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## discussion article

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### **The Burkitt affair revisited. Colonial implications and identity politics in early South African prehistoric research**

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#### **Abstract**

The alleged professional misconduct of Cambridge prehistorian Miles Burkitt, over his guided archaeological trip to South Africa in 1927 and the single-authored publication that resulted, has been taken to epitomize colonial relations of expropriation. However, unexploited archival and printed resources show that the affair has far more interesting implications, and that in South Africa of the 1920s and 1930s prehistoric archaeology became something of a ‘national discipline’, bearing both on national prestige abroad and on national unity at home, in the stormy relations between the English- and Afrikaans-speaking communities.

#### **Keywords**

South Africa; historiography; archives; plagiarism; Afrikaans; colonialism; metropolitan science

#### **Preamble**

Anyone who still imagines that the history of archaeology is some arcane sub-speciality best left to pedantic armchair theoreticians or nostalgic retiring professors has better take on board the ubiquitous presence of historical considerations throughout the archaeological literature – be it in the form of opening paragraphs, strings of references, or sections titled ‘history of research’, ‘formative phase’, ‘methodological developments’ or ‘previous investigations in the area’. The history of archaeology has always been useful and pertinent to its practitioners, as they seek better to argue their positions, legitimize their claims or invoke the authority of their predecessors. Very often, however, this laudable pragmatic determination results in a disciplinary history that is historiographically uncritical towards the sources it relies on, which frequently boils down to the published accounts of their aforementioned predecessors (who had of course their own axes to grind). When setting to do a history which is not for archaeology but about archaeology (cf. Schlanger 2002a), it will be a good idea to treat such participant accounts with a grain of salt, and seek to confront them with independent evidence of the kind to be found, for example, in archives.

This is what is attempted here, with the Burkitt affair. As we will see, recourse to hitherto unexploited papers and correspondence can lead us

beyond the overt claims of the protagonists, and transform a seemingly straightforward case of plagiarism into a rich seam of historical insights and understanding. In effect, claims of unscholarly behaviour aside, the Burkitt affair involves wider questions of knowledge and power in colonial settings, and touches on the relations between identity politics and archaeological practice. Without anticipating the arguments to be unfolded, what follows here is in the nature of a microhistorical, biographically minded, archive-based study, seeking to elucidate the construction of prehistoric archaeology as a scientific discipline in the midst of early 20th-century South African nationalisms. After all, it is not for the purpose of slighting this or that personality that the Burkitt 'affair' has been brought to the fore, but rather because it is considered by many to be a defining episode, bearing on and motivating the identity of the discipline itself. Whether this appraisal is justified or not, it can only drive home the above proposition that the history of archaeology matters.

### A painful affair

A story has been circulating in the archaeological literature about the grave professional misconduct of Cambridge prehistorian Miles C. Burkitt, who was taken in 1927 on a 6000-mile three-month-long archaeological tour of southern Africa by his former student John Goodwin (as well as by C. Van Riet Lowe, N. Jones and others) and already on the ocean liner back home transformed his travel notes into a book, *South Africa's past in stone and paint*, which appeared a few months later under his sole authorship and with little more than a dutiful acknowledgement to the research results put at his disposal by his guides (Burkitt 1928). Goodwin, the story goes on, 'was shocked by the speed of production [of this book], to say nothing, we suspect, of its sole authorship. The very promise of its appearance goaded [him] into a frenzied collaboration that produced the definitive volume on Southern African Archaeology [Goodwin and Van Riet Lowe 1929]' (Schrire *et al.* 1986, 123). Thurstan Shaw, for his part, took the unusual and admittedly painful step of publishing a brief note on 'Goodwin's gift, Burkitt's craft' (Shaw 1991, 579) in which he testified that when he met Goodwin in 1940 the latter was still embittered towards Burkitt. Further indications on this resentment can be found in some of Goodwin's own comments in later publications, where they appear almost as an innuendo:

As they finally left the Union in September, Burkitt said: 'by the time we reach England I shall have my book ready for the press'. This was of course the logical and desired outcome of his tour, but was to be completed at a speed I had not expected. Dr Gill promised me every facility for swift 'priority' publication in the museum *Annals*, but I realised it was outside my powers to produce a definitive work in so short a time (Goodwin 1958, 32).

Since this sorry affair will serve me here as a *casus belli* of sorts, I should immediately emphasize again that there is more in question than slighted scholarship or individual blame. Indeed, what propels the Burkitt affair

squarely into the history of archaeology (rather than its lore) is the fact that it involves far broader and more instructive issues of knowledge and power and their distribution. This was made manifest already in the first airing of the affair in print, on the occasion of the exclusion of South African researchers from the 1986 World Archaeological Congress. In this tense setting, Carmel Schrire, Janette Deacon, Martin Hall and David Lewis-Williams used Burkitt's book as a milestone against which to chart the progress of research, and concluded that 'Burkitt's *cul-de-sac* is no longer a pale reflection of Europe at the tip of an unknown continent' but rather a site of innovation and complexity (Schrire *et al.* 1986, 130). On another occasion, Schrire expressed even more forcefully what she saw as the symptomatic character of the affair:

[Goodwin's] brilliant insights were snatched from his grasp by his mentor, Miles Burkitt, the genial and well-loved teacher of archaeology at Cambridge, who visited Goodwin in 1927, saw his sites, heard his opinions, and then sailed home to publish it all under his own name. Goodwin, realizing what had happened, raced Burkitt to the finish, and lost, leaving him with the bitter realization that he was nothing but a colonial, working in the field, for the greater glory of his Cambridge betters (Schrire 1995, 35).

While it can readily be agreed that relations of domination and contestation are at work here, it would be misleading to reduce them to some stereotypical confrontation between the metropolitan better and the man on the spot – with the later inevitably the loser. On the contrary, the casting of the affair as a straightforward case of European expropriation or victimization appears rather less convincing, if not downright distracting, in the light of the previously untapped archival and published sources to be examined here. The crux of the matter, I shall argue, is that prehistoric archaeology emerged in early 20th-century South Africa as something of an 'eminently national discipline', as Gustav Kossina would have put it, bearing in equal measure on the 'colonial nationalism' and the 'tribal nationalism' then at stake. More specifically, this prehistoric archaeology proved twice topical to its promoters and practitioners. It was, most obviously, a tool for enhancing South Africa's stature abroad, drawing attention to its prehistoric treasures and elevating its standing on a par with European science. It was also – a hitherto unsuspected dimension – yet another terrain of linguistic and ideological confrontation between Boer and Briton, indeed a domestic arena for constructing and contesting the dominant character of White South Africa. The various strands of archival evidence and historical analysis accumulated here in reassessing the 'affair' will go some way to exonerate Burkitt himself; more importantly, they will help us better appreciate the manifold implications of archaeology in the politics of science and identity.

### **Burkitt's visit**

Let us then begin with Miles Crawford Burkitt (1890–1971) and his involvement in the affair. Burkitt's prehistoric vocation was confirmed upon a memorable meeting with the charismatic Abbé Henri Breuil in Cambridge in

1912.<sup>1</sup> Thus inspired, he went on to publish *Prehistory. A study of early cultures in Europe and the Mediterranean basin* (1921), a well-received book that did much to diffuse the emergent culture-historical orthodoxy among its English-reading audience. By the early 1920s Burkitt was in charge of the Stone Age collections at the Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, and he was also beginning to provide the first ever systematic teaching of prehistoric archaeology in Britain. Given Cambridge's aspired eminence in the global topography of knowledge, it was almost inevitable that his remit would expand to 'world prehistory' as a whole. Indeed, anthropologist A.C. Haddon could readily congratulate Burkitt: 'Thanks to your energy and knowledge we may look forward to our school and museum being the real centre of that branch of research in the Empire'.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, in comparison with other imperial institutions such as the British Museum, Cambridge's centrality was also crafted by personal tuition and allegiance: Burkitt's lectures were attended not only by such future professionals as Goodwin, L.S.B. Leakey and J.D. Clark, but also by a succession of classics or natural-sciences undergraduates newly 'handpicked' to the colonial administration, who required concise initiations to anthropology and archaeology ahead of their overseas postings (cf. Furse 1962, 150 ff.; Gann and Duignan 1978). The contacts he subsequently maintained with these colonial recruits,<sup>3</sup> together with the hazards of his curatorial duties, account for Burkitt's growing knowledge and interest in African prehistory.

This reputed expertise undoubtedly contributed to his invitation by the University of Cape Town to visit southern Africa, where he was to 'inspect' or 'audit' the archaeological riches of the region, promote local disciplinary developments and acquaint those back home with the considerable results already achieved (e.g. Burkitt 1928, p. vii). Conceived as a decisive one-off event, this fast-paced, wide-ranging tour through the Union of South Africa and Southern Rhodesia was programmed, indeed orchestrated, to achieve maximum impact. Not only was it planned long ahead, there were also advance notices of its precise itinerary so that interested parties could prepare for and consult the visitor.<sup>4</sup> And once the tour had actually begun, the media attention it generated was considerable. The leading English-language daily the *Cape times*, which had recently published a series of archaeological 'stories in stone' penned by Goodwin, followed the visit with interest. The newspaper reported on Burkitt's arrival on 17 June 1927, and by 27 August dedicated a full page to 'Archaeology in the Union. Auditing some theories. An account of Mr. M.C. Burkitt's tour'. A follow-up interview with Burkitt appeared on 7 September under the heading of 'S. African history in stone. Rich fields for the student of archaeology. Mr. Burkitt's researches. Scenes depicted in Bushman paintings' (cf. Figure 1).

Alongside the strictly archaeological aspects of the tour – sites to visit, artefacts to examine, collections to assess, rock-art to record and so on (cf. Burkitt 1928, 29–54) – there were also all-important social engagements for Burkitt and his wife Peggy to attend. Indeed, integral to almost each stop-over was the meeting of amateur archaeologists, dignitaries and politicians, and then mingling, dining, picnicking, being entertained and entertaining, and

**S. AFRICAN HISTORY IN  
STONE.**

**Rich Fields for the Student of  
Archaeology.**

**MR. BURKITT'S RESEARCHES.**

**Scenes Depicted in Bushman  
Paintings.**

**WAGON LOADS OF RELICS.**

Mr. M. G. Burkitt, F.S.A., F.G.S., the eminent lecturer in Archaeology at Cambridge University, who arrived in South Africa in June at the invitation of the University of Cape Town to inspect the interesting Bushman "sites" and collections of stone implements from prehistoric "homes" that abound in the Union, has now returned to Cape Town, after a tour of 8,000 miles through the country. He was accompanied by Mr. A. J. H. Goodwin, Senior Lecturer in Social Anthropology at the Cape Town University, and Mrs. Burkitt and Mrs. Goodwin were also with the party.


In an interview with a "Cape Times" representative yesterday, Mr. Burkitt "told the story of Africa," as he now sees it, revealed through the eyes of an archaeologist.

**MOVEMENTS OF PEOPLES.  
Importance of Bushman Art.**


**"Cradle" or "Museum"?**

**"It Only It Were Published!"**

**The "Story of Africa."**



MR. A. J. H. GOODWIN.



MR. M. G. BURKITT.

**Figure 1** 'S. African history in stone'. *Cape times*, Cape Town, 7 September 1927. Collage with sub-titles and photographs (Goodwin above, Burkitt below).

generally contributing to consolidate local hierarchies and tastes. As Peggy Burkitt wrote back home,

They seem pleased with him and Sir Carruthers [Beattie] is we think a great man. To-morrow we motor round the Cape of Good Hope with Lady Beattie and Henry, and on Friday Tom Barnard takes us to a very celebrated Caledon Flower show to be opened by Princess Alice (wife of the Governor-General).

Motoring around, the Burkitts observed the human scenery with a mild dose of snobbish exoticism, noting that 'the natives are dears, especially the children and the flowers are indescribably beautiful'. This incidentally is one of the rare occasions when native South African populations were actually acknowledged by the archaeologists who ostensibly studied their past – and even then, typically, their existence was merged with the floral, natural background. In contrast, the Burkitts were fully attuned to the surrounding White society with its complications and divides. In otherwise tranquil Grahamstown, for example, Peggy was struck by how 'one & all they hate the Dutch & therefore support the English church'. Likewise, while her account of Professor Schwarz's daring scheme to divert the Zambezi river into the Kalahari desert was in itself light-hearted, she genuinely deplored that the

current ‘dullard’ government disregarded it ‘possibly also for political reasons as tho’ a Bosch he [Schwarz] also hates the Dutch. Everything that everybody does in the whole country’ – she summed up with dismay – ‘is influenced by those sort of considerations and it is most deadening to enterprise and good feeling’.<sup>5</sup>

### Promoting the discipline

Just how deadening were such considerations for the archaeological enterprise is a matter we will appreciate later on, but let us remain for a moment longer with Burkitt. In between collecting artefacts and gathering impressions of this kind, the visitor was also involved in the strategic and institutional promotion of the archaeological discipline itself. At a public level, in addition to the speeches and the press items, he also lectured to specialized audiences at the universities of Cape Town and Stellenbosch, and gave a keynote address on archaeological methods at the annual meeting of the South African Association for the Advancement of Science (Burkitt 1927). In more private enclaves, Burkitt engaged in sustained discussions with his hosts Sir J.C. Beattie, the Dean of Cape Town University, anthropologist T.T. Barnard and E.L. Gill of the South African Museum. An inkling of the issues at stake emerges from the correspondence they maintained following Burkitt’s departure. Barnard, in particular, was keen to brief and consult Burkitt on ongoing projects such as the publication of Dorothea Bleek’s work (continuing her father’s pioneering ‘Bushman’ linguistic and folklore studies), obtaining monies from the Harvard African Studies Centre, or the pressing need to find the right man to undertake a projected Carnegie-funded survey of Bushmen painting in Southern Rhodesia. As Barnard confided to Burkitt, the man on the ground, Asst. Commissioner Macrae, was ‘dropped’ as unsatisfactory, N. Jones was ‘hankering for the Abbé Breuil’ but in vain, ‘Leakey would be excellent if he was interested in the project; he could always expend superfluous energy digging between whiles, and he might wrangle an extension and do some Zimbabwe hunting and ancient mines research’, and ‘it might even be a woman as you once suggested’. Significantly, this project suffered a major setback with the unexpected arrival in August 1928 of German anthropologist Leo Frobenius and his retinue, hoping to spend two years in Southern Rhodesia investigating ruins and recording paintings. The startled Barnard wondered whether the South African government had been notified of this ‘rival claim’, and promised to report any developments to Burkitt and also to J.L. Myres of the British Association for the Advancement of Science; indeed, in view of its joint meeting scheduled with its South African counterpart in July 1929, the British Association had been granted exclusive rights to study the Zimbabwe ruins – by, as it happened, an all-women team led by Gertrude Caton-Thompson.<sup>6</sup>

It is evident from all this that Burkitt’s tour contributed significantly to the reconfiguration of prehistoric archaeology as a national asset, within a wider drive for the ‘South-Africanization of science’. Promoted by the highest authorities in the land – chief of them the political leader and statesman Jan Christiaan Smuts and his deputy Jan Hofmeyr – this movement implied the

development by South African researchers of a distinctively South African ‘point of view’ on science, which, far from being parochial or marginal, would overcome a (European) legacy of complacent preconceptions with fresh outlooks and forward-looking solutions to the problems of the age (e.g. Smuts 1925; Hofmeyr 1929; and cf. Dubow 2000; Schlanger 2002b, 201–3). Set in the context of a broader scientific ‘emancipation’ or demarcation by the colony from the metropolitan power (cf. Macleod 1993; Stoler 1989; Schlanger 2002c), this rhetoric entailed a none-too-subtle balancing act, with Science (so often with a capital S) at once manifestly universal in its claims and currencies, and at the same time geared to enhance the mental stature and aura of its extremely local-patriotic practitioners. Smuts himself perfectly conveyed the gist of this movement when he concluded his Presidential Address to the 1925 meeting of the South African Association for the Advancement of Science with the simultaneously grandiose and idiomatic pronouncement that science, the key to stability and permanent progress, was ‘the real pioneer and Voortrekker to our future’ (Smuts 1925, 19).

