

CHAPTER SEVEN

DISCUSSION

The Shashe-Limpopo hunter-gatherer sequence presented in this chapter and elsewhere in this thesis has been refined through the use of the vast body of literature on the farmer sequence of the region (Chapter 3), which allows for the contextualisation of material culture changes at hunter-gatherer sites over the last 2000 years. As noted in Chapters 3, 5 and 6, differences in material culture occur between the first and second millennium AD in the Limpopo Province at several hunter-gatherer sites. Some of these differences appear to correlate with changes in the distribution, density and political hierarchies of the farming groups settling in the region (Hall & Smith 2000; Chapter 3). Farming history is therefore vital for an understanding of the relationships between hunter-gatherers and farmers. Also vital to this study is an understanding of the differences between pre-contact and contact period hunter-gatherer material culture. The identification of the underlying structures and identities that facilitate hunter-gatherer / farmer interaction (such as those discussed in Chapters 1 & 2), and the recognition of the different kinds of interactions that occurred in southern Africa (Chapter 3), also aids in the construction of models for interpreting interaction relationships in the Shashe-Limpopo region.

Previous work in the region (Hall & Smith 2000; van Doornum 2000) set up preliminary models of hunter-gatherer / farmer interaction, based on data recovered from only two sites. Two of the aims of this project are thus: 1. to increase the data available for the region, and, 2. to test the observations made by Hall and Smith (2000) and van Doornum (2000) regarding interaction in the Shashe-Limpopo region, including the effects of hunter-gatherer / farmer proximity on interaction. Three shelters (see Chapter 4) were specifically chosen for excavation. Tshisiku Shelter was selected to test observations made at Little Muck Shelter (Hall & Smith 2000; Chapter 3): both shelters are situated in a similar environment, in close proximity to rivers, and to Zhizo and K2 farmer settlements. Balerno Main Shelter was selected because of its size and potentially deep sequence, and because it lies

within the same ‘farmer-free’ zone as Balerno Shelter 3 (van Doornum 2000; see Chapter 3). Balerno Shelter 2 was chosen because of its proximity to Balerno Shelter 3 and in order to provide a comparative sample for Balerno Shelter 3.

At least two broad phases of occupation are proposed for Tshisiku Shelter, based on the presence of pottery and selected radiocarbon dates (see Chapter 4): a pre-contact phase from Spit 14 to Spit 4 (Fig. 7.1); and a contact phase from Spit 3 to the Surface. The bulk of the occupation at Tshisiku Shelter took place in the pre-contact period, where several fluctuations in activity occurred. These fluctuations (represented by changing artefact densities) allow for a possible further subdivision of the occupation into four different phases:

- An early pre-contact period between Spit 14 and Spit 8 (where Spit 11 dates to between 5660 and 5610 BC, and Spit 8 dates to between 4330 and 4220 BC) (Table 7.1; Fig. 7.1).
- A second early pre-contact period, between Spit 7 and Spit 5 (the period of greatest activity).
- A late pre-contact period in Spit 4 (1220 – 1010 BC) (Table 7.1; Fig 7.1).
- A contact period between Spit 3 and the Surface, with K2 / Mapungubwe pottery (dating to AD 1000 – AD 1300) occurring in Spit 2 (Fig. 7.1).

Few changes occur across the pre-contact / contact period divide (Spit 4 to Spit 3) although a slight increase in material densities does occur in Spit 3, followed by a continued decrease to the Surface layer.

Four phases of shelter occupation are proposed for Balerno Main Shelter, based on the presence of ceramics, stratigraphic differences, radiocarbon dates (Chapter 4), and changes in material densities. These include:

- An early pre-contact phase between DAF (11 120 - 10 890 BC) and ABR (6230 – 6060 BC), which does not form part of this study.
- A late pre-contact hunter-gatherer phase occurring between levels DBG 75+ and DBG 65-70 (where level DBG 70-75 dates to between 340 - 320 BC and 210 – 100 BC)(Table 7.1; Fig 7.1)
- A contact period hunter-gatherer occupation during the first millennium / early second millennium AD i.e. AD 100 – 1300 (DBG 60-65 to BRA)

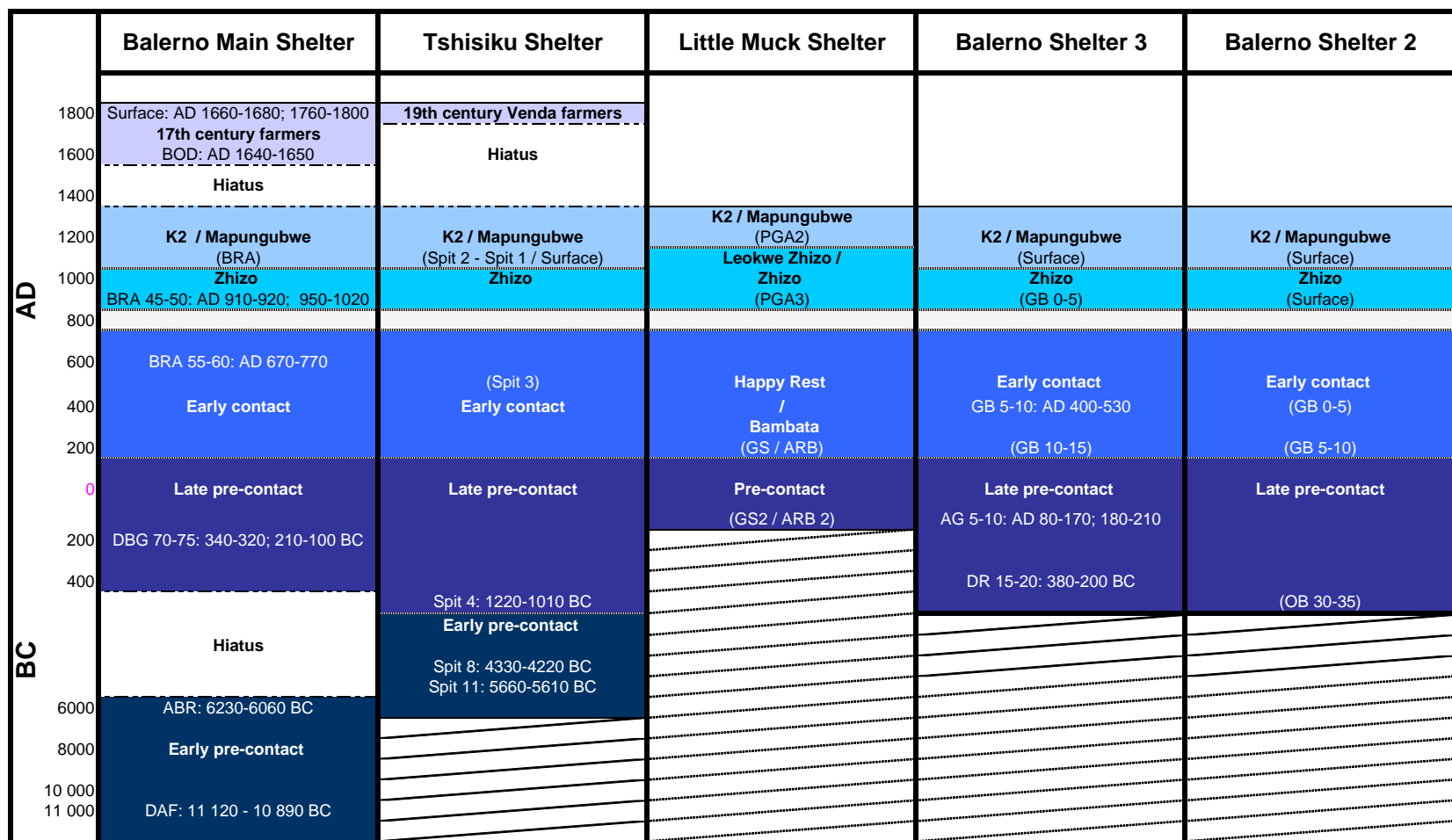


Figure 7.1. Comparison of periods of occupation in Shashe-Limpopo rock shelters
(where dates are known they are included; approximate positions in time for selected undated spit levels included in brackets)

