

*All That Glitters is not Gold: authenticity and historical accuracy in
representations of Mapungubwe*

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to infinity, and beyond.

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14 March 2021

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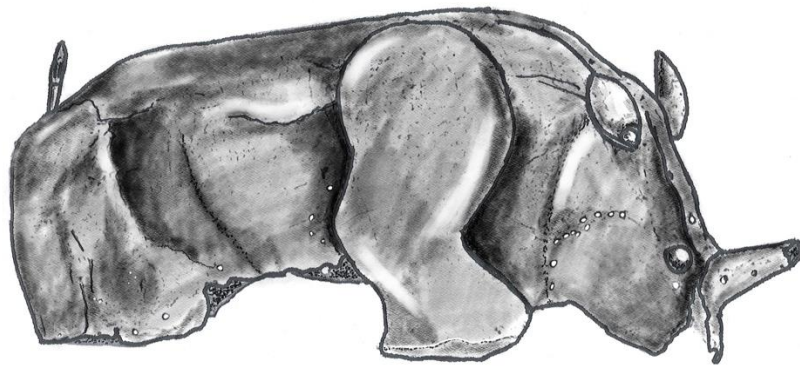
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AL²¹

Figure 0: A pen-and-pencil sketch of the Mapungubwe Rhino, A. Andreou 2021

Abstract:

The (Re)Discovery of Mapungubwe in 1933 sparked an ongoing 89-year journey of interpretation, re-interpretation, hidden agendas, scientific racism and an evolution of world-views. In being as deeply meaningful and entrenched in the South African psyche as it is, Mapungubwe features in a variety of representations. For this thesis, a selection of these representations were made of both those considered historical and contemporary. These were discussed and unpacked in accordance with the broader research question examining if their accuracy matters. In this unpacking archaeological theory is discussed, as well as the nationalist ideologies and racial science which was attributed to it in the early 20th Century. In addition to the selection of representations, a history of the re(discovery) and discoveries of Mapungubwe is also discussed. Ultimately, it does not matter if representations of Mapungubwe are accurate or authentic, as these facets are framework dependent, and have been found to each carry their own meaning or 'truth' around the Mapungubwe story.

KEYWORDS: Mapungubwe; representations; authenticity; archaeology.

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Chapter One

In The Beginning: An Introduction

“My mother was the one, who told me about the girl who made Stars out of wood ashes. This girl arose from where she was lying in her little hut. She put her hands into the wood ashes of the fire and threw them up into the sky.”

~ **Willem Bleek & Lucy Lloyd** (trans), *Specimens in Bushman Folklore*, 1911 ~

1.1 Introduction

In this introductory chapter, I provide a brief overview of the Mapungubwe story in the forms that it is most commonly known. This includes a discussion of its ‘discovery’ in 1932, as well as certain key associations to the site and its multiple narratives. In addition, I highlight the aims and relevance of the study, the methods and methodological approaches used in carrying out the research, as well as a brief mention of the limitations and scope of the thesis. The chapter outline for the work that follows concludes this chapter.

Mapungubwe is the collective term given to a group of middle Iron Age (CE 900 – 1300) sites in the Limpopo Province in the northernmost region of South Africa. Mapungubwe, and most predominantly the ancient capital of Mapungubwe Hill (CE 1220 – 1295), is regarded as the earliest city-state in Africa and served as the seat of trade to the southern tip of the continent with the Middle East, Asia and Northern Africa (Schoeman & Hay 2013; Huffman 2008; Huffman 2007; Huffman 2000; Meyer 2011b). The sites are renowned for the material evidence found here of advances in social evolution and trade, and in the art of metallurgy and goldsmithing (Huffman 2000; Tiley-Nel & Botha 2013; Chirikure 2013).

The most publicised discovery (although not the first or earliest) of the site occurred in 1932 by Ernest and Jerry van Graan and, as a result, mention of this particular instance is referred to as the (Re)Discovery. Through their involvement, the University of Pretoria took

institutional custody of the site and its artefacts, which have been studied extensively over the past eighty-nine years (van Graan 2011; Tiley-Nel 2018; Tiley-Nel & Wintjes 2019).

Mapungubwe has long been a place shrouded in myth and reverence, with many of the flat-topped hills in the Mapungubwe Complex showing evidence of having been used as sacred rain-making spaces. Mapungubwe Hill itself is still seen with such reverence that many do not dare to look directly at or even gesture towards it for fear of ancestral retribution for their acts of disrespect (Murimbika 2006; Huffman 2009; Wilmsen 2009; Sebola 2017).

Of the associations and connotations linked to Mapungubwe, none is more prominent than the famous Gold Rhino. This emergent foil form was discovered in 1932 by the van Graans; it has become the crowning symbol of Mapungubwe and is internationally recognisable (Tiley-Nel & Botha 2013; van Graan 2011). The rhino, now on permanent display at the University of Pretoria, is immortalised in its iconography in the highest of South Africa's National Orders; The Order of Mapungubwe – for extraordinary achievement in aspects such as nation-building, creative and performing arts, journalism and sport, and bravery. Mapungubwe and its rich and layered history is a crucial factor of what former President Thabo Mbeki coined as the African Renaissance (Carruthers 2006; Pikirayi 2011). Mapungubwe was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and today falls under the management of the South African National Parks portfolio as Mapungubwe National Park (UNESCO 2002, Meyer & Cloete 2010; Meyer 2011b; SANParks 2019).

Due to the multiple layers in which Mapungubwe is relevant across a variety of fields such as archaeology, geology, anthropology, history, and environmental science to name but a few; there are many research avenues in which the site is explored. While in addition to specialist academic studies, for example into faunal remains or trade-glass beads, the site and its history are represented in many educational textbooks, poetry and several fictional and non-fictional publications (Antonites, Bradfield & Forssman 2016; Prinsloo *et al* 2005; Prinsloo 2011; Ntwape *et al* 2017; Shillington 2012; Mitchell 2010; Moeti 2012; Mda 2013; Nephawe 2014; Casely-Hayford 2012).

1.2 Rationale and Central Research Question

As a globally renowned archaeological site, Mapungubwe has largely been interpreted according to a traditional archaeological framework, in which artefacts and remnants are interpreted within a scientific and rationalist epistemology to construct a set of commonly accepted ‘facts’ about its past and its meanings. However, due to Mapungubwe having been at its peak far beyond any form of living memory, the only way to understand the site is through material interpretations, which (as will be discussed through the course of this thesis) have their own parameters of bias and incorrectness.

Due to this reliance on the interpretive process, which is for the most part learned and often biased, with what certainty can we view the ‘facts’ of such a place? This is coupled with the existence of various representations and uses of the site’s narrative which lies outside the academic scope. These re-tellings are in many cases found to be missing the mark when relating them to the core ‘facts’ about Mapungubwe. Alongside these academic and scientific interpretations of Mapungubwe, however, exist many creative, literary and contemporary interpretations of its histories and significance. For example Zakes Mda’s *The Sculptors of Mapungubwe* (Mda 2013); K.A. Nephawe’s *Legends of the Lost Sacred Kingdom* (Nephawe 2014); and Chris Angus’s *Winston Churchill and the Treasure of Mapungubwe* (Angus 2014). In many of these creative and interpretive works, alternative or imagined versions of Mapungubwe’s history are presented, alongside elements of mythology, metaphor and fiction. These treatments of the Mapungubwe story, when viewed from the standpoint of traditional archaeological interpretations, lend themselves to accusations of ‘historical inaccuracy’ or misinterpretation.

In this thesis, I aim to provide a more nuanced reading of the ideas of truth and scientific accuracy as they pertain to Mapungubwe. Specifically, I am interested in the extent to which such interpretive, creative or fictionalised representations of Mapungubwe might enable the conveyance of particular kinds of ‘truth’ that the scientific archive cannot access; and, as a corollary, the ways in which the ‘official’ or academic archive is also constructed and potentially open to multiple interpretations.

Often, a response to these deviations from the accepted norm would be to dismiss them and label them as historically inaccurate. However, this could ultimately mean disregarding a whole different layer and association to these narratives. Therefore, this thesis and research has the central question: *To what extent is the concept of 'historical accuracy' and authenticity a useful measure for assessing interpretations of Mapungubwe's history and significance?*

The broader question that is posed above can be broken down further by the following additional questions, which play a large role in the central make-up of this question:

- What is understood as 'accuracy', and 'truth'?
- How is the history of Mapungubwe represented in the historical representations?
- How is the history of Mapungubwe represented in contemporary representations or out of main-stream academia?
- How do these histories relate to one another?
- How has the 'story' of Mapungubwe been shaped, and what does this mean for the site and its significance in a contemporary South African heritage context?

It is important to note, that the notion of authenticity is example dependent and is applied to each representation uniquely. In addition, the use of inverted commas when dealing with terms such 'fact', 'accuracy', 'truth' and other like-terms are implicit in their problematic and contested nature in the context of this thesis.

1.3 Aim and Relevance of the Study

The aim of this research is to compile and critically analyse a selection of representations of Mapungubwe's history (both historical and non-historical / contemporary in nature). The selected representations take the form of the 'official' archive and first-hand accounts, the archaeological record and artefacts, a novel, a poem, and an exhibition. In addition to working with these chosen representations, the study will consider the concept of historical accuracy in relation to these selected examples. While the representations of Mapungubwe appear in a broad scope, including newspapers and print media; textbooks; artworks; reproductions; poetry and prose; videography; music; academic outputs (research and journal articles etc);

exhibitions; the Mapungubwe Archive; novels; symbols and iconography; and architecture, due to the sheer number of the various typologies, the decision was made to refine these parameters and select a dataset with a more focussed number of representations.

The following works and archives have been selected as representative of the multiple ways in which Mapungubwe's story appears in public view, and as the focus of this study. For ease of reference I have divided these into historical and contemporary interpretations, as follows:

Historical Representations:

- 1) **The Mapungubwe Archive** – the compilation of nearly nine decades of written information on and about the site and its story has the potential to show a myriad of uses and meanings for the space. The Mapungubwe Archive, housed at the University of Pretoria Museums, consists of first-hand accounts, letters and correspondences, field reports, print media and photographs. These could prove to be highly beneficial in providing an insight into the audience and way the (re)discovery was presented to and processed by the public across that point in time.
- 2) **The Archaeological Record** – consisting of the materiality and the associated written account and contexts, which would prove to be invaluable references to the 'on-the-ground' scenes as they were excavated on the site, and how the artefacts and objects have been interpreted and given meaning post-excavation.

Contemporary Representations:

- 3) **Exhibitions** – The Javett-UP Art Centre and the 'Gold of Africa' exhibition could give insight into decontextualization and the recontextualization of the Mapungubwe story and materiality.
- 4) **Artefact Reproductions** – these simulacra, while varied and rare, could prove highly beneficial in approaching the concept of acceptance of accuracy, or rather the acceptance of associated-accuracy by the consumer.
- 5) **Published Works** – is in this instance the term given to works of prose, poetry, fiction or historical novels which do not form part of an academic output/peer reviewed journal. These could prove to be beneficial in providing insight in how the site and its narrative(s) are represented outside of the academy.

In the knowledge that the research question is predominantly philosophical in nature, it should be noted that this body of work and the research into it does not aim in any way to re-write or re-create the narrative of Mapungubwe, but rather interrogate how it has been used since its creation.

As one of South Africa's most important sites historically, archaeologically, geologically and anthropologically, it should be reiterated that the history of the Mapungubwe Cultural Landscape is beyond the reaches of living memory. As such, contemporary knowledge and understanding of the site is reliant on archaeological and historical interpretation, and that interpretations commonly accepted as 'fact' may themselves be inaccurate. While there is no possible way to truly know the accurate history of Mapungubwe, what it has come to mean has far transcended the confines of just an archaeological site and lives monumentalised as so much more.

1.4 Methodology

I firstly need to address my positionality regarding this study. Previously, following the completion of my undergraduate degree in Archaeology and Ancient Cultures in 2013, I had worked at the University of Pretoria Museum's Mapungubwe Collection under Dr Sian Tiley-Nel for several years. During this time, I worked intimately with the ceramics, faunal remains, and gold which comprises much of the collection, as well as having had regular visits to Mapungubwe Hill. I also delved into the site's history and associated narratives within the archive as part of researching new display panels for the museum and retold this narrative and history countless times over through ambassadorial visits, school classes, and university lectures in history, archaeology and architecture. These spanned from the University of Pretoria, local Gauteng schools, schools in the Limpopo province, and as far abroad as the University of Florida in the United States of America. I had a hand in many once-in-a-lifetime

projects, exhibitions and conservation efforts on the collection, and my illustrations of the K2 Ivory and Bone Tool assemblage feature in University of Pretoria publications.¹

This engagement with the collection was the ignition point of what has been just short of a decade of personal adoration towards Mapungubwe, which I have carried with me long since having left the employment of the museums. This love for the collection, and the exposure I had to it, gave me a far deeper relationship to the site than most. From this, the concept of importance in the correctness in representations of the site struck a strong chord with me. As a result, I decided to pursue this study to assess this idea of correctness/accuracy, and if it matters.

Having studied archaeology and completed my post-grad studies in museology and heritage studies; much of my foundational training is in the use of material culture and archival resources as a road map to the 'truth' of an object or place. With this framework in mind, when I came across representations of Mapungubwe that could be considered 'historically inaccurate' (in comparison to the history disseminated by the University of Pretoria Museum), it was greatly concerning for me that the particular representation was 'incorrect'.

This concern stems from my belief that, due to the site's incredible and sacred nature (which will be explored in the following chapters), an 'inaccurate' or 'misinterpreted' view of the space and its history was to do a great disservice not only to Mapungubwe and all that it is, but also a disservice to those accepting these 'incorrect' representations and being deprived of a much richer story in the 'truth'. Based on this, I decided to collect representations of Mapungubwe; both those perceived as 'accurate' and as 'inaccurate' and compare them to the 'truth' posited by the museum. It is important to note that the notions of accurate and inaccurate are binary typologies, which is at the core of this research question.

The approach of this study is through the collection and analysis of historic narrative. I have used a combination of literary narrative analysis and historical methodology, using the lens

¹ Antonites & Tiley-Nel 2015; McGinn & Tiley-Nel 2018

of internal criticism, as the primary methodological frame for the study. This internal criticism model focusses on determining “the meaning and value, or credibility of evidence” (Shafer 1980: 41).

In addition to this, a subjective epistemological philosophy is adopted to assist in considering the representations. According to Shafer (1980: 149) “Authentic evidence may lie or mislead, intentionally or unintentionally... The historian is interested in lies as well as truth, but he must be able to distinguish between them”. Shafer argues that the process of determining historical credibility is intrinsically biased, as interpretation is a learned skill, and the academic would draw on the way they have been taught that skill in order to action it.

This makes for an increasingly difficult situation where the historian is the proverbial middle-man with a third party relying on the interpretation to be credible. Authentic evidence which unintentionally misleads can also be linked to living and collective social memory: Brown, Kouri & Hirst (2012) argue, for example, that memory is a fragile entity that relies solely on its reconstruction when called upon – a process which on its own has a margin of error and distortion. This occurrence is also examined in Muzaini (2015), where he discusses not only *why*, but *how* individuals (and communities) forget. This includes memory which has specific negative emotional and psychological impacts on a person which is bound to result in an eschewed or partial recollection.

The internal criticism facet of the historical methodological process is crucial in evaluating the source material which has been selected as part of this study. Approaching the representations from within the framework of a subjective epistemological philosophy as well as internal criticism processes, will enable effective analyses and critique on their credibility in relation to the Mapungubwe history. This study also makes use of elements of literary narrative analysis – a form of qualitative research (Butina 2015; McAlpine 2016). Narratives, as discussed by McAlpine (2016), in the forms of text, oral representations or even those depicted in the form of iconography/motif, are integral to the human condition. These actions create a coherent sentience to our existence, with temporality, and socio-environmental contexts. Literary narrative analysis relies specifically on influential experience which is embodied in the chosen language, imagery or metaphor used in the account.

Following Rashid et al (2019:3), subjective epistemology can be defined as a scenario wherein the “researcher sees knowledge as something interpreted by individuals”. The term epistemology refers to the relationship between the knower and the knowledge; it is the framework within which knowledge (or perceived knowledge) is known, processed and accepted, which in turn informs us of our position in relation to that which we are perceiving, and even goes as far as cementing our sentience of the world around us (Levers 2013; Crotty 1998; Denzin & Lincoln 2005).

Subjective epistemology is useful in dealing with archaeological interpretations due to it being predominantly subjective; the interpretation often stems from a particular knowledge framework or bias. An epistemological approach enables the assessing of this knowledge through an inspection of ‘how do we know this’, which can lead to a renewed understanding of something which could previously have been interpreted or considered using a now outdated framework. An example of this can be seen in Chapter Four around Alexander Galloway’s (1937) *Skeletal Remains of Mapungubwe*, which was approached with a lens of scientific racism and European supremacy which relegated human remains to scientific collateral.

As the nature of the site, and therefore the fundamental understanding of it, is primarily archaeological, the data will also be viewed through Processual and Post-Processual Archaeological lenses. Processualism adopts a viewpoint of cross-disciplinary approaches to the archaeological praxis, which leans towards a more multidisciplinary and faceted interpretation and understanding of the past. Post-Processualism expands on this and adopts a greater ‘human’ aspect to the approach (Darvill 2008). These, with specific reliance on the Post-Processualist approach, is helpful in the analysis of these representations as it assists in providing a multi-faceted lens with which to view them. Post-Processualism incorporates a much deeper anthropological meaning and association with the past which will assist in a broader range of interpretations.

1.5 Methods

As this study is by a large means the analysis and comparison of data using the frameworks of literary narrative analysis and internal criticism, the first point of order was to commence a data mine. This was predominantly through the desktop research into the collection via online records through university libraries and the Mapungubwe Archive. I was also able to make use of a wide host of publications and special collections (such as the Fouché compendium). I was able to access the remainder of the selected representation typologies (poetry; prose; scholarly texts; symbols and iconography) which are available in the public domain through desktop research. Having worked closely with the collection, I was able to use several of my personal archived photos from visits to Mapungubwe Hill and from my day-to-day in and around the museum space. I was also able to visit the UP Museums and the Javett-UP Art Centre in person. Due to COVID-19, and the cross-provincial distance, I was unable to visit Mapungubwe Hill again.

After having gathered representations of Mapungubwe in the various typologies which they are presented in, I briefly analysed them in order to understand their context and if they would be relevant for the refined scope of the study. Following the refining of the scope, the selection of representations was unpacked and considered for their value from a narrative perspective as well as in the lens of the internal criticism framework of historical methodology. All considerations and interpretations were viewed within the philosophy of subjective epistemology.

This set of methods was chosen because they are best suited for obtaining the most relevant information pertaining to the site and its past, as well as the contemporary understanding or associations with the site. The Mapungubwe Archive is home to the first-hand archaeological findings and excavation reports, which assist in painting a picture of what was found *in situ*. These are coupled with the interpretations of the findings by the academy, which has informed the current historical understanding of the site. The representations of the site in contemporary media assist in understanding the current position of the site in the South African heritage practice.

It was outside the scope of this study to conduct interviews with archaeologists (both professional and students), and specifically educators (tertiary and secondary levels). However, such interviews could prove to be a useful additional source of data for future study. A selection of IEB and National Curriculum History educators could be approached, as well as archaeologists both in the field and those functioning in academy, both those with experience in Mapungubwe and those without. This would provide a broad spectrum of understandings and associations with the site and what it means to the participants who would have varying knowledge and experience of the space.

1.6 Limitations

The major limitation while compiling this work was an issue of physical access. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it has been difficult if not impossible to travel for the purposes of research and archival work. It also meant that access to the Mapungubwe Archive was impossible within the time constraints of completing the dissertation. The archival team were able to assist with a handful of digitised items, but the large reliance on the Archive anticipated in the original research proposal had to be reconsidered. Parts of the Archive have been accessed and assessed through secondary sources, i.e. Sian Tiley-Nel's PhD Thesis *Past Imperfect: The Contested Early History of the Mapungubwe Archive* (Tiley-Nel 2018) and Nikki Haw's contributions to *Mapungubwe Remembered; Mapungubwe and the Media: refuting the myth* (Haw 2011).

In addition to the limitation of access, what also arose was the sheer volume of representations in the public space that an exhaustive study and analysis would have amounted to too large a scope. Therefore, a smaller refined selection of the representations, both historical and contemporary, had to be chosen. The final selection was based on factors relevant to each section; historical and contemporary. For the historical representations, I chose to work with representations which were contentious and held a gravitas in what they meant – this choice concluded in Galloway's skeletal study, and the Gold Rhino and its reproductions. For the contemporary representations I factored in the accessibility (being the popularity, retrievability and then importantly; the language of delivery) of the source,

the size of the representation typology, and finally, how I was able to engage with it personally.

1.7 Chapter Outline

Chapter One - *In The Beginning: An Introduction*, has served the purpose of positioning the research question, its aims and relevance as well as outlining the methods and methodological process involved in the researching of this work.

Chapter Two - *Digging up the Past: Literature Review and Theoretical Frameworks*, consists of the literature review. This chapter provides the theoretical framework for the study, drawing on selected historical and archaeological bodies of work and providing an overview of the various concepts and approaches that shape the study.

Chapter Three - *Mapungubwe; of Jackals, Gold, and Plunder: A History*, unpacks the Mapungubwe story, from its discoverers and re(discoverers), its discovery and (re)discovery, and discusses several key stakeholders and their involvement in the site and its history over the past 88 years.

Chapter Four - *All that Glitters is not Gold: Historical Representations*, examines and interrogates the selection of historical representations of Mapungubwe, how they are delivered, and the stories they tell. These selected representations include Dr Alexander Galloway's *The Skeletal Remains of Mapungubwe* (1937), as well as the artefactual material and archaeological record - with the Gold Rhino and its reproductions as a particular focus.

Chapter Five - *Myths and Modernisations: Contemporary Representations*, examines and interrogates the selection of contemporary representations of Mapungubwe, how they are delivered, and the stories they tell. These representations are comprised of Zakes Mda's novel *The Sculptors of Mapungubwe*; Henning Pieterse's poem *Mapungubwe*; and the 'Gold of Africa' exhibition currently on show at the Javett-UP Art Centre.

Chapter Six - *In the Dust that has Settled: Discussion and Conclusion*, is the final chapter in this work, comprising of the discussion and conclusion based on the research and results presented throughout.

