

Between 1200 and 1300 AD, the Mapungubwe region was the centre of trade in southern Africa. Wealth came to the region from ivory and later from gold deposits that were found in Zimbabwe. The area was also agriculturally rich because of large-scale flooding in the area. The wealth in the area led to differences between rich and poor.

historical archaeology. In Makapane's cave was the month-long siege of chief and several thousand me Kekana chiefdom by the following an attack on a p Boers.

SA WORLD HERITAGE !

In the village neighbouring Mapungubwe, called K2, an ancient refuse site has provided archaeologists with plenty of information about the lifestyles of the people of Mapungubwe.

According to the University of Pretoria website: "People were prosperous, and kept domesticated cattle, sheep, goats and dogs. The charred remains of storage huts have also been found, showing that millet, sorghum and cotton were cultivated.

"Findings in the area are typical of the Iron Age. Smiths created objects of iron, copper and gold for practical and decorative purposes - both for local use and for trade. Pottery, wood, ivory, bone, ostrich eggshells, and the shells of snails and freshwater mussels, indicate that many other materials were used and traded with cultures as far away as East Africa, Persia, Egypt, India and China."

Mapungubwe's fortune only lasted until about 1300, after which time climate changes, resulting in the area becoming colder and drier, led to migrations further north to Great Zimbabwe.

Transfrontier park

Plans are afoot for the establishment of a transfrontier park encompassing parts of South Africa, Zimbabwe and Botswana. This would link the newly created Mapungubwe National Park with Botswana's Tuli Block and the Tuli Safari area of Zimbabwe.

Besides the rich cultural heritage of the place, most of the continent's big game roam here. There is also a tremendous diversity of plant and animal life, and the park, known as the Limpopo Shashe Transfrontier Conservation Area, is likely to become a major tourist attraction.

A draft memorandum for the park has been drawn up between Botswana, Zimbabwe and South Africa, and a tourism-development study has taken place. Part of the plan is to build a cultural centre at Mapungubwe.

But Unesco's declaration of Mapungubwe as a World Heritage Site will in itself stimulate more tourism to the area. Comments Unesco spokesman Jasmini Sopova: "People will get to know the list, and when it is on the list it is very attractive. Secondly, you can also get material help from Unesco for the site."



South African Heritage Month

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Mapungubwe: SA's lost city of gold

14 July 2003

One thousand years ago, Mapungubwe in Limpopo province was the centre of the largest kingdom in the sub-continent, where a highly sophisticated people traded gold and ivory with China, India and Egypt. The Iron-Age site, discovered in 1932 but kept under wraps by the apartheid government, has been declared a World Heritage Site by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco).

Mapungubwe was one of 24 sites around the world added to Unesco's World Heritage List in July 2003, bringing to five the number of South African sites that have been awarded World Heritage status.

- SA's World Heritage sites: see box down right.

Mapungubwe and Makapane's Valley, also in Limpopo province, were declared national heritage sites by the South African Heritage Resources Agency in 2001 - the first two sites to be declared under the 1999 National Heritage Resources Act, which replaced the old National Monuments Act.

- Makapane's Valley: see box down right.

Mapungubwe, an area of open savannah at the confluence of the Limpopo and Shashe Rivers and abutting the northern border of South Africa and the borders of Zimbabwe and Botswana, thrived as a sophisticated trading centre from around 1220 to 1300.

In its statement on the listing, Unesco describes Mapungubwe as the centre of the largest kingdom in the sub-continent before it was abandoned in the 14th century.

"What survives are the almost untouched remains of the palace sites and also the entire settlement area dependent upon them, as well as two earlier capital sites, the whole presenting an unrivalled picture of the development of social and political structures over some 400 years," Unesco said.

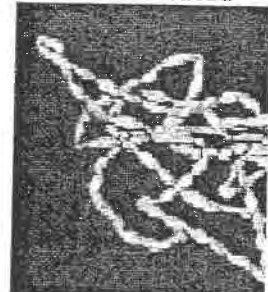
Mapungubwe was home to an advanced culture of people for the time – the ancestors of the Shona people of Zimbabwe. They traded with China and India, had a flourishing agricultural industry, and grew to a population of around 5 000.



The famous gold rhi Mapungubwe



Mapungubwe Hill, w Area was located

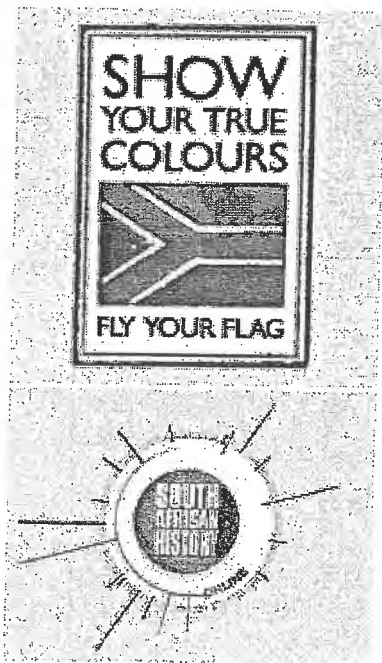


Examples of gold jewelry



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SouthAfrica.info reporter

