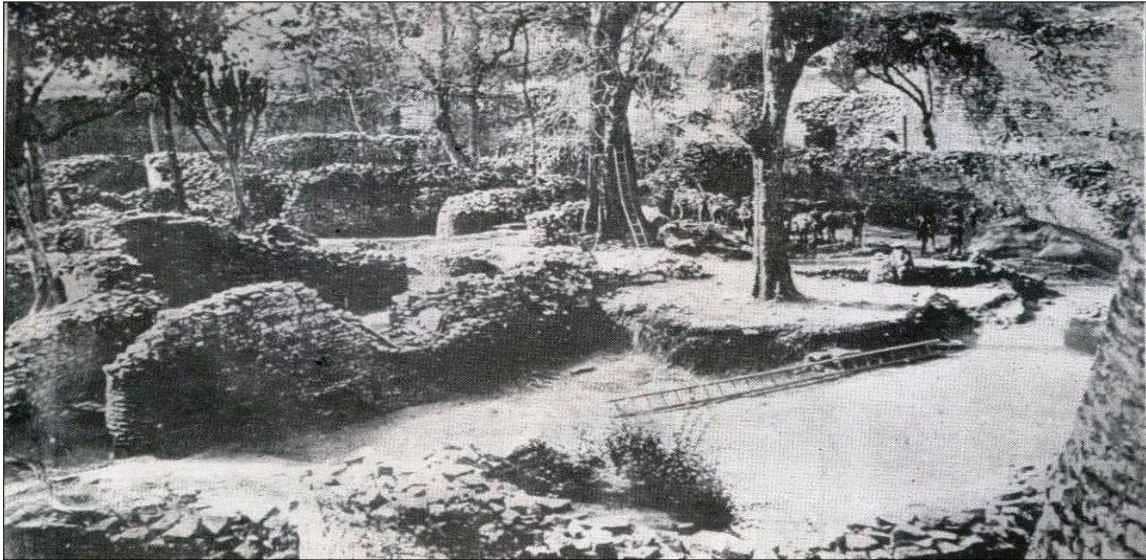


Figure 2.3: The Great Enclosure after Hall's excavations. Taken from Hall (1907).

Hall, following Willoughby, systematically moved through the Great Enclosure, the Hill Complex and most of the Valley Enclosures, digging his way through the sediment; down 3-5 feet in some places and up to 12 feet in others. All of this material contained archaeological remains but most were disregarded. His actions left only remnants of the archaeological deposits which had filled the walls; this would prove to be a constraint on all future research done at this site (Garlake, 1973). Hall believed that the Ruins were constructed by some foreign civilization so he had no scruples about digging through the daga hut floors which owed their presence to indigenous populations. Many of the artefacts that could not be proved to be of a foreign nature were discarded (Ndoro, 1994).

All these men believed in the exotic origins theory, although their excavation results did not seem to corroborate this hypothesis. Due to this anomaly another theory came into existence, which argued in favour of indigenous origins; stipulating that Great Zimbabwe was constructed by Africans and lived in and controlled by Africans. These ideas were based on the work of the first generation of professional archaeologists to work at Great Zimbabwe, beginning with David Randall-MacIver in 1905. The British South Africa Company (B.S.A. Company) employed trained archaeologist Randall-MacIver who had been instructed by the venerable Egyptologist (Sir) Flinders Petrie himself. He therefore had an academic quality background in conducting professional excavations and his results reflected this new approach (Summers, 1965). He was instructed to view great Zimbabwe and report back to the Committee at their next meeting. The project was funded by the Rhodes Trustees (Garlake, 1973). Randall-MacIver had decided to abandon previous findings made by his predecessors; attempting rather to view the site as if he were the only archaeologist to have visited Great Zimbabwe. After his studies were completed, he concluded that Great Zimbabwe was a medieval Bantu site and therefore could not be accredited to King Solomon or the Queen of Sheba, or any other foreign colonist (Randall-MacIver, 1906; Summers, 1965).

Randall-MacIver was followed by the very experienced and meticulous Gertrude Caton-Thompson in 1929. Having completed her excavations, Caton-Thompson concluded that there was still “not one single item that is not in accordance with the claim of Bantu origin and medieval date” (Caton-Thompson, 1931: 199). In the 1950s Great Zimbabwe was analysed by a three man team comprising, K. R. Robinson, who was at that time the Inspector of Monuments, Anthony Whitty, an employee of the Monuments Commission, and Roger Summers, a trained

archaeologist, who had received his training at the London Institute of Archaeology. The primary purpose of their investigation was to compile a ceramic sequence for this site (Garlake, 1973). Once completed, the sequence also substantiated a medieval time line for the site of Great Zimbabwe and supported the theory that it was indigenous in origin. Later, in 1968, Peter Garlake published an account of his own research done on the exotic imported goods found at Great Zimbabwe, and through this study inferred a time period of the major occupation from the thirteenth until the fifteenth century (Garlake, 1968; Huffman and Vogel, 1991).

In summary, it was now established beyond doubt that Great Zimbabwe was local in authorship. The origins saga however is an important landmark in understanding the development of archaeology as a discipline and how dominant ideas from Europe were used to expropriate a past from its owners, and ultimately, to justify colonialism. It also extended the interest placed on elite areas at this site.

#### *2.4 Sequence building and dating at Great Zimbabwe*

There had been some controversy over Caton-Thompson's analysis of Great Zimbabwe's material culture. Inaccuracies had become apparent during the 1950s when better dating methods and a more concise ceramic analysis became available. It was for this reason that in 1958 K. R. Robinson, with the help of A. Whitty and R. Summers, resumed work at Great Zimbabwe. As stated: the main aim of their investigation was to compile a ceramic sequence for the site (Garlake, 1973). Robinson (1961b) excavated an area in the Western Enclosure, part of the Hill Complex, which had not been disturbed by the previous destruction. His Test I held a deep



deposit which on reflection informed his later deduction of the existence of five different periods of occupation at Great Zimbabwe. He used radiocarbon dates from his excavations, dated at the University of Michigan Memorial Phoenix Project Radiocarbon Laboratory, in order to create a chronology for this site. These Periods were represented by five Classes of pottery each one differing from the next and are as follows:

- Period 1 (AD 100-300) was associated with the ancestors of the Bantu people and represents the earliest Iron Age occupation of this site; it is also associated with Class 1 pottery which is dominated by sandy textured pots that are decorated with channel and stamp decoration techniques. Robinson (1961b) had no date for this Period, but used a date from a similar ware found in the Zambezi Valley which was dated to AD  $90 \pm 220$ . During this period occupation was in the Hill Complex area.
- Period 2 (AD 300-1085) is associated with early Karanga populations who occupied the Hill Complex area and Class 2 pottery. The characteristic gourd-shaped and tapered necked pots of this style are of coarse clay with no graphite and are rarely decorated. Charcoal samples for this Period dated to AD  $330 \pm 150$  (M-913). During this period occupation was in the Hill Complex area.
- Period 3 (AD 1085-1450) is associated with Karanga populations who produced Class 3 pottery. This class of pottery has been found on the valley floor suggesting that it is the beginning of the first extension of people from the Hill Complex to the Valley. It was associated with fine clay, rolled or bevelled rims, poor graphite burnishing and incised band decoration, although the latter were rare finds. Charcoal samples for this Period dated to AD  $1085 \pm 150$  (M-914).

- Period 4 (AD 1450-1833) is associated with the Rozwi people who showed the first serious expansion from the Hill into the Valley and produced Class 4 pottery, which is associated with vertically necked pots of varying heights moulded in fine clay of thin fabric with graphite burnishing, incised or engraved geometric bands and raised ribs on the neck being common. Charcoal samples for this Period dated to AD 1450 ± 150 (M-915).
- Period 5 was not given a radiocarbon date but rather its age was based on information Robinson received from Vengai, a grandson of Mugabe Haruziweshe, who told him that the occupation had only begun 70 years before the European occupation. The Period was therefore given an estimated time frame starting at approximately AD 1833 (Robinson, 1961b).

Summers (1961) was simultaneously excavating in the Great Enclosure during Robinson's excavation in the Western Enclosure part of the Hill Complex. His results from this excavation concluded that the Classes of ceramics found in the Great Enclosure were only those of Class 3 which was influenced by Class 4 and Class 4 types, giving the site a chronology towards the end of Period 3 and continuing into Period 4.

While Summers was conducting his excavations, Whitty (1961) did an architectural analysis of the walling inside the Great Enclosure. The latter's results were extended to interpret the evolution of architecture for the whole site. It was decided that P, PQ, Q and R were to represent the stylistic variations of the walls built in the Great Enclosure. In the end, Whitty (1961: 294) concluded that the chronology proceeded as follows, P – PQ – Q – R, with P being the oldest and R the youngest. Upon applying his scheme to the rest of the site, Whitty (1961) deduced that the

earliest walling could be seen in the Hill Complex in the form of the P and PQ styles which appeared at the end of Period 3. This was then followed by the construction of the Q-Style of walling in the Valley and was used in the construction of the Valley Enclosures and the Great Enclosure. His model ended with R-Style walling being used in the later occupation of Great Zimbabwe.

TABLE						
Phase	Pottery	Beads	Other Imports	Other Finds	Architectural Details	Radiocarbon Date
I	Carefully made and lavishly decorated: rather like Gokomere. From Acropolis only.	None	None	None	None	A.D. 330 ( $\pm 150$ )
II	Rough and scarcely decorated. From Acropolis only.	A few light blue glass beads, different in colour and shape from later types.	None	Clay models of oxen.	Huts with thin daga walls spread over wooden wattle-work. No stone walls.	A.D. 1080 ( $\pm 150$ )
III	Well-made thin pots with short necks: decoration rare: smooth matt finish. From Acropolis and No. 1 Ruin.	Quantities of small glass beads of various colours: •Blue Green •Royal Blue •Lemon Yellow •Orange •Indian Red •White  *Most common colours	Islamic glass dated 14th cent.	A few pieces of gold. Iron tools.	Well-built daga huts. Style P stone walling.	A.D. 1450 ( $\pm 150$ )
IV	Similar pots to previous phase but usually finished with graphite burnish. Rare on Acropolis and No. 1 Ruin. Common in Great Enclosure.			Copper ornaments. Soapstone bowl. Iron weapons.	Well-built daga huts with poles in walls, design shows variation during phase. Style Q walling: buttresses, radial walls. Conical Tower and Great Outer Wall at end of Phase.	About 1830
V	Rough pots decorated with cross-hatched bands. A modern ware. From Acropolis only.	Some previous types persist but 19th century trade beads appear.	"Pinchbeck" Watch chain, nineteenth-century.	Iron tools and weapons.	Traces of daga huts. (Style R walling probably belongs here.)	

Table 2.1: The sequencing put forward by Robinson, Summers and Whitty. Taken from Summers (1965).

After Summers et al. (1961) Peter Garlake (1968) conducted research on the exotic imported goods found at Great Zimbabwe. From the evidence gathered he concluded that imported ceramics only reached Great Zimbabwe at the end of Period 3. Garlake (1968) gives a date of AD 1390  $\pm$  90 (SR-47), received from the end of a Period 3 Layer, as being the start of Period 4 occupation in the Great Enclosure. After analysing the imports Garlake (1968) believed that by the end of the fifteenth century, Great Zimbabwe was no longer an important trade site as none

of the imports he studied date to any time after that. This suggested to him that Great Zimbabwe was abandoned by the original builders around AD 1450 (Garlake, 1968).

From the early 1980s, Huffman popularised the cognitive structuralist theories discussed below. He argued that Great Zimbabwe was built following a cosmological plan such that various areas could be accorded to different officials within the resident population. Using this framework, Huffman and Vogel (1991), took advantage of advances in dating to refine the radiocarbon chronology of the site by dating charcoal from Robinson and Summers' excavations. Huffman and Vogels' revised sequence and reworked ceramic sequence is as follows:

- Period 1 (AD 320 – AD 670) was first found in the Western Enclosure, which is part of the Hill Complex. This layer contained evidence of Robinson's (1961a) Class 1 pottery. Huffman (1982) believes the associated pottery Class 1 to be representative of an early Gokomere presence and has called it Period 1a. This is due to slight changes in the pottery reflecting a more Zhizo identity.
- Period 2 (AD 670 – AD 1075) was found on the Hill Complex. It contains Robinson's (1961a) Class 2 pottery, clay figurines and bone points. The Class 2 ceramic styles are now related to the Gumanye classification type.
- Period 3 (AD 1100 – AD 1250) was found in the Hill Complex, the Valley floor and the Great Enclosure. The gap between the end of Period 2 and the beginning of Period 3 has been related by Huffman and Vogel (1991) as being an interface between the two periods. It contains Robinson's Class 3 pottery and it is believed by the authors that no trade goods were to be found during Period 3.

- Period 4 has been separated by Huffman and Vogel (1991) into three different phases: Period 4a is associated with the pottery Class 4a and is seen as a transitional phase between Period 3 and 4. It was dated to AD 1250 ± 40 (Pta-2694) from samples acquired in the Great Enclosure. This was also the time that gold objects were starting to appear in the archaeological record.

Period 4b is associated with the pottery Class 4b and was first seen on the Hill Complex. Samples from these levels have been dated to AD 1310 ± 45 (Pta-1986) and AD 1379 ± 50 (Pta-2706). A level in the Valley area was dated to AD 1350 ± 50 (Pta-1208). This time period is believed by Huffman and Vogel (1991) to correspond with the beginning of the building of the stone enclosures. Towards the end of this period research is problematic owing to the destruction wrought by late nineteenth and early twentieth century explorers and antiquarians. The last level in the Hill Complex which belongs to this Period was dated to AD 1440 ± 150 (M-915).

Period 4c was found in the Valley area and was given a date of AD 1580 ± 50 (Pta-2711). This Period has been described by Huffman and Vogel (1991) as a residential period.

Since Huffman and Vogel (1991) there have been some advances in the idea of a chronology at Great Zimbabwe. In 2008 Chirikure and Pikirayi published their own chronology for the site which included information from Summers et al. (1961) and Huffman and Vogel (1991). In this chronological summary of Great Zimbabwe some of the dates are different to that which had been put forward by Huffman and Vogel (1991). The information attached to the different periods, including that of which category of pottery belonged where, is identical to that which

came before it. The changes, which can be seen in table 2.2, relate to dates and the beginning of the stone walling constructions.

Period	Focus	Pottery	Architecture	Date
I and Ia	Hill Complex	Class 1 – Gokomere/Ziwa/ Zhizo pottery	no stone walling	5th-8th centuries
	-----	<b>Abandoned</b>	-----	9th-12th centuries
II	Hill Complex	Class 2 – Gumanye pottery	no stone walling; <i>dhaka</i> house floors	mid 12th-early 13th centuries
III	Hill Complex, Western and Eastern Enclosures	Class 3 pottery, Class 3 influenced by Class 4a pottery	P stone walling; substantial <i>dhaka</i> houses	early-late 13th centuries
IVa	Hill Complex; Great Enclosure; Upper Valley Enclosures	Class 3 influenced by Class 4a pottery; Class 4 pottery	P and PQ walling	late 13th-early 14th centuries
IVb	Great Enclosure; Lower Valley Enclosures	Class 4b graphite burnished ware	PQ, Q and R walling	early 14th-mid 15th centuries
IVc	Lower Valley Enclosures	Class 4c graphite burnished ware	Q and R walling	mid 15th-mid 16th centuries
	-----	<b>Abandoned</b>	-----	mid 16th-19th centuries
V	Lower Valley Enclosures	Class 5 – Karanga pottery	R walling	19th century

Table 2.2: The sequencing put forward by Chirikure and Pikirayi. Taken from Chirikure and Pikirayi (2008)

In conclusion, Huffman and Vogel (1991) gave the peak of civilization at Great Zimbabwe a relatively short time frame. They believed that Great Zimbabwe's role as a political and economic centre in the region spanned from the third quarter of the thirteenth century to the mid fifteenth century. Chirikure and Pikirayi (2008) believe that there was a longer time frame, giving Great Zimbabwe's political and economic importance a time span from the early thirteenth century to the mid sixteenth century. Another important aspect which should be mentioned here is that the dates used in these studies were acquired from the elite areas only. However, they still offer insight as to when the areas thought to house the commoner population

were occupied. The Hill Complex, an elite occupation site, was occupied during Period 1 and continued to be occupied until Period 5. When looking at the Great Enclosure and the Valley Enclosures one can note that initial occupation only started around Period 3. Therefore one can infer that the areas thought to have housed the commoner population, which are situated on the valley floor and outside and surrounding the Outer Perimeter Wall, became populated during Period 3 during the same expansion period that saw the Great Enclosure and Valley Enclosures occupied.

## *2.5 The emergence of the cognitive structuralism approach*

In the 1980s Huffman shifted from site and spatial analysis to a more cognitive archaeological approach. Huffman (1986b: 84) describes cognitive archaeology as “the study of prehistoric ideology, that is to say the ideals, values and beliefs that constitute a society’s worldview. Cognitive archaeologists use the principles of sociocultural anthropology to investigate such diverse things as material symbols, the use of space, political power and religion.” By this method Huffman hypothesized that one could decipher, through settlement position, where certain people would most likely have resided in Great Zimbabwe. He based his conclusions on reconstructions “from 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century Portuguese descriptions of various Shona-speaking kingdoms and from Shona oral history, recent Shona ethnography and the ethnography of the Venda, a related people in the northern Transvaal” (Huffman, 1986b: 90).

