

Research Article

STYLE, CHRONOLOGY AND CULTURE: A CRITICAL REVIEW OF WHITTY'S STYLISTIC CLASSIFICATION OF ZIMBABWE CULTURE USING EVIDENCE FROM THE HWANGE DISTRICT, NORTHWESTERN ZIMBABWE

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ABSTRACT

Based largely on architectural style, the Zimbabwe Culture has conventionally been divided into three phases named after the major sites of Mapungubwe, Great Zimbabwe and Khami. Within and between the sites of this important southern African cultural phenomenon, the P, PQ, Q, and R stylistic classification originally defined by Anthony Whitty in the 1950s has continued to provide the basic descriptive and analytical framework. This has included continued acceptance and assumptions of the chronological as well as socio-political significance and implications associated with these wall styles as originally defined. Ongoing research in the Hwange district, has led to the documentation and assessment of dry stone-walled sites that architecturally and in several other respects, do not fit the traditional conventional frameworks. This is challenging the currently accepted definitions and characterisation of this important culture and its associated architecture. This paper discusses the variations in the architectural characteristics of the Hwange district dry stone-walled sites in the context of existing national and regional studies of this architectural heritage. Against this background, we question the continued use and application of outdated and uncritical characterisations of the Zimbabwe Culture architecture as currently presented in the southern African archaeological discourse.

Keywords: Zimbabwe Culture, Hwange, architectural variations, dry stone-walled sites.

INTRODUCTION

The Zimbabwe Culture of southern Africa is dated to the period between the 11th and 18th centuries AD. It has largely been defined by its monumental stone walls that come in a variety of styles and constitute its most striking and immediately visible attribute. Traditionally, this archaeological culture was conventionally divided into three phases: (i) Mapungubwe (AD 1220–1290); (ii) Great Zimbabwe (AD 1250–1450); and (iii) Khami (AD 1450–1650). In the absence of robust chronological data, these phases were derived from the major sites of Mapungubwe, Great Zimbabwe and Khami whose rise and collapse was assumed to have been in tandem. However, recent research has shown that some of these sites chronologically overlap, thereby challenging the linear evolutionary framework (see Chirikure *et al.* 2014). The definition of the

different phases has been based on variation in architectural style as well as other archaeological considerations such as changes in ceramic style. The stone wall stylistic classification was defined by Anthony Whitty, an architect, back in the 1950s (Whitty 1959, 1961). The classifications were largely based on architectural considerations, including refinement of walling. Building on earlier observations, Whitty (1961) defined four architectural styles for the Zimbabwe Culture, namely, P (Poor), PQ (Poor/Quality), Q (Quality) and R (Rough) (Fig. 1). Whitty's classification has been largely accepted and thus has remained unquestioned. Our view is that this was because the classification fitted well with Western-derived linear progression from Mapungubwe to Great Zimbabwe and Khami thereafter. In addition, it could be that the classification was never really critiqued and was thus taken for granted.

This classification translated into an evolutionary sequence where there was argued to be a building and construction skills-related development from the original poor walling in P style, a transition towards better construction skills represented by a combination of P and Q, and culminating in the perfection of walling in Q style, which antiquarian Bent (1892) described as 'the best of what we call the Zimbabwe Culture'. R walling was thought to represent degeneration in building and construction skills and associated with a decline in culture.

Influenced by their Western backgrounds and experience, many early European observers interpreted the Zimbabwe Culture stone walling as defensive and described the ancient city of Great Zimbabwe as a fortress (Bent 1892; Hall 1905). Others, who were awed by the grand and visually impressive parts of the settlement such as the Great Enclosure and the Conical Tower within, preferred to interpret such parts of the site as the result of religious inspiration and therefore representing a temple (Hall & Neal 1902). This was in the context of the exotic origin hypothesis for the Zimbabwe Culture and its architecture where the whole complex was attributed to Phoenicians and Arabs, among a host of other foreign candidates (see Hall 1905; Bruwer 1965; Gayre 1972; Mahachi & Ndoro 1997). Following the dismissal of the exotic origin hypothesis over the years, there is now general agreement that Zimbabwe Culture stone-walling was constructed for prestige, standing as symbols in action and a highly visible outward

