PROFESSIONALISATION
OF SOUTH AFRICAN
ARCHAEOLOGY: AN
IMPORTANT LEAP TO
THE FUTURE*

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Resumo: a arqueologia como disciplina tem se desenvolvido seguindo tendências, geralmente, sem-
elhantes no mundo. Em seus primeiros passos, a arqueologia era amplamente dominada por cole-
cionadores que não ofereciam muita interpretação sobre os materiais que estavam reunindo. Como
amadores, suas análises do passado eram severamente limitadas. No caso da África do Sul, foi
somente em 1923 que o primeiro sul-africano foi formado como arqueólogo. A formação de mais
arqueólogos foi um fenômeno lento por muitas razões, e, portanto, foi somente quando um número
crescente de universidades introduziu programas de arqueologia no país que houve esforços conjuntos
para formar mais estudiosos na disciplina. Enquanto todos esses acontecimentos se realizavam o
profissional, contudo, não estava regulamentado. Em vez disso, as associações arqueológicas foram,
informalmente, constituídas por pessoas com ideias similares que compartilhavam a mesma paixão
pelo passado. E foi somente em março de 2018 que a Associação de Arqueólogos Profissionais Sul-Af-
ricanos (ASAPA), administrada e historicamente sediada na África do Sul, foi reconhecida como um
órgão não-estatutário. A disciplina teve uma longa trajetória até atingir esse nível. Na minha opin-
ião, o reconhecimento preferencial teria sido o registro como um órgão estatutário estabelecido pela
lei do Parlamento da África do Sul. Deixando isso de lado, compartilho a jornada que a arqueologia
sul-africana percorreu ao longo do período que abrange quatro séculos, além de avaliar o impacto
causado pelo reconhecimento de 2018 pela Autoridade de Qualificações da África do Sul (SAQA).


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he history of archaeology in South Africa dates back to the 1700s when initial efforts were made to record various archaeological materials that were being discovered. Importantly, these early recordings were to some extent linked to government officials who were undertaking these tasks as part of their general interests. This means there was a very close relationship between archaeology and the political foundations that were being laid in the country. As can be expected, there was a drought of trained archaeologists at this period, and it is thus not surprising that all those who were recording archaeological objects discovered and attempting to provide early interpretations of South African past were all amateurs. These amateur archaeologists, who had a passion for the past, thus played a critical role in the development of archaeology in South Africa even though, like their African counterparts who worked as their ‘slaves’, they had no professional training in archaeology. While they have easily been accorded the status of being archaeologists even without any academic training in the discipline, their African counterparts who played equally significant roles in locating archaeological sites, assisting with their investigations, and providing insights into archaeological interpretations, they have never been given the same accolades. In most cases, their names are not even known because they became the ‘absent’ assistants (SHEPHERD, 2002, 2003, 2005; NDLOVU, 2009a). Some of these amateur archaeologists have, in the past, even had buildings at academic institutions named after them. The archaeology department at the University of the Witwatersrand was once housed in the building named after Clarence van Riet Lowe. The University of Pretoria provides achievement awards to archaeology students in honour of Herbert M. E. Hanisch, a civil servant who like many of his counterparts in those early days, had a keen interest in archaeology. This historical legacy of archaeology in South Africa further highlights the significant relationship between archaeology and politics. Such political influence is not only limited to who was undertaking early archaeological research, but is further defined by the supposed absence of Africans in the discipline. The identity of who is African and who is not is very contentious in South Africa. In the context of this paper, I am using the description of being African to refer to indigenous African descents. Various reasons have been offered for the previous absence or lack of African archaeologists in the country (TRIGGER, 1990, p. 316; SHEPHERD, 2005, p. 123; NDLOVU, 2009a, 2009b; HUMPHREYS, 2011, p. 2). I define them as previously absent because even though they had always assisted in the ‘discovery’ of archaeological sites, provided cheap labour in the excavation of these ‘discoveries’, and even provided views that assisted in the interpretation of this same ‘discoveries’, their active participation has not been given the same recognition as their white counterparts who have been gloriously awarded the significant status of being amateur archaeologists. They were further not usually named in reports. Jeppson (2007) notes a similar phenomenon in her excavations at Franklin Court, Philadelphia, where the African American excavators were pictured and made many field decisions, but were not named. What we see here, therefore, is a situation where Africans were erased from the historical records of South African archaeology. This erasing was caused by their roles in the formative stages of the discipline and its eventual development not being fully acknowledged. Not only that, but it is further an undisputed reality that Africans were not paid living wages, earning salaries that were even significantly lower than their counterparts were spending on their lunch (SHEPHERD, 2002, p. 142; HODDER, 2003; NDLOVU, 2009b). In
addition, there is no evidence that they or their children were ever encouraged to become professional archaeologists themselves once the academic presence of archaeology became a reality in the early 1920s. South Africa did not have a professionally trained archaeologist until James Goodwin attained his degree from Cambridge University in 1923 before subsequently joining the University of Cape Town. Barend Malan became the first archaeologist trained within the South African soil.