Chapter Two

Digging up the Past: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

“...as my eyes grew accustomed to the light, details of the room within emerged slowly from the mist, strange animals, statues, and gold - everywhere the glint of gold. For the moment - an eternity it must have seemed to the others standing by - I was struck dumb with amazement, and when Lord Carnarvon, unable to stand the suspense any longer, inquired anxiously, 'Can you see anything?' it was all I could do to get out the words, 'Yes, wonderful things.'”

~ **Howard Carter**, *The Tomb of Tutankhamun*~

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter the interrelated concepts of truth, accuracy, history, and archaeology are defined and discussed in relation to the secondary literature. The bodies of literature drawn from in this study range from seminal works by Carr (1990), Trigger (1968; 1969), and von Ranke (1875), to the works of McGhie (2009), Jones (2001), and Ndlovu & Smith (2019). I also briefly discuss the backgrounds of history and archaeology as fields within the academy and social science, with a focus on South African archaeology during the time of the Mapungubwe (Re)Discovery.

This chapter provides the theoretical framework to the study via a review of the relevant literature. This consists predominantly of explorations into history and historiography, as well as theoretical archaeological frameworks. These are imperative to the greater study as it allows for a foundational grasp of the how certain methodologies came about, especially in reference to the archaeological process.

The constructs of accuracy and truth, and how the general public rely on the accuracy of academic information, is at the core of this study. That being said, this is not a study to uncover or discover the full meaning of ‘truth’ or to attempt to provide a fixed definition of ‘accuracy’. It is rather an exercise in looking at the understanding of these terms and how they are engaged with and mobilised in the archaeological and historical fields. In this chapter,

I also unpack some of the ideas of interpretative ‘truth’ and historical accuracy that lay the foundation for the theoretical basis for the dissertation. This chapter aims to explore these understandings and hopes to engage with it in a manner that assists and informs the way it is used to interpret the past through the fields of history and archaeology, with the aims of exploring how the ideas of “truth” and “accuracy” have been applied to some of the known representation(s) of Mapungubwe.

2.2 History and Archaeology: *foundations and theory*

2.2.1 History and Historical Accuracy

Historical accuracy is a notoriously contested idea. As Samuel Johnson points out, “we can know no more than what old writers have told us” (Greene 1995:12). In relation to Johnson’s point, the work of Edward Carr’s, *What is History?* (1990:30) is brought to the fore. He states that, “the historian without his facts is rootless and futile; the facts without their historian are dead and meaningless”, and he adds that describing history is an eternal intertwining and symbiotic dialogue between the past and the present, through the historian and the fact. Carr is seen as one of the seminal leaders in social history, especially in the idea that history can move away from what could be seen as a common-sense school of history and approach histories as a varied and interpretive process.

Another forerunner in historiographical thought is Leopold von Ranke. Von Ranke proposed that “the task of the historian was simply to show how it really was (*wie es eigentlich gewesen*)” (Von Ranke 1885:vii; Carr 1990:8; Eskildsen 2008; Braw 2007). We rely on the record-keepers of the past to provide us with a true and Ranke-esque account. This ‘world-famous’ Rankean ideology is also discussed by Gilbert (1987) on a semantic level around the translation of *eigentlich* in this context. The term has been given a number of translations, including “really”, “essentially” and “actually” and inferred as “the actual past” (Gilbert 1987:394). The discussion Gilbert makes on this is important, as the interpretation of the term can determine how the ‘quality’ of the history and its depth of study can be perceived. Terms such as *essentially* or *really* denote a superficial layer which the historian would need to

unpack a great deal in order to understand it, while the term *actually* cements the historian's goal of providing precise and accurate facts from the situation (Gilbert 1987).

Francesco Petrararch, the acclaimed 'father of humanism', saw the distant past as an idyllic framework of perfection and started the movement that would study and understand the past through the collection of ancient texts and studies of the ruins and structures which still stood the passage of time (Kelly & Thomas 2013). These ideals were marked as heresy and continued with little traction until the dawn of the Renaissance. This new era saw a move towards a reliance of information stemming from the very tangible results of engaging with the natural and physical sciences (Sklenár 1983). From this point onward, the scientific aspects of the social/human sciences were birthed with an explosive interest in understanding the past through the combination of not only the religious and spiritual facets which had come to the fore, but in grasping an understanding, or at the very least sound hypothesising, of the intellectual cultures of early man through their material remains. These material remains, when in an orderly fashion, would form the rudiments of a later classification of stages attributed to social and physical evolution (Evans 1982; Trigger 1989; Greene 1995; Piggott 1989).

In Bruce Trigger's book, *Beyond History: The Methods of Prehistory* (1968), he addresses the foundations upon which history is based. History, in its modern form of academic discipline especially, is the intangible made tangible. In the past, the recording and creation of history was as a result of the celebration of events and the monumentalisation of people and deeds. As the process of recording was designated solely to the literate, this of course allowed for a certain degree of artistic license and posed the risk of being over-ruled and re-written. This recording process is now made instant and debatably merciless with twenty-first century recording methods such as the internet and social media.

We can certainly acknowledge that history through memory is bound to have its fair share of flaws, and that it lies within the responsibility of the historian to acknowledge and consider this when approaching accounts (Nora 1989; Shafer 1980; Brown, Kouri & Hirst 2012). This aspect of the creation or re-telling of historical account is explored in Munslow's *A History of History* (2012) where he reminds historians of the integral balance which must be kept in the

historical narration process; that it is not the historian's place to create poetry or a fanciful storyline, it the critical onus of the historian to ensure a correct rendition or imitation of the account – similar to how von Ranke (Von Ranke 1885; Carr 1990; Eskildsen 2008; Braw 2007) proposed.

Accuracy should be considered within the reasonable parameters of judgement. Keith Nier (1986:373) writes that in instances where a site, object or context are discussed without a clear indication of whether that which is being discussed is a representation of "...as true, as the best available account..." that no complaints or questions should be brought forward against any assumed misrepresentation or acceptance that the content and context is factual. This, however, I would disagree with. Many rely on academia and the products of the academy to serve as the transmitter of information, much of which will be assumed as accurate based on the societal norm of holding the academy as the pinnacle of knowledge and wisdom. In this vein, portions of information or thought which are not assured to be completely truthful or to be sufficiently supported would need to bear with it the caveat stating such. This can be considered as academic agency and accountability.

An example of this comes from an article written on Mapungubwe by Professor Alexander Duffey (2012). The article, *Mapungubwe: Interpretation of the Gold Content of the 'Original Gold Burial M1, A620'* speaks of Duffey's hypothesis (or rather, his imaginings) that the various figurines and associate emergent foil forms which were found across the gold burials as funerary items formed a single 'divination bowl' in likeness of contemporary Shona divination-ware. The article is not specific in its statement of this existing as an imagining or a depiction of proposed use.² This has resulted in the reaction that still has visitors arriving at the Mapungubwe Collection wanting to view this supposed divination bowl, which exists in no other form than as an imaginative construct in Duffey's article. This illustrates the power of the academy, and how important it is for academics to understand their proverbial power in the offering of 'facts' and 'truths' - while this object did not in fact exist, because Duffey

² "Enough fragments remain, however, to give a credible partial reconstruction based on careful iconographic observation". (Duffey 2012:175)

wrote about it in a manner advising that this construct was very much real, the reader did and many still do believe it to do so.

The interpretation of accuracy can also be the responsibility of the of the consumer, with an example coming from the work of Lisa-Marie McGhie (McGhie 2009). McGhie discusses the virtual Blombos ochre exhibition displayed at the WITS University Origins Centre. She posits the ochre and its 'aura' within in the scope that "the creation of a copy aims to establish itself as a substitution for reality, as something even more real" (Benjamin 2008; Eco 1986:8; McGhie 2009), in that the consumer is more focussed on taking in something that looks better (i.e., newer, flashier, brighter) as opposed to the original artefact. McGhie brings to the readers' attention the above through her observation of the veracity with which visitors to the museum were more engaged with the hologram depiction of the Blombos ochre, than the artefact itself (McGhie 2009). This ties into her comment of "The inability to grasp the otherwise clear, high-resolution projected image is a powerful metaphor for our imperfect means of apprehending and studying the past" (McGhie 2009:2) as an allusion towards what will be discussed later in this work on the aura of an object superseding the object itself.

When considering the action of purposeful omission and re-representation of histories, an example from the realm of the Aztecs and Dr Caroline Dodds Pennock comes to mind. In an episode about Aztec culture on the *You're Dead to Me*, *BBC Radio 4* podcast Dodds Pennock (2019) discussed how the probability of the world's common understanding of Aztec history can be completely incorrect. The flaws in the historical record are firstly as a result of poor surviving sources, but in addition to that, much of the Aztecs' record keeping was destroyed during the Spanish conquest.³ The Spanish did record their encounters with the Aztec people, including what they were able to understand from oral tradition – but for the most part it is assumed that they could have made up most of it, or misinterpreted aspects based on observation. Further to this, the physical Aztec records which were destroyed during the conquest were already questionable, as at around CE 1430, the reigning Aztec ruler, Ahuitzotl, destroyed and rewrote the recorded histories and "created this grand mythical history for the

³ CE 1519

Aztecs, promoting the way that they are, so of course they're in charge and it was always destined that they would be in charge" (Dodds Pennock 2019).

Sian Tiley-Nel in her doctorate *Past Imperfect: The Contested Early History of the Mapungubwe Archive* (2018), opens her work stating her study "focuses on the conceptual notion of history as an imperfect past... because the past constantly challenges many ideas of the present" (Tiley-Nel 2018:IV). Tiley-Nel addresses the concept of a past imperfect as a vehicle of challenging the changing conceptions of time throughout history. The concept of a past imperfect has been well debated over the past few years across varying fields and interests (Nield 2014; Towner 1993; Bryan 2015; Carmes 1995, Bracher 2016; Durica 2018; McCants 2016; Swanepoel 2016; Rigney 2018; Plane 2003; Lehtimäki, Karttunen & Mäkelä 2012).

It is possible to explore further interpretations through the methodologies and theories of memory studies, which allow for the creation of an additional version of the story of the space – possible, but not without great difficulty and a paradigm shift. Collective memory and history are often seen to be in conflict with one another, as history had originally set out to provide an accurate and often personally-dissociative account (Wertsch & Roediger 2008). Memory, on the other hand, has a very personal aspect of identity and association which is attributed to the account (Wertsch & Roediger 2008; Nora 1989; Schuman, Schwartz & D'Arcy 2005).

2.2.2 Archaeology as theory

Archaeology as a formal school of thought, insomuch as having a theoretical component, is a relatively modern emergence having only been around since 1960. Before then "each scholar was free to build his discipline anew on the basis of his own ideas" (Piggott 1989; Trigger 1989: 27). Despite the fanciful depictions, archaeology as an institution, is far removed from the picture portrayed of it in films such *Indiana Jones* and *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider* – with exception of the grave robber aspect which was very much alive in the salvage archaeology era (Daniel 1981). Before the 1960s and the worldwide establishment of the practice as a formal aspect of the academy, the gentleman's pastime is said, within the accepted colloquial history of the

field, to have begun in vicinity of 500 BCE with the last Babylonian King Nabonidus who took it upon himself to rebuild and record the ruined temples and structures of an early Babylon (Kelly & Thomas 2013).

Andrew Jones (2001) discusses archaeology as being made of two opposing halves: archaeological science and archaeological theory. On one side is the belief that archaeology is a set of processes, and the product of these processes (being the data from the objects and context) which can be built into generalising laws which are applicable to all archaeological contexts. This is opposed by the ideology that the archaeological record is comprised of the result of meaning social action in the past. This ideology, if envisioned as sentences in a piece of text, while possibly similar and interlinked, hold their own contextual distinction and uniqueness. The tension between the two beliefs allows for the consideration of an interesting ideology in the creation of a biography of an object. This means that an individual object while having been created for an initial purpose or function, could have been used by various individuals over any length of time, or used for an entirely different purpose than what has been interpreted as its use. Through the contextual lens, this does not necessarily suggest that an individual object can be read or documented as an integral cipher of a human life cycle, but rather that the objects can be read as holding the possibility to be linked to the identity of their owner or user with varying degrees of importance and meaning throughout the object's use-life (Jones 2001).

To assist in the creation of deeper meaning in the process of interpretations, one of the archaeological recent (in other words post 1970) theoretical norms, coined Processual Archaeology, came into being. This slowly began to alter its often-static approaches to broach the dividing line between archaeology and predominantly anthropology in the spheres of past and present,⁴ but also a handful of other fields to form a more multi-disciplinary approach to the praxis. This has resulted in archaeology adopting a more cultural-centric approach and had bred a field of 'contextual archaeology' with a greater focus on "archaeological sites as

⁴ Currently living culture 'vs' material remains of a culture in the archaeological record.

part of a human eco-system” (Butzer 1980:1). Processual Archaeology can be described as (Darvill 2008:366):

Essentially, the New Archaeology of the late 1960s and 1970s, Processual Archaeology is grounded in a positivist view of the past and takes an essentially anthropological view of ancient societies. Drawing on earlier work in the field of biology, systems theory became a dominant model in processual views of the past. In this, societies are seen as a series of subsystems interacting with each other and the environment in which the system is set. What interested processual archaeologists were the processes that prompted and thus explained change, whether they were natural (e.g. climatic), or anthropogenic (e.g. population growth; agricultural intensification; accelerated trade). The overall aim was to move away from simply describing archaeological evidence towards trying to provide robust explanations for the patterns in it.

The above shows how ideas about how accuracy and knowledge of the past were understood began to change during this period. Processual Archaeology has since been challenged and expanded on in the form of Post-Processual Archaeology, which looks further than the scientific elements of the Processual theory and considers the various facets intrinsic to society which could also have served as influential factors. These are aspects such as social evolution, gender roles and power ideologies (Darvill 2008).

The most recent addition to the pool of archaeological thought, as coined by Ian Hodder, is Post-Processual Archaeology. This theory expands critically on the framework presented by Processual Archaeology (Hodder 1985; Darvill 2008:360):

Post-processual archaeology incorporates many different approaches derived from Marxism, hermeneutics, post-structuralism, and constructivism, but is perhaps united in an interest in social ontology – the character of social reality. Here attempts have been made to provide archaeology with more sophisticated conceptions of past society and the tools to explore ancient societies through archaeological materials. Understandings of human

behaviour must be sought in societies themselves in order to identify specific and rather idiosyncratic responses to particular conditions.

Modern Archaeology, having stemmed from the antiquarian age of Europe, adopted what was known as the Comparative International Perspective (CIP), which argued a ‘comparability of artefacts’ which meant that archaeologists at the time would base their interpretations on the framework they were familiar with, i.e. Anglo-Saxon Bronze Age sites, and expecting an African Middle Stone Age site to not only bear similar results in the record, but also that the materiality can be compared to be ‘like’ one another (Pilling 1968; Kelly & Thomas 2013; Deetz 1991; Orser 2012). While on whichever grounds these early archaeologists and historians based this principle, it remains no different to comparing a flamingo and jellyfish – irrelevant and completely devoid of sufficient factual similarity.

There is also a much-noted dialogue in terms of the accuracy of archaeology in context to understanding it as a Eurocentric discipline (Orser 2012; Paterson, Gill, Kennedy 2003; Feder 1999; Winter 2014; Bruchac 2014; Alatas 2002; Montón-Subías & Hernando 2018; Austin 2007; Lambropoulos 1993; Domanska 2018). This dialogue is important, as it informs much of how the record has been interpreted – especially in an African context. As stated by Dr Natalie Swanepoel: “We should [thus] be wary of only seeing African contexts through the lens of exploitation and dispossession” (Swanepoel 2016:17). With the changing mindset with regards to the past and the human relation to it, archaeological theory has started a post-colonial shift in most parts of the world. This, historically speaking, allows for a new lens to be focused on the praxis, one which “no longer imagine[s] Europeans as the only effective cultural performers, [or] agents of superiority...” (Orser 2012: 738), there is still a long road ahead in addressing the systemic nature of the praxis which future students of archaeology will need to lead (Bruchac 2014).

Archaeology as a discipline had a series of theoretical movements within itself in terms of different epochs of schools of thought. These are divided into text-aided and prehistoric archaeological schools. Text-aided is comprised of Classical, Egyptology and Assyriology. Prehistoric on the other hand is comprised of Antiquarian; Scandinavian Style; Palaeolithic-Evolutionary; Culture-Historical; Functional; Processual, and Post-Processual. (Trigger 1989).

In addition to these movements were sub-tiers known as Social Anthropology and Darwinism, as part of studies into social evolution; and Diffusionism (Kuper 1988; Friedman & Rowlands 1982; Renfrew 1973; Renfrew 1984; Bowler 1989).

Robert Ascher described archaeological process as being divided into four tasks: formulation and refinement of concepts, data gathering and processing, interpretation of data, and synthesis, which functioned as a cascading model requiring the task before to inform the task that followed (Ascher 1961). Andrew Jones in his book *Archaeological Theory and Scientific Practice*, divides the practice not into four, but into three spheres: excavation, post-excavation, and publication. He unpacks these particularly in reference to the decontextualization which is foundational to the archaeological practice (Jones 2001; Branham 1995).

Interpretation with a degree of human error is not the only interpretative analysis in the archaeology with parameters for error. Radiocarbon dating, the process archaeological scientists use to determine the geochronology of objects or archaeological matter and indicates how old it is, is notorious for possible false readings. While these are not as a result of any learned human behaviour, but rather by environment factors such as diagenetic changes, structural alteration as a result of the presence of micro-organisms and even extreme fluctuations in temperature (Wright 2017).

2.2.3 Archaeology as practice

While seemingly quite different, the fields of history and archaeology are rather reliant on one another – they effectively fulfil the same function, the discovery and the recording of our collective human pasts. From as distant as 45,000 years ago through the cave paintings and pictographs of Mesopotamia and the Ancient Near East; Mesoamerica; Africa; Ancient Asia and Europe – humanity found ways and means of recording the past and the present. Whether in the form of oral traditions, to monolithic structures with detailed effigies and motifs, to the recorded word – our ancestors, both distant and not so distant, ensured that which they felt important was retained in the annals of time (Brumm *et al* 2021; Trigger 1989).

Trigger (1989: 27) states “... history as a literary genre did not ensure the concurrent growth of a disciplined interest in the material remains of earlier times” but early historians, whether unknowingly, were engaging in archaeology practices. The archaeologists’ reliance on history (and the working knowledge of a particular history) is evident even in the nomenclature of the field’s greatest categorised divisions, prehistoric and historical archaeology. Prehistoric archaeology is concerned with the study of the materiality of a time before history was recorded in a documented fashion, and historical archaeology during a time where written records were used. This contrasting lack or presence of written sources which favours the historical archaeologist, can prove difficult in a prehistoric context where the practitioners are required to create their own interpretations based on the material evidence, which can be biased or incorrect (Daniel & Renfrew 1988; Greene 1995). The same can be considered for classical historians and near-modern historians who cannot hope to rely on record of the past that has been passed down from their seminal sources, such as modern historians have the luxury of being able to do so.

While it is true that some of the great civilisations of antiquity did record their histories and narratives through forms written media (such as China, Greece, Egypt and Rome),⁵ it was very much due to the archaeological evidence which was uncovered, assessed and interpreted which confirmed and supplemented written sources. Assyriologists, Egyptologists and Mesoamerican experts all relied and continue to rely on archaeology (and philology) to assist in acquiring historic information about these places and peoples (Trigger 1968).

The basis upon which archaeological evidence is interpreted is an understanding of the physical context of the material, and the empirical data and interpretation of this data (Butzer 1980). This act or process of interpretation is problematic because, as unpacked above, Archaeology as an institution is predominantly a western and colonial construct, with initial fickle theoretical frameworks and a fondness towards elitist supremacy (Bruchac 2014; Greene 1995; Gathercole & Lowenthal 1990; MacDougal 1982). These factors which were integral in the foundational core of the practice would of course still potentially render an

⁵ Not to be overlooked that without the Egyptological investigations during the antiquarian era of archaeology which resulted in the discovery and decoding of the Rosetta Stone. (Daniel 1981, Maisels 1993).

influence upon how practitioners are taught the discipline, how they are informed and how they too inform. On this, Greene writes (1995:161): “We are products of a social environment that has conditioned our outlook on the world, and our view of the past is inevitably influenced by our perception of the present.”

Ascher writes that “the most widely used of the tools of archaeological interpretation is analogy. In its most general sense of interpreting by analogy is assaying any belief about non-observed behaviour by referral to an observed behaviour which is thought to be relevant” (Ascher 1961:317). This concept of comparability of artefacts and the Comparative International Perspective is an alarmingly dangerous set of actions which could lead to an eternally eschewed perspective of an object or space. In contemporary archaeological practice it has become a running joke that if an immediately identifiable context cannot be given that a practitioner can revert to classifying said unknown as fulfilling a ritualistic purpose. This is problematic in that it assigns a ‘random’ meaning to an object or space, based either due to the CIP effectively grouping perceived ‘like-objects’ which in reality have no correlation and providing meaning according to that. Or alternatively, an unthinking assignation of meaning to part of the record under the auspices of ‘ritual’, which often leads to the academic world accepting this misinterpretation as a ‘truth’ until such a time that said object or space *might* be interpreted correctly.

This creation of meaning or purpose from an uncontextualised materiality is a foundational aspect of the interpretive process known as inference from absence. This process, also referred to as ‘argument from silence’ is for the most part in the core sciences seen as weak or inconclusive evidence. In archaeology however, as a subset of science, this process and their occurrences are frequent and for the most part accepted on face-value. It should be noted here as well that absence and paucity of evidence is often seen in the same light by many archaeologists (Wallach 2019).

While in defence of this, as an archaeologist myself, I readily admit to having attributed meaning where meaning was missing to objects in the past. However, based on a transient interpretive model, whenever sufficient evidence is discovered to the correction / alteration of an interpretation, it should always be reconsidered in respect of this. Further to this, it could

be argued that essentially the only person to completely understand an object (especially one arising from the archaeological record), is the maker / user themselves. This argument comes from the thought that as interpreters of the archaeological record, we are programmed or taught to see a dagger and attribute to it use-wear parameters of either functional or ceremonial; we would not for instance view it as having been made as art. While this is a shortfall in the interpretive process, it is at this stage the only way we can assign understanding to materiality with an absence of context. However, further to this, one must consider the concept of 'use-life', which forms part of contextual archaeology wherein objects take on the uses or purposes assigned by them by their owner(s) over a period of time. In this, objects can have an interchangeable meaning depending on who owned them and what those individuals chose to perceive them at a particular point in time (Jones 2001; Gosden & Marshall 1999).

