

## Disciplining archaeology; the invention of South African prehistory, 1923-1953

NICK SHEPHERD

*University of Cape Town*

“[I]t is not easy to say something new; it is not enough for us to open our eyes, to pay attention, to be aware, for new objects suddenly to light up and emerge out of the ground.”

Michel Foucault, *The archaeology of knowledge* (London, 2001), 44-5.

“We understand the African as little as he understands us.”

John Goodwin, South African archaeologist, 1936.<sup>1</sup>

### Knowledge Production

Foucault’s defining insight, that new knowledge does not come unbidden to the alert seeker but is produced, as he puts it, under certain “conditions” and “relations”, is the starting point for this investigation. Briefly put, my interest is in running together a reading of Foucault’s major synthetic work, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, with an account of the establishment of the discipline of archaeology in South Africa in the three decades beginning in the 1920s. There are a number of factors which make this a promising exercise, besides the suggestive doubling of “archaeology”/archaeology, metaphor and discipline, and I shall mention two at the outset. The first is that the discipline of archaeology remains generally committed to a form of scholarship in which knowledge is “discovered” rather than “produced”. On the one hand, this is in contradistinction to the discipline of social anthropology, which advertised its “reflexive turn” as early as the mid-1980s.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, this is despite the best efforts of post-processual archaeologies, whose efforts, in any case, I would understand to be otherwise directed.<sup>3</sup> Put differently, for archaeologists, in the most literal of

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1. This is from Goodwin’s preface to a book of eight broadcast talks called *This Africa* (Cape Town, 1935). I am grateful to the National Research Foundation of South Africa and the Research Unit for the Archaeology of Cape Town for financial support, and to Janine Dunlop for research assistance. The visual material reproduced here is done so with the permission of the Manuscripts and Archives Department of the University of Cape Town library.

2. See, for example, J.Clifford and G.E.Marcus, *Writing culture: The poetics and politics of ethnography* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1986); G.E.Marcus and M.M.J.Fischer, *Anthropology as cultural critique: An experimental moment in the human sciences* (Chicago and London, 1986).

3. See N.Shepherd, ‘Heading south, looking north. Why we need a post-colonial archaeology’, *Archaeological Dialogues*, vol. 9(2), 2002, 74-82. For key works in the genre of post-processual archaeology, see I.Hodder, *Reading the past: Current approaches to interpretation in archaeology* (Cambridge, 1994); I.Hodder, *Interpreting archaeology: Finding meaning in the past* (London, 1995); I.Hodder, “‘Always momentary, fluid and flexible’: Towards a reflexive excavation methodology”, *Antiquity*, vol. 71, 1997, 691-700; M.Shanks and C.Tilley, *Re-Constructing archaeology: Theory and practice* (Cambridge, 1987); M.Shanks and C.Tilley, *Social theory and archaeology* (Cambridge, 1987).

ways, new objects (read “artefacts”) *do* emerge from the ground, and it has been a short and tempting leap of faith to translate these, in unproblematised ways, into new forms of knowledge (read “new objects of discourse”).

The second factor which makes this a promising exercise is the colonial setting of this account of disciplinary formation. Colonial archaeologists were separated from their archaeological subjects by a double remove of time and space. Not only were their subjects archaeological “others”, separated from the present by the centuries and millennia, but they were colonial “Others”, culturally, racially and spatially distanced from the metropolises. That is, not only were they subject to the methodologies and procedures of the discipline, but their descendants were subject to the laws and strictures of the colonial state, as well as to a body of racial myths, tropes of Otherness, invented histories, and so on.<sup>4</sup> The result, archaeologically-speaking, was a fertile breeding-ground for imagination, for methodological excess, as well as for the most exquisite of ironies. Put together, the result of these two factors was a mixture of innocence and malice which has been a thread through the history of colonial archaeologies; or, since malice is a hard word, a failure of empathy, a sense of critical and emotional distance, a coldness towards demands other than those of the discipline.

If one is to “say anything”, Foucault writes in the passage from which I have taken my epigraph, that is “for the appearance of an object of discourse”, it is necessary not only that it “exist in relation to other objects” (44), but that it “exists under the positive conditions of a complex group of relations” (45). Such relations “are established between institutions, economic and social processes, behavioural patterns, systems of norms, techniques, types of classification, (and) modes of characterization” (45). Accordingly, the account which follows is an account of the emergence of classificatory and conceptual schemas, of typologies and nomenclatures, and of a disciplinary language, as well as of the winning of institutional spaces, the formation of popular and professional bodies, and the relation of the discipline to centres of state power and influence, and forms of popular memory and imagination.

My argument is that in a roughly 30-year period, beginning in the early 1920s, we see the emergence and formation of the discipline of archaeology in South Africa in a recognisable format - which has elsewhere<sup>5</sup> been described as colonial archaeology - with an associated set of practices and guiding ideas. In Foucault’s terms we see the emergence of an archaeological discourse. At the centre of this discourse was a conception of South African prehistory, and a new valuation of forms of knowledge associated with the archaeological past. This discourse is distinct from the kinds of writing about and discussions of past times which preceded it, and it differs in formal ways from the kind of archaeology practised in South Africa in, say, the 1960s and 1970s. In key respects it repre-

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4. See, for example, H.K.Bhabha, *The location of culture* (London, 1994); M.L.Pratt, ‘Scratches on the face of the country; or, what Mr Barrow saw in the land of the Bushmen’ in H.L.Gates, ed., “Race”, *writing and difference* (Chicago, 1986), 138-62; E.Said, *Orientalism* (London, 1978); E.Said, ‘Representing the colonized: Anthropology’s interlocutors’, *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 15, 1989, 205-25; G.C.Spivak, *In Other worlds: Essays in cultural politics* (London, 1987).

5. See N.Shepherd, ‘The politics of archaeology in Africa’, *Annual Review of Anthropology*, vol. 31, 2002, 189-209; B.G.Trigger, ‘Alternative archaeologies: Nationalist, colonialist, imperialist’, *Man*, vol. 19, 355-70.

sents both a localisation and “South Africanisation” of archaeology, as well as an attempt to tie local sequences and conceptions of the past into broader African and regional schemas. This was especially true of southern and eastern Africa, and those regions whose contemporary political affiliation was expressed in the institutions of British empire. In the period following the general election of 1948 and the elevation of the Afrikaner nationalists, this gave way to a rival imaginary, framed in terms of the mythical narratives of Afrikaner sacred history rather than archaeological narratives of the pre-colonial past.

