



Prehistory Society

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Editorial

I would like to start by apologising for the late appearance of the first newsletter of 2010. In part this has been due to a **dearth of submissions** but has also been occasioned by circumstances beyond my control. I hope to have things back on course for the remainder of the year as my personal and work life settles down to a more placid level.

You may notice the **new look** to this newsletter which is entirely due to Lee Nesbitt who took time from her busy schedule to design the attractive new logo at the top of the page and create a handy template for producing the newsletter. This is part of our efforts to raise the publications produced by the society to new - and dare I say - more polished - level; at least visually, for our submissions have almost always been of high quality, academically speaking. Thank you again to Lee for starting us on the right track. I hope to improve the next issue of the journal, aesthetically speaking.

Members and contributors have been anxiously awaiting their copy of **Volume 29** of the journal. It should have been ready at the beginning of the year and I sincerely apologise for the huge delay in its appearance. It has been entirely my fault. All the papers and reviews have been edited and revised and all that is to be done is typesetting and then printing. I have asked a professional typesetter to assist me in this regard and we hope to have the final product ready by the end of June. I have already received submissions for Volume 30 and I am busy editing them. If you have anything you would like to contribute please do contact me as I would like to make it a larger edition than normal.

As discussed at the AGM of the Society in February 2010, there will be changes made to how the journal is produced. One of the changes to be completed is the **creation of an editorial board** to assist the lead editor (me) with reviewing material for publication. Once done, this will bring the journal in line with academic standards elsewhere in the world, although provision will be made for inclusion of articles by those who may not be entirely within academia. I hope to have this in place for volume 31, once a suitable number of people agree to help out. Please also contact me if you have any suggestions for improving the journal or would like to contribute.

Finally, I would like to add a final reminder that if you haven't **paid your membership dues**, you can contact the Chairperson Adele Hamilton-Ritchie (adele@premier.co.zw or adele@zol.co.zw) for more details. Please also encourage others to join the society; it needs all the support it can get.



The Ancient Ruins Company

PAUL HUBBARD

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The many stone ruins dotted around Zimbabwe fired the imaginations of the early white settlers, prompting a great deal of debate about their origins and function. The varied and often fanciful theories about the origins and development of the Zimbabwe Culture are well-known and need not to be discussed further. What is possibly less known is the role these ruins played in the early formation of the Stock Exchange in Zimbabwe, both by inspiring the creation of an unusual listed company as well as promoting investor confidence during the turbulent genesis of the country's financial system.

Ancient gold workings around the country revealed the existence of an unsuspected but dynamic gold industry that was continuously claimed to have been exceedingly profitable. In 1897, an estimate that 21,000,000 ounces of gold had been mined by the 'Ancients' was widely publicised. Such an amount would then have been worth at least £75,000,000; a huge amount when you consider a pint of beer was three pence or less at the time. Recognising that these ancients may have done the hard work for them, a band of prospectors and speculators decided to form a company with the sole aim of looting the stone-built structures across the country and recovering as much gold as possible. There were however precedents for this aim.

After the end of the Anglo-Ndebele War in 1893, an American soldier who had been part of the disastrous Shangani Patrol, Frederick Burnham was granted the right to mine Dhlo Dhlo Ruins, near present-day Gweru. He recovered 641 ounces of "gold inlaid work and gold ornaments" some of which he gave to Cecil Rhodes; the rest he kept himself or sold as bullion. Some two years later, two prospectors named W.G. Neal and G. Johnson found five buried skeletons together with a large amount of gold objects, including necklaces, bangles and bracelets. The total amount came to 208 ounces which they sold for £3000.

In light of these dramatic and spectacular finds, it was in September 1895 that the British South Africa Company (BSACo) granted the Rhodesia Ancient Ruins Ltd the "exclusive right to explore and work for treasure" in several ruins in Matabeleland and "the first right to work further ruins". The first shareholders were Maurice Gifford, Jefferson Clark, Tom Peachy, W.G. Neal, George Johnson and Frank Leech. Registered under the Companies Ordinance of 1895, the company had a stated capital of £25,000. Each share was worth a nominal £1, although Neal and Johnson agreed to hand over £2000 and receive 6000 fully-paid-up shares since it would be they involved in the actual exploration and digging.