Prehistoric archaeology was indeed one of those disciplines on the march – alongside geology, palaeontology and physical anthropology (viz. the australopithecine discovery of 1925) – which could serve both South Africa and science in their respective advancements. To capture the distinctiveness and importance of the land’s remote past, its leading archaeologists developed from the mid-1920s onwards the so-called ‘African terminology’ of prehistory, in which the European classification scheme (effectively that devised in late 19th-century France by Gabriel de Mortillet) was explicitly rejected in favour of newly named periods (i.e. Early, Middle and Late Stone Ages) and cultures (e.g. Stellenbosch, Smithfield, Wilton and so on, cf. below). This defiant alternative framework certainly caught the attention of European and specifically French scholars (cf. Schlanger, forthcoming). It also proved its utility as a geo-political device, insofar as the various cross-continental links and tables of chrono-cultural correlations it allowed one to draw could effectively reposition South Africa and Europe on a single, level plane of scientific merit and prestige. A clear priority in Burkitt’s roving ambassadorial agenda, the enhancement of South Africa’s scientific stature, emerges in private correspondence, specialized publications and the popular press: ‘It can be gauged how little Europe knows of our archaeological conditions’, deplored the *Cape times* (27 August 1927), ‘when it is stated that in the Cambridge collection there are [only] three Smithfield implements’ and further ‘[Burkitt’s] trip has aroused enormous interest in archaeology in the Union and in Rhodesia, and will in turn arouse further interest in Europe’ – so much so, he was quoted as saying in the *Cape times* (7 September 1927) – that members of the British Association will be ‘surprised and astonished’ when they come in 1929 to this country, ‘packed full of thrills and interest for the scientist’. And as he awakened broader public and scientific interest, Burkitt was also mindful to clear the way for his hosts’ aspirations and achievements in this topic; ‘a final authoritative work containing all important sites, finds etc. . . . will eventually have to be written’, he both prophesized and exhorted in *South Africa’s past*, ‘and it is a South African, or South Africans, who must do it’ (Burkitt 1928, p. viii).

### Goodwin's reaction

The South African scholar who went on to co-produce such an authoritative work was of course Astley John Hilary Goodwin (1900–1959). Sent up to Cambridge to read English, the budding Pietermaritzburg-born poet and playwright underwent an archaeological experience during his summer language school in Grenoble – he subsequently changed to anthropology under Haddon and Burkitt and was then recruited by Radcliffe-Brown back to the University of Cape Town.<sup>7</sup> Initially research assistant in ethnology, then senior lecturer from August 1926, Goodwin must have been implicated in the invitation of his teacher, but as we saw there were also more powerful personalities and motivations at work within the University and the South African Museum, if not within higher echelons of government. What is certain is that Goodwin was the best-qualified scholar for overseeing the practical archaeological aspects of the tour – since his return in 1923 he had been encouraged by the retiring director of the South African Museum, the French-born entomologist-turned-archaeologist Louis Péringuey, to assiduously sort and compare the stone implement collections assembled there. Building on his first-hand familiarity with local types and sequences, Goodwin began to coordinate, formulate and publish works on the new African terminology of prehistory. This scheme was still very much in the making when Burkitt arrived, but it seemed rather evident that – just like Goodwin himself, who had been seconded by the University of Cape Town and proved of invaluable help throughout (Burkitt 1928, pp. vii, x) – so too were the current facts and ideas on Southern African prehistory to be made accessible to the visitor, to be taken into account, discussed and publicized. Similarly, the occurrence of this information in Burkitt's full-length introductory book could hardly have been such a shocking surprise, notwithstanding the (otherwise so commendable) speed of its production. While still in South Africa, the *Cape times* announced, 'So successful has this trip been that Mr. Burkitt finds it necessary to devote an entire book to his journey in South Africa' – a book he furthermore intends to publish 'immediately he returns to England' (27 August 1927, 7 September 1927). At the time of these events, all this seemed quite appropriate and welcome to those concerned. Sir J.C. Beattie, having funded Burkitt's visit and seen the book dedicated to his name, wrote back on receiving his copy, 'I doubt if ever before we have had such valuable return for the expenditure of 100 £'.<sup>8</sup> Likewise Barnard was explicitly grateful to My Dear Miles 'for having come out here and worked so incredibly hard and done so much propaganda for us', and further declared that Burkitt's book will be 'billed in all S. A. universities as one of the set books'.<sup>9</sup>

Somewhat different was the situation with Goodwin himself, who, besides his unique archaeological qualifications, also happened to entertain rather complicated and occasionally volatile relations with his closest associates, including Van Riet Lowe and Burkitt himself. Thus in an exceptional letter dated 22 April 1929, Goodwin expressed to Neville Jones his dissatisfaction with Burkitt's book, complained about what we 'poor colonials' might expect in the way of 'decent recognition', and further added, 'I think my failure to describe my scheme verbally to B. made him think me an idiot who had hit on a workable scheme. Perhaps I am, but still . . . he might have been kind



enough to pretend that I was not.<sup>10</sup> That noted, however, the question of such pretence simply does not arise throughout the correspondence between Burkitt and Goodwin, between Cambridge and Cape Town. On the contrary, both parties appear to be appreciative of each other, and of their respective research and publication endeavours. Here, to begin with, is Burkitt, writing on the eve of his departure:

Dear Goodwin, Thank you so much for both your letters and your interesting paper which will be most useful to me if the S. African trip does eventuate. I have just written to Barnard saying how much I hoped it will . . . It will be most interesting to talk over your African problems + I shall have much to learn + only European parallels to offer in the way of throwing light on things. Your theories are most interesting.<sup>11</sup>

Already, on the way back home, Burkitt confirmed that he was working at ‘enlarging’ his notebooks into an account of his African tour, and enlisted Goodwin’s help for commenting on a draft and for finding some bibliographical references.<sup>12</sup> Goodwin provided the requested references, and at the same time informed his correspondent, ‘I am busy trying to write up everything here for a series of papers in the Royal Society, or the S.A. Museum Annals. It will be as out of date as Peringuey[’s publication] in a few years time, but it seems a necessary step’.

After outlining his comprehensive scheme (cf. Figure 2), Goodwin concluded thus:

You will notice you have influenced me in the use of the term Lower Palaeolithic for Stellenbosch, though I still don’t like to apply it to the Victoria West and Fauresmith. Mousey [*sic*; Mousterian] has similarly been applied to the faceted butt wherever it occurs. Whether rightly or wrongly I would like you to decide. I still fight shy of ‘Neolithic’.<sup>13</sup>

This almost casual announcement of a proposed publication of his own, and the airing of its structuring arrangement, can only suggest that Goodwin felt in no way threatened or affected by Burkitt’s publication plans when he himself was working on what would become *The Stone Age cultures of South Africa* (Goodwin and Van Riet Lowe, 1929). Burkitt for his part heartily applauded and encouraged such an initiative:

I think there is no doubt you are right in producing a series of learned papers . . . which will later form the basis of a really large book on Southern African archaeology. ‘South Africa’s Past in Stone and Paint’ which you people more or less forced me to write – it was Miss Willman who refused to be put off with an article or two in the Royal Anthropological Inst. – is due to appear at the end of June, but it is only meant – and this fact I urge on you – as a prolegomena to a large work, the time for which is not yet, and which in my opinion should be written by a South African or South Africans.<sup>14</sup>

All in all, this and other exchanges (notably on academic vacancies in South Africa or in Britain) rather intimate a sense of collaboration and common

I am grouping things thus:-

Earlier stone age. Stellenbosch (Lower Palaeolithic)  
 Victoria West  
 Fauresmith (Beginning of Mousey influence)

Middle stone age. (Full Mousey influence producing disconnected industries at:-  
 Alexandersfontein.  
 Glen Grey Falls  
 Thaba Nohu  
 Swaziland  
 Still Bay. Beginning of neanthrop influence.)

Later stone Age. (Marking full Neanthropic influence)  
 Howison's Poort  
 Smithfield A. (Lower has been discarded)  
 Smithfield B. (Upper has been discarded)  
 Smithfield C. (Cave Smithfield, which I feel must be differentiated.)  
 Wilton.

You will notice you have influenced me in the use of the term Lower Palaeolithic for Stellenbosch, though I still don't like to apply it to the Victoria West and Fauresmith. Mousey has similarly been applied to the faceted butt wherever it occurs. Whether rightly or wrongly I would like you to decide.

I still fight shy of "Neolithic"

I have got a large number of implements from Villiersdorp, on the northern side of our Southern Mountain range. It is identical with the Stellenbosch stuff, as it should be.

Neville-Ben-Jones visited Lowe a little time ago. Lowe murmured "Burkitt found a crescent just here." Neville stooped down and said "Ah! Here's another!" So that's that. It seems to be very local; as the two crescents must have been lying within a foot of each other.

Wishing you all joy with Glozel. Is it? or isn't it?

Yours sincerely,

**Figure 2** 'I am grouping things thus'. Goodwin presents to Burkitt his proposed scheme of South African prehistoric cultures, 18 November 1927 (verso), Burkitt Papers, Box 2.

purpose, in which Goodwin readily shared both knowledge and its authorship with his former teacher.<sup>15</sup> And when Burkitt's book appeared in print and reached South Africa, Goodwin could matter-of-factly congratulate its author for having made good use of the lantern slides he had provided: 'I see that you have used two in S.A.P in S.A.P. [initials of *South Africa's past in stone and paint*], they came out quite well'.<sup>16</sup> It may well be that – in parallel, as it were – Goodwin harboured some rancour over the single authorship of Burkitt's book; in line with the above-mentioned 'South Africanization' of science it is more than plausible that this resentment would have increased and become more manifest over the years. Nevertheless, an overall appraisal of the evidence here presented rather confirms that Burkitt's visit and its aftermath were actually the subject of considerable satisfaction all around.



**Figure 3** E.C.N. Van Hoepen with skull, at the National Museum, Bloemfontein.

### Racing Van Hoepen

What is left outstanding, however, and what opens up wholly new vistas on the making of South African prehistoric archaeology, is the matter of this famous ‘race’ surrounding the publication of Goodwin and Van Riet Lowe’s 1929 *Annals* volume (cf. Schrire *et al.* 1986; Goodwin 1958, 32; Summers 1975, 139). Now that Burkitt’s work can no longer be said to compete with Goodwin’s publication plans (but rather, if anything, encouraged them), this race becomes puzzling: against whom? Having set aside the notion of a brutal metropolitan appropriation, we can envisage the possibility that the urgency actually derived from some internal challenges, and that it was within South Africa itself that ‘claims for priority’ were being advanced and disputed. And here, much as Goodwin and Van Riet Lowe are nowadays well-nigh universally acknowledged as the founding fathers who launched local prehistoric archaeology on its true course, force is to recognize that their status was actually hard earned, and that there were in the South Africa of the 1920s other archaeologists, with different conceptions and approaches.<sup>17</sup>

One such individual – indeed the one who was raced against, defeated and then effectively cast away from the annals of the discipline – was E.C.N. Van Hoepen (cf. Figure 3). As one of South Africa’s first professional palaeontologists, specializing in Karoo reptiles and ammonites, the Dutch-born Dr Egbert Cornelis Nicolaas Van Hoepen (1884–1966) was appointed in 1922 to the directorship of the Nasionale Museum in Bloemfontein. With newly secured financial and political clout, he worked relentlessly to enhance the scientific and institutional standing of his museum.<sup>18</sup> The series of

expeditions he conducted in Zululand from 1923 onwards led him to develop some ideas about prehistoric stone industries which he presented at the 1926 Pretoria meeting of the South African Association for the Advancement of Science. In this paper, published in the *South African journal of science* as 'Die indeling en relatiewe ouderdom van die Suid-Afrikaanse klipwerktnuie' ('The classification and relative age of South African stone industries'), Van Hoepen proposed to divide the South African Stone Age into a sequence of cultures named Stellenbosch, Pretoria, Vaal, Pniel, Mosselbay, Koning and so on (Van Hoepen 1926). In the following decade this scheme underwent considerable revisions and redefinitions (including the occasional retraction), all of which were greatly facilitated by their author's ability to create a dedicated publication series, the *Argeologiese Navorsing van die Nasionale Museum (Archaeological researches from the National museum)*. The first issue, on 'Die Koningse Kultuur', appeared on 10 September 1928, and it brought with it a remarkably virulent debate with Goodwin, and particularly with Clarence 'Peter' Van Riet Lowe (1894–1959), the Bloemfontein-based building works engineer soon to become professional and quintessentially institutional archaeologist.<sup>19</sup> Leaving aside some strident bickering over the protagonists' adherence or not to the 'scientific method', several of the methodological and terminological issues raised prove to have more revealing ramifications (cf. Van Riet Lowe 1929; Van Hoepen 1930; 1932a; b; 1938).

