

ROYAL POSSESSION CULTS IN SOUTHEASTERN AFRICA  
AND WESTERN MADAGASCAR :  
An Exploratory Historical Comparison of the Shona and the Sakalava

by  
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An enduring cult of possession through which departed monarchs remained in communication with their successors in office and, ultimately, with the descendants of their former subjects, is a feature of some antiquity in Madagascar. While spirit-possession, ancestral or otherwise, is hardly confined to a single region of the Great Island(1) precisely the opposite obtains for its presence as a royal cult. As such, it has been documented to a sufficient extent only among the peoples of Western Madagascar, many of whom came to adopt the collective name of Sakalava and most of whom accepted the rule of monarchs issuing from the single dynastic family of the Maroserana. Indeed, the royal *Tromba* (possession as act and cult) among the Northwestern, Central and Southwestern Sakalava cannot be now disassociated from their Maroserana kings. Upon exiting from this world they became the great or national ancestor-deities, the *Ampagnito-bé*. As is now widely appreciated, the Sakalava and their Maroserana rulers were the creators of the earliest empire within Madagascar; and, the question of how and why royal possession took hold as a cult in states under the Maroserana and not in states developed and controlled by rulers from

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(1) See, for example, A. + G. Grandidier, *Ethnographie de Madagascar*, III, 1917, pp. 491, note 3, and 620-622, note 271.

other dynastic families within Madagascar is extremely interesting in its own right.

One possible answer could reflect the principle of *cujus regio ejus religio* usually applied to suggest that subjects adopt the intrusive cult of their rulers. There is now ample evidence to show that this particular answer cannot work. In fact, the Maroserana adopted and elaborated upon the pre-existing religious structures within Western Madagascar (2). It is, moreover, no longer seriously contested that a part of Madagascar's Western littoral was inhabited by speakers of at least two Bantu idioms at the time when the Maroserana and their Sakalava warriors embarked upon their successful empire-building. Such a linguistic and, to some extent, cultural situation does not appear to have been extant in any other section of Madagascar. Reduced to its simplest form, the second answer must be that the uniqueness of the royal *Tromba* derives from a peculiar blend of the pre-existing and the intrusive, a chemistry duplicated nowhere else within the Island. In a book on the *Tromba* published just four years ago, Father Estrade could write with some serenity that «la possession était d'ailleurs familière à ces populations d'origine africaine auxquelles s'étaient mêlé les Maroserana (3)», statement that would have lifted quite highly a number of brows even a decade ago. The summary statements on Afro-Malagasy connections, such as found in the so-called Linton-Deschamps hypothesis or merely duplicated by certain European students of Madagascar ought to be completely discarded since their main role is to deflect the research from the sheer possibilities of the subject. From my personal conversations with the late Hubert Deschamps, who should be regarded as an *Ampagnito-bé* of historians who study Madagascar, it was never his intent, in listing the would-be African features in the Island, to rest the matter at that point. As far as it is known to me, no one has thus as yet explored the realm of comparison between Africa and Madagascar in connection with the royal possession cults (4), despite the high probability that some interesting items could crop-up to be of benefit at the same time to the histories of Madagascar and Africa. While possession in general has been ascertained in many parts of Africa and while its royal possession cults are not a monopoly of a single group of inter-locking peoples, they remain relatively rare, especially in highly developed forms, even in the greater of the two Continents. As Baumann and Westermann had brought to the attention of a wide audience in the early 1940's and as the subsequent investigations *in situ* by D.P. Abraham confirmed with slight chance of error (5), the Shona of what used to be Southern Rhodesia (now

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(2) Cf. «Religion and State : A Comparison of Antanosy and Sakalava in the 1600's» in R. Kent (ed.), *Madagascar in History*, 1979, pp. 80-101.

(3) Jean-Marie Estrade, *Le Tromba*, 1977, p. 175. I am grateful to father Estrade for sending me a copy of his most useful book.

(4) The annotated *Bibliography on Spirit Possession and Spirit Mediumship*, compiled by Victor I. Zaretsky, 1966, i-xvi and 1-106, reveals no such comparison and a preliminary bibliographical search for the period of 1966-1980 has failed to find one.