Table 7.1. Table of radiocarbon-dated shelters in the Shashe-Limpopo region.

| Sample Number | Shelter | Stratigraphic Position | Material Dated | Radiocarbon Date | Calendar Date Range |
|---------------|----------------------|-------------------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|
| Pta # 7972 | Balerno Main Shelter | Surface | charcoal | 240 +/- 35 BP | AD 1660-1680; AD 1760-1800 |
| Pta # 8604 | Balerno Main Shelter | 013 DC / BRA interface | charcoal | 325 +/- 15 BP | AD 1640 - 1650 |
| Pta # 8614 | Balerno Main Shelter | P13 BRA 45-50 | charcoal | 1100 +/- 60 BP | AD 910 - 920; AD 950 - 1020 |
| Pta # 8603 | Balerno Main Shelter | P13 BRA 55-60 | charcoal | 1340 +/- 40 BP | AD 670 - 770 |
| Pta # 7995 | Balerno Shelter 3 | G7 GB 5-10 | charcoal | 1650 +/- 50 BP | AD 400 - 530 |
| Pta # 7997 | Balerno Shelter 3 | G8 AG 5-10 | charcoal | 1920 +/- 45 BP | AD 80 - 170; AD 180 - 210 |
| Pta # 8609 | Balerno Main Shelter | P13 DBG Hearth | charcoal | 2180 +/- 50 BP | 340 - 320 BC; 210 - 100 BC |
| Pta # 7994 | Balerno Shelter 3 | G7 AG 10-15 | charcoal | 2250 +/- 40 BP | 370 - 200 BC |
| Pta # 7996 | Balerno Shelter 3 | G7 DR 15-20 | charcoal | 2270 +/- 50 BP | 380 - 200 BC |
| Pta # 8666 | Tshisiku Shelter | D2 Spit 3: FG 10-15 | ostrich eggshell | 2380 +/- 50 BP | 410 - 380 BC |
| Pta # 8654 | Tshisiku Shelter | D2 Spit 4: FG 15-20 | ostrich eggshell | 2960 +/- 60 BP | 1220 - 1010 BC |
| Pta # 8729 | Tshisiku Shelter | D2 Spit 2: FG 5-10 | ostrich eggshell | 3130 +/- 70 BP | 1430 - 1280 BC |
| Pta # 8907 | Tshisiku Shelter | D3 Spit 2: FG 5-10 | ostrich eggshell | 4390 +/- 70 BP | 3030 - 2900 BC |
| Pta # 8652 | Tshisiku Shelter | D2 Spit 8: FG 30-35 | ostrich eggshell | 5440 +/- 60 BP | 4330 - 4220 BC |
| Pta # 8709 | Tshisiku Shelter | D2 Spit 11: GS 7.5-12.5 | ostrich eggshell | 6750 +/- 60 BP | 5660 - 5610 BC |
| Pta # 8591 | Balerno Main | P13 ABR | ostrich eggshell | 7350 +/- 80 BP | 6230 - 6060 BC |
| Pta # 8639 | Balerno Main | P13 DAF | ostrich eggshell | 11040 +/- 90 BP | 11 120 - 10 890 BC |

- A final phase of contact period occupation in the late second millennium AD: BOD (AD 1640 – 1650) to Surface (AD 1660 – 1680; AD 1760 – 1800), where BOD may represent a transitional phase between hunter-gatherer and farmer occupation. A hiatus in shelter occupation of about 400 years thus occurs between the BRA and BOD levels.

Although a change in artefact densities does occur across the pre-contact / contact divide, little major change takes place. Artefacts are concentrated in the upper contact DBG levels, as well as in the BRA levels. Very low densities of hunter-gatherer artefacts occur in the layers above BOD, as by this stage farmers were occupying the shelter.

Based on the presence / absence of ceramics, because no radiocarbon dates were available, the deposit at Balerno Shelter 2 can be divided into two phases of occupation:

- A late pre-contact phase (OB 30-35 to GB 10-15)
- A first millennium / early second millennium AD contact phase (GB 5-10 to Surface), occurring between AD 100 and AD 1300.

The major trend is for artefact densities to be low in the late pre-contact period (OB30-35 to GB10-15), and quite high in the early contact period levels (GB 5-10 to Surface), peaking in spit GB 0-5.

Several phases can be identified in hunter-gatherer occupation of the Shashe-Limpopo, based on the shelter sequences described above and on the Iron Age sequence (Tables 3.1 & 7.2). These phases include an early pre-contact period (6000 – 1220 BC), a late pre-contact period (1220 BC – AD 100), an early first millennium AD contact period (AD 100 – AD 900), a late first millennium / early second millennium AD contact period (AD 900-1300), and finally a late second millennium contact period (AD 1600 – AD 1900).

6000 to 1220 BC: Early pre-contact LSA*

Out of the five Shashe-Limpopo shelters studied so far, only Balerno Main Shelter and Tshisiku Shelter were occupied by hunter-gatherers during the early- to mid-Holocene pre-contact period. At Balerno Main Shelter, the very earliest layers of occupation, DAF and ABR, date to between about 11 120 - 10 890 BC and 6230 – 6060 BC (Table 7.1; Fig. 7.1) – a period that falls outside the scope of the current project, and thus artefacts from these two levels were not included in the analysis. This early period of use was followed by a hiatus in occupation, with hunter-gatherers only returning to the site between 340 – 100 BC (Table 7.1; Fig. 7.1). Although the exact reasons for this lengthy break in occupation are as yet unknown, the abandonment of the site might not be unique: a similar situation was noted in the Matopos, Zimbabwe, where fewer hunter-gatherer sites occur between about 6500 BC and 4000 BC (Walker 1995a & b). In contrast, many small sites became visible in the Matopos archaeological record after 4000 - 3000 BC. Later Stone Age sites are also rare in Botswana and other parts of southern Africa until the mid-Holocene, only becoming more visible after 3000 / 2000 BP (Deacon 1974; Walker 1998). Furthermore, no LSA sites dating to before 2000 BP have been found in eastern Botswana and southern Zimbabwe (Walker 1995b: 60). Walker believes that seasonal aggregation and dispersal may have been adopted after 4000 / 3000 BC, enabling a greater variety of areas to be inhabited due to an increased population and a concomitant increase in the number of sites that were occupied (Walker 1995a). If Walker is correct, it is possible that the same thing happened in the Shashe-Limpopo. Although Balerno Main Shelter may not have been used between 6000 BC and 340 – 100 BC, the region was not abandoned by hunter-gatherers: another site, Tshisiku Shelter, was occupied during this period. However, other shelters that may have been occupied at this time still need to be identified, in order to test whether this site was unique or whether it was part of a regional pattern.

Occupation at Tshisiku Shelter began at about 6000 BC, and continued throughout the early pre-contact phase (Spit 14 to Spit 5). Periods of intensified occupation and activity occurred between 4330 – 4220 BC and 1220 BC (Spits 8 / 7 to 5), when the

* The single dates (for e.g. 6000 BC or 1220 BC) used in this chapter are rounded off for simplicity, to facilitate the discussion, and should not be taken to mean an exact date or year. Please refer to Table 7.1 for the date ranges.

greatest variety of formal stone tools occurs. Scrapers are more frequent at this time (Spit 7 to Spit 5) whereas previously, backed tools were more dominant (Spit 9 - 7) (a similar situation occurred at Jubilee Shelter in the North-West Province (Wadley 1996)). This may indicate an increase in the processing of skins between Spit 7 and Spit 5. Fine-grained dolerite - thought to have abrasive properties useful for the processing of hides (Webley 1990) - also became more important in Spits 7 and 6. Borers and awls only occur in the early pre-ceramic period after 5560 – 5610 BC (Table 7.1), between Spits 10 and 5, with backed flakes occurring mostly between Spits 11 and 5. These tools may also have been used in the processing of hides and the production of bags and clothing.

