

CONTESTED MONUMENTS

The Politics of Archeology in Southern Africa

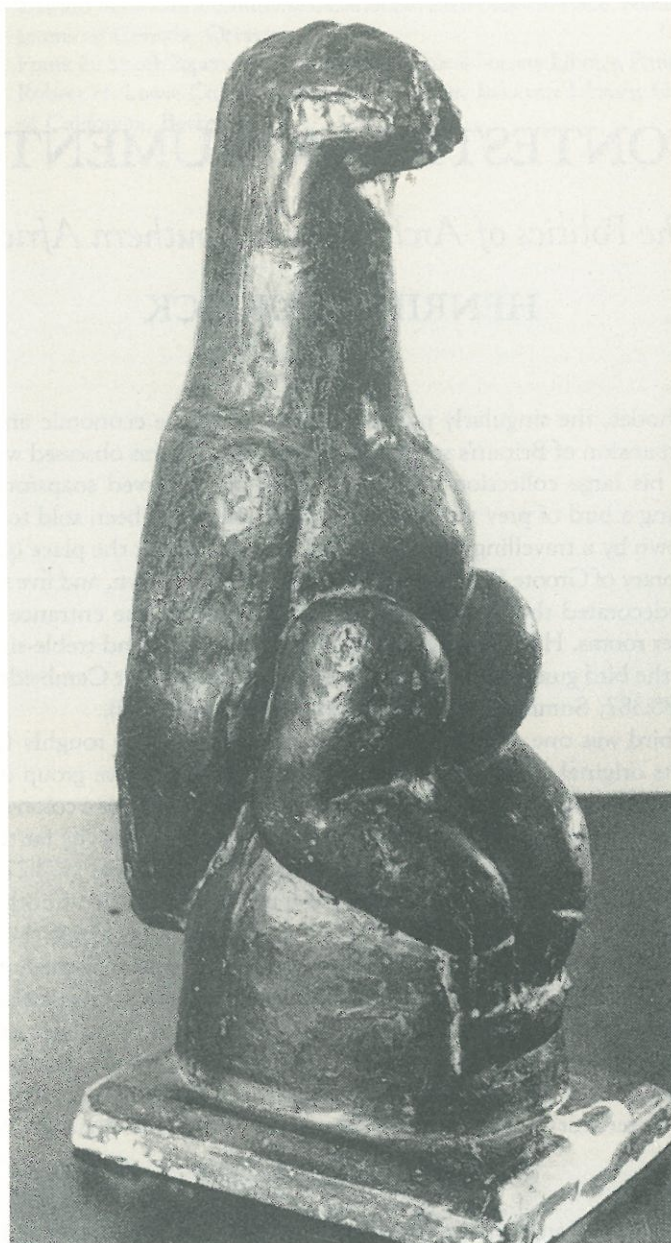
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Cecil Rhodes, the singularly powerful promoter of the economic and territorial expansion of Britain's southern African empire, was obsessed with one item in his large collection of African artifacts—a carved soapstone bird, resembling a bird of prey with human limbs, which has been sold to him in Cape Town by a travelling hunter in 1889. Rhodes gave it the place of honor in the library of Groote Schuur, his house outside Cape Town, and five wooden replicas decorated the banister of the stairway linking the entrance hall to the upper rooms. His friends were recipients of castings, and treble-sized versions of the bird guarded the gates of his English house near Cambridge (Rotberg 1988:387; Summers 1963:1, 1971:xvi; Walton 1955:79).

The bird was one of eight such carvings, each standing roughly five feet tall on its original pillar, that had once graced an impressive group of stone ruins in Mashonaland, part of the territory that was to become a colony named for Rhodes. Spread over some sixty acres, the ruins included "by far the largest single prehistoric structure in sub-Saharan Africa" (Garlake 1973:27). They were called "Great Zimbabwe" to distinguish them from the two-hundred-odd similar and less impressive ruins that once dotted the area, which the Shona called "zimbabwe"—their word for a court, house, or grave of a chief, and the name now carried by the African state installed in the former colony.

In the same year Rhodes acquired his Zimbabwe bird, he also gained a Royal Charter for his British South Africa Company. The Company sent its "Pioneer Column" from South Africa to occupy Mashonaland in 1890, and in 1895 its territory south of the Zambezi was named Rhodesia. In 1914 the

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Cecil Rhodes's Zimbabwe bird. (From Roger Summers, *Ancient Ruins and Vanished Civilizations of Southern Africa* (Cape Town: T. V. Bulpin, 1971.)

British government renewed the Company's charter on condition that white settlers be granted self-government in ten years. In 1923 the whites and a very few eligible African voters narrowly rejected the option of a merger with the Union of South Africa. Instead the country became a British colony in which income qualifications excluded almost all Africans from the electoral rolls and the government enjoyed virtual autonomy. Although Britain retained the right to veto legislation that discriminated against Africans, it never exercised that right. Between 1953 and 1964, Southern Rhodesia became part of the Central African Federation, which also included Nyasaland (now Malawi) and Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia); the Federation dissolved when Malawi and Zambia became independent African-ruled states. In 1965 a white supremacist regime in Southern Rhodesia proclaimed their country's Unilateral Declaration of Independence from Britain, changing the country's name to Rhodesia. Brought down by international economic sanctions and guerilla warfare, the Rhodesian regime ended in 1979. In 1980 the new country of Zimbabwe inaugurated as its first Prime Minister the leader of the African freedom fighters, Robert Mugabe.

Through all of these changes, the images of Great Zimbabwe and of the Zimbabwe bird in particular remained constant features of state iconography. In 1924, when Southern Rhodesia was granted its Arms (based on those of Cecil Rhodes), a Zimbabwe bird was represented on its crest. Zimbabwe birds came to be found everywhere, from government buildings to trademarks, symbolizing Southern Rhodesia. During the period of the Central African Federation, birds appeared on the paper money and coins issued by the Bank of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. When the Federation dissolved, the new flag contrived for the country of Southern Rhodesia contained the arms; so, too, did the flag of the white supremacist regime of Rhodesia. Today, a representation of the same Zimbabwe bird presides over Zimbabwe's flag, and a bird is found on all manner of government artifacts, from postage stamps to the logo of the television system. Moreover, when the new state Zimbabwe assumed management of the museum at Great Zimbabwe, birds retrieved from foreign collections were reunited there. The Zimbabwe birds are now "widely affirmed to be the most precious symbols of the new state" (Garlake 1982:16; Frederikse 1982:349; Summers 1963:2).

To every group that has made an icon of the ruins, they have been material evidence of a prosperous and powerful state that once held sway in the land. There, however, the resemblance between different groups' received histories of Great Zimbabwe ends. Seeking to legitimate their rule, British settlers and African nationalists subscribed to very different accounts of the building of the ruins, placing their construction alternatively in ancient times and the relatively recent past, and identifying the builders—or, at least the architects—either as representatives of some non-African civilization or

members of the indigenous population. The stories of Great Zimbabwe have served to rationalize either colonial rule or African autonomy. An account of the images of the ruins promulgated by the state and accepted by diverse sectors of the population reveals changing power relationships in the country. But Zimbabwe's story is not unique. As we will see, in other colonial regimes archeological exegesis has been similarly employed to legitimate political authority.

Alien Traces of a "Former Civilised Race"

The territory occupied by the British South Africa Company was the only British colonial preserve acquired for the explicit purpose of exploiting its mineral resources. Rhodes's Company received its charter on the strength of an agreement, negotiated in 1888 with Lobengula, the ruler of the powerful Ndebele kingdom, giving it the right to mine gold in Mashonaland. The two-hundred-odd force of Rhodes's Pioneer Column—raised when Rhodes was the Prime Minister of the Cape Colony and at the height of his political power in South Africa—were described to the British government as "miners," the peaceable vanguard of European settlement in the new colony. The Pioneers (among them the hunter who sold Rhodes his Zimbabwe bird) evidently joined Rhodes's venture expecting to become rich through prospecting. Each was promised fifteen claims of gold in Mashonaland and given rights to a vast tract of land advertised as extremely fertile—though many sold their land rights back to the Company before beginning their march north. Accompanied by five hundred of the Company's Police, the Pioneers reached the site of the colony's new capital without military incident, having been led on a circuitous route by the famous hunter-naturalist F. C. Selous—said to be the model for Allen Quartermain, the hero of H. Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (Chanaiwa 1973:84; Keppel-Jones 1983:158; Paver 1950:159–61, 179).

The British settlers' occupation of Southern Rhodesia could be rationalized in a number of ways. Selous himself offered a naturalist's justification: the country was a natural habitat for them, "the fairest and most fertile of the regions now for the first time since the dawn of history attracting the attention of a civilised and energetic race of men." In it "European children would grow up strong and healthy, and our English fruits retain their flavour" (1889:661–62). Because Lobengula, acting under the misapprehension that his agreement effected recognition of his sovereignty, had been brought to agree formally that his country lay within the British sphere of influence, they could also argue that they had secured permission to colonize from the local authority. But Rhodes and his kind in southern Africa were accustomed to invoking their version of the history of the area to demonstrate that African poli-

ties had no stronger claim to the land than they did (Rotberg 1988:251). The story they told about Great Zimbabwe was of a piece with this supposed history.

