

ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE SHADOW OF APARTHEID: RACE, SCIENCE AND PREHISTORY

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ABSTRACT

What was the relationship between archaeology and apartheid in South Africa? How did South African archaeologists navigate the relationship between science and state under apartheid? This paper makes two arguments: the first is that the nature of this relationship was less about the goals, beliefs and attitudes of individual archaeologists, than it was about the structural relationship between the discipline of archaeology and the apartheid state, evidenced in matters of political economy, the availability of funding, the influence of theory from the disciplinary metropolises in the global north, and the local social and political contexts in which archaeologists practised. The second is that describing this relationship is less a matter of choosing between binary terms of resistance and collusion, than it is about assaying a more complex and ambiguous middle ground, made up of compromises, accommodations, strategic silences, and minor failures of will and vision. In the case of South African archaeology, the edges of this relationship were sharpened by three factors: first, the discipline was largely state funded through the apartheid museum and university system; second, the subject matter of archaeology is so centrally concerned with black history and experience; and third, the need by archaeologists to access material cultures, human remains, and sites on the landscape. South African archaeology was a material beneficiary of apartheid, in the sense that the years of greatest political repression were arguably its years of greatest achievement. However, more marked than this was the manner in which the totalitarian politics of apartheid freed archaeologists from public accountability. Apartheid delivered up archaeological sites, sacred places, and human and cultural remains, for collection, representation, and display, with little possibility of popular dissent. The legacies of this history of unaccountable practice may prove to be among the most lasting legacies of the decades of archaeology in the shadow of apartheid.

Key words: archaeology, apartheid, South Africa, World Archaeological Congress, Black Consciousness, African nationalism, contract archaeology, complicities

AN AFRIKANER CENTENARY

The opening frames of the flickering black-and-white film fill the screen. We see the ox-wagons straining over mountain passes, or crossing the open veld. They look like toys against the immensity of the surrounding landscape. Men on horseback ride in tight formation. Women wear sun-bonnets and long dresses. The processional nature of this movement of people and wagons is impressed upon us. The wagons enter a town, cheering crowds line the streets. The scene changes: it is journey's end and a great throng is gathered. There is an air of expectancy. From afar, we watch the speeches. A small, emphatic figure mounts the platform. We sense rather than hear the barked syllables, the answering sigh from the rapt crowd.

The year is 1938. The scenes documented in the film are part of the *Euufees* celebration, the centenary re-enactment of the Great Trek, and the covenant made at Blood River on December 16, 1838¹. Nine wagons drawn by oxen departed

from various points around the country to converge on Pretoria and Blood River. Stopping at towns along the route, they ignited the imagination of Afrikaans-speaking white South Africans, and provided a point of focus for a nascent Afrikaner national identity. The historian Dunbar Moodie writes: "Passionate enthusiasm seized Afrikaans-speaking South Africa". Men grew their beards, women donned Voortrekker dress, street after street in town after town was named after Voortrekker heroes, babies were baptised, and couples married in the shadow of the wagons. These events acted as a unifying force and were instrumental in overcoming the factionalism which had characterised Afrikaner politics. Moodie writes: "The memory of the 'ox-wagon unity' would constitute a potent political force during the next decade" (1975: 180). On a hill outside Pretoria the trek re-enactments culminated with the laying of the foundation stone of the Voortrekker Monument, a site that was to become the central symbolic and memorial site of the apartheid state. Although interrupted by the war, these developments culminated in the election of a Herenigde Nasionale Party (HNP, or Reunited National Party) government in 1948, a date generally taken to mark the beginning of institutional apartheid.

Two other sets of events in the 1930s played a role in the ascendancy of Afrikaner nationalism as a political force. The first was the consolidation of Afrikaner capital, and its organisation in terms of the notion of *volkskapitalisme* ('people's capitalism' or 'capitalism for the people'). In a widely influential study, Dan O'Meara writes of the period 1934–1948 that Afrikaner nationalism "was fundamentally shaped by the imperatives and contradictions of, and struggles around, the accumulation of capital" (1983: 248). The second was the return from doctoral study in Europe of a group of young Afrikaner intellectuals. Inspired in some cases by first-hand experience of National Socialism (commonly known as Nazism) in Germany, their published work was to lay the doctrinal foundation of apartheid (Coetzee 1991).

For South African archaeology, too, the decades of the 1930s and 1940s were a formative period. Goodwin and Van Riet Lowe published *The Stone Age Cultures of South Africa* in 1929. Van Riet Lowe became the first Director of the Bureau of Archaeology on its founding in 1935. The Cape Archaeological Society was founded in August 1944, and soon became the South African Archaeological Society which held its first meeting in June 1945. The first edition of its journal, the *South African Archaeological Bulletin* (SAAB), appeared in December of that year (Shepherd 2015a). In 1947, Jan Smuts, then Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa, chartered a South African Air Force flight to take a delegation of scientists to the first meeting of the Pan-African Congress on Prehistory held in Nairobi, Kenya. In many ways, the high point of a settler archaeological tradition in the first part of the last century, it marked the explicit recognition of its pre-eminence as a South African science. As a knowledge project, archaeology signified in two senses: first, in writing back to a metropolitan scientific

establishment which could imagine little of value emerging from the colonies; and second, in linking South Africa to other territories and parts of Africa *via* the transnationalism of Empire. Along with their suitcases, the South African delegation carried an invitation from Smuts to hold the next Congress in South Africa in 1951 (Shepherd 2002a, 2003).

Two events intervened to cancel this vision and to devalue the status of archaeology in South Africa. The first was the apartheid election of 1948. The second was the death of Smuts in 1950. The second Pan-African Congress on Prehistory was shifted to Algiers at short notice. Neither Berry Malan nor Van Riet Lowe, assistant secretary and vice president, respectively, were able to attend at Algiers, and no other South African delegates participated. For the next 40 years the development of South African archaeology would take place in the shadow of apartheid (Shepherd 2002a, 2003).