Even when professional training of archaeologists began in South Africa, none of these opportunities were extended to Africans. Yet, these African ‘slaves’ continued to provide the much needed and sought after labour and insights. I have always been interested in establishing to what extent were the children of these African ‘slaves’ of archaeology ever interested in pursuing a career in archaeology even though their parents were not enjoying the same limelight as their European counterparts. We may never know this, as such knowledge has been permanently lost, but assumptions can be made. It may have been difficult for these children to have a positive view of archaeology when their parents were not getting the recognition they deserved. While they may have accepted the superiority of Europeans, as was custom and still is to a large extent, there is very little hope that the discipline of archaeology could have aroused significant interest in them. Thus, while their parents continued to fulfil various research tasks as dictated to them by their superiors, only white amateur and professional archaeologists have continued to receive recognition in South African archaeology. Even the first professionally trained South African archaeologists of African descent have never been appropriately recognised in the country and specifically within the discipline of archaeology. Maybe this will only be possible once archaeological institutions in South Africa are adequately led by Africans.

What I have illustrated thus far clearly shows that South African archaeology has had a chequered history. It is within this context that we should review the professionalisation of the discipline in the country. The purpose of this paper is to reflect on various initiatives that have been undertaken over the past decades to professionalise the discipline of archaeology in South Africa. I specifically want to further review the impact of these initiatives in professionalising archaeology. I begin the paper by briefly reflecting on the history of archaeology in South Africa. I further review the establishment of the two archaeological associations that have had a significant presence in the continued development of archaeology in the country. These are the Southern African Association of Archaeologists (SA3) and the South African Archaeological Society (SAAS). The former is a predecessor to the current Association for Southern African Professional Archaeologists (ASAPA). The review of these two archaeological associations provides a further insight into the history of South African archaeology. This is significant to undertake because such analyses provides an adequate context through which we can best understand activities that have been undertaken over the years to professionalise the discipline.

REFLECTING ON THE HISTORY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA

As indicated earlier, the roots of archaeology in South Africa were established alongside the early stages of colonialism. This discipline thus became deeply linked to officials who served in this governance structure that was giving more regard to the
one race that became superior as a result of the hostile takeover of land belonging to indigenous people. During this colonially-defined era, South Africa was considered to be a landscape that previously had no history, and its new enlightened identity was thus credited with the arrival of colonialists. As a result of the negative ideas held about South Africa, nothing positive could be thought of the country. This view of South Africa, which was similar to how Africa was viewed in general had a significant impact in terms of earlier archaeological interpretations. Research into the origins of South African rock art provides an appropriate case study to illustrate this argument. According to earlier views, the beautiful paintings ought to have been made by people who came from elsewhere. They could not have been indigenous in their origin. Even when some early scholars began crediting Bushmen with authorship of the art, their ‘artistic achievement’ was considered in very simplistic terms. Within this view, these images were thought to have been a record of the world around them, and their experiences of it. What is today commonly accepted as a valid interpretation of South African Bushmen rock art, that it records complex belief system, could not even be thought of as a possibility. What this case study illustrates, therefore, is that archaeology and politics have coexisted for a long time. As archaeologists, therefore, we have a burden of the past on our shoulders. But it is critical that our professional conduct is not found wanting, with our archaeological interpretations becoming easily criticised simply because we are trying hard to correct the past by being overly apologetic in our analyses of archaeological findings.

Largely because of its unfavourable past, archaeology in South Africa has been criticised for being untransformed and ‘lily white’. This is a view I share, strongly. Lack of transformation is in terms of the racial profile of archaeologists and the application of interpretive approaches that have significantly defined the discipline. These interpretive approaches have generally considered communities through negative lens (see NDLOVU, 2016). Communities were either perceived as providers of cheap labour or a threat to the archaeological sites that archaeologists were investigating. Yet, as Ndoro (2005) has appropriately argued, these same archaeological sites would not have been discovered by archaeologists if they had been destroyed by these communities. This generalised view of African communities, and how they have always been portrayed in archaeology, must be responsible for the lack of racial transformation in the discipline. Such lack of transformation has meant that there have been very few Africans becoming professional archaeologists in the country (NDLOVU; SMITH, 2019). I argued earlier that such lack of African archaeologists happened besides the fact that many Africans played critical roles in the formation stages of the discipline in South Africa. Yet, none of those Africans were ever recognised nor had any of their children attaining professional accolades in the discipline (NDLOVU, 2009b; SMITH, 2009). This is a direct reflection of the politicised environment in which they worked under. While meaningful changes have been taking place, particularly in the past decade or so, African archaeologists are still not ‘seating at the main table’. Instead, we are still passengers in the car whereby we have now been offered a lift. This is further evidenced by the reality that to date, only three Africans have attained doctoral degrees in archaeology. Two others are imminent, but that is still not enough considering that South Africa has been politically independent since the so-called democratic transition in 1994. There is clearly a need for archaeology
to be transformed into a field that is representative of the demography of the country, which would ensure that knowledge production is to some extent reflective of the South African population. Such would open possibilities for other voices that have been previously kept silent. As future professionals, young African archaeologists coming into the discipline must be properly nurtured, not discouraged by their experiences.