When accepting the concession, it was further agreed that the BSACo would receive 20 per cent of all finds and that "Mr. Rhodes on behalf of the BSACo [would have] the first right of purchasing any discoveries. The ruins at Zimbabwe [were] excluded for the



present at Mr. Rhodes' express desire". Until the start of the 1896 war, Neal and Johnson dug through five ruins for their company. They found another cache of gold at Dhlo Dhlo with 700 ounces of gold beads and wire bracelets; exciting from a historical perspective but of little immediate value to them, were several Portuguese objects in the cache including a priest's ring that has tantalised researchers ever since. Such discoveries always bolstered their share prices. In a letter dated September 23, 1895 Neal boasts to a friend that their shares were already worth 102/6d each and were expected to climb by another 45/- due to a few new finds. Nevertheless, such over-confidence was unwarranted. As archaeologist Roger Summers wrote in 1965, "While the Ancient Ruins Company Limited cannot be classed as a fraudulent concern, its promoters were undoubtedly over-optimistic, as were so many Rhodesians in the 1890s, and it never paid any dividends".

After serving in the war, the men quickly resumed their treasure-hunting activities. Between September 1897 and May 1900, when the Company was dissolved, Neal and Johnson dug in another 50 or so ruins although for apparently little overall return. They became known as the 'blanket-prospectors' because of their method of payment to locals for information leading to new ruins. Five more groups of burials packed with gold were found, most spectacularly at Chumungwa and Mtelegwa Ruins where a total of 178 ounces of gold were looted. From published records it would seem that the Company's enjoyed few such successes and in fact only recovered an average of 100 ounces of gold a year. Additionally, although every ruin contained some sort of gold bauble, or at least gold dust, the amount recovered from each was only about 10 ounces. Neal spent a great deal of time defending the lack of return to the other shareholders, arguing that it was only to be expected since the ancient gold miners were also gold traders and therefore probably exported the majority of their production.



Neal, in an attempt to deflect the growing criticism of his company's *raison d'être*, gave all of his notes on the ruins to a journalist named Richard Hall. Together they produced a book called *The Ancient Ruins of Rhodesia* which was a catalogue of sorts; both of various sites across the country and Neal's finds over the years. In it they estimate that about 2000 ounces of gold were removed from the country's ruins by treasure seekers, placing the gold value of the finds at £7500. They claimed, however, that when sold, the ornaments realised between three and a hundred times their metal value because of their intrinsic value as "ancient relics". Sadly almost all of these treasures have disappeared from the public view except for the few bought by Rhodes, now stored at his house in Cape Town.



According to tradition, the Ancient Ruins Company was dissolved in 1900 at Rhodes' instigation. As the story goes, Rhodes was visiting Great Zimbabwe and came across a group of men employed by the Company with the avowed intention of putting what remained of the deposit of the Great Enclosure through their mill. Roger Summers has another view on the collapse of the company pointing out the expense of getting to the ruins and then sifting through large rock falls in the ruins, as well as the depressed prices for gold "trinkets" due to the Second South African War (1899-1902). In any case, all ruins were taken over by the Administration and a protective Ancient Ruins Ordinance was passed by the Legislative Council. The British High Commissioner advised that it should not become law because he considered the protected sites ill-defined and the penalties too severe.

In a way Zimbabweans owe the Ancient Ruins Company a debt of gratitude for the existence of the heritage we take for granted. The Company's depredations inspired the passing of legislation designed to protect relics of the country's past and the creation of an agency to do just that – today known as the National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe. This however does not excuse their destructive orgy of looting which surely destroyed a great deal of information about the fascinating culture that built the stone structures.

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A version of this article first appeared in the 2010 edition of the *Handbook to the Zimbabwe Stock Exchange* (Harare: New Zanj Press and the ZSE). Sincere thanks to the editor for allowing me to reproduce it here.

Archaeologists Find 5000 Year-Old Skeletons in Morocco

May 7 Sapa-AFP

Archaeologists in Morocco uncovered an ancient burial ground in a cave east of the capital Rabat, digging up human skeletons dating back 5000 years, they told AFP. It is the first time that human skeletons dating from the end of the Neolithic period to the Bronze Age have been discovered in Morocco, Youssef Bokbot said, leading the team carrying out the digs.



"Seven skeletons and four graves will allow us to identify very precisely the funeral rites of the Beaker culture, a first", Bokbot said of the discovery in a cave near Khemisset, 80 kilometres (50 miles) from Rabat.

"The copper objects that we found confirmed humanity's evolution, the passage from stone to metal, a real transformation", the archaeologist added. The digs, which began in 2006, were in a cave 18 kilometres from Khemisset.