This aspect of interpretation by archaeologists (and historians or museologists) – who effectively serve as intermediaries between knowledge and audience – need to re-assess and understand the proverbial power of the agency they hold.

2.3 South African Archaeology: *history, science or politics?*

2.3.1 South Africa: the empire's playground

For numerous years Africa as a continent held extreme scientific interest and importance in the research for hominid ancestry by Western science. This however led to the continent at large being treated as a research site – South Africa was of special curiosity (Bruchac 2014; Kuljian 2016; Legassick & Rassool 2015; Dubow 1995). This interest led to the establishment of what can be considered a 'dark academia' which promulgated human segregation and genetic study 'in the name of science'. From the early 1900s, British scientists were making themselves quite at home in the country, treating the land and its people as subjects for investigation. A prime example being British Anthropologist A.C. Hodden addressing a gathering of the British Association for the Advancement of Science and calling for "an accurate account of the natives of South Africa... for scientific use, and as a historical record" (Kuljian 2016; Legassick & Rassool 2015:3).

This objectification of these groups of people and placing them under a microscope became the central focus of scientific inquiry in South Africa for the greater part of the early 20th century – specifically in respect of the so-called ‘bushmen’. This grouping of peoples was of a macabre interest to colonial British scientists, with great encouragement to museums and like-institutions to collect anatomic material and data which was treated with an enthusiasm which is, quite frankly, too harrowing to contemplate. All of this was done under the auspices of science, with the effective hunting-for-sport of these individuals seen as action done “in support of scientific knowledge and that Bushman skeletons were a relic of natural history” (Legassick & Rassool 2015; Kuljian 2016:31).

This ownership of people and cabinet-of-curiosity-effect was rampant across the colonised spaces on the continent. The Kimberley Diamond Fields Advertiser saw an editorial article which read (Kuljian 2016:30):

If [therefore] any reader should know of a docile bushman who has no particular use for himself, the scientific world would be truly grateful if that same bushman could be induced to pack himself in formalin, or something of that sort, and ship himself to Europe for the purpose of ornamenting a dust-proof showcase, side by side with the mummies of Egypt.

The sheer disregard for human life due to self-appointed racial dominance is unprecedented, and due to what Dubow (1995) has described as ‘collective amnesia’, for many years this part of history was almost too conveniently forgotten.

2.3.2 South African Archaeology: *from dust to praxis*

Trigger is cited in Ndlovu & Smith (2019) as having described South African Archaeology in the later portion of the 1900s as “... the most colonial of all African archaeologies. It was the creation of the white minority intelligentsia whose relationship to the majority of South Africans remains highly ambiguous” (Ndlovu & Smith 2019: 176).

To position the mindset around archaeology in South Africa we must first unpack its roots and foundations. While recorded histories of an archaeological nature in South Africa appear to extend back to 1858 as the interior areas and other less frequented parts of the country were being explored. These reports and detailed observations covered assorted lithics, rock art sites and shell middens (Shepherd 2003). Between 1870 – 1923, some 130 academic works were published on sites and finds of the greater southern African area.⁶

Archaeology as a discipline, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, only became recognised globally as more than a ‘gentleman’s pursuit’ and as an academic field by 1960 (Trigger 1989; Greene 1995; Piggott 1989). This being said, a proto-archaeology was offered to an extent at South African Universities from as early as the 1920s. The abovementioned ‘to an extent’ is key in that these were predominantly offered through either the Department of Anthropology or the Department of Geography. The first instance of this was at the University of Cape Town by John Goodwin, who produced names such as Barend Malan and Revil Mason who went on to be considered pioneers in the field (graduating over a period of 20 years). The course was offered as part of the Department of Anthropology until 1935 which saw the foundation of the Bureau of Archaeology, which was headed up by van Riet-Lowe (Ndlovu & Smith 2019; Deacon 1990; Tiley-Nel 2018). Raymond Inskeep, considered to be one of the ‘architects’ of South African Archaeology, joined the Bureau in 1960, where he graduated a host of students – many of whom are famed archaeologists today. Among these students was the first archaeology student of colour in South Africa, Cedric Poggenpoel. For the formative years of his career, he was, despite being a qualified academic, highly constrained in the field being consistently relegated to manual labour roles (Schrire 2003; Ndlovu & Smith 2019).

By 1965, Revil Mason had begun teaching archaeology through the Department of Geography at the Witwatersrand until 1977 when it was offered as a separate qualification, taught by Thomas Huffman. The University of Pretoria had begun offering archaeology classes headed by Hannes Eloff through the Department of Anthropology in 1949 and it had become a formalised degree by 1968 - some 35 years after having conducted archaeological

⁶ Today’s South Africa, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Swaziland and Mozambique

investigations and taken custody of the archaeological resources at Mapungubwe Hill (Ndlovu & Smith 2019; Tiley-Nel 2018).

Field-based archaeological practice from the 1990s was predominantly focussed on the establishment of chronological sequences in order to create a standard archaeological record. In addition to this, the field of inquiry had started to broaden its scope having moved on from an apartheid nationalist focus of racial purity. It has only been in the past 20 years that attention has expanded to include the full range of human existence, as positioned by Processual and Post-Processual frameworks (Mitchell & Whitelaw 2005; Darvill 2008).

2.4 The Application of Truth, Accuracy, and Authenticity

Darvill describes accuracy as being “the closeness of an estimate to the true value” (Darvill 2008:2), while Kavanagh defines accuracy as being the state in which something “conforms to a predefined standard or specification” (Kavanagh 2017:10).

Edward Carr, as mentioned in the outset of this chapter, approaches the idea of fact as a duality, needing both the historian and the fact to exist. While avoiding further rumination on definitions and semantics, one can look to Michel Foucault in his *Archaeology of Knowledge & The Discourse on Language* where he broaches the concepts of truth and accuracy. He writes:

“Of course, it is obvious enough that ever since a discipline such as history has existed, documents have been used, questioned, and have given rise to questions; scholars have asked not only what these documents meant, but also whether they were telling the truth, and by what right they could claim to be doing so, whether they were sincere or deliberately misleading, well informed or ignorant, authentic or tampered with” (Foucault, 1972:6).

Later in this body of work the issue of archaeology and racial puritan agendas and work done in attempt to institute some sort of scientific proof of a ‘European/Caucasian supremacy’ over all others with respect of Mapungubwe will be discussed from an anthropological sense (Tiley-Nel 2018; Ndlovu & Smith 2019; Carruthers 2006). However, before the pursuit of

evolutionary science came the era of what was coined 'salvage archaeology', which followed the colonial spread like a secondary infection across the world. With the concept of colonisation and colonialism coming from the assumed right of ownership, it can be defined as "a series of policies, process, and relations that exploited people and resources in diverse ways and locales" (Oland, Hart & Frink, 2012:2). With this perceived ownership in mind, and as part of a misguided cabinet of curiosity approach to 'show the folks back home', these salvage archaeologists moved at the forefront of the collection of assorted cultural and archaeological objects (including human remains) of the newly colonised peoples (Bruchac 2014).

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, "we can know no more than what old writers have told us" (Greene 1995:12). This of course is troublesome in that, as just discussed, we rely on the accuracy of the interpretation by the historian / archaeologist / practitioner – which could be biased or swayed towards a multitude of directions, political or otherwise. To attest to this Carr posits that "...we can view the past, and achieve our understanding of the past, only through the eyes of the present. The historian is of his own age, and is bound to it by the conditions of human existence" (Carr 1990:24). Corresponding to Carr's thoughts much earlier is Michael Oakshott; who stated that "History, is the historian's experience. It is 'made' by nobody save the historian: to write history is the only way of making it" (Oakshott 1933: 99). Another factor to consider is also not only the agency of the recorder, but also the recorded – a prime example being the earlier mentioned scenario pertaining to Aztec history where the ruler Ahuitzotl purposefully re-wrote the recorded histories of his people in the 1430s (Dodds Pennock 2019).

Considering the clouded and transient nature which we can attribute to the concepts of accuracy and truth in an historical concept – the idea of contextual archaeology is incredibly important. Contextual archaeology consents to the idea that artefactual or site meanings and interpretations are bound by the context, which incidentally is often removed or completely destroyed during the excavation process. This opens the understanding that the meaning and interpretation, being context-bound, can change and transform along with the context to which it finds itself associated with along the period of its life post-excavation (Hodder 1985; Barrett 1987; Shanks & Tilley 1987; Jones 2001).

This openness for the idea of an evolving interpretation is certainly a desirable course of action given light of post-colonial and contemporary approaches to the re-understanding of space. While evolving interpretation should not be a destruction or omission of previously accepted or known narratives of information, it should be building on the understanding, adding on an extra layer to the history. In this way the narrative itself grows and allows for an increased anthropological record to be studied in the future. After all, when dealing with the study and understanding of the past it is important to remember that “...there are no ‘right’ answers, and that all interpretations are based upon assumptions of varying probability, never certainty” (Greene 1995:8).

In respect of specific research done into representations of Mapungubwe, most notably is the work of Himel Ramji (2018) with his Master’s thesis *Producing the Precolonial: Professional and Popular Lives of Mapungubwe 1937 – 2017*. In this work, he looks at the changing of meanings of Mapungubwe in its entirety in what he has phased as the various epochs that formed the site’s history. In the work, he holds a firm focus on the precolonial and the empowering of the possibilities of postcolonial production of meaning to Mapungubwe and what ‘it’ means.

Approaching authenticity, both in the sense of object-meaning and curation, Walter Benjamin and his ideas on aura in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (2008) have foregrounded much of the contemporary understanding of an object’s place and our human understanding thereof. Lisa McGhie (2009) and Frijey (2017) are contemporaries in this idea of aura and authenticity. McGhie (2009) as has also looked at the Mapungubwe Gold Rhino in her work *Archaeology and Authenticity in South African Heritage Locales and Public Spaces* where she addresses the ‘validity’ and role of unoriginal objects on display in museum spaces. These notions are discussed in Chapters Four and Five.

Chapter Three

Mapungubwe; of Jackals, Gold, and Plunder: A History

“I will tell you a little secret about archaeologists, dear Reader. They all pretend to be very high-minded. They claim that their sole aim in excavation is to uncover the mysteries of the past and add to the store of human knowledge. They lie. What they really want is a spectacular discovery, so they can get their names in the newspapers and inspire envy and hatred in the hearts of their rivals.”

~ **Elizabeth Peters**, *The Deeds of the Disturber* ~

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss and contextualise the history of Mapungubwe with a brief background to the site and the way its discovery has been represented in the 20th and 21st centuries. As was positioned at the outset of this thesis, ‘Mapungubwe’ is the collective term for three main middle Iron Age sites (CE 900 – 1300) namely Schroda, K2, and Mapungubwe Hill. There are however over four hundred individual archaeological sites in the Mapungubwe locale which date from as early as the Late Stone Age (BCE 11 120 / BP 11 000) to the Late Iron Age (Carruthers 2006).

Mapungubwe Hill is considered the earliest city-state in Africa and is renowned for its innovation, complex society and seat of trade with active points in the Ancient World to the North and the East (Forssman 2013; van Doornum 2008; van Doornum 2014; Schoeman & Hay 2013; Huffman 2008; Huffman 2007; Huffman 2000; Meyer 2011b; Carruthers 2006). Mapungubwe is at the historic epicentre of advancement in social evolution and metallurgy in southern Africa, which had a catalytic influence on the societies which followed it (Huffman 2000; Tiley-Nel & Botha 2013; Chirikure 2013; Carruthers 2006; Maggs 2000).

The first arrival of non-nomadic people to Mapungubwe is believed to stem from migration of agropastoralists from nearby areas. They are clustered as being part of the Kalandu

Tradition ceramic tradition, known as Happy Rest, ⁷ at around CE 350. There is continued evidence of occupation within the landscape from the 4th century, with a brief absence during CE 600 – 900 due to unfavourable environmental conditions. CE 900 sees the return of occupation to the area with the founding of the Zhizo site at Schroda (Huffman 2000; Antonites 2016; Tiley-Nel 2017).

From the establishment of Schroda there followed K2, a Leopard's Kopje site dating CE 1020 – 1220 which continued to pave the road ahead for the eventual occupation at Mapungubwe Hill and its founding as the trade and innovation capital of Iron Age Africa. While opinion is divided as to what brought about the end of the occupation of Mapungubwe, the popular conclusion is that it was due to a combination of environmental factors (severe drought) and surrounding political influences. There is a school of thought which believes that the people of Mapungubwe went on to start Great Zimbabwe but without substantial conclusive evidence to attest to this it remains hypothetical (Huffman 1996a; Huffman 2000; Meyer 1998; O'Connor & Kiker 2004; Carruthers 2006).

The most frequently reported date of discovery of Mapungubwe is in 1932 by Ernest and Jerry van Graan in partnership with Prof Leo Fouché and the University of Pretoria, which took institutional custody of Mapungubwe in 1933. This is however incorrect, as I unpack during this chapter, with the earliest recorded discovery of the site and its artefacts dating to the late 1800s. This 1932 occurrence is therefore coined as the (Re)Discovery of Mapungubwe (van Graan 2011; Tiley-Nel 2018; Tiley-Nel & Wintjes 2019). The notion of 'discovery' is problematic with many archaeological sites 'found' leading up to the 20th century. These 'discoveries' are mostly attributed to European individuals and institutions, while in actual

⁷ *A note on naming conventions.* Much of southern African archaeology is categorised as part of a ceramic tradition, we utilise the collected knowledge and interpretation of the host of ceramic typologies and technologies in the archaeological record to assist in dating and attributing sites to groupings of people based on the shape and decoration of ceramics or ceramic sherds found in the stratigraphy. This knowledge is centralised in what is affectionately dubbed the 'African Archaeologists' Bible' - Handbook to the Iron Age: *The Archaeology of Pre-Colonial Farming Societies in Southern Africa* (Huffman 2007).

fact these sites and spaces have for the most part been known about as part of local culture and mythology for centuries.

Bearing in mind that all archaeological knowledge is based on human and scientific interpretations, our understanding of the history of the site has undergone several shifts.⁸ This is primarily due to changes in archaeological and nationalist thought in South Africa; these climates have heavily influenced the understanding of the site and its materiality. As highlighted in the previous chapter, archaeology as a discipline was very much in the earliest phases of its development in the 1930s, with the formative years being a time of racial puritan agendas and colonial control (Bruchac 2014; Kuljian 2016; Legassick & Rassool 2015; Dubow 1995; Ndlovu & Smith 2019).

3.2 Archaeology on a Global Scale: *Excavation and Discovery 1890 – 1935*

To contextualise the global discovery chronology into which Mapungubwe fits, this section will provide brief insight into the global archaeological headlines of the time. This 45-year period saw an incredible amount of archaeological discovery; in addition to the sites that were found a host of famous artefacts were also unearthed. These included the Antikythera Wreck, 1900; Stelae of Hammurabi, 1901; The Venus of Willendorf, 1908; The Bust of Nefertiti, 1912; and the Lachish Letters, 1935.⁹

With a lens on the sites, with which to contemporise the international archaeological activity with that at Mapungubwe, the below infographic highlights five key archaeological discoveries which occurred in the same time period as Mapungubwe. In noting these ‘discoverers’ in relation to the geographic location of the finds, all were foreign nationals – for the most part British, with exception of Winkler and Bingham who were German and American respectively.

⁸ Scientific interpretation, as mentioned above in part of section 2.2, is formed by processes such as radiocarbon dating etc. Effectively any process requiring a technological component to assist in the interpretation.

⁹ For further reading see: Moussas 2011; Barmash 2020; Kohen 1946; Wiedemann & Bayer 1946 and Ganor 1967.

During the same time period as the discover(ies) made at Mapungubwe, the world was abuzz with the remarkable archaeological discoveries of Knossos (Hood & Smyth 1981), Hattusa (Beckman 2007), Machu Picchu (Reinhard 2007), The Tomb of Tutankhamun (Riggs 2016) and the Royal Tombs of Ur (Marchesi 2004).



Figure 1: Infographic timeline detailing the major 'discoveries' around the time of the Mapungubwe discover(ies).
A. Andreou, 2021.

3.3 Site Specifics: *The Iron Trinity*

3.3.1 Spatial Context

Mapungubwe, also referred to as The Mapungubwe Cultural Landscape as declared by UNESCO, is in the northern Limpopo Province within the SANParks Mapungubwe National Park, where the current borders of South Africa, Zimbabwe and Botswana meet (UNESCO 2002; Meyer 2011b, Huffman 2008). Environmentally, Mapungubwe is predominantly a

sandstone complex with abundant Mopane and Acacia shrubland, on what was previously known as the farm Greefswald 37MS (Forssman 2013; Meyer & Cloete 2010). The Mapungubwe Complex is formed primarily by three main stages of occupation found in the archaeological record. These are the middle Iron Age sites of Schroda (CE 900-1020), K2 (CE 1020 -1220) and Mapungubwe Hill (CE 1220 -1295), which will briefly be discussed individually below (Huffman 2000; Antonites 2016; Tiley-Nel 2017).



Figure 2: Map of the Mapungubwe National Park, with the perimeter demarcated in grey, and the sites Schroda, Mapungubwe Hill and K2 labelled. Google Maps, 2021.

The archaeological record of the Mapungubwe Cultural Landscape boasts a host of typologies and areas which have become the focal points of specialised study and enquiry within the archaeological field. These range from studies in faunal remains; human remains; metallurgy; architecture; trade; bead and glassware manufacture; low fired-ceramics and ceramic technologies; and archival assemblages (Antonites & Tiley-Nel 2015; Tiley-Nel & Botha 2013; Chirikure 2013; Weber 1937; Pearson 1937; Stanley 1937; Steyn 2007; Steyn 2011; Meyer & Cloete 2010; Prinsloo *et al* 2005; Prinsloo 2011; Tiley-Nel 2014; Tiley-Nel 2018).

3.3.2 Schroda

Schroda is a mid-tenth century (CE 900 – 1020) Zhizo agropastoralist site on the Mapungubwe landscape, some 5 km from Mapungubwe Hill (Huffman 2007; Carruthers 2006). The site and its archaeological finds contextualise the earliest identifiable phase in the history of the Mapungubwe Complex. For unknown reasons, the people of Schroda vacated the area; Tom Huffman leads the hypothesis that this was due to a shift in the socio-political and economic climate (Antonites 2016; Tiley-Nel 2017; Huffman 2000).

Schroda is noted for its evidence of early trade networks to the East and significant archaeological finds. Over and above the expected ceramicware and human remains, an intricate collection of clay animal and anthropomorphic figures have been found. These have been proposed by Dederen and Mokakabye, amongst others, to be associated with initiation and coming of age ceremonies (Antonites 2016; Dederen & Mokakabye 2017; Humphreys 2011).

3.3.3 K2

K2, a Leopard's Kopjie tradition site, is the second capital attributed to the Mapungubwe Cultural Landscape. Located a mere 1.05 km from Mapungubwe Hill, the site was occupied for two centuries before being abandoned for Mapungubwe Hill (Huffman 2000; Carruthers 2006; Maggs 2000).

This site is most associated with the discovery of the introduction of glass beads, and, more importantly, evidence of the re-smelting of glass beads on site; the first evidence of this in the area (Huffman 2000; Gardner 1963). In addition to the presence of beads, both the iconic 'garden roller' beads so synonymous with the K2 site but also exotic trade glass beads, was a hoard of worked ivory and bone fragments (Tiley-Nel & Antonites 2015).

3.3.4 Mapungubwe Hill

Mapungubwe Hill is one of the first African city states and served as a trading post with regions such as Egypt, South-East Asia, India, Persia and China (Schoeman & Hay 2013; Huffman 2008). Mapungubwe Hill is perhaps the site most strongly associated with the

Mapungubwe Complex; this due to the three royal graves on top of the hill. These graves provided an assemblage of intricate gold items (van Graan 2011; Tiley-Nel & Botha, 2013).

The focus of the collection resulting from the find were three gold animal figurines: a rhino, a bovine, and a feline, with the addition of a sceptre and a vessel. This does however not cover the full expanse of the find. A cache of gold tacks, canular coil wire and gold beads (fashioned into various jewellery items such as anklets, bracelets, and necklaces), as well as emergent animal foil forms were found (Tiley-Nel & Botha 2013).

Interestingly, the majority of the foil forms currently in the collection are defined as *emergent*, as upon the discovery they were disassociated fragments. These fragments were then later assembled into new forms emerging from these foil pieces – giving the term emergent. Huffman originally posited the larger recognisable parts of the gold animal figurines to be two more rhinos (Huffman 2007). It was only in 2006 that, with the help of the South African Institute for Objects Conservation¹⁰, the bovine and the feline were re-interpreted from the fragments (Botha & Tiley-Nel 2013; Tiley-Nel 2009). The interpretation and, specifically, the *re-interpretation* of these will be detailed in Chapter Four.

3.4 Of Discoveries, (Re)Discoveries and Subterfuge

The term of (Re)Discovery is an important concept. With the publicised discovery of the Mapungubwe site and, of course, its gold hoard, taking the country by storm in 1933, it must be clarified that this was neither the first nor the second time that the site and its treasures had been ‘found’ (Wintjes & Tiley-Nel 2019). To assist in better contextualisation of the narrative, I first discuss the events of 1932 as the (Re)Discovery, and then unpack the two recorded earlier discoveries.

¹⁰ Now named the South African Institute for Heritage Science & Conservation

3.4.1 The (Re)Discovery: *Messers van Graan, and Fouché*

The much-publicised discovery in 1932 by the van Graans and Fouché brought about a shift in the way the academic fraternity and the newly introduced archaeological practices and thought orbited each other in southern Africa. In this section, Jerry van Graan's accounts will be discussed.

The two accounts of the (re)discovery of Mapungubwe are firstly a translated verbatim recollection by Jerry van Graan, given in a radio interview in 1973. Secondly, there is an undated and unaddressed letter written by him, presumably some time following the (re)discovery (added in appendices). The core recollection of both accounts is similar.¹¹ They are summarised and collated in the following paragraphs, after which my analysis follows.

In his youth Ernst van Graan had befriended an African gentleman. After some time (and perhaps some pointed convincing) the man began to tell Ernst about the legends and mythologies surrounding a sacred hill to the north. The place was rumoured to once have been home to great kings and a wealth of treasures. The man refused to take Ernst to or give him directions to find the sacred place. These events took place in the small town of Alldays, some 69 km from where the Mapungubwe National Park is today.