After analyzing these sources Huffman postulated that one main principle of the Great Zimbabwe society was an institutionalized bureaucracy, with distinct administrative systems run,

organized and implemented by royals. His resulting hypothesis stipulates that the settlement would have been established along distinct spatial outlines. The king (or chief, leader), accompanied by a specifically selected sister would have resided on the Hill top, his palace enclosed by a wall (Huffman, 1986b). Huffman designated the Western Enclosure as the king's abode because excavations in this area yielded the largest quantity of residential debris in the Hill Complex (Huffman, 1984, 2007). Others who had the privilege to be housed on the hilltop would have been one or two of his younger wives, a special councillor and a witch doctor. The front of the palace would have been occupied by male guards, musicians and his praisers, while the back would have housed the ritual area, where rainmaking ceremonies would have occurred and spirit mediums resided (Huffman, 1986b, 1996). The Eastern Enclosure would have been the ritual area, this conclusion rationale being drawn from the fact that the area had proffered up ceremonial objects such as the carved soapstone birds and bowls. An area at the bottom of the Hill would have been left open for the purpose of male court meetings. The Valley Enclosures would have housed the other wives of the king; the remaining enclosures being occupied by important elite families. The Great Enclosure is theorized to have held premarital schools and was an area of initiation. Any outlying homesteads to these enclosures would have housed the commoner population. A reconstruction of how this might have looked during the height of occupation is shown in a painting by Jeremias which is now housed in the Manyikeni Museum (Figure 2.4). Huffman's excavations in three of these areas yielded everyday household objects, such as iron hoes, grindstones, domestic pottery, general ornaments such as metal bangles and glass beads (Huffman, 1984). Although Huffman excavated the commoner area he has not published his findings, choosing rather to focus his attention on the walled areas.



### 2.5.1 Responses to the cognitive structuralist approach

The cognitive structuralist theories applied at Great Zimbabwe are based on Portuguese documents, Shona 'oral traditions' and Venda ethnographies, which have been amalgamated into a picture that presents a civilization which remained essentially static for two centuries (Beach, 1998). However, farther studies done on Great Zimbabwe have shown that the stone walling was built over an extended period (Whitty, 1961; Collett, et al., 1992; Chipunza, 1994; and Chirikure and Pikirayi, 2008). These studies indicate that there were changes in the meaning and use of space over time, in order to accommodate the different uses and ideologies of the people (Collett, et al., 1992; Hall, 1986). These ideas stimulated other researchers to seek alternative theories to the cognitive structuralist approach.

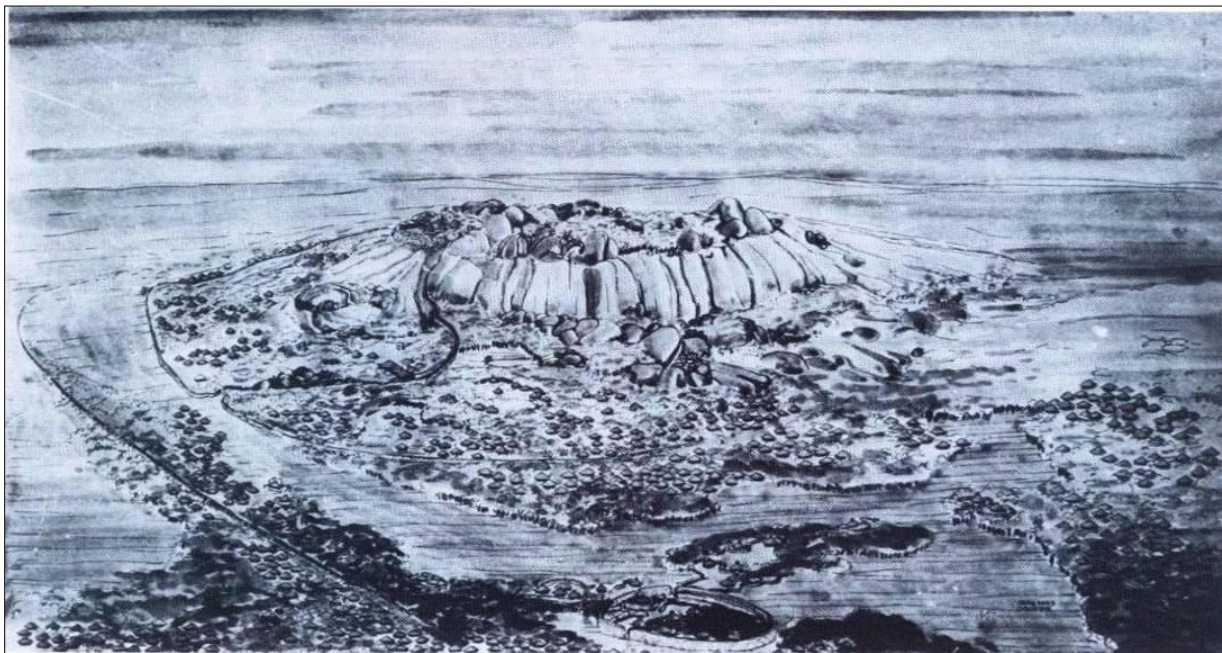


Figure 2.4: A reconstruction of what Great Zimbabwe might have looked like (Plates 28-33 by Jeremias from the Manyikeni museum). Taken from Sinclair (1987).

Collett et al. (1992), after analysing the different methods used in the construction of the stone walls and an excavation carried out in the Western Valley Enclosure, have suggested that the use of space at Great Zimbabwe most probably varied over time. They believe that building episodes at the site could be measured in years rather than months, suggesting that the builders showed an understanding that the special arrangements inside the enclosures might alter with time. Similarities in the building sequences of the Western Valley Enclosure and the Great Enclosure suggest there was a common developmental dynamic, although this would not have been part of a synchronous elaboration of the buildings. At the site itself it is also clear that there was a series of occupations in the Great Enclosure, shown in the form of hut floors, one on top of the other. Excavations in the Western Valley Enclosure yielded blue-on-white porcelain from the Ming Period, dated to AD 1488-1505, from which Collett et al. (1992) inferred that this area was nevertheless occupied after the agreed abandonment age of AD 1450. The Western and Central Valley Enclosures continued to be occupied in the sixteenth century, probably as the residence of a lesser ruler in a period of decline. This suggests that the Valley Enclosures were unlikely to have housed the royal wives. The discoveries of Collett et al. illustrated the probable complications which extend to a theory encompassing the idea that all the structures at the site are contemporary.

A more recent study on the dating of Great Zimbabwe site executed by Chirikure et al. (2013) has made use of a Bayesian chronology. Suggested dates set the commencement of the Hill Complex wall's construction between AD 1100 – 1281 and that of AD 1226-1383 for the Great Enclosure, thus presupposing occupation of the Hill Complex began prior to inhabitancy of the Great Enclosure and this by extension being started before the occupation of the Valley

Enclosures. This supports Whitty's (1961) theory. Their results support that of other researchers who have proposed that the structuralist theory put forward by Huffman (1982; 1986) is unsuitable due to the development at the site over time (Chirikure et al., 2013). Instead they support the theories of Whitty (1961), Collett et al. (1992), and Beach (1998), in which central power originated in the Western Enclosure of the Hill Complex and shifted to the Great Enclosure. It was during the occupation of this area that Great Zimbabwe's rulers enjoyed their most affluent period, and finally central power shifted to the lower Valley Enclosures, after which Great Zimbabwe was abandoned as a centre of political power (Chirikure et al., 2013).

David Beach (1998) offers an alternative cognitive archaeology and imaginary history hypothesis opposed to Huffman's cognitive archaeology hypothesis, where there is a movement over time of important personnel followed by developments in the walling at Great Zimbabwe. He proposes the first royal occupation was in the western section of the hill, around AD1250 when the first stone walling was constructed around this area. The wives lived a short distance down the hill outside the Western Enclosure while the kings' children lived in houses situated on the descending terraces, including those located on the south side of the hill inside the Inner Perimeter wall. The next royal occupation was the area which became the Great Enclosure; this area already being partly enclosed by constructed walls. This was followed by a reoccupation of the Western Enclosure during which time considerable PQ and Q-style building was undertaken. Thereafter, royal accommodation returned to the Great Enclosure. Over the next 250 years similar shifts of the ruling family around the Great Zimbabwe site took place, culminating in the last vestiges of royal families having their abodes in the Western Valley Enclosure (Beach, 1998).

The hypothesis that Beach (1998) puts forward in the above description can also be seen in other Shona capitals. Studies have shown that the Mutapa rulers shifted their capitals to the abodes of the new ruler, and were therefore associated with multiple capitals during its reign (Mudenge, 1988; Chirikure, et al., 2012). The same can be seen in the Hera rulers of Buhera, they too shifted their capitals depending on where the new ruler resided. Therefore, the idea of shifting capitals and residences for kings has deep-rooted significance in the Shona culture. These shifts have also been seen in Venda occupations of different sites along the Soutpansberg which have been connected to different leaders (Chirikure, et al. 2012).

In summary, there have been many attempts to understand the evolution of Great Zimbabwe. These attempts have circulated around trying to understand the structure of occupation at the site. The impression of occupation suggests expansion over time and thus shifting of the elites to various walled areas. In all these theories the commoners occupy the regions outside the walled areas.

### ***2.6 Previous comparisons of objects found in the elite area and the commoner area:***

In 1995 Carolyn Thorp published her book 'Kings, Commoners and Cattle at Zimbabwe Tradition Sites', in this book, among other things, she looks at faunal remains from both the elite area and the area designated for common people. Here she mentions the hypothesis that, "The accumulation of wealth in cattle has been interpreted as the stimulus for transformation of social relations, resulting in more stratified societies and the establishment of larger regional social

networks" (Thorp, 1995, pp. 7). She goes on to say, "Whatever the case the Zimbabwe State grew out of cattle based societies" (Thorp, 1995, pp. 7). Thorp (1995) as mentioned previously, did her analysis on the faunal assemblages, these being excavated by Huffman during his 1972-76 field seasons. Huffman excavated four commoner sites which he denoted 21-24 and Z5 which was a stone walled enclosure (Thorp, 1995).

Huffman's excavations were conducted in what is now the curio shop on the northern slope of one of the smaller hills. At the summit of this hill stands the Zimbabwe Site Museum and the Camp Ruins. He excavated an area which was occupied by approximately 30 intimately packed huts made of daga. This fitted in well with the hypothesis that the commoners at Great Zimbabwe lived in overcrowded conditions beyond the walled enclosures. The excavations unearthed several layers of once occupied hut floors. Two radiocarbon dates were accessed from these floors, one from Hut 35 dated to AD 1350 +/- 50 while the other came from Hut 10 dated to AD 1570 +/- 50. For this reason the site was identified as being characteristic of Period 4, the ceramic findings supported this analysis (Thorp, 1995).

The results from the analysis of Huffman's data show that there was a predominance of cattle rather than small stock amongst the domesticated animal remains. This matches the results published by Brain (1974a) who did a faunal analysis on remains found in the 'elite' midden below the Hill Complex, which is believed to have housed the King and his entourage. Here Brain (1974a) writes that 98% of the domestic animal remains studied were of cattle, whereas, only 2% were from smaller animals such as sheep and goats. Both Thorp (1995) and Brain (1974a) note the insignificance of wild animals in the remains analysed. The similarities in

assemblages end there, for once one looks at the age composition of the animals found in the different areas one can see that they are in fact different. The remains analysed by Brain (1974a) contained a 75% predominance of immature cattle. The results from sites 21-24 revealed the highest percentage in site 23 of only 36%. Thorp (1995) summarised her own and Brains (1974a) results concluding that sites 21-24 had similar content, including artefacts of small stock, game and cattle, as well as being of the same age composition, whereas, the Hill Midden had compatibility of content but not of age composition for the animals at time of death.

Analyses done on other areas of Great Zimbabwe were also conspicuously different to those done on the Hill Complex, suggesting that this area alone practiced these eating habits. Thorp (1995) suggests that this could be due to the fact that the King resided in the Western Enclosure and therefore this might be an example of differing eating habits between commoners and elites/royalty. She goes on to mention that this could have been the norm amongst rulers in other Zimbabwe Tradition Sites (Thorp, 1995).

To summarise the works done by Thorp (1995) and Brain (1974a) it appears that it was the Hill Complex alone which practiced juvenile animal consumption. The other areas occupied at Great Zimbabwe on the whole consumed comparable animals, both by age and species. Neither Thorp (1995) nor Brain (1974a) mention any certainty of whether it this could be due to a difference between elite and commoner diets or if the time lapses between differing sites indicates different diets over time.

Another data set which has been analysed at Great Zimbabwe is the metal worked objects. The earliest of these studies was done by Stanley (1929a; 1929b). The results from Stanley's (1929a; 1929b) studies indicated that the metal worked objects found at Great Zimbabwe were indigenous in origin. Then in 1994 Grant published his results on an analysed piece of tin bar, concluding that the tin alloy came from Rooiberg, which is situated in modern day South Africa 350 km away from Great Zimbabwe. Herbert (1996) concluded after studies done on the metal objects at Great Zimbabwe that the site had had a booming metallurgic industry. Miller (2002) studied the metallurgic material from Huffman's 1972-1976 excavations, also concluding that the fabricated metal was indigenous in origin (Bandama, et. al., 2016).

More recently, Bandama et. al. (2016) have done both an archival and an excavation review on metal worked objects at Great Zimbabwe. Archival work was the study of what had been previously seen at the site and excavation work included that of a commoner area now dubbed the Car Park Midden which dated around AD 1450 and AD 1660, giving it a Period 4 occupation time frame. Their finds indicate that throughout the Great Zimbabwe site, spanning both elite and commoner areas, metal production was done on a homestead-based system. Production materials and methods also seem to be comparable, evidence being shown after compositional studies were done on certain objects. Their finds show that each homestead followed the *chaine operateire* to its completion, showing signs of primary production, secondary production, use and discard. The objects also show homogeneity between the commoner and elite areas, suggesting that commoners were able to access the same materials needed for metal production as the elites (Bandama, et. al., 2016).

In summary, over time there have been studies done at Great Zimbabwe that compare elite goods to those used by the commoner population. The work done by Thorp (1995) and Brain (1974a) show us that when it came to food consumption, the similarities between which kinds of animals were eaten were extremely close; telling us that the elites and commoners ate the same kinds of animals although with one difference; the Hill Complex occupants ate juvenile animals, whereas, as older animals, whereas, the occupants from the rest of the site ate older animals. Similarities can also be seen in the metallurgy of the different areas at Great Zimbabwe. Here they extend as far as materials used in the smelting process to the objects found at the different sites. Suggesting elites and commoners had access to the same products.

## *2.7 Attempts to consider commoner sites outside Great Zimbabwe*

In 1984 Paul Sinclair, following a recent trend in Iron Age research, published an account reflecting on information gained from sites situated outside the stone walls at Great Zimbabwe. His aim was to achieve an enhanced understanding of Great Zimbabwe's social stratification at an ideological, economic and political level. At this time researchers were becoming more aware of the fact that these areas were also occupied, thus compelling them to study the relationships between urban and rural areas. It was calculated that in all of the 600 square meters of excavated area at Great Zimbabwe, only 20 meters belonged to areas outside the stone enclosures. Thus showing that all attention was focused on the elite areas; to the near exclusion of the areas designated to commoner occupation. Even the excavations done by Huffman in the early 1970s will only give us some information on these 1200 square meters of this large site (Sinclair, 1984; Connah, 2001).



Sinclair (1984) chose two sites to examine and compare to the main site at Great Zimbabwe. These were Chivowa Hill and Montevideo Ranch. Chivowa Hill is situated 34 km north of Great Zimbabwe and displays a typical Gumanye facies hilltop settlement. The pottery found here represents Robinson's (1961a) Period 2, with charcoal samples from the trench dating to AD  $940 \pm 50$  (Pta-1979), AD  $960 \pm 35$  (Pta-1919), and AD  $865 \pm 35$  (Pta-1922). There was a low stone wall construction, levelling off a precipitously sloping bedrock surface. Excavations revealed cattle and human figurines, and a range of iron and copper artefacts. At Montevideo Ranch, excavations have yielded pottery associated with Robinson's (1961a) Classes 2, 3, and 4. Yet the dates received from these levels differ to those set aside for the different Periods at Great Zimbabwe. For example, the occupation level in which Class 4 pottery was found dated to AD  $610 \pm 40$  (Pta-1920). Other remains analysed from both sites included bovid bones. At Chivowa Hill remains reflected an importance of cattle, with adult bones making up the largest percentage found. These results were similar at Montevideo Ranch (Sinclair, 1984).

Yet, Sinclair (1984) makes it clear that this is but a theory and more research would be required in other such areas to facilitate proper conclusions. At the time of publication Sinclair (1984) did not have a full account of the available fertile land in the area surrounding Great Zimbabwe. He reflects though that the land around Chivowa Hill and Montevideo Ranch would have been able to support successful crops in most years. Sinclair (1984) therefore suggests that it might have been possible for the upper classes to have had control of access to the arable land in the area. Both sites have been documented as having had access to iron ore and to be smelters of the ore. There is a belt of alluvial soil near Montevideo which would have provided gold, but no such belt occurs in the area close to Great Zimbabwe. Sinclair (1984) suggests that mining could have

been carried out by the peasants seeking to appease the demands made of them by the elite. Further finds in the area have suggested that the elite at Great Zimbabwe had the means to extract a percentage of the production from mines located up to 100km away. Sinclair's (1984) work suggested that Great Zimbabwe might not have been a self-sufficient settlement; instead the elite could have used their power to appropriate goods from self-sustaining rural communities on the outskirts of the centre.

Other research has been conducted on the Zimbabwe plateau. The site of Chipadze Ruin, situated at Harleigh Farm near Rusape has shown a contemporary occupation time scale with Great Zimbabwe, being occupied between 1300 AD to a little after 1500 AD. This site showed a prominence of cattle-keeping remains. Stone-walling was present at this site, with daga huts evident inside the enclosures. It is believed that this site housed a small political or religious elite. Again, excavations were centered within the enclosures while the area around the enclosures was left alone. It was the same at the sites of Nhunguza and Ruanga, both smaller settlements on the Plateau and both being stone-walled enclosures. At these sites it was decided that there must have been a commoner population close by that supported the elite population living in the enclosures. Evidence suggests that at Ruanga the commoner population lived on the Lower Platform, although investigations were not carried out to prove this. At Nhunguza six smaller hut remains were found outside of the enclosures but were not excavated. The same can be found at the site of Tsindi and Zvongombe, where excavations focused on the stone-walled areas. It was only at the site of Manyikeni that both the enclosures and the areas outside of the enclosures were analysed. One interesting fact from this site were the results of the faunal analyses, it was discovered that the occupants of the enclosures were consuming more cattle, as

these bones dominated the finds. Yet in the areas outside the enclosures it was found that goats, sheep and game dominated their meat diet (Connah, 2001).