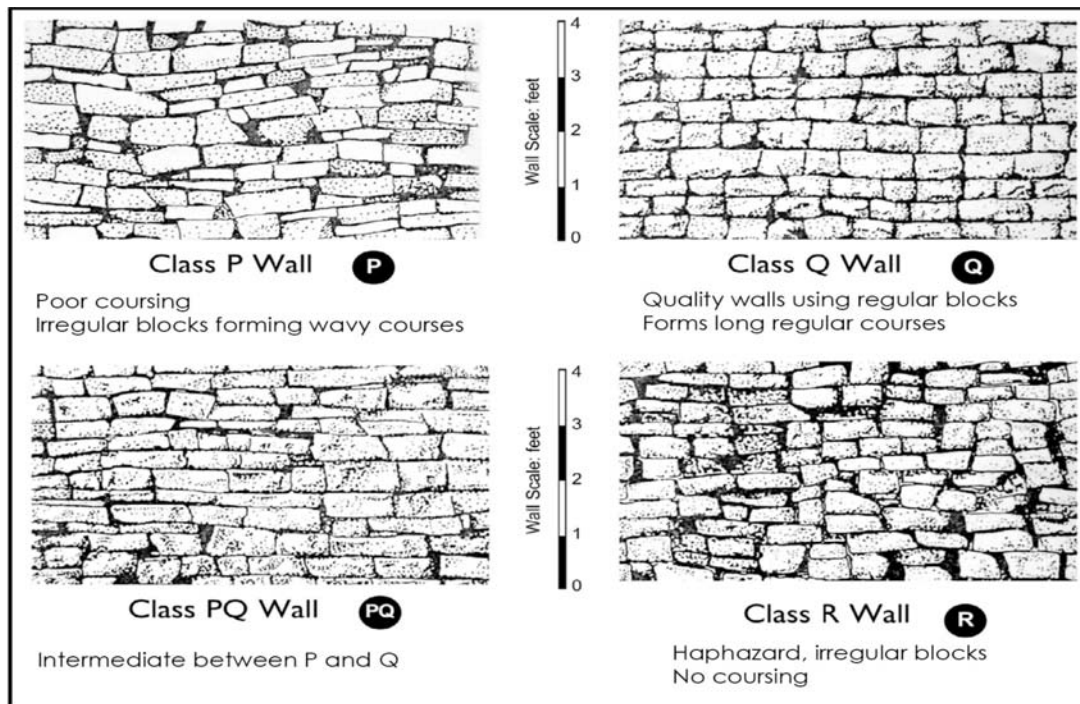


FIG. 1. Construction styles after Whitty (1961).

expression of the wealth, power and prestige of the ruling classes (Pikirayi 2013). In this connection, the walling represented a classic example of costly signalling where substantial labour and other inputs were invested in non-functional monumental architecture to make a statement about political power and status (Conolly 2017; O'Driscoll 2017; Wright 2017). Within the framework of the departure from the defensive and exotic/origin to the more 'enlightened' interpretation of the walling in its different styles, R style walling was, however, regarded as representing functional needs in the form of cattle kraals, in contrast to the refined and symbolic P, PQ and Q styles (Whitty 1959; Garlake 1970; Chipunza 1994; Ndoro 2001).

To date, Whitty's classification has continued to provide the basic descriptive and analytical frameworks for the Zimbabwe Culture stone buildings across the region, and has served to inform some of its interpretation. Implicit in the architectural classification was the culture evolutionary thinking that the variation in the appearance of architecture was evidence of the evolution of skills and expertise, as already noted above. Equally important, the changes in architectural style were also associated with cultural, socio-political and economic growth or decline through space and time across southern Africa. This has included continued acceptance of the chronological implications of the wall styles as originally defined by Whitty. Just as important, acceptance of the chronological significance of the architectural classification has also included acceptance of assumptions relating to the development and decline of major socio-political formations in the region. This has formed an important part of the basis of the traditional reconstruction of culture historical frameworks that have continued to inform the Zimbabwe Culture discourse in the region (e.g. Garlake 1973; Pikirayi 2001; Sinclair 1987; Pwiti 1996; Huffman 2007).

Yet there is need to bring into the mix local understandings of the stone walling and what they might have signalled. Among the local people, dry stone-walled buildings are known as *Madzimbahwe* or *Mizinda* (palaces) regardless of whether they have coursing or not (Chirikure *et al.* 2014). This introduces a very interesting dynamic where local people identified places with their occupants and not whether coursing was

present or not. These were occupied by royalty of various lineages (Chirikure *et al.* 2012). Each area had its *dzimbahwe* such that the label Zimbabwe Culture does not fully capture the variation that exists in the cultural and chronological development of stone-walled sites in different areas.

ZIMBABWE CULTURE: HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

Until as recently as the late 1990s, archaeologists have understood and interpreted the major socio-political developments associated with the Zimbabwe Culture in linear evolutionary terms largely based on traditional evolutionary theory originating back in the 1950s (White 1959) and further developed in the 1970s (Friedman & Rowlands 1977). In the context of the Zimbabwe Culture, this approach took the direction of complex socio-political formations in the region (state systems) rising, prospering, declining and collapsing in a direct, causal and linear sequence and relationship. In this sense, the Mapungubwe state, of the Mapungubwe phase (until recently regarded as southern Africa's earliest state system, see Chirikure *et al.* 2014) developed sometime during the 11th century AD and flourished in the Shashe–Limpopo basin for some two centuries. It then declined and collapsed sometime during the 13th century AD when power shifted from here to Great Zimbabwe with the rise of its direct successor, the Zimbabwe state. The Zimbabwe state itself flourished but also declined and collapsed during the middle of the 15th century, whereupon power shifted to Khami, the capital of the Torwa state that directly succeeded it. These political developments were accompanied by major economic and other cultural changes such as the decline in the economic importance of ivory on the external trading market systems linked to the Persian world *via* the Indian Ocean coast and the increasing importance of gold which saw the economic decline of Mapungubwe and the rise of Zimbabwe. Subsequent to these developments was the fall of Zimbabwe and the rise of the Torwa state in the southwest and the Mutapa state located in northern Zimbabwe (Huffman 1972; Pikirayi 1993; Pwiti 1996; Machiridza 2012).