The term “invention” appears as part of my title, and to the extent that it appears as part of my argument it requires further comment here. I take as axiomatic the idea that there is nothing natural or inevitable about the production of knowledge, even more so about the production of knowledge about the past. At the same time, of course, the vast majority of knowledge represents itself as exactly that. The over-riding value of spending time with Foucault’s work, and of taking seriously an overworked notion like “knowledge production”, is in reminding us of the strangeness - in Foucault’s term, the “newness” - of knowledge as it emerges. Embedded in the term “to invent” are a number of meanings, and it is in the following sense that I use it here. Not “to fabricate” (to “make up”) but “to contrive” (“to devise, to bring to pass”); thus, “to invent”: “to bring into use formally or by authority; to found, establish, institute” (OED).

Finally, a note on A.J.H. (John) Goodwin (1900-1959), the author of my second epigraph, and the figure who stands at the centre of this account. South African-born, and Cambridge-trained, Goodwin returned in 1923 to become one of the first professional archaeologists in sub-Saharan Africa. Unlike his contemporary, Louis Leakey, who became African archaeology’s first media personality, Goodwin’s legacy is little known, even within the discipline. By all accounts a retiring man, he contrived to have only a single doctoral student in thirty years of teaching at the University of Cape Town, surely something of a record. At home his career was largely overshadowed by that of Clarence (Peter) van Riet Lowe, a civil engineer turned archaeologist, who began as Goodwin’s “correspondence pupil”. And yet, in the period under review, Goodwin’s influence on the development of archaeology in Africa was decisive. For B.D.Malan, one of the three principal commentators on the formation of southern African Stone Age studies, along with Janette Deacon and Goodwin himself, the year of Goodwin’s return marks “the beginning of a new cycle of increased advance”. Goodwin credits the Pretoria conference of 1926 as marking “the beginnings of increased co-operation and exact observation”.

### **The Palaeolithic in Africa**

There is a long history of interest in the material evidence of past times in South Africa. The agents of this interest were settlers and explorers, military men (like T.H.Bowker), a Superintendent of Education (Sir Langham Dale, who published under the pseudonym ), geologists (Thornton, J.P. Johnson, W.H. Penning), a medical practitioner (Kannemeyer), and self-professed collectors and “antiquarians” (like J.C.Rickard). Some 130 papers on broadly archaeological

topics were published in the period 1870-1923, covering the territories of what are today South Africa, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Swaziland and Mozambique. These appeared locally in the *Cape Monthly Magazine*, and after 1878 in the *Transactions of the South African Philosophical Society* (later the Royal Society of South Africa), as well as in the various metropolitan journals (*Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries*; *Proceedings of the Ethnological Society of London*; *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*). The key source for this early period is Goodwin himself, whose “Comments on the History and Present Position of South African Prehistory” (1935) was written as a report to the “Inter-University Committee for African Studies”.

Occasional descriptions of artefact types appear in the accounts of early travellers in the interior, usually the highly distinctive bored-stone types (as in the case of Sparrman), or rock paintings and shell middens (Barrow). In 1858 T.H.Bowker, “our first true antiquary”<sup>6</sup> made a collection of stone implements from near the mouth of the Great Fish River. Specimens were sent to the Albany Museum in Grahamstown and the Royal Artillery Museum in Woolwich, prompted in part by the interest created by the discoveries of Boucher de Perthes in the gravels of the Somme. Dale is attributed with the first public record on stone artefacts to appear locally.<sup>7</sup> The 1870s are chiefly remarkable for the detailed testimonies taken from Bushman informants by the linguist Wilhelm Bleek, a fact omitted from Goodwin’s comprehensive review but mentioned by Deacon, the rehabilitation of Bleek and Lloyd’s work being a phenomenon of the period post-1975.<sup>8</sup>

Dunn’s work<sup>9</sup> is regarded as “the first real attempt to give a comprehensive account of South African prehistory,” but he later moved to Australia taking his material with him. Goodwin describes this work as “the paper of a typical collector rather than that of a scientist,”<sup>10</sup> an interesting example of the transvaluation of a term. The notion of the “collector”, like the related notion of the “antiquarian” (or “antiquary”) was in common circulation in the nineteenth-century as a term with a positive valuation, implying a kind of curiosity and a scientific sensibility. By the opening decades of the last century, with the hardening of the disciplines well in train, the term had come to connote dilettantishness and a lack of method. Goodwin used the term in the 1930s to acknowledge the work of early practitioners, but also to place it outside the disciplinary canon, which his own work largely inaugurates. Thus, for example, Deacon would write that “(the) controlling models and paradigms of authors between 1869 and the early 1920s were essentially those of amateur collectors.”<sup>11</sup>

6. See A.J.H.Goodwin, ‘A commentary on the history and present position of South African prehistory with full bibliography’, *Bantu Studies*, vol. 9, 1935, 295.

7. L.Dale, ‘Stone implements in South Africa’, *Cape Monthly Magazine*, vol. 1, 1870, 365-6; L.Dale, ‘Stone implements in South Africa’, *Cape Monthly Magazine*, vol. 1, 1870, 236-9.

8. W.Bleek, *Report of Dr. Bleek concerning his researches into the Bushman language and customs*, Presented to the Honourable House of Assembly by command of his Excellency the Governor (Cape Town, 1873); W.Bleek, *A brief account of Bushman folk-lore and other texts*, Second report concerning Bushman researches presented to both Houses of Parliament of the Cape of Good Hope (Cape Town, 1875). See J.Deacon, ‘Weaving the fabric of Stone Age research in southern Africa’, in P.Robertshaw, ed., *A history of African archaeology* (London, 1990), 39-58.

9. E.Dunn, ‘Stone implements of South Africa’, *Transactions of the South African Philosophical Society*, vol. 2, 1880, 6-22.