Ernst van Graan passed the story of the sacred hill and its treasure down to his son, Jerry. During his studies in history / anthropology (at that point referred to as *Volkekunde*) at the University of Pretoria, Jerry relayed this story to Prof Leo Fouché. This happened during an African pre-history lecture on the then recent work done by Gertrude Caton-Thompson at Great Zimbabwe. Fouché naturally denounced the claims as ridiculous fiction, which prompted Jerry to vow that he would find it himself. Fouché, apparently, gave the challenge “with a great deal of mirth and teasing” (Tiley-Nel 2018; van Graan, 2011:44).

¹¹ Mapungubwe Archive Reference: UP/AGL/D/12.

Some time later,¹² after Jerry had graduated and was teaching in the town, he met an African man named Mowena through one of the local farmers. Mowena was in possession of a beautiful clay pot, and upon inquiry revealed the pot was rumoured to be from a sacred hill, filled with treasures. Jerry remembered the stories from his youth, and immediately told his father.

On 31 December 1932, the Van Graans and three local farmers embarked on an attempt at finding the sacred hill.¹³ They had hoped to make use of Mowena, but, to their dismay, Mowena refused to help them (due to heavy rains and the danger of summiting the Hill). Eventually Mowena's son was persuaded (financially) to lead them along the path from his village.¹⁴ Their path led them into a valley of flat-topped hills, and Jerry asked Mowena's son if one of the hills was the hill they were searching for. Mowena's son is said to have been unable to respond, and abruptly disappeared among the trees instead. The Van Graans took this as their answer.

Despite his visible reluctance, Jerry and Ernst continued making numerous attempts to pry further information out of Mowena's son. After much persuasion, he eventually showed them a secret path which would allow them to summit the hill. He directed them to a tree behind which to look and they found the secret path and summited the hill.¹⁵

Jerry, the youngest of the group, was elected to scale the narrow crevice forming the path to the top –a daunting task even today with the stairway currently in place. After they found surface deposits, a few copper arrowheads, and a section of gold foil, the Van Graans knew they were in the right place and began detailed searching and sub-surface

¹² There is no distinctive time frame between the events but based on the signature of the letter sent to Fouché from van Graan regarding the 'discovery' in 1933 and the uncertainty of Fouché remembered him, it can be assumed that it was several years.

¹³ H.P. van der Walt, D.J. du Plessis and M. Venter

¹⁴ "I took a handful of small change from my pocket, mostly copper and a few silver coins, about one rand..." (van Graan, 2011:45)

¹⁵ The tree, a wild fig, which still grows there today, see *figures 3, 4*.

excavations. Following their summit on the first day and their initial finds, the explorers went back on two more days.

Their searching and excavations unearthed a plethora of artefacts. These included gold beads and nails, jewellery, sheet gold, glass beads, etc. During the excavations they also found a grave, which is assumed to have been the first (in roughly 600 years) unearthing of a gold burial at Mapungubwe Hill.

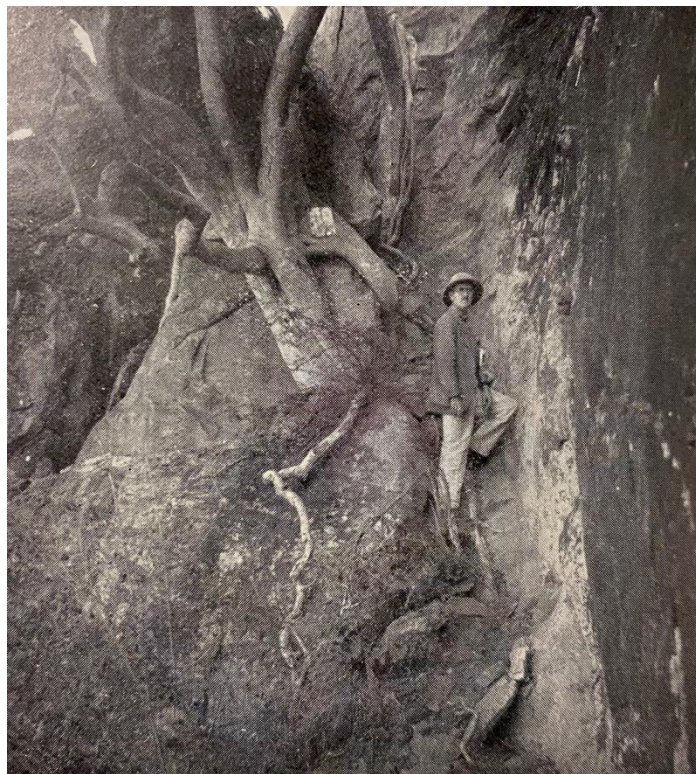


Figure 3: Photograph of the wild fig, the tree that served as marker of the secret path. (Fouché 1937: plate vi)

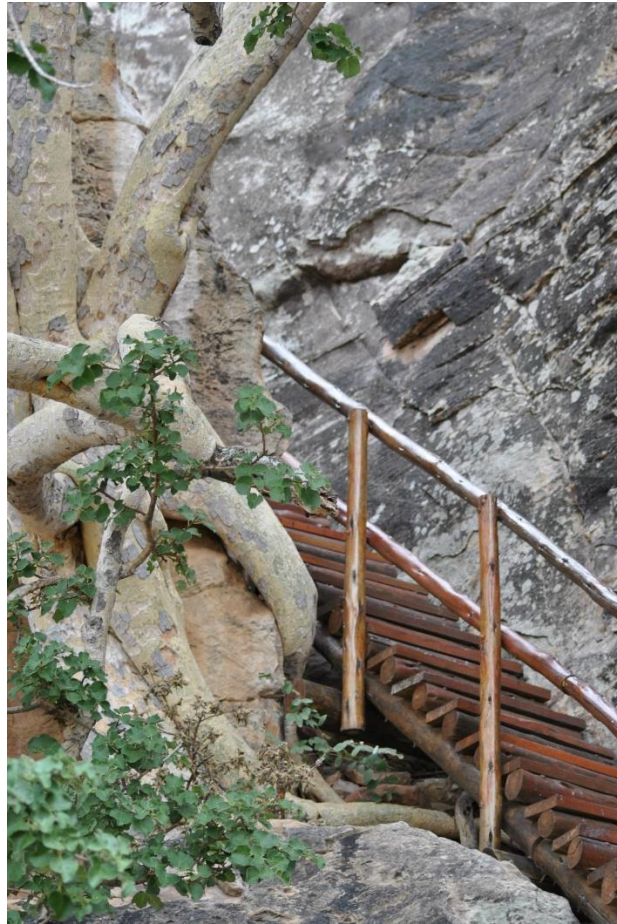


Figure 4: Photograph of the wild fig, the tree that served as marker of the secret path – with contemporary staircase. Photograph by author, 2015.

From their own reports, the Van Graans had every intention to not only find the hill, but to summit it; to find the treasure. By the time they embarked on the expedition, they likely had little doubt that they were on the precipice of something great.

But they also knew that the place was sacred to the local community; their lack of respect and understanding perhaps testament of the political and racial beliefs of the day. Not only did the local community know about the Hill; they *revered* it. To them, it truly was (and still is) a sacred place. This is important to remember when dealing with the terms ‘discovery’, ‘finding’, ‘unearthing’, and all iterations thereof when dealing Mapungubwe – the local communities did not need the Hill to be discovered. The Hill was right there, in all its sacred glory.

Sadly, this was seen as irrelevant to the white ‘discoverers’. They failed to see that Mapungubwe was, in fact, never lost, and it certainly never needed to be ‘found’.

3.4.2 Lotrie and Lottering

Although the Van Graans are credited as the ‘discoverers’ of Mapungubwe, it had in fact been visited and written about prior to their interest. The first noted discovery was by François Bernard Rudolph Lotrie (sometimes referred to as Frans Lottering), originally from Grahamstown in the Eastern Cape, who had lived on a neighbouring farm *Koedoesvlei* in the late 1880s (Moerschell 1912; Tiley-Nel 2011a; Wintjes & Tiley-Nel 2019).^{16 17} Lotrie was known to have lived in a small self-built house in the vicinity of the base of Mapungubwe Hill until 1902 (de Vaal 1977; Tiley-Nel 2011a). Tiley-Nel (2011a:11) writes that “Legend has it that he discovered a beautifully crafted clay pot which he gave to his African friend Mowena, who more than thirty years later, led the van Graans to Mapungubwe Hill”.¹⁸

Lotrie, while rumoured to have found an initial gold cache in his time at the Hill, had none to his name save for a single gold bangle which adorned his right wrist – any supposed other gold he had found is said to have been washed away in a flood at his home in Kalkbank (Tiley-Nel 2011a; Wintjes & Tiley-Nel 2019). Rosenthal suggests that Lotrie had embarked on a handful of ventures to the area where he had hidden his loot but was unable to find any of it (Rosenthal 1951).¹⁹

It should be noted that even Fouché viewed Lotrie as the pioneer western discoverer of Mapungubwe Hill, which he based on mention of him in Moerschell’s *Der Wilde Lotrie* (Fouché 1937; Moerschell 1912; Tiley-Nel 2018).

¹⁶ Noted, but with very scant archival materials on the subject.

¹⁷ Lotrie also written in the archival record as Lottrie, Lotree and Lotrich.

¹⁸ We see a slight deviation to this statement here in that from van Graan’s verbatim account, it was one of Mowena’s sons who lead them and not Mowena himself. This could be due to Mowena being a family name passed down from father to son.

¹⁹ It is advised in Wintjes & Tiley Nel 2019 that it is best treat the validity of Rosenthal’s work on Lotrie with caution due to the lack of substantial source references.

Barend Lottering, Frans Lotrie's youngest son, who had lived on the Farm Greefswald for nearly two decades before the publicised discovery in 1933, can also be considered a (re)discoverer of Mapungubwe. His father had introduced him to the site, and there are records of Lottering showing visitors around the hill and conducting minor excavations. This included the local prospector Richard Glen Rorke. In addition to Rorke, he had taken Johannesburg business mogul Von Leeson who in turn brought Leo Frobenius and his German expeditionary team (Schoeman 2011; Wintjes & Tiley-Nel 2019; von Leeson 1928²⁰).

Although the archival evidence documenting Lotrie and Lottering's (re)-discovery of Mapungubwe is scant, I find it unlikely that a local prospector would have been involved if there had not been some kind of evidence or mention of gold.

3.4.3 Frobenius and the German Expedition of 1928

The involvement of Frobenius and his expeditionary team accounted for the first scientific survey conducted at the Mapungubwe Hill. The survey consisted of a week of minor excavations, photographic landscape studies and annotations of the discovered archaeological material. These findings were however still subject to the political supremacist views at the time. For many years, the materiality and remains of the ancient architecture were attributed to Phoenician, Egyptian or Asian settlers – who while still seen as inferior to Westerners – were not deemed as inferior as Africans who “were not capable of working gold” (Miller, Desai & Lee-Thorp 2000: 91 – 92; Wintjes & Tiley-Nel 2019; Kuljian 2016; Carruthers 2006). The Frobenius records were unpublished and have surfaced only recently during the work done by Justine Wintjes (Wintjes 2017; Wintjes & Tiley-Nel 2019).

It is accidental that the academic world has these findings, as it was due to Wintjes' familiarity with the Mapungubwe landscape that they had come to light. These records formed part of a set of photographs and field notes which were incorrectly labelled by Frobenius and his team. The photograph which led to this discovery was of an unforgettable feature of a large

²⁰ Mapungubwe Archive Reference: UP/AGL/D/3464

dolomite dyke which scars the landscape – a view which, at the angle displayed, is only visible from the summit of Mapungubwe Hill. Wintjes, after examining the assemblage of photographs and notes, states that she quickly realised that the German expeditionary team had mistakenly referred to Mapungubwe Hill as Manopie (Wintjes 2017).²¹

Frobenius and his expeditionary team recorded their time at ‘Manopie’ / Mapungubwe from 08 October 1928 to 15 October 1928 where they sunk trenches and conducted minor excavations with detailed and annotated diagrams and photographs of their processes and findings. They recorded the sighting, detailing and removal of several pottery items and other artefacts, presumedly worked iron and stone. There was no mention of the presence of gold during their weeks’ worth of work on the hill (Wintjes 2017).

It comes across as peculiar that the Frobenius expedition did not report a single gold item during their week on the Hill, especially considering the rich quantity of these items that were unearthed only moments after the van Graan’s summited. This is of note given the unconstrained vigour with which much of the archaeological sites were being plundered and pillaged on a global context. Wintjes and Tiley Nel agree (2019:107; Kuklick 1991): “The complete absence of any mention of gold from the various archival sources makes one wonder whether the unspoken retrieval of gold items was a primary motivation behind the visits, evoking the pillaging that took place elsewhere in a deceitful entwinement of treasure hunting and archaeology, for example in the activities of the Ancient Ruins Company at Zimbabwe sites in Southern Rhodesia in the late 19th century.”

3.5 Involvement of the University of Pretoria

3.5.1 Around the time of (Re)Discovery

As discussed in an earlier section, Jerry van Graan was a student of Prof. Fouché in the Department of Anthropology.

²¹ Manopie is incidentally the name of another rocky outcrop on the Mapungubwe Cultural Landscape, not far from Mapungubwe Hill.

Following up on the 'challenge' Jerry had accepted when Fouché had laughed off his tales of the hill, he sent the professor a letter on his finds, which is translated below. This letter, as with the Jerry's handwritten account of the discovery,²² contains several antiquated racial slurs. While they are not censored in the archival records provided in this document for the sake of historic transparency, the translations have these slurs omitted.

²² Mapungubwe Archive Reference: UP/AGL/D/12. Inserted as Appendix A.

"Barend 1089".
P.K. Mopani,
N. Transvaal.
6. 2. 33.

Prof. Dr. L. Fouché,
Universiteit van Pretoria,
Pretoria.

Geachte Professor,

Steelwaarskynlik het u my al vergeet, maar as u in briedje terug dink sal u u miskien nog kan herinner, dat ek een van u oud-studente is.

Terwyl ek in u klas was het ons die Simbabwe Bou-valle behandel, en o.a. het u ons vertel dat die begrafflaas van die bewoners van Simbabwe nog nie gevind is nie, en toe het ek u mos vertel van 'n sodanige plek, waarvoor kaffus my van vertel het.

Nou het dit my geluk om die genoemde begrafflaas te vind. (Ek veronderstel natuurlik maar dat dit die begraffplek van Simbabwe is.) Daar is grafte wat lyk of dit miskien duisende jare oud kan wees. Daar is ook allerhande goue, koper en yster juwele en artikels. Natuurlik, die koper en yster is meestal vergaan. Onder aparte kowat stuur ek u in paar artikels, wat daar gevind word. Miskien sal u my beter verstaan, as u dit self sien.

Siende dat daar baie goue artikels is, beskou ek die ontdekking as baie waardevol, en daarom neem ek ~~ook~~ nou my toevlug tot u. Kan u my nou ask. se, wat so 'n ontdekking man of min werd is, en wat se eis ek moet stel om 'n persoon die genoemde plek te gaan aan wys? Ook sal ek graag wil weet hoe ek in aanraking kan kom met persone, wat alles wetenskaplik kan ondersoek? Stekmoontlik is u die geskikte persoon om hierdie ontdekking te ondersoek en bekend te maak. Daarom sal ek graag dadelik van u wil hoor.

Hoogagting,

U oud-student,

J. G. O. van Graan.

P.S. Ek sal bly wees, as u die inhoud van die pakkie wou in my wil terug stuur, sodra u dit gesien het.

Figure 5: The letter from van Graan to Fouché dated 1933. Mapungubwe Archive Reference: UP/AGL/D/2.

The letter, originally in Afrikaans, is translated below.

Dear Professor,

You have most probably forgotten me, but if you think back you might be able to remind yourself that I am one of your old students.

While in class, we addressed the Zimbabwe Ruins and, amongst other things, you told us that the graveyard of the residents of Zimbabwe has not yet been found. That is when I told you of such an apparent place, which old (*word omitted*) had told me about.

Now fortune has come upon me to find the mentioned graveyard. (Of course, I assume that it is the graveyard of Zimbabwe.) There are graves that appear as if they can be thousands of years old.

There are also all sorts of golden, copper, and iron jewels and articles. Naturally, the copper and iron have mostly perished. In a separate package I also send you a few of the articles that have been found there, hoping you will understand me better if you see them for yourself.

Since there are a lot of golden articles, I view the find as very valuable. This is why I am now approaching you, sir.

Would you please be able to tell me what the estimated value of a find such as this would be, and which claim I would have to make in order to show the relevant person the site? I would also like to know how I would be able to get in contact with the relevant person that will be able to examine everything scientifically? Most likely you are the most suitable person to examine this discovery and publicise it. That is why I would like to hear from you immediately.

With admiration, your old student, J.C.O. van Graan.

PS, I would be glad if you could return the contents of the accompanying package to myself once you have seen it.

Trans: J. van der Westhuizen, 2021

I would like to stress the chronology of Jerry's letter. They, as the (re)discovering party, had at least some concept of understanding of what they had found. He makes specific mention of graves that 'can be thousands of years old' and 'lots of golden articles'. What is important to note, is that this letter is dated roughly a month *after* the initial (re)discovery. In the radio interview referred to earlier, Jerry mentions that it took much convincing for the (re)discovering party to agree to allow him to approach Prof. Fouché in order to conduct a scientific study.

The content of the letter (and indubitably the accompanying box of gold items) sparked immediate reaction from Fouché. According to van Graan (2011), Fouché entered into an agreement with them (the 'discoverers') before the University of Pretoria (led by Fouché) stepped onto the site.

van Graan 2011:48 states:

Upon receiving my parcel, he reacted at once and sent me a telegram, requesting that we come see him immediately so that we could negotiate about revealing the secret place. Since my grandfather was the most senior of the group,²³ we decided that he would negotiate with the professor. On his arrival in Pretoria, Prof. Fouché and a number of academics had their proposals for negotiation ready and submitted them to my grandfather. They offered to pay us for half of everything we had found there, and that we would also receive half of everything they discovered during their research but that they first had to buy out the farm in question before anyone could lay claim to the finds. In this way they persuaded my grandfather to give them the name of the farm. They established the name of the owner without any trouble and, without telling him about the discovery, they bought the farm for next to nothing.

²³ Throughout the verbatim account, he has named his grandfather as a member of the expedition despite all other historical accounts stating Ernst was his father. This is noted in a preface to van Graan's translated account of events (van Graan 2011:44).

Despite the probability of recollected events varying some 50 years later, what unfolded is quite clear. Following the (re)discovery of Mapungubwe Hill by the van Graans, Prof Fouché had no doubt about the significance of the find. I cannot help but wonder what his first thoughts were when he read through Jerry's letter and opened the accompanying package. Had they found the graveyard of Great Zimbabwe?

What followed was the start of the scientific investigation into one of the early birthplaces of African brilliance and ingenuity. Scientifically, this culminated in the compiled study by Fouché (1937), *Mapungubwe: ancient Bantu Civilisation on the Limpopo: reports on excavations at Mapungubwe (Northern Transvaal) from February 1933 to June 1935 Volume I*. This work consists of specialist studies of individual aspects of the findings on site (skeletal remains, beads, gold, metallurgy, pottery) by academics of the day Galloway (1937); Beck (1937); Pearson (1937); Stanley (1937); and Schofield (1937). These works are viewed further, with specific focus on Galloway's study in Chapter Four.

3.5.2 The Science of Early Mapungubwe

The involvement and custodianship by the University of Pretoria of the Mapungubwe archaeological finds, history, interpretations, and re-interpretations have contributed invaluable to world history through the publicization of the site. The manner and tone of the involvement today is thankfully very different to how it was at the outset, as will be discussed in the following sections (Tiley-Nel 2018; Carruthers 2006).

The University took up the mantle as sole custodian of the site, and the subsequent collection that resulted of it. This included the archival repository which was created in the years post discovery. In part, the discovery of Mapungubwe also led to the establishment of the University of Pretoria Archaeological Committee in 1933, following the announcement of the gold by Fouché in February of that year. The Committee was tasked with the finalisation of the excavations between 1933 and 1947, and the subject-specific scientific research which would take place as a result thereof. It was to act as sole voice and decision-making body on the matter (Strydom 2013; Tiley-Nel 2018; Schoeman 2011; Fouché 1937; Carruthers 2006).

The committee was comprised of government officials, university staff and representatives for the public. These consisted of individuals such as Fouché; D. E. Malan; J. S. Smit; J. de Villiers Roos; C. Maggs; T. Truter; C. van Riet-Lowe; J. H. de Wet; R. L. Barry, and A.E. du Toit (Tiley-Nel 2018).²⁴

An undertone of the Committee however was seeing to that a darker side of academia came to the fore - Volkekunde, in the Department of Anthropology which “put Afrikaner nationalism into full practice” (Tiley-Nel 2018:96). This dark academia focussed rather on aligning to the backwards political ideologies of the day than purely on the marvel and historical significance of the site. By this I refer to the studies on so-called ‘Bantu genetics’, a whole hidden subsect of the Mapungubwe history which was dedicated not to the archaeological material or anthropological wealth, but rather to a racial puritan agenda (Tiley-Nel 2018; Carruthers 2006). This particular study by Dr Alexander Galloway (1937) is discussed in the following chapter.

3.5.3 On Owners, Custodians and Stewards

What is interesting to note, is the University’s status as owner, custodian and steward of the site; despite the multiple claims on both the history of the site, and the land itself (Tiley-Nel 2018; Sebola 2017). Their continued role as gatekeeper to this sacred space, which was acquired by them through the most underhanded of means, does beg the question – do they really still have the ‘right’ to this proprietorship?

²⁴ These individuals were: a lecturer at the University of Pretoria in the Department of Zoology; a National Politician, and former Administrator of the Transvaal; Journalist, Attorney, Secretary of Justice and Director of Prisons, Humanitarian; Prominent Pretoria Businessman and donor to the University of Pretoria; Resident Magistrate for the Transvaal and Chief Commissioner of the Transvaal Police; Civil Engineer for the Department of Public Works, and Director of the Bureau of Archaeology at the University of Cape Town; Presumed to have been involved with the Department of Public Works; Secretary of the University of Pretoria Council; and Rector of the University of Pretoria. For further reading, see Tiley-Nel 2018: 96 – 126.