During the decline of Great Zimbabwe, two states rose to become its' successors. One of these was the Torwa state, based at the site of Khami, 20km outside of Bulawayo and the other was the Mutapa state which was situated in the northern part of the Zimbabwe Plateau (Beach, 1994). In 1988 Mudenge published his "A Political History of Munhumutapa c. 1400-1902". He gives a detailed description of the descendant Shona society as a whole living at Mutapa. Mudenge comes from a historical background and has therefore written this book using a historical framework, utilizing the available Portuguese documents and other written records to give an in-depth background to the Mutapa society. The information recovered is enough to relate back to pre-Mutapa states or for our use, to Great Zimbabwe, thus helping us to understand the material culture of the commoner area. Mudenge (1988) gives a summary of the different social groupings which would have made up the Mutapa society. In the Mutapa state the chief or king would have received his income from a variety of sources, including tribute, which could have been received in cattle, hoes, gold, grain or other objects of value and judicial fees. This information could be useful in understanding the social dynamics at Great Zimbabwe. As stated many times before, in order to have a clear and full understanding of the culture at Great Zimbabwe, one needs to look at the society as a whole, therefore studying the lower levels of the society is of great importance (Mudenge, 1988).

More research is required to qualify the extent to which the Great Zimbabwean elite were able to exercise control over the different environmental zones in the areas within its sphere of

influence. Sinclair's (1984) and others study of rural commoner sites are important, but they still ignore the fact that there were commoners residing at Great Zimbabwe, making up a large percentage of the population. If the above mentioned studies are correct; what was the role of these smaller elite centres and their commoner population and how did they interact and affect Great Zimbabwe? More importantly, what was the role of the commoners at Great Zimbabwe; were they feeding their own elite and was any surplus they might generate expropriated? A deeper look into the social dynamics of other capitals such as Mudenge's 1988 work might be helpful here. It is important that focus be directed towards these commoner areas in order to gain a full understanding of the relationship between commoner and elite.

## ***2.8 Conclusion***

Over a century of research at Great Zimbabwe has generated information which enhanced our understanding of the identity of the builders, the sequence of occupation and their various interpretations. It is however clear that not much attention has been directed to the commoner areas and the analysis of material culture found there. Exploring the archaeology in these areas would throw light on the relationship between the rulers and the ruled and illuminates crucial activities such as the organisation of production.

## Chapter 3: Theory and Methodology

### *3.1 Introduction*

This chapter deals with the theory and methodology utilized in this dissertation. Archival research, collections based research, and field walking was carried out. Object studies are presented as a primary focus. This is important because artefacts and objects hold a central place in archaeology as they were made and used by people from the past. They could be described as being reluctant witnesses to the past (Caple, 2006). Artefacts also provide us with information on trade and exchange, interaction and social and cultural values. In socially complex societies differential access to resources can be seen in the types of objects found, although elites monopolise goods and therefore had more. This fact forms the basis of the understanding of rank and was explained by Childe who put forward that the monopoly and control exercised by the elites can be seen in their control over the rise of monumental architecture, for instance the Great Enclosure at Great Zimbabwe and administrative techniques, such as social hierarchies and writing. This is an important factor when attempting to gain more insight into the nature of commoner areas, their dating, the material culture recovered and how it compared to the elite areas.

### *3.2 Theoretical Approaches to objects and understanding ranked societies*

Objects are abundant in the archaeological record. The needs of bygone societies determined why objects were created and in the manner in which they were used. Because they were made

by people, objects communicate a wide variety of messages that inform us about the lives, tastes, beliefs, economy and politics of their makers and users (Gosden, 2005; Earle, 2000). Therefore, objects used by people in the past are akin to a mirror which reflects what was happening in those societies. Objects are symbols of value and when considered in relation to the context of their recovery, throw important light on differences in rank between residents of a given settlement. Furthermore, some objects are symbolic and expressive plus they are instrumental in illuminating how power was negotiated and displayed. Because similar communities use identical objects, a study of objects is important in understanding group identity and in some cases ethnic identity. For example, archaeologists in southern Africa have looked at ceramic decorative traits to establish correlation between pots and people (Huffman, 2007; Pikirayi, 2007). In this way they separated pots made by Shona tribes from other groups. The manner in which objects are made and decorated are also important in telling us about the age of the objects (Hodder, 1987).

When dealing with objects, it is also important to understand their production and use biographies. Usually this is achieved through a framework such as *chaine operateire* which refers to technical sequences of operation involved in artefact production from raw material acquisition through production and use (Lemonier, 1993). *Chaine operateire* enables a simultaneous study of technical and symbolic factors associated with object production and use, which is a key factor in understanding past societies. It is important to consider both absent and present objects in an assemblage because this is integral to building meaning. In their absence they can give us insight as to why they are not present and any change in their character can inform us of a wider change over time in the society who manufactured them (Gosden, 2005).

Although objects provide cultural and historical information, it is important to understand the bias of objects. Some are well preserved when compared to others. Also, because of their monumental nature, the remains or objects of elites may have a better duration when compared to those of commoners. However, when dealing with objects, context is very important in the construction of meaning. Objects recovered from religious contexts, for instance, are bound to differ from those recorded in day to day areas. For example, the distinctive material culture found in ritual rainmaking sites in southern Africa which include countless pottery fragments, present because once pottery had been used in a ritual it could not be returned to the homestead. Other key markers are temporary grain bins, built directly on the ground and temporary cattle kraals, distinguished by their untrammelled dung. Many sites can only be located in certain areas, such as on the top of hills which are difficult to access and which lie in the 'bush' away from the settlement (Huffman, 2009; Schoeman, 2006). Huffman (2001; 2007) stipulates that sites used for male and female circumcision rituals in Iron Age communities will also hold specific material culture and will be constructed differently to a homestead. Such places will be devoid of the substantial daga structures, are often situated on land unable to sustain agricultural fields and will be associated with stone cairns. The recovery of gold rich burials on top of Mapungubwe led to it being interpreted as an elite centre.

Hayden (1995) hypothesizes that socio-complexity would have risen during an era of abundance. Rich resources with resultant high population densities offered privileged access to resources. The privileged few who gained control over these resources used them to create power inequalities among the residing population. These 'elites' removed themselves from normal day to day activities and rather occupied themselves with tasks ranging from accounting to

soldiering. Calabrese (2000) explains the fundamental basis for elite power as follows: "considered here to be their role as ideological specialists whose relationships with, the alleged ability to propitiate, the sources of agriculture, animal and human fertility ensure the successful biological and cultural integrity and continuity of the larger community. This ideological system provides the structure and foundation upon which the larger political economy is built, consolidated and maintained" (Calabrese, 2000: 101). The rest of the community would have fallen into the category of 'commoner' and would have recognised these claims due to the fact that they would have benefitted the entire community in some way, for example, exchange goods being brought into the area, surplus stored food might have been used in times of famine or drought for the community at large etc. The differential access to resources resulted in the concentration of economic power and would have aided in the legitimization of social hierarchies. Differential access to goods would have resulted in certain members of the community, namely the elites, residing in larger homesteads of a higher quality and closer to the communities' political centre (Costin and Earle, 1989). Specialized craft good production would be evident with the highest accumulations of products being evident in the elite areas; often used as a means to show off their wealth, promoting them to the lower caste members of society and members from other settlements (Hayden, 1995) as well as playing an important role of gifting in the construction of alliances both political and home-based (Brumfield, 1992). Commoners with less access to conspicuous goods and less political power would have aligned themselves with settlements of power. Their material culture would have reflected their lower status. Their houses would have been further away from the political centre of the settlement, smaller and situated closer together. Access to prestige or exotic goods would have been nominal, but one would still



find these goods in commoner households (Huffman, 2007; Kim and Kusimba, 2008; Earle, 2000).

Differences between elite and commoners during the Middle to Late Iron Age in southern Africa are commonly seen. Firstly their residences; it was common to find the elite residing on plateaus or hilltops. Examples of these are Mapungubwe, where the elite resided on a steep plateau affording its ruling class some security. The same can be seen at Great Zimbabwe and Khami. Houses of elites differed to those of commoner people, for example, it was common practice during this time for elite residences to be surrounded by stone walled structures, another separation between themselves and the commoner population. The majority of the population, at these sites, lived at the bottom of the hill, where their residences were characterised by mud-on-wood houses separated by daga walls, wood and sometimes stone. Household goods would also differ. At Mapungubwe archaeological finds discovered in the elite residences included prestige goods such as trade beads in large quantities, copper and iron objects, gold beads and bangles and highly polished pottery wares in assorted styles and forms. The archaeological finds dominating the commoner residences were those of utilitarian pottery, in some cases of an inferior quality to those found on the hilltop, with few examples of beads and iron wares (Kim and Kusimba, 2008; Huffman, 2008; Huffman, 2009).

Archaeologists have therefore, used objects to understand the distinctions between commoners and elites but only inasmuch as these identify the elites and their exclusive areas of occupation. Based on the nature of material culture and its patterning, Childe (1950) established criteria for

identifying civilisations and complex societies. Within certain capitals, such criteria are important in separating elite from non-elite areas.

Childe's (1950) ten criteria for identifying complex societies and civilizations are as follows:

1. Early cities were more densely populated and extensive than those that had come before them, although still small in comparison to contemporary villages of today.
2. Early cities would have had class distinction, comprising peasants residing on the outskirts of the cities and beyond, commoners residing inside the main city, specialists and elites. The last two groups did not have to produce their own food but were provisioned by the first two groups.
3. "Each primary producer paid over the tiny surplus he could wring from the soil with his very limited technical equipment as tithe or tax to an imaginary deity or a divine king who thus concentrated the surplus" (Childe, 1950: 11).
4. There would have been monumental architecture present in the city centres (Childe, 1950). Smith describes Childe's 4<sup>th</sup> criteria, which involves monumental architecture, as being important in showing symbolically the "power and wealth of early rulers" (Smith, 2009: 13).
5. The 'ruling class' which included people working as priests, officials and civil and military leaders would have received the majority of the surplus food described in criteria 2, the rest of the surplus going to people holding a lesser position in the social hierarchy.

6. Methods were created in order to record information, although this criterion is often omitted because some ancient cultures did not develop this technique.
7. This criterion fits in with criterion 6 and involves the invention of writing and the elaboration of geometry, astronomy, arithmetic and other exact sciences.
8. The specialists, not having to feed themselves could then spend more time on mastering their skills.
9. Social surplus collateral allowed for the importation of goods and raw materials.
10. This surplus enabled the city to support food producing commoners and kept specialist craftsmen supplied with imported raw materials. The latter, by virtue of being exempted from food production were able to devote their time to the mastering of their skills. The ruling elite classes benefited from the productivity of both the former groups.

The last five criteria show that important objects were the property of the ruling or elite class. They would have had control of the imports and the specialist skills of recording and the understanding of scientific information, which would not have been explained to the commoner populations. Therefore, the elites would have had a monopoly over important material objects, information and skill. This would have been represented and identifiable in their material remains.

A characteristic of elite housing is that the houses are larger. The expansion of corporate or privately owned property is seen as a critical element during the establishment of power (Hayden, 1995). Elite burials often contain conspicuous grave goods, and royal burials the most

conspicuous goods to be found (Childe, 1951). It is also said that overall, these ‘elites’ have the privilege of acquiring the top food resources and due to their control over trade items, these would tend to be accumulated in their areas of occupation. This is the case at places such as Mapungubwe, Great Zimbabwe and elsewhere. Prestige goods would include well made ornaments and metal worked objects. It is believed that the commoner population would not have had the benefit of these objects and would also have eaten food of a lesser quality (Feinman, 1995; Hayden, 1995; Hayden, 1998). The key fact is that the elite material culture differs from commoner material culture which is why a comparison between the two is important at Great Zimbabwe.

What can be gathered from this information is that often the more prestigious and interesting objects and monumental architecture are prescribed to the ‘elite’ of a civilization. It is for this reason that most studies revolve around these areas and their occupants. Unfortunately, this excludes the ‘common’ people and their material culture as these people occupy areas on the periphery of trade centres and built up places. The results from the analysis done on excavated remains and the information gained through field walking will be discussed in the next chapter.

### *3.3 Methodology*

This study made use of a multi-disciplinary methodology informed by the theoretical framework provided above. The different components are as follows:

### 3.3.1 Archival Studies

The first step involved archival research which was undertaken at the Conservation Centre of Great Zimbabwe in June 2013. The procedure started with all files being consulted in order to record accession numbers, context and storage location of the objects found outside of the Outer Perimeter Wall in what is believed to be the commoner area. The process also involved the recording of vital information such as the context of recovery, date of excavation, name of excavator and the objects in the boxes. Complimentary to this was an analysis of the literature pertaining to Great Zimbabwe namely information on excavated goods from the Western Enclosure part of the Hill Complex, Great Enclosure and the Mauch Ruins. All of the publications consulted referred only to the walled areas.

During this archival study, it emerged that a significant amount of excavation work had been carried out in the commoner area. As mentioned previously most of these excavations were done during salvage excavations, as transformation of the land was taking place. For example, the Barrier Hut situated next to the former Parks Office, now used as a maintenance workshop was excavated by David Collett in 1987/8. Other areas that received archaeological attention in the commoner area include the modern campsite (the records of this excavation do not mention who the excavator was), the Aloe Gardens, which straddles the line being both inside and outside the Outer Perimeter Wall and which was excavated by KT Chipunza in 1983, the Chenga Ruins, excavated by D. Collett (no year was given) while the area previously used as the Golf Course was dug by J. Chikumbirike and D. Manatsa in 1995. Nemanwa Ruins which is adjacent to the Conservation Centre and is near Nemanwa Primary school was excavated by W. Ngoro and K. T. Chipunza (no year given) and a later study was done on the site by Huffman and Vogel

(1991). Finally, the Workshop Plantation was excavated by D. Manatsa and J. Shumbaimwe (National Museums and Monuments Artefact Records, accessed 27.06.13).

Noticeable in these records is the lack of complete entries. In some instances record sheets do not even note the context of recovery and the excavator. Some of the excavation note books are available but not all. The current Regional Director said that all records had been complete but when previous employees left their jobs, they carried with them some of the records. The National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe are trying where possible to rebuild the archives.

In total, for the area outside the Outer Perimeter Wall, 16 boxes of objects from the Barrier Hut were accessed, 4 boxes from the Nemanwa Ruin and 2 boxes from the Workshop Plantation. An important aspect to mention here is that analysis focused on the ceramic material culture from the three sites mentioned above, with the other artefacts being documented from available collections. For the area inside the Outer Perimeter Wall excavation, notes done by Caton-Thompson (1931), Robinson (1957) and Summers (1957) were accessed and analysed through their published accounts. These were put into table form in order to be of use as a comparison to the information found from the area outside of the Outer Perimeter Wall.

### **3.3.2 Ceramic Analysis**

The archival research demonstrated that a significant amount of material culture from the commoner area was available in the Conservation Centre but had not been studied. Of all the

objects, ceramics provided the best opportunity to understand the identity of the occupants of the area and whether they were related to the occupants of the elite areas. This is possible because over half a century of typological work on ceramics in southern Africa has demonstrated a relationship between ceramic decorative style and group identity (e.g. Aquina, 1968; Reynolds, 1968; Evers, 1988; Collett, 1993; Huffman, 1980, 2007). Huffman (2007) comments that ceramic decorative style as a whole expresses cultural identity as it forms a recurring set of codes which represent cultural symbols. Therefore, a diachronic analysis of ceramics from archaeological sites enables current researchers to identify cultural succession on various scales from the local to regional. Ceramic analysis helps to establish a culture history sequence, for instance, where farming societies lived, who lived there and when. This method was used in conjunction with linguistic and historical data to track the movement of Shona speaking chiefdoms through their Khami style pottery, across the Limpopo River to the Soutpansberg during the 15<sup>th</sup> century. From there, analysis showed how this ceramic style moved into Sotho-Tswana settlements characterised by Moloko styled ceramics, until the two styles merged into a new style which is characterised with Venda societies of today (Huffman, 2007). These analyses also enable researchers to understand changes that occur in different cultures.

Huffman's method of ceramic analysis is known as the multi-dimensional approach. This is based on looking at vessel profile, shape, decoration technique, motif and placement. He then goes on to stipulate that there are two conditions that need to be met in order to increase the strength of a ceramic analysis procedure. These are that "the ceramic style must be complex otherwise it will not be uniquely representative. And secondly, the makers must and users must belong to the same material-culture group" (Huffman, 2007: 104). An experiment was conducted

which involved analysis of ceramic styles from museum collections and contemporary villages belonging to “the Tonga in Zimbabwe, the Korekore (northern Shona), Ndau (eastern Shona), Venda and Pedi” (Huffman, 2007: 111). It was discovered that ceramics could be reliably defined if one considered the following combinations “(1) profile; (2) design layout; and (3) motif categories” (Huffman, 2007: 111). Analysis of ceramics can identify whether there is a relationship between different groups of people across the landscape by looking at the similarities of each group’s pottery ware which is ascertained by means of ceramic group triangulation. Huffman’s multi-dimensional approach is widely accepted and offers insight into understanding the ceramic remains in the current area of study. “In this multi-dimensional system, an interrelated series of types is formed when motifs and layouts of simple types occur as components of the most complex type; that is, the type with the most motif positions on the most complex profile..... Interrelated series such as this help to reveal the structure of ceramic style, and that is why they can be used to recognise Iron Age entities” (Huffman, 2007: 111).