Having reflected on the roots that enriched the existence of archaeology in South Africa, I now explore the existence of structures that have enabled the development of archaeology in the country. These structures are both the archaeological associations and the academic institutions that have provided training in archaeology. The aim of such an exploration is to, beyond the general history of archaeology, to understand the professionalisation of archaeology in South Africa. There have particularly been two archaeological associations that have defined the history of the discipline. These are the Southern African Association of Archaeologists (SA3) and the South African Archaeological Society (SAAS). The former was later renamed to the Association for Southern African Professional Archaeologists (ASAPA) in 2004. ASAPA is a regional body representing the interest of archaeology professionals in Southern Africa. It has a mandate of establishing, maintaining, and promoting archaeology in southern Africa. The aim is to establish the initiatives that have been undertaken to professionalise and regulate the discipline. The SAAS is an umbrella body that caters for the interest of general members who have a passion about the past.

THE FORMATION OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

The South African Archaeological Society was first established in August 1944 under a different name. At the time, the society was called the Cape Archaeological Society when it was initially founded by James Goodwin and changed its name in June 1945. Renaming the organisation enabled it to increase its membership beyond the one province of the country, thus including members from the three other South African provinces and neighbouring countries. As argued earlier, South Africa was having a significant deficiency of professionally trained archaeologists. As a result, there was not many archaeologists in the country such that this society could be limited to them. Its membership, therefore, has always been opened to everyone with an interest in the past, thus bridging the gap between professional archaeologists and enthusiasts of archaeology. The association has four branches to cater for their members around the country. All South African-based members, therefore, automatically become members of a specific branch depending on their location in the country. These branches are based in Cape Town (Western Cape branch), Johannesburg, (Northern branch) Durban/Pietermaritzburg (KwaZulu-Natal branch), and Bloemfontein/Kimberley (Trans-Garib branch). They organise regular lectures and outings to many interesting destinations telling a story about the past. Volunteers who serve on the branch committees in Cape Town, Johannesburg, Durban/Pietermaritzburg and Bloemfontein/Kimberley organise the activities.

Few months after its formation, the SAAS established what has since become a premier journal publishing research articles on southern African archaeology. Over the years, a greater geographical scope has been represented by articles published in this
The South African Archaeological Bulletin (SAAB) was established in December 1945 and has been published ever since, with two issues published each year. Since 2005, the SAAB has been edited under the agreement between SAAS and ASA-PA. I was appointed on a five-year term as the first African to be the Editor-in-Chief of the journal since its first publication in 1945. This 2015 appointment meant a lot to me, and I shall be forever grateful to that courageous ASAPA Council that made the decision, against all odds they had to face at the time following their unwelcomed decision. Having been the Editor-in-Chief of such a prestigious publication is an honour I shall cherish for a long time. Yet, my experience has been fraught with many challenges, from the very beginning of my appointment. I aim to write about such in the future.

Following the establishment of the SAAB, the SAAS began publishing the Goodwin Series, with the first issue launched in 1972. This series is named after the founder of the Society, James Goodwin, credited as the the founder of the discipline of archaeology in South Africa and first Editor-in-Chief of the South African Archaeological Bulletin. It is an occasionally published series on various topical issues. The most recent issue of the Goodwin Series was published in 2019. Titled Towards a history of archaeology from South Africa, to celebrate the 20-year collaboration between South Africa and France. The image used in the front cover of this publication tells a story. In the image is a group of Africans who were helping to excavate an archaeological site. Most are posing with their equipment while two at the background were photographed in their playful self. Besides these two publications, SAAS also publishes a newsletter called The Digging Stick. It was launched in 1978 by Janette Deacon, the current Honorary Secretary, under the name of the South African Archaeological Newsletter. It was aimed at caring for the broader membership of the SAAS, considering that the two other publications were very academic. The newsletter published brief articles and news on archaeology, thus making archaeological research findings become more easily accessible to many others. It was renamed to its current name in 1984, and is published three times a year for the members of the society.

Other than the SAAS, the other archaeological association that has played a critical role in the continued development of the discipline in South Africa has been the Southern African Association of Archaeologists (SA3). It’s establishment was a significant departure from what the SAAS represented and it came at the time when the teaching of archaeology was transforming. The association became the home for professional archaeologists. Not that they were not catered for under the SAAS, but the new association was about pride for them, to have a professional body like other associations in the country and elsewhere.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN ASSOCIATION OF ARCHAEOLOGISTS (SA3)

The Southern African Association of Archaeologists (SA3) was formally established in 1971 by Professor Ray Inskeep, then of the University of Cape Town. He had come to the UCT to replace South Africa’s first professional trained archaeologists, the late John Goodwin who had established the SAAS. Inskeep’s idea of establishing SA3 was three fold: (i) to provide a platform for archaeologists to establish their professional identity, (ii) to encourage the training of archaeologists, and (iii) to promote
archaeological heritage in Southern Africa. I would argue that the first two reasons for establishing SA3 formed the core attributes over many years, with the management of archaeological heritage not being given much attention by the professional body. By making such a great contribution in establishing the professional entity for archaeologists, Inskeep added to his colourful role in the overall development of professional archaeology in South Africa.

