

**Producing the Precolonial: Professional and Popular Lives of Mapungubwe,
1937 – 2017**

by

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I dedicate this work to Ricky and Dom, who taught us that loss was only ever the beginning.

ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study of the changing meanings of the *thing* that is ‘Mapungubwe’ (most often considered as a thirteenth-century southern African state) within and outside the academy from 1937 and 2017, deliberately excluding meanings that might have existed prior to 1937, analysing the socio-political work Mapungubwe has been made to do in this period. The study explores the shaping and positioning of evidence in the production of narratives that ascribe and/or enforce particular truths or regimes of truth. To do this, I consider the politico-cultural associations that convert an object into evidence of something and make that evidence meaningful. Under what conditions, and for what reasons does this conversion occur? And, what specific meaning is imposed into the object? This is, therefore, an analytical disaggregation and political assessment of the particular signs and symbols through which the composite and contested *imaginaire* of Mapungubwe has been historically constructed. Necessarily, it is also an unpicking of the languages of evidence.

The work is divided into three parts, each dealing with a different strut in the making of Mapungubwe. The first chapter covers the archaeological production of Mapungubwe, from the first excavational work conducted in the 1930s, until more recent work, during the 2010s. During the early twentieth century, the topic of Mapungubwe was cloistered within academic archaeology, particularly at the University of Pretoria. It was only after the end of apartheid that the ‘trope’ of Mapungubwe began to be deployed in an increasingly wider social realm and integrated into multiple educational and heritage projects, with particular encouragement from the state. The second chapter looks at the introduction and development of the theme of Mapungubwe in the South African national history education curriculum after 2003, when it was also made a UNESCO World Heritage Site and harnessed as name of the Order of Mapungubwe. The chapter analyses the narrative presentation of Mapungubwe in the existing curriculum, and the attending conceptual devices through which this narrative is constructed and sustained. The third chapter scans the explosion of Mapungubwe in popular discourses, about a decade after its strategic foregrounding in school education and institutionalisation as heritage. In this chapter I examine several literary narratives, artistic productions and promotional activities of tourism in conjunction with the current political and economic developments in the area.

I make use of sources from various different academic disciplines, including archaeology, history, politics, education and history education, literary theory, as well as relevant samples from fictive writing, sculpture, poetry, touristic longform writing, and advertisements. In bringing together such diverse orders of discourse, the thesis attempts to map the expanding topographies of Mapungubwe – a venture that, I submit, has methodological and topical significance beyond the immediate field of inquiry. Through this work, the reader will be able to see how the language used to describe and inscribe meaning in Mapungubwe has changed over time, exposing the malleability of (precolonial) history in the hands of both professionals and non-professionals. The thesis makes clear to the reader the importance of ‘popular’ representations of history in the development of modern culture, both in terms of reproducing existing conditions, as well as resisting them. Finally, the thesis troubles the concept of the ‘precolonial’, and considers what changing purpose the period has had over time, how it shapes our view of history, and how we could alternatively envisage the precolonial and, thus, history.

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Producing the Precolonial Professional and Popular Lives of Mapungubwe, 1932 – 2017

PREFACE

Early in 2017 – the second year of this study – my supervisor, Professor Carolyn Hamilton, handed me her personal copy of Zakes Mda’s 2013 novel, *The Sculptors of Mapungubwe*. At that stage, I had been struggling to write a thesis on the presentation of Mapungubwe in the South African basic education curriculum. I was conscious that this would require me to gain some archaeological knowledge, so that I could ascertain where the knowledge contained in the school curriculum actually came from. And yet the work I was producing felt dull, uninspired, a bit limited and perpetually incomplete. *Sculptors* changed the project fundamentally. It was from that moment that the second part of my title – the professional *and* popular lives – emerged.

Even in the very early stages of my research and writing, I found myself bouncing between the fields of archaeology, formal history, and education. My supervisors themselves were based in different departments, with Professor Hamilton based in Anthropology, Dr Bodhisattva Kar in History, and Dr Kate Angier in Education. With *Sculptors*, the project gained a new shape, and with the requirement of a new conceptual approach. In fact, the novel helped me settle upon a workable structure for the piece (with three chapters, dealing with archaeology, education, and popular representations). However, the research could no longer be conducted under the strict disciplinary limitations of either History or History Education.

Instead, I found a new freedom, along with fresh worries. While I was dealing with rigidly constructed sections of archaeological, then history educational, and then popular knowledge production and products, I had to find a way of analysing the work in a holistic manner, rather than presenting to my reader three separate theses squashed into one. I had to bring the data together – to interpret the three sections of data as linked, yet distinct. I had to subvert academic discipline. The experience was harrowing.

Luckily, I had been absorbed into the Archive and Public Culture initiative (APC), spearheaded by Professor Hamilton, which operates as an interdisciplinary research group, in a much different fashion to the traditional university department. Through the APC, I was able to engage with academics and students from a multitude of disciplines and backgrounds (including historians, archaeologists, literary scholars, fine artists, and museum curators), which offered me a position from which to interpret my data. It was also in this space that the idea of the ‘producing the precolonial’ came to fruition in my mind. This is to say that the ‘precolonial’ is something that is actively constructed in the manner in which we periodise the past and how we populate this periodisation with people, objects and events. From interactions in spaces like those provided by the APC, I managed to grapple with what had at first seemed irreconcilable collection of data.

INTRODUCTION

How does one remember a lost place? What trajectories does imagining (have to) take to summon into existence a world that is no longer available...?

Sumathi Ramaswamy, *The Lost Land of Lemuria*
(2004)¹

Mapungubwe

‘Mapungubwe’ names a place – specifically a sheer-cliffed hill and its immediate surrounds – near to the confluence of the Shashe and Limpopo rivers, at the border between Botswana, Zimbabwe and South Africa. It is a place where various artefacts were found, including gold objects, burial sites and skeletons, as well as imported beads, material, and numerous other remnants.² ‘Mapungubwe’ also names a time in that space, often argued contemporarily to be between 1220 and 1290.³ Like all history, it is *lost*, and yet posited as *discoverable* through a variety of instruments. For instance, one can haul information from the objects of the earth through the disciplinary procedures of archaeology and geology. What is buried can be excavated, and what predates texted record relies that much more upon the meaning made in the objects of archaeological excavation. Positioned as such, Mapungubwe has been at the centre of much archaeological discovery and debate as part of the Shashe-Limpopo Confluence Area since the 1930s.

By the early 2000s, Mapungubwe had been made into an ideological *Naissance* – reinvigorated to inspire a national rebirth.⁴ By 2004, it had been inducted into the national school curriculum, and elevated as a symbol to serve as the highest civilian award in South Africa as the Order of Mapungubwe. Almost simultaneously, it became a United Nations Educational, Scientific and

¹ Sumathi Ramaswamy, *The Lost Land of Lemuria* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2004), 4. Ramaswamy discusses Lemuria, a land that has never existed – taken for a fantasy by scientists. Mapungubwe, by contrast, is something that is taken as real, something that is there to be found, something tangible that can be held, a place that one can go to and ‘be at’. Yet, at the same time, they are both ‘lost’ places. The Mapungubwe resurrected in the archaeological, or in the fictional, cannot be brought back materially – only through a reimagining that we create, that we communicate imaginatively, whether through the stringency of academic discourse, or through the free flow of the fantastical and fictive. Mapungubwe, like Lemuria, is always imagined.

² This is well recorded, but for the latest comprehensive records and interpretations, see Alex Schoeman and Michelle Hay (eds.), *Mapungubwe Reconsidered: Exploring beyond the rise and decline of the Mapungubwe state*, MISTRA Research Report, (Johannesburg, Real African Publishers, 2015)

³ Rachel King, ‘Archaeological Naissance at Mapungubwe’, *Journal of Social Archaeology* (1)(3) (2011), 312.

⁴ Tim Maggs, ‘African Naissance: An Introduction’, *Goodwin Series, Vol.8: African Naissance: The Limpopo Valley 1000 Years Ago* (Dec. 2000), 1-3.

Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) World Heritage site, within the Mapungubwe National Park, run by the state apparatus of the South African National Parks board (SANParks). It is also a flourishing field for fictive and artistic interpretations, such as the work of Zakes Mda, K.A. Nephawe, Beverley Price, Noel Ashton, Chris Mann, and Wayne Visser, to name but a few.

Research questions

This thesis is a study of the changing meanings of the *thing* that is ‘Mapungubwe’ (most often considered as a thirteenth-century southern African state) within and outside the academy between 1937 and 2017, analysing the socio-political work Mapungubwe has been made to do in this period. The research considers two central questions. Firstly, how has the history of Mapungubwe been produced over time, both academically and outside the academy? And secondly, what work has the *thing* ‘Mapungubwe’ been *made to do* in social and political life? In this, I question *who* has the power and authority to represent Mapungubwe, *how* they (choose to) represent it, and *for whom* is Mapungubwe represented? Beyond these issues of personnel, I consider how certain materials from Mapungubwe become considered evidence of particular understandings of the history. What signs and symbols are used, or, more politically, *whose* signs and symbols are used? How were those symbols of Mapungubwe produced, and why were the related understandings of Mapungubwe produced in the specific moment or era of their production? These are historical questions, but they are also questions of the politics of culture and its production. I am asking questions centred around *selection*: how and why that selection occurs, and what is (re)produced from that selection?

In this, it is crucial to consider the *languages of representation* – the signs, symbols, concepts, tropes, and personae – that are used to shape evidence and communicate the meanings inscribed in Mapungubwe.⁵ Importantly, particularly considering the current methodological shifts in the social sciences: who is *excluded* from this through the use of such symbols? How are certain languages (sets of signs and symbols) used to relay the image of Mapungubwe publicly, and

⁵ The concepts of ‘language’ and ‘culture’ that I use throughout this thesis are adopted from the work of Stuart Hall (unless otherwise stated), where language denotes sets of signs, symbols and conceptual meanings, beyond the bounds of the written or spoken word. ‘Language’ implies images, settings, and structures – it implies a certain set of conventions and rules for making meaning. The understanding of culture and cultural production is also largely adopted from Hall, as a circuit between representation, identity, production, consumption and regulation. See Stuart Hall, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London, Sage Publications, 1997) 1-29.

how does power shape the use of these languages? This is an analysis of the *production* and *selection* of ‘Mapungubwe’ through archaeological, educational, and popular representations.

Significance and contribution

The thesis holds significance for multiple fields, bearing important remarks for history (professional or otherwise), archaeology, (history) education and curriculum theory, political studies, literature studies, media studies, and heritage and cultural studies. One of the central aims of this work is to trouble the contemporary (and past) reliance on archaeology in determining the ‘precolonial’ in academia, and to make a claim for the production of the concept and its parts elsewhere, outside the confines of (professional) archaeology and national state authority. The work is also valuable for what has been dubbed a ‘decolonisation project’, of history, of education, of procedural (how) and substantive (what) knowledge. In posing a challenge to disciplinary boundaries and cloistered conventions, the thesis centres upon a consideration of the overflow of knowledge between fields, and how this becomes powerful in the political construction of knowing (in) the past and present. In many ways, this thesis hopes to expose the limitations and possibilities of the disciplines it considers, particularly of archaeology, history, and fictive literature. On a more particular level, this work provides a holistic overview of Mapungubwe, beyond the archaeological, educational, and touristic representations we have become accustomed to. In this overview, an outline can be constructed for the continuities and ruptures between fields to expose the politics of knowledge-making, the cultural reproduction of symbols and the making of meaning in the object/Event of Mapungubwe. Thus, I provide a new take on Mapungubwe, focused around the discursive reconstruction of the object.

The study considers what was occurring in the *making of Mapungubwe* in the course of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, and, through the requirements of the approach, demanded a certain openness or willingness to transgress the boundaries of the established disciplines from which the knowledge I was working with came from. Simply put, one cannot adequately critically analyse the social and political products of archaeology through the disciplinary procedures of archaeology. Similarly, one cannot deconstruct a historiography by simply checking the veracity of the historical facts and evidence. In another vein, history education, general education, and curriculum theory prove inadequate in unpicking the social and political production which occurs in the usage of Mapungubwe in school education. Only an interdisciplinary – or multidisciplinary – approach could adequately deal with the data I had

accumulated and selected for study. The actual methodology is thus quite difficult to convey in a succinct fashion simply because the language for such study does not yet exist, but in this introduction, I have attempted to make my approach as clear as possible.

In simple terms, I wish to consider how Mapungubwe is *made* and *shared*. Put more precisely, I want to analyse the processes and practices through which archaeological and other scientific (or more precisely, *scientised*) knowledge is constructed *and* disseminated, within and beyond the academy. In other words, how is knowledge of Mapungubwe made, how is it made public, and how is it made *publicly*?

Theoretical and conceptual approach

Configuring loss

In the *Lost Land of Lemuria*, Sumathi Ramaswamy describes the writing of history as a ‘labour of loss’. She argues that,

Loss is...the enabling fiction that energises the production of history, a collective practice through which we can cope in modernity with being in exile from our pasts, and with the consequent displacement and estrangement such a rupture produces. Historians, be they professional or amateur, always already write in the shadow of loss. They, too, are engaged in labours of loss.⁶

When we write of the past, we write of a thing that has already slipped through our fingers, and so the very act of (history) writing appears as a parodied resuscitation of what is *presumed* to have been. This work will highlight a particular construction of modernity – a Mapungubwe made in contemporary times that cannot possibly be the Mapungubwe of the past, simply because it is a Mapungubwe born in and for the present. For every mode of discovery, there is a reciprocally produced loss. Thus, conceptually, this thesis explores the production of the discovery of a lost object and the construction of an historic Event in the representations of Mapungubwe through time, and the concurrent production of, or making of meaning in, the concept of the ‘precolonial’. In this I take discovery as an act of structured recovery or a *making* or *re-making* of the past – an activity enabled by the production of a lost object or place in the very writing of history.⁷

⁶ Ramaswamy, *Lost Land of Lemuria*, 8.

⁷ The work of David Lowenthal is useful here, but I prefer in my analysis to take the discipline of History (and Archaeology) at arm’s-length, to run through it with an analytic comb, to explore the subjectivity to power that

This is a thesis about the history of the breathing of life into the ‘thing’ that is Mapungubwe. It is about the imposition of precise, specific meaning – of a ‘truth’ – into the object, so as to produce the historic Event.⁸ This work considers the constructedness of truth, and the assemblages of ‘fact’ as subjective processes, shaped by historically cultured ways of thinking and knowing about the world, that are generally regulated or mediated by a sovereign authority. ‘Truth’ itself is a product of particular regimes of knowledge, and so the truth of the object – in this case Mapungubwe – changes with time and power. There are, therefore, a plurality of ‘Mapungubwes’, emerging from different nodes in the historic relations associated with its construction. There are many ways that Mapungubwe has been brought back from the dead – it has existed and continues to exist in multiple forms, some contradictory to others, and some supplementing or complementing their fellows. Thus, this is a thesis of vastness, of multiplicity, and of interrelation – it is a thesis written in the plural. I write about the public *lives* of Mapungubwe – its variance, its inability to settle, and the refusal of the past to be standardised, or tamed, by History.

Locating the lost in language

If we accept *loss* as the enabling fiction of history writing as Ramaswamy argues, then it is through *language* that we are able to describe what was lost, and to relocate it within the realm of the known. Language makes meaning of the world. It makes the world, its objects and relations, understandable and associable within the limitations of a given language, with its sets of signs and symbols, which, for Hall, are imbued with *cultural* meanings.⁹ Hall describes culture as:

...not so much a set of things...as a process, a set of *practices*... Primarily, culture is concerned with the production and the exchange of meanings –

creeps into, or rather, that conditions the practices and methods for making meaning in both professional and amateur representations. See David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country – Revisited* (London, Cambridge University Press, 2015). South African intellectual Ciraj Rassool has been critical of Lowenthal for giving a certain sanctity to the professional discipline of History. For Lowenthal, according to Rassool, “Heritage...was a zone of exaggeration, myth-making, omission and error. It is distinct from the discipline of History, viewed as ‘higher’ activity of systemic research, evaluation of evidence and interpretation, subject to the weight of previous research and the conventions of peer review. Heritage might have a purpose...but it was not the domain of historians”. See Ciraj Rassool, ‘The Rise of Heritage and the Reconstitution of History in South Africa’, *Kronos*, No. 26 (August 2000), 4.

⁸ I use ‘Event’ in the Badiouan sense, because Mapungubwe is made to mark a rupture in the ‘precolonial’, when a major socio-political change occurs within southern African society, marking a distinct shift in political culture. For Badiou, “Everything...depends on consequences...there exists no stronger a transcendental consequence than that of making something appear in the world which had not existed previously. The imagination of the Event, I insist, is always shaped by the politics of the present”. Alain Badiou, *Polemics*, Translated by S. Corcoran (New York, Verso, 2007), 285.

⁹ Hall, *Representation*, 1.

the ‘giving and taking of meaning’ – between the members of a society or group. To say that two people belong to the same culture is to say that they interpret the world in roughly the same ways and can express themselves, their thoughts and feelings about the world, in ways which will be understood by each other.¹⁰

Thus, language is not so much about the individual as it is about the individual’s capacity to communicate with others. The requirement for successful language and meaning-making is the shared nature of the signs and symbols used in practice. Language empowers certain understandings of what it is used to describe but, at the same time, erases or disempowers those understandings which lie outside the symbolic range of the language used. This is to say that, while Mapungubwe might be open to interpretation and contestation – of multiplicity and plurality – it is often (perhaps inevitably) the case that certain understandings are privileged over others. Thus, Mapungubwe – like all history – becomes a legitimising force of certain authorities or, more generally, of certain understandings of the past and ways of knowing (about) the world. The ‘Mapungubwe’ of one world fades away in the face of a more powerful authorised ‘Mapungubwe’, with all its signs and symbols, thus legitimising a certain worldview or, as I argue, a particular politics, society and culture.

Professional knowledge

This thesis is, therefore, a consideration of an object, and its subjection to changing regimes of knowledge and power, often to be transformed into a contemporarily constitutive Event. The object itself is malleable, and it is never truly the thing that existed in the distant past. What we encounter in the present are refracted images of the past that are always “incomplete”.¹¹ Thus, the meaning made for the precolonial has perhaps less to do with the actual reality of the many eras before European colonialism, and more to do with the perceived political needs of the present. For instance, until only quite recently, the concept of the ‘precolonial’ did not even exist. The period it presently describes was, during the colonial era, referred to as ‘prehistory’ or ‘protohistory’, a time that could not be truly historical because it did not conform to the generally textual recording of the past.¹² Instead, coloniality claimed to have brought ‘history’ with it. At present, the concept of the precolonial is under increased scrutiny, considering that

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹¹ Ramaswamy, *Lost Land of Lemuria*, 8.

¹² See, for instance, the usage of ‘prehistory’ in Raymond Dart, ‘Recent advances in anthropology in Africa’, *The Leech* (April 1938), 53.

it closes the possibility for a nuanced, pluralistic history of the world before colonial times. Authors have come to use such terms as ‘the past before colonial times’ or even hyphenating the term as the ‘pre-colonial’, so as to trouble the concept.¹³ Still, it is often a general designation of a past preceding texted history, particularly in southern Africa.

Archaeology became the primary means for unearthing the unwritten past – the precolonial – according to much of the academy. While both disciplines were concerned with the recoupment of the lost, History was cleaved from Archaeology, which became the professional domain of the study of the past before ‘history’.¹⁴ Archaeology, like all professional disciplines, follows strict rules and conventions. These are based around excavation, collection and categorisation, but, as in the case of all other knowledge production, have been reassessed and remodelled through epochs of power and knowledge.¹⁵ Still, it must be noted that the movements in archaeology are not only constrained by power, but also by technology and its advances.

Sanctified Science

Because of its attachment to science, archaeology has been ascribed a certain sanctified authority over the production and legitimisation of certain knowledges produced of a ‘textless’ past.¹⁶ The words that describe this past are never taken from that past, but rather imposed, whereas texted pasts come with the provision of words genuinely applicable to the era of their inscription.¹⁷ But the language-crafting power of science in the manufacture of truths is quite particular to modern times. It is a case of displacement, where the sacred has been split from practices of ‘honest’ and ‘objective’ meaning-making, which have usurped sanctified knowledge as a modern sanctity of sciences and fact, so much so that “the modern world [has] become a place where it is no longer possible to live in union with the divine”.¹⁸ It is a definitive characteristic of the modernity, a time in which God is dead, burnt at the stake as a heretic. But from the ashes of the monolith rises a new god – a god that preaches the word of science, of objective fact, where faith can be measured, quantified, valued and packaged. The scientific, as we will see, is not so far detached from the commodified, as suggested by the

¹³ Cynthia Kros and John Wright, ‘Promoting public discourses on the past before colonial times: a possible role for the Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory’. Unpublished concept note, (26 October 2017).

¹⁴ See Martin Hall, *Archaeology and the Modern World: Colonial Transcripts in South Africa and Chesapeake* (London, Routledge, 2000).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ For Lewis R. Gordon, this is a “theobiodicean” problem, produced by a conflation of sacred and scientific absolutes. Lewis R. Gordon (2006), ‘African-American Philosophy, Race, and the Geography of Reason’, in L.R. Gordon and J.A. Gordon, *Not Only the Master’s Tools* (New York: Routledge), 7.

¹⁷ This is only relevant because History was taken to be texted, while prehistory remained untexted, and thus beyond the scope of History, until it could be ‘texted’ by archaeologists, through a categorical naming of objects.

¹⁸ Ramaswamy, *Lost Land of Lemuria*, 9.

contemporaneity of the projects of industrial capitalism, colonisation, and positivist social science, conducted often by men of devout faith. That these things emerge under the same regime of knowledge and power is central to the consideration of the supports between professional and popular on the one hand, and secular and sacred on the other.

The results of the scientisation of life in modern times cast by Ramaswamy might seem somewhat depressing and appears to have led the spirit of adventure and inquiry into the dreariness of repetition amid an obsession with the application of stringent scientific method. For her, we have developed something of a loss of imagination. She writes that, “there is no mystery remaining in being. Reality has been rendered dreary, flat, and utilitarian, leaving a great void in the souls of men which they seek to fill by furious activity and through various devices and substitutions”.¹⁹ In Mapungubwe, we can observe the furiousness of work done to assuage the panic felt in the face of the unknown. But, while this portrait of the modern world might appear to be one of dejection, there is still some light that shines through the panic.

It is, then, in the pursuit of the seemingly lost, or unknown, that we (postcolonial subjects) might gain hope.²⁰ We hope to know it, we crave it, we lust after it. We wish to understand the world, to make sense of it, to proclaim to humanity that we are aware of what was, and that we are conscious of where *things* – objects and subjects, including ourselves – come from. In this, we pursue a certain wisdom – we hope to become ‘greater’ by finding what we lost and to make it knowable once more. In this sense, we hope to become whole once again. The past is taken as a part of ourselves, and thus we impose ourselves into the past. Our hope, then, is to find ourselves in the past, no matter how distant that past might be from us. Thus, in this thesis, I hope to “consider how apprehensions of loss may be a source of pleasure and hope, and not just poignancy and pain”.²¹ The thought of recouping the lost, of making that distinguished discovery, of recovering our fractured selves from the past, is a source of wonder, of pleasure, and of awe, rather than merely one-dimensional fear or distaste. We do not so much hate the unknown as we are enamoured by the possibility of knowing it, and our infatuation with our own capacity to make this thing known and knowable to ourselves *and others*.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ See Leonard Praeg, ‘Philosophy, and Teaching (as) Transformation’, *South African Journal of Philosophy* Vol.30. No.3 (2011), 343-359. The author discusses the production, in the early post-apartheid era, of a new national “we”, premised upon public performances of national unity in, for instance, the utterance of the national broadcaster’s SABC-1 slogan of “Simunye – we are one”. But the national “we” is only one instance. In this case, I use “we” to suggest any collective, or community, that produces a language with which to create and convey the past.

²¹ Ramaswamy, *Lost Land of Lemuria*, 8

Popular Lives

But to study the historic production of a subject that exists at present in multiple fields, including archaeology, history, education, heritage, fiction etc., without considering the breadth of *popular* representations would do injustice to the topic itself, as well as the labours of loss engaged by ‘amateur historians’. Similarly, for Stuart Hall, these are the very productions that comprise the cultural life and thus the broad scope of language in a society.²² I wish to take their work with the upmost seriousness, but in this I am conscious that the popular lives of Mapungubwe are always contingent to their sources, and that the sources that have made Mapungubwe through time have changed somewhat. In this, I mean to measure the transposition of language and knowledge from and to the field of the professional in which Mapungubwe’s cloistered birth occurs, into the national public, and into wider (or narrower) popular public spheres.

There have been a number of popular productions of Mapungubwe, especially after the end of apartheid. There have been sculptures (e.g. Beverley Price’s ‘Mapungubwe Re-Mined’, and Noel Ashton’s ‘Mapungubwe Remembered’), poems (e.g. Chris Mann’s ‘Rhinoceros’, and Wayne Visser’s ‘Lost City of Gold’), works of fiction (e.g. Zakes Mda’s *The Sculptors of Mapungubwe*, K.A. Nephawe’s *Legends of the Lost Sacred Kingdom*, and Chris Angus’s *Winston Churchill and the Treasure of Mapungubwe Hill*), and tourist guides (e.g. David Fleminger’s *Mapungubwe Cultural Landscape*), among a variety of others. There is a vast array of reimagined ‘Mapungubwes’. But there have also been schoolbooks, like textbooks, with the inclusion of Mapungubwe into the national school History curriculum. There are many *normative* lives of Mapungubwe – each claiming some position in the general ascendancy of fact in modern discourses.²³ I wish to consider these lives, and how they take hold of proposed fact or, more loosely and perhaps more usefully, previously constructed knowledge of Mapungubwe. Popular representations emerge always as an amalgamation of histories selected as appropriate for the envisioned construction of the thing required to be made. When Mapungubwe is made popularly, it is made through authorial *selection*, which implies a certain authority to obliterate what knowledge does not fit the required mould, and therefore deemed inappropriate or, in the bluntest sense, just plain wrong. The thesis, therefore, moves beyond the limitations of the disciplines of History and Archaeology, and takes seriously the social and

²² Hall, *Representation*, 2-3.

²³ Indeed, that which opposes the normative seeks to impose a new normative.

political productivity of wider public and popular representations and interpretations of Mapungubwe.

Methodological approach

In the first instance, I trace the variations in the making, representation, production, or *recovery* of Mapungubwe, within the broader production of the ‘precolonial’ (or ‘times before colonisation’). In this, I take ‘tracing’ to be an act of ‘backtracking’, where ‘tracking’ implies the goal of finding something, while ‘tracing’ refers to a situation where the ‘thing’ is already found – or rather, it is already (in the process of being) made, represented, produced, or recovered. Thus, I am concerned with discourses on Mapungubwe, but more so with how they have been produced. The method of this thesis is a tracing of these produced forms of Mapungubwe, back through their processes of production, to explore the history of how these particular products came to be. Hence, I must first discern what the *products* are – the produced forms of Mapungubwe, carrying and carried by discourses. Then I must consider how the products came to be what they are – through what processes, through what agencies, and for consumption by whom?

My data, therefore, comprises documents that could be considered to already contain produced forms of Mapungubwe, while simultaneously reproducing that specific understanding of the ‘thing’ that is Mapungubwe, and the language and associated culture attached to that understanding. I have deliberately cast a wide net, since the thesis seeks to explore the reciprocity between professional and popular spheres. This consists primarily of archaeological articles and reports; academic literature from the social sciences; curriculum documents, textbooks, and government statements; as well as news articles, websites, novels, poems and sculptures.

My methodological approach is a blend of, primarily, historical and literary critique, and a political analysis of public pedagogies.²⁴ It is an assessment of how history is used for public pedagogical purposes – how history becomes foundational in public culture, in the nexus of politics, history, and culture. Mapungubwe, in this work, is regarded as a socio-cultural *instrument* – something that is constructed and fundamentally political, but also something that is socio-politically and culturally productive.

²⁴ The latter is drawn from Henry Giroux, ‘Public Pedagogy as Cultural Politics: Stuart Hall and the ‘Crisis’ of Culture, *Cultural Studies*, 14:2 (2000), 341-360.

Central to the method of the thesis is a consideration of the consciousness *of* Mapungubwe that is constructed through representations, paralleled with the socio-political consciousness of worldly relations that is imposed into Mapungubwe, and thus transposed into social life as evidence of certain historical truths. In a sense, I am analysing the stories of Mapungubwe through a deconstructive history of the evidence used to produce such stories, and so this is an analysis of the positioning and shaping of evidence to produce certain narratives. I am *tracing* the historic and existing forms of Mapungubwe through their respective processes of production. Following the terminology of Stuart Hall, I am discerning how certain languages (sets of signs and symbols), over time, have been selected and utilised to describe and inscribe meaning into Mapungubwe, to give it socio-political and, following Hall, cultural purpose and utility. At its simplest, this thesis asks how Mapungubwe has been used to legitimise authority. In this work, I explore the position that Mapungubwe is a produced cultural *impositional* and *inculcative* instrument, as per the theory of Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron in their socio-cultural critique, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*.²⁵ For the authors, public pedagogies are critical in the reproduction of social norms and behaviours. Taken alongside Hall, it is public education (beyond its institutionalised forms) – through the dissemination of particular narratives of historic society – that is able to impose and inculcate a certain worldview or “cultural arbitrary”.²⁶

The methodology is intimately linked to the structure of the thesis, which flows from professional, into educational, and finally into popular knowledge production and dissemination. The shape of the work enables me to move through Mapungubwe knowledge production in a roughly chronological way, that allows me to highlight the epochal political shifts that occur around the topic, alongside the shifting methods and meanings enabled by different regimes of power and knowledge.²⁷ The structure also allows me to break from the tendency to afford epistemological (productive) primacy to the academic disciplines, foregoing the important production occurring in what are often considered less ‘professional’ and more

²⁵ Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*, Translated by R. Nice (London, Sage, 1990), 1-6. In this, I resist affording primacy to a fixed, static conceptualisation or (re)imagination of Mapungubwe, while also admitting that there have been dominant representations and interpretations, which have changed over time alongside (state) power. See Henry Giroux, *On Critical Pedagogy* (New York, Continuum, 2011), 20-21 and 142-156.

²⁶ Bourdieu and Passeron, *Reproduction*, 5.

²⁷ I opt for the word ‘production’ because it implies *process*, but also admits into the process a sense of the commodification required by the moment in history we find ourselves in. My timeline – from 1937 to 2017 – is not independent of these conditions, which Achille Mbembe describes as “the era of neoliberalism, capitalism and animism”. Achille Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason*, translated by Laurent Dubois (Johannesburg, Wits University Press, 2017), 4.

‘popular’ fields of production. Critical to my methodology, therefore, is to displace the authority of the professional in the grafting of facts into or onto truths. This thesis is fundamentally a politicisation of knowledge production and its processes, specifically regarding the contemporary socially, politically and (therefore public) culturally productive power of ‘precolonial’ histories of southern Africa.

Chapter Outline: From professional, to national, to popular

My project for tracing of the history of meaning-making in the object of Mapungubwe takes its form from the historical blooming of Mapungubwe. That is to say, while the history of Mapungubwe begins in the local stories – of which variations are still held by Bantu-speaking communities in the language – I begin the first chapter with the professional archaeological construction of Mapungubwe, since this is the first space in which the ‘thing’ is made publicly after its “discovery” in 1937.²⁸ An oral history project in this direction – to collect, for instance, Vhangona oral histories – would require much more space than I have room for in this thesis. It is, however, high up on the agenda of, for instance, the University of Pretoria (who have initiated an oral history project in the hopes of collecting as much oral history data on Mapungubwe and its landscape), as well as the Mapungubwe Institute for Strategic Reflection (MISTRA), who have produced a thorough initiative towards a complete historicisation of Mapungubwe, including work led by grassroots intellectual Vele Neluvhalani, and other work deeply inspired by the contributions of Victor Ralushai.²⁹ We engage, even within the bounds of professional archaeo-history, in an expansion of the scope of what constitutes legitimate knowledge.

In the first chapter, I wish to explore how the ‘thing’ that is Mapungubwe was given meaning – how and by what the finding and categorisation of the objects excavated was influenced, from the 1930s to the 2010s. In other words, I look at how the procedures and processes of the archaeological discipline (and their changes through time) have constructed meaning in

²⁸ I do this because it is my contention that the bulk of Mapungubwe knowledge we encounter – in professional fields, national education, and the wider popular arts – is fundamentally detached from the local (oral) histories preceding the interventions from the 1930s archaeologists. To begin with oral histories would be to ignore the colonisation of Mapungubwe knowledge – it would be both to afford too much credence to oral histories as fact, as well as disposing with the appropriation, manipulation and actual production of knowledge stemming from ‘settler’ disciplinary discourses. An historicisation of the oral historic contestations between claimants of Mapungubwe history would make for an intriguing study, but unfortunately evades the scope of this thesis.

²⁹ See Alex Schoeman and Michelle Hay (eds.), *Mapungubwe Reconsidered: Exploring beyond the rise and decline of the Mapungubwe state* (revised second edition) (MISTRA Research Report) (Johannesburg, Real African Publishers, 2015). The publication is a comprehensive readdress of the research conducted on Mapungubwe until the present. It is far more expansive and more technically sound than much earlier work on archaeological Mapungubwe.

Mapungubwe, but also how Mapungubwe has acted on the discipline of archaeology. These are the early makings of Mapungubwe, that provide the basis for later knowledge and study, in public and popular fields.

In the second chapter, I explore the entrenchment of Mapungubwe in national education through its inclusion in the Revised National Curriculum Statement of 2002/3. In this, particular and somewhat absolute characteristics are ascribed to Mapungubwe, conveying a very much narrowed ‘national narrative’ version of Mapungubwe. Mapungubwe is made to fit into a much longer history which centres around the figure of the nation. With this, Mapungubwe is made constitutive of the contemporary nation, in certain very specific ways. My concern here is how Mapungubwe is shaped for the imposition and inculcation of a sort of national culture, which is shaped by the narrativisation of history, through the assemblage of events and concepts. In this, I seek to unveil what *work* Mapungubwe is made to do in the national school curriculum.

From this springboard, the third chapter explodes the view of Mapungubwe, to consider a selection of the vast array of popular representations of Mapungubwe. In this, I look to the literary and artistic conventions and traditions which become constitutive of the meaning-making process of the object of Mapungubwe. For instance, what professionally-produced knowledge is selected to make the representation? Or, on a different note, what symbols are chosen to constitute the thing that is Mapungubwe. Centrally, how is the loss of Mapungubwe produced, and how is the activity of discovery enabled and encouraged? Who has lost what, what is there to find, who does this finding, and how are they able to find it? In a sense, this chapter considers the popular imagination, and the wideness of audiences. To whom do we speak of Mapungubwe, and how do we modify our language so as to make the thing communicable. In essence, what do we *make* Mapungubwe (do)? In this third and final chapter, I seek to discern the languages – the sets of signs and symbols – that have been hauled from professional disciplines and converted into more accessible popular forms, such as the novel, documentary, poem, and sculpture.

To summarise the chapters, the first engages the early production of institutional knowledge, the second looks to the use of such knowledge in national education, and the third looks to the popular manipulations of knowledge. Each looks to a certain public, and a specific set of processes of production and consumption of knowledge. The categories of ‘professional’ and ‘popular’ refer to particular publics, but are also in some ways arbitrary, since they are neither

absolute nor completely distinct from one another. In fact, central to this thesis is a consideration of the flows between these fields. In a sense, I have set myself the task of describing the non-absolute nature of disciplinary bounds.

A world beyond science

We live in a world where, more and more often, science is definitive of the truth of things. It is assumed that, above all, only science is able to uncover actual *fact*. As professionals, it is often said that what we do is ‘social *science*’.³⁰ The suffixing of *science* is assumed to afford the knowledge we produce some sense of validity, authority, legitimacy, precision, and rigour in a time of sanctified science. It is these supposedly neutral practices that are presumed to push human society forward into the future, and, in the case of history, that project to us the supposed truth(s) of the past. It is a knowledge of existence that we have lost and must regain – an *essence* of ourselves, and of our world. Thus, the modern pursuit of knowledge itself is a pursuit founded in the retrieval of the lost self.³¹ We see that “high modernity has not been merely preoccupied with progress and advance, but also with loss and disappearance.”³² We fetishise the lost, we yearn for it, and so we engage on (often ludicrously expensive) voyages of *discovery* to find it. For science, loss reaches its productive pinnacle in the act of discovery, which, under the rules of science, is a strictly procedural activity. Our professional goals, in the present, are therefore not so different to the European voyagers so often disparaged in contemporary writing – those who designated the Orient only to constitute the self against the Occident. This work, therefore, is an analysis of the production of loss, and the reciprocal activity of discovery that comes with it. It is about the varying nature of the constructed loss, and, in turn, the modes of discovery that are perceived to be required, and what journeys are made towards that endeavour. What is the produced ‘loss’ that we are in search of?

This work hopes to shed some light on both the particularity of Mapungubwe, but also on the methodology of history-writing in its widest conception – as a public practice, rather than the property of professional historians. In a sense, it is an exposition of the non-absolute nature of the work we do, and to give some substance to the claim that the act of historical recovery is

³⁰ This is practically emphasised in the proliferation of the *Bachelor of Social Science* degree, which is often indistinct from the studies of the *Bachelor of Arts* degree in contemporary times.

³¹ Perhaps this could be said to be an alienation stemming from the modern human endurance of the alienated post-industrial relations between capital and labour, where we, workers of any particular field, are always detached from the products of our own labour, and the consumption of that product. History itself appears as a product of the factory assembly line, where each piece becomes detached from the other.

³² Ramaswamy, *Lost Land of Lemuria*, 1.

an act of sociocultural reproduction. I wish to look to the productivity of Mapungubwe – in society, and specifically with regard to the shape and nuance it is made to provide to the concept of the precolonial. This piece is about the work that Mapungubwe is made to do, through the production of its loss and the enabling, execution and communication of its discovery, from its cloistered professional birth in the 1930s, to its explosive rebirth after 2003, until the very contemporary representations of 2017.

CHAPTER 1

Professionalising Mapungubwe

The archaeological excavation, interpretation and making of Mapungubwe

The making of archaeological evidence...entails interventions that go well beyond interpretative acts. In excavating the land, archaeologists carve particular (kinds of) objects out of the contours of the earth's depths-depending, of course, on the specific excavating techniques used, the kinds of remains made visible, and which of those remains are recognized as significant and thus recorded (inscribed as evidence) and preserved. In so doing, archaeologists assemble material culture henceforth embedded in the terrain itself, facts on the ground that instantiate particular histories and historicities.

Nadia Abu El-Haj, *Facts on the Ground: Archaeological Practice and Territorial Self-Fashioning in Israeli Society*³³

Archaeology is about excavation, but it is also about importing meaning into the things that are excavated from a particular *place*. Archaeology is not merely about discovering the past, but also about making meaning in the present. It is also about making that meaning communicable to a certain professional public, but also about rendering it inaccessible, fenced off by nets of technocratic jargon. The languages of archaeology are often claimed as objective, scientific, dissociated, dispassionate, yet intrigued and enthralled by the activity of finding meaning in the object. This chapter is about the almost-century-old history of meaning-making in the ‘thing’ that is Mapungubwe, through the import of historically-weighted concepts and symbols into the objects of Mapungubwe. It is about (archaeological) naming, but more so it is about categorisation and conceptualisation – how the names are organised together; how patterns are constructed or satisfied. It is about where the names come from, and how the names organise and produce meaning in the thing or, perhaps, place – meaning that reaches far outside the terrain professionally claimed by archaeologists. ‘Mapungubwe’, strictly speaking, does not

³³ Nadia Abu El-Haj, *Facts on the Ground: Archaeological Practice and Territorial Self-Fashioning in Israeli Society*, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2001), 13.

exist until it is uttered. So, let us begin with the initial appropriative utterance in the archaeological professionalisation of Mapungubwe.³⁴

Introduction

When Professor Leo Fouché introduced Mapungubwe to the world, he provided the means for communicating the name: “The reader, confronted for the first time with the word ‘Mapungubwe’, will want to know how it is pronounced. The pronunciation is *Ma-pu-ngû-bwe*, with the accent on the penultimate syllable. The *u* sound is, in both cases, equivalent to *oo*, as in *food*.”³⁵ He meant for it to be spoken about – perhaps even discussed or debated – and not merely read. Though the name ‘Mapungubwe’ had already existed among local African communities, and been harvested by archaeologists, it posed something mysterious to its new audience – something so difficult to announce that its tangible materiality was itself something of intoxicating fascination, a symbol of the exotic long-lost *other world*.³⁶ Indeed, it was something new and exotic to be *consumed*, much like the ‘food’ to which it had been attached by Fouché. The objects of a past long-gone promised to yield, to the new world, truths of a much older primordial world – a particularly African lost ‘other world’, now found, and it was said *Ma-pu-ngû-bwe*.

Archaeologists began excavating in 1934 with the hopes of unearthing the objective, irrevocable, seemingly irrecoverable *facts* of the long African past, then described as *pre-history* – a time before time itself. But before it could be recovered, the objects founding the history of Africa needed to be *discovered*. The assumption, even before ‘Mapungubwe’ had even been conceived by archaeologists, was that there was indeed *lost* treasure to be found by the brave investigator, whatever vocation they might hail from. Mapungubwe was, first and foremost, a marvellous treasure discovered, and it was the duty of those graced with its

³⁴ I have chosen to relate this chapter chronologically so as to present to the reader epochal clusters of the production of Mapungubwe. Veering off chronology (as I have experimented in drafts) tends to run the risk of obfuscating the shifts in regimes of power/knowledge that condition the knowledge production during certain times. We see that Fouché’s 1937 publication is pre-apartheid, Gardner 1940-1963 is apartheid era, and the work of Chirikure (for example) is post-apartheid. The knowledge production and methods of archaeology develop and change, but within epochs there is a give-and-take relationship between fields of scientised and scientific knowledge production. I have, in this chapter, attempted to map broad power/knowledge shifts through regimes through the use of chronology. This is not to say that history is itself linear, but rather to magnify the point I am trying to make: that knowledge (about Mapungubwe) is political, rather than objectively scientific, and that the precolonial has, since at least the nineteenth century, served as legitimisation of certain authorities, which are often of the state, or at least an oppressive and dominant force.

