A Contested Past and Archive

> I want to explore the landscapes of the past, the spaces where archivists and historians struggle with memory, fight with memory, where they see archival records differently … [where] the "archive" is largely perceived as discourse, metaphor, symbol or manifestation of power, as a site of human inscription and intentionality, and of contested memory. Terry Cook, 2010.

1.1. Introduction

Most archival histories consist of reading, accessing and shaping the past in a number of ways. The past can be remembered, recovered or even reinvented, yet no historian can present the "unvarnished truth".[1] Increasingly in the last few decades, the question of what it means to contest the past has become a charged notion, as a contested history, in a basic sense evokes a struggle in the terrain of truth.[2] The idea of contesting the past, poses questions about the present, and what the past means in the present.

Contested history, like memory, is naturally fallible and the past is therefore inherently and most often considered imperfect. Historical debates often revolve around the assumption that "making" history, like the past, is imperfect, biased and flawed, as historians recognise there is no absolute "truth" in history. Similarly, archives have also always been at the intersection of past, present, and future as it is contended that archival "truths" indeed have historical consequences as these "interfaces" or spaces are the focus of power of the present to control what the future will know about the past.[3]

This re-examination of the past is not discipline specific nor is it a novel notion, yet nuanced work on the contested past lies at the heart of many postmodern archival studies.[4] In reconsidering the place of historical knowledge in archival work, it is suggested that "the pendulum is swinging back, not in a simple return to the past… but toward appreciation of the central place of historical knowledge in the distinctive body of knowledge, research, and daily work of the new archival profession which has emerged over the last quarter century".[5] There was growing recognition in the 1980s of the association between academic historical research and the archives, as humanities and social science put into question claims to objectivity as archives offered a way of engaging with knowledge of the past as inevitably partial and subjective.[6]

However, post 1994, the role of postmodern historical knowledge and that of archival scholarship has advanced tremendously both in terms of scope and in the development of many wide-ranging intellectual paradigms. Craven invites scholars to question "what is an archive" and to step away from the "practicalities of keeping archives" and instead consider what they actually "do in a cultural context".[7] Therefore, archives have become sites of contestation as the 'politics of the past' has become increasingly prominent in post democracy eras and the role of archives has to be considered and questioned. Likewise, the past must also be contested, as the question of the archive has risen to greater prominence in South Africa than ever before.[8]

Considering an archive

This book examines the contested early history of the "Mapungubwe Archive" held at the University of Pretoria and how as a manifestation of the institution, it can also be argued that the archive has become a site of contestation in the present. But what is the "Mapungubwe Archive"? Is it a collection of historical papers, a physical construct contained within walls, a university facility or merely a collection of related historical records? Unfortunately, this trajectory of enquiry of when does an archive become an archive is not seemingly simple, but instead poses a rhetorical or philosophical question when attempting to reach a clear definition. Theoretically, the "decolonisation of archival methodology" trend rejects the influences of colonialism and imperialism as well

[1] See, for example, E.H. Carr, *What is history?* London: Penguin, 1961.
[2] See, K. Hodgkin and S. Radstone (eds.), *Contested pasts: the politics of memory.* London: Routledge, 2003.
[3] J.M. Schwartz and T. Cook, "Archive, records, and power: from (postmodern) theory to (archival) performance". *Archival Science* 2(3), 2002, pp. 171–185.
[4] See for example, T. Cook, "Electronic records, paper minds: the revolution in information management and archive in the post-custodial and post-modern era". *Archive and Social Studies: A Journal of Interdisciplinary Research* 1(0), 2007, pp. 399–443.
[5] T. Nesmith, "What's history got to do with it? Reconsidering the place of historical knowledge in archival work". *Archivaria* 57, (Spring 2004), pp. 1–2.
[6] T. Nesmith, "Archives from the bottom up: social history and archival scholarship". *Archives and Social Studies*: *Journal of Interdisciplinary Research* 2 (1), March 2008, pp. 41–82.
[7] L. Craven, *What are archives? Cultural and theoretical perspectives: a reader*. Burlington: Ashgate, 2008.
[8] See for example discussion about the role of archives in a democracy and how heritage has been "valorised", yet the archival system in South Africa is strained and neglected, *Archives at the Crossroads 2007*. Open report to the Minister of Arts and Culture, Archival Conference "National System, Public Interest", co-convened by the national Archives, the Nelson Mandela Foundation and the Constitution of Public Intellectual Life Research Project, April 2007, <https://www.nelsonmandela.org/images/uploads/NMF_Dialogue-Archives_at_the_Crossroads1.pdf> access: 2018.09.26

Figure 1.1. An early photographic view of Mapungubwe Hill from the 1934 archaeological expedition.

as the paternalistic 'western' sense of a Rankian-type definition of an archive.

Therefore, this research acknowledges to an extent, that the "Mapungubwe Archive" is part of the ongoing process or 'turn' of centering archival concerns both practically and theoretically in rejecting the hegemonic environments of defining archives.[9] The Mapungubwe Archive also cannot divorce itself from the Mapungubwe collection under the stewardship of the University of Pretoria nor Mapungubwe as a major heritage site in South Africa.

Considering that the "Mapungubwe Archive" in essence was only retrospectively created in the twenty-first century, broadly speaking then this Archive can be understood to mean anything that it is no longer current, but that has been retained. The Mapungubwe Archive was only launched as a formal repository in February of 2022, post pandemic and only after a major preservation grant from the US Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation which commenced from 2018 and reached its conclusion in November 2021. Compounding the problem, is assigning specific dates for the Archive, although research commenced in 1933, the archive contains a few records prior to the 1930s, some even dating back to 1900.

However, to overcome the historical tendency of distilling dates, merely for the purposes of research and motivation, the Mapungubwe Archive for the purposes of this book cannot be definitely arranged by date or a chronology. Instead, the Archive should be viewed as a dynamic historical, heritage and contemporary primary resource consisting of irreplaceable records and memory that has evolved from the past into the present and continues evolving. For this reason, the first chapter only at this stage considers and reconsiders "an archive", and for this reason the final chapter concludes the "Mapungubwe Archive" as a modern construct of the twenty-first century. For practical purposes, the Mapungubwe Archive was launched as an African repository at the University of Pretoria on 24 February 2022 and as yet, still has to go through the formal naming process required to allocate its formal name. In addition, all post 2000 archival material, including digital content has yet to be appraised and lodged into the Mapungubwe Archive. Hence, the archive is still in the process of being reimagined and forward-focused for 2026 and beyond.