Indeed, historical legend had inspired the colonization of Zimbabwe. Before Rhodes sent his agents north, he and his fellow South Africans knew the stories circulated from the beginning of the sixteenth century by the Portuguese colonists of East Africa about their trading partner, the fabulously wealthy and powerful kingdom of Monomotapa (Mwene Mutapa), reputedly based at Great Zimbabwe. Many believed this empire was truly ancient, perhaps even the location of King Solomon's mines, and the biblical city of Ophir. Their speculations were encouraged by the reports of Carl Mauch, a German explorer who had in 1871 become the first European to visit Great Zimbabwe and publish his impressions, who believed the architecture of the ruins to be that of the Israelites of King Solomon's time, reminiscent of Solomon's Temple and the palace visited by the Queen of Sheba. Following Mauch's report, prospectors descended upon Lobengula, requesting permission to mine; their disappointing yields did not deter Rhodes from pursuing the quest with added vigor. When he paid his first visit to Great Zimbabwe, in 1891, the local chiefs were told that the "ancient temple" the "Great Master" was visiting had once belonged to white men (Garlake 1973:65; Bent 1896:33; Rotberg 1988:176, 243; Summers 1952).

Rhodes began financing research projects on Great Zimbabwe almost immediately after his men occupied Mashonaland. A relentless collector of artifacts and a passionate reader (and rereader) of the classics, he himself looked in Egypt for ancient birds that resembled his Zimbabwe treasure, postulating a common source for their design. Believing that history taught valuable practical lessons, he commissioned complete translations of all the ancient sources of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, as well as of the (mostly Portuguese) records of southeastern Africa in the early modern period (Bent 1896:xiv; Garlake 1973:65, 69; Rotberg 1988:95, 383–87). When we consider the work on Great Zimbabwe which Rhodes financed, we must therefore ask what cautionary lessons it was intended to convey. Of the projects he sponsored, two are of special interest: an archeological expedition mounted in 1891 by J. Theodore Bent, an English author and explorer; and an archival search for descriptions of Zimbabwe in European libraries undertaken shortly thereafter by Alexander Wilmot, a Scottish-born South African ex-civil servant and politician who was then the leading history textbook writer for South African schools (Thompson 1985:92).

Bent's expedition, financed by the Royal Geographical Society and the British Association for the Advancement of Science as well as the British South Africa Company, brought him to Zimbabwe for two months' work, accompanied by Mrs. Bent and R. W. M. Swan, the team's cartographer and surveyor. His published report, which raised most of the points later debated,

dismissed the possibility that the Shona in the area could have built Great Zimbabwe. To be sure, their peaceful and industrious character was superior to that of other Africans, and their appearance suggested that their ancestors included non-Africans. The Shona were actually descended from the Makalanga (Karanga), whose name the Portuguese translated as "Children of the Sun," the dominant tribe of Monomotapa. And it was "a well accepted fact that the negroid brain could never be capable of taking the initiative in work of such intricate nature" as building the ruins. Africans were congenitally incapable of the social organization required for such a task because they were both natural wanderers and essential anarchists. Monomotapa had "split up, like all Kaffir combinations do after a generation or so, into a hopeless state of disintegration." And the present population of Rhodesia was incapable of uniting to fight their common enemy, the Zulu (of whom the Matabele were an offshoot), who had migrated from the south in waves, mounting assaults that nearly depopulated Mashonaland. If Africans had built Great Zimbabwe, they would have had to have done so "as the slaves of a race of higher cultivation" (Bent 1896:xiv, 33, xiv, and passim).

Bent argued that the ruins' builders were migrants from somewhere in south Arabia, of Semitic stock, with the commercial instincts characteristic of their race. Unable to specify their nationality, he frequently referred to them simply as the "ancients"—a name that persisted in popular discussions of the creators of Great Zimbabwe. The present local culture in fact provided evidence of a "former civilised race who dwelt here," for the Africans grew foodstuffs and played a complicated game they could only have acquired from foreigners. That the departed race was from the ancient Middle East was evident from the architecture and decoration of the ruins: the orientation of the structures denoted sun worship, and the stylized statues of birds and phalli indicated reverence of the female and male elements in creation—characteristic religious practices of the Assyrians, Egyptians, and Phoenicians. The ancients' worship of stone monoliths proved Phoenician influence, if not identity. The Sabeans—the Queen of Sheba's people—were also possible ancient colonists (Bent 1896:85–86, 105, 118, 175–76, 180–86, 218–19).

The character of the structures revealed the colonial purposes of the ancients. Standing as "a garrison in the midst of an enemy's country," the monuments protected an alien people who "never considered the country their own." They had come to extract the vast quantities of gold that the ancient world imported from Mashonaland, using mining technology identical to the Phoenicians' and Egyptians'. The inferior construction of more recent walls revealed the ancient race's phased withdrawal from the area. In its migrations elsewhere, the alien race progressed, "eventually developing into the more civilised races of the ancient world." Bent was vague as to the precise cause of the ancients' departure and the relation of their colony to the kingdom of Monomotapa,



The largest structure at Great Zimbabwe—the largest prehistoric structure in sub-Saharan Africa—as photographed for Gertrude Caton Thompson. This structure has been variously known as the "Elliptical Building," the "Temple," the "Circular Ruin," and the "Great Enclosure." (From Gertrude Caton Thompson, *The Zimbabwe Culture* [Oxford, 1931].)

but he suggested that the ancients had suffered at the hand of wild invaders and that Portuguese reports of Monomotapa's grandeur were highly exaggerated (Bent 1896:42, 176, 70, 139, 218–22, 228, 231–37).

Wilmot's archival research led him to make only a few modifications in the story Bent had told, and these were generally to turn Bent's tentative speculations into positive assertions. Most important, he made the story of the decline of the Great Zimbabwe civilization a cautionary tale for southern Africa's white settlers: the ancients had not withdrawn, but had weakened the quality of the kingdom's ruling stock by interbreeding with local Africans. The early Portuguese had accurately described a still degenerating society: a kingdom that had lost many ancient technological skills, although it still exploited its mineral resources sufficiently to sustain a thriving gold trade; an elite still of sufficiently high moral character to be susceptible to conversion by the bearers of superior religions—Christianity and Islam. By the middle of the seventeenth century, however, Monomotapa was so degraded

that it fell to "great bands of marauding savages," dropping precipitously on the scale of civilization—although its descendants still managed to work feebly the mineral deposits that served "the most recent 'diggings' of the British South Africa Company" (Wilmot 1896:216, 118, 119, 143–46, 152–82).

As for the mines, they were "very probably the mines of Ophir one thousand years before Christ." Great Zimbabwe was settled when the ancient kingdoms of Israel and Phoenicia were both at the height of their powers, and had formed an alliance for colonial purposes. They had the capacity to exploit the land's resources effectively, and the British were their successors: "In all history there is no greater analogy than that between the Empire of Britain and that of Phoenicia at its culminating point of glory, six hundred years before the birth of our Savior" (1896:118).

In an introduction to Wilmot's book, H. Rider Haggard stressed this analogy, describing the Phoenicians as "this crafty, heartless and adventurous race, who were the English of the ancient world without the English honour." Although the comparison was a commonplace in Britain and the Continent throughout the nineteenth century, the analogy had particular force in reference to the supposed historical experiences of both peoples in a specific place, confirming Wilmot's assertion that southern Africa was "eminently a white man's country" in which the African population was providentially placed as a source of "cheap labour" (1896:55–58, xvii, 68–69, 83, 77–83, 86–90; Wilmot quoted in L. Thompson 1985:93; cf. Bernal 1987:338).

Even before 1900, Rhodesian ruins had attracted the destructive attentions of treasure hunters, particularly those of the Ancient Ruins Company, Limited, authorized in 1895 by the British South Africa Company to plunder for profit in all of the ruins save Great Zimbabwe—with the stipulation that the company receive 20 percent of the prospectors' finds and that Cecil Rhodes be offered the first chance to purchase any treasure excavated. The Ancient Ruins Company did not survive beyond 1900, and its wanton destruction of ruins inspired passage of the Ancient Monuments Protection Ordinance in 1902. Nevertheless, one of its founders, W. G. Neal, a prospector from South Africa who turned to archeological treasure hunting after meeting Bent, soon re-emerged disguised as a bona fide archeologist (Garlake 1973:70, 1978:34; Schofield 1935).