10. Goodwin, ‘A commentary’, 300.

11. Deacon, ‘Weaving the fabric’, 40.

J.C.Rickard's classificatory schema has been fairly widely reproduced<sup>12</sup> and includes some standard terms ("Neolithic", "Paleolithic") as well as some local coinages: "Late Kitchen Midden"; "Early Kitchen Midden"; "East London group"; "Port Elizabeth group".<sup>13</sup> Goodwin's immediate predecessor was Louis Peringuey, an entomologist and veteran of the Franco-Prussian War who later became director of the South African Museum. He published widely on archaeological topics in the period 1892-1917, although by the end of his life this interest had abated. According to Goodwin, "(he) was no chicken when he died and had little interest in archaeology by then."<sup>14</sup> His approach to his museum duties was seigneurial. Museum attendants would line up and salute him in the morning, whereupon he replied with his walking stick "giving a sword-salute very smartly". Goodwin recalls that Peringuey "dumped a few tons of tools under the skeleton shed," but also that he "(kept) the best stuff in his desk," unlabelled, to be produced with a flourish for his more deserving visitors.<sup>15</sup>

Two ideas underpinned approaches to prehistory in this period. The first was that the South African material needed to be referred back to the European sequence, and in particular the French Palaeolithic which provided the benchmark for European prehistory (following the work of G.de Mortillet). Thus, to take an example more-or-less at random, J.P.Johnson described a long, lanceolate spearhead of indurated shale as resembling "certain well-known Solutro-Magdalenian types of Europe", although it is almost certainly "of more recent date than the associated Acheulean types."<sup>16</sup> Peringuey divided the South African stone age into "Neolithic elements", "Inland, or Aurignacian. Littoral, or Solutro-Magdalenian", and "Stellenbosch" or "Orange River" types.<sup>17</sup> Within this broad schema, which might be termed the "Palaeolithic in Africa", debates concerned the relative antiquity of the South African material (which was generally thought to be more recent), as well as migrationist/diffusionist debates concerning the nature of the transmission of the European types. At the same time, some reservations were expressed regarding the applicability of the European scheme, most significantly by A.C.Haddon during a visit of the British Association for the Advancement of Science in 1905.<sup>18</sup>

A second underpinning idea identified South African prehistory with a contemporary, ethnically-designated group, the "Bushmen" or "San". The Bushmen were understood to be the authors of prehistory, in whole or in part,

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12. J.Rickard, 'Notes on four series of Paleolithic implements from South Africa', *Cambridge Antiquary Society*, vol. 7, 1881, 57-66; J.Rickard, 'Notes on some Neolithic implements from South Africa', *Cambridge Antiquary Society*, vol. 7, 1881, 67-74. Rickard's schema is to be found in Goodwin, 'A commentary'; A.J.H.Goodwin, *The loom of prehistory: A commentary and select bibliography of the prehistory of southern Africa* (Cape Town, 1946); and B.D.Malan, 'Remarks and reminiscences on the history of archaeology in South Africa', *South African Archaeological Bulletin*, vol. 25, 1970, 88-92.
  13. Archaeology's frequently opaque terminology is itself a matter of interest. A note for the non-specialist: "Neolithic" means "Of or belonging to the later stone age, characterized by the use of ground or polished stone implements and weapons." "Palaeolithic" is that period "Characterized by the use of primitive stone implements; applied to the earlier part of the prehistoric 'stone age'" (both definitions from the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary).
  14. Reported in Malan, 'Remarks and reminiscences', 89.
  15. *Ibid.*
  16. J.P.Johnson, 'Note on stone implements from Embabaan Valley', *Man*, vol. 7, 1907, 54.
  17. L.Peringuey, 'The Stone Ages of South Africa', *Annals of the South African Museum*, vol. 8, 1911.
  18. A.C.Haddon, *Presidential Address, Section H*, Presented at the British Association for the Advancement of Science, 1905.

and the terms “Bushman relics”, “Bushman remains” and “Bushman drawings” commonly substitute in the literature for archaeological artefacts and rock paintings. This formulation was legally codified in the Bushman Relics Act of 1911, the first conservation legislation in South Africa, following hard on the heels of the Act of Union. The Bushman Relics Act was intended to extend a measure of protection to archaeological sites (especially rock art sites), but also to control the burgeoning trade in human remains of Bushman origins.<sup>19</sup> At the back of this idea, in turn, was another widely-held conception of the Bushmen as a remnant race or evolutionary hold-over, literally as “living” prehistory. This is an idea with a long (and ongoing) pedigree in South African thought, letters and popular culture. In the period under review it received its most influential expression in the work of Stow.<sup>20</sup>

Together, these two notions, the “Palaeolithic in Africa” and “Bushman prehistory” inform a developing discourse around past times in the closing decades of the nineteenth century and the opening decades of the twentieth century. On the one hand, they introduced a specifically European optic, so that in the most literal (and surreal) of senses these early workers were scratching hopefully in harsh local soils for signs which could be linked back to a cave in France. On the other hand, they set up a degree of slippage between prehistory, Bushman-studies and Bantu-studies, or between Archaeology and Ethnology as they would come to be framed, whose intellectual territory was understood to be substantially overlapping, if not identical.

### “Clean[ing] up the Stone Ages”

Two events in the mid-1920s served to transform conceptions of South African prehistory. The first was Raymond Dart’s published description of the Taung fossil of *Australopithecus africanus* (in *Nature*, 1925). This turned Dart into an “instant hero” in South Africa.<sup>21</sup> Among the many notes of congratulations was one from General Jan Smuts, recently defeated as prime minister, and now biding time as the president of the South African Association for the Advancement of Science. In the press Smuts wrote of “an epoch-making discovery, not only of far-reaching importance from an anthropological point of view but also well calculated to concentrate attention on South Africa as the great field for scientific discovery which it undoubtedly is.”<sup>22</sup>

On an international stage Dart’s discovery was panned. Responses in *Nature* by (Sir) Arthur Keith and Grafton Eliot-Smith, respectively the foremost physical anthropologist of his day and the renowned London University neuroanatomist, doubted the human affinities of the skull. (Sir) Arthur Smith Woodward, a champion of “Piltdown man”, dismissed the term *Australopithecus*

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19. See M.Legassick and C.Rassool, *Skeletons in the cupboard: Museums and the incipient trade in human remains, 1907-1917* (Cape Town, 1999).

