

Analysis of Lithic Artifacts from Nyamapfeni Site, Zimbabwe

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Introduction

The lithic artifacts under discussion were submitted by Professor Felix Chami after excavation of Nyamapfeni megalithic site of eastern Zimbabwe in 2009. As shall be noted later, due to several reasons the eastern region of Zimbabwe has received very little attention in Stone Age research compared to the western side. Materials recovered from the site include Later Stone Age (LSA) and Iron Age (IA) artifacts. Only lithic artifacts are discussed here. The IA materials will be discussed by Chami and Mahachi (in volume 10 of this journal).

Background to Stone Age Research Eastern Zimbabwe

Stone Age documentation in Zimbabwe can be traced back to the first decade of the 20th century from reports by professional land surveyors and geologists (Walker 1995, 1998). However, no serious archaeology pursuit took place until 1919 when Arnold and Jones (1919) published their excavation results from Bambata Cave of the Matopos area. The Bambata investigation by Arnold and Jones (1919) and Jones (1926) marked the foundation of building up the history of the Zimbabwean Stone Age sequences. As was the case for most African regions, Jones (1919) and Jones (1926) research of Bambata Cave of the Matopos was faced with a problem of Stone Age Stone nomenclature. Therefore, in order to classify the recovered stone materials a feasible nomenclature for artifacts and their associated industries had to be developed. As a starting point to solve the problem of nomenclature, Jones endorsed terminologies that were used for similar lithic industries in Europe and South Africa. Among the borrowed terminologies included the 'Smithfield' and 'Wilton' all of which had their background from South African LSA industry classification. Encapsulation of these terminologies to the Zimbabwean lithic industry was boosted by Nan Riet Lowe excavation near Bulawayo where materials with similar attributes were exhumed. Soon, the terminologies were adopted by archaeologists working in other areas of Africa including East Africa (see for example the works of Leakey (1931, 1936) and O'Brien (1939). The Wilton industry was essentially distinguished from Smithfield by the presence of crescents in the former and their virtual absence in the latter (Manhire 1987).