As a consequence, some of the earliest Mapungubwe records, which later became university departmental records, were identified at some point in time as potential research sources to the archaeologist, and over more time,

[9] See T.R. Genovese, "Decolonizing archival methodology: combating hegemony and moving towards a collaborative archival environment". *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous People*, 12(1), 2016, pp. 32–42.

the records acquired deeper meaning and greater value. Evolving over decades and transforming a significant change of name to today, what is referred to as the "Mapungubwe Archive", can be viewed as the archival canon or body of works or narrative of Mapungubwe from the University of Pretoria. More formally, the Mapungubwe Archive serves as both a repository and a depository for materials of enduring historical value associated with the now world-renowned heritage site known as Mapungubwe in South Africa.[10] However, they are also the *fonds d'archives* for the official records of the University of Pretoria thus forming an integral part of institutional memory.

This book is less concerned with the history of the Mapungubwe Archive and is not intended as a history of the subject of Mapungubwe, but rather the ways in which the Archive can be reconsidered, redefined, and thus questions how and why the Archive constitutes part of the collective and institutional memory of the University of Pretoria. This book does interrogate the early historical archival context, as well as gaps in the Mapungubwe Archive, by examining critical aspects of the University of Pretoria's association with Mapungubwe with a focus on the time period of mainly the 1930s. The scope of the Mapungubwe Archive is colossal and the subject of Mapungubwe through many transdisciplinary lenses makes it certainly impossible to cover all research angles. This context of the Mapungubwe Archive in the 1930s is particularly considered, as all decisions on Mapungubwe were taken by the Council of the University of Pretoria under the advice of a sub-committee known as the Archaeological Committee of the University of Pretoria (1933–1947), yet subtly under State control.[11]

This early period of Mapungubwe and the University of Pretoria's parallel history from the "discovery" of gold artefacts in 1933,[12] through to the foundational years of the Archaeological Committee, who "directed" research until its cessation in the 1940s, is re-examined and to an extent deconstructed using a postmodern archival approach. Select members of the Council and the Committee were considered highly influential individuals and were externally well-connected to government administrators who "appear as faceless bodies obscuring the role of

the individuals of whom they were constituted."[13] Thus, securing research and legal rights to Mapungubwe and the gold treasure trove that was under the ownership of the University of Pretoria on behalf of the State.

Within the milieu of the 1933 national general elections and at a time when as an institution of higher learning the University of Pretoria supported growing Afrikaner Nationalism.[14] It also buttressed the ideals of national unity and perpetuated the colonial narratives that dominated Mapungubwe research in the early years. The consequences of this primary history directly provides a significant view on why the Mapungubwe Archive was created and how it evolved, backing notions of a contested past into a contested present. It was within this context that concretised the University of Pretoria's perceived status and power over Mapungubwe's history and heritage for more than eight decades. This study's research questions centre on this power of the so-called authority and questions how, why and within which political and social settings, critical legal and institutional decisions were made. For example, securing a national cultural treasure on behalf of the Union of South Africa in 1933 that reverberated into present issues of contestation in heritage legislation and other heritage platforms.

Furthermore, this publication is intended to contribute to the growing research agenda on South African archives and embolden future research into the Mapungubwe Archive. Although Mapungubwe's past has been archaeologically researched progressively in academia for close to eighty-nine years, little scholarly attention or effort has been paid to any historical interest in the Mapungubwe Archive. By unpacking and "peeling back the layers"[15] of the Mapungubwe Archive, a wealth of untapped historical sources can illuminate the origins of some controversies of Mapungubwe's colonial, Afrikaner nationalist and apartheid past and how the contestations mirror present debates and disputes in forming the contemporary history and stewardship of the Mapungubwe Archive by the University of Pretoria.

The central argument remains how the archive needs to be questioned not only as a historical source, but rather as a discourse within global and local archival trends of "reading against the grain".[16] Reading against the grain simply means to read historical records critically and look at the power of the context in which they were written. This book focuses on the conceptual notion of history as

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[10] The Mapungubwe Archive at the University of Pretoria is the only one of its kind in South Africa and serves as a depository and repository to identify, collect and preserve records of archival value relating to the history/subject of Mapungubwe by the University of Pretoria. Curated and managed by the University of Pretoria Museums, the Mapungubwe Archive maintains and preserves an extensive collection of both documentary and photographic records and includes a broad range of other material in a variety of media, some available for research and access.

[11] See, for example, Mapungubwe Archive, Minutes of Meeting of the Archaeological Committee from 1933 to 1947. The discussion on the Archaeological Committee is however only limited to its early or maiden years.

[12] F.R. Paver, "The mystery grave of Mapungubwe. A remarkable discovery in the Transvaal: a grave of unknown origin containing much gold-work, found on the summit of a natural stronghold in a wild region", *The Illustrated London News*, 8 April 1933.

[13] B.L. Strydom, Broad South Africanism and Higher Education: The Transvaal University College (1909–1919), PhD History, University of Pretoria, 2013, p. 27.

[14] See, F.A. Mouton, "Professor Leo Fouché, the History Department and the Afrikanerization of the University of Pretoria", *Historia* 38(1), 1993, pp. 92–101; See, F.A. Mouton (ed.), *History, historians and Afrikaner nationalism: essays on the history department of the University of Pretoria, 1909–1985.* Vanderbijlpark: Kleio, 2007, pp. 13–43.

[15] V. Harris, "Claiming less, delivering more: a critique of positivist formulations on archives in South Africa". *Archivaria* 44, 1997, p. 136.

[16] See for example, A.L. Stoler, *Along the archival grain: epistemic anxieties and colonial common sense.* New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2009.

an imperfect past, as it argues that Mapungubwe's past is inherently incomplete, because the past perpetually tests many notions of the present. The Mapungubwe Archive thus evolves to become a metaphor for a past imperfect.