Implied in this traditional sequence was a progression in, and refinement of architectural skills from Mapungubwe through to Great Zimbabwe and Khami where there was thought to be a corresponding progressive relationship between socio-economic and political growth and developments in stone wall architecture (Huffman 2007). Further research in northeastern Botswana identified multiple Leopard's Kopje sites with stone walling, some even predating Mapungubwe which prompted van Waarden (2011, 2012) to argue that the origins of the Zimbabwe Culture were in that region. More work at Mapela also identified a similar sequence (Chirikure *et al.* 2014). This motivates for a serious rethinking of chronological relationships between various sites with evidence of walling in the region, followed by how region-specific developments evolved through time. Such work will inevitably involve an assessment of the relationship between the architectural style-based phases and other later Zimbabwe Culture socio-political formations in the region. These include the Mutapa state in northern Zimbabwe, the Venda state in the Shashe–Limpopo basin and the Nambya state in northwestern Zimbabwe. It is against this background of the need to understand local developments first, as a step towards building the bigger picture that we focus on the Zimbabwe Culture in northwestern Zimbabwe.

THE ZIMBABWE CULTURE IN NORTHWESTERN ZIMBABWE

The issues raised and discussed in this paper form part of the concerns of the ongoing archaeological, historical archaeology, ethnohistorical and cultural heritage manage-

ment research project in northwestern Zimbabwe (Fig. 2), funded by the Volkswagen Foundation and directed by one of us (Shenjere-Nyabezi 2016). The research project was inspired by and initiated against a background of extremely limited archaeological knowledge about the Nambya state and the Zimbabwe Culture in northwestern Zimbabwe, as well as ongoing discussions on the need to rethink the origins, flourishing and decline of the Zimbabwe Culture (see Ndoro 2001; van Waarden 2011; Chirikure *et al.* 2013, 2014).

Despite poor archaeological coverage, manifestations of the Zimbabwe Culture in northwestern Zimbabwe are best known from the three major stone buildings of Shangano, Bumbusi and Matowa (Mtoa) (Fig. 3). Based on oral historical narratives, these three sites have been associated with the Nambya state. Nambya oral histories identify the stone buildings as capital sites of the Nambya state, with each different stone building complex associated with successive rulers of the state, known as Whange in the Nambya language. Here, according to the Nambya oral narratives, Shangano was the capital of the first Whange, Chilobamago. After his death, Chilobamago was succeeded by Nyanga who moved the state capital to Matowa. Nyanga was subsequently succeeded by Whange Shana who moved the palace to Bumbusi, and later came Lusumbami. In this way, these stone structures are an important part of Nambya history and are held to be significant sacred ancestral sites by most Nambya people today. At Shangano, for example, rainmaking and other traditional rituals continue to be held.

According to oral history, the contemporary Nambya people trace their origins from Great Zimbabwe (Henson 1973;



FIG. 2. Map showing the Volkswagen-funded research project area in northwestern Zimbabwe.



FIG. 3. Three major stone buildings in Hwange: (a) Shangano, (b) Matowa, and (c) Bumbusi.

Hayes 1977; Beach 1994; Ncube 2004; Haynes 2014; Sagiya 2020). While this oral-based explanation is noted, three other reasons could account for the origins of the Nambya people. First, archaeological evidence illustrates similarities between Great Zimbabwe and the Nambya states in terms of the presence of dry stone-walled sites in both localities (Ncube 2004; Hubbard & Haynes 2012). The similarities between archaeological evidence and the oral history of the Nambya people might also be inferred to be reflective of the cultural relationship between the two states rather than the Nambya being a direct offshoot of Great Zimbabwe. Second, dating evidence from the capital site of Shangano (see later) indicates that the development of the Nambya state fits within the broad time framework of the Zimbabwe and the Torwa states. In this sense therefore, if we follow the traditionally accepted architecturally based chronological frameworks, the following must be evident: (i) the Nambya state, its capitals and related stone buildings in northwestern Zimbabwe should reflect the architectural progression that has been assumed from Great Zimbabwe to Khami; and (ii) Nambya should at least fit within the Khami phase architectural style. Third, within the context of the state system and its associated successive capitals, there would be an expectation that the architectural attributes of the stone-built capitals should reflect the progression from the earliest capital at Shangano to the latest at Bumbusi (*via* Matowa), as based on Nambya oral narratives. It is against this background that the architecture of the Zimbabwe Culture in the Hwange district in northwestern Zimbabwe is here examined as a cultural attribute. This is from the point of view of, and in the context of the culture historical and chronological assumptions and implications of the existing wall style classifications and characterisation.