So far as archaeological practice was concerned, Van Hoepen contrasted two distinct methods for identifying prehistoric cultures: the method of 'association' endorsed by his opponents Goodwin and Van Riet Lowe, which notably risked combining implements which occurred together but actually belonged to different cultures; and his own 'typological' method, which postulated that the earliest implements are the more clumsy and improve with time, and which required comparing the manufacture and shape of co-occurring implements in coherent collections (Van Hoepen 1932a, 24–25; and cf. Goodwin 1935, 334). This methodological distinction granted, the antithetical character attached to it remains to be assessed. Admittedly, Van Hoepen's palaeontological training clearly inspired his quest for evolutionary progression through immutable 'type fossils', themselves judiciously chosen to represent the industry or culture which begat them. However, it must be noted that such an approach was widespread in archaeological circles. Moreover, the prehistoric cultures singled out according to its criteria were not strikingly aberrant or incompatible with the prevailing paradigm. Indeed, Goodwin may have repeatedly expressed his methodological dissatisfaction with Van Hoepen's identification of prehistoric cultures (Goodwin 1926, 788; 1935 etc.), but in actual fact he had no qualms about including the 'Pniel' industry in the gazetteer-of-sorts he maintained at the South African Museum in 1926, or indeed about incorporating into his own Middle Stone Age the 'Thaba Nchu' culture advanced by his Bloemfontein-based opponent.<sup>20</sup> More generally, the basic aim shared by all parties was to establish the succession of 'prehistoric cultures' – a single framework within which they could all readily appeal to Burkitt's authority.<sup>21</sup>

Beyond the identification and characterization of these South African prehistoric cultures, it was their designation that generated a bitter conflict – a 'priority dispute', as historians of science call it. Van Hoepen repeatedly

claimed his precedence in identifying and designating cultures later described anew and renamed by Goodwin and others. Clashes on this issue occurred as early as 1925, when, following a public presentation of archaeological remains, 'Mr. Lowe's nomenclature was severely criticised by Dr. Van Hoepen'.<sup>22</sup> Going so far as to accuse Van Riet Lowe of 'scientific piracy', Van Hoepen also deplored that Burkitt in his 1928 book had called some implements Smithfield, while he had named them Koning two years before (Van Hoepen 1930, 362, 364). In the same vein, he claimed the precedence of his 'Mosselbay culture' over the 'Middle Stone Age', a later addition by Goodwin to his initially bipartite, Péringuey-inspired scheme:

As Goodwin was present at that meeting in 1926 at which my paper was read, he cannot plead non-acquaintance with my work. Neither can I suppose that he has deliberately ignored it. He must have overlooked it accidentally. The result of such an action may be that the honour of the discovery passes from the original investigator [to] a following one. That such a result is not imaginary appears from a postcard, which I received from M.C. Burkitt, the friend and master of Goodwin, wherein he says, relative to a similar case: 'I don't see what can be done, now that the new name has spread throughout the scientific world' . . . What should happen is very simple. Burkitt and all the others who get to know the facts [should] act according to the Law of Priority and treat their fellow man as they would be treated themselves (Van Hoepen 1932b, 48).

Goodwin may have been given here the benefit of the doubt, but his overall response amply confirms that more was involved than individual honour or scientific propriety alone:

While the [1926] Pretoria conference did not definitely reject the terms Pretoria and Vaal as phases of the Stellenbosch culture . . . little more has been heard of these two cultures. . . . In what would now be termed the Middle Stone Age, falls the Mossel Bay culture [of Van Hoepen], which has now been taken over and incorporated (Goodwin 1935, 335).

With this blunt 'taking-over' and 'incorporation' we can begin to appreciate how closely run was the race with Van Hoepen, and how much its outcome impacted on the subsequent development of South African prehistoric archaeology. In this respect, the bullish Van Riet Lowe was particularly determined to have the better of his opponent, whom he liberally vilipended in his letters to Goodwin. The tone was set following the 1926 Pretoria conference: 'What do you think of friend v. Hoepen's withholding the Stilbaai point found with his so-called Koning implement? His archaeological measles is fast assuming a nasty and virulent form'.<sup>23</sup> In the following months Van Riet Lowe began collaborating with Goodwin on the *Annals* volume, and he also wrote a response to Van Hoepen's Koning culture for the *South African journal of natural history* (cf. Van Riet Lowe 1928). Juggling between these two commitments, he prompted his co-author,

I hope our book will soon be out 'cos my 'die Koningse Kultuur' ought to appear in print next month – and I DON'T wish it to appear before 'The

Smithfield Industry'!!! As you will realize – so do please tell me what the position is!<sup>24</sup>

With the *Annals* volume still laboriously being written or updated, the impatient Van Riet Lowe hit on a brilliant scheme: 'To put the tin hat on Homo Bloemfonteinensis sapientissimus male's paper cannot [South African Museum director] Gill's preface be dated August 1928!? Or even 9th September, 1928 – this would obviate a great deal of bother – just a brainwave'.<sup>25</sup>

The date of 10 September 1928 being, of course, the issue date of Van Hoepen's first *Argeologiese Navorsing*. Force is to add, for the record, that such shenanigans were also directed at Burkitt, when Van Riet Lowe confirmed to Goodwin,

Also I think it wise to add, as you suggest, at the very end: 'advance copies of Mr. Burkitt's book: 'South Africa's past in Stone and Paint' only reached us in August 1928 – too late for discussion in the MSS of these papers . . .'. If Gill does write an introductory note he must be made to date it August or earlier. A little tact ought to do the trick.<sup>26</sup>

And so it was, tact aiding, that Gill dated August 1928 his preface to the 27th volume of the *Annals of the South African Museum* which effectively went to press a year or so later.

In any case, egos and rivalries aside, the debate with Van Hoepen did not simply involve issues of archaeological method or interpretation, but also some crucial questions over the discipline's tenor and frame of reference. While this may not be immediately apparent in the official accounts (effectively those of the winning parties to the race), the crux of the matter clearly emerges in some revealing comments which Burkitt received from his former pupil and from his erstwhile host. Goodwin, to begin with him, complained thus to his 'Dear Brother Burin':

Van Hoepen is publishing his stuff in a new series he has invented for the purpose, 'Argeologiese Navorsing' written of course in the language of the (theatrical) gods. He is publishing our Smithfield A as his 'Koning' and our Stellenbosch as his Pniel (or Vaal). Lowe is very angry.<sup>27</sup>

As if to make this point fully clear, Sir J.C. Beattie returned from presiding over the 1928 meeting of South African Association, and shared with Burkitt this disparaging comment (Figure 4):

Barnard, Goodwin, van Riet Lowe, Heese, van Hoepen were all at the Kimberly meeting. Heese and van Hoepen I met for the first time; they were doing a little propaganda for afrikaans as a scientific language! We did not try to make martyrs of them.<sup>28</sup>

### From prehistory in Afrikaans to Afrikaner prehistory

Theatrical gods and the lures of martyrdom notwithstanding, it was first and foremost the language in which South African prehistoric research was being

and time on prehistory is dedicated!

We are going on very much as usual. Slowly increasing in size and getting more & more of the staff involved in university work generally. Barnard Goodrum, van Riet Lowe, Steers, van Hoepen were all at the Kimberley meeting. Steers and van Hoepen met for the first time; they were doing a little propaganda for Afrikaans as a scientific language! We didn't try to make martyrs of them.

Goodrum is much the same. A little too slopshank in his methods, but you had not had him another year or two longer in Cambridge. He will I hope come out all right but I sometimes fear he got on too quickly. Barnard is as usual as ever and as casual about lecturing; he has the hope Oxford overlooked the futility of lectures. There is a lot to be said for it. He will be in England this Christmas. Mrs Barnard leaves in a few weeks time; he goes later, he expect he here again. Do you think she is a woman?

Give my love to Peggy. My wife and I & the children still look back with pleasure on the two short times we were at Glenora. I hope we will be again.

With best wishes  
Yours truly  
H. Beattie

**Figure 4** 'A little propaganda for Afrikaans as a scientific language'. Beattie to Burkitt, 22 August 1928, Burkitt Papers, Box 2.

conducted – English or Afrikaans – that gave rise to such feelings. By the first quarter of the 20th century Afrikaans was indeed a language on the ascendant, poised as both alternative and competitor to English. The series of consolidations and revivals undergone by this erstwhile 'kitchen Dutch' before and after the Anglo-Boer War resulted in a fully fledged written language, whose audience increased manifold upon its introduction into the schooling system (in 1914) and its acceptance by the Church for Bible translation (in 1919). As a culmination of this process, the Parliament endorsed in May 1925 a motion proposed by D.F. Malan, then Minister of the Interior and of Education in Hertzog's National Party Government, making Afrikaans

an official language of the Union of South Africa, alongside English (cf. Haarhof 1930; Moodie 1975). Thus established *de jure*, it still remained for Afrikaans to fulfil *de facto* the claims of its more militant champions, such as Jan Cilliers or Gustav Preller, and demonstrate its capacity for accurate and cultured communication – not only in the fields of literature and poetry where it excelled, but also in the otherwise demanding domain of science. Efforts to make of Afrikaans a language of scientific expression touched on aspects of public outreach – the South African Museum, for example, had the labels of its exhibits translated into Afrikaans (cf. Summers 1975, 153) – and they also reached realms of esoteric innovation and scientific communication: barely two months after the Parliamentary Act, Smuts forcefully reminded the audience of his presidential address that in ‘the [SA] Association both official languages of the Union enjoy equal privileges’ (Smuts 1925, 1).

This may have been so, but the proffered linguistic equivalence remained unpalatable to the English-speaking archaeological community. In addition to the various oversights or incorporations already noted above, the language of the ‘(theatrical) gods’ generated further movements of recoil, not always consciously or deliberately expressed. To be sure, Van Riet Lowe knew well to mock C.H.T.D Heese, for example, for joining ‘the ranks of die ware Afrikaans – o ja! o ja! o ja! – or het van Hoepen how geropen, do you dink!’.<sup>29</sup> At the same time, there was something more subtle and revealing in his criticism of Van Hoepen’s Koning culture, where he consistently referred to the term ‘*Kultuur*’ in capitalized italics (Van Riet Lowe 1929, 333 *passim*) as if it were some unfathomably alien and untranslatable notion rather than a widespread term of Latin origin. In contrast to this typographically aided accentuation of alterity, Goodwin rather engaged in an unconscious spell of orthographic and phonetic appropriation. Initially spelt and pronounced in Afrikaans as ‘Stilbaai’ (e.g., in print, Goodwin 1926, 784, 787) or ‘Mosselbaai’ (Van Hoepen 1926), these eponymous terms soon underwent an ideologically charged process of transformation known as *verengelsing* or ‘anglicization’, to end up as the ‘Still Bay’ and ‘Mossel Bay’ cultures of the authorized prehistoric terminology.

This overall reticence towards things Afrikaans undoubtedly derived from the ‘loaded’ character of the language. If Afrikaans could not be trusted to serve as a medium of science, this was not simply because of some would-be internal deficiencies, possibly associated with its immature structure or its limited vocabulary. Rather, intimately linked as it was to a particular community, Afrikaans also embodied that community’s identity claims in its struggle for existence and expansion. Such were the ideological and emotional ties forged between the *taal* and the *volk* – a ‘nation built from words’ (I. Hofmeyr 1987) – that prehistory in Afrikaans effectively risked amounting to Afrikaner prehistory, where the vested interests and local perspectives of the linguistic community would end up being served before the impartial and universal objectives of science. If Afrikaner conceptions of race and history are anything to go by (cf. Van Jaarsveld 1964; Saunders 1988; Dubow 1995), it can be speculated that such a (pre)history would have been mesmerized by questions of cultural identity and group distinction and would have promoted an essentialist vision of unfolding collective destinies in which contingency



and intermingling had no place. Furthermore, such a prehistory would have been amenable to confirming Stow-Theal's hypothesis of successive waves of regional migration, and indeed to legitimizing the separate development of 'culturalism' later championed by H. Verwoerd and W. Eiselin.

Be it as it may, such a putative Afrikaner prehistory no doubt hovered on the background of the Frobenius 'affair' – the outcry surrounding the decision by Malan and the National Party Government to grant the princely sum of £5000 to Professor Frobenius for pursuing his research on the Zimbabwe question. Ironically, since this was the 'rival expedition' specifically decried by T. Barnard and denied access by the British Association, Frobenius had to content himself with exploring rock art and ruins elsewhere in southern Africa, and indeed undertake comparative research in, of all places, India (cf. Caton-Thompson 1983, 133). The parliamentary vote in early 1930 gave rise to heated debates, to the relish of both English and Afrikaans-speaking media. Caught in a quandary between principles and patronage, General Smuts (then leader of the opposition) was led to endorse in the House a parochial attitude usually associated with his Nationalist adversaries:

In a sense, I welcome the generosity of the Minister to Professor Frobenius. Although this fact, in itself, may be the subject of criticism, at any rate it shows good intentions. It shows that the Minister does recognise the value of science of this type to South Africa. But I do wish to impress upon the committee and on the Minister, that they will, in showing this generosity, this recognition of the work of others, not forget the work of our own sons.

This South African born and bred, this 'modest Columbus' of which the eminent Abbé Breuil had spoken so highly, was none other than C. Van Riet Lowe, a humble civil servant who should urgently be 'set free by our government in order to devote attention to this work of our archaeology'. Smuts would ensure that this happened as soon as he recovered political power in the Fusion Government of 1934, but on the day he must have realized that Prime Minister Hertzog had the upper hand in the debate. Indeed, the latter took full responsibility for having drawn Malan's attention to the remarkable work and undeniable competence of Professor Frobenius, and deplored the fact that the discussion, 'initiated by quasi-scientists and politicians . . . was attributable to jealousy and envy'. Knowing a thing or two about double standards, Hertzog concluded thus: 'I feel that all this sound and fury would never have been raised if the grant had been made to an Englishman. Unfortunately, Professor Frobenius is German' – the vote was approved (Figure 5).<sup>30</sup>

### Conclusions: at home and abroad

For all these apparent attempts at exclusion – on the very morning following this parliamentary debate, Van Riet Lowe had already lumped together Van Hoepen and Frobenius<sup>31</sup> – it remains that Afrikaans/Afrikaner prehistory could still constitute a viable discipline. Just as Van Hoepen himself (e.g. 1932a) appealed to the likes of Otto Hauser to advance his typological claims, so were local workers like Heese, Dreyer or Macfarlane using

## A Forgotten Principle



MRS SOUTH AFRICA: "Well, I must say, considering how you've dinned 'South Africa First' into our ears, that you might have given that valuable prize to one of our own boys instead of to a comparative stranger."  
 GENERAL HERTZOG: "Nonsense, my dear, we must get away from these old prejudices, and cease being parochial."  
 (The Government in giving a grant of £5,000 to Professor Frobenius, a German scientist, has overlooked South African-born scientists whose claims should have come first.)

**Figure 5** 'A forgotten principle'. Prime Minister General Hertzog granting £5000 to German scientist L. Frobenius. Caricature in *The Friend*, Bloemfontein, 1 March 1930.

