Lasting Legacies

Contemporary Struggles and Historical Dispossession in South Africa

Robin L. Turner

"Awakening on Friday morning, June 20, 1913, the South African native found himself, not actually a slave, but a pariah in the land of his birth."[1] This opening passage from Solomon Plaatje's classic *Native Life in South Africa* underscores the importance of land to well-being and belonging. State-led and state-sanctioned dispossession causes suffering and signals political exclusion, rendering the dispossessed denizens who are subject to the state but not full members of the polity. Highlighting the adverse effects of the Natives Land Act of 1913 in its unsuccessful plea for repeal of that act and greater recognition of native rights, *Native Life* evocatively describes the impoverishment, illness, and premature death caused by the expulsion of black people from putatively white places and draws attention to prior state "land grabbing" in what became South Africa.[2] Following the incorporation of Thaba Nchu into the Orange Free State, successive governments "confiscated all the land not yet surveyed," created legal barriers to black land acquisition, and then stopped granting the exemptions through which some had secured land title in 1900, thereby ensuring that many black people lacked state-recognized rights to land and could not obtain them.[3] State-led and state-sanctioned racialized dispossession in present-day South Africa began before 1913, as this example highlights, and continued long thereafter.[4] White supremacist governments further racialized the national territory for most of the twentieth century, circumscribing black property rights and displacing millions of people.

Contending that twenty-first-century natural resource use and land rights conflicts are haunted by the long shadow of historical dispossession, this article examines the relationship between this past and the present in the South African interior. Focusing on the regions that now encompass the Mapungubwe National Park and Cultural Landscape in Limpopo province and the Madikwe Game Reserve in the North West province, I describe recent land and natural resource struggles and detail the dispossession and partial displacement of black people from these regions (see fig. 1). These changes

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1. Plaatje, *Native Life in South Africa*, 7.

2. Ibid. On suffering, see chaps. 4–5; on land grabbing, see 72.

3. Ibid., 72.

4. In fact, "land dispossession had largely taken place before the Natives Land Act of 1913" (Beinart and Delius, "Historical Context and Legacy," 669).

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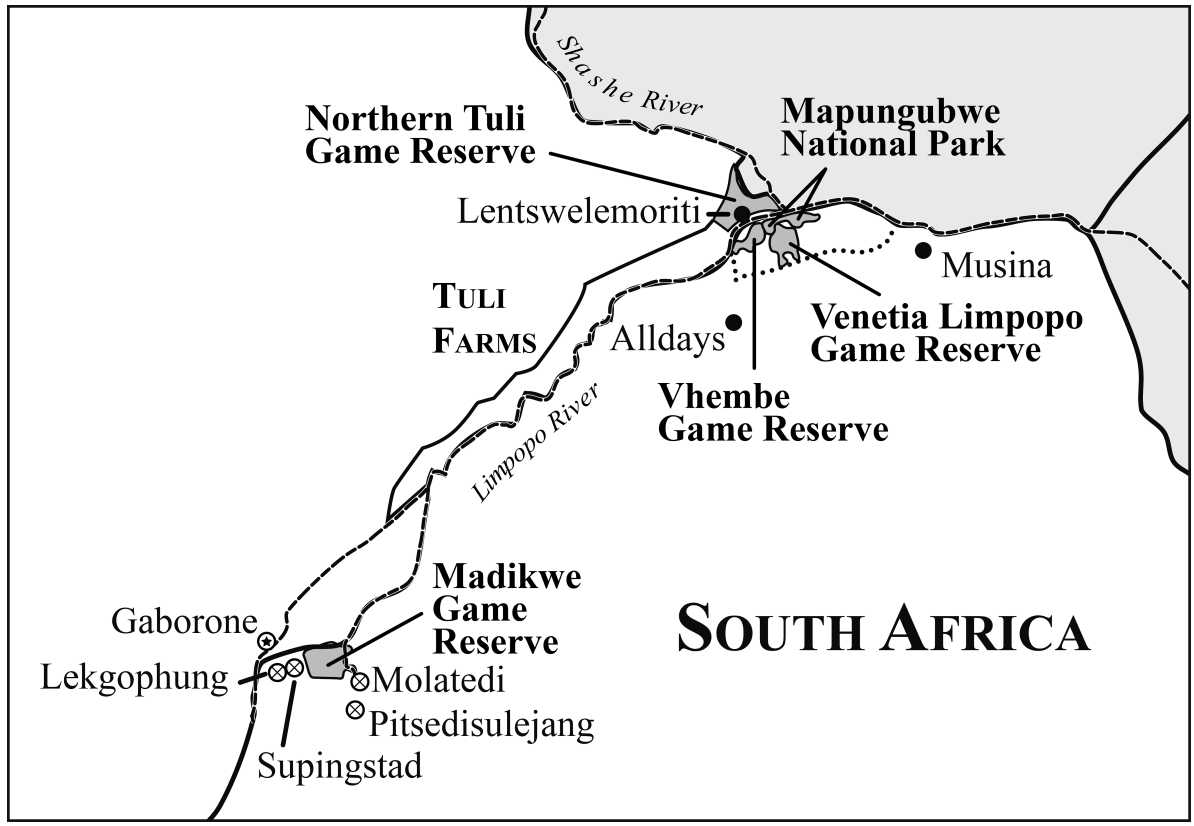

Figure 1. The Madikwe and Mapungubwe Regions, South Africa

facilitated enduring transformations of the rural terrain and political economy as well as adversely affecting black denizens, producing constellations of interests that not only render full restoration of lost land unlikely but also hinder dispossessed people's efforts to gain greater access to and control over land and other natural resources.

Looking beyond what Cheryl Walker terms a "'master narrative' of loss and restoration" focused on providing redress for apartheid forced removals, this article delineates how black landholders in the Mapungubwe and Madikwe regions were dispossessed over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and attends to subsequent land-use change.[5] Conceptualizing dispossession as an extended, uneven, contested process of losing control over a resource rather than a singular legal event, I discuss key moments in the formal, de jure seizure of black-held land and trace the slower, uneven process through which many black people were effectively dispossessed, losing de facto control over the land in these places.[6] The nineteenth-century refusal to recognize long-resident peoples' property rights to the lands where they lived, farmed, hunted, and traded laid the foundation for diminution of their access to—"ability to derive benefits from"—these lands and natural resources, and for the subsequent displacement of many black denizens.[7] The history of racialized dispossession extends beyond the post–Native Land Act land losses for which South Africans are constitutionally entitled to redress.[8]

Analysis of recent struggles in the Madikwe and Mapungubwe regions illustrates the endur-

5. Walker, *Landmarked*, 12.

6. "Holding and possession both mean that one has control of the piece of land or resource. . . . These terms connote nothing about whether that person has a legal right to hold or possess that resource" (Bruce, "A Review of Tenure Terminology," 3). I thank Gillian Hart for clarifying my approach to dispossession.

7. Ribot and Peluso, "A Theory of Access," 153.

8. The Restitution of Land Act of 1994 and the 1996 constitution contain provisions that only those dispossessed after June 20, 1913, are entitled to restitution. The Restitution of Land Rights Amendment Act of 2014 reopened the land claim process until June 30, 2019, but did not alter these provisions.

