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The Shona

Origin

They were the original inhabitants of modern Zimbabwe.

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Political Organization

1. The kingdom was ruled by a king who was the head of state and government.
2. The office of the king was hereditary
3. The king was the chief religious authority

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He was assisted to rule by the

- i. Queen
- ii. Head drummer
- iii. Nine principal wives of the king
- iv. His sister
- v. Commander-in-chief of the army
- vi. Senior son-in-law of the king (Mbokurumme)
- vii. The chancellor
- viii. Head doorkeeper
- ix. Head cook
- x. Lesser chiefs who paid tribute to the King by providing labour, cattle and agricultural produce.

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4. The king controlled trade and used the revenue]
5. from trade to run the army and the empire
6. The king had a standing army for defence and expansion
7. The vassal states were ruled by Chiefs who paid tribute to the king in the form of slaves and gold, ivory and cattle.
8. Symbols of national unity included the royal fire which was lit at the court of the Mwene Mutapa

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Social Organization

1. The Shona were divided into clans with names such as monkey, leopard, elephant and thus could not eat meat of such animals
2. They believed in the existence of one all powerful god and creator known as Mwari who was worshipped through priests.
3. The priests presided over religious functions. They came from the Rozwi clan. Powers of the priests included:-
 - Warding of epidemics, diseases and wars
 - Rainmaking

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5. They believed in the existence of ancestral spirits i.e.
 - a. Vadzimu - family spirits
 - b. Mhondoro - clan spirit
 - c. Chaminuka - national spirit that settled clan disputes and protected people against injustices in government.
6. Shona elders were highly respected because after death they would become intermediaries

7. Shona were a polygamous society
8. Among the Shona, marriage between related clans was prohibited (exogamous)
9. They lived in stone buildings and they were skilled in masonry.

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Economic Organization

1. They practiced agriculture and grew millet cassava, beans fruits, vegetables etc
2. They kept livestock e.g cows
3. Their main economic activity was trade
4. They practiced long distance trade with the Arabs and Waswahili and the Portuguese. They sold gold, ivory, skins, slaves and copper in exchange for cotton cloth, guns, copper, glassware, beads etc.

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5. They hunted elephants for ivory that was in demand by the Portuguese, Arabs and Waswahili
6. They gathered wild fruits and honey
7. Practiced crafts such as basketry, pottery and carving items from ivory and soapstone
8. Made iron goods e.g. spears knives shields hoes etc
9. They did fishing in rivers and lakes.