COMPLICITIES

There are a number of versions of the relationship between archaeology and apartheid, none of them particularly satisfactory. Events around the formation of the World Archaeological Congress (WAC) in the mid-1980s, themselves precipitated by the question of this relationship, produced a number of statements. In his foreword to *Academic Freedom and Apartheid*, Peter Ucko's account of the formation of WAC, Neal Ascherson describes South African archaeologists as "themselves in no way personally tainted by support for apartheid and, on the contrary, in many cases displaying impressive intellectual battle honours in the struggle" (Ucko 1987: viii). Later in the same work, he writes of the disinviting of South African and Namibian archaeologists by the organising committee of what would become the World Archaeological Congress: "This hurts, but it seems to me to be a hurt that goes with the job – like the hurt of ostracism for those who worked for a German occupation regime by day to conceal their work for the Resistance by night. It should not be understood as a real rejection" (Ucko 1987: 240). Cambridge archaeologist Charles Thurstan Shaw offers a similar image of South African archaeologists. He writes of the ban:

It is sad that this means excluding courageous South Africans who, by their work, have indeed helped to undermine the theoretical basis of apartheid. Such scholars are, as it were, underground resistance fighters; but in the last war underground resistance fighters were sometimes killed by the British and American bombs supporting them (Ucko 1987: 84).

In January 1999, the fourth full meeting of the World Archaeological Congress was held at the University of Cape Town, South Africa. In the symbolism of the moment, this was understood to be a turning of the wheel and a celebration of South Africa's new-found democracy and openness. In her opening speech, Mamphela Ramphele, scholar, Black Consciousness activist, and then Vice Chancellor of the University of Cape Town, gave a strikingly different version of the relationship between archaeology and apartheid when she effectively accused South African archaeologists of colluding to obscure a rich precolonial heritage. She said: "All young South Africans were fed myths about this continent to legitimate racist claims about the inherent inferiority of people of African descent". Of attempts by the Black Consciousness Movement to forge a new historical consciousness in the 1970s, she added: "[We] did not have the intellectual backing that archaeology would have provided at this critical juncture" (Yeld 1999: no page given).

A third version of the relationship between archaeology

and apartheid is offered by the South African archaeologist Janette Deacon, in refutation of a statement by Bruce Trigger. In his afterword to Peter Robertshaw's *A History of African Archaeology*, Trigger described South African archaeology as the "most colonialist" archaeology in Africa (Trigger 1990: 310). He was writing shortly after the events around the first World Archaeological Congress. In a landmark earlier paper, Trigger had divided archaeology into three types: nationalist, colonialist and imperialist archaeologies (Trigger 1984). In her own essay in Robertshaw's volume, Deacon rejects Trigger's characterisation of South African archaeology. Of archaeology under apartheid, she writes:

[the] dichotomy between the goals and beliefs of professional archaeologists and the beliefs of other members of society in which they work must be recognised. To stamp it all as 'colonial' [as Trigger has done] is to overlook the significant differences in attitudes that have developed between those involved directly in archaeological research and the more varied community of the country as a whole (Deacon 1990: 40).

A starting point for my own account of the relations between archaeology and apartheid is the notion that this relationship was less about individual goals, beliefs and attitudes, than it was about a set of structural relationships, and politically and economically defined contexts. A remarkable feature of archaeology under apartheid is just how closely the fortunes of the discipline were tied to the changing fortunes of the apartheid state. Viewed as a disciplinary project, South African archaeology existed within a tightly defined and changing social and discursive space, which combined matters of political economy, forms of theory in archaeology, notions of audience, forms of institutionalisation, and conceptions of disciplinary goals and accountabilities. This combination of factors not only coloured the kinds of narratives that emerged, it determined the nature of the discipline itself: what archaeologists did as archaeologists, and what they understood themselves to be doing.

A second point of departure for my account is the idea that describing this relationship is less a matter of choosing between binary terms of resistance and collusion, than it is about assaying a more complex and ambiguous middle ground. This middle ground is describable in terms of a shifting set of accommodations, compromises, and – a term used by Mark Saunders in a related context – complicities, with all that they involve in the way of everyday disappointments, banal betrayals, and ambiguously scripted responses (Saunders 2002). On the one hand, the story of archaeology under apartheid is an account of specific histories and the localisation of a disciplinary project of knowledge production. On the other hand, it is part of the general relationship between knowledge and power. This seldom unfolds as a simple moral fable, but is part of a more complex, certainly a more interesting and engaging, process whereby knowledge of a certain kind accommodates to power, and whereby disciplinary projects institutionalise themselves in relation to a range of state and non-state forces (Said 1978; Mudimbe 1988). In the case of archaeology under apartheid, the edges of this relationship were sharpened by three factors: first, the fact that the discipline was largely state funded through the apartheid museum and university system; second, the fact that the subject matter of archaeology is so centrally concerned with black history and experience; and third, the need by archaeologists to access material cultures, human remains, and sites on the landscape (Shepherd 2002a, 2003, 2015a). To a great extent, the question of complicities lay in the manner of bringing about this kind of access, in relation to

histories of dispossession, using the resources of the apartheid state and the privileges of whiteness.

ARCHAEOLOGY IN REVERSE

Ray Inskeep made the theme of his address to the Annual Meeting of the South African Museums Association in April 1961, shortly after his arrival in the country, the state of neglect in which archaeology found itself. He went on to review the early development of archaeology in South Africa, noting that this country “may fairly claim the distinction of having led the field in the early stages of archaeological research in Africa south of the Sahara”. He notes that: “Official interest came to the fore in 1935 with the establishment of a Government Bureau of Archaeology, and the South African Commission for the Preservation of Natural and Historical Monuments, Relics and Antiquities. South Africa had made a notable start in a rich new field of study” (Inskeep 1961: 225–226).