Turkey Orders Probe After 'Discovery' Of Noah's Ark

April 30 Sapa-AFP

Turkey's culture minister has ordered a probe into how pieces of wood, claimed to be remains of Noah's Ark, were taken from Turkey to China by evangelical explorers, media reports said Friday. "How did these objects get there?... I am having this investigated," Culture and Tourism Minister Ertugrul Gunay said in remarks published in the Milliyet newspaper.

A team of evangelical Chinese explorers reportedly displayed the wooden pieces at a recent press conference in Hong Kong, claiming they recovered them from Mount Ararat in eastern Turkey.

"It's not 100 percent that it is Noah's Ark but we think it is 99.9 percent that this is it," Yeung Wing-cheung, a Hong Kong documentary film-maker and member of the 15-strong team from Noah's Ark Ministries International told AFP. The team said they recovered wooden specimens from a structure that carbon dating proved was 4,800 years old, around the same time the ark is said to have been afloat.

The biblical story of Noah's Ark says God decided to flood the earth after seeing how corrupt it had become, and told Noah to build an ark and fill it with two of every animal species. After the flood waters receded, the Bible says, the ark came to rest on a mountain. Many believe that Mount Ararat, the highest point in the region, is where the ark and its inhabitants came aground.

Gunay also said the inquiry aimed to shed light on the presence of Turkish officials at the press conference in Hong Kong, without Ankara's permission. The minister stressed he supported research on Noah's Ark in Turkey, hailing it as a "bonus" for the country's tourism sector, according to Milliyet.

Mud-brick.com

Recently the launch of www.mud-brick.com, a multi-authored, general issue archaeology blog aimed at starting a conversation with the general public promised much for future efforts at popularising archaeology. It was developed by archaeology graduate students from universities in New York City. Mud-brick's mission is to provide



people who are interested in archaeology with informed perspectives from professional archaeologists, facilitating an ongoing discussion on current archaeological issues. If you're interested in contributing, email adam.green@nyu.edu.

African Nations Turn to Hermit Kingdom for a Good Deal on Liberation Statues

CHRISTINA PASSARIELLO

Wall Street Journal, Jan 30.

New York has the Statue of Liberty. France has the Eiffel Tower. Now Senegal is about to get the "African Renaissance"—built by North Korea.

This month, workers from Mansudae Overseas Project Group of Companies, a North Korean design firm, were putting the finishing touches on a giant copper sculpture of a family. Senegal President Abdoulaye Wade will inaugurate the African Renaissance Monument in April to mark the 50th anniversary of the country's independence from France, a ceremony he expects the president of North Korea's Parliament to attend.

"Only the North Koreans could build my statue," says Mr. Wade, sitting in a red velvet chair in his palace. Moreover, they offer monuments at a good rate, he says: "I had no money."

Built by North Koreans, the new monument in Dakar, Senegal, is larger than the Statue of Liberty.

North Korea is mainly known for a totalitarian regime overseeing economic failure. But it has also produced a successful export business—building monuments to freedom and independence. The statues' selling point: They are big, simple and cheap.

Over the past decade, Mansudae has built dozens of statues and monuments for cash-strapped African countries. Botswana cut the ribbon on a memorial to three tribal chiefs in 2005. Neighbouring Namibia boasts a bronze of its founding president wielding an AK-47.

The African Renaissance is Mansudae's biggest work yet, measuring 164 feet high and crowning two barren hills in Dakar called "*Les Mamelles*" at the westernmost point of Africa. That makes it taller than either the Statue of Liberty (151 feet) or Rio de Janeiro's Christ the Redeemer (100 feet). The statue depicts a father holding a baby in his left arm. The man's right arm is around the waist of the baby's mother. The three are reaching out to the sky and out to the ocean.

"Its message is about Africa emerging from the darkness, from five centuries of slavery and two centuries of colonialism," says Mr. Wade.



Africa's rash of nationalistic monuments, statues and shrines has made Mansudae's signature aesthetic of socialist realism fashionable. In Benin, for example, a statue of a 19th-century king holds his hand up, symbolically forbidding the French to enter.

Socialist realism is popular "because people can access it easily," says Mary Jo Arnoldi, curator for African Ethnology at the Smithsonian Institution. It is easy to understand for illiterate populations, she says. "But aesthetically, it's not going to win any prizes."

In Senegal, however, the statue has been a beacon of discontent, sparking angry newspaper editorials and protests from religious leaders. The statue's sultry mother figure, dressed in a wisp of fabric that reveals part of a breast and a bare leg, has offended imams in this majority-Muslim country.