There have been some critiques of Huffman's multi-dimensional approach. Pikiyai (2007) argues that the approach fails to address the social networks behind the production and distribution of Iron Age ceramics. He states that ceramics impart knowledge so that one is able to uncover other social aspects. They have a social meaning to both consumers and makers; therefore their decorative motifs convey other messages including those on gender, status, world-view and ideology etc. Archaeologists using the above mentioned approach have tended to forget that culture is not static and have based much information on modern group identities. Assuming that other material culture is included in the ceramic boundaries they have failed to incorporate reviews of material culture boundaries in differing group identities. It is therefore evident that



association between material culture objects and pottery is not just coincidental, but rather socially constructed and through this understanding one can identify numerous identities. Therefore, ceramic style is much more than just a basis for understanding group identity or explaining changes in different cultures, it is vital in the understanding of social communication. Another problematic factor is that archaeologists rarely find complete vessels; due to this the ceramics might not be able to convey what they could have meant to originally communicate (Pikirayi, 2007). Another critique to Huffman's approach is from Hall (1983); he states that Huffman's approach is subjective in that he correlates the 'ethnographic present' to the past with usually unexplained methodological explanations. This idea does not factor in cultural change through time. Some of Huffman's chosen sample sites were labelled as contemporary yet turned out to have no radiocarbon dates associated with them. The contemporary labelling therefore came from the ceramics themselves, which Hall (1983) believes was not a good criterion if the function was to test his theory of ceramic similarity, again showing the subjectivity of the study. Huffman's subjective interpretation is presented as fact in many cases when he deals with his data set. In some cases, necessary explanations are not given, raw frequency figures are missing and 'descriptive domains' and 'real classifications' are assumed instead of explained (Hall, 1983).

The critiques were considered but because of the availability of the information on interaction, sequence and identity, it was considered prudent to analyse ceramics from the commoner area at Great Zimbabwe and then compare the results with information known from the walled areas. There was an abundance of ceramics found at each of the sites analysed from Outside the Perimeter Wall as well but there being no full vessels for the ceramic analyses, Huffman's approach was used for easy comparability. The ceramics at Great Zimbabwe have been

documented on their design and layout, and then dated to specific time periods using information gathered from associated excavated material. Each period of occupation at the site has very distinguishable ceramic material culture, for this reason I used the multi-dimensional approach in order to chronologically place the sites studied for this dissertation. That being done, the information gained by using this approach will be useful in elaborating the divide between elite and commoner at Great Zimbabwe. It was based on this information that the data capture sheet (Figure 3.1), mentioned above was designed. The multi-dimensional approach was followed, recording profile shapes, design layout and type of decoration style and motif. A separate record was kept in order to record the graphite burnished sherds. Unfortunately full vessels were not available for this study which necessitated the focus being placed on sherds.

The main advantage of ceramic analysis is that it deals with abundant material culture which makes comparability of results possible. For example, Robinson's study (1961a) is especially important as his typological sequence for this site is widely accepted. The other objects in the boxes (e.g. the metal worked objects, bones, beads etc.) would have required invasive sampling techniques to understand them. In any event they were also recorded and photographed as their presence or absence was important in making comparisons with those from the elite areas. In terms of procedure, the ceramics were counted and decorated ceramics and rim sherds were recorded in detail on a records sheet.

### **3.3.3 Field Walking**

Further information about the location itself was gathered by field walking which included a tour of the walled areas. The physical inspection of the location was aimed at providing a spatial

understanding of the distribution of material culture areas at the site. It was an important task as it provided an opportunity to view the nature of the surface finds, especially in the commoner area. What was apparent during this exercise was the intrusion of modern activity in these areas, and apart from the salvage work conducted here, it seems little is being done to protect areas that are not situated within in the walls. As already mentioned, the material culture from the areas outside the Outer Perimeter Wall examined during my study were excavated during salvage operations. Initially, the aim of this study had been to excavate an area located in the common grounds outside the Outer Perimeter Wall. It was soon realized however, that this would not have been ethically justifiable as there was already an abundance of unexamined material culture stored in the archive.

### ***3.4 Conclusion***

It is important to use a theory and methodology which enhances our understanding of the unexplored areas of Great Zimbabwe. A combination of material culture theory, ceramic classification and artefact studies is a powerful way of achieving this. This is because objects make statements about their users and producers which help in the understanding of the social systems and stratifications, which otherwise might have remained unknown. It remains to be said that there are limitations associated with the assemblage for the commoner area. The first is that perhaps some pertinent records such as excavation reports are missing. Also, no photographs of excavations are archived. Secondly, small areas of the commoner area were excavated making it difficult to estimate the frequency of objects from this area. For the purposes of this research these limitations were considered less important, for the primary goal was to generate indicative

data on the material culture of commoner areas. This is essential for redirecting attention to a critical but neglected aspect in global archaeology of commoner areas.

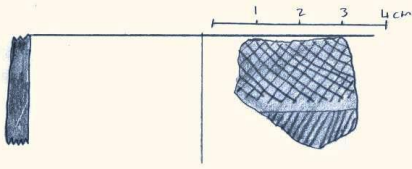
Reading Form

Site Name Great Zimbabwe - Burrier Hut  
Context 2030:BD:BH - Box 41

Vessel Form  
Lip Form  
Rim diameter  
Rim thickness  
Neck height  
Surface Treatment Graphite Burnishing  
Decoration Technique Cross-Hatching and Incised lines  
Decoration Position  
Decoration Motif:  
XXXXXX  
TTTTTT  
Tempering.

Comments:  
SN 14196  
Photo No: 3445-3447

Profile:



28

Figure 3.1: The data capture sheet used during ceramic analysis.

## Chapter 4: Results

### *4.1 Introduction*

Great Zimbabwe has been an area of interest for antiquarians, historians and archaeologists for over 100 years. Therefore, it is understandable to come across some deviations in the research. This is true for the site in its entirety; in the area outside the Outer Perimeter Wall, focus has been on conservation and collection, rather than analysis and publication. The material culture found inside the Inner Perimeter Wall has been picked at, with only the information of interest to that researcher being used in publications. For example, the exotic goods were published in a paper where the data was used in an attempt to prove that Great Zimbabwe was exotic in origin. Certain objects from the Hill Complex, Great Enclosure and the Valley Enclosures have been used in publications hypothesising that Great Zimbabwe was built along a preconceived idea of spatiality and again in the counter-arguments to this hypothesis. A comparison between the objects found inside the Inner and Outer Perimeter Walls and those found outside the Outer Perimeter Wall, to understand the difference between the two areas and who lived there, has yet to be done.

## 4.2 Information gathered from outside the Outer Perimeter Wall

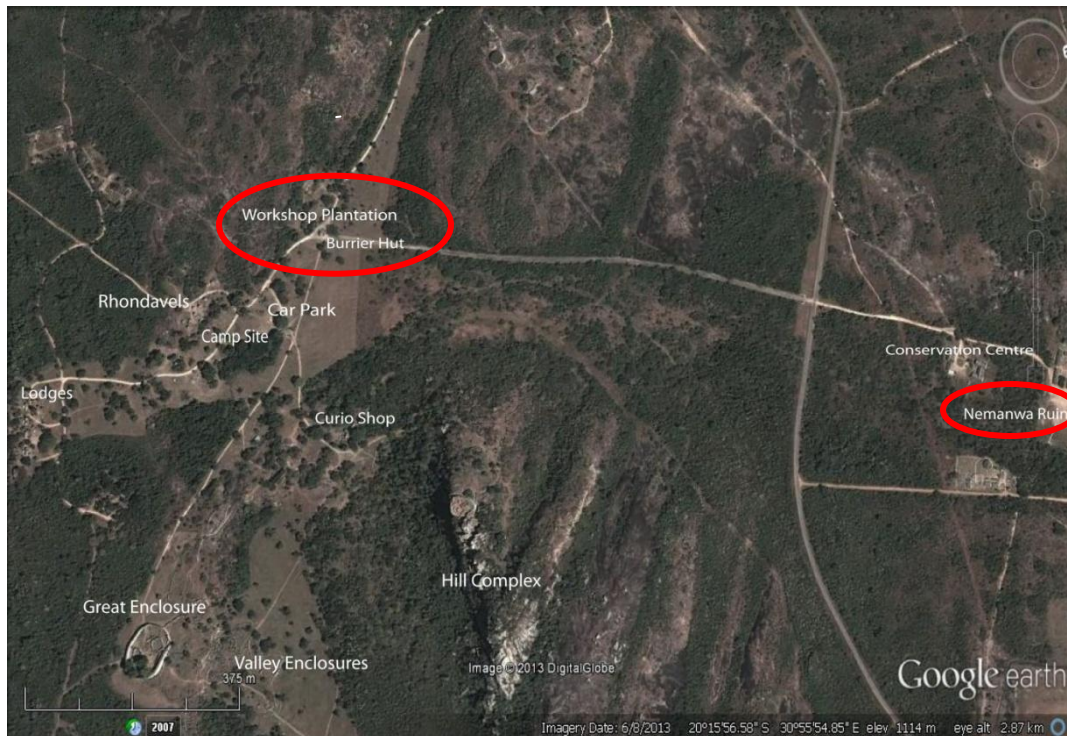


Figure 4.1: Google Earth image of Great Zimbabwe, showing the Hill Complex, Valley Enclosures, and the Great Enclosures. Also shown is the area that would have been occupied by the commoner population. The red outlined areas indicate the study sites used in this research. (Accessed, 24.09.13, edited 18.01.17)

An overall discovery during this research was that the commoner area at Great Zimbabwe has suffered neglect. Of the seven excavators mentioned in the methodology chapter who excavated in the areas between the Inner and Outer Perimeter Wall and the area outside the Outer Perimeter Wall, none have published their finds. Some of the information from Huffman's 1972-76 excavations has been published by Huffman himself, as well as Thorp (1995) and Miller (2002), yet none of these have been a complete rendition of the excavation. The information gathered has been published in small quantities rather than a focussed publication on the material culture which has been excavated from that area. Researchers wishing to access the records of these excavations and the material culture they brought to light face further challenges in that field

notes are not readily accessible making it difficult to contextualise the excavation site. Nevertheless, the artefacts from these areas are reluctant witnesses to how the commoners of Great Zimbabwe lived.

#### 4.2.1 Ceramic Analysis Results

For the area outside the Outer Perimeter Wall each site was analysed separately in an attempt to understand its context in relation to the whole location, this was followed by an analysis of the individual ceramic variables to characterize the assemblage. The ceramic sherds were counted and separated into decorated and undecorated groups. The decorated ceramics were further subdivided into two categories, those which are burnished and those that have decorations made by incisions and ribbing.

When looking at the percentages of decorated, burnished and undecorated sherds amongst the total number of sherds counted from each site one can see a pattern in the analysis.

Site Name	Number Decorated	Number Graphite Burnished	Number Undiagnostic	% Decorated	% Graphite Burnished	% Undiagnostic
Barrier Hut	8	292	2124	0.33	12.05	87.62
Workshop Plantation	4	113	445	0.71	20.11	79.18
Nemanwa Ruin	6	95	336	1.37	21.74	76.89

Table 4.1: Numbers and percentages of decorated vs. non-decorated ceramic sherds at the Barrier Hut, Workshop Plantation and Nemanwa Ruin.

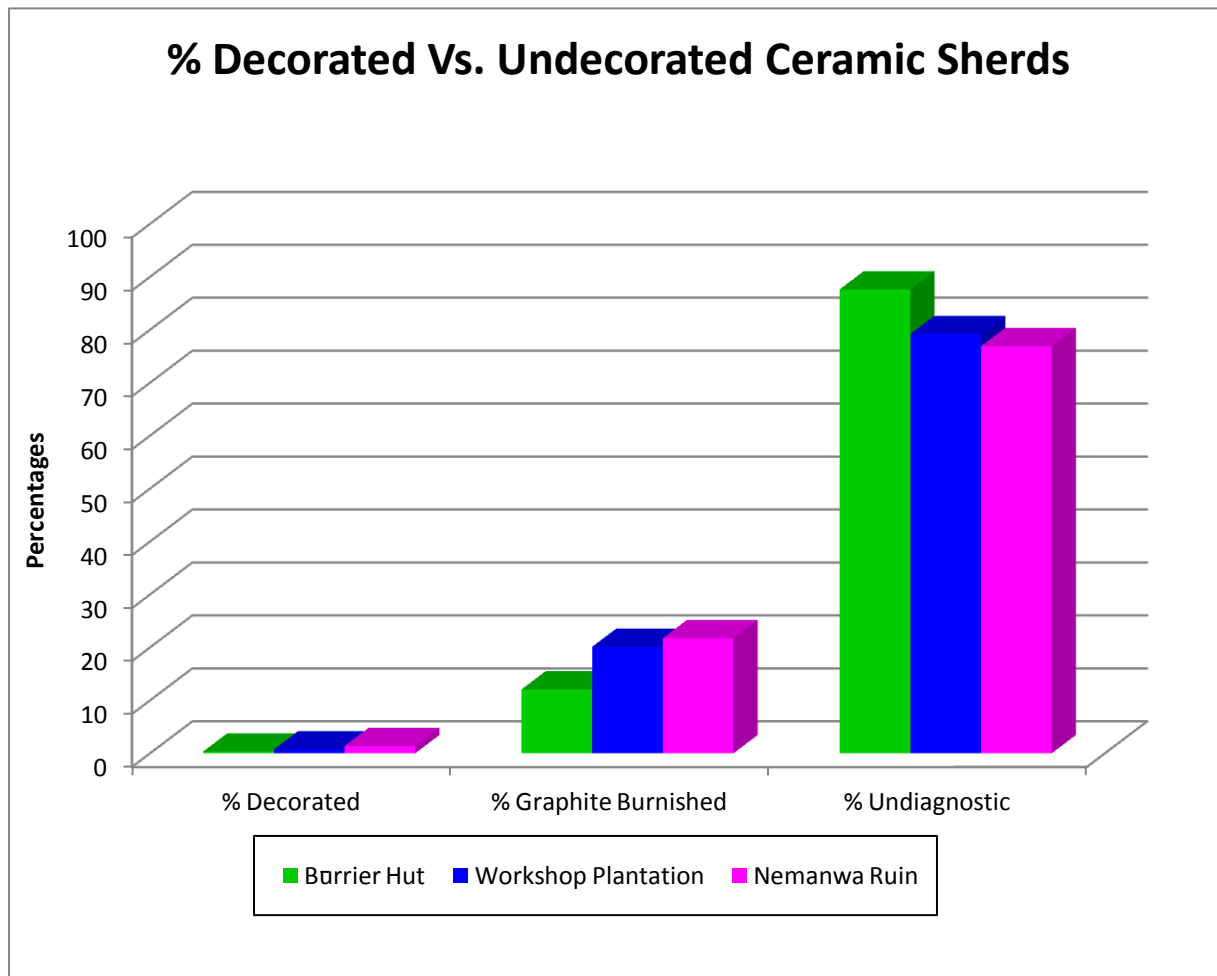


Figure 4.2: Bar graph representing the percentage of decorated vs. non-decorated ceramic sherds at the Barrier Hut, Workshop Plantation and the Nemanwa Ruin.



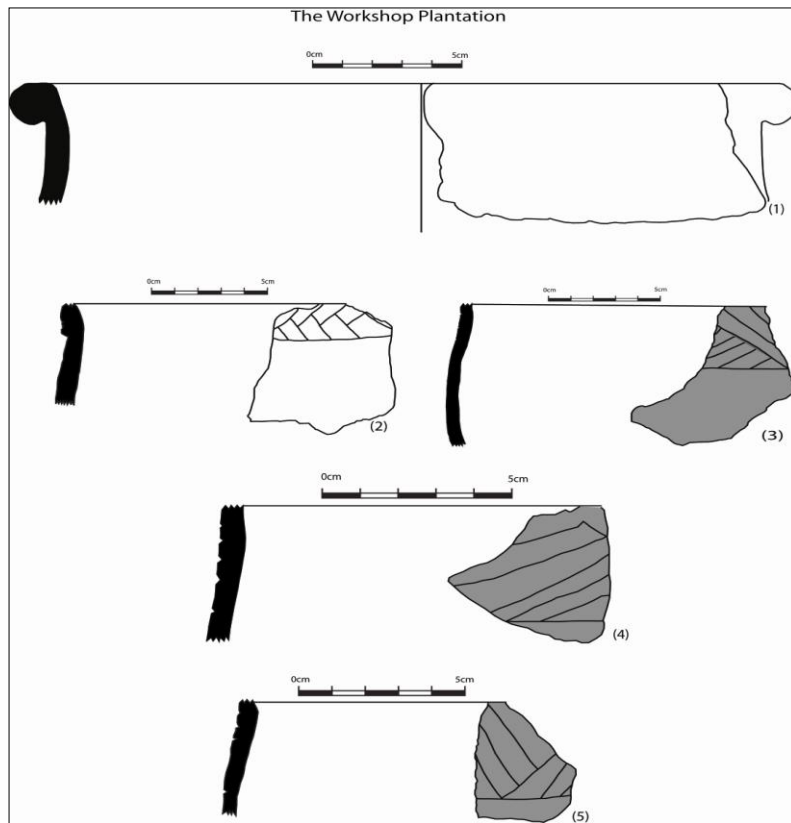


Figure 4.3: Ceramics from the Workshop Plantation representing the vessel shape and motif.