20. G.Stow, *The native races of South Africa*, (London, 1905).

21. See S.Dubow, ‘Human origins, race typology and the other Raymond Dart’, in P.F.Alexander, R.Hutchison and D.Schreuder, eds., *Africa today: A multi-disciplinary snapshot of the continent in 1995* (Canberra, 1996), 245-79.

22. *Star*, 6 Feb. 1925, in Dubow, ‘Human origins’, 246.

as a barbarous combination of Latin and Greek.<sup>23</sup> In fact, it was not until Le Gros Clark examined the material from Taung, Sterkfontein and Swartkrans in 1947 in the run-up to the first meeting of the First Pan African Congress on Prehistory, and pronounced himself satisfied, that the genus *Australopithecus* gained general acceptance.<sup>24</sup>

The second event which changed prevailing conceptions of the past was Goodwin's introduction of a local typology and nomenclature for the Stone Ages, and a conception of successive stages of prehistory. Goodwin's first position on returning from Cambridge had been as research assistant in ethnology to A.Radcliffe-Brown at the University of Cape Town. He was given the task of building up an ethnographical survey and bibliography "intended to provide the foundation of an Africa Institute at Cape Town."<sup>25</sup> However, with the death of Perigey in March 1924, he turned his attention to the substantial stone artefact holdings of the South African Museum. It is worth reconstructing the conditions under which Goodwin laboured, from a technical point of view. The museum's holdings consisted of hundreds of individual collections with little or no geographical, stratigraphic or contextualising information. For example, J.M.Bain's collection

could be shown lithologically to have come from vast areas south of the Vaal River. All had been submitted as a 'single collection' and numbered as such. No supporting evidence was given, and only a few individual tools bore such locations as 'Karoo', 'Cape Province', 'Free State'.<sup>26</sup>

Goodwin involved himself in the quintessentially archaeological tasks of formal comparison, and the construction of typologies and, more tentatively, chronologies. It was while engaged in these problems that he began a correspondence with van Riet Lowe, then designing road-bridges for the Public Works Department in the Orange Free State. For Goodwin, tied to Cape Town by lack of research funds and by his ethnological duties, van Riet Lowe provided a crucial link with the field. Goodwin, in turn, "converted" van Riet Lowe, and "drilled" him in the new terminology, an exercise which was to prove crucial in its broader acceptance.

Goodwin first introduced his schema at the Oudtshoorn meeting of the South African Association for the Advancement of Science in 1925, but withdrew it voluntarily, citing insufficient support. In the period March-July 1926, prompted in part by this failure, he published a series of popular articles on archaeology in the weekend edition of the mass-circulation daily newspaper, the *Cape Times*, under the heading "Sermons in Stone" (later amended to "Stories in

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23. All in *Nature*, 14 Feb 1925, cited in Dubow.

24. See P.Tobias, 'The VIIIth Pan-African Congress on Prehistory, Nairobi, 1977, and the Opening of the Louis Leakey Memorial Institute', *South African Archaeological Bulletin*, vol. 33, 1978, 5-11. Tobias writes: "The conversion of Le Gros Clark ... (was a turning point) in the appraisal of the African early hominids" (6).

25. A.J.H.Goodwin, 'Formative years of our prehistoric terminology', *Southern African Archaeological Bulletin*, vol. 13, 1958, 25-33.

26. *Ibid*, 27.

Stone”). The articles addressed the history of prehistoric studies in South Africa, dwelt on the relation between the South African and French Palaeolithic sequence (including “the deduced relationship of Aurignacian, Capsian and Bushman cultures”), and outlined Goodwin’s proposed terminology, an interesting choice of topics for the popular press.

In the first sermon Goodwin gives an account of earlier students of prehistory, including Peringuey and “contemporaries of his, and later collectors”, Kannemeyer, Alfred Brown of Aliwal North, H.Cottell of Cradock, and so on. He writes: “Now all of these men were trained either from books on European archaeology or by men who had themselves been trained in Europe. Thus every find made in South Africa was viewed through European spectacles.”<sup>27</sup> The third sermon begins:

Up till quite lately (sic) several presumptions have been made as to who were the original South Africans. It was first presumed long years ago that the Bushmen, as we loosely call them, were the first inhabitants of our country... On this has been pyramided a further presumption that all the stone implements found in South Africa were ‘Bushman’.<sup>28</sup>

The seventh sermon ends with Goodwin fretting about terminology, this time in connection with the so-called “Eastern Culture” (a term later dropped). He asks in connection with the implements which make up this industry:

Who made them? What else did these folk make? Is the ‘Axe-edged’ implement really made by the same people as the dainty lance-head? Are they older than the implements of the Pygmy-makers? What relationship exists between the lance-head and the *coup de poing* of the Earlier folk? Worrying questions to one who is trying hard to ‘clean up the stone ages’.<sup>29</sup>

Goodwin’s schema was finally accepted at the Pretoria conference of the South African Association for the Advancement of Science in July 1926, a meeting attended by van Riet Lowe (who had missed the Oudtshoorn conference). In essence, what it proposed was a two-stage division of prehistory, and the substitution of local terms and culture for the European types. Thus, an Earlier Stone Age came into being comprising a Stellenbosch Culture, a Fauresmith Culture, and an uncertain Victoria West Culture (which was later shelved). The Later Stone Age contained the Smithfield Culture, the Pygmy or Microlithic Culture (amended to the Wilton at the Pretoria conference), and the problematic Eastern Culture (part of which was amended to the Stillbay).<sup>30</sup> Subsequently a third stage

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27. *Ibid.*, 29. The first sermon appeared in the edition of 27 March 1926.

28. *Ibid.*, Sermon 3, 24 April 1926.

29. *Ibid.*, Sermon 7, 29 May 1926.

30. *Ibid.*



was instituted, the Middle Stone Age, roughly equivalent to the Middle Paleolithic, following the work of Neville Jones in Southern Rhodesia.<sup>31</sup> The term Middle Stone Age was first used in 1927, and a description was read in 1928.