Although the favoured raw material in the early pre-contact phase between Spits 14 and 8 is chert, a more equal utilisation of all raw materials occurs after 4330 – 4220 BC, in Spits 7 and 6. A correspondingly lower utilisation of the bipolar technique for stone tool production occurs at this time, which is perhaps indicative of more time being available for the procurement of larger pieces of raw material from bedded sources, or more people collecting raw material. Tools may have been produced by a less expedient form of stone tool manufacture than the bipolar technique, because conservation of raw material was not necessary.

The faunal material recovered from the early Holocene pre-contact period includes a wide range of mostly small animals (for example small bovids, tortoises, and hares) that could easily be hunted, snared or collected by small groups or individuals. However, several larger bovids were also present in the faunal assemblage, which may indicate group hunting of the kind often associated with aggregation in the ethnography. Bone waste masses are also highest between Spit 8 (4330 – 4220 BC)(Table 7.1) and Spit 6, perhaps indicating that a larger number of people were present than in previous times (Spits 14 – 9). Fish also formed part of the diet, as well as fresh water mussel: an increase in the number of fish vertebrae and a decrease in the number of small game animals in Spit 5 may reflect a different focus in subsistence strategies because of the increased number of people.

Artefact densities (including lithics, faunal material, colouring material, ostrich eggshell and *Achatina* eggshell, as well as ostrich eggshell beads) are also especially

high in Spits 7 to 5, indicating a greater amount of activity taking place, either for a longer period of time, or due to more people being present. The production of mats, and possibly baskets, is concentrated in the pre-ceramic period at Tshisiku Shelter, as worked bone (mostly matting needles) percentage frequencies are highest between Spit 11 (5660 – 5510 BC)(Table 7.1) and Spit 5. The frequency of ostrich eggshell beads in the pre-ceramic period at Tshisiku Shelter is high, but between Spit 13 and Spit 6, more incomplete beads are present in the assemblage than complete beads. During this time, there is also a higher frequency of ostrich eggshell raw material available for bead production, and a wider range of stages of bead manufacture are present, which may indicate that much larger quantities of complete beads were being manufactured. The only borers in the assemblage (Spits 10 to 5) also occur at this time. An increase in bead production may therefore have occurred, possibly for gift production for exchange, due to increased numbers of hunter-gatherers living in the shelter or immediate area. The increase in colouring material may indicate that an increase in ritual activity (such as painting) also took place.

Thus, in brief: few hunter-gatherer shelters in the Shashe-Limpopo region may have been occupied by between 6000 - 4000 BC, as is the case in the Matopos, Zimbabwe (Walker 1995a & b). However, hunter-gatherers were still present in the area: Tshisiku Shelter was occupied from 5660 – 5610 BC. Even though Tshisiku Shelter is small, it is possible that increasing number of hunter-gatherers were living at the shelter between about 4330 – 4220 BC and 1220 BC, or that hunter-gatherers were staying at the shelter for longer periods, leading to the accumulation of high densities of artefacts.

After this peak in activity, however, Tshisiku Shelter became a less attractive place for hunter-gatherers, and utilisation of the shelter began to decline steadily: either fewer hunter-gatherers visited the shelter, or the occupants began to spend less time there. Further excavations of shelters with deep sequences need to be studied in order to understand the mechanisms (perhaps environmental, perhaps social, or both) underlying this decline.

This continued occupation of Tshisiku Shelter is also interesting in that during the same period in other regions of southern Africa, for example the Waterberg, no

hunter-gatherers are present. The exact reason behind hunter-gatherer occupation of the Shashe-Limpopo region needs to be identified through studies of other shelters with a similar depth of occupation.

1220 BC to AD 100: Late pre-contact LSA

Since no farmers (or herders) had entered southern Africa by 1220 BC to AD 100, hunter-gatherers had free reign over the landscape, with no restrictions to mobility, demographics, or access to resources, except for any inter-hunter-gatherer restrictions that might have existed. As mentioned previously, Walker (1995a & b) notes an intensification in occupation of many smaller shelters in the Matopos near the end of the pre-contact period, a trend that is also visible in the Shashe-Limpopo. According to Walker, larger, well-used shelters in the Matopos may have acted as central places, with several smaller satellite sites being occupied on a permanent, temporary or seasonal basis. If a situation similar to that described by Walker for the Matopos occurs in the Shashe-Limpopo region, perhaps smaller shelters such as Balerno Shelters 2 and 3 provided a place for seasonal or temporary ‘overflow’ of hunter-gatherers from larger sites such as Balerno Main Shelter, or acted as dispersal phase sites. This would explain the largely ephemeral nature of the deposits at Balerno Shelters 2 and 3, and (initially) Little Muck Shelter. Alternatively, they may have been used for other specialised functions, although the data do not suggest this.

During this phase, occupation of Tshisiku Shelter (Spit 4: 1220 – 1010 BC) continued largely uninterrupted from the early pre-contact period (6000 – 1220 BC), although material densities are lower than in the early pre-contact period at the shelter. Balerno Main Shelter was reoccupied (between 340 – 100BC), and occupation began at Balerno Shelter 2, Balerno Shelter 3 (between 380 – 200 BC)(Table 7.1; Fig. 7.1) and Little Muck Shelter.

During the late pre-contact phase (1220 BC – AD 100), Little Muck Shelter is characterised by an ephemeral occupation with low densities of artefacts similar to that of Balerno Shelter 3 (DR 20-25 to AG 10-15) and Balerno Shelter 2 (OB 30-35 to GB 10-15). Densities of colouring material, ostrich eggshell, *Achatina* and unidentifiable bone are low at all three shelters, but somewhat higher earlier in the

same period at Tshisiku Shelter (between 1220 BC and 1010 BC). Ostrich eggshell bead numbers are also correspondingly low at these sites, while at Balerno Main Shelter, ostrich eggshell beads occur throughout the late pre-ceramic assemblage along with increasing densities of ostrich eggshell and *Achatina* fragments. Only one bone bead was recovered from this pre-contact phase, as well as a small fragment of engraved bone (from Balerno Main Shelter, level DBG 65-70).

Faunal evidence indicates that easily collected animals such as tortoise were favoured by hunter-gatherers at Balerno Main Shelter (340 - 320 BC; 210 – 100 BC) and Tshisiku Shelter (1220 – 1010 BC) during the late pre-contact phase, although their diet also included fish, suid, and some bovids of size class I, II and III. At Balerno Shelter 2, small fauna were also the most abundant. This trend may indicate that small family groups were occupying the shelters at this time.

Although formal stone tools are present in higher frequencies at the beginning of the late pre-contact phase at Tshisiku Shelter (Spit 4: 1220 – 1010 BC), they are almost non-existent later on at Balerno Shelter 2. Higher frequencies are somewhat more common at both Balerno Shelter 3 (380 – 200 BC) and Little Muck Shelter, but the highest frequencies occur earlier at Tshisiku Shelter (1220 – 1010 BC), and later at Balerno Main Shelter (380 – 100BC). However, less diversity in tool types occurs at all of the shelters than in the earlier pre-ceramic period of occupation at Tshisiku Shelter, and in the later ceramic phase at all five shelters.