The SA3 holds biannual conferences for archaeologists working in the region to meet and discuss their interpretations of various archaeological materials. These professional gatherings are organised at various locations around Southern Africa, even though most of them have been held in South Africa. Acknowledging that there have been many SA3 biannual conferences those of its successor (ASAPA), I wish to focus on one such gathering. This notable conference was held on 5 July 1983 in Gaborone, Botswana. Considering the political context under which archaeology existed in South Africa, the 1983 conference presented archaeologists with an opportunity to significantly redefine the destiny of their discipline and most importantly, pronounce against the Apartheid government in the country. I thus define this conference as key moment in the history of archaeology in Southern Africa, and in particular, the SA3. It was an opportunity for archaeologists to openly accept that politics had a direct impact on archaeology, whose professionals had a role to play in seeking social justice for the majority of the South African population. During this conference, the majority of South African members in attendance hesitated when called upon by their African counterparts to openly denounce Apartheid (MITCHELL, 2011). As a result, delegates from Mozambique, Botswana, Zimbabwe left the association in protest for the failure by South Africans to denounce apartheid. This was a significant moment in the history of southern African archaeology.

While it might not necessarily be linked to events that took place during the 1983 conference, it is significant to note that there was no other meeting of the SA3 nor its predecessor ASAPA that took place outside South Africa until the 2011 meeting held in Mbabane, eSwatini (see also MITCHELL, 2011). The hosting of the 2011 ASAPA conference outside South Africa followed an agreement reached at the 2008 conference hosted in Cape Town to hold the next gathering outside South Africa to illustrate that ASAPA was not just an association of South African archaeologists. This was a significant attempt to portray ASAPA as a truly Southern African association, even though it has always been dominated by South African-based archaeologists in terms of membership of its Council. Initially, Mozambique had been chosen as the destination for the 2011 conference, but due to logistical challenges, a late decision was taken to hold the conference in Swaziland instead.

The next biannual conference of the SA3 was held two years later in Makhanda (previously called Grahamstown). What South African archaeologists were soon to learn was that it was not only their regional counterparts who were having an issue with the Apartheid government. Archaeologists at an international level were also beginning to demonstrate their concern against the increasingly isolated government. It was an this 1985 conference that the archaeologists in attendance first learnt of the decision to ban all archaeological professionals who were residents in South Africa and Namibia, which was then occupied by South Africa. The ban was to prevent them from
attending the scheduled 1986 International Union of Pre and Proto-Historic Sciences (IUPPS) congress in Southampton, England. The demand for banning them from attending this conference was exacerbated by the increasingly tense political climate of the mid-1980s where the South African government had declared a state of emergency due to the intensified attacks by the liberation warriors. These continued attacks were threatening the continued existence of the enclave that was providing for the white population in the country with the African majority not catered for. Declaring the state of emergency was an approach implemented to deal with the increased challenge against the Apartheid government. What this illustrated, therefore, was that the battle for the heart and soul of South African archaeology had now been extended beyond the region to an international playground. The 1986 hosting of what became the first World Archaeological Congress in Southampton, England would not have occurred had South Africa not had Apartheid.

The recommendation to exclude South African and Namibian archaeologists because of political activities in their countries had not been welcomed by some. They had objected to this recommendation, arguing that the discipline was immune to politics, and as such, archaeologists could not be punished for events they supposedly have no control over, had been banned from what later became WAC (see GERO, 2000; HALL, 1990, 1997; HUBBARD, 2013; NDLOvu, 2009a; UCKO 1990). According to Clark (1989, p. 214), “the conference had to be open to all bona fide archaeologists and related scientists with no distinction of race, country or philosophical persuasion.” His views found support from the Society for American Archaeology Executive Committee which had issued a statement in December 1985. In this statement, the Executive Committee argued that “the SAA upheld, and will continue to uphold, the principles of freedom of research and the freedom of scholars from all nations to meet and exchange ideas” (cited in HODDER, 1986, p. 113-4). While these discussions were being held in 1985, violence was increasing in South Africa, and the United Nations had issued cultural and academic bans against the country’s Apartheid regime. The hosting of the World Archaeological Congress (WAC) in Cape Town in 1999 could thus be considered a significant step aimed at sending an important message about the political changes that had been ushered in the country following the so-called democratic transition in 1994. But whether the rainbow nation has been born or not in South Africa, fostering an improved image of archaeology, is highly debatable.

What these three conferences, all held in the 1980s, highlight is that the history of archaeology in South Africa is tangled with that of the political landscape in the country. It is littered with exclusionary and unwritten policies that could not allow for an increased African participation in the discipline. Therefore, attempts to professionalise the discipline cannot be discussed without considering this highly political context within which the discipline was founded, and through which it has continued to prosper over the years. Any efforts to professionalise the South African archaeological fraternity are thus taking place under the cloud of an untransformed discipline.