For the purposes of this book, the concept of "past imperfect" has been borrowed from several historical contexts. The idea of an imperfect past has been explored widely over several decades in historical scholarship. There is an emerging interest in this new historical perspective that debates the changing conceptions of time in history.[17] A prime example is the thought-provoking research seminar series at the University College of London titled, "Past Imperfect" which explores recent concerns with the past and its place in the present. The seminar suggests that the present is increasingly over invested and points to:

> [T]he critique of official histories and the conjoining of history and fiction behind us, we now confront new imperatives for what is at stake in thinking across historical, current and future perspectives. We start from the premise of the verb tense 'past imperfect', in which a past that is unfinished constantly challenges the ideas of the "new" and embraces the presentness of the past.[18]

This publication is not about "making" history, but rather how history is "used" as objectively as possible to debate the present. As the title suggests, in the context of research, "past imperfect" is metaphorically applied to the historical time span of the Mapungubwe Archive, thus not "what" happened, but rather "how" it happened. Furthermore, in syntax, the specialised grammatical term of "past imperfect" is both an adjective and a noun. The term is applied to a tense, which denotes "action going on but not completed - usually to the present tense of incomplete or progressive action", also meaning, "not perfect, flawed or can denote damage, containing problems, or having something omitted or missing".[19] The emphasis on imperfection and the flawed nature of history is important in this research, as the boundaries of the past and present are blurred and it is this tension that ensures dialogue with the past and refigures the function of how "an archive" such as the Mapungubwe Archive continues in ever-evolving forms into the present.

Changing archival perspectives

Research draws from broad postmodern approaches and trends in both global perspectives and the emerging South African discourse on archives in theory and in practice. The perception of archives has changed radically since the twentieth century notions of a traditional or classical archive.[20] From the 1990s, the meaning of archives has been challenged by intellectuals such as Jacques Derrida and Ann Stoler who both contended that any theory of the archive must be understood in the context where past, present and future constantly re-articulate each other and in doing so, redefine the archive. The role of archival theory and archival science as developing paradigms are also useful to elucidate contemporary archival challenges as Derrida suggests that:

> [T]he question of the archive is not, I repeat a question of the past…but rather a question of the future, the very question of the future, question of a response, of promise and of a responsibility for tomorrow. The archive: if we want to know what this will have meant, we will only know tomorrow.[21]

Derrida argues that the archive is never fixed and stresses the importance of the archive in historical research. Derrida further claims that the archive affirms the past, present, and future in that it preserves the records of the past and it embodies the promise of the present to the future making the point that archives are also a way of "imagining the future".[22] One way of understanding this shift and considering the temporal qualities of an archive in the framework of research is to examine how the archive and its meaning have changed over time. But how then, does the archive speak to the past, present and future? Such rhetorical questions never have straight forward answers, but most archives continue to expand, yet also their significance, value and use among wider academia also inevitably changes over time. New archival thinking is required to challenge insular views of traditional archives, as changes move the theoretical focus of the archive away from the record towards a functional context behind the record, thus embracing "process rather than product".[23]

Thus, while traditionally an archive was viewed as a physical repository of records pertaining to history, in the last half of the twentieth century a profound conceptual and abstract change shifted the archive from "place" to "process".[24] These recent changing perceptions within

[17] See for example: S. Nield, "Past imperfect, present tense: on history as discarded practice" in, M. Blazevic and L. C. Feldman (eds.) *Misperformance: essays in shifting perspectives*. Ljubljana: MASKA Institute of Publishing, Production and Education, 2014, pp. 69–78; L.W. Towner, *Past imperfect: essays on history, libraries and humanities*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993; C.F. Bryan. Jr., *Imperfect past: history in a new light*. Virginia: Dementi Milestone Publishing, 2015; M.C. Carnes (ed.), *Past imperfect: history according to the movies*. New York: Henry Holt, 1995.
[18] University College of London, "Past Imperfect", 2015, <http://ucl.ac.uk/art-history/news-events/past-imperfect>, access: 2015.09.03.
[19] Definition of "imperfect past" from the Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary and Thesaurus, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2015, <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/imperfect> access: 2015.10.29.

[20] See for example, T. Cook, "What is past is prologue: a history of archival ideas since 1898 and the future paradigm shift". *Archivaria* 43, 1997, p. 17.
[21] J. Derrida, *Archive fever: a Freudian impression*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998, p. 36.
[22] J. Derrida, *Archive fever: a Freudian impression*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998, p. 29.
[23] T. Cook, "What is past is prologue: a history of archival ideas since 1898, and the future paradigm shift". *Archivaria* 43, 1997, pp. 17–63.
[24] B. Brothman, "The past that archives keep: memory, history, and the preservation of archival records". *Archivaria* 51, 2001, p. 79.

archival discourse reverberated in international and national trends and fuelled by a shared preoccupation with the function and fate of the historical record in turn resulted in a "preoccupation of the archive".[25]

This conversion embedded in post colonial theory about what defined an archive was widely regarded as the "archival turn" - first coined by the United States of America (USA) Professor of Anthropology and Historical Studies, Ann Stoler.[26] Since then historical research has focused on "archive science" as a subject of investigation, rather than where research physically takes place.[27] This theoretical change or paradigm shift lies at the heart of the "archival turn" in modern historiography and signified the repositioning and refiguring of archives, not only globally but within a South African archival setting as well.[28]

Nonetheless scepticism arose from modern methodologies, as research shifted from the formation of the archive and extended to the objective recording of history using archives. Influenced by Derrida and Stoler, Terry Cook, a well noted and widely published Canadian archivist, supports the views of analysing the history of archival ideas as a process, as opposed to record or product, and put forward the idea of "making" archives, rather than "keeping" archives.[29]

While many archival intellectuals explore aspects of the "archive" in a philosophical or metaphorical sense, the archive has further become a universal metaphor for all conceivable forms of collective memory as well as other "archival metaphors" surrounding notions of contestation, power and authority.[30] For example, Joan Schwartz and Terry Cook illustrate how archives are inherently viewed as instruments of political and social power that are exercised through the control and dissemination of information, where: archives have the power to privilege and to marginalise. They can be a tool of hegemony; they can be a tool of resistance. They both reflect and constitute power relations. They are a product of society's need for information, and the abundance and circulation of documents reflects the importance placed on information

in society. They are the basis for and validation of the stories we tell ourselves, the story-telling narratives that give cohesion and meaning to individuals, groups, and societies.[31]

Therefore, the archive as an instrument of prevailing relations of power also plays a critical role in the idea that archives have the potential of being contested sites of power struggles. Other historians and archivists also acknowledge the archive's power in determining both what is said and what is silent. F.X. Blouin and W.G. Rosenberg has examined ways of knowledge of history and how custodial practices of archives and historical documents have changed over time, with a particular focus on the nature of contesting authority, authority in history as well as in archives, all signature questions embedded in postmodern archival theory. [32]