At the end of the century, southern Africa's empire builders had little time for archeology, however. Between 1893 and 1897, the indigenous peoples of the British South Africa Company's domain mounted a variety of resistance movements, which were suppressed by military means. One group of the Company's soldiers, in particular, became Rhodesian heroes, the thirty-two members of Allan Wilson's Shangani patrol, all of whom died in 1893 in an unsuccessful attempt to capture Lobengula; a crypt was immediately erected for their

remains at Great Zimbabwe. In 1895 the Company's Administrator in Southern Rhodesia, L. Starr Jameson, led the unsuccessful raid against the Afrikaner regime in the Transvaal that is known by his name, resulting in the uproar that forced Rhodes to resign the Cape Colony premiership and removed Jameson to a British prison. And between 1899 and 1901 Rhodes and other South Africa-based colonists were preoccupied with the Anglo-Boer War. All of these events were to be reflected in the popular articulation of the Great Zimbabwe legend (Huffman 1976:47).

Shortly after the cessation of hostilities, Richard N. Hall burst upon the popular archeology scene. An Englishman settled in Southern Rhodesia and making his living as a journalist, Hall began working with W. G. Neal, who provided the records of the Ancient Ruins Company. First presented by Hall at a meeting of the Rhodesia Scientific Association in 1901, their work provoked considerable discussion—not all of it favorable—and in the following year resulted in *The Ancient Ruins of Rhodesia*. Hall was able to extract an archeological appointment from Cecil Rhodes, then on his deathbed, and between 1902 and 1904, he was employed by the British South Africa Company to undertake at Great Zimbabwe "not scientific research but the preservation of the building," in order to make the ruins more attractive to tourists (Garlake 1973:72). Hall exceeded his charge, recovering a goodly number of relics—and disturbing the site so as to make the stratigraphical reading of the archeological record even more difficult. He also wrote another book, *Great Zimbabwe*, published in 1905 (Chanaiwa 1973:120; R. N. Hall 1909:9; Summers 1971:xvii).

Dedicating their book to Wilmot, Hall and Neal told much the same tale as their predecessors had done. But their history was far more violent. Wilmot had represented the early aboriginal population of the Great Zimbabwe region as "comparatively mild, intelligent, and docile," posing the ancient colonists "no great difficulty in forming a settlement" (1896:69). Mindful perhaps of the recent African resistance, Hall and Neal conjured up a new scenario in which Great Zimbabwe was built by a vast population of unwilling laborers. To control them during the long period of the ruins' construction, a far greater number of ancients than previously assumed had to have taken up protracted residence in the area. When the ancients departed—probably unwillingly—they left behind the legacy of their long stay, their mixed-blood descendants, the superior Makalanga who ruled Monomotapa. In appearance and behavior, the Makalanga's then-contemporary progeny were still exhibiting traces of Semitic blood, but they had lately become a "timid race of slaves." The once proud race of Monomotapa had been thoroughly broken by wave upon wave of savage attackers, of whom the Matabele were just the most recent (Hall & Neal 1902:123, 99–100, 122–33).

Amateurs and Professionals in Archeological Debate

In 1905, the locally grown saga of Great Zimbabwe was challenged by an invasion of outsiders, brought by the British Association for the Advancement of Science for its first meeting in South Africa. At the suggestion of Sir Lewis Michell, a Director of the British South Africa Company (and Rhodes's banker and biographer), an archeological expedition to Great Zimbabwe was mounted to provide a paper for the South African meetings. Financed by the Association and the Rhodes Trustees, the six-month expedition was led by David Randall-MacIver, a promising young student of the famed Egyptologist Flinders Petrie.

As Randall-MacIver dryly reported at the Association's Johannesburg sessions, his findings were "not of the nature which the general public expected." Far from being ancient, the ruins had been built no earlier than the fourteenth or fifteenth century. Moreover, they had not been constructed over a protracted period but during a single epoch, in the course of which the builders' skills improved somewhat. But they were not architectural marvels. Although many were visually attractive, and some quite spectacular, they had been built with fairly rudimentary techniques. Nor was there any evidence that an alien race had ever occupied the country. True, there had been foreign culture contact and trade from the eleventh century, bringing artifacts that had been mistakenly construed as evidence that non-Africans were responsible for the stone structures in which they were found. But there was no reason to believe that the ruler of the kingdom of Monomotapa was of a different race from his subjects; Portuguese sources stated explicitly that the kingdom was "peopled by heathens whom the Moors call Kaffirs." Unquestionably, this powerful kingdom had once controlled much of the area that became Southern Rhodesia, and it seemed "extremely probable that the builders of the Rhodesian ruins may have succumbed to . . . such invasions" as had plagued the country's peoples in recent times. Great Zimbabwe had not been the site of fabulous gold mines, but a distribution point for minerals mined elsewhere—by Africans. In sum, the ruins had been built by Africans, in entirely African style, to serve African purposes. The structures were elaborated versions of designs still seen in African huts everywhere in the country; even the famous birds resembled the tribal emblem of a contemporary people. Because the culture of the monuments' architects was evidently continuous with that of contemporary Africans, ethnographic observation would definitively determine which of Rhodesia's peoples had built Great Zimbabwe (Randall-MacIver 1906b:vii; 102, 103; cf. 59–68, 75, 78, 83–86, 96–103; cf. 1905, 1906a).

As the first trained archeologist to investigate the ruins, Randall-MacIver came to southern Africa prepared to ridicule the amateur methods of his predecessors, and to lament the damage they and others had done in ignorance.

In his analysis, he was able to turn evidence used by local investigators against them, making extensive use of Portuguese documents compiled by G. M. Theal and reinterpreting previous archeological findings. When he presented his conclusions, first in Southern Rhodesia, then in South Africa, and later at a meeting of the Royal Geographical Society in London, his audience saw him as the champion of professional British archeologists, fighting southern African amateurs. Indeed, his Rhodesian venture was an important step in his career. When he was commissioned for the job, he was a very junior archeologist—the Laycock student of Egyptology at Worcester College, Oxford; two years later, he was the head of a significant expedition in Egypt and the Sudan. And when the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* looked for an author for the entry on "Zimbabwe" in the eleventh edition (1910–11), Randall-MacIver was the obvious choice as the recognized authority.

There were some white settlers in southern Africa, such as F. C. Selous, who regarded Randall-MacIver's work favorably, for reasons that will shortly become clear. But most shared the opinion of the explorer and colonial official Sir Harry Johnston that the opinion of a supposed expert who came from abroad to pronounce on local matters could never be more reliable than that of someone "intimately acquainted with the Bantu negroes of Africa" (1909: 564). There were also some scholarly critics who judged Randall-MacIver wrong from academic positions back in Britain: men such as J. W. Gregory, Professor of Geology at Glasgow, and A. W. Keane, Professor of Hindustani at University College, London—upon whose work Hall and Neal had relied (Randall-MacIver, 1906a:336–37, 340). They, however, were not archeologists. The leading members of his professional community arrayed themselves behind Randall-MacIver. And they were formidable figures indeed: Henry Balfour, Curator of the Pitt Rivers Museum and Fellow of Exeter College, Oxford; Arthur Evans, Extraordinary Professor of Prehistoric Archaeology at Oxford—an authority on Phoenician culture well qualified to reject assertions that it had touched southern Africa; J. L. Myres, Lecturer in Classical Archaeology at Oxford; A. C. Haddon, Lecturer in Ethnology at Cambridge; and C. H. Read, Keeper of British and Medieval Antiquities and Ethnography at the British Museum—under whose auspices Frank Shrubbsall, a physical anthropologist, examined the British Museum's collection of skeletal remains from Great Zimbabwe and determined them to be of the same race type as the Africans then living around the ruins (Randall-MacIver 1906a: 336–47; Shrubbsall 1906).

For some of Randall-MacIver's British supporters, endorsement of his work entailed an appraisal of African potential that was anathema to white settlers. In his presidential address to the anthropology section of the British Association at the South Africa meeting, Haddon spoke of Bantu social organization as lending itself to discipline, giving African peoples the capacity

for great achievements when they were led by those of their own who possessed great "executive ability"—men such as Lobengula and the Zulu warriors Shaka and Cetshwayo (1905). In his review of Randall-MacIver's book, Myres argued that "the modern Kaffir, with his peculiarly autocratic chieftaincy," could easily be seen as the descendant of the ruin builders, for his culture made him "competent to organize both the building of a Zimbabwe and the working of 'King Solomon's Mines.'" Myres even chastised Randall-MacIver for conceding a point of his predecessors' arguments, suggesting that Randall-MacIver had meant to say not that the kingdom of Monomotapa fell to a barbarous race, but to invaders of different culture (1906:68, 70).

When Hall undertook to refute Randall-MacIver's argument, he had therefore to appeal primarily to white settlers for support. His *Pre-Historic Rhodesia*, published in 1909, was produced with the aid of over three hundred subscribers, including a host of southern Africa's educators, amateur scientists, Native Commissioners, and political figures (1909:ix–xviii). Hall's counter-attack was a brief for the superiority of local knowledge. If Randall-MacIver had discussed Great Zimbabwe with local Africans, he would have found that they themselves disclaimed all connection with it, variously saying that they knew nothing of its builders, that it was the work of the devil, or that the ancients had built it. If he had been apprised of the degree to which the ruins had been disturbed by previous archeologists and prospectors (who, of course, included Hall), he would have known that the professional archeologist's stratigraphic method could not be strictly applied there. Most important, Randall-MacIver had misinterpreted the archeological record as material evidence of cultural progress, whereas the ruins attested to cultural degeneration: the older the building, the higher was its technical standard. As an outsider, he had failed to recognize the significant differences between African peoples. The waves of invasion that had buffeted the area for centuries immemorial had brought peoples of increasingly inferior stocks, higher in bellicosity and lower in virtue. So rude was the culture of the most recent people that their leavings had made Hall physically sick; the great German bacteriologist Robert Koch had inspected the spot and confirmed that his affliction was caused by the Africans' unsanitary habits (1909:13–14, 149–51, 246–47, 250, 273, 395–420).