Within the stone tool assemblage, there is a greater emphasis on the use of quartz, agate and fine-grained quartzite, as well as fine-grained dolerite at some sites (for example at Balerno Main Shelter in the DGB layer) than in the early pre-contact period, although the use of chert is still dominant. Bipolar core percentage frequencies at some sites are not as high as in the later contact period, and evidence for quarrying of raw material also occurs in the form of a cache of bedded chert in the Balerno Main shelter DBG level. This may indicate that expedient tool production is not a priority during this phase.

A greater variety of activities occur at the larger site of Balerno Main Shelter during the late pre-contact period than at the smaller sites such as Balerno Shelters 2 and 3,

and Little Muck Shelter, where a more restricted set of activities took place. For example, limited stone tool production, little bead making, and hide-working took place at Balerno Shelters 2 and 3, while at Balerno Main Shelter these activities as well as others (including wood-working, bone tool production, and basket and mat-making) took place on a larger scale. The variety of activities occurring at the shelter may indicate that Balerno Main Shelter acted as an aggregation site during some parts of the year, or that the shelter was occupied for longer periods. At Tshisiku Shelter (Spit 4: 1220 – 1010 BC), an increasingly reduced amount of activity took place, and lower material densities occurred during this time.

Thus, for some as yet unidentified reason, the Shashe-Limpopo region became an attractive place for hunter-gatherers between 1220 BC and AD 100. Occupation of almost all the Shashe-Limpopo hunter-gatherer sites began during the second half of the last millennium BC (from about 350 BC onwards), with the exception of Tshisiku Shelter. Tshisiku Shelter was utilised without a break in occupation, from the early pre-contact period to the late pre-contact period. While Balerno Main Shelter had previously been used by hunter-gatherer in the early pre-contact phase, it was abandoned and only re-occupied after a lengthy hiatus. Occupation during the late pre-contact period was ephemeral at all shelters, except Balerno Main Shelter, and perhaps Tshisiku Shelter, where material densities were declining from greater frequencies occurring in the previous phase.

This largely ephemeral late pre-contact phase was followed by a period of intensified hunter-gatherer occupation and activity at most of the shelters in the Shashe-Limpopo region.

AD 100 to AD 900: Early contact^{*} period

Herders and farmers entered southern Africa during the early part of the first millennium AD, bringing with them domesticated animals and pottery, while farmers also introduced domesticated crops, iron and glass beads. From about AD

^{*} The term ‘contact period’ is used here in a general sense to refer to the last two millennia - the period when herders and farmers are present in various regions in southern Africa - and not necessarily to refer to direct contact between hunter-gatherers, herders and farmers in the Shashe-Limpopo region between AD 100 and AD 900, as there is no evidence that farmers had settled in the region at this time.

350, migrating EIA farmers settled in the Soutpansberg (Huffman 2002). Although the intensity of hunter-gatherer occupation in the Soutpansberg decreased when farmers first entered the region, hunter-gatherers continued to inhabit the area, as a relatively strong continuity in hunter-gatherer residues occurred (van Doornum 1998). Hall and Smith (2000) suggest that an increase in hunter-gatherer settlement density and intensity along the Limpopo River in the first half of the first millennium AD is linked to the appearance of Happy Rest (AD 350 – 600) farmers and the decrease in hunter-gatherer occupation intensity in the well-watered Soutpansberg. In the Shashe-Limpopo, little evidence of farmer (or herder) settlements dating to the ‘Bambata / Happy Rest’ period (AD 100 and AD 600) (Table 7.2) has been found as yet. The Limpopo Valley may have been too dry for farmers in the first millennium, and hunter-gatherers may thus have begun to intensify their occupation in this less favourable region, in order to avoid farmers who were settling in other areas such as the Soutpansberg (Hall & Smith 2000).

Table 7.2. The Shashe-Limpopo Iron Age sequence (after Huffman 2000).

| Farming Group | Time Frame |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| Happy Rest | AD 350 - AD 600 |
| Zhizo | AD 900 - AD 1000 |
| Leokwe Zhizo | AD 1000 - 1200 |
| K2 | AD 1000 - 1220 |
| Mapungubwe | AD 1220 - AD 1300 |
| Great Zimbabwe | AD 1300 - AD 1450 |

The intensification of hunter-gatherer occupation in the region can be seen archaeologically in the steep increase in artefact densities at Balerno Shelter 2 (GB 5-10 and GB 0-5), Balerno Shelter 3 (GB 10-15 and GB 0-5) and Little Muck Shelter (GS / ARB). At Tshisiku Shelter, a slight increase in material densities also

occurs during this phase (roughly equivalent to Spit 3) even though the overall trend at this site is a decrease in material densities. In contrast, no major change in material densities occurs between the pre-contact and the contact period (DBG 60-65 to BRA 55-60 (AD 670 – 770) and BRA 50-55) at Balerno Main Shelter.

As in the previous period - the late pre-contact phase - hunter-gatherers focussed on small game in their hunting and snaring. Tortoise and other easily snared and trapped animals dominated the faunal assemblages at Balerno Main Shelter, Balerno Shelter 2 and Tshisiku Shelter, indicating occupation by small hunter-gatherer groups or hunting by individuals. Bovids of size class II and III are more common in this period at Balerno Main Shelter, perhaps because there was a need to feed larger numbers of people living at the site. The sudden appearance of fish may also be linked to the need to broaden the subsistence base to support a larger number of people. No domestic animal remains were found at any of the shelters studied, which means that either hunter-gatherers consumed such animals elsewhere, after receiving them through trade, or as payment from farmers, or they never acquired domestic animals in any form.

It is interesting to note that, while ostrich eggshell and *Achatina* raw material densities increase at Balerno Shelters 2 and 3 and Little Muck Shelter, (and even Tshisiku Shelter for a brief period in time) between AD 100 and AD 900, they decrease at Balerno Main Shelter, although many beads still occur. *Achatina* fragments are also more common in the Balerno Main Shelter pre-contact period than in this early contact period. The raw material may have been traded away in exchanges with either other hunter-gatherers or farmers, or it may have been converted into beads, since a high frequency of beads in progress occurs in the shelter at this time. Bead frequencies are lower at Balerno Shelter 2 and Balerno Shelter 3, with ostrich eggshell beads and beads in progress occurring mainly within the later GB levels in the Happy Rest period, where they peak. Most of the different stages of bead manufacture are present in these levels, with more beads in the process of manufacture present than complete beads, which may be indicative of a much larger quantity of complete beads.

Other artefact densities also increase in the contact period at Balerno Shelters 2 and 3, including stone tools, bone and colouring materials. An increase in the variety of formal tool types occurs at Balerno Shelter 2, Balerno Shelter 3 and Little Muck Shelter but not at Tshisiku Shelter, where tool diversity decreased. Raw material preferences changed somewhat during this period, with quartz and agate becoming less important in favour of chert, except at Tshisiku Shelter where both chert and fine-grained dolerite dominate. Scraper frequencies increased in all the assemblages while fewer segments and other backed pieces occur at Balerno Shelters 2 and 3 than at Balerno Main Shelter and Tshisiku Shelter. The presence of segments and backed bladelets in particular may imply that knives and arrows were being produced, for hunting and skinning of carcasses. Adzes, planes, and spokeshaves (evidence of wood- and bone-working) are all present at Balerno Main Shelter during the early first millennium AD, as well as a tanged point and a retouched MSA tool. Thus greater diversity in tools is an important characteristic of the early contact period (AD 100 – AD 900), in contrast to the late pre-contact phase (1220 BC – AD 100). This contact phase is the period of greatest activity at both Balerno Shelter 2 (GB 0-5) and Balerno Shelter 3 (GB 5-10: AD 400 – 530)), and of increased activity at Little Muck Shelter. Artefact densities are far higher than those in the late pre-ceramic period, although in comparison to other shelters such as Little Muck Shelter (GS / ARB), Balerno Main Shelter and Tshisiku Shelter, Balerno Shelter 2 and Balerno Shelter 3 material densities are quite low.