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ing effects of dispossession. Large expanses of public and privately held land in these regions are now devoted to nature conservation and tourism. However, the coerced displacement of black people from Mapungubwe and Madikwe was *not* directly intertwined with the expansion of the nature conservation estate or its depopulation as in the better-known Kruger National Park, Kalahari Gemsbok National Park, Hluhluwe-Umfolozi Game Reserve, and St. Lucia Wetland Park cases.[9] Showing that displacement facilitated the establishment of conservation areas in Madikwe and Mapungubwe nevertheless, I contend that these changes now structure current land-use debates to the disadvantage of the dispossessed. Situating its analysis of twenty-first-century land and natural use conflicts, attending to longer, place-specific histories of racialized dispossession, and focusing on land-use change rather than memory or social differentiation, this article makes a distinctive contribution to scholarship on the South African past and present.[10]

The next section discusses contemporary land and natural resource use struggles in the Mapungubwe and Madikwe regions. Based on field research carried out in 2005, 2006, 2010, 2011, and 2015, the narratives draw from interviews with current and former residents of these places, land claimants, government officials, businesspeople, and conservation advocates, and from public and privately held records, media coverage, and other documents. The subsequent section delves into the specific histories of these regions. Informed by historical scholarship on the succession of polities in which present-day Mapungubwe and Madikwe were situated between 1830 and 1994, I trace the dispossession and gradual displacement of black landholders from these regions, consider the land changes occurring in the aftermath of dispossession, and analyze their political economic effects.[11]

Struggling over Land and Natural Resources

Centering on past, present, and future property rights and natural resource use, contemporary struggles in the Mapungubwe and Madikwe regions show how past dispossession continues to shape present struggles. The Machete land claim, Vele colliery, and Barokologadi land claim conflicts described in this section illuminate the uneven terrain on which South Africans now contend for rights to and influence over valued rural territory and highlight the barriers to reversing historical dispossession. Recognition of the losses suffered by Machete and Barokologadi people did not enable either to secure full access to and control over the land they once held. These cases suggest that public policies intended to redress segregation and apartheid-era land loss grant the dispossessed and their descendants a venue in which to articulate historical injury and to make claims on the state but do not alter the dominant understandings, land-use patterns, and constellations of interests that favor present rights holders.

Nature and Heritage Threatened? Mining and Land Restitution in Mapungubwe

Situated in northernmost Limpopo province at the confluence of the Limpopo and Shashe Rivers and first settled between one million to 250 thousand BCE, the Mapungubwe region was the locus of a sophisticated civilization between 900 and 1290 CE. Rediscovered in 1932–33, ancient Mapungubwe garnered renewed attention as a symbol of Africa's rich past and potential future, exemplified in these comments by then president Thabo Mbeki:

> In 1932 an Afrikaner prospector named Van Graan approached a strange-looking outcrop in the Limpopo valley known as Mapungubwe Hill, in the area where the borders of South Africa, Botswana and Zimbabwe meet. Mapungubwe Hill held great mysterious power over the local people

9. See, for example, Carruthers, *The Kruger National Park*, and Ramutsindela, "The Perfect Way," on Kruger Park; Ellis, "The ≠Khomani Sand Land Claim," on Kalahari Gemsbok; Brooks, "Images of 'Wild Africa,'" on Hluhluwe; and Walker, *Landmarked*, on St. Lucia.

10. Most contemporary South African land scholarship acknowledges that dispossession predates 1913 but focuses on twentieth-century displacement and postapartheid land reforms. See, for example, James, *Gaining Ground*; Zenker, "New Law against an Old State"; Ramutsindela, "The Enduring Spatial Legacy of the Natives Land Act"; Walker et al., *Land, Memory, Reconstruction, and Justice*; and Walker, *Landmarked*.

11. Research by Johan Bergh, Friedrich Braun, Peter Delius, Harvey M. Feinberg, Maanda Mulaudzi, Stanley Trapido, and Roger Wagner was particularly helpful in teasing out differences between the territory over which polities asserted authority and that which the polities actually controlled, occupied, and used.

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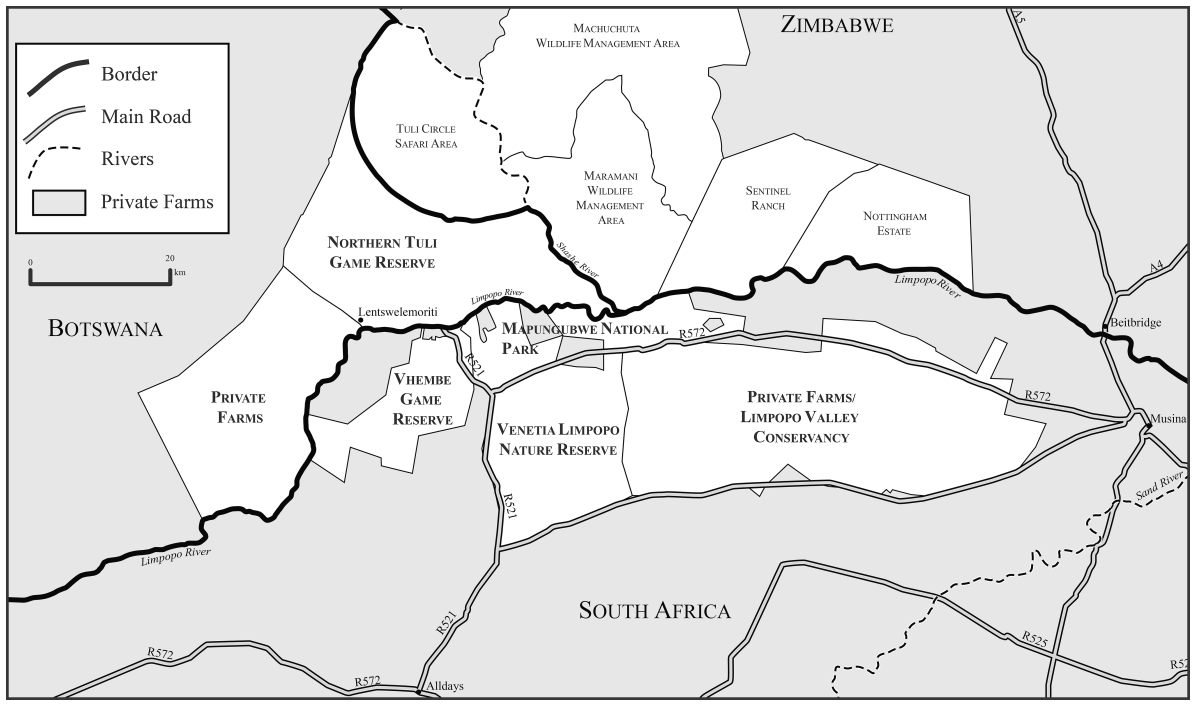

Figure 2: The Limpopo-Shashe Confluence Region

> who always turned their backs on it when outsiders attempted to discuss it. . . . I think we will all agree that much still needs to be learned about the full significance of Mapungubwe, her civilization and her technological advancement. . . . The source of our power comes not only from our present, but from our past.[12]

The Mapungubwe Cultural Landscape was designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2003.

The Mapungubwe region now encompasses numerous nature and cultural heritage tourism, game farming and ranching, and commercial agriculture enterprises, the Mapungubwe National Park and Cultural Heritage Landscape, and the immense De Beers Venetia diamond mine (see fig. 2). Providing an anchor point for nature and cultural heritage tourism since its establishment in 1998, the Mapungubwe National Park expanded from three farms in 2001 to 19,800 hectares of land in two large sections in 2008, as South African National Parks and the Peace Parks Foundation worked toward establishing the Greater Mapungubwe Transfrontier Conservation Area across the confluence region in South Africa, Botswana, and Zimbabwe.[13] Khoisan rock art and material remnants of ancient Mapungubwe are presented and preserved at the national park and scattered well beyond its borders.