With Hall's final effort, the story of Great Zimbabwe was fully articulated as a moral tale justifying the establishment of white settler society in southern Africa. It was a tale consistent with the settler belief that Africans had no clear title to the land either by virtue of long occupation or capacity to use natural resources productively. Wave upon wave of migrants had descended not only upon Zimbabwe, but had coursed throughout Africa, making population displacements a routine feature of the continent's history. One historian of southern Africa concluded in 1897 that "the ownership which the Bantu

tribes could claim [to the land] had no deep roots in the past. It was won by force, and as it was won and as it was upheld, so it could with no glaring injustice be swept away" (quoted in Thompson 1985:95). Moreover, the tide of population movements and conflict had actually swelled around the beginning of the nineteenth century, as the last vestiges of Monomotapa were being obliterated. The product of African societies' own internal dynamics rather than a response to European colonialism, the strife between Africans had then intensified, causing a depopulation that left vast tracts of land vacant for white settlement. African political-economic orders were destroyed, reducing the peoples of the region to the pathetic state that the first settlers reported. Great Zimbabwe stood as a testament to a high point of civilization reached in ancient times, from which the region had since been in decline. Most important, that civilization was non-African, for Africans were incapable of great achievements unless forcefully supervised by a superior race. Africans might be productive members of civilized societies if they were properly led, but they could do nothing of great consequence by themselves (Cell 1989:485–86; Cobbing 1988; Kgoale 1986:322).

It is important to note that much of this narrative could be reconciled with orthodox academic opinion. No one would deny, even today, that Africa has been repeatedly swept by waves of migrants, and that in the early nineteenth century the strife accompanying the consolidation of the southern African Zulu nation brought phenomenal devastation—known in the Zulu language as the *Mfecane* or "time of troubles"—although there is still argument about the relative importance of the African and colonial elements in its cause. Moreover, the idea that culture was a function of race, once characteristic of anthropology generally, persisted in archeology; until the mid-twentieth century, archeologists were wont to assume that material evidence of cultural change in a given area indicated change in the ethnic composition of the population, brought about through migration (Balfour 1929; Burkitt 1928:174; G. Clark 1966; J. Clark 1953; Thompson 1990:80–87).

It was thus possible for white settlers in Southern Rhodesia who claimed particular expertise in African matters to contrive a new story of the building of Great Zimbabwe that still justified their occupation of the country, but did not seem ridiculous to academics abroad. Selous indicated the direction this argument might take in a favorable comment at the London meeting at which Randall-MacIver presented his work to the Royal Geographical Society. It was easier to accept that Great Zimbabwe had been built by Africans if, as Randall-MacIver had suggested, its construction was rudimentary. Selous recalled that "nothing could have been more rude" than the decorations and walls of the monument; "there was not a single straight line in them." To accept that the ruins had been built fairly recently to designs still recognizable in African material culture, it was only necessary to reappraise the results of



The Conical Tower located in the Elliptical Building, which was the focus of much of the speculation about Great Zimbabwe's alien architects. (Photograph courtesy of Anthony Hart Fisher.)

the Zulu and Matabele invasions of Mashonaland. In his years of exploring Mashonaland before the British came, Selous had learned from its inhabitants that they had lived in stone walled towns and extracted gold from quartz until the Zulu came in the eighteenth century, and he believed that they still had the skills necessary to build Great Zimbabwe, given the leadership Africans themselves were clearly capable of providing in viable social structures (quoted in Randall-MacIver 1906a:341; cf. 340, 343).

As the African population of Southern Rhodesia became quiescent—or adopted protest strategies suited to the framework of colonial rule—such views became easier to accept, and various white students of African culture began to endorse Randall-MacIver's argument. The most notable among them were the Reverend Samuel S. Dorman, a missionary-ethnographer; J. F. Schofield, an accomplished amateur archeologist employed as an architect by the Public Works Department of the British South Africa Company; and Charles W. Bullock, a Native Commissioner whose ethnographic work on the Shona was widely respected by anthropologists, who became the country's Chief Native Commissioner. By 1928, when the journal of Rhodesia's Native Affairs Department published an article claiming that Great Zimbabwe was built by ancient colonists from the Middle East, the editor inserted footnotes and appended an extended comment indicating that no knowledgeable person should believe it (Beek 1928; Bullock 1927:38; Chanaiwa 1973:118–19).

Nevertheless, the image of Zimbabwe as ancient and exotic persisted in the popular mind. And in 1923 there arrived at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg an apostle of a new anthropological school that promised to impart a gloss of academic respectability to the popular theory—Raymond Dart, the newly appointed Professor of Anatomy. An Australian, Dart had worked at University College, London, under the distinguished paleoanthropologist (and fellow Australian) Grafton Elliot Smith, the Professor of Anatomy. At University College, Smith and his colleague W. J. Perry, Reader in Cultural Anthropology, presided over a graduate program in “Human Studies,” using an extreme diffusionist model to synthesize all of anthropology's parts—physical anthropology, cultural analysis, and archeology. Although their program had been generally rejected by the early 1930s, the battle for theoretical supremacy waged in Britain during the 1920s between Smith and Perry and functionalist anthropologists was seen by its participants and spectators as a contest of equals. The diffusionists represented the course of human history as a series of episodes of progress and degeneration, and they identified the Great Zimbabwe ruins as a case in point for their theory (Mas-singham 1928; *Nature* 1925; Perry 1923:161). Central to their narrative was the invention of a culture complex that fortuitously emerged in ancient Egypt. Distinguished by clearly defined social hierarchy and an obsession with death—denoted by mummification and the worship of stone monoliths—this “Ar-

chaic Civilization" was spread because its carriers migrated everywhere that precious minerals were to be found, imagining them to be "Givers of Life." Perry and Smith called these wanderers "The Children of the Sun," which as it happened, was the phrase by which the Portuguese had translated the name of the Karanga, whose kingdom they had seen as based on mining (Kuklick 1991).

Shortly after he arrived in South Africa, Dart achieved a scientific celebrity that gave him an audience for pronouncements made outside his area of expertise. Analyzing the "Taungs skull," a fossil found in 1924 in Botswana, he interpreted it as the missing link between man and the lower primates, arguing that it placed the origin of the human species in Africa, rather than in Asia as most paleontologists (including Elliot Smith) believed. Although Dart was not to be professionally vindicated for decades, he successfully prosecuted his case in the South African newspapers, becoming in consequence the kind of local hero Hall had been. His fame established, Dart began expounding the diffusionist creed. He infuriated serious Southern Rhodesia archeologists by reanimating the ancient-exotic theory of Great Zimbabwe's origins, pointing to such evidence as rock paintings in Cape Province, which he interpreted as eyewitness accounts by Bushmen of the very people who built the ruins—men with white or light brown skins, wearing ancient Babylonian, Phoenician, and even Egyptian garb, standing next to considerably smaller figures who were supposedly naked Bushmen (Dart 1925; Lewin 1987: 50–60; Schofield 1926; *Times* 1988).

Professionalism Triumphant

The stage was thus set for a new confrontation when the British Association was scheduled to hold its second South African meeting in late July and early August of 1929, again in Cape Town and Johannesburg. In 1928 the Association appointed a young archeologist, Gertrude Caton-Thompson, to head an expedition to examine "the ruins of Zimbabwe or any other monument or monuments of the same kind in Rhodesia which seem likely to reveal the character, dates, and source of culture of the builders." It seemed a repeat performance of the earlier one: again, the costs were borne by the Association and the Rhodes Trustees; again, the investigator was a student of Flinders Petrie. Moreover, Caton-Thompson was expected to reach the same conclusions Randall-MacIver had, albeit with more thorough documentation (Caton-Thompson 1983:111).

There were, however, significant differences. By 1928 the organizing force of Caton-Thompson's expedition, J. L. Myres, had become a very powerful figure. As General Secretary of the British Association, he was in a position

to bring scientific enlightenment not only to southern Africa but also to the British public, by arranging a British Museum exhibition of Rhodesian artifacts, for which he wrote the catalogue. Caton-Thompson herself, although only thirty and without formal credentials, was at a more advanced stage of her career than Randall-MacIver had been. She had worked with Flinders Petrie in London and the field, and she had studied at London and at Cambridge with a range of specialists including Haddon and Miles Burkitt (who after visiting Great Zimbabwe in 1927 had dated it between A.D. 1000 and 1200). She had served as the field director for the Royal Anthropological Institute, was the author of a book, and was already recognized as one of the outstanding archeologists of her generation (Burkitt 1928:160–66; Caton-Thompson 1983:82–86; Fallaize 1929).