One of the possible explanations for the increase in artefact densities at smaller sites such as Balerno Shelter 2 and Balerno Shelter 3 in the Bambata (AD 100 – 350) and Happy Rest period (AD 350 – 600)(Table 7.2), is that, with the intensification of occupation by hunter-gatherers moving away from farmers in other areas, all available shelters were occupied or utilised. Smaller shelters may have continued to act as dispersal sites or as ‘overflow’ areas for larger shelters and aggregation sites such as Balerno Main Shelter, as they had in the previous late pre-contact phase (1220 BC – AD 100). Although Tshisiku Shelter had already begun to be used less frequently by hunter-gatherers before the contact period began, a minor increase in artefact densities did occur at the beginning of the contact phase (Spit 3). However, after this time (Spit 2 - Surface), Tshisiku Shelter continues to be less and less favoured by hunter-gatherers. In contrast, Balerno Main Shelter, possibly a site of

some importance because of its size and art, and its use as an aggregation site, shows hardly any change during the early ceramic phase (AD 100 – 900).

It is, however, evident that some form of interaction between hunter-gatherers in the Shashe-Limpopo region and farmers (and perhaps herders) did occur, even if farmers and herders were not living in the area: small quantities of Iron Age pottery, metal fragments and glass beads occur at all of the sites excavated so far. Possible contact with herders is indicated by the presence of fragments of Bambata ceramics in various shelters, acquired either through direct or indirect exchange. Polly Weissner has argued that such pottery fragments can be accounted for by *hxaro* (Weissner 1990), although some hunter-gatherers did obtain whole pots from farmers, as evidenced by the K2 / Mapungubwe beaker found at Tshisiku Shelter. It has been argued that Bambata pottery in hunter-gatherer sites in the Waterberg is evidence of exchange / intermittent contact with Bambata settlements, or of a relatively widespread third century hunter-gatherer network (van der Ryst 1998). At Jubilee Shelter, Wadley (1996) found that Bambata ceramics pre-dated Iron Age farmers in the region, which, she also argues, indicates the presence of a hunter-gatherer exchange network.

Further evidence of interaction with (or at least the presence of) herders is found in rock art of the Shashe-Limpopo region (Blundell & Eastwood 2001; Eastwood *et al.* 1999; Eastwood & Fish 1996a & b; Eastwood & Cnoops 1998; Eastwood 1999, 2003; Eastwood & Blundell 1999; Eastwood and Cnoops 1999a & b), where several paintings of sheep have been found (Eastwood & Fish 1996a). However, few other 'contact' scenes have been described for the region, unlike other areas such as the Cape and the KwaZulu-Natal Drakensberg (Campbell 1986, 1987; Manhire *et al.* 1986; Hall, S. 1994; Loubser & Laurens 1994). However, there are no dates for the rock art.

Evidence of exchange with farmers (either direct or indirect) has also been found in the Shashe-Limpopo region. According to Walker (1995b; 1996; 1998), an increase in the trade of skins with farmers and the adoption of metal is suggested by an increase in scrapers and a decrease in backed points (arrow points) in the Matopos and Botswana. A similar situation occurs in the Waterberg (van der Ryst 1998) in

the twelfth century, in the first stages of interaction (see Alexander 1984; Moore 1985), as well as in the Soutpansberg and elsewhere in southern Africa (for example, Mauermanshoek (Wadley 1991)). An increase in scraper frequency and a concomitant decrease in backed pieces also occurred at this time in the Shashe-Limpopo region and continued into the later contact period. Increasing densities of other artefacts such as completed beads, beads in various stages of manufacture, colouring material, and bone tools, may indicate increasing ritual activity, bead-making, hide-, bone- and wood- working in response to the presence of farmers in adjacent areas. On the other hand, these increases may simply reflect the increase in the number of hunter-gatherers in the region, continuing with their day-to-day existence. If beads and hides were produced for trade, it is possible that farmers entered the region seasonally, allowing for exchange to take place (Hall & Smith 2000). Alternatively, hunter-gatherers may have travelled to trade with farmers outside the Shashe-Limpopo region. In the case of the Waterberg, hunter-gatherers actually followed farmers onto the plateau to trade with them in initially friendly relationships (van der Ryst 1998).

Thus, in brief: hunter-gatherers were already present in the Shashe-Limpopo region before the appearance of EIA farmers in southern Africa. However, an increase in hunter-gatherer settlement density and intensity of occupation occurred between AD 350 and AD 900, during this early 'contact' period. This increase is probably linked to hunter-gatherers avoiding farmers settling in other more agriculturally favourable areas, for example, the Soutpansberg. Some contact between hunter-gatherers and farmers, and perhaps between hunter-gatherers and herders, did occur, but at a very low level, possibly through seasonal trade. Hunter-gatherers may have travelled to other regions to trade, or may have perhaps traded with EIA farmers passing through the region.

AD 900 to AD 1300: The Zhizo – Mapungubwe periods

By AD 900, many farmers had begun to settle in the Shashe-Limpopo region, and hunter-gatherers would have been faced with several choices, including moving away, fighting or interacting co-operatively with these farmers (Alexander 1984; Moore 1985). If hunter-gatherers had already been trading seasonally, on a more or

less equal footing with farmers - and perhaps herders - in the previous early contact phase (AD 100 – 900), the incursion of farmers into the region may have been either well-received, or, alternatively, have elicited little response from them. Those hunter-gatherers who did not wish to interact with the farmers, or share space with them, would have returned to the Shashe-Limpopo region less frequently, or left the area entirely, provided that there was somewhere for them to retreat to. For those hunter-gatherers who chose to remain, interaction may have taken place in several ways, depending on several factors. These factors would have included how hunter-gatherers perceived farmers and their 'places', and *vice versa*; the proximity between hunter-gatherer and farmer settlements; the seasonality or mobility of hunter-gatherers; the social make-up of the farmer groups involved; the goods and services each group had to trade; the need for such goods and services; and the perceived and real benefits that such interaction might bring. Thus perceptions of space, place and identity would have played a large part in hunter-gatherer / farmer interaction. For instance, it is interesting to note that some farmer settlements, for example Leokwe Hill (Calabrese 2000; Vogel & Calabrese 2000) and Pont Drift (Hanisch 1980), are situated in close proximity to hunter-gatherer shelters (Little Muck Shelter and Tshisiku Shelter, respectively), which appear to have been occupied contemporaneously.

Although farmers would have chosen good agricultural land to settle on, and may not have been concerned that hunter-gatherers were living nearby, it is possible that their close proximity to contemporary hunter-gatherer sites was of importance to them. Hunter-gatherers had something farmers valued: the status of 'first people', with power over nature and the supernatural in terms of rainmaking or ritual specialisation (for instance, local knowledge of plants and herbal remedies). Hunter-gatherers then faced the choice of whether or not to remain in close proximity to farmers. Alternatively, farmers may have thought so little of hunter-gatherers that settling near them, in 'their' space was not an issue for them. These possibilities have interesting implications in terms of farmer perceptions of hunter-gatherers, and for interaction relationships in the Shashe-Limpopo, especially when different groups of farmers are participating in interaction relationships with hunter-gatherers.

