

SOUTH AFRICAN KINGDOMS

OVERVIEW

GREAT ZIMBABWE: 1100 AD – 1450 AD



Great Zimbabwe was located in south-eastern Africa in modern-day Zimbabwe and was established in 1100 AD. A south-african ethnic group known as the Shona people were the architects of Great Zimbabwe. In the Shona language the name Zimbabwe means 'Great Stone Houses' or 'Great Revered House.' The Shona people who are still present to this day in Africa followed a monotheistic African religion believing in one God who they called 'Mwari.' The main city would eventually grow to house around 18,000 Africans making it a larger size than medieval London. The city included amongst other structures twelve central buildings and a castle. There were also 150 buildings and homes made of clay and gravel which had walls which were 18 inches thick. One of the main commodities traded by Great Zimbabwe was gold which was abundant in the region. The Shona Africans of Great Zimbabwe would trade gold with the Swahili Africans of the east- African Swahili states who were mostly Muslims.

KINGDOM OF MAPUNGUBWE: 1075 AD – 1300 AD



The Kingdom of Mapungubwe was located in southern Africa just south of the central city of Great Zimbabwe and was established by the Shona people in 1075 AD. The kingdom was located near to the Limpopo River which runs through southern Africa and is over 1,570 kilometers in length. The Kingdom of Mapungubwe was a key trading center and was inhabited by blacksmiths, doctors, tool makers, sculptures and merchants. The wealth of the kingdom was further strengthened by the trade in large cattle herds, which were abundant in the region. Each territory in the kingdom was controlled by a chief who would have the responsibility of collecting taxes and distributing them to the current ruler. These chiefs were protected by the ruler in exchange for providing these services. The Kingdom of Mapungubwe also traded with the Africans of the Swahili States.

KINGDOM OF BUTWA: 1450 AD – 1683 AD



The Kingdom of Butwa was established in 1450 AD by the descendants of the Shona people who were the architects of the previous Kingdom of Mapungubwe and Great Zimbabwe. The Kingdom of Butwa established its capital in western region of modern-day Zimbabwe. The capital of the Kingdom of Butwa was named Khami. The stone structures built there bear a similarity to those of Great Zimbabwe. The leadership of the Kingdom of Butwa was the Torwa Dynasty who established for themselves an economic system based on the trade of gold and cattle. The Kingdom of Butwa continued to prosper well into 1683 AD when Europeans specifically from Portugal attempted invade the region and control the gold trade. The Portuguese were driven out and a new African state called The Rozwi was established and became the dominant power in the region and prospered and continued for another 200 years.