“But”, continues Inskeep, “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” (Inskeep 1961: 226–227). The government Archaeological Survey was short-staffed, and their accommodation ‘hopelessly inadequate’. Only one of the national museums had a trained professional archaeologist on its staff, and the situation in the universities was little better. Inskeep’s was the only university position in archaeology, and he had “the burden of running a museum, teaching, and pursuing research [...] with very little money at his disposal”. He writes: “In simple terms, all this means that in such a large country as South Africa [...] there are five professional archaeologists to deal with the immense task of unravelling South Africa’s past, a provision that is hopelessly inadequate” (Inskeep 1961: 228–229).

Inskeep, another Cambridge-trained archaeologist, had come to South Africa to replace John Goodwin at the University of Cape Town. Van Riet Lowe had died in 1956, and Goodwin had followed in 1959. They had been at their posts for 21 and 36 years, respectively. Goodwin’s post was still the only university-based archaeological position. He had supervised only one doctoral student (R.J. Mason), and in all that time had been instrumental in arranging professional archaeological employment for no more than three of his students: B.D. Malan in the 1930s, Mason in the 1940s, and P.B. Beaumont in the 1950s (Deacon 1990; Shepherd 2002a). The situation in the museums was no better than it had been earlier. The decade of the 1950s was a period of steep decline for the discipline. Following the disappointment of the second Pan-African Congress, and a series of setbacks at the University of Cape Town, Goodwin spent the middle years of the 1950s doing fieldwork in Nigeria (Shepherd 2015a). After a hopeful beginning, the development of archaeology in South Africa had stalled.

Inskeep saw quite clearly that the future of archaeology in South Africa could only be secured through an increased financial commitment from government resources, and his real purpose in this paper is to lobby for such support. He argues that a well-supported archaeological programme is a symbol of modernity and development. Inskeep writes of the need to train “successive generations of archaeologists in order that South Africa shall be able to stand firmly and proudly among the nations of the world in a field of research which is rapidly

becoming a measure of cultural status, alongside such things as museums, libraries, art galleries, and general educational facilities” (Inskeep 1961: 227).²

Events immediately following this address were the opposite of what was intended. In an editorial in the *South African Archaeological Bulletin* in 1962, Inskeep reports “a matter of great interest and concern to all who are interested in the progress of archaeology in Africa in general and the Republic of South Africa in particular [...] [namely] the closure of the South African Archaeological Survey as a government department, and its transfer to the University of the Witwatersrand”. The government would continue to pay the salaries of the two research officers and one clerical assistant involved in the transfer, but Inskeep reports being “unable to discover what further financial support, if any, the Government proposes to provide for research”. He continues: “We cannot [...] but deplore this apparent withdrawal of the Government’s moral support for archaeology in South Africa, nor can we understand the reasons for this change”. The transfer was effected just at the time when plans were announced for the implementation of the Orange River irrigation scheme: Inskeep wonders “who now will be responsible for saving the potentially priceless archaeological documents that must progressively be submerged as this great scheme proceeds?” (Inskeep 1962: 86).

In fact, it was not until the late 1960s that South African archaeology began a process of re-emergence. It did so as the result of the convergence of two factors, one external and one internal to the discipline. The first was the phenomenal growth of the apartheid economy through the 1960s, built on the back of the security state and intense political repression. The second was a set of developments in archaeological theory itself.

DECADE OF DOMINANCE

Colin Bundy, among the foremost of South Africa’s revisionist historians, heads his account of the period 1962–1972, the “Decade of Dominance”. He begins: “Happy days were here again – if you happened to be a government supporter, a capitalist entrepreneur, an investor in the stock exchange, a home-owner and consumer in the boom economy”. The South African economy resumed the impressive growth that it had demonstrated in the 1950s, but in overdrive. Gross national product grew at a real rate of over 6 per cent per annum, a figure equalled by only a handful of other economies over the same period. Total direct foreign investment in the South African economy more than doubled between 1960 and 1972: “Dollars, pounds, marks, francs and yen poured in: here was an economy where growth and profits were high, unionisation and industrial unrest virtually absent, the currency hard, and the market buoyant” (Bundy 1986: 80).

Intimately linked with this resurgent economy was the strong state, personified by B.J. Vorster (Minister of Justice, and from 1966, Prime Minister): “Increased spending on the security forces; wide new powers for the security police; a barrage of punitive security laws, detentions without trial, torture, and the shackling of the courts – these were the political developments of the early sixties”. By 1965, the extra-parliamentary opposition had been routed: “Its leaders were in jail or in exile; its rank and file intimidated and demoralised”. Bundy quotes a telling statistic from historian R.W. Johnson: “At some point around 1970 white South Africans overtook Californians as the single most affluent group in the world” (Bundy 1986: 81).

South African archaeology was a beneficiary of this high point in the development of racial capitalism. Eager to accrue the cultural apparatus of a modern state and with money in

hand, the government increased its spending on museums and universities. In 1967 the quasi-governmental Council for Scientific and Industrial Research funded the establishment of a rock art recording project and a radiocarbon dating laboratory. Departments of archaeology were established at the Transvaal Museum in 1969 and the Natal Museum in 1972. The growth in archaeological employment was exponential. In 1960 there was a single university post and two museum posts in archaeology. In 1970 there were six university posts and ten museum posts. By 1987 there were 30 university posts and 28 museum posts, or a total of nearly 60 professional posts in archaeology (Deacon 1990). By 1974 when the boom years ended and South Africa entered a severe economic recession, the professional basis of archaeological research in South Africa had been firmly established (Shepherd 2002a, 2003).