³⁵ Leo Fouché, ‘Preface’, *Mapungubwe, Ancient Bantu Civilisation on the Limpopo; Reports on Excavations at Mapungubwe (Northern Transvaal), from February 1933 to June 1935*. (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1937), 1.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

presence to expose the once-lost wonder to the world at large. It is in 1933, then, that the public life of Mapungubwe begins, though it is a cloistered, professional public life. As Dr Otsile Ntsoane argued in 2015, “the recent archaeological approach is interesting...But we must talk about 70 years ago first”.³⁷ We begin, then, with a group of ‘explorers’ in what is now the Limpopo province of South Africa, near to where the Shashe river meets the Limpopo, on a Hill at a vast game farm title-deeded to a man called E.E. Collins, who had used it as his winter hunting getaway. But Mr Collins and his deed are not our primary concern for this project. Rather, the concern, in this case, is with treasure-hunters.

Greefswald

The farmers E.S.J. and his son J.C.O. van Graan were described in the writings of the 1930s as both adventurous and responsible characters.³⁸ Not only did they endeavour to discover the promised-but-lost treasures of the mysterious hill on Greefswald farm, but they also reported their findings to the University of Pretoria. L.P. Kirwan related the finding of the objects of Mapungubwe by van Graan, remarking that the whole escapade “has the authentic Rider Haggard touch”, referring to the late nineteenth and early twentieth century English fiction author.³⁹ According to Kirwan:

A farmer, van Graan, it seems, heard strange tales from the Natives in this desolate region of the Transvaal of a mad white man, living in a cave on the banks of the Limpopo, who had climbed the hill of Mapungubwe, courting certain death at the hands of the Great Ones whose spirits were said to haunt the place. Miraculously he returned, with a token of his visit in the form of some earthenware vessels which, the Natives declared, belonged to some remote age.⁴⁰

Upon hearing of the success in finding gold of a man named Lottering, who lived as a hermit nearby, the adventurous spirit of van Graan leapt to attention, and he soon employed a local man named Mowena (or rather, his son) to show him, his son, and three others the way up the

³⁷ Alex Schoeman, Sekibakiba Lekgoathi, Simon Hall, Vele Neluvhalani, Otsile Ntsoane, David Pearce in Alex Schoeman and Michelle Hay (eds.), *Mapungubwe Reconsidered: Exploring beyond the rise and decline of the Mapungubwe state*, MISTRA Research Report, (Johannesburg, Real African Publishers, 2013), 14. At the time of publication, it was 83 years since the van Graan’s expedition, not 70. In fact, the second set of excavations were concluded 75 years ago.

³⁸ Leo Fouché’s, ‘Discovery of Mapungubwe’ (Letter from Fouché to Jerry van Graan, 2 October 1933), 1. Accessible at <https://repository.up.ac.za/handle/2263/1239?show=full> [last accessed 12/02/18]

³⁹ Lawrence P. Kirwan, ‘Recent Archaeology in British Africa’ *Journal of the Royal African Society*, No.149, Oct. (1938), 494-501.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 495.

Hill in search of the mysterious treasure.⁴¹ The group of amateur explorers found gold-plated ornamental goods, as well as some remains of skeletons which dissipated when exposed to the air.⁴² What occurred next has been described as uncharacteristic for colonial-era adventurers. Instead of looting the trove, they reported the find to what they considered to be the relevant authority, which was, in this case, the archaeology department of the University of Pretoria, where the younger van Graan had studied the discipline.⁴³

“Simbabwe goud!”

The report from van Graan was heeded by Prof. Leo Fouché at the University of Pretoria, who took immediate action towards further excavation of the hill on Greefswald. In his letter in response to the explorer’s (now ‘successful discoverer’s’) initial report, Fouché referred to his marvel at the finding of “Simbabwe goud!” in South Africa, which he had already sent off to the National Mint for valuing of the gold. The letter began, “Waarde van Graan, Jou pakkie wat gister aangekom het, was ‘n ware bom! Ek het dit dadelik uitgeroep: ‘n nuwe Simbabwe!” (roughly translated: “Dear van Graan, Your package that arrived yesterday was a huge surprise! I immediately exclaimed: a new Zimbabwe!”).⁴⁴ Immediately, and without any analysis of the site itself – from a reading merely of the objects sent by van Graan – the enthused Leo Fouché had already determined that the objects found at Mapungubwe were linked to Zimbabwe culture, which at the time had grabbed the interest of the British and colonial archaeological world, explicated by Gertrude Caton-Thompson. The immediate reach for Zimbabwe is critical to the shaping of Mapungubwe interpretations to come, and the influence of the interventions of Caton-Thompson in early African archaeology should not be underestimated.

During 1920s, the British archaeologist had trained and conducted her previous archaeological research in Egypt. It was in Egyptology – then the fulcrum of African archaeology and historicisation, and of explorative fancy to British colonists (who had recently mandated to

⁴¹ Fouché, *Mapungubwe Vol. 1*, xv. See also David Fleminger, *Mapungubwe Cultural Landscape* (Pinetown, 30 Degrees South, 2008), 83. Mowena (according to Ralushai, perhaps Mokwena), who was allegedly old and blind, refused to show the group up the hill, arguing for its sanctity, though settling on the assumption that the van Graan company would never find the hidden trail up the hill. The group eventually coaxed a son of Mowena/Mokwena to guide them up the hill, but the conditions of the negotiation are unclear from the available source material. Xolelwa Kashe-Katiya, ‘Carefully Hidden Away: excavating the archive of the Mapungubwe dead and their possessions’ Unpublished masters thesis (UCT), 64. See also Victor N.M.N Ralushai, *A preliminary report on the Oral History of Mapungubwe: Mapungubwe Oral History Project*, (Pretoria, Department of Environment Affairs and Tourism, 2002).

⁴² Kirwan, ‘Recent Archaeology in British Africa’, 495.

⁴³ see Gertrude Caton-Thompson, *The Zimbabwe Culture* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1931) for an idea of the looting that had occurred at Egyptian and southern African archaeological sites.

⁴⁴ Fouché ‘Discovery of Mapungubwe’ (letter to van Graan), 1. Note that “ware bom” translates as “real bomb”, which contains similar metaphorical meaning to the English.

themselves and France much of the highly excavatable and archivable Middle East) that the archaeology for the rest of the continent spawned.⁴⁵ What methodologies were to be imported into the archaeology of Great Zimbabwe in the 1920 were directly attached to the methodologies developed by Caton-Thompson and others in Egypt, although she was lauded for her sensitivity to the particularity of context in the Zimbabwe ruins.⁴⁶ Consequently, the archaeological practices, theories and methodologies applied to the findings on Greefswald farm in the 1930s were drawn from the geographically remote instance of ancient Egyptian antiquity. Naming, in particular, was drawn from Egypt. For instance, the name “K2”, applied to the Bambandyanalo site, about a kilometre away from Mapungubwe Hill, is derived from the architectural artefacts’ similarity to the ‘Koms’ of Egypt.⁴⁷ In general, too, the gold burials were later likened to the burials of the Egyptian pharaohs.⁴⁸ In Great Zimbabwe, the ‘Acropolis’ could not but take its shape from Egyptological spatial categories.⁴⁹

But the links constructed in the archaeological praxes developed at Egypt, Zimbabwe and Mapungubwe are more noteworthy than they are immediately problematic. Caton-Thompson’s work had been pivotal in the Africanisation of Great Zimbabwe history, which had been submerged in mystery in popular ‘lost world’ or ‘dark continent’ rhetoric, pioneered in the work of turn-of-the-century fiction writers like H. Rider Haggard and Arthur Conan Doyle.⁵⁰ The archaeologist presented an argument – through meticulously categorised material findings – that Great Zimbabwe was part of a greater African culture of a medieval, or even post-medieval, society in southern Africa, dating to the fourteenth and fifteenth century. Such findings debunked the mythologies upon which the popular ‘lost world’ genre of creative

⁴⁵ Graham Connah, ‘Archaeological Practice in Africa: A Historical Perspective’ in Peter Mitchell and Paul J. Lane (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of African Archaeology* (London, Oxford University Press, 2013), 17. The author also takes note of the focus placed by European archaeologists on stone-age African histories, regarding later histories as “short and not worth archaeological investigation”. The primordial, the ‘primitive’ represented Africa’s long past.

⁴⁶ Martin Hall, ‘Pots and Politics: ceramic interpretations in southern Africa’, *World Archaeology* vol.15 no.3, (1984).

⁴⁷ Guy A. Gardner, ‘Hottentot Culture on the Limpopo’, *South African Archaeological Bulletin* vol.4 no.6 (Dec. 1949), 117.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ “Acropolis” is taken from the Greek, and so the categorical and meaning-laden naming of southern African archaeological sites and objects becomes entwined in the development and dissemination of Greco-Latin patterns of the past.

⁵⁰ Hall, ‘Pots and Politics’, 263. Conan Doyle published *The Lost World* in 1912, and Haggard published his first Allan Quatermain novel, *King Solomon’s Mines*, in 1885. Agatha Christie also published *The Adventure of the Egyptian Tomb* in 1925, having spent time in Cairo, like many British tourists, in the early twentieth century. Egypt and Egyptology, and the archaeological riches of the African continent were (in the process of being) embedded in the British literary imagination. The relation of lost and found was regularly performed through such literature.

writing was based.⁵¹ Caton-Thompson's finds rattled the world of colonial literature and, in particular, British intellectual imaginations, insisting that Great Zimbabwe was a Bantu-African construction, rather than the lost world it was thought to be. In 1931 it became the case that King Solomon's capital, Ophir, the lost city of gold, could no longer be located in southern Africa.⁵² The region had lost its biblical relatability, but it had gained new meaning for positivist archaeologists and empiricist historians seeking to construct a historical narrative of 'Bantu' and 'pre-Bantu' occupation of the southmost regions of the continent.⁵³

Southern African archaeology was on the rise. It had become not only fashionable, but also potentially financially lucrative, not least because of the relatability to Egyptian archaeology imposed into the objects. Mapungubwe, for the archaeologists involved, presented more than merely an intervention into the archaeological world and the great narrative of African history (then described as "pre-history"),⁵⁴ but also a career-making opportunity. Immediately upon the unearthing of the objects, Fouché contacted *The Star* and *The Argus* regarding media rights to the existing and potential finds from Greefswald.⁵⁵ Each paid £25 – described as a "gift" by Fouché, and while Paver, the editor of *The Star*, had "priority rights" to all "official information", all matter for publications was to first go through Fouché. Rights would not be afforded to the (national) Broadcasting co., as "They are parasitic – like Reuter's, – using expired copyright news".⁵⁶ At the same time, Fouché sent the golden objects found to the National Mint for valuing, and was in the process of acquiring, via the authority of the Rector of the University of Pretoria, several hundred pounds to buy Greefswald farm from Collins.⁵⁷ It is not in the post-apartheid that Mapungubwe is suddenly converted into a commodity

⁵¹ *Ibid.* Hall notes that Caton-Thompson's interpretations, while funded through the Royal Archaeological Society, were not embraced wholeheartedly into the greater spectrum of archaeological and historical interpretations of the region's past. It would be some 40 years until the claim for Great Zimbabwe's African construction would be acknowledged, and then only via the unquestioned empiricism of skeletal remains.

⁵² Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*, (London, Routledge, 1995), 4. In her introduction, the author explores the representative symbols through which Haggard's story is related, as a confluence of imperialist conceptualisations of race, class, and gender. The initial reference between southern Africa and Ophir appears to be made by Thomé Lopes, Vasco da Gama's scribe, around 1502. Sofala (in Mozambique) can still be observed demarcated as Ophir on Lopes' maps of the region.

⁵³ Note, though, that Caton-Thompson was, too, stricken by the "settler paradigm", wherein post-Zimbabwe was a "progressive degradation" of society, towards the necessarily colonisable natives of southern Africa. See Hall, 'Pots and Politics', 265.

⁵⁴ Raymond Dart, 'Recent advances in anthropology in Africa', *The Leech*, April (1938), 53.

⁵⁵ Leo Fouché, 'Discovery of Mapungubwe – Media Rights' (Letter to the Rector of the University of Pretoria, 1933), 1. Accessible at <https://repository.up.ac.za/handle/2263/1359?show=full> [last accessed 12/02/18].

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Leo Fouché, 'Purchase of Greefswald' (Letter to the Rector of the University of Pretoria, 20 October 1933), 1. Accessible at <https://repository.up.ac.za/handle/2263/1362?show=full> [last accessed 12/02/18].

through its conversion into UNESCO-authorised heritage, but rather in the immediate moments of its ‘discovery’ in the early 1930s.

The first excavations and the first publication (1934 – 1937)

The first set of excavations were led by Rev. Neville Jones, beginning in 1934, who conducted digs on the summit of the Hill, and at the foot of the Western ascent.⁵⁸ Jones articulated the three main objectives of the excavations as: 1) “The discovery of such evidence as should enable us to arrive at a certain, or probable, date for the occupation of Mapungubwe”; 2) “The sifting of evidence for the establishment of cultural contacts with other contemporary peoples, whether indigenous or foreign”; and 3) “The collection of such material as would help us to know what manner of people lived there, and to note such cultural features or peculiarities as might reveal themselves”.⁵⁹ Thus, for the first excavators of Mapungubwe, what was key was to decipher a chronology of cultural society and cultural relations across space and time, through an archaeology of the objects found. In other words, certain objects were conceived as predisposed to *chronologising* and *culturing* Mapungubwe, which were generally drawn from earlier work in Egypt and Zimbabwe by the likes of Caton-Thompson. The collections made from Mapungubwe and the surrounds were vast, and included at least nineteen other excavations sites, all situated on Greefswald farm.⁶⁰ The recorded objects found included gold items, ceramic pottery, glass beads, as well as skeletons.

Gold found at Mapungubwe

During these early excavations, the relation between skeletal remains and the golden objects found was critical in the status-making of the object/subject relation constructed into the archaeology of Mapungubwe.⁶¹ What this means is that the golden objects which were found were attributed greater importance in archaeological *interpretations* (although not necessarily quantitatively in analysis) because they were found in particular graves, high up on the hill. But, reciprocally, the skeletons in the graves were attributed greater importance because they also contained the golden objects. It was also with gold that Mapungubwe could be further linked to the Second Zimbabwe Period which, apart from certain ceramics, was one of a number of tangible links to Great Zimbabwe archaeology.⁶² The confluence of *gold* and *burial*

⁵⁸ Neville Jones, ‘The 1934 Expedition’ in Fouché, *Mapungubwe Vol. 1*, 9. See also Kirwan, ‘Recent Archaeology in British Africa’, 496.

⁵⁹ Jones, ‘The 1934 Expedition’, 10.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁶¹ M. Weber, R. Pearson and G.H. Stanley, ‘Metallurgical Material’ in Fouché, *Mapungubwe Vol. 1*, 114-119.

⁶² Fouché, *Mapungubwe Vol. 1*, 25-27.

appealed to one of the core areas of fascination for early African archaeological practice and interpretation: Egypt.⁶³ Mapungubwe appeared to mirror the great graves of the pharaohs – situated apart from the peasantry although considered to be built by the peasantry, buried off the ground, and adorned with gold and other finery. Thus, Mapungubwe promised to yield fascinating, mystical, and highly cultured finds, comparable to the already highly romanticised history of ‘ancient Egypt’.

But at this early stage, golden objects did not necessarily receive greater attention from archaeologists.⁶⁴ While the finding of golden objects brought significant interest, the initial publication from Fouché considered the other objects found – the wooden and glass beads, and the ceramics – with an equal seriousness.⁶⁵ But it was not whether golden objects received greater literary coverage at that early stage, but rather how the finding of golden objects in graves shaped the archaeological practices and interpretations that were to come. The locus of excavation was the Hill, where the skeletons and gold were found. While excavations in the 1930s extended to the valley and the surrounds, and readings were compared with the wide variety of other archaeological finds around the region, which were dominated by Great Zimbabwe archaeology.

John Schofield’s ceramic sequencing

Neither gold, skeletal remains, beads, or other objects in the graves gave any real indication of the age or chronology of the site, its society, or its objects, which was articulated by Jones as a key objective of the excavations.⁶⁶ It was in *ceramics* that archaeologists were able to find some means for positioning Mapungubwe in time. Particularly useful was the analysis provided by John Schofield, who had spent some time in then-Rhodesia, where he “extended his archaeological classification to a culture one”.⁶⁷ For Schofield, pottery provided to the archaeological historian a spiritual certainty, requiring the reciprocal faith from its believer: “Our faith rests on the knowledge that pottery, which in every other field of archaeological

⁶³ John F. Schofield, ‘Work Done in 1934: Pottery’ in Fouché *Mapungubwe Vol.1*, 44.

⁶⁴ In fact, they are dealt with within only five pages of text in Fouché *Mapungubwe Vol. 1*.

⁶⁵ Schofield, ‘1934: Pottery’, 32. See also H.C. Beck, ‘Report on Beads’ in Fouché, *Mapungubwe Vol. 1*, 103.

⁶⁶ It would not be until the late 1940s that Willard Libby would develop radiocarbon dating, which widened the scope for the dating of archaeological objects. Sheridan Bowman, *Radiocarbon Dating*, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1990), 9.

⁶⁷ Roger Summers, ‘Forty Years’ Progress in Iron Age Studies in Rhodesia, 1929-1969’, *The South African Archaeological Bulletin*, Vol. 25, No. 99/100 (Dec. 1970), 95.

research has proved a faithful guide, will not fail us in South Africa, and must, as our work progresses, unlock many doors which are at present closed to us”.⁶⁸

Schofield described two separate groups of people from a ceramic analysis focused on the patterns on pots.⁶⁹ This was then interpreted as a convergence of two distinct groups – one from the northeast, the other from the west – at Mapungubwe.⁷⁰ From the northeast came what Caton-Thompson had designated as the Zimbabwe second period culture of the mid-sixteenth century, belonging to a Shona genealogy. From the west came “Zimbabwe ‘A’” culture, related to the first people of Zimbabwe, as well as “Sotho-Chuana stock”.⁷¹ Both designations are taken from Caton-Thompson’s cultural-temporal categorisations of the Great Zimbabwe excavational findings. The interpretation at this stage was through already formulated lenses that had emerged in the archaeology of another nearby cultured place, requiring an intimate relatability between the sites before than relatability could be ascertained with any certainty beyond geographic locale and ethnic assumptions.

Lestrade’s ethnology

The initial ethnological analysis related to the first excavational report was conducted by Gerard Paul Lestrade. Lestrade used various “informants”, from various locations and cultural groups around the Shashe-Limpopo confluence area.⁷² His “trips” to the villages were generally confined to the headquarters of chiefs.⁷³ Assumedly, he would have needed their permission to traipse around the villages and surrounding land. By his own admission, he was mistrusted by many of the villagers, who saw the removal of Mapungubwe objects as a desecration of a sacred space.⁷⁴ His interviews generally ‘tested’ the ethno-historical knowledge of his informants, as well as their knowledge and attitudes towards certain objects and materials.⁷⁵

⁶⁸ Schofield, ‘1934: Pottery’, 32. He echoes Caton-Thompsons words, “pottery, that loyal friend, alone tells a straightforward tale” (Caton-Thompson, *Great Zimbabwe*, 190). Caton-Thompson distinguished her ‘classes’ based on “colour, technique, and decoration”, and determined from this a direct link between ceramic class and real ethnicity. See Hall, ‘Pots and Politics’, 265.

⁶⁹ Schofield, ‘1934: Pottery’, 32.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 42. Note, too, the difference in meaning of the word ‘culture’ in early twentieth century archaeology, versus that of Stuart Hall (*Representation*, 2). For archaeologists of the era in question, ‘culture’ was generally a static empirical category, while for Hall it is a state of perpetual production.

⁷² Gerard P. Lestrade, ‘Ethnological Investigations’, in Leo Fouché, (ed.), *Mapungubwe, Ancient Bantu Civilisation on the Limpopo, Reports on Excavations at Mapungubwe (Northern Transvaal) from February 1933 to June 1935* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1937), 119.

⁷³ Lestrade, ‘Ethnological Investigations’, 119-120.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 119-120.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 119.

Lestrade conducted an object-driven ethnology, rather than a linguistic (or other) ethnology, and, in fact, reported very little on language. He regarded the oral traditional history of the region as “in an extremely confused state”, and thus oral histories were taken to be useless to the archaeological cohort.⁷⁶ He did, however include a reasonably long section on cultural “strains”, predominantly “Shona-Venda”, “Sotho”, and “Lemba” strains, emphasising a “Sotho conquest” of the Shona-Venda occupants.⁷⁷ This implied a single violent imposition on the part of the Sotho emphasising a tale of *invasion*.

His findings were presented along the lines of local “abilities” to identify objects from the site, to find out whose historical culture they belonged to. Pottery and beads he found to be common to all three groups.⁷⁸ However, gold beads and plating were found to be alien to Shona-Venda and Sotho strains, which he determined linguistically (despite emphasising the confusing nature of linguistic evidence), stating that the Shona-Venda and Sotho words for gold, brass and copper was the same (“-swuku”, translated by Lestrade as ‘red’).⁷⁹ This evidence, alongside the material evidence provided by excavators, led Lestrade to argue that, while smelting was practiced by local Bantu folk, goldmining was not indigenous to southern African societies, since there was no physical evidence of goldmining. For Lestrade, the introduction of gold was attributable to the Lemba strain, which had comingled with Arab (and Swahili) influences.⁸⁰ Thus, according to Lestrade, the gold fetish interpreted at Mapungubwe came from outside, from an “alien” influence.⁸¹

Alexander Galloway’s skeletons

But while the application of Caton-Thompson’s categories and methods in Schofield’s work in particular, led to readings of the collected data that determined the hill in Greefswald to be of Bantu occupation, skeletal analyses – appearing right at the end of the 1937 report – presented drastically different conclusions.⁸² According to Alexander Galloway, “...no true Negro remains have been found at Mapungubwe ... The scarcity of Negro features can mean only one thing, that the Negro features are alien.”⁸³ Galloway determined that, rather than the

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 120.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 121.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 121-123.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 124.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² The term ‘Bantu’, in the academy of the time, referred to a linguistic group. However, it entered usage as a general and interchangeable signifier for Black people, particularly in South Africa. See Saul Dubow, *Scientific Racism in Modern South Africa* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995), 94.

⁸³ Alexander Galloway, ‘The Skeletal Remains of Mapungubwe’ in Fouché, *Mapungubwe Vol. 1*, 162. Saul Dubow has also addressed the questionable political nature of physical anthropology, noticing the parallels

Shona/Sotho rooted people found in Schofield's analysis, the Hill must have been inhabited by "Bush-Boskop people, showing sporadically a few Negro features", although they were of a "much purer physical type than would be expected from such a site", representing "a homogenous people which had been stabilised over many centuries, since the racial features are so constant".⁸⁴ Galloway's analysis relied on a set of scientific data and method that set Bantu folk as "impure", against presumable Hottentot purity – symbols of (im)purity are imparted into the characters comprising (what was at this stage referred to as) *prehistory*.⁸⁵

The Bush-Boskop category, into which the skeletons of Mapungubwe were ordered, was regarded as relatively pure, tainted only by the evidence of Bantu influence in the material culture, and percentiles of Bantu genetic mutilation of the 'purer' race.⁸⁶ Galloway and his team had performed a comparative study, taking fifty-five 'Transvaal Basuto' skulls, since it was the "tribe" he had "proceeded the furthest with...and because these Transvaal Basuto skulls represent the descendants of the oldest Negro inhabitants of the northern half of the Transvaal".⁸⁷ Additionally, as of 1934, a team of research students from the University of Pretoria Department of Anthropology had "described the physical anthropology of the Bush skeleton", referring to the technical anthropological group comprising Bushmen, and Hottentots – the indigenous hunter-gatherers and herders of southern Africa.⁸⁸ Similar ethno-skeletal categorisations were emerging around the world, often in racist pseudo-sciences funded and promoted by colonial governments (e.g. 'research' done in Australia, or Congo, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century).⁸⁹

Galloway was rigorous in his application of terminology, opting for physical anthropological categories rather than linguistic terms, in accordance with the conventions of skeletal analysis. According to A.J.H. Goodwin, "Dr Galloway's evidence is frankly and very fully given.

between existing state and colonial politics and scientific findings during the twentieth century in particular. For Dubow, Galloway's findings were isolated in the 1937 publication, but belonged to the popular "Dartian school", led by Raymond Dart, who had been in the favour of Jan Smuts, who stood as something of a patron for certain early twentieth century south African archaeologists, like Dart and Goodwin. See Saul Dubow, *Scientific Racism in Modern South Africa*, 95.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* See also Alexander Galloway, 'Recent Discoveries in South African Physical Anthropology', *Man*, Vol.38 (July 1938), 106.

⁸⁵ Galloway, 'Recent discoveries', 106.

⁸⁶ Raymond Dart, 'Recent discoveries bearing on human history in southern Africa', *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. 70, No. 1 (1940), 20.

⁸⁷ Galloway, 'The Skeletal Remains of Mapungubwe', *Mapungubwe Vol. 1*, 129

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ See Dubow, *Scientific Racism in Modern South Africa*, 26. Dubow provides a general opinion on a politics physical anthropology. See Frank Spencer, *History of Physical Anthropology Volume 1* (Oxfordshire, Taylor and Francis, 1997), 133-137. Spencer provides a detailed (and political) historical account of physical anthropology in Australia.

Whether it will be found that he has enlarged his Bush-Boskop type to cover too wide a range, or whether that term calls for substitution, the relative scarcity of Negro features is phenomenal and vastly important”.⁹⁰ The classifications for ‘African’ skulls were extremely wide, catering to historic peoples from southern Africa, but also as far as Eastern Europe (Armenoid), the Mediterranean, and Asia (Mongoloid).⁹¹ Later, the skeletal analyst would further qualify his designation of the Bush-Boskop category, which had caused some confusion in archaeological circles.⁹² For Galloway, the confusion emerging from his analysis of skeletal remains was part of a much larger problem:

In South African physical anthropology proper there is a great deal of confusion in terminology. The use of the terms Boskop, Bush, and Negro physical types, to describe the fundamental physical types in South Africa is more satisfactory than the use of cultural terms such as Hottentot and Bantu, but it must be remembered that the terms Boskop and Bush have no chronological significance, but are merely physical descriptive terms.⁹³

Galloway was quick to confess that his job was merely to analyse skeletons, according to the existing methods available. According to Galloway, his readings of the bones were strictly objective, and he had not imported into them any external significance. He was, supposedly, able to read the bones in themselves, without imbuing in them a significance of his own. In paper soon following the initial publication, he wrote:

The bones recovered from the excavations at Bambadyanalo, a site close to Mapungubwe confirm the conclusions on the Mapungubwe skeletal material. The bones are not ' Bantu ' but find their nearest counterpart in the bones of the pre-Bantu inhabitants of South Africa. It is, however, not the task of the specialist to theorize on his findings, but the task of the historian to examine all the evidence and then pronounce a verdict.⁹⁴

Galloway asserted that the bones could not be Bantu and were rather linked to Bush or Boskop bone structures. However, he emphasised that his job was not to interpret his finds, or to give

⁹⁰ A.J.H. Goodwin, ‘Review: Mapungubwe, Ancient Bantu Civilization of the Limpopo. by Leo Fouché’, *Man*, Vol. 38 (Jan. 1938), 13.

⁹¹ Galloway, ‘The Skeletal Remains of Mapungubwe’, 128.

⁹² Gardner, ‘Hottentot culture on the Limpopo’, 117.

⁹³ Galloway, ‘Recent discoveries’, 106.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

a definitive cultural analysis of the objects. He left it to others – capable, learned historians and archaeologists – to interpret the objects, to find meaning in the objective fact he was able to present through what was then considered to be a set of strict scientific practices. The practice of skeletal analysis, for Galloway, was not interpretive, but pure in its objectivity and empiricism. He was, at the time, seen as a provider of truthful objects – a conveyor of truth – rather than a purveyor of symbols or a maker of meaning. But so too was the case for Schofield's Caton-Thompsonian ceramic categorisations.

Processes in archaeological meaning-making

There are several salient points to be taken from the initial archaeology of the Hill on Greefswald farm. The first is to do with the categorisation of the material objects excavated, particularly ceramics. The archaeology – in its practices and processes – was immediately linked to the Zimbabwe excavations that had recently occurred and gained major publicity, debunking long-held myths of African remoteness from Western civilisation. The methods adopted were, however, drawn from Caton-Thompson's work, and so categories of analysis were imposed upon the objects found, and influenced heavily by the methods developed in Egyptology in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. According to one reviewer, "The conclusions arrived at accord closely with those of Miss Caton-Thompson at Zimbabwe and again demonstrate that fanciful theory cannot stand up against the careful deductions of modern archaeological method".⁹⁵

It appears that 'fanciful theory' referred to the existing biblical interpellations of peoples and places in (southern) Africa, while 'modern archaeological method' referred to those methods for categorical organisation of archaeological objects as a means for historical (and ethno-cultural) interpretation developed by the likes of Caton-Thompson in Egypt. Science was figured to usurp the sacred as the dominant modality of fact. The archaeological practices developed in that space and time were regarded very much as universal rules, with particular categories spatially and temporally contingent. For instance, the categories 'Zimbabwe A' and 'Zimbabwe B' were particular to southern African archaeology, but the construction and application of such categories had already been predetermined by the success of similar models in Egypt.

⁹⁵ C.W.H., 'Review of *Mapungubwe: Ancient Bantu Civilisation on the Limpopo. Reports on Excavations at Mapungubwe (Northern Transvaal) from February 1933 to June 1935* by Leo Fouché', *The Geographical Journal* Vol.91 No.2 (February 1938), 181.

The second is that the bodies found were determined to be “non-Negro”, of “Bushman or Boskop stock”.⁹⁶ According to Galloway’s analysis, which was conducted in accordance with agreed (albeit controversial) skeletal analysis methods, concluded that of the bodies one was, for instance, only “40 percent Negro”, while others were only “10 – 20 percent Negro”.⁹⁷ That Galloway was able to gauge precise (or even vague) percentages of Negro-ness through the application of ‘appropriate’ scientific methods of analysis on skeletal remains is itself a fascinating practice for analysis, particularly because the findings of the physical anthropologist diverge so strikingly from the findings of the rest of the publishing cohort, especially those of Schofield.⁹⁸

Roger Summers, a prominent Zimbabwean archaeologist responsible for much work at Great Zimbabwe and Nyanga, noted that “it was probable that he [Schofield] visualised a series of three cultural ‘invasions’, each wiping out the products of its predecessors”.⁹⁹ However, Summers did acknowledge that Schofield’s interpretations were conditioned by the political society from which they emerged. According to Summers, “The interpretations of differing ceramic types as the product of ‘invasions’ was a concept which was popular in Britain during the first half of the twentieth century and this probably influenced Schofield’s thoughts on Rhodesian cultures”.¹⁰⁰ But Summers’ observation of the culture of interpretation was only uttered in 1969. In the archaeology of southern Africa during the 1930s, there was no real consciousness of the problematic influence of interpretation by the historic principle or *rule* of ‘Bantu invasion’ in the region. The aim (according to Jones) was to find when and where exactly Bantu-speaking folk began their invasions, rather than to consider the possibility of a more complex set of relations, perhaps involving cooperation, assimilation, or ethno-cultural modification.

Instead, positivist method, rooted in a strict belief in the facts of science (coupled with the courage to actually scale the hill) was seen to have managed to unearth a truth lost in the darkness of African history. Another reviewer notes the relation of *fact* and archaeology: “... the whole principle of the book, on which the editor must be congratulated, is the way in which

⁹⁶ Galloway, ‘The Skeletal Remains of Mapungubwe’, 127-174.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ Skeletal analysis has proven immensely useful in determining what kinds of people moved through which spaces at what times; however, the *categories* applied (eg. Bush-Boskop) and their affiliation with specific immobile but historic ethnic and cultural subjectivities promotes certain connotations between race discourses and science.

⁹⁹ Summers, ‘Forty Years Progress’, 95.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

workers have been allowed to say exactly what conclusions the evidence in their fields lead them to”.¹⁰¹ Fouché, Neville, Schofield, Galloway and company were *workers*, specifically *science* workers, who needed to be allowed the public space to make known their findings, for they had truths backed up by irrefutable material – empirical facts – to offer to society.¹⁰² The publication, produced through the authority of the Cambridge University Press, and distributed in accordance with the international prestige of the publisher, offered to the authors exactly that. They had done so with great gusto – Mapungubwe had been made to be known.

The amateur archaeologist and the physical anthropologist, 1940 to 1964

The general certainty of a scientific archaeology continued into the 1940s, as did the fascination with “the facts obtained” which were capable of illuminating “an entirely new and unsuspected chapter to South African history”.¹⁰³ Fouché and his cohort of authors and practitioners had unequivocally determined that further excavations were required if the ‘real truth’ was to be found out about Mapungubwe specifically, and the southern African iron age in general. In 1939, Capt. G.A. Gardner (an American soldier who had fought on the side of the British in the South African/Anglo-Boer War) took over the excavations at Mapungubwe.¹⁰⁴ Gardner was an amateur archaeologist who had gained some practical experience under Caton-Thompson at Faiyum in 1927-8.¹⁰⁵ For the length of the excavations at Mapungubwe, he was overseen by Clarence Van Riet Lowe (the revered South African civil engineer and archaeologist), and was assisted by Peter Van Tonder, the only European citizen involved in the 1930s–1940s excavations (the rest were South Africans or Rhodesians; although there were no Black personnel credited; all those working at Mapungubwe or with its objects were affiliates of the University of Pretoria).¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹ L.H.D.B., ‘Review of *Mapungubwe: Ancient Bantu Civilisation on the Limpopo. Reports on Excavations at Mapungubwe (Northern Transvaal) from February 1933 to June 1935* by Leo Fouché’, *Science Progress* (1933), Vol.33 No.130 (October 1938), 399.

¹⁰² Few of the personnel involved in the initial excavation were professional archaeologists. Schofield, for instance, was an amateur archaeologist, trained as an architect, who juggled his occupation and (somewhat involved) hobby (Hall, ‘Pots and Politics’, 264). During these early years, there were very few professional archaeologists in South Africa. The first was A.J.H. Goodwin, appointed in 1923.

¹⁰³ Gardner, ‘Hottentot culture on the Limpopo’, 117.

¹⁰⁴ By this stage, Fouché had left the University of Pretoria and joined the Witswatersrand University faculty, having refused to tow the Afrikaner nationalist line demanded by UP management. This becomes increasingly important as apartheid is implemented, and UP erects intellectual walls around the SLCA.

¹⁰⁵ Roger Summers, ‘Reviewed work: *Mapungubwe Vol. II* by P.J. Coertze’, *The South African Archaeological Bulletin*, Vol. 19, No. 75 (Sept. 1964), 79.

¹⁰⁶ It seems extremely unlikely that the manual (unskilled) labour was done by the white archaeologists, considering their rapidly increasing social status at the time (Gardner, Van Riet Lowe, and Malan – high-ranking

Gardner's Mapungubwe Vol.II (1935 – 1963)

The second set of excavations took place between 1935 and 1945, chiefly conducted by Gardner himself.¹⁰⁷ However, before any of the work could be published, the Second World War erupted, bringing archaeological expeditions and excavations to a halt. Soon after soldiers returned to South Africa, including many of the archaeologists, the National Party claimed victory in South Africa, which saw the institutionalisation of Afrikaner Christian nationalism in the form of apartheid. Gardner himself had aged between the excavations (1935-1940) and his writings (1949, 1955, 1963) on Mapungubwe, turning sixty during the war.¹⁰⁸

In his writing, Gardner was critical of Schofield's argument that Mapungubwe was occupied by folk of 'Bantu stock'. He favoured the skeletal analyses of Galloway, suggestive of the higher status held by bone analysis in archaeology and academia in general as a purer science. On Schofield he wrote that "surely this is an error", since Mapungubwe was a "pre-Bantu Hottentot site on the Limpopo".¹⁰⁹ He was similarly critical of the excavators involved in Neville's initial expedition: "On arrival at Mapungubwe I was disappointed to find that the summit appeared to be a chaos of pits and trenches, and was unable to discover any accurate records of what had been attempted. No grids had been laid down, and at the time I considered it a waste of money and labour to continue the work there".¹¹⁰ Due to the condition of the hill, he decided to instead begin excavating at the nearby K2 and Bambadyanalo.

Bambadyanalo/K2: Hottentots in Hamitic histories

Gardner's excavations yielded 79 human skeletons (reported sometimes as 76 or 70, but analysed by Galloway nonetheless) and six animal skeletons (described as "burials"), as well as evidence of "pot-burials" in which "the body was buried in exactly the same fashion as pre-dynastic Egyptian interments".¹¹¹ The reference to Egypt – both in the naming of the hill, as well as the naming and description of the burial practice – is indicative of the resilient influence of Egyptology in Mapungubwe archaeology, despite the geographic remoteness of the sites. It is worth noting that according to some intellectuals (and, certainly, non-intellectuals), the

members of the South African archaeological society – all subsequently delivered Presidential Addresses), as well as the existing racialisation of the labour/capital relation across the world in the early twentieth century.

¹⁰⁷ Summers, 'Review of Mapungubwe Vol. II', 79.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Gardner, 'Hottentot Culture on the Limpopo', 117.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 118.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 119.

Hottentots were more closely Hamitic than the Bantu folk of Africa.¹¹² They were, in essence, born of a more biblical, more sacred extraction. To designate the bodies, and therefore cultural authority (since these were the bodies of kings), as Hottentot, was to reach out and claim biblical authority in the archaeology and historiography of Mapungubwe and its surrounds.

For Gardner, these found objects were to be read as Hottentot, since the bodies found at the site were Hottentot, as per the categorisation by Galloway of the bones as “Boskop-Bush”, which the scientist had confessed was synonymous with Hottentot.¹¹³ He agreed though, that some Bantu incursion must have occurred, owing to the obvious influence on crafts, conceding that K2 and Mapungubwe held the archaeology of *five* cultures.¹¹⁴ Despite his generosity here, in his writings – as with Dart and Walton – Bantu folk appear in the interpretations as “invaders, who probably took the women and established themselves on the hill Mapungubwe”.¹¹⁵ Mapungubwe hill, for Gardner, was far from sacred, existing as a site where “the history of invasion and destruction repeated itself”.¹¹⁶

Despite his criticism of Schofield’s readings and the excavators’ practice, he was full of praise for Galloway, commending him and his practice for “his usual thoroughness”.¹¹⁷ There is, in all writing, a reverence for the scientist – the facts rendered visible by his bone readings, and through the rigour of his practice. James Walton, in addressing the interpretations of Gardner also expressed the general satisfaction with Galloway’s work: “The fact that his early K2 people were a non-Negro people, with whom the Bantu-speaking Negro peoples had not hybridised, has not, so far as I am aware, ever been doubted...The fact that the skeletal materials indicate Hottentot affinities is also not disputed”.¹¹⁸

For Walton, it was more a question of what mixtures of cultures had occurred – how to explain the disparity between the *facts* of the bones *with* the *facts* of the ceramics. While Gardner insisted that the skeletons and their bodies had to match the material culture, for Walton, they were very much interchangeable. He noted that “A Bantu culture has been adopted in a number

¹¹² See Edgar A. Gregerson, *Language in Africa: An Introductory Survey* (New York, Gordon and Breach Science Publishers, 1977), 125. See also Dubow, *Scientific Racism in Modern South Africa*, 118. Dubow describes the theorisation of Hamitic roots as “the infinitely malleable Hamitic myth”.

¹¹³ Gardner, ‘Hottentot Culture on the Limpopo’, 119.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 119-120.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 117.

¹¹⁸ James Walton, ‘Mapungubwe and Bambandyanalo’, *The South African Archaeological Bulletin*, Vol. 11, No. 44 (Dec., 1956), 111.

of cases by Bush peoples, with little or no hybridisation”.¹¹⁹ What Walton described were Hottentot bodies imbued with Bantu culture. This explained “the facts obtained” from both the skeletal remains, as well as the ceramic sherds.¹²⁰ For Walton and Gardner, while it was more likely that Schofield’s analysis was incorrect, the high science of Galloway’s physical anthropology was seen to be beyond such incredulity.

The fact of Bantu invasions: Producing precolonial relations

Fundamental to all of the interpretations of Mapungubwe from the 1930s through the 1950s was the positioning in archaeological chronologies of southern Africa of Bantu folk as *settlers* (referred to by Garlake and Hall as the “settler paradigm”): non-indigenous groups that had moved into the region and displaced the actual indigenous people – variously described as the San, or Bushmen, and sometimes conflated with the Khoisan, Hottentots, Khoikhoi, or Boskop-Bush, or any other of a number of scientised categories for skeletal and anatomical analysis.¹²¹ The attitudes were immediately reflected in Galloway’s skeletal analysis, and later in the considerations of Dart and Walton. Gardner was scathing of the impact of Bantu peoples on the region: “Bantu invasions constituted merely an influx of savages, bringing little with them except the knowledge of iron and primitive hoe-culture”.¹²²

Here, savagery overcomes iron in historic importance. In his “opinion the southern Bantu were, and are, incapable of producing the bewildering number of forms and variations which we found”.¹²³ Had the Bantu not run into the Hottentot’s of K2, they would never have developed a recognisable form of ‘high culture’ – exemplified in gold, high places, Egyptian burial, and trade. In all of these narratives, the original Hottentot inhabitants are positioned as the indigenous *victims* of the alien Bantu groups. According to Gardner, the final Hottentot occupants “were probably expelled by the Venda hordes who swept over the country in the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries”.¹²⁴ The Bantu, in such tales, are always *invaders*, who are *incapable*, and very much more *recent* than the remote ancient, fairer, and conveniently

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ Gardner, ‘Hottentot Culture on the Limpopo’, 117.

¹²¹ See Peter S. Garlake, *Great Zimbabwe*, (Harare, Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1982), 3. See also Hall, ‘Pots and Politics’, 263. For a more recent consideration of the “settler paradigm”, see Shadreck Chirikure, Munyaradzi Manyanga, Innocent Pikirayi, A. Mark Pollard, ‘New Pathways of Sociopolitical Complexity in Southern Africa’, *African Archaeological Review* (30, 2013), 339-366.