Using a combination of systematic archaeological survey,

local information and archival sources, the ongoing research in the Hwange district has sought to document archaeological sites in the area. This is in order to create a more secure database as part of the aim to develop an archaeological understanding and characterisation of northwestern Zimbabwe. In keeping with one of the project aims of ensuring that the local communities derive benefits from the archaeological resources in their area, as well as meeting their expectations (in the context of the cultural heritage management component of the project), the research is deliberately focused on the stone-walled Zimbabwe Culture sites. As noted above, these sites represent an archaeological heritage that the Nambya people, who are a sub-group of the Shona, see as important and immediately identify with where they regard it as relevant to their past and their present (Kearney 1907; Ncube 2004; McGregor 2005, 2009; Haynes 2014). The sites represent an important rallying point and a source of Nambya cultural pride and identity in the present. This is especially against the background in which they see themselves as one of the marginalised minority groups in modern Zimbabwe. Nambya are linguistically closely related to the Shona but are a sub-group which has felt marginalised despite being considered Shona. One could argue that their oral history which associates them with Great Zimbabwe is within a context of the political significance of the World Heritage Site in contemporary Zimbabwean politics. The Nambya, while generally considered to be Shona, have been complaining about marginalisation in terms of development projects in their area, in much the same way that there has been a general concern that Matebeleland has been lagging in terms of development (see McGregor 2009; Sinamai 2019; L. Chinyati, pers. comm. 31 January 2017; E.T. Ndlovu, pers. comm. 23 January 2018). The sites have always been a source of cultural pride for the Nambya as symbols illustrating their successful and

glorious past, which they are now seeking to use to project themselves on the economic and socio-political landscape of the country (see McGregor 2005).

APPROACHES TO DATA COLLECTION

Thus far, the research has resulted in detailed documentation of the three major sites of Shangano, Bumbusi, and Matowa. Of equal significance has been the location, recording and documentation of several smaller *dzimbahwes* during the course of the archaeological surveys. These had not been previously recorded in the National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe data base. Over and above the previously known major stone buildings, the newly recorded sites provided an expanded data base for the Zimbabwe Culture in northwestern Zimbabwe, allowing for a more informed understanding of this archaeological phenomenon in the local, broader national context and beyond. The discussion we present here is thus based on documentation and assessment of the architectural style of ten of the stone buildings in the Hwange district, over and above the major sites (Fig. 4). On the basis of information from the local communities and other

sources (e.g. reports from Hwange National Parks Management Plan 2016–2026, Haynes 2014) we estimate that there may be as many as 50 Zimbabwe Culture stone buildings in the Hwange district (see Table 1).

OBSERVATION ON ARCHITECTURAL STYLE

The presence of the same style within the same wall is clearly visible on walls at the site of Bhale (Fig. 5) and to some extent, at the Negasha as well as the smaller sites of Holobebe, Madumabisa, Lukwalwabashaninga, Makomo, and Ndomolupanga. Wall style variation between sites within the Hwange assemblage of stone buildings is also notable. In this regard, there are also some striking differences between Shangano, Bumbusi and Matowa. While Shangano walls combine all P, PQ, Q and R styles (Fig. 6), Bumbusi is almost exclusively in Q style, although elements of PQ and R style are detectable. The second capital site of Matowa, which is identified with Whange Nyanga, one of the most prominent of the most remembered rulers of the Nambya state represents something of an enigma in terms of architectural style. It is constructed using techniques that do not seem to fit within the