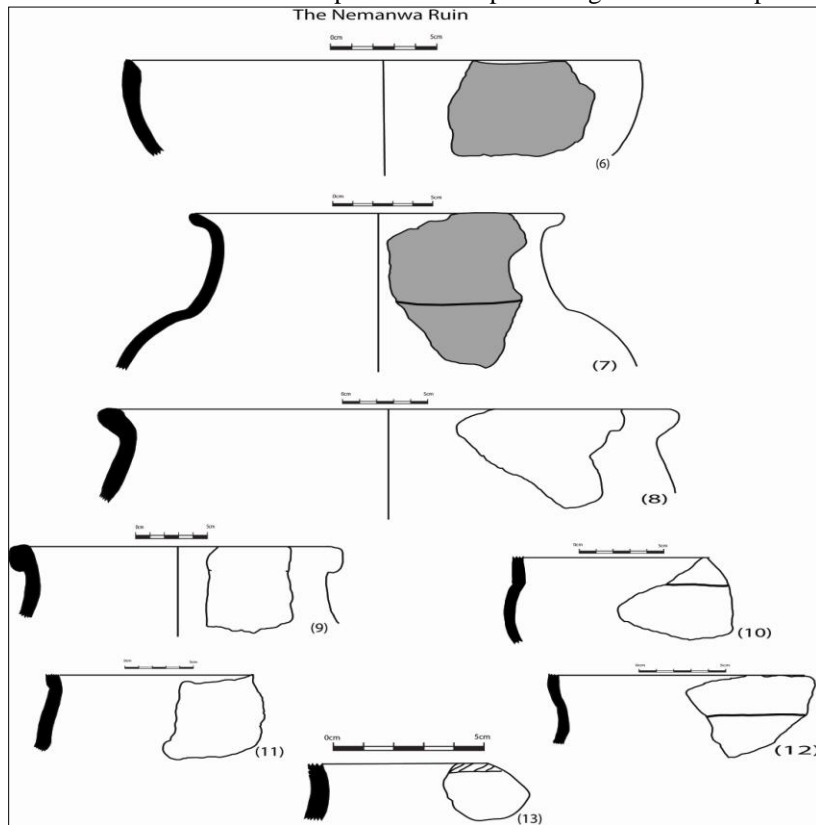


Figure 4.4: Ceramics from the Nemanwa Ruin representing the vessel shape and motif.

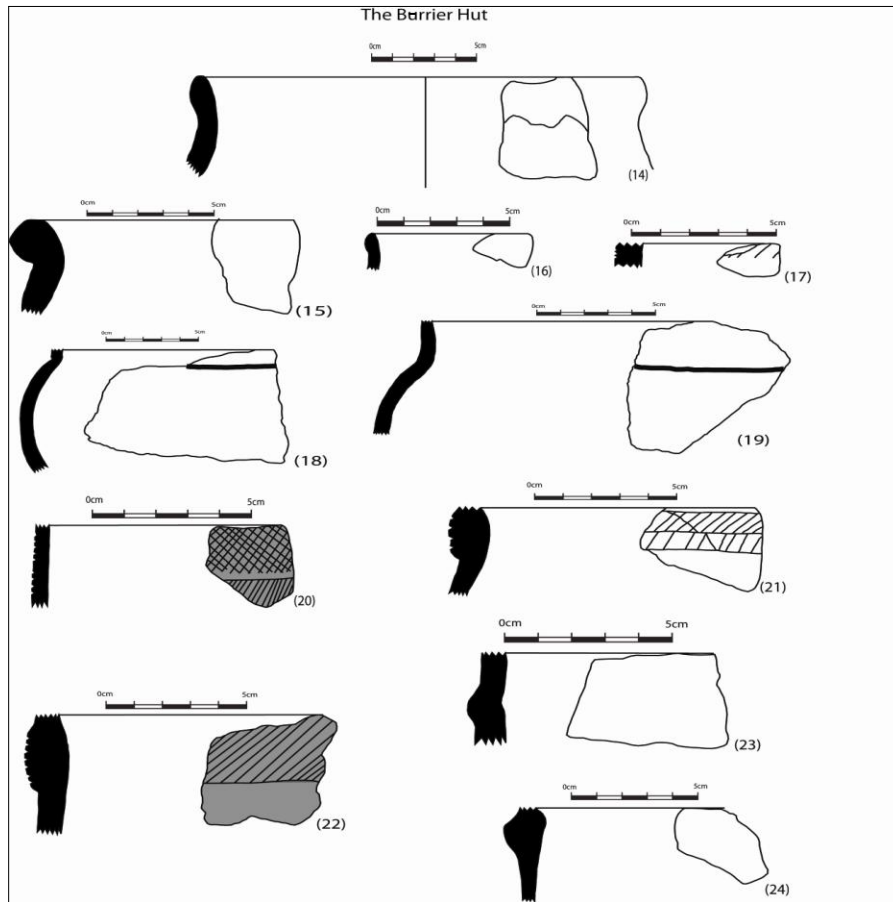


Figure 4.5: Ceramics from the Barrier Hut representing the vessel shapes and motif.

#### 4.2.2. Vessel Shape

Using Huffman's multi-dimensional approach, only 43 sherds were sufficiently diagnostic to produce visible profiles to enable distinguishing which type of pots were represented at each of the different sites. After analysing the different profiles represented the ceramics were separated into 5 types. Type 1 is characterized by bowls; Type 2 by shouldered pots; Type 3 are spherical pots with very short necks and heavily rolled rims (these being the same as Robinson's Form 3); Type 4 are spherical bodies, with short necks and beaded rims (these being the same as Robinson's Form 1); and Type 5 are beaded rim sherds where the sherds' shape could not be distinguished due to fragmentation, yet have been placed into Class 4 as detailed by Robinson (1961a) and Huffman (2007).

Type		Site Name		
		Nemanwa Ruins	Workshop Plantation	Barrier Hut
Type 1	Bowl	1 (Class 3)		
Type 2	Shouldered pot	1 (Class 3)		
Type 3	Spherical pot with very short neck and heavily rolled rims	3 (Class 4)	1 (Class 4)	2 (Class 4)
Type 4	Spherical body, short neck with beaded rim	7 (Class 4)		4 (Class 4)
Type 5	Rim Sherds with beaded rims			6 (Class 4)

Table 4.2: Different vessel types which were found at the three sites, including the sherd count representing each type.

The Nemanwa Ruins held the largest variation of types of identifiable sherds, with type 1 to 4 being represented at this site. As can be seen in the table, Type 3 has the largest representation, being found at all three sites. Type 1 (Figure 4.3, No. 6) is represented by one sherd from the Nemanwa Ruin and has been placed into Robinson's (1961a) Class 3 as the bowl sherd discovered was burnished with graphite disqualifying it from being placed into Class 2 in which bowls are typically exceedingly numerous. The burnishing also disqualifies it from being classified as Class 4 where bowl sherds are almost non-existent even though graphite burnishing was common during this period. This leaves Class 3, in which bowls are rare, but are found. Class 3 does also comprise some pots which were burnished with graphite, although these are documented as being of poor quality. Type 2 (Figure 4.3, No.11), the other Class 3 representative was also found at the Nemanwa Ruin site. It has been placed in Class 3 due to shouldered pots having been recorded as typical of this time period, but have not been recorded for the time

period of Class 4. Type 3 sherds (Figure 4.3, No. 1, Figure 4.4, No. 9 & 8, Figure 4.5, No. 14 & 15) have been placed in Robinson's Class 4. The heavily rolled rims are common to this period, and not to any other of the periods, making it simpler and more definite a classification. Type 4 sherds (Figure 4.4, No. 7 & 10) have also been placed into Robinson's Class 4 as they are the most represented during this time period and not found in the other time periods. Type 5 (Figure 4.5, No. 16) is represented by rim sherds that are too small to be placed in any one of the other four Types and therefore are grouped separately; the beaded rims suggest Class 4 as this form of rim was common during the time period.

Overall, the predominant Class was found to be Class 4 with a few examples of Class 3. Both of the Class 3 forms were found at the Nemanwa Ruin indicating that this site was occupied during Period 3 and Period 4, which might have been a transitional site. This conclusion was drawn from evidence that the Nemanwa Ruin has both Period 3 and Period 4 pottery forms. The Class 3 representatives could have been deposited before the stone walled structures were constructed. I mention this as Huffman and Vogel (1991) found some Class 3 pottery beneath the eastern wall in their Trench IV although sherds associated with the building belonged to Class 4b. It would have been beneficial to the discussion if stratigraphic information was available, but unfortunately it is not. The other two sites show evidence of being occupied only during Period 4.

### 4.2.3. Decoration Technique






Site Name	Oblique parrallel lines arranged in counter triangles Shown in Caton-Thompsons plate XVIII No. 2 Could be Class 3 influenced by Class 4	Single Line Incisions along neck Seem to belong to Type 4 Class 4	Deep Incisions - made at a diagonal angle Raised rib in neck, incisions are made in this raised area. Class 4 - Huffman, 2007	Raised rib in neck - no incisions Ceramics thicker on neck, no decoration made in this raised area Class 4 - Huffman, 2007	Band of cross hatching, with incised lines below Class 3
					
Nemanwa Ruins	1 - Unidentifiable Fragment	3 - Unidentifiable Fragments 2 - Type 4			
Workshop Plantation	3 - Unidentifiable Fragments		1 - Unidentifiable Fragment		
Barrier Hut	1 - Unidentifiable Fragment Fragment so small unable to tell if it is triangles	4 - Unidentifiable Fragments	2 - Unidentifiable Fragments	2 - Unidentifiable Fragments	1 - Unidentifiable Fragment

Table 4.3: Decoration styles exhibited at all three sites and the number of fragments found at each of the different sites.

The table shows that there are 5 representatives of Form 1 (Figure 4.3, No. 3, 4 & 5, Figure 4.4, No. 13, Figure 4.5, No. 17), originating from all three sites, with the largest number found at the Workshop Plantation. The sherd from the Barrier Hut is very small and it is therefore difficult to identify it as a true representation of this Form. According to Thompson (1931), Form 1 is representative of Class 3 influenced by Class 4. Form 2 (Figure 4.4, No. 7, 10 & 12, Figure 4.5, No. 18 & 19) is represented by 9 sherds, found at the Nemanwa Ruin and the Barrier Hut. According to Robinson (1961a) this is a representative of Class 4 and appears to belong to the Type 4 pottery class. Form 3 (Figure 4.3, No. 2, Figure 4.5, No. 21 & 22) is represented by 3 sherds, found at the Workshop Plantation and the Barrier Hut. Each of these pieces shows a different decoration technique, but all are made on the raised rib found in the neck area. According to Huffman (2007) and Robinson (1961a), this decoration technique belongs to Class 4, although the latter did not recover any of these forms during his excavations at Great

Zimbabwe. Form 4 (Figure 4.5, No. 23 & 24) is represented by 2 sherds both found at the Barrier Hut. This Form is similar to Form 3 except that it is not decorated on the raised ribs, and is likewise a representative of the pottery Class 4 according to Huffman (2007) and Robinson (1961a). Form 5 (Figure 4.5, No. 20) is represented by 1 sherd coming from the Barrier Hut and belongs to Class 3, as placed by Robinson (1961a).

The above information indicates that these sites were occupied during Period 4 (1250 AD to 1580 AD), due to the recorded decoration techniques being predominant during this time period. The only instance in which a Class 3 decoration technique was found belonged to one sherd from the Barrier Hut. This sherd could therefore indicate that this site had its origin during period 3, with the main occupation during Period 4.

#### **4.2.4 Objects Analysis**

The other objects found during analysis were of a varying nature. At the Barrier Hut many identifiable bones of cattle, goats, sheep and wild animals were represented. Unidentifiable bones were found, including three bone fragments which were charred. Four daga pieces were also included in the finds. The most interesting object was a crucible which had gold remnants encased in it, showing that gold working had taken place in this area.

Finds from the Nemanwa Ruin include three stones which appeared to have been used by people, one of which seemed to have been used as a grinding stone. The bones from this site included seven incisors, parts of bovid skulls, twelve molars, part of a calcaneus, one humerus, one femur,

and three other unidentifiable long bones. There was also a multitude of metal objects including eleven wound copper based wires, seventy nine iron fragments, and one copper bead. The Nemanwa Ruin was enclosed by R-style walling which is interesting as it lies outside of the Outer Perimeter Wall. A date has been given to the site which came from the base of daga floors which have indications for the earliest use of the site. The date for this is given at AD1410 ± 40 Nemanwa 38A. This is a clear indication that the site was occupied during period IV (Huffman and Vogel, 1991).

The last site to be analysed was the Workshop Plantation where not a single box included in this study contained any bones or bone fragments. There was a large quantity of daga pieces, indicating that this excavation had involved digging through a hut floor. Among the objects found during analysis of this site, were metal objects, such as hoes and a spear. The metal objects showed signs of oxidization. The daga was gritty and resembled that used to seal floors in the elite areas (see Robinson, 1961).

During the field walking, house structures were noticed along the modern dirt rounds surrounding the sites and under a tree in the parking area where they are undergoing substantial erosion. It was noticeable that these structures were similar to the Zimbabwe cement structures seen in the enclosed areas. Huffman found glass beads belonging to the Zimbabwe type in his excavations here together with bronze, iron and copper objects. The beads were shown by Wood (2005) and the metal by Miller (2002).

### 4.3 Information gathered from inside the Perimeter Walls

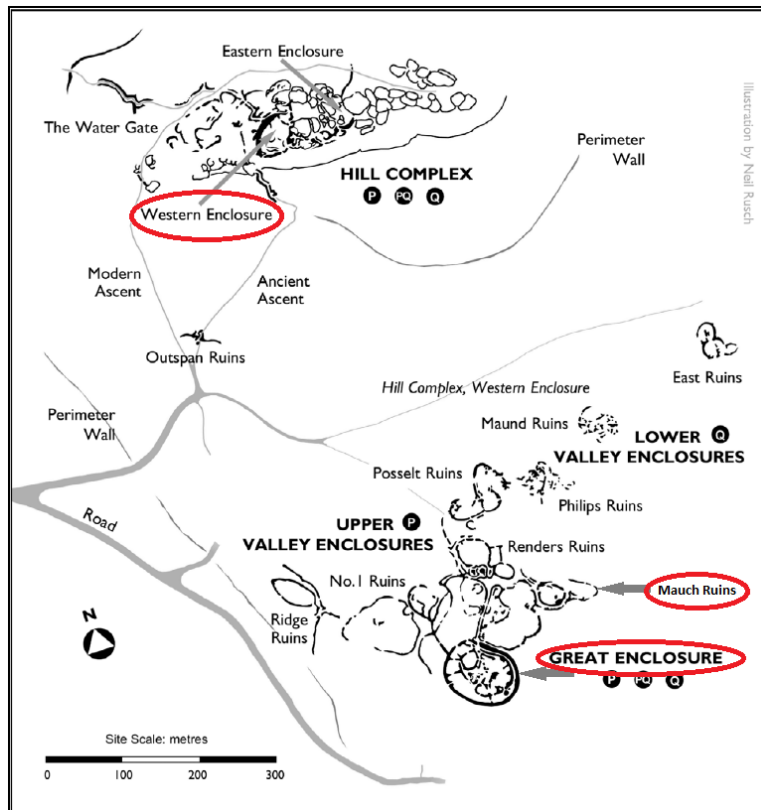


Figure 4.6: Great Zimbabwe, showing the Hill Complex, Valley Enclosures, and the Great Enclosure. The red outlined areas indicate the study sites used in this research. [https://www.researchgate.net/figure/273293351\\_fig2\\_Figure-2-Site-plan-of-Great-Zimbabwe-modified-from-an-original-plan-by-National-Museums](https://www.researchgate.net/figure/273293351_fig2_Figure-2-Site-plan-of-Great-Zimbabwe-modified-from-an-original-plan-by-National-Museums) (Accessed 18.01.17)

The information gathered from the elite areas (Figure 4.6) and those found inside the Perimeter Walls, have their own set of challenges. Many of the site names, especially from the Hill Complex, have changed, or the content has been abbreviated, making it difficult to place the collected material culture. These objects are dispersed through Southern Africa; some are located at the Great Zimbabwe Conservation Centre, others are stored in the Great Zimbabwe Site Museum, while still others can be found at The Iziko Museum in Cape Town South Africa, and in the curiosity cabinet at Groote Schuur, also in South Africa. Many of these objects have been



focal pieces for publications over the years, but a proper comparison of what could be found in the walled areas compared to what could be found in the unwalled areas has yet to be given proper attention.

#### **4.3.1 Ceramic Analysis Results**

The ceramic information from the areas inside the Perimeter Walls were analysed slightly differently. The information used was gathered from previously done excavations. These include the excavations of K. R. Robinson (1961a) of the Western Enclosure, which is part of the Hill Complex; those of R. Summers (1961) of the Great Enclosure and Caton-Thompsons' (1931) excavations of the Mauch Ruins. In these cases the main focuses were on which Classes of ceramics were found in which areas. Robinsons and Summers excavation notes provided information on the percentages of decorated vs. undecorated sherds throughout the different Classes. This was done in order to ascertain whether there is a higher frequency of decorated sherds in the elite, walled in area, compared to that of the unwalled, commoner area. It will also provided information on where one might find the different Classes of ceramics.

Firstly, the percentages of decoration will be looked at. This information was gathered from excavations done by K. R. Robinson and R. Summers.

Class	Number Decorated	Number Undecorated	% Decorated	% Undecorated
Class 1	35	3	92.11	7.89
Class 2	6	281	2.09	97.91
Class 3	4	109	3.54	96.46
Class 3 influenced by Class 4	7	120	5.51	94.49
Class 4	2	292	0.68	99.32

Table 4.4: The numbers and percentages of decorated vs. non-decorated ceramic sherds for Classes 1-4 from the Western Enclosure and 3-4 in the Great Enclosure.

