CLOUDING POWER?
Rain-control, Space, Landscapes and Ideology in Shashe-Limpopo State Formation

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy.

Johannesburg, 2006
ABSTRACT
In this thesis I identify and clarify the archaeological signature of rain-control sites in the Shashe-Limpopo Confluence Area (SLCA). I use a landscape-based approach to investigate rain-control in the ideology of SLCA farming communities. I investigate the archaeology of ritual by viewing rain-control as materialised ideology. Using this insight, I examine the material culture and spatial manifestation of rain-control, the transition from ritual to residential sites, and how these transitions articulated with the ritualised landscape.

Specifically, I explore the local manifestation of rain-control and its relationship with the ideologies of farming communities in the period leading up to SLCA state formation, between AD 1000 and AD 1250. I also scrutinize the relationship of the Leopard’s Kopje elite with hunter-gatherers and other farming people on the same landscape, as this relationship was partly grounded in ritual and rain-control.

Furthermore, this thesis explores the ideological roots of the Mapungubwe state. The ideology manifest in the location of the Mapungubwe royal residential area germinated during the K2 occupation. In this period rain-control was slowly removed from nature and located in farmer society. The final step in this course was nationalising rain-control and locating it on Mapungubwe hill. Initially, however, rain-controllers resisted this centralisation.
DECLARATION
I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of PhD in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.

Maria Hendrieka Schoeman
day of 2006
To my family
Met dof-sware plof, soos koeels in die stof,
kom die eerste dripples neer,
tot dit ruis alom soos deur die gebrom
en gekraak van die donderweer.
Met kloue vooruit om te gryp en te buit
jaag 'n haelwolk langs verby,
soos 'n perde-kommande wat dreun oor die lande
vertrap en gesel hy-
en sy lyke-kleed sien ek ver en breed
in die awendson gesprei.

With muted-heavy thuds, like bullets in the dust,
the first drops fall,
until it murmurs all around like the drone
and crackle of thunder.
With outstretched claws to grab and loot
a hail-cloud rushes by,
akin to a horse-commando that thunders over the fields
he tramples and scourges
and I see his death-shroud far and wide
spread in the evening sun.

(Celliers 1974:2)
Acknowledgements

I have accumulated many debts in the course of this research. Most can never be repaid.

The SLCA is a harsh and hot place, and fieldwork there is physically challenging. Going home to the comfort of Machete made fieldwork less trying. The MacWhirters allowed me to stay on Machete long before they met me. Their friendship and kindness, after we met, means that Machete will always be my second home. The Machete staff made my two year stay as comfortable as possible. Red, Spot and Batty kept me company, and made sure that things never were boring. A special thank you to Tats who spend many hours patiently listening to my thoughts on rain-control, and the hilltop excavations. My mental survival in the SLCA was facilitated by the helpfulness and hospitality of my neighbours, Oom Frans and Tant Saartjie Venter. Oom Frans was always willing to help and share his knowledge of the valley and local rainfall patterns.

Many people in the area helped me. Gustav Kruger, representing DeBeers, facilitated my access to Little Muck and Armenia farms. SANParks, represented by Bernard and Elanza von Lente, allowed me to freely visit sites located on SANParks properties, even after my excavations had been completed; Pitse Ramotsi and Rhudzani Munyai helped me excavate. Rhudzani also helped me sort, without his help I would still be in the field; many other people helped me in the field. Duncan MacWhirter deserves a special mention. He left his sterile veterinary life for a day to help backfill EH hill. Unfortunately being coated in dust from head to toe cured him from any desire to partake in future archaeological research.

I also have enormous debts to people outside the SLCA. De Beers funded my research. This thesis would not have been possible if Tom Huffman did not find the funding. He also read and commented on numerous drafts of this thesis. McEdward Murimbika was always willing to talk. Chrissie Sievers was passionate, fast and efficient in her analyses of the botanical remains. Marilee Wood analysed the beads and valiantly tried to make sense of the M3S disturbed sequence. Wendy Voorvelt did the ceramic illustrations in record time and drew
the SLCA site distribution maps. George Susino identified the miscellaneous rock types. Bronwen van Doornum assisted me with the initial stone tool identification.

I also have purely intellectual debts. When I started this research I expected to find 'normal' farmer rain-control sites. The amount of hunter-gatherer material came as a jolt. This shock was channelled constructively through discussions with colleagues who were willing to explore the implications. Foremost was David Pearce. David and other people at RARI, especially Ben Smith, Lara Mallen and Catherine Namono, were willing to discuss hunter-gatherer rain-control and ethnography, even 'after hours'. Simon Hall, who has explored hunter-gatherer/farmer interaction for many years, acted as a sounding board in Botswana. Natalie Swanepoel and Sakkie Niehaus suggested readings that helped me clarify key concepts. Phil Bonner, whose intellectual generosity and willingness to explore new ideas I admire, advised me to confront the discordant. John Calabrese and Jeanette Smith confronted the discordant before me and were always willing to share their knowledge.

John Calabrese, David Pearce, Innocent Pikarayi, Karim Sadr, Jeanette Smith, Bronwen van Doornum, Lynn Wadley and Gavin Whitelaw read and commented on chapters in this thesis, or earlier papers related to it.

My greatest debt is to my family, especially my partner Jae Lee.
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