THE NEW ARCHAEOLOGY

Economic growth provided the general conditions for the re-emergence of archaeology in South Africa in the late 1960s and early 1970s. A second, key development was internal to the discipline and took the form of a reorientation of archaeological theory. The archaeology practiced by Goodwin, Van Riet Lowe, and their contemporaries had been of the cultural historical type. Emphasis was placed on the formal analysis of stone artefacts, and on developing typologies and mapping the distribution of archaeological 'cultures'. Prehistory was conceived of as a succession of such cultures on the landscape, with new cultures arising through the diffusion of ideas and the migration of people, each new group leaving their signature artefact types in the archaeological record (Shepherd 2002a, Shepherd 2015a). Beginning in the 1960s in North American archaeology, a cogent challenge emerged in the form of 'processual' or New Archaeology, associated in the first instance with the work of Lewis Binford (Trigger 1989). On the one hand, this placed an emphasis on ecological relationships, on taphonomy or site formation processes, and on cultural 'process' rather than cultural history. On the other hand, it combined logical positivism with a deductive method of enquiry ('hypothetico-deductivism'), to create a particular notion of archaeology as the science of the past (Binford 1962, 1965; Binford & Binford 1968).

In the case of South African archaeology, the link with theoretical developments in the metropole came *via* the Cambridge school of Higgs, Clark and Clarke, and its local graduates, Inskip and John Parkington (who had arrived from Cambridge in 1966 to take up a post at the University of Cape Town), and the South African-based faunal studies of Richard Klein (Deacon 1990; Shepherd 2002a, 2003). Janette Deacon notes that the ecological focus of Later Stone Age studies in the 1960s and 1970s was most clearly developed in the work of Hilary Deacon and Parkington. Through a programme of excavation at sites in the eastern Cape (Scott's Cave, Melkhoutboom, Springs, Highlands), Hilary Deacon was able to reconstruct an extinct Holocene subsistence system based on underground plant foods and hunting (Deacon 1976).

By the early 1970s the reorientation of South African archaeology was well underway. Aron Mazel, a perceptive critic of South African Later Stone Age studies, used citation lists to show that "[in] the early 1970s [...] the primary inspirational source of South African LSA archaeology switched from Britain to [North] America" (Mazel 1987: 512). Parkington reportedly regards Binford as "the most outstanding archaeological thinker of the century" (Mazel 1987: 508). An earlier humanist, historical and romantic tradition had been replaced by the scientism and disenchantment of the New Archaeology.

The scientific report became the standard format for representing the archaeological past, closing off a number of earlier genres: the anecdotal or speculative paper, the handbook, the cultural history, and so on. At the same time, this had far-reaching implications for disciplinary conceptions of audience, for its sense of accountability, and for its relationship *vis-à-vis* the apartheid state and contemporary society (Shepherd 2002a, 2003).

AMATEURS AND PROFESSIONALS

An immediate outcome of this move to professionalise and modernise the discipline was the shedding of its amateur constituency. My source is an extraordinary debate published in the *South African Archaeological Bulletin* in 1973, which developed out of a paper submitted by Jalmar and Ione Rudner, the pre-eminent amateur archaeologists in South Africa at the time (Rudner & Rudner 1973)³. In what was a departure for the *Bulletin*, it now followed a *Current Anthropology* format, and pre-circulated the paper among likely commentators, publishing 20 of their responses. The debate lined up against one another professional practitioners, and what was at that stage an active and vocal amateur constituency. Historically, amateurs had played an important role in the development of archaeology in South Africa. Leading practitioners like Van Riet Lowe had begun as amateur archaeologists. Amateurs had been instrumental in the founding of the *Bulletin*, and their subscriptions continued to be an important source of revenue. Deacon notes that up until 1960, amateurs were the authors of about 50 per cent of the papers published in the *Bulletin* (by the 1970s this had fallen to around 10 per cent). She writes: "The impression one gets of the organisation of archaeology in southern Africa prior to 1960 is that the heart of the subject was seen by both professionals and amateurs alike to rest with the amateurs, or at least with people not employed full-time nor formally educated as archaeologists" (Deacon 1990: 50–51).

Two events lay behind the 1973 debate and provided its context. The first was a meeting held in the Austrian town of Burg Wartenstein in 1965 with the aim of introducing a greater clarity in local terminology and definitions. Many old, cultural and industrial terms were replaced by new, more technical ones (Deacon 1990). The second was an amendment to the law governing heritage management in South Africa, entered in the statutes as the National Monuments Act (No. 28 of 1969). This placed a prohibition on all collecting of archaeological and palaeontological material, including surface collecting which had long been a staple of amateur archaeological activity, unless covered by a permit from the National Monuments Council. The NMC was reportedly reluctant to issue permits to non-professionals. Together these developments had the effect of greatly restricting the scope of amateur archaeological activity.

The title of the Rudners' paper is 'End of an Era'. They begin: "The role of the amateur archaeologist in South Africa is coming to an end and the professional archaeologist is taking over. But need this be?" The Rudners have two complaints: the first lies with "the increasingly technical character of the papers in the *Bulletin*"; the second concerns the new law prohibiting surface collecting without a permit. They write: "We see in the present situation a danger that the amateur archaeologist in South Africa will lose interest as he is almost entirely restricted in his hobby [...] It will be to the advantage of the professional archaeologist to encourage and co-operate with the amateur, rather than to isolate him from the archaeological scene. There is scope and work for all in this vast country" (Rudner & Rudner 1973: 13).