Conflict has roiled Mapungubwe for the last several years as two land restitution claims and a proposed coal mine brought the region's future into question. Seeking redress for post–June 1913 displacement, land claims by Machete and Tshivula people could displace current land rights holders and had the potential to produce a shift away from conservation tourism and commercial agriculture *if* the settlement resulted in transfer of unrestricted title to the claimants. The proposed colliery was seen by its opponents as a threat to regional biodiversity, cultural heritage, agriculture, and tourism. Both developments spurred mobilization within and beyond the Mapungubwe region, with current landowners and land users opposing the land claim while the anti–coal mine campaign

12. Thabo Mbeki, "Statement at the National Research and Technology Foresight Launch," March 23, 2000, Unisa Online, www.unisa.ac.za/contents/colleges/docs/tm2000/tm032300.pdf. Also see Schoeman and Pikirayi, "Repatriating More Than Mapungubwe Human Remains."

13. Bernard van Lente, Mapungubwe Park Manager, interview by the author, January 10, 2006; South African National Parks (SANParks), "Mapungubwe National Park Management Plan."

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brought together claimants, farmers, tourism businesspeople, and conservationists. Discussing the land claim and colliery in turn, I consider the differing constellations of interests arising from past dispossession and present land use and describe how contending parties have used heritage, historical connection to the land, and their productive or sustainable resource management as resources in these struggles.

Initially filed in 1998, the Machete and Tshivula collective land restitution claims first became public on July 7, 2006, when the Commission on Restitution of Land Rights gave notice of these claims and two others to large expanses of northern Limpopo land.[14] The properties listed in these overlapping claims included part of Mapungubwe National Park and nearby farms targeted for park inclusion, part of the De Beers–owned Venetia Limpopo Nature Reserve and Venetia diamond mine, and portions of several properties then used for farming, game ranching, and tourism. Two years after gazetting these claims, the regional commission issued a report that deemed the Machete claim largely valid and dismissed the overlapping portions of the Tshivhula claim. Stating that the Machete had possessed "indigenous ownership rights" to fifty-six farms from which they had been gradually dispossessed over several decades, the 2008 report called for "a detailed feasibility research study" of restoration.[15]

The Mapungubwe land claim brought the contrasting perspectives and interests of current landowners, land users, and dispossessed people to the surface. Many landowners and land users responded to the Machete and Tshivhula land claims with skepticism. Since the land on which the claimants and their ancestors lived, farmed, grazed livestock, and buried their dead is now immensely valuable, some dismissed the claims as ill-founded resource grabs that misrepresent regional history. Skeptics asserted that black denizens of Mapungubwe had lost land rights long before 1913, that the Machete and Tshivhula had chosen to leave the region, and that current politics rather than historical facts were driving the commission's validation of much of the Machete claim.[16] One person with strong ties to the region since 1965 told me, "They [the Tshivula] were advised by the lawyers as to what to claim. . . . The majority of the people voluntarily left the area because of drought in the 1930s. The Limpopo River was dry, and there were few wells. People came looking at Mapungubwe because they've heard that there was gold. But many moved because it was impossible to survive, so it was voluntary removal."[17]

Partly a strategic response by those seeking to retain state-recognized rights and access to regional resources, counterclaims opposing Mapungubwe land claims also reflect widely held interpretations of South Africa's past that conflate the loss of formal land rights and effective dispossession: people use and exert control over land to which they do not hold title, as discussed in the introduction. South African land claim commissions and courts have validated numerous restitution claims involving untitled "beneficial occupiers" displaced after the Natives Land Act of 1913.[18] In the Mapungubwe region, as subsequent sections detail, nineteenth-century white settler polities withheld state-recognized property rights from black landholders in the nineteenth century but did not fully control their putative territory; most black denizens were not fully dispossessed before the twentieth century.

The struggle over the Mapungubwe restitution claim has been waged mostly behind closed doors for nearly a decade. Although those with valid land claims are entitled to restitution, granting the Machete claimants even restricted title preserving the conservation status of claimed farms in the national park and Venetia Limpopo Nature Reserve, a far more likely outcome than conveyance of unrestricted property rights, would be extraordinarily expensive, as would purchase of

14. General Notice in Terms of the Restitution of Land Rights Act, 1994 (Act 22 of 1994), Notice 879, July 7, 2006.

15. Commission on Restitution of Land Rights, "Acceptance Report," 12 and 29.

16. Informal interactions in 2005, 2006, and 2011; E. O. M. Hanish, interview by the author, Limpopo province, January 16, 2006; Mapungubwe landowner, interview by the author, Limpopo province, January 27, 2006; and Huffman, "Historical Archaeology of the Mapungubwe Area."

17. E. O. M. Hanish, interview by the author, Limpopo province, January 16, 2006.

18. See Hall, "Reconciling the Past, Present, and Future," 22, and Mostert, "Change through Jurisprudence," 61–79.

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comparable land or other equitable redress.[19] "It is an agreement which will probably cost billions," as then land commissioner Tele Mapoto said in 2009, without noting that the national government has never fully funded restitution.[20]

Research to date suggests that only model claims—those involving the forced removal of a group at a well-defined point in time—and model claimants—those possessing strong, politically savvy leadership and the appearance of unity—have secured relatively swift, somewhat satisfactory settlements.[21] Subject to coerced displacement over an extended period of time and now spatially dispersed, the Machete are not model claimants and have not managed to present a united front.[22] With little progress toward settlement evident in the late 2000s beyond the acquisition of three farms, a small contingent of claimants moved to Den Staat, a commission-purchased property situated between Mapungubwe National Park and a commercial irrigated farm.[23] Disrupting a pending partnership between the Machete claimant organization and the neighboring commercial farm, the claimant settlers began growing tomatoes and harvesting wildlife despite their lack of a title deed, of capital to repair the degraded infrastructure left behind by the prior owner, and of support from the commission or other claimants. Most Machete claimants did not relocate to Den Staat, instead continuing to lobby for resolution of their claim with little success.

Failure to resolve the Machete claim has not only frustrated claimants but also affected landowners and land users who must secure commission permission for sale, lease, or development of claimed properties, impeding efforts to consolidate the Mapungubwe National Park and create the Greater Mapungubwe Transfrontier Conservation Area. The commission has granted permission for South African National Parks to acquire farms along the periphery of Mapungubwe National Park, but the agency has not pursued this strategy.[24] Reasoning that "it still doesn't make sense to buy land when you might lose it," as an agency executive commented, South African National Parks has instead prioritized reaching contractual agreements with private landowners to incorporate their land into the national park and seeking a similar agreement with the Machete.[25] The claimants, landowners, and land users were still negotiating with a shifting set of land claim commissioners and officials in 2015.

As 2008 drew to a close, word spread that Coal of Africa Limited (CoAL) sought to mine coal in the Mapungubwe region.[26] The proposed mine, the Vele Colliery, would be built on an 8,662 hectare area along the Limpopo River located about 7 kilometers east of Mapungubwe National Park's western boundary and 27 kilometers away from Mapungubwe Hill.[27] CoAL sought to extract up to 5 million tons of coal each year through underground and opencast (strip) mining for at least thirty years, removing and processing large quantities of soil. The colliery also would extract up to 5,000 cubic meters per day from the Limpopo River and aquifer. CoAL submitted an application for mining rights to the Department of Mineral Resources in November 2008 and began pursuing other required authorizations after company representatives met with municipal, provincial, and national officials and a few landowners.[28] The department then ordered the company to submit

19. A 2007 Memorandum of Agreement between the Ministry of Agriculture and Land Affairs and the Ministry of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, adopted as national policy in 2008, states that the conservation status of claimed land and protected areas must be maintained. See Ramutsindela and Shabangu, "Conditioned by Neoliberalism," 451–52.

20. Tempelhoff, "Mapungubwe's Future in Doubt."

21. James, *Gaining Ground*; Walker, *Landmarked*; and Robins and van der Waal, "'Model Tribes' and Iconic Conservationists."