In South Africa two leading proponents of the contextual and postmodern critique of the archive, are the historian, Carolyn Hamilton[33] from the University of Cape Town (UCT) and Verne Harris,[34] the Director of Research and Archives at the Nelson Mandela Foundation, both of whose archival perspectives have been widely adopted in a South African setting. Hamilton's approach argues for the concept of the "life of an archive" implying that one needs to look at processes of change within an archive, how it changes and shapes public discourse i.e. the archival life cycle, proposing that it is inadequate to make histories of archives and in fact archives require biographies instead.[35] Increasingly as archives become subjects of historical enquiry, they need to be continually refashioned and forged within social and political "crucibles".[36] Likewise, Harris holds the view that the Rankian nineteenth century positivist paradigm that espoused empirical data and documentary evidence as historical truth-and-proof has dominated most archival discourse in South Africa.[37]

However, both Harris and Hamilton critique such traditional archival practices and instead join the collective

[25] J. Derrida famously called this preoccupation with the archive or tendency *mal d'archive* or archive fever.
[26] See for example, A.L. Stoler, "Colonial archives and the arts of governance". *Archival Science* (2), 2002, 87–109; A.L. Stoler, *Along the archival grain: epistemic anxieties and colonial common sense.* New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2009.
[27] T. Cook, "Archival science and postmodernism: new formulations for old concepts". *Archival Science* 1, 2001, pp. 21–23; T. Cook, "From information to knowledge: an intellectual paradigm for archives". *Archivaria* 19, winter 1984–1985, pp. 28–49.
[28] C. Hamilton, Harris. V., Taylor, J., Pickover, M., Reid, G. and Saler, R. (eds.), *Refiguring the archive*. Cape Town: David Phillip, 2002.
[29] T. Cook, "Archival science and postmodernism: new formulations for old concepts". *Archival Science* 1, 2001, p. 24; T. Cook, "We are what we keep; we keep what we are: archival appraisal past, present and future". *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 32(2), 2011, pp. 173–189; T. Cook, "Archival principles and cultural diversity: contradiction, convergence or paradigm shift? A Canadian perspective". *International Journal of Archive* 3/4, 2007, pp. 37–38.
[30] J. Taylor, "Refiguring the archive", in C. Hamilton, et al. (eds.), *Refiguring the archive*. Cape Town: David Phillip, 2002, pp. 243–281.

[31] J. Schwartz, and T. Cook, "Archives, records, and power: from (postmodern) theory to (archival) performance". *Archival Science* 2(3), 2002, p. 13.
[32] See, for example, F.X. Blouin, and W.G. Rosenberg, *Processing the past: contesting authorities in history and the archive*. Oxford: Oxford Scholarship, 2011.
[33] See for example, C. Hamilton, Harris. V., Taylor, J., Pickover, M., Reid, G. & Saler, R. (eds.), *Refiguring the Archive*. Cape Town: David Phillip, 2002.
[34] See further readings by V. Harris, *Archives and justice: a South African perspective*. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2007; V. Harris "The archival sliver: power, memory, and archives in South Africa". *Archival Science* 2, 2002, pp. 63–86.
[35] See for example, C. Hamilton, The public life of an archive: archival biography as methodology, unpublished paper, presented at the Archive and Public Culture Workshop, University of Cape Town, Cape Town, 2 September 2009.
[36] C. Hamilton, "Forged and continually refashioned in the crucible of ongoing social and political life: archives and custodial practices as subjects of enquiry". *South African Historical Journal* 65(1), 2013, pp. 1–22.
[37] V. Harris, "Redefining archives in South Africa: public archives and society in transition, 1990–1996". *Archivaria* 42 (Fall 1996), pp. 6–27.

call for an archival transformation or re-formation promoting a postmodern or deconstructed paradigm.[38] In this regard, Harris has therefore emerged as one of South Africa's leading social archival thinkers in changing perceptions of archives, postulating a post positivist conception of the archive. Collectively, these two South African scholars, like T. Nesmith urge postmodern archival studies to consciously identify the "cracks that let the light in", allowing the exploration of multiple narratives and perspectives in ways of "seeing archives" beyond mere physical records.[39]

Harris in particular has certainly brought a distinct South African consciousness to archival literature expressed politically within a transformative post democratic context. He argues that the archive is not neutral or impartial territory as Western archive theory has assumed. Instead, the South African archive plays a political and active role in the creation of memory, contemplating the social constuctedness of collective memory as part of an ever-changing and evolving political landscape.[40] Harris also posits the modern archive as a political entity and claims a movement out of a custodial era or archival practice and into future movements where archivists are "purveyors of concepts" and social memory.[41]

Although the notion of memory is general rather than abstract, in recent years it has been acknowledged that archive records function as a form of memory, primarily institutional memory. Archives and records therefore also serve as a means to provide or construct a collective or social memory.[42] Historically, archival holdings were recognised for their cultural or historical value and were as a result considered as national "memory banks", this antiquated idea of archives as an organ of national government or state was rejected in lieu of archives as social "spaces of memory" and public memory.[43]

In addition, practically and theoretically, scholarly awareness has matured, particularly where the construct of the archive offers a critical focal point for historical theory and research. In the past decades there has been an increasingly wider and broader range of prevailing schools of thought in archival science than ever before, with early

historical perspectives deeply rooted in positivism.[44] According to Harris, this is the crucible of ideas out of which modern archives – "archival science - emerged in the nineteenth century".[45] The positivist approach assumed the sanctity of evidence whereby archival records were products of administration and diplomatic information, guaranteeing the reliability and authenticity of untainted and empirical historical proof. Therefore, in archival terms, positivism uses as a departure point the objective and fixed nature of records, as well as the impartial and neutral roles played by archivists in the arranging and description thereof.[46]

In the context of research, the archive as a concept is questioned, constructed and deconstructed and it may not be just a concept about dealing with the historical past. It is within such broad perspectives that the archive is examined and questioned, and contested as archives defined by Harris, "demands space for contestation".[47] By using this approach one explores the evidentiary power of archival documentation laying the foundations for radically different approaches to processing the past.

While the archive provides the raw material for writing history, the archive can therefore also be contested and questioned in detail and more acute questions can be formulated about why the archives are either presenting or neglecting certain historical information. It should be further accepted that with all historical research, one can only derive the full value of the archive by acknowledging its limitations and there is also no doubt that the historical record is not impartial and like many archives will always be incomplete, fragmented and imperfect. In this publication, contesting the Mapungubwe Archive is not necessarily about the physical records, but rather contextualising the historical records which form part of the institutional memory of the University of Pretoria.