There are four membership categories. These are Professional (has a postgraduate degree in archaeology), Technical (has a degree in archaeology and works in a related field), Honorary (high achievers who have made a significant contribution to archaeology) or Affiliate (does not qualify for professional or technical membership, but has a
qualification that can advance archaeological research). Currently, ASAPA has over 400 members under all these four membership categories. Since ASAPA became a registered non-statutory body in 2018, there have been 32 applications for memberships submitted to Council. Of these applications, 31 were Professional membership while one was for an Affiliate membership. All of these applications were successfully approved as they met the constitutional requirements. The majority of these applicants are based in South Africa, while five are members based overseas (one of whom is Africa based in Europe) and seven come from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries, mostly Zimbabwe. Further analysis reveal that of these 32 new ASAPA members, 13 are African while two are Indians. That means that of these 32 members, 17 are white archaeologists.

There have been growing calls, however, for a number of fieldwork assistants who have been working with many archaeologists across Southern Africa, particularly South Africa and Lesotho, to receive recognition as Technical members even though they do not have degrees in archaeology. This recognition, it is hoped, will add further impetus to transformation efforts in South Africa. I have concerns with this approach because it will not achieve much in my view. After all, membership of ASAPA will not significantly advance these fieldwork assistants. What is critical, in my view, is that efforts should be put towards providing them with professional degrees in archaeology because the reality is that while they maybe far more experienced than even highly qualified archaeologists, their advancement, be it socially or professionally, is significantly hindered by them lacking degrees in archaeology. Having degree certificates, therefore, will present them with opportunities to really make a meaningful career out of archaeology. We can look back as southern African archaeologists and be truly proud of a positive impact we would have made in meaningfully transforming the discipline of archaeology. A ‘quickly-cooked’ transformation to boost our numbers will take us nowhere in my view. I am thus opposed to the current initiatives to draft a Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) policy that will effectively, it is aimed, allow for these fieldwork assistants to be accepted as Technical members of ASAPA. To date, nine new Technical members were accepted on the basis of their prior learning. This was before ASAPA was registered with SAQA and in the absence of the RPL policy which is now a requirement following the 2018 registration as the non-statutory body.

A separate category of membership, only opened to ASAPA members, is accreditation as a Cultural Resources Management (CRM) member. Members can be given accreditation in various professional areas of specialisation such as Iron Age, Stone Age, Coastal Shell Midden, Maritime, Colonial Period, Industrial, Rock Art, Grave Relocation and other areas as specified by the applicant. Members accredited under CRM can either be Principal Investigators (Masters Degree, three years experience in CRM, or a portfolio of five Phase II projects), Field Director (Masters degree in archaeology and a five years experience as field supervisor), and Field Supervisor (Honours degree in archaeology). Accreditation can also be provided in certain specific areas of technical archaeological specialisation such as archaeobotany, archaeozoology, isotope work, archaeometallurgy, or human skeletal analysis. Members under this form of accreditation can either be as Laboratory specialists (Honours degree in archaeology or appropriate discipline offering appropriate training or Principal Investigators (Masters degree in archaeology or appropriate discipline, three years experience, or
experience on specific applicable projects). Accreditation as an approved CRM member of ASAPA has become vital. This is because CRM is now the largest field employing archaeologists (NDLOVU, 2014). Therefore, the right to market yourself throughout the southern African region as an expert in the specific area of accreditation is important when competing for business.

Beyond reviewing the archaeological associations and their contribution to the development of archaeology, I now explore archaeology programs in South Africa. This is important as I continue to reflect on the historical roots of archaeology in the country. As indicated earlier, understanding the roots behind the professionalisation of archaeology entails that we fully appreciate how archaeology came about and the structures that have enabled its existence in South Africa.

ARCHAEOLOGY PROGRAMS AT SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES

South Africa did not have a professional archaeologist until 1923, when James Goodwin attained his doctorate degree from Cambridge University under the tutelage of Miles Burkit. He was subsequently employed by the University of Cape Town (UCT) as a research assistant in ethnology. He was the first person to teach archaeology at UCT, doing so under the anthropology program. His first graduate in archaeology was Barend Malan who attained his degree in 1932, almost a decade since Goodwin had received his doctoral qualification. What is evident from these early days of teaching archaeology under the anthropology program is that there were not a lot of students taking the discipline. It would take another 20 years after Barend’s successful completion of his archaeology program that Revil Mason would also graduate in archaeology, also at UCT. What is also important to note is that this was largely a period defined by the Second World War (1939-1945), and thus there may not have been a lot of students in general (DEACON 1990). That noted, one of Goodwin’s former students blame him for the low number of graduates during this period (see NDLOVU; SMITH 2019). Nevertheless, Goodwin still managed to train five archaeologists who have significantly contributed in the interpretation of South African archaeology and the management of its heritage. These are Barend Malan who graduated in 1932, and three others, namely, Peter Beaumont, David Lewis-Williams, and Hilary Deacon who all graduated in 1955. The last of his archaeology students, Glynn Isaac, finished her degree three years later, in 1958. Overall, UCT has become one of the most successful universities in the teaching of archaeology, with the number of eminent archaeologists in the country having been trained at the institution (SCHRIRE, 2003, p. 100).