22. Machete claimants, interview by the author, Limpopo province, January 25, 2006; SANParks employees and Tshivula claimant, interviews by the author, Limpopo province, July 25, 27, 28, and 31, 2011; Machete claimants, restitution official, and Mapungubwe landowner, interviews by the author, Gauteng province, August 2 and 3, 2011, and November 1, 2015.

23. Four people involved in Mapungubwe land management, restitution, and conservation, interviews by the author, Limpopo province, August 1 and 2, 2011, and Gauteng province, August 15 and 16, 2011.

24. Three SANParks officials, interviews by the author, Gauteng province, August 15 and 16, 2011.

25. SANParks official, interview by the author, Gauteng province, August 15, 2011.

26. I use "CoAL" in all references in the main text to Coal of Africa Limited, the Limpopo Coal Company (Pty) Ltd., and other subsidiaries CoAL has created for its mining operations in South Africa's Limpopo province.

27. Limpopo Coal Company, "Vele Colliery Project Environmental Management Programme [EMP]."

28. Limpopo Coal Company, "Vele Colliery Project EMP Annexure N."

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a scoping report, an environmental management plan, and an environmental impact assessment.

Mineral extraction is governed by numerous acts, regulations, and formal procedures in South Africa, as elsewhere.[29] Officially, if not in practice, companies must jump several official hurdles to establish a new mine, obtaining a variety of licenses, permits, and impact assessments from different government agencies including the Department of Mineral Resources and other less powerful agencies. The Vele Colliery struggle was waged concurrently in government agencies, in the courts, and among various local, national, and global publics.

CoAL initially made steady progress by focusing on the relatively supportive national Department of Mineral Resources and limiting its interactions with likely opponents. CoAL representatives had informal discussions and meetings with interested and affected parties between January and November 2008 but did not contact prominent Mapungubwe landowner Paul Hatty, who owned a tourist lodge less than 10 kilometers away from the proposed mine, chaired the Mapungubwe National Park Committee for several years, and led the Limpopo Valley Conservancy. CoAL also made no direct contact with the Department of Environmental Affairs and the South African Heritage Resources Agency, which have statutory responsibility for the Mapungubwe National Park and Cultural Landscape UNESCO World Heritage Site. The meeting with these agencies and CoAL took place only eight days before the January 31, 2009, deadline for comments on the Vele Colliery scoping report, which was subsequently extended to February 16. Several of the parties most interested and affected by the proposed mine thus had little opportunity to participate in the early stages of the approval process. "I believe the mine thought they could get away with stealth. They tried to do it under cover. That is what has increased the ire of those against the mine," Hatty commented.[30]

Opposition to the proposed Vele Colliery was evident from the moment word began to spread. As Alex Schoeman, a South African archaeologist and former Mapungubwe resident, said, "I heard over Christmas. They [CoAL] were granted rights over the holdings. It came out of the blue completely. . . . My first thought was 'Hell, no! This has to be a mistake.' In the end it was true."[31] The Endangered Wildlife Trust and the Association of Southern African Professional Archaeologists each submitted critical comments on the scoping report in January 2009. The South African Heritage Resources Agency, the Department of Environmental Affairs, and the Peace Parks Foundation expressed concern regarding the mine's potential adverse effects on regional natural and heritage resources in multiple venues. Mapungubwe land claimants, landowners, and land users expressed opposition to the mine at the first open public meeting in April 2009, detailing an array of overlapping concerns regarding heritage, biodiversity, farming, and tourism.

The conflict entered a new stage when the Department of Mineral Resources issued a mining license for the Vele Colliery in January 2010. Local activists then formed the Mapungubwe Action Group to campaign against the mine and created the Save Mapungubwe Coalition with six established nonprofit organizations: the Association of Southern African Professional Archaeologists, BirdLife South Africa, the Endangered Wildlife Trust, the Peace Parks Foundation, Wilderness Foundation South Africa, and the World Wide Fund for Nature South Africa.

The Mapungubwe Action Group brought together a disparate group of people united principally by their opposition to the proposed mine: farmers, farm managers, and tourism businesspeople, Machete land claimants, Vhangona cultural activists, and shareholders in the Northern Tuli Game Reserve, situated across the Limpopo in Botswana (see fig. 2).[32] Mapungubwe Action Group activists continuously highlighted the sym-

29. Relevant legislation includes the Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act of 2002, the Natural Environmental Management Act of 1998, and the National Heritage Resources Act of 1999.

30. Paul Hatty, interview by the author, Gauteng province, August 2, 2011.

31. Maria H. (Alex) Schoeman, interview by the author, Gauteng province, August 3, 2011.

32. One of several groups claiming ancestral ties to ancient Mapungubwe, Vhangona activists have supported cultural heritage and biodiversity conservation in the region and sought to participate in decision making. Ratshalingwa Wilson Sigwavhulimu, interview by the author, Limpopo province, January 16, 2006; Thirabeli Robert Rakhadani and Fhavhadziawa Thomas Nephawe, interview by the author, Limpopo province, July 30, 2011; and Schoeman and Pikirayi, "Repatriating More Than Mapungubwe Human Remains."

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bolic, affective, and material threats posed by the Vele Colliery on television, film, websites, and other media while specifying the mine's potential adverse effects in interactions with decision makers. "Our national heritage is being put at risk. . . . 'You bestow the Order of Mapungubwe. How can you allow the place after which so prestigious an award is named to be destroyed?,'" said land claim leader Lucas Machete in a *National Geographic* article.[33] "This is very short-term thinking. . . . Mining is for 30 or 40 years. Tourism is forever," a white landowner told me.[34] "We would not allow anyone to come and destroy the heritage that will be there for a 'project' that will last 25 to 30 years . . . just for financial gain. We would never in our life let down the expectations of our ancestors," said a Vhangona Cultural Movement leader.[35]

The Save Mapungubwe Coalition partners led the bureaucratic and legal struggle against the mine. Coalition members appealed the issuance of mining rights and the environmental management program approval appeal in 2010, seeking immediate suspension of the mining right, challenging the process through which these approvals were granted, and elaborating upon the mine's substantial adverse effects. In August 2010, shortly after the coalition sought urgent interdicts, the Department of Environmental Affairs ordered CoAL to cease several construction activities begun without prior environmental authorization and the Department of Water Affairs ordered CoAL to "cease all unlawful water use immediately."

The Mapungubwe Action Group Save Mapungubwe Coalition campaign garnered international media coverage, motivated UNESCO inspection visits and expressions of concern, and led to a months-long suspension of construction activities but did not achieve its ultimate objective. The Department of Water Affairs and the Department of Environmental Affairs issued the requisite licenses and authorizations in 2011, and the minister of water affairs then lifted the water license suspension in 2012 without hearings on the Save Mapungubwe Coalition appeal.[36] The September 2011 announcement that CoAL, South African National Parks, and the Department of Environmental Affairs had agreed to work together to conserve the Mapungubwe Cultural Landscape affirmed that CoAL had secured sufficient support from national decision makers to proceed. The Save Mapungubwe Coalition has focused on damage control since 2011, seeking to protect the landscape first through direct negotiations with CoAL and then through the Vele Colliery Environmental Monitoring Committee.[37] The Vele colliery began operating in 2012 but its long-term prospects are uncertain, as the coal is of lower-than-expected quality. CoAL suspended mine operations and laid off workers in 2013 but has indicated that operations should resume in 2016.[38]

Recent struggles in Mapungubwe demonstrate the pressing need to more fully reckon with the material and discursive legacies of South Africa's past in its postapartheid present. In each case, activists pressured government officials to not only acknowledge black and indigenous peoples' long history in the region but also prioritize redressing dispossession and protecting heritage in land rights and natural resource use decisions. Machete claimants used elders' knowledge of burial sites and other markers of past residence to buttress assertions that they had previously possessed land rights, while anticolliery activists accentuated the heritage, conservation, and long-term economic

33. Marshall, "Ancient African Citadel Threatened by Mining Venture."

34. Nick Hilterman, interview by the author, Gauteng province, July 22, 2011.

35. Ratshalingwa Wilson Sigwavhulimu, interview by the author, Limpopo province, July 30, 2011.

36. CoAL petitioned the minister to allow the water-use license to remain in full effect in August 2011, and Save Mapungubwe submitted arguments against the lifting of the license in September 2011.