Hunter-gatherers and farmers in different places and contexts interact in varied ways, with differences in farmer social makeup also influencing the kinds of interaction taking place. This appears to be the case in the late first millennium / early second millennium AD contact period in the Shashe-Limpopo region, where, from about AD 900, the hunter-gatherer sequence can be divided into two periods related to the farmer sequence: Zhizo and Leopard's Kopje (which consists of the K2 and Mapungubwe periods). The Zhizo period (AD 900 – AD 1000 / 1200) and the K2 / Mapungubwe period (AD 1000 – 1300) (Table 7.2) are most likely represented at Tshisiku Shelter by stratigraphic levels Spit 3 / 2 to Spit 1 / Surface; at Balerno Main Shelter by BRA 45-50 (AD 910 – 920; AD 950 – 1020) to BRA; and at Balerno Shelter 2 by the Surface layer. During this phase (AD 900 – 1300), the Shashe-Limpopo landscape became increasingly competed over, as farmers competed with each other as well as with hunter-gatherers, for resources and space. This competition would have had a large impact on hunter-gatherers in the region, with varying consequences.

AD 900 to AD 1000 / 1200: The Zhizo period

From AD 900, Zhizo farmers began to settle in the region in increasing numbers (Huffman 2000: 23; Fig. 3.2), decreasing the space available for hunter-gatherers. It is possible that the incoming Zhizo farmers may have entered the area initially to hunt for elephants before deciding to settle in the region (Huffman 2000). These Zhizo farmers may have employed hunter-gatherers already familiar with trading through previous exchange networks with herders and Happy Rest farmers, to assist them in obtaining ivory for trade. The benefits hunter-gatherers received from this trade may have included access to domestic livestock, grain, metal, glass beads and ceramics. However, the limited evidence of farmer-derived artefacts at the hunter-gatherer sites studied (with the exception of Little Muck Shelter) does not seem to reflect very close contact. Perhaps this initial kind of interaction relationship was limited to only a few groups or individuals, or to certain places on the landscape.

At this time, hunter-gatherers may have had unrestricted access to farmer sites, with hunter-gatherers being on an almost equal footing with farmers. Later, more control and restrictions may have been placed on them as they became 'different and

inferior' instead of 'different but equal', in the eyes of the more hierarchically divided farmers (Hall & Smith 2000; van Doornum 2000). In Eastern Botswana, which is similar to the Shashe-Limpopo region in its lack of ecological diversity, a high density of farmers and lack of available or free space for hunter-gatherers to move around without restriction, led to the subjugation and incorporation of hunter-gatherers into farmer society (Denbow 1990). The issue of proximity also seems to be of some importance at this time in the Shashe-Limpopo, when increasing numbers of farmers were settling in the region. Evidence from hunter-gatherer sites located at various distances from farmer sites indicates different reactions to interaction.

At Little Muck Shelter, material densities that were already high during the Bambata / Happy Rest period (AD 100 – 600), increased even further during the Zhizo / Leokwe Zhizo period (AD 900 – 1200) (Table 7.2), when Zhizo farmers settled at nearby Leokwe Hill (Calabrese 2000; Vogel & Calabrese 2000). It seems as though these hunter-gatherers chose to enter into close relationships with the farmers, rather than move away, and the shelter appears to have become more of a workshop than a camp, with greatly increased material densities (including bone, colouring material, ostrich eggshell raw material and especially scrapers) occurring at this time (Hall & Smith 2000).

In contrast to Little Muck Shelter (even though both shelters are situated close to farmer settlements, in a similar environment), artefact frequencies at Tshisiku Shelter decreased even more from the low densities present in the early contact phase (AD 100 – 900). Hunter-gatherers continued to use the shelter despite the fact that farmers had settled in close proximity to the site during both the Zhizo and the later K2 period. However, it does appear as though hunter-gatherers began to frequent the site less often, as their normal mobility and activities were increasingly disturbed and restricted by the farmer presence on the landscape. Alternatively, they spent more time at, or near, farmer sites.

Decreased frequencies of all artefact categories (including bone, stone, shell and colouring material) occur at Balerno Shelter 2 and Balerno Shelter 3 (located in the 'farmer-free buffer zone'), between AD 100 to AD 670 – 770 and AD 910 -1020 (Table 7.2). Hunter-gatherers thus spent less time at these small shelters or stayed

for far shorter periods. There is not a substantial amount of evidence for an increase in the production of beads or scrapers for hide-working at the two sites, unlike at Little Muck Shelter (which became a 'workshop' at this time), and to some extent, Balerno Main Shelter. The possibility thus exists that hunter-gatherers supplied skills such as rain-making and herding cattle instead, on a seasonal basis (see Chapter 2), returning to the shelters when their services were not needed by the farmers. It is also possible that hunter-gatherers went to shelters such as Little Muck Shelter - in close proximity to farmers - in order to interact with farmers, perhaps on a seasonal basis (Hall & Smith 2000; van Doornum 2000).

This pattern may thus indicate when not aggregating at larger shelters such as Balerno Main Shelter, hunter-gatherers may have interacted more closely with farmers, either in or near, their settlements during dispersal phases. The question does arise as to what hunter-gatherers received in return for their services: no domestic animal remains were found, and very few glass beads, metal and pottery fragments were present in the assemblages. Perhaps this evidence only occurs at sites such as Little Muck Shelter, situated in closer proximity to Iron Age settlements, unless hunter-gatherers were 'paid' in milk and grain, which left no trace in the archaeological record at these sites.

Working in farmer villages may have been an option for hunter-gatherers (for example Hall 2000) who may have brought tools with them into farmer sites, and taken them away again, after they had completed their work. Little published evidence is as yet available to corroborate the possible presence of hunter-gatherers on farmer sites in the Shashe-Limpopo (but see Mason 1981; Maggs 1980, 2004; Hall 2000 for evidence in other regions). Such research has not been the focus of most Shashe-Limpopo Iron Age studies in the past, although one unpublished example has been noted at a Zhizo site, Baobab, on the farm of Emondsberg. Stone tools (bladelet cores and debitage) were found here in good association with Iron Age midden material (Calabrese 2005; J. Calabrese *pers. comm.* 2005). Calabrese notes, however, that these tools should be viewed with caution, as little metal has been recovered from any but the most elite Shashe-Limpopo Zhizo sites, and thus stone and bone tools may have been produced and used by Zhizo commoners themselves and not by hunter-gatherers. Excavations aimed at identifying and

describing a hunter-gatherer presence in farmer sites (or lack thereof) are sorely needed. Further research into the identity of the tool-makers and users is also necessary.

Alternatively, if hunter-gatherers were not working at or near farmer villages, they may have avoided farmers and instead focussed on bigger shelters located further away from farmer settlements, such as Balerno Main Shelter, which shows a slight increase in material densities (including colouring material and stone tools) at this time. Higher frequencies of ostrich eggshell beads occur, along with many incomplete beads (although more complete beads occur than beads in process). Lower frequencies of ostrich eggshell raw material occur during the contact period. Goods may have been produced in greater quantities at Balerno Main Shelter during the Zhizo period (AD 900 – AD 1000) as densities do increase slightly at this time. This may be due to surplus goods being made for trade with farmers (although actual trade may have occurred at sites such as Little Muck Shelter during dispersal phases) or due to increased numbers of hunter-gatherers avoiding farmers occupying the site. In his studies of !Kung intra-camp patterning, Yellen (1977) found that the longer a camp was occupied, the greater the number of activities that occurred. This was reflected in an increase in the variety of tools found at a site. If Balerno Main Shelter did not act as an aggregation site, the wide variety of formal stone tools and high densities of material at the shelter may therefore simply reflect longer occupation of the site by a smaller group of hunter-gatherers.