A number of amateur archaeologists wrote in support of the Rudners' paper, including G.C. Hoehn of Cape Town, M.R. Izzett of Salisbury (now Harare), and D.R. Hamann, also of Cape Town, who wrote that the Rudners' "contention that the *Bulletin* has now become too technical will be supported by the majority of non-professional members of the Society". On the other side, T.M. Evers and R.J. Mason, both practising archaeologists, came down heavily on the side of professionalism. Evers wrote: "Ultimately [...] the bulk of archaeological research should devolve on the professional who can record material and present it at a standard comparable to the admirable scientific standards set overseas". Mason wrote even more uncompromisingly "No amateur archaeologist has any right whatever to divert money or any other resources from the professional archaeologist" (Rudner & Rudner 1973: 13–14).

The redefinition of archaeology as the 'science of prehistory' and the shedding of its amateur constituency meant that it was even less inclined to engage with the political contexts of apartheid. This also had the effect of refiguring notions of accountability within the discipline. Whereas Goodwin and Van Riet Lowe had understood themselves to be writing, at least in part, for a general audience – 'the man in the street' – formalised in the membership of the Archaeological Society, archaeologists working in the processual tradition addressed a more narrowly defined group of fellow professionals. They increasingly understood archaeology to be an essentially technical intervention, aimed at addressing the problems presented by certain forms of material evidence. Taken together, these developments – the narrowing of purview, a restricted notion of accountability, the reframing away from an historical and narrative tradition – had the effect of resolving the central conundrum of archaeology under apartheid. That is, the question of how a discipline aimed at explicating African pasts could prosper as a state-sponsored project under apartheid.

The answer took two forms. First, by defining itself as a mainly technical intervention, questions of history and representation counted for less than questions of expertise and the ability to get the job done. Second, through refiguring notions of audience and accountability, archaeologists took it as a right that they should have access to material cultures and sites on the landscape, without reference to the historical and ongoing struggles around land, history and culture in which those sites were situated. For its part, the state had little to fear from a discipline so profoundly disconnected from contemporary society and the politics of the present. For the most part, South African archaeology would pass the turbulent decades of the 1970s and 1980s in retreat from those politics, even as its technical proficiency and infrastructure grew ever more sophisticated (Shepherd 2002a, 2003). Isolated references to contemporary events in earlier issues of the *Bulletin* give way to a concerted silence. The red-letter dates of resistance and repression – Soweto 1976, the township revolts of the mid-1980s, the State of Emergency, the banning of political organisations linked to the United Democratic Front, and the subsequent unbanning of political organisations and the release of political prisoners – would be passed over in a set of omissions that became increasingly difficult to sustain as events in South Africa grabbed media attention globally.

IRON AGE ARCHAEOLOGY AND BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS

The most dramatic demonstration of this convergence between theory and practice in the re-emergence of South African archaeology under apartheid, was the form taken by the

Iron Age archaeology of the 1970s. Of this period, Martin Hall notes: "The writing of the precolonial [Iron Age] archaeology of the sub-continent, achieved largely within a decade, was a remarkable achievement. But accompanying the success of conferences, meetings and academic publications was an equally remarkable contradiction" (Hall 1990: 72). The "liberal germ, from which the florescence of Iron Age archaeology had stemmed, had been outrage at the conscious distortion of history to form a part of apartheid ideology", yet "there was no attempt made to make the new archaeological synthesis accessible either to challenge settler consciousness or to serve black nationalist aspirations". Indeed, the "extent of the distance between professional archaeology and the wider community is evident in the failure of the new Iron Age synthesis – potentially one of the most politically significant branches of archaeology in the world – to make any political impact". He writes of the "irrelevance" of the new work in the revival of black nationalism in the 1970s under the banner of the Black Consciousness movement: "Black Consciousness emphasised the need for self-identity in order to counter the cultural impoverishment of colonialism and apartheid. It would be logical to expect that the new understanding of the Iron Age, directly contradicting apartheid history, would become important in Black Consciousness philosophy". Instead, "an abstract, utopian vision of the precolonial past developed". Hall quotes Steve Biko, the foremost articulator of Black Consciousness, who writes that the "fundamental aspects of pure African culture" include an emphasis on the individual, on communalism, an ignorance of poverty, and a "people particularly close to nature". This is an essentialised and ahistorical conception of the past which, in Hall's terms, constitutes a return to "merrie Africa" (Hall 1990: 72–73).

In finding reasons for this "isolation of the results of Iron Age research from popular consciousness", Hall points to three factors. In the first place, he writes that "the effectiveness of apartheid segregation made it difficult for academics – almost exclusively white and working in segregated research institutions and universities – to communicate the results of their work to the majority of the population". In the second place, he notes that "archaeology in Southern Africa was part of a 'world system', with its practitioners looking outwards at international methodological and theoretical concerns". This meant that research projects in Iron Age archaeology "were as much addresses to the general world of scholarship as they were contributions to the history of those whose history had been so systematically denied". In the third place, he refers to the ideological contradiction faced by South African archaeologists in "being part of the dominant minority while at the same time contesting its view of history". This resulted in "the tight parcelling of archaeological information in a technical form that made it unintelligible beyond the profession" (Hall 1990: 73–74). One form of this 'tight parcelling' was an intensely contested set of debates around ceramic typologies, for the most part conducted in a kind of archaeological shorthand. This built on established practice in the archaeology of the southern African Iron Age. Writing of an earlier generation of researchers in Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), Hall notes that although John Schofield "saw his task as the extension backwards in time of current ethnographies, his typological categories were sanitised by numeration; labels such as 'NC2D', 'ST1' and 'NT1' were hardly likely to affront the settler consciousness". Of the research at Mapungubwe, the location of one of the earliest state societies in southern Africa, he writes that it "was soon shrouded by technique and technical controversy". And he notes of Keith Robinson and Roger Summers that "like

others before them, [they] avoided many potential clashes with settler ideology by using highly technical frameworks for conceptualising and reporting their results" (Hall 1990: 64).

