

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **AN OVERVIEW OF MAPUNGUBWE NATIONAL PARK**

A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots.

~Marcus Garvey~

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The ruins of the Kingdom of Great Zimbabwe have drawn tourists from across the globe for many years. The site of Great Zimbabwe near Masvingo has been the focus of numerous research studies (Huffman & Vogel, 1991; Huffman, 2000; Huffman, 2008) and it was a popular theory among historians that this was the first site in southern Africa constructed by a structured and sophisticated society (Huffman & Vogel, 1991:61-70). However, it was established fairly recently that Mapungubwe in South Africa precedes Great Zimbabwe by about a century, and that the people of Mapungubwe are actually considered to be the ancestors of the inhabitants of the Kingdom of Zimbabwe (Huffman, 2000:14; Huffman, 2008:38). This finding increases the importance of the site of Mapungubwe.

The position of Mapungubwe marks the development of significant economic and political transitioning in the history of southern Africa (Richardson, 2001:260; Huffman, 2008:38). Prior to this period the area was occupied by numerous hunter-gatherer tribes. Archaeological digs at the site after its discovery in 1932 have provided proof that the people occupying Mapungubwe had an influence eastward as far as the Indian Ocean (Huffman, 2008:38). This influence made it possible for the kingdom to trade with the East as far as China; the first southern African society to have done so (Huffman, 2008:38). Archaeological research has unearthed more golden artefacts at Mapungubwe than at any other archaeological site in southern Africa (Richardson, 2001:260).

From the very beginning, people were struggling for the ownership and development of the area. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Boer trekkers moved to the north

of the then South African Republic (ZAR or Transvaal) in order to seek land for settlement, farming and hunting (Fleminger, 2006:72). However, that area proved to be unsuitable for livestock (due to the arid landscape) and many new farmers struggled. During the 1940s a debate started around the protection of the area for conservation due to the unique fauna and flora found there. Nevertheless, some groups were still pro-agriculture (although livestock farming was difficult, citrus farming later proved to be feasible) while others supported conservation. This debate went as far as the South African parliament and with the support of the then prime minister, Jan Smuts, a conservation area of 92 000 ha was declared in 1947. One year later Jan Smuts lost the parliamentary election and the conservation area lost its status. After that period, the main economic activity in the area was agriculture, primarily farming (Berry & Cadman, 2007:46).

However, the government still owned a number of farms in the area on which little or no industrial activity took place. In 1932 gold artefacts were discovered by chance on Mapungubwe Hill, located on the farm Greefswald, and treasure seekers soon started plundering the area. This came to an end when the site was given legal protection and the University of Pretoria started scientific excavations. The site of Mapungubwe and the nearby K2 were declared national monuments in the early 1980s (University of Pretoria, 2008:1). The unique history of the area has resulted in the landscape being incorporated into a UNESCO World Heritage Site, which forms part of the Mapungubwe National Park and World Heritage Site today. The history of the Mapungubwe National Park (MNP) and World Heritage Site (MNP) has been one of great achievements and disillusionment (Berry & Cadman, 2007).

The aim of this chapter is to conduct a literature analysis of MNP in order to provide an overview of the research setting. This chapter will include aspects such as a brief discussion of the park's location and size, the establishment of the park and the transfrontier conservation area and World Heritage Site. The chapter will end with a discussion of the major challenges facing the park.

## 2.2 MAPUNGUBWE NATIONAL PARK ANALYSIS

This section will address the following issues relating to MNP in terms of the park location and park size, the proclamation of the area as a national park and World Heritage Site and the future development of a transfrontier conservation area.

### 2.2.1 Location

MNP is situated in the Vhembe district of the Limpopo Province of South Africa. The location of MNP is significant, as it lies at the confluence of the Shashe and Limpopo Rivers that form the natural borders between South Africa, Botswana and Zimbabwe, as seen in Map 2.1.



**Map 2.1: Location of Mapungubwe National Park in South Africa**

*(Source: SA Venues, 2013)*

The park lies roughly halfway between the towns of Musina (Messina) and Alldays (Alldays is the nearest town, about 40 km from the park) along the R572 regional road.

The park is approximately 400 km north of Pretoria and Johannesburg. The R572 also serves as the southern boundary of the park.