Raw material, rather than finished beads may have become increasingly more important for trade during the contact period (Hall & Smith 2000). The shell bead evidence from Schroda, the Zhizo capital, includes a large cache of ostrich eggshell bead rough-outs, as well as 810 ostrich eggshell beads and 4733 *Achatina* beads (Hanisch 1980; Hall & Smith 2000). From the number of rough-outs and bead-making debris, as well as the lack of a hunter-gatherer signature, the conclusion can be drawn that ostrich eggshell bead manufacture took place within Schroda, and was performed by farmers themselves. Those ostrich eggshell beads that are present at both the Pont Drift sites and Schroda tend to be between 2-12 mm in diameter, with the emphasis falling on the larger sizes (Hanisch 1980), unlike most hunter-gatherer beads, which tend to be smaller in size. It is however possible that hunter-gatherers

made beads for farmers using farmer tools, or their own tools that they took with them when they left the village, or that hunter-gatherer women married to farmers produced the beads. Hunter-gatherers are known ethnographically to have produced large as well as small beads, with larger beads being used for trade with farmers (Weissner in Jacobsen 1987). Unpublished evidence of LSA stone tools within some Zhizo (and K2) settlements in the Shashe-Limpopo (J. Calabrese *pers. comm.* 2005; M. Schoeman *pers. comm.* 2005) may point to hunter-gatherers actually working in villages at this time. Thus farmers may not have exclusively produced all the ostrich eggshell beads present on an Iron Age site. Further studies therefore need to be done to establish the exact identities of the bead makers.

Achatina beads were more prominent at the Pont Drift Iron Age sites near Tshisiku Shelter than ostrich eggshell beads (Hanisch 1980). During Zhizo times (AD 900 – 1000), favourable ostrich habitats may have been displaced westwards and the scarcity of eggs may have conferred higher values to ostrich eggshell and ostrich eggshell beads (Hall & Smith 2000). Hall and Smith suggest that bead production may have been centred and controlled by the Zhizo elites, and that hunter-gatherers gradually became excluded from trade in beads and raw material. Furthermore, with local and coastal trade links increasing from the tenth century AD, intensified craft production was required, and through the centralisation and control of this production, an elite class, with increased political power, began to emerge. The part played by hunter-gatherers in this production was further marginalised as their engagement became more unequal and redefined (Hall & Smith 2000). Hall and Smith suggest further that this process of exclusion intensified after AD 1050 in the K2 period, and that hunter-gatherers were no longer included in barter and craft exchange.

Thus, to summarise: a range of responses to the presence of farmers on the landscape occurred between AD 900 and AD 1000 / 1200, in the Shashe-Limpopo Zhizo / Leokwe Zhizo period. At Tshisiku Shelter (located in close proximity to the Pont Drift farming settlements), although hunter-gatherers continued to use the site, occupation and activity decreased, while at Little Muck Shelter (close to the Leokwe Hill farming settlement) activity intensified. A different range of reactions occurred at the three Balerno sites lying at some distance from farming settlements in a

‘farmer-free buffer zone’. Artefact frequencies at Balerno Shelter 2 and Balerno Shelter 3 decreased, and hunter-gatherers may have been focussing on the larger Balerno Main Shelter and aggregating there. Alternatively, hunter-gatherers may have frequented the smaller shelters less often because they were spending more time in another area, in other shelters closer to farmer settlements, or within the farming settlements themselves. Few major changes in artefact frequencies seem to have occurred at Balerno Main Shelter - hunter-gatherers appear to have continued their activities and occupation, mostly unchanged by the presence of farmers on the landscape.

AD 1000 to AD 1300: The K2 / Mapungubwe period

From AD 1000, Zhizo farmers were largely displaced by K2 (AD 1000 - 1220) and Mapungubwe (AD 1220 – AD 1300) (Table 7.2) farmers in the early second millennium AD. These farmers differed from earlier Zhizo farmers in both their social and their political structure (Chapter 3). These differences would have had an impact on how they perceived hunter-gatherers, which in turn would have impacted on how the different farmer groups would have interacted with hunter-gatherers (and *vice versa*), and at what level in the farmers’ class structure this interaction would have taken place. New social structures underlying interaction, in contrast to those acting in the Zhizo period, would have developed (see Hall & Smith 2000). A further dimension may have been added to hunter-gatherer / farmer relationships during the K2 / Mapungubwe period as some Zhizo people still remained in the region, for example at Leokwe Hill (Calabrese 2000, 2005; Vogel & Calabrese 2000). Calabrese suggests that, if the occupations were contemporaneous, the K2 elite occupied the hilltop (high status area) while the Zhizo commoners occupied the lower status area below. The fact that both Zhizo and K2 farmers occupied Leokwe Hill has implications for the hunter-gatherers living at Little Muck Shelter, who may have been interacting closely with farmers at Leokwe Hill. The question then arises: which farmers were the hunter-gatherers interacting with? The Zhizo commoners or the K2 elite? What form did the interaction take?

In their model of interaction, Hall and Smith (2000) argue that hunter-gatherers became increasingly out-competed by commoner farmers at the lower levels of the

farmer society, who took over tasks that hunter-gatherers had previously performed (such as rainmaking, bead-making, hide processing and hunting). These changes are visible in the archaeological record: the frequencies of hunter-gatherer artefacts decreased at all hunter-gatherer sites excavated so far in the Shashe-Limpopo, with the exception of Balerno Main Shelter, where the hunter-gatherer signature remained similar to that of the pre-ceramic period and the late first millennium AD. This pattern could also indicate that hunter-gatherers were spending more time working at or near farmer villages and less time in smaller, dispersal phase shelters during certain parts of the year, while continuing to aggregate at larger shelters such as Balerno Main Shelter during other times of the year.

As was the case in the Zhizo period (AD 900 – 1000), high frequencies as well as a large variety of formal stone tools occur during the K2 / Mapungubwe period (AD 1000 – 1300) at Balerno Main Shelter, suggesting continuity in a wide range of activities, such as hide-scraping, woodworking, mat-making, ostrich eggshell bead production and the production of clothes and bags. Higher frequencies of segments and backed pieces, similar to those occurring in the Zhizo period, may indicate a greater need for knives or arrows at Balerno Main Shelter than at Balerno Shelter 2 and Balerno Shelter 3, where few backed tools occur. Continuity in Balerno Main Shelter occupation, from the pre-contact period to the K2 / Mapungubwe period, is probably due to the fact that these hunter-gatherers were sheltered from the changes that farmers brought with them, because of the ‘farmer-free buffer zone’ that surrounded them and possibly because the shelter was important as an aggregation site. It is therefore evident that perhaps not all hunter-gatherers were outcompeted and marginalised in the region during this period.

Overall, however, the hunter-gatherer signature disappeared completely by the end of the Mapungubwe period at Balerno Main Shelter, and Late Iron Age farmers occupied the shelter after a hiatus of about 400 years. At Balerno Shelter 2 and Balerno Shelter 3, material densities decreased substantially throughout Zhizo and the K2 / Mapungubwe period, even though they were situated in the same buffer zone as Balerno Main Shelter. This suggests that hunter-gatherers occupied the sites less frequently or for shorter periods as the K2 / Mapungubwe period progressed. By AD 1300, no hunter-gatherers were utilising either site.

At Little Muck Shelter, hunter-gatherer material was replaced by farmer material during the K2 / Mapungubwe period (Hall & Smith 2000). It could be argued that the hunter-gatherers at Little Muck Shelter continued to live there, but were incorporated into the farmer society, in a situation similar to that proposed by Sadr (2005) for Ostrich Shelter, Thamaga (see Chapter 3). However, S. Hall (*pers. comm.* 2005) argues that this is unlikely based on the large number of gaming boards and farmer artefacts present at the site (Hall & Smith 2000). Hall and Smith argue that the increase in farmer material at the shelter indicates that once the hunter-gatherers left or were forced to leave the area, farmers appropriated the shelter as a place of power. If farmers took over Little Muck Shelter, they were perhaps making a statement about their own power and status, and ownership of the landscape - taking control of a place imbued with power due to its association with the 'first people' or hunter-gatherers. According to Schoeman (*in prep.*), landscape plays an important role in the identity construction of the Mapungubwe people, and, by controlling the landscape, the Mapungubwe leaders were able to control symbolic resources as well as rainmaking. By acknowledging that hunter-gatherer places had power, farmers were tacitly agreeing that hunter-gatherers themselves had some sort of power or ownership of the landscape (see Cashdan 1986 a & b; Chapter 3). Thus, by using a power-filled hunter-gatherer place, farmers could tap into the power of the 'first people'.