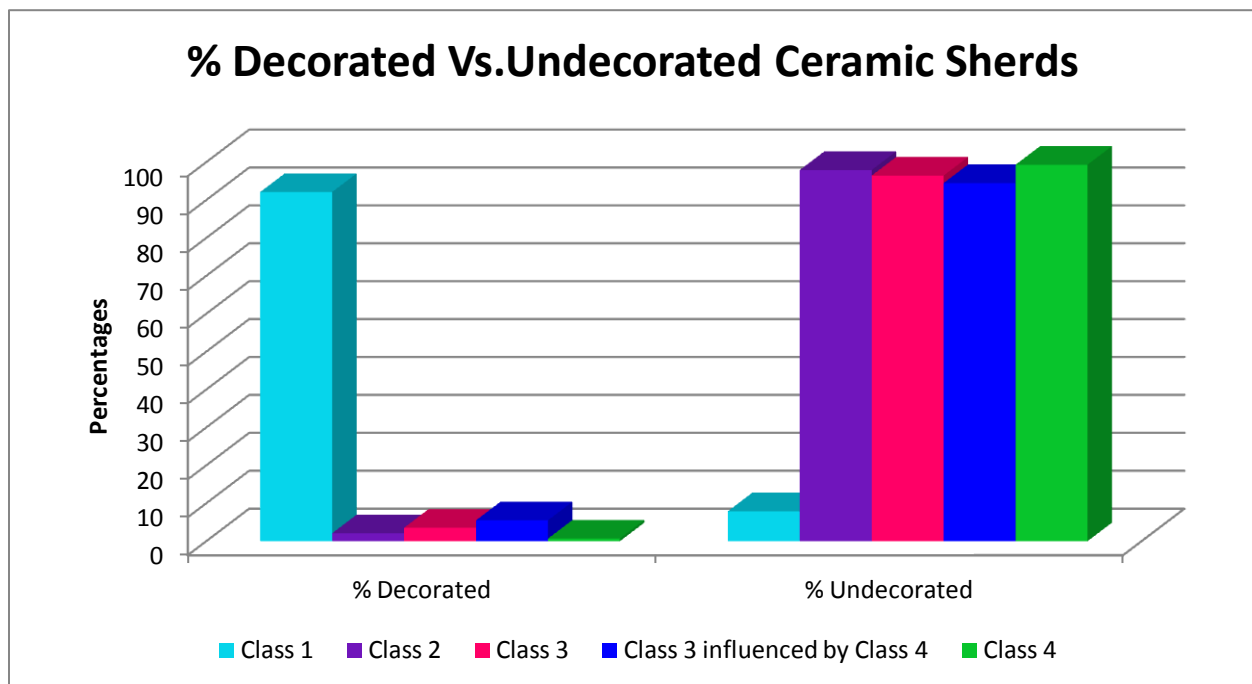


Figure 4.7: Bar graph representing the percentage of decorated vs. non-decorated ceramic sherds for Classes 1-4 from the Western Enclosure and 3-4 in the Great Enclosure.

Figures 8 to 12 show images of vessel shape and decoration of Robinson's (1961b) Classes 1 - 5 found in the Western Enclosure and Great Enclosure.

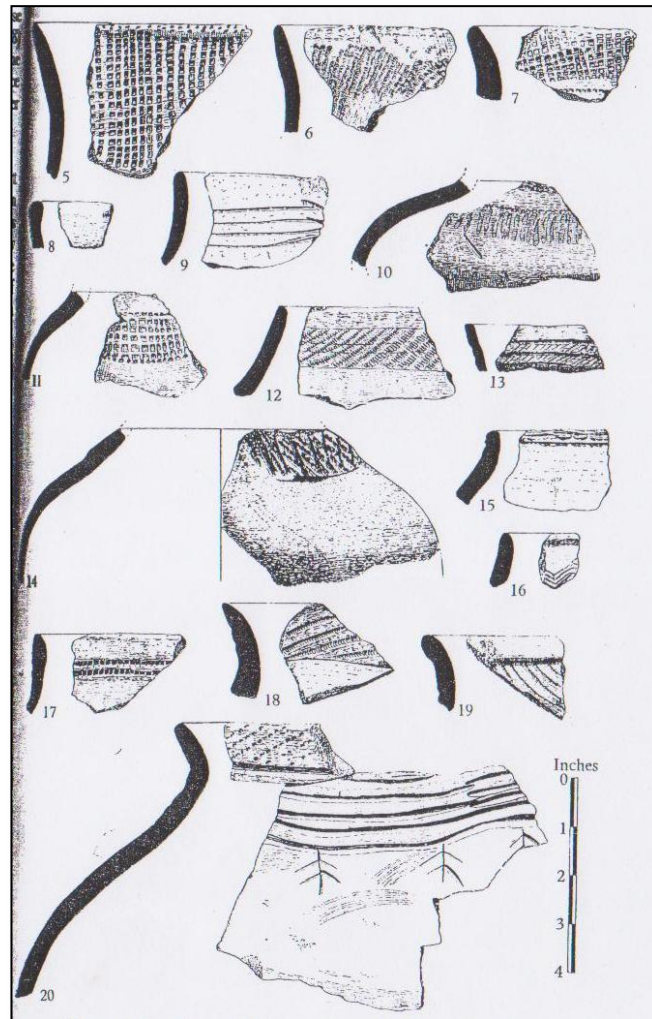


Figure 4.8: Ceramics from the Western Enclosure representing the vessel shapes and motifs of Class 1 ceramics. Taken from Robinson (1961b).

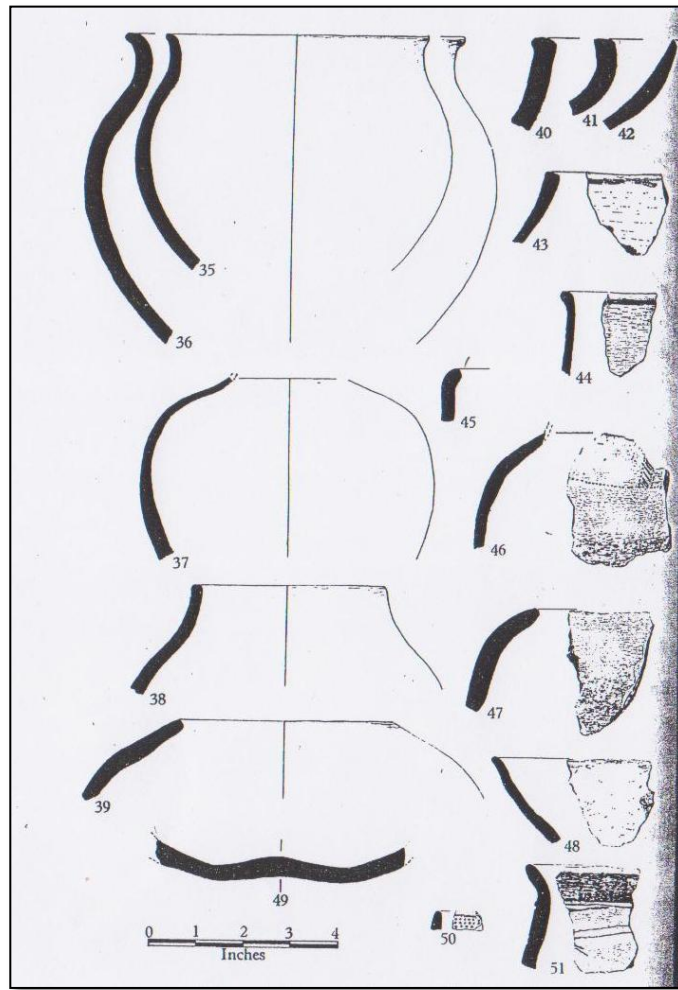


Figure 4.9: Ceramics from the Western Enclosure representing the vessel shapes and motifs of Class 2 ceramics. Taken from Robinson (1961b).

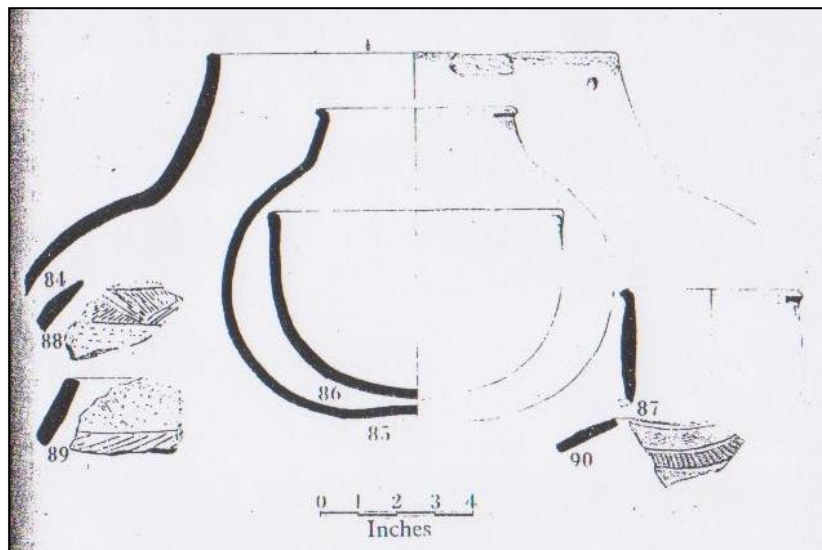


Figure 4.10: Ceramics from the Western Enclosure and Great Enclosure representing the vessel shapes and motifs of Class 3 ceramics. Taken from Robinson (1961b)

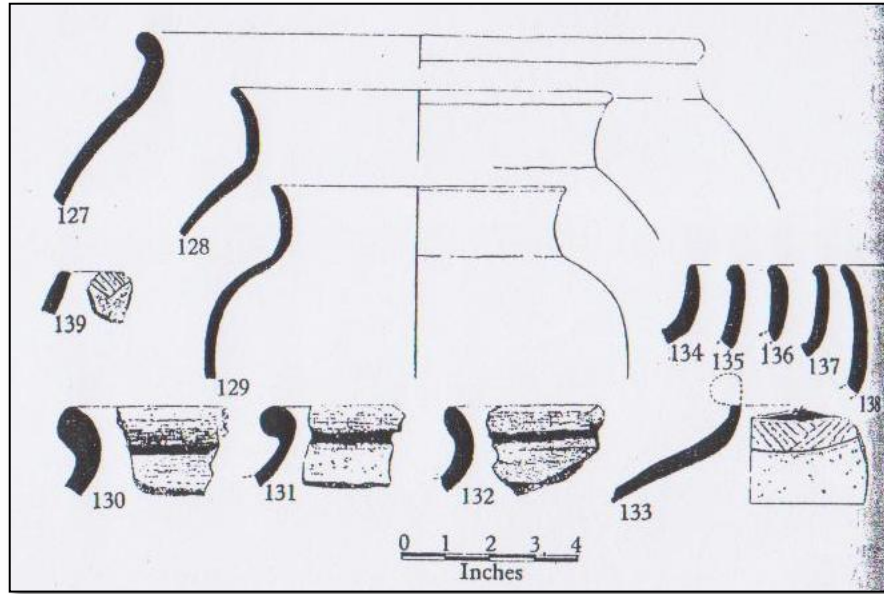


Figure 4.11: Ceramics from Mtuzu Ruin and from Old Goal Site, Zimbabwe area representing the vessel shapes and motifs of Class 4 ceramics according to Robinson (1961b) and Huffman and Vogel (1991) Class 4B. Taken from Robinson (1961b)

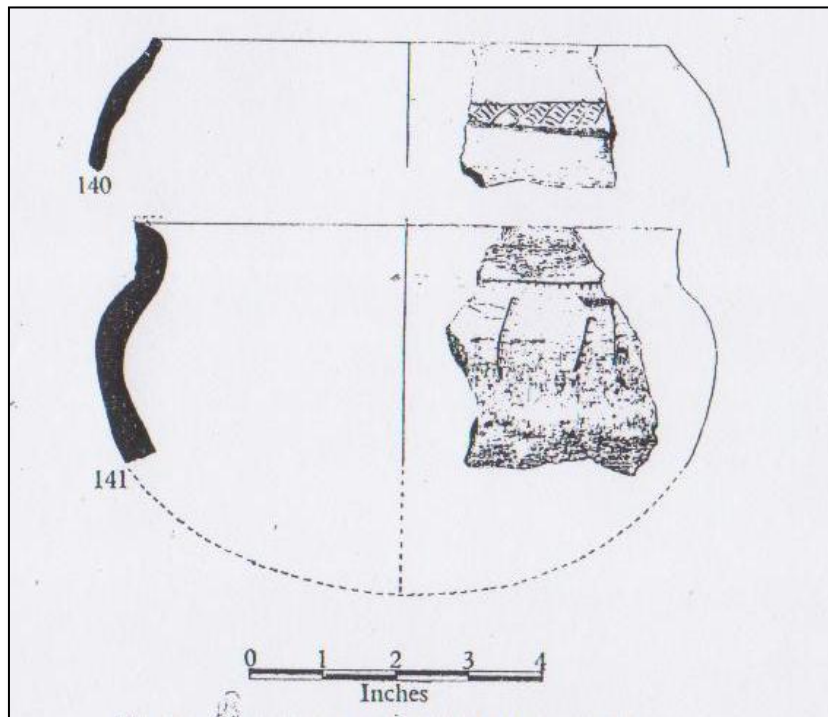


Figure 4.12: Ceramics from the Hill Complex representing the vessel shapes and motifs of Class 5 according to Robinson (1961b) ceramics or Class 4C by Huffman and Vogel (1991). Taken from Robinson (1961b)

The ceramic Class distribution will now be analysed. Three sites were chosen for this analysis, the Great Enclosure, the Western Enclosure and the Mauch Ruins.

Great Enclosure, R. Summers Excavations	
	Trench Number
Class 1	None
Class 2	None
Class 3	Trench 3; Trench 5; Trench 6; Trench 7; Trench 8; Trench 9; Trench 11; Trench 12; Trench 19; Trench 28; Trench 39; Trench 41; Trench 42; Trench 43; Trench 44
Class 4	Trench 2; Trench 5; Trench 7; Trench 9; Trench 11; Trench 19; Trench 28; Trench 33; Trench 36; Trench 37; Trench 38; Trench 39; Trench 41; Trench 42
Class 5	None

Table 4.5: The trench numbers of where the different Classes of ceramics were found in the Great Enclosure.

What one can infer from this table is that Classes 1 and 2 were absent from the Great Enclosure excavations. There was an abundance of both Classes 3 and 4 with overlapping of the two classes found in some of the trenches. Trenches 5, 7, 9, 11, 19, 28, 39, 41 and 42 yielded both Class 3 and Class 4 ceramics, while Trenches 3, 6, 8, 12, 43 and 44 only yielded Class 3 and Trenches 2, 33, 36, 37 and 38 were exclusively Class 4. Class 5 was not represented in this assemblage.

Western Enclosure, K. R. Robinson	
	Test Pit Number
Class 1	Test IV; Test V; Test VI; Test IX
Class 2	Test I, Layer 14; Test IV; Test V; Test VI; Test IX
Class 3	Test I, Floors c to j and Layer 13
Class 4	Test I, Hut A
Class 5	Test I

Table 4.6: Test excavations numbers of where the different Classes of ceramics were found in the Western Enclosure.

What one can deduce from this table is that all Classes were present in the Western Enclosure which is part of the Hill Complex. Class 1 was found in Test IV, V, VI and IX. Class 2 ware was found in Test I layer 14, Test IV, V, VI and IX. Class 3 ware was found in Test I, floors C to J and in layer 13. Class 4 ware was found in Test I, Hut A and Class 5 ware was found in Test I. Class 1 and 2 were both found in Tests IV, V, VI and IX. While Classes 2 to 5 were all found in Test I.

Mauch Ruins, Caton-Thompson	
Class 1	None
Class 2	None
Class 3	None
Class 4	Mauch 2: Surface Humus, Red Daga; Mauch 1; Mauch 3: Surface Humus, Variegated daga, Grey argillaceous soil and ash; Mauch 4: Surface humus, Variegated daga, Midden; Mauch 5: Surface humus, Variegated daga
Class 5	Mauch East

Table 4.7: The excavation areas of where the different Classes of ceramics were found in the Mauch Ruins.

Caton-Thompson's (1931) ceramic classification differed to that of Robinson's (1961a) ceramics. In his 1961b chapter "Zimbabwe Pottery" Robinson reclassifies Caton-Thompson's (1931) ceramics to fit in with his known classification. It is this new classification which is used in the table above, showing that only Classes 4 and 5 were present at the Mauch Ruins which forms part of the Valley Enclosures. Class 4 was present over the entire site, whereas Class 5 was represented by one individual sherd and was only found in Mauch East .

To summarise, the Western Enclosure which is part of the Hill Complex is the only site analysed in which all 5 Classes were found which suggests that the Hill Complex was occupied during all



5 Periods of Great Zimbabwe's occupation. The Great Enclosure only yielded Classes 3 to 4, suggesting occupation began during Period 3. The Mauch Ruins only held only Classes 4 and 5, this could be due to sampling, as other areas within the Valley Enclosures could have, on sampling, yielded other Classes. For the Mauch Ruins it can be suggested that this site was only occupied during Period 4 and 5.

### 4.3.2 Objects Analysis

The objects found during the analysis of the sites within the walled-areas were somewhat different and more extensive than those found in the Barrier Hut, Workshop Plantation and the Nemanwa Ruin.

The objects from the Great Enclosure included:

Trench 3 - Fragments of wound copper ribbon, an iron ring and charcoal;

Trench 5 - Spindle whorls, wound copper wire and ribbon, 91 glass beads, a gold pellet, charcoal, bones of domestic oxen and sheep, fragments of coiled bronze ribbon, pole daga, fragments of a rim from a soapstone bowl and carbonised wood;

Trench 6 - Wound copper ribbon, an iron fragment and a spindle whorl;

Trench 7 - Wood with copper staining;

Trench 8 - 30 Glass beads, slag and charcoal;

Trench 9 - Pebbles, slag, an iron fragment, a copper ribbon bracelet;

Trench10 - Slag;

Trench 11 – An iron fragment, a polishing stone and other stones;

Trench 12 - MSA core, charcoal, a crucible fragment, stone implements and other stones;

Trench 19 - Wound copper ribbon, spindle-whorls and animal bones;

Trench 28 - Slag;

Trench 29 - Scorifier;

Trench 30 - MSA flake;

Trench 34 - Iron bangle fragments and a broken glass bead;

Trench 35 - Bone and a fragment of a bottle glass;

Trench 39 – A glass bead and wound copper ribbon;

Trench 40 - Soapstone bowl fragments and a spindle-whorl;

Trench 42- Animal bones, an iron-wire bangle, slag, stones, a smoothing stone for daga, glass beads, iron fragments, charcoal and an LSA flake;

Trench 44 – A soapstone spindle-whorl, a pottery spindle-whorl, an iron spearhead and painted glassware; There is evidence of hut floors in many of the trenches.

The objects found from within the Western Enclosure are as follows:

Test 1 - 1034 Glass beads, copper and iron wire, and one each of the following items - slate pendant, spear blade, iron arrow head, gold pellet, iron hoe head, iron spear head and a broken cattle figurine;

Test 3 - 3 yellow beads of cane glass;

Test 4 - Fragments of 3 cattle figurines;

Test 5 - 5 Glass beads and 21 figurine fragments;

Test 6 - 4 Figurine fragments.