Together the contributions of Dart and Goodwin introduced new objects of contemplation into South African, and African, prehistoric studies: on the one hand, a transitional pre-human form imagined in terms of a narrative of biological evolution; and on the other hand, associated stages of cultural and technological development, imagined in terms of a succession of stages or “Cultures”. Significantly, archaeology remained (and remains) a discipline concentrated on fossil forms and stone implements, whose human authors and agents are only dimly imagined, as “folk”, or in Goodwin’s formulation, “the original South Africans”.

### **Centre and Periphery**

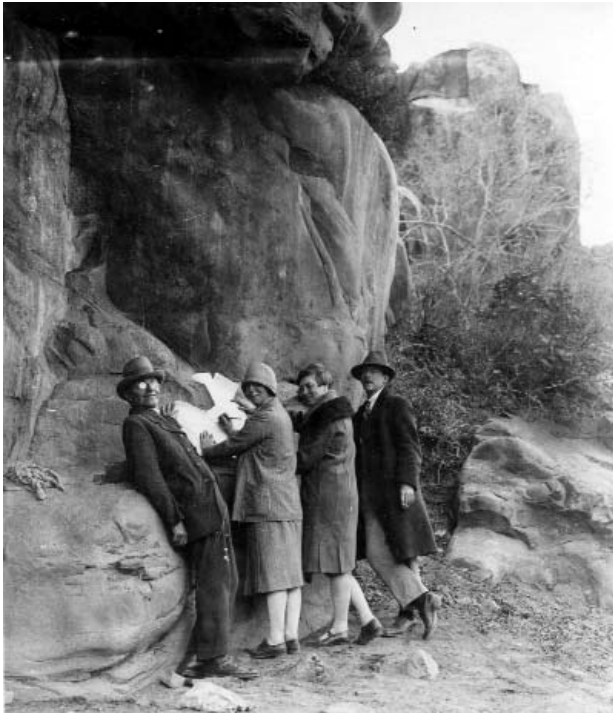
In *The Loom of Prehistory*, the second of a series of handbooks on archaeology aimed at a popular audience, Goodwin complains of “the way in which scientists in Europe and elsewhere are only willing to accept the statements of visitors with a brief knowledge of the country, rather than to augment these with the detailed work of those who know South Africa and local conditions, and have a knowledge of hundreds of sites over a period of years.”<sup>32</sup> In fact, the relation between the disciplinary metropolises, in this case British archaeology at Cambridge, and their satellites in far-flung parts of the world, played a key structuring role in the development of archaeology at home and abroad. Goodwin wanted a Department of Archaeology established at the University of Cape Town, and he suggested that Miles Burkitt, his former lecturer at Cambridge, be invited to give his views.

With Goodwin playing host, the two men and their wives embarked on a grand tour of southern African sites, on a route which saw them cover some 5,000 miles by road in the Union of South Africa. In Southern Rhodesia they were met by Neville Jones who acted as their guide for a further 1,500 miles, whereupon the Burkitts were despatched to van Riet Lowe for a final rounding-off in the Free State (500 miles). A number of photographs of the trip survive: the visiting party inspecting the ruins of Great Zimbabwe; a scene in which Goodwin has positioned his wife alongside a panel of rock art to give a sense of scale; and a scene in a cave near Tarkastad in the eastern Cape, with from left to right Miles Burkitt, Mrs Peggy Burkitt, Mrs Winnie Goodin, and John Goodwin.

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31. N.Jones, *The Stone Age in Rhodesia* (Oxford, 1926).

32. Goodwin, *The loom of prehistory*, 38-9.



**Figure 1.** Scene in a cave near Tarkastad in the eastern Cape, with from left to right: Miles C. Burkitt, Mrs Peggy Burkitt, Mrs Winnie Goodwin, and John Goodwin. The two women are engaged in tracing a rock art image, later reproduced by Burkitt in his book. As a vignette in the African bush, it nicely recalls the sheer unlikelyhood of so much of archaeological practice in this period: the contrast between the formal clothes of the touring party and the rough countryside of the eastern Cape; Burkitt's slightly startling expression; the wifely labour of drawing and annotating.

At the conclusion of their tour Burkitt remarked that “By the time we reach England I shall have my book ready for the press.” The manuscript, completed on the voyage home, was published as *South Africa's Past in Stone and Paint* (1928). Goodwin, who had been planning a definitive book of his own, was forced into a hurried collaboration with van Riet Lowe. The result, *The Stone Age Cultures of South Africa* (1929) is “a classic example of empiricism at its most useful.”<sup>33</sup> Goodwin, for whom Burkitt's actions represent a complex betrayal (What did he expect? Why had he given the older man free access to his material?), is careful to refer to Burkitt's book in approving terms.<sup>34</sup>

Burkitt argues in his book for Northern, and more specifically for European Lower Palaeolithic, Mousterian and Upper Palaeolithic influences in the stone-tool assemblages and rock art of southern Africa. Interestingly, Goodwin and van Riet Lowe repeat this view, even as they were doing so much

33. This is in Deacon, ‘Weaving the fabric’, 45. See A.J.H. Goodwin and P. van Riet Lowe, *The Stone Age cultures of South Africa* (Cape Town, 1929); M. Burkitt, *South Africa's past in stone and paint* (Cambridge, 1928).

34. “(O)ne of the most delightful books on South African prehistory this region has seen.” (Goodwin, ‘A commentary’, 339); “Burkitt's excellent and delightful book” (Goodwin, ‘Formative years’, 32).



**Figure 2.** Goodwin and an un-named co-worker at Oakhurst Cave, a large and productive site on the southern Cape coast. Like the vast majority of “native” labourers on archaeological sites he has disappeared from official histories of the discipline, only to recur, in disconcerting fashion, in the liminal space of the unofficial site photograph.

to unshackle the South African sequence from European typologies. They argue that many of the local stone-tool industries came to southern Africa with the migration of people from North Africa, a part of the world which had been touched by civilization by virtue of its proximity to Europe. The Sahara acted as a selective barrier, preventing the movement of cultures from south to north, but allowing “higher” cultures to pass from Europe to south of the Sahara. In their words, Africa is “a pocket from which nothing tangible returns” (3). The image here is of a cul-de-sac or a cultural black hole, something which absorbs energy and creativity and returns nothing. This geography of the imagination is given expression elsewhere in Goodwin’s work. An essay on “The Peopling of Africa” begins: “Sitting here in Cape Town, or perhaps now and then travelling to Europe in a great curve which passes round the western coast of our continent, we seldom think of the vast numbers of people who live, and go about their daily work, and die, between us and Europe.”<sup>35</sup>

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35. In A.J.H. Goodwin, *This Africa* (Cape Town, 1935), 1.