(5) H. Baumann and D. Westermann, *Les Peuples et les Civilisations de l'Afrique*, 1962 (original German edition 1942), see their «Rhodesian Civilization», in particular ; and

Zimbabwe) and a slice of Western Mozambique are decidedly at the apex in the history of royal possession cults within Africa as a whole. We are also dealing here with the great dynasty of Mwene Mutapa, title of praise received by the first empire-builder whose own ancestors, the Karanga-Shona, had established the first hierarchical state under the leadership of the Rozvi clan which provided the earliest local *Mambo* (chief, kinglet, king, ruler). Although Western Madagascar and the Sakalava are separated by a bit of water and some land from Zimbabwe and the Shona there are adequate structural and historical reasons for a preliminary comparison of their respective royal possession cults. Later on, a much fuller effort could come to some specific grips with a problem that cannot be separated from the early history of Madagascar and Africa, the problem of diffusion as against independent invention.

To turn first to the Shona (6), when they rebelled back in mid-1896 against the rule of Cecil Rhodes' South Africa Company local Europeans could not understand how such a fragmented people, some virtually acephalous, could act as one. According to contemporary Europeans, the Shona had «no common organization,» they «owed allegiance to no single authority,» had «no folklore,» and thought «nothing of yesterday (7)». The sense of the last two claims was duplicated in N. Western Madagascar by P. Lapeyre when he stated, in 1891, that «of the history of ancestors» there were «no trace (8)», as both Andriamandisoarivo and Charles Guillain turned in their graves. There really was no mystery about the Shona ability to coalesce in times of great stress and one can do no better than to summarize a recent article by Terence Ranger (9). The outsiders of the 1890's did not know that some six decades earlier the Shona confederation had been militarily destroyed by invading Zulu-like regiments. But, the end of Rozvi rule over the Shona did not end their spiritual domination at all. Among the Shona ancestors, generally called *mudzimu/midzimu* (pl. of *mudzimu* would be *vadzimu*), a special place is occupied by the *mhondoro* spirits as they represent defunct rulers and sub-group founders, sometimes a departed Shona who had attained some sort of prominence; and the *mhondoro* thus tend to be the widely respected territorial deities. As such, they are endowed with shrines and each *mhondoro* is represented by one senior spirit medium, the *svikiro* (also *tsvikiro*). This was particularly the case among the Shona living in the old nucleus of the Rozvi monarchy, in the Northern and Northeastern Mashona and

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D.P. Abraham, «The Early Political History of the Kingdom of Mwene Mutapa (850–1589),» in *Historians in Tropical Africa*, 1962 (mimeo. ed. printed in Salisbury) pp. 61–90; and his «The roles of 'Chaminuka' and the *mhondoro*-cults in Shona Political History,» in E. Stokes and R. Brown (eds.), *The Zambezi Past*, 1966, 28–46.

- (6) Among the several books written, one could consult Charles Bullock's *The Mashona*, 1927; Michael Gelfand's *Shona Ritual*, 1959; and his *Shona Religion*, 1962.
- (7) *The Zambezi Past*, 1966, 117 and note 2 (article by T. Ranger).
- (8) *Dialectes hova et sakalava : essai d'étude comparée*, 1891, p. 4.
- (9) «The Role of Ndebele and Shona Religious Authorities in the Rebellions of 1896 and 1897,» in Stokes + Brown (eds.), *The Zambezi Past*, 1966, pp. 94–136.

and to a great extent in Central Mashonaland. The situation was somewhat different in Western Mashonaland and among the Matabele, descendants of the formerly invading regiments who had adopted some of the religious features of the Shona. There, instead of the primacy of the *mhondoro*, a parallel cult of Mwari was in full vigor. Mwari had once been the «omnipresent and omnipotent High God» of the Karanga but extended his domain far beyond the Karanga themselves to become the Supreme Diety of all the Shona and even among the Matabele who were able to maintain a centralized state and monarchy until its defeat in 1893. The Mwari cult was represented by a complex ladder organization of sacerdotal persons and messengers, possessing also a wide-flung intelligence network. These religious authorities within the parallel cults of the Mwari and *mhondoro*, the pre-eminent Shona ancestral spirits with a hierarchy topped by the departed Mutapa royals, were the vehicle through which the Shona could come to act together. The Mwari cult was also involved in the Matabele rebellion against the South Africa Company which erupted in March 1896, just three months ahead of its Shona counterpart (10).