THE CHALLENGE TO ARCHAEOLOGY UNDER APARTHEID

Hall heads his account of the development of Iron Age archaeology through the 1980s 'crisis'. A pivotal moment for archaeology under apartheid came during the 1983 meeting of the Southern African Association of Archaeologists in Gaborone, Botswana. The Southern African Association had been renamed from the original South African Association of Archaeologists, and its members included archaeologists from Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, and Mozambique. As Hall tells it: "delegates from Mozambique forced a resolution seeking the condemnation by the Association of apartheid and other forms of discrimination. Although the majority of delegates, mostly from South Africa, were openly opposed to the racial policies of the South African government, they had little taste for the explicit involvement of their discipline in the political arena" (Hall 1990: 75). This was a period in which South Africa was involved in active wars of destabilisation in Angola, Mozambique, and Namibia. The cost of opposing apartheid was being measured in the Frontline States in terms of the deaths of tens of thousands of their citizens. In the event, the motion was never put to the vote. Delegates from Mozambique and Zimbabwe resigned from the Association, "and many others left the meeting feeling that internationalist ideals were no longer attainable" (Hall 1990: 75).

In fact, regardless of the reactions of South African archaeologists, the question of a disciplinary response to the relation between archaeology and apartheid was being settled elsewhere. In December 1983, the Pan-African Congress on Prehistory and Related Studies held its 9th Congress in Jos, Nigeria. As Adebayo Folorunso tells it, for many young Nigerians who had qualified in the late 1970s and early 1980s, this was their first experience of a major international conference (Folorunso 2007: 69). The National Commission for Museums and Monuments provided free transport by bus and free accommodation in hostels for those who travelled from western Nigeria to Jos in north-central Nigeria, although many of those who were present could not afford the conference registration fee. In addition to delegates from various African countries, a sizeable proportion of delegates, close to 50 per cent, were from North America or Europe. The composition of delegates was to play an important role in the business of the plenary session, where the question of archaeology and apartheid came up for discussion. A four-part resolution was put to the Association: first, that the Association "unequivocally condemns, on scientific grounds, the practice of apartheid"; second, that it "rejects racist criteria used anywhere to restrict education, research and employment opportunities for "non-white" South Africans and Namibians"; third, that it "calls for a cessation of all contacts with South African institutions"; and fourth, that it "calls for the censure of colleagues and institutions maintaining links with South African institutions" (Folorunso 2007: 72). A counter-motion proposed that the resolution had "a distinctly political tone, and that since this is an academic assembly and is concerned with science and not politics" it should be rejected (Folorunso 2007: 72). A further motion proposed that parts one and two of the resolution be considered, while parts three and four should be dropped. Money was raised to register those Nigerian archaeologists who were present but unable to vote because not officially registered, and all four parts of the resolution were adopted by the Association. The events at Jos were

to have a direct influence on subsequent events around the formation of the World Archaeological Congress.

In the years that followed, the political crisis in South Africa deepened. From August 1984, it took the form of violent clashes with the state security forces in all the major metropolitan areas. South Africa and the struggle against apartheid took centre stage in the world media. One result of this international attention was the disinviting of South African and Namibian archaeologists from a meeting of the International Union of Prehistoric and Protohistoric Sciences due to be held in Southampton in 1986. The events leading up to the formation of the World Archaeological Congress split the world body of archaeologists. A heated series of debates drew in scholars, politicians, media commentators, and human rights activists (Ucko 1987; Shepherd 2002b). The question of the relationship between archaeology and apartheid in South Africa had become a flashpoint for the discipline at large, as it debated questions of archaeological ethics and accountabilities. More generally, it provided a point of focus in an ongoing debate around academic freedom and responsibility. The first World Archaeological Congress was held in Southampton in 1986. The eleventh Congress of the IUPPS was held in Mainz and Frankfurt the following year, precipitating a split in world archaeology which persists to the present day.

For their part, the response of the majority of South African archaeologists can be fairly summed up by Philip Tobias's statement on his return from a meeting of the Permanent Council of the IUPPS. The Permanent Council had voted in favour of the International Executive Committee's decision to reschedule the eleventh Congress to Mainz and Frankfurt, with the participation of the South Africans. Tobias said:

The action of the IUPPS Executive Committee has written a memorable new chapter in the age-old history of the struggle for the free circulation of scientists, free access to knowledge by all and the universality of science [...] However obnoxious the policies of certain governments or regimes may be, this should not influence the decision to admit freely to international scientific meetings, scientists from all countries (Tobias 1986: 4).

Notwithstanding the upbeat nature of Tobias' statement, by the late 1980s South African archaeology was in crisis. Increasingly isolated at home and abroad, the general consensus amongst practitioners not to speak out against the politics of apartheid was looking increasingly threadbare in the glare of world attention, and as the apartheid state meted out a series of savage reprisals in response to the popular dissent of the middle years of the decade. Moreover, the argument for a notion of science which operates in isolation from society was becoming increasingly difficult to defend (Shepherd 2002b, 2003). In Anglo-American archaeology, an articulate challenge to the positivism and scientism of the New Archaeology had emerged in the form of postprocessual theory. Building on the work of Ian Hodder in a path-breaking pair of publications, Michael Shanks and Chris Tilley argued for the notion of a socially and politically engaged archaeology (Shanks & Tilley 1987a, 1987b). 'The black and the red' found their way into archaeology departments in South Africa, where they were passed from hand to hand among students. By 1988, South African archaeology was a knowledge project beset by the question of its own future. The answer, when it came, took a surprising form.