Van Hoepen's terminology and referring to his publication series. Writing to a certain Koos Marais, the Riversdale-based Heese noted that his Afrikaans article 'gives my ideas on V.W. [Victoria West technique] more fully . . . to understand it fully, one has to have also v. Hoepen's article before one'.<sup>32</sup> Goodwin himself, acting in 1936 as external examiner in archaeology for the University of South Africa, found himself correcting a question which began,

'Describe any one typical Smithfield A (= Koning) Association' (in Goodwin Papers, Box 9). Whatever the possible points of similarity or divergence, there are undoubtedly comparisons to be drawn between Smuts's archaeological investments, notably in Mapungubwe, and the championing by Malan and Hertzog of Frobenius's Zimbabwean vision. In the same vein should be mentioned the engaged author and publicist Gustav Preller, who promoted in his *Day-dawn in South Africa* a frankly Afrikaner-centred view of history, including the startling proposition whereby 'a branch of the Neanderthal race may have trekked from Germany into Africa' (1938, 17). The same Preller, however, also took part in the Archaeological Conference convened by Secretary of the Interior C.E. Schmidt in Pretoria in November 1929, and left his mark with the unanimously supported proposition that 'this conference accepts the principle that all objects of an archaeological or palaeontological nature within the union shall be regarded as the property of the state'.<sup>33</sup>

In some eyes, all of this did not contribute to a legitimate and potentially fruitful plurality of opinions and interpretations, but rather amounted to a seemingly incompatible and mutually exclusive alternative. Indeed, seen at a local domestic level, the ensuing debate represented a concrete expression, a scaled-down enactment of a much more fundamental conflict between the Boer and Briton communities of (White) South Africa. Tugged and pulled between the protagonists, prehistory was in danger here of being mired in the battlegrounds of 'tribal nationalism', a term coined in the early 20th century by journalist and political commentator Richard Jebb to designate this destructive enmity between rival European factions within the Empire (Cf. Schreuder 1988). As Peggy Burkitt had already noted and deplored during her whirlwind tour of the country, all of this was proving 'most deadening to enterprise and good feeling'. Also Van Riet Lowe, the local boy, accumulated some frustration, which he vented in the most eloquent terms:

Heese's latest outburst to Balfour has made me thoroughly fed up with local archaeology. I cant stand a petty spirit and I am not going to be embroiled in local scalps. With van Hoepen & Heese on one side – always bickering – I fail to see how we can run the show with any degree of domestic happiness.<sup>34</sup>

Bad blood between South African scholars was one thing, presence and poise on the international front quite another. Again, the problem was not so much that there existed different interpretations of the prehistoric cultures of South Africa, but rather that, regardless of their intrinsic merit or appeal, these versions were couched in different languages. If South African prehistorians could not speak with one voice – not even to each other – what chance had their message to be heard, loud and clear, on the international scene? Thus, while the leading prehistoric journal of the time, the Paris-based *L'Anthropologie*, comprehensively reported on Goodwin and Van Riet Lowe's terminological propositions (e.g. Boule 1927; 1929), the London-based *Nature* rather chose to dedicate half a column of 'Research items' to a new classification of South African Stone Age industries as suggested by none other than Dr Van Hoepen – and without any mention of either Goodwin or Van Riet Lowe (*Nature* 122, 15 December 1928). With such distracting

disunity, with such disruptions to the 'show', how was prehistory to fulfil its scripted mission for the South-Africanization of science, to draw to the country the eyes of the world, and to secure its recognition as major actor on the global scene, with its distinctive perspective and contribution to make? Indeed, prehistory had to be freed from such 'tribal' diversions if it was to contribute to the establishment of what Jebb had more appreciatively called 'colonial nationalism' (Schreuder 1988). To drive this point home, we might give the final word to the no longer so infamous Miles Burkitt, who rather perspicaciously perceived during his South African tour the implications of archaeology in the politics of science and identity:

South African prehistorians are to be congratulated on what they have already accomplished, often in the face of considerable discouragement, and even ridicule. As in the case of all new countries, men's minds at first turn largely to the future and not to the past, with the result that any subject which cannot claim to provide immediately material benefits for the community is little encouraged. The now growing interest in their prehistoric archaeology, in their geology – apart from prospecting – and in other purely scientific investigations in South Africa is, in my opinion, a most hopeful sign indicative of national cultural development, indeed of the growth of a true South African nationality within the British Empire (Burkitt 1928, p. ix).

*Coda* The race which Goodwin did not lose to Burkitt, but rather won over Van Hoepen, is now for us something of a *fait accompli*: the fact that English is the near-universal language of science is not one we need to challenge, as long as we remember that English too is the language of a given community, wide-ranging and powerful as it is, with its own interests and perspectives.

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Rock Art Research Institute, Department of Archaeology, University of the Witwatersrand (Ben Smith and his team). Permission to reproduce images was kindly granted by the Syndics of Cambridge University Library (Figures 1, 2 and 4), the National Museum, Bloemfontein (Figure 3) and the Rock Art Research Institute (Figure 5). I have also benefited from discussions and exchanges with Phillip Tobias, Carmel Schrire, Saul Dubow, Bruce Trigger, David Van Reybrouck and reviewers of earlier versions of this paper. I thank them all, and retain responsibility for my arguments.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The following undated note seems to capture the man: ‘Mon Cher Harlé ayez la bonté d’envoyer nos brochures sur la faune à M. Miles Burkitt qui, disciple de Breuil et un peu de moi, a bien étudié en France et en Espagne et jusqu’en Russie et va maintenant enseigner la préhistoire à Cambridge ou son père est professeur de théologie. Emile Cartailhac.’
- Besides the CUL Burkitt Papers, where this letter is kept, relevant biographical items on Burkitt can be found in the archives of the Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (CUMAA), as well as in Clark (1989, 34 ff).
- <sup>2</sup> Haddon to Burkitt, 18 December 1920, Burkitt Papers, Box 2.
- <sup>3</sup> Special mention should be made of Farquhar B. Macrae, assistant commissioner in Mumbwa, Northern Rhodesia, who went on to publish his finds (Macrae 1926) with Burkitt’s encouragement. Cf. Macrae to Burkitt, 1925, CUMAA 114 AR3/1/4, and Schlanger (2001) on collecting prehistory in late colonial Africa.
- <sup>4</sup> The curator of the McGregor Museum in Kimberly, Maria Wilman, for example, could already in January 1927 anticipate and prepare for Burkitt’s coming in June. Cf. Wilman to Marr [Cambridge lecturer in Geology], 12 January 1927, CUMAA 52 AR/2/1/3. Likewise Neville Jones pleaded with Goodwin to have Burkitt in Salisbury for a day or two: ‘We see so few of our front-rankers out here that it seems too good to be true’ (27 May 1927, Goodwin Papers, Box 8).
- <sup>5</sup> Letters by Peggy Burkitt to family, 27 June 1927, 16 and 17 August 1927, Burkitt Papers, Box 2.
- <sup>6</sup> Barnard to Burkitt, 28 March 1928, 23 August 1928, Burkitt Papers, Box 2.
- <sup>7</sup> These details were provided by Goodwin in a draft titled ‘Formative years of South African prehistoric terminology’ (Goodwin Papers, Box 93), and omitted in the published version (Goodwin 1958). On Goodwin see also Summers (1975), Deacon (1990), Shepherd (2002a).
- <sup>8</sup> Beattie to Burkitt, 22 August 1928, Burkitt Papers, Box 2.
- <sup>9</sup> Barnard to Burkitt, undated (c. 1928), and 23 August 1928, Burkitt Papers, Box 2.
- <sup>10</sup> Goodwin to ‘Brother Sawmills’ (Neville Jones), 22 April 1929, Goodwin Papers, Box 7.
- <sup>11</sup> Burkitt to Goodwin, 15 October 1926, Goodwin Papers, Box 18.
- <sup>12</sup> Burkitt to Goodwin, 17 October 1927, Goodwin Papers, Box 8.
- <sup>13</sup> Goodwin to Burkitt, 18 November 1927, Burkitt Papers, Box 2.
- <sup>14</sup> Burkitt to Goodwin, 14 May 1928, Goodwin Papers, Box 18.
- <sup>15</sup> This attitude was also manifest in print: already before the visit Goodwin had stated that his ‘knowledge of stone implements was acquired at Cambridge from Mr. Miles Burkitt, and much of the terminology has been taken from his teaching’ (Goodwin 1927, 29), and likewise in the 1929 publication he readily acknowledged Burkitt’s role in devising the Middle Stone Age (1929, 96, *passim*).
- <sup>16</sup> Goodwin to Burkitt, 21 September 1928, Burkitt Papers, Box 2.
- <sup>17</sup> Prehistoric research had actually been undertaken in the country since the 1860s. When we consider a broader range of contemporary accounts, the person most readily

- recognized as the local founder and leader of prehistoric research was Louis Péringuey, whose work is said to have been extended by a series of pupils, ‘continuators’ and ‘imitators’ (Cf. Breuil 1930, 211, Dart 1929, 274, Heese 1945, 78).
- <sup>18</sup> Van Hoepen’s ambition to centralize in Bloemfontein all the country’s palaeontological research led him to an open conflict with the South African Museum in Cape Town, where no such research was undertaken at that time (cf. Summers 1975, 135, Cluver and Barry 1977, 328). On Van Hoepen’s career and controversial leadership of the Nasionale museum, and the support received from D.F. Malan, see Van der Bank (1998). I thank Sven Ouzman for providing me with this reference.
- <sup>19</sup> With Smuts’s backing, Van Riet Lowe was appointed in 1934 to head the Archaeological Bureau in Johannesburg, and he also served on the natural and historical monuments commission. See B.D. Malan (1962), Deacon (1990).
- <sup>20</sup> Gazetteer of prehistoric finds, untitled notebook, written before mid-1926, in SAM, Goodwin Box 2. For ‘Thaba Nchu’, cf. Figure 2.
- <sup>21</sup> Thus Van Riet Lowe castigated Van Hoepen for ignoring ‘the research and opinions, published and unpublished, not only of local fellow-workers but also of Mr. Burkitt’ (Van Riet Lowe 1929, 333). See Van Hoepen (1932b) (quoted here) for his references to Burkitt.
- <sup>22</sup> *The Friend*, Bloemfontein, 11 September 1925.
- <sup>23</sup> Van Riet Lowe to Goodwin, 12 July 1926, Goodwin Papers, Box 7. Van Riet Lowe would have been particularly piqued by *The Friend* dated 11 June 1926, which began its piece on the 24th annual meeting of the South African association by reporting on the new classification proposed by Van Hoepen.
- <sup>24</sup> Van Riet Lowe to Goodwin, 18 March 1929, Goodwin Papers, Box 7. The ‘Smithfield’ and ‘Koning’ industries are supposedly equivalent.
- <sup>25</sup> Van Riet Lowe to Goodwin, 10 November 1928, Goodwin Papers, Box 7.
- <sup>26</sup> Van Riet Lowe to Goodwin, 17 January 1929 [dated 1928 by error], Goodwin Papers, Box 7.
- <sup>27</sup> Goodwin to Burkitt, 21 October 1928, Burkitt Papers, Box 2.
- <sup>28</sup> Beattie to Burkitt, 22 August 1928, Burkitt papers, Box 2.
- <sup>29</sup> Van Riet Lowe (signing as ‘Petrus van der Westhuisen’) to Goodwin, 29 May 1928, Goodwin Papers, Box 7.
- <sup>30</sup> Union of South Africa, House of Assembly debates, 24 February 1930, p. 1120; *Cape times*, 25 February 1930; *The Friend*, 25 February 1930, all in Van Riet Lowe Papers, Notebook 9/81.
- <sup>31</sup> Van Riet Lowe to Goodwin, 25 February 1930, Goodwin Papers, Box 7.
- <sup>32</sup> Heese to Marais, undated, SAM Heese Papers, Box 1.
- <sup>33</sup> Memorandum on the proceedings of the Archaeological Conference, Pretoria, 15 November 1929, Goodwin Papers, Box 11.
- <sup>34</sup> Van Riet Lowe to Goodwin, 9 August 1930, Goodwin Papers, Box 8.

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### ***Opération coup de poing*** Saul Dubow

Nathan Schlanger’s entry point into the history of South African prehistory may be read as an academic *coup de poing*, a sharp fist strike designed to cleave its way into the archaeological establishment; yet, like the examples of

such ‘palaeoliths’ that so fascinated earlier prehistorians, the object of study may require further contextualization and understanding in order to yield up its wider meanings.

The narrow point that Schlanger makes, and around which he pegs his argument, is the ‘Burkitt affair’. At the outset, one cannot help wondering whether it counts as a genuine controversy. For, if Schlanger is right that Goodwin and Van Riet Lowe did not resent the appearance of Burkitt’s *South Africa’s past in stone and paint*, it follows that there was no real dispute about the issue until Carmel Schrire and others took Burkitt to task more than 50 years later, and no substantive response to the charge of intellectual appropriation until Schlanger’s own in the pages of this journal 15 years further on. Not exactly a torrid affair. But an interesting entry point into the broader politics of prehistory, nonetheless.

My own perusal of the Goodwin papers at the University of Cape Town indicates that Schlanger’s corrective is well founded. Put simply, Goodwin and Van Riet Lowe were by no means upset when Burkitt’s book first appeared. Having been taught by Burkitt as an undergraduate at Cambridge, Goodwin continued to relate to Burkitt as a mentor and friend and the two maintained a cordial friendship at least into the mid-1950s. I have found nothing to suggest that Goodwin disagreed with the following sentiments written by Van Riet Lowe to T.T. Barnard in August 1928:

Burkitt’s book is excellent. I am most favourably impressed and frankly do admire both his gift and his exposition. I disagree here and there – which, of course, is usefully provocative. At one time I rather feared that the conception of the book took place when the parent was in such a state of excitement and general agitation that the child would not be normal. But it is – wonderfully so. The man has an amazing mind.<sup>1</sup>

It is of course possible that Goodwin later came to resent Burkitt’s intervention, but this does not seem to be of relevance here. Of much greater concern to Goodwin and Van Riet Lowe in the years after 1924, when their profitable partnership began to be forged, was to persuade the world that South Africa was an important field of archaeological research, that South African archaeology possessed its own distinctive features, and that they, as the foremost practitioners of the discipline, were best positioned to reveal its true significance. As Van Riet Lowe wrote Goodwin in 1931: ‘The day will yet dawn when our big-guns from Europe will realize the bigness and importance of our field. So far none of them have.’<sup>2</sup>

This letter went on to make a dig at ‘the armchair Burkitt’ but the remark was not necessarily intended to be hostile; so long as Burkitt used his authority to boost awareness of exciting developments in South African prehistory, the reputations of local experts like Van Riet Lowe and Goodwin and the significance of their discoveries could only be enhanced. Burkitt well understood this quid pro quo and he understood, too, the role that archaeology could play in South African nation-building. His opening remarks in *South Africa’s past* make explicit reference to the contribution

prehistory could make in the 'process of forming a new South African nation within the British Empire'. With a mixture of mixture of *noblesse oblige* and *droit de seigneur*, fully consonant with his senior academic status, Burkitt explained his own role and that of his discipline:

Prehistory . . . carries the story of the land down almost to the day before yesterday, and that is just the reason why it is of particular interest to every intelligent South African, and it is in the hope of helping forward the study of the subject that I am trying here to give a general, but connected, account of the early prehistory of the country as I understand it and as it was unfolded to me in the course of a recent archaeological tour undertaken at the invitation of the University of Cape Town (Burkitt 1928, 2).

It should be noted that Burkitt's tour to South Africa was one of many similar visits at the time, including those of fellow prehistorians Henri Breuil and Leo Frobenius. The tours to South Africa of the British Association for the Advancement of Science in 1905, and again in 1929, were major expeditions which attracted considerable public attention. Comparing the orchestration and reception of these events provides insights into broader ideological shifts in the politics of knowledge (Dubow 2000). At the level of individual relationships, visits by overseas luminaries offered locally based South African scientists and intellectuals vital opportunities for international exposure, publicity at home and the chance to cultivate patronage networks. Visitors and hosts both stood to gain from the exchange, though this does not preclude the possibility that rivalries and resentments could fester below the surface.