Contextualizing the archive

The subject of Mapungubwe has fundamentally been pursued by the discipline of archaeology and therefore our understanding of it has largely been insularly archaeological. The Mapungubwe Archive has as a direct result been overlooked and underemphasised in most studies and therefore, has been perpetually unresourced, undervalued and underused. Regrettably, few scholars have ever utilised the Mapungubwe Archive and its associated records as a basis for research nor referred

[38] V. Harris, "Claiming less, delivering more: a critique of positivist formulations on archives in South Africa". *Archivaria* 44, 1997, pp. 132–141.

[39] See T. Nesmith, "Seeing archives: postmodernism and changing intellectual place of archives". *The American Archivist* 65, (Spring/Summer 2002), pp. 24–41.

[40] V. Harris, *Exploring archives: an introduction to archival ideas and practice in South Africa*. (2nd ed.) Pretoria: National Archives of South Africa, 2000.

[41] See for example discussion by V. Harris, *Archive and justice: a South African perspective*. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2007.

[42] T. Cook, "Archival science and postmodernism: new formulations for old concepts". *Archival Science* 1, 2001, pp. 3–24; M. Hedstrom, "Archives, memory, and interfaces with the past". *Archival Science* 2, 2002, pp. 21–43.

[43] See, E. Ketelaar, "Archives as spaces of memory". *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 29(1), April 2008, p. 10; see also T. Cook "Evidence, memory, identity, and community: four shifting archival paradigms". *Archival Science* 13(2–3), 2013, pp. 95–120.

[44] See for example, P. Mortensen, "The place of theory in archival practice". *Archivaria* 47, 1999, pp. 7–8.

[45] V. Harris, "Claiming less, delivering more: a critique of positivist formulations on archives in South Africa". *Archivaria* 44, 1997, pp. 132–133.

[46] A.J. Gilliland-Swetland and S. McKemmish, "Building an infrastructure for archival research". *Archival Science* 4 (3/4), 2004, pp. 149–197.

[47] V. Harris, *Exploring archives: an introduction to archival ideas and practice in South Africa.* (2nd ed) Pretoria: National Archives of South Africa, 2000.

Figure 1.2. Mapungubwe expedition team of 1934 (left to right) John Schofield, Gerard Lestrade, N Neville Jones, Pieter van Tonder of the University of Pretoria.

to primary sources in order to construct the myriad of theories and approaches to the subject of Mapungubwe, despite over eight decades of scholarship.

The Mapungubwe historical records and documents were first viewed as traditional administrative forms of record-keeping, mainly as an archaeological working tool that produced masses of documentation and an incalculable amount of photographs during the course of excavations and research at Mapungubwe by the University of Pretoria and others.

The University of Pretoria's connection to Mapungubwe followed the period of the Great Depression of 1929, and took place during the rise of Afrikaner nationalism in the 1930s. This era was characterised by a rapidly expanding cultural movement including the adoption of Afrikaans as the single medium of instruction by the University of Pretoria. Institutional politics played a critical role when the University of Pretoria became an Afrikaner institution in 1932, particularly when lecturers were expected to teach "*volks geskiedenis*" or *volks*-history to encourage Afrikaner nationalism.[48] This is evidenced by the publication of the first early history of the University of Pretoria in a source known as *Ad Destinatum. Gedenkboek van die Universiteit van Pretoria* (1910–1960) / Commemorative book of the

University of Pretoria, commissioned by the University Council and edited by C.H. Rautenbach.[49] This historical account is in fact credited to A.N. Pelzer, a member of the Department of History and prominent member of the Afrikaner *Broederbond* (Brotherhood), the elitist once secret organization limited to Afrikaner men.[50]

From the years 1947 to 1967 Mapungubwe research was controlled and directed under the auspices of *Volkekunde* in the Department of Anthropology. Although the early years at Mapungubwe were largely archaeological, research was initially led by the liberal historian, Prof. Leo Fouché. However, the first mention of Mapungubwe within the University of Pretoria's own recorded history falls under the division of the Department of Archaeology, when the discipline of archaeology was formalised in a separate department in 1968.[51] The Department of Archaeology was established under its first lecturer and founder, J.F. Eloff, who was strongly influenced by Afrikaner ethnologists such as J.A. Engelbrecht, W.W.M. Eiselen and P.J Coertze.[52]

[48] F.A. Mouton, "Professor Leo Fouché, the history department and the Afrikanerization of the University of Pretoria", *Historia* 38(1), 1993, pp. 92–101.

[49] C.H. Rautenbach, (ed.) et al., *Ad Destinatum. Gedenkboek van die Universiteit van Pretoria*. Johannesburg: Voortrekkerpers Beperk, 1960; University of Pretoria Archive (UPA), A-1, Overview histories.
[50] See, for example, F.A. Mouton, "A.N. Pelzer: a custodian of Afrikanerdom". *South African Historical Journal* 37(1), 1997, pp. 133–155.
[51] C.H. Rautenbach, (ed.) et al., *Ad Destinatum. Gedenkboek van die Universiteit van Pretoria*. Johannesburg: Voortrekkerpers Beperk, 1960.
[52] E. Judson, "A life history of J.F. Eloff", in J.A. van Schalkwyk (ed.), *Studies in honour of Professor J.F. Eloff*. Pretoria: National Cultural History Museum, 1997, pp. 3–4.

According to the South African historian, Jane Carruthers, Afrikaner nationalist politics plagued Mapungubwe as, "institutional politics played a large part of the archaeological history of Mapungubwe". When the language policy of the University exclusively became Afrikaans, so academic freedom became impossible as only the heroes of Afrikanerdom were studied and revered to such an extent that:

> The discipline of History became the Afrikaner battleground and, not surprising in the paradigm of Afrikaner Nationalism and the 'myth of the empty land', Mapungubwe was a political anathema … [Volkekunde] was a questionable discipline in South Africa because of the racism that Volkekunde espoused in its 'scientific' support for atomizing African communities.[53]