3.6 Heritage Legislature

3.6.1 The Bushman Relics Act of 1911

The 1911 Act is significant in that it's the first 'heritage' legislation passed in South Africa,²⁵ and gives a sense of how cultural heritage was understood at the time. The act focussed on, as the name suggests, so-called 'Bushman Relics' which were defined as any drawing, painting or petroglyph, as well as any midden or cave dwellings which were believed to be linked to any First Nation peoples.

3.6.1 The Natural and Historical Monuments Act of 1923

This, the second official legislation in the interests of the protection of heritage resources in South Africa is two pages in the Gazette.²⁶ The document calls for the founding of the Commission for the Preservation of Natural and Historical Monuments of the Union.

3.6.2 The Natural and Historical Monuments, Relics and Antiques Act of 1934

The 1934 Act broadened the protections and scope of previous legislation to allow for the acquisition, repair and the erection of signage for spaces of listed monuments.²⁷ It also expanded on the type of space or objects which were now to fall under this act and benefit from it. It strengthened the protection of such articles and fortified legal ramifications which would result of any disregard to these rules.

²⁵ The full text for this Act is available online at:

<https://sahris.sahra.org.za/sites/default/files/website/articledocs/Bushman%20Relics%20Act%201911.pdf>

²⁶ The full text for this Act is available online at:

<https://sahris.sahra.org.za/sites/default/files/website/articledocs/Natural%20and%20Historical%20Monuments%20Relics%20and%20Antiques%20Act%201923.pdf>

²⁷ The full text for this Act is available online at:

<https://sahris.sahra.org.za/sites/default/files/website/articledocs/Natural%20and%20Historical%20Monuments%20Relics%20and%20Antiques%20Act%20of%201934.pdf>

3.6.3 The National Monuments Act, No. 28 of 1969

The National Monuments Act extends from the Act of 1934 and brings into effect the allocation and erection of spaces and monuments of memorial to persons and events.²⁸ It also provisions for the declaration of shipwrecks as monuments. In addition, it speaks strongly to the implementation of permissions and permits which would become required for the transport or export of any article which would fall under the protection of the Act. A selection of the Mapungubwe collection (predominantly the gold vessel, sceptre and rhino) were declared national heritage objects by the National Monuments Council in 1997 (Meyer 2011a).

3.6.4 The National Heritage Act, No. 25 of 1999

This, South Africa's current heritage legal framework, came into effect with the turn of the century. It allows for more stringent and detailed provisions of protection. With respect of Mapungubwe, the site was gazetted as a Grade I National Heritage in 2001, according to the criteria highlighted in this new Act of 1999 for having "qualities so exceptional that they are of special national significance" (Haw 2011; NHRA 1999:18).

3.6.5 UNESCO

Mapungubwe was inscribed by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) as a 'specialised agency' of the UN's World Heritage list in 2003. It was declared as a World Heritage Site in 2009 conforming to the UNESCO guidelines criteria ii, iii, iv and v (Tiley-Nel 2018; UNESCO 2002; Meyer 2011b).

The site's applicability to these criteria is explored below (UNESCO 2002:11):

²⁸ The full text for this Act is available online at:

<https://sahris.sahra.org.za/sites/default/files/website/articledocs/National%20Monuments%20Act%201969.pdf>

- (ii) it exhibits an important interchange of human values, over the time period between AD 900 and 1300 in Southern Africa, on developments in technology and town-planning; and
- (iii) it bears a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilisation which has disappeared; and
- (iv) it is an outstanding example of a type of architectural and technological ensemble and landscape which illustrates a significant stage in human history; and
- (v) it is an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement and land-use which is representative of a culture that became vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change.

3.7 Claimant Communities: *vox populi*

Mapungubwe as site and as a place of deep historical and cultural significance has for much of the time following its (re)discovery been a topic of contestation (Nienaber *et al* 2008; Scheoman & Pikirayi 2011). This contestation arises out of the prospect of ownership of the land, the ancestors buried there and the history of the space.

This stems from the perceived lack of any direct or attributable descendants of the original peoples who had once inhabited Mapungubwe, as Dr Vele Neluvhalani has stated: “If you were to go to Mapungubwe, you won’t find the indigenous people, the original people who stayed at Mapungubwe” (Schoeman & Hay 2013:15; Sebola 2017; Nel 2011). In response to this lack of clear lineage, there are today a small number of claimant communities from the local and neighbouring groups who hold a deep symbolic association with the space (Nel 2011). These claimant communities are comprised of members of the Vhangona Cultural Movement, the Lemba Cultural Association and the Tshivhula Royal Family (Tiley-Nel 2019a; Sebola 2017; Nel 2011; Nel 2011).

In considering the lack of absolute and irrefutable proof of any direct descendants or proven ‘ownership’ of the Mapungubwe heritage, it has a blurring effect on the prospect of

association and who is allowed to make these claims. Former President Thabo Mbeki's praise of Mapungubwe during his consecration of the site as part of the African Renaissance rings loudly. He highlighted how the symbolism of Mapungubwe "can serve as an exemplar landscape for South African reconciliation and nation-building" (Carruthers 2006:3, Shepherd 2003, Maggs 2000).

This repositioning serves as an example of how the meaning and heritage of The Mapungubwe Cultural Landscape has continuously evolved since its (re)discovery. As a sacred Hill to local communities and one of the most important African archaeological finds of the century, Mapungubwe is considered to be a space of extraordinary emotional and scientific value to the greater narrative of reconciliation.

3.7.1 The Repatriation: *bones of contention, and a return to rest*

2007 saw the return of the Mapungubwe human remains to the site. This came about following a call from the claimant communities for the bodies of their ancestors to be laid to rest (Nel 2011; Steyn 2011; Meyer 2011a; Nienaber *et al* 2008).

The University, the communities, and a host of stakeholders were involved in the negotiations around the call for repatriation. Much like with Prestwich Street, there was opposition against the repatriation proceeding in the light of proposed future scientific relevance and study potential of the remains (Steyn 2011; Nienaber *et al* 2008; Shepherd 2007; Schoeman & Pikirayi 2011; Rassool 2015).

The negotiations culminated in the customary cleansing practices taking place at the Hill on 06 November 2007, with the burials occurring on the 20th of November 2007 (Nel 2011).

The great strides that have been made in effective management of relationships between archaeology (as science) and the claimant communities must be commended. This incredibly important Cultural Heritage facet of the reborn South Africa (linked to archaeological practice) holds great potential in our ongoing understanding and acceptance of our mosaiced history as a country (Schoeman & Pikirayi 2011).

Chapter Four

All that Glitters is not Gold: Historical Representations

“These stone walls, potsherds and other relics from the past that are now lying so quietly before us are the remains of a once living and thriving community with a respected king or queen, now long gone and forgotten; people to be understood and appreciated and their heritage to be cherished and preserved by us who came later.”

~ Johannes Frederik Eloff ~

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I focus on a selection of representations of Mapungubwe which can be considered ‘historical’ representations. These historical representations are comprised of archival documents and field reports, as well as artefactual material and the archaeological record.

As discussed in an Chapter One, Mapungubwe is a highly influential research area in academia as a result of the richly varied facets and avenues attributed to the site. These research areas include for instance: archaeology and palaeontology, anthropology, environmental and geographic studies. As a result, the collection of work and research available is extraordinary.

Aligning with the above representation typologies, I have selected one body of work from the archive to discuss; Fouché’s 1937 *Mapungubwe Ancient Bantu Civilisation on the Limpopo: Reports on Excavations at Mapungubwe*. From this, I refine my focus to discuss a particular section - Galloway’s *The Skeletal Remains of Mapungubwe* (1937). In addition, I also look at the artefactual material and archaeological record as a source, with the Gold Rhino as a particular case study.

When analysing these representations, the underlying creation of meaning through the representations is crucial. How are the ideas of 'truth' and knowledge and 'authenticity' constructed in the representations? It is also important to note the discussion raised by Kasfir around binary classifications as 'authentic' being a denotation of 'good' and 'inauthentic' meaning 'bad' when dealing with representations. The study does not aim to create a classification of intrinsically good or bad sources but aims to view and discuss how certain sources represent Mapungubwe and what it stands for (Kasfir 1992).

The Mapungubwe Gold, being the most alluring aspect of the collection, is the second focus of this chapter, with the Gold Rhino and other animal forms serving as a primary case study.

4.2 The Archaeological Record and Artefactual Material

4.2.1 The Mapungubwe Gold Rhino

The Gold Rhino is a captivating gold foil figurine that was once tacked onto a wooden core (Fouché 1937; Tiley-Nel 2019b; Tiley-Nel 2009; Tiley-Nel & Botha 2013). The body of the rhino is a single large sheet of foil which has been shaped through creasing and striking from the reverse side, through a process known as *repoussé*. The head and horn are separately formed foil constructs which were tacked onto each other and then to the shoulders with tiny gold tacks and shanks – these would also have ensured the foil was adhered to the wooden core. The rhino's ears are fluted nails, and the eyes large dome-capped nails while the tail is of a solid construction with incised lines alluding to a tuft of hair. The rhino's well-defined but stout legs end in broad, flared feet and the rest of the body exhibits a bulged midriff with a sloping rump and squared shoulders.

Oddy (1991) is of the opinion that the rhino is a young male, due to the lack of a secondary horn. He supplements this with the statement that it could also have been due to a lack of experience in the sculptor who was unable to affix the second cone instead of a deliberate aesthetic decision (Oddy 1991). While it is more likely that the lack of a secondary horn is an aesthetic decision, it is worth consideration that the rhino could purposefully have been an allusion to a young bull. The rhino, as it is interpreted to be, is a funerary item. In considering

Oddy's young bull hypothesis the skeletal remains associated with the 'Original Gold Burial' (M₁ A620) where the fragmentary rhino was discovered, are that of a young adult male of between 25 and 45 years old (Steyn 2007). Based on this, it could be considered that with knowledge of the rhino as a funerary item, that it was possibly buried with the individual in death, with the figurine potentially having been symbolic of an earlier rite of passage which he had kept with him. Or alternatively, that the grave is of a young king, and the rhino was fashioned after his death to commemorate his youth. There is of course no definitive way of knowing this, but it does give a feasibility to Oddy's observation.

The rhino is however so much more than just its materiality. The rhino is a symbolic representation of sacred leadership, with a suggestion by Boeyens and van der Ryst that the Mapungubwe rhino had once been affixed to the top of the sceptre (and others like it) as a symbol of office (Boeyens & van der Ryst 2014). This notion of the Mapungubwe rhino existing as emblematic of royal influence and authority is also echoed in works by Huffman (1996b), Hall & Steffoff (2006), and Fouché (1937). It should be noted that the use of rhino bones and horn were also part of rainmaking rituals, which were integral to the Mapungubwe culture and tradition (Murimbika 2006; Huffman 1996b). Archaeologists and anthropologists can attest to this due to the material evidence on the Mapungubwe Cultural Landscape which links to rainmaking practices, which is synonymous with the area (Murimbika 2006; Huffman 1996b).



Figure 6: *The Original Gold Rhino*, taken during the *Gold Inventory Project*, 2015. Photograph by author, 2015.

4.2.2 Artefacts Re-interpreted

In Chapter Two, I discussed the importance of the context of material and empirical data to the methods of archaeological interpretation. This context and the interpretation thereof are paramount to furthering the understanding of a site or excavation (Butzer 1980; N/A 1960; Greene 1995; Ascher 1961; Daniel & Renfrew 1988; Jones 2001). The lack of context, which leads to an inference from absence is also an integral part of the foundational understanding process of a site and its materiality (Wallach 2019).

Following the uncovering of the first gold grave M₁ A620 by the van Graan party in 1932, the gold was first examined by Mr Pearson, Dr Weber and Prof Stanley. Their focus was, for the most part, confirmation of materiality and to an extent, purity. Much of the discussion in their analyses orbited around the method in which the canular wire was drawn and the

manufacture of the gold bead typologies. There is, like most references in this compendium, a strong racial dialogue which is pulled through. In this instance through commentary on the supposed rudimentary nature of the metalworking found at the site (Fouché 1937; Pearson 1937; Weber 1937; Stanley 1937).

The analysis by Dr Weber is brief and prefixed with his personal statement of “My ignorance in such matters is so profound that I am naturally looking forward with some interest to the echoes which my probably unorthodox remarks will produce (Fouché 1937:114, Weber 1937). Unfortunately, Fouché adds no mention as to who Dr Weber is, or what his field is, but it can be assumed to be something perhaps alien to archaeology or metallurgy based on his comment. Tiley-Nel & Botha (2013) list Dr Weber as a metallurgical specialist in their work *The conservation of the Mapungubwe gold collection, South Africa*, but based on his comment I am not inclined to take this at face-value.

Mr Pearson served as the Deputy Master of the Royal Mint and was also responsible for many of the initial weighing and other metrics of the gold which was sent to him by Fouché. Based on the date of the earliest of the records,²⁹ it could be assumed that they were of the package of items sent to Fouché by van Graan, followed by items collected resulting of the initial fieldwork.

4.2.1.1 *Of (Re)Discovery*

The first unearthing of the now famous Mapungubwe Rhino can be credited to the van Graan party. From Jerry van Graan’s handwritten account,³⁰ the record shows that the first gold finds included “several large sheets of gold”, as well as the “small buffaloes” (UP/AGL/D/12). From later records by Fouché (1937), it can be confirmed that these were in fact parts of the Mapungubwe Rhino. Duffey (2012) argues that the first person to attempt assemblage of the rhino was most likely Pearson from the Royal Mint.

²⁹ Appendix A, B, and C. Mapungubwe Archive Reference: UP/AGL/D/7; UP/AGL/D/8; UP/AGL/D/10.

³⁰ Mapungubwe Archive Reference UP/AGL/D/12

Based on this, it can be concluded that Pearson was unsuccessful in his reconstruction. The pieces of the rhino were identified, but it was not until much later that the reconstruction was completed. The other figures, described as “small buffaloes” by van Graan (UP/AGL/D/12) were also postulated to have been additional rhinos by many in the field, including Tom Huffman (2007:58)

4.2.1.2 Fouché’s Excavations

During the scientific studies conducted by Fouché and his party (1933 – 1937), several more pieces of gold foil were unearthed. At the time these were believed to be from more rhino or buffalo figures. These were entered into the archival record, but not much work at reconstructing them was done.

4.2.1.2 The British Museum

Andrew Oddy of the British Museum Conservation Division had first assessed the Mapungubwe Gold in the 1980s, before conducting the restoration and reconstruction of the Gold Rhino in 1999. (Oddy 1984; Oddy 1983; Tiley-Nel 2009; Tiley-Nel & Botha 2013). The British Museum also assisted with the cleaning of much of the foil items, as well as the later reconstruction of the vessel by Marilyn Hockey in 2000 (Tiley-Nel & Botha 2013).

4.2.1.3 The South African Institute for Heritage Science & Conservation

It was not until 2006 that the two additional iconic animal figurines were carefully restored and reconstructed. The fruits of this exercise yielded two previously unknown animals. The first of these being in the form of a bovine or buffalo, and the second of a feline. These figurines were restored and reconstructed from 40 and 36 individual foil fragments, respectively (Tiley-Nel 2009). In addition to the reinterpretation and resurrection of these two forms, the institute and its team of conservators were integral in the stabilisation of the nearly 9kg worth of anklets, necklaces, and bracelets which form the bulk of the gold collection (Tiley-Nel 2009; Tiley-Nel & Botha 2013).

4.2.1.4 Reconstruction – *ex cineribus*

Although the artefactual material had been carefully investigated, documented, and restored, the Mapungubwe Gold animal figurines could not be seen collectively for 76 years after their (re)discovery. There was a total of 1500 hours of conservation work that went into the meticulous reconstruction of these items. (Tiley-Nel 2019b).

I also cannot resist likening the proverbial rebirth of the Mapungubwe animal figures, and especially the Rhino, with the rebirth of South Africa as a democracy post-Apartheid. The rampant political and racial agendas documented as part of the initial scientific records had to be broken down before the attributed meaning could truly become apparent, and much like the Mapungubwe Hill rising from the valley, so too can the artefacts.

4.2.3 Artefacts Reproduced

The Gold Rhino is one of the most ubiquitous images used in representations of Mapungubwe.³¹ Of these, the most notable popular reproduction is probably in the iconography of the medal presented to recipients of the highest National Order – the Order of Mapungubwe (Pikirayi 2011). Through the Order, the Rhino has indubitably become an important symbol in South African lives. Just as the Gold Rhino had once been a symbol of greatness for the people of Mapungubwe, so too has the Rhino become symbolic of greatness, of respect, and of achievement.

Furthermore, its likeness finds itself on book covers, informational pamphlets, brochures, posters, design elements in hotels, and even as the inspiration and iconography for a local craft-coffee roastery.³² In 2006, in honour of Johannesburg's foundational history orbiting around gold discoveries, and to commemorate South Africa's first goldworkers – a large fibreglass statue of the Gold Rhino was erected on Main Street.

³¹ A note on semantics: The rhino is often referred to incorrectly as the 'Golden Rhino'. The term golden is implicit of colouration, and not materiality. Therefore the technically correct wording should be 'Gold Rhino'.

³² <https://www.cocobistro.co.za/rhino-roastery/>

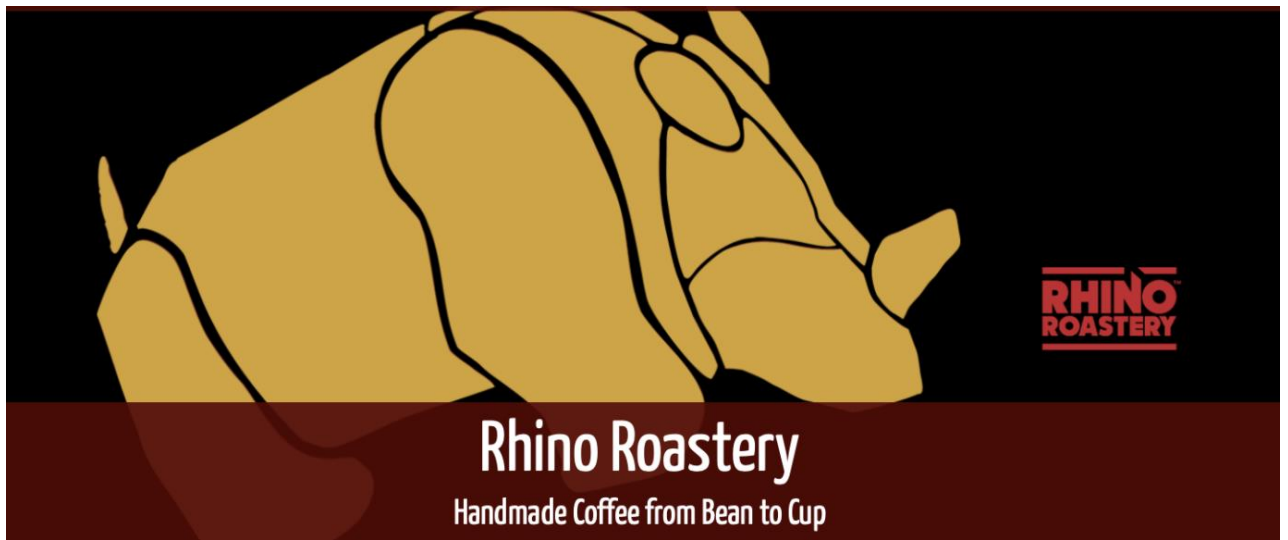


Figure 7: Corporate Identity and branding of the Rhino Roastery in Pretoria (Rhino Roastery 2015).



Figure 8: Statue of the Gold Rhino in Main Street, Johannesburg (Pikirayi 2011:268).

4.2.4 A Tale of Six Rhinos

When approaching museological artefacts, or any items of outstanding intrinsic and financial value, it has become important to consider the terms 'replica', 'fake', and 'aura'. Objects on display in a museum may intentionally not be the original. This could be due to a multitude of reasons, for example, during periods when items are being restored / cleaned or to alternate high-value items with replicas for security reasons (McGhie 2009; Yan 2010; Constantine 2016).

In Lisa McGhie's work; *Archaeology and Authenticity in South African Heritage Locales and Public Spaces* (McGhie 2009), she discusses and unpacks some of these terms. She describes replicas as being parasitic, parading as mirror of the original despite often being made by and of a completely different method and material. On the matter of fakes, she describes these as something otherworldly and almost embodying a metaphorical 'evil'. While being something created intentionally in order to deceive, these are often created in a manner which is purposefully more captivating and are made almost in this fashion to radiate a more powerful aura than the originals to which they are linked (McGhie 2009; Lovata 2007; Benjamin 2008).

Bringing to mind the words of Umberto Eco; "the creation of a copy aims to establish itself as a substitution for reality, as something even more real" (Eco 1986:8), McGhie examined the interaction of visitors engaging with the Blombos Ochre hologram at the WITS Origins Centre and argued that based on the "little visitor feedback to suggest they are pining for the real Blombos ochre, being more than content with having seen its hyper-real incarnation" (McGhie 2009: 352). This speaks to Benjamin's concept of aura (2008), and McGhie's positionality on fakes being more captivating than the hologram is better presented and consumed in this form.

Unbeknownst to many, in addition to the original reconstructed foil rhino that was excavated by the van Graans, there were five reproductions of the Mapungubwe Rhino made by the University of Pretoria: one for use in display in the Mapungubwe Gold Gallery; one for use in display at the Mapungubwe Hill Interpretation Centre at the site itself; and three more for

use in permanent displays at the Little World Museum of Man in Alchi, Japan, as well as the national museums in China and Taiwan, respectively (Fouché 1937; McGhie, 2009; Tiley-Nel 2011b; Newman & Kriel 2006).