¹²² Gardner, ‘Hottentot Culture on the Limpopo’, 117.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 120.

more Hamitic inhabitants of southern Africa.¹²⁵ In turn, the British arrived with the inevitable iron, now developed to the point of guns, and took from the Bantu land which they had invaded and stolen in the first place. The conclusions of Gardner and other archaeologists of Mapungubwe from the 1930s through the 1950s is magnificent in its appropriateness to the political rulership in South Africa at the time. The readings of Mapungubwe as non-Bantu – indeed, as anything but Bantu – were easily absorbed at the time by a much-changed political climate in South Africa.

Between Fouché and Gardner's publications, there is a significant political event: that is, the 1948 rise of the National Party government and the institutionalisation of apartheid as government policy, which came with the ousting of the 'nature-loving' Jan Smuts from the office of Prime Minister, who had, since at least 1922, made significant usurpations of local trade networks in the Limpopo region, and ordered the construction of the massive Dongola Wildlife Sanctuary, which overlapped the borders of South Africa, Southern Rhodesia, and Bechuanaland.¹²⁶ During his time in office, Smuts had become regarded as something of a patron of archaeology, and the natural and human sciences in general, having afforded much funding and status to such men as Raymond Dart and A.J.H. Goodwin.¹²⁷ It is worth noting that National Party ideology was very much attached to earlier formulations of Afrikaner Christendom in South Africa. In this understanding, South Africa was regarded as the Afrikaans promised land. Mapungubwe itself posed an intriguing reading. It became, once again, a lost city of gold – starkly similar to the biblical site of King Solomon's mines at Ophir. The southern African lost city of gold, debunked through Caton-Thompson's work, could rise once more in Mapungubwe.

Inputs from professional archaeological experts

The second volume of reports on the Mapungubwe excavations was only published in 1963 – 23 years after the conclusion of the excavations. The 1960s saw increased interest in southern African archaeology, particularly from British and American archaeologists, some of whom began to conduct more systematic studies of the region, considering new, more precise methods

¹²⁵ Gregerson, *Language in Africa*, 125. The link made between Hamites and Hottentots was strictly linguistic according to Gregerson. During this period, it was believed that Hottentot languages (Khoi) was related to Hamitic languages, despite the different locales of either set of languages.

¹²⁶ From 1947-1949, the region was turned into the Dongola Wildlife Sanctuary by Jan Smuts, after the battle of Dongola. However, with the victory of the National Party, the land was turned back into farmland, amid scathing parliamentary critique of Smuts' policies. Kashe-Katiya, 'Carefully Hidden Away', 48-51. See also Saul Dubow, *A Commonwealth of Science, Sensibility, and White South Africa 1920-2000* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006), 209.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

for the categorisation of their findings, including the use of radiocarbon dating methods. During this time, new excavations in the region were taking place, including Robinson's excavations at Leopard's Kopje, which yielded intriguing similarities with finds at K2 and Mapungubwe. Additional excavations were conducted through the 1960s to 1980s by Hannes Eloff on behalf of the University of Pretoria, who, during that period, maintained a stranglehold on Greefswald archaeology.¹²⁸

While the publication of Fouché was seen as something fresh and new, Gardner's work was dislocated from the progress of wider southern African archaeology, only in part due to the time gap between excavation and publication. Roger Summers reviewed Gardner's volume, and, while he commended the "amateur archaeologist" for his enthusiasm and endurance, he was scathing of Gardner's actual archaeological practice and publication, noting, however, that the amateur archaeologist had served in the Second World War between excavating and writing, resulting in the fifteen-year gap between work and publication. Summers was critical of "Gardner's lack of the broad vision acquired in professional training", which "led him...into the irritating habit of decrying his predecessor's work and has also prevented him from making use of the specialised knowledge possessed by workers in cognate fields", including pottery, beadwork, and glasswork.¹²⁹

For Summers, Gardner failed in addressing the pre-existing scholarship on archaeology in the southern African region, including Zimbabwe, "and so deprived himself of a great volume of comparative material". As such, Summers deemed the work of "very limited value" and should "be approached very warily".¹³⁰ And although Gardner's amateur archaeological work posed as successor to Fouché's initial volume on Mapungubwe, it was not a complete reappraisal – nor was it required to be. In the two decades following, a number of the Mapungubwe archaeological inner circle had continued their work, including the publication of Galloway's *The Skeletal Remains of Mapungubwe* (1959), Van Riet Lowe's *The Glass Beads of Mapungubwe* (1955), and receiving passing mention in Schofield's *Primitive Pottery* (1948).

American archaeologist, Brian Fagan was similarly critical of the method and delivery of Gardner's excavations, but agreed with his interpretation of the non-Bantu ethnicity of the people inhabiting K2 (and those who were buried at Mapungubwe). But for Fagan, the ethnic

¹²⁸ J. Eloff and Andrie Meyer, 'The Greefswald Sites', in E.A Voigt (ed.), *Guide to archaeological sites in the Northern and Eastern Transvaal* (Pretoria, Transvaal Museum, 1981).

¹²⁹ Summers, 'Review of *Mapungubwe Vol.II*', 79.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

difference between body and culture needed to represent a violent rupture. Fagan argued that, “...it seems probable that the occupation of the mound [Mapungubwe Hill] shows no major discontinuity, although there are some changes in material culture connected with the arrival of a new and as yet unidentified group in the Greefswald region later than the eleventh century. These were probably a small group of the people who, with the K2 people, were the first occupants of Mapungubwe”.¹³¹

For Fagan, as with most who had theorised on Mapungubwe at that stage, the site was evidence of Bantu arrival in southern Africa around the fifteenth and sixteenth century (concurrent with European settlement).¹³² And the sites were important because they proved this fact. According to Fagan,

The Greefswald sequence is of vital importance to South African history, for the sites have been held to show that the earliest Iron Age population of South Africa was non-Negro. In addition, they have been used to provide a fairly accurate indication of the date at which Bantu-speaking peoples first crossed the middle reaches of the Limpopo.¹³³

The chronology was determined through the radiocarbon dating done by Gardner and others in the region, like Fagan, who initiated a carbon-dating project of Greefswald which continued into the 1990s.

The method, pioneered by Willard Libby, developed after the Second World War, and had become an increasingly influential tool in archaeology. From the comparative degradation of carbon molecules, archaeologists were able to assess the age of organic objects found at archaeological sites, and, in doing so, were able to construct definite temporalities for the objects found.¹³⁴ In the case of Mapungubwe, the vast radiocarbon dating conducted by Gardner allowed for a fair certainty that the site had been occupied after K2, but before Great Zimbabwe. The work that had occurred from the 1930s through the 1950s was object-driven, with a determination to collect as many objects as possible.¹³⁵ A great deal of effort was to ensue in the following years towards the carbon-dating of as much of the landscape as possible.

¹³¹ Brian Fagan, ‘The Greefswald Sequence’, *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (1964), 340.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 337.

¹³⁴ For a much more thorough technical explanation, see R.E. Taylor and Ofer Bar-Yosef, *Radiocarbon Dating, An Archaeological Perspective (Second Addition)*, (California, Left Coast Press, 2014), 19-24.

¹³⁵ M.A. Jaspan, ‘Negro Culture in Southern Africa before European Conquest’, *Science and Society*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Summer 1955), 199.

Almost enamoured by the new technology, archaeologists sought to heighten the interpretations of the discipline, placing great emphasis on the facts of radiocarbon. Indeed, for apartheid academics and archaeologists, radiocarbon had *proved* the fact of Bantu invasion.

Developing archaeological sciences in the 1970s

The end of the 1960s saw an increase in archaeological work in southern Africa, despite that the SADF took control of Greefswald farm in 1968.¹³⁶ New excavations had been conducted at and around Great Zimbabwe as well as at Leopard's Kopje in the northern Transvaal, by K.R. Robinson and Roger Summers.¹³⁷ Along with this came changing methods, including more rigorous stratigraphical records, and more observant methods of spatial archaeologies.¹³⁸ Significant interpretive work was conducted during the 1970s by Summers, Huffman, Garlake, Maggs.¹³⁹ The time is described as a "liberal revival of African studies", while the politics of Africa was in a state of flux as more countries gained independence.¹⁴⁰ During this time, the social sciences in Europe and the USA were going through what is known as the 'cultural turn', which critiqued existing positivist conceptions of universality in the academy as Western, and turned towards an understanding of cultural difference and the historical production of culture and society, rather than accepting European civilisation as normative human (socio-political and cultural) development.¹⁴¹

However, the particularity of South African race relations is imperative to a political-historical understanding of the archaeology occurring during apartheid. It should be noted that Black political organisations had been banned in 1960.¹⁴² Meanwhile archaeology was moving

¹³⁶ This was for strategic purposes, to monitor, police, or hinder the movements of anti-apartheid forces across the border into Botswana and Zimbabwe.

¹³⁷ K.R. Robinson, *Khami Ruins* (London, Cambridge University Press, 1959); K.R. Robinson, 'Further excavations in the Iron Age deposits at the Tunnel site, Gokomere Hill, Southern Rhodesia', *South African Archaeological Bulletin* 18 (1963), 155-171; K.R. Robinson, 'The Leopard's Kopje culture, its position in the Iron Age of Southern Rhodesia', *South African Arch. Bull.* 21 (1966), 5-51. Roger Summers, 'Iron Age cultures in Southern Rhodesia', *South African Journal of Science* 47 (1950), 95-107; Roger Summers, 'Iron age industries of southern Africa, with notes on their chronology, terminology, and economic status', in W.W. Bishop and J.D. Clark (eds.), *Background to Evolution in Africa*, (University of Chicago Press, 1967), 687-700.

¹³⁸ For example, see Tim Maggs, *Iron Age communities of the southern highveld*, (Pietermaritzburg, Natal Museum, 1976). 'Stratigraphy' is, simply put, the graphic recording of the layered positions of objects found in an archaeological excavation.

¹³⁹ See Schoeman and Hay et al., *Mapungubwe Reconsidered*, 8. The authors provide a detailed list of excavations occurring from 1932 to 2015.

¹⁴⁰ Hall, 'Pots and Politics', 264.

¹⁴¹ Hall, *Representation*, 9. The 'cultural turn' is famously evident in work of École Normale Supérieure scholars during and after the 1960s, including the likes of post-structuralist thinkers Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida and Louis Althusser. Critical in the cultural turn are Frantz Fanon's *Black Skins White Masks* (France, Editions de Seuil, 1952), as well as Edward Said's *Orientalism* (New York, Pantheon, 1978), which destabilised European epistemological hegemony (in the human and social sciences).

¹⁴² Union of South Africa, 'Unlawful Organisations Act, No.34 of 1960', (Pretoria, Government publisher, 1960).

towards an espoused more ‘liberal’ direction. While archaeology claimed to be scientific and therefore apolitical, archaeologists dabbled in the construction of a very political history of land, people, and culture.¹⁴³ During this period the National Party government was only funding archaeological projects which generally satisfied the need to legitimise apartheid. Also present, however, were University of Illinois archaeologists, like Fagan and Huffman. Should universities decline to push the apartheid line, then they tended to lose public government funding, requiring alternative financial sources. Political resistance, for archaeologists, was professionally risky, particularly for local South African archaeologists. This, in turn, opened the way for foreign archaeologists – often from the USA – to take centre-stage in the production of South African archaeology for international consumption.¹⁴⁴

There was a resurgence of interest in Mapungubwe and the Limpopo region, which had not been revisited since Gardner’s excavations, in part due to the South African Defence Force’s control of the region. New excavations, and reviews of old findings from the Limpopo region were consistent during the 1970s, despite that the 1960s mark a slow period for Mapungubwe, archaeologically, historically, and politically. Along with this refinement of the practices and methods of recording archaeology, came the introduction of new methods for the analysis of bone material, emerging as new discourses of physical anthropology, resulting from excavations of skeletal remains around South Africa, at the Cape and in the Transvaal, following the 1947 discovery of ‘Mrs Ples’ – the oldest fossil related to humanity, *Australopithecus africanus* – in Sterkfontein by Dr Robert Broom. There was a wealth of material evidence on which physical anthropologists could practice and hone their methods for the analysis and categorisation of historic peoples in southern Africa.

Skeletal material revisited

By the 1970s, major progress was being made towards what was considered a more refined science of archaeology, including the ‘high science’ of skeletal analysis, which was to prove a definitive intervention in the scope of historical potential in Mapungubwe. Early on, G.P. Rightmire conducted a re-evaluation of the skeletons of K2 excavated by Gardner and reported by Galloway.¹⁴⁵ His new methods included a much wider range of skeletal material, from central and east Africa (Rwanda, Burundi, Kenya), down through southern Africa, and

¹⁴³ Martin Hall, ‘Legacy of Racism’, *Archaeology* Vol.52, No.3 (May/June 1999), 64-65.

¹⁴⁴ Nick Shephard, ‘State of the Discipline: Science, Culture and Identity in South African Archaeology, 1870-2003’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (Dec. 2003), 834.

¹⁴⁵ G.P. Rightmire, Iron Age skulls from southern Africa reassessed by multiple discriminant analysis, *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, 33 (1970), 147-167.

including Zulu, Xhosa, Sotho, and Venda examples.¹⁴⁶ Furthermore, in his analysis, unlike either Gardner or Galloway, he foregrounded the other evidences and interpretations which were dominant at the time, including acknowledgement of the ceramic sequences that had been defined in earlier work.¹⁴⁷

Therefore, unlike his predecessor, Rightmire's work was conducted under the conditions and limitations of a much more refined and more widely evidenced historiography of the movement of people in southern Africa. Rightmire's was, for all intents and purposes, the first readdress of the skeletons since Galloway – and the readings were substantially different. Thirty-three years had passed since Galloway's initial interpretations (and eleven years since his analysis of the K2 remains), and an immense amount of work had been produced towards interpreting the 'things' of Mapungubwe and its surrounds. Reflecting upon the massive intervention of Rightmire, Huffman wrote, "Among other things, Rightmire pioneered a multidimensional approach that was superior in theory and method to what had gone before. Subsequent research...has verified his approach and findings. Indeed, most Iron Age skeletons found in southern Africa are black, sub-Saharan Africans".¹⁴⁸

But, nevertheless, bones were considered to whisper only truth – they are themselves an assemblage of facts, irrespective of what culture they might be attached to when extracted, – and so the new truth for the occupants of K2 and Mapungubwe became that they were admittedly Black, and the descendants of the contemporary class of 'incapables' (according to Gardner), whose official political organisations had already been banned for a decade by the time Rightmire published his analysis.¹⁴⁹ The findings were somewhat strange, since they confirmed what the majority of the archaeological community had 'known' for some time, but could not claim with any legitimacy, since the high science of physical anthropology refuted such claims. Rightmire's findings shifted analysis, allowing for sites like Mapungubwe, K2, and Leopard's Kopje to be related under the umbrella of historic Bantu society, and to be

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ The art of *description* is key to the interpretations of bones in archaeology and palaeontology. Phillip V. Tobias inadvertently takes note of the competitive, contentious and subjective nature of skeletal or bone analysis in physical anthropology. Noting the ego of Robert Broom, he describes Broom's displeasure with the bone descriptions of a young (31-year-old) Raymond Dart in his analysis of what he called *Australopithecus Africanus*. As such, it took almost a quarter of a decade for Dart's analysis to be accepted by the scientific archaeology community. In a similar fashion, the readings of the well-established Galloway took over three decades to be overturned, and only once Rightmire had earned status and authority in the physical anthropology community. Phillip V. Tobias, *Humanity from African Naissance to Coming Millennia: Colloquia in Human Biology and Palaeoanthropology* (Johannesburg, Witwatersrand University Press, 2001), 17.

¹⁴⁸ Thomas N. Huffman, 'State Formation in Southern Africa: A Reply to Kim and Kusimba', *The African Archaeological Review*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (March 2010), 3-4.

¹⁴⁹ Union of South Africa, 'Unlawful Organisations Act, No.34 of 1960', (Pretoria, Government publisher, 1960).

confirmed into temporal categories, allowing for concrete sequences of Bantu movement and technological and socio-political development.

Ceramic and spatial sequencing

The 1970s also saw the beginning of what was to become the enormous amount of published work by the likes of Thomas Huffman on archaeological sites classified as ‘iron age’ in southern Africa. Huffman brought more nuanced approaches to the analysis of ceramic designs, so as to ascertain a certain cultural identity attached to that style of ceramic-making through association by spatial organisation, through distinctive traits of “cognitive systems” found in the archaeological evidence.¹⁵⁰ Huffman was able to generalise significant societal, political and cultural changes between groups, affording a sense of regionality between groups in southern Africa during the Iron Age.¹⁵¹

Ideologically, and in terms of historical philosophy, Huffman, an American who had studied under Brian Fagan at the University of Illinois, presented a challenge to the existing norms of archaeological practices and procedures of interpretation and meaning-making, echoing the global shifts in intellectual discourses. Huffman considered the early theories of Randall-MacIver, who had brought Caton-Thompson into the fold during the excavations of Great Zimbabwe in the 1920s and was very much a leader in southern African archaeology:

Randall-MacIver developed the theory that Zimbabwe was ‘essentially African’ over sixty years ago. It has been reaffirmed with every Iron Age excavation in Rhodesia and never seriously scientifically questioned. To say ‘essentially African’, however, gives only the barest outline of a very complex situation.¹⁵²

Thus, for Huffman, key to his studies was the differentiation of groups moving through history, possibly converging at major capitals, or “territorial states”, like Mapungubwe, Great

¹⁵⁰ Martin Hall, ‘Archaeology and Modes of Production in Pre-Colonial Southern Africa’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 14, No.1 (Oct. 1987), 2.

¹⁵¹ Authors like Huffman and Maggs argued that “cattle have been part of a ‘farming complex’ for the full two millennia of the southern African ‘iron age’”. Huffman noted the presence of a ‘Bantu Cattle Pattern’ (Central Cattle Pattern, and later Zimbabwe Culture Pattern) in early iron age sites, some dating to the first centuries CE.” See Martin Hall, ‘The Role of Cattle in Southern African Agropastoral Societies: More than Bones Alone Can Tell’, *Goodwin Series, Vol. 5, Prehistoric Pastoralism in Southern Africa* (1986), 83. I do not think it would be a stretch to argue that the increased regionalisation of Mapungubwe archaeology was a direct result of the inaccessibility of the site, requiring archaeological professionals to revisit old objects, rather than excavating new ones.

¹⁵² Thomas N. Huffman, The Rise and Fall of Zimbabwe, *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (1972), 353.

Zimbabwe's "Acropolis", or Mutapa.¹⁵³ Through this sequencing models, Huffman enabled the tracing of the historic movements of people and development of society, and which developments occurred when, and between which people. Sometimes, as in the case of Mapungubwe, change was not necessarily the result of external intervention, but rather internal organic development, which had previously been argued as early as Caton-Thompson in 1931 but had receded during the period from the 1940s to 1960s. Thus, the return to earlier conclusions – like that of Mapungubwe as a *Bantu* kingdom or state, as per Fouché, but not Galloway, Gardner, Walton, or early Fagan – through different means and organisational models of new and old evidence, became the general pattern in southern African archaeology through the 1970s.

For Rachel King, writing in 2011, Huffman's interpretations are among the most "comprehensive reconstructions" of Zimbabwe region archaeology to date. Attesting to the strength of Huffman's categorical interpretations almost half a century later, King sums up the intervention:

While ceramic sequences are the foundation for a culture-history sequence, Huffman has proposed an understanding of material culture at Mapungubwe and Great Zimbabwe built on the premise that Iron Age spatial organization reflects 'attitudes about status and attitudes about life forces' as part of a 'cognitive system'. For Huffman, one could read identity from the study of material culture against spatial organisation, utilising, in this case, "a combination of archaeological data, early Portuguese records, and ethnographies from modern Zimbabwean Shona and South African Venda peoples based on a perceived link with the earliest southern African farmers."¹⁵⁴

The archaeologists of the 1970s also brought with them an emphasis on ethnography, which had played only a minor role through the contributions of Lestrade in earlier interpretive work which had focused more on producing for Mapungubwe specific cultural anthropologies attached to the present (Schofield), and finding their most potent condition in the physical anthropology of Galloway.¹⁵⁵ However, the concern was with the nature of *scientific* inquiry

¹⁵³ It is around this time that the name "Zhizo" become popularised when referring to the 10th to thirteenth century inhabitants of the Mapungubwe region.

¹⁵⁴ Rachel King, 'Archaeological Naissance at Mapungubwe', *Journal of Social Archaeology* (1)(3) (2011), 315.

¹⁵⁵ During this time, the land of Greefswald farm was handed over to the South African Defence Force in 1968, as a strategic point to hinder the movement of anti-apartheid forces across the border. See Kashe-Katiye, 'Carefully Hidden Away', 55.

and method in the archaeology. As Hall observes, for Huffman, “the starting point, in common with the British model, is the assumption that ‘real’ ceramic classifications exist”.¹⁵⁶ For archaeologists like Huffman, the practices and procedures conducted needed to be as scientific as possible to yield objective facts, so as to assemble unproblematisable truths – because *fact*, unlike truth, was supposed to be debate-proof by definition. The histories held in the memories of people related to Mapungubwe, or Great Zimbabwe, were, obviously, outside the scope of debate, and so could never serve as empirical evidence or fact.

Martin Hall described an “alternative road” to Huffman’s structuralism in “historical materialism”, which as yet had not been used to interpret southern African histories from the early first millennium CE.¹⁵⁷ For Hall:

This lack of application of materialist theory is to some extent the result of a methodological problem. For whereas forces of production can often be discerned through conventional archaeological evidence, the other essential component of any mode of production – the relations of production – are disconcertingly elusive without recourse to the circularity of ethnographic analogy.¹⁵⁸

To get past this, Hall suggests Giddens’ concept of ‘signification’, in which power is “a relation exercised through rules and resources”.¹⁵⁹ Thus, for Hall, what was required was a materialist understanding of power expressed through resource ownership and trade. But the sources for such historic significations – which must indeed always be historicised – are vast, stemming from the ideologically-tainted interpretations of the early archaeologists of the 1920s to 1950s, while also coming from local communities, whose stories are themselves historicisable (through some effort), having undergone the tumultuous deracination of colonial and apartheid eras.

Oral histories and ethnographies

Until this point, there was little use or acknowledgement of the oral histories of the people and region concerned, particularly in the exclusive interpretations of professional archaeologists. The unwillingness or inability of the early archaeologists, particularly around the Transvaal, while imbued with a colonial intellectual arrogance, was also reproduced as a form of

¹⁵⁶ Hall, ‘Pots and Politics’, 267.

¹⁵⁷ Martin Hall, ‘Archaeology and Modes of Production in Pre-Colonial Southern Africa’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (Oct. 1987), 3.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

disciplinary decadence, wherein the disciplinary discourse spoke only inwardly, cyclically debating interpretations within the confines of its own stories and logics, while disregarding or manipulating all information that did not fit into the neat set of disciplinary discourses (as in the case of Gardner, who determined that the conclusions of the ceramic analysis of Schofield were at fault, rather than the physical anthropology of Galloway, which was considered beyond reproach).

From the 1930s until the late 1960s, there was an intellectual mistrust of oral histories, considered to be shrouded in superstition and confusion, which only began to dissipate after the interventions of scholars like Jan Vansina.¹⁶⁰ Despite this, the engagements with African oral histories after the 1960s are not unproblematic, particularly due to the pre-existing dismemberment and dispossession of African communities, and the deracination of African people due to the cultural imperatives of colonisation (the ‘civilising mission’), as well as the labour needs of early capitalistic colonial industrialisation (migrant labour). Nevertheless, despite their political shortcomings, by the 1980s, these interpretations, including his theorisation of Central Cattle Pattern in the region, altered the position of Mapungubwe in relation to nearby settlements, giving the ancient state greater attachment to the region, rather than existing as some impossibly African outlier.¹⁶¹ From the 1980s, through the 1990s and early twenty-first century, the interpretations of Mapungubwe inspired by Huffman’s ceramic-sequencing and spatial organisation interventions have maintained a foothold in Mapungubwe discourses.

Producing the Precolonial History of Africa

During the 1970s, the work of social and physical scientists on the southern African pre-colonial past had reached a point where the interpretations were ready for inclusion in publications of more holistic historiographies of the African continent. From the very earliest days of southern African archaeology at the beginning of the twentieth century, the aim of all the archaeological excavations was to produce for the global civilised public a coherent History of Africa. Many had, of course, been attempted, including Davidson’s influential *The Lost Cities of Africa*.¹⁶² The work during the 1970s of Roland Oliver and John Donnelly Fage is more than commendable, having produced a history of Africa torn free from the constraints of

¹⁶⁰ Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology*, Trans. H.M. Wright (London, Routledge, 1965).

¹⁶¹ Thomas N. Huffman, ‘The Central Cattle Pattern and Interpreting the Past’, *Southern African Humanities* Vol. 13 (Dec. 2001), 19.

¹⁶² Basil Davidson, *The Lost Cities of Africa* (Back Bay Books, 1959).

the racist historical philosophy which was seen to have tainted the work of thinkers like Galloway, Gardner and Walton. Between 1975 and 1984, they and their cohort published an eight-volume collection entitled *The Cambridge History of Africa*. Similarly, Monica Wilson and Leonard Thompson were in the process of publishing a two-volume history entitled, *The Oxford History of South Africa*, the first of which chronicled South African history until 1870.¹⁶³

By the time Roland Oliver and J.D. Fage got to editing their massive volume of work, it had been agreed among most Africanist intellectuals that Bantu peoples had arrived in southern Africa in a more remote time, probably during the first few centuries of the common era. About a decade after Oliver and Fage began publishing the *Cambridge History of Africa*, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) began taking an increased interest in the production of such histories. In the case of Mapungubwe-era Africa, the resulting literature took the form of Hrbek and El Fasi's 1988 publication, *Africa from the Seventh to the Eleventh Century*, in which Mapungubwe was proposed as "the first Zimbabwe capital", which came as a "result of increased political power made possible by the gold and ivory trade".¹⁶⁴ By the 1980s, the 'precolonial' was very much in the process of being produced (as distinct from prehistory), and Mapungubwe had become an integral part of this production, at this time as a strictly African formation, rather than the biblical (Judeo-Christian) allegorical symbols attributed to it during the early to mid-twentieth century.

Greefswald in the 1980s: The politics of Mapungubwe

The 1980s saw a curious juxtaposition of a major sequence of archaeological sites, and a drug-rehabilitation facility which was to become infamous in the annals of apartheid history. Archaeological work was conducted primarily from afar, and few excavations occurred from the mid-1960s until the end of the 1980s, although notable faunal analyses were conducted by Elizabeth Anne Voigt.¹⁶⁵ In this period, Greefswald farm was taken over by the South African Defence Force, having swivelled between state and private property since the 1933 purchase

¹⁶³ Monica Wilson and Leonard Thompson (eds.), *The Oxford History of South Africa, Volume 1: South Africa to 1870* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1985).

¹⁶⁴ M. El Fasi and I. Hrbek, *General History of Africa III, Africa From the Seventh to Eleventh Century* (California, Heinemann/UNESCO, 1988), 679-680.

¹⁶⁵ Elizabeth Anne Voigt, 'Reconstructing Iron Age economies of the Northern Transvaal: A Preliminary Report', *South African Archaeological Bulletin* 35 (1980), 44. According to Voigt, "The study of fauna from the northern Transvaal sites has shown a changing economic pattern through time and culture...data from the Mapungubwe sites indicate a very heavy dependence on domesticated stock. Dense occupation of the area would undoubtedly lead to the destruction of most game, so that hunting could not be extensively pursued". Similar faunal analyses had been conducted by Ina Plug (1978) and others. No excavations of Mapungubwe occurred during the bulk of the 1980s.

of the farm from Collins by the University of Pretoria. Fences were summarily erected, and the farm was converted into a what was euphemistically referred to as a drug rehabilitation facility but has since been characterised as a space of torture.¹⁶⁶ At this stage, Greefswald was run primarily by the infamous Dr Aubrey Levine, who is speculated to have used Greefswald as a site for the Aversion Project.¹⁶⁷ At the farm, “Conditions were particularly brutal. The idea was to isolate and keep the inmates perpetually on the go and through strenuous exercise exhaust them to keep their minds off drugs”.¹⁶⁸

The sites of Greefswald/Mapungubwe bear an intriguing relation between the space and the human body, where the certitude with which the biopolitical was held in official discourses (funded by the state) harks back to the 1930s-1950s scientific supremacy of Galloway’s skeletal analyses, where Greefswald was a site of somatic ethno-cultural *discovery*, even beyond the proposed archaeological, and into the political. Historically, since the 1930s, Greefswald farm has been a site at which the civilised could learn more about the outliers of the society – the uncivilised, traitors to the socially normative. It is no neat historical coincidence that Robben Island was once a leper colony, and under the apartheid regime converted into the well-known but infamous apartheid prison, while Greefswald was once evidence of Bantu invasion, and then converted into a space to which a most *homo sacerian* character could be expelled from 1980s South African society – the drug addict. Like Robben Island, it was a most useful symbolic site of socially (re)productive performance for colonial and apartheid society. Similarly, too, it was not the historical or research value which was harnessed by the apartheid state, but rather the remoteness of the space, at the border between South Africa, Zimbabwe and Botswana.

Greefswald is far from the centres of South Africa, whether geographic or political. It is quite physically on the outskirts of the territorialised South African state. Indeed, in archaeology it has been more closely linked to Zimbabwe archaeology than to any archaeologies of interior, eastern or western South Africa. By the 1980s, it had become symbolic of the detachment of whatever was situated in the marginal space, and what was constituted at the centre of society (the proscribed behavioural *normative*) by the expulsion of whatever was relocated to the outskirts. First it was the Afro-Hottentot corpse – symbolic of a time of Bantu invasion and

¹⁶⁶ see Laura Pollecut, ‘Unlocking South Africa’s Military Archives’, in K. Allan (ed.) *Paper Wars: Access to information in South Africa*, South African History Association (Johannesburg, Wits University Press, 2009).

¹⁶⁷ See Kashe-Katiye, ‘Carefully Hidden Away’, 55. ‘Speculated’ because it is uncertain whether Aversion Project work was conducted at Greefswald, although it is certain that Levine was key in the Project.

¹⁶⁸ Pollecut, ‘Unlocking South Africa’s Military Archives’, 136.

debauchery which had been long-ousted from South African society by British and Afrikaans alike – and then it was the drug-addict – also expelled to the margins of society, both physically and symbolically, at the site of Greefswald farm, the old safari getaway of E.E. Collins. In such a way, Greefswald farm provides the intriguing juxtaposition of archaeology and biopolitical governmentality – where Mapungubwe was only recently a site of proof of Bantu biological invasion, its site had become a site of national shame, and symbolic expulsion.

In spite of the shift in the use of the farmland, Mapungubwe research continued, albeit generally from afar, and was largely dominated by reassessments of old materials, like the aforementioned work of Voigt on faunal remains, Huffman on spatial and ceramic sequencing and others, including Tim Maggs and Martin Hall. During this period, the radiocarbon dating project continued, chiefly to readdress a lot of what were considered to be “erroneous” dates, stemming from the initial rudimentary radiocarbon work done by Gardner.¹⁶⁹ The work of Hall is particularly important for his contributions towards the political analysis of the historic practices of archaeological and the associated interpretive disciplines. For Hall, “despite the volume of work that has been completed, archaeology in southern Africa has until recently remained impoverished of theory”, with most writers relying on “a simple model of southerly migration...to account for farming origins, despite the fact that race is almost obsolete in physical anthropology”.¹⁷⁰

He was especially critical of the “settler paradigm” imposed in the interpretations of southern African history, wherein the region (much like the Americas) became a land of successive lines of settlers, from Hamites, to Bantu invasions, to the colonial settling of first the Dutch and then the British.¹⁷¹ In this model, ceramics equated to ethnic background or, in the language of the time, *tribe*. Indeed, ‘settler paradigm’ seems an astute description of the conceptualisation of historiographies of Africa and the world into which Mapungubwe was made to fit during the bulk of the twentieth century. But even during this broadly described period, there were different sets of symbols used to infuse meaning into Mapungubwe. There existed, before the van Graan’s set foot anywhere near the Hill, the position of Mapungubwe Hill as sacred in the cultures of nearby peoples, including the Venda and Shona inhabitants of the region in the 1930s. For them, the Hill should not to be climbed, much less the golden objects removed from their graves.

¹⁶⁹ Peter Mitchell, *The Archaeology of Southern Africa* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002), 304.

¹⁷⁰ Hall, ‘Archaeology and Modes of Production’, 1.

¹⁷¹ Hall, ‘Pots and Politics’, 263.

But there was also the symbolic set immediately attached to Mapungubwe by Fouché and, later, by Schofield – that is, the association with Great Zimbabwe Culture. Despite Mapungubwe preceding Great Zimbabwe chronologically, it was to the later formation that was taken to be constitutive of meaning in the first. The signs and symbols of Great Zimbabwe were applied to Mapungubwe, though in a positivistic and methodically rigorous fashion. Alongside this, though, was the association of Mapungubwe to Judeo-Christian signs and symbols, through attachment of southern African gold-bearing archaeological sites to King Solomon's capital at Ophir. This was closely associated with the British colonial literary imagination, but also with the general activities of early colonialism, in adventure, exploration and the discovery of a past that was produced as lost. But, also, and most powerfully, were the somatic (or biopolitical) truth discourses – tales of the bones – that became definitive in the potential for mythology in Mapungubwe. The bone-reader, who was never an interpreter, but an honest analyst, limited by the objective nature of the practices of their (or, in this case, his) discipline, could tell no lies. And it was said, first, that these were Hottentot bones. Later, however, it was found that they were indeed Bantu bones.

The Mapungubwe that had emerged in the latter half of the twentieth century was somewhat threatening to the National Party's Calvinist historical narrative, since it had begun to depart from the narratives of savagery, Bantu invasion, and Solomonic biblical mysticism which had dominated the pre-1960s/1970s interpretive work. By the time apartheid had ended, and Mapungubwe was to enter mainstream public discourses (including those of heritage, tourism, education, and the arts), there were multiple 'truths' of Mapungubwe that had been produced over time within the academy. It was a Mapungubwe of many meanings, with many sets of symbols to choose from to make meaning in Mapungubwe. But once apartheid ended, new political limits were instituted, and the productive machinery through which meaning could be made had changed fundamentally. For instance, the discipline of archaeology exploded: for the first time, black archaeologists could access the site and objects of Mapungubwe. In another instance, the ownership of the property shifted, from the University of Pretoria and the SADF – which for sixty years had closeted the site and its research – to South African National Parks board (SANParks). A new Mapungubwe was required to produce a new conceptualisation of the precolonial, to be constitutive of the contemporary, postcolonial, post-apartheid order.

The end of apartheid: democracy and a new politics of land and history, 1994 – 2017

The symbolic sets and expulsions (and inclusions) required for the maintenance or, rather, reproduction of societal order and existing matrices of power relations in South Africa changed fundamentally with the respective ends of the Cold War and apartheid, and the introduction of a proposed democratic political system, rather than the racialised ideology of white supremacy through which the policies of apartheid were filtered. This also constituted a reordering of the archaeological community, as well as the position of archaeology in relation to the national public. By the time the ANC had claimed victory in 1994, Greefswald's drug rehabilitation facility had been shut down, and the SADF had been reconstructed as the South African *National* Defence Force, now serving an ideologically changed political system (i.e. the democratic Republic of South Africa). At the same time, the propriety of Greefswald shifted to the new authority of SANParks in 1995.¹⁷²

The following year saw the launch of a national Constitution, confirming the authority of the new state, which was in turn defined by a new body politic and governed according to new ideologies founded on notions of democratic representation, human dignity, human rights, and non-racialism. The occasion was jubilant, and brought with it the promise of newness, and national cultural and political rebirth. Deputy President at the time, Thabo Mbeki, took the opportunity to deliver a speech which would become a hallmark of the ideology of the policies associated with history, archaeology and education, in which he explicated his vision of the African Renaissance, a project that was to birth a new nation, re-attached to its rightful historicity.¹⁷³ The political conditions under which archaeological practices of excavation and interpretation were to occur were substantially different, requiring a much closer association between the history of the nation-state, its population, and the findings of archaeological interpretation. Indeed, as per Mbeki, the truths had already been uncovered – they now needed to be reattached to the people with which they could be appropriately associated. Once Mbeki

¹⁷² Lynn Meskell, 'Mapungubwe Cultural Landscape: Attractive Economies and Endangerment on South Africa's Borders', in C. Brumann and D. Berliner (eds.), *World Heritage on the Ground: Ethnographic Perspectives*, (Berghan Books, 2016), 273. This is a strange and conflicting movement of land, where propriety has been contested in courts, in oral histories, in archaeologies. Kashe-Katiye's MA thesis is useful for an understanding of the making of Mapungubwe land into heritage. However, her focus, particularly when dealing with the early phases of meaning-making, is with the ethnology and ethnography of Mapungubwe, particularly in the work of Lestrade.

¹⁷³ Thabo Mbeki, 'I Am An African', Speech delivered at the inauguration of the 1996 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Cape Town, 8 May 1996).

was elected as President of the ANC and South Africa, the influence of the African Renaissance gained momentum. By the late 1990s, many academics in the social sciences had taken the project towards national rebirth quite centrally into their practices.

Mapungubwe in the African Renaissance

Since the 1960s, a great amount of interest had grown in academic circles regarding precolonial histories, and the possibilities of reconsidering social science methodologies. During the 1990s, such considerations became more prevalent in South African academic discourses, in part because they were – with the end of apartheid – allowed to enter public and popular domains, as well as mainstream education.¹⁷⁴ The drive towards the African Renaissance, for Mbeki, demanded the restoration and active (re)construction of African histories prior to colonial intervention.¹⁷⁵ He took great interest in precolonial African histories and the maintenance of the associated archives, most famously playing a (donor) role in the Timbuctou Manuscripts Project, which continued beyond his presidency.¹⁷⁶ It is also during his time in office that sites like Mapungubwe and uKhahlamba became UNESCO World Heritage Sites, protecting the vast landscapes of archaeological material and possibility, tenuously preserving them for future research, touristic exploitation, and potential economic growth in their respective regions.¹⁷⁷ In a speech in 2005 at the Timbuctou Project Fundraiser in Tshwane, Mbeki referenced Mapungubwe as evidence of the apartheid regime's erasure of African histories of development and ingenuity. According to Mbeki,

We in South Africa know how deafening silences about our history can be. Here in our own country, the apartheid regime locked away the evidence of the civilisation of Mapungubwe and refused to allow independent research on the site for decades. Today we encourage such scholarship in an effort to unlock the liberating secrets of our pre-colonial history.¹⁷⁸

During the late 1990s and early 2000s, Mapungubwe came to perform a very specific role within the South African leg of the African Renaissance, being claimed as the 'Golden Era' or

¹⁷⁴ Johann Mouton and Johan Muller (eds.), *Theory and Method in South African Social Science Research: Advances and Innovations* (Pretoria, HSRC Press, 1998).

¹⁷⁵ Malegapuru William Makgoba, *African Renaissance: The New Struggle* (Johannesburg, Mafube, 1999).

¹⁷⁶ Shamil Jeppie and S.B. Diagne (eds.), *The Meanings of Timbuktu* (Johannesburg: HSRC Press, 2008), 8.

¹⁷⁷ see Jane Carruthers, 'Mapungubwe: An historical and contemporary analysis of a World Heritage cultural landscape', *Koedoe* 49/1 (2006).

¹⁷⁸ Thabo Mbeki, 'Address by the President of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, at the SA-Mali Timbuktu Project Fundraising Dinner' (City of Tshwane, 1 October 2005). Accessible at: <http://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/address-president-south-africa-thabo-mbeki-sa-mali-timbuktu-project-fundraising-dinner-city-> [Last accessed 14/02/2018].

‘Naissance’ to the Renaissance – that thing to be memorialised, and glorified, as that moment of South African greatness to inspire the new post-apartheid future. By 1998, the massive project to carbon-date the material gathered from Greefswald farm was presented in published volume by Andries Meyer.¹⁷⁹ The piece was a milestone in Limpopo archaeology, and marked the resurgence of Mapungubwe in both political and archaeological fields. During the ensuing years, a number of more political analyses of Mapungubwe would be conducted by Lynn Meskell and Jane Carruthers, anthropological studies by Innocent Pikirayi, and re-assessments of skeletal remains by Maryna Steyn, among others. The work of Steyn is extremely important, since it was the final skeletal analysis of the remains of K2 and Mapungubwe before they were reburied in accordance with the wishes of those designated as descendants of the inhabitants of the ancient sites.¹⁸⁰

In December 2000, the South African Archaeological Society published the *Goodwin Series Volume 8*. Edited by Mary Leslie and Tim Maggs, the volume was titled: ‘African Naissance, the Limpopo Valley 1000 Years Ago’, with contributions from Maggs, Andries Meyer, Thomas Huffman, Simon Hall, Ben Smith, J.C. Vogel, J.A. Calabrese, Andrew Reid, Alinah Segobye, Munyaradzi Manyanga, Innocent Pikirayi, Webber Ndoro, Marilee Wood, Duncan Miller, Nirdev Desai, Julia Lee-Thorp, Maryna Steyn, Willem C. Nienaber, and Ina Plug.¹⁸¹ The contributors present the archaeological position and progress of Mapungubwe and Limpopo valley history from the middle Iron Age, according to leading South African archaeologists who had been centrally involved in Limpopo archaeology during the 1970s and, especially, the 1980s.

The papers in the collection position Mapungubwe within a broader set of temporal and regional relations than earlier work (particularly that of the Fouché and Gardner eras), as well as exploring more deeply the relations in the immediate area, between agriculturalists, herders, and hunter-gatherers.¹⁸² The authors are highly technical in the archaeology they present and are far more conscious of the interpretive qualities of their work. The publication of the volume

¹⁷⁹ Andries Meyer, ‘The archaeological sites of Greefswald: Stratigraphy and chronology of the sites and a history of investigations’ (Pretoria, University of Pretoria, 1998).