Although there are references to the cult of royal possession in Mashonaland as early as the Sixteenth century(11) the earliest attempt to describe this *particular* feature, in considerable detail and context, came in 1609 from the pen of the Dominican Father João Dos Santos. It merits an extensive reproduction (12) :

«Every year in the month of September, when the new moon appears, *Quiteve* (a) ascends a very high mountain situated near the city called *Zimbaoe*(b), in which he dwells, on the summit of which he performs grand obsequies for the kings, his predecessors, who are all buried there. For this purpose he takes many people along., both of his city... and from other parts of his kingdom. On reaching the mountaintop, the first thing they do is to eat and drink their *pembe*, (c) until they are all drunk, the king first of all, and they continue eating and drinking for eight days with great rejoycings, the chief of which is for the king to... call one party running against the other... For these feasts the king and his nobles dress... in their best pieces of silk and cotton... Standing thus, they rush against the other... pretending

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(10) Ränger, «The Role of... Religious Authorities,» *The Zambezi Past*, 1966, *passim*.

(11) Cf. João de Barros, *Da Asia*, 1552, *First Decade*, reference to Mutapa kings.

(12) *Ethiopia Oriental* (1609), 1891, ed., pp. 65–67 ; for the English text, see the *Records of South Eastern Africa* (RSEA), vol. VII, pp. 196–198, edited by G. McCall Theal ; for an abridged French text see G. Charpy, *Histoire de l’Ethiopie Orientale*, 1684. (12) a-d : (a) according to Dos Santos, this was the title «common to all kings of that kingdom (including all lands and the river of Sofala) who, on coming to the throne, discard their former name and are never known by it again.» (b) for a fine general account of Zimbabwe see the recent work by Peter S. Garlake, *Great Zimbabwe* 1973 ; the «Zimbaoe» mentioned in the quote above may or may not be the Great Zimbabwe itself ; (c) In Western Madagascar *pembe* will be readily recognized as *ampemba* or millet, hence millet-derived beet ; (d) «Kaffir, Kaffirs» is a term no longer acceptable but it used to designate the Bantu-speaking Africans.

to fight... running and turning until they are too exhausted to move... When the king had feasted for eight days, he begins his lamentation for the dead who are buried there, and all join in... for two or three days, until the devil enters into one of the... assembly, saying that he is the soul of the dead king, father of him who is engaged in these ceremonies, come to converse with his son. The demoniac becomes as one into whose body the devil has entered, stretched (out) on the ground disfigured, deformed, and out of his senses, and while he is in this state the devil speaks through his mouth in all the foreign tongues of other Kaffir(d) nations which are understood by many of those present. Besides this he begins to cough and speak like the dead king whom he represents, in such a manner that it seems to be his very self, both in voice and movements, by which signs the Kaffirs(d) recognize that the soul of the dead king has come as... expected. The king who is performing the ceremonies, being informed of this, comes accompanied by all his nobles to the place where the demoniac is, and all prostrate themselves before him, showing him great honor. Then all withdraw, leaving the king alone with the demoniac, with whom he converses amicably as if with his dead father, asking him if there will be war, if he will triumph over his enemies, and if there will be famine or misfortunes in his kingdom, and everything else which he wishes to know. The devil answers all the questions, and counsels him as to what he is to do... these blind men believing him and coming to consult him every year in the manner aforesaid... the Kaffirs(d) loudly praise their king for being so fortunate that the dead kings come to converse with him, whom they hold to be happy and powerful in the other world, and able to grant the living king everything which he may ask for.»

This extremely interesting and composite portrait of an annual festival at which the cult of royal possession represented the culminating point was drawn, as Dos Santos relates himself, by «certain Portuguese who have chanced to be present at these assemblies» and who actually «saw the things I have related»(13). Before attempting an internal analysis it is necessary to bring up the earliest and analogous reports for the royal *Tromba* among the Sakalava. As it happens, they come from two Jesuit Fathers and especially Father Luis Mariano, who had spent a year in Menabé, had visited northwestern Madagascar before it became Iboina, and who knew southeastern Africa well, too, having spent some years in Mozambique. Mariano's letters to his superior at Goa were composed only seven years after Dos Santos wrote his *Ethiopia Oriental* or very close in time, another fortunate circumstance. There is one crucial difference, however. Dos Santos was describing a dynastic cult of some antiquity. Mariano and D' Azevedo were in Menabé before it was known by that name, before the advent of the Maroserana dynasty. We will return to this point later.

