Preface

This book is an extension of a doctoral research that I completed with the University of Pretoria. The study focussed on the Great Zimbabwe World Heritage Site, where archaeological researches have largely concentrated on the monumental structures, iconic artifacts and the interpretation of the use of space. However, such studies have often presented Great Zimbabwe as an abandoned city and not as an inhabited one. This study deploys Geographical Information Systems (GIS) tools as well as ethnography to examine the centrality of water in the everyday lives of people living in ancient cities. This is informed by the need to view ancient cities as inhabited settlements with daily requirements of resources such as food and water and not just as ruined or abandoned ones. The study contends that water was one of the key resources in the everyday functioning of the city. As a result, there was an interface between water, water management and the built structures. Although acknowledging that the ethnographic present cannot be taken to represent what obtained in the prehistoric past without presenting challenges, the study explores how contemporary water sources around Great Zimbabwe and water management systems may help archaeologists to reconstruct water management systems to reflect the time when this ancient city was occupied. GIS tools for hydrological modelling are employed to compute design flow around Great Zimbabwe. Using run-off models, the study argues for a re-interpretation of the use of some of the archaeological features found at Great Zimbabwe such as the *dhaka* pits. Through a cost surface analysis, the study provides an insight into how the residents of Great Zimbabwe traversed their landscape and transported water from sources to the dwelling places. The study argues that the sustenance of the ancient city of Great Zimbabwe owed much to the availability of reliable sources of water. As evidence of water engineering, there are features such as terraces, *dhaka* pits and drain-holes, which demonstrate that the residents of Great Zimbabwe were aware of the need to channel water flow, control water run-off, store water and also protect stone walls from storm water. Overall, the study goes beyond the identification of potential and known water sources at Great Zimbabwe by deploying GIS tools, archival sources and ethnography to examine the archaeological implications of water and to analyse how it was entangled with the use of space as well as social formation.