¹⁸⁰ Maryna Steyn, ‘The Mapungubwe Gold Graves Revisited’, *The South African Archaeological Bulletin*, Vol.62, No. 186 (Dec. 2007), 140-146. See also Kashe-Katiya, ‘Carefully Hidden Away’, 70. The author is critical of the University of Pretoria for intending to “locate science outside of politics” during the repatriation of the bodies from Mapungubwe. The university insisted on DNA tests to decide who were the proper descendants of Mapungubwe, which gives an idea of the position of science in South African society, and the relation between the state and its institutions, archaeological sciences, and ownership rights.

¹⁸¹ A year before, the Fourth World Archaeological Congress was held in Cape Town.

¹⁸² King, ‘Archaeological Naissance’, 315.

communicated major advances in understandings of the ‘Iron Age southern Africa’, and also marked the resurgence of research interest in Mapungubwe. Of course, by this stage, the methodological interventions of thinkers like Martin Hall had been taken into consideration, alongside a vastness of postcolonial literature and theory with which to re-examine such histories and archaeologies.

In his introduction to Volume 8 of the Goodwin Series, Tim Maggs invoked the phrasing of Mbeki, positioning the work within the scope of the African Renaissance: “The beginning of the ‘African Century’ is seen by many as a time of renewed optimism in Africa. This is best expressed by President Thabo Mbeki’s inspiring message of hope for the future ‘African Renaissance’”.¹⁸³ Maggs positions the greater Limpopo archaeological landscape (including Mapungubwe), and the work in the Goodwin series, as part of the “original African ‘Golden Age’ that will inspire the Renaissance [...] in the new millennium”.¹⁸⁴ A direct thread was drawn between the initial phases of early-mid Iron Age political, societal and technological advancement, and the advancements seen to be required by academics and politicians alike, in a South Africa that was just reaching the end of its first decade of democracy. As such, Mapungubwe changed from ‘a hill on Greefswald farm’ in the ‘Dongola national park’, to the prime fixture in the Mapungubwe National Park and Mapungubwe Cultural Landscape.

The ancient state had re-entered the limelight in academic research as well as political discourses and had emerged as an important instrument in the African Renaissance. In the early twenty-first century, Mapungubwe was embraced locally, as the highest national award – the Order of Mapungubwe (December 2002) – and globally, as a UNESCO World Heritage Site (July 2003). The great ‘first state’ of southern Africa had been chosen to symbolise South African heritage, long before the conception of the territory of South Africa (est. 1910). Once this centralisation into the national and inter-national imagination was concretised, a vast array of literature on Mapungubwe began to be published, including tourist and informational guides, and more critical academic publications. Much of the archaeological evidence from Mapungubwe Hill remains at the University of Pretoria Museum, under the curatorship of Sian Tiley-Nel, who has produced a number of archaeological papers on reinterpreting the archaeological evidence from Mapungubwe Hill. By the beginning of the twenty-first century,

¹⁸³ Tim Maggs, ‘African Naissance: An Introduction’, *Goodwin Series, Vol.8: African Naissance: The Limpopo Valley 1000 Years Ago* (Dec. 2000), 1.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

Mapungubwe was rapidly growing as a site of great importance (particularly in terms of its heritage value), both politically and intellectually, along national and global axes.

Heritage space

The history of Mapungubwe is exemplary of the problematics posed by the performance post-colonial state into a ‘nation’ with a shared heritage. At least, Mapungubwe is, in its geographic immediacy, transcendent of such constraints. Unlike so many national and global sites of heritage, the ancient state bears “no ongoing relations between people and place”.¹⁸⁵ This is exactly to say that “no modern community occupies the site or can lay claim to an organic association with it”.¹⁸⁶ It is described by Jane Carruthers (historian of the Kruger National Park), in her 2006 paper critiquing the politics of the Mapungubwe World Heritage Site, as an “uncontested landscape”.¹⁸⁷ The landscape cast by, for instance, Xolelwa Kashe-Katiya (currently head of consultancy at MISTRA, whose own research has centred around the treatment of Black subjects in archaeological and other historical writing), however, is one of extreme contestation, between multiple authorities and interest groups.

The emphasis on Mapungubwe as *uncontested space* obscures the reality that people do live nearby, and that ‘Mapungubwe’ and its manipulations in the national imagination – as heritage commodity – do inevitably interact with the people surrounding Mapungubwe. While Carruthers constructs the idea that Mapungubwe is free game, it appears that it is they who have the most to lose in the positioning and execution of Mapungubwe as heritage site, though not necessarily the most to gain. Significantly, local communities have never been reimbursed for the loss of either mineral wealth or potentially arable land, disabled by heritage status. Similarly, it is unlikely that nearby communities would actually benefit from Coal of Africa’s (CoAL) mining operations, outside of job availability on the mines which – historically speaking – mirrors the labour relations of the colonial state.

For Carruthers, Mapungubwe becomes important in the South African heritage landscape for essentially these very reasons. She writes:

Mapungubwe [is where] the first consequences of wealth accumulation become evident. This inequitable distribution of wealth resulted in class distinction and disparity in access to resources, together with the physical

¹⁸⁵ Carruthers, ‘Mapungubwe... World Heritage’, 2-3.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

separation of commoners from the ruling class or ‘sacred leadership’, the latter living on the top of the hill, the commoners below and serving their interests.¹⁸⁸

Thus, for Carruthers, two important related things happen historically at Mapungubwe. The first is that wealth distribution changes, and social classes emerge – a form of class elitism rises. Alongside this, though banalised by the likes of Gardner, Galloway, Fagan and Dart, are the general advances and spread of Iron Age technologies. It is “because it salutes an early modern, technologically advanced state and economy that existed long before the era of colonisation”, Carruthers argues, that Mapungubwe becomes “an appropriate symbol” for the post-apartheid South African nation-state.¹⁸⁹ For Carruthers, “the values encapsulated in this cultural landscape are modern, capitalistic and international”, mirroring the contemporary state.¹⁹⁰ The second is that Mapungubwe is also a moment of “one culture surpassing and supplanting another: farmers squeezing out herders and foragers” – it is a moment, as per the view of Gardner, of Bantu displacement of the indigenous foraging peoples, rather than the organic and fluid transitions described by the likes of Huffman.¹⁹¹

Revising and repurposing Mapungubwe

Carruthers’ paper was published in 2006, right in the middle of Mbeki’s second term, but only a year before he was recalled by the ANC. By that stage, the African Renaissance had hit an iceberg in political discourses, with much ruling-party (and public) attention vaulting towards the crisis within the ANC.¹⁹² The Renaissance, often seen as Mbeki’s project, had shaped politics and intellectuality in mainstream South African circles during the initial stages of the first decade of the twenty-first century, but, by 2006, was a waning influence in political and, therefore, in public discourses. By 2009 – the year of Zuma’s election – talk of the African Renaissance had morphed to such a degree that the new slogan of the President became “100% Zuluboy” (for which the ANC was “slammed” by COSATU),¹⁹³ a claim of authentic ethnicity

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 5. See also Thomas N. Huffman ‘State Formation in Southern Africa: A Reply to Kim and Kusimba’, *The African Archaeological Review*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (March 2010). Huffman explains that there is no evidence that any of the transformations around Mapungubwe (at K2 and Leopard’s Kopje) occurred through violent intervention.

¹⁹² Wherein Mbeki was ousted, replaced for a short while by Kgalema Motlanthe, who was himself ousted and replaced by Jacob Zuma. See Frank Chikane, *Eight Days in September: The Removal of Thabo Mbeki*, (Picador Africa, 2012).

¹⁹³ See Mbongiseni Buthelezi, ‘We Need New Names Too’ in Carolyn Hamilton and Nessa Liebhammer (eds.), *Tribing and Untribing the Archive* (Pietermaritzburg, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2016). See also

and culture which ran very much against the grain of the African Renaissance.¹⁹⁴ But still, despite waning political interest in precolonial histories and heritage, Mapungubwe made its way into the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) history curriculum as a dedicated topic in 2010/11, and academic work continued at the site, its objects being paraded for the world to see as recently as 2016/7.¹⁹⁵ There was, perhaps, a second resurgence of the historic site in the national imagination during the initial stages of the second decade of the twenty-first century, informed by political ideology as well as disciplinary advancement.

In 2015 MISTRA published *Mapungubwe Reconsidered: A Living Legacy – Exploring Beyond the Rise and Decline of the Mapungubwe State*; an edited volume by Alex Schoeman, Michelle Hay, and Rachel Browne, including contributions from Shadreck Chirikure,¹⁹⁶ Peter Delius, Amanda Esterhuysen, Simon Hall, Sekibakiba Lekgoathi, Maanda Mulaudzi, Vele Neluvhalani, Otsile Ntsoane, David Pearce, Karim Sadr, Alex Schoeman, and Jeanette Smith.¹⁹⁷ The authorship of the book is heavily academic (especially History and Archaeology), though there is some connection with History education and curriculum review/revision. Esterhuysen was present on the History and Archaeology Panel (2000), while Lekgoathi is on the Ministerial Task Team for the implementation of compulsory history (2015). Lekgoathi's closeness to such emerging studies as *Mapungubwe Reconsidered* indicates that there is significant interest for the MTT in reconsidering early southern African histories from the northmost provinces.

Schoeman and Hay, in their introduction to the collection, describe the “range of interpretations” of Mapungubwe, from “traditional African kingdom”, to “sophisticated state

Andisiwe Makinana, “100% Zuluboy t-shirt: COSATU slams Lekota” (Cape Argus, 23/10/2007), accessible at: <https://www.iol.co.za/news/politics/100-zuluboy-t-shirt-cosat-slams-lekota-375991>.

¹⁹⁴ see Yonah Seleti, ‘The African Renaissance: The New Struggle: Is the African Renaissance a chimera?’, *Current Writing: Text and Reception in Southern Africa* 11(2)(1999), 52-65.

¹⁹⁵ See Mark Brown, ‘South Africa’s golden rhino to star in British Museum exhibition’, *The Guardian* (7 August 2016). Accessible at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/aug/07/british-museum-south-africa-host-800-year-old-treasure> [Last accessed 14/02/2018].

¹⁹⁶ Chirikure in particular has produced some intriguing challenges to more (Western) ‘traditional’ understandings of Mapungubwe, Great Zimbabwe, and SLCA archaeology. For instance, he has been able to locate Mapungubwe within a wider set of relations through trade, which become definitive of the character of Mapungubwe/Zimbabwe/SLCA societies. See Shadreck Chirikure, ‘Land and sea links, 1000 years of connectivity between southern Africa and the Indian Ocean Rim regions, AD 700 – 1700’, *African Archaeological Review* 31 (2014), 705-724. Chirikure’s own contribution to *Mapungubwe Reconsidered* consists of a review of the position of metal in Mapungubwe, how it was mined (elsewhere), manufactured (smelted and moulded), and traded.

¹⁹⁷ Credits are given on page 8 of the publication. Most of the personnel work at History, Archaeology or Geography departments at either the University of the Witwatersrand or the University of Cape Town. Neluvhalani is credited as a “retired grassroots intellectual”.

that formed part of international trade networks”.¹⁹⁸ Presenting an historical view of Mapungubwe discourses, the collection favours newer interpretations, presenting a general contemporary intellectual position on Mapungubwe. The group aimed for their work to become an educational resource, aimed at schools and universities. However, they write that, “Sadly, it is still difficult for teachers and learners to easily access substantial, accurate and up-to-date information about Mapungubwe”.¹⁹⁹ Certainly, much of the literature on Mapungubwe is technical archaeology, well beyond the scope of school History. Even the content of *Mapungubwe Reconsidered* demands a high reading level, despite that the topic is taught in grade six. What is provided in the collection of essays is very much more directed at adults, to update their own understanding of Mapungubwe history.

The authors of *Mapungubwe Reconsidered* argue that Mapungubwe “was long downplayed because it provided a potent challenge to view that African settlement was recent, and that kingdoms were a novelty of nineteenth century society”.²⁰⁰ According to Hall,

Racist interpretations dominated the work of Gardner and Galloway, but others acknowledged that Mapungubwe Hill was the core of a pre-colonial African civilisation. More recent work recognises that Mapungubwe comprised of people from multiple origins, including hunter-gatherers, pastoralists and farmers.²⁰¹

This is again reflected in the collection’s second chapter, in which Lekgoathi, Ntsoane, and Neluvhalani converse about shifting archaeological methods between the first rediscoveries of ‘Mapungubwes’ ruins, and the more recent.²⁰² For Ntsoane, the first archaeologists in the 1930s, and their successors in the 1950s, in their excitement at finding golden ornaments, read too much meaning – a meaning coordinated by a distinctly colonial meaning-making machinery – into their findings. Lekgoathi, however, is more accommodating of the ethnographic methodologies employed by archaeologists who found evidence of material culture at Mapungubwe.

For Neluvhalani, the early archaeologists “ruffled everything, threw soil from the summit into the precipice”.²⁰³ He argues that in their fascination for the golden objects of the hilltop elite,

¹⁹⁸ Schoeman and Hay, *Mapungubwe Reconsidered*, 9.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 12.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 25.

²⁰² The conversational tone of the interaction is markedly different to the technocratic archaeological register employed in earlier Mapungubwe discourses from 1932 to the mid-2000s.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 41.

the archaeological possibilities of the valleys below were obfuscated and rendered banal against the overpowering status of the golden objects and imported glass beads. For Neluvhalani and Ntsoane, the problem with early interpretations of Mapungubwe was that “when they began they never recognised Africans”.²⁰⁴ The discussion between the three continues, shifting towards issues of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS), and how Mapungubwe might illuminate them. Though different arguments emerge, it appears, particularly in the case of Neluvhalani, that attributing contemporaneous IKS to Mapungubwe is problematic because it forces that IKS into a state of immobility, unchanged from Mapungubwe society of the thirteenth century, to the emptied land that is Mapungubwe today. Such is simply impossible – a false link of primordial traditional authenticity is constructed between Mapungubwe and local communities.

We see, most recently, a reconstitution of the subjectivity of the archaeologist in Africa, with the introduction of a new group of African archaeologists. While archaeology, cloistered by white authority due to colonial and apartheid institutional rules – especially, in this case, at the University of Pretoria – was obsessed with objects and determining ethno-cultural identities of people, according to the rules of science, the nature of the associated disciplines changed fundamentally with the inclusion of black archaeologists in the field of study. While early archaeology was associated with a colonial project that tended to render the Other (colonised peoples) as *data* (objects for analysis), the practices of meaning-making and understanding always occurred without having that Other enter the conversation. They were always talked about, or used as sources, but never allowed to play an active role in the assemblage of knowledge. After 1994, and especially in the new millennium, the African archaeologist – a new subjectivity – had to face their disciplinary profession with a high level of scepticism, as they changed from outsider to insider of archaeological knowledge and community. There was a significant difference in the approach to knowledge, in that for the first time, Mapungubwe is studied as one’s own history, laying ontological or cultural claim to that history, and investing in the knowledge production beyond claims of professional interest.

What occurred, rather than a new realisation that archaeology was not absolutely scientific or objective, was a realisation that there was a new malleability in the objects of excavation that was required. What resulted from this opening up of gateways into precolonial knowledge production was, rather than a reproduction of old forms of discovery – as the colonial

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

adventurer, in search of the lost Judeo-Christian sacred – a reconstitution of loss, and therefore a re-subjectification of the agents of discovery. This is to say, there was a formation of a new discoverer, who was able to 1) make new use of old tools, and 2) make new tools for understanding the objects of excavation. However, to produce a new discovery, we must make new loss. And when we standardise discovery, we negate the journey to discover produced losses that are in excess of the scope of the dominant mode of loss.

Conclusion: Regimes of knowledge and Mapungubwe

There are four marked phases in interpretations of Mapungubwe since the 1930s. The first, second, and fourth are largely academic, although all are determined very heavily by the ideologies of the academic institutions and contemporary political regimes associated. The first is the colonial-era finding of Mapungubwe Hill in the 1930s and the earliest archaeological excavations from the 1930s to the 1960s and comprises primarily the volumes from Fouché and Gardner. Most interpretations were later found to be problematic in terms of the excavation and collection of archaeological evidence, as well as the methods used for skeletal analysis (for example). The second phase begins with the interventions from abroad, in the work of Brian Fagan, Thomas Huffman, Roland Oliver, and J.D. Fage, as well as the significant physical anthropological interventions of Rightmire, which in turn, became inevitably, and through no particular will of the physician, a political intervention. New interpretive methods shifted thinking about the inhabitants of Mapungubwe during the middle iron age, positing them as Bantu peoples, through ceramic and spatial analytic sequencing, and re-evaluations of skeletal remains. During this period, there is a proliferation of Mapungubwe knowledge production through different fields, exploding from the archaeology of Mapungubwe outwards into, for instance, anthropological, historical, and political interpretations. However, much of this occurred while the sites associated with Mapungubwe were, first, returned to private farm owners (from the 1940s to 1960s), and then taken over by the SADF (from the 1960s to the 1980s).

The third phase begins with the push towards the African Renaissance, spearheaded by the likes of Thabo Mbeki and taken quite centrally into much academic research between the end of the 1990s and the early 2000s. During this phase, a number of archaeological research projects are produced, but Mapungubwe remains largely defined by its rulership and golden objects and is bound increasingly more tightly to South African national heritage and UNESCO World Heritage. From the mid-2000s there is a decline in African Renaissance rhetoric, in

politics, and in academia. This fourth phase marks a resurgence in Mapungubwe history, and begins around 2008, but only gains real momentum after 2010, around the same time as the revision of the national curriculum and prescription of a more specific topic dedicated to Mapungubwe, alongside the revamping of the Mapungubwe National Park. During this time, different archaeologists enter the mainstream, and conduct new research initiatives, yielding different results and interpretations. The considerations by archaeologists shift from the politics of the African Renaissance emphasis on golden things and rulership, and towards more nuanced understandings of the relations between people in the region at the time around Mapungubwe.

It is only in the final phase of Mapungubwe research that the oral histories held by local (predominantly Venda) communities gain prominence in academic discourses on Mapungubwe.²⁰⁵ Prior to this, African oral histories were only engaged as functional in relation to the archaeology.²⁰⁶ There is much work to be done in bringing together the material and linguistic evidence available to interpret Mapungubwe, alongside its temporal and spatial surrounds. It has been reasonably well-known that ‘Venda’ was itself a political identity reconstructed during the apartheid era.²⁰⁷ For instance, the territory of the former Venda Bantustan does not corroborate historically with the territories occupied by Venda people.²⁰⁸ For example, Mapungubwe Hill, so central to Vhangona clan oral histories, did not fall within the territory of the Venda Bantustan, and so it was excluded from apartheid-era Venda authority. Rather, by the 1930s, the land was privately owned by a white settler, deeded to E.E. Collins, for whom Greefswald was a luxury getaway. Over time Mapungubwe shifted ownership, from Collins’ private property, to the property of the University of Pretoria, to property of the state – as both nature reserve and national park, as well as military base.

And yet the differing positions of Mapungubwe in Venda history tell of the levels of competition and deracination between clans and families under colonial authority. It is only in certain Vhangona oral historiographies that Mapungubwe is the capital of a large state or

²⁰⁵ Ralushai, *A preliminary report on the Oral History of Mapungubwe*.

²⁰⁶ For instance, see G.P. Lestrade, ‘Ethnological Investigations’, p119-120. Lestrade determined that the ethnic mix around the Mapungubwe region was so “confused” that it was largely pointless as archaeo-linguistic evidence.

²⁰⁷ This inference I take from the work of Mahmoud Mamdani, discerning the historically constructed nature of postcolonial political identity. See Mahmoud Mamdani, ‘Beyond Settler and Native as Political Identities: Overcoming the Political Legacy of Colonialism’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* Vol.43 No.4 (Oct. 2001), 651-664.

²⁰⁸ Maano Ramutsindela, ‘Resilient Geographies: Land, Boundaries and the Consolidation of the Former Bantustans in Post-1994 South Africa’, *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 173, No. 1, Environment and Development in the Former South African Bantustans (March 2007), 48.

kingdom, led by the first Venda king, Shiriyadenga.²⁰⁹ In competing historiographies, Venda was never united, and Mapungubwe was simply an independent state among many others.²¹⁰ In almost *all* archaeological and historical accounts by professional white historians from the 1930s until the 1990s, oral historiographies are completely absent, perhaps due to Lestrade's conclusion that linguistic evidence in the region was too confused to be helpful. Through this period, it is the science of archaeology which prevails as the set of practices for making visible the concealed past of Africa. Subsequently, what is more prevalent, particularly for the gaze of the public, is the representation of Mapungubwe as a general symbol of the historicity and heritage a contemporary nation-state, rather than the very specific heritage-history of certain groups of people, whether they be local or diasporic. The Mapungubwe of 2017 is, despite the efforts of intellectuals, practitioners and politicians alike, a disfigured corpse in history, easily removed from one context and attached to another, with a long history of facts, truths and meaning from which to choose, towards the composition of a historiography into which Mapungubwe might fit; or, rather more precisely, to compose or produce a Mapungubwe that is able to fit a particular preconceived historiographical narrative, or imaginative fantasy.

²⁰⁹ G. Mwakikagile, *South Africa as a Multi-Ethnic Society* (Dar es Salaam, Continental Press, 2010), 160.

²¹⁰ Kashe-Katiya, 'Carefully Hidden Away', 67-8. Interest groups include the Vhangona Cultural Movement, Lemba Cultural Association, Leshiba Royal Family, Machete Royal Family (who have subsequently lodged a large land claim in the region), San Council, and Tshivula Royal Council.

CHAPTER 2

Nationalising Mapungubwe

Mapungubwe, History education, and the production of new national narratives

Individual facts were not learnt for an immediate practical or professional end. The end seemed disinterested, because the real interest was the interior development of personality, the formation of character by means of the absorption and assimilation of the whole cultural past of modern European civilisation. Pupils did not learn Latin and Greek in order to speak them... They learnt them in order to know at first hand the civilisation of Greece and of Rome – a civilisation that was a necessary precondition of our modern civilisation: in other words, they learnt them in order to be themselves and know themselves consciously.

Antonio Gramsci, *The Prison Notebooks*²¹¹

Rebirth

In 2000, veteran South African archaeologist Tim Maggs made the claim that Mapungubwe was a symbol of southern African ‘Naissance’, precursory inspirator to the ‘Renaissance’ envisioned by disciples of Mbeki’s political philosophy (which, at the time, comprised a very broad group, including public and institutional intellectuals across fields).²¹² Less than three years later, Mapungubwe was both designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and introduced into the national school History curriculum, after a number of history education initiatives, including the deliberations of the History and Archaeology Panel in 2000, and the formation of the South African History Project, a national project aimed at general public history education, for adults and children alike, which functioned from 2001 to 2004. In the culmination of this work, Mapungubwe (with only a few other precolonial historical topics) was given critical purpose in the reconfiguration of the past, particularly for the constitution of some sense of national heritage, with nodes of development, and notions of origins – of *Naissance*. The term ‘Naissance’ means ‘birth’ in French, from the Latin *nascentia*. The symbolic links between the terms of ‘naissance’, ‘birth’, ‘originary’, and ‘first’ are quite

²¹¹ Antonio Gramsci, *The Prison Notebooks*, Q. Hoare and G.N. Smith (eds. and trans.) (New York, International Publishers, 1971), 37.

²¹² Tim Maggs, ‘African Naissance: An Introduction’, in T. Maggs and M Leslie (eds.), *Goodwin Series, Vol.8: African Naissance: The Limpopo Valley 1000 Years Ago* (Dec. 2000), pp. 1-3. Also in Makgoba, *African Renaissance: The New Struggle*.

obvious, all relating to some sense of initial emergence. Mapungubwe became *first* state – originary, authentic, and of pure meaning.

More than the prototypical African state, the Naissance became the archetype for southern African socio-political progress. If there was an African Renaissance, then to confirm Mapungubwe as Naissance was to give to it particular meaning for the contemporary – it was to give meaning to the concept of the ‘desired product’ of the contemporary society of a world-trading capitalist state. The potential relation between the ancient historic state and the contemporary nation-state became the motive force behind its inclusion into such institutions as national history education. When Mapungubwe was included, and it was justified as ‘the *first state* in southern Africa’. Its very title yielded unto it status as the originary state in southern Africa – the model, the long-lost ‘once was’. The question, then, is of what meaning is imparted by authority into the Naissance that is envisioned as precursor to the Renaissance. How was (and is) this morsel of the precolonial manufactured as a product for national educative consumption? Simply, how is the past made meaningful in the present, particularly for the reconstitution of the nation?

The relation produced between the distant past and the present is reciprocal: the past is used (manufactured or constructed) to give meaning to the present, and the past is understood through the lens of the present – through concepts and symbols which are both historical (because they develop with culture over time), and contemporary (because they are imposed from the present moment into the representation or interpretation of the past). Simply put, when the past is reimagined, the activity of reimagination occurs in the present, but always through refracted past reimaginings. History reads as layer upon layer of contested or agreed meanings – some of the old signs, symbols, concepts are concretised, while others are discarded, perhaps even set in opposition to the new regime of knowledge. When a past record of the even more distant past is read in the present, it is through the present that the relation is made. Time becomes entangled, rather than linear, in the reflection of the past, and so educative symbols should be historicised, rather than naturalised as contemporary.²¹³ We should consider, then, the weight of the concepts, symbols, and, more broadly, the mnemonic infrastructures and narratives through which the past is recreated as educative history. We must first follow the unfolding of the narrative, and then unpick the threads which hold it together,

²¹³ See Carolyn Hamilton, ‘Archives, Ancestors and the Contingencies of Time’, in Alf Lüdke and Tobias Nanz (eds.) *Laute, Bilde, Texte: Register des Archivs* (Göttingen, VandR Unipress, 2015), 114-115.

so as to uncover the work or, more precisely, the cultural-epistemological reproduction occurring through the educative narrativisation of Mapungubwe.

Professional History

The educational field (or ‘learning area’, or ‘subject discipline’) in which we encounter Mapungubwe in education is called ‘History’, which is a very particular discipline, at least since the nineteenth century, but harking back to writing practices long preceding this.²¹⁴ Despite the fact that the past has been imagined consistently by humans for as long as we care to remember, it is to select few (white, male) bourgeois intellectuals in nineteenth century Europe that we in fact owe attribution of the development of the ‘History’ discipline as a *set of practices*. History as a profession, distinct from the history writings which precede, only rises during the nineteenth century. Such was and is the power of colonialism, that the normative discipline of History that we teach and learn today in schools and universities is, in fact, historically founded in the inseparable projects of colonisation and industrialisation, not long before *nation-building* became a normative impulse in education during the mid-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, once Germany and Italy had unified as nation-states some centuries after the consolidation of *states* in Europe following long after the Treat of Westphalia (1648).²¹⁵

Positivism

The work of Leopold Von Ranke is among the most important in the early conceptualisation of professional History, working towards the ideal of a truly objective discipline. Von Ranke, despite all the criticism his work has been met with since the cultural turn in the social sciences, was acutely aware of his own attitudes, albeit that he was always constrained by the regimes of knowledge of the time in which he wrote. His methods were essentially built towards an attempt to overcome the biases and subjectivity that Von Ranke knew were present whenever the historian read or wrote. Those influences he was unaware of form the foundations of the

²¹⁴ Stefan Berger, ‘History Writing and Constructions of National Space: The Long Dominance of the National in Modern European Historiographies’, in Mario Carretero, Stefan Berger and Maria Grever (eds.), *Palgrave Handbook of Research in Historical Culture and Education* (London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 46.

²¹⁵ Tamar Herzog, ‘Historical Rights to Land: How Latin American States Made the Past Normative and What Happened to History and Historical Education as a Result’, in Mario Carretero, Stefan Berger and Maria Grever (eds.), *Palgrave Handbook of Research in Historical Culture and Education* (London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 92.

subsequent critiques of his methodology, including his centring of the European Christian masculine experience in his conceptualisation of universal logic.²¹⁶

Positivism, then, rather than emerging as an assertion of ideology, was the attempt to overcome ideology through an appeal to science, or, at the very least, the imposition of scientised practices in social disciplines like History. It is only after the 1960s that Von Ranke's methodologies come to be criticised, after the "cultural turn" in the social sciences, once historians had become educated take notice of the ideologies inherent in Historical and historiographical method.²¹⁷ 'Objectivity' (in history and moreover the social sciences), since the contributions Carr and Foucault, has become something of a fantasy – yet in the social and natural sciences it has remained as the unattainable light at the end of the tunnel: to be aspired to, but unachievable in totality.²¹⁸ The categories of science, which make it interpretively and analytically useful, are themselves historically cultured.

While Von Ranke wrote in the midst of European Empires in the early and mid-nineteenth century, History in school education emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, amid the rise of nations in Europe, including the formation of the German and Italian nation-states, which had been important intellectual and industrial centres in Europe.²¹⁹ At the time, such states as Spain, France and Britain were in the latter stages of consolidating their global power, having by the late nineteenth century claimed territories across Asia, Africa and the Americas, harvesting from them massive amounts of capital, including raw materials, labour and land. The 1800s and early 1900s are a very particular time in global history, since it is during this time that European industrialisation explodes, and colonisation reaches its peak, amid the abolition of the slave trade. In Europe, it is both the rise of a ruling middle class, as well as an industrial working class, which were gradually displacing the power of monarchies.²²⁰ By the time nations in Europe had risen (and much of the rest of the world under European colonial and imperial rule), 'History' was a budding field of professional study, and the disciples of historians like Von Ranke were gaining increasing recognition and influence.²²¹ What History was enjoyed in the colonised world was *exported* from the colonial master-

²¹⁶ For instance, see Anne Curthoys and John Docker, *Is History Fiction?* (Sydney, UNSW Press, 2010), 50-68.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*

²¹⁸ E.H. Carr, *What Is History?* (Cambridge, University of Cambridge Press, 1961).

²¹⁹ Curthoys and Docker, *Is History Fiction?*, 52-53.

²²⁰ See, for instance, Badiou, *Polemics*, 257-289, in which he discusses the radical Event of the Paris Commune in French political history.

²²¹ Curthoys and Docker, *Is History Fiction?*, 53. The authors discuss Von Ranke's closeness with Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm IV.

country to the colony, as knowledge manufactured from the raw historical materials expropriated from the colonies.

The point here is not that History today remains cloistered in positivistic methodologies, but rather that the rise of the educational discipline of History followed soon at the heels of positivist, professionalised History, rather than emerging during the 1960s and 1970s ‘cultural turn’ in the social sciences.²²² For pedagogues across the world, History became ‘the history of the nation-state’. During nineteenth and twentieth centuries, “education supported and sustained moral citizenship and loyalty” to the nation.²²³ According to Karrouche, “History education in particular caters to this need and provides historical depth and understanding to national subjects’ loyalty to the state, as it defined who counts as a citizen of the state and what it means to belong to a nation”.²²⁴ As Rodriguez-Moneo and Lopez note, the “political and ideological uses of the past produce and reproduced misleading meanings for historical concepts and ahistorical narratives: not in order to critically understand the past, but in order to legitimate the present and promote certain features”.²²⁵ School history, then, has at its centre the peculiar figure of ‘the nation’.

Nationalising history in the twentieth century

We know from Benedict Anderson that nations are imagined communities, but we know also from Partha Chatterjee that, in the imagination, which is in part determinant of action and consciousness (together as *praxis*), the nation manifests as very much concrete.²²⁶ The nation

²²² Mario Carretero, ‘Teaching History Master Narratives: Fostering *Imagi-Nations*’, in M. Carratero, S. Berger, M. Grever (eds.), *Palgrave Handbook of Research in Historical Culture and Education* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 516. We see also in the work of contemporary education theorists, like Michael Young and Ursula Hoadley, an almost absolute rejection of structuralist and post-structuralist education theory, particularly those of Louis Althusser and Michel Foucault. Such theorisations as Young and Hoadley’s tend to naturalise institutionalised education. See Ursula Hoadley, ‘Knowledge, knowers and knowing: Curriculum reform in South Africa’ in L. Yates and M. Grumet (eds.) *Curriculum in Today’s World: configuring knowledge, identities, work and politics* (Routledge, 2011), 139-154. Often, this results in a failure at policy-making level of historicising the pedagogies that manifest in a particular curriculum. For instance, CAPS has been criticised for regressing to an apartheid-era form of positivist nationalist education, which appears to have been outside the considerations of the groups in charge of revising the NCS in 2010.

²²³ Norah Karrouche, (2017), ‘National Narratives and the Invention of Ethnic Identities: Revisiting Cultural Memory and the Decolonised State in Morocco’, in M. Carratero, S. Berger, M. Grever (eds.), *Palgrave Handbook of Research in Historical Culture and Education* (London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 296.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*

²²⁵ Maria Rodriguez-Moneo and Cesar Lopez, ‘Concept Acquisition and Conceptual Change in History’, in M. Carratero, S. Berger, M. Grever (eds.), *Palgrave Handbook of Research in Historical Culture and Education*, (London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 481.

²²⁶ Benedict Anderson, *Imagine Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London, Verso, 1983), 48-59. See also Partha Chatterjee, *Politics of the Governed: Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World* (New York, Columbia University Press, 2004), 5. This turn from Chatterjee is very important – the

is imagined – but because it is imagined, and enacted (performed), it becomes very *real* in praxis. Thus, there are two levels with which to consider the nation in History education, which together can be construed as a generalised praxis in education: first, the way that it is *imagined*; and second, the way that it is *performed*. The two are inseparable in this context, since the activity of imagination is itself performed, and the performance requires foundation in the imagination. In educational History, the concept of the ‘nation’ has been historically central to the construction of the educational discourses of the discipline, in historic prescriptions of imagination and performance. Rodriguez-Moneo and Lopez consider the important position of the nation, citing five reasons for the conceptual centrality of the nation in educational history narratives:

First, the discipline of history itself has been connected to this concept [the nation] since its beginning as a modern discipline in the nineteenth century. Second, the very concept of nation has shaped most of historical narratives within the discipline in many different countries leading to the construction of national narratives in order to encounter the past. Third, these national narratives, with the concept of nation as their leitmotiv, have guided the uses and goals of history education since the nineteenth century and their influence can be traced up until now. Fourth, the concept of nation has been strongly connected to national identity including its explicit and implicit moral purposes. Lastly, the way in which the concept of nation is understood could lead to very different ways of looking at the whole discipline of history.²²⁷

Following such an understanding of the nation in History education, it becomes evident that the authority of the state and the conceptual personae of the nation historicised (its leaders, heroes, citizens, oppressors etc.) are inextricably linked. It is to the ideologies of the institutional authority that we can look to for the foundational subjective interpellations which occur in the content-knowledge specified for the History curriculum. According to such a view, emphasis is placed on “the state as prime orchestrator of historical memory in modernity”.²²⁸ This idea is shared by many historians, including Eric Hobsbawm and Benedict Anderson.²²⁹

consideration of a popular politics, of politics practiced in the everyday, a politics of the mundane. In many ways, the third chapter of this thesis makes this move, taking into consideration production in the popular.

²²⁷ Rodriguez-Moneo and Lopez, ‘Concept Acquisition and Conceptual Change in History’, 482.

²²⁸ Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. Translated by B. Brewster (New York, Monthly Review Press, 1971), 143-144.

²²⁹ Eric Hobsbawm and Terrence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983), 281.

But the role of the professional historian as “an important mythmaker for national identity in the nineteenth century” is equally important in the construction of the educational history narrative.²³⁰

History education is produced from an interplay between both professional and political spheres of influence, which are implicitly entwined with the everyday historical knowledge held by the general population, however comprising subgroups might be differentiated (according to race, gender, ethnicity etc.). But it is the *nation* which becomes central to the narrativisation of history for (national) educative consumption, rather than the micro-groupings which make up the nation. When history is attributed ownership (in educational histories), it is often the nation that is selected, rather than the micro-grouping. For instance, in the case of Mapungubwe in the existing South African curriculum, the history becomes the property of the nation of South Africa, rather than the property of the groups to whom the land, objects and ancestry of Mapungubwe has been politically and legally designated.²³¹

Post-Independence nationalist history education in Africa (1959 – 1994)

Some examples of nationalist educational histories containing national narratives during the mid-twentieth century include those of the Israeli state, the USA, the USSR, and apartheid South Africa. While it is during the nineteenth that the positivist discipline of History and European nation-states rise, it is only during the twentieth century that nationalist histories really meet their extreme (or, rather, most extreme at that point). During this phase, a critical distinction becomes manifest in education between “us” and “them”, the nation and its citizens versus the “other” inscribed into the materials for education.²³² Importantly, this nationalist extremism only emerges *after* the Second World War and during the Cold War – once ‘the Empire’ has decided to decolonise its territories, opting rather for a more indirect imperialism.

For thinkers like Andrew Mycock, there is some sense of confusion as to ‘what to do after Empire?’, considering the emergence of new state authorities and national identities following

²³⁰ Maria Grever and Robbert-Jan Adriaansen, ‘Historical Culture: A Concept Revisited’, in M. Carratero, S. Berger, M. Grever (eds.), *Palgrave Handbook of Research in Historical Culture and Education*, (London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 80.

²³¹ In 2009, the Machete royal house made a claim for land which fell within the jurisdiction of SANParks. See Shadreck Chirikure, Munyaradzi Manyanga, Weber Ndoro, Gabriel Pwiti, ‘Unfulfilled promises? Heritage management and community participation at some of Africa's cultural heritage sites’, *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 16:1-2 (2010), 30-44.

²³² See Falk Pingle, *UNESCO Guidebook on Textbook Research and Textbook Revision* (Paris, UNESCO, 2010).

the advent of the decolonial process.²³³ New political formations emerge from the collapse of Empires, especially the democratisation of the British political system, and the capitulation of the Ottoman Empire during the First World War. It is a time after the Second World War, and during the Cold War, once colonisation had ceased to be fashionable or economically viable for the colonial mother-countries. This meant that formerly colonised states could, for the first time, determine their own histories, partially independent of the influence of colonial or imperial master narratives. For Africa, Latin America and Asia, national histories of the territorialised nation-state only really began during this decolonisation process. In the African case, this only takes off after 1959, when Ghana gained independence.

In Africa, the relation between nation, history and education took various shapes. In general, there was a rise in nationalist histories, which came with the decolonisation of states in Africa. There are several types of educational history which emerge during the period of the 1960s to 1980s. There were vanguardist nationalist histories, as in the case of Nkrumah's Ghana, where the post-independence ruling party were endeared into history as the central historical figures through which narratives were formed. There were also nativist or traditionalist movements, for instance, in Kenyatta's Kenya, or others which were influenced by the Negritude movement, as in the case of Senghor's Senegal.²³⁴ These are more descriptive categories than distinct categories, since, for instance, the "nativist" impulse is evident in both the educational policies of both 1960s and 1970s Kenya and Ghana.²³⁵

South Africa was no exception to the nationalist movement or trend in global education discourses. While other nations were gaining independence and introducing new history education models, the South African education authorities (imbued with their power by the apartheid government) had been instituting Christian National Education (CNE) alongside Bantu education.²³⁶ The two systems were both racialised and sanctified, but were met with local and global opposition.²³⁷ Particularly in the CNE model, historical emphasis was placed on the Great Trek, centring around the historic religious rites of the Afrikaans people. In the

²³³ Andrew Mycock, 'After Empire: The Politics of History Education in a Post-Colonial World' in M. Carratero, S. Berger, M. Grever (eds.), *Palgrave Handbook of Research in Historical Culture and Education* (London, Palgrave MacMillan, 2017), 393.

²³⁴ Jomo Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya: The Tribal Life of the Gikuyu* (Vintage Books, 1965); Leopold Senghor, 'Negritude', *Indian Literature*, Vol. 17, No. 1/2 (January-June 1974), 269-273.

²³⁵ Achille Mbembe, 'African modes of self-writing', *Public Culture* 14(1) (2002).

²³⁶ I.B. Tabata, *Education for Barbarism: Bantu (apartheid) education in South Africa*. Unity Movement of South Africa (1960).

²³⁷ Both CNE and Bantu education were premised on white superiority and black ineptitude as natural yet sought to manufacture both through education.

South African case, the history taught in schools was determined significantly by an ideology of Afrikaner nationalism, wherein the Afrikaans people were the biblical proprietors of southern Africa. South Africa was, for them, the promised land, much in the same way modern Israelis lay claim the Palestinian territories.²³⁸

The period of the 1950s to the 1990s saw a steady reproduction of national history narratives in education across the world, although there was a noticeable disjuncture between the national religiosity of curricula like CNE, and the secularisation of the social sciences (after the interventions of, especially, post-structural theorists, like Foucault, during the cultural turn in the social sciences).²³⁹ The stern objectivity of the professional discipline of History (and the associated fields, like archaeology, anthropology and sociology) seemingly could not meet with the heavily ideological educative nationalisms present in state-authorised pedagogic expressions – and yet they were made to coexist. The 1950s to 1990s, therefore, comprise a point in time at which professional and public expressions of history were in dissonance. As a result, much theory that was produced in this time was extremely critical of institutionalised education, and where the selections for national history education were highly ideological and centred around the origins and development of the existing nation-state and its associated networks of authority.²⁴⁰

The 1990s saw the end of the Cold War as well as the end of apartheid, bringing fundamental changes in both global and local (or national) politics, in part due to the dissolution of the ideological polarisation of world politics with the demise of Soviet communism. At this time, there was a reconfiguration of History education in both global and local discourses, often as a challenge to previous ‘master narratives’ in educative history.²⁴¹ In terms of the global, socialism and the economic power afforded by the Soviet Union had collapsed, and so support for socialist movements and educational ideology subsided. There was no longer a concrete and neat cleavage between capitalist and communist policy and ideology, and so new lenses

²³⁸ Abu El-Haj, *Facts on the ground*.

²³⁹ Mycock, ‘After Empire’, 393. On ‘History Wars’, he discusses the tensions arising during this era of conflicting historical narratives. For instance, the national histories of Israel and its neighbours could not agree since, for example, the relative interpretations of the *Nakba* are completely at odds, each demonising the other. Similarly, the National Party narrative of Afrikaner religiosity could not be married to the secularist Marxist interpretations of history that rose in the country in the 1960s and 1970s. See also M. Legassick and D. Hemson, *Foreign Investment and the Reproduction of Racial Capitalism in South Africa* (1976), for an idea of the Marxist historiographies and historical analyses being conducted during the 1970s.

²⁴⁰ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (Paris, Gallimard, 1975). See also Bourdieu and Passeron, ‘*Reproduction*’ as well as Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy*.