The second academic institution to provide archaeology in South Africa was the University of Pretoria (UP) which first introduced the discipline in 1949 following the appointment of Hannes Eloff as a lecturer. Similar to how archaeology used to be taught at UCT, the discipline was also taught as a course within the anthropology degree. This scenario lasted until 1967, when the first two-year major in archaeology was launched. Two years later, in 1969, archaeology was offered as a full degree programme following the efforts of Hannes Eloff. The one major distinction was that the module was offered in Afrikaans which would have limited its broader appeal to non-speakers of the language. Archaeologists at the institution played a
critical role in the discovery and research undertaken at Mapungubwe (VERHOEF, 1986; JORDAAN, 2017; TILEY-NEL, 2018; WINTJES; TILEY-NEL, 2019) and the famous Kruger National Park. Archaeology is still being taught at the University of Pretoria, which particularly in the last 15 years, has become a lot more open to a broader scope of students and employees following the racialised policies of Apartheid. Teaching is now done only in English.

It was not until 1965 that the archaeology program began to be taught at the University of Witwatersrand (Wits) in Johannesburg. Unlike at UCT and UP where it was taught under the anthropology program, it was in geography that Revil Mason found a home for the discipline. Significant developments took place in 1977, when archaeology was offered as an independent degree from geography. This occurred following the appointment of an American-trained archaeologist, Thomas Huffman. Wits has historically played a leading role in the archaeological investigations, with its archaeologists making important discoveries particularly in Stone Age and Iron Age.

The University of Stellenbosch began teaching archaeology in 1971, under the guidance of Hilary Deacon. Similarly to the UP, Afrikaans was also used in teaching archaeology, particularly at the lower levels of the discipline. This academic institution did not produce a large number of students during its history of teaching archaeology. It is also a university that had the shortest stint in the teaching of archaeology because after 38-years, the archeology program was ended in 1999 following the retirement of Hilary Deacon. He had been the only head of department responsible for archaeology.

Noting the reasonably limited number of academic programs offering archaeology, there was indeed a lower number of archaeology students graduating in the early days of the discipline. This scenario opened the possibility for amateur archaeologists to flourish. Not only that, but there was a significant lack of African archaeologists trained under any of these archaeological programs offered at the four institutions of higher learning discussed above. Especially after the formal introduction of apartheid in 1948 when only UCT was teaching archaeology, Africans could not attend at universities that were largely meant for Europeans. For them to be admitted, they had to secure special permission particularly for degree programs that were not being offered at academic institutions dedicated for the politically neglected South Africans (NDLOVU; SMITH, 2019). These institutions were introduced in 1951. At this time, only UCT (1920s) and the UP (1949) were offering the teaching of archaeology. Africans, therefore, were largely expected to attend at universities that were set up in 1959 for ‘Black’, ‘Indian’ and ‘Coloured’ people. Of these institutions, only one was providing a degree program in archaeology. The University of Fort Hare began teaching archaeology program in 1971 under the leadership of the Cambridge-trained Robin Derricourt. This program was not offered for a long time, enough to make a meaningful contribution in the training of Africans in archaeology. It’s future was dealt a big blow when Derricourt left Fort Hare on 1974 to make a career move to Zambia. Student numbers began to drop significantly. Only two former students of Derricourt, Lewis Matiyela and Themba Zwane, went on to attain professional qualifications in the discipline (NDLOVU, 2012; NDLOVU, SMITH, 2019). They never really had a platform to make a meaningful impact in South African archaeology, and thus build from their earlier publications. Matiyela was the first African person to publish an article in the
South African Archaeological Bulletin in 1976 (MATIYELA, 1976). It was not until 1992 that Zwane (who previously used the Nogwaza surname) successfully published his article in the now defunct South African Field Archaeology journal (NOGWAZA, 1992). Besides these two publications, there was no other African archaeologist who published in South African archaeology until 2009 when I published an article on the management of rock art in the uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park in South Africa (NDLOVU, 2009c).

Considering that South African only had one professional archaeologist back in 1923, and did not have archaeology training programs in those early days until the late 1920s, the country has traveled a great journey to be where the discipline is today. There are now eight universities providing archaeology programs in the country. These are the University of Pretoria, University of the Witwatersrand, University of South Africa, University of Cape Town, University of Venda, University of Limpopo, University of Johannesburg, and the Sol Plaatje University. The nature of the programs vary from one university to the other. While the universities offering archaeology, particularly between 1949 and 2019, has been slowly increasing, the progress made in the training of Africans scholars is still not too pleasing though (NDLOVU; SMITH, 2019). Africans are still not playing a critical role in the production of archaeological knowledge as equals to their counterparts.

This broad overview of South African archaeology, from how it came up to the review of structures (associations and universities) that have enabled its existence, I now want to discuss the various undertakings that have been made to professionalise the discipline. The need to professionalise the discipline can be traced back to the 2004 conference of the then SA3 held in Kimberley. As part of these transformative discussions, the idea was to revise the association’s constitution, rebranding, and take over the editorial duties of the esteemed archaeological journal owned by the SAAS, the South African Archaeological Bulletin. The major impact that these initiatives had was to help professionalise the association in response to the changing status of archaeology and the increasing professionalisation of its practitioners. The new constitution was legally approved during the 2006 SA3 conference held at the Ditsong Museum of Cultural History in Pretoria. This vital legal step helped to fully rebrand SA3 into the Association of Southern African Professional Archaeologists (ASAPA), and provided a roadmap for more transformative initiatives.