Unlike Randall-MacIver, however, Caton-Thompson faced an organized opposition in the form of a rival expedition funded by the South African government and led by Professor Leo Frobenius, President of the Frankfurt Research Institute for Cultural Morphology. Frobenius had proven himself ready to find exotic origins for notable African achievements by arguing that sculptures found in Ife, Nigeria, were of classical Greek derivation—probably the last vestiges of the lost culture of Atlantis. But because the Southern Rhodesian government felt that the British Association's expedition had priority, it denied Frobenius permission to excavate, and the work on the Zimbabwe question he presented at the Association meetings was based on research he had conducted in India (Caton-Thompson 1983:132–33; Garlake 1978:38–40).

Caton-Thompson carried on her investigations between April and September of 1929, accompanied by two women assistants, one of whom, Kathleen Kenyon, was herself to become an eminent archeologist. The all-female composition of the team, who supervised their African laborers without the help of male intermediaries, delighted the popular press, and they enjoyed cooperation from both the South African and Southern Rhodesian governments. The South African Defense Force provided an airplane, a pilot, and a photographer, who took the first aerial pictures of the ruins. Help and advice was provided by various Southern Rhodesian government departments, particularly by the members of the Native Department. The Colonial Secretary of Southern Rhodesia paid all the wages of the expedition's workmen, all the living expenses incurred by Caton-Thompson's party, and all the running costs of a car lent by the Transport Department. And because Great Zimbabwe was by 1929 becoming a tourist attraction, it was served by a simple hotel, which provided a comfortable base (Caton-Thompson 1931:v–viii, 1983:117).

Anticipation of Caton-Thompson's performance, and the event itself, provided the South African press with sensational material. Hers was not the only notable story provided by the British Association meetings, which re-

ceived extensive media coverage: all the important talks were broadcast on the radio, as well as described in the newspapers. The most thoroughly reported address was probably that on "Holism" delivered by General J. C. Smuts, the once and future Prime Minister of South Africa, who was a distinguished naturalist. But Caton-Thompson and Frobenius, her appointed antagonist, also received considerable attention. Two days before Caton-Thompson spoke, Frobenius addressed a packed house, which was disappointed when he evaded the issues that she was expected to raise. Hundreds of people were turned away from Caton-Thompson's lecture, and she was obliged to deliver it again at Johannesburg's Town Hall two days later. Her effective lecture style was much remarked, as was her quick response to questions from the audience—which Raymond Dart tested to the limit (*Cape Times* 1929a, 1929b, 1929c; D. Hall 1929; Caton-Thompson 1983:130, 136; *Times* 1929).

Dart delighted the press by indulging in an "outburst of curiously unscientific indignation," delivering his remarks "in tones of awe-inspiring violence" (*Cape Times* 1929d). He insisted that Caton-Thompson had not refuted the hypothesis that Zimbabwe was built in ancient times by exotic visitors, claimed that her work served to inhibit the growth of archeological research conducted by southern Africa's own residents, and at the conclusion of his outburst stormed from the room. Frobenius, however, brought himself to congratulate her on behalf of German science; L. S. B. Leakey endorsed her judgment (having confided to her in private that she had persuaded him to abandon his earlier belief that the ruins dated from before the Christian era); and the response was generally adulatory (*Cape Times* 1929c; Caton-Thompson 1983:129, 132).

While Caton-Thompson was conducting her research, she kept a large file labelled "Insane," into which she put the many archeological suggestions she received from local enthusiasts—evidently supporters of the interpretation she was charged with refuting (Bullock 1949:51). Incredulous that anyone could ever have believed the ruins of exotic origin, when "every detail in plan, building, and contents seems African Bantu," she praised them as material evidence of considerable indigenous achievement. "Instead of a degenerate off-shoot of a higher Oriental civilisation, we have, unsuspected by all but a few students, a vigorous native civilisation, showing national organisation of a high kind, originality, and amazing industry" (Caton-Thompson 1929b: 621; *Cape Times* 1929b).

Caton-Thompson's praise was highly qualified, however, and her analysis in fact incorporated many historical points that had appealed to white settlers. It therefore proved persuasive to a larger local audience than had Randall-MacIver's. She judged the technical standard of the building low, arguing that it bespoke the recent construction of the ruins: they could not have survived for millennia. Moreover, she traced a saga of degeneration after the fashion of Bent and Hall, found traces of foreign influence, and dated the oldest parts

of the monuments six centuries earlier than Randall-MacIver (*Cape Times* 1929c, 1929e; Caton-Thompson 1929a:432–33).

Because Caton-Thompson came to Rhodesia from Greece and Egypt, it was perhaps inevitable that she would compare the Zimbabwe ruins unfavorably to classical ones. But she went so far as to declare that the "architecture at Zimbabwe . . . strikes me as essentially the product of an infantile mind, a pre-logical mind." Though certain design features reflected Persian, Arabic, and Saracenic sources, this connection was only a remote one effected by the trade on which the Zimbabwe civilization was based. Had the peoples who originated the designs been directly involved in constructing the ruins, they would have employed more sophisticated techniques. Most important, Hall was right, and Randall-MacIver was wrong, in dating the buildings of inferior technical quality: "The time-scale in Rhodesia's case leads, I believe, away from the best towards deterioration, and not from immaturity to maturity" (Caton-Thompson 1931a:103, 57).

Caton-Thompson's account of the social organization and history of the Zimbabwe culture was a compromise between the views of Hall and Randall-MacIver. The mixture of artifacts she found in the ruins proved to her that Hall had been right to see the structures as the work of slave laborers. But the kingdom they served was an African one, an absolute monarchy devoted to a "divine king." Citing the work of local authorities, she speculated that the kingdom might be equated with the one the Portuguese called Monomotapa, and that its rulers might have been the Rozwi, one of the peoples incorporated into the Shona, whose marriage customs blurred whatever racial distinction once obtained among them. Although this kingdom had reached its zenith in the tenth or eleventh century, when its culture began to be devastated by "migratory Bantu hordes," the Zimbabwe culture did not finally fall until the beginning of the eighteenth century, when the inhabitants of the area were still "capable of erecting excellent stone walling with elaborate decoration." Traces of the culture were even visible in the twentieth century: as Randall-MacIver had observed, the general architectural and design motifs were evident in contemporary African workmanship. But Caton-Thompson conceded to Hall that the bearers of the Zimbabwe culture no longer resided in the area, although they were African; the closest approximation of the Zimbabwe culture was that of the Venda of the Transvaal, who had been pushed south from Zimbabwe by the migratory hordes (1931a:192, 182; 34–37, 53, 60–64, 99–104, 119, 160, 175–82, 194–95, 1983:119).

In Britain, as in southern Africa, Caton-Thompson's work won the attention of a wide public beyond her professional peers. Though British imperial enthusiasm was no longer so high, there were still many citizens who, encouraged by the popular press, reveled in the colonial fantasy of King Solomon's mines. The broadcast of Caton-Thompson's findings and the publicity attendant upon the British Museum exhibition brought forth expressions of

disbelief that Great Zimbabwe was a recent African achievement—some of them from people such as J. W. Gregory, who rehearsed the protests they had made earlier to Randall-MacIver's work. In such venues as the letters column of the *Times*, professional archeologists battled amateur enthusiasts (Boggis 1930; Cope 1929; Gregory 1929, 1930; *Illustrated London News* 1929; Maugham 1930a, 1930b; Rickard 1930). Caton-Thompson defended herself, but her honor was guarded most vehemently by J. L. Myres—who not only prosecuted the case of professional archeology but also railed against colonial adventurism, pointing out that the mineral wealth of Rhodesia had been far less than anticipated (Myres 1930a, 1930b, 1930c, 1930d; Caton-Thompson 1930).

In intellectual circles, however, Caton-Thompson's work was treated as a definitive triumph for professional archeology. Little was made of the differences between her account and Randall-MacIver's; indeed, to her professional audience, the conclusions of her study were entirely expected. As one reviewer commented, if the point of her expedition was "exploding what was to archeologists a moribund theory of the exotic origin of the ruins it was probably not worth the trouble involved" (Hobley 1931:161; Braunholtz 1932). But by employing such a rigorous method, her investigation raised many problems for future archeologists to investigate (as, in fact, they did). It was the virtually unanimous judgment of all of the reviewers who considered Caton-Thompson's work for serious journals, as well as of writers for responsible publications such as the *Times*, that her work was definitive proof of the superiority of professional work over that of amateurs (C. W. H. 1931; N. M. 1931; Schebesta 1931; *Times* 1930; *Times Literary Supplement* 1931). It was surely no coincidence that the anthropological section of the British Association elected David Randall-MacIver to serve as its President in 1931—and that he made the triumph of scientific archeology the subject of his presidential address (1933).