²⁴¹ J. Frost, ‘Using ‘master narratives’ to teach history: The case for the Civil Rights movement’, *The History Teacher* vol.35 no.3, (Society for History Education, May 2012), 437.

for interpreting the world developed alongside and within emerging public domains. In terms of the local, apartheid had ended, and with it the racialised education system and Christian ideology of education and policy was replaced. With the collapse of apartheid came the rise to power of a new ruling elite. The historical nature of the new ruling class is of great importance to the educational changes and historical interpretations to come. A new national narrative was to emerge in education.

South African History education after apartheid

To consider History education in (post-apartheid) South Africa, it is necessary to take into account the initial challenges to the apartheid education system. During the 1970s, through the 1980s, there was a push by certain groups of History academics to posit a challenge to the normative ideologies of the discipline in South Africa at the time.²⁴² By the 1990s, historians were “beginning to articulate... an ‘engaged public history’ that brings into question assumed hierarchies of historical knowledge”.²⁴³ The drive towards the construction of ‘public history’ was premised on the argument that “there are a range of historical genres and producers of history, who cohere and compete with each other in the making of history in a variety of different ways”.²⁴⁴ As such, these historians saw their role as being “to understand these different ways of making history, how they intersect with each other, and to intervene in a manner that does not necessarily give precedence to academic knowledge but allows for the constant questioning and opening up of historical authority”, through a series of “knowledge transactions”.²⁴⁵

One instance of such History projects is the History Workshop, which included “radical Marxist scholarship”, which was “grounded in notions of experience and ‘history from below’”, and emphasised the importance of “oral histories” as alternative sources for constructing historiographies.²⁴⁶ One of the main aims was to explode the scope of history – its producers and audience – by producing “histories in accessible form and language for

²⁴² J. Sithole and S. Ndlovu, ‘The Revival of the Labour Movement, 1970 – 1980’, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 2: 1970 – 1980* (UNISA Press, 2006), 208. There was an especially strong socialist labour-oriented thrust to revisionist histories during this time.

²⁴³ L. Witz, G. Minkley, C. Rassool, *Unsettled History* (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2017), 7. The authors, based at the University of the Western Cape, are critical of the History Workshop under Bonner, for having afforded a primacy to academic knowledge production, and disregarding popular and grassroots knowledge production.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 10. See also Philip Bonner, ‘New Nation, New History: The History Workshop in South Africa, 1977-1994’, *The Journal of American History*, Vol.81 No.3, The Practice of American History: Special Issue (Dec.1994), 977-985.

audiences conceived as ‘popular’”, including “books in easy English, illustrated histories, newspaper articles, video productions and slide/tape shows”.²⁴⁷ Many saw these popular histories to possess “potential to contribute to the ‘liberation of history and of apartheid and of constructing a viable and inclusive future for all who live in South Africa’”.²⁴⁸ However, the History Workshop of this era has been criticised for their treatment of popular histories as *sources*, rather than alternative forms of history writing or historical authority.²⁴⁹ What was produced was history *for* the popular classes, not *by* them.²⁵⁰

It is during this period that there was an “emergence of a perspective that, in the notion of ‘struggle’, collapsed national and class teleologies into of ‘the people’”.²⁵¹ The situation appears starkly similar to Mbembe’s explication of the *Afro-radical* mode of African self-writing, in which history is apprehended and instrumentalised by the post-colonial elite, promoting a vanguardist nationalist historiography.²⁵² Minkley, Witz and Rassool write that, “‘History from below’ was in effect ‘people’s history’ and connect to the struggles for ‘people’s power’ and ‘people’s education’”.²⁵³ The political project of disciplinary specialists had become conflated, or perhaps rather *absorbed*, by the nationalist party project of the ANC and its affiliates. The mass referred to as ‘the people’, to whom the struggle was attributed, came to symbolically possess “authentic voices from below”, but “what were depicted as authentic voices from below became those of nationalist leaders”. Indeed, in 1986, it is not a working-class individual who addressed the National Education Crisis Committee, but rather Zwelakhe Sisulu, son of Walter and Albertina, future chief executive of SABC, and emphatic political elite.²⁵⁴ And when ANC and NP leadership met to negotiate the new curriculum, learners and teachers were positioned on the outskirts of considerations, and never personally entered into the negotiation as unified organisations (ie. unions).²⁵⁵

²⁴⁷ Witz et al, *Unsettled History*, 10.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 35.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 4. By ‘popular classes’, I am referring to those without access to academic, professional modes of publication or broadcast.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 33.

²⁵² Mbembe, ‘African modes of self-writing’, 240.

²⁵³ Witz et al., *Unsettled History*, 33.

²⁵⁴ see Zwelakhe Sisulu, ‘People’s Education for People’s Power’, keynote address to the national consultative conference for the National Education Crisis Committee (Durban, 29 March 1986). My claim here is not that Sisulu was positioned as a working-class hero, but rather than the choice of spokesperson chosen by the NECC was of an elite background with familial struggle credentials.

²⁵⁵ It is only after 1994 that black teachers’ unions in South Africa emerge, eg. SADTU, and later NAPTOSA, the SAOU, and others. See Logan Govender, ‘Teacher unions, policy struggles and educational change, 1994-2004’, in Chisholm, L. (eds.) *Changing Class* (HSRC Press, 2004).

The result was the 1995 institution of NatEd 550, a transitional curriculum which aimed at removing all overt racist, sexist and prejudicial content. The pedagogies and models of the curriculum and its subject-disciplines remained intact. Witz, Minkley and Rassool observe that “the pasts that are produced in the public sphere are often the result of negotiations and conflicts between opposing groups over its constituent elements what events and personalities should be included and excluded and how they should be represented”.²⁵⁶ In the case of NatEd550, the negotiation was quite literal.²⁵⁷ The first major curriculum change implemented under the democratic government only occurred in 1997, during Mandela’s presidency, under Minister of Education, Sibusiso Bengu. The curriculum consisted of a radical form of Outcomes Based Education, which removed all content-knowledge specifications, rather focusing on skill and civic outcomes. The curriculum, called Curriculum 2005, was met with heavy criticism for a multitude of reasons, and Bengu’s department was admonished for what was perceived as an emphatic failure.²⁵⁸ During this time, historians and history teachers alike were struck by a sense of panic, fearing the removal of History as a subject-discipline (or learning area) in the school curriculum.²⁵⁹ Their fears were short-lived, however, as History was to quickly become cemented into the national education by the new regime.

Mbeki

Upon Mandela’s retirement from the ANC presidency, Thabo Mbeki was elected as President in 1999, bringing with him many new ideas, including an emphasis on institutionalised History education, which had been all but dissolved during the C2005 era of ‘collective amnesia’. Mbeki shifted Kader Asmal into the position of Minister of Education, and he immediately began work towards the revision of the curriculum. In 2000, a review of C2005 was conducted.²⁶⁰ In the same year, the Working Group for Values in Education was brought together under the leadership of Professor Wilmot James, calling for “the establishment of a panel of historians and archaeologists to advise the minister of education on how best to

²⁵⁶ Witz et al., *Unsettled History*, 15

²⁵⁷ Thokozane Mathebula, ‘People’s Education for People’s Power – a promise unfulfilled’, *South African Journal of Education* 33(1) (2013),.

²⁵⁸ Jonathan D. Jansen and Pam Christie, *Changing Curriculum: Studies on Outcomes-based Education in South Africa* (Cape Town, Juta, 1999). The *Mail and Guardian* also published their annual report-card on government performance; Bengu received an ‘F’, the lowest possible grade. ‘1997 Cabinet Report Card’, (*Mail and Guardian*, 24/12/1997). The ‘failure’ of C2005 is curious, since it was never implemented at matric level, and so there is no real way to gauge its success or failure according to its progression through the whole of school. For most, like Jansen, it had failed because it provided inadequate subject-content knowledge for either learners or teachers, resulting in a populace lacking the actual knowledge to embark on further (intellectual) study.

²⁵⁹ Ciraj Rassool, ‘The rise of heritage and the reconstitution of history in South Africa’, *Kronos*, no.26 (August 2000), pp. 1-21.

²⁶⁰ Linda Chisholm et al., *Review of Curriculum 2005*. Department of Education, Republic of South Africa (2000).

strengthen the teaching of history in South African schools”.²⁶¹ The task given to the Panel was “to place history-teaching, and the interrogation of the truth of memory at the centre of the curriculum...because the teaching of history is central to the promotion of all human values, including tolerance”.²⁶²

The History and Archaeology Panel are historically prominent in the determination towards a revised History curriculum for the ‘new’ South Africa. For the Panel, the formal studies of History and archaeology were critical in democratic South Africa, because “both nurture a spirit of critical inquiry, and assists in the formation of a conscious historical consciousness, which has an essential role to play in building the dignity of human values within an informed awareness of the legacy and meaning of the past”.²⁶³ The study of history was critical not least because South Africa was at a stage in which it was “itself consciously remaking its current history”, existing “in conditions of flux”, wherein “historical study of a probing kind is a vital aid against amnesia, and a warning against any triumphalism of the present”.²⁶⁴ Archaeology was particularly important, as it was seen to provide the means for discovering the lost past, in objects, fragments, remnants of the past. So critical was the study of History at school level that the Panel gave warning that, “unless clear steps are taken...our schooling system will fail to play a full part in ensuring that present and future generations of our citizens have the necessary knowledge and skills to contribute to sustaining an open, equitable and tolerant common society”.²⁶⁵

The History and Archaeology Panel gave discipline-centred substance to the earlier review of C2005, which had provided only general recommendations.²⁶⁶ For the Panel, C2005 did “not effectively help explain the formation of the present”, having dispensed with standardised and heavily described content specification, as per the interpretation of OBE associated with C2005.²⁶⁷ But the Panel were specific in their criticisms of earlier History curricula, citing a “serious neglect of the origins of very early societies and the significant place of Africa in that development, except for vague nudgings in the direction of the early precolonial past and change over time, and the binding interrelationships between South Africa and the rest of the

²⁶¹ Wilmot James et al., ‘Report of the Working Group for Values in Education’, Manifesto on Values Education and Democracy (2000).

²⁶² *Ibid.*

²⁶³ Njabulo Ndebele et al., ‘Report of the History and Archaeology Panel’ (2000), 4.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁶ see Chisholm et al. *Review of C2005*.

²⁶⁷ Ndebele et al., ‘History and Archaeology Panel, 4.

world”.²⁶⁸ Particularly in the higher grades (grades 10 to 12), the Panel found that history “remains overwhelmingly Eurocentric in conception”.²⁶⁹ In such representations of history, “Africa is mostly inert, and treated within the context of European impact through colonisation...through world power involvement in Africa, European realities remain the major point of reference and historical meaning for the continent’s history”.²⁷⁰

In revision, what was determined to be required were history content-knowledge specifications that were “more explicit about the importance of teaching and about the contribution of Africa and the rest of the world”.²⁷¹ It is from these deliberations that the introduction of precolonial southern African history into the national curriculum finds its political roots. While professional historians had, since at least the 1970s, been in the processes of reconfiguring the concept of the ‘precolonial’ – as opposed to *prehistory* – it is only really after 2000 that these leaps in History interpretation and method become manifest in education.

Heritage-making

During this period, Asmal’s department of education also brought together the South African History Project, as well as other initiatives like the Freedom Park Project. The SAHP in particular aimed at educating the South African citizenry in the history of the country, with emphasis placed on oral histories, and histories obfuscated or bastardised during apartheid (what were considered ‘subjugated histories’).²⁷² This included histories submerged during colonisation, but also histories that preceded colonial intervention. While *access* to history was being widened, the possibilities for new, different, previously marginalised histories were also in the process of expansion. All of these projects, panels and reviews were enveloped by Mbeki’s articulation of the African Renaissance, dating back to his 1996 ‘I Am An African’ speech. His election in 1999 enabled him to implement into policy his philosophies and ideologies. It is during the early 2000s – during Mbeki and Asmal’s time in office – that content-knowledge specifications are reintroduced into the curriculum. Not only was content reintroduced, but it was also revised. The early 2000s, particularly the period 1999 to 2004, is a period in which the national narrative of history education was *reconfigured*.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 17.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 16.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 17.

²⁷² For instance, the SAHP placed great emphasis on reformulating the narrative of the Nongqawuse and the Xhosa Cattle Killings, which, in the 1980s, had become a key fixture in historical revisionism in South Africa. See June Bam in Shamil Jeppie (ed.), *Toward New Histories for South Africa* (Cape Town, Juta, 2003).

Central to this reconfiguration was the re-presentation of the ‘heritage’ of the nation – its foundational and identitarian history; a history to be *possessed* by the subject/citizens of the nation-state. For Witz, Minkley and Rassool, heritage should be considered as “a constitutive and organising rhetoric across the field of cultural and institutional practices in which the mobilisation of historical understandings of social memory occur in the *institutional* and *citizenly* forms”.²⁷³ Following such a line of thought, “heritage becomes a critical element of the institutional and citizenly collective commonsense that underpins public culture”.²⁷⁴ It is, in the words of Fanon, inscriptive of a particularly conceived *national culture*.²⁷⁵ Heritage, then, “emerges in the institutions and utterances in and through which historical understandings or habits of memory are deployed in relation to governance” – in short, “it is the deployment of history in imagining and defining citizenship and governance”.²⁷⁶

Heritage (in this sense) is a very specific form of *public history*, which is appropriable for political purposes by the citizen of the nation to which that heritage belongs. Heritage understood as such implies an agency in the citizen, and a certain influence possessed by that citizen over the governance of the nation-state. A new history was to be written, for new purposes (the production of a new nation/citizen), and under new political conditions. It is in 2002 that Mapungubwe is included in the South African school history curriculum, alongside Thulamela and Great Zimbabwe.²⁷⁷ Thus, for institutionalised education in South Africa, the 2002 implementation of the NCS marks a significant narrative shift in post-apartheid History education.

The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement

However, it is not with the 2002 NCS that we interact today in South African education, but rather the 2011 Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), a revised version of the NCS. The main difference between the NCS and CAPS is the pedagogical philosophy underlying the curriculum model. For the NCS, OBE was retained. CAPS, on the other hand, appears as a direct result of the ministerial command for the erasure of OBE from the curriculum.²⁷⁸ With that, CAPS was meant to give greater specification of content-knowledge,

²⁷³ Witz et al., *Unsettled History*, 18.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁵ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York, Grove Press, 1963), 206.

²⁷⁶ Witz et al., pp. 19.

²⁷⁷ Department of Education, Republic of South Africa, Revised National Curriculum Statement (NCS) (Pretoria, Government publishers, 2002).

²⁷⁸ Angie Motshekga, ‘Statement by Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga, on Curriculum Review Process’, National Assembly, (Nov. 5 2009). Referred to in Ursula Hoadley, ‘Knowledge, knowers and knowing:

while cutting down on the number of individual pieces of content. For instance, in the Mapungubwe topic, Great Zimbabwe is shifted into a comparative function, and Thulamela is completely removed, but greater specification is given to the content prescribed for the study of Mapungubwe. Rather than comprising three lines (as in the NCS), the topic is now communicated in the curriculum policy documentation in a whole page (page forty-two of the intermediate phase document, to be precise).

The historical narrative for Mapungubwe, and indeed for the whole History curriculum, is far more specifically described in the content specifications that come from government (specifically the Department of Basic Education), and therefore the materials through which History education is enacted are far more standardised. Simply put, textbooks contain far more similar information to one another under the CAPS curriculum. For Susanne Grindel, “History curricula and textbooks form the normative order that structures the teaching of history and the imparting of historical facts and information to students”.²⁷⁹ It is in textbooks that the curriculum is modulated into communicable narrative form for learners and teachers. It is textbooks that carry the narratives and concepts through which the nation is imagined and performed, at least within the control of the state. As Grindel argues, textbooks are “tools to educate the nation”.²⁸⁰ So, when considering the narrative of the curriculum, it is worth considering the narrativisation of curriculum content-specifications, as the confluence of substantive and procedural knowledge, in the representations of textbooks. The new CAPS curriculum contains a highly specified narrative of history, which is by default a national narrative, since it is produced through the direct authority of the national governmental Department of Basic Education, stipulated for consumption by the national youth.

Historical Narratives

We must digress for a moment to discuss the shape of school history as a narrative, though distinct from the formal process of researching and writing professionally produced historiographies in contemporary times. Historical narratives have been dominant in educational representations of History from the nineteenth century through contemporary times. Even before this, in the historical writings of Herodotus, Sima Qian, and others, narrative

Curriculum reform in South Africa’ in L. Yates and M. Grumet (eds.) *Curriculum in Today’s World: configuring knowledge, identities, work and politics* (Routledge, 2011), 139-154.

²⁷⁹ Susanne Grindel, ‘Colonial and post-colonial contexts of History textbooks’, in Carretero et al. (eds.), *Palgrave Handbook of Research in Historical Cultural and Education* (London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 265.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

forms were employed to convey the recording of the past.²⁸¹ In our everyday interactions, we employ narrative forms to convey stories of even the most mundane occurrences or activities. They are the chief means through which history – the interpretive record of the past – is communicated to learners. But they are not constrained to the educational field, since “individuals and groups create identities through narratives, by producing oral, written or audio-visual stories which confirm, alter or undermine other (grand) narratives”.²⁸² There is a vast array of media and genres through which narratives are constructed by individuals and groups, each with their own conventions, but tending towards particular envisioned identities for construction, though they do not necessarily coalesce in contemporary times.

But while professional History engages procedures which have produced a multiplicity of historiographies which often do not agree with each other, the form of history contained within the school curriculum is presented with far greater certitude. This is to say that school history presents narratives which are constrained by the figure of the nation, and therefore more narrowly selective of knowledge to be interacted with. While the curriculum might insist upon the juxtaposition of disciplinary ‘skills’ (procedural knowledge) alongside content (substantive) knowledge, in the combination of the two, very specific narratives are produced. A very selective narrative of the nation is configured. In a sense, the school history curriculum is a very long historiography (centred around the figure of the nation), which includes very specific instructions or rules for reading.

Pre-colonial in the post-apartheid curriculum

The narrative of the existing curriculum takes its form from the NCS 2002, although it has been “streamlined”, with a few additions and various subtractions.²⁸³ There are a number of new or altered thematised topics, but few of them fall within the scope of this study, since my concern is with the production of the ‘precolonial’ (although certain later histories are important in association with the precolonial histories which precede or frame them – a point that I deal with below). Precolonial southern Africa, in CAPS, retains the shape made for it in the NCS.

Phasing

The South African schooling system is divided into several phases, which qualitatively cleave the national narrative into several graded portions. The phases are the junior phase (R – 3),

²⁸¹ Antonis Liakos and Mitsos Bilalis, ‘The Jurassic Park of Historic Culture’, in Carretero et al. (eds.), *Palgrave Handbook of Research in Historical Cultural and Education* (London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 212.

²⁸² Grever and Adriaansen, ‘Historical Culture’, 78.

²⁸³ Hoadley, ‘Knowledge, knowers and knowing’, 149.

intermediate phase (grades four to six), senior phase (grades seven to nine), and further education and training (grades ten to twelve). All of the precolonial sections of the narrative are contained within the intermediate phase. For Gramsci, this would designate the active school, whereas the FET phase would designate the creative or critical school (if even that). It is at this stage that knowledge is most easily absorbed by the learner, with the least critical thought or problematisation. In the language of Bourdieu, it is the stage at which a given cultural arbitrary is most easily imposed and inculcated.²⁸⁴ For Mario Carretero, after age twelve (approximately the age of the majority of grade six learners), children engage with more abstract, complex concepts.²⁸⁵ It is also at this stage that knowledge is assimilated and accommodated by learners with less problematisation than in the higher grade (eg. FET phase, grades ten to twelve).

Histories of southern Africa before colonisation only appear in the curriculum history narrative in the intermediate phase, when learners are younger than the age of twelve (predominantly). This means that they are engaging with knowledge at a lower level than, for instance, learners between age thirteen and eighteen (who are generally in secondary/high school, equitable more with Gramsci's Creative school than earlier years).²⁸⁶ Concepts are assimilated and accommodated by the learner with less critical problematisation than at higher levels.²⁸⁷ In addition, the concepts are often taken as given, and are not dealt with in abstraction (for instance, "the state" of Mapungubwe). To convey the information prescribed, knowledge is centred around historic figures or, more precisely in this case, *conceptual personae*, through which to relate to the learner.

²⁸⁴ Bourdieu and Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*, 6.

²⁸⁵ Carretero, 'Teaching History Master Narratives', 513. This is supported in the theorisations of both Gramsci and Piaget.

²⁸⁶ Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, 2. In accordance with Gramsci's conceptualisation of the Active and Creative schools, it makes most sense to argue that the Creative school only actually manifests outside school, in certain tertiary fields of study which require critical understandings. It is arguable whether the Creative school can truly manifest in the school situation, considering that the national standardised assessments in the final year of school (grade twelve or matric) consist of examinations which lend themselves to rote-style learning rather than critical interrogation. The levels of critique taught to learners are themselves contained within themselves – critique becomes procedural and disciplinary, rather than "creative".

²⁸⁷ C. Kros and S. Harrop-Allin, 'The C Major scale as index of 'back to basics' in South African education: A critique of the curriculum assessment policy statement', *South African Review of Education* (Volume 20, Issue 1, 2014). The authors are critical of the CAPS presentation of Mapungubwe, arguing that the concepts introduced and the actual content so shaped is beyond the level of grade six learners. Peter Kallaway has been similarly critical of certain topics in the FET phase, regarding them as "political science" modules, rather than History education. See Peter Kallaway, 'History in senior secondary school CAPS 2012 and beyond: A comment', *Yesterday and Today*, No.7 (July 2012), 42.

Certain assumptions are made by the authorial authorities of the curriculum as to what is relatable to the learner. Importantly, certain concepts are built at this low level, which helps to expand the scope of relatable signs, symbols and concepts possessed by the learner. Education is, in this sense, about conceptual expansion. In the case of the *national* curriculum, the foundations for the nation are set in place very early in the curriculum, even before disciplinary History is introduced. At this early stage (grades four to six), the concern is overwhelmingly with *originary* histories – involving the *origin* of, for instance, the state (and, conflated, the nation). History as a subject-discipline (or learning area) first emerges in grade four.²⁸⁸ During this grade, there is little sense of temporality to the introduction of the national narrative, although certain concepts are instilled into the learner's symbolic repertoire for making meaning in the world. The topics for the year are: local history, learning from leaders, transport through time, and communication through time.²⁸⁹ The topics are general, but they do possess narrative qualities, situating the learner in the midst of both historical thinking, as well as a sense of historical consciousness, based in, for instance, the idea of a good leader being exemplified by Mandela or Gandhi, as prescribed in the curriculum.

It is also in grade four that learners are introduced to concepts of leadership, and in grade six that they encounter concepts of 'democracy', 'citizenship', and the 'state'.²⁹⁰ But cognitive capacities are still at a relatively rudimentary level, albeit with a "desire" to go beyond their "knowledge of the limits of reality and identity".²⁹¹ That is to say, there is a desire to be able to identify with the narratives they encounter, which at that age is most easily achieved through an association of the knowledge encountered with an individual or an object in which to manifest meaning. It is "a desire embodied by the figure of the hero".²⁹² Hence the association in grade four of 'good leadership' with the historic figures of Gandhi and Mandela, or the attribution of heritage in objects, people or monuments in grade six. The "use of narrative helps employ and manage the concept of causal relationships".²⁹³ Narratives are related in terms of cause and effect – something happens, and *therefore* something else occurs. For instance, the

²⁸⁸ 'Learning areas' apply to C2005 and the NCS. These were vague, and tended towards organic, radical constructivist learning. CAPS sees the reintroduction of rigid subject-disciplines, which are more closely linked to the professional discipline.

²⁸⁹ Republic of South Africa, Department of Basic Education Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), Intermediate Phase Social Sciences (Pretoria, Government Publishers, 2011), 33.

²⁹⁰ CAPS, IP Social Sciences, 34-37.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*

²⁹² Carretero, 'Teaching History Master Narratives', 513.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, 514.

King decides it is time to leave K2, so he absconds to Mapungubwe Hill.²⁹⁴ Consequently, people follow him, and Mapungubwe society is established. It is cause and effect, embodied in an individual. In general, the causality is simplistic, and time presented overwhelmingly as linear – history becomes ‘one thing after another’. Chronologically speaking, the national narrative of South Africa in the curriculum commences in grade five.

Plotting the precolonial

The concern here is not merely that there are narrative forms are intertwined into History education, but rather with the *configuration* of the narrative. The “configuration” of a narrative refers to “the process of narrative emplotment”.²⁹⁵ For Grever and Adriaansen, plot functions on three levels. “First, a plot mediates between individual events, experiences and the story as a whole. An individual event gains meaning from the way it is configured in the plot. The plot is in its turn more than the mere sum of the recounted events, because a story as a totality contains a certain “thought”. Second, emplotment ties a large range of heterogeneous actors, situations, meanings, interactions and unexpected results together. Third, the plot mediates between the time of the clock and experienced time as it creates a temporal unity of its own”.²⁹⁶ Thus, the three levels can be roughly described 1) the experiential interaction between group and collective; 2) a relation is constructed between causes and effects; 3) a temporality is constructed in the narrative. The three levels, then, are of *relations*, *causality* and *temporality*.

These plotted narratives are composed through what are called “mnemonic infrastructures”, which enable structured meaning-making within the narrative. Grever and Adriaansen argue that, “to be able to tell specific stories about the past or to express historical experiences, people create material and immaterial mnemonic infrastructures, anchored in time and space”, which “enable a mediation between past and present, and between personal and collective memory”.²⁹⁷ Mnemonic infrastructures could be considered as the symbols and signs – the cultural epistemological landmarks – which allow for the act of imagination to be contained within specified limits of the relation between temporalities assigned by different groups. They are the cultured tropes applied in the narrative to make the language relatable to the reader or, in this case, the learner.

²⁹⁴ This is a narrative carried in certain textbooks, but not prescribed in the curriculum policy documentation. The attitude is reflected in all three textbooks analysed for this study.

²⁹⁵ Grever and Adriaansen, ‘Historical Culture’, 78.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 78-9.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 79-80.

In the case of school level education, school history is communicated primarily through narratives which are dominantly figured around individuals or nations. In the case of the individual, the dominant tropes are generally of Great Men and Events.²⁹⁸ In the case of the national, the concern is generally with the origins and progress of the nation. In this second case, there is a tendency to historicise the nation to naturalistic proportions, by attributing histories that predate the nation-state to the linear historical narrative of the nation-state. For instance, Mapungubwe is taken as national heritage, yet it appears in the thirteenth century, at least four centuries before any concrete theoretical concept of the nation had emerged (in Europe). In this way, the past is located within the limits of present imagination – through signs and symbols imbued with contemporary meaning. It is interesting, then, to consider the basic building-blocks of the narrative – its plot, and the concepts which make meaning in the narrative.

The plot begins with hunter-gatherers in southern Africa around 8000 BCE as the first inhabitants.²⁹⁹ They are, within the topic, soon followed by herders around 2000 BCE at the start of grade five. Often in textbooks they are described as the San and Khoi, although these titles are contested, and groups, in higher levels of academic studies, and in politics, culture and history, require further differentiation. However, the curriculum differentiates the groups by their way of life. The narrative then moves chronologically through to the arrival of farmers around 250-300 CE in the second topic of grade five.³⁰⁰ Like the section before it, while the topic is temporally bound, there is no sense of movement through time in the topic – there are no actual developments that occur, outside the intervention of peoples moving into the region. Whether or not this is a possibility, considering the historical and archaeological resources available, is arguable. The early inhabitants of southern Africa are presented as quite frozen in time, developing little, and what developments do arrive tend to come inbuilt into the peoples entering the region. Herders bring livestock-keeping into the region, just as farmers bring agriculture – nothing in southern Africa yet develops without imposition.

In effect, the introductory stages of southern African history – of the South Africa national narrative – possesses a linear timeline and is attributed a sense of space in the imposition of the contemporary nation into the narrative. The foundations have been set for socio-political development, since the three proclaimed indigenous groups of South Africa have arrived. As

²⁹⁸ Carretero, 'Teaching History Master Narratives', 514.

²⁹⁹ CAPS IP Social Sciences, 38 – 41.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 39.

such, the narrative then moves all the way across the continent, to Egypt. The title of the topic describes Egypt as “an ancient African society”. Despite this, the content stipulated for the topic places Egypt amid only Mediterranean and Middle Eastern relations, without any discussion of relations between Egypt and the African continent.

The year is ended with a study of heritage across the provinces of South Africa. It is in this moment that Mapungubwe is first introduced into the national narrative, specifically as *heritage in objects*. The golden objects of Mapungubwe are used to exemplify both the general category of heritage in objects, as well as finding specific meaning in the history of the Limpopo Province. In the very first moments of its introduction, Mapungubwe is nationalised, rather than historicised. This is important because it frames the following topic on Mapungubwe. Before the learner interacts with the *history* of Mapungubwe, they engage the relation between the contemporary nation-state, their own identity, and Mapungubwe. The narrative meaning of Mapungubwe is concretised. Typified by its golden objects, Mapungubwe is embraced as part of national identity – it becomes part of the thin membrane that binds us.

Heritage in the First State

Mapungubwe is first figured in the existing curriculum as ‘heritage’, most specifically *national heritage*, since it is first introduced as an instance of ‘heritage in objects’, as an example of heritage from the Limpopo province in the fourth and final topic of grade five. But what are the products of the heritage claim? What heritage work is Mapungubwe made to do, and, beyond this, what does it mean to claim that something is heritage, especially when that heritage is taken from a time predating the nation, yet is ascribed to that nation? What social and cultural production is done by the conceptualisation of Mapungubwe as heritage, specifically when Mapungubwe is imagined as it is in the existing curriculum? The application of ‘heritage’ imports into the object certain cultured meanings through concepts, signs and symbols that are of that culture (ie. they are the means of communication of a specific ‘language’, where ‘language’ is broadly understood).³⁰¹ Heritage carries with it a shared truism or historicity of the people to which it belongs, and to whom it provides a sense of belonging in its potential for identity formation.

Something very complex is occurring in the confluence of heritage, education and the history of the past before colonisation. There is a sharing – a dissemination and assimilation – of standardised and legitimising meanings, which are rooted anachronously and perhaps

³⁰¹ Hall, *Representation*, 1-29.

irrationally in times which predate the conception of that collective to which that time-space so described is said to belong. In more simple terms, the meanings preferred by a particular but diverse set of authorities is negotiated and implanted into the educative forms of history, setting in motion an associated set of socio-cultural productions and (more likely) reproductions – and this process is, in part, irreverent to the ever-expanding wideness of historical discourses in contemporary times.

When introduced under its own dedicated topic (in the first term of grade six), Mapungubwe is presented as a ‘state’. The ‘state’ of Mapungubwe is described specifically as the ‘first state’ – situated as the originary indigenous complex political formation in southern Africa, predating colonial intervention, which consumes the state-formation that later occurs in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. There is a certain weight to the concept of the “state” in educative discourses. What actually is a ‘state’ in the curriculum? In general terms, the State is the *leviathan*, the hegemonic authority, that sovereign that maintains and reproduces its authority through the performance of its monopoly on violence. The State stipulates educational policy, but also heritage policy. It sets regulations for representations, and it is determinant in the identity formation of those it performs its sovereign power over.³⁰² The State is both real, but also abstract in the extreme. The State has marked authority in the legislature and judiciary, and the State is a territorialised authority, refigured in contemporary times as the *nation-state*, ie. belonging to a particular unified *nation*, which comprises a citizenry (a politically determined and empowered subjectivity, imbued with a sense of territorial and cultural belonging).

To claim the *first state* is to claim some or all of these things. Perhaps, even, other memories are pulled to consciousness through engagement with the concept of ‘the state’. It is to impose the concept of the contemporary upon the very distant past. But the state of the past is claimed as distinct from the state of the present – after all, the state of Mapungubwe is very specifically described as the *first state*. But why is the claim of the ‘first’, of *origins*, important? What work does the application of the term do? How does it qualify the state? What qualities does it impart into the state? The ascription of the title of the ‘original’ implies a sense of archetypal purity and constitutive legitimacy. In the case of Mapungubwe, it is specifically a pure archetype found in a time that is particularly *precolonial* – before the advent of the colonial. It becomes transformed as something traditional, and authentic.

³⁰² *Ibid.*

In the particular descriptions of precolonial instances like Mapungubwe, the ‘precolonial’ as a whole – as a massive epoch – is given meaning, nuance, and differentiation within the time-space it occupies. For instance, Mapungubwe adds nuanced meaning to the concept of the ‘precolonial’ because it is the *first state*. Mapungubwe marks a change in political society in southern Africa, not merely among Bantu-speaking people, but among all people near the Shashe-Limpopo Confluence Area, and associated with it by, for example, long-distance trade networks. In the production of the image of the ‘first state’ (the originary African state) the ‘precolonial’ is used to constitute meaning in the ‘postcolonial’. Mapungubwe is produced as Naissance, envisioned as such during what was termed the African Renaissance. It is the history of the state but located long before the formation of the State. In different words, it is heritage proclaimed for the contemporary nation-state through the apprehension of history which predates the state.

It then become necessary to consider the instance of the micro-narrative of Mapungubwe within the entire narrative historiography contained within the curriculum. One must look to the long length of the past into which the particular instance of Mapungubwe fits, and into the concepts, signs and symbols through which the meaning of Mapungubwe is produced so as to uncover what cultural reproductions occur through the conceptual construction of the history of Mapungubwe in educative history in the South African school curriculum. We must look, then, to the narrative, its plot, its mnemonic infrastructures, and its characters and their interrelations, so as to consider the production of meaning for the precolonial and contemporary in educative representations.

Conceptualising the past

The *concepts* of History are the basic means of teaching, learning and understanding History. They “can be considered the basic units of knowledge” since “they are a representation of classes that included elements – cases or instances – that share common features”.³⁰³ Concepts are “the basis of procedural knowledge”.³⁰⁴ These tools for understanding are critical for making sense of the world, for bringing the chaotic panic that accompanies realisation of the unknown to heel – to make the world obedient to our ways of knowing it. As Rodriguez-Moneo and Lopez write, “Concepts are essential for organising the world and making sense of it. Without conceptual knowledge, the environment would be chaotic, and interaction with the

³⁰³ Rodriguez-Moneo and Lopez, ‘Concept Acquisition’, 470.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 475.

physical and social world would not be possible”.³⁰⁵ Concepts are a means of assuaging panic in the face of the unknown – concepts make the unknown knowable. In a sense, concepts enable the activity of *finding*, or, even more specifically, the performance of the nation in the acknowledgement of national heritage in the national narrative – of finding identity in the distant past. In the existing curriculum, there are only four governing concepts through which history is to be taught: multi-perspectivity, cause and effect, change and continuity, and time and chronology.³⁰⁶ Of all the vast array of historical concepts through which to imagine and organise the past for the purposes of understanding, it is a very distinct set that is selected. These concepts import a particular way of thinking and knowing about the world.

It is in historical narratives that concepts manifest and gain meaning, power and influence.³⁰⁷ But while it is through narratives that concepts are carried, it is also through the concepts that the narratives gain significant meaning. Concepts can be used to order the world, to mark difference, and to mark relation between things. ‘First order’ concepts are intriguing, since “most of the time first order concepts are embedded in historical narratives”.³⁰⁸ Concepts are imbued with meaning even before they are engaged in the narrative, but it is in the narrative that particularity is induced into the concept to produce “subordinate concepts” from the ‘first order concepts’.

The concept of ‘cause and effect’ is attributed meaning in the way in which events are organised against one another. What causes what? And how is this causation described? For instance, in Mapungubwe, the cause for the ascent to the hill is often attributed to the King – a certain imagining of the particular cause-effect relation is embedded in the socio-politics of the historic culture. Similarly, multiperspectivity in educative history is highly selective, since not all perspectives could possibly be covered. Certain dominant perspectives are chosen. For instance, when dealing with the Nazis, it is extremely unlikely that a positive perspective of the German fascist regime would be presented (at least, none have been encountered in this research), since it would be considered distasteful under the current regimes of power and knowledge. Multiperspectivity when considering the precolonial is intriguing, since the imagining of the precolonial *had to* shift according to the shifting power relations after

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 470.

³⁰⁶ CAPS IP Social Sciences, 12.

³⁰⁷ Rodriguez-Moneo and Lopez, ‘Concept Acquisition’, 496.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p479.

apartheid. And yet it is still possible from the curriculum stipulations to argue for the dichotomised (and oversimplified) ‘positive and negative outcomes’ of colonisation.

In this sense, it is up to the purveyor of the narrative – for instance, the curriculum or textbook author – to consider and select appropriate concepts, and to consciously narratively imbue them with particular meaning. For instance, the concept of the “nation” and “nationalism” are historicised very specifically in Grade eleven in the South African curriculum, exhibited in several distinctive instances: Afrikaner nationalism, African anti-apartheid nationalism (specifically the African National Congress and Pan-African Congress), African nationalism in Ghana upon independence, and Middle Eastern nationalism in Israel and Palestine. Under the topic, nationalism is a first-order concept attributed to the formation of nation-states in Europe during the nineteenth century (specifically German and Italian states). From that point, the examples appear more as parodies of a European model, rather than instances of particularised, territorialised, temporalised and contextualised national formation. Universality becomes ascribed to the European originary instance (Said’s Occident), while mimicry of the ‘purer’ archetype is observed in the colonised territories (Fanon’s caricature).

But while the nation is theorised in the South African curriculum to some point in the nineteenth century, the concept of the nation permeates the narratives of historic societies and events which long predate the emergence of the nation itself. The past is understood through the lenses of the present – but in the case of national education, it is through the very narrow and distinctive lens of the *nation* that the past is studied.³⁰⁹ The selected instances of the past are determined to be relevant for school education because they are associable with the nation. More precisely, the past is maintained and reconstructed in the narrative *for* association with the contemporary nation, to give to it historical meaning, as “an ancient and natural essence of national identity is sustained for political use”.³¹⁰

In the adamant determination of History education (and its authorities) to set at the centre of history a nation that cannot predate the history that gives to it meaning, “political and historiographic uses and meanings clash”.³¹¹ For Levi-Strauss, the mnemonic infrastructures that are used to make sense of the past act to conflate the past and present, to bring the rituals and definitions of the two into the same temporal-spatial plane. “The ritual practices that make

³⁰⁹ This is not to say that the lens(es) are not nuanced (for instance, by human rights and democracy discourses), but rather to recognise the overarching authority of the nation in educative historical narratives and concepts.

³¹⁰ Moneo and Lopez, ‘Concept Acquisition’, 481.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*

up the mnemonic infrastructure of what Claude Levi-Strauss called “cold” (“primitive”) societies – such as several indigenous cultures – do, for example, not mediate between present and past but aim to annul this opposition of rituals”.³¹² In this understanding, the past becomes a mirror of the present, afforded meaning only through the potential relation between the two.

To assess the relation between narrative and concept in the pedagogic process, and representation of the instance of Mapungubwe. Grever and Adriaansen provide three useful steps for considering national historical narratives. They outline the first step of their own analysis: “First, we discerned the actual historical narratives and performances—from popular to academic—through which the past gains meaning through emplotment and affection, that is, substantive historical interpretations in the form of myths, historiography, schoolbooks, travel guides, recounted memories, but also staged re-enactments and rituals”.³¹³ Thus, step one is to identify the actual narrative – of what nation, through what events, through what symbols, tropes, characters?

The second step for the authors is to identify the symbols through which the narrative is made manifest: “Second, these literal or symbolic articulations of relationships with the past rely on and in turn (re)define mnemonic infrastructures. This level of analysis refers to the social and cultural structures that maintain and constitute narrative and performative articulations about the past. These structures—from material to immaterial—in turn rely on historical (re)presentations to underline their social relevance through, for example, the suggestion of its historic continuity.”³¹⁴ Thus, step two requires the identification of the concepts and symbols that are used to organise meaning in the narrative. Step three requires a consideration of the relation constructed in the narrative between past, present, and envisioned future: “Third, all historical cultures depend on specific conceptions of history—axiomatic understandings of how past, present and future are related to each other, including forms of (modern) historical consciousness”.³¹⁵

Personae in the educative national narrative of Mapungubwe

It was earlier argued that school history is primarily communicated through *narratives*, which are imbued with meaning by sets of conceptual symbolic references, structured in what can be

³¹² Grever and Adriaansen, ‘Historical Culture’, 81.

³¹³ *Ibid.*, 84.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*

³¹⁵ *Ibid.* In this, ‘historical consciousness’ is distinct from ‘historical thinking’, where the latter is described as thinking through the disciplinary procedures of professional History, while the former designates a way of thinking about the world that is informed by selected historical evidences.

called *mnemonic infrastructures*. At school level, these narratives and mnemonic infrastructures tend to centre around individual figures and events. There is a subjectivity attributed in the narrative around which events happen. A sense of *time* and *place* is imposed into the narrative through the construction of mnemonic infrastructures in the narrative. The ‘event’, in this case, is Mapungubwe itself. The event is given temporality in the thirteenth century, and territoriality in southern Africa; most specifically the Limpopo province and the nation-state of South Africa. The main characters – the historic figures and conceptual personae – provide for intriguing analysis.

From an assessment at the curriculum policy documentation, the main figures prior to Mapungubwe are described by their ways of life: hunter-gatherers, herders, and farmers. There is some tentative ethno-cultural allocation, via the descriptors of ‘San’, ‘Khoi’, and ‘African’. All of these categorical personae are of originary stock: hunter-gatherers as the first inhabitants of the region, followed by the first herders, and concluding with the first farmers in southern Africa. Once Mapungubwe arrives, the central historical figures shift. Even before this, there is a displacement of the foraging peoples encountered in the first half of grade five, which actually occurs in the second topic of grade five, with the introduction of farmers from the north-east. Foragers are historiographically displaced, rather than in the political history presented in the curriculum documentation, which asserts that relations at the time were amicable between the three distinct groups.³¹⁶

Mapungubwe sees the rise of an elite group of African farmers and traders. It also sees the addition of gold to the southern African repertoire of iron age materials. Several new figures are introduced into the narrative, despite the displacement of foraging peoples. For instance, Arab and Swahili traders appear for the first time. Textbooks make some (albeit not unproblematic) effort to describe these new characters, one saying that “The people who live in North Africa and the Middle East are called Arabs”, who then mix with African folk on the east coast of Africa, where “Muslim Arabs, who followed the new religion of Islam” settled “at some of the coastal towns of eastern Africa”.³¹⁷ The result was the production of Swahili, when “African groups living on the East coast of Africa absorbed the culture and Muslim religion of Arabs. The people became known as Swahili...a mix of African languages and

³¹⁶ CAPS IP Social Sciences, 39

³¹⁷ P. Ranby, B. Johannesson, R. Versfeld, M. Slamang, B. Roberts, *Platinum Social Sciences Grade six Learners Book* (Cape Town, Pearson Marang, 2016), 109.

