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Sacred powers and rituals of transformation: An ethnoarchaeological study of rainmaking rutuals and agricultural productivity during The evolution of The Mapungubwe State,AD 1000 to AD 1300

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ABSTRACT FOR PH.D. THESIS BY MCEDWARD MURIMBIKA, 2006

THESIS TITLE: Sacred Powers and Rituals of Transformation: An Ethnoarchaeological Study of Rainmaking Rituals and Agricultural Productivity during the Evolution of the Mapungubwe State, AD 1000 to AD 1300

The study of sacred leadership at Mapungubwe involves an analysis of how the emerging elite centralised rainmaking and other public rituals. These developments occurred in the Shashe-Limpopo basin between AD 1000 and AD 1300. Mapungubwe was the last in a sequence of capitals in the basin. The first was Schroda (AD 900-1000), followed by K2 (AD 1000-1220) and then Mapungubwe (AD 1220-1300). This sequence corresponds to a series of cultural, socio-political and economic transformations that led to class distinction and sacred leadership, two distinctive features of the region's early state system.

The development of Mapungubwe was a local indigenous accomplishment that occurred in the prehistoric period but in the relatively recent past. This offers possibilities for using current indigenous knowledge to develop relevant ethnographic models. Over a period of four years, I explored Venda, Sotho-Tswana and Shona traditional agriculture strategies and belief systems through their oral histories, cosmologies and practices. I identified three systems of rainmaking practices. Practice A is associated with kin-based chiefdoms. Practise B exists among class-based polities with sacred leadership. Practice C represents the devolution of complexity after the disintegration of the Zimbabwe culture. These data provide models to clarify the roles of rainmaking and agriculture in the evolution of Mapungubwe.