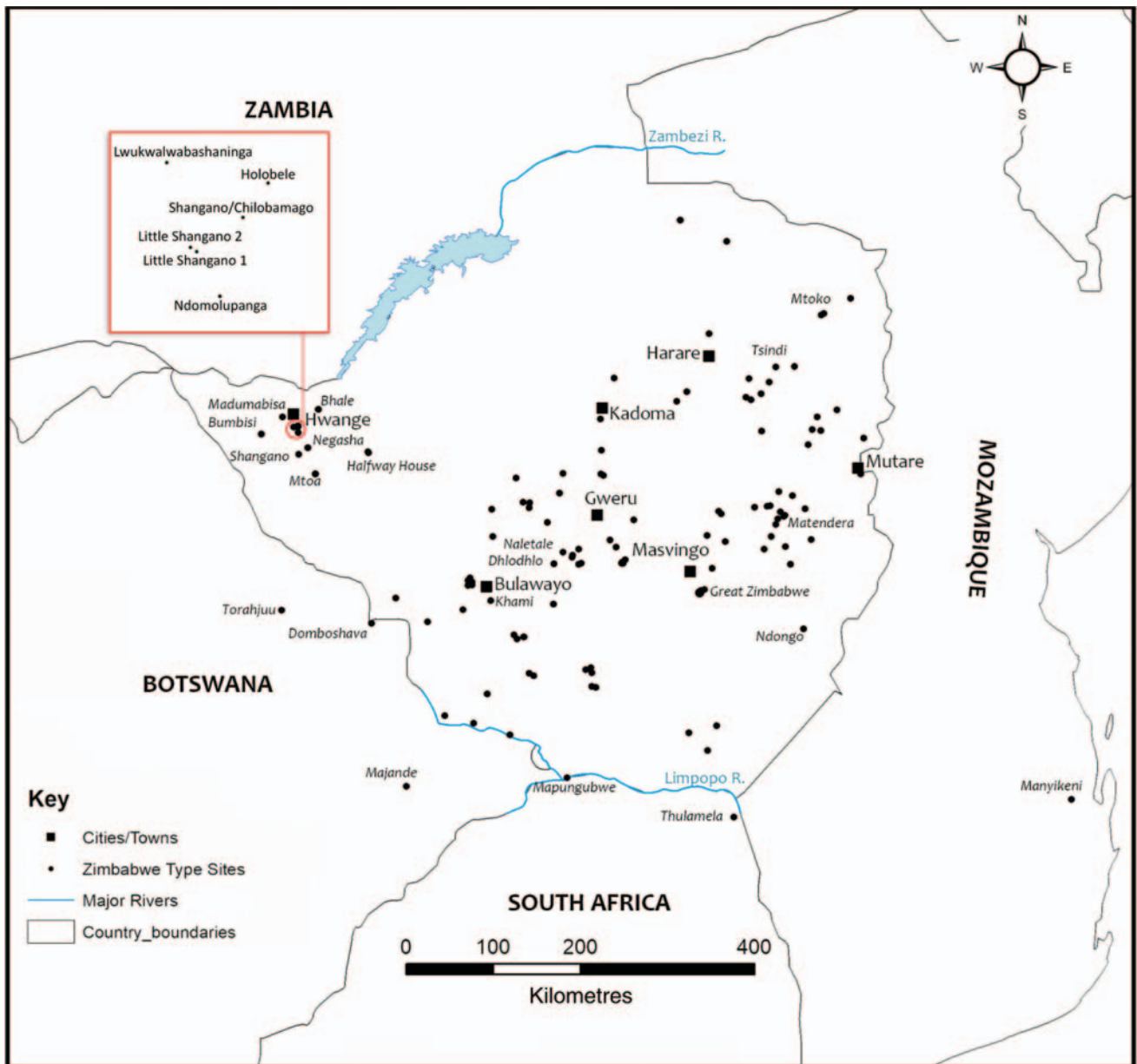


FIG. 4. Map showing distribution of Zimbabwe Culture sites in Hwange and southern Africa.

TABLE 1. List and description of Zimbabwe Culture sites in northwestern Zimbabwe.

Site name	Location and GPS reference	Approximate size	Building material	Construction style
Bhale	Chinove communal area, Hwange district GPS reference: 0480108 7979555	60 m × 70 m	Sandstone	P, PQ, R
Dobashuro	Hwange National Park GPS reference: 0417805 7943794	A horseshoe-shaped wall, 20 m long	Sandstone	PQ
Matowa	Hwange National Park GPS reference: 0466595 7935823	70 m × 80 m	Granite	R?
Bumbusi	Hwange National Park GPS reference: 0414199 7960931	1 hectare	Sandstone	P, PQ, Q, R
Halfway House	Chimwala communal area, Lupane district GPS reference: 0535093 7928967	60 m × 40 m	Sandstone	P, PQ, R
Holobebe	Chilanga communal area, Hwange district GPS reference: 0456332 7960931	30 m × 40 m	Sandstone	P, R
Makomo	Hwange National Park GPS reference: 0451538 7959888	20 m × 10 m	Sandstone	P, PQ
Madumabisa	Madumabisa resettlement area, Hwange district GPS reference: 0438774 7971854	70 m × 50 m	Sandstone	P, PQ, Q, R
Ndomolupanga	Shangano communal area, Hwange district GPS reference: 0456210 7960334	40 m × 30 m	Sandstone	P, Q, R
Negasha	Negasha safari area, Hwange National Park GPS reference: 0456265 7953558	90 m × 80 m	Granite	P, PQ, Q, R
Little Shangano 1	Shangano communal area, Hwange district GPS reference: 0455942 7960578	40 m × 50 m	Sandstone	P, PQ, Q, R
Little Shangano 2	Shangano communal area, Hwange district GPS reference: 0455910 7960601	30 m × 50 m	Sandstone	P, PQ, R
Lukwalwabashaninga	Shangano communal area, Hwange district GPS reference: 0455948 7961062	30 m × 20 m	Sandstone	P



FIG. 5. Bhale showing all styles.



FIG. 6. Presence of all styles within the same wall at Shangano site.

existing classifications. At the same time, there appears to be a systematic construction method in what may appear to be uncoursed walls, marking a departure from the more regular and conventional P, PQ, and Q styles. While the wall style may show similarities with R walling, from the point of view of lack of stone block dressing and coursing which characterises R style, there are marked differences (see Table 1). The builders also combined dressed and undressed stone blocks that they neatly fitted together to create a face walling that is difficult to label or categorise as rough walling. There is evidence that stone blocks of different sizes and shapes were carefully selected and laid with great workmanship, resulting in the production of the unique architectural characteristic features of rough but quality walling. For Ted Davison, the first warden for Hwange National Park (1928–1961), Matowa is ‘better built’ than Bumbusi, despite the dominance of the Q style at the latter site (Davison 1977: 130). What is striking and perhaps even more intriguing in the context of our concerns here with previous convictions relating to wall style progression with regard to the Zimbabwe Culture is the presence of important decorative features on the seemingly degenerate walls at Matowa. Here we note the presence of chevron decoration, decorative use of quartz as well as monoliths (Fig. 7). These symbolic features would place this site firmly within the mainstay of the Zimbabwe Culture, yet, according to the existing stylistic frameworks, the site of Matowa would belong to a devolved or degenerate era of the culture. In this regard and using the traditional frameworks, Matowa represents something of an architectural riddle. Here, it is of interest to note that architecturally, the closest parallel to Matowa stone wall style is to be found at the major site of Regina (also known as Zinjanja) in Central Zimbabwe, which is

associated with the Changamire-Rozvi state (Beach 1994; Machiridza 2012). It is of further interest to observe that chevron wall decoration is represented as a very short section at the small horseshoe shaped enclosure of Dobashuro in the Hwange research area. Stylistically, this site is in typical PQ style, further demonstrating the complexity of relationships between style and chronology within the northwestern Zimbabwe context.