In a report appended to his letter of 20th August 1617 and after spending a full year in the heart of what would become the Menabé Mariano offered the

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(13) RSEA, VII, 1901, 198.



following summary of the salient religious features (14) :

«... Ils considèrent comme dieux tous les individus qui meurent à l'âge de raison et qu'ils appellent *Afo*... c'est-à-dire des esprits ; ils vénèrent tout particulièrement les vieillards et les chefs de familles, donnant la suprématie et rendant de plus grands honneurs aux mânes des nobles et des princes de sang royal, surtout s'ils sont morts très âgés. Les vieillards de sang royal sont honorés après leur mort par le peuple entier comme des dieux nationaux... le Diable... s'introduit fréquemment... dans le corps de quelques-uns... il convoque son auditoire par de grands gémissements et des cris ; ensuite, dès qu'il voit les gens du pays assemblés, il se met à parler au nom d'un mort... traitant des sujets divers selon les époques et les circonstances, parlant tantôt du passé, tantôt de l'avenir ou bien de la guerre, de la paix, des récoltes. Tous les assistants écoutent dans le plus profond recueillement, tandis que l'un des plus âgés parmi les vieillards présents lui répond et l'interroge familièrement.»

As Mariano had written some three months earlier, the possessor of a human assumed either the role of a departed commoner or else of one of the *dieux* (15). Still earlier, on 22 October 1616, after some four months of stay, Mariano could add more interesting detail. By his time, the local inhabitants already had six principal divinities. Their ancestors were the object of a «culte semblable à celui que nous accordons à nos saints.» The «Devil» identified the specific ancestor during possession by assuming the ancestor's name ; he often would induce those present «a faire quelque entreprise ;» and it was both «étrange et lamentable» to see the people talk to the «Devil» as if they were addressing their fathers, brothers or friends. Still worse, shortly upon the death of an individual, the «Devil» would not miss the opportunity to speak in that person's name also by assuming the voice of the departed (16). To pursue the point noted a moment ago, in 1616–1617 there were as yet no Maroserana *dady* even in Menabé but it is abundantly clear from the descriptive contemporary materials that the *Tromba* is present, without being so named. It also manifests itself at two distinct levels. One is the level of commoners at which anyone can communicate with an ancestor of the family through a possessed surrogate. The other, «noble,» «of royal blood,» and using a pre-designated *vaha* (a term that used to be applied to linguists and to spirit-mediums), is most potent, powerful as a group or national deity when «royal blood» blends with the gerontocratic principle. This differentiation is also confirmed by the preserved relics of the departed commoners and nobility. As Mariano tells us again it was the prevailing custom for both strata to have «les fils aînés» collect the same items as relics from their departed fathers, namely the «poils de la barbe, les ongles et le

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(14) *Collection des Ouvrages Anciens Concernant Madagascar (COACM)*, II, 1904, p. 253–254, small print.

(15) *COACM*, III, 1904, 233.

(16) *COACM*, III, 1904, 228.

pagne.» But, the commoners used to wrap them up in a sewn piece of ordinary cloth around the kidneys while the nobles «déposent ces objets dans une espèce de... petit reliquaire qu'ils attachent à une ceinture dont ils se parent lorsqu'ils vont à une fête ou qu'ils portent pour la guerre (17)».

We also know from a 1719 visit to Menabé and a 1741 visit to Iboina by crews of two Dutch vessels originating at the Cape that the Sakalava rulers were already inserted into the growing national pantheon of Maroserana kings. Menabé's powerful, autocratic and much feared King Ramena, for example, screened the Dutch gifts within his inner compound at what could be called the altar of one or more royal predecessors, suspended as relics encased in ivory and smeared with «huile odorante.» Invoking «l'esprit du roi défunt» an aged «sorcier» in a state of disfigurement («tout cassé») responded for the royal spirit «d'une voix sourde et caverneuse» that there was nothing to fear (18). Twenty-two years later, an observing Dutch quartermaster (O.L. Hemmy) visited the great royal village of Marovoay, «plus grand que le château du Gouverneur du Cap,» and was admitted into another inner enclave containing considerable wealth as well as the «reliquaire royal, qui se compose de quatre écussons représentant chacun un des quatre aïeux du roi.» The Dutch spelling of royal names does mutilate them somewhat but it is easy to recognize them as Andriamisara, Andriandahifotsy, Andriantsimanata (by the *fitahina*, Andriamandisoarivo) and Andriantoakafo (posthumously Andrianamboniarivo), himself the father of the King in question, Andriamahatindriarivo. This King did the Dutch quartermaster singular honor by inviting him to be present at the altar of the royal relics for a ceremony which lasted about thirty minutes. After the ritual ablutions, which have been called in French «la cérémonie du bain de reliques» with a recent and untenable claim that it supercedes the royal *Tromba* as a dynastic cult (19), the King stood in front of each ancestral representation with a musket in his hand and uttered some sort of prayer from which the Dutchman could only extract the word «trade (20)».