37. Save Mapungubwe Coalition, "Media Statement: The Save Mapungubwe Coalition Withdraws from the Memorandum of Understanding with Coal of Africa Limited, and Joins the Environmental Monitoring Committee for the Vele Colliery," December 7, 2012, www.ewt.org.za/media/2012/Save%20Mapungubwe%20Coalition%20Statement%207%20Dec%202012.pdf.2012. South African National Parks is a parastatal organization that took no public stance on the proposed mine, and its policies prevented most staff from publicly expressing their views about the proposed mine. However, some Mapungubwe National Parks employees assisted with antimine activism behind the scenes.

38. See Ryan, "Retrenchments Follow," and Dick, "Coal of Africa's Half a Billion-Dollar Baby."

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value of Mapungubwe to the region, nation, and world.[39] These mobilizations succeeded in securing recognition but failed to accomplish their objectives. Confronted with cultural heritage and dispossession on the one hand and biodiversity, tourism, and mining on the other, national decision makers appeared to prioritize high-value present and future land uses over redressing past dispossession.

Conservation versus Restoration: The Barokologadi Campaign

The Barokologadi restitution struggle illustrates how post-dispossession land-use change has influenced property rights and natural resource debates in the Madikwe region. The collective land restitution claim T. Z. Molwantwa filed on behalf of the Barokologadi ba ga Maotwe on July 2, 1995, marked the beginning of an extended struggle over land rights, land use, and appropriate redress. This was a model claim with model claimants in many respects. Forcibly removed from Melorane in 1949–50, with a politically astute, well-networked leader who mobilized well-off urban Barokologadi and those residing in former Bophuthatswana, Barokologadi claimants presented a united front despite internal divisions.[40] Land-use change presented a substantial barrier to redress, nevertheless, as the place that the Barokologadi called Melorane now comprised a large section of Madikwe Game Reserve, a nature conservation and tourism site, and several properties leased to *baruakgomo* (black emerging farmers) and other individuals.

Contention over the Barokologadi claim centered on the appropriate form and scope of restitution: restoration, compensation, or alternate land. Affected land users opposed restoration and sought to retain the claimed land by emphasizing that the Barokologadi had not *owned* Melorane, by asserting their present state-recognized property rights, and by highlighting their improvements to the land and their formal and less formal interactions with decision makers throughout the claim negotiations. Madikwe lessee Barry York challenged the validity of the Barokologadi claim, asserting in court and in other venues that he had laboriously transformed a degraded farm into the successful Sebele game hunting and cattle farming operation on the understanding that he could purchase the land. The *baruakgomo* also lobbied heavily to retain use of and secure title to the leased properties as the North West Parks and Tourism Board pressed to maintain the integrity of Madikwe Game Reserve.

Relying on the discursive erasure of past dispossession and the prioritization of present land uses for persuasive efficacy, restoration opponents met with success at first. The provincial State Land Disposal Committee officials moved to transfer title to Barry York and the *baruakgomo* even though no transfers on land subject to published restitution claims are supposed to be processed; restitution officials intervened to halt the transfers.[41] Regional Land Claims Commission initially accepted opponents' framing of the claim as well, characterizing a settlement offer in which the claimants would have gained title to Sebele farm but not to land inside Madikwe Game Reserve as "a clear upgrading of the rights from Beneficial Occupation to Ownership Rights" in 2003 correspondence.[42] The Barokologadi Land Claims Committee consistently rejected these arguments and sought restoration of Melorane throughout their prolonged negotiations with the Commission on Restitution of Land Rights, the North West Parks and Tourism Board, and other parties from 1999 onward, using pickets and presenta-

39. Several contemporary ethnocultural communities, including the Lemba, Vhangona, and Twamamba, have asserted ancestral ties to the ancient Mapungubwe civilization. See Schoeman et al., "Repatriating More Than Mapungubwe Human Remains," and Nienaber et al., "Reburial of the Mapungubwe Human Remains."

40. Collective identity conflicts intertwined with the Barokologadi's forced removal are discussed in Turner, "Land Restitution, Traditional Leadership, and Belonging."

41. Comprising representatives from several government departments, the State Land Disposal Committee was supposed to track and ratify land allocations. Two participants in land restitution negotiations and one affected party, interviews by the author, Gauteng and North West provinces, July 5, July 6, and August 25, 2005; Tsholofelo Zebulon Molwantwa, interview by the author, Gauteng province, February 8 and March 13, 2006; North West Parks and Tourism Board employee, interview by the author, Gauteng province, March 21, 2006.

42. Regional land commissioner for Gauteng and North West province correspondence to Louise du Plessis, legal representative of the Barokologadi claimants, February 14, 2003.

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tions at national and provincial land summits to draw attention to their cause.

The Barokologadi claimants achieved a partial victory in 2007, securing the first state recognition of these people as rights-bearing titleholders to Melorane in their history. That year, the Barokologadi Communal Property Association (CPA), the North West Parks and Tourism Board, the Commission for Restitution of Land Rights, and other government departments signed a binding agreement stating the Barokologadi CPA would receive title to all of the claimed properties, that the land inside Madikwe Game Reserve would remain a protected part of that reserve, and that the reserve land would be managed through a comanagement agreement. The agreement also stated that the claimants would receive financial compensation "for the loss of enjoyment, use, and occupation of the claimed land falling within Madikwe Game Reserve" and that the CPA would receive restitution grants, planning grants, and financial aid to support development of the restored land.[43] The Barokologadi settlement marked both a departure from and a consolidation of past dispossession: decision makers limited Barokologadi access to and control over Madikwe Game Reserve but recognized and compensated them for this loss.

"We have to make sure that we use the land appropriately so that it can benefit everybody. . . . Now that we have won the land we have to prepare how we are going to use it," T. Z. Molwantwa told me, as the likely scope of the settlement became clear.[44] Granted restricted title to a portion of Madikwe Game Reserve and unfettered title to the remainder of Melorane, the CPA decided to create commercial agricultural and tourism enterprises rather than attempt to settle their dispersed membership on the restored land. The Barokologadi CPA had secured title to most of Melorane but had few of the promised development funds and was still enmeshed in comanagement negotiations with the Parks and Tourism Board in mid-2010.[45] Despite the slow implementation of the settlement, however, the CPA had raised about 300,000 rand from its members, secured a National Development Agency grant, partnered with a business development company, formed a joint venture with a local farmer, and started a livestock project on lands outside Madikwe Game Reserve by that point.[46] Continuing to work toward their vision for the restored land, the Barokologadi had managed to obtain title to all but one farm, secure partial implementation of the comanagement agreement, raise more than 25 million rand in project funding from three national departments, and recruit investors to underwrite leisure tourism developments on their land by October 2015.[47] State-recognized property rights now facilitate Barokologadi initiatives to use the restored land.