MANAGING HERITAGE

There is close to a century of heritage legislation in South Africa, the terms and nature of which act as a barometer of

South African social and political history. One of the earliest pieces of legislation was the Bushman Relics Protection Act of 1911, passed shortly after the Act of Union. It protected rock paintings and petroglyphs, as well as the anthropological contents of graves, caves, rock shelters, middens, and shell mounds (Shepherd 2008). A subtext to the Act, as historians Martin Legassick and Ciraj Rassool have pointed out, was an attempt to halt the trafficking of human remains identified as Bushman. Local institutions and museums in Europe were eager to acquire type specimens of what, in terms of the racist discourse of the day, was understood to be a primitive form of humanity (Legassick & Rassool 1999).

The Natural and Historical Monuments Act (No. 6 of 1923) extended legislative protection to monuments and built structures, as well as to “areas of land having distinctive or beautiful scenery, areas with a distinctive, beautiful or interesting content of flora and fauna, and objects (whether natural or constructed by human agency) of aesthetic, historical or scientific value [including] waterfalls, caves, Bushman paintings, avenues of trees and old buildings” (1923: 16). It also established the first statutory body responsible for heritage management, the Commission for the Preservation of Natural and Historical Monuments of the Union, or the Historical Monuments Commission, as it was known. Eleven years later, the Historical Monuments Commission was given increased powers in terms of the Natural and Historical Monuments, Relics and Antiques Act (No. 4 of 1934). The same year saw the founding of the Bureau of Archaeology, under the directorship of Clarence (Peter) van Riet Lowe, a civil engineer turned archaeologist. The Director of the Bureau also served as Secretary to the Commission, an arrangement which gave archaeologists a particular prominence in the conceptualisation and management of heritage (Shepherd 2008). In the period between the passing of the Bushman Relics Act and the late 1940s conceptions of heritage in South Africa were connected to settler histories, British Empire, and the role of the sciences, especially archaeology. After 1948, conceptions of heritage were increasingly identified with Afrikaner nationalist history, and heritage management fell into the hands of Afrikaner folk historians (Shepherd 2003). The major event of the period, the Van Riebeeck Tercentenary of 1952, inaugurated a new conception of heritage tied to the narratives of Afrikaner sacred history (Witz 2003).

Rapid economic growth through the 1960s combined with increased political repression to create a climate in which heritage became subsumed as part of the cultural apparatus of the modernising apartheid state. The increased pace of construction development had its corollary in a growing public awareness on the part of white South Africans around issues of heritage conservation, and saw the development of several influential conservation organisations including the Simon van der Stel Foundation, the Vernacular Architecture Society of South Africa, and the Historical Homes of South Africa Limited. Partly as a result of the efforts of these organisations, new legislation in the form of the National Monuments Act was promulgated and adopted in 1969. Under the Act, the Historical Monuments Commission was replaced by a statutory body, the National Monuments Council, which fell under the Minister of National Education. The Act formalised a transition which had been underway for some time, namely the switch to a predominantly architectural notion of heritage focused on the built environment. Successive conceptions of heritage in South Africa had seen it pass from the domain of archaeologists and prehistorians, to the domain of Afrikaner folk historians, to the domain of architects and town planners (Shepherd 2008).

The late 1960s and early 1970s were also a period of forced removals and the destruction of inner-city precincts like District Six, so that notions of urban conservation operated within a highly selective purview. On the one hand, this comprised a nostalgic reading of settler history and the material record of its various events and institutions – conquest, racial slavery, border wars, and wars of dispossession – and, on the other hand, by a pragmatic assessment of the desirability of apartheid rule. Such was the basic pattern of heritage management in South Africa as it developed through the 1970s and 1980s (Shepherd 2008). It was not until the late 1980s that a set of developments took place that was to change the face not only of heritage management, but of the discipline of archaeology in its relation to the state and to society.

CONTRACT ARCHAEOLOGY

In June 1988, Hilary Deacon published an editorial in the *South African Archaeological Bulletin* under the heading ‘What future has archaeology in South Africa?’ He begins by reviewing the history of employment in archaeology from the period of Goodwin, through the boom period of the 1960s and 1970s. He writes:

[...] with the introduction of legislation providing for the conservation of the natural environment, a new demand for archaeological services will be made [...] The concept of the proposed legislation has potentially serious implications for archaeology in this country because impact statements, including those on cultural resources, will be required for development projects [...] South Africa is making a belated start in what is known elsewhere as cultural resource management or CRM (Deacon 1988: 3).

Deacon was writing at a time when government spending on universities was being curtailed. He speculates that CRM might come to the rescue of archaeology and extend the boom: “Is archaeology entering another boom period as in the 1970s when there were posts to be filled?” (Deacon 1988: 4).

The following year, Martin Hall published an editorial in the *Bulletin*, with the title, ‘Contract Archaeology in South Africa’. He begins: “Contract Archaeology – where the archaeologist works, for a professional fee, within an agreement with an architect, planner, government department, municipal agency, or the like – is an exciting new concept in this country” (Hall 1989: 63). At the time of writing, the universities of Cape Town and the Witwatersrand had contract divisions attached to their departments of archaeology, and departments of archaeology at the universities of Stellenbosch and Pretoria were undertaking contracts, as were a number of archaeologists working from the museums. Hall was writing in a period of considerable excitement about the potential of contract archaeology. He notes that already the financial turnover of university-linked contracts divisions was higher than the research funding they received from the Human Sciences Research Council, their previous main benefactor.