CONSTRUCTION TECHNIQUES IN NORTHWESTERN ZIMBABWE

Apart from the stylistic features that characterise the Zimbabwe Culture stone walls in northwestern Zimbabwe noted above, our documentation of the sites also revealed other important attributes that indicate significant variability in the architecture. Firstly, at Shangano and elsewhere in the Hwange district, there are important differences in construction techniques from Great Zimbabwe and Khami. This includes straight joints as well as a lack of clear coursing (Fig. 8). Secondly, again compared to Great Zimbabwe and Khami, interlocking between the core and face blocks is very rare (Fig. 9). Thirdly, there is the presence of vertical joints that run from one course to the next (Fig. 10). Fourthly, there are limited cross joints resulting in relatively weak walls. However, this weakness appears to have been compensated for by construction of low walls. On average, the walls at most of the Hwange sites are less than 1.5 m in height. It is also observable that overall, there is inconsistent selection of trimmed or dressed blocks for use as face blocks. In this regard, the inescapable conclusion is that the overall concern seems to have been for blocks to fit together rather than consideration of their shape and conformity to a particular style.



FIG. 7. Matowa showing the chevron, and quartz line decoration, as well as monoliths.

EXCAVATIONS AT SHANGANO

As noted above, the archaeological research in northwestern Zimbabwe in the Hwange district included excavations at the site of Shangano, and at the two smaller enclosures of Little Shangano 1 and Little Shangano 2 nearby which are associated with it (Fig. 4). Only a short summary of the excavations is presented here insofar as it relates to the concerns of this paper. Excavations were undertaken over two seasons: July 2017 and August 2018. These excavations were conducted in different

parts of the site (see Fig. 11). Three test pits and two trenches were excavated on a midden in an area immediately outside the Shangano Southern Enclosure, to the south while one trench was sunk on a house platform within the Southern Enclosure itself, designated Platform B. The more extensive excavations were conducted on a large house platform in the northern part of the Northern Enclosure which was designated Platform D, together with another house platform (Platform C) which was located in a lower position immediately to the east



FIG. 8. Shangano wall straight joints.



FIG. 9. Bonded and interlocking walling at Khami site.

of Platform D (Fig. 11). A single trench was also excavated on Platform F located immediately outside the enclosures to the eastern side.

Excavations yielded a variety of materials which have been analysed. The faunal remains included domestic (cattle, sheep and goat) and wild species such as elephant (Majoli 2018). The pottery shows some general affinities with Great Zimbabwe period IV but lack the lavishly decorated polychrome pottery typical of Khami and the Changamire Rozvi state sites (Zhou

2018). An examination of the imported glass beads recovered shows that they are not a classic representation of the Great Zimbabwe and Khami–Torwa trade beads (Nyambiya 2018).

Of particular interest in the context of this paper and discussion was the recovery of charcoal samples from different contexts, of which 15 were submitted to the Curt-Engelhorn-Zentrum Archäometrie gGmbH laboratory (Mannheim, Germany) for C14 dating (Table 1). The C14 determinations show that Shangano was occupied between the 14th and 19th



FIG. 10. Vertical joints at Halfway House site.