Deacon remarks that “Goodwin had had high hopes for prehistoric studies in South Africa in the 1920s, but seems to have been discouraged both by the lack of funds and by the turn of events.” She cites Leach’s comment to the effect that the background of anthropologists in Britain in the first few decades of the twentieth century had much to do with whether they “got on” in university politics.<sup>36</sup> Smuts presided over the centenary meeting of the British Association in London in 1931, with van Riet Lowe representing South Africa as president of the Anthropological Section of the South African Association. They shared a boat home, and at Smuts’s suggestion “the two men had long and serious discussions on archaeological subjects almost daily during the voyage.”<sup>37</sup> As a botanist, Smuts was keenly interested in problems of climate and environment in prehistory. He subsequently encouraged his son to do a study of surface sites in the central and northern Transvaal (Mr. Jannie Smuts published several papers on what he claimed to be a very early pebble industry, but when his ideas failed to gain support he lost interest in the subject).

A direct outcome of General Smuts’s “powerful patronage” was the founding in 1935 of the Bureau of Archaeology, later the Archaeological Survey, in the Department of the Interior. Van Riet Lowe was transferred from the Public Works Department to become its first director. He defined the aim of the Bureau in terms of a number of linked objectives:

Firstly, it was to be an institution for research in the prehistory of South Africa; secondly, a centre of information and assistance to all engaged in such studies; and thirdly, a centre for the promotion of general public interest in prehistory. A fourth objective was to ensure the preservation of archaeological sites and the elimination of unscientific methods and unauthorized excavations.<sup>38</sup>

This last function was carried out through the powers of the Commission for the Preservation of Natural and Historical Monuments, Relics and Antiquities, which was reconstituted with wider powers by an act of parliament of 1934. Van Riet Lowe was appointed as a member and also as Secretary of the Commission, a position held by subsequent directors of the Bureau. Malan, himself a past director of the Bureau, recalls that as a centre for information it functioned mainly by correspondence:

We wrote constantly to a large circle of correspondents, mostly amateurs reporting their discoveries, or seeking assistance in describing them... As for promoting public interest - van Riet Lowe

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36. This is in E. Leach, ‘Glimpses of the unmentionable in the history of British social anthropology’, *Annual Review of Anthropology*, vol. 13, 1-23. See Deacon, ‘Weaving the fabric’, 45.

37. See B. D. Malan, ‘Biographical sketch (Clarence van Riet Lowe)’, *South African Archaeological Bulletin*, vol. 17, 1962, 40.

38. Malan, ‘Remarks and reminiscences’, 90. For a useful account of the role played by Smuts in the formation of South African prehistory, see N. Schlanger, ‘Making the past for South Africa’s future: The prehistory of Field-Marshal Smuts (1920s-1940s)’, *Antiquity*, vol. 76, 2002, 200-9.

excelled at this and hardly a week passed without some reference to archaeology in the press.<sup>39</sup>

The founding of the Bureau marks a significant moment in the institutionalisation of archaeology in South Africa in two respects. In the first place, it established archaeology as a directly-funded branch of the civil service, a very different form of institutional insertion to that envisaged by Goodwin, who had lobbied for an Institute of Archaeology attached to the South African Museum. In the second place, it marks an important reorientation of archaeology, in the direction of a localisation and a “South Africanisation”, to use a term introduced by Dubow (following Hofmeyr).<sup>40</sup> At the centre of this reorientation were two complimentary forces, the political patronage of Smuts, and, within the discipline, a developing sense of audience and of a local archaeological constituency.

### **The Archaeological Society**

The roots of archaeology’s engagement with its own constituency go back at least as far as Goodwin’s “Sermons in Stone” (1926). However, it was not until August 1944 that the Cape Archaeological Society was founded by a small group including Goodwin and Dorothea Bleek. The initial aims of the society were modest. It was hoped that a minimum membership of thirty would enable it to function, and it confined its activities to the Cape Province. Such was the nature of the response that at the intervention of Smuts and van Riet Lowe, the scope of the society was widened. In June 1945 the South African Archaeological Society was founded, covering “southern Africa, including Southern Rhodesia and those neighbouring territories which have a lively interest in the subject.”<sup>41</sup> Goodwin and A.W.Robinson drafted the statutes of the society, which provided for a central council with autonomous centres wherever they could be maintained. Within nine months the society had 247 members and sixty “junior associates”. Six centres had been organised, of which the Cape Peninsula and the Witwatersrand were the largest.

An important part of the Society’s activities lay in the area of publishing. At the end of 1945 the first issue of the *Southern African Archaeological Bulletin* appeared with Goodwin as editor. Initially it was hoped for three numbers per year, but within a year it had become a regular quarterly journal. It was for many years the only regular archaeology journal south of the Sahara,<sup>42</sup> and remains the only indigenous archaeology journal with a continuous record of publication. The first ten volumes of the *Bulletin* contain 113 full-length articles, and 109

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39. Malan, ‘Remarks and Reminiscences’, 90.

40. See Dubow, ‘Human Origins’, 251. He notes that “On the occasion of the 1929 visit of the British Association to South Africa he (Smuts’s deputy, Jan Hofmeyr) celebrated the scientific achievements that had been made since the last visit of the British Association in 1905. Chief of these was the ‘South Africanisation’ of science, by which Hofmeyr meant not only that scientific work had become firmly established in the country, but also that South Africa had something unique to contribute to the world.”

41. Resolution of the council of the Cape Archaeological Society, May 1945, reported in B.D.Malan, ‘The South African Archaeological Society: Ten years of archaeology in South Africa’, *South African Archaeological Bulletin*, vol. 11, 1956, 31.

42. See Deacon, ‘Weaving the fabric’.

shorter articles. The list of topics (surveyed by Malan in his address as president of the Society in 1955) covers work on ape, proto-human and human skeletal remains; work on the Earlier and Middle Stone Ages; a substantial number of contributions on the Later Stone Age; and a smaller number of papers on what was termed “proto-history” and would later become the “Iron Age” (including work at Great Zimbabwe and Mapungubwe Hill).