My concern lies not with the reproduced rhinos on permanent display in international museums; these are labelled as reproductions. However, the rhinos on display in South Africa need to be questioned. While I focus on the Gold Rhino in this section, it should be noted that the main five iconic items: the rhino, bovine, feline, vessel and sceptre, were all reproduced and placed on display, while the originals remained secure in a vault. For many years, the replica rhino was on display at the University of Pretoria. The display plaque made no mention of any form of reproduction:

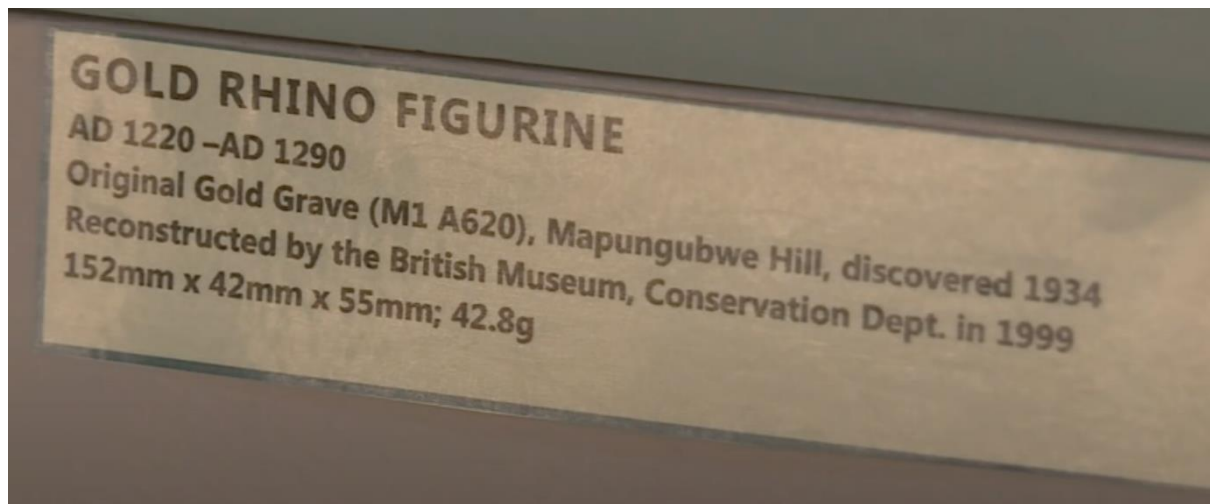


Figure 9: Example of the Gold Rhino's plaque, UP Museums ca. 2015. Captured still from a YouTube interview with curator, Sian Tiley-Nel (Tiley-Nel 2015).

What purpose did the display of these reproductions serve? Is this disregard of accuracy an example of unethical curatorial practice, or is the aura and mystical nature around these iconic items sufficient for viewers, as McGhie discussed in relation to the Blombos Ochre?

The inaccurate context provided on the accompanying plaque is where the crux of the matter lies. If these plaques are created in order to *intentionally* deceive, did it not make the displays 'fakes'? I can fully understand and advocate the sensitivity around the artefacts, with their inconceivable value as National Heritage, but does this not however *mandate* curatorial authenticity *because* of the intrinsic value of these artefacts?

As the use of these items as funerary-ware indicates the value they had not only to the individual they were buried with, but also to the people of the time. It is the purpose of museums to safeguard, to restore, and to preserve items of great significance; why treat the Mapungubwe Gold any differently?

On discussing this in alignment with the core question posed by this research of 'does it matter' that this particular exhibition had reproductions on display at the time, the answer is both yes and no. This duality arises from the fact that reproductions of key items is often commonplace in museums (Yan 2010; Fyfe 2004; Constantine 2016; Frijeje 2017). The reliance and effectiveness of aura in objects holds a hypnotic effect on visitors in that for the most part, museums can 'get away' with these illusions (Benjamin 2008; Frijeje 2017). In this regard, the historical accuracy of the representation does not matter.

Where the historical accuracy of the representation *does* matter, is when the curation is implicit that the viewer is engaging with the real object. This, as McGhie (2009) describes as the intention to deceive, is unethical and detracts from the experience entirely, even if the viewer is unaware of the fact. Further to this deception, is the robbing of an experience of the viewer, in often instances with Mapungubwe, a pilgrim, of being able to engage with an object of both sacred and National importance. While Fischer (1991) argues a sacral decontextualization in 'taking the crucifix out of the cathedral' meaning to strip it of its nature as a consecrated item, if the object during its use-life was perceived of unfathomable importance and sacrality, this would be eternally imbued within its materiality (Jones 2001). Just because the exhibition of reproductions in museums is commonplace that does *not* make it ethical – nor justifiable. If such a deception is to occur, rather have it stipulated in relation to the object. Museum objects, as discussed through the course of this thesis, are by their nature decontextualised – there is no need to decontextualise the viewer experience further by offering intentionally deceitful facsimiles and simulacra on display (Fischer 1991; McGhie 2006; Frijeje 2017). Benjamin speaks of an inter-relation between the existence of the object relying on the historical context to which it is attributed, and the existence of historical context in relation to the object to which it attributed. This notion of course alludes to Carr's position on the reliance of historian and fact, and fact on historian (Benjamin 2008; Frijeje; 2017; Carr 1990). Benjamin's attribution of inter-relation between object and history, which

is naturally flawed due to the decontextualised nature of museums exhibitions, shifts the onus to the curation process to bridge this gap (Benjamin 2008; Frijay 2017).

This argument is developed further in relation to the current exhibition of the Mapungubwe Gold at the Javett-UP Art Centre in the following chapter. It is important to conclude here, in anticipation of that particular discussion, that the Mapungubwe Gold currently on display at the Javett-UP Art Centre are the original iconic items.

4.3 Fieldwork, Findings and Finagling: *Fouché and Friends*

This compilation of documents and studies by Fouché (1937), *Mapungubwe Ancient Bantu Civilisation on the Limpopo: Reports on Excavations at Mapungubwe (Northern Transvaal) from February 1933 to June 1935* exists as the earliest multi-disciplinary study of Mapungubwe. The compendium focuses on a variety of subjects which still form the core research areas of and at the site today. These include the metallurgy, anthropological studies, ceramic technologies, botanical studies, beads, and human remains.

The body of work, as implicit from the title, follows the excavation reports and laboratory studies on the site and its materiality from 1935 to 1936. The work was conducted by Fouché himself, as well as others such as Rev. Neville Jones, Prof. G. H. Stanley, Dr I. B. Pole-Evans, John Schofield, Dr M. Weber, Mr. R. Pearson, Prof. G. P. Lestrade, and Dr A. Galloway – with introduction and commentary by Raymond Dart.

The focus of this following section is the work done on the anatomical remains by Dr Alexander Galloway, which is a prime example illustrating ideological evolution over the past century. This is in the sense of both an archaeological perspective, as well as a nationalist perspective. This study takes up the largest section of all studies in the compendium.

It is important to note from the outset that while these are the earliest studies, they represent the worldview of the time. This is illustrated throughout the texts through the way the site is

approached, especially with respect of the people who created and effectively were all that is Mapungubwe.

4.3.1 The Skeletal Remains of Mapungubwe, Alexander Galloway: *throwing the bones*

This section is not viewed through the lens of its value as an anatomical study, which scientifically speaking is incredibly thorough and detailed. It is viewed through the lens of a chronology of ideological evolution in respect of scientific racism in South Africa. This study, and the way the blatant disregard and disrespect for human life and clinical fashion in which it is presented, is morally difficult to read from a post-colonial and inclusive worldview. The study was conducted through the University of the Witwatersrand by Galloway and a group of seven named students who were selected from his university classes. The study was done in lieu of Raymond Dart,³³ who could not dedicate attention to it during this time (Fouché 1937; Galloway 1937).

Importantly, Galloway only refers to the exhumed finds as ‘human’ a few times in the 48-page study. The tone is consistent and definite in the stark racial schism of the time, which saw the classification of non-white people as inferior. The remains are referred to as skeletal and use only core clinical anatomical terms devoid of the critical link that these individuals were once very much not just human, but people. The study portions the various aspects of the human remains as if they were ‘Lego pieces’ that the students were given to empty out onto lab tables, each getting a turn to play with. This trivialisation of segregated human remains ‘in the name of science’ was commonplace during this time (Kuljian 2016; Rassool 2015; Shepherd 2007).

Of the twenty-four graves which were unearthed and exhumed on Mapungubwe Hill through the course of the early excavations, predominantly by van Tonder – who was neither an archaeologist nor an anatomist – only eleven were considered ‘viable’ for Galloway and his students to study (Fouché 1937; Galloway 1937). The remains exhumed on Mapungubwe Hill

³³ Renown discoverer of *Australopithecus africanus*

are notoriously fragmentary, this is a result of the shallow nature of the graves which occurred due to pendulous weather conditions that varied from heavy rain fall to lengthy droughts. These fluctuations in temperature, humidity and moisture caused severe erosion to the stratigraphy and resulted in a hyper-alkalisation of the soil accelerating their decay (Steyn 2007; Galloway 1937; Huffman 1996a).



Figure 10: Pieter van Tonder with the 'sceptre burial', M5 A619. (Steyn 2011:224)

These remains, despite their friable nature, were still referred to as a “treasure trove” in an editorial segment by Fouché (1937:126). Nevertheless, the terming of these remains as a treasure trove likens it to a commercialised commodity, which speaks to Kuljian’s *Darwin’s Hunch* (2016) where she discusses the rampant and unfettered collection, trade and finagling of human remains for the furtherment of the empire’s scientific inquiry. This inquiry is brought through in Galloway’s study by the insistence of categorising the anatomical metrics of African peoples and cementing clear divisions between them as a group, branched out as typologies of ‘Bushmen’, ‘Hottentots’, ‘Boskop’ and ‘Strandlopers’ as a collective “Bush Race”

(Galloway 1937). These he discussed in a manner which was akin to a 'twitcher' discussing the differences between speciation of Reed Warblers, or more relevant to the analogy – Darwin's Finches of the Galapagos.

Galloway discusses the existence of a South African non-white anatomical 'type' as this 'Bush Race'. He includes in this an aside of frustration on the nomenclature of the term 'Bantu' being attributed to a physical anthropological sense, when it is a linguistic categorisation as indicated by his statement of "The homogenous and essentially Negro physical character of the Bantu-speaking peoples of South Africa has so impressed itself upon physical anthropologists that the term 'Bantu' has been used by them instead of South African Negro" (Galloway 1937:128).

Shockingly, the bulk of his argument discusses 'native' non-white south Africans as being a hybridization of this 'Bush Race' which has been "infiltrated..." by "Negroid" elements which according to Galloway resulted in 'impurity' and 'dilution' of the 'Bush Race' – "The Negro in his African migrations hybridised with other strains in Africa, and finally, in South Africa..." (Galloway 1937:128).

Galloway and his students based their analyses of the Mapungubwe human remains on the anatomical 'Negro specimen' collection housed at the University of the Witwatersrand. This collection consisted of over 300 individuals. For their comparisons of 'Bush' and 'Boskop' specimens, the data and collections of the McGregor Memorial Museum, and the University of Cape Town Department of Anatomy, were used. Part of this including the allocation of a system of awarding points to the 'Negro'-ness of the remains – the greatest total points in a single individual of the eleven was 26% (Galloway 1937).



Figure 11: The Raymond Dart Human Skeleton Collection at the University of the Witwatersrand. 1960s. (Kuljian 2016:96).

From their analyses, they dated the human remains to between (CE) 1600 - 1700 and concluded that they were of a “Bush-Boskop people showing sporadically few Negro features” (Galloway 1937:162). This is discussed by Galloway as (1937:161 - 162):

It is natural to conclude that the Mapungubwe remains present a very early stage in the process of infiltration of Negro features into the aboriginal Bush-Boskop population. It has been shown how widely divergent the Mapungubwe remains are from the modern Basuto Negro type. There can be no question of there being any direct filial relationship between the two peoples. If the modern Basuto has evolved from a parent Mapungubwe type in South Africa, the advent of the Negro into South Africa must be more remote than we think... Man has made no appreciable advances in evolution of physical features over

the last six thousand years. His evolutionary history is one of replacement of dwindling races. Any changes in features are those of racial hybridization attendant on this replacement. Hybridization never masks the fundamental type, but merely adorns it with a few new features. Man's history is one of social evolution of brain and mind. If the Mapungubwe skulls represent the antecedents of a Sotho-Shona people, then to allow for this amazing biological change, the Negro must have entered South Africa and settled at Mapungubwe at least six thousand years ago – which is absurd.

The above quote is a good demonstration of how archaeological thought in its framing as scientific practice (and therefore 'accurate' and 'true') has been entangled with race science and nationalist ideologies. Steyn (2011) briefly discusses and reflects on Galloway's study. In this, she comments on the way no postcranial examination was conducted on the skeletons, with the primary focus being on the crania sorted and compared typologically against a collection of pre-supposed races in order to assess their conformity to these "pure or ideal races" (Steyn 2011:226). There was no further research or interest shown in the original study on wanting to understand the individuals or life at Mapungubwe better, be it through osteological studies which would advise on diets and general health and lifestyle. The focus was purely to ascertain a classification of ancestry (Steyn 2011).

This, alongside their attribution of the remains to (CE) 1600 - 1700 ties into the 'theory of the empty land', also known as the 1652 paradigm (Tariq Mellet 2020). This ideology – a staple of many Apartheid South African history books – promoted the belief that South Africa existed as barren landscape until the Dutch arrival, whereafter only then that the history of South Africa begins and can be recorded (Clifton 1991; Huffman 2007; Tariq Mellet 2020). It should be noted that Galloway's 'Bush-Boskop' typology was eventually deemed scientifically inaccurate as the type 'Bush-Boskop' could not exist, and through continued research into the human remains have all confirmed them to be of African descent (Singer 1958; Rightmire 1970; De Villiers 1979; Steyn 2011).

From this, it is evidenced that so biased was the work and unwavering their racial agenda that it should be considered whether this bias was evident in findings. Effectively, did Galloway

and his team allow science to lead them to a conclusion, or did they already have a conclusion that they tried to apply science to?

Ultimately, the clinical manner and deep racial undertones to the study is implicit of how non-white people were seen in Africa and South African in the early 20th century. This study in reality serves a contrary to its intent - and exists as duality of triumph. In Galloway's fervent aim of cementing segregation and *Otherness*, he merely highlighted just how unique these peoples were, how they did not really have anyone to compare these peoples to – which aids as testament to the distinctive significance of the peoples of Mapungubwe.

4.3.2 On the Mapungubwe Archive: *through dust-tinted glasses*

When approaching and considering the 'archive' as an entity or construct, it is always important to be reminded of the concept of 'archivability'. This process, as discussed by Mbembe (2002), is applied to a document or item whereby they are judged – at a particular point in time – on their worthiness for retention. To this, he states "The archive is therefore, fundamentally, a matter of discrimination and selection" (Mbembe 2002:20). The archive by its very construction is filled by the process of purposeful and selective retention, which in its wake often leaves deafening silences and omissions. This is challenged however by the fact that no archive can realistically store and house the entire history or record of something. What is left for use by the historian are choice fragments of a narrative, which pose the risk of promoting a biased or inaccurate account (Mbembe 2002).

Archives, as an assemblage of selective process, can be considered not as sources of 'real meaning', with their trustworthiness and authenticity having long been, and continuing to be topics of contestation (Stoler 2002; Guha 1983; Denning 1995). This brings forward the idea of Carlo Ginzburg's (1989) evidentiary paradigms, which entails moving away from a distinguishing of fact from fiction model, and rather to address the production and consumption of sources. This has led to the mass uncovering of information, as alluded to in the above sections, that has not only been diluted and intertwined by a particular racial or political agenda, but also shone light on the reality that some critical sources have been

deemed unworthy of retention in narratives that they very much should have been recorded as integral (Ginzburg 1989, Stoler 2002).

The Mapungubwe Archive, is naturally, no different to any other, and has suffered this selective retention too over the years of its construction. The Mapungubwe Archive is for the most part, a construct of retrospective collecting and assembling in predominantly the twenty-first century, with very few records existing from the time of the (re)discovery (Tiley-Nel 2018). It until recently, existed as “a metaphorical archive in the sense that it formed an unidentified and incohesive part of the institution’s memory bank” (Tiley- Nel 2018:158). To speak to the aforementioned in this section, Tiley-Nel reiterates the concept of the archivability and selected retention of documents and histories in the context of Mapungubwe, which was done and controlled by the University of Pretoria Archaeology Committee – with the archive becoming a “manifestation of colonial and Afrikaner Nationalist politics and ideology” (Tiley - Nel 2018: 159).

Taking this into account, and further the extensive imperfection of the Mapungubwe Archive as discussed by Tiley-Nel (2018), to what extent can it be used as a research tool when the bulk of the assemblage, was collected under the auspices of a political agenda? Ginzburg’s evidentiary paradigms are therefore essential in further use of this archive, which is implied given the multi-faceted layers of context that the archive holds, making research into and of the contents not only the work of archaeologists and anthropologists, but rather within the ambit of a multiple disciplines (Ginzburg, 1989; Tiley-Nel 2018).

Chapter Five

Myths and Modernisations – Contemporary Representations

“After all, I believe that legends and myths are largely made of ‘truth’, and indeed present aspects of it that can only be received in this mode; and long ago certain truths and modes of this kind were discovered and must always reappear.”

~ **J.R.R. Tolkien**, *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien* ~

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I focus on some of the publicly available contemporary representations of Mapungubwe. These representations were inspired by the site, the historical representations, and the meaning that has been created from Mapungubwe. Important to note is the distinction between the previous chapter and this one; the previous dealt specifically with representations from an archaeological and scientific lens, this chapter deals with representations which are positioned within a creative or inspired scope.

While there are an incredibly wide variety and volume of contemporary typologies, there are too many to discuss each representation sufficiently in this study. Representations of Mapungubwe include newspapers and print media; textbooks; artworks; newspapers and print media; artworks; reproductions; poetry and prose; videography; music; works of fiction and non-fiction; symbols and iconography; and architecture. These are testament to the creative process, and the way the ‘power’ of Mapungubwe can move and inspire those who engage with it.

The typologies I had spent the most time with were works of non-fiction and textbook non-fiction, works of fiction, works of poetry and prose, works of art, and symbols and iconography. These included works like *History of Africa* (Shillington 2012); *The Archaeology of South Africa* (Mitchell 2010); *The Fortunes of Africa* (Meredith 2014); *A Short History of South Africa* (Nattrass 2019); *The Lost Kingdoms of Africa* (Casely-Hayford 2012); *Via Afrika Social Sciences: Grade 8 Learner’s Book* (Ntwape et al 2017); and *Darwin’s Hunch* (Kuljian

2016). As well as Zakes Mda's – *The Sculptors of Mapungubwe* (Mda 2013); K.A. Nephawe's *Legends of the Lost Sacred Kingdom* (Nephawe 2014); and Chris Angus's *Winston Churchill and the Treasure of Mapungubwe* (Angus 2014). Of these works of both non-fiction and fiction that I had engaged with during the research phase of this study, I had decided to look specifically at Mda's novel for use in this thesis.

Mapungubwe is no stranger to works of poetry and prose, which were possibly the most internally varied of all the sources considered in this study. The collected works included poetry in the following categories: the discovery of Mapungubwe, the rhino, Mapungubwe as a place, and praise poetry/prose about Mapungubwe as an entity rather than a place. These were comprised of the works: *Mapungubwe Praise Poem*, Alen Munro (Pikirayi 2011); *Mapungubwe*, H.J. Pieterse (Pieterse 2000); *The Rissik Bowl – previously known author*, (Tiley Nel 2011b); *I Speak of Mapungubwe* – Moitsadi Moeti (Moeti 2012); *Mapungubwe* – Mbizo Chirasha (Chirasha 2000); *The Golden Rhino of Mapungubwe* – Chirs Mann (Mann 2008); *Lost City of Gold* – Wayne Visser (Visser 2017).

Due to the sheer volume of representations resulting in too large a workable scope, a smaller refined selection of the representations was chosen. The chosen set of representations is: a work of fiction, a work of poetry, and a contemporary exhibition.

Having spent time with each source individually, I was able to work off a concise understanding of them in order to conclude on which I would be addressing in this study. I based my decision on the following aspects; the accessibility of the source,³⁴ the size of the representation typology, and finally, how I was able to engage with it personally.

The crux of working with these representations, as with the selection made in the previous chapter, is to follow through with the underlying questions. How does the 'accuracy' of a representation matter when the 'meaning' it manifests is more 'true' than other more 'accurate' scientific and archaeological representations.

³⁴ This in terms of popularity, retrievability and then importantly; the language of delivery.

5.2 The Sculptors of Mapungubwe - Zakes Mda: *a work of fiction*

Mda adopts an in-passing and matter-of-fact manner of implementation as quite an effective mode of transmission of aspects of real archaeological and historical knowledge of the site in a fictitious layout. The story opens with the date CE 1223 (three years following the abandonment of K2), and provides the reader with a contemporary local cosmological creation narrative and offers immediate insight into the expansive trade network already cemented at the site. This is done by the mention of the two mirrors which form a central arc throughout the story – “It was the year of the mirror. Not that there was a sudden proliferation of them in the town. There were only two known mirrors in Mapungubwe, the most celebrated one a work of Persian craftsmanship... It was brought into the town by Abdul wa Salim, the Swahili Trader” (Mda 2013: 3-4).

Important facets of trade relations through the Swahili traders with the Middle East, Asia and Northern Africa is beautifully woven into the story. Mda details knowledge of, and interacting with, other African peoples such as the !Kung, Khoi, and the Azande of Central Africa. He subtly elaborates on aspects of the archaeological record, including the local mining and mineral ‘hotspots’ as well as local ceramic and maker technologies.

A running theme in the story is the importance of gold in not only Mapungubwe society, but also as the ‘source’ of much of the 12th century trade-wealth. Martin Meredith echoes this in *The Fortunes of Africa: A 5000-year history of wealth, greed and endeavour* (Meredith 2014:84). Meredith describes the inception of the gold trade from “Mapungubwe, the capital of a cattle-owning chiefdom based in the Limpopo Valley”, detailing the trade of gold and ivory for glass beads, porcelain, and cloth. Mda continues with the thread of cloth and fabric. I note specific mentions of Chata wearing items of silk and cotton not synonymous with the rest of the community, save for the King.

The novel also attests to many of the anthropological and mythological aspects which have been attributed to the site: trances, rain-working and divination practices, and, most importantly, it clearly speaks to the socio-political divides which make up much of the

cementation of Mapungubwe's status as the earliest southern African city state. In doing so, Mda has clearly drawn on the historical and archaeological record, paired with existing interpretations of the space and has woven them as part of the narrative.

What Mda achieves with his (arguably hyperbolic) Mapungubwe narrative is unique. After my first read of the work I was perplexed by some of the devices of fiction Mda uses. This including phrases such as "He knew exactly what Chata was trying to do – to win back the people's favour after his disgrace. *And the suckers were sucking up*" (Mda, 2013: 109). This kind of leniency is common of modern fiction, but, dealing with the historical narrative of Mapungubwe, this does seem slightly out of place. This interjection of modern devices is also noted by Jacobs (2015), who describes the novel as a "precolonial parable about art and society" (Jacobs 2015: 13). They state that the novel lacked a linking of contemporary relevance or placement within the story with regards to the history of Mapungubwe. Jacobs further describes Mda's attempts to modernise the narrative as jarring, particularly his insertion of European colloquialisms.³⁵ This, in the defence of Mda, seemed to be an unnecessary set of allegations, as with fiction comes a degree of poetic leniency. With this work especially so, as the novel does not claim to be an historical insight into the space, but rather a story making use of the landscape and known imagery as its staging and props.