What were the theoretical issues Caton-Thompson's professional audience agreed that she had raised? In introducing her book with a quotation from Elliot Smith ("Theories must be founded on facts, not possibilities") she must have had diffusionism in mind; she certainly took seriously the threat to her interpretation posed by that of Frobenius, which had a family resemblance to diffusionist argument, as well as to white settler ideology. Frobenius saw the Zimbabwe culture as but one manifestation of a great prehistoric civilization that joined Egypt, Crete, the Near East, Mesopotamia, Arabia, and East Africa, the Zimbabwean offshoot of which was inspired by the drive for mineral wealth and sustained between roughly 4000 B.C. and 900 B.C.¹ Although

1. Frobenius's assertions were sufficiently vague to admit of various interpretations. For W. E. B. Du Bois, for example, Frobenius was the "greatest student of Africa" because he had described the ancient African civilizations that so inspired Pan-African nationalism (1947:79n.).

Frobenius's work received respectful attention in Britain, his analysis was seen as broadly speculative and incompletely documented—and therefore no real challenge to Caton-Thompson's (Caton-Thompson 1931a, 1931b, 1983:133; *Times Literary Supplement* 1931). Diffusionist hypotheses as such were not discussed in the reviews of Caton-Thompson's interpretation, but the frequent suggestion that it showed the need for more research into the causes and processes of cultural degeneration indicated the effect the diffusionists had in fact made on the British anthropological community (*Discovery* 1936:181; C. W. H. 1931:886; Hobley 1931:167; N. M. 1931:436; *Nature* 1929b:607; Westermann 1931).

The overwhelming endorsement that Caton-Thompson received from her professional peers made it impossible for students of African culture among the whites of southern Africa to dismiss her work. The British professional acceptance of her analysis of cultural degeneration may have smoothed the way for its acceptance, since white southern Africans had their own reasons to establish a degenerative trend in African culture. Caton-Thompson's account could in fact be reconciled with a version of African history that legitimated colonial rule. A reviewer in the journal of Southern Rhodesia's Native Affairs Department, for example, was pleased to note that she had found evidence of non-African influence on the builders of the ruins—a minor point in her argument that she later qualified—and that she attributed the final decline of the Zimbabwe culture to the devastating African wars that began in the eighteenth century and reduced the indigenous population to the pathetic state that virtually mandated colonialists' rule and cleared the land for their settlement (Schofield 1937:69; Caton-Thompson 1983:129; H. B. M. 1931).

Caton-Thompson's account further commended itself to Rhodesia's apologists because her praise for the achievement of Great Zimbabwe's creators was so qualified. When Charles Bullock, for example, ridiculed those who persisted in believing that the monuments had been built by exotic visitors, he drew heavily on Caton-Thompson's description of their defects.

[N]o other race but our happy-go-lucky Bantu could be accused of erecting them. Who else could build a place as big as the "Temple" without working from a plan? Who else would just make encircling walls come together by a little deviation from the symmetrical when they were not going to meet? What other race would build walls 30 feet high without using a plumb line? (Bullock 1949:52)

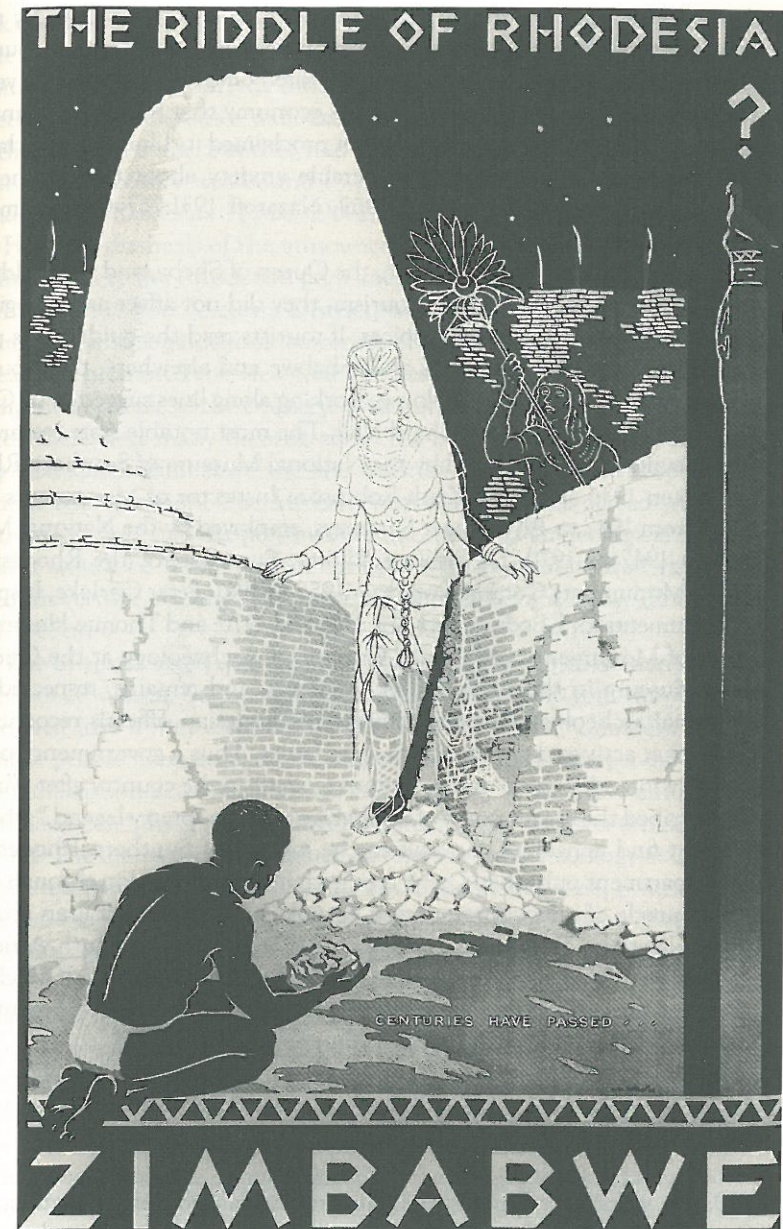
The structures were a lesson writ in stone for Africans and colonialists alike. To Africans, they were "material evidence that the Bantu had once capable and forceful leadership able to facilitate what is lacking to-day, that is continuity of purpose and effect," leadership that contemporary Africans should obviously try to imitate (53). To colonialists, they were a reminder of the mis-

sion that justified their rule—the uplift of the country's indigenous peoples.

To be sure, there were still scholars in southern Africa who refused to believe the Great Zimbabwe ruins were of recent vintage and African design. Raymond Dart and his colleague M. D. W. Jeffreys churned out articles purporting to show that southern African peoples indulged in forms of nature worship characteristic of the ancient Near East; that the rock paintings of southern Africa employed ancient Egyptian decorative motifs and portrayed features of the aquatic culture of ancient Egypt; that the language now used in the area of Zimbabwe contained imported words, some of which referred to places in Arabia in biblical times; that the blood groups of those African peoples supposedly in residence from the early Christian era had a pattern characteristic of the peoples who lived in (and migrated from) Asia at that time. When in 1952 the radiocarbon dating technique was applied to wood extracted from the inner wall of one of Zimbabwe's structures and indicated that building began in the eighth century, Dart hastened to point out that the technique admitted of the possibility that construction dated from the fourth century. He triumphantly proclaimed that science had effected a compromise between the ancient and medieval dates advanced for the ruins—and proved that they could not have been built by Bantu peoples, since none were in southern Africa during the construction period (Dart 1948, 1955, 1957, 1962, 1963; Jeffreys 1954, 1967).

Nor were Dart and Jeffreys the only persons writing about Great Zimbabwe in southern Africa. In the decades that followed the publication of Caton-Thompson's book, it was scarcely possible to pick up a number of the *South African Archaeological Bulletin* or of *NADA*, the Southern Rhodesia Native Affairs Department Annual Report, and not find some item related to the ruins. A study of the Zimbabwe controversy in 1950 noted that a comprehensive bibliography of works on the ruins would surely number over a thousand, and it "would offer all things to all men" (Paver 1950:38). The list has continued to grow, and it has continued to include work done by unrepentant amateur proponents of the ancient-exotic theory. Archeologists have in fact laid themselves open to attacks from amateurs by lamenting the damage done by previous workers and suggesting that no reading of the remains can be definitive because the evidence itself is unclear; even the introduction of the radiocarbon dating method was accompanied by an enumeration of the reasons its results were imprecise (Bruwer 1965; Caton-Thompson 1958:200; Chanaiwa 1978: 185; Hromnik 1981:8–19; Mallows 1984).