The international exchange of ideas had wider ideological ramifications. In the field of prehistory the discovery of the Taung skull in 1924 prompted Raymond Dart to proclaim the significance of *Australopithecus* as the key evolutionary missing link in hominid development. Dart's claim was a major statement of South Africa's unique status as the 'cradle of mankind' and took on distinct nationalist overtones (Dubow 1996). Its ideological significance was no less important in the growing racialization of South African physical anthropology: whereas today the story of *Australopithecus* and other early hominids is joyously read as confirmation that Africa's contribution to the human race is nothing less than the gift of humanity itself (a theme that is being given official sanction in post-apartheid South Africa), in the 1920s and 1930s such discoveries were often used to support theories of racial difference. At that time living Bushmen and Hottentots were said to be the descendants of early human species, remnants of humankind trapped in an evolutionary cul-de-sac – 'living fossils' in the words of Jan Smuts. Goodwin himself imbibed such ideas during the formative stages of his intellectual development, 'Africa is a pocket', he once noted, 'things go in but very little ever comes out again'.<sup>3</sup>

In the field of archaeology the most important controversy in the 1920s was that surrounding the origins of Great Zimbabwe. Gertrude Caton-Thompson's declaration in 1929 that these magnificent ruins must have been the handiwork of Bantu-speakers challenged the widespread assumption



that Africans themselves could not have been responsible for their creation and that the real architects must have been Phoenicians or some other race emanating from the Near East. When Caton-Thompson presented her findings on the occasion of the 1929 joint meeting of the British and South African Associations for the Advancement of Science her claims proved all too much for presiding cultural diffusionists and race typologists, whose leading representative, Raymond Dart, launched a splenetic attack during question time.

Viewed in this national context, and in light of the extensive press coverage accorded to such controversies, the publication of Van Riet Lowe and Goodwin's 1929 statement about South African archaeology caused barely a ripple. But, as Schlanger shows, it too can be seen as a contribution to what I have elsewhere termed the 'South Africanization' of science, following the formulation of Jan Smuts and his deputy Jan Hofmeyr. These Afrikaner scholar-politicians were determined to maintain South Africa's links to the Commonwealth and to develop a sense of moderate 'South Africanism' founded on a broadly based White nationalism. Science was an important means of achieving this end.

Smuts's ambitious homespun philosophy of 'holism' encouraged him to view Africa's unique intellectual resources and scientific problems as part of a larger whole. In fields ranging from geology and botany to physical and social anthropology – and, not least, when marketed as a social laboratory for the study of 'race relations' – the country could contribute much to international understanding. Just as the constituent members of the British Commonwealth should work on the basis of mutuality and equivalence, so South African scientists could contribute to the sum of human knowledge and achievement. In doing so, South Africa's international status would be augmented, its sense of belonging expanded. Within the country the promotion of a universal scientific culture devoted to rational thought and progress might help to secure the political future of Whites: by cultivating a shared scientific culture, it was hoped that parochial differences between English and Afrikaners could be transcended and that a distinctive and shared South African nationality would be stimulated instead; conversely, the implicit association of Western progress and rationality with Whiteness – in contradistinction to the assumed primitiveness and backwardness of Africans – would help to maintain political boundaries and racial differences. These multiple purposes are what the 'South Africanization of science' was intended to achieve.

By no means all Whites were agreed on this strategy. For a variety of reasons Afrikaner nationalists were deeply suspicious of a British-based scientific culture that could so easily be interpreted as a disguised form of imperialism. Such sentiments came to the fore when the young Afrikaner-educational psychologist E.G. Malherbe delivered an address on the problem of 'poor Whiteism' during the 1929 visit of the British Association (Dubow 2001). A public outcry ensued, led by the Afrikaans press. Any intimation that the predicament of poor Whites, who were predominantly Afrikaans-speakers, could be explained by eugenic degeneration or psychological weaknesses was highly offensive to the followers of Smuts's great political rival, J.B.M.

Hertzog, whose political career was founded on the defence of the Afrikaans language and culture.<sup>4</sup>

The attempt by some modernizing Afrikaner nationalists to develop autonomous intellectual traditions (or at least to appeal to metropolises other than Britain) and to promote Afrikaans as a worthy scientific language was one important expression of this rising nationalist assertion. Schlanger's instancing of this in the case of the Van Riet Lowe–Goodwin turf war with Van Hoepen is one more reminder of the growing animosity between English and Afrikaner intellectuals. There can be no doubt that Goodwin and Van Riet Lowe held Van Hoepen in contempt and that passions were high but further research is required to ascertain how substantive were the intellectual differences at issue. A noteworthy feature of the Van Riet Lowe–Goodwin correspondence is the growing camaraderie in their exchanges and their enjoyment of sharp jokes at others' expense. This seems to be an important aspect of their bonding experience but it may also make divisions and differences seem more acute than they actually were. Contests over proprietorship and rivalries over naming are often to the fore in the field of prehistory where fresh 'discoveries' are so much part of the pride of first possession. Did Goodwin and Van Riet Lowe really see themselves in a 'race' with Van Hoepen or was the contest more about academic inclusion and exclusion? In this connection it is worth noting that the process of estrangement between English and Afrikaans academicians in the late 1920s had much further to go before ethnic divisions were institutionally confirmed. Bodies like the Inter-University Committee for African Studies, for example, were still able to function across the ethnic divide in the 1930s. Only in the apartheid era did such divisions become virtually impermeable.

Arising out of this last point I wish, finally, to open the question of academic institutionalization and discipline formation, which seems to me to be of rather more importance than Schlanger allows. Seen in this way, the story of the Van Riet Lowe–Goodwin collaboration might also be told in terms of efforts to accord professional status to archaeology as a separate university discipline. Schlanger's comments about Van Hoepen's appointment as the director of the the Nasionale Museum in Bloemfontein, and his inauguration of a publication series devoted to archaeology, appear to fit this pattern too. Doubtless, more needs to be said about this Afrikaans initiative, not least to make the connection with Pretoria University's later custodianship of the Mapungubwe site, which took on a marked nationalist agenda in the high-apartheid era.

The story of how Van Riet Lowe used international contacts like Breuil to extricate himself from the Public Works Department, where he was still employed as a civil engineer, and how he eventually became the founding director of the Wits Bureau of Archaeology in 1935, also requires further research (Murray 1982). So, too, do his efforts to gain professional recognition – with scant support from Burkitt, as it happens.<sup>5</sup> In Goodwin's case, it should be noted that although he bears the distinction of having been the first trained archaeologist to hold a university appointment in the country, his post was initially that of research assistant in ethnology in the

newly formed department of social anthropology at the University of Cape Town, then under the leadership of the pioneer of structural-functionalism, Radcliffe-Brown. The influence of social anthropology, I would suggest, had a major effect on Goodwin, not least on his views on race. It is fascinating to compare his Cambridge student notebooks and jottings, which bear the strong imprint of racial science and cultural diffusionism, with those compiled during his later years – such as his ‘Racialist’s source book’ – that evince a determinedly anti-racist position.

This process of questioning racial categories and rejecting biological determinism was incremental and sometimes inconsistent. Consider Van Riet Lowe’s remarks on Goodwin’s draft ‘Commentary on the history and present position of South African prehistory’ (1935) in which he admonished Goodwin’s ‘use of racial terminology, where you can use cultural terms’.<sup>6</sup> The influence of social anthropology is also detectable in the ‘new terminology’ that Goodwin and Van Riet Lowe outlined in *Stone Age cultures of South Africa* (1929). Not only did this represent a determined effort to question European categories and to assert a South African-specific agenda for prehistory, the new terminology was also novel in respect of its use of the language of ‘cultures’, ‘industries’ and ‘folk’ in preference to that of ‘race’ and ‘type’.

That this terminology signalled a significant shift away from the approaches favoured by physical anthropology is borne out by Van Riet Lowe’s and Goodwin’s scepticism towards the methods and assumptions of physical anthropology. Witness, for example, Goodwin’s saying ‘I have been pondering whether or not to try and wipe the earth with physical anthropology, it might best be done by an outsider. The whole subject is one big bluff’.<sup>7</sup> The doyen of physical anthropology, Raymond Dart, was a particular target when he strayed into the archaeological terrain. A postcard written by Van Riet Lowe to Goodwin in 1928 read, ‘Dart’s Pilansberg Mts., Rustenburg dist associated human and faunal remains is BILGE! – TRIPE! The elephant is an elephant all right but the imps are no more imps than the moon is a chunk of green cheese. Absolute TRIPE.’<sup>8</sup>

If the shadow of physical anthropology represented one major constraint, the embrace of social anthropology may have also been problematic, notwithstanding the substantial affinities between the two disciplines on matters of culture. Goodwin’s intense irritation with Winifred Hoernlé’s attempt to prevent him from writing on the Smithfield culture – admittedly because she thought Van Riet Lowe was better equipped to do so – is one piece of evidence that deserves consideration, though it seems to have had the happy effect of helping to persuade the two archaeologists to combine forces and publish together. Although a measure of recognition was accorded to Goodwin after 1929, he was clearly frustrated by the failure to accord archaeology its rightful place as a distinct discipline. In the early 1930s Goodwin interpreted an honorarium he received from the university not as a reward for his archaeological work but as ‘a Scotchly gauche’ reward for not applying for Isaac Schapera’s post, and he reported himself depressed that the university principal, Jock Beattie, was seeking to prevent him from teaching prehistory and doing research.<sup>9</sup> In 1936 he wrote to Van Riet Lowe reporting

on a discussion with staff and senior students in which he was challenged to justify the approach of archaeology. Although archaeology shared with physical anthropology an interest in the fossil content of the Quaternary, its premises, he insisted, were different. Archaeology, he drolly commented, understood that unhappily

man has behaved badly. He refused to develop along text-book lines: he developed and he differentiated into races, but the races crossed continually and man was always taking erratic steps in his evolution. Where the old anthropologists had expected an orderly procession upward to man's highest type, he found a whimsical rabble. So many major discoveries have shattered our preconceptions of evolution, that man's physical remains are useless as dating factors.

Archaeology, Goodwin argued, should instead become more closely allied with geology, but it was critical that it should not be 'swamped by it. That last point is important'.<sup>10</sup>

In shifting the debate onto new terrain I seek to encourage Nathan Schlanger to expand his work further. In his foray into South African prehistory he makes some telling points, and he tells them effectively, but there is perhaps insufficient engagement with, and acknowledgement of, the people about whom he writes – Goodwin<sup>11</sup> and Van Riet Lowe in particular. The same might be said of his sometimes cavalier treatment of South African archaeologists (e.g. Shepherd 2002) and historians who have been grappling with these and related issues in the politics of knowledge.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Goodwin Papers, University of Cape Town, BC 290, Box 8, Van Riet Lowe to Barnard, 28 August 1928.
- <sup>2</sup> BC 290, Box 8, Van Riet Lowe to Goodwin, 19 February 1931.
- <sup>3</sup> BC, 290, Box 57, 'notebooks'.
- <sup>4</sup> I cannot resist noting that prime minister Hertzog was also the Member of Parliament for Smithfield – the controversial term given to the prehistoric 'culture' or 'industry' over which Goodwin, Van Riet Lowe and Van Hoepen clashed.
- <sup>5</sup> Burkitt was condescending when asked to confirm a doctoral degree on Van Riet Lowe for his 1938 thesis on 'The geology and archaeology of the Vaal River basin'. He acknowledged the importance of Van Riet Lowe's South African work but said his knowledge of European archaeology was deficient and noted that standards differed from university to university. Burkitt's final judgement was, 'I feel it would be hardly right to refuse him.' A handwritten note by Goodwin took issue with this grudging approach. See BC 290, Box 8, Correspondence of Van Riet Lowe, 1930–55.
- <sup>6</sup> BC 290, Box 8, Van Riet Lowe to Goodwin, 24 November 1934.
- <sup>7</sup> BC 290, Box 8, Goodwin to Van Riet Lowe, 30 June 1936.
- <sup>8</sup> BC 290, Box 6, Van Riet Lowe to Goodwin, 5 December [1928?].
- <sup>9</sup> BC 290, Box 8, Goodwin to Van Riet Lowe, 6 December 1934.
- <sup>10</sup> BC 290, Box 6, Goodwin to Van Riet Lowe, 30 June 1936.
- <sup>11</sup> I should note that I have recently discovered that Goodwin was a near neighbour who took a particular shine to me in the year of my birth and his death. Perhaps I owe him a debt.

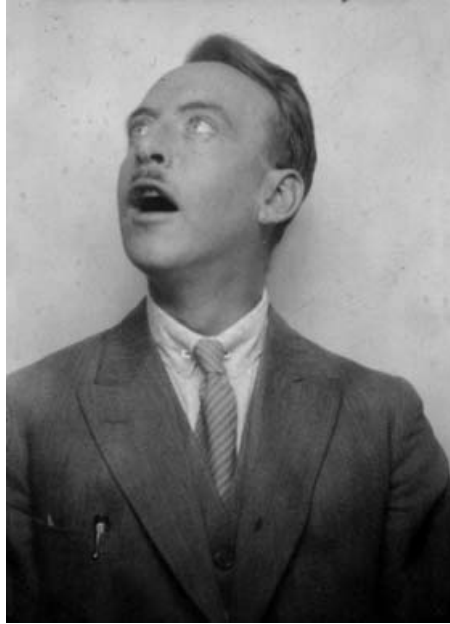
**The modest violet. Response to 'The Burkitt affair revisited'***Nick Shepherd*

Buried deep in the Goodwin Collection are five passport-style photographs of the man himself, memorable for their informality and their eccentricity. In the first photograph Goodwin looks directly at the camera, the sober academic. In the second, mouth ajar, he looks up to the heavens. In the third, in a different jacket, he gazes off into the distance, wistful as a pre-Raphaelite virgin. Pencilled on the back, in Goodwin's handwriting, is the word 'Soulful'. A fourth image has him grinning at the camera. In a final photograph he looks to the floor. Pencilled on the back is the caption 'The Modest Violet'.<sup>1</sup>

A.J.H. (John) Goodwin (1900–59) is a major figure in South African and African prehistory, responsible for founding the discipline on a professional basis in South Africa, and for setting in place a basic conceptual framework and standards of practice. In the 1920s he established a local chronology and typology of the African Stone Ages which remains in general usage. He wrote the first extended treatment of the history of prehistoric studies in southern Africa (Goodwin 1935), and the first textbook of archaeology for local practitioners (Goodwin 1945). In the mid-1940s he played a key role in the establishment of the Archaeological Society of Southern Africa, and was the founder editor of the *Southern African archaeological bulletin*, the



**Figure 1** A.J.H. (John) Goodwin (1900–59). The sober-minded academic.



**Figure 2** Mouth ajar, he gazes up and away.

longest-running indigenous journal of African archaeology with a continuous record of publication. *The Stone Age cultures of South Africa* remains ‘a classic example of empiricism at its most useful’ (Deacon 1990).