There are several ways to interpret the decrease in (and final disappearance of) hunter-gatherer material at the end of the K2 / Mapungubwe period described above. It is possible that the arrival of even greater numbers of farmers in the region (who became more politically and socially stratified and complex through time than the Zhizo farmers), restricted hunter-gatherer access to resources and space on the landscape to such an extent that they moved out of the area. In other words, hunter-gatherers may have left the region permanently because they felt too constrained and inferior in the eyes of these farmers, and were perhaps unfairly treated because of this perception. In the Waterberg, an increase in hunter-gatherer sites occurred from about the twelfth century onwards (van der Ryst 1998); this increase may be linked to the departure from the Shashe-Limpopo region by some hunter-gatherers, who instead chose to follow other farmer groups to the Waterberg Plateau, to interact with them.

Alternatively, some hunter-gatherers may have become part of the Shashe-Limpopo farmer societies, either through coercion or by building on previous close relationships with farmers, slowly becoming incorporated into their settlements, and finally leaving with the farmers groups when the area was abandoned around AD 1300.

There is evidence that hunter-gatherers may have acted as rainmakers for farmers during the K2 period (AD 1000 – AD 1220) (M. Schoeman *pers. comm.* 2004), and thus hunter-gatherer sites in close proximity to rainmaking sites need to be investigated in order to determine if this did indeed occur. Other studies need to be done in order to determine whether Shashe-Limpopo hunter-gatherers acting as rainmakers or healers gained prestige through their interaction with farmers, and what effects this may have had on the rest of the hunter-gatherer groups / social make-up (see for example Dowson 1994). The disappearance of the hunter-gatherer material signature from the archaeological record may have been linked to the social breakdown of hunter-gatherer groups and the incorporation of individuals into farmer society, where their individual material signature may have been lost, although not necessarily their social identity.

As yet, no direct evidence of hunter-gatherers working or settling in Shashe-Limpopo farmer sites has been discussed in the literature. Although hunter-gatherer material culture may have come to resemble that of the farmers with whom they were living, this does not necessarily mean that any / all of the hunter-gatherers gave up their identity and traditional beliefs completely, even if they were ‘subjugated’ and ‘encapsulated’ (as discussed in Chapter 2 - see for example Prins 1994; Chapter 2). Some individuals may have been able to negotiate the differences in culture and use these differences, as well as the farmers’ perceptions that as ‘first people’ they had access to power, to their own advantage, manipulating their own identity within farmer society. Even if hunter-gatherers were completely subjugated they may still have retained parts of their hunter-gatherer identity (Guenther 1986b; Chapter 2). Studies on farmer sites need to be done in order to identify a hunter-gatherer presence in farmer sites, and to investigate whether the continued presence of a hunter-gatherer identity is a possibility.

In brief: during the K2 / Mapungubwe period (AD 1000 – AD 1300) hunter-gatherers in the Shashe-Limpopo region reacted to the new farmer presence in a variety of ways. Some hunter-gatherers no doubt abandoned the area while others chose not to, for example the hunter-gatherers occupying Balerno Main Shelter, who seemed to take little notice of the new arrivals (largely because of their distance from farmer settlements). Other hunter-gatherers abandoned smaller, dispersal phase shelters (Balerno Shelters 2 & 3) to aggregate more frequently at larger shelters (Balerno Main Shelter). Alternatively, these hunter-gatherers spent more time at, or near, farmer villages, or left the region entirely. Some sites, such as Little Muck Shelter, may have been taken over by K2 / Mapungubwe farmers because of the power that they had through association with the 'first people', thereby displacing the original hunter-gatherer inhabitants. Alternatively, these hunter-gatherers interacted so closely with farmers that they became 'acculturated', and continued to use the shelter, their hunter-gatherer material being replaced by that of farmers.

However, those hunter-gatherers that chose to remain and to continue to interact closely with farmers did not necessarily lose their hunter-gatherer identity, despite changes to their material signature. Instead, they may have used their power as 'first people', healers and rainmakers, to negotiate the differences between farmer and hunter-gatherer culture, thereby successfully retaining their identity, although this may not be expressed in an identifiable way in the archaeological record.

Finally, both hunter-gatherers and farmers abandoned the area entirely by the end of the thirteenth century.

AD 1600 to AD 1900: The recent past

Several of the shelters in the Shashe-Limpopo region appear to have been utilised by black farmers, after they had been abandoned by hunter-gatherers in the thirteenth century. For instance, during the nineteenth century, Venda farmers built three grainbins in Tshisiku Shelter, in order to secure grain against raiders. The lack of buried clay pots, pottery fragments and cairns makes it unlikely that these grainbins

were anything other than utilitarian (unlike ritual / rainmaking grainbins described by Aukema 1989).

At Balerno Shelter 2, several possible gaming boards and two grinding grooves indicate that, although no farmer occupation as such occurred at the site, farmers may have used it for another purpose: for example, it may have been used as a camp by farmer herdboys. No such use appears to have taken place at Balerno Shelter 3.

At Little Muck Shelter, a large number of gaming boards had been pecked into the rock surface in front of the shelter, and may either have been associated with a possible farmer occupation during the K2 / Mapungubwe period (Hall & Smith 2000), or perhaps LIA farmers. The association of men with gaming boards may add an important dimension to the appropriation of this space and place by farmers.

Farmers also occupied Balerno Main Shelter during the 1600 to 1700s (Table 7.1). Unlike the appropriation of Little Muck Shelter due to its power as a place inhabited by the 'first people' in the K2 / Mapungubwe period, it is likely that the Late Iron Age use of the shelter was associated with ancestral power. According to S. Hall (*pers. comm.* 2005), the circular features (Fig. 4.11) (see Kruger 2000 for a detailed description) at Balerno Main Shelter are thought to be associated with ancestral ritual rather than with the power of the 'first people'. Hall believes that this dissociation from the power of the 'first people' is due to the long break in the occupation of the shelter, and the absence of hunter-gatherers on the landscape at that time. It is, however, possible that even though LIA farmers using the shelter during this period were ignorant of a hunter-gatherer occupation or use of the shelter (and thus did not associate the art in the shelter with hunter-gatherers) they considered the site to be a source of power. Loubser and Dowson (1987) found that Venda-speakers in the Soutpansberg recognised certain places with hunter-gatherer art as places of power, without understanding their meaning or their origin. Nonetheless, the situation at Balerno Main Shelter differs from that at Saltpan Shelter (and Little Muck Shelter), where the appropriation of the power of the hunter-gatherers is of great importance (Hall & Smith 2000).

Thus, based on radiocarbon dates from several of the sites, as well as the association of the various shelter sequences with the Iron Age sequence of the region, the hunter-gatherer sequence proposed for the Shashe - Limpopo region includes:

- an early pre-contact phase (11 120 – 10 890 BC; 6000 – 1220 BC)
- a late pre-contact phase (1220 BC – AD 100)
- an early first millennium contact phase (AD 100 – AD 900)
- a late first millennium / early second millennium contact phase divided into two periods:
 - the Zhizo period (AD 900 – AD 1000 / 1200)
 - the K2 / Mapungubwe period (AD 1000 – AD 1300)

Finally, a late second millennium phase of LIA farmer utilisation of selected hunter-gatherer sites occurred during the recent past (AD 1600 – AD 1900).