The development of Great Zimbabwe as one of Rhodesia's main tourist attractions further encouraged amateur speculations. To the Southern Rhodesian Publicity Bureau, the story of the Great Zimbabwe's ancient origins was an effective advertisement for tourism, advanced in booklet and poster form through the 1930s. When this story could no longer be proclaimed un-



Southern Rhodesia Publicity Bureau Poster, 1938. (National Archives of Zimbabwe.)

abashedly, the ruins were instead promoted as "Rhodesia's Mystery". By the 1960s, when the National Park around the ruins housed every sort of tourist facility, roughly a hundred thousand people visited Great Zimbabwe each year. Tourists contributed so much to Rhodesia's economy that when the country was subjected to economic sanctions after it proclaimed its Unilateral Declaration of Independence there was considerable anxiety about the decline of tourism at Great Zimbabwe (Berlyn 1969; Nazaroff 1931:767-68; Summers 1968:1).

But if fantasies about King Solomon, the Queen of Sheba, and the building of Zimbabwe promoted Rhodesian tourism, they did not affect archeological research conducted under state auspices. If tourists read the guidebooks put out by the archeological museums at Zimbabwe and elsewhere, they found descriptions provided by state employees working along lines suggested by Gertrude Caton-Thompson, not Richard Hall. The most notable state researchers were Neville Jones, employed by the National Museum of Southern Rhodesia between 1936 and 1948; Keith Robinson, Inspector of Monuments for Rhodesia from 1947 to 1970; Roger Summers, employed by the National Museum from 1947 to 1970; J. Anthony Whitty, Surveyor for the Rhodesian Historical Monuments Commission from 1955 to 1961; Peter Garlake, Inspector of Monuments for Rhodesia between 1964 and 1970; and Thomas Huffman, Inspector of Monuments and Senior Curator of Archaeology at the Queen Victoria Museum in the 1970s. Their work was, and remains, respected in international archeological circles. Southern Rhodesian officials recognized the fables that activated the tourist trade as fables. Thus a government booklet evidently intended to encourage Britons to settle in the country after World War II described the ancient saga of Zimbabwe as but a "pretty legend," which some might find appealing. And when the journal of Southern Rhodesia's Native Department published Dart's article claiming vindication through the scientific miracle of radiocarbon dating, it took care to run with it an article on the implications of the new technique reprinted from the South African *Sunday Mail*, in which it was reported that the conclusions of Randall-MacIver and Caton-Thompson stood with only slight modification (Government of Rhodesia 1945:89; *Sunday Mail*, 1955; Summers 1971:229-34).

The Controversy Revived

In 1970, five years after Rhodesia's Unilateral Declaration of Independence, Summers and Garlake left Rhodesia, because they could no longer work under the Rhodesian regime and sustain their intellectual integrity. Archeology had become thoroughly politicized, and the controversy over the building of Great Zimbabwe had been reactivated. The proximate cause was quite possibly the

discovery of a new group of ruins at Bindura in 1968, whose excavation Garlake supervised as the Senior Inspector of the Historical Monuments commission. As he pointed out, the Bindura ruins were important evidence for interpreting Zimbabwe, since radiocarbon dating showed them to be of an age with the major ruins, but they had not been despoiled by previous predators. This new discovery was bound to provoke argument (Whatmore 1969; *Antiquity* 1971; *Rhodesian Herald* 1969a, 1969d).

Hard on the heels of the announcement of the findings at Bindura came a discussion in the Rhodesian parliament, in which Col. George Hartley, the M.P. from the Fort Victoria District, where the ruins were located, rose to demand that the guidebook be censored by the Minister of Internal Affairs, because it promoted the view that Rhodesia's stone ruins were erected by the indigenous people of the country. This notion was "nothing but pure conjecture"; there were many theories about the builders of the ruins, and the theory that Great Zimbabwe was the work of "light-skinned" people deserved serious consideration. The Minister responded that he agreed with Hartley and that he had told the personnel of the country's archeological institutions that it would be "more correct" to convey to the public that there was no incontrovertible evidence about the origin of Great Zimbabwe (*Rhodesian Herald* 1969b).

The Minister acted quickly, with the evident approval of many white residents of Rhodesia. State employees at Zimbabwe were told that they would lose their jobs if they credited "black people" with the monuments (although "yellow people" were acceptable putative builders), that they must not discuss the radiocarbon dates of the ruins, and that they were to give out guidebooks that had been "physically censored" by order of the Minister (Frederikse 1982: 10-11). The internationally regarded Professor of Archaeology at Cape Town, Raymond Inskeep, who was visiting Rhodesia at this time, protested in vain that no reputable archeologist doubted that the ruins were of relatively recent African construction, and that government efforts to suggest otherwise were "sinister." Inskeep's comments were front page news; as the Rhodesian magazine *Property and Finance* contended, the implication of this view was clear: if "for centuries Rhodesia was the center of a sophisticated Negroid 'civilisation' . . . there should be no legitimate opposition to a Black take-over of the country" (quoted in *Antiquity* 1971). If the letters column of the *Rhodesian Herald* is a reliable indicator of white settler opinion, this view was widespread (*Rhodesian Herald* 1969c; Clarke 1969a, 1969b; Harris 1969; Layland 1969a, 1969b; Lee 1969; Richards 1969; Ridler 1969; Ure-White 1969; Wright 1969).

The pages of the *Rhodesian Herald* also bear witness to the descending hand of official censorship, which rested heavily on Rhodesian society in the Unilateral Declaration of Independence period, during which a State of Emer-

gency was consistently maintained. When in 1969 one Edmund Layland characterized as "monstrous imposture" the hypothesis that Zimbabwe was built by Africans, his letter was printed with a rejoinder from *Herald* writer John Whatmore: no reputable archeologist had denied the African origin of the ruins since 1914, and the authorities cited by Layland were not professionally qualified to render judgment. But later that year, when the *Herald* reported the radiocarbon dating of the Bindura ruins, the story included a disclaimer at its end: "Critics of the archaeologists' findings attribute the Zimbabwe buildings to Arab or Phoenician civilizations" (1969d). In this official climate, *Property and Finance* was able to proclaim blandly in 1972 that to portray Zimbabwe as a "Bantu achievement" was to argue "against all objective evidence" (quoted in Frederikse 1982:12).

As an editorial in the *Rhodesian Herald* pointed out in 1969, Zimbabwe had become a contested symbol for Rhodesian whites because African nationalists had made it their own. From 1961, the parties agitating for African rights effectively renamed their country, anticipating the day when they would assume power, by incorporating the name Zimbabwe into their titles.² Indeed, so charged did the word Zimbabwe become that the Rhodesia Broadcasting corporation banned any mention of all of the political groups operating under the banner of Zimbabwe. The meaning of the ruins, however, had not always been the same for African nationalists. In the 1930s, there were Shona partisans who accepted the ancient-exotic interpretation of Great Zimbabwe's origins, and described the early use of their ancestors as forced laborers by non-Africans as emblematic of the indignities since suffered by their people under colonialism. But in the Pan-African political argument that captured the nationalist imagination all over sub-Saharan Africa after World War II, Zimbabwe was one of the powerful African states that had been suppressed by colonialism, the vanished glories of which would return when the descendants of their citizens created new states with the old names. White supremacists and African nationalists thus revived the debate over the building of Great Zimbabwe because they were contesting the ownership of the entire country (DuBois 1947:172-74; Fagan 1970; Frederikse 1982:266; Summers 1963:29).

For roughly a decade before the Universal Declaration of Independence, archeological research sustained a history of the kingdom of Great Zimbabwe

2. The name "Zimbabwe" was attached to the country's African political parties as a by-product of the repeated banning of parties known by other names. The party formed in 1957 as the Southern Rhodesian African National Congress from a fusion of the African National Council (founded in 1934) and the African National Youth League (founded in 1955) became the Zimbabwe African Peoples Union in 1961. Later, members dissatisfied with the leadership provided by Joshua Nkomo formed the Zimbabwe African National Union, the party that became (and remains) the governing party of Zimbabwe under Robert Mugabe.

that African nationalists could embrace with some enthusiasm. Garlake, Hoffman, Robinson, Summers, Whitty, and others reconceptualized the Zimbabwe problem, following up a point made by both Randall-MacIver and Caton-Thompson, seeing the stone walls of the ruins as enclosures for housing a small elite fraction of the state's population. Although they agreed that the Great Zimbabwe complex was distinguished from other African stone structures by its size and complexity, they shifted their attention from analysis of the construction of the ruins per se to the social structure they embodied. In this context the complex was significant as the capital of a large state subordinate to a divine king, with a hierarchy of classes, occupational differentiation, and a formal political structure. With a population of roughly 18,000 at its height, it dominated an area extending into present day Mozambique, Botswana, Lesotho, and South Africa. Built between roughly 1250 and 1450 by descendants of the Shona people who had occupied the area since at least the end of the first millennium, the walls of the ruins testified to an internally generated evolution and to technical progress. The Zimbabwe state's rise and fall had an economic basis: although established in an environmentally blessed area, its expanding population depleted the natural resources; dependent on East Coast African markets for the gold it mined, the state's surplus-generating trade collapsed when world gold prices fell and the coastal cities declined. By the end of the fifteenth century, Great Zimbabwe was already a ruin; the Mwena Mutapa kingdom that succeeded Zimbabwe as the dominant power in the region had a different center. But there had been no break in the continuity of the culture of the area's people; the various sub-groups of the Shona moved about, but they maintained residence in the general area. It was thus possible from later Shona culture to interpret the significance of the monuments, including the social organization they embodied and the religious meaning of such decorations as the famous birds (Connah 1987:183-213; Huffman 1981, 1987:1-3).