Yet, for such a significant figure, he remains comparatively under-studied and unknown, sneaking in under the radar of academic scrutiny. This lack of presence is underlined by the contrast with his contemporary, the East African prehistorian Louis Leakey, who became African archaeology’s first media personality. The year of Goodwin’s demise, 1959, was the year of Leakey’s *Zinjanthropus* triumph. In South Africa Goodwin’s career was overshadowed by that of his ‘correspondence pupil’, Peter Van Riet Lowe. With his major work behind him early in his career he turned to lesser projects, including a spell excavating in Nigeria in the mid-1950s. Part of the reason for his obscurity was temperamental. He appears, by turn, charming and paranoiac, generous and ambitious, diffident and scheming, humorous and disappointed (one is tempted to say, rather like the rest of us). Janette Deacon has noted that his failure to get along in the closed circle of South African science translated into a failure to get ahead.

In a discipline that celebrates bluntness, practicality and monomania, he was cursed with a whimsical imagination. The Goodwin Collection is a sprawling archive, running to over a hundred boxes of material. In addition to manuscripts, research notes, letters to contemporaries and the like, it includes a substantial collection of photographic prints and negatives, and examples of Goodwin’s creative writing. These include a long poem on archaeological method (first stanza: ‘For the maximum yield when you work in the field/Two aims should be well kept in mind,/The first is, Retain ev’ry object you gain/And



**Figure 3** 'Soulful'.

preserve ev'ry interesting find') and numerous typescripts of plays written for the university's amateur dramatic society. Apart from the promisingly risqué 'The sultan; or a peep into the seraglio', most of these are drawing-room dramas of a kind of Wodehousian aspect. In sum, the picture is of an interesting, significant, unconventional mind, deeply involved in thinking through the problems of the discipline.

All of this makes it especially pleasing for me to have cross my desk Nathan Schlanger's paper, 'The Burkitt affair revisited. Colonial implications and identity politics in early South African prehistoric research'. This engaging and well-written work presents the evidence for the reinterpretation of a minor but 'painful affair' in the annals of colonial archaeology. Writing in the style of an investigative review or exposé, Schlanger states that it is his intention to provide the kind of disinterested account which at once sets the record straight and acts as a model for other accounts. In his terms, this is the notion of a history 'not for archaeology but about archaeology', uncompromised by the play of power, ambition and deference. Of the standard (that is, compromised) histories, he writes, 'it will be a good idea to treat such participant accounts with a grain of salt, and to seek to confront them with independent evidence of the kind to be found, for example, in archives' (p. 5, above).

Schlanger makes two important claims, one regarding the 'Burkitt affair' of the title, the other regarding the notion of a nascent Afrikaner prehistory in South African studies. Let me say, at the outset, that much as I enjoyed the paper, I remain unconvinced on both counts. Of the two claims the notion of an Afrikaner prehistory is the more interesting one, and could do with further investigation. The challenge here would be to show some continuity in



**Figure 4** An interesting, significant, unconventional mind.

‘Afrikaans/Afrikaner prehistory’ which precedes Van Hoepen. South African prehistoric studies have a long history which predates the events under discussion. Some 130 papers on broadly archaeological topics were published in the period 1870 to 1923, covering the territories of what are today South Africa, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Swaziland and Mozambique (Shepherd 2002b). These appeared locally in the *Cape monthly magazine*, and after 1878 in the *Transactions of the South African Philosophical Society* (later the Royal Society of South Africa), as well as in the various metropolitan journals (*Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries*; *Proceedings of the Ethnological Society of London*; *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*). Their authors were settlers and explorers, military men (like Bowker), a Superintendent of Education (Sir Langham Dale, who published under the pseudonym  $\Delta$ ), geologists (Thornton, J.P. Johnson, W.H. Penning), a medical practitioner (Kannemeyer) and self-professed collectors and ‘antiquarians’ (like Rickard). I have seen little to suggest a nascent Afrikaner prehistory in this period (in the sense of a prehistory by and for Afrikaners); on the contrary, I have been struck by the anglophone nature of the project. Nevertheless, perhaps something can be unearthed?

Concerning the Burkitt affair, Schlanger presents a range of evidence which, interesting as it is in its own terms, remains ambiguous and ephemeral in terms of the issue under discussion. Any serious revision of the affair needs to address the fact that by his own account Goodwin felt slighted, and that events more than justified that feeling. At best, one might argue that this represents a revision of history (and a revision of feeling) after the event, but even so the fact remains that he was slighted in as far as he felt slighted. To argue otherwise would be to argue for a primordial structure of feeling between two





**Figure 5** 'The modest violet'.

people which remains unmodified by subsequent events, an unlikely sort of project. The alternative would be to frame things differently – to conjecture that Goodwin may have felt slighted, but that he had no right to feel slighted (and that we have no right to remember him as the wronged party).

In any case, with regard to the doing-down of South African archaeology by the archaeologists of the metropole, the real action was elsewhere, in the failure to ratify *Australopithecus africanus* as part of the human lineage. Dart's claims, published in *Nature*, were greeted with a mixture of scorn, condescension and defensiveness. Responses by (Sir) Arthur Keith and Grafton Eliot-Smith, respectively the foremost physical anthropologist of his day and the renowned London University neuro-anatomist, doubted the human affinities of the skull. (Sir) Arthur Smith Woodward, a champion of 'Piltdown man', dismissed the term *Australopithecus* as a barbarous combination of Latin and Greek (Dubow 1996). In fact, Tobias notes that it was not until Le Gros Clark examined the material from Taung, Sterkfontein and Swartkrans in 1947 in the run-up to the first meeting of the First Pan-African Congress on Prehistory, and pronounced himself satisfied, that the genus *Australopithecus* gained general acceptance (Tobias 1978). This passing over of South African archaeology was accompanied by a subtle rewriting of the history of human origins research, with the focus on East Africa as the 'cradle of humankind'. Both in their style and their timing (research in the style of the safari, on the eve of political independence) the Kenyan and Tanzanian discoveries proved more acceptable to metropolitan sensibilities. White science could succeed where colonialism had failed. In this context Nathan is simply wrong to claim that the Burkitt affair, an event on the

margins of the margins, 'has been taken to epitomize colonial relations of expropriation'.

Indeed, there is a sense in which the Burkitt affair has always been a red herring, a sense in which the interest is not in the detail of events but in their representation. The interesting question is not to ask who had the right and wrong of events, but what do they mean? Schrire *et al.* use the incident rhetorically to highlight both the history of archaeological endeavour in South Africa, and the sense in which the destinies of the archaeologies of the centre and periphery have been twinned (Schrire *et al.* 1986). To a significant extent, archaeology has been run on an expeditionary basis. The colonial and former colonial archaeologies have been far more than simply outliers of the metropolises, but have provided their substance, their proving grounds and their treasured self-images. At the same time this relation has been unequal. No one, surely, would seriously contest the uneven nature of power geometries in the discipline, or that archaeologists of the South have been badly used in this relation. Why did Goodwin lay on such an extraordinarily lavish trip for his former mentor? Why did he continue to be scrupulous in the public realm of print, whatever his privately held emotions? And why, ultimately, did he feel able to express his resentment, obliquely and long after the fact?

I wonder about the tone of Nathan's paper, the brusqueness, the judicial severity, the eye for the quip at the expense of one's subject. The Goodwin Collection is that rare thing, an academic archive which is essentially unedited, presented *in toto*. Am I alone in experiencing a slightly humbling feeling of trespass as I handle this material, the detritus of an intellectual life spanning 40 years (and I cast a glance at the unfinished projects in my own study, the unpublished notes, the half-formed ideas). This uneasiness can be posed in terms of two sets of questions. The first concerns the role of the academic historian or archaeologist. Do we revisit the past in order to pass judgement on it? Is our intention to set the record straight, and if so for whom, for how long? And am I alone in being mistrustful of this desire to set straight, to neaten up, to have the last word?

My second set of questions concerns the role of Nathan himself in all of this. He appears in his own text only indirectly, as an impartial intelligence, but what has been his own trail of investigation? Why the Goodwin-Burkitt affair? Can one really step outside of a participant account as he suggests?

Let me say what it is that I find in the Goodwin Collection: a glimpse of the archaeological imagination working itself out at a particular, formative point in its history. This is archaeology of a particular type, which has been called colonial or colonialist archaeology (Trigger 1984; Shepherd 2002). It is full of elisions, blind spots, evasions and contradictions. It is informed by a particular sense of itself, of its significance and its sense of mission. Archaeologists of this type wrote for a particular constituency, and the accounts that they produced were a blend of empiricism and fantasy, of the soberly rational and the wildly improbable (as, to a greater or lesser extent, is all archaeology). More importantly from the point of view of the inheritors of this tradition, they set in place forms of practice and guiding ideas that have continued to inform the discipline at a deep level. So that finally, for me, spending time with

the Goodwin Collection becomes an exercise in self-knowledge – and, by a small leap of intuition, a glimpse of how things might be differently imagined and practiced. A post-colonial archaeology needs to be articulated in relation to colonialist archaeology understood not as a caricature of oppression and misguided thinking, but as something variously constructed, contested and contradictory (and aware of its own contradictions). As a project this is more provisional and more compromising than the search for the truth of the past. I like to think that it recognizes the complexity of a subject who in a moment of irony and self-parody would pencil a caption on the back of a photograph – modest violet, indeed.

### Note

<sup>1</sup> All photographic material is reproduced with the permission of the Manuscripts and Archives Division of the University of Cape Town Library.

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### Local heroes *Henrika Kuklick*

Among historians and sociologists of science, it is a commonplace that scientists' accusations of plagiarism defy straightforward explanations. To appreciate that these accusations need not indicate simply that given individuals have claimed others' ideas as their own, it is important to remember that scientists' habits of communication create specialized research communities in which professional practices are – and are intended to be – relatively standardized. A defining property of science is, after all, that it requires practitioners to reach consensus about solutions to their common research problems, in pursuit of which disciplinary colleagues are expected to exchange regular reports of their theories, information, materials and techniques. Certainly, patterns of behaviour do not fully realize the scientific ideal; there is no end of evidence that scientists' communications may be less than fully frank, that their judgements are affected by diverse personal considerations, and that their research is shaped by peculiarities of places and things. But to find disparities between the real and the ideal does not mean that the ideal does not inform occupational practices. And because scientists belong to exchange networks, their standardized practices are virtually guaranteed to lead to so-called 'simultaneous discoveries'. Sometimes, when two or more scientists reach a given conclusion at the same (or nearly the same) time, their agreement occasions mutual congratulations, since it confirms the appropriateness of scientists' shared interpretations. (When in 1858, for example, prominent British scientists celebrated Charles Darwin's and Alfred Russel Wallace's independent formulations of the concept of natural selection, they rendered the concept less controversial than it might have been had it been advanced by one man alone.) At other times, however, a scientific event that might be regarded as a simultaneous discovery under some circumstances instead

becomes an occasion for expression of discord among interested scientific parties, prompting a 'priority dispute' or (worse) an accusation of plagiarism.

In short, those who study the social behaviour of scientists are prepared to interpret accusations of plagiarism and priority disputes in much the same fashion as social anthropologists have interpreted accusations of witchcraft. Of course, there is no denying that individuals commit intellectual property theft and also throw fits of temper because their colleagues have failed to acknowledge that they were first to reach a new finding, just as some persons do attempt sorcery, but accusations of misconduct are significant less because charges levelled against individuals may be justified than because patterns of accusations denote conflicts that are systematic in the social groups to which individuals belong.

Does it make sense to analyse disciplinary relationships of archaeologists in the above terms? Archaeology as an enterprise would seem to be quite different from the sort of scientific community on which sociological generalizations have been based. Its practitioners toil in field sites that have distinctive properties, not in laboratories in which working conditions are designed to be free from distinctive qualities of time and place and in which knowledge is generated that will be judged significant only if it proves capable of travelling all over the globe. Nevertheless, since its professionalization a century ago, archaeology has involved an international community of practitioners. And the tensions that have obtained within this community are, in fact, highlighted by the Burkitt affair. Schlanger effectively absolves Miles Burkitt of the charge that he plagiarized the ideas of his erstwhile student John Goodwin when he wrote *South Africa's past in stone and paint* (1928). What matters in explaining the dynamics of development of southern African archaeology, then, is not whether Burkitt acted unethically but why the charge against him has been preserved in disciplinary folklore for the better part of a century. That is, from the issues raised in the Burkitt affair, we can see persistent tensions in relationships among archaeologists worldwide.

Archaeologists have been presented with the conflicting demands of local and cosmopolitan modes of achieving professional legitimacy. If they have been satisfied by local recognition alone, they have been able to take pride in documenting the distinctive history of material culture in a specific place – which can justify not only the use of a place-specific archaeological classificatory scheme but also the nationalist assumption that a specific place has had the power to shape its human inhabitants' distinctive pattern of behaviour from time immemorial to the present. But when archaeologists have sought local and international recognition simultaneously, as in instances such as those Schlanger describes, they have run the risk of being regarded as traitors at home and mediocrities abroad. The resentments displayed by South African interpreters of the Burkitt affair have been those of archaeologists who believed that in order to gain places in their discipline's international community they had to accept the unsatisfactory, subordinate role of colonial provincials, who furnished information to and accepted intellectual direction from elite practitioners in the metropole.

The priority dispute represents a scientific misdemeanour rather than a felony but, as Schlanger's evidence shows, it is also indicative of tensions

within a population. In South Africa the scientific priority dispute could be a vehicle for expressions of antagonisms endemic among segments of White society. When E.C.N. Van Hoepen claimed that he had been the first to identify and describe specific cultures, his chosen opponents were Goodwin and others – who collectively stood for the stalwarts of anglophone scholarship, against Afrikaans-speakers such as himself, who could rejoice that Afrikaans had just become an official national language and who were seeking to gain recognition for it as a legitimate language for scientific communication.

Do we need to look for plagiarism accusations and priority disputes in order to find the conflicts Schlanger describes? No, we do not. Plagiarism accusations and priority disputes do not necessarily constitute investigative sites in which are revealed patterns of behaviour that the social actors who are the subjects of our enquiries did not themselves understand. 20th-century, White Southern African archaeologists and palaeoanthropologists were fully aware that their scientific disputes had nationalist and/or ethnic implications.