Test excavation IX which was done on the South-East corner of the Hill Complex contained 53 clay figurine fragments, 1 clay spoon, 8 schist pendants pierced for suspension, 10 blanks and 2 bone points.

Objects from the Mauch Ruin areas include as follows:

Mauch 2 - Iron fragments, 22 glass beads, an iron spear head, a soapstone object, fragments of a soap stone bowl and 2 iron wire fragments;

Mauch 3 - 1 Black polished pottery amulet, 24 fragments of bronze wire, an arrow head, an iron axe head or chisel, iron fragments and 2 iron hoes;

Mauch 4 - 7 Glass beads, a length of plain copper or bronze wire, an iron chisel, an arrow head, bronze wire bangle fragments, an iron hoe, a length of bronze wire, fragments of bronze wire, 2 copper nails and a fragment of bronze sheathing;

Mauch 5 - 16 Glass beads, a bronze wire fragment and 2 clay scorifiers;

Mauch Ruins E - 11 Glass beads, fragments of bronze wire bangles, an iron arrow head, an iron nail and 2 un-pierced spindle-whorls.

#### ***4.4 Conclusion***

An evident factor of these three commoner area sites is that, overall, the ceramics are predominantly Class 4 pottery. The other objects found at these sites; the animal bones, the iron hoes and grinding stones indicate that these areas were homesteads. Due to the predominance of the Class 4 pottery type there is an indication that occupation of these sites situated in the commoner area was during Period 4 (1250 AD - 1580 AD). This is supported by the date

received from the Nemanwa Ruin of 1410 AD. There is a large quantity of metal fragments to be found, especially at the Nemanwa Ruin. However, excavations are required to obtain samples for dating. It is also apparent that metal working, indicated by the crucible with gold remnants encased in it was taking place in the commoner area.

The results attained from the Walled Area sites show that there was greater access to metal worked objects as each of the three sites sampled, contained numerous metal worked objects. The Great Enclosure held evidence of domestic animal bones, charcoal and multiple pieces of slag including a crucible fragment suggesting that metal working was taking place at this site; the other consumable goods such as bronze and copper bangles, spindle-whorls, the numerous glass beads and hut floors suggests that this area was occupied by homesteads. In addition to the above results show a greater access to not only metal worked objects but beads and soapstone goods, indicating that the occupants of the Walled Areas had easier access to 'elite' objects. The ceramic evidence indicates that the Great Enclosure and Valley Enclosures were occupied at a later date to that of the Hill Complex.

## Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

### *5.1 Introduction*

In the introductory chapter of this research paper it was put forward that commoner areas or areas which do not have monumental architecture, or were not considered to have housed elite or royal families have been placed on the margin of scholarly research. Not only have these valuable archaeological areas been neglected in terms of directed research but they have also been intruded upon by modern activities. However, in spite of being subject to limitations, the commoner areas of Great Zimbabwe have much to offer which is of historical and archaeological importance. By way of example, this particular research project has brought to light the fact that there are more similarities between the material culture of commoner areas and that of elites than might have been expected.

### *5.2 The commoner and elite area at Great Zimbabwe*

According to the Zimbabwe Culture Pattern (Huffman, 1972, 1982, 1984, 1986b, 1996, 2009, 2011) the commoner area of Great Zimbabwe was situated outside the Outer Perimeter Wall. This area has been transformed over the years from a golf course, to a camping ground and presently, a parking lot. In addition to this, buildings for tourist accommodation, museums and a curio shop have been erected at this location (Figure 4.1). The ‘rescue excavations’ done in order to gain an understanding of the area and to save the archaeology that was about to be destroyed, have left us with little understanding of the context of these sites. Therefore, the information they

could have given us has been lost. Nevertheless, there still remain some significant pointers to understanding the manner in which commoners lived at Great Zimbabwe.

The importance of archaeological sites can only be fully understood when the entire society, both elite and non-elite are studied. Only then can we fully grasp the relationships between these areas and the identities of the people that lived in them. Contemporary historians have begun to focus on the topic of slavery as a global phenomenon and in the same manner archaeologists need to look at the outlying areas of past civilizations. The potential significance of these areas must be acknowledged before more information is lost to research.



Figure 5.1: The curio shop and its amenities at Great Zimbabwe. Photo: Liesl Sonnenberg

By analysing the material culture of Great Zimbabwe found at sites once occupied by common people one can begin to compare this material to that found in the elite areas. This enables us as

researchers to obtain a better understanding of what was occurring in each area and how the two areas interacted with one another (Table 5.1).

	Enclosed Areas	Area outside of the Perimeter Wall
Pottery	X	X
Stone Walling	X	X
Daga Hut Floors	X	X
Bronze Artefacts	X	X
Copper Artefacts	X	X
Iron Artefacts	X	X
Soapstone Artefacts	X	
e.g. bowls, birds		
Phalli	X	
Pottery Whorls	X	
Stone Tools	X	X
Gold Workings	X	X
e.g. crucibles, clay		
Pottery Animals/ Figurines	X	
Pottery Beads	X	
Glass Beads	X	X
Gold Beads	X	
Porcelain	X	
Slag	X	X

Table 5.1: A summary of the type of objects found in both the elite areas and the commoner areas.

## A) Pottery

Analysis of the pottery found in the commoner area reflects that which was found in the elite areas. The percentages of decorated versus non-decorated ceramic sherds falls within the norm of what was found during Robinson's (1961a) analysis. In his description of the Class 4 ceramics he says that decoration was very scarce throughout his excavations. Burnishing decoration was frequent during this time period and this is reflected in the results obtained on the three sites

analysed (Figure 5.2, Figure 5.3 and Figure 5.4). Ceramics found in both elite and commoner areas are reflective of household pottery, showing that both of these areas were occupied by family units using the same form of pottery.

When considering the ceramic analysis results a conclusion can be drawn that the pottery found in the area outside the Outer Perimeter Wall is mostly from Class 4 and therefore the major occupation of this area would have been during Period 4. It seems that people had started to occupy certain parts of this area during the last stages of Period 3 due as there is evidence of Class 3 being present. This is supported by the dates received from the Nemanwa Ruin, showing that basal occupation was around 1410 AD  $\pm$  40. The dates from the Car Park Midden also support this argument, ranging from between 1450 AD to 1660 AD. It would be useful to obtain more <sup>14</sup>C dates from samples received from the Barrier Hut and the Workshop Plantation, as well as other sites from outside the Outer Perimeter Wall. These would help in the understanding of the chronology of these areas and therefore the chronology of Great Zimbabwe in its entirety.

For Great Zimbabwe as a whole the pottery analysis seems to fit the theory that there was a shift and expansion in settlement patterns over time (Collett, et al., 1992; Hall, 1986; Beach, 1998). Analysis from the Hill Complex shows that this area was occupied from Period 1 all through to Period 5. The same cannot be said for the Great Enclosure or the Valley Enclosures where occupation seems to have begun in Period 3 in the Great Enclosure with the earliest ceramics relating to that time period. The evidence from the Mauch Ruins indicates a similar occupation time frame starting in Period 4 with evidence of Period 5. Evidence for Period 3 has been found in other areas of the Valley Enclosures, for example in the Maund Ruins (Caton-Thompson,



1931; Robinson, 1961b). Robinson (1961b) suggested that there may have been evidence belonging to Periods 1 and 2 found at the Maund Ruins A3 midden, yet this could have been an earlier occupation. The main finds here indicate an occupation from late Period 3 to Period 4 in the Great Enclosure and Upper Valley Enclosures and Period 5 in the Lower Valley Enclosures (Chirikure and Pikirayi, 2008).



Figure's 5.2; 5.3; 5.4: Examples of graphite burnishing from the Barrier Hut and the Nemanwa Ruin. Photos taken by: Liesl Sonnenberg.

## B) Stone Walling

These results could be the foundation of questions revolving around the development of Great Zimbabwe. Analysis and dating of the Hill Complex, as well as the Valley Enclosures and the Great Enclosure, and recently, the results gained from outside the Outer Perimeter Wall start to shed light on how Great Zimbabwe expanded. Chirikure et al. (2013) have suggested that the stone walling construction started around the end of the twelfth to the beginning of the thirteenth centuries, tying it into the end of Period 3 or the beginning of Period 4. The Nemanwa Ruin (Figure 5.5) was also a stone enclosure and although the building was constructed in the R-Style it is walled in an area found outside the Outer Perimeter Wall (Huffman and Vogel, 1991).

Walling is considered to have also been a prestige indicator, a structure that separated the elite from the commoners. This kind of spatial alteration is believed to have been reserved for the elite of the society and not for the lower classes (Huffman, 2009). Yet, the Nemanwa Ruin (Figure 5.5) shows is an anomaly to in this theory, calling into question whether stone walling was an elite practice or rather something that was carried out by the society over a period of time and was available to all those living at Great Zimbabwe. The Perimeter Walls are also stone constructions and one might therefore question whether this is important for the understanding of elite separation from the commoner people. The Inner Perimeter Wall was built first, indicating that the settlement at that stage was smaller; then, with growth in the settlement size, the Outer Perimeter Wall was constructed. This shows how Great Zimbabwe expanded over time. It may well be possible that stone walling as widely acknowledged was a product of the elite but that Nemanwa was built while the site was expanding. Whitty (1961) believes the R-style was the last to be built and based on this assumption, the Nemanwa Ruins (Figure 5.5) could be part of the elite settlement which was built outside the Outer Perimeter Wall due to expansion. This theory is supported by Beach (1998) who says that these stone-walled sites situated outside the Outer Perimeter Wall could have been occupied by senior sons, favoured *torwa* (unrelated) members of the elite, or in-laws. 20 such sites have been found on the outskirts of the city centre of which Nemanwa is but one. He suggests that in these cases the families could have had houses both outside and inside the stone enclosures. This could explain the material culture found at Nemanwa, namely the higher frequency of decoration on the ceramics and more metal worked objects were found here than at either the Barrier Hut or the Workshop Plantation.



Figure 5.5: Part of the R-Style walling forming part of the Nemanwa Ruin. Photo: Dr. Shadreck Chirikure

Stone walling is said to have been an object of elite power, used in the construction of their houses; yet some houses situated inside the Outer Perimeter Wall were not constructed using stone walling. Evidential remains along the pathway leading to the Valley Enclosures shows daga floors with no stone walling present (Figure 5.6; Figure 5.7; Figure 5.8). This could be evidence of commoner folk living inside the Outer Perimeter Walls before expansion took place shifting them to the outskirts of the city centre. This again brings up questions of an expansion over time for Great Zimbabwe. It might also show that some of the elite did not have access to stone walling, yet they were still able to occupy prime land closer to the Hill Complex. Questions concerning this separation of the social classes require investigation of these homesteads and their dates of occupancy, before they are destroyed due to the neglect of areas not associated with stone walling.



Figure 5.6: Path leading to the Valley Enclosures



Figure 5.7: Evidence of daga flooring being eroded along the pathway



Figure 5.8: Material culture remains along the pathway

### C) Daga Floors

Another aspect which is apparent in both the elite and the commoner areas are the solid daga floors, which start to appear in Robinson's (1961b) layer 12. Seen during field walking, the daga floor remains resemble those seen during excavations in the walled areas. Huffman (2009) suggests that one of the distinguishing factors of the elite housing during the Zimbabwe Culture Pattern were these thick daga floors (Figure 5. 9). Yet, if we find them in both the elite areas and the areas outside the Outer Perimeter Wall, perhaps we should ask questions concerning housing evolution rather than a separation of elite and commoner. It could be that as time progressed so did the building materials of houses and rather than the elite gaining exclusive access to newer and improved methods of building their houses, this was rather a societal shift to newer and improved methods. Huffman (2009) also suggests that the elite housing predated the first stone walling which we believe to have started during Period 3. If this is so, then it is understandable that we should find the same flooring techniques outside the Outer Perimeter Wall as this area seems to have first been occupied during Period 3. This validates the theory that as time progressed residents of Great Zimbabwe naturally extended their quarters outside the Perimeter Walls as liveable space within the walls was decreasing. Robinson (1965) demonstrated that stone walling of prestige status began around AD 500 on hilltop settlements around the early

Leopards Kopje. Because these communities built daga floors, it is possible that this architecture was widely practiced by local communities.



Figure 5.9: Road with a Hut Floor showing through from the commoner area. Photo: Liesl Sonnenberg

## D) Other Objects

Huffman (1984) believes that commoner goods should include domestic pottery. Other commoner goods should include iron hoes, grindstones, glass beads and metal bangles. Some of these goods were discovered at the three commoner sites analysed here. At the Workshop Plantation two iron hoes were found (Figures 5.10 and 5.11), in the Nemanwa Ruin a grindstone (Figure 5.12), other domestic stones, and bovid bones (Figure 5.13) were part of the finds.



Figure 5.10: Iron hoe from the Workshop Plantation.



Figure 5.11: Iron hoe from the Workshop Plantation.



Figure 5.12: Grinding stone from the Nemanwa Ruin



Figure 5.13: Bovid bones from the Barrier Hut

When looking over the objects found in the walled areas one can see that they include metal objects of bronze, iron and copper (Figures 5.18 and 5.19), soapstone objects, phalli, pottery whorls (Figure 5.16), stone tools (Figure 5.16), gold workings, pottery animals and figurines (Figure 5.17), household pottery, glass and gold beads, porcelain and slag. These objects have been designated as belonging to the elite population at Great Zimbabwe (Huffman, 1996). Yet, in the analysis, some of these objects have been found in the three sites that are designated as commoner areas (Figures 5.10 and 5.11). Clearly, elite objects were defined without looking at commoner areas.



Figure 5.14: Bronze spear from the Workshop Plantation.



Figure 5.15: Copper/ bronze Bead from the Nemanwa Ruin.

Unfortunately, there were no glass beads to be found amongst the objects that were analysed for this research. This could be due to the excavation method used or due to the small sample size used during this study. The only way to discover whether there is in fact no glass, gold or pottery beads present would be to conduct a more extensive study, or resort to a new excavation. Copper (Figure 5.17 and Figure 5.15), iron and bronze artefacts were all present in the commoner area, as well as other metal working paraphernalia, including its remnants such as slag (Miller, 2002) and a gold encrusted crucible found at the Barrier Hut (Figure 5.16). These are all indicative of normal domestic residences during this time period and from a comparative perspective the same objects were found in the elite and commoner households.

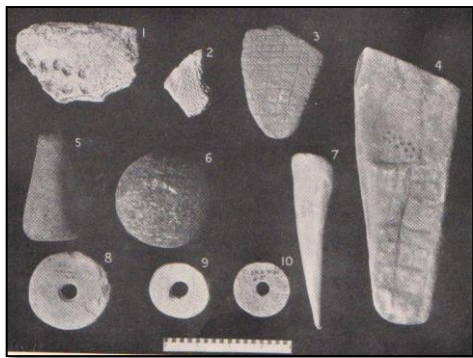


Figure 5.16: Pottery sherds, pottery lids and pottery spindle whorls. Taken from Caton-Thompson (1931). (1961b).

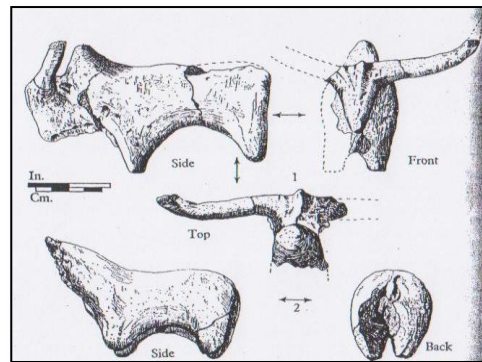


Figure 5.17: Two cattle figurines from the Western Enclosure. Robinsons Test IV. Taken from Robinson

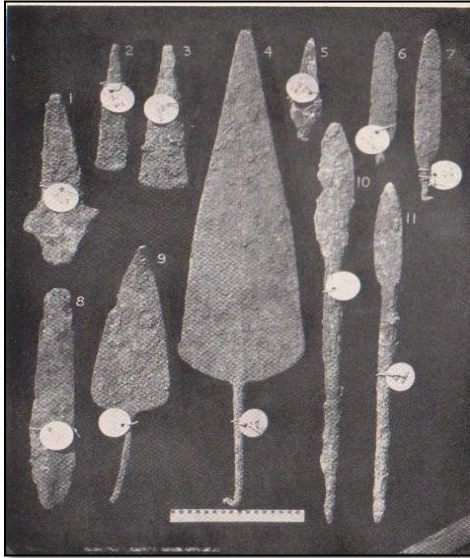


Figure 5.18: Iron tools and weapons from the Maund Ruins. From Caton-Thompsons excavations. Taken from Caton-Thompson (1931).

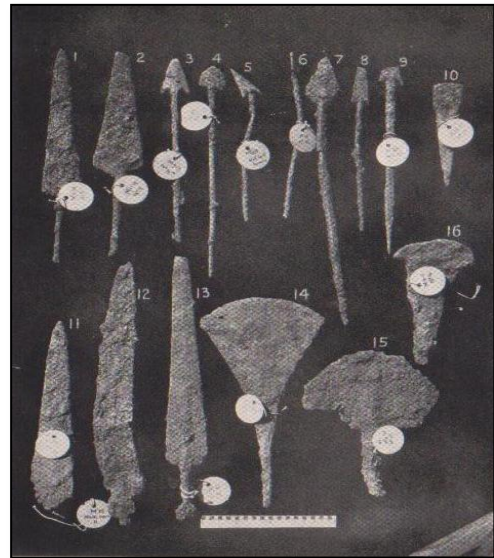


Figure 5.19: Iron tools and weapons from the Hill Complex. From Caton-Thompsons excavations. Taken from Caton-Thompson (1931).

The crucible (Figure 5.20) with flecks of gold encased in it found at the Barrier Hut site shows that gold working was happening both inside and outside the stone enclosures. Gold has often been associated with the elite, as it is believed to be a prestige good. Unfortunately only one example of this has been found in the commoner area at this stage. After a more extensive study it might be possible to relate the quantities of such crucibles found in the elite areas to those found in the commoner areas. A study of this nature might well prove difficult as there are no definite counts for crucibles found in the elite areas. At the Workshop Plantation an isolated bronze spear, considered to be a symbol of leadership was found (Figure 5.14). In terms of current thought, items of this nature should only be located on the Hill Complex as this was where the King resided (Huffman, 1984).