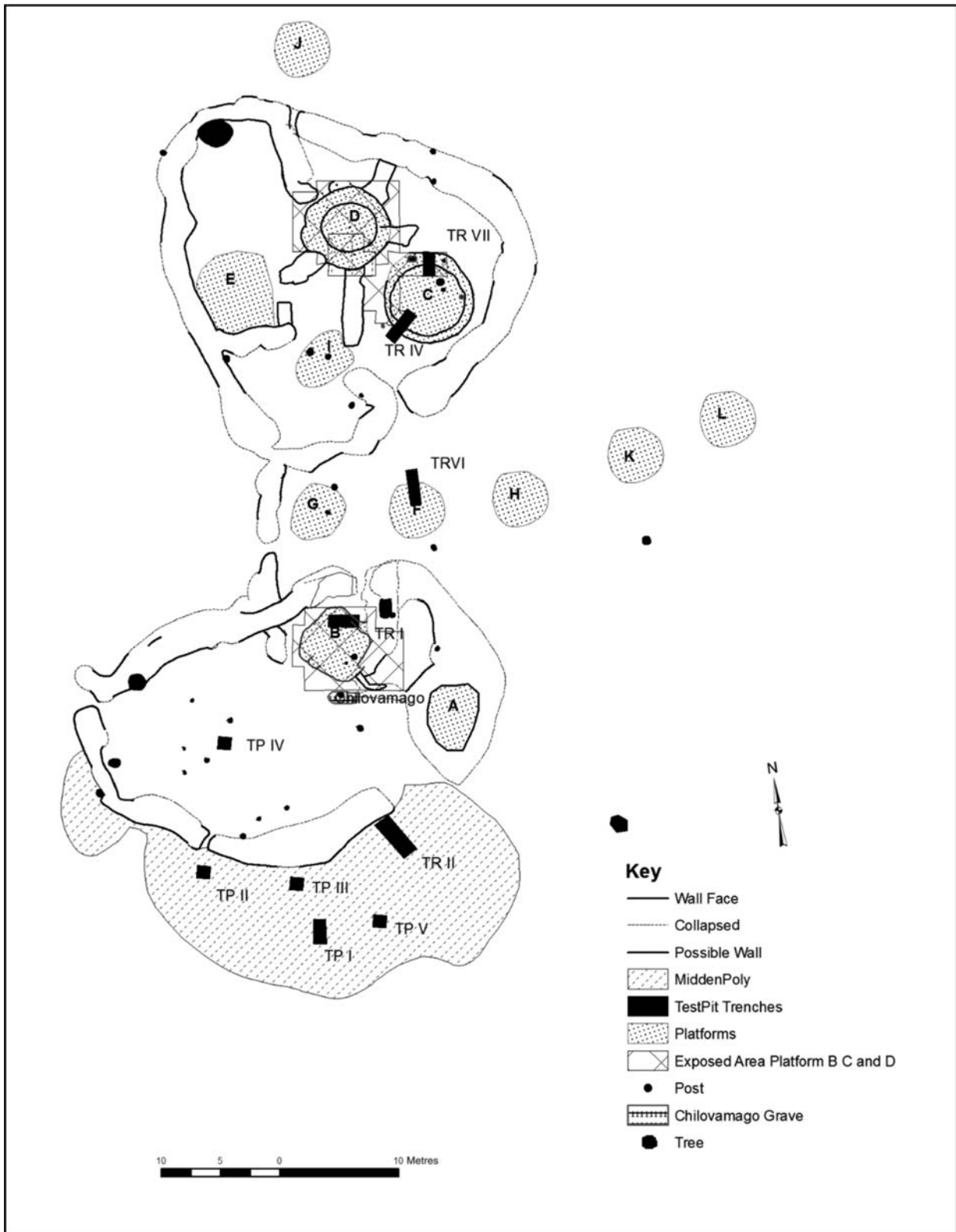


FIG. 11. Shanganu site plan showing the excavated areas.

centuries AD. This places the Nambya state within a chronological framework that overlaps with Great Zimbabwe and Khami, as well as the central Zimbabwe sites of Naletale and Danangombe that are associated with the Changamire Rozvi state (Beach 1994; Machiridza 2012; see Table 2).

DISCUSSION AND MATTERS ARISING

The observations made above, including the dating evidence now available for the Zimbabwe Culture in north-

western Zimbabwe make it increasingly arguable whether the conventional characterisation of the architecture and the associated chronological implications remain useful constructs. The dating evidence from Shanganu (c. AD 1330–1795) suggests a complex system that developed during the latter part of Great Zimbabwe and broadly contemporary with Khami (AD 1450–1650), Danangombe (AD 1650–1820) and other chronologically overlapping places. As noted above, the Shanganu site stone architecture exhibits combinations of

TABLE 2. Radiocarbon dates from Shangano excavations.

Laboratory number MAMS	Sample name	¹⁴ C Alter (yr BP)	±	δ13C AMS (‰)	Cal 1-sigma	Cal 2-sigma	C (%)	Material
42723	Sample 1 Sh SE Tr 1	343	21	-21.4	cal AD 1491–1630	cal AD 1470–1634	53.9	Charcoal
42724	Sample 2 Sh SE Tr1	584	21	-23.9	cal AD 1319–1403	cal AD 1306–1410	59.5	Charcoal
42725	Sample 3 Sh SE Tr1	448	21	-22.6	cal AD 1435–1449	cal AD 1424–1461	54.1	Charcoal
42726	Sample 4 Sh SE Pfb Tr 2	129	21	-21.9	cal AD 1683–1935	cal AD 1680–1938	57.9	Charcoal
42727	Sample 5 Sh SE TP1	227	21	-23.6	cal AD 1651–1795	cal AD 1644–1950	57.3	Charcoal
42728	Sample 6 Sh NE Pfd 67	319	21	-27.5	cal AD 1521–1636	cal AD 1491–1643	48.6	Charcoal
42729	Sample 7 Sh NE Pfd G52	118	21	-24.9	cal AD 1690–1925	cal AD 1682–1936	45.8	Charcoal
42730	Sample 8 Sh NE Pfd G40	326	21	-26.9	cal AD 1515–1634	cal AD 1488–1641	47.9	Charcoal
42731	Sample 9 Sh NE Pfd G51	326	21	-25.8	cal AD 1516–1634	cal AD 1489–1641	54.5	Charcoal
42732	Sample 10 Sh NE Pfd G51	374	21	-26.2	cal AD 1456–1615	cal AD 1449–1628	55.9	Charcoal
42733	Sample 11 Sh NE Pfd G63	261	21	-27.1	cal AD 1640–1662	cal AD 1527–1795	56.1	Charcoal
42734	Sample 12 Sh NE Pfd G63	354	21	-26.7	cal AD 1476–1623	cal AD 1458–1633	56.7	Charcoal
42735	Sample 13 Sh NE Pfd G74	541	28	-25.8	cal AD 1330–1425	cal AD 1318–1435	7.6	Charcoal
42736	Sample 14 Sh NE Pfd G74	382	20	-22.3	cal AD 1453–1613	cal AD 1446–1620	56.8	Charcoal
42737	Sample 15 Sh NE Pfd G74	350	21	-21.0	cal AD 1485–1625	cal AD 1462–1633	54.3	Charcoal