Consider, for example, the career of the palaeoanthropologist Raymond Dart, who in 1924 discovered the first specimen of the hominid genus *Australopithecus* (often called, in commemoration of its place of excavation, the ‘Taung skull’ or ‘Taung baby’). Recognition of the significance of Dart’s find was long in coming, and Dart consistently protested that scientific advances originating in South Africa were discounted on the international scene. Similarly, Dart identified himself as a local partisan when he refused to accept British archaeologists’ arguments that the stone ruins called Great Zimbabwe, located in what was in his day Southern Rhodesia, had to have been built by Shona people, ancestors of the Africans who lived in the area of the ruins. Dart prosecuted the argument of the (many, but not all) southern African archaeologists who held that the structures must have been built by a people who had migrated out of Southern Rhodesia in the distant past. (Over time, specific features of Dart’s argument changed, including his identification of the putative builders of Great Zimbabwe, but his conclusion was always the same: the African ethnic groups who were in the 20th century resident in the country that became Zimbabwe had moved onto the land at roughly the same time as White settlers came there, and by this token Africans’ claims to political title in Zimbabwe were not justified.) I wish to emphasize that Dart’s reasoning was consistent, despite what are to us distinct differences in the merits of the cases he made; he invariably cast himself and other White settler scientists working in southern Africa as persons whose views were categorically rejected by the international scientific community, whether he was explaining the delayed acceptance of his unquestionably important contribution to palaeoanthropology or defending lunatic accounts of the building of Great Zimbabwe (Kuklick 1991).

So what do we gain when we bring Schlanger’s perspective to analysis of some episodes in the history of archaeology in southern Africa? We can see that archaeologists’ routinized relationships are schematically similar to the habits of practitioners of other scientific enterprises. Seeing this, we should be prepared to dispense with the notion that the discipline of archaeology is, in contradistinction to many others that claim scientific status, distinguished by its vulnerability to politicization. From one scientific discipline to another,

behavioural expectations vary, to be sure, but there is not a vast normative chasm separating the various human sciences from the biological and physical sciences.

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### **Colonial vindications. More on the history of South African prehistoric research** *Nathan Schlanger*

Together with the welcome insights they have brought to the matters at hand, the archaeological dialogues here engaged have certainly made me appreciate where my claims could be modified and my arguments amplified. Since I have already been taxed with a questionable insistence on setting the record straight, and with a penchant for academically *coup de poing*-ing my way through the archaeological establishment and its established historiography, I may as well persevere and thank the commentators for helping me grasp the following key point: what has been motivating a substantial part of my investigations, I can now better specify, is a growing unease with the well-established paradigm of ‘colonial vindication’. This is not, let me hasten to add, a reference to the genuine injustice done to those indigenous populations whose pasts have been expropriated and denigrated by the colonizing powers (i.e. Trigger’s sense of ‘colonial archaeology’). Likewise, there is obviously no denying that the globalization of archaeology in the colonial and post-colonial eras has entailed considerable intellectual and institutional struggles, alongside innumerable power games, financial calculations and scientific compromises – and here Shepherd is surely right to give as example the ‘cradle of humanity’, a shifting zone whose ideological, diplomatic and economic potential Smuts had already fully sized in the 1930s (cf. Schlanger 2002b, 205–6). Rather, what I wish here to open to scrutiny is this apparently long-standing notion that South African archaeology has been systematically ‘done down’, ‘passed over’ and ‘badly used’ (Shepherd’s terms) by the metropole – making it quite evident that its history, if not its ethos, should be primarily geared towards securing due recognition and redress.

Now, from the perspective of the history and social studies of science (some of whose tenets were outlined by Kuklick), such a stance is manifestly useful for infusing the relevant audience with a sense of disciplinary purpose and identity – be it during the establishment of the new African prehistoric terminology in the late 1920s, the exclusion of South African scholars from the World Archaeological Congress in 1986, or again the far more challenging prospects facing archaeology in post-apartheid South Africa (an urgency which Shepherd and others have set to address). This genuine efficacy granted, however, I see little compelling historical evidence to support the pervasive assumption that the practitioners, practices and achievements of South African prehistoric archaeology have been somehow inequitably dealt with or overlooked, because of their colonial situation. Indeed, as I respond in the following paragraphs to the various points raised by the commentators,

it seems to me that a substantially different understanding of the whole issue will emerge when, to begin with, we further engage with primary evidence of the kind to be found in archives and when, building on that, we redouble our efforts at contextualization, by seeking to locate actors and actions in their broader settings, as Dubow rightly advocates, but also by taking into account, for a change, this so integral and yet virtually ignored constituent of colonial archaeology – I refer, of course, to the metropole itself.

### The affair

To begin with the beginning, appreciations of the ‘Burkitt affair’ have varied among the commentators, and they all have their points. Accepting that Burkitt’s book caused no resentment when it appeared, and adducing further evidence of his own, Dubow does not consider the affair to be particularly ‘torrid’. Shepherd for his part remains sceptical: he advances the unassailable argument that Goodwin ‘was slighted in so far as he felt slighted’, and then unexpectedly rejects my proposition that the affair has been taken to epitomize colonial relations of expropriation. In her methodological discussion of plagiarism and disciplinary relationships, Kuklick indicates best what I aim to get at: what matters about the accusation is not its reality as much as its resonance and its resilience. Once claimed, once given the credentials of publication, the affair has been embraced by the archaeological community into its disciplinary folklore, where – we can agree on that – it is not really as a lesson in personal integrity or scholarly deontology that it has been invoked. As a recent example I cannot resist quoting Shepherd himself, for whom Goodwin had ‘his material whisked away from under his nose by his Cambridge mentor Miles Burkitt, who rushed his own book into print (1928) a year before Goodwin & van Riet Lowe’s *The Stone Age Cultures of South Africa*’. Presented as an established fact, this episode is taken to evidence ‘an important tension [emerging] between the archaeological metropolises in Europe and their offshoot archaeologies in the colonies’ (Shepherd 2002b, 194–95). What is more, as if to confirm my wariness, note how the commentators seem to consider the Burkitt affair to be somehow symptomatic, part of a pattern – how else to explain that they all saw fit to mention it alongside the cases of Raymond Dart and of Great Zimbabwe, as if it were yet another instance of – yes, of what exactly? I remain uncertain regarding the relevance of these notorious cases, as will be seen below, but here I may record that my reluctance to take the ‘affair’ at face value began when I first had access to Burkitt’s African activities through his Cambridge archives – in some respects an experience not dissimilar to that recounted by Shepherd amidst the Goodwin papers. In any event, once this scepticism became instilled, the affair has served me on two counts: to question, through it, the postulate of colonial vindication, and also to grasp, beyond it, the existence of Afrikaner prehistory.

### Afrikaner prehistory

By all accounts Afrikaner prehistory deserves a much closer scrutiny than I could have given it in my text, for reasons of space as well as competence. Various suggestions from the commentators point at promising directions.

Shepherd, also here apparently unconvinced, considers that it would be important to show some continuity in Afrikaner prehistory prior to the 1920s, and notes that the roughly 130 papers published on southern African archaeological topics between 1870 and 1923 rather indicate the anglophone nature of the project. This is in fact hardly surprising, for two reasons. First, it was Goodwin himself who included these early papers and authors within the historiographical canon of South African prehistoric research (Goodwin 1935) – without suggesting any deliberate omission, it can be surmised that Goodwin did not spend much time looking for Afrikaans writings on the subject; by his own admission, he seems never to have learned the language (see below). The possibility remains therefore that some early archaeological amateurs have been making vernacular or other use of Afrikaans. A useful starting point for reaching these occurrences would be through such works as Mitchell (1998; 2002), insofar as the late 19th- and early 20th-century stone artefact collectors he identifies and sets in context are those who had been interacting with the British Museum, irrespective of their inclusion in Goodwin's effectively anglophone account. Such a line of enquiry would obviously have to be extended to relevant South African, French, German and Dutch institutions, and draw on archived correspondence, inventories and ledgers to prise out these often elusive 'men in the field' who make archaeology happen.

But second, interesting as this tracking down will prove to be, the promotion of Afrikaans as a language of scientific expression remains essentially a phenomenon of the 1920s – that is, of Goodwin's own times – when a resurgent Afrikaner community sought to establish with it its ideological credentials and political clout. The repercussions of these 'tribal' tensions in the field of science (and specifically social sciences) begin now to be better known; Dubow has noted that the 1929 British Association visit, besides contributing to a supra-White sense of national identity, has also pointed to 'intensifying debates about the position of the Afrikaner volk within the body politic of South Africa, as well as its broader relationship to the outside world' (Dubow 2000, 94), and I have for my part approached prehistoric archaeology in a similar light. Goodwin himself provides some tantalizing testimony regarding this politico-linguistic imbroglio. Writing to Smuts on the launching of the Cape archaeological society (soon to be the South African Archaeological Society), Goodwin admitted,

Our only failure is Stellenbosch. We wrote asking them to provide the Afrikaans focus for the society, in the hope that they could help to develop a high standard of publications in Afrikaans, but their reaction so far has been very much like that of the wedding guests in the Bible.<sup>1</sup>

Some five years later, in a rambling and passionate letter to Van Riet Lowe, Goodwin recorded,

I still feel strongly (as I have felt for thirty years) that the Union of S. Af. was a mistake, and that a Federation of four distinct states would have been



preferable . . . I do not want a government post and subconsciously this is one of the reasons why I have not learned the Afrikaans I should.<sup>2</sup>

This, of course, is in contrast to Van Riet Lowe, the erstwhile derider of ‘die ware Afrikaans’, now a state employee wont to abide by the official bilingual policy.

There soon came times, as we know, when linguistic and political mastery were brought into closer contact. As I see it the challenge posed by Afrikaner prehistory concerns not its ‘prehistory’ but rather its posterity: what happened after 1948 to the beginnings initiated in the 1920s and 1930s? Were there any more generous gestures worth £5000 in its direction? To broaden up some suggestions initially made, there is room to trace the impact of European continental scholars and their eventual recuperation by local supporters from Malan downwards, and also to highlight Gustav Preller’s unexpected championing of the national reclaim and state ownership of the archaeological heritage. Together with that, it seems to me more problematic or partial than Dubow allows to see in the use of cultural terms (e.g. in the ‘new’ prehistoric terminology) an indication of some anti-racialist stance, under the influence of recent trends in social anthropology. Not only did a broadly similar cultural-historical approach underlie much of the ‘old’ terminology, it also happens that the notion of ‘culture’ (or its rendition as *Kultuur*) occupied a pivotal position in Afrikaner ideological and scientific discourse – this is notably the case with the prehistoric sequences advanced by Van Hoepen and his colleagues, and even more so with the ‘culturalist’ *volkekunde* of Werner Eiselen and the South African Bureau for Racial Affairs (cf. Gordon 1988, Hammond-Tooke 1997). What will more generally need to be examined, along the paths already suggested by Dubow, Martin Hall (1984) and others, is whether and in what ways have Afrikaner conceptions of the prehistoric (Stone Age) past informed historical and anthropological appreciations of the indigenous present – and, obviously, with what eventual practical consequences. In comparison with Smuts’s earlier use of prehistory to rationalize native problems – viz. the notions of ‘contemporary unequals’ and ‘return to ancestral lands’ (cf. Smuts 1932, Schlanger 2002b) – it may well be that Afrikaner prehistory has remained a low-key affair, its knowledge claims and legitimizing rhetoric deemed too uncertain and ambiguous for official appropriation or nurture. Or again it may be that, confined to the hands of ‘amateurs’, it proved no contest for the increasingly professional strand of anglophone research undertaken from the 1960s onwards (cf. Deacon 1990). All more incentives for getting to the bottom of this matter.

### The 1929 *Annals*

Returning upon this to our more microhistorical affairs, it can be agreed that Goodwin and Van Riet Lowe’s *Stone Age cultures of South Africa* was rushed to publication not to prevent the Cambridge man Burkitt from stealing their show, but rather in view of the Afrikaans-written prehistoric scheme advanced by the Bloemfontein-based Van Hoepen. This is not to say that the motives and incentives surrounding the 1929 *Annals* volume can be reduced

to local rivalries – on the contrary, we will see in a second that alongside professional and personal calculations, metropolitan considerations loomed particularly large. But evidence in the Goodwin papers unambiguously shows that the ‘race’ regarding the publication of the South African Museum *Annals* begun in earnest on 10 September 1928, with the first issue of the *Argeologiese Navorsing* from the Nasionale Museum. What had hitherto been a considerable irritation – a turf war with his fellow Free-stater for Van Riet Lowe, a terminological challenge for Goodwin (who was nonetheless ready to use some of his opponent’s terms) – became from that day on a real scientific-cum-linguistic threat to disciplinary domination, a menace requiring urgent measures (including dubious ones) to ensure audience and precedence. Unlike the questionable accusation of plagiarism levelled at Burkitt, the priority dispute engaged here with Van Hoepen is more challenging to understand. On the face of it, such a conflict rests on a basic consensus; a dispute over ‘who said it first’ implies some agreement over what this ‘it’ is – for example, that ‘Smithfield’ and ‘Koning’ are somehow equivalent. More cynically, this dispute might have to do not with some ideal precedence in the enunciation of truth, but rather with the possibility of ignoring rival claims while stalking one’s own grounds, and more generally to ‘run the show’, *dixit* Van Riet Lowe, with a sufficient degree of hegemonic happiness.

As we recall, domestic univocality was directly tied to international audibility; in this respect, Van Hoepen’s Afrikaans challenge can be further grasped when we uncover the motivations underlying the 1929 *Annals* volume. The commonplace disciplinary requirement to publish was of course long in the air, and while Burkitt may have been urging caution over the hasty production of anything definitive, he was fully supportive of – and kept well informed on – Goodwin’s publication plans. In parallel, relationships were developing between Goodwin and his ‘correspondence pupil’ Van Riet Lowe, initially the amateur and subordinate party.<sup>3</sup> Soon enough, a flare-up erupted when anthropologist Winifred Hoernlé warned Goodwin in March 1928 that his planned publication of the Smithfield industry rather smacked of trespassing and poaching to the data provider, Van Riet Lowe. While the two men patched up their differences and went on to fruitfully collaborate (as Dubow noted in his commentary), what is particularly interesting for us is that Goodwin spelt out point by point his reasons for publishing, at this particular juncture, ‘a generalised theory of stone cultures in South Africa’:<sup>4</sup>

1. When I go to England at the beginning of next year I shall be doing a large amount of archaeological work. I have no desire to start in as a suppliant. I must be in a position to exchange paper for paper, and idea for idea. I cannot see myself coming back to this country with anything but a few unworked chips and a collection of picture postcards, with one or two kindly references to books I already know, unless I go over very definitely as an archaeologist.

2. In order to inveigle scientists out for the British Ass. meeting next year, we need something of that sort. They must be made to see that South Africa has had a dirty past. Burkitt had read one of Johnson’s books, and had

never even seen Peringuey's book until a day before he left this country. Seligman . . . is in a similar position . . . You can't blame them. We have not published decently yet.

3. I have consistently refused to train any students as archaeologists until I should be able to put the whole thing before them in a proper form. We cannot expect to get any interest of a useful type until we can tell people what to look for, and give them our results . . .

