

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION  
OF CERTAIN IRON AGE SITES  
IN THE LIMPOPO/SHASHI VALLEY

by

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Submitted in fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
Master of Arts

In the Faculty of Arts and Philosophy  
University of Pretoria

October 1980

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many people to whom acknowledgements are due, and without whose assistance, this work would not have been completed. There will no doubt be people whom I have left out, but whose help is none the less appreciated. I trust that they will understand.

I would like to thank Prof. J.F. Eloff, my promotor for the guidance and help received during the course of this dissertation. There are colleagues like Prof. T.N Huffman, Andrie Meyer and Elizabeth Voigt, who were prepared to spend many hours in discussing the results of the work and comparing these results to what is known out of their own experience, about the Leopard's Kopje A and Zhizo Traditions.

I am indebted to the Board of the National Cultural History and Open-air Museum, under whose auspices the work was undertaken. Without their financial and other support, this work could not have been done. The former director of the Museum, Mrs. Kotie Roodt-Coetzee, must be mentioned in this connection, as the Limpopo/Shashi Valley project was started under her direction in 1973 and could not have been carried out with the success that it has achieved, without her whole-hearted support. Dr. B. Cronje, the present director, has continued with this encouragement, and it is through him that I was able to make use of many facilities at the Museum.

Specialist analysis was undertaken by people at various institutions. The National Herbarium identified the plant samples. Professor H. de Villiers of the Dental School, University of the Witwatersrand identified the human remains. Radiocarbon dating was done by Dr. J. Vogel of the National Physics Laboratory of the C.S.I.R. The faunal analysis was undertaken by Mrs. E. Voigt, Mrs. I. Plug and Miss A. Brown of the Transvaal Museum. To all these persons and institutions, I am deeply grateful.

At the scene of the excavations, a word of thanks must be given to the team of African labourers who worked with me, doing their best in what often were unpleasant weather conditions. I have been fortunate in that most of these persons have excavated frequently with me since 1975. Of these, I must single out two people, whose support and co-operation ensured the success of the work in the field and back in the Museum. The first is Mr. Silas Tlou, who, in his capacity as foreman, saw to the work being efficiently carried out, and that any problems arising were quickly solved. The second person is Mr. Samuel Moifatswane, an employee of the Museum, who

has been working with me in the Northern Transvaal and North Eastern Botswana since the beginning of this project. To him fell the task of preparing for each season's fieldwork, as well as the packaging of material on site, its transportation to the Museum, and the sorting out and marking of the material back in the laboratory.

Obviously the support of the local farmers is necessary for any fieldwork. My thanks are due to Mr. and Mrs. M. Opperman for permission to excavate on Schroda, to Mrs. M. Bester and Mr. W. Jansen for Pont Drift, as well as to all the local farmers for their friendship and hospitality. In particular, I would like to mention Mr. and Mrs. H. Lemmer and Mr. and Mrs W. Neethling in this connection.

To my colleagues at the Cultural History Museum who helped me in the preparation of this thesis, I would like to express my sincere gratitude. These include Mrs. R. Celliers, Mr. P.D. Brink and Mr. J van Ewyk for the drawings; Mr. C.P. Jansen for the printing of the photographs; and Miss A. van den Heever, Mrs. H. du Toit and Mrs. E. Botha for the typing.

One other colleague to whom I am greatly indebted is 'Oom Karools' Reinecke, Development Officer at the Museum. Mr. Reinecke has been responsible for arranging the donations of camping and excavation equipment and other necessities that are required during the course of conservation and excavation in the field. To me it is very clear that I would not have been able to accomplish the same amount of work, had it not been for his support. A word of thanks must also be given to all those companies who, through Mr. Reinecke, donated so generously in the form of materials to this project.

Last but not least, my most sincere thanks and appreciation are due to my wife, Alta. There is much that I would like to say, but this is perhaps not the place to express it. Alta has, I am sure, suffered more than I have realized during the course of the several years during which this work was taking shape. Without her moral support, or her energy in assisting me, I doubt whether this thesis would have been completed. I hope that the finished product will have made all her sacrifices seem worthwhile.

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ABSTRACT

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF CERTAIN IRON AGE SITES  
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by

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Degree: Magister Artium

An archaeological investigation was made of two Iron Age sites on the farms Schroda and Pont Drift. The farms are situated on the southern bank of the Limpopo River, about 65 km and 95 km respectively west of Messina. Little is known about the archaeological cultures of the area surrounding the Limpopo and Shashi Rivers in the northern Transvaal and north eastern Botswana. Attention has been given to the work done in Rhodesia, Botswana and in particular at Greefswald.

The project was initiated in 1973 with a survey during which 86 Iron Age sites were recorded. Five sites were excavated, of which Pont Drift (TPD 1/2) and Schroda (TSR 1/1) were chosen for interpretation in this dissertation. Attention was given to pottery as well as other cultural facts.

Schroda was found to contain stamp decorated Zhizo pottery, although a certain amount of incised ware was found. Certain features were noted here, which suggested that characteristics normally associated with the Leopard's Kopje A Tradition may have had their origin during the earlier Zhizo Tradition. During analysis of the material, particular attention was given to these aspects.

At Pont Drift, an interesting sequence was exposed. The two metre deep occupation could be divided into four stratigraphic units, which were culturally different from one another. The lower unit (4) contained Zhizo pottery, while the topmost unit (1) contained Leopard's Kopje A pottery. The intermediate units (2 + 3) contained a mixture of Zhizo and Leopard's Kopje A pottery with the Zhizo decreasing towards the upper levels.