Public policies intended to redress segregation and apartheid-era dispossession grant the dispossessed and their descendants a venue in which to articulate historical injury and to make claims on the state but do not alter dominant understandings, land-use patterns, and constellations of interests that favor present rights holders. Land and resource use struggles are deeply intertwined with conceptions of property, productivity, and value that disadvantage claimants.[48] The ill-founded presumption that nonwhite peoples did not *own* land before white settlement disadvantages dispossessed people in contemporary resource struggles as does Barokologadi and Machete people's lack of property title prior to displacement, itself a constitutive element of their dispossession. The common view that collective land holding and resource management are less productive than individual private enterprise and less sustainable than state

43. Commission on Restitution of Land Rights, *Settlement agreement*.

44. T. Z. Molwantwa, interview by the author, Gauteng province, February 2, 2006.

45. The comanagement agreement was finalized later in 2010 and has been partially implemented, while negotiations over the amount the Parks Board will pay the CPA to lease its land inside Madikwe game reserve continue.

46. Interviews by the author, Gauteng and North West provinces: T. Z. Molwantwa, June 22, 2010; Amos Setou, June 29, 2010; and Mmusi Moses Maotwe, July 25, 2010.

47. Interviews by the author, North West province, October 22 and 27, 2015.

48. See Ramutsindela and Shabangu, "Conditioned by Neoliberalism," on how neoliberal conservation affects restitution claims to protected lands. The Machete and Barokologadi cases differ from the Makuleke claim discussed in that article in that each involve land outside protected areas.

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nature conservation also tilt the discursive terrain against claimants.[49] Regional landowners and land users deployed these arguments in struggle, as seen in Barry York's emphasis on his investment in and improvements to the land, and in the rhetorical weight parks and tourism parastatal agencies place on the public interest in conservation.

Implying that land claimants would be poorer land stewards, these dominant discourses force land claimants seeking unfettered property rights to demonstrate their readiness to maintain and improve restored land. Perceived incapacity to meet that standard then provides a rationale for state decision makers to confer restricted rights on "successful" claimants or to defer settlement indefinitely, as in the Machete case. Perpetuating disadvantage, these practices and discourses not only subject claimants to standards the direct and indirect beneficiaries of their dispossession were never asked to meet—as discussed in the next section—but also disregard both the adverse effects of displacement on dispossessed people's resources and the substantial state resources directed to beneficiaries. As T. Z. Molwantwa commented, "Some farms that were taken away from the white farmers have become unproductive. I said, who is to blame? Because the people were forcibly removed, and their skill was destroyed, and the young generation should take over, but there is no skill. So you can't blame us. The government should have trained the young ones because they saw that the land was going back to its rightful owners."[50]

The next section describes the gradual dispossession of black denizens of Madikwe and Mapungubwe. Detailing the state-led and state-sanctioned processes through which black landholders in these places were deprived of formal property rights and then effectively dispossessed while state resources were directed toward white settlers, I then consider subsequent land-use change and the state's role within it.

Consequential Claims, Gradual Dispossession

Settler State Land Claims

Preceded by more than a century of turbulence in which conflict among Tswana chieftaincies, raiding by Mzilikazi's expansionist Ndebele kingdom, and the movement of Griqua, Kora, and white people through the territory led to displacement and greater centralization among the surviving African polities, the formal dispossession of black people in present-day Limpopo and North West provinces began when white Afrikaans-speaking settlers (Voortrekkers) asserted *ownership* of the territory after the 1837 defeat of Mzilikazi by African and Afrikaner forces.[51] The small fragmented Voortrekker settlements controlled only a small portion of the territory at the time. However, the Voortrekkers secured British assent to the dispossession of black denizens in 1852 through the Sand River Convention in which British government formally recognized the independence of the Trekkers who had migrated north of the Vaal River and repudiated its previous agreements with black residents. Shortly thereafter, the fractured Voortrekker communities created a new polity later named the *Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek* (the South African Republic) and proclaimed their ownership of and authority over the territory north of the Vaal River and south of the Limpopo River. Deliberately disregarding black people's land rights and effective control over much of the territory, these Voortrekker land claims initiated the formation of a new property rights regime and laid the foundation for twenty-first-century land struggles.

The 1837 and 1852 Voortrekker land claims were more "notional" than real at first.[52] White settlers did not control most of the land and existed in complex relationship to several larger and longer resident African communities. The northernmost settlement of Zoutpansberg was situated within a "disturbed but crowded African world" comprised of nearby Venda, Pedi, Lobedu, and Langa polities and the powerful Ndebele and Gaza in the periphery, for example.[53] Centered in the Zoutpan Mountains and encompassing the Ma-

49. "Tragedy of the Commons" concisely articulates the perceived weaknesses of collective landholding. See Hardin, "Tragedy of the Commons." C.f. Ostrom, *Governing the Commons*.

50. T. Z. Molwantwa, interview by the author, Gauteng province, February 2, 2006.

51. Wright, "Turbulent Times."

52. The phrase "notional ownership" is drawn from Delius, *The Land Belongs to Us*, 130.

53. Wagner, "Zoutpansberg," 321.

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pungubwe region, Zoutpansberg "depended on the acquiescence, and even collaboration, of African neighbors."[54] Conflict within and among the Zoutpansbergers and the Venda led to the dissolution of the settlement in 1867, and few white people settled on lands north of the Zoutpan before 1914, nearly fifty years later.[55] The other Voortrekker settlements shifted back and forth between working with, relying upon, and fighting nearby black and mixed-race communities from their founding through the late 1870s.[56]

The South African Republic's enormous territorial claim was immensely consequential despite its initially fictive nature, for its "notional ownership" discursively emptied the territory.[57] Both a bundle of rights and a social relation, "property is distinguished from mere momentary possession or longer-term access by virtue of being recognized by others, through enforcement by society or the state, and by custom, convention or law," as Christian Lund writes.[58] But *whose* recognition, enforcement, customs, or laws matter? While access to, ownership of, and control over land and people were fundamentally contested between the 1830s and the 1880s, white settler recognition, conventions, and laws eventually became hegemonic. Determined to create a white supremacist polity allowing "No equality of Coloureds with Whites either in Church or state," as their 1856 constitution stated, these settlers consistently refused to formally recognize black, Khoisan, and mixed-race people's property rights and land tenure systems, instead treating nonwhites as rightless land dwellers.[59] "In this imaginary environment, lands lay open for disposal by the state, and extant occupation and land use rarely figured except as onerous problems in need of resolution," as Lindsay Braun writes.[60]

The republic generously distributed this ostensibly empty land, allowing each white male trekker to claim two large farms for eventual registration and inspection by state officials and using land grants to fund its operations and pay its officials while setting aside only small portions of the territory for black denizens.[61] An 1886 act declared the Zoutpansberg to be government land and provided for the allocation of farms to white adult males who would ensure the land was "beneficially occupied"—a condition rarely satisfied or enforced.[62] Twenty-eight percent of South African Republic territory had been allocated to white people and companies by 1860, 56 percent by 1890, and 66.9 percent by 1911. White people and companies registered titles throughout the South African Republic but rarely settled in the two northernmost districts, which accounted for only 5 percent of white residents in 1873.[63] Nor did white claimants quickly settle in lands controlled by powerful African polities. Most claimants to Pedi land quickly sold their newly acquired land to companies, speculators, or land agents, for example.[64] State land grants facilitated land speculation and enabled well-positioned officials to accumulate large landholdings but did not quickly increase the state's effective control over territory.[65]

The South African Republic's notional ownership placed new burdens on black denizens, obligating most who wanted to retain state-sanctioned access to the land on which they lived, farmed, and hunted to purchase it from the republic or from white titleholders or to work for those owners.[66] Black land purchase was impeded by republic poli-

54. Ibid., 321.

55. See ibid., and Mulaudzi, "'U Shuma Bulasi.'"

56. Etherington et al., "From Colonial Hegemonies to Imperial Conquest."

57. Delius, *The Land Belongs to Us*, 130.

58. Lund, "Negotiating Property Institutions," 12–13.

59. Following Wegerif et al. (*Still Searching for Security*, iii.), I use *farm dweller* to refer to "any person, other than the owner, who is living on a farm."