Contract archaeology developed in the United States in the 1970s around the concept of cultural resource management, and about ten years later in Australia. A number of factors converged in the development of a local CA sector in South Africa in the late 1980s. The first of these was a more vocal environmental lobby, and an increased awareness on the part of developers of the value of commissioning surveys of the environmental impact of development. The second was the partial recovery of business confidence at the end of the decade, and an increase in building development projects. However, the most important factor appears to have been anticipation within the discipline of new heritage and environ-

mental legislation. This was duly passed as the Environment Conservation Act of 1989 (Shepherd 2015b).

For South African archaeology, the advent of contract archaeology and in the late 1980s and early 1990s was the most important development of the late-apartheid period. It came to the financial rescue of a discipline that was beginning to feel the effects of cuts in government spending. More significantly, it gave South African archaeologists a language with which to negotiate the political transition. In the coded and formalised terminology of heritage management discourse, with its notions of ‘stakeholders’ and its protocols of ‘consultation’, archaeologists found a language which both articulated a notion of society, and defined the terms of engagement. From their point of view, it was helpful that heritage management discourse had nothing to say about historical terms of engagement and legacies of struggle, just as it had nothing to say about distinguishing between the claims of different stakeholders. In this sense, heritage management discourse is every bit as ahistorical and decontextualising as the New Archaeology (Shepherd 2015b).

Heritage management discourse arguably enlarged archaeology’s sense of involvement in society, although in practice this tends to get lost in the bureaucratisation of the consultation process. Its more profound effects have been twofold: the first was a shift in the economic basis of the discipline, away from public funding towards an increasing reliance on private funding *via* the speculative capital invested in construction projects; a second, related shift was in notions of accountability. A conception of accountability which had previously been articulated around a responsibility towards disciplinary best practice and the truth of the past, was broadened to include the interests of a class of professional heritage managers and the principles of sound business practice. On the very eve of political transformation, when notions of popular enfranchisement and public accountability were being written into the new Constitution, South African archaeologists moved in the direction of increased privatisation. In a replay of events from two decades before, they borrowed from metropolitan theory to re-articulate a sense of purpose and redefine the terms of engagement between archaeology and society, even as they acted to delimit claims to public accountability (Shepherd 2015b).

ARCHAEOLOGY, APARTHEID, AND AFTER

Archaeology under apartheid made important research and infrastructural gains. Yet, reviewing the history of those years, especially the decades of the 1970s and 1980s, it is difficult not to be visited by a sense of failure. Certainly, there were energetic dissenters within the discipline. Martin Hall’s voice emerges as the most consistently engaged of the period. His published work did much to mitigate the image of South African archaeology abroad. In 1985, Aron Mazel and colleagues founded the Archaeology Workshop. Others spoke out individually against some of the excesses of apartheid. What emerges most strongly, however, is how consistent the consensus position was within the discipline, in public statements, in the pages of the *Bulletin*, and in the classroom. It may be that in thinking about the relationship between archaeology and apartheid we need to frame the question differently, not: Why were archaeologists not more socially and politically engaged? but rather: Working in intensely contested political contexts, in the cauldron of apartheid, how could they imagine that it was an option to *not* articulate a response?

Such a question requires a careful answer. One part of the answer would point to the influence of metropolitan theory.

Another part would point to an embedded tradition of practice which overlooked contemporary social worlds, and which encouraged (or required) a separation between archaeology as knowledge project, and the contexts in which that knowledge project unfolded. However, it would also need to point to the availability of a counter-position, at least from the mid-1980s. Internationally, this took the form of a growing body of postprocessual theory, and the challenging set of events around the formation of the World Archaeological Congress. At home, this counter-position was being articulated in related disciplines of history and social anthropology, as part of a tradition of principled dissent within the academy that produced Jack Simons, Archie Mafeje, the Wits History Workshop, and many other examples. One of the most important publications of the late 1980s, *South African Keywords* (1988), can be read as a concerted response to apartheid on the part of a group of University of Cape Town-based social anthropologists.

When Archbishop Desmond Tutu opened the inaugural session of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in the East London city hall on 15 April 1996, he delivered a short homily in which he chose an archaeological metaphor to express his meaning: “We are charged to unearth the truth about our dark past; to lay to rest the ghosts of that past so that they may not return to haunt us. That it may thereby contribute to the healing of a traumatised and wounded nation; for all of us in South Africa are wounded people” (Beresford 1996). Subsequent debates around the TRC give us the language through which to specify the position of archaeology under apartheid. This was the position neither of the perpetrator nor of the victim, but rather of the beneficiary, with all that that involves in the way of ambiguity, complicity, and entanglement (Mamdani 1997). South African archaeology was a material beneficiary of apartheid, in the sense that the years of greatest political repression were arguably its years of greatest success. However, more marked than this was the manner in which the totalitarian politics of apartheid freed archaeologists from public accountability. Apartheid delivered up archaeological sites, sacred places, and human and cultural remains, for collection, representation, and display, with little possibility of popular dissent. For their part, archaeologists were happy to accept this level of access as a right of science. Once established, such habits are not easily disestablished. The legacies of this history of unaccountable practice would prove to be among the most difficult and damaging of the post-1994 period.

NOTES

¹The film is called *1938: Die Wonderjaar* (1938: *Year of Wonders*). Made up of archival footage, it records the central event in the developing Afrikaner nationalism of the 1930s, the *Euufees*, or centenary celebrations of the covenant made at Blood River on 16 December 1838.

²Inskeep repeats this point in an editorial published the following year (1962). He writes that active government support for archaeology “is widely held to be a measure, along with museums, art galleries, and general educational facilities, of a country’s cultural status” (*South African Archaeological Bulletin* 27: 86).

³Jalmar Rudner had been an honorary curator of archaeology at the South African Museum in Cape Town. The husband-and-wife pair were frequent contributors to the *South African Archaeological Bulletin*.

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