Arabic. It is spoken all over East Africa today”.³¹⁸ Some sense of regionality is produced in the precolonial, but there is little detail afforded to the lay of the land in southern Africa outside Mapungubwe.

Europe in the precolonial: Colonisation or globalisation?

Other new introductions include Marco Polo and the seafaring expeditions of Europeans during the early Renaissance era of the thirteenth century. The introduction of Polo into the narrative of precolonial southern Africa is remarkable and does a lot of conceptual and symbolic work. In the curriculum, Mapungubwe history is only followed-up on in grade ten, with coverage of the political transformations in the east of southern Africa in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. The topic directly following Mapungubwe covers the arrival of the first European colonials to southern Africa. From that point, the curriculum content specifications plunge into the colonial era, only sporadically engaging precolonial histories like fourteenth century Timbuktu. Polo, in the curriculum, emphasises the end of the precolonial – but located in the thirteenth century, long before any Europeans arrive or settle in the region. After this stage, presumably, the world spins into a state of globalisation, which converts into the colonial era. The presentation of the development of colonialism is disturbingly organic.

Nevertheless, Polo does a lot more work in the narrative, allowing for a comparison between the European Renaissance and what had been described as the *African Naissance* not so long before Mapungubwe was introduced into the South African national educative historical narrative. Polo produces in Mapungubwe a sense of Naissance, but through a constructed contemporaneity with the European instance. The Venetian merchant – and the associated symbols of the historic figure of conceptual personae – becomes the apparatus for associating Mapungubwe with rebirth, since the European Renaissance appears as presumed to possess a greater (more authoritative) symbolic value, and thus capable of giving meaning to the African instance.

The history of Marco Polo only appears at the end of the topic – as if to conclude this moment in African history. The bulk of the content specified for Mapungubwe part of the national narrative actually centres around a different conceptual persona – the King. So, while Polo is reproductive of a History discipline machinery which requires for the universal concept (Renaissance) to be grafted from the tangible and originary European instance, there is a

³¹⁸ L. Dilley, M. Monteith, A. Proctor, G. Weldon, *Oxford Successful Social Sciences Learner's Book, Grade six* (Cape Town, Oxford Publishers, 2016), 29.

different conceptual persona required to embody the particular African instance of Naissance. The persona chosen is also of a universal category but gives body to his own particular instance – the King of Mapungubwe, the King of the first state in southern Africa. He is an originary character – the first of his kind; an authentic image of African authority, free of the ‘contamination’ of coloniality.

The first king in southern Africa

In educative representations (of textbooks), Mapungubwe is positioned as a significant shift in the structure of southern African societies – it is the *first* of its kind. Before the emergence of the Mapungubwe state around 1220, people lived in “small family homesteads and independent villages”, in an “equal kind of society”, in which there was “little conflict because there was plenty of land and people could move away if anyone became too powerful”.³¹⁹ However, as the agricultural society developed, “some people became more powerful than others”.³²⁰ The period after the 10th century becomes very important for societal development in the Limpopo region, as “between 900 AD and 1300 AD, farming communities became more complex...this means they became bigger and more organised. Societies became more complicated in the way they were ruled”.³²¹ The rise of the elite class is also associated with clay figures that were found on and around the hill: “clay figures that must have been used in religious ceremonies...These clay figures of cattle probably had some ritual meaning in the later farming societies”, indicating that “clearly, some families were becoming richer and had more religious power than others”.³²² There was an “unequal society” at Mapungubwe, a description which marks the difference between Mapungubwe and its predecessors at Schroda and K2.³²³

The decision to move to Mapungubwe is attributed somewhat differently and tends to even shift within the same textbook. Dilley et al. write that, “At some time, the people living at K2 moved and built their village at the bottom of Mapungubwe hill”, which eventually “grew into a town”.³²⁴ But it is to the King that the ascent to the Hill is attributed: “Around 900 AD, the chief of the town and his family decided to build their huts on top of Mapungubwe hill”.³²⁵ The move in Clacherty et al. is similar, although the authors provide slightly more detail, writing

³¹⁹ Dilley et al., *Oxford*, 29.

³²⁰ G. Clacherty, S. Cohen, F. Dada, A. Joannides, H. Ludlow, *Day-By-Day Social Sciences Learners' Book, Grade six* (Cape Town, Maskew-Miller-Longman, 2015), 92.

³²¹ Ranby et al., *Pearson*, 100.

³²² Dilley, *Oxford*, 24.

³²³ *Ibid.*, 28.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*

³²⁵ *Ibid.*

that, “the Zhizo people in the valley became very rich and powerful because they controlled trade”, and “over time the farmers living in the valley began to live closer together in small towns around the more powerful leaders”.³²⁶ Eventually, “the leaders who lived at K2” ascended to Mapungubwe hill.³²⁷

In some textbook narratives, Mapungubwe “was occupied as the capital of a large kingdom for about 80 years”.³²⁸ The type of rule at the capital is explained as a development of the office of the ‘chief’, which is set as the traditional patriarchal office in (southern) African cultures: “...a chief was the ruler of an African farming society. Mapungubwe was the first state in southern Africa. We can therefore call the chief a king”.³²⁹ This king lived on top of the hill “with members of his family and a few other important people”.³³⁰ In this way, Mapungubwe is made distinct from other southern African societies at the time, since “this was the first time in the history of southern Africa that the leaders lived apart from ordinary people”.³³¹ In some instances, Mapungubwe is specifically associated with Venda folk, who have “always known and respected Mapungubwe hill”, which is associated with the claim that “People feared and honoured the king because they believed that the spirits of the king’s ancestors looked after all the people in the kingdom”.³³² For locals, Mapungubwe was a sacred place.

The walls on top of the hill are given purpose in textbooks, as they kept the king “hidden from the people he ruled”.³³³ It is in the classed spatial politics of Mapungubwe that the ancient state gains further historical importance: “The rulers of Mapungubwe lived on top of the hill and the ordinary people lived in the valley below. The social hierarchy was physically obvious as ordinary people lived at the bottom of the hill”.³³⁴ The King’s power was consolidated as “it was believed that the king communicated with the ancestors on behalf of the people. This is called sacred leadership. It was believed that living on top of the hilltop brought the king closer to the ancestors”.³³⁵ In other textbook narratives, “the people of Mapungubwe believed the king

³²⁶ Clacherty et al., *Day-By-Day*, 94.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*

³²⁸ Ranby et al., *Pearson*, 104.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*

³³⁰ *Ibid.*

³³¹ *Ibid.*

³³² Dilley et al., *Oxford*, 26.

³³³ Ranby et al., *Pearson*, 105.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, 106.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, 104.

to have a special relationship with the ancestors and gods”, which “gave him a sacred right to rule”.³³⁶

The position of the elite on the hill is described in both religious and political terms: “By living on top of Mapungubwe hill, the kings were showing their power by living close to the ancestors. They could not be seen by most ordinary people, who feared and respected them”.³³⁷ His move to the top of hill is directly associated with the performance of his power: “the king decided to show his power by moving away from the rest of the people”.³³⁸ By doing this, he was “reminding his people that he had control over the rain needed for good crops, and control over floods and drought”.³³⁹ He lived on top of the hill with “his wives, senior sister/diviner, advisers, healers and guards”.³⁴⁰ According to one textbook, “the king’s sister was probably the chief diviner”.³⁴¹ The “soldiers who guarded the stairways were called the ‘eyes of the king’”³⁴²

The King of Mapungubwe is presented as an absolute ruler, conveyed through the universal concept of ‘the King’, but particularised by his situation at the Shashe-Limpopo confluence area in the thirteenth century. He is a feudal ruler, from “medieval” times. He is both traditional and, since he hails from the *first state*, he is originary, and thus risks proclamation as ‘authentic’. In the curriculum, he organises trade, owns the gold, makes the critical decision to move from K2 to Mapungubwe, defines spatial politics, controls labour, and determines the means of production in the historic society narrativised as such. What occurs, then, is the historicisation of the *authentic traditional African despot* in the national narrative.

In terms of labour, it was the King who sat as master of his labourers: “His followers carried thousands of tons of sand to the top of the hill to make it level”.³⁴³ In other narratives, “The people carried rocks to build large flat areas on top of the hill. They built large houses for their kings on these flat areas”.³⁴⁴ Gold was a “status symbol” and is also attributed to the King and his elite cohort: “kings and members of the royal family were buried at the top of the hill with golden objects”.³⁴⁵ Gold is made important in Mapungubwe society because it “showed that he

³³⁶ Clacherty et al. *Day-By-Day*, 95.

³³⁷ Dilley et al., *Oxford*, 27.

³³⁸ Clacherty et al., *Day-By-Day*, 95.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 98.

³⁴² Ranby et al., *Pearson*, 105.

³⁴³ Clacherty et al., *Day-By-Day*, 95.

³⁴⁴ Dilley et al., *Oxford*, 26.

³⁴⁵ Ranby et al., *Pearson*, 107.

was richer than any of his subjects”.³⁴⁶ The elite cultural symbolism of gold is then grasped by the present, as the textbook remarks that, “Even today, only important people wear gold beads among the TshiVenda speaking people who live in the area”.³⁴⁷ The King, perched atop his hill, and resplendent in his gold finery, was also the centre of trade, since it is intimated by the textbook that “only the king could organise trading expeditions”.³⁴⁸ Through the King’s mercantile guile, “Mapungubwe became connected to other parts of the world by trade”.³⁴⁹ This propulsion of the economy by the King is imperative for the narrative conceptualisation of Mapungubwe, since it is stated that “this was the beginning of globalisation”.³⁵⁰

Even after the hill was “abandoned in about 1275 AD”, it is the King and the elite that motive force in history is attributed.³⁵¹ One textbook appears to set sole agency in the hands of the “rulers” of Mapungubwe: “We do not know if the rulers of Mapungubwe moved to Great Zimbabwe, or if new rulers grew powerful at Great Zimbabwe. What we do know is that the rulers of Great Zimbabwe took over and developed the royal culture of Mapungubwe. The rulers of Great Zimbabwe also took over control of the trade between Mapungubwe and the coast”.³⁵² In another representation, it is the similarities in rulership between Mapungubwe and Great Zimbabwe which are given emphasis: “Many things about Great Zimbabwe were similar to the Mapungubwe state. Great Zimbabwe was also a complex kingdom where the king, his family and advisors had more power than ordinary people”.³⁵³ This despite the contestation of empirical links between Mapungubwe and Great Zimbabwe in archaeology.

Conclusion: Globalising the precolonial

It is perhaps important to note at this point that there is no further reference to Limpopo or the region surrounding Mapungubwe later in the curriculum. Once Mapungubwe has fallen, there is a brief flirtation with the northern sections of South Africa with Mzilikazi, but, for the most part, Limpopo falls away to the more dominant Zulu, Xhosa and Sotho histories during colonial times. There is, in the South African curriculum, a sidestepping of the history between thirteenth century Mapungubwe and contemporary South Africa, through what is proposed as a functional erasure of the region’s history once the Event of Mapungubwe is over.

³⁴⁶ Clacherty et al., *Day-By-Day*, 96.

³⁴⁷ Ranby et al., *Pearson*, 108.

³⁴⁸ Dilley et al., *Oxford*, 29.

³⁴⁹ Ranby et al., *Pearson*, 110.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁵¹ Dilley et al., *Oxford*, 26.

³⁵² *Ibid.*, 32.

³⁵³ Ranby et al., *Pearson*, 112.

Zimbabwean history, it seems, is too ‘Zimbabwean’ to comply with a blossoming post-apartheid South Africa nationalism, rooted in histories of the precolonial. There is a tendency in the educative representations of Mapungubwe to prefer South African nationalist interpretations of Mapungubwe, foregoing the historic and contemporary debates regarding the complexity of Mapungubwe’s position in southern African histories, which have been attached, under different regimes of power and knowledge, to Zimbabwe, South Africa, and tentatively in the present to peoples settled in what is now Botswana.³⁵⁴

From this analysis, it appears that the very essence of educative histories has not changed much. That is, they remain overwhelmingly narrative, and of a national centrality. The histories conveyed through the narrative tend also to remain figured around the Great Men and Events of the historic nation, whether they be real or abstract, like the King of Mapungubwe. The national educative history becomes a history of the development of the elite class of society. Mapungubwe, presented as the first stage in this state-making process, becomes the originary model for an indigenous southern African complex politics, and is represented through a particularly elite lens. This indigenisation of elitism is constructed in parallel to the European Renaissance, which sets up the dialectic relation between Europe and Africa which dominates the conceptual design of the rest of the curriculum, since Mapungubwe marks the final node in the precolonial for South African educative history.

The Mapungubwe we meet contemporarily in educative representations is one of a globalist nature, importing symbolic figures (like the King), and attaching itself to both regional (Swahili) and global (China, India, Europe) histories, without really engaging the broadness of the archaeological production of knowledge on Mapungubwe. A very particular image of nationalised Mapungubwe is drawn – one that is elite, pre-capitalist, and globalised. But the national narrative, while important due to the compulsory nature of its consumption in schools, is only one among a variety of narratives of Mapungubwe which explode from the uncloistering of archaeological knowledge in the post-apartheid. The African Renaissance, within which Mapungubwe was so important, was attempted to be infused into all aspects of social production by its proponents, who maintained such strong positions in government. And so, Mapungubwe, after the early 2000s, became a part of South African national culture – an emphatically precolonial instance taken as emblematic of the contemporary socio-political formation. But the authority of educative history, as with archaeology, is not absolute, and so

³⁵⁴ S. Chirikure, M. Manyanga, M. Pollard, F. Bandama and G. Mahachi, ‘Zimbabwe Culture before Mapungubwe: New Evidence from Mapela Hill, Southern-Western Zimbabwe’, *Plos One* 9(1) (2014).

a multitude of divergent representations emerged. In this, we might be able to gaze beyond the institutionalised life of Mapungubwe and consider the breadth of productions of the precolonial in public representations of Mapungubwe.

Interestingly, however, the Mapungubwe we encounter in South African school history education is more reminiscent of literature which appeared during the pre-Huffman-influenced phase of archaeohistorical discourses, dispensing with the more contemporary arguments posed by the likes of, in particular, Chirikure. We are met with a stable narrative of Mapungubwe, which ignores the vast contestation endured by the topic. It is a narrative that pulls away from ‘Mapungubwe as Zimbabwean’, and definitively towards ‘Mapungubwe as South African’. In the imposition of the contemporary state into the pre-colonial ‘state’, we see an erasure of certain sectors of contemporary politics, while a more bureaucratically powerful narrative is preferred. Certainly, in the focus on golden objects, and the hill itself, we see a mimicry in educative representations of the Fouché/Gardner era of colonial ‘grave-robbing’ archaeology, obsessed with the finding of royal gold. But the position of power is refigured, with the king attributed a narrative dominance, reminiscent more so of the contemporary claims of the post-apartheid African elite, from traditional leaders (like Venda incumbent, Toni Mphephu Ramabulana), to bureaucratised state leaders (like Jacob Zuma, or Cyril Ramaphosa). We see old colonial-era histories come to serve the indoctrinative/transformational purposes of the post-colonial, post-apartheid national bourgeoisie. It is a curious resurgence of certain interpretations of the past – problematised by academics – which come to serve to legitimise the authority of those empowered (by the state) in the present.

CHAPTER 3

Popularising the Precolonial

Re-making and un-making the myths of Mapungubwe

The present changes the past. Looking back, you do not find what you left behind.

Kiran Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*³⁵⁵

Introduction

The untidiness of the past

The *thing* that is ‘Mapungubwe’ has, for the past century changed over time. I say this because, since its early days, knowledge about Mapungubwe was both contested and malleable to certain (political/cultural) purposes, moving and changing accordingly, from the 1930s into the 2000s. History is not so stable. Yet by the mid-2000s, through institutionalised education public history education initiatives (e.g. South African History Project), authorities like that Department of Education (later, the Department of Basic Education) had initiated the process towards some level of standardisation of history in the national imagination. The 2000s also saw archaeological interventions from thinkers like Pikirayi and Chirikure that began reshaping Mapungubwe within the broader movements of the historical disciplines, including archaeology.³⁵⁶ With politics and archaeology in a state of flux, the arts soon followed, and within only a few years, sculptures, novels, and poems had been produced.³⁵⁷ The history of the languages used to describe Mapungubwe is wide, messy, and often resistant to a chronological understanding, but there is possibility for tracing the dominant signs and symbols preferred in certain works of literature and art. That is, the selected tropes or symbols that emerge from particular threads or dominant discourses in the representation of Mapungubwe.

In the early archaeological stories of Mapungubwe, there was a tendency to move between the sacred and the secular, the popular and scientific, with overlaps or, more precisely, support

³⁵⁵ Kiran Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss* (Johannesburg, Penguin, 2006), 208.

³⁵⁶ For instance, see Chirikure et al., ‘Zimbabwe Culture before Mapungubwe’, *Plos One* 9(1) (2014). See also Innocent Pikirayi and Shadreck Chirikure, ‘Debating Great Zimbabwe’, *Azania: Archaeological Research in Africa* 46:2 (2011), 221-231.

³⁵⁷ This is what I take as the “acts of surplus representation” referred to in Sylvia Wynter’s explication of Paul Riceour’s use of Clifford Geertz’s ‘Ideology as a Cultural System’. Sylvia Wynter, ‘On How We Mistook the Map for the Territory’, in L.R. Gordon and J.A. Gordon (eds.), *Not Only the Master’s Tools* (Oxon, Routledge, 2006), 154-155.

structures built between each to reciprocally produce legitimacy for the knowledge of one another. There is no neat temporal progression of symbols, but rather a matrix of interconnected (and residual) themes. Ramaswamy is critical of the neat cleavage between the professional and the popular, which blinds the academic to the productivity of the popular. She writes that,

it is the solemn duty of the scholar-in-discipline to debunk these ‘fraudulent’ and ‘wild’ writers ‘on the lunatic fringe’ who have seduced a gullible readership, for ‘their extremely popular writings’ persuade so many intellectually unwary people that research is simply a process of manipulating facts, intuition, and imagination in equal parts.³⁵⁸

She continues in her critique of the conservative professionalisation of (studies of) the past, arguing that “...the preoccupation with loss... manifests itself in the fascination with vanished homeland, hidden civilisations, and forgotten peoples and their ignored past that ranges from the passionate disinterest of the scholar to the melancholic yearning of the nostalgic”.³⁵⁹ Thus, not only is loss at the centre of the professional academic exploit, but is also central in the popular retracing of the past. The search for it, and its discovery are, in a sense, part of our becoming of ourselves.

In this chapter, I wish to avoid the trap of dismissing the productivity of the popular and the fictive by recognising that fictive literature is just that: fictive, unreal, an imagination of what did not happen, and thus as productive for exactly these reasons. Often, the sacred and the secular (or scientific) are separated from one another, with one believed one to supercede the other – the sacred, like fictive, as fallacy; the scientific or professional as facts interlaced as ‘authentic objective truth’. Such understanding disallows a recognition of the overlaps and support structures between the two, and produces, in the sciences, merely another sanctified sacred. In part, this chapter deals with the confluence and conflation of secular and sacred, the espoused ‘real’, and ‘unreal’, and the coexistence of the two in the imagination, and therefore in history as praxis.

For instance, in Galloway and Gardner’s early explications of Mapungubwe as Hottentot, we discern an attempt to code the territory of South Africa as a variant of the biblical ‘promised land’ through the linguistic link constructed between Hamites and Hottentots.³⁶⁰ The Judeo-

³⁵⁸ Ramaswamy, *Lost Land of Lemuria*, 3.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.

³⁶⁰ Gregerson, *Language in Africa: An Introductory Survey*, 125.

Christian association with Mapungubwe (in its links to Great Zimbabwe) was born of a longer line of literatures, rooted in the biblical tales of Solomon's Ophir according to Thomé Lopes (Vasco da Gama's scribe), and, later, H. Rider Haggard.³⁶¹ These biblical associations of Mapungubwe were to be extensively hauled over time, dragging with them the remnants of Mapungubwe, battered and bruised but ripe for polishing, always subject to change in the hands of particularly authorities over time. We see, as recently as 2014, a resurgence of the Haggardian narrative of the lost world, of the Solomonic ancient golden city, of the fetishised discoverable sacred, in the convergence of the fantastical and the scientific. Myth, religion, and science overlap, overstepping the epistemological territory of one another. In the scientific search for fact, the very myths that precede the search and produce the loss are ironically reproduced.

This chapter is the public life of Mapungubwe in its most exploded view, through the widest lens thus far engaged, beyond the stringent rules of the previous two analytic optics (the professional-archaeological and the national-educational). Taking the productivity of the popular seriously, I consider the reciprocal and uneven process of meaning-making straddling the pasts and the present: how the past constitutes meaning in the present, and *vice versa*; particularly in this instance, which was cloistered within the archaeological community, but in the present has emerged in multiple popular medias through 'new' agencies, producing new knowledge about Mapungubwe. So, how is Mapungubwe made valuable and interesting? And to whom is it addressed? How is it made to draw public intrigue so as to become *popular*? In other words, what is Mapungubwe when it enters public culture? To what imaginations does it appeal in the initiation of specific symbolic 'narrative toolkits'?³⁶² In analysing this, I track the translation or transposition between fields, from professional archaeology to popular fictions.

Making loss

Discovery for sale

Commodities exist as such so as to be sold, and sale of heritage commodities is generally aimed at tourists. Thus, heritage is not simply for ourselves (for our designation of 'self' as citizen and 'other' as non-citizen, in the political sense), but to describe ourselves to others, beyond

³⁶¹ *Transactions of the Geological Society of South Africa Volume 37-38*, Geological Society of South Africa, xxiii. The sources states that so influential was the narrative of Ophir that the name was emblazoned on maps to mark Great Zimbabwe, particularly after the maps of Thomé Lopes in 1502-1503.

³⁶² James V. Wertsch, 'Collective Memory and Narrative Templates', *Social Research*, Vol. 75, No.1, Collective Memory and Identity (Spring 2008), 139.

political identity.³⁶³ To make known that commodified culture is for sale, the production of touristic texts is required. Such texts on Mapungubwe, which latch on to the theme of heritage, have been vast, although the majority of touristic publications manifest as advertisements, in brief paragraphs in pamphlets, or on touristic websites – short-form writing which inevitably presents an essentialised view of Mapungubwe history (as opposed to the long-form writing of books). Certain characteristics are chosen to be exploited so as to construct Mapungubwe and Limpopo as attractive tourist destinations. The website which tourists will almost inevitably visit when in search of Mapungubwe online is managed by SANParks.³⁶⁴ The SANParks website for Mapungubwe National Park is exemplary in the symbolism attached to the ‘ancient state’ when sale is prioritised.

The introductory text, right at the top of the website reads: “Mapungubwe National Park and World Heritage Site is the ideal location for anyone interested in wildlife and birds, to those in search of serenity, identity and the extraordinary history of this Park”.³⁶⁵ Somewhat ironically, the featured photograph in the background is of a dead, leafless tree, growing out of a rocky outcrop on top of a hill overlooking the veld. The image is sparse and desolate, while also positioning the viewer at the vantage point of a sentinel, symbolised in the position of the tree. It is unclear whether the photograph was taken from the top of Mapungubwe Hill or from somewhere nearby. What is notable, though, is the juxtaposition of wildlife and the discovery of long-passed history to signify that ‘the safari experience’ can blend seamlessly into ‘the heritage experience’.

Below this, under the heading ‘Featured Activity’, is advertised, “Discover an Ancient African Kingdom”, under which is a photograph of the golden rhino, bowl, sceptre and beaded necklace – the typical golden symbols unearthed from elite graves.³⁶⁶ Tourists are asked to do what the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century excavators claimed to do – to *discover*. Perhaps this alludes to a self-discovery – to find this knowledge for oneself, to import into one’s sense of being this new knowledge, and to change with it. But that such language employs historical discourses that cast Africa in an exotic darkness for the sake of identification with and of its

³⁶³ Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, *Ethnicity Inc.* (London, University of Chicago Press, 2009). See also Mamdani, ‘Beyond Settler and Native’, 651–664.

³⁶⁴ SANParks, Mapungubwe National Park website, accessible at: <https://www.sanparks.org/parks/mapungubwe/>. Last accessed 01/11/2017.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

audience is worth noting when considering the nature of the representation of Mapungubwe carefully manicured for touristic consumption.

The caption for the section reads:

Discover an ancient African Kingdom, Southern Africa's first, established at Mapungubwe Hill between 1200 and 1290 AD. Home to a powerful tribe that flourished on trading with Eastern cultures such as China and India, Mapungubwe saw the rise and fall of this great civilisation more than 700 years ago. This is the place where archaeologists excavated the famous golden rhino and other evidence of a wealthy African kingdom.³⁶⁷

Very little of this is uncontested in the professional (archaeological) life of Mapungubwe. For instance, it has been disputed whether Mapungubwe was southern Africa's *first* kingdom, and whether it actually collapsed after 1290.³⁶⁸ In a completely different turn, the final sentence of the paragraph is telling of the centrality of the golden rhino to descriptions of Mapungubwe – where the rhino is consistently specified as an emblem of Mapungubwe, while everything else becomes subsumed under the vague category of 'other evidence'. However, what is presented by SANParks are the historically dominant discourses, rather than a consideration of the breadth of existing discourses on Mapungubwe history. The text is meant for touristic consumption, and not for academic or pedagogic debates, after all, and thus certain narratives are selected for a mode of popularisation that appeals to the audience intended. Near to the bottom of the webpage are four "Things to see", the first two of which are "The Lost City", and "Wildlife and Mystic Scenery".³⁶⁹ The adjectives "lost" and "mystic" demand particular attention.

In order to promote Mapungubwe tourism and history, SANParks began in September 2017 – Tourism Month – with a lecture series entitled, "Mapungubwe: The Beginning". For SANParks, Mapungubwe is not merely lost and mystical, but also an *originary* history – a

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁸ See Pikirayi and Chirikure, 'Debating Great Zimbabwe', 221-231. The authors were responding to Thomas Huffman's critique of their own earlier (2008) interpretations. They argued that Huffman "misunderstood Portuguese written accounts", and that his "treatment of the radiocarbon chronology is methodologically unsound". See also, Chirikure et al., 'Zimbabwe Culture before Mapungubwe: New Evidence from Mapela Hill, Souther-Western Zimbabwe'. Additionally, we know very little about the intricacies of political leadership and structure at, for instance, K2, Schroda or Mapela. As argued in chapter 1, it is largely the similarities imported from Egyptology, through Great Zimbabwe (ethno-)archaeology that it was determined that Mapungubwe was a *kingdom* and *state*, in the classical Western understandings.

³⁶⁹ 'Mapungubwe National Park', SANParks website. <https://www.sanparks.org/parks/mapungubwe/> Accessed 22/11/17.

history of the beginning of, in this instance, southern African indigenous statehood, before what Basil Davidson referred to as “the colonial hurricane”.³⁷⁰ It is a matter of recouping lost pasts, so as to reassemble the broken fragments into a unitary history. But this recouping occurs under the placemaking conditions of a particularly postcolonial context. As Ramaswamy argues,

Place-making in the modern world... cannot ignore the colonisation of imagination itself, and the numerous contradictions and conflicted intimacies of power, contestation, and resistance in an age dominated by capitalism, imperialism, and the postcolonial condition... we *are* the place-worlds we are compelled to imagine with languages and conceptual tools that may not be of our own making and are frequently alien to our being.³⁷¹

The influence of H. Rider Haggard

SANParks and its associates have tended to sell myths of loss and vicarious discovery. I am curious, then, as to what “conceptual tools” have made the loss of Mapungubwe, and how these might be considered “alien to our being”. Positions were surprisingly blunt, and easy to unearth. In his touristic publication on Mapungubwe entitled *The Mapungubwe Cultural Landscape*, David Fleminger makes a peculiar comparison between the history he is about to relate, and the stories written by H. Rider Haggard, a popular English writer of adventure novels set in exotic locations who had the experience of serving the British administration in South Africa from 1875 to 1882.³⁷² Most of Rider Haggard’s novels were set in exoticized landscapes of Africa, in the vein of the authors Chris Angus hoped to emulate in *Winston Churchill and the Treasure of Mapungubwe*.³⁷³ In 1938, when reviewing Fouché’s original volume on Mapungubwe, Laurence Kirwan also made reference to Rider Haggard, comparing van Graan to Rider Haggard’s protagonist, Allan Quatermain.³⁷⁴ Rider Haggard’s works, including *King Solomon’s Mines* (1885), *She...* (1886), *Allan Quatermain* (1887), and *She and Allan* (1921), among many others, have presented Western audiences with sensationalised representations of

³⁷⁰ Basil Davidson, ‘The Rediscovery of Africa’, *Africa’s Long Past: The startling rediscovery of a continent*, The UNESCO Courier October 1959, 5. For Ramaswamy, “In their colonial, nationalist, or liberal forms, narratives of loss... suffer from a pervasive nostalgia, a yearning for unity with the homogenous past, a desire for the closure of difference, and any politics associated with them would be profoundly conservative and restorative”. Ramaswamy, *Lost Land of Lemuria.*, 7.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

³⁷² David Fleminger, *The Mapungubwe Cultural Landscape*, 14.

³⁷³ Peter Riva, Book review featured in *Publishers Weekly* (14 July 2014).

³⁷⁴ Kirwan, ‘Recent Archaeology in British Africa’, 495. Kirwan’s job, at the time, was as field director of Oxford University Expeditions to Nubia, from 1934 to 1937, according to his obituary. M. Wise, ‘Obituary: Sir Laurence Kirwan’, *The Independent* (6 May 1999).

Africa through late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, inspiring, aside from Angus's offering, such popular characters as Indiana Jones. Widely considered as one of the pioneering figures of the 'lost world' archaeo-adventure genre, Rider Haggard brought fantastical fables of 'the other world' to ordinary readers in the metropole, engraving colonial fantasies of the lost, the savage, and the exotic in the "Occident".³⁷⁵

The comparison made by Fleminger gives a good indication of the intended audience for the book – those familiar with the works of H. Rider Haggard, and the literary tradition surrounding this genre of lost world adventure. The repeated digressions of Fleminger from African history to the tall tales of Haggard also indicates a certain overlap between fictive and touristic representational devices or conceptual tools.³⁷⁶ In Fleminger, it is a certain thread of African history interpretation that overshadows his attempted historicisation of the ancient state – a thread which must constantly be reattached to a central corpus of historical fantasies which insist on a dark, lost, mythical and irresistibly exotic expanse. Certainly, the genre of the colonial-era adventure-to-Africa, or 'lost world' novel, is highly contentious in postcolonial times, since the tropes bought into, the very settings enlisted by the genre, are founded in a world that requires Africa to remain dark, lost, and discoverable to the civilised, the white, the adventurous – out of reach to the Black, native, indigenous majority.³⁷⁷ The protagonists, in such works, are always colonials coming to Africa to find what has already been long known but superstitiously avoided by local people, and the audience revels in their vicarious adventure in the sacred.

For colonial thinkers, including archaeologists and authors from as early as the 1930s, Mapungubwe became a 'lost city', much like El Dorado for Spanish travellers, Atlantis in the Greco-Latin tradition, Ophir in Judeo-Christian scripture, or, perhaps, Wakanda for contemporary diasporic African youth.³⁷⁸ Atlantis is perhaps the earliest manifestation of the myth (in the texted Greco-Latin tradition) and appears as just that – a myth – first, in Plato's

³⁷⁵ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York, Vintage Books, 1978), 2. See also McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, for a captivating discussion of the gendered symbolism in Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines*. More detailed analysis can be found in Gerald Monsman, *H. Rider Haggard on the Imperial Frontier: The Political and Literary Contexts of His African Romances* (Greensboro: English Literature in Transition Press, 2006).

³⁷⁶ The overlap between touristic, fictive, and archaeological is also evidence in Kirwan's reference to Haggard in relation to Mapungubwe. Haggard, like the rhinoceros, is constant through the three fields.

³⁷⁷ The genre and its biblical foundations are discussed at length in J.H. Walton and S. Brent, *The Lost World of Scripture: Ancient Literary Culture and Biblical Authority*, (Illinois, IVP Academic, 2013).

³⁷⁸ Wakanda is the fictional home country of King T'Challa who also serves as national protector and superhero, Black Panther. See Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Black Panther Vol.1: A Nation Under Our Feet* (Panini Publishing Ltd., 2016). I do not think this contemporary mythification of the 'African homeland' can be completely detached from the central tenets of the philosophies of Marcus Garvey or the Negritude movement.

early writings, *Timaeus* and *Critias*. Since its introduction into the Western imagination, the story of Atlantis has been subject to multiple retellings, from various late antiquity and Roman configurations, as well as seminal interventions by early modern scholars such as Marsilio Ficino, Gian Carli, J.S. Bailly, and later by William Blake and several occultist and romantic interpellations.³⁷⁹ The sunken city was later popularised in Jules Verne, *20 000 Leagues Under the Sea* in 1869, well into the colonial era, and was quickly followed by hundreds (if not thousands) of subsequent references and representations in Western and Eastern popular literature and media.

El Dorado appears in texts much later, with earlier records dated to sixteenth century Spanish historical texts. Soon it became the centre of many subsequent expeditions – including those of Sir Walter Raleigh. In the case of El Dorado expeditions, the result, eventually, has been the destruction of vast areas of Amazon rainforest for the sake of goldmining and other mineral extraction, as well as the dispossession, eviction and murder of indigenous peoples.³⁸⁰ So close to the colonial and postcolonial heart and spirit is El Dorado, that it has been the centre of critical appraisal and creative adaption by such authors as V.S. Naipaul, in his Afro-Caribbean history, *The Loss of El Dorado*, as well as Guyanese novelist Wilson Harris's *The Palace of the Peacock*, and the Cuban writer Alejo Carpentier's *The Lost Steps*.³⁸¹ But these authors do not focus on the general themes of gold cities or their loss, but rather endeavour to both historicise and reimagine particular instances of a loss. Still, in these examples, there is a *persistence of loss*.

Winston Churchill and the civilising of Mapungubwe

Thus far, in this tale of the reproduction of loss, we have encountered the transposition of archaeological knowledge into educative nationalist, and touristic heritage commodity knowledge. While the signs, symbols and concepts of each 'language' is distinct in its genre and assemblage, there are certain commonalities, particularly in the selection of facts with which to construct or represent Mapungubwe. But there is a step beyond this – a level of imagination which by its very nature is unconstrained by "reason or unreason", so Gayatri

³⁷⁹ Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *The Atlantis Story: A Short History of Plato's Myth*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007).

³⁸⁰ C. Holder Spude, R.O. Mills, K. Gurcke, *El Dorado! The Archaeology of Gold Mining in the Far North* (USA, The Society for Historical Archaeology, 2011), 25. See John Silver, 'The Myth of El Dorado', *History Workshop Journal*, vol. 34 (1992), 1–15.

³⁸¹ Naipaul, V.S., *The Loss of El Dorado* (London: André Deutsch, 1969); Bhabha, H., *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994); Wilson Harris, *Palace of the Peacock* (London, Faber and Faber, 1960); Alejo Carpentier, *The Lost Steps*, trans. Harriet de Onis (Minnesota, University of Minnesota Press, 2001).

Spivak tells us.³⁸² For Mikhail Bakhtin, the fictive novel is special, in that it is the “sole genre to develop, that is as yet uncompleted”.³⁸³ Fiction, for Bakhtin and Spivak, is irreverent to the conventions and procedures and protocols of the academic discipline, whether of (for instance) archaeology, history, anthropology, or linguistics. But novels are not uniform, and within the medium there are a multiplicity of genres and cultures, each with their own conventions, rules and styles of writing and sourcing.

In contemporary times, the narrative of Mapungubwe as a ‘lost city’ remains resilient. One such exponent is Chris Angus’s 2014 novel, *Winston Churchill and the Treasure of Mapungubwe*.³⁸⁴ Angus has published a number of other books, fiction and non-fiction, although most of his fictive works are classed as ‘historical thrillers’. The novel was published by Yucca Publishing, which is an imprint of Skyhorse Publishing. It is a relatively small independent American publishing company, producing a wide range of fiction and non-fiction books, though only supplying to the USA and Canada, so the book is not available in South Africa, or anywhere in Africa (according to one apologetic seller). This suggests that, despite being set mostly in South Africa, the novel is not aimed at a South African audience, but rather caters to a British and North American market.

The front cover of the novel is telling of the tale to come.³⁸⁵ The text is simple, with the title of the novel in large black letters at the top of the cover, with Angus’ name appearing slightly smaller below in white fonts. Superimposed in the background is a sepia-toned image of the African continent, with no demarcation of contours, rivers, borders, or towns, although the Rift Valley Great Lakes rise in a prominent blue. At the bottom-left corner of the page there is an eight-point compass. The front cover – for all intents and purposes – is a map of Africa – but a completely unified, undifferentiated, undiscovered Africa. It is an Africa presented very much as open, unmarked, unclaimed, but nevertheless navigable space. It is there to be discovered.

Throughout the story, Mapungubwe is referred to as a “Nubian” treasure, containing the graves of a local Nubian who had married to a Roman, thus imagining Mapungubwe within a Mediterranean history, rather than the Bantu African society archaeologists had generally

³⁸² Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalisation* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2013), 281.

³⁸³ Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (Texas, University of Texas Press, Slavic Series, 1982), 3.

³⁸⁴ Chris Angus, *Winston Churchill and the Treasure of Mapungubwe Hill* (Yucca Publishing, 2014).

³⁸⁵ The 2014 publication is its only imprint thus far, and so this is the only front cover the book has been bound in. There is an alternate cover, although the only change is a photograph of Churchill superimposed onto the map of Africa.

determined it to be some four decades before the publication of the novel.³⁸⁶ The assumption rests on interpretations from prior to the 1960s, when the work of Fouché, Galloway, Gardner (and others involved in the 1930s – 1950s excavations) was prominent. Gardner argued that Mapungubwe was a Hottentot society.³⁸⁷ Later scholars were highly critical of Gardner's and Galloway's interpretations.³⁸⁸ It is a fantastical move on the part of the author, bringing together the well-known Nubian towards to unknown southern Africa – Mapungubwe becomes relatable to its audience through the recognisability of the symbolic associations and conceptual tools used.

The characters who make the story, who traverse the deterritorialised map and discover its invisibilised treasure, make for very interesting analysis, considering how they position Mapungubwe in relation to the greater global conditions at the time. The novelist takes hold of the historic arrest of Winston Churchill by Louis Botha in what was soon to become the South African Union. The story is set at the turn of the twentieth century, starting in 1899, and ending sometime after the Second World War. The plot shifts from young Churchill, on a mission assigned by Botha to protect the great Nubian treasure known only as Mapungubwe Hill (from Nazis, in spite of the fact that the Nazi Party only rises to prominence after the First World War), to the end of the Second World War, by which time Churchill is Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, ordering a British secret service agent to continue his work guarding the treasure.

The Winston Churchill of Angus' imagination is cast initially as a protector of the treasure. In the novel, while the British are positioned as protagonists, the Nazis appear as antagonists, with Afrikaners serving the plot as somewhat secret allies of the British, at least where the treasures of Mapungubwe are concerned.³⁸⁹ Black Africans are positioned on the outskirts of the narrative, serving only functional roles in the greater machinations of Churchill and company. As in the initial narratives of Fouché, Black Africans are only ever guides to white discoverers, or, in this case, protectors.³⁹⁰ But to position Britain as protectors of Africa's treasures is to

³⁸⁶ There is absolute no material or ethnographic evidence to substantiate the Mediterranean construction of Mapungubwe.

³⁸⁷ Gardner, 'Hottentot Culture on the Limpopo', 116-121.

³⁸⁸ see Simon Hall in Schoeman and Hay (et al.), *Mapungubwe Reconsidered*.

³⁸⁹ In reality, the relation between the British government and the Afrikaans leadership in South Africa around the World Wars was much more strained than Angus would have his reader believe, since certain dominant groups of Afrikaners allied themselves with the Axis power. See R.B. Beck, *The History of South Africa, 2nd Edition*, (Greenwood, 2013), 130.

³⁹⁰ Note that Mowena (perhaps Mokwena), the man whose son guided van Graan's party, is introduced differently through the history of texts. For Fouché in 1937, he is merely a guide, without a politics of employment. For Fagan in 1964, he is "persuaded". But for King in 2011, Mowena is "forced" to help van Graan and company.

obfuscate completely the realities of the history of British raw material extraction from its colonies.

Angus manages to obscure or at least ignore that the ‘treasures’ of Mapungubwe – including the bodies of the dead – were removed from their resting place in graves at Mapungubwe Hill, and that, subsequently, the treasures of Mapungubwe would be paraded for the world to see – even visiting the British Museum in 2016.³⁹¹ It is between the first part of the story, during the South African War, and the end, in the period following the Second World War, that Mapungubwe archaeology and excavation had, in reality, begun. In a further historical sidestep, the novelist ignores completely that during early twentieth century, land was being legislated away from native Africans in South Africa, through the Union of South Africa in 1910, and the Natives Land Act of 1913. Such matters seem to fall outside the scope of the novel.

Despite this ahistoricity where African history is concerned, the novel is saturated in dialogues detailing the British World War experience which is, largely, narrated in a stylistically realist language. The insistent ahistoricity of the African and severe historicity of the British war effort in the novel constructs for its colonial protagonists an aura around mystical Africa. While Mapungubwe becomes mythically Nubian, Churchill remains an historical figure, albeit at the centre of a fantastical adventure. Locals are shrouded in the mysticism that emanates from Mapungubwe hill, but colonials are positioned as the voice of reason in an otherwise irrational and superstitious environment. There is a reproduction of interpretations of African history, and interpellation of African subjects, which harks back to a regime of knowledge and power that precedes the publication. In Angus’s offering, the past resurges.³⁹²

This is not a question of which is true or real, but rather that each is representative of the regimes of knowledge through their respective epoch. Fagan, ‘Greefswald Sequence’, 337; King, ‘Archaeological Naissance’, 314. Note that neither Fagan nor King refer to Mowena by name – he is, for Fagan, “an African”, and for King, “a local black man”.