60. Braun, "Spatial Institutionalisation and the Settler State," 151.

61. Bergh, "(To) Reserve to the Native Tribes"; Braun, "Spatial Institutionalisation and the Settler State"; Delius, *The Land Belongs to Us*; and Trapido, "Aspects in the Transition from Slavery to Serfdom."

62. Mulaudzi, "'U Shuma Bulasi.'"

63. Wagner, "Zoutpansberg," and Mulaudzi, "'U Shuma Bulasi.'"

64. Braun, "Spatial Institutionalisation and the Settler State," 160.

65. Christopher, "Official Land Disposal Policies"; Braun, "Spatial Institutionalisation and the Settler State"; Delius, *The Land Belongs to Us*; Trapido, "Aspects in the Transition from Slavery to Serfdom"; and Trapido, "Reflections on Land, Office, and Wealth."

66. Etherington et al., "From Colonial Hegemonies to Imperial Conquest," 338. Voortrekkers occasionally granted lands to African allies such as Moiloa I of the Bahurutshe in present-day North West province. See Manson and Mbenga, *Land, Chiefs, Mining*, 21–22.

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cies such as Volksraad Resolution 181 of June 18, 1855, which explicitly excluded "coloured people" from burghership and declared that "no person who is not recognized as a broker shall have the right to possess immovable property."[67] The state refused to register black land purchases except through white trustees until the Tsewu v. Registrar of Deeds decision of 1905 mandated it do so.

The transfer of the South African Republic to British administration and its subsequent incorporation into the Union of South Africa in 1909 as the Transvaal province was followed by gradual consolidation of state control over the land the republic had seized and redistributed. The Natives Land Act of 1913, the Natives Land and Trust Act of 1936, and a long series of other proclamations, ordinances, and acts racialized the national territory, allocating a small portion for black settlement while raising the already substantial barriers to land acquisition and making it increasingly difficult for black people to reside on putatively white land without working for white landowners.

Trying to retain access to land in this hostile context, black people employed diverse strategies to slow or limit dispossession, reclaim lost lands, and secure formal property rights. Nineteenth-century leaders Sekhukhune and Nyabela aggressively challenged claims to Pedi and Ndebele lands, filing formal petitions and disputing title while their followers remained resident until military defeats left them unable to protect much of their territory after the 1870s.[68] Active participants in the South African War, some black communities in the Western Transvaal reclaimed former territory by force, gains that were reversed by the British shortly after the war ended in 1902.[69] Other black residents circumvented race-based property restrictions by purchasing farms through white missionaries and other trustees. Black Transvaalers held title to 118 farms or farm portions through trustees in 1904, 591 properties in 1913, and 867 properties in 1936, the year in which the state took control of trust lands.[70]

Most black residents of the Transvaal neither lived in a powerful African polity nor managed to secure state-recognized land rights through a grant or a trustee, however. These denizens' continued residence gradually became dependent on white titleholders. Rather than summarily expelling black dwellers or farming the lands themselves, many white landowners and private companies instead engaged in "native farming," generating income by charging black occupants cash, labor, or in-kind rent. Stanley Trapido argues, "The major source of profit from agriculture . . . lay in the various forms of rent paid by African producers who had often been the cultivators of the land prior to its seizure by Afrikaner settlers."[71] Immensely profitable for white landowners, these practices contributed to the impoverishment of black Transvaalers.

Dispossession and Displacement in Madikwe and Mapungubwe

The five contemporary communities with the strongest ties to Madikwe—the Balete ba Lekgophung, Bahurutshe ba ga Suping, Baphalane ba Sesobe, Barokologadi ba ga Maotwe, and Batlokwa boo kgosi ba ga Matlapeng—each relocated multiple times during the nineteenth century, moving back and forth across the Marico and Limpopo Rivers during Mzilikazi's reign.[72] The Barokologadi settled at Melorane and the Baphalane at Vleischfontein in the present-day Madikwe Game Reserve before 1884 while the Balete, Bahurutshe, and Batlokwa settled in the surrounding area.[73] Machete and Tshivhula people also settled in the Mapungubwe region well before the turn of the twentieth century, with the Machete residing near the Limpopo-Shashe River confluence and

67. Eybers, *Select Constitutional Documents*, 362.

68. See Braun, "Spatial Institutionalisation and the Settler State," and Delius, *The Land Belongs to Us*.

69. Mbenga, *Land, Chiefs, Mining*, 42–62.

70. Bergh and Feinberg, "Trusteeship and Black Land Ownership," 180, and Feinberg and Horn, "South African Territorial Segregation," 51.

71. Delius, *The Land Belongs to Us*, 350. Also see Mulaudzi, "'U Shuma Bulasi.'"

72. The present collective identities of these groups were forged through complex interactions with multiple peoples and polities. See Turner, "Land Restitution, Traditional Leadership, and Belonging"; Breutz, "The Tribes of Rustenburg and Pilanesberg Districts"; Breutz, "The Tribes of Marico District"; Ellenberger, "History of the Ba-Ga-Malete"; and Ellenberger, "History of the Batlokwa."

73. See Gillespie, *Vleeschfontein an African Village*, 10, and South Africa General branch, "Removal of the natives on the farm Rooderand No. 117KP, District Marico," letter to the Undersecretary (Development), February 8, 1950, in the author's possession.

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the Tshivhula based farther south near the Zoutpan Mountains.[74] Distance from larger and more powerful black polities and the absence of white settlers allowed Machete leaders to exert authority over much of northern Mapungubwe, even though both the Venda and the Tshivhula contend the Machete were a subject group.[75] Mulaudzi attributes the lack of state-proclaimed black locations in the region to this perception, writing, "[Denizens] were erroneously assumed by the state to be under the [Venda] Mphephu chiefdom."[76] Reflecting these unresolved disputes, the Tshivhula included Machete land in their restitution claim even as the Machete independently sought restitution.

Settler and state land seizures directly affected the Madikwe and Mapungubwe regions, first rendering black denizens formally landless and then facilitating the individual and collective displacement of many people. Most Madikwe land remained putatively white after the Voortrekkers' nineteenth-century assertion of ownership. Resident since at least 1872, the Barokologadi ba ga Maotwe place tried but failed to purchase Melorane and were deemed rent payers while Melorane was labeled a "black spot" in 1836 and sold to three white brothers in 1838.[77] The Zeerust native commissioner then secured the forcible removal of the Barokologadi in 1950. Jesuit missionaries purchased the Vleischfontein farm on which the Baphalane ba Sesobe had long resided from the white trader Auguste Greite in 1883–84.[78] After conflict arose between Africanist Baphalane and church authorities regarding the annual rent payment of a portion of each harvest and other issues, Catholic officials closed the Vleischfontein mission station in the late 1940s and then sought and eventually secured the forcible eviction of the remaining Baphalane.[79] The Bahurutshe ba ga Suping, Balete ba Lekgophung, and Batlokwa boo kgosi ba ga Matlapeng each avoided collective displacement, securing title to the farms and farm portions where they lived in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[80] The South African government later designated these places for black settlement and then declared these lands part of Bophuthatswana.