In addition to the *Bulletin* the Society published a series of handbooks intended to be “guides to new members who require access to the basic data of our subject”, as well as works of reference “for the research worker”.<sup>43</sup> The first of these, *Method in Prehistory* (Goodwin 1945), is a textbook on archaeological methodology, with sections on “Field Research”, “Excavation”, “Beliefs and Burials” and “Primitive Arts and Crafts”. *The Loom of Prehistory* (1946), the second handbook, was intended to update *The Stone Age Cultures of South Africa*.

It is common around this time to find references in the archaeological literature to “the needs of the common man” and “the need to involve the man in the street,”<sup>44</sup> but in the period 1923-1953 archaeology in southern Africa was entirely and exclusively a phenomenon of settler society. This may seem less surprising than it is. It was, after all, a period in which any number of amateur scientific and other organisations sprang-up in the colonies, with a membership that was white, or largely white. What makes it remarkable in this case is that archaeology as a discipline is so centrally *about* black African experience. This brings us to the defining paradox of colonialist archaeology, which was that it was possible - in fact, it was entirely normal - to practice African archaeology without knowing, or wanting to know, anything about African people *per se*. As Goodwin, the consummate archaeological synthesiser and part-time ethnologist put it in the passage which I have taken as the second of my epigraphs: “We understand the African as little as he understands us.” Doing archaeology involved a number of suppressions, blind-spots, self-willed strictures on imagination, and chief amongst these was an indifference towards the African present. In fact, in broadly metaphorical but also in the most literal of ways, doing archaeology involved looking through present landscapes, with their clutter of political aspiration and cultural change, to find the traces of an imagined past lying below.

Like all such suppressions, in a colonial context this relation was more-or-less unstable, was liable to leakage, and where better to find traces of this than in the slippery domain of the visual image? A photograph from Goodwin’s collection shows Goodwin and an un-named co-worker at Oakhurst Cave, a large and productive site in the southern Cape which was published in 1937.<sup>45</sup>

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43. See Malan, ‘The South African Archaeological Society’, 32.

44. These are both by Inskeep, writing in the *Bulletin* on the social milieu of the post-war period in South Africa. See R.R.Inskeep, ‘Editorial’, *South African Archaeological Bulletin*, vol. 25, 1970, 83.

45. See A.J.H.Goodwin, ‘Archaeology of Oakhurst Shelter, George’, *Transactions of the Royal Society of South Africa*, vol. 25, 1937, 228-324.



**Figure 3.** Photographed in situ; part of the vast collection of human remains disinterred from Oakhurst Cave by Goodwin and his co-workers in six visits between February 1932 and February 1935. Something of the intimacy of death, and of its interruption by the act of excavation, is captured in the folding together of the two figures.



**Figure 4.** Camp life; a pencilled note on the back of this photograph reads “Forest Hall; Goodwin, Jean and Berrie Malan”. Forest Hall, a small shelter about 2 kilometres east of Keurboomstrand on the southern Cape coast, was excavated in June 1940. Goodwin is seated second from the left. Seated on his right hand is the un-named co-worker from the excavation at Oakhurst Cave. A second un-named figure lifts a kettle from the fire in the foreground. The lighting in this image is extraordinary. In a visual metaphor for the history of the discipline itself, the white excavators appear bathed in light, while their black co-workers are lost in the shadows.

I wish to use these images to illustrate two things. The first is archaeology's reliance on "native" labour, like colonial society at large. Unmentioned in site reports, unrecalled in official tellings of the history of the discipline, we see them, these black co-workers, captured in the background of a photograph or flitting around its margins, usually with a trowel or spade in hand, or involved with the paraphernalia of camp life. More rarely, as in this image, they look back at us boldly from the centre of the frame. My clumsy coinage, the notion of a "co-worker", alerts us to a second point, a more systematic absence. The semantics of a discipline are as good a guide as any to its politics and its practices. This period sees the development and application to local circumstances of an extensive vocabulary: the notion of the "site visit", the "tour", the "field season", and the "research field". What is missing, and strikingly so, is a term to describe black field operatives. White co-workers might be "assistants", "excavators", "field-hands", "students", or "supervisors". But the only term to describe the function and office of black co-workers is that colonial catch-all, "the boy". I tried to uncover the name of Goodwin's co-worker who appears in a number of other photographs, some of them from other sites, but an extensive search of site notebooks, published reports, letters and memoirs and the like, yielded nothing. The closest that I got was a terse entry in a site notebook recording the cost of "Boy for a day", and beneath it the cost of Goodwin's hotel lunch (at roughly double the first entry).<sup>46</sup>

### **The Pan-African Congress and the Eclipse of Prehistory**

If the practices and semantics of archaeology imply a general politics, then events in the post-war period give a more detailed sense of the nature of its political insertion. As Tobias tells it, late in the war Louis and Mary Leakey were giving thought to the idea of inviting colleagues from around the world to visit some of the important East African sites. With financial support from the Kenyan government they went on to organise what was to become the first meeting of the Pan-African Congress on Prehistory in Nairobi in January 1947. Such was the meeting's prestige that Smuts, then Prime Minister of South Africa, "made the unique gesture of placing an Air Force plane at the disposal of his country's delegation to fly them up to Nairobi."<sup>47</sup> Not only they, but delegates from the neighbouring territories of Northern and Southern Rhodesia, Angola and Mozambique were taken on the same aircraft. The plane made its way up the Great Rift Valley; "the pilot was amenable to any reasonable suggestion and so they were able to obtain fine aerial views of the volcanic craters and the Rift Valley lakes as they flew north." Deliberations were held in the Council Chambers of the Nairobi Municipality. The Abbe Breuil became the organisation's president, van Riet Lowe and Camille Arambourg were the vice-presi-

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46. See N. Shepherd (forthcoming), "'When the hand that holds the trowel is black': disciplinary practices of self-representation and the issues of "native" labour in archaeology", *Journal of Social Archaeology*.