³⁹¹ Mark Brown, ‘South Africa’s golden rhino to star in British Museum exhibition’, *The Guardian* (7 August 2016). Accessible at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/aug/07/british-museum-south-africa-host-800-year-old-treasure> [Last accessed 14/02/2018].

³⁹² Angus’s literary-thematic backtrack did not go unnoticed, however, with one reviewer, Peter Riva, writing for *International Transactions*, stated that “Angus’s elaborate plotting fails to distract, unfortunately, from the characters’ period-appropriate but discomfiting racial attitudes...At the end of the day, this genre homage reads more like a Dan Brown pastiche of H. Rider Haggard than the real thing”. Peter Riva, Book review featured in *Publishers Weekly* (14 July 2014). But while the reviewer is critical of the reproduction of the genre, the admiration with which he regards Haggard’s earlier tales of colonial escapade is not unnoticeable. For the reviewer, it is not Angus’ ideological position on and interpretation of African histories that is problematic, but rather his woeful execution that is of concern.

The lighter side of the heart of darkness

Much of the mystique attributed to the treasures of Mapungubwe is found in its loss, indicating a broader theme in the language used to describe Mapungubwe. It is a language of discovery in the ‘dark continent’ by the colonial adventurer. The image of lost treasures very much plays on the fetishisation in the colonial imagination of the discoverability of Africa’s dark, unexplored crevices – its history, its animals, its plants, its people; all objects for study and literary manipulation. Such interpretations of Africa are most famous in works like Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, as well as the writings of Haggard, including *King Solomon’s Mines* and *She*, the latter of which was based loosely on Queen Modjadji and the matrilineal culture of the Balobedu, despite that Rider Haggard inserted a white queen into the story.³⁹³ Similar examples can be found in contemporary filmic and literary offerings, like the Tintin comics, or the Indiana Jones film series.³⁹⁴

However, Angus’s piece is much different to *Heart of Darkness*, in that it is not merely “the horror” that is discovered in Africa, but also great treasure, subverting the classically horrific experiences of the European adventurer in deepest, darkest Africa that were (are) embedded in the colonial imagination.³⁹⁵ In fact, in recent years there has been something of a resurgence of the emblem of the African (or South American) ‘lost city’, often qualified specifically as a ‘lost city of gold’. Adventure is no longer the terrifying voyage of Marlow and the madness of Kurtz. Rather, it is the benevolent wanderings of the immeasurably ethical and free-spirited archaeologist *qua* reluctant academic popularly portrayed by Harrison Ford.³⁹⁶ Like many adventure novels, films and comics, Angus’s offering tells of the position of Mapungubwe in the colonial imagination – as a lost city of gold, much in the same vein as literary constructions of the great cities of El Dorado, Atlantis, or Wakanda, or even the real cities of Timbuktu, or Alexandria, near to where Haggard’s fabled mines of King Solomon were said to be found. Certainly, the ‘lost city of gold’ has been one of the most enduring myths in the literary imagination – whether colonial or not.

³⁹³ Fleminger, *Mapungubwe Cultural Landscape*, 68. See also McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 1-17. In the opening chapter, McClintock provides a powerful argument about the gendered colonial representation of the African territory in the route map to Ophir.

³⁹⁴ Juan Medrano, Pablo Mano, José J Uriarte and Ana-Pía López, ‘Stigma and prejudice in Tintin’, *BMJ: British Medical Journal*, Vol. 339, No. 7735 (19-26 December 2009), pp. 1406-1407.

³⁹⁵ Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (Johannesburg: Penguin Popular Classics, 1994). Originally published in 1902.

³⁹⁶ As an aside, Haggard’s protagonist, Allan Quatermain, is considered to be a significant influence for the character of Indiana Jones. Quatermain is the archetypal benevolent colonial discoverer, garbed in khakis with rifle in hand.

We can understand now that Mapungubwe has been constructed as something ‘lost’ since the very earliest productions of its historicity in the 1930s through to the contemporary era. There has been a certain resilience of loss in contemporary reimaginings of the ancient state. As Ramaswamy writes, “history’s own beginning is one which presupposes a *lost* object”.³⁹⁷ But loss invites discovery and so, since we have established the loss of Mapungubwe, the chapter must now shift gear from the construction of *loss* to the production of certain activities or performances of *discovery*. In this, I outline three (overlapping) modes of discovery: the golden, the touristic, and the (re)embodied. These three also deal, in turn, with objects, land, and people – three important levels of Mapungubwe symbolism. Each brings different formations of Mapungubwe, though certainly there are overlaps of devices from conceptual toolkits. We turn, then, first towards the symbolic reproduction of the objects of the ancient state, particularly, in this case, the famous golden objects of Mapungubwe.

Golden discovery

Nationalising the golden era

Once again, we must revert to post-apartheid reconstitution of the image of the nation-state so as to unpick the languages that describe Mapungubwe. Within only a few years of Mbeki’s presidency, the diction of African Renaissance gained wide currency in professional and popular fields, informing several overlapping modes of cultural reproduction.³⁹⁸ Mapungubwe was soon taken on as a symbol of the contemporary nation-state of South Africa in more generalised and institutionalised forms. The symbol has grown to such status as heritage that it has become part of the ever-widening repertoire of place names in South Africa. For instance, the name was ascribed to a road in Tembisa township in the Gauteng province, more than five hundred kilometres away from the archaeological site. This trend has continued. The premium hotel chain Faircity, which named its Morningside property after Quatermain, Rider Haggard’s fictional colonial hero, christened its Marshalltown hotel Mapungubwe.³⁹⁹ Detached from the material referents, the name could be taken up by a security service company in Mutale,⁴⁰⁰ and a travel company in Midrand.⁴⁰¹ Music tracks began to explicitly reference

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.

³⁹⁸ For instance, see Makgoba, *African Renaissance: The New Struggle*.

³⁹⁹ <http://www.south-african-hotels.com/groups/faircity-hotels-group/> [Last accessed on 18 February 2018].

⁴⁰⁰ http://www.securitydesk.co.za/mapungubwe-security-services-mutale_contact-number-address [Last accessed on 18 February 2018].

⁴⁰¹ <http://www.mapungubwetruvel.co.za> [Last accessed on 18 February 2018].

Mapungubwe.⁴⁰² Coffee table books and children's comics were soon in supply, often with direct inputs from "professionals".⁴⁰³

In 2002, the President's Office instituted the 'Order of Mapungubwe', arguably a colonially inspired award (mimicking the British OBE, for instance), for honouring the highest level of achievement by a South African citizen that has "impacted internationally and served the interests of the Republic of South Africa".⁴⁰⁴ The design of the badge of the Order is remarkable, as it highlights the raw symbols drawn from the ancient site and impressed upon the national consciousness. On the badge of the medal, Mapungubwe Hill is silhouetted in the background, with the golden rhino given prominence in the foreground. Below this, the golden sceptre melds into a geometrically patterned gold-melting pot, under burns a furnace. The symbolism of the actual artistic representation centres around gold and gold production, and links it directly to South African instances of ingenuity and societal contribution. The analysis of the medal is entrenched in the national basic education curriculum, studied in grade six.⁴⁰⁵ It was, by 2011, well into the process of symbolic concretisation in the national imagination.

The golden objects of Mapungubwe are similarly dominant in commemorative stamps, designed privately, but legitimised by the national Post Office. In 2017, Sue Dickinson produced a painting for a postage stamp, depicting the Mapungubwe golden rhino and golden bowl.⁴⁰⁶ In the national representation of Mapungubwe, the emphasis is on the golden objects found at Mapungubwe Hill – property of an historic elite. The stamp is an example of commercial art, displayed and sold via artist's personal website, alongside several other painted artworks. Despite their private origin (in this case), stamps have an important space in national commemoration projects, in conjunction with the national postal service. Stamps are a place

⁴⁰² Riku Lätti and Chris Van Niekerk, 'Mapungubwe (III)', in *Tussen Kontinente* (Next Music, 2009), duration 1:06 minutes; Akkedis, 'Mapungubwe', in *Afrika My Baby* (Akkedis, 2010), Track No. 6, duration 3:38 minutes; Irene Mawela, 'Mapungubwe', in *Ari Pembele: Let's Rejoice* (Umsakazo Records, 2017), Track No. 5, duration 5:44 minutes.

⁴⁰³ Sian Tiley, *Mapungubwe: South Africa's Crown Jewels* (Cape Town: Sunbird, 2004); Sian Tiley-Nel, Nic Buchanan and Sivuyile Matwa, *Kingdom of Gold: The Curse of Mapungubwe*, Africa Illustrated Book 1 (Cape Town: Umlando Wezithombe, 2013)

⁴⁰⁴ <http://www.dac.gov.za/national-orders> [Last accessed on 18 February 2018]. See also E. Jenkins, *Falling into Place: The Story of Modern South African Place Names*. (Claremont, David Philip, 2007), 185. In his interviews, the author notes that 'Mapungubwe' was rejected against the popularity of Limpopo as the new name of South Africa's northmost province, since it was "not marketable". Why it was not marketable is never revealed but gives a good idea of the (initial lack of) faith held in the marketability of Mapungubwe in the early post-apartheid era.

⁴⁰⁵ See Chapter 2, and CAPS IP Social Sciences, 41.

⁴⁰⁶ See Dickinson's website at: <http://www.suedickinson.co.za/postage-stamps/>. She has gone through various projects, but the Mapungubwe stamps are part of a project to commemorate "early South African history", presenting archetypal symbols of South African precolonial heritage like, for instance, the 'Lydenburg Heads'.

where a nation can be expressed and memorialised, with specifically constructed characteristic images attached to the nation disseminated in the most mundane of ways.⁴⁰⁷

It is important to clarify that, despite the attachment of these images often to the mining of gold, there is, in fact, no archaeological evidence that there was ever gold to be mined at that specific site, with the distinct possibility that Mapungubwean goldsmiths had to import their gold.⁴⁰⁸ This suggests that gold was traded *into* Mapungubwe society, and that mining was not necessarily a central feature of Mapungubwe society, although metalwork is accepted to have had great importance to the society. Yet it is not merely the making of golden objects but the practice and industry of *goldmining* that has become significant in the current nationalist appropriation of Mapungubwe. It may not be unremarkable at this point to call attention to the fact that, after apartheid, the ANC-led government did not nationalise the mining industry, but rather nationalised the symbols of mining – to make mining and metalworking, while well outside the grasp of the ordinary citizen, a national activity, pastime, or perhaps even recreational obsession.⁴⁰⁹

Gold and the nation

The obsession with gold is particular neither to South Africa nor to Mapungubwe. For Peter L. Bernstein, “Nations have scoured the earth for gold in order to control others only to find out that gold has controlled their own fate. The gold at the end of the rainbow is ultimate happiness, but the gold at the bottom of the mine emerges from hell”.⁴¹⁰ In the history of human society, gold has served as a symbol of hope and wealth, but also of the greatest exploitation and death (for instance).⁴¹¹ The case of South Africa is no different, although goldmining in South Africa is distinct from goldmining in, for instance, the USA, since South African gold is contained in thin veins in rock ore, rather than in nuggets flowing down streams. In fact, according to Bernstein, “The South African mines are the worst”, requiring deep-level shaft mining and the

⁴⁰⁷ W.A. Kemp, *Nationalism and Communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union: A Basic Contradiction?* (London, MacMillan Press Ltd., 1999), 119. See also H. Fuller, *Building the Ghanaian Nation-State: Kwame Nkrumah's Symbolic Nationalism* (London, Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), or H. Hoyo, ‘Posting Nationalism: Postage Stamps as Carriers of Nationalist Messages’, in J. Burbick and W. Glass (eds.), *Beyond Imagined Uniqueness: Nationalisms in contemporary perspectives* (London, Cambridge University Press, 2010), 67-92.

⁴⁰⁸ Shadreck Chirikure, ‘The metalworking industry of Mapungubwe’, in Alex Schoeman and Michelle Hay (eds.) *Mapungubwe Reconsidered*, MISTRA Research Report (Johannesburg, Real African Publishers, 2013), 68-75.

⁴⁰⁹ Abraham Mathebe, *South African Mining Nationalisation* (Bloomington, XLibris, 2010), 16.

⁴¹⁰ Peter L. Bernstein, *The Power of Gold: The History of an Obsession* (New York, Wiley and Sons, 2004), 8.

⁴¹¹ Luli Callinocos, *A Peoples History of South Africa: Gold and workers* (Ravan Press, 1997).

extraction of massive amounts of ore for a tiny amount of gold, in heat exceeding 50°C.⁴¹² This is not to mention to the health hazards associated with deep level mining.⁴¹³

Despite this, gold has been prominent in symbolic national reformation, even included on the national flag as a thin vein buffering the black from the green.⁴¹⁴ Gold is also prominent in artistic representations of Mapungubwe, particularly in the reimagination of the nation. It is both colour and metal, where neither can be dissociated from the symbolic meanings brought with the other. So important is gold to the representation of Mapungubwe, that the golden objects once housed securely at the University of Pretoria were moved to the Mapungubwe Interpretation Centre which has, as recently as July 2017, been burgled, resulting in the theft of several gold items from the adjacent Thulamela exhibit.⁴¹⁵ While security is a concern, so too is the flaunting of golden heritage.

In the national imagination, as exhibited in postage stamps and the medal of the Order of Mapungubwe, the ancient state is made special *because of* the presence of gold and its working. When Mapungubwe is imagined, it is imagined with its array of golden objects – the sceptre, the beads, the bracelets, and most prominently by far, the golden rhino. Other metalwork becomes virtually invisible, absorbed into the perceived darkness (or the lost quality) of the rest of the regional precolonial history. What is not metallic from Mapungubwe suffers an even worse fate in the abyss of perceived unimportance, receding into the background (if not rendered completely invisible) in many artistic public representations of Mapungubwe. Glass, for instance, while found at Mapungubwe, emanates from Eastern trade, and is thus discarded as alien to southern Africa. It is a similar case for Chinese porcelain. Mapungubwe is metallurgical when it is not mythic and monarchic.⁴¹⁶

⁴¹² *Ibid.*, 13.

⁴¹³ A. Lombard, L. Ledwaba, L. Sadiki, *Broke and Broken: The Shameful Legacy of Goldmining in South Africa* (Johannesburg, Jacana Education, 2007). The book gives a good idea of, primarily, the economic and human rights abuses historically associated with South African mining. See also J. McCulloch, *South Africa's Gold Mines and the Politics of Silicosis* (Johannesburg, Jacana, 2012), 1-13. This work outlines quite nicely the health hazards, like silicosis, faced by South African miners. In a holistic sense, the South African goldmining industry has been cast in a widely negative light regarding, in particular, the conditions endured by miners.

⁴¹⁴ Though South Africa produces large amount of, for instance, titanium and platinum (which is heavier, more durable, and more valuable than gold), it is gold that is preferred for representation on the flag. Similarly, most South African sports teams are garbed in 'green and gold', which become the dominant colours in the symbolic construction of the image of the nation – blue and red, for instance, very rarely appear in the uniforms of South African sports teams (the 1996 Bafana Bafana kit is probably the last time a South African sports kit was dominated by gold, black and white).

⁴¹⁵ Dave Chamber, 'Theft of gold relics from Kruger museum angers archaeologists', *The Times* (23 August 2017). Accessible at: <https://www.timeslive.co.za/news/south-africa/2017-08-23-theft-of-gold-relics-from-kruger-museum-angers-archaeologists/>. Last accessed 15/02/2018.

⁴¹⁶ Though these imported goods are critical in the structuring of the power of the King and elite of Mapungubwe.

Indigenising an industry

Mapungubwe was, according to most professional historians, a thriving ‘middle Iron Age’ society (whether it was a capital of a wider state, or an independent polity of its own) with an emphasis on gold in excavated material culture.⁴¹⁷ Like goldsmithing, copper and ironwork at Mapungubwe are rooted to a time before the interventions of the colonial metal industry in South Africa. Mapungubwe provides the historic evidence for a remodelling or reconfiguration of the symbolic meaning imported into metals like gold in South Africa. The action is to indigenise and Africanise the general metal and specific gold industries, and to detach, even for the briefest moment, the existing industries from their historically colonial roots, and attach them, always with inevitably impermanent threads, to precolonial goldmining and manufacturing instead. This generally occurs without mind for the fact that the existing institutional relations between workers and owners of the means of production in mineral industries in South Africa have changed little from their colonial and apartheid foundations, despite that some few black elites have risen to the highest echelons of mineral industry management.⁴¹⁸

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, there has been a concerted effort by conglomerates in the gold industry to reconfigure the relation between themselves and the bulk of the South African population, if not in reality, then at the very least symbolically and historically. That is to say, while conditions for workers on (and under) the ground have not improved significantly since the end up apartheid, there has been an effort to reimagine the historicity of goldmining and manufacture in South(ern) Africa, particularly in precolonial times.⁴¹⁹ Several projects have been funded by, for instance, Anglo-Gold Ashanti – a branch of Anglo-American based in Africa, appropriating the name of the precolonial Kingdom of the Asante people in contemporary Ghana.⁴²⁰

Mapungubwe ‘Re-Mined’

The project to reconfigure the relation between gold industry and population includes the works ‘Mapungubwe Re-Mined’ (2006) and ‘Mapungubwe – A New Skin’ (2016), both by South

⁴¹⁷ Chirikure, ‘The metalworking industry of Mapungubwe’, 68-75.

⁴¹⁸ Lombard et al., *Broke and Broken*. See also Greg Marinovich, *Murder at Small Koppie: The Real Story of the Marikana Massacre* (Penguin Random House South Africa, 2016), 28.

⁴¹⁹ T.S. Phakathi, ‘Self-directed work teams in a post-apartheid gold mine: Perspectives from the rock face’, (Paper presented to the Centre for Civil Society, UKZN, 2006).

⁴²⁰ M. Mawere, *Colonial Heritage, Memory and Sustainability in Africa*, (African Books Collective, 2015), 343.

African artist, Beverley Price, who specialises in jewellery design.⁴²¹ The art is currently (2017/8) exhibited as part of Paul Harris's Contemporary Art Collection at Ellerman House in Cape Town, South Africa. Housed within a boutique hotel in Bantry Bay, the jewellery itself and the use of gold exaggerates a certain opulence in the production and exhibition of such luxury items. The art is expensive and heavy (one of the necklaces weighs about half a kilogram). This representation of an aesthetics inspired by Mapungubwe is constructed and maintained very much outside the scope of the vast majority of South Africans (and humans in general) and caters to the gaze and fetishes of only the highest levels of the middle, upper and ruling classes. Indeed, Ellerman House is neither accessible nor affordable (or even appealing) to many people. It is Mapungubwe re-skinned and re-mined for a very specific few.

Despite this exclusivity of exhibition, the work is claimed by its creator to be both indigenously and Western inspired. Like educative Mapungubwe, it is used to emphasise a globalist paradigm. The basic physical forms of the pieces of jewellery are often taken from the remnants of Mapungubwe archaeology, while the labour itself is starkly Western, marking evidence of Price's South African, British, and Israeli training as a jeweller.⁴²² The sculpture takes its form from the Mapungubwe golden rhino, but neither the covering nor the wirework reflects indigenous practices, rather employing general wire-framing techniques, and Price's own contribution to the craft in the form of the wire-woven pictorial blanket which covers the gold-painted wire frame of the rhino. The work, according to the artist, aims to emphasise object hybridity in South Africa – to create new meanings through new juxtapositions of objects. Beyond this, Price considers her work as an act of reclaiming of the material of gold, by “circumventing” the colonial history of gold (centred around the Witwatersrand) and mining in South Africa.⁴²³ The aim is to debunk the myth of gold as a colonial intervention in southern Africa, and to emphasise that gold was a central part of indigenous African culture. It is to reposition the image of the gold industry in relation to the populace.

Reconfiguring the image of the gold industry

Considering the patronage received by Price for her project from Anglo-Ashanti Gold, the link between the reimagining of Mapungubwe and the reconstitution of the elite and the image of

⁴²¹ Beverley Price, 'A new skin for the Mapungubwe rhino', Design Indaba (website, 2012), accessible at: <http://www.designindaba.com/articles/creative-work/new-skin-mapungubwe-rhino> [last accessed 01/11/17]. See also, Design Indaba, 'Sovereign Beauty', Design Indaba (website, 2006), accessible at: <http://www.designindaba.com/articles/creative-work/sovereign-beauty> [last access 01/11/17].

⁴²² *Ibid.*

⁴²³ *Ibid.*

gold in South Africa is not too farfetched. This is very much to say that there is a tendency of high-ranking politicians and political affiliates to seek involvement in post-apartheid mining of gold and other minerals.⁴²⁴ Of course, in some sense, this was to displace foreign control of South African minerals, by instating high-ranking, highly educated, and politically well-positioned ANC affiliates in key positions in non-state organisations, like mining conglomerates. Subsequently, though, the new ruling class have tended to amass immense wealth, while conditions for workers on mines have not changed much. In some cases, the situation has worsened. In other cases, there has been an increased visibility of the conditions endured by black mineworkers.⁴²⁵ This suggests that, in this case, the reconstruction of the relation between people and gold industry is an obfuscation of reality.

While things change drastically for elites like Motsepe and Ramaphosa, the conditions for workers have not changed much. In recent times, the massacre at Marikana has most tragically brought to fore the continuation of the historic relation between labour, capital and authority on mines.⁴²⁶ Strikes in the mining sector since the end of apartheid bear further testimony to the largely untransformed nature of labour relations in the mining sector in South Africa.⁴²⁷ Furthermore, as in the case of the tension between Xolobeni communities in the Eastern Cape and Australian mining company Mineral Commodities (MRC), the local poor have often fallen foul to the predatory nature of mining capitalists and their political affiliates (as well as, in some instances, their opponents, often legal NGOs).⁴²⁸ The situation of eviction and expropriation is not much different to the events in and around the Amazon rainforest in lieu of El Dorado myths.⁴²⁹ In the case of CoAL mining near Mapungubwe, while government afforded the company the rights to mine coal on the border of the National Park, the operations ceased after only two years, with the company citing that they had other endeavours which

⁴²⁴ Ramaphosa is in platinum, not gold – but he has significant links with mineworkers' unions, particularly the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM). Motsepe is attached to Harmony Gold (through his company, African Rainbow Minerals). Tokyo Sexwale and Mamphela Ramphele are associated with Gold Fields (although Ramphele has since resigned from her position as Chair). Ramaphosa and Motsepe are also related by marriage, which gives to the whole situation an oligarchic appeal.

⁴²⁵ McCulloch, *South Africa's Goldmines and the Politics of Silicosis*, 121-155.

⁴²⁶ Greg Marinovich, *Murder at Small Koppie*, 25-52.

⁴²⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁸ J.P. De Wet, 'We don't want your development!: Resistance to imposed development in northeastern Pondoland' in T. Kepe and L. Ntsebeza (eds.), *Rural Resistance in South Africa: The Mpondo Revolts After 50 Years*. (Leiden, Brill, 2011), 262.

⁴²⁹ Patrick Tierney, *Darkness in El Dorado: How Scientists and Journalists Devastated the Amazon* (New York, Norton, 2001).

were prophesied as more profitable.⁴³⁰ The result for local communities was damaging – with many left unemployed, and others retrenched.⁴³¹

Yet Mapungubwe maintains critical contemporary symbolic value for the reconfiguration of relations between people and industry in post-apartheid South Africa. It is evidence of an elite-dominated society in southern Africa before colonisation, wherein the elite lived separately from the peasantry and were actively engaged in capitalistic trade relations before the advent of a more formal colonisation after 1652. In most creative artistic representations of Mapungubwe, the ancient state is typified by a fetishisation of golden objects in the pre-colonial southern African society, wherein such items were reserved for elites and used by them to symbolically express their power and status. But what did the new elite do with the space of Mapungubwe? And for whom has Mapungubwe been transformed? Who actually gets to engage with this Mapungubwe so creatively constructed?

Touristic discovery

The desolate and the frozen

Beginning in 1994, the new South African government began making changes in the organisation of certain sections of the national apparatus. This included the management of the national parks board, which was reconfigured as the South African National Parks board (SANParks).⁴³² In 1995, SANParks began on an endeavour to buy the land upon which Mapungubwe was situated.⁴³³ Greefswald itself was owned by the SADF and so it passed relatively neutrally to SANParks.⁴³⁴ But the site was scattered, narrow, and held scant appeal, lacking the facilities for the economic growth and heritage building SANParks was tasked with.⁴³⁵ Nearby farms, which had been built up and ran as private game reserves, were thriving by comparison. Other nearby sites included coal mine operations, like the Vele mines, operated by CoAL. Nearby Venda and Shona communities were also present, though some distance

⁴³⁰ Tracy Davies, 'Mining – coming to a protected area near you', GroundUp (6 July 2015). Accessible at: https://www.groundup.org.za/article/mining-coming-protected-area-near-you_3094/. Last accessed 01/11/17.

⁴³¹ *Ibid.*

⁴³² Lynn Meskell, 'Recognition, Restitution and the Potentials for Postcolonial Liberalism for South African Heritage', *South African Archaeological Bulletin* 60 (182) (2005), 74.

⁴³³ SANParks provide a detailed decade-by-decade history of the Mapungubwe National Park, accessible at: <https://www.sanparks.org/parks/mapungubwe/tourism/history.php>. Last accessed 01/11/2017.

⁴³⁴ Pollecut, 'Unlocking South Africa's Military Archives', 123. gives a description of the SADF use for Greefswald Farm, as a drug rehabilitation facility, and alleged site for the infamous Aversion Project.

⁴³⁵ Meskell, 'Mapungubwe Cultural Landscape', 273.

away from the former-SADF site. Mapungubwe, which had been sporadically inhabited since before 900 CE, was rendered uninhabitable by law.

By the time Mapungubwe was proclaimed a World Heritage Site by the international authority of UNESCO in 2003, the site had been enlarged and revamped to boast several game lodges and other such establishments. A year later, the Vhembe Dongola National Park (which had been first ordered into construction by Jan Smuts) was renamed the Mapungubwe National Park.⁴³⁶ The actual hill, however, remained largely excavated and messy, and it took about a decade longer for the site to be completely reconstructed so as to appeal to a largely touristic market. Despite this, critics still believe the site to be of inadequate development or maintenance. According to Meskell, “Today what survives for visitors is perhaps better described as the ‘destruction’ of a palace site and settlement through early and unsystematic archaeological excavation and treasure seeking”.⁴³⁷

Accommodation for the visitors ranges from tented camping to extravagant luxury lodges, but local communities are, by law of property and UNESCO decree, not allowed to reside on SANParks land. The heritage site is sacred to the nation (even if this sanctity is acquired from the sanctity of the market) and seemingly *must be* secured. But even the commodification of the site is very closeted and monopolised. For instance, the closest shops are in Alldays and Musina, which are seventy kilometres away. Furthermore, unguided hikes are prohibited at Mapungubwe National Park. There are no businesses allowed except those established or authorised by SANParks. What occurs is the enforcement of *desolation* at the Mapungubwe National Park, so as to make it an attractive tradeable good to foreign tourists. The assumption, from SANParks management and the associated authorities seems to be that they have to reproduce the myth of Mapungubwe as *frozen* and *abandoned* to maintain its exchangeability in the global market.⁴³⁸ The result is that a history of Mapungubwe in motion through time is disallowed. To be valuable, Mapungubwe must be sealed, frozen – it must be presented in its most pure, most ‘authentic’ condition.

Rhino country

The symbols of Mapungubwe stretch much further than their association with gold and gold industry and the frozenness of the Hill and its surrounds. The land of Mapungubwe has much more to offer, exemplified in the popular mechanisation of the found object of the golden

⁴³⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*, 275.

⁴³⁸ Carruthers, ‘Mapungubwe... World Heritage’, 2-6.

rhinoceros, which has been especially dominant in popular representations.⁴³⁹ The rhino has featured in most contemporary popular representations of Mapungubwe to varying degrees, although notably dominating the graphic signs in education, and being centralised in the University of Pretoria exhibit, as well as the recently constructed Interpretative Centre located at the Heritage Site. In sculpture, too, and in national commemoration, the golden rhinoceros – once lost, but now found – appears as a rare constant. Of course, the recurrent image of the rhinoceros appeals to another facet of the economic value of Mapungubwe, since one of the key attractions at the Mapungubwe National Park is the possibility of seeing wildlife. According to Meskell, “Today the more lucrative nexus of mineral exploitation and nature-based safari tourism is replacing the archaeological landscape of Mapungubwe”.⁴⁴⁰ The dominance of the symbol of the rhinoceros, therefore, is a good metaphor for the dominance of ‘wildlife’ (as an economic category, rather than merely referring to animals) – of the safari – in the touristic appeal of Mapungubwe.

In his poem ‘Rhinoceros’, Chris Mann manages to bring together the fascination with finding the lost golden cities and its lost golden objects, and the intrigue of the observation, documentation, and killing of African game.⁴⁴¹ The first half of the poem relates the experience of the speaker taking a photograph of a rhinoceros during a game drive, while the second half relates this experience to the golden rhino of Mapungubwe – a specific aspect of the material culture of Mapungubwe. The poem begins with a description of anthills looking like “Gaudi’s cathedral” (2), referring to the designs of Catalan architect, Antoni Gaudi, including the *Sagrada Família* in Barcelona.⁴⁴² The symbols, literary references, signs the author or artist uses gives an indication of the “mnemonic communities” the speaker wishes (or is able or willing) to address.⁴⁴³ The audience needs to have access to the same or similar sets of signs and symbols – in a word: *language*.⁴⁴⁴ Without this, the meaning of the line of poetry fails to describe but succeeds in mystifying.

⁴³⁹ In 1997, the bowl, sceptre and gold rhinoceros “were declared national treasures”. See S. Woodborne, M. Pienaar, S. Tiley-Nel, ‘Dating the Mapungubwe Hill Gold’, *Journal of African Archaeology* Vol. 7(1) (2009), 1.

⁴⁴⁰ Meskell, ‘Mapungubwe Cultural Landscape’, 273.

⁴⁴¹ C. Mann, J. Skeen and A. Craig, *Lifelines*, (Pietermaritzburg, University of Kwa-Zulu Natal Press, 2006), 63. See also D. Levey and C. Mann, ‘Environmentally aware art, poetry, music and spirituality: *Lifelines*’, *Alternation* 14(2) (2007), 225-226.

⁴⁴² A. Cuito and A. Gaudi, *The Architecture of Gaudi*, (Madrid, A. Asppan SL, 2003), 46.

⁴⁴³ Wertsch, ‘Memory and Collective Identity’, 139.

⁴⁴⁴ I have, throughout this thesis, used the word ‘language’ in the broadest sense, as explicated by Stuart Hall in his *Representation*, as the breadth of associable cultured symbols and ways of making meaning and knowing the world. I do not use language in the classical sense, i.e. as a descriptor of difference between grammatical and etymological constants.

Beyond the potential mystification of Gaudi's cathedral, the poet employs several instances of hunting symbolism. While hunting cannot be called an exclusively colonial activity, many of the symbols used are – it is hunting configured or *emplotted* as a colonial activity.⁴⁴⁵ Despite that tracking the spoor of an animal is a general facet of hunting, the comparison between the photographic camera and the rifle is rooted in the juxtaposition of historically colonial activities. It is a rifle detached from repressive militaristic or emancipatory revolutionary signs, and rather attached to the very specific experience of the safari – of traipsing the open lands of Africa, free of resentment or reproach.⁴⁴⁶

These symbols relate to the intended audience – people who have (or want) some knowledge of (and intrigue for) hunting, safari, and wildlife photography – drawing on three interlinked touristic elements in the apartheid and post-apartheid public life of Mapungubwe. The rhino itself comes to bear specific symbolism in the confluence of gold, wildlife, and the forgotten, unexplored, or invisible – it is the *lost* and *golden* rhino of Mapungubwe. Intriguingly, in most representations of Mapungubwe where animals are concerned, it is the rhino that is chosen, rather than the jackal or bateleur eagle, both of which have been claimed as etymological roots for the name 'Mapungubwe'. Of course, the bateleur has been taken on as a national symbol by Zimbabwe, with sculptures of the raptor among remnants excavated at Great Zimbabwe, and the symbol emblazoned upon the Zimbabwean national flag.⁴⁴⁷ It is perhaps considered too Zimbabwean to be South African.

The symbol of choice in certain representations of Mapungubwe tends to appear as detached from its context. In academic (ethnographic) interpretations of the symbolism of the rhinoceros in Mapungubwe, there is contestation regarding the status and meaning of the rhinoceros. Of course, interpretations are often strictly ethnographic, harvesting rhino significance from existing cultures – in which the rhinoceros holds varying symbolic value. Often, in Mapungubwe interpretations, the golden rhinoceros is insisted to be the property of the King, serving, with the sceptre, as a symbol of his power.⁴⁴⁸ When, for instance, the Noel Ashton Art

⁴⁴⁵ Wertsch, 'Narratives as Cultural Tools', 511-533.

⁴⁴⁶ I. Overton, *Gun Baby Gun: A Bloody Journey into the World of the Gun* (Great Britain, Canongate Books, 2015).

⁴⁴⁷ see E. Matenga, *The soapstone birds of Great Zimbabwe: symbols of a nation* (African Pub. Group, 1998), 72-73. The Shona name for the bateleur eagle is "chapungu". The Venda name for the black-backed jackal is "phungubwe", and in Shona is "hungubwe" or "gava". According to research conducted by Ralushai, the man who showed the van Graans' the way to the hill was of Tshiwana background. Kashe Katiya, 'Carefully Hidden Away', 63.

⁴⁴⁸ J.C.A. Boeyens and M. van der Ryst, 'The cultural and symbolic significance of the African rhinoceros: a review of the traditional beliefs, perceptions and practices of agropastoralist societies in southern Africa', *Southern African Humanities* 26 (2014), 25.

Studio project entitled ‘Mapungubwe Revisited’ takes hold of the Mapungubwe rhino symbol, it is presented merely as a reproduction of a large bronze rhino statue – only the figure of the rhinoceros is taken from Mapungubwe, shorn of all other connections.⁴⁴⁹ The symbol is detached from any ethnological or zoological interpretation or African cultural significance, and re-associated within a very contemporary, liberal anti rhino-poaching campaign.

We see, also, in the contemporary, South African post-apartheid elites entering the safari-world with much enthusiasm and aplomb, as in the case of Cyril Ramaphosa.⁴⁵⁰ Hunting itself has been central to many (if not most) human societies, and bears wide cultural symbolism, along with agriculture and the keeping of livestock, which are commonly considered to represent substantial advances in human technology and lifestyle. Rather, what is critical is the economies of influence (of power relations) that manifest in the commodification and corporatisation of Mapungubwe, and the manipulation of land in the production of the image, the objects, the symbol.

Freezing land use in time

In terms of the relation between Mapungubwe and safari tourism, what is notable is the continuation or unchanging nature of land use around Mapungubwe since colonial and apartheid times. According to historical accounts, the land used to be owned by E. E. Collins, who used the Greefswald Farm, on which Mapungubwe Hill is situated, as his winter hunting ground.⁴⁵¹ There is a certain opulence associated with the type of ownership of the farm, existing as the largely unused property of a wealthy man who used the space as his getaway in the cold months, to go game hunting – a luxury escapade for colonial society. Most of the year, the farm was unoccupied by its owner.⁴⁵² The original colonial purpose of the area, as per the owners uses, was hunting and relaxing (or both simultaneously, curiously).⁴⁵³ The neighbouring area was, during this period, also subject to expanding mining interests in the

⁴⁴⁹ Noel Ashton, ‘Mapungubwe revisited’, Noel Ashton Art Studio website (2012), accessible at: <http://www.noelashton.com/sculpture/mapungubwe-revisited-initiative/>. Last accessed 01/11/17. The work was produced through funding from the World Wildlife Fund (WWF).

⁴⁵⁰ See Anthony Butler, *Cyril Ramaphosa*, (Johannesburg, Jacana, 2007), 386.

⁴⁵¹ Carruthers, ‘Mapungubwe... World Heritage’, 7.

⁴⁵² *Ibid.*

⁴⁵³ Note that Collin’s propriety soon follows the designation of the Dongola reserve by Jan Smuts in the 1920s. While Smuts might be revered for his will towards conservation, it should be noted that this occurred through the disappropriation of land from local communities. To create Greefswald, locals first had to be removed – conservation of wildlife required the eradication of the native human element. See M. Ramutsindela, *Transfrontier Conservation in South Africa: At the confluence of capital, politics and nature*, (Gateshead, CABI, 2007), 77.

region.⁴⁵⁴ Much of the territory fell under the authority of the Cape Colony, which began the colonial mining industry in the area.

The use of the land around Dongola/Mapungubwe has not changed since apartheid, and although the accessibility of the activity of hunting has been expanded, beyond privatisation (individual – for E. E. Collins and friends) to corporatisation (for sale, to wealthy locals and tourists), the land is still inaccessible to communities claiming heritage in the land owned by SANParks and private landowners, including mines and farms.⁴⁵⁵

For the Comaroffs, there is a very specific temporal relation between culture and labour in post-apartheid South Africa:

To be sure, the sale of culture seems, in part, to be replacing the sale of labour in ... a South Africa whose industrial economy, founded on racial capitalism, is presently undergoing radical reconstruction – the impact of which has included the loss of millions of jobs, an acknowledged unemployment rate of around 40 percent, the casualisation of much of the remaining work force, and the privatisation of previously public assets.⁴⁵⁶

In this view, culture is converted by people into capital for sale in the global market, so as to create revenue for, at its most basic, survival, but also to amass great wealth. The scope of gains to be made, and the agencies involved, are far wider than either Meskell or Carruthers allow their readers to believe.⁴⁵⁷ But in the specific case of Mapungubwe we must consider what specifically is being converted from ‘found objecthood’ to a more significant heritage object status. And *how* are these things converted – through what sets of symbols, and in what historic discourses? I argue, from the evidence I have laced together, that popular Mapungubwe is

⁴⁵⁴ Innocent Pikirayi, *Tradition, Archaeological Heritage Production and Communities in the Limpopo Province of South Africa* (Addis Ababa, OSSREA, 2011), 84.

⁴⁵⁵ “...land claims in the park are considered a threat to the status of the park as the World Heritage Site”. See B. McCusker, W.G. Moseley, M. Ramutsindela, *Land Reform in South Africa: An Uneven Transformation* (Maryland, Rowman and Littlefield, 2015), 64.

⁴⁵⁶ Comaroff and Comaroff, *Ethnicity Inc.*, 11.

⁴⁵⁷ For Meskell (‘Mapungubwe Cultural Landscape’) and Carruthers (‘Mapungubwe...World Heritage’), the hegemonies of UNESCO and the South African state dominate heritage-making to such a degree that there appears to be absolutely no agency of the ordinary citizen in heritage-making. This thesis, as the very root of its methodology, refuses to oust from the analysis the heritage production which occurs from different nodes in the matrix of relations of power in politics and culture. In this sense, I read the Comaroffs’ production of heritage as culture commodified broadly, comprising a multiplicity of agencies and products. The ‘official Mapungubwe’ of SANParks, UNESCO, the South African government is not the only Mapungubwe that has been produced in contemporary or historic times.

largely made appealing and accessible to old and new elite groups – whether local or foreign. Mapungubwe becomes a discourse of domination.

Collapse

But Mapungubwe is not merely golden and opulent. It also historic, lost, and superseded. If ‘appeal’ could be apportioned, then a large portion of the touristic and historical appeal of Mapungubwe is rooted in its historic demise (founded, often, in the construction of some mythic primordial African forgetfulness). The specifics of this ending in popular, especially touristic, representations are remarkable, because they have tended to impress on Mapungubwe a particularly contemporary conceptualisation of the ‘end of the African state’. For David Fleminger, much like SANParks, Mapungubwe outright “collapsed” after 1290.⁴⁵⁸ The trope of “collapsed African states” buys into a popular narrative that associates post-colonial African states with images of ‘collapse’ or ‘failure’, with news and political theory often interpreting African states as “failed states”.⁴⁵⁹ But what does it mean for a state to “collapse”? And what does it mean for a state to “fail”?

The collapse of Mapungubwe is not the same as the failure of the postcolonial African state. The contemporary *failure* is an ideological claim, while the past *collapse* is often attributed to a lack of rains (climate change, sometimes taken to the extreme as a minor ice-age), although there is some semblance of symbolic attachment to Africa as the place of incapacity, incapability, and inferiority. It is sustained by a logic wherein, no matter the epoch, whether in the thirteenth century or the twentieth, or twenty first, the African state is destined to collapse or fail – in short, the African state will exhibit to the world the inadequacies of its people. Such determinist logic, therefore, has extremely limited explanatory value for why things happen, and the symbolic meanings of the terms used to explain Mapungubwe afford to its history only the narrowest possibilities. Mapungubwe as *collapsed* becomes an archetype for African political ‘failure’.⁴⁶⁰

⁴⁵⁸ Fleminger, *Mapungubwe Cultural Landscape*, 41.

⁴⁵⁹ This is intriguingly explicated along global economic and political terms in S.L. Woodward, *The Ideology of Failed States: Why Intervention Fails*, (Cambridge University Press, 2017), 87.

⁴⁶⁰ This resembles what Garlake and Hall have referred to as the “settler paradigm”, through which African history was interpreted throughout the twentieth century, wherein all African societies tend towards collapse or degrade, in spite of evidence of ingenuity as well as socio-political and technological development. See Hall, ‘Pots and Politics’, 263.