Financing details for the project have been murky, and some taxpayers are outraged by the very idea of it when power outages occur daily and university students strike over rising fees. Mr. Wade had no budget for the African Renaissance, so instead offered a prime chunk of state-owned land in exchange, which North Korea has since resold at a large profit, he says.

However, a panel near the base of the monument lists the official budget as \$25 million, though foreign government officials estimate its cost at around \$70 million. Mr. Wade says he plans to keep 34% of the profit from entrance fees and merchandise for a personal foundation.

The North Korean role is of less concern, though labour unions do lament that Mansudae got the job when an estimated 49% of the population is unemployed: 150 North Koreans are building the statue, helped by just 50 Senegalese. Mamadou Diouf, the head of the Confederation of Autonomous Unions of Senegal, says the project doesn't look African.

"If [building the statue] was a priority for our country, it could have been done by Senegalese workers in a manner much more in line with our values," he says.

Still, New Yorkers didn't embrace the Statue of Liberty, a gift from France, in its early days, either, says Stephen Briganti, the chief executive of the Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation. Mr. Wade asked him three times for advice on how to make money by selling small reproductions of the African Renaissance. "I cautioned him it would take time for it to become a symbol," says Mr. Briganti.

Mr. Wade fell under the spell of art when he studied in France in the 1950s. Between law classes, he strolled in the gardens of the Rodin Museum in Paris and admired the sculpture of "The Thinker."

North Korea built Senegal's African Renaissance Monument, which will be taller than the Statue of Liberty.



"I'm a bit of an aesthete," says Mr. Wade, 83 years old, pointing at his office's miniature replica of the Louvre's Winged Victory of Samothrace, a marble sculpture celebrating a Greek naval battle. "I love everything that is beautiful."

After Mr. Wade was elected president in 2000, he was driving by the Mamelles near Dakar's airport and had a vision of a statue of a family emerging from the volcanic hill.

Mr. Wade inquired about the French foundry that cast many of Rodin's sculptures, the Fonderie de Coubertin. But his advisers said it would be too pricey and pointed him toward the only budget option: Mansudae.

Mansudae was set up in 1959 to produce art glorifying North Korea's leaders. The company counts 1,000 artists among its 4,000 workers, and occupies a 144,000-square-yard campus in Pyongyang. The sculptors work in a warehouse and use scaffolding to reach the tops of statues, according to Pier Luigi Cecione, a curator and writer in Florence who represents Mansudae in Europe and the U.S.

Mansudae has decorated Pyongyang's metro stations with mosaics. In 1972, Mansudae built a 66-foot-high statue of Kim Il-Sung, the nation's founder and "Eternal President," which now sits on a hill dominating Pyongyang. The statue established Mansudae's reputation abroad, and China, Malaysia and African nations began commissioning projects, Mr. Cecione says. In 1994, the company painted an 269-foot-long canvas, "The Year of Bitter Tears," to mourn the death of President Kim.

Mansudae remains tightly closed to outsiders, and a receptionist answering the phone in Pyongyang declined to answer any questions.



Mr. Wade demanded modifications to Mansudae's first version of the African Renaissance. "It had to have African heads, not Asian!" Mr. Wade says. The same problem had occurred with some of the statues Mansudae had made for Mali, according to his cultural advisers.

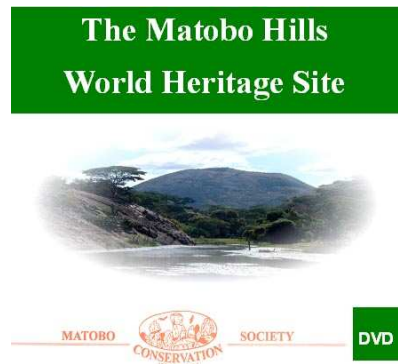
Construction started during the summer of 2007, and Mansudae installed a foundry at the base of the hill from which huge copper limbs emerged.

Ahead of the April inauguration, workers were recently completing the last details. Two North Koreans, tubes of Krazy Glue at their feet, were attaching the sealing to windows inside the male figure's hat, which has a viewing level similar to the one in the Statue of Liberty's crown.

After all the criticism, Mr. Wade is now getting some compliments. He says he recently received a letter from Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi asking how he could get a similar statue.

“The Matobo Hills”

A DVD commissioned by the Matobo Conservation Society (MCS) to support the successful bid for World Heritage Site status is now on sale. The price is 50 Rand for MCS Members, or 100 Rand for Non-Members. For further information (including US dollar prices and how to arrange payment) please contact the Secretary J Whiley on +263-9-792419 or +263-912-221-894, or email jwhiley@ppc.co.zw



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