The role of *volkekunde* in "controlling" Mapungubwe received wide condemnation by several scholars.[54] This has contributed to the many political views on Mapungubwe. It is further alleged that the University was and remains a "gate-keeper", rather than a custodian, as the institution has been accused of deliberately "hiding" Mapungubwe.[55] Such political opinions persist in the present, as recently reported by *The New Age* discussions in the drive for decolonization of South Africa's higher education claiming that, "it also led the University of Pretoria to perpetuate one of the greatest epistemological cover-ups in South African history, when it hid Mapungubwe artefacts deep in its dungeons" in the 1930s.[56] It is argued that the Mapungubwe Archive serves as a reminder of the University of Pretoria's colonial, Afrikaner nationalist and apartheid history,[57] as the social and political environment within the University of Pretoria has brought Mapungubwe a particular controversial and complex historical reputation.[58]

It took nearly eight decades to recognise the need for the professional "creation of stable, consistent, logical, and accessible archives from fieldwork" as "a fundamental building block of archaeological activity"[59] for an eventual, proper and adequate titled "archaeological archive" to develop.[60] Since the discipline of archaeology emerged within the University of Pretoria in 1968 as previously mentioned, it was only accepted in about the late 1980s that excavation as a method of research is essentially a destructive process. Moreover, no archaeological interpretations were sustainable, until they could be backed up with evidence from field records and post excavation reports. The neglect of historical records is not a new trend as archaeological archives in general are not greatly valued nor used and the state of South African archives in general is no different.[61] Despite the recognition that archives are the "new frontier" for twenty-first century research, there remains in comparison, an obsessive focus instead on material collections storage and other curation challenges.[62] Regarded in fact as a state of crisis, Childs makes this point:

> Little effort has been expended on encouraging the archaeological profession to value its collections as much as the sites from which they are derived … the archaeological profession must take some degree of responsibility for this state of affairs. Archaeologists have learned to value their trowels and shovels more than the collections they create.[63]

Historically, whilst only a few select individuals had access to the Mapungubwe records, which were kept within a departmental vault, even then, these documents were seen as records and not truly for their archival significance. For the purposes of this book it is important to acknowledge that the Mapungubwe Archive is not the creation of a single individual, but reflects a long succession of individuals who have created, shaped and reshaped the Archive within an institutional setting which has been socially and politically influenced over a long period of time. The possibility of establishing dedicated

[53] J. Carruthers, "Mapungubwe: an historical and contemporary analysis of a World Heritage cultural landscape". *Koedoe* 49(1), 2006, p. 7.

[54] See J. Sharp, "The roots and development of *Volkekunde* in South Africa". *Journal of Southern African Studies* 18(1), 1981, pp. 16–36; see also C.S. van der Waal, "Long walk from volkekunde to anthropology: reflections on representing the human in South Africa". *Anthropology Southern Africa* 38(3–4), 2015, pp. 216–234.

[55] A. Rademeyer, "UP ontken artefakte is weggesteek", *Beeld*, 12 January 1999; K. Helfrich, "Tuks denies 'hiding' artefacts", *Pretoria News*, 12 January 1999; A. Dunn, "Historical row", *Pretoria News*, 13 January 1999.

[56] N. Mkhize and I. Lagardien, "How western economics took over", *The New Age,* 2 March 2018.

[57] See articles by, S. Dubow, "Racial irredentism, ethnogenesis, and white supremacy in high-apartheid South Africa". *Kronos* 41(1) 2015, pp. 236–264; S. Dubow, *Scientific racism in modern South Africa*. Cambridge: University Press, Cambridge, 1995.

[58] Other studies, mainly from social archaeology and social anthropology, also use Mapungubwe as case studies that are politically packaged as South African heritage, thus creating and perpetuating political narratives of Mapungubwe and its contested association with the University of Pretoria, even to a point of damage to the institutions reputation see, R. King, "Archaeological naissance at Mapungubwe". *Journal of Social Archaeology* 11(3), 2011, pp. 311–333; L. Meskell, *The nature of heritage: the new South Africa*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012, p. 170.

[59] See, for example the 2003 foreword by H. Swain, Chair of the Archaeological Archives Forum, in, D.H. Brown (ed.), *Archaeological archives: a guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation*, London: Institute of Field Archaeologists, 2007; J.A. Baird and L. McFadyen, "Towards an archaeology of archaeological archive". *Archaeological Review* 29(2), 2014, pp. 14–32.

[60] See, for example, the seminal UK study by D.H. Brown, "Archaeological archives: A guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation*"*, Archaeological Archives Forum (AAF), London: Institute of Field Archaeologists. 2007, <http: /www.archaeologyuk.org/archives/ aaf_archaeological_archives_2011.pdf.>, access: 2016.06.24.

[61] See other examples such as, N. Merriman and H. Swaine, "Archaeological archives: serving the public interest?" *European Journal of Archaeology* 2(2), 1999, pp. 249–267; G. Lucas, "Time and the archaeological archive". *Journal of Theory and Practice* 14(3), 2010, pp. 343–359.

[62] H. Swaine, "Archive Archaeology", in, R. Skeates, J. Carman and C. McDavid (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Public Archaeology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, pp. 351–372.

[63] S.T. Childs, "Archaeological collections: valuing and managing an emerging frontier", in, N. Agnew and J. Bridgland (eds.), *Of the past, for the future: integrating archaeology and conservation*. Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2006, pp. 204–210.

archives for Mapungubwe was largely mooted in the late 1990s by the research need to merely access the early records, and only make use of them for cross reference as research data.[64]

Unfortunately, during the period ranging from the 1950s to the late 1990s, many departmental records went missing or were thrown out, some were negligently discarded and even destroyed, leaving critical gaps in the Mapungubwe Archive.[65] However, it was with the transfer of these 'departmental records' to a museum environment in 1999 that enabled the Mapungubwe Archive to be first formally established and given its official title as an "archive".

It was also only much later that extensive curatorial effort to consolidate and retain as many Mapungubwe records as possible (and scattered collections) from within the University of Pretoria that had become so dispersed over a long period of time, formed part of the permanent museum records. This remains a perpetual challenge as many Mapungubwe records lie in institutional administration and the University's Executive filing systems. However, a positive move was made also in line with larger institutional archival policy as the University of Pretoria Archives (UPA) was established.[66] This was underpinned further by compliance with the Promotion of Access to Information Act, No. 2 of 2000, the National Archives and Record Services of South Africa Act, 1996 (Act 43 of 1996), as amended by the Cultural Laws Amendment Act, No. 36 of 2001 and it was only in 2005 that the Mapungubwe Archive eventually listed as an archival repository.[67]

Reconsidering the Mapungubwe Archive

From the above discussions, it is clear that currently the Mapungubwe Archive needs to be reconsidered. The Archive is unfixed, even though not definitively defined, it remains an institutional historical resource, but not yet a public resource. Furthermore, the Mapungubwe Archive has the potential to become a political tool of the present, though references to the past have resulted in historical narratives that demonstrate notions of contest, control, power, status and ownership that can continue to comment on the present. The significance of this book is to express interest in the future use and role of the Mapungubwe

Archive and encourage that new interdisciplinary discourse take greater cognisance of the Mapungubwe Archive that has been absent so long from historical discourse, archival debates and conventional scholarship.