It is not the purpose of the present exploratory paper to trace the evolution through time and context of the *Tromba* but it is evident that it evolved out of an established and widespread cult of all ancestors into the *fivavahana Sakalava* in which the departed Maroserana kings represent the most powerful saints and associates of the Zanahary; and, in this sense, the *Tromba* of the Sakalava as a people cannot be detached from the dynastic cult. This evolution is attested with certainty by the fact that at its point of origin, in the Menabé, the *Tromba* could only receive an initial elaboration in the transition from a cult of ancestors practiced by the fragmented and autonomous grouplets to the full-fledged

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(17) *COACM*, II, 1904, 253.

(18) *COACM*, V, 1907, 25-26.

(19) H. Lavondés, *Bekoropaka*, 1967, p. 130.

(20) *COACM*, VI, 1913, 116-117 and 127-128.

religion of the Sakalava. It was in the Northwest, in Boina, at its 18th-century apex, that the royal *Tromba*, centered on the *doany*, attained its final complexity of a major local religion with an ability to incorporate not only the Sakalava but other Malagasy as well and even the *vahiny*, like myself, could obtain the benevolent protection of the *Ampagnito-bé* as I recall the blessing of my spouse and myself received at the *doany* at Mirinarivo some 16 years ago. I am even firmly convinced that we have been spared some disasters as a result of the blessing extended through Chief Nintsy, Mamory-Bé and Tsimanohitra Tombo. Indeed, even the term *Tromba* did not originate in Menabé but in Iboina. As Rakotomanga-Ramasondrano pointed out almost six decades ago, the term *Tromba* seemed to derive from Kiswahili, a branch of the Bantu languages with its own group of sub-dialects, and it was «getting around» among the other Malagasy groups already as an extension of the Sakalava religion (21), more precisely that of the Iboina-Sakalava.

There is no way, it would appear, through which it could be ascertained via either the Shona oral traditions or written Portuguese accounts at Mozambique, as to just what situation existed prior to the advent of the royal possession cult as described by Dos Santos. By the turn of the Seventeenth-century, moreover, the Mwene Mutapa empire was already in decline, having attained its most acute point of expansion and strength by the turn of the *preceding* century (22). Precisely because of this adverse epistemological factor, the Bantu-speakers of Western Madagascar who lived between the 16th and 20th degrees latitude (23) assume a greater historical importance than is suggested by their uniqueness in the sea of the Malagasy-speaking Islanders. Indeed, the situation in the just-mentioned area of Western Madagascar was analogous to the *mudzimu/mhondoro* sequence in Mashonaland. The way I think this aspect should be read tells us that what is being witnessed in the so-called «Bambala» section of Western Madagascar is an even earlier version of a terribly rich ancestral cult, one that antedates almost certainly the advent of the Mutapa dynasty and empire. This allows one to augment the degree of probability that the «Bambala peoples» attained Western Madagascar before about 1450 as, otherwise, the political conceptions of the Mutapa would have surfaced very much prior to the arrival of the Maroserana Kings.

One would be remiss in the scholarly duty to mention as well some items which do not fit into the point of view advanced. Thus, on the Shona side, the importance of rain-making is capital. One of the greatest Shona *mhondoro*, as

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(21) *Ny Sakalava*, 1924, p. 83.

(22) D.P. Abraham, «Early Political History of the Kingdom of Mwene Mutapa» in *Historians in Tropical Africa*, mimeo. ed. Salisbury, 1962, pp. 62-63.