Mda's exceptional story-telling ability enables an intricate interweaving of fact and, what is rather obviously, fiction. He masterfully crafts an enticing story the likes of which is unique in African fiction, and this without losing key details about the ancient hilltop kingdom. From Mda's work readers to whom Mapungubwe was previously unknown, receive flashes of historical introduction to the site, its people, associated customs (e.g., rainmaking), and specifically their global relevance (Maithufi 2015). The expanse and wealth of the Mapungubwe Kingdom is artfully explored, detailing just how wonderfully unique the space and its history is. This work is also important in its subtle alluding to the horrific rhino poaching which is rife across southern Africa. This is seen in both the instilling of the importance of the rhino as a sacred symbol and totem, but also in the uncovering of Rendani's illicit deals of

³⁵ These include words such as "gander", "codger", and "bums" (Jacobs 2015:23).

trafficking rhino horn out of Mapungubwe through the Swahili traders (Mda 2013; Sewlall 2016; Williams 2016).

Mda's work is unique in every sense of the term; African fiction, drawing on a documented historic setting in the African context. I feel this representation has particular power in influencing the meaning of Mapungubwe; it introduces new audiences to the significance of the Kingdom in a manner which cannot be attempted through the scientific and archaeological analysis. Through Mda's work, Mapungubwe can be revered not only by the local communities from the early 20th century, but also by the general population. Through this, it is easy to understand the significant role Mapungubwe played in early African society with emphasis on culture, economy, and diplomacy. I am yet to find a representation detailing these aspects of Mapungubwe as subtly and efficiently as Mda.

Sculptors of Mapungubwe provides important insights into art and art-making as part of daily-life in society - both as part of existential expression and the complex depth of humanity and our psychology (Sewlall 2016; Williams 2016; Maithufi 2015). This is demonstrated in the references to Chata's fantastical creatures which he can conjure into sculpted existence from his trance-states, as well as the hyper-realistic rendition of both the 'Rain Dancer' and the Khoi woman which he sculpts of gold and ivory (Mda 2013).

Mda has achieved an incredible 'breaking of the divide' in terms of the space through the marriage of history and the imaginary, it presents a narrative which is silent in the scientific and archaeological representations – the humanity of Mapungubwe. This representation brings a 'truth' and an 'authenticity' which could not be achieved through a scientific lens, and in doing so, makes the post-processual concept of the 'life' of Mapungubwe far more accessible than science and archaeology ever could.

5.3 Mapungubwe – H.J. Pieterse: *a work of poetry*

This poem, *Mapungubwe* by Henning Pieterse, comes from an anthology called *Die Burg van hertog Bloubaard*. The richness of the imagery portrayed in the original language is still just

as vivid in the English translation below, which has been supplied for ease of reference for those unfamiliar with Afrikaans.

The poem was written in 2000, which was a time where the shift in understanding and perception of Mapungubwe was well underway as a post-processual stance was applied broadly to the site's facets. It was in the same year that the first Mapungubwe Museum was opened at the University of Pretoria, where the author lectured in the Department of Afrikaans. This is also around the time that the concept of the African Renaissance was beginning to take a firm hold across the nation (Haw 2011; Maggs 2000). This dawn of the new millennium and the 'African Century' was the pivot point in much of the contemporary understanding of Mapungubwe, and in terms of archaeology in general as the new theoretical frameworks became more prevalent and had a deeper impact on the praxis. Haw (2011) alludes to this juncture in time as a great unveiling, not only in traction of new approaches and understanding, but also in a physical sense of Mapungubwe, which had until then been seen as something that was hidden and secreted away by the University (Haw 2011; Meyer 2011a).

Mapungubwe – H. J. Pieterse (Pieterse 2000: 291)

Original Afrikaans

I
Die troon waarop die stil koning sit,
gepoleerde klip, kyk suid.
'n Lou wind onthou die stemme
van swermendes in die vallei.
Hy sien my, delwend tussen mure
na artefakte vir my vers,
blou glaskrale, 'n potskerf,
reste van 'gou septer.

English Translation³⁶

I
The throne upon which the silent king sits,
polished stone, looking South.
A warm wind remembers the voices
of those milling in the valley.
He sees me, digging between walls
for artefacts for my verse,
blue glass beads, a pot sherd,
remains of a gold sceptre.

³⁶ J. van der Westhuisen, 2021

Ek rig sy hutte op uit die grond,
steierwerke vir my vers,
kamers met ivoor en gekleurde glas
wat sy dansende krygers versier het.
So hoog as hul roestende spere
hurk sy krygers in hul graf.
(Stof waai langsaam in
deur die venster van my gedig)
'n Vergulde renoster se horing stomp af.
(Maak toe die deure, maak die mure dig)
Die grond word lank gebalsem
deur sy krygers se geurende lywe.

II

Van sy heuwel kon die koning opstaan,
die horison omarm,
bome, diere, mense
in die kraal van sy arms versamel.
Hy kon, soos ek, Noord droom
van 'n klipkoninkryk in die bloute
waar tyd 'n gladde suil van stilte
tussen ringmure sou laat groei.
In reeds ontginde slote kry ek
koper, krale, 'n ooglid porselein,
'n skulp wat met die oosrivier
op 'n plat boot aangekom het.
Krygers, geel van die herfs,
dans oor my papier na die noorde.

I erect his huts from the ground,
struts for my poem,
rooms that his dancing warriors
had adorned with ivory and coloured glass.
His warriors crouching in their graves
as tall as their rusting spears.
(Dust blows slowly in
through the window of my poem)
A gilded rhino's horn off.
(Close the doors, steady the walls)
The ground has long been preserved
by his warriors' flavouring³⁷ bodies.

II

From his hill the king could stand,
arms encircling the horizon,
trees, animals, people
collected in the kraal of his arms.
He could, like me, dream of
an unexpected stone kingdom
where time would grow a smooth column of
silence
between the circular walls.
In previously-mined trenches I find
copper, beads, a sliver of porcelain,
and a shell that arrived on a flat boat
from the eastern river.
Warriors, yellowed by autumn,
dance over my page towards the north.

³⁷ Inferred as decomposing/composting

Min keer terug, wat oorbly
lê in klipgroewe van geheue.
Die koning sou kyk na 'n kremetart
Wat hom op die vlakte uitbrand;
na 'n bootgravure langs die water,
geanker in 'n rots.

III

As ek wakker word, sal ek wes kyk,
met my vers teen die loop van die water
sien hoe die wind die koper spiere
van die rivier gladder streel.
Verby klippe soos olifantgrafte
sal ek stap; dink aan 'n renoster
wat stadig opstaan
en lank die wind uit die suide snuif.
Stemme sal weer tussen grondmure sing
en hutte, swart teen vure,
sal kyk hoe die koning luister
na verdwynende dreuning van voete.
Hy sou 'n voël sien styg oor die rivierpoort,
'n voël wat in klip gaan sit
en steeds uit stof na my kyk,
uit skulpe, munt en porselein.
Eendag, in die droomtyd,
sal 'n langboot vir my aanland.
En die roeiers laat hulle spane sak
in die glasblou water.

Little returns, what remains
lie in stone grooves of memory.
The king would look at a baobab
burning on the plains;
at a boat etched into the rocks
anchored next to the water.

III

If I wake, I will look west,
with my verse against the flow of water
see the wind softly calming the
copper spears of the river.
Past the rocks like elephant graves
I will walk; thinking of a rhino
slowly rising
and sniffing the southern wind.
Voices will once again sing between mud walls
and huts, blackened by fire,
will see the king listen
to the disappearing rumble of feet.
He would see a bird rise over the river port,
a bird captured in rock
which still looks at me through the dust,
from shells, coin, and porcelain.
One day, in a dream,
a longboat will arrive for me too.
And the rowers will lower their oars
into the crystal blue water.

The poem is broken into three stanzas, which seem to position temporal leaps. There is a clear relationship between the king, and the first person who is recounting his experience. I would

like to separate the poem into two layers, one from an historical informative perspective, and the other from an emotive perspective.

Historically, the poet provides a crucial informative background to what is known about the site. He mentions firstly the social divisions for which Mapungubwe is renowned – through obvious mentions to the king and the throne. He also speaks to the population density of the Mapungubwe polity;

‘n Lou wind onthou die stemme / a warm wind remembers (Line 2)
van swermendes in die vallei / of those milling in the valley. (Line 3)

The integral aspect of trade that was so central to Mapungubwe is brought to the fore;

blou glaskrale / blue glass beads... (Line 7)
... gekluerde glas / coloured glass (Line 12)
... ‘n ooglid porselein / a sliver of porcelain (Line 30)
‘n skulp wat met die oosrivier op ‘n plat boot aangekom het / a shell that arrived on a flat boat
from the eastern river (Lines 32 – 33)
uit skulpe, munt en porselein / from shells, coin(s) and porcelain (Line 56)

The author also makes reference to the gold artefacts found during excavations, namely the Gold Rhino and the sceptre;

Reste van ‘n gou septer / remains of a gold sceptre (Line 8)
‘n Vergulde renoster se horing stomp af / A gilded rhino’s horn off. (Line 17)

Another aspect which is alluded to, which, while only hypothetical in historical accuracy, is a valid aspect of the greater Mapungubwe story. This comes as an allusion to Great Zimbabwe and the stone eagles to which it is synonymous:

Hy sou ‘n voël sien styg oor die rivierpoort, ‘n voël wat in klip gaan sit / He would see a bird
rise over the river port, a bird captured in rock (Lines 53 – 54)

While the historic references are certainly noteworthy, what strikes me more are the emotive references. The poet shows great ingenuity in speculating about life at Mapungubwe, which is where the additional Mapungubwe narrative comes through:

Van sy heuwel kon die koning opstaann, / From his hill the king could stand, (Line 20)

die horison omarm / arms encircling the horizon (Line 21)

bome, diere, mense / trees, animals, people (Line 22)

in die kraal van sy arms versamel / collected in the kraal of his arms (23)

These lines are indicative of the peoples of Mapungubwe having complete ownership of the space. This wasn't just any hill; Mapungubwe was a home, and the king was not only their leader, but also their protector. He took care of his people and ensured that they had peace. This ties in with the greater 'city-state' narrative.

Furthermore, the transient state of life and being seems to be the overarching theme of the work. Several references are made to the present versus the past (e.g., "remembers"; "once again", "disappearing"; etc.). The author emphasises that the people of Mapungubwe are very much gone. Yes, they certainly left a legacy behind, but that is undeniably in the past. The first person also considers his own mortality, and how one day he would also pass on (the "longboat" references – an allusion to Chiron, the river boatman of the Underworld across mythologies). I cannot help but wonder if the author himself wishes to be memorialized through his work just like Mapungubwe has been (and he has certainly helped).

What is of particular significance to me is the change in the Afrikaans Mapungubwe narrative evident in the poem. Exploring the Afrikaans documented Mapungubwe representations had, until quite recently, strong racial puritan undertones. What the poet does here is the complete opposite, likening Mapungubwe to castles and kingdoms found in Europe. The poet (perhaps unwittingly) fully acknowledges the significance of Mapungubwe by including this poem in this anthology. It is clear the poet holds Mapungubwe in reverence, expertly articulating what Mapungubwe means to him, especially how the narrative and life continues post death.

This is another excellent example of what Mapungubwe could (and does) mean to ordinary people. People can engage with the history, the artefacts, the wonder of the Hill and all the mystery it is shrouded in.

While Mda's offering of a humanised narrative to Mapungubwe is far more detailed and layered, it can be argued that this poem is the first work of fiction to bridge this gap of humanising the dehumanised effectively. While the poem does draw on much of the historical and archaeological aspects pertaining to the site, it is novel in its focus on the life that happened there; "... 'n Lou wind *onthou die stemme van swermendes in die vallei / a warm wind remembers the voices of those milling in the valley...*" (Lines 3 - 4), alongside the frequent acknowledgement of the king, and his warriors.

5.4 Gold of Africa, Javett-UP: *a contemporary exhibition*

South Africa has, over the past two decades, seen four permanent Mapungubwe Gold exhibitions. The first 'Mapungubwe Museum', in 2000 at the University of Pretoria; the Mapungubwe Interpretation Centre which opened at Mapungubwe in 2009; 'The Mapungubwe Gold Gallery' at the University of Pretoria Museums over 2016; and now most recently (2019) – the 'Gold of Africa' exhibition, at the Javett-UP Art Centre.



Figure 12: A view of the Mapungubwe Gold Gallery, post re-curation, 2016. UP Museums. Photograph by author, 2016.

Having been part of the design and renovation process of the 'Gold Gallery' from 2014 to 2016, I had been intricately involved with the previous (and by then outdated) 2000 exhibition. The University of Pretoria Museums is also responsible for portions of the Mapungubwe Interpretation Centre, which I was actively part of maintaining and updating.

The Javett-UP exhibition 'Gold of Africa' came into being after I was no longer involved in the collection, and it is therefore one of the primary reasons I have chosen to engage with it as a contemporary representation in this study. I did this because it would put me in the position entirely of the viewer, without any first-hand or background involvement in the current exhibition process. This would allow me to approach and engage with the space in the exact way the curatorial team had envisioned for all visitors.

The 'Gold of Africa' exhibition is housed in a two-storied silo called 'The Gold Tower' and features the AngloGold Ashanti Barbier-Mueller collection alongside a selection of items of the Mapungubwe Gold Collection.

5.4.1 AngloGold Ashanti Barbier-Mueller Collection: *a brief conversation*

As this portion of the 'Gold of Africa' exhibition is not directly relevant to the study, but does form part of the greater exhibition, it will be discussed only briefly.

The entrance to the exhibition on the lower level leads you past an infographic timeline of the gold trade in world history before stepping into Ashanti Gold collection displays. The display is an assault to the senses, with the viewer being presented with an inundation of decorative gold items alongside media screens, text on panel and text on glass.

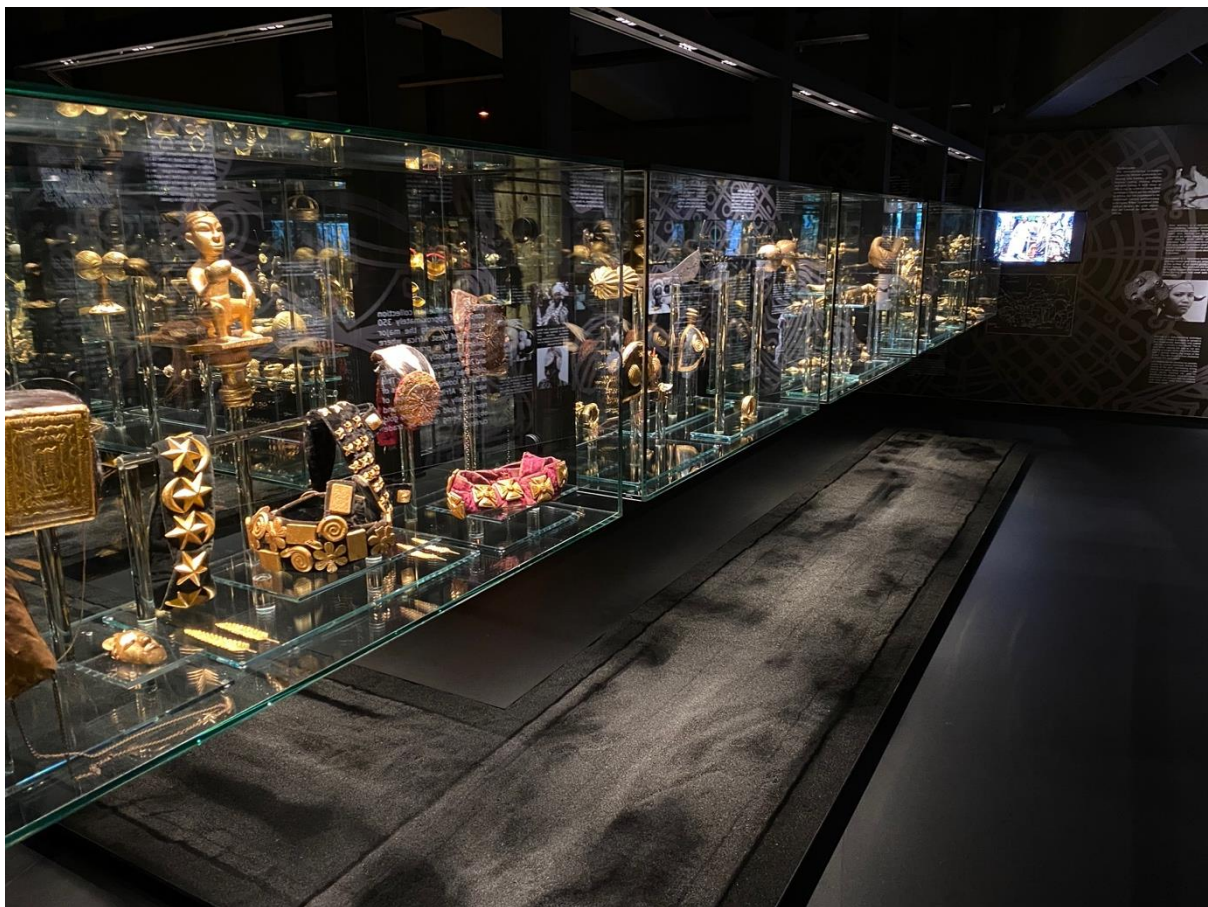


Figure 13: A view of the entrance to the Ashanti Gold collection. Javett-UP. Photograph by author, February 2021.

While it could be argued that when, dealing with gold, the more powerful the impact the more powerful the awe, I do not find it to be particularly effective. Predominantly as the meaning is lost in such a large accumulation of these items and the viewer could easily lose interest a quarter of the way in. This ‘the more the merrier’ approach could be considered a retroactive, and reminiscent of museological practice of the early 1900s, which as the century progressed was deemed counterproductive and called for a greater link between object, context and interpretation (Frijey 2017).

For the most part, gold is revered for it being “earth’s rarest and most valued metal” ... “a substance which is precious because it is rare” (Tiley-Nel 2019b:5). The crude overabundance in which this gold collection is presented is a tragic diminishing of this rarity.

5.4.2 Mapungubwe National Treasures Collection: *into the heart of darkness*

Moving from the cacophony of Ashanti gold items, the space leads the viewer up two flights of stairs – which I would like to imagine as an allusion to the climb to the top of Mapungubwe Hill (see *figures 3 and 4*). The viewer surfaces into a room of indeterminable shape or size due to the complete lack of ambient lighting, with the only light coming from an oblong display case which houses the selection of Mapungubwe Gold items.

The centre of the table has a raised outline of Mapungubwe Hill rising out of it – which is only really discernible if you have a familiarity with the iconic lacrimiform shape of the Hill – or if someone present were to point it to you. The exhibition space is too dark to distinguish much of the flat surface of the table from the raised outline of the Hill, which is unfortunate as it is the only contextual link that the assemblage of gold in this display has to Mapungubwe.

The display case has sets of small digital media screens, which I discovered existed only after walking into one whilst viewing the table. They were all non-operational, with printed signs over the screens which are incomprehensible due to the suffocating lack of light in the space. It can be reasonably assumed that they are touch-navigated and have been deactivated as a COVID-19 precaution. This, while an unforeseen global circumstance, is an over-sight in the

exhibition design as it has severed an integral contextual artery between the artefacts on display and the information attributed to them (Jones 2001; Fischer 1991).

The curation in this illuminated table reads like a scene from a jewellery store, and not from a space which should be paying a deep respect to these sacred items and delicate art of conservation that has gone into them. It seems to transcend the weight and importance of what Mapungubwe is and what it means, to function only as a presentation of accumulated 'shiny things'. While it can be appreciated that the Javett-UP is a centre of contemporary art, and therefore the displays and curations in the space would conform to this. The Mapungubwe Gold items are not works of contemporary art, and should be curated in a fashion that speaks to this. In the curation of African art and artefacts, an early controversial 1988 exhibition *ART/artifact* by Susan Vogel can be discussed. The exhibition aimed, as did settings such as *Primitivism in 20th Century Art* and *Magiciens de la Terre*, to position western art next to African art (Kasfir 1992; Nzegwu 2019). The exhibition was clear in the belief that there was no distinguishing a piece of art and a manufactured cultural object in an African context, and the objects through the curators' authority were displayed to conform to western standards. Nzegwu (2019:369) comments on this with "The idea that African artifacts are works of art *only* on Western ground and determined *only* by white curators is evidence that racial ideology was driving explanations."

Art museums and the curation of art items is often catered around the transfer of knowledge through the act of 'seeing' (Frijey 2017). While artworks and works of art are exhibited as purposeful creation; either for a specific exhibition or as a result of an inspired event in an artist's life, that is their purpose – to be viewed. This foregoes and transcends the 'power' that is laid upon artefacts and their use-life, which arguably might have been considered art at a given point in time – it was not necessarily their sole intended purpose. Given the varied possible biographies imbued in an archaeological artefact, this sole designation as an art object results in this instance in its further decontextualisation (Jones 2001; Fischer 1991; Constantine 2016). This becomes troublesome when dealing with a multi-layered and multi-historied artefact, which is displayed amongst art – based on a curatorial authority that it should be there, where the nuanced historicization, which ultimately assists in creating the artefact's aura is often lost (Kasfir 1992; Frijey 2017; Fischer 1991; Benjamin 2008).



Figure 14: The Mapungubwe 'Gold Table', Javett-UP. Photograph by author, February 2021.