Moreover, the Mapungubwe Archive is not just an institutional depository, it can and should be viewed as a "space of memory", where knowledge is collected, classified and preserved, and therefore has the ability to be reformed and reconstituted.[68] The trajectory of the Mapungubwe Archive can also be used to inform the institutional practices, as well as the force of politics, within the University of Pretoria's broader scholarship over time and space. The apparent neglect of the Mapungubwe Archive for decades has perhaps both allowed and alluded to ways in which the archive continues to accrue different meanings, perspectives and interpretations over time. This mirrors the notion of "an archive having a life" and does not assume once "safely cloistered" in the archive, a record, an object or a collection is preserved relatively unchanged for posterity.[69]

Nonetheless, their creation, organisation, preservation and the omission of some records in the Mapungubwe Archive is far from perfect, neutral or impartial. Instead, it reflects the University of Pretoria's fundamental and institutional preoccupations and priorities, as well as potential "hidden histories".[70] The Archive has immense potential to reveal a great deal about changing notions of the institution's sense of justice, ethics, power, status and control as retaining records was also a deeply subjective decision.[71] The understanding of Mapungubwe's contested early history can be shaped by the Archive and can reveal why some records were kept and others not, and more importantly what can be further extracted and elucidated from the many omissions, silences and absences? There are also minor private contributors to the Archive which are critical unravelling the narrative such as the private archives of E. V. Adams and the family records of the Van Graan family, among the unknown records tied up in the former Transvaal Museum Archive in Pretoria.

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[64] See cross-referencing method and use of archive records in, A. Meyer, *The Iron Age sites of Greefswald: stratigraphy and chronology of the sites and a history of investigations*, Pretoria: University of Pretoria, 1998, pp. 50–55.

[65] Personal interview and discussions with A. Meyer in Pretoria, 15 May 2015.

[66] The University of Pretoria Archives (UPA) serves as the memory bank of the institution, it preserves and maintains access to records from all sectors of the University as well as associated institutions and communities. This institutional archive was only formally established in 1999, <https://www.up.ac.za/up-archives>, access: 2016.06.25.

[67] Mapungubwe Archive, copy of Directory Entries of Archival Repositories 2005, <http://www.national.archives.gov.za/dir_entries_pg7_2005.html>, access: 2016.05.26.

[68] See, E. Ketelaar, "Archives as spaces of memory". *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 29(1) April 2008, pp. 9–27.

[69] See, C. Hamilton, "Backstory, biography, and the life of James Stuart". *History in Africa* 38, 2011, pp. 319–341.

[70] The linking of archives and hidden history is interesting and is gaining more attention in modern international archival studies, see S. Roff, "Archives, documents, and hidden history: a course to teach undergraduates the thrill of historical discovery real and virtual". *The History Teacher* 40(4), 2007, pp. 551–558. See also, University of Oxford, 2017, "Hidden histories in the archives", <https://www.history.ox.ac.uk/article/hidden-histories-archives>, access: 2018.04.03.

[71] The archivist, record-keepers, or individuals making calls of what records to keep as "evidence" and which to not is an important point where the 'archivist' becomes the point of discussion, as does the archive itself. Many scholars such as Terry Cook, Verne Harris, Mark Greene and others discuss and debate of making archives, rather than keeping archives and the creation of records in archival practice and the construction of evidence, see for example, B. Brothman, "The past that archives keep: memory, history, and the preservation of archival records". *Archivaria* 51, 2001, pp. 48–70.

Figure 1.3. Early photograph of University of Pretoria camp among mopane bushveld near Mapungubwe Hill, with Prof. Leo Fouché sitting and his back turned.

Such difficult questions are important in raising the scholarly potential of a largely untapped archive. It is argued that a critical investigation of the Mapungubwe Archive can shed further light on deeper nuances of the contests or multiple pasts associated with Mapungubwe and the University of Pretoria. More importantly, this publication sets out to highlight the importance of these historical records and the potential of the Mapungubwe Archive to enhance our understanding of the early history of Mapungubwe's contested past and how the Archive can be used to inform present debates. This is particularly relevant to the Mapungubwe Archive, which is seen both as an institutional archive (or institutional instrument) as well as a primary repository of archaeological, cultural, historical and heritage resource, whereas the archive is still conventionally viewed by some scholars as just "artefacts of archaeological knowledge" and thus as "artefacts of history".[72]

Similarly, this view aligns with the emerging postmodern pattern of the growing importance, relevance and future of archives and not necessarily just as historical records of the past but critically also the dire need to save the

historical record due to the alarming and growing neglect of South Africa's archives.[73] More broadly, this further relates to the contribution and legitimacy of the archive, to not only the discipline of history but to anthropology, social studies, the arts and literature, and collectively these disciplines share a common concern about the debate and fate of the historical record or "the postmodern suspicion of the historical record".[74]

Book outline

The book comprises of five chapters, outlining the key themes of the research on the Mapungubwe Archive and how they get unpacked, as well as how they fit together. Each chapter addresses particular aspects of the main research question. This first chapter as the introduction presents an outline and context of the University of Pretoria to the subject of Mapungubwe and the Mapungubwe Archive specifically. It highlights the concept of "contestation", a continuing theme supporting the book's title as a "past imperfect". It reviews select key texts surrounding changing perspectives in archival discourse.

This brief theory is necessary in order for the Mapungubwe Archive to be "theorised" about, and for the archive to

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[72] S. Guha re-examines the way in which the past is recalled and historicised, with a focus upon issues of historiography, the notions of the archive as an artefact of evidence and the changing needs of archaeological academia towards archives and the increasing role archives play in research. See for example, S. Guha, *Artefacts of history: archaeology, historiography and Indian pasts.* London: Sage Publications Pty. Ltd, 2015.

[73] See article by R. Pather, "Activists fight to keep SA's historical documents safe", *Mail & Guardian*, 6 March 2016.