Figure 5.20: Crucible with flecks of gold remaining in it. Found at the Barrier Hut.



Figure 5.21: Copper Wire found at the Nemanwa Ruins

Huffman (1986b) hypothesised that the Great Enclosure housed the initiation centre, a ritualistic area. Material culture from this site should therefore reflect this hypothesis; the area should be devoid of substantial daga structures, be situated on land unable to sustain agricultural fields, would be associated with stone cairns and constructed differently to a homestead (Huffman, 2001, 2007). Huffman (2011) does allow for some utilitarian goods to be present as these could have been part of the initiation process. According to Huffman (2011) the Venda's Domba, which is a premarital initiation school includes taking the initiates through a make-believe countryside and homestead. This could account for the household goods found in the Great Enclosure. During the Domba there is a mock smelting experience which could have left evidence of slag or other metal working goods. The teachings would probably have included lessons taught using special figurines, similar to the pottery animal figurines found in the Western Enclosure in the Hill Complex. An abundance of these figurines would therefore have been part of the material culture remains found in the Great Enclosure. Evidential remains from the Great Enclosure do not fully support this theory. The few phalli and pottery figurines found in the Great Enclosure have all been associated with Period 3 ceramics, disappearing during

Period 4. If the site had been used as an initiation centre until the decline of Great Zimbabwe these objects would have been present throughout the Great Enclosure's occupation time frame. There is an abundance of homestead ceramic remains littering the site, dating from Period 3. The object analysis shows a wealth of homestead artefacts, including metal worked objects, glass beads, slag, spindle-whorls, fragments of soapstone goods, charcoal, bones of domestic animals and evidence of hut floors layered over time (Figure 5.22); more than would have been present if the site was used as an imaginary homestead. This information suggests that the Great Enclosure instead of being an area of initiation was rather occupied by homesteads housing elite families, suggesting another shift in occupation residencies as suggested by Beach (1998).



Figure 5.22: Evidence of hut floors in the Great Enclosure. Photo: Liesl Sonnenberg

An interesting study might be to look for similar adoptions of elite goods in commoner areas around the world. In modern society there is a trend which shows that some lower class households rise above their fellows and through their means acquire goods that might reflect or

resemble those of the elite. In Muria, India, a category of people belonging to the 'tribal' group rose to enrich their lives to a greater degree. They now sport the consumption behaviour of their elite fellows (Gell, 1988). In the informal settlements of South Africa one will see a similar example. Even in the make shift homes, homeowners have acquired new fridges, television sets, new beds and other objects such as cell phones (Meintjes, 2000). In the archaeological record left by slaves at the Cape from the 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, analysis of their material culture is difficult because it reflects that of the elite. Slave owners might well have passed down their goods when they were done with them or, conceivably, the slaves might have stolen such items when the opportunity arose (Hall and Markell, 1993). One could relate this theory back into the excavations done in commoner areas around the world to see if a similar situation is reflected. This can only be done if excavations are done in a manner that shows contextual and therefore reliable data. These kinds of ethnographical studies indicate that the difference between elite and commoner might well be over emphasised.

At Great Zimbabwe, certain objects found in the elite areas, such as spindle whorls, soapstone artefacts and figurines (Figures 5.17 and 5.18) were not found in the three sites situated outside the Outer Perimeter Wall that were studied during this research. The absence of soapstone artefacts from these areas could be due to either of two different reasons. In the first, that they are absent due to their being elite objects and therefore we should not find them in the areas outside the Perimeter Walls, especially outside the Outer Perimeter Wall. Or secondly, were more sites in the commoner area to be excavated they might well yield some of these artefacts. Therefore, there could be soapstone artefacts from outside the Outer Perimeter Wall, they have just not yet been found. Pottery figurines (Figure 5.17) and phalli were abundant during Period 2 and

Robinson (1961a) found and described such goods. These would have been found on the Hill Complex. Robinson did not find any of these objects that related to Period 3 on the Hill Complex, nor did he find any spindle whorls during his excavations that related to this Period. Summers (1961) did find pottery figurines and phalli in his excavations in the Great Enclosure which can be related to Period 3. Yet, throughout his excavations in the Great Enclosure, nearly all the phalli and pottery figurines were related to Period 3 through their association with Class 3 ceramics. This could perhaps be due to the unfortunate destruction of this site through unprofessional excavations during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries? If not, then it would seem that these objects are associated with Period 2 and 3 and start to dwindle and then disappear during Period 4. This could explain their absence in the Period 4 occupation levels at sites outside the Outer Perimeter Wall, rather than the fact that they were elite goods and therefore commoners would not have had access to them.

Huffman (2007), using the cognitive structuralist approach, examined in Chapter 2 of this study, hypothesised that Great Zimbabwe was occupied with a pre-conceived idea of spatiality. After analysing literature on the construction of the stone walls, this theory does not seem to be the full story. Rather, it would seem that there were shifts in the area designated for the ruler of Great Zimbabwe, depending on the time period that one is researching (Beach, 1998; Collett et al., 1992; and Chirikure et al., 2013). If this is true, then where does it leave the commoner population? Did they still reside outside the Outer Perimeter Wall, or further from the site of Great Zimbabwe, in rural peasant homesteads like Montevideo Ranch and Chivowa Hill?

The study conducted by Sinclair (1984) shows how an understanding of the complex relationship between peasants, commoners and elites can only be grasped once we have conducted a full scale study in order to understand each area. Only then can we begin to put together all the pieces of the puzzle in order to understand which activities were taking place where, who was occupying the different areas and how their material culture differs.

The results of the ceramic analysis and the analysis of the other objects found in the ‘commoner’ area at Great Zimbabwe shed a similar light on the situation. The story that these objects are telling us is about the growth of a society. How people moved and populations expanded across a landscape in order to include their ever increasing numbers. The material culture from both the walled in areas and the areas outside the Outer Perimeter Wall are similar in nature. They seem to be an expression of an evolving culture, rather than one which was separated by social boundaries. If objects are the same then perhaps the elites would have had more finds in comparison, unfortunately due to the hap-hazard manner in which the elite and commoner areas were excavated significant quantities of material are unavailable for analysis.

### ***5.3 A Historical Example of Commoner Interaction with Elites, From the Mutapa State Society***

Huffman postulated that the building at Great Zimbabwe only commenced in the late 13<sup>th</sup> to early 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, fitting in well with his hypothesis that Great Zimbabwe came into power after Mapungubwe’s decline around 1290 AD. Huffman had previously used the cognitive structuralist approach to hypothesise that Great Zimbabwe was an offshoot of Mapungubwe. The decline of Great Zimbabwe also fits very neatly into the time frame of Khami’s rise to political

power. Yet as evidence shows, Great Zimbabwe already had political importance before Mapungubwe declined in power and true to this Khami was an important site which overlapped with Great Zimbabwe for at least a century before the latter's collapse (Chirikure et al., 2013).

As stated many times before, in order to have a clear and full understanding of the culture at Great Zimbabwe, one needs to look at the society as a whole, therefore studying the lower levels of the society is of great importance (Mudenge, 1988). Mudenge (1988) summarises the different social groupings which would have made up the Mutapa society. This has been summarised further in the following paragraphs in order to briefly describe the levels of organisation that might have been present at Great Zimbabwe. First is the *Imba* (lit. Hut), this is the smallest unit of society and includes the nuclear family. This unit would have included a man and his wives and their children. It would have had its own compound, also known as a *mana*, and in some cases might have included the man's sons and their wives. Next would have been the *Musha* (village), this would have been made up of separate *imba*. The size of a *musha* was not fixed and varied from one to another. Villages functioned as economic units of production and help could be gained from ones neighbours in a time of need. The *musha* is followed by the *Dunhu* (ward) which included a group of *musha*. Due to territoriality the boundaries of *dunhu* were clearly distinct, often by natural features such as mountains or rivers. A *dunhu* would have fallen under a sub-chief, normally known as a *sadunhu*. The *sadunhu* was typically either the descendant of the first male to have moved into the vicinity or he would have been an important member of a dynasty which had conquered and instilled itself onto the present population. Following this would have been the *madzishe* (i.e. chiefs), in some cases these *madzishe* referred to themselves as *madzimambo* or *mambo* singular (i.e. kings). The term of highest endearment would have

been *Madzimbabwe*, which translates into “he that dwellith in a *zimbabwe*” (Mudenge, 1988: 18). For the interests of this dissertation, one would need to look at the material culture of those residing in *imba*'s and compare it to the compounds occupied by the *sadunhu*'s and *mambo*'s and their families.

In the Mutapa state the chief or king would have received his income from a variety of places, including tribute, which could have been received in cattle, hoes, gold, grain or other objects of value and judicial fees. Tribute in the form of labour would have been accessible from those living within the king's *dunhu*. The court at Mutapa was known as *zimbabwe*, the houses being made of daga, poles and grass thatched roofing, enclosed by stone walling. An interesting aspect of the Mutapa state capital is that it did not remain in the same place throughout its life span, but rather it was mobile. The theory behind this movement is that each new Mutapa ruler was free to choose the location of his capital, normally remaining in his chosen place throughout his rule, although this was not always the case (Mudenge, 1988). In most cases the Mutapa would rule from his existing homestead instead of moving his household to his predecessors homestead (Mudenge, 1998; Beach, 1994; Chirikure, et al., 2012). If one looks along the Mutapa state timeline it would be associated with numerous capitals, some which have been located and others which are still to be found. Once a new ruler came into power his homestead would be expanded to accommodate his new position (Chirikure, et al., 2012).

With regards to resources and material culture, it is known that during the Mutapa state's rule before the eighteenth century, the Mutapa kept his cattle herds at quite some distance from the capital, up to 150 km away. The Mutapa's cattle were often used in times of need, including

those of war and famine. It has also been recorded that in some cases the Mutapa would pay his gold mining labourers in cattle (Mudenge, 1988). Agriculture was also an important factor, featuring as the basis for the Mutapa economy and it provided sustenance for those living in the Mutapa state and could feed a large labour force. This food resource could have been stored for a time of need, being able to feed the Mutapa and his subjects if food was scarce (Beach, 1994; Mudenge, 1988).

Concerning trade, it is known that the people would have paid the Mutapa some form of tribute, either in labour or in objects. It is known that people were also expected to pay some form of tax over to the Mutapa after a hunt. In most cases the common people would have gone out and mined for gold, hunted elephants for their ivory and other animals for skins and meat and would have produced hoes and other 'elite' objects (Mudenge, 1988; Chirikure, 2007). These objects would have been used as their tribute, and if not for tribute, a percentage would have been paid over in the form of tax, yet they would also have been consumed by commoners (Beach, 1994; Chirikure, 2007). Therefore, when looking at the material culture of the commoner people one should not be surprised to find some of these items labelled as 'elite' objects in their possessions. At the same time the Portuguese recorded that external trade was not that important for the commoner people and that they spent minimal time and resources on this activity. They would occasionally trade for certain objects but did not replace their indigenous objects for external imported objects (Mudenge, 1988). Beach (1994) believes it was a different story with the elite of the Mutapa state, saying that they would have used the best of both the local and the imported objects to adorn themselves. Thus, it would make sense that the archaeological remains should reflect this, showing a larger and more varied assemblage of imported and important objects in



the elite residences and a smaller amount of imported and important objects in the commoner households.

In summary, one can see that the common people of the Mutapa state did most of the mining, cattle herding and tended to the crops. There were different levels of social complexity, starting at the immediate family level. Each of these levels would have had to have provided some kind of tribute and in most cases some kind of tax to the ruling family. Due to this, they would also have owned or possessed objects which have previously been believed to only have been possessed by the elite households; such as gold, ivory, copper etc. Therefore, one should be prepared to find these kinds of objects in commoner sites as well as elite, just in different quantities. At the same time, the description above shows how commoner people living closer to the political centre often paid their tribute in labour, while those further away would pay it in kind, for example by tending cattle or by paying it in gold and ivory.

#### ***5.4 Archaeology and Monumental Architecture***

Stone walls have generally been seen to be objects of power (Pikirayi, 2013) in global archaeology generally. This is evident from the emphasis placed by research on the areas which are believed to be connected with the elite of a population, or which have monumental architecture. Those places formally inhabited by common folk are generally neglected and in many cases are destroyed before a proper understanding of their material culture can be analysed. We saw this in the example of the ancient city of Teotihuacán, where a supermarket was built on the outskirts of the city, burying material remains under its foundations. Great

Zimbabwe, before the 1980s, seemed destined to suffer similar degradation until it was realised that there was an abundance of material culture to be found in these areas. Since then, ad hoc rescue excavations have been undertaken in an attempt to conserve material in the areas most at risk. To date, however, the remains have been stored in boxes at the Great Zimbabwe Conservation Centre, without proper analysis. Most work has been conducted within the constraints of the stone walling, with no information being published on the areas situated outside the Outer Perimeter Wall (Randal-MacIver, 1906; Caton-Thompson, 1931; Summers et al., 1961; Garlake, 1973, 1968; Huffman, 1982, 1986, 1996, 2007; Huffman and Vogel, 1992; Collett et al., 1992; Beach, 1998; and Chirikure et al., 2013). A full study of Great Zimbabwe should include analysis of the information to be found outside the Outer Perimeter Wall. Sinclair (1984) states that “Of particular importance is the concept of social formation, comprising in the case of the Zimbabwe State, an economic, an ideological and a political level. The Zimbabwe State should be analysed in terms of each of these levels in order to focus on such closely related topics as systems of production, extraction of surplus product, division of labour, class relations and the cycles of reproduction of different aspects of social organisation” (Sinclair, 1984: 48). Such understanding cannot be achieved without an analysis of daily life in commoner areas. This study has shown that different dynamics played a role in the exchange of goods; it is not just a simple explanation of commoners supplying elites with objects, structures, food and labour, as theorized by Childe (1950).

Although this study has shown similarities between the elite and non-elite material culture it would have been important to compare the quantities of objects from the two different areas. It is possible that the elite might have consumed more when compared to commoners, similar to that

of the Mutapa State. Given the said history of vandalism at Great Zimbabwe which affected both elite and non-elite areas it has become impossible to pass judgement on the issue. Future research should however focus on extracting whatever information is possible from the two areas thereby enhancing our understanding of Great Zimbabwe.

### *5.5: Conclusion*

Great Zimbabwe like most urban centres around the world, historically and contemporary, housed both an elite and a commoner population. Elites lived close to the city centre surrounded by stone-walling and commoners lived further from the political centre outside the stone-wall confines. This research has shown that there are blurred lines when labelling what elite material culture should look like and therefore what should or should not be present in the commoner material culture remains. It has also shown that a spatial divide between elite and commoner is difficult to define when looking at a site that has an occupation time frame spanning a few hundred years. These concluding remarks will be explained further in the discussion that follows.

Spatially, what do we know about Great Zimbabwe? It is hypothesised that Great Zimbabwe was built along a preconceived idea of spatiality (Huffman, 2007). According to the Zimbabwe Culture Pattern the common people living at Great Zimbabwe resided on the outskirts of an Outer Perimeter Wall. Hut floors which are not associated with stone walling, are present in-between the Inner and Outer Perimeter Walls, indicating that common people also resided in that space. Thus showing housing that did not use stone-walling can also be found both inside and

outside the Perimeter Walls. Chronology of the commoner sites occupied outside the Outer Perimeter Wall show that the main occupation of these areas was during Period 4. These facts are indicative of a population expansion over time which is also supported by information that Great Zimbabwe became an important political centre around the early thirteenth century (Chirikure and Pikirayi, 2008) therefore as a city, its' population numbers would have increased. As the population increased so the land occupied by common people would have to have expanded in order to accommodate the increased numbers. Evidence in the Great Enclosure suggests that this area housed homesteads, showing hut floors layered down over time, containing household goods such as pottery, slag, soapstone artefacts, stone tools etc. Could this be a reflection of that which one sees occurring during the Mutapa State occupation and as Beach (1998) suggested? The evidence does reflect that this could have been the case.

What we do know about the commoner area at Great Zimbabwe is that the material culture found here reflects that which one would expect to find in a homestead during this period. Their material culture identity therefore would reflect household items such as pottery, some metal worked objects, evidence of metal working such as slag, crucibles and faunal remains. This is similar to what one finds in the homesteads situated inside the Perimeter Walls. The main similarities include the Zimbabwe cement floors, the copper, bronze and iron artefacts and an isolated gold worked crucible. These objects are believed to be of elite status, yet they are found in the commoner area suggesting that material culture moved across class boundaries as is proposed by Meintjes (2000), Gell (1988), Hall and Markell (1993), and Mudenge (1988). Perhaps quantities differ, elites containing more and commoners less, but transformation of Great Zimbabwe over hundreds of years has left us unable to answer these questions.

If it is believed that wall enclosures were designed as a means of separating the commoners from the elite, and the residences outside the Outer Perimeter Wall were supposed to belong to the commoners, how does one explain the existence of the Nemanwa Ruin? Is its presence outside the Outer Perimeter Wall due to Great Zimbabwe's expansion resulting in a push factor on the elite housing passed the boundaries? As might have happened when expansion moved past the Inner Perimeter Wall? Or is this an elite house built further away from the city centre as a means to escape the city confines?

Future research could include discussions on what really distinguished the elite population from the commoner population at Great Zimbabwe. Are objects of power such as stone walling and soapstone artefacts the distinguishing features, as is suggested by ethnographic studies? Or is there some other aspect which has so far eluded modern researchers? What are the actual spatial designations at Great Zimbabwe? The information gained would offer us a better understanding of the social and spatial organization of Great Zimbabwe. Research could then be extended to include other sites in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of their political, economic and social stratifications. Sites such as Khami and Mapungubwe in Southern Africa, and then other sites around the world such as Rome and Egypt where these areas have been previously neglected (Sinopoli, 1994) could be comparisons to note.

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