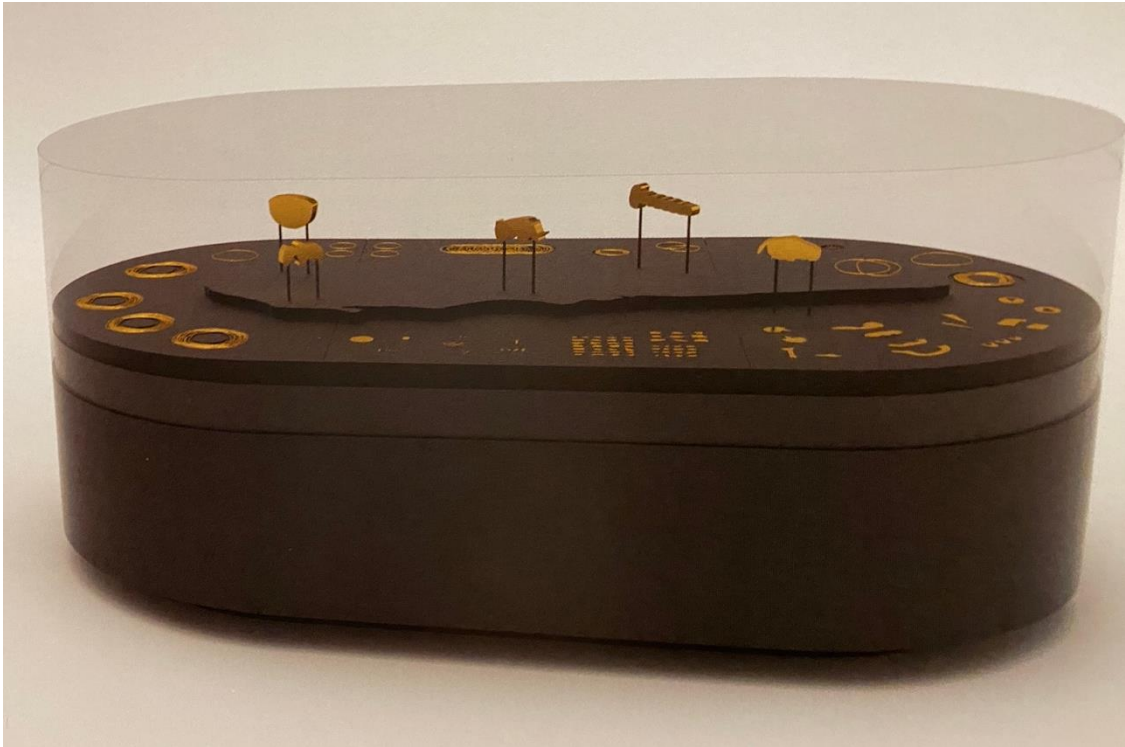


Figure 15: A digital render of the 'Mapungubwe Gold Table'. (Tiley-Nel 2019b:4)

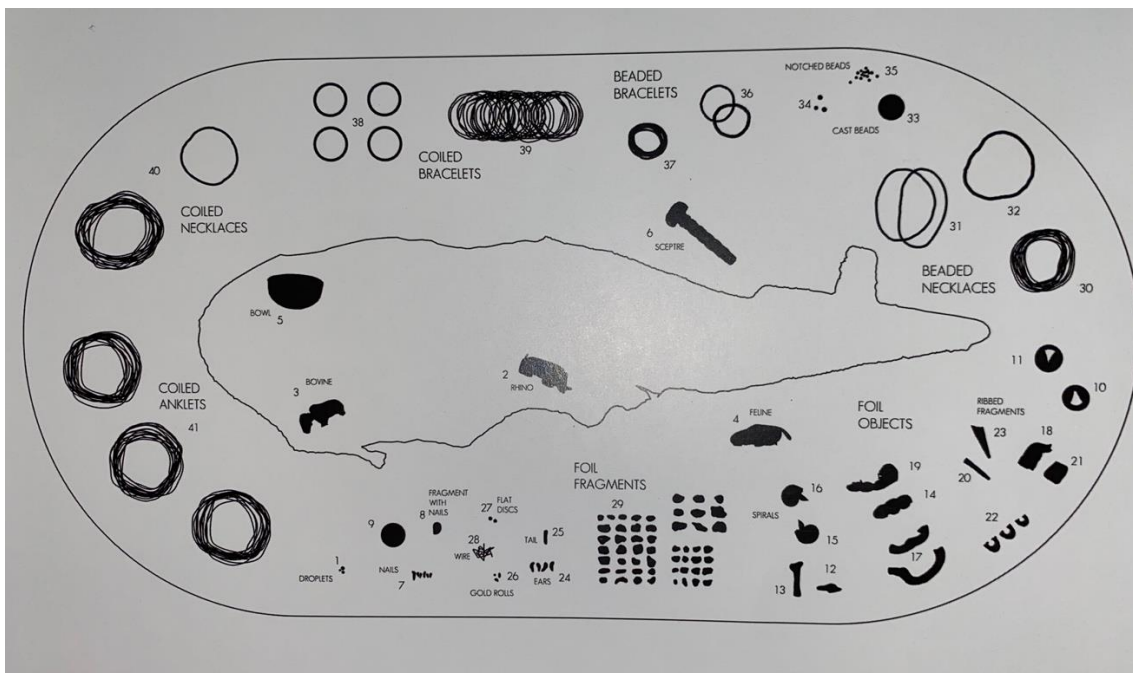


Figure 16: A digital wayfinding layout of the 'Mapungubwe Gold Table'. (Tiley-Nel 2019b:i)

5.4.3 Mapungubwe Decontextualised

An interwoven thread which is mentioned in this work has been around a core principle of archaeology, namely context. While following Jones's (2001) lead in the ideology of excavation as a process of destruction and decontextualization; post-excavation interpretation and engagement has an integral requirement for context in order for archaeological and museological items to be read. Inactive digital media screens aside, having alienated the selection of Mapungubwe Gold from an already contextually alienated collection posits a fundamental disconnect with the meaning and associations to the site.

The decontextualization of the Mapungubwe Gold triggers a deep emphasis on the dehumanisation of this history. The site, as a vibrant and varied tapestry of form and meaning, surpassed the finite binary into which this exhibition places it, as art, as gold. The exhibition effectively disassembles the context of Mapungubwe in favour of what can honestly be rounded to being purely an impact tactic and delivers but a sensationalist sliver of the full narrative embodied in the Mapungubwe story. In reading a selection of objects, and an exhibition at large as an archive, and recalling Stoler (2002), Guha (1983) and Dening (1995) around such an archive not being a reflection of true meaning; could it be considered that in the creation and curation of this display that the Mapungubwe story has undergone further judgement in its archivability? The conscious curatorial choice to further the dissemination of Mapungubwe as spectacle over Mapungubwe as space is detrimental to the way the site is engaged with in this exhibition.

During my time at the Javett-UP Art Centre, I was approached by one of the tour guides and we proceeded in a brief conversation around the 'Gold of Africa' exhibition.³⁸ What struck me was that they had completely disassociated Mapungubwe with Africa, and they held a clear distinction between the "African Gold" and "Mapungubwe Gold". They told me they preferred the Ashanti Gold collection due to its evidence of European influence and mastery

³⁸ It is important to note that this was not an interview or formal engagement by any means and was merely a chance and passing impromptu discussion around the exhibition. I mention it here as an afterthought to the discussion, having only processed the engagement as valuable after the fact.

in their metal-working. The Mapungubwe Gold was in their description, uninspiring and rudimentary. Their response is testament to how fatal the decontextualization of the Mapungubwe story is in this exhibition.

While as mentioned earlier, the Mapungubwe collection is already alienated from its context by being at the University of Pretoria in place of at Mapungubwe itself. The gold collection being associated with the other finds on display; the ceramics and bone tools, it was still able to hold a cohesive thread of connectedness which is lost in its new curation. However, in considering Philip Fischer's stance in his work *Making and Effacing Art: Modern American Art in a Culture of Museums* where he writes that if you "Take the crucifix out of the cathedral [and] you take the cathedral out of the crucifix" (Fischer 1991: 9), how is this 'desacralisation' intensified when the point of reference for context (The UP Museum) a decontextualization in itself?

On discussing the sacrality of objects and spaces, Joan Branham in her work *Sacrality and Aura In the Museum: Mute Objects and Articulate Space* speaks of the core decontextualization of objects in museum spaces. She describes this as a hallmark trait of museology, alongside the divestiture of the knots of associated memory and meaning to a particular object (Branham 1995). This removal of meaning mentioned by Branham is rampant in this context. While the sense of meaning is problematic in the archaeological sense, as Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett is quoted in Kasfir (1992) saying that underlying process of designing an exhibition is also constituting the subject, and that "in-context approaches exert strong cognitive control over the objects, asserting the power of classification and arrangement" (Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1991: 389 - 390; Kasfir 1992:47). It is essential to remember when dealing with archaeological objects, that the meaning is interpreted, and therefore created outside of a reference paradigm and almost always with an omniscient curatorial authority (Kasfir 1992).

Chapter Six

In the Dust that has Settled: Discussion and Conclusion

*"You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise."*

~ Maya Angelou, Still I Rise ~

6.1 Discussion

At the outset of this research, I had positioned a study that would look at a selection of typologies of representations of Mapungubwe, both historical and contemporary in nature. These representations, having started as an incredibly broad set of works, were refined down to five sources. The study aimed to determine if historical accuracy is important when assessing representations of Mapungubwe.

Through this question, sub-elements in addressing the representations by their 'accuracy' when the 'meaning' they manifested was more 'true' than other more supposedly 'accurate' scientific and archaeological representations emerged. This in addition to the layer of what the representation stood for.

The study positioned the known and accumulated history of Mapungubwe, and how this knowledge came into being and circulation in the public and academic space. It was discussed how this knowledge (especially around the discovery and (re)discovery) can become clouded due to the inaccuracy posed by the reconstruction of memory. This was seen in respect of Jerry van Graan's written and verbal recounts of the discovery. While these inaccuracies did not change the weight of the story, they stood testament to how easily facts and fiction can blur.

An important aspect that was viewed in this research was the evolution of ideology in South Africa, having moved from an antiquarian and nationalist stance on the historical and archaeological praxes to the adopting of a post-processual framework (Darvill 2008; Ndlovu & Smith 2019). Through this, the evolution of archaeology as an adjunct discipline in its infancy and its growth into an important tool in the understanding of the many pasts of our country was also brought to light (Ndlovu & Smith 2019; Carruthers 2006).

The concept of accuracy in representation in tangible settings is brought to the fore, in the discussion around previous exhibitions showcasing reproductions in place of originals, and the importance of an associable context to a decontextualised entity. The aspect of 'aura' was an important facet to keep in mind, and how this illusion is able to stimulate a sense of meaning based on an aesthetic (Frijey 2017; Benjamin 2008).

In the space of archaeological context, there is often little to no living memory to work from, which results in the reliance on an historical or a prehistorical source base in order to access and assess a site, object or space. This, as was demonstrated in this work, is reliant on contextual interpretation, re-interpretation and in some cases an inference of absence in order to do so (Jones 2001; Ascher 1961; Kelly & Thomas 2013; Greene 1995; Hodder 1985; Frijey 2017).

The addressing of contemporary representations was for me, incredibly important, as it was testament to a transcendence of meaning away from what is positioned and represented as 'fact' and allowed for an exploration of 'truth' on a level that speaks to the personal and the attributable meaning of an object, site, or space. This added layer allots and stacks an additional depth to this narrative, which in the case of something as sacred and as special as Mapungubwe, far outweighs any clinical or dictionary definition stemming from dust-laden textbooks from yesteryear offering up a chosen meaning.

6.1.1 Humanising the Dehumanised

Through the course of this thesis, the very tangible aspect of the dehumanisation of Mapungubwe has been quite clear. From the day that the van Graans set foot on the site, up

to the most recent representation in the 'Gold of Africa' exhibition, the focus and approach to the site and its layers have been scientific, archaeological and inaccessible. While it could be considered that science and history can be disassociated from this 'human' aspect, there is the strong sense of forgetting that the creation of science and history is a direct result of being human. This is evident from as early as Carr's approach on the relationship and dependence between fact and historian (Carr 1990). The same in the importance of the contextual bridge between an object and its history as discussed in Benjamin (2008) and Frije (2017).

It is therefore important that representations not only of Mapungubwe, but all sites and spaces of cultural importance be viewed in the vein of inquiry adopted in this thesis; how does the 'accuracy' of a representation matter when the 'meaning' it manifests is more 'true' than other *more* 'accurate' scientific and archaeological representations? This is, after all, the broader depth of Processual and Post-Processual approaches – to integrate the understanding of the intangible humanity behind the materiality.

6.2 Conclusion

This study began, in the aims of collecting representations of Mapungubwe and assessing their 'authenticity' and 'accuracy' against the supposed golden ideal of the archive.

As was discussed and uncovered throughout the body of work, the archive and the 'source' of Mapungubwe knowledge at the University of Pretoria is flawed, imperfect and decontextualised. A reality of most museums and archives across the world (Tiley-Nel 2018; Stoler 2002; Guha 1983; Denning 1995; Fischer 1991). This means that there is no 'true font' of knowledge to draw from, which is discussed through the sections on archaeological theory and interpretation; interpretation of the past is subjective, biased and relative to a host of factors. These factors, which often are permanent stains on a history, are slowly being washed away as new understandings and new processes are being approached in the understanding of objects, sites and peoples (Butzer 1980; Jones 2001; Guha 1983; Denning 1995; Schoeman & Pikirayi 2011).

While it has taken 70-odd years to get to this point, Mapungubwe has gone from being seen as the supposed 'graveyard' of Great Zimbabwe and then as the Ancient City State of the Limpopo Province, to being a bastion of inspiration for fictional literary works. It is a source of context for art, meaning, and power. For this to happen, it means that this place is going to be remembered not just as part of the academy, but also as part of humanity.

Ultimately, to answer the question; it does not matter if representations of Mapungubwe are different from each other or are seen as inaccurate or inauthentic. Each representation holds the possibility to bring about a new meaning to Mapungubwe based on its own 'brand' of authenticity, accuracy, and truth through its unique type of knowledge and approach. These layers of knowledge matter, and all should be seen as the collective archive of memory and meaning of the site, that we as a nation create. Mapungubwe is so much more than an accumulation of shiny things laid bare on a table, or glass cabinets filled with pots and sherds – it is a quintessential facet of our South African identity.

While we will never be able to know how we have fared in our accumulation and interpretations (and re-interpretations) of Mapungubwe over the past eighty-nine years, the message for me is clear: Mapungubwe is not a place, it is a feeling. A beacon of hope that dawns each day on the horizon and sings the song of *Africanacity*, and all that it is to be part of one of the most important heritage stories the world has ever seen.

Long may Mapungubwe be remembered.

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Appendices

Die Ontdekking van Mapungubwe.

Terwyl ek onderwys gegee het op Brombeck-skool, het ek in sekere Mnr. v.d. Walt daar ontmoet, wat daar kinders op skool had. Met toeval vernem ek van hom, dat hy in kaffer het, wat weet van 'n sekere „Gheimsinnige kofpie“, waarop daar allerlei „dinge“ is. Die gevolg was, dat ek my vader, E. S. van Graan, dadelik in kennis gestel het daarvan, want hy sock alreeds vyf jaar na 'n sodanige kofpie.

Ons het toe besluit om die 31^{ste} Des. 32 ons soektog te begin. Ons is toe per motor na Mnr. H. v.d. Walt, want ons moes sy kaffer kry, om ons die kofpie te gaan aanwys. Mnr. v.d. Walt en sy skoonseun Mnr. D. du Plessis is toe saam. Op pad na die Limpopo vallei sou ons die kaffer Mawona ontmoet, wat ons die geheime paadjie teen die „Gheime kof“ sou gaan wys.

Daar dit 'n reinnige dag was, het die ou kaffer beslis gewis om saam te gaan, want sy woorde was „Julle sal nie net alleen papnat sien nie, maar julle sal ook nie lewondig terug kom nie“. Met veel moeite het hy naderhand vertel van sy seun, wat in 'n ent vader weg woon, en die sou ons hulwaarskynlik die plek gaan aanwys.

Met veel moeite en ergenis het ons toe die seun gekry, wat ingewillig het om saam te gaan. So omtrent 11 uur het ons die kofpie Mapungubwe bestyg, langs die geheime paadjie, wat die kaffer ons aangetoon het. Die kaffer self was glad nie daarvan hoer om op te klim nie, maar toe hy sien

dat dit met ons alles goedgaam, en hy allernig daaromde moet agterbly, het hy ook maar ons voetstapke gevolg

Toe ons to kom, wou die kaffer niks doen nie. Ons het egter die koppie in biefjie bekyk, maar in paar van ons was faamlik telungeotetel, want daar het maar net stukke kleinpotte rondgelei, en niks anders nie. Een of twee van ons het ook die opmerking gemaak, dat daar niks te doen is nie, want daar was alreeds mense voor ons, want daar was etlike graafflette geewe.

My vader se woorde egter was: „Nou moet julle op julle knieë kniip, en sien wat julle op die grond kan vind.“ Dadelik het my vader en ek die kop sistematies, van eenkant af noukeurig begin ondersoek, wat natuurlik maar kniip-kniip gegaan het.

Eers het ek in paar stukke yster gereedschap opgetel, wat my belangstelling men gaande gemaak het. Na in rukke het ek in paar stukke koper voorwape opgetel, en my belangstelling was nog groter, maar helaas, — daar het in reënblu op ons uitgesak, met die gevolg, dat ons papnat was en sidde van die koue. Alle belangstelling omtrent oudhede het natuurlik toe verdwyn, maar ons was nog steeds op ons knieë en, — — „Mintig, die is mooi plaaijje heidie, — dit lyk amper soos goud! Daar is nog een!“ Met in bly gemard wys ek toe my vonds aan my vader, wat dadelik berotig, dat dit goudplaat is. Ek wys hom toe waan ek dit gevind het,

en dadelik met hy toe, dat daar baie glaskralthuis op die grond lê, en terwyl hy besig was om dit op te tel, sien hy dat daar ook goue kralthuis tussen die ander is.

Hy roep ons toe almal en ons begin goue kralthuis te soek. In Rutki daarna het my vader in plek gekry, waar daar groter goue krale lê, en waar daar in paar goue ringe bokant die grond uitsteek.

Terwyl ons nog so rondsoek in goue kralthuis kry ons die bek van in kleipot, wat bokant die grond uitsteek. Dit het ons toe uitgehaal, maar daar was niks in te vinde nie.

Ondertussen het dit nog maar altyd sag gereën, met die gevolg dat ons besluit het, om die plek te verlaat tot die volgende dag.

Sondag, die 1^{de} Jan, 33 het weer begin met wolke in die lug, en in sagte reën, maar ongeveer 10 uur was ons weer hard besig om kralthuis te soek. Hierdie keer was ons nie met vier persone nie, maar wel vyf, want Mon. v.d. Walt se skoonseun M. Venter het gehoor van ons ontdekking van die vorige dag, en om alles in geheim te hou, moes ons hom innem as in aandel hou, al was dit ook ten koste van onself.

Daar ons vyf was, het die goue kralthuis op die oppervlakte goue aardrye, maar ons het goue uitgevind dat daar onder die oppervlakte ook goue kralthuis is, met die gevolg dat ons met ons sakmesse begin goue het, en op die manier kom ons toe op in paar groot stukke goudplaat af, asook die buffelthuis.

„Stadig kereks, - ons is nou op in graf!" was my vader se woorde, wat dadelik sijn, wat sal gebeur, as elkeen net voetel om uit te kry, wat hy kan. Ons het die grond toe stadig weggeknap, totdat ons op die goue bande, om die bene afgekrom het. Nadat ons dit versigtig verwyder het, het ons begin soek na die kop, - alles natuurlik met die grootste versigtigheid, en werklik, ons kry toe die kop, maar nie net dit alleen nie, maar ook wat ons vermoed om 'n kroon te wees, want dit lê bo teen die kopbeen. Ook het ons die arms versigtig oopgemaak, en op die linkehand het ons in besonder soort kleibordjie gevind.

Voer ons toe iets daarvan verwyder, wou ek eens 'n kiekie daarvan neem, maar die lug was so bewolk, dat dit geblyk het, of dit in saak van onmoontlikheid is. Die kiekies het sleg gekom, maar daar is wel een, wat kan getuig van wat ons se.

Daarna het ons alles verwyder en toe die kop verlaat, want dit was al laat en ons wou nog graag ook die ander kuffe gaan besigtig.

Maandag-oggend, die 22^{de} Jan. het ons weer ons terugreis aanvaar, want my vader en ek wou nie graag hie die hele plek moet omgedraai word, sodat dit onmoontlik gemaak word in wetenskaplike ondersoek nie.

J. A. van Graau.

Royal Mint,
Pretoria.

GOLD LEFT FOR WEIGHING AND EXAMINATION BY
PROFESSOR FOUCHE 21.2.33.

NOTE. All weights include the adhering clay or earth. A test made on one piece of plate indicates that a deduction of not less than 4% should be made for adhering dirt, e.g. No. 1 weighing 22.09 ounces becomes 21.21 ounces and applying the fineness of the similar material assayed 13.2.33, viz. 912.3 (91.23%) the fine gold contents of No.1 is 19.35 ounces which at 84/11.45 per fine ounce is £82/3/10d. and at present price due to exchange value of gold represents in London £116.12/6d. at the price ruling on the 20th instant viz. 120/6½. No deduction has been made for transport to London, interest, insurance, etc. The same remarks apply to the weights of gold given below:

No.1.	Wt. of large coil of spiral necklace	22.09 ounces	troy.
2."	" pieces of plate (and pins)	3.57	" "
3."	" small lot of spiral necklaces (smaller spiral)	.75	" "
4."	" lighter coloured spirals	1.19	" "
5."	" string of beads including some non-metallic beads	1.14	" "
6."	" what appears to be corroded iron tube of very small bore	.06	" "
<hr/>			
	Assay of light coloured metal in No.4	900.0	(90.0%)
	" " metallic beads " No.5	935.0	(93.5%)

R.P.
22.2.33

R.304.

BC.

2.111.33 - 50.

REPORT ON GOLD CONTENT OF MATERIAL RECEIVED ON 10.3.33 FROM

Professor Fouche.

1. Weight of beaten gold in form of plates, Rhinoceros, etc.	12.34 oz. Tory.
2. Weight of beads	15.04 " "
3. Weight of Spiral Bands including 45.34 oz. and 2.48 oz. of lighter colour	<u>47.82</u> " "
TOTAL	<u>75.20</u> " "

Fine Gold Content.

	<u>ASSAY.</u>	
Plato	12.34 oz. -- 944.5	11.65 oz. Tory.
Beads	15.04 -- 911.0	13.70 " "
Spirals	45.34 -- 945.0	42.84 " "
" (lighter colour)	2.48 -- 894.0	<u>2.22</u> " "
		<u>70.41</u> " "

Total fine gold

Total weight of fine gold @ £4.4s.11.45 d. per oz. = £299. 1s. 7d.

The above is a fair estimate of the value of fine gold contained in this material.

Royal Mint,
Pretoria.
15.3.33.

R. FEARSON.

DEPUTY MASTER.

R.331.

BC. 17.3.1933-45