[74] M. Manoff, "Theories of the archive from across the disciplines". *Libraries and the Academy* 4(1) 2004, p. 14.

find its place in current historical archival discourse on the topic. Leading global and South African archival scholars such as Terry Cook, Joan Schwartz, Tom Nesmith, Ann Stoler, Verne Harris and Carolyn Hamilton's perspectives are discussed. It aims to provide an overview of the changing perceptions of an archive with a focus on the notion of history as "flawed" which embodies all pasts as "imperfect". The Introduction therefore summarises the contextual foundation in which the research questions are formulated. It further outlines the general scope and highlights the focus, gaps and contribution of the book, as well as the significance of the Mapungubwe Archive for future research.

Chapter two revisits Mapungubwe literature presented in broad chronological themes. Time shifts range from early literature that includes largely colonial narratives that cover the early period 1933 until 1940; followed by an overview of post War studies that are limited and sporadic and which waned between the 1950s and 1960s. These following decades provided the political backbone to the scholarly flourish of stratigraphic and Iron Age studies which marked the 1980s, strongly influenced by *Volkekunde* or Cultural Anthropology and later entrenched, by when Archaeology became an accepted field of study at the institution The literature review then expands to the proliferation of post 1994 research which is largely very critical of previous studies and interpretatively based social studies, mainly within the discipline of social anthropology and social archaeology in reaction against cultural approaches.

This literature chapter provides the setting of how research on the archive fits within broader disciplinary conversations, synthesising and summarising arguments about how wide-ranging and transdisciplinary the subject of Mapungubwe can be. This shift between time periods allows for historical clarity of the chronological progression to augment and spark the contestation of Mapungubwe's early history and at the same time tracks the intellectual trajectory of the Mapungubwe Archive.

Continuing the theme of contestation, chapter three introduces the argument that there were multiple discoveries of Mapungubwe, prior to the primary discovery of gold on Mapungubwe in 1932, which in 1933 fell under the helm of the University of Pretoria's early history. This section is devoted to the parallel narratives of the early history before 1933 and highlights the ignored Indigenous histories, the nineteenth century discovery of Mapungubwe by an elusive historical figure by the name of F.B. Lotrie, as well as, the ecological significance and history of Dongola near Mapungubwe and the German discovery of Mapungubwe by Leo Frobenius in 1928. This chapter delves further into the main gold discovery by the five discoverers which led to the declaration of Mapungubwe as a "treasure trove". It sets out the initial contact between the discoverers and the University of Pretoria and what transpired. It also uncovers many of the controversies and irregularities of

the "discovery" and provides clarity of what occurred before 1933 and what emerged just after, including what was shared in the public domain, what was published and what was chosen not to be shared.

The emphasis in chapter four is the second main focus of the early history of the University of Pretoria from the viewpoint of the Mapungubwe Archaeological Committee. From its maiden years in 1933, the University was a major instrument of institutional power and authority over Mapungubwe influencing the State and vice versa, the direction of research as well as the research results and interpretations made about the archaeological site. This chapter does not cover the archaeological excavation history of Mapungubwe for this period. Instead, this section elucidates the fact that Mapungubwe's early history was controlled more or less by the Committee fronted by a lesser known individual, J. de Villiers Roos whose influence was exponentially greater than that of the historian Prof. Leo Fouché to whom much of Mapungubwe's traditional history is ascribed and accredited to.

Fouché and Roos as contesting personalities in Mapungubwe's history is delved into, separating those that "make" history from those who "partake" and the consequences thereof that influenced and controlled the power of the Mapungubwe narrative, both colonial and nationalist. This chapter argues that the Committee's role was much more than mere excavation, and points to their institutional influence and responsibility towards the State. In addition, the little known role of the Transvaal Museum in the public exhibition of the Mapungubwe Collection under their curatorship for nearly thirty years is further highlighted and supported by Mapungubwe records traced to the Transvaal Museum Archive.

Following the kaleidoscope of discoveries and state claims to the "treasure trove", chapter five illuminates the legal chartering by the University of Pretoria that shaped the colonial and nationalist claims to Mapungubwe. This chapter charts the trajectory of historical legislation from the Historical Monuments Commission in 1926 to the later workings of the National Monuments Council into the newly transformed National Heritage Resources Act of 1999, its effects and deficiencies as the current heritage legislation.

This evolution of failed legislation and discord around selective heritage is the result of which gave unintentional or intentional rise to the early notions of "ownership" and what is referred to in the present as "stewardship".

Finally, the epilogue considers the purpose of seeing the Mapungubwe Archive and its transformative life-cycle. It reflects back on its overall history, evolving from archaeological records that were first viewed as administrative documents, merely as field records and correspondence. The Archive is then only considered
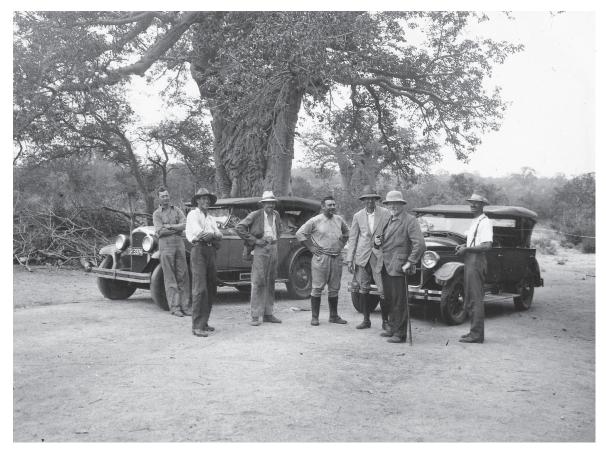
Figure 1.4. Prof Leo Fouché, Head of History and excavations, acting as agent on behalf of the University of Pretoria, accompanied by E.V. Adams, the Attorney during February 1933 negotiations with discoverers and the gold in their possession of the treasure trove. © E. V. Adams Archive.

again briefly between the 1960s and 1980s, the select-and-neglect era as mere data research sources. From the late 1990s, institutionally, the historical records are taken slightly more seriously for their value as having potentially important historical content.

There are also intentional gaps and silences during the height of apartheid, mainly the 1980s and even post 1994, largely as a result of departmental agendas, academic struggles and internal institutional politics. The future and fate of the Mapungubwe Archive that forms an integral part of the institutional memory of the University of Pretoria in the coming century is considered. It demonstrates current reconsiderations of why the Mapungubwe Archive is contested and imperfect providing conclusions.