different wall styles (P, PQ, Q, and R) for the long period of its occupation. The same stylistic variation is also reflected at other sites in this region such as Negasha and Halfway House/Chimwala, to the degree that it seems fairly clear that correlations between wall style and chronology are problematic. Also becoming questionable is whether the perceived architectural progression should have socio-political implications in the context of the development of the Zimbabwe Culture state systems. The stone buildings documented in the ongoing research in the Hwange district clearly do not fit into the long accepted traditional and conventional stylistically derived chronological frameworks. This is especially when considered against the stylistic variation within and between sites as well as the differences in the construction techniques noted above. This is also against the background that perceived developments in wall styles were also previously related to political developments during the long lifespan of the Zimbabwe Culture and is especially with regard to the origins of the different socio-political formations associated with the culture. Our discussion in this regard then fits into the more detailed observations and discussion on the origins and development of Zimbabwe Culture that have been presented elsewhere (see Chirikure *et al.* 2013; Chirikure *et al.* 2016), using a wider range of data sets and approaches. The overall picture that emerges then raises questions about the significance of and relationship between style, chronology and culture. The existence of stylistic variation within and between sites persuades the conclusion that style did not matter (also see Chirikure *et al.* 2014). Rather, concern was to construct architectural ensembles that embraced the wider cultural grammar, socio-political and symbolic dimensions.

The stylistic variation and inconsistencies observed in the Hwange district does not appear to be unique to this area. Elsewhere, in northern Zimbabwe, variation has also been noted. Garlake's (1970) national survey and assessment did show that the P, PQ, Q, R sequence did not quite apply to all contexts. While he tried to explain this variation in terms of differences in raw material, no further work was done. In any case, our observations in the Hwange district strongly suggest that the variation must have been influenced by factors beyond raw material. In the same vein, Pwiti (1996) noted similar variation

and fairly significant differences between a range of Zimbabwe Culture stone buildings in northern Zimbabwe, which represented shifting capitals of the Mutapa state centred in this area. Again, in keeping with the state of knowledge and perhaps the fact that research was largely focused on other concerns, Pwiti (1996) questioned the view that Mutapa came out of Great Zimbabwe, even though it was later. Evolutionary thinking and expectation would be that the later sites associated with the Mutapa should reflect the highly evolved Q style. In northern Zimbabwe, the sites of Nhunguza, Chisvingo and Garaubikirwe, located within a 3 km radius of each other are dated to the early part of the 16th century AD and exhibit all styles, with Chisvingo in Q style. Part of Chisvingo has an elaborate chevron decoration. Stylistically, in terms of style, this picture is also observable in the Hwange district, north-western Zimbabwe. As already noted, Bumbusi is almost all Q style, while Shangano combines P, PQ, Q and R. Matowa, an architectural enigma would at best, be PR style, while containing important elements of an evolved Zimbabwe Culture architectural symbolic code such as the chevron design and monoliths (Fig. 7). Finally, at Great Zimbabwe itself, Chipunza (1994) used a Harris matrix approach to trace architectural developments on the Hill Complex which showed that the relationship between architectural style and chronostratigraphic developments was far from clear. Yet the PQR classification continued to be accepted, possibly because research has been concerned with other issues of the Zimbabwe Culture such as cognitive archaeology/structuralist archaeology following the publication of Huffman's *Snakes & Crocodiles* in 1996.

CONCLUSION

Stylistic variation was a common and recurrent feature of the Zimbabwe Culture architecture during its lifespan. Stylistic variation would then have been a product of a combination of factors. Our observations, particularly based on the substantial photographic record provided as well as the noted construction techniques, show that there is no correspondence between wall style as first expressed by Whitty (1959, 1961). Similarly, we argue that there is no correspondence between socio-political and economic developments, and architectural style. To

this end, there is a clear call to revisit the P, PQ, Q, R classification system. Existing definitions and characterisation of the Zimbabwe Culture phases based on architectural considerations is problematic and requires rethinking. Existing architectural classification assumes a cultural progress evolutionary interpretive framework which is contradicted by the picture obtaining in northwestern Zimbabwe and elsewhere. There is therefore a clear need to reconsider architecture as an artefact and its significance within the overall frameworks of the socio-political formations that were a major historical development of the Zimbabwe Culture. Although efforts have been made, and continue to be made towards re-examination of architecture and monumentality as represented by the stone buildings of the Zimbabwe Culture (e.g. Huffman 2007; Chirikure *et al.* 2014; Shenjere-Nyabezi 2018), there is now a need to shed the traditional concerns to use this class of data for chronological purposes and to focus on the possible meanings of this class of material culture.

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