4. We ourselves need a decent review of the subject to see where we are, and what we are doing. In Saturday's paper I saw a long argument as to whether the Bushman or the Hottentots were the first peoples in South Africa. Such crass ignorance is our fault.<sup>5</sup>

The range and ranking of Goodwin's motivations (personal, institutional, disciplinary) lead us squarely to re-examine the widespread postulate of 'colonial vindication'; they clearly evidence a simultaneous desire to make a good impression in metropolitan circles and to enhance the importance and independence of local science. It appears then that metropolitan archaeology – if the term can still be taken generically – served at once as a point of reference and as a point of departure, as a background, as a backdrop, as a scale with and against which South African prehistoric archaeology was being made. While these intimate relations of production and presentation were frequently fraught with tension, we need to critically reconsider the pervasive notion that South African prehistoric archaeology was somehow created despite or in opposition to the metropole, and indeed that it had to struggle with the metropole to have its institutions established and its achievements recognized.

### Vindications I

The processes of academic institutionalization and discipline formation certainly require further attention, as Dubow remarked. In the light of our concerns here, it is noteworthy how essential was the role played by metropolitan archaeology and its representatives, both at an explicit rhetorical level and through behind-the-scene actions. To begin with the overt dimension, we may record that metropolitan visitors, besides dispensing advice and instructions, were also willing to serve as instruments of stratagem and persuasion in the hands of their South African hosts. Leaving aside the long-term impacts of such visitors as A.C. Haddon (in 1905) or Henry Balfour (from 1910 onwards), we recall that Burkitt's own tour generated much propaganda for the academic, financial and legal recognition of archaeology. Likewise the 1929 British Association meeting saw the arrival of well-disposed heavyweights, and Breuil in particular was enlisted to pen a long pleading letter to Prime Minister Hertzog, recalling among other things the archaeological wealth, the urgency and the local availability of vigorous talent (viz. Van Riet Lowe).<sup>6</sup> As the interested party noted to Barnard,

If we set about things in the right way, I think it will materialize. What we really need is Sollas or Breuil to say 'What! Have you no chair in

archaeology? With all this wealth\_\_\_' or words to this effect; and even a stone hearted government must surely melt. It will take time I know but here is to hoping!<sup>7</sup>

Goodwin for his part had benefited from quite a different type of intercession in his own university appointment – rightly heralded as the first and for long only of its kind in sub-Saharan Africa. Indeed, his Cambridge teacher Burkitt took on seriously the role of mentor, encouraging and mediating on his behalf. Hardly back to the 'bleak, dank north' from his South African visit, Burkitt already prompted Goodwin not to 'forget Vosberg. I really feel a lot depends upon it. Also I shall look forwards to your book for "the student". But above all come to Europe for a study course, as soon as you can'.<sup>8</sup> The publication of this rock-art site was urgently required to enhance Goodwin's reputation, as evident from Burkitt's next letter:

I am sorry there is a cloud over Jock's face [J.C. Beattie, Dean of the University of Cape Town]. I really did work hard to dispel it at Capetown and I failed to really quite get to the root of the whole matter; after all it was one of delicacy as, though I could justly claim a great interest in your future, both from having been so much with you in South Africa and as an old pupil of mine, at the same time the arrangements of the University Staff at Capetown is not an affair for discussion with an outsider! I hope it is only temporary and I feel sure that the way to dissolve the mist is by some such work as you are doing at Vosberg. I shall be writing to Jock on other matters this week and I shall not fail to enlarge upon your letter to me and the amount of work you have obviously been doing.<sup>9</sup>

For the record, Beattie still found reasons to deplore to Burkitt that 'Goodwin is much the same. A little too slapdash in his methods, pity you had not had him another year or two longer in Cambridge. He will I hope come out all right but I sometimes fear he got on too quickly'.<sup>10</sup> Fortunately, the deed was already done, as Goodwin noted in a sentence he did well to strike out from his published reminiscences: 'On August 1 of 1926, as a result of the success of the new terminology (in which the principal, Sir Carruthers Beattie, was greatly interested), I was appointed to the permanent staff of the University of Cape Town as Senior Lecturer'.<sup>11</sup>

## Vindications II

We thus approach, from a less usual but perhaps more candid angle of personal credit and reward, this other facet of 'colonial vindication', according to which this most substantive of local achievements – the African terminology of prehistory – had to overcome opposition, reluctance or mere indifference to impose itself and be recognized at its worth. Among the commentators Dubow expresses this idea most clearly, but in reality this pervasive notion of a valiant departure from imposed European categories towards a new dawn of Stone Age research is very much a founding narrative of Goodwin and Van Riet Lowe's own making. As Goodwin put it in a later publication,

The classic system of archaeological terminology was evolved in a limited field (parts of France only)... By the chance spread of European culture and colonisation to distant lands, it was only natural that the same developments, the same sequence of incoming cultures and local evolutions found in the glacier-limited habitable patches of western Europe should be sought (and indeed found with great facility) in these outside areas (Goodwin 1945b, 91–92; and cf. also Goodwin’s 1932 letter to Smuts, quoted in Schlanger 2002b, 203)

– upon this, it was only natural that the new terminology would be cast as a heroic deed of self-affirmation and emancipation, well in the Smutsian spirit of the ‘South Africanization’ of science.

From my ongoing research on this complicated topic (cf. Schlanger forthcoming), two points are relevant to the issues at hand. First, there was nothing particularly radical or unprecedented about departures from the ‘classic’ European terminology (i.e. the combination of Lubbock’s Palaeolithic and Neolithic with Gabriel de Mortillet’s Acheulean, Mousterian and so on). Modifications have been advanced since the beginning of the century in North Africa, and specifically urged in South Africa by the likes of Haddon, Peringuey and Dunn. Next, once the terminological system was advanced, its reception was anything but hostile or inattentive. This was the case with leading prehistoric journal *L’Anthropologie*, whose review of one of Goodwin’s earliest papers drew the following encouraging comment from Burkitt: ‘I notice a review of your Capsian Article in “L’Anthropologie”, merely stating your conclusions in a few words without much serious criticism. Ça marche!’<sup>12</sup> Indeed, Goodwin and Van Riet Lowe’s 1929 volume already received six pages of thorough and sympathetic review (Boule 1930). To give another example, a possibly less qualified but no less authoritative appreciation came to Goodwin from V. Gordon Childe: ‘I am not really a student of the Palaeolithic age . . . it is a great relief to hear the stone age cultures of S. Africa reduced to such an illuminating scheme, and the later ones at least anchored securely to some historical stock’.<sup>13</sup> Not only was the new terminology received favourably abroad, it was also endorsed by the many archaeologists who came to the country for the 1929 British Association meeting; as Goodwin reported to Van Riet Lowe,

Leakey, Jones, Breuil and I think everyone at the meeting, agreed on the terms Earlier, Middle and Later, all three, and even said that Burkitt was inconsistent in using Lower Palaeolithic for Earlier Stone age. Breuil actually said don’t attempt to use Upper Palaeo. and Epipalaeo., nor even Middle Palaeo.<sup>14</sup>

So are we at the end of the day to be left with Raymond Dart, as a sort of ‘missing link’ between the claims and the realities of colonial vindication? So apparently would have it Shepherd, for whom the ‘real action’ with regards to the ‘doing-down’ of South African archaeology by the archaeologists of the metropole lay elsewhere, in the failure to ratify Dart’s *Australopithecus* into the human lineage. At the onset, it would be useful to dispel the confusion or conflation (and cf. Dubow’s comment) between archaeology and

palaeontology; not only are these quite separate disciplines in their subject matters, epistemologies and modes of demonstration, it so happens that in the case at hand the practitioners themselves stressed their theoretical and ethical distances. There is also something disquietingly positivist about this ratifying ‘failure’, as if Dart’s 1925 claims were by their own weight naturally and automatically able to carry conviction – unless deviated by the socially or ideologically induced biases of the scientific community. This may have been the case, but there are actually several perfectly plausible factors available to account for this cool reception – the big-brained Piltdown man, the fixation on the Asian plains, and last but not least Dart’s own scientific reputation. So while the Taung child itself was indeed ‘passed over’, there seems to be no germane evidence to show that this was because its discoverer was a mere colonial (and Australo-South African, at that).

By germane evidence I mean actual indications or disclosures – e.g. of the kind preserved in archives – by the metropolitan scientists concerned, and not the justificatory claims advanced by the likes of Smuts or Dart himself, accounts which effectively ‘celebrate the intuitive genius of a young colonial anthropologist whose finding were vindicated only after years of being treated with a mixture of determined resistance and arrogant neglect on the part of the metropolitan scientific establishment’, as Dubow (1996, 3) puts it with a cynical realism that seems to have eluded Shepherd. Kuklick goes further with the comment that Dart cast himself as rejected by the international scientific community with regards to both his genuine palaeontological contribution and his lunatic Great Zimbabwean raciology. The judgement of value here expressed can be highlighted through contemporary popular opinion, for which on the contrary Dart’s Zimbabwean claims made far better sense than his embarrassing notions about Africa being the possible cradle of humankind or of the missing link (cf. Chilvers 1929, 380–82, Preller 1938, 16 *passim*). Amongst our South African archaeologists, Dart and his findings were ignored, or else berated – as Van Riet Lowe wrote to Goodwin, it was urgent to ‘redeem the Transactions from the painful position and level it fell to when it published Dart’s MUCK on Mumbwa – a contribution that made the transactions the laughing stock of overseas folks’.<sup>15</sup> Notwithstanding the incongruous fact that the redeeming paper proposed was one by Smuts, this comment testifies to the tensions highlighted by Dubow between the archaeological and anthropological disciplines, and it also confirms the possibility that these ‘overseas folks’ may equally have shared some misgivings vis-à-vis Dart and his claims.

### Conclusions: metropolitan archives

It would be both excessive and over-simplistic to leave with the impression that South African prehistoric archaeology was done down insofar as it felt done down – to paraphrase Shepherd and juxtapose Goodwin’s fate with that of the discipline he did so much to establish. What makes the history of this research tradition so fascinating, and its achievements so noteworthy, is in my view this exceptional entanglement of domestic and international tensions, where the internal ones ran along fault lines of cultural and linguistic identity as much as professional or personal considerations, and the external

ones include a complicated admixture of deference and defiance vis-à-vis metropolitan science and its representatives.

Talking of which, we may at long last spare a brief thought for metropolitan archaeology, and agree that this ever-so-useful foil and construct was in reality neither homogeneous nor omnipotent, but rather an often relative and contested value, to be shored up and reoriented just as any other component of power-knowledge relationships. To grasp this point, it will be worth recalling that up to the 1920s academic prehistory was almost non-existent also in mainland Britain, bereft of funding or research programmes, and involving at best a couple of curatorial posts at the British Museum or the National Museum of Wales, the Ordnance Survey and the University of Cambridge (cf. Clark 1989). There, the local boy Burkitt was the first in the country to provide systematic teaching in Palaeolithic archaeology, and indeed to author textbooks on the subject, but for quite a few years he did so in an unpaid and semi-official capacity, until his appointment to a university lectureship in 1926 – coinciding in fact with that of his first pupil Goodwin. Now, as far as can be gathered, Burkitt was by reputation not always that profound or original a thinker, and it is true that he often ended up surrounded by tougher operators and more incisive minds of the likes of L. Leakey, J.D. Clark, D. Garrod or G. Clark (cf. Smith 1999). Even abroad his persona as a metropolitan authority soon came to be overshadowed by his erstwhile mentor the French Abbé Breuil, who first came to South Africa in 1929 and conquered all, from the earthiest amateur to the loftiest Smuts, with his encyclopaedic charisma (but that, as they say, is another story). The quid pro quo mentioned by Dubow will in any case have to be completed to include Burkitt's own standing; if South Africa's archaeologists needed the Cambridge men for promoting their discipline, so did the honorary keeper of the Stone Age collections depend on them (and the likes of Macrae, Wayland, Owen, Glover and a plethora of professional and amateur others), their contacts, their finds, their reliability, indeed their fidelity, to establish his own credentials and expertise. The five cardboard boxes of the Burkitt papers at the Cambridge University Library, filled with off-prints, postcards and unsorted letters in recycled brown envelopes, are less amenable to emphatic immersion than Goodwin's infinitely richer and wider-ranging archives. There nevertheless emerges from these relics a clear enough impression of a generous and attentive correspondent, keen to exchange knowledge and to communicate enthusiasm about the past – indeed, an impression that made me first think that there might be more than meets the eye to the Burkitt affair.

### Archival sources

*Burkitt Papers* – Cambridge University Library, CUL Add. MS 7959.

CUMAA – Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology.

*Goodwin Papers* – Manuscripts and Archives Department of the University of Cape Town, BC 290.

SAM – Archives of the South African Museum–Iziko Museums of Cape Town.

*Van Riet Lowe Papers* – Archives of the Rock Art Research Institute, Department of Archaeology, University of the Witwatersrand.

## Note

- <sup>1</sup> Goodwin to Smuts, 11 November 1944, Smuts Papers, Microfilm 73/168.
- <sup>2</sup> Goodwin to Van Riet Lowe, 26 October 1950, Goodwin Papers, Box 7.
- <sup>3</sup> Thus in early 1927 Van Riet Lowe commented on Goodwin's latest paper in *Man*, and added 'a propos of this, I do wish you'd bear in mind my ready willingness to help you in whatever way I can. Perhaps you'd like me to do a map or assist in the illustrations in some way or another. In any case please don't hesitate to approach me for whatever little job in which I might be able to assist you' (28 February 1927, Goodwin papers, Box 7).
- <sup>4</sup> Goodwin to Van Riet Lowe, 2 April 1928, Goodwin Papers, Box 8.
- <sup>5</sup> Interestingly, in his more terse reply to Hoernlé's admonitions, Goodwin presented his fourth point thus: 'I do not feel that it is fair to make any attempts to get laws passed about excavating before we prove the necessity for such laws. You already know the opposition of Fort Hare to any research grants being allocated to archaeology, and that from educated men'. Goodwin to Hoernlé, 2 April 1928, Goodwin Papers, Box 8.
- <sup>6</sup> Breuil to J.M.B Hertzog (draft), 10 October 1929, Goodwin Papers, Box 8.
- <sup>7</sup> Van Riet Lowe to Barnard, 6 April 1929, Goodwin Papers, Box 8.
- <sup>8</sup> Burkitt to Goodwin, 17 October 1927, Goodwin Papers, Box 7.
- <sup>9</sup> Burkitt to Goodwin, 9 November 1927, Goodwin Papers, Box 7.
- <sup>10</sup> Beattie to Burkitt, 22 August 1928, Burkitt Papers, Box 2. See reproduction in Figure 4 here.
- <sup>11</sup> Goodwin, draft of 'Formative years of South African prehistoric terminology', Goodwin Papers, Box 93, original strikeout.
- <sup>12</sup> Burkitt to Goodwin, 9 November 1927, Goodwin Papers, Box 7.
- <sup>13</sup> Childe to Goodwin, 4 October (1926?), Goodwin Papers, Box 18.
- <sup>14</sup> Goodwin to Van Riet Lowe, 12 August 1929, Goodwin Papers, Box 8, original underlining.
- <sup>15</sup> Van Riet Lowe to Goodwin, 17 February 1932, Goodwin Papers, Box 8.

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