

# Where did King Solomon Get the Gold for the Temple?

## THE RUINS OF ZIMBABWE

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The recent tense interest in the Valley of the Kings and the tomb of Tutenkhamen revives a kindred interest in the mysterious Ruins of Zimbabwe; for both are in the same vast Continent—North and South respectively—and both have a fascinating Biblical association, the one actual, the other presumptive.

Modern busy Rhodesia, in the heart of which stands Zimbabwe as a pathetic inscrutable witness to a remote past, owes its origin under that name to the energy of Rhodes in his aim to bring uncivilized lands under the influence of Anglo-Saxon rule, and his consuming desire to unite British and American efforts to that end. The sanction for the Rhodesian Charter, thirty years ago, may be defined as mainly the willingness, perhaps the desire, of the peaceful Mashonas to contribute to the advance of civilization, and the need of protecting them against the warlike incursive Matabeles. As a resident of over twenty years in South Africa, covering the period of the change, I have been deeply interested in Rhodesia in its modern evolution and its relation to antiquity.

It was in 1868 that a wandering hunter, on the quest for big game in the wilds of Mashonaland and alert for the spoor of the African lion, was suddenly confronted with vast ruins—awesome in themselves, the more so in contrast with the tense silence and the rank grasses and foliage in which they were partly hidden. They comprised a great oval building 290 feet long by 220 feet broad, the walls 35 feet high in places and 16 feet thick at the base, the whole constructed of small finely chiselled granite blocks fitted cleverly without any mortar; near this an ingeniously built hill-citadel or Acropolis of similar construction and, between the two, a variety of smaller ruins indicating a populous city at one time.

Theories of origin may be reduced to two: one, held by the "Modern" school, that these buildings were erected in mediaeval times, but not later than 600 years ago, by a super-native race naturally more advanced and skilled than the natives of today—the claim being based on indirect data and inference which to my mind are quite inconclusive; the other school, equally supported by scholarly research, holding that they were built in remote times by an alien race—probably Phoenician, Chaldean or Sabeian—who were employed by their distant masters to exploit and export the gold of the country. It is interesting to note that metallurgists and mining experts of today, including Mr. John Hays Hammond, estimate that the gold wrought from the ancient workings in Rhodesia must have approximated in value to Seventy-five million pounds sterling and that the processes were evidently the work of skilled miners. It is known that at one time immense quantities of gold were brought to Jerusalem and Babylon, nobody knows where from, and that similar quantities of the precious metal were exported from the country now known as Rhodesia, nobody knows where to. Hence the startling theory—fascinating yet not fantastic—that modern Rhodesia is identical with ancient Ophir, that the numerous small ruins found throughout the country were the remote mining outposts, and Zimbabwe the great central depot where the gold was stored under military protection until it could be transported by caravan to the East African port of Sofala—due East from Zimbabwe—thence to be shipped to the historic lands referred to. What are come of the pros and cons? It is generally accepted that in historical times, but before the advent of Europeans, Mashonaland was occupied for centuries by Bantu tribes who are traditionally of a pastoral nature; yet the "modern" theory has to assume that not later than

600 years ago the natives of the country were both skilled and aggressive in construction. No such buildings have been found anywhere else in Africa—South of the line—not even in Zululand, a fact worth noting in the evidence, for the Zulus, among whom I have mixed for years, have all the suggestion of a virile ancestry.

It is true that the Zimbabwe structures do not seem of a hoary age, for the chisel marks are almost fresh in appearance; but if the 600 years minimum allowed by the "modern" theorist have left no sign of such decay it is a fair assumption that in four or five times that period, and in a singularly preservative climate, the result in the case of granite would be practically the same. Incidentally many of us have seen frescoes in Roman ruins and in Pompeii just about as fresh and unblurred as when they were new, long before the Christian era.

It has been urged that the comparative plainness of construction does not suggest affinity with the ornate sumptuous architecture of Phoenician or Babylonian cities and that the buildings are without inscription; but it may be answered that in this case it would be the practical builders—not the sculptural architects—who would plan and erect these structures, primarily to suit industrial needs and uncertain tenure, but with sufficient social and religious features to minister to a large colony, while the absence of inscription in similar buildings in parts of Asia would seem to prove that in ancient times inscription was not a necessary adjunct of literacy. It may be added that some of the peculiar features of the Zimbabwe buildings, such as the parallel passage between the lofty walls of the Elliptical Temple and the shape of the conical tower therein, indicate a Semitic origin; while the discovery of many soapstone birds—in each case facing the East—suggest a race given to Sun and Star worship. Of such were the Phoenicians with their symbol of the Sacred hawk emblematic of Venus, but never the Bantus.

If it be asked why there are no records of survivors it can perhaps only be assumed that tropical diseases incidental to rank growths, combined with the lack of adequate sanitary provision may in time have decimated the colony and that the latter, a comparative handful among the teeming savage tribes in the "dark continent," may have been suddenly overcome and exterminated and the records lost.

Apart from all question of the Zimbabwe origin, some hold that the location of Ophir was most probably in South Arabia; and while this theory would bring it more within reach of Phoenician knowledge and adventure there are good arguments against it. For example we do not know of any extensive export of gold from South Arabia; but we do know that Arabian records of 900 years ago tell us that at Sofala on the East African coast a flourishing industry in gold export was then, and long had been, a known fact. A glance at the map will shew that Sofala is many hundreds of miles below South Arabia and, as already stated, is due East from Zimbabwe in the interior.

Biblical allusion, though not conclusive on the point, is of deep interest; and among many references I select one from Chronicles, dealing with King Solomon's cooperative relations with the shipping centres of Tyre and Sidon:

"And Hiram sent him by the hand of his servants ships and servants that had knowledge of the sea; and they went with the servants of Solomon to Ophir and took thence four hundred and fifty talents of gold and brought them to King Solomon."

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