

CHAPTER 14

**Faunal Remains from Murahwa's Hill,
Eastern Zimbabwe**

Plan Shenjere

This chapter presents the results of an analysis of faunal remains from Murahwa's Hill, a multi-component farming communities site in Eastern Zimbabwe. The results show that the Early Farming Communities relied more on wild than domestic animals while the Later Farming Communities of the Zimbabwe culture practiced both herding and hunting but with no discernible preferences, contrary to patterns observable elsewhere at elite Zimbabwe culture sites where cattle dominate the faunal assemblages.

Introduction

Faunal remains recovered from the July 2004 archaeological excavations at Murahwa's Hill in Manyikaland, eastern Zimbabwe were analysed. Murahwa's Hill is an important site in understanding the archaeology of eastern Zimbabwe. The material was availed to the author for analysis towards the production of an MA dissertation in Archaeology and training in faunal analysis.

The Site of Murahwa's Hill

Murahwa is a large granite hill located some 3 km to the west of the city of Mutare in the eastern Highlands of Zimbabwe. It lies on latitude 18° 56 S and longitude 32° 39 E (Figure 1). Several cave and rock shelter formations are found around the hill, some of which bear evidence of utilisation by humans from as far back as the Late Stone Age period up to recent times. The main site of Murahwa's Hill (Figure 2) itself is located on a gentle rise on the southern side of the hill. The site was first excavated by Bernhard in the 1960s but the results were never published, although a report is available in the National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe records (Bernhard n.d.). It was re-excavated in 2004 under the University of Zimbabwe Archaeology Unit/University of Bergen Centre for Development Studies NUFU funded archaeological research project entitled *The Ancestral Landscape of Manyikaland*. Both excavations established that Murahwa's Hill is a multi-component site. The occupation sequence shows the presence of Early Farming Communities of the Ziwa ceramic tradition from the late 10th Century AD, followed by the Zimbabwe culture Khami phase dated to the 15th /16th Centuries AD. The final occupation is in the historic period during the 19th Century. This occupation is associated with populations ancestral to the modern Manyika people of Eastern Zimbabwe.