(23) Mariano was absolutely explicit after a year in future Menabé that «nous avons vu et contrôlé» (italics mine for the unbelievers) «tous ces usages, et nous avons la quasi-certitude» (in a quintessential Jesuit scholarly abnegation) «qu'ils sont les mêmes chez les habitants de toute la côte, depuis le 20<sup>e</sup> jusqu'au 16<sup>e</sup> degré de latitude, qui parlent la même langue...»



great as Andriamisara in Madagascar, is *Chaminuka*, the great rainmaker. But, rain-making is virtually absent from the Bambala peoples and their successors in Western Madagascar. Indeed, instances of rain-making are extremely rare for all of Madagascar and only the Onjatsy seem to have known something about it in antiquity. In a reverse sense, the sheer richness of ancestral cult in Bambala areas of Western Madagascar, at the level of commoners for both the *pater-familias* relics and *Tromba*, and even more so for the nobility and kings, appears to be ahead of the ancient Shona society. Again, it may be that migrations to Bambala antedate the advent of rain-making as a major feature of Shona culture or that the Bambala peoples in question did not come exactly from northern and eastern reaches of present-day Zimbabwe. At any rate, we have here some interesting avenues for future research.

To return to that long and interesting composite portrait by Father Dos Santos, one cannot escape from some striking parallels. The Shona necropolis is hardly a step removed from the *Doany* as the royal possession must be acted out at the sacred site to which the royal spirits are bound in one form or another. The new-moon aspect in the Shona example is certainly present in Iboina's royal *Tromba*. The so-called and almost certainly mislabelled «orgies» are equally present with variations in length of time but not much else. Even the mock-combat among the Shona finds a reported analogue in southwestern Madagascar around 1630 or so (24), although in its isolated context such a game of nobles and commoners may amount to a method of conflict-resolution which does not need to be explained with diffusion. It seems extremely hard to keep attributing clusters of similarities to ecology or to what is often called «parallel evolution.» It goes without saying, that the Shona cults evolved inland and within the Shona society just as the Bambala and later Sakalava cults developed or evolved along the sea and within the Sakalava society; and in each case local elaborations exist. In this framework there was certainly «parallel» evolution, from personal to national religion in which ancestral spirits of families were subordinated to spirits of the kings who conquered the territorial domains ultimately to become Menabé and Boina or Mwene Mutapa and Changamire. But, at an earlier point in time there must have been some intimate contact. It is not necessary here to go into a related possibility in any great detail, namely the possibility that at least in part the earliest Maroserana arrived to Southwestern Madagascar when the Mwene Mutapa empire was still close to its apex, sometime late in the Sixteenth-century, so that the ideology of both the Maroserana and Mutapa dynastic possession cults was roughly the same. This question of origin of the Maroserana is not easy to resolve since direct and indirect documentation is not on hand. Yet, I would like to end the present exploratory paper by suggesting that we need not, as historians, be defeated by the seeming inability to obtain the kind of evidence which would be considered «conclusive.» For

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(24) I recall François Martin reporting just such an event in detail in his *Memoire* regarding Madagascar.

years I have been puzzled by the term which designated the cattle owned by the Maroserana, the term *Tsimirango* in common Malagasy. It does have an earlier form, reported early in the 18th century by Robert Drury and spelled as *Chemerrango* (25). Now, as I looked at a host of sources for the early Shona history I came across a royal *mhondoro* that came to influence decisively, upon consultation, a Shona emperor who ruled between 1623 and 1629 (26). The *mhondoro* was called *Samarengu*. A further probing into Shona history revealed that there had been earlier in time a first heir (*nevanje*) to the monarch who marks the transition between the Karanga state and the Mwene Mutapa empire. This first heir was Samarengu himself. But, what really makes it most interesting for us, is the fact that Samarengu was a *fallen heir* because the throne went to a daughter of the Shona emperor and not to the first-designated successor (27). It is not my intent really to engage in «trait-chasing» but I categorically reject the dicta of academic puritans about various «methodologies» which are either «approved» or «disapproved.» Could it be that the immediate descendants of the fallen heir Samarengu, using their contact with seafaring traders who had thousands of agents in Mwene Mutapa for a long time, deliberately migrated across the Mozambique Channel? If there were the slightest possibility that the Maroserana had formed prior to  $\pm$  1450, give or take a decade, I would be the first to reject the potential link. The Maroserana, however, cannot be made to antedate by much  $\pm$  1550 and are thus in no chronological violation of the possibility; and what would have been more natural than to stamp the first royal cattle with a symbol bearing the name of royal *pater* who had become an important *mhondoro* in Shonaland as well. I only ask the question.

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(25) *Journal*, 1890 ed. (of 1729 original), p. 271.

(26) Stokes + Brown (eds.) *The Zambezi Past*, 1966, 44, note 3 from preceding page.

(27) Abraham, «Mwene Mutapa,» 1962, p. 63.