Radiocarbon dates placed the Zhizo occupation of Schroda and Pont Drift Unit 4 at between 790 and 850 A.D. The Leopard's Kopje A unit at Pont Drift was dated to around 1100 A.D.

From the information a reconstruction can be made of the development of the two pottery traditions in the research area. Schroda and Pont Drift were inhabited by people with the well developed stamp decorated Zhizo pottery tradition from about 790 to 850 A.D. At this period (850 A.D.) new inhabitants entered the area bringing with them a new, incised pottery series. These people mixed with the Zhizo peoples and out of this union developed the Leopard's Kopje A tradition, which contains numerous characteristics of the Zhizo culture. There is no indication at either site of a forced abandoning of the villages, suggesting that the newcomers lived peacefully amongst the original inhabitants of the area. It is at the same time clear that the Leopard's Kopje A did not develop naturally out of the Zhizo.

Schroda represents the first excavated site of the southern branch of the Zhizo Tradition, and it is the author's opinion that it should be regarded as the type site.

Further work should still be done, particularly that other Zhizo sites be excavated to control the findings at Schroda and Pont Drift unit 4. A spatial settlement study of other Leopard's Kopje A sites should be undertaken to determine relationships to one another, as well as differences in economy.



OPSOMMING

'N ARGEOLOGIESE INTERPRETASIE VAN SEKERE YSTERTYDPERKTERREINE  
IN DIE LIMPOPO-/SHASHIVALLEI

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'n Argeologiese ondersoek is gedoen op twee Ystertydperkterreine op die plase Schroda en Pont Drift. Die plase is onderskeidelik ongeveer 65 km en 95 km wes van Messina geleë op die suidelike oewer van die Limpopo-rivier. Weinig is bekend oor die argeologiese kulture van die omgewing rondom die Limpopo-en Shashiriviere in die Noord-Transvaal en Noordoos-Botswana. Aandag is gegee aan werk gedoen in Rhodesië en Botswana besonder by Greefswald.

Die projek is in 1973 aan die gang gesit met 'n opname waartydens 86 Ystertydperkterreine aangeteken is. Vyf van hierdie terreine is opgegrawe, waarvan Pont Drift (TPD 1/2) en Schroda (TSR 1/1) gekies is vir interpretasie in hierdie verhandeling. Aandag is gegee aan die potwerk sowel as ander kultuurfasette.

By Schroda is stempelpersierde Zhizo-potwerk gevind, tesame met 'n sekere persentasie met insnyding. Sekere verskynsels is hier opgemerk wat geïmpliseer het dat kenmerke wat normaalweg met die Leopard's Kopje A Tradisie verbind word, moontlik hulle oorsprong kon gehad het tydens die vroeëre Zhizo. Met die ontleding van die materiaal is besondere aandag hieraan gegee.

'n Interessante volgorde van lae is gevind by Pont Drift. Die bewoningslae, wat twee meter diep was, kon in vier stratigrafiese eenhede verdeel word wat kultureel van mekaar verskil het. Die onderste eenheid (4) het Zhizo potwerk bevat, terwyl die boonste eenheid (1) slegs Leopard's Kopje A potwerk gehad het. Die eenhede tussenin (2 + 3) het gemengde Zhizo en Leopard's Kopje A potwerk bevat, met 'n afname in Zhizo na die boonste lae.

Radiokoolstofdatering plaas die Zhizo bewoning van Schroda en Pont Drift

op ongeveer 710 tot 850 n.C. Die Leopard's Kopje A eenheid by Pont Drift se datering is ongeveer 1100 n.C.

Uit die inligting kan 'n rekonstruksie gemaak word van die ontwikkeling van die twee potwerktradisies in die navorsingsgebied. Schroda en Pont Drift is vanaf ongeveer 790 tot 850 n.C. bewoon deur mense met 'n goed ontwikkelde stempelversierde Zhizo potwerktradisie. Op daardie tydstip (850 n.C) het nuwe intrekkers die gebied binnegekom en het 'n nuwe potwerkserie wat deur insnyding gekenmerk was, saamgebring. Hierdie mense het vermeng met die Zhizo mense en uit die verbintenis het die Leopard's Kopje A tradisie ontwikkel wat talle kenmerke van die Zhizo kultuur dra. Daar is geen aanduiding by enige van die twee terreine van 'n gedwonge ontruiming van die nedersettings nie. Dit suggereer dat die nuwe intrekkers hul vreedsaam tussen die oorspronklike inwoners van die gebied gevestig het. Dit is terselfdertyd duidelik dat die Leopard's Kopje Tradisie nie spontaan uit die Zhizo kon ontwikkel het nie.

Schroda verteenwoordig die eerste terrein van die suidelike vertakking van die Zhizo Tradisie wat opgegrawe is en dit is die mening van die skrywer dat dit as die tipeterrein beskou behoort te word.

Verdere werk moet nog gedoen word, veral ten opsigte van die opgraving van addisionele Zhizo terreine om die gegewens van Schroda en Pont Drift, eenheid 4, te kontroleer. Ook moet 'n studie van die ruimtelike vestigingspatroon van ander Leopard's Kopje A terreine onderneem word om die verband tussen hulle asook verskille in ekonomie te bepaal.

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