Recent archeological analyses of Great Zimbabwe have thus agreed with Caton-Thompson's original formulation in many particulars. But there have been critical changes in interpretation: full acknowledgment of extraordinary African enterprise in mining, trade, construction, and state organization; recognition of a progressive historical trend, rather than degeneration from an early cultural height; elimination of the marauding African hordes from the story of Great Zimbabwe's decline, and with it recognition of the continuity of Shona culture and occupation. Thus white supremacists could not tolerate recent archeological opinion, for it could not be reconciled with a justification of colonialism—as Caton-Thompson's clearly could be. When Thomas Huffman wrote a new guidebook for the ruins late in the U.D.I. period, he was obliged to introduce it with a statement that visitors might choose to believe that ancient colonists built Great Zimbabwe—though cognoscenti

could easily recognize his understated endorsement of recent archeological research in the notes he wrote on the various parts of the monument. Recent research, however, readily served African aspirations. In the museum display at Great Zimbabwe mounted since the nation assumed its new identity as Zimbabwe, the ruins are presented as the center of a city-state created by the Shona people, who are the dominant ethnic group of the country (Frederikse 1982:349; Huffman 1976).

The Genre of Colonial Archeology

A cursory look at an archeological dispute that once flourished in the United States suggests that this colonial people approached its aboriginal population with many of the same attitudes that prevailed in colonial Zimbabwe. For many decades after independence, controversy raged over the Native American earthworks known as the "mounds"—heaps of earth ranging in size from small piles to an immense hill extending over sixteen acres and a hundred feet in elevation, which covered human remains and material artifacts. Contemplating the mounds in ignorance of the observations of earlier colonists (who had witnessed mound construction by Native Americans as late as the early eighteenth century), an extraordinary array of settler observers concluded that they were very ancient and that the present aboriginals could not have built them. There were a few dissenters from this consensus, Thomas Jefferson among them, but in gross outline it prevailed among self-appointed experts ranging from rustic clerics to the national intelligentsia—who named as putative earth workers such candidates as the Phoenicians, the Vikings, the Lost Tribes of Israel, the Polynesians, and the (white) builders of ancient Mexican civilization whose migrations took them through the country (Silverberg 1968: esp. 2–7, 19–24, 32, 44, 48, 51, 56–59, 79, 92–94, 98, 136–37, 154–70).

Committed to the view that they were morally entitled to settle North America because they were capable of using the land to its fullest potential, white settlers represented aboriginals as irredeemable savages. This characterization affected American anthropology as the discipline emerged through the nineteenth century. If American Indians were "unwilling to change and perhaps incapable of it," it followed that they had no history; they could not have had an earlier, mound-building culture (Trigger 1978:93, 87–95). When the American Ethnological Society was founded in 1842, it saw the issue of the mounds as one of the crucial problems for the new discipline, and commissioned E. G. Squier to synthesize the accumulated evidence about them. Generating many publications with his colleague E. H. Davis, Squier concluded that the mounds "far exceed anything of which the existing tribes of

Indians are known to have been capable" (quoted in Silverberg 1968:127).

As the century drew to a close, however, Native American resistance to colonial expansion became less threatening. By 1871 an Act of Congress could proclaim that "hereafter no Indian nation or tribe within the territory of the United States shall be acknowledged or recognized as an independent nation," and the colonization of the remaining frontier zones was accomplished with relative ease (quoted in Officer 1971:30). Anthropologists then reinterpreted the mounds. Led by John Wesley Powell and his colleagues at the Bureau of American Ethnology, as well as by Frederic Ward Putnam at Harvard's Peabody Museum, researchers determined that the mounds had been recently built by Native Americans still resident in the country and—most important—that they expressed a culture of a considerably lower level than had previously been thought (Silverberg 1968:80–81, 110–35, 168–84, 197–221; Thompson & Lamar 1981:9). As had been the case in southern Africa, North American colonists were reluctant to credit aboriginals for the building they did on the land and, by implication, thereby to acknowledge that they were in established residence rather than transients. They would do so only when colonial title to the land seemed no longer in dispute, and when they could preserve their moral rights to the land, even though aboriginals had built on it, by representing those achievements as relatively inconsequential.

As another comparative case, we may consider the relatively recent phenomenon of Israeli archeology, which developed as a distinctive variant of the long-established field of biblical archeology (the effort to find documentation for religious tradition). Israeli archeology has its antecedents in the work done by Jewish settlers of Palestine under the British Mandate after World War I, and has been used to further the Zionist cause. Since Israel was created in 1948, archeology has become a grass-roots movement, enrolling myriad amateur enthusiasts in projects great and small all over the country. For the largest excavations, the Israeli Defense Forces' personnel and equipment have been placed in service, and some projects have been treated as national emergencies, worthy of "archeological offensives" mounted to preserve sites from the depredations of wandering Bedouins, who could easily take valuable treasures over the border for sale. Archeologists have been routinely summoned by the country's prime ministers to report on their activities, and their more sensational findings have been announced in flash bulletins by the broadcast media and accorded banner headlines in the newspapers (Yadin 1971:32, 13; Albright 1970:57–58; Silberman 1982:199–200; Yeivin 1955:3–5).

Archeologists have worked to establish the special qualities of their land as a nurturing environment, and to demonstrate that the current occupants of Israel have moral title to it by virtue of their priority of settlement. They have argued that the peculiar conditions in Palestine made it "the cradle of man's cultural development in his first advance beyond the end of the Middle

Stone Age," the source of "the impulse to cultural development, both technical and agricultural," which was the basis of "rich and highly-advanced civilizations" elsewhere (Yeivin 1955:3-5). They have identified a continuous Jewish presence in the territory of Israel from biblical times to the present, and have reached the (somewhat problematic) conclusion that this presence was maintained from the start by populations who had fixed ties to the land; the tribes who moved into the area to form ancient Israel were settlers rather than true nomads (Albright 1970:61).

Israeli archeologists have done more than this, however. They have found in the archeological record evidence that their ancient forebears were paragons of contemporary virtues. No one has produced archeological findings with greater national appeal than Yigael Yadin—surely the only professor of archeology who has ever served as Chief of Staff of the military forces of his country. Yadin directed two major excavations of ancient military sites—that of the fortress of Masada, where in the beginning of the Christian era Jewish zealots made a heroic stand against the Romans; and that of the site of the Second Revolt of the Jews against the Romans in the second century, led by the heretofore purely legendary Bar-Kokhba. In each instance, Yadin found in the written and material records evidence that Jews were both extremely disciplined fighters and dedicated to the practices of their faith, even under the most difficult of conditions. The zealots at Masada were especially exemplary because they chose to commit suicide en masse rather than live as Roman captives (a conclusion from which there is some scholarly dissent). Masada, in particular, has become a national symbol. A major tourist attraction, it is commemorated on Israeli stamps and coins, and is the site of an annual ceremony staged by the Israeli tank corps—whose new recruits swear that "Masada shall not fall again." As then-President Golda Meir observed in 1971, the country has a "Masada Complex." The implication of the archeologists' findings is that in the special environment of Israel the Jewish people take on a distinctive character; the land is their natural habitat—an inspiring (and consoling) message in an embattled state created after the Holocaust (Yadin 1966:54, passim; cf. 1971:23-26, 124-26, passim; Silberman 1989:99, 100; cf. 88).

What is at issue is not the rigor of Israeli archeology, which is obviously work of very high quality. So, too, was the research done by Gertrude Caton-Thompson and the analysis it prompted. But sound archeological evidence can document the legitimacy of political regimes as effectively as can fanciful accounts. No matter by whom or to what scholarly standard the archeological research discussed in this paper has been done, it has dealt with the same fundamental questions, and it has been used to legitimate the occupation of a particular land by pointing to the history of that land's tenants.

By the criteria of what passes for international law, the rights of ownership

are established by long use. If the land's claimants—be they Zulu, Indians, or Arabs—can be seen as wanderers with no truly fixed ties to the land, colonists will insist that they have as much right to territory as aboriginals. They will even insist that *ceteris paribus* their claims have greater weight, since they have greater virtue, an argument that can be made either by denigrating the qualities and accomplishments of aboriginal peoples or by celebrating those of the colonists. There is no novelty in the observation that history often serves to rationalize national purpose, and that archeology is a form of historical inquiry. But the history espoused by officialdom conventionally serves to sanction present practices by arguing that they have always been thus. Colonial ventures are ruptures of what has always, or at least has previously, been. In this context, archeology has been a vehicle for explaining away the obvious, for transforming a decisive break with the past into an inconsequential moment, and it can do this because its esoteric practices uncover a past invisible to the naïve observer. Absent approval from the deity (which, of course, many have claimed), colonialists may not be able to find a better means to justify actions illegal by any people's customary standards.

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