The end days of Mapungubwe are often presented as if the people disappear; in the sense that they *cease to exist*.⁴⁶¹ But this rests on an assumption that there were, in history, a people known as the *Mapungubweans*, as if Mapungubwe marks a distinct ending in the history of a singular, closeted people. But the “Mapungubweans” are associated with much larger, much longer histories – they exist in other histories, and are carried in, for instance, the oral histories of certain Vhangona clans.⁴⁶² What is most prominent in touristic representations of Mapungubwe is the commodification of symbol and material as the “lost” or “forgotten” and, therefore, discoverable. There is then a need to produce and maintain Mapungubwe as desolate – to actively, consciously freeze it in time, and to preserve this sense and environment of *timelessness*, so as to make Mapungubwe marketable. What is required is to close off the Park to the public; to preserve it and make it an unliveable, un-industrialisable terrain, wherein no one is allowed without the right permissions from the appropriate authorities. There are no unguided walks allowed at Mapungubwe National Park. There is no mining allowed. There are no human settlements allowed. For mystique masked as heritage to be maintained, Mapungubwe must remain desolate – empty, timeless, and forever lost and thus there to be found, if only momentarily and vicariously.

Embodied discovery

Reconfiguring loss: Re-sculpting Mapungubwe

Thus far, we have encountered chiefly object losses, in a desolate Mapungubwe space, where it seems as if no people have roamed since the thirteenth century, save the intrepid wanderer in search of gold. There have been, almost contrary to the disembodied histories of the colonial era and post-apartheid touristic genre, several contributions from African authors, endeavouring to popularly engage the stories of (and around) Mapungubwe. One such example, *The Sculptors of Mapungubwe*, is a fictive allegorical interpretation of the history of Mapungubwe by South African playwright, novelist and poet, Zakes Mda. A similar method of historical fiction writing was previously employed by Mda in his earlier work around the prophecy of Nongqawuse in *Heart of Redness*. In like fashion, *Sculptors* takes hold of the past, and through careful, creative and academically informed reconstruction, provides a critique of various salient contemporary issues, from debates around the authenticity versus fluidity of

⁴⁶¹ Fleminger, *Mapungubwe Cultural Landscape*, 12. This is also emphasised by the ethnological work conducted by Lestrade in the 1930s, who determined that the cultural and linguistic make-up of the descendants of Mapungubwe were so chaotic and confusing that any oral sources or histories would be useless in discerning any truths of the place. Lestrade, ‘Ethnological analysis’, 119-120.

⁴⁶² This is not to naturalise oral histories, but more so to embrace that oral histories are historically contingent.

African tradition, to gender rights in present-day South Africa, as well as reaching towards issues of pre-colonial rhino poaching in southern Africa.

The use of allegorical methodologies in historical fiction is not new to African authors and artists, according to Bheki Peterson.⁴⁶³ The analytic research of Peterson has engaged the use of allegory in the work of the early twentieth century playwright, poet and author, H. I. E. Dhlomo, in his plays *Moshoeshoe*, *Cetshwayo*, and *Dingane*, collectively referred to as *The Black Bulls*.⁴⁶⁴ Dhlomo, heavily influenced by the English literature he had been exposed to during his missionary education, took on the tales of southern African kings, and reformulated them to produce dramatised, theatrical recollections of the deceased leaders, while delivering a scathing critique of the politics of the 1930s in South Africa. Much in the same vein as Mda, Dhlomo aimed very specifically at African histories which had previously been silenced, banalised or bastardised in mainstream discourses. But as in the case of Mda, the products of the imagination were constrained by the existing regimes of knowledge. In Dhlomo, for instance, we see a strict Christian morality espoused in the text.

During Dhlomo's days, the possibilities of mainstream publication, particularly for a Black author, especially for a highly politicised Black author, were not wide. Conditions changed for Black authors after the end of apartheid, with a proliferation of new and old publishing houses opening up to the publication of and capitalisation on the stories of Black authors. One such publishing house is Kwela publishers, which began in 1994. Despite that the publishing house and Mda specialise in African stories, the text was written and published in English, and, although the writing style and vocabulary makes for easy reading, the intended audience for *Sculptors* is English-speaking, albeit broad in terms of age and gender.

While much of the story is constructed through the author's imagination, this creative process is mediated by existing archaeological, ethnographic and linguistic evidences. There are inevitable gaps in facticity of all historical interpretations of Mapungubwe, but there are certain limitations to the possibility of the historical narrative imposed by the evidences and the

⁴⁶³ Bheki Peterson, "Black Writers and the Historical Novel: 1910-1948" in David Attridge and David Atwell (eds.) *The Cambridge History of South African Literature* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012).

⁴⁶⁴ Herbert Isaac Ernest Dhlomo was a prominent literary figure in Black intellectual circles in the early 1900s. He was the brother of fellow writer, Rolfes Reginald Robert Dhlomo. Their father was a close affiliate of Bambatha, leader of the Bambatha Rebellion, and both brothers later became ANC members. Most of HIE Dhlomo's work consists of plays, and journalistic commentaries, including some philosophical engagements. Arguably, his most famous works are his fantastical re-mythologising of the tales of Zulu kings Dingane and Cetshwayo, and Basotho king, Moshoeshoe in a series of independently published works plays collectively known as *The Black Bulls*. See Nick Visser and Tim Couzens, *H.I.E. Dhlomo: Collected Works* (Ravan Press, 1986).

regimes of knowledge by which those evidences are organised into stories or assemblages of ‘fact’. Such limits appear to be determined primarily from archaeological evidence, with lesser influence from ethnographic and linguistic evidences. For instance, there is no archaeological evidence for goldmining at Mapungubwe, and so at Mda’s Mapungubwe, protagonists have to travel far to find gold, sourced to Mapungubwe via tributes and trade. Such is the status of archaeological knowledge in Mda’s representation.

Before even jumping into the story, Mda acknowledges his sources:

The setting – place and period – of this novel is imagined and re-imagined from the various oral traditions of the peoples of the region and from the sterling scholarship of Thomas N. Huffman, McEdward Murimbika, G. Pwiti, A. Meyer, C. E. Cloete, A. G. Schutte, Maryna Steyn, Duncan Miller, Nirdev Desai, Julia Lee-Thorp, Innocent Pikirayi, Gail Sinton Schoettler, T. G. O’Connor, G. A. Kiker, Mark Horton, John Middleton, Edward Eastwood and Cathelijne Eastwood.

Many of these people had played a role in the *Goodwin Series Vol.8*, or would write chapters for *Mapungubwe Reconsidered*, two of the more prominent post-apartheid publications concerned with Mapungubwe. The bulk of those Mda acknowledges are in academic fields like archaeology, and so the relative amount of oral history knowledge sourced for the book is meagre by comparison. In this, Mda prefers professional knowledge to what is considered the unprofessional or amateur – lay-knowledges of the supposedly untrustworthy uneducated ordinary. A certain preference for knowledge emerges, resulting in particular reproductions. While a product of imagination, *The Sculptors of Mapungubwe* is also a product of the transposition of the professional to the popular, a transposition mediated by the knowledge of the professional and the conventions of the genre of historical fiction. But Mda does what archaeology could not: he inserts whole characters – made, imagined people – into an instance of the lost-but-now-found tale of Mapungubwe.

Peopling Mapungubwe

Story revolves around Chata, whose mother was of !Kung descent, and whose father is revealed later to be Zwanga, his Mapungubwean foster father. His heritage is fundamental to his problems and sense of being and belonging in the Bantu state of Mapungubwe throughout the novel. He seems to be unable to escape the innate calling of his hunter-gatherer lineage but is also held to the Mapungubwe society in which he was brought up. Bantu and hunter-gatherer

streams are presented as essential, but in Chata the essential characteristics come into conflict to produce a sense of the fluidity of culture and ethnicity in precolonial southern Africa. Outside of him, change seems stunted. Mda's Mapungubwe society is a strictly Bantu kingdom, and hunter-gatherers and Khoekhoe herders are considered outsiders. While there is some sense of cultural intimacy between !Kung folk and Mapungubweans (despite that this intimacy takes the form, often, of slavery or servitude), Swahili and Arab traders are considered absolute outsiders.

They are dealt with in two main cases: 1) Chata's initial travels are enabled by a Swahili trader; 2) Rendani's downfall is rooted in his dealings with a Swahili trader. In both cases, Swahili traders represent a tentative expansion upon Mapungubwe society, which is resisted with great effort by some subjects of the kingdom but exploited by others. Cultural variation is critical to the representation. Mda's Mapungubwe gives some historical cadence to pre-colonial southern African culture, without collapsing it into a unified whole. While religious beliefs are foregrounded, and culture and politics overlap, culture itself is presented as malleable, despite that cultural change is often resisted. For instance, Mapungubwe society is presented as Bantu African (although not stated), which is implied by the externality of !Kung and Swahili people in relation to central Mapungubwe society.

The scope of the power of the Mapungubwe state is unclear. There is significant interaction with nearby farmers, as well as Swahili traders, but there is no real indication of the expanse of Mapungubwe tributes. However, to gain some semblance of independence, Chata leaves the village, although he is still tied to Mapungubwe society once he has established himself elsewhere, implying a wide territorial authority for the Mapungubwe state. The internal society is characterised by a non-absolute patriarchal monarchy, polygamous male relations in marriage, rain-worship, high-level architecture and crafts, gold smelting, and multiculturalism. The type of rule is non-absolute because the King's power is limited by a circle of elders, led by a 'Young-Father', known as Baba Munene, who acts as the civic authority in Mapungubwe state governance. Sovereignty is dispersed and authority delegated, but they are centralised upon the office of the King, who has a sacred right to rule.

In the narrative, Mapungubwe Hill (like silk and gold) is reserved for elites – including the King, his family, the Young Father and his family, and other nobles and high-ranking officials, as well as a certain religious sect favoured by the Royal Family. Spatial political mobility is possible, however. For instance, when Rendani marries into the Royal Family (marrying

Princess Dova), he gets a house on Mapungubwe Hill. Chata has no links to royalty, so he lives in the valley below, until he is given the rank of Master Sculptor, and is forced to live on the Hill. For instance, Zwanga – father of Rendani and Chata – holds the title of Master Carver, which is later taken up by Rendani. Chata – through no will of his own – is awarded the titled of Master Sculptor, although this is presented as a new position, concocted by Rendani, to interject into and control the life of his rival. Beyond this, Marubini, presented as a love interest of the brothers, becomes tasked with rainmaking duties, having proven herself to control the rains with her dancing. This too is presented as a new position, which, of course, posits an unwitting challenge to the King's authority as sacred symbolic rainmaker. From old symbols, new symbols are made.

The case for peopling Mapungubwe is similar, but not exactly the same in the novel *Legends of the Lost Sacred Kingdom*, by K.A. Nephawe.⁴⁶⁵ The novel deals with the Vhangona tales after King Shiriyadenga who is told to be the first king of the Venda, and the first king to reside over the Venda capital of Mapungubwe.⁴⁶⁶ The author takes the oral histories he was surrounded by as a child growing up in rural Venda from, for instance, his grandmother, and constructed the story from the evidence of such sources. Unlike Mda, Nephawe comes from Venda, and so his writing comes with a submergence in the stories and history of the land, whereas Mda, much like the archaeologists who initially created the thing/Event of Mapungubwe, entered the story of Mapungubwe always from the outside. The story is set during the reign of Thovhele Gandamipfa, presumably many years after the death of King Shiriyadenga. Instead of the rhinoceros, jackal or bateleur eagle, Mapungubwe is associated with the leopard, rooted in the cultural symbols of the authors youth.

For Nephawe, the people of Mapungubwe are Vhangona, while for Mda they are the fantastical 'Mapungubweans' – despite that Nephawe employs the genre of fantasy, while Mda opts for a more realist portrayal. This becomes clear from the sourcing of information for the production of the narratives and characters. While Mda relies heavily on archaeological evidence and professionalised knowledge of Mapungubwe, Nephawe takes the oral history route, inserting grassroots knowledge from *indigenous knowledge systems*. The emphasis in Nephawe's narrative is on oral historicity and potential fantasy, as opposed to Mda's insistence on the archaeological and scientific facts for the basis of his tale. While for Mda, the mode is scientific

⁴⁶⁵ K.A. Nephawe, *Legends of the Lost Sacred Kingdom* (Bloomington: AuthorHouse, 2014).

⁴⁶⁶ Nephawe takes note of the extended lineage of Mapungubwe kings, including Shiriyadenga, Magwede, Galatshane, Netshikwengani, and Guvukuvhu.

and largely secular in nature, for Nephawe the mode is more rooted in the sacred and the cultural, allowing for history to be produced in much different ways. Indeed, in Nephawe, the very title of the novel emphasises the ‘sacred’ and ‘legendary’, giving to the story a mythic shroud, while for Mda, the emphasis is on the hyperreal, rooted in a certain positivistic faith in the scientific archaeological knowledge of Mapungubwe. But this is not to say that either is more or less limited than the other, but rather to say that they are both limited by the relative knowledge regimes (of resources and genres) from which they emerge.

Echoes of the embodied: Re-embodying Mapungubwe

While Mda endeavours to reconstruct the potential voices of the past, and Nephawe shifts from Mda’s modernist realism towards a more fantastical offering, other recent work by contemporary African artists has endeavoured to engage the voices of the descendants of the people of Mapungubwe. One such instance is the recent documentary, *Mapungubwe: Echoes in the Valley*, directed by Mandla Dube and produced by Nhlanhla Mthethwa, which explores Mapungubwe beyond archaeological evidence and interpretations.⁴⁶⁷ Both Dube and Mthethwa are known for their historical work, and Dube considers himself a “student of history”.⁴⁶⁸ The director claims to have been brought in by former President Thabo Mbeki, and so the project itself is attached to the broader African Renaissance project, led by figures like Mbeki, and is located within broader project to decolonise African histories.⁴⁶⁹

The documentary deals with issues of being and belonging related to Mapungubwe, locating Mapungubwe within the histories of local and diasporic communities, with emphasis on Shona and, especially, Venda roots in Mapungubwe. The filmmakers aimed to listen to the voices of the descendants of Mapungubwe, and to engage the cultural life of Mapungubwe, alongside the academic or archaeological life of Mapungubwe, rather than engaging academic discourses solely to displace the inappropriate and select appropriate oral histories to substantiate preconceived notions of Mapungubwe history. Archaeological knowledge is juxtaposed alongside cultural or ‘indigenous’ knowledge.

The documentary exhibits a shift in Mapungubwe history discourses, politicising the history of Mapungubwe, and bringing into question the methods and ethics of archaeology, particularly

⁴⁶⁷ Mandla Dube (director) and Nhlanhla Mthethwa (producer), *Mapungubwe: Echoes in the Valley*, (SABC-3; aired 9, 16, 23 July 2017).

⁴⁶⁸ Garreth van Niekerk, ‘TV trilogy unearths naked truth about ancient Mapungubwe’, Channel 24 (9 July 2017). Accessible at: <https://www.channel24.co.za/TV/News/tv-trilogy-unearths-naked-truth-about-ancient-mapungubwe-20170708> [last accessed 17/02/2018].

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

colonial ethics in dealing with the African dead. The issue of ‘Black Bodies’ is dealt with through an interview with Xolelwa Kashe-Katiya, who argues that early archaeologists were guilty of the dehumanisation (of ancestors) and dismembering of bodies – the treatment of the corpse for dissection and analysis, disengaged from their subjective humanity, and appropriated as scientific objects. Kashe-Katiya considers what right Fouché, Galloway, Gardner and the rest had to excavate the buried bodies of people, and then *loot* their graves. It is, beyond ethics, a question of politics, where, hegemonic forces determined the treatment of the Mapungubwe site in the 1930s as “excavation”, while the communities claiming historical association with the site regard the actions of early archaeologists as “theft” (or “graverobbing”). For Kashe-Katiya, as with many contemporary African historians and archaeologists, the golden objects removed from the graves were the property of the dead – the ancestors – who were themselves torn from their resting places.

In early archaeological records and interpretations of Mapungubwe, there is very little acknowledgement of the stories of local people associated with Mapungubwe, and, consequently, African histories of Mapungubwe were left out of the historical and archaeological archive on Mapungubwe. Much of the existing record on Mapungubwe is still rooted in archaeological excavations and interpretations which predate South African democracy, and so the methodologies, ethics and politics of the interpretations are questionably exclusionary of native histories and historiographies of Mapungubwe. In these early interpretations of Mapungubwe, there is no effort to locate Mapungubwe in time. For example, it is rarely endeavoured to consider what came after 1290 around the area of Mapungubwe. Rather, it is simply accepted that the Hill and its valley were abandoned after 1290. In such narratives, Mapungubwe becomes desolate from 1290 until E. S. J. van Graan stumbled upon all the gold during a treasure-seeking adventure into the irresistible African wilds.

During his interview in *Echoes*, specialist grassroots researcher and Mapungubwe oral history expert, Vele Neluvalani states, with a wry grin, that there is no such thing as “Mapungubweans”. That group of people was constructed through colonial interpretations of archaeological evidence which dislocated the history of Mapungubwe from the history of the people in the region (especially Venda and Shona clans in South Africa and Zimbabwe). For many of the interviewees of *Echoes*, the intellectual interventions of Western writers deleted African interpretations of Mapungubwe history (from local communities). Instead, the discussions of the 1930s through to the 1990s were dealt with as an interaction between professional archaeologists, and excluded blacks, particularly in the publications of Fouché and

Gardner. Simply put, archaeological interpretations of Mapungubwe occurred outside the influence and knowledge of the descendants of 'Mapungubwe'. What emerges in the documentary is a question of ownership: who *owns* Mapungubwe – the territory, the objects, the history, the heritage. Mapungubwe – the land, symbols, stories – becomes an issue of property. What occurs from this is a move to, in a sense, rekindle or recoup the lost sacred described all those years ago by Mowena, the man who refused to point out Mapungubwe hill to the van Graan's.

Reconfiguring ownership of the lost: The revision of agency

What occurs in both Mda and Dube's work is a reconfiguration of the agencies involved in the acts of 'loss' and 'discovery' (or 'recovery'). That is to say, historic and contemporary subjectivities are constituted within the greater 'grand narrative' of Mapungubwe. While in earlier representations, van Graan and company were communicated in somewhat heroic Haggardian terms, explorers and discoverers, we see, particularly in Dube's interviews, the reconfiguration of these explorers as 'graverobbers', 'looters', or 'thieves'. In this way, what was considered the act of 'discovery' becomes re-formed as an act of 'theft'. The past once found becomes the past stolen. Thus, in the present, there is a reconfiguration of present-day subjectivities association with *land* and *upheaval*. The 'discoverers' of Mapungubwe become those with the capacities to relocate Mapungubwe into its 'originary' culture. In a sense, this is to make Mapungubwe authentic again.

The new 'discoverer' becomes Mda, Dube, Neluvhalani, Chirikure, who are armed and capable of wrestling the stolen history from the clutches of the likes of van Graan, Fouché, Gardner, perhaps even Huffman. But what is intriguing here is that Mapungubwe never become absolutely 'found' in the contemporary. What occurs, rather, is a rearticulation of Mapungubwe in terms of *loss*. Rather than dispensing with the symbolic loss of Mapungubwe, the symbol is reconfigured and imbued with new, contemporary meanings. In this way, the anthem of the lost never truly dissipates in the present but is rather made to take on new forms. Loss is perpetual, loss is resilient, but loss is also epochally malleable.

Conclusion

The resilience of loss

Mapungubwe has been found over and over again, and its loss reshaped over time with changing regimes of knowledge and power. In this, it has been re-made through different epochs, which have been particularly determined by political authority and evolving

archaeological sciences, though irreverent to the chronology of Mapungubwe truth discourses. Loss begins Mapungubwe, and loss maintains Mapungubwe. We yearn to discover it, and yet we can never truly discover it – for its loss is far too perpetual, resilient against our panicked rummaging in the hopes of making the sacred object of the unknown visible, understandable and meaningful to ourselves, through the import of language, symbol, conceptual tool. This loss occurs in different ways, and thus discovery comes in many different forms, enacted by various agencies. What we can observe in Mapungubwe is a reconfiguration of the activity of rekindling the past, although admittedly this is no less bound to existing regimes of knowledge and power as were the initial interpretations of Fouché, Gardner, and Galloway. The past is always lost, and thus, to be found, but the historicity of the ‘thing’ changes with time. Mapungubwe in the contemporary marks a significant shift *and* certain continuations in the modes and means for the making of loss and discovery in the present. It exhibits both the resilience of loss as a category, and the changing methods for assuaging the panic of the unknown, and the human desire to discover.

We see, though, that the arts, like archaeology and education, are constrained by both emerging and dominant regimes of thought and knowledge. The mode is to popularly reassess the old as well as critiquing the contemporary, through allegorical means. Like the work of Dhlomo, the creations of Mda, Dube, Nephawe seek to both look back into history, but also into the present, using the past to critically evaluate the present, although always along the stringent cultural stipulations of existing regimes of knowledge. So, while artistic fields might claim to be free of the present (and free of reason and unreason), these forms are still reproductive of the past and the present, even if they serve to reject or critique either or both. Creativity, while emboldening the critical, is nevertheless reproductive.

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CONCLUSION

Afro-Capitalism, Ophir, and the possibility of new histories

To participate in the realm of the Real and to belong to that which is real also implies being immersed in the ocean of the sacred and being imbued with the perfume of the sacred.

S.H. Nasr, *The Need for a Sacred Science*⁴⁷⁰

The many lives of Mapungubwe

This thesis shows that the seemingly irreconcilable and fundamental differences between the sacred and the secular, in many ways manifesting in the professional versus the popular, are not so real as we would like them to be, and certainly they have, historically, tended to overlap and even support one another. In early professional explications of Mapungubwe, we see how central Judeo-Christian scripture and mythology were to the construction of Mapungubwe, and how these assumptions affected the making of historical fact. In later representations, we see a new dominance of the contemporary nation-state elite, alongside a re-emergence of colonial-era ‘lost world’ narratives of Mapungubwe which, while contemporaneous, appear to be aimed at different audiences.

How has Mapungubwe changed over time?

The three previous chapters made clear that the making of ‘Mapungubwe’ has changed over time. The language – the signs and symbols – for representing Mapungubwe have not remained static over the years. *How* these changes occurred has not been uniform, spurred often by political, technical and/or socio-cultural influences. For such reasons, the interdisciplinary approach of this work became critical to both the collection of data as well as the analysis of that data, allowing me to make visible to the reader the variety of influences or catalysts for the changing and often resurging representations of Mapungubwe over time. There are four identifiable epochs that become most evident, although they have tended to overlap, and within them there have often been recurrences of older understandings. Furthermore, within the epochs I describe, there are additional micro-changes and contestations. However, what I have

⁴⁷⁰ S.H. Nasr, *The Need for a Sacred Science* (Richmond, Curzon Press, 1993), 49.

identified are periods of major change in the representation of Mapungubwe, taking account of those most dominant. The historic making of Mapungubwe has not been a neat process.

Epoch 1: 1930-1948

The first epoch began in the 1930s and stretched until 1948. It was a time in the history of Mapungubwe dominated by South African archaeologists, including Leo Fouché's collaborators, many of whom were based at the University of Pretoria. The University had purchased Greefswald farm (on which Mapungubwe was located) from E.E. Collins in 1934. In this period, Mapungubwe took on a curious mixture of sacred and scientific understandings, which were permeated by the Judeo-Christian tale of King Solomon's mines at Ophir, much like Great Zimbabwe and, even before that, Sofala in Mozambique. The archaeology itself was heavily influenced by the praxes developed in Egypt in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, which had been brought into and modified in southern Africa for the archaeology of Great Zimbabwe less than a decade before the initial excavations of Mapungubwe commenced. At the same time, Mapungubwe was accepted as a Bantu civilisation by most, save the highly regarded physical anthropologist, Alexander Galloway. The popular biblical association was fed by both Galloway's interpretations, as well as the popular Western/colonial literary genre of the 'lost world' adventure, particularly the work of H. Rider Haggard. At that stage, Mapungubwe was still a site of contestation, although, as the next epoch displayed, the scientific certitude of physical anthropology (specifically skeletal analysis) was privileged over other modes of interpretation, like ceramic and ethnological analyses.

Epoch 2: 1948-1970

The second epoch was marked by the significant political change that occurred with the National Party's electoral victory in 1948. In this moment, the South African nationalism of Jan Smuts, who had supported archaeology and nature conservation (albeit in a pro-colonial manner), was displaced by the strict Afrikaner Calvinism of the National Party. In this second period, the Solomonic interpretation of Mapungubwe grew even stronger, evidence of the 'promised land', with Guy Gardner's work presenting to the world a Mapungubwe that was not Bantu, but rather Hottentot, and that the region, which once boasted a thriving golden Hottentot civilisation, had been invaded by Bantu folk who were regarded by Gardner as savage. Many others, like Raymond Dart and James Walton, reflected similar attitudes. The savage invasiveness of Bantu peoples imposed into the Mapungubwe narrative aligned neatly with the political narratives of the apartheid state, constructing an image of a biblical society which had been destroyed by rampaging Bantu settlers, who happened to be those set at the

lowest rung of the apartheid racial hierarchy. This epoch was dominated by the particular politics of the apartheid state and exhibits the extremely political nature of scientific findings, as well as the tendency, in the colonial era, for sacred and scientific understandings to coalesce with, complement, or supplement one another quite neatly.

Epoch 3: 1970-1994

The third epoch, unlike the previous one, was marked most strikingly by a technical intervention. When G.P. Rightmire reassessed the bones of K2 and Mapungubwe in 1970, he emphatically rejected the findings of Galloway, who had been the chief conductor of skeletal analysis in the Limpopo region (and elsewhere) from the 1930s until at least the late 1950s. According to Rightmire, Mapungubwe was a Bantu civilisation. The readings, therefore, debunked the popular apartheid-era attribution of Bantu civilisational incapacity and invasiveness. No less that this set of analyses had occurred through an even more stringent set of scientific practices than those conducted under Galloway. Almost simultaneously, there was an increase in international archaeological influences, with the beginning of work by Thomas Huffman, hailing from the United States, as well as other professionally-trained archaeologists from abroad. Such personnel were not given to toeing the apartheid ideological line, and so archaeological interpretations began to expand, shifting away from the reproduction of representations of Bantu savagery and invasion. Additionally, while linguistic ethnologies were discarded by Lestrade in the 1930s, there was an increasing interest in Limpopo ethnologies, including Ralushai's work towards collecting a multitude of Venda oral histories.⁴⁷¹ The latter stages of this third epoch were, however, still stained by the politics of the apartheid state, with Greefswald farm, upon which Mapungubwe was located, shifting to South African Defence Force control, which greatly hindered archaeological work. It was in this period, though, that interpretations and representations of Mapungubwe began to shift from Solomonic associations, with the increased efforts, from academics, to secularise the sciences.

Epoch 4: 1994-2017

The fourth epoch was (and is) marked by a radical shift from the politics that dominated the three earlier epochs, with the end of apartheid and election of the ANC into power in 1994. With this came a new politics of the state, and a reconfiguration of the image of the nation. As such, new symbols were chosen to represent South Africa, and Mapungubwe was one of them. In 1995, SANParks took control of the locale of Mapungubwe. By 2003, it had been embraced

⁴⁷¹ Ralushai, *A preliminary report on the Oral History of Mapungubwe*; Victor N.M.N., Ralushai, *Conflicting Accounts of Venda History with Particular Reference to the Role of Mutupo in Social Organisation* (Queens University, 1977).

as a heritage site, as well as the chosen symbol for the highest civilian honour in the country. At the same time, it entered the school curriculum. Ascribed the title of *Naissance*, Mapungubwe was brought into the public spotlight as a symbol of southern African – most specifically South African – greatness before colonisation. It exhibited and attempted to prove to the world, and to the nation-state, that there was a thriving golden, world-trading, globalist, and elite-driven society in existence even before colonials imposed these fetishes and values into south(ern) African society. But if we politicise and historicise honestly, we find that this neatness of (national) historiography is strikingly similar to that which was preferred by the apartheid state – a Mapungubwe that could satisfy the requirement for the legitimisation of the state authority and its elite. The impositional and inculcative instrument had been, since the 1930s, used in very particular ways.

The languages of Mapungubwe

In this latest epoch, we find a new political and economic elite attempting to legitimise their authority. There was, in essence, a reconfiguration of the nation-state and its power relations, and, as I have argued in this thesis, this was done, in part, through such histories as Mapungubwe. Histories from before colonial times, in fact, have become increasingly more important in the reconfiguration of the image of the nation-state, its appendages, and its subject-citizens. But Mapungubwe is very special within the spectrum of southern African histories before colonisation. Standing as South African or southern African heritage, Mapungubwe came to symbolise a utopian or *nativist* capitalism – an Afro-capitalism – that became endeared as the preferable return to ‘authentic African ways’, foregoing the implicit fluidity of culture, ethnicity, and what it means to be ‘African’.

However, counter to this reinterpretation of Mapungubwe as an Event typified by an indigenous Afro-Capitalism, we see simultaneously a maintenance of much older, more colonial imaginings of the historical Event. Particularly in touristic representations, the Haggardian Mapungubwe – the exotic and mythic lost city – is retained or, more precisely, resuscitated. Considering the composition of the touristic audience, this is in fact unsurprising. It is to wealthy (South) Africans, but most particularly to wealthy Europeans (especially the British) and Americans that Mapungubwe is rendered. We see, in tourism, an intermingling of the Haggardian tale – of adventure, gold-hunting, and mythic discoverable lostness – and the popular fetish of the game safari, ideally represented in the symbol of the golden rhinoceros, which has become, in the post-apartheid era, perhaps the most popular symbol of

Mapungubwe, particularly for a Western(ised) audience. This maintenance of the colonial-era representation of Mapungubwe fits neatly with the economic interests of the contemporary post-apartheid elite. It is, after all, largely for economic reasons that Mapungubwe remains cordoned off, out of reach to the vast majority of South Africans, while simultaneously posing as the heritage of many of them.

Thus, there are two primary modes of the representation, or languages, of Mapungubwe, which do not cleanly fit the epochs, but are rather observed to be woven through the epochs, disappearing and reappearing in mainstream representations.

The Solomonic

The first is the *Solomonic*. I call it this because it stems from the Judeo-Christian tales of King Solomon's mines, of which the capital was called Ophir. As early as 1502, southern Africa had been claimed as the location of Ophir in the records of Thomé Lopes. Later, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the stories of Ophir were popularised in the Western/colonial imagination in the works of H. Rider Haggard, where they took on the tropes of the treasure-hunting adventure genre. In this language, Mapungubwe is always typified by the *discovery* of gold. It becomes the object of the Haggardian fantasy of treasure-hunting, as well as the irresistible lostness of the place and its discoverability by the intrepid adventurer (who is often white, but never a black African). This language is most evident in the early archaeology of Mapungubwe, during the colonial and apartheid eras, from the 1930s to the 1970s, after which it gradually receded from dominant histories of Mapungubwe.

Importantly, this language became the enabling fiction for narratives of Bantu invasion and the attribution of characteristics of savagery to Bantu folk. It was posited that Mapungubwe was Hottentot, rather than Bantu, and that Bantu invaders had, in fact, destroyed the thriving golden Hottentot civilisation, leading southern Africa into the backwardness supposedly encountered by early Europeans. This, of course, became an enabling fiction for the apartheid government, its Calvinist ideology, and its racial policies.

But while colonialism and apartheid receded, the Solomonic language of Mapungubwe resurged during the post-apartheid era in touristic writing, like that of David Fleminger in *The Mapungubwe Cultural Landscape*. This, I argue, is due to the intended audience of touristic texts on Mapungubwe, who largely hark from European, British and American backgrounds, and so would be familiar with the Judeo-Christian signs and symbols carried in the language used. The language is also carried in certain art and literature. For instance, from South Africa,

Chris Mann's 'Rhinoceros', which centres around hunting, photography, and the golden rhinoceros, alluding in its imagery to European architectures, seeking to draw in its audience. Abroad, the Solomonic language of Mapungubwe has been carried in the work of Chris Angus, *Winston Churchill and the Treasure of Mapungubwe Hill*, which simply reproduces the Haggardian narrative of the colonial treasure-seeker.

The Afro-Capitalist

The second is much newer, only emerging in the post-apartheid era, particularly in the early 2000s, but gaining momentum after 2010, during which the Solomonic was still retained, albeit for primarily external consumption (outside South Africa). The second I refer to as the Afro-Capitalist language of representation. It is present most noticeably in the national education curriculum representation of Mapungubwe, but also in the construction of national symbols like the Order of Mapungubwe. The language is propped up by a highly selective use of archaeological knowledge, as well as the selection of particular characters or *conceptual personae* to carry the particular narratives. In the case of the curriculum, it is the nameless king of Mapungubwe around which the narrative centres. He controls all aspects of the society, including civic planning, trade, spatial politics. This language is typified by this personified elitism, as well as an emphasis on global trade, gold production (its mining and manufacture). Mapungubwe becomes representative of a precolonial form of, in a word, capitalism. By locating a form of capitalism in the precolonial, a language and narrative is enabled of an indigenous and supposedly authentically African form of capitalism. Thus, it becomes an enabling fiction for the indigenisation of an African capitalism, enabling a narrative that situated capitalism as an authentically African way of life.

Interestingly, rather than taking Mapungubwe for its contentious, unknown intrigue, those empowered to represent, recover, or (re)discover the history of Mapungubwe have tended to do so often in ways that project the conditions of the present into the past – an image that is reflective more of the present than it is faithful to the evidence, materials, objects, or *things* of the past. What I mean by this is that the power relations and cultural values (of whatever collective the authorised producer of that Mapungubwe affords primacy to) that exist in the present are often quite simply implanted into contemporary representations of Mapungubwe. It is very rarely that one encounters any tales of the ordinary (objects or subjects) of Mapungubwe. Instead, it has been an elite-dominated story that has been narrated publicly and popularly. Furthermore, and far more specifically, the Mapungubwe of contemporary times is most often one that is elite-dominated, gold-touting, world-trading, and fundamentally

capitalist in its (socio)political and (socio)economic relations. It is a case of a modern culture, so severely influenced by colonialism and Western imperialism, implanted into the narrative of the distant past. And, indeed, all this is said to occur before colonisation, imposing into ‘Mapungubwe’ the capacity to produce evidence of an authentic indigenous southern African capitalism.

The possibility of new histories for Mapungubwe

But the Solomonic and Afro-Capitalist representations of Mapungubwe are the products, largely, of official political and professional discourses brought into the public light – in, most notably, education and tourism, as well as in certain artistic representations. These are what I outlined in chapters one and two, as well as certain parts of chapter three. However, there is some hope for moving past these extremely limited hegemonic representations.

There is a third language, which I argue is only emerging at present, and so it is difficult to define, and perhaps even calling it a third language – rather than a whole new spectrum of languages – is slightly reductive. Nevertheless, I must attempt to name this new set of signs and symbols, which comprises the work of both professional and popular labourers of loss. This includes Zakes Mda, K.A. Nephawe, Mandla Dube (and Nhlanhla Mthethwa), as well as Shadreck Chirikure, Innocent Pikirayi, and others, who have brought new understandings into Mapungubwe, beyond Solomonic or Afro-Capitalist determinations.

This new emerging language is important because it is the first moment in which the emphasis of the signs and symbols of the language emerges from popular or, more specifically, *peoples’* histories. Predominantly, and most simply (almost simplistically), these comprise oral histories. In execution, we see that often such treatment results in a diversity of politics. For instance, people’s power to change societal norms in Mda’s work, with the socialised implementation of *mbisili*. The histories, unlike the others, is an embodied, personified history, beyond the nameless king, or colonial adventurer. Mda and Nephawe construct whole villages, as Dube brings to the fore an entire spectrum of voices concerned with Mapungubwe.

Often, it is a Mapungubwe reimagined by African artists and intellectuals, as opposed to the disinterested and detached scientist, or the Western thinker on a flight of fancy. I do not think it is merely coincidence that the new languages of Mapungubwe are being constructed by black intellectuals and artists, as opposed to its historic construction at the hands of white intellectuals (and, to a lesser degree, artists). I think this is rather a matter of a new existential positioning

entering the arena of making Mapungubwe, bringing new insights and new aims in their creative, educated reimagining or rediscovering of the lost place. The post-apartheid era marks the first time black African authors and artists had the opportunity, power and authority to produce Mapungubwe – and this should not be delinked from the emergence of new ways of knowing Mapungubwe. These labourers of loss have brought with them potential for the making of new symbols for Mapungubwe – a new language to describe Mapungubwe; and, therefore, new purposes for Mapungubwe history to serve.

Popularising the popular in the professional

There is a vastness of life in Mapungubwe that remains unexplored in the professional academic world, in History, Archaeology and beyond, because of the strict distinction between the professional and popular lives of Mapungubwe. In recent years, there has been something of an improvement in this aspect, with the increasing embrace in professional circles of, especially, oral histories into the scope of knowledge about Mapungubwe. And this is certainly an extremely critical endeavour in our voyage of discovery in the mists of the long and lost past of Africa, and the world at large. There has certainly been an appropriation by the national and popular public of certain (dominant) professional ‘Mapungubwes’, but the relation is rarely reciprocated. What I mean here is that the professional life of Mapungubwe only rarely endeavours to engage the popular life of Mapungubwe, and on the rare occasion that this occurs, it comes with little or no self-reflection on the practices of the intellectual in what often becomes a debunking of mythologies.

There is a critical need at present for the increased study of the overlapping of the professional and popular in productions of the precolonial, but through careful, rigorous and critical appraisal of both professional and popular knowledge production process, with sensitivity for the particularity of methods of ‘making’ that are specific to the media or genre concerned. The popular does most certainly need to become an aspect of our considerations of the making of history. This is especially because these are the real public expressions, unbound from the shackles of academic rigour, allowed to break free of the sanctity of science. Perhaps this will allow us to explore new notions of thought beyond the confines of the neat cleavage of the secular and sacred, particularly where the professional, academic and intellectual is conflated with the scientific, in the hopes of giving validity to the reproductions therein. If we are to reconsider Mapungubwe, then we need to take very seriously the scope of reproduction, and what work Mapungubwe is made to do in our society, in our world, rather than to be lulled out

of our restless panic of doubt that a knowledge of the archaeology of the nation will reveal the truth of our past and legitimise our present. Rather, this thesis has argued (and shown) that both archaeology and nation are bound by the very same regimes of knowledge which are thought to confound the reason or facticity of the sacred or, alternatively, the popular.

Taking this a step further, there is an increased need in the present for more popular representations of the past before colonisation – more creative reimaginings of the past, not merely as *sources* of history, but as conscious history-making in themselves. We see such efforts emerging in the work of Mda, Nephawe, and Dube, but often these author(itie)s appear as mediators, in a similar fashion to the professional mediators of lay knowledges. What needs to occur, I argue, is a far more complex but open-ended popular history-making, where the histories constructed emerge from the proverbial ‘grassroots’ – of local communities – rather than being harvested by intellectuals and grafted onto existing grand narratives. We must, in this sense, go a step further than Mda, Nephawe and Dube. What this step might be, I argue, will only be evident in the popular representations to come, and cannot be predetermined, as such predetermination would immediately limit the scope of new radical emancipatory popular representations.

Producing the precolonial

This thesis took on two issues. The first was of ‘Mapungubwe’ – the specific instance – and how it had been manipulated over time to mean different things, for different purposes. The second was of the concept of the ‘precolonial’, and what the findings of this study might reveal about the position of such histories, and the very concept itself, in contemporary society. Much of this thesis has centred around Mapungubwe and, so, in this final section, I wish to step back and consider the production of the ‘precolonial’.

The past is always something we encounter in the present as *refracted*. This is to say, it is not a direct, exact projection of what existed many years ago. Rather, what we encounter is, in the first instance, shaped by the politics and socio-cultural conditions in which the historical representation, or historiography, was written. Worded differently, our conception of what happened in the past is always tempered by the politics of the present – by purpose, and by a certain preconception of what will be found, or what we wish to find. In a sense, the findings of history are always presupposed in the method of data collection and history writing employed by the author or authors.

But, in the next instance, that image of the past that we encounter also shapes our contemporary politics and socio-cultural condition (as well as our worldview). That is to say, we tend to situate ourselves in the past, often in terms of heritage, implying an inherited history. History is shaped in a way that makes it attachable to the contemporary subject, giving that subject identity, while that subject imbues into that history a certain meaning in their ownership of it. It is a matter of reciprocity between the past and present, rather than merely a one-way relation. In a simple example, the history of Mapungubwe can only be South African heritage if it is owned by South Africans. Mapungubwe affords identity to its owners, while its owners give it purpose and meaning.

Thus, I argue, history appears to us out of a complex back-and-forth interaction between the past and the present. The history we encounter in the present has always been subject to multiple mediations over time – and we exist in (at least) one epoch of this perpetual history of mediation. This thesis, however, has been about a particular instance in a much larger historical scape – Mapungubwe within the precolonial. What this thesis has shown is the extreme level of mediation, but also the progressive expansion, of discourses on the precolonial. Over time, what had previously been the arena of professionals – and a specific group of professionals (archaeologists) – has expanded through different epochs to include a wider breadth of voices and productive agencies. Mediations (and the agencies which execute them) have expanded over time, and so the number of stories increase, requiring a far more nuanced, multi- or inter-disciplinary approach.

My contention is that this is a general rule for all history, but more so for the period of history called the ‘precolonial’. This is because histories of the ‘precolonial’ existed before colonials began collecting information and popularising and professionalising stories of the long African past. These histories – the indigenous histories of the ‘precolonial’ – were shifted to the margins, while colonial histories occupied the centre of public history. But as we move deeper into the post-apartheid era, we encounter an increased flow of submerged histories of the African past, bringing to the fore much hope but new problems. What I mean is that if we accept that all histories appear to us as mediated, then (re)position our gaze from the present into the past, and then, in turn, how do we deconstruct the act of hauling information of the distant past, through all of its own historic mediations, so as to discern some sort of contemporary truth to constitute the knowledge of the present?

This consideration complicates our dealing with history. It means that we cannot merely accept information as ‘true’ simply because of the nature or attribution of the source. Rather, it is a thought beyond considerations of ‘bias’. It also requires a much wider gaze, consisting of not merely professional knowledge production, but also wider public and popular knowledge production – which is socio-cultural production – but through a methodology that is capable of simultaneously politicising and historicising that knowledge and its processes of production. In this view, the study and making of history should be viewed as a fundamentally political exercise. In such a way, rather than insisting on ‘one true Mapungubwe’, there will rather be an opening up of new avenues of cultural production, enabling a more ‘honest’ consideration with the past.

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