47. P. Tobias, 'The VIIIth Pan-African Congress on Prehistory, Nairobi, 1947, and the opening of the Louis Leakey Memorial Institute', *South African Archaeological Bulletin*, vol. 33, 1978, 6.



dents, and Louis Leakey the Organizing General Secretary. Along with their luggage, the South African delegation took an invitation issued by Smuts to host the second Pan-African Congress in South Africa in 1951, a fitting gesture in a developing bi-regional partnership.

Two events intervened to cancel this vision of South Africa linking up with Kenya for a place at the forefront of archaeological research on the continent. The first was the election of 1948 in which D.F.Malan's National Party swept to power on an *apartheid* platform. The second was the death of Smuts in 1950. The December issue of the *Bulletin* carried a black-edged obituary in place of an editorial. Goodwin wrote: "With the passing of the General we have reached the end of a period; a South African period as formative and clear-cut in its implications as the Victorian and Elizabethan periods in Britain."<sup>48</sup> It soon became clear that the new government was bent on rescinding Smuts's invitation to host the second Pan-African Congress. In a series of increasingly bitter editorials, Goodwin bemoans this loss of political patronage and archaeology's growing sense of isolation; "We have the materials, we have the will, we have the men; we only lack the essential support of our own Government in this particular instance." Later he writes:

There is no further news of the Second Pan-African Congress in Prehistory, due to be held in 1951. Dr L.S.B. Leakey's brilliant inspiration seems to have been well ahead of its times. Perhaps (at the pace of the ox) we shall have reached an adequate cultural level in 2051 AD, to follow Kenya's brave lead.<sup>49</sup>

In fact, this was the beginning of a long fallow period for the discipline. Ray Inskip, who replaced Goodwin at the University of Cape Town, made the state of neglect of archaeology the theme of his address to the annual meeting of the South African Museums Association in April 1961: "(South Africa) may fairly claim the distinction of having led the field in the early stages of archaeological research in Africa south of the Sahara." But, he continues,

these worthy achievements belong to a previous generation, and we have seriously to ask ourselves whether at the present moment the achievements of the past have not been allowed to fall into neglect. Certainly when we look closely at official services, such as National Museums, and Commissions for the Preservation of Natural and Historical Monuments ... it is quite clear that a number of smaller territories to the north are pursuing a far more active and enlightened course than is the case in South Africa today.<sup>50</sup>

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48. See A.J.H.Goodwin, 'Editorial (Obituary notice, General Jan Smuts)', *South African Archaeological Bulletin*, vol. 5, 1950, 125.

49. A.J.H.Goodwin, 'Editorial notes and news', *South African Archaeological Bulletin*, vol. 5, 1950, 1-3, 41-2.

50. R.R.Inskip, 'The present state of archaeology in South Africa', *South African Museums Association Bulletin*, vol. 7, 1961, 225, 226-7.

This gloomy prognosis was confirmed when in 1962 the Archaeological Survey was closed as a government department, and transferred to the University of the Witwatersrand.

Goodwin's angry jibe gives the clue. In the period 1923-1948 archaeology in South Africa developed in a particular political climate and context, personified by Smuts. If, on the one hand, such a climate was indifferent towards anti-colonial and African nationalist sentiment, then on the other hand it was generally opposed to the more extreme forms of settler nationalism. Archaeology, like Smuts's personal politics, tended to be played out on a larger stage, one which was given geographical expression in the trans-nationalism of British empire. Its venues were meetings of the British Association, the South African Association, and (briefly) the Pan-African Congress on Prehistory. With Smuts as its booster, prehistoric studies could emerge for a brief period as *the* premier form of scientific pursuit, in the broader context of South African studies. At the heart of this developments lay a new valuation of forms of knowledge associated with the prehistoric past, which, in turn, informed an emergent national identity in South Africa. The unique nature of South Africa's fossil record, and the richness of its painted sites and archaeological deposits, gave substance to the idea of Union, and placed South Africa in a specific relation to other parts of the empire, notably East Africa. Its sub-text was that in matters of prehistoric science, South Africa could be treated on equal terms with all comers, including the metropole (an assertion which was hotly contested by British archaeologists).

A general conception of past-times which had been in formation almost from the first moments of contact, and which leaves a substantial published record in the period post-1860, was disciplined and localised in the period post-1923 in terms of a named set of cultures, industries, forms of life and modes of production. This archaeological imaginary was made available in two ways: as a set of texts (that is a set of site reports, syntheses, and speculative papers, couched in the formal terminology of the discipline), and as a series of points on the landscape, with each place-name denoting a notable site or discovery. One could read (or write) the text, but one could also visit the site, and see, touch, feel and smell "the past".

In the post-1948 period there was a marked transformation in general social and state-sanctioned engagements with past-times, whose roots lie in the same period of the 1920s and 1930s. But this time not in Taung, Makapansgat and Oakhurst Cave, and the emergent discipline of archaeology, but in the political theatre surrounding the Great Trek re-enactments of the mid-1930s and the emergence of Afrikaner nationalism as a political force. Henceforth the historical imagination of the South African state would creak with the ox-wagons of the Afrikaner pioneers, thunder with the massed rifles of Blood River, and echo with the cries of the fallen impi. The settler pan-Africanism and Anglophilia of the emergent discipline of archaeology were replaced by the parochialism of Afrikaner nationalism. The strange occluded twilight of prehistory, part fantasy, part brute, material artefact, was eclipsed by the narratives of Afrikaner sacred history.

As if to underline this replacement in national historical consciousness, the period 1951-1952 was to be remarkable not for the holding of the second

Pan-African Congress on Prehistory, but for the tercentenary of Jan and Maria van Riebeeck, and the staged re-enactment of the arrival of colonialism at these shores.<sup>51</sup> It was not until the late-1960s and early-1970s that the discipline of archaeology re-established itself in South African affairs, this time in a very different context, as part of the general cultural apparatus of a modernising apartheid state with money to spend on museums and universities. This would involve archaeology in a new and different set of compromises and accommodations, which would in turn shape the nature of the discipline, but that, as they say, is another story, and must wait for another day.

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51. See C.Rassool and L.Witz, 'The 1952 Jan van Riebeeck Tercentenary Festival: Constructing and contesting public national history in South Africa', *Journal of African History*, vol. 34, 1993, 447-468.