PROFESSIONALISING THE DISCIPLINE OF ARCHAEOLOGY IN SOUTH AFRICA

During the first meeting of the ASAPA Council following our election in March 2008, we discussed the need to continue efforts that had already been initiated to professionalise the discipline. Beyond rebranding SA3 to ASAPA and launching a new constitution for the association, our view was that we need to ensure that we become a practicing entity, such that all archaeologists can legally be under one entity that can safeguard their interests. The reality was that before such initiatives, ASAPA was simply another ‘old boys club’ as it was largely dominated by men of an advanced age. Archaeologists were not mandated by any legal requirement to be members of the as-
sociation. What this meant was that the association did not have the ability to exercise its control over those who were not members, even when they were potentially bringing the discipline into disrepute. My view was that we needed to be registered by an Act of Parliament within the South African law, such that no archaeologists would practice in the country without being a registered member of the association. This would have meant that we become established as a statutory body, rather than the non-statutory status we currently have. A perfect example of a statutory body is the engineering profession. Engineers have to register with the Engineering Council of South Africa as per the requirements of the Professional Engineers’ Act (Act 81 of 1968). Failure to do so means the particular professional cannot operate as an engineer. The promulgation of the Engineers’ Act laid strong foundation for the engineering profession to self-govern, giving it a prized status. I had hoped for the same for the discipline of archaeology. However, such a feat is yet to be achieved. My view was always that we need to register as a statutory body which as you say, requires that an act of parliament is passed. This view is based on the understanding that such registration means all practicing archaeologists should be ASAPA members. ASAPA, most importantly, would be in the position of regulating archaeological programs offered in the country. We cannot undertake such important measures as a non-statutory body because membership is thus voluntary and cannot be used as a pre-requisite to practicing as a professional archaeologist.

Nevertheless, there have been significant developments over the past few years. Most importantly, it has been the successful registration of ASAPA with the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). This is an authority mandated, amongst other responsibilities, with the task of developing and implementing the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) as well as verifying the qualifications provided by academic institutions in the country.

Considering how long it has taken for the Brazilian archaeology to be regulated, South Africa still has some distance to travel before its archaeology profession could be regulated through a statutory body established under the South African parliament. In the case of Brazil, the need to regulate the discipline was first identified in the 1980s during the period when there was only one institution providing training in archaeology. Yet, it was only on 18 April 2018 that the archaeological profession was regulated under Federal Law no. 13.653. Today, and as a sign of progress made by the late 1980s, Brazil about 24 archaeology programs at both undergraduate and graduate levels. This significant change has led to the training of many students who have over time become professional archaeologists themselves.

REGISTRATION WITH THE SOUTH AFRICAN QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

ASAPA became a member of the SAQA on 09 March 2018 following efforts by its Council elected at the 2013 biannual conference held in Gaborone, Botswana. Prior to that, ASAPA had successfully applied for registration with the Department of Social Development as the Non-Profit Organisation. Amongst the criteria that ASAPA was subjected to was the need to be a legally constituted entity with the appropriate resources to deliver on its mandate. ASAPA further had to be governed as per good
corporate governance practices. The archaeological association is registered with the Directorate Registration and Recognition (DRR) of SAQA for five years, until March 2023 after which the recognition must either be renewed or it shall be cancelled. The litmus test for ASAPA to have their recognition renewed for a further five years will be the favourable outcome of a monitoring and evaluation process that will be conducted by SAQA. The DRR of SAQA is responsible for the reviewing and approval of applications for recognition from professional bodies as per the NQF Act (no. 67 of 2008), and to ensure that all South Africans benefit from the various professions active in the country.

According to SAQA regulations, a professional body is group of experts operating within a specific profession resulting in learning in and for the workplace. There are two categories of professional bodies. In the first, professional bodies are established by the law of the South African parliament. As a result, they are called statutory-recognised professional bodies. All professionals qualified within such specific disciplines must become members and be subjected to the agreed policies. Without such membership, they cannot be recognised as qualified in their chosen field of qualification. Institutions of higher education must also have their qualifications verified by these professional bodies, to ensure that their graduates are recognised. In the second category, professional bodies are established to represent members of a particular academic disciple. These bodies must be guided by an approved legal framework by its members safeguarding their existence. Because they are not established by the law of parliament like statutory bodies, they are registered with DRR of SAQA as non-statutory bodies. ASAPA’s recognition by SAQA falls under the category of non-statutory bodies. The benefit of becoming a member of SAQA is that the professional body concerned is subjected to high standards of competence, its members must adhere to generally agreed ethical principles, and they are provided with opportunities to continuously improve their professional competency.