Black denizens of Mapungubwe were formally dispossessed upon the creation of the South African Republic in the mid-nineteenth century, and neither that polity nor its successors allocated any land for black settlement in the region. Conditions changed little for several decades, however, as whites were slow to claim and occupy land in this remote region. Despite the surveying of the Mapungubwe region in the 1860s and allocation of at least eleven farms between 1870 and 1886, the region was perceived to be entirely without white occupants in 1906.[81] The 1912 Land Settlement Act and 1914 extension of rail service to the town of Musina increased white landholding and settlement, principally by poor "'pap and game' farmers" who couldn't afford to buy elsewhere, relied heavily on hunting, and struggled with indebtedness despite repeated government forgiveness of their loans.[82] White absentee ownership remained high throughout most of the twentieth century, as the following statistics indicate: only 16.5 percent of blacks in the northern Zoutpansberg lived on locations in 1905; only twenty-seven of eighty farms slated for inclusion in the proposed Dongola Wild Life Sanctuary in Mapungubwe had resident owners in the mid-1940s; and about 90 percent of farms around Musina lacked white occupants in the mid-1980s.[83] Lack of state-recognized property

74. See Mulaudzi, "'U Shuma Bulasi,'" and Bonner et al., "A Synthesis of the Recent History of Mapungubwe," 5.

75. Compare Huffman, "Historical Archaeology of the Mapungubwe Area"; Mamadi, "History of the Sebola (Tshivhula) People"; Mulaudzi, "'U Shuma Bulasi'"; Nemudzivhadi, "Tshivhula Tsa Matshokotike"; Ralushai, "Preliminary Report"; and Van Warmelo, "Mmathšêtê."

76. Mulaudzi, "'U Shuma Bulasi,'" 215.

77. T. Z. Molwantwa, interview by the author, Krugersdorp, Gauteng province, February 8, 2006; South Africa General branch, "Removal of the natives on the farm Rooderand No. 117KP, District Marico," letter to the Undersecretary (Development), February 8, 1950, in the author's possession.

78. See Ryan, "Achievement of the Jesuit Order in South Africa," 256, and Gillespie, *Vleeschfontein an African Village*, 8, 10.

79. Gillespie, *Vleeschfontein an African Village*, 83–88.

80. The Bahurutshe purchased property in 1892 and 1894, the Balete did so in 1906, and the Batlokwa did so before 1953. See Breutz, "The Tribes of Marico District," 76–77, 213, and Breutz, "The Tribes of Rustenburg and Pilanesberg Districts," 376.

81. Huffman, "Historical Archaeology of the Mapungubwe Area," 52, and Mulaudzi, "'U Shuma Bulasi,'" 107.

82. Mulaudzi, "'U Shuma Bulasi,'" 111–24.

83. Ibid., 212, and chap. 3; Carruthers, "The Dongola Wild Life Sanctuary," 92; and Mbongwa, "South Africa."

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rights made black residents vulnerable to expulsion nevertheless.

Most long-resident black denizens of Mapungubwe were eventually displaced, not through collective forced removals but through the state-sanctioned imposition of increasingly adverse conditions. Taking advantage of race-based policies allowing at-will evictions, restricting livestock, imposing labor requirements, and then ending labor tenancy, many landowners either evicted black residents or enforced rules that made it difficult to remain when their presence was no longer desired. In the Machete case, elders attribute the disbanding of their settlement to a farmer who prohibited hunting and ordered them to reduce the number of livestock, conditions that led the then chief and other community members to leave the farm.[84] Born at Machete in 1914, Jim Mulaudzi recounted leaving the village with his parents as a child because white people came to occupy the area. "They didn't give us a place to settle, so we decided to go around to the farms. Some went to Zimbabwe and Botswana."[85] Another longtime resident, who was born in the 1940s, highlighted how the simple presence of white people could spur movement. Asserting that his father and forefathers were born and buried in Mapungubwe, Saul Sematla told me, "Our fathers ran away because they were scared of the whites. They went somewhere where there were no whites. As time goes on, the whites came where they are."[86] Displacement led to the fragmentation of the Machete and Tshivhula communities as some individuals, families, and small groups moved to different farms while others who could not secure farm employment or found it "unbearable" moved to black townships on the outskirts of Musina or Alldays or to more distant places.[87]

Transformations: Land-Use Change in Mapungubwe and Madikwe

The state-led and state-sanctioned dispossession and displacement of long-resident black people created the conditions for the agricultural and touristic transformations of Madikwe and Mapungubwe, changes that made full restoration of lost lands highly improbable. First converted into commercial irrigated farms and cattle ranches, large portions of these regions then were transformed into nature tourism destinations, game farms, and game ranches in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s. State officials and policies played a role in the transformation of both regions. In the Madikwe case, the apartheid government expropriated twenty-eight agricultural farms and the Vleischfontein mission station, and then transferred title to the Bophuthatswana government as part of its effort to consolidate that notoriously fragmented *bantustan*. The Bophuthatswana government used most of the transferred land to create the Madikwe Game Reserve while leasing the remaining land to Barry York and to *baruakgomo*, the black commercial farmers.

In the Mapungubwe case, state policies first subsidized white agriculture and then encouraged a shift away from it. Through the 1980s, Mapungubwe landowners not only received the assistance and market protections to which all white farmers were entitled but also benefited from generous farmer assistance programs meant to prevent "terrorist" incursions from Zimbabwe and Botswana by supporting farmers who lived within 10 kilometers (later extended to 50 kilometers) of the border. Border programs granted living allowances; land and livestock purchase assistance; feed, transportation, and borehole subsidies; and low or no-interest loans.

The government reversed course in the 1990s with apartheid's demise, abolishing the border assistance programs, reducing agricultural subsidies and trade barriers, and highlighting Mapungubwe as a symbol of South Africa's rich past while partnering with the DeBeers Corporation to establish the Mapungubwe National Park. Coinciding with a dramatic increase in international tourist travel to South Africa, these changes encouraged many landowners to shift fully or partially from agricul-

84. Nemudzivhadi, "Tshivula Tsa Matshokotike," 15.

85. Jim Mulaudzi, interview by the author, Limpopo province, January 25, 2005.

86. Saul Sematla, interview by the author, Limpopo province, July 27, 2011.

87. Nemudzivhadi, "Tshivula Tsa Matshokotike," 15.

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ture to nature tourism, game hunting, and game farming in the 1990s and 2000s. State recognition and respect for landowners' property rights granted them substantial influence over the pace and direction of land-use change.

Conclusion

Contemporary land and resource struggles occur on a terrain shaped by more than a century of racialized dispossession. State-led and state-sanctioned land seizures structure the political economic context in which people contend for control over Madikwe and Mapungubwe. The nineteenth-century repudiation of black denizens' property rights, granting of land rights to white settlers and business people, and imposition of substantial barriers to black land acquisition served as the foundation for the twentieth- and twenty-first-century land transfers through which present landowners and leaseholders gained state-recognized rights. Long-ago settler polity land claims and the subsequent state and market-mediated transfers produced enduring changes in the physical landscape, first obscuring traces of black settlement with fences, crops, and grazing lands and then transforming large portions of Madikwe and Mapungubwe into tourist-friendly wilderness.

Twenty-first-century rural struggles reflect the distinct constellations of interests produced by past dispossession and displacement. Too often, these conflicts pit the well-resourced beneficiaries of historical dispossession—state-recognized landowners and land users—against their often impoverished victims—black landholders and their descendants who could not secure state-recognized property rights. Excluded from the state and market-mediated land sales and contractual arrangements through which Mapungubwe National Park, the Venetia Limpopo Nature Reserve, Venetia Diamond Mine, and Madikwe Game Reserve were created, most black land claimants and black land dwellers are forced to rely on moral suasion, protest, and public opinion in circumstances where capital is more influential. Land and natural resource struggles throughout South Africa require a fuller reckoning with the past. ıılıı

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