

# Strongholds of the World

Interdisciplinary lecture series of the  
Marburger Arbeitskreises für europäische Burgenforschung e.V., Germany,  
and Aarhus University, research programme “Materials, Culture and Heritage”, Denmark  
in 2022

## 6th meeting:

When: Friday, May 06, 2022

Entry: 12:30 CET. Begin: 13:00 CET

Topic: Strongholds of Political Power, Strongholds of Resistance: Securing monumental structures on the Zimbabwe plateau and adjacent regions (1100-1900 AD)

Register in advance for this webinar:

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Meeting ID: 659 0349 4238

SIP: [65903494238@109.105.112.236](mailto:65903494238@109.105.112.236) or [65903494238@109.105.112.235](mailto:65903494238@109.105.112.235)

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.

## Innocent Pikirayi, PhD

Department of Anthropology, Archaeology and Development Studies, University of Pretoria,  
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## Strongholds of Political Power, Strongholds of Resistance: Securing monumental structures on the Zimbabwe plateau and adjacent regions (1100-1900 AD)

During the early second millennium AD, the Zimbabwe Tradition, a settlement system synonymous with state-level societies developed on the Zimbabwe plateau and adjacent regions. Characterised by monumental stone-walled structures, antiquarians and early archaeologists interpreted these as ‘forts’, linked to long-distance trade. Referring to early sixteenth century Great Zimbabwe, Portuguese chronicler João de Barros remarked that it "is guarded by a nobleman, who has charge of it, after the manner of a chief alcaide, and they call this officer Symbacayo ...." Alcaide is an Iberian term borrowed from Arabic *al-qā'id*, meaning commander of fort or castle. I employ the concept of ‘stronghold’ beyond European understandings of Medieval fortifications or castles, to denote power and understand how monumental structures served ruling elites. European concepts of defence

cannot be applied to understand the construction and function of sites such as Great Zimbabwe.

With European expansion into the African interior after 1500 AD, the same region witnessed both European and local strongholds ('loopholed forts'), the latter constructed to resist Portuguese attacks. These were 'strongholds of resistance'. To survive European siege warfare, these strongholds also used European weaponry. The term 'Refuge Tradition', was an unsuccessful attempt by some archaeologists to characterise the rise of hilltop and fortified settlements from 1700 to the onset of British rule in 1890.

## Our speaker

### **Innocent Pikirayi, PhD**

Innocent Pikirayi made his BA in History, an MA in African History and his PhD in Archaeology.

From 2010 to 2019, Innocent Pikirayi served as Professor in Archaeology and Chair in the Department of Anthropology and Archaeology at the University of Pretoria. He is now Professor and Deputy Dean responsible for Postgraduate Studies and Research Ethics in the Faculty of Humanities at the same university. In 2019, he was Visiting Professor in Archaeology at the Centre for Urban Network Evolutions (UrbNet) at Aarhus University in Denmark. He is also serving as Honorary Research Associate of the McDonald Institute, University of Cambridge, for three years until 30<sup>th</sup> September 2023.

Innocent Pikirayi serves as advisors to the following journals in archaeology and the broader humanities: *Azania: Archaeological in Africa* (Routledge), *African Archaeological Review* (Springer), *Antiquity: A Review of World Archaeology*, The Society for Post-Medieval Archaeology, and the African Humanities Publication (AHP) Series (Carnegie Corporation). Innocent Pikirayi is a member of the World Archaeological Congress (WAC), the Society for American Archaeology (SAA), the Society of Africanist Archaeologists (SAfA), the Shanghai Archaeology Forum (SAF), the Association of Southern African Professional Archaeologists (ASAPA), the South African Archaeological Society (ArchSoc), the Integrated History and Future of People on Earth (IHOPE), and the Academy of Science South Africa (ASSAf).

### **Select References on Great Zimbabwe:**

Bent, J. T. 1896. *The ruined cities of Mashonaland*. London: Spottiswoode.

Beach, D. N. 1988. 'Refuge' archaeology, trade and gold mining in nineteenth-century Zimbabwe: Izidoro Correia Pereira's list of 1857. *Zimbabwean Prehistory* 20, 3-8.

Garlake, P. S. 1973. *Great Zimbabwe*. London: Thames and Hudson.

Pikirayi, I. 2000. Wars, violence and strongholds: an overview of fortified settlements in northern Zimbabwe. *Journal of Peace, Conflict and Military Studies* 1 (1), 1-12.

Pikirayi, I. 2009. Palaces, Feiras and Prazos: An Historical Archaeological Perspective of African-Portuguese Contact in Northern Zimbabwe. *African Archaeological Review* 26 (3), 163-185.

Pikirayi, I. 2013. Stone architecture and the development of power in the Zimbabwe tradition AD 1270-1830. *Azania: Archaeological Research in Africa* 48 (2), 282-300.

Randall-MacIver, D. 1906. *Medieval Rhodesia*. London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd.

### **Six principal and relevant publications by Pikirayi:**

Pikirayi, I. and Magoma, M. 2021. Retrieving Intangibility, Stemming Biodiversity Loss: The Case of Sacred Places in Venda, Northern South Africa. *Heritage*, 4, 4524-4541.

- <https://doi.org/10.3390/heritage4040249>
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- Pikirayi, I. 2017. Ingombe Ilede and the demise of Great Zimbabwe. *Antiquity: A Review of World Archaeology* 91 (318), 1085-1086, <https://doi.org/10.15184/aqy.2017.9>
- Pikirayi, I. 2018. Investigating Complexity: Great Zimbabwe from a Multidisciplinary Perspective. In Ekblom, A., Isendahl, C. and Lindholm, K-J (eds). *The Resilience of Heritage: Cultivating a Future of the Past – Essays in Honour of Professor Paul J.J. Sinclair*. Uppsala University: African and Comparative Archaeology, Department of Archaeology and Ancient History, 83-100.
- Pikirayi, I. 2019. Local narratives, regional histories and the demise of Great Zimbabwe. In Schmidt, P. and Kehoe, A. B. (eds). *Archaeologies of Listening*. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 131-153.
- Pikirayi, I. 2019. Sustainability and an archaeology of the future. *Antiquity: A Review of World Archaeology* 93 (372), 1669-1671, <https://doi.org/10.15184/aqy.2019.182>
- Sulas, F. and Pikirayi, I. (eds). 2018. *Water and Ancient Societies: Resilience, decline and revival*. New York and London: Routledge.