While noting the broader benefits of ASAPA as a non-statutory entity recognised by SAQA, the main important questions could be: What does this mean for the ASAPA members? What benefits do they derive from such recognition by SAQA? According to the ASAPA Council, ASAPA members will benefit from this recognition particularly through the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) the entity is supposed to implement, recognition of prior learning, and improved credibility of the entity. For instance, it could be decided that each member requires a certain number of CPD points accumulated over a certain period for them to be able to retain their membership. The CPD policy, however, is yet to be implemented by ASAPA, but must enjoy majority support for it to be effective.

Probably as an unintended outcome, ASAPA has seen a significant increase in its membership or an interest to continue existing membership. While this can be directly attributed to the official recognition by SAQA, it is important to note that during the same period, there has been an increase in the number of foreign teams working in South Africa. Some of these would be archaeologists who want to obtain work permits to stay in South Africa. As a result, the Department of Home Affairs need letters from relevant professional associations for the endorsement of their applications. It helps that archaeology is recognised as a scarce skill in the country. I must further state that before the constitutional amendments approved at the Business General Meeting
held during the 2017 ASAPA conference in Pretoria, applying for membership was made cumbersome by the requirement that the applicant must find about four existing members who must sign a membership application form for that particular potential member. Not only that, the Curriculum Vitae of this applicant was to be circulated to every ASAPA member who were all given about four to six weeks for an opportunity to object against someone’s application if they felt the need to do so. I sincerely felt this was gatekeeping by those who had already attained membership, and was not in keeping with having a fair and open membership application process. It was not necessary in my view because there were clear guidelines as to how one qualifies for each of the membership categories (Professional, Technical, Honorary, or Affiliate) allowed for in the constitution. This highly needed constitutional amendment, therefore, was a big achievement and could have played its part in helping to increase membership numbers. It felt like a great achievement to finally have this requirement scrapped off. Sadly, membership to the Cultural Resources Management (CRM) section of ASAPA still requires that an applicant’s CV is circulated to all CRM accredited members. I have concerns about this, but such a concern is not as great as I had with the general membership application. Whatever reasons may be offered for an increase in ASAPA membership, there can be no hesitation that SAQA’s recognition has had an important impact in significantly increasing the membership numbers.

CONCLUSION

The discipline of archaeology has a very long history in South Africa, cutting across four centuries. In its early days, archaeology was closely associated with colonial structures of governance. This element of archaeology continued for many years, with these amateur archaeologists playing their trade to nurture their interest to learn about the past and some quenching their thirst for collecting archaeological materials. Political nature of archaeology continued to define the discipline over many years. This has been, amongst others, in terms of who has been getting recognition archaeological investigations, the training and employment of archaeologists in the country, the perceived refusal by South African abused archaeologists to pronounce against Apartheid, the mooted and controversial banning of South African and Namibian based archaeologists from attending the 1986 11th Congress of the Union Internationale des Sciences Préhistoriques et Protohistoriques (UISPP). With all this rich history of archaeology in the country, it was a significant development when ASAPA was formally recognised as a non-statutory body by SAQA. This provides the association, in South Africa, with an opportunity to bring integrity to the discipline. While the SAQA registration may not be as a statutory body established by an act of the South African Parliament, it does a lot of good in efforts to being a professional image to the discipline. Considering that it took more than three decades for Brazilian archaeology to be formally regulated under Federal Law no. 13.753, South African archaeology should take inspiration that one day it to can be established by an act of the national Parliament. The Society of Brazilian Archaeology (SAB) has witnessed significant progress over the years, in terms of academic programs offered, the employment of archaeologists in government agencies (i.e. National Institute of Historic and Artistic Patrimony), and the growth of contract archaeology. Drawing
from such inspiration will ensure that ASAPA has more legalised control over the teaching of archaeology in the country in terms of evaluating and accrediting archaeological programs. In addition, such stronger recognition by SAQA will ensure that no one can practice as an archaeologist in South Africa without being a member of ASAPA. Membership, therefore, would not be voluntary which would mean that subjecting members to the constitution and the code of conduct would be much enhanced.

PROFISSIONALIZAÇÃO DA ARQUEOLOGIA SUL-AFRICANA: UM SALTO IMPORTANTE PARA O FUTURO

Abstract: archaeology as a discipline has developed following generally similar trends around the world. In its infancy days, archaeology was largely dominated by collectors who were not providing much interpretation of the materials they were gathering. As amateurs, their analyses of the past was severely limited. In the case of South Africa, it was only in 1923 that a first South African was trained as an archaeologists. Training of more archaeologists was a slow phenomenon for many reasons, and thus it was not until a growing number of universities introduced archaeological programs in the country that there were concerted efforts to train more scholars in the discipline. While all these developments were taking place, however, the professional was not regulated. Instead, archaeological associations were informally constituted by like-minded people who shared the same passion for the past. It was not until March 2018 that the Association for Southern African Professional Archaeologists (ASAPA), administratively and historically based in South Africa, was recognised as a non-statutory body. The discipline has taken a long trajectory to reach this level. In my opinion, the preferred recognition would have been registration as a statutory body established by the law of South African Parliament. That aside, I share the journey South African archaeology has traversed over the period encompassing four centuries, as well as evaluate the impact made by the 2018 recognition by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA).


References