## 2.2.2 Size

MNP currently consists of a total surface area of 19 787.8 ha, which, with the Agulhas and Bontebok national parks, makes it one of the three smallest national parks in South Africa. In comparison, the Kruger National Park, the largest national park in South Africa, covers an area of about two million hectares (SANParks, 2012:b1). The area constituting MNP includes land owned by SANParks as well as a number of contractual private lands (SANParks, 2010a). Table 2.1 gives an indication of these lands, their size and respective owners. One of the strategic objectives of MNP is expansion, as discussed in section 2.6.4.

**Table 2.1: Land ownership in MNP**

	<b>Farm name</b>	<b>Size (ha)</b>	<b>Owner</b>
<b>1</b>	Little Muck	2 147.4	Friends of Peace Parks
<b>2</b>	Welton	700.6	National Parks Trust
<b>3</b>	Tuscaneen	1 300.6	WWF South Africa
<b>4</b>	Balerno	795	SANParks
<b>5</b>	Mona	560.8	Friends of Peace Parks
<b>6</b>	Armenia (1)	855.2	Friends of Peace Parks
<b>7</b>	Armenia (2)	71	Friends of Peace Parks
<b>8</b>	Rhode's Drift	872.2	Peace Parks Foundation
<b>9</b>	Den Staat	1 897.3	SANParks
<b>10</b>	Samaria (1)	464.7	SANParks
<b>11</b>	Samaria (2)	443.2	SANParks
<b>12</b>	Greefswald	2 633.3	SANParks
<b>13</b>	Hamilton (1)	359.1	SANParks
<b>14</b>	Hamilton (2)	65.3	SANParks
<b>15</b>	Strindal	784.2	SANParks
<b>16</b>	Schroda (1)	742.6	De Beers Mines
<b>17</b>	Schroda (2)	923.8	De Beers Mines

	<b>Farm name</b>	<b>Size (ha)</b>	<b>Owner</b>
<b>18</b>	Schroda (3)	1 286.1	De Beers Mines
<b>19</b>	Schroda (4)	332.9	De Beers Mines
<b>20</b>	Riedel	2 570.5	National Parks Trust

(Source: SANParks (2010a:9-10))

As can be seen in Table 2.1, only 7 440 ha or 38% of the total surface area of MNP is owned by SANParks. The remaining 12 347 ha or 62% of land is owned by non-governmental organisations, conservation trusts and a major mining group. These private lands have been conceded to SANParks to be managed as part of MNP (SANParks, 2010a:10).

### **2.3 PROCLAMATION AS A NATIONAL PARK**

In order to protect the area around Mapungubwe Hill, the Vhembe-Dongola National Park was proclaimed in 1995 when the government of the Northern Province (now the Limpopo Province) handed over the farm Greefswald to SANParks (Fleminger, 2006:107). In the following years, the park was gradually expanded and in 2004 the Vhembe-Dongola National Park was opened to tourists under the name Mapungubwe National Park.

### **2.4 DEVELOPMENT OF A TRANSFRONTIER CONSERVATION AREA**

A transfrontier area (TFCA) is an area where two or more protected areas in different countries are adjoined and jointly managed across the international borders (RETOSA, 2011:1; Spencely, 2001:56). The concept of TFCAs has its roots in 1936 with the establishment of the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park between Canada and the USA (Waterton Glacier National Park, 2010:1). In southern Africa there are currently ten TFCAs, six of which include South African territory (Peace Parks, 2011:1).

TFCAs have become a new and developing theme of environmental management. Since ecosystems cross political borders created by humans, it is important for good ecosystem

management and conservation that neighbouring countries cooperate in that venture. As a result, TFCAs are becoming an important factor of environmental protection and have received significant support from a number of global organisations, including the World Bank and environmental NGOs (Duffy, 2005:90).

According to the Integrated Tourism Strategy for MNP, the objectives of a TFCA are as follows:

- i. To encourage transnational collaboration and cooperation between the three countries in terms of implementing ecosystem and cultural resource management.
- ii. To promote coalition in the management of biological and cultural resources and encourage social, economic and other partnerships among the governments and the stakeholders.
- iii. To improve ecosystem integrity and natural ecological processes by harmonising wildlife management procedures across international boundaries and striving to remove artificial barriers impeding the natural movement of animals.
- iv. To develop frameworks and strategies whereby local communities can participate in, and tangibly benefit from, the management and sustainable use of natural and cultural resources that occur within the proposed TFCA.
- v. To promote cross-border tourism as a means of fostering regional socio-economic development (Greater Mapungubwe TFCA Trilateral Technical Committee (GMTFCA), 2009:1).

The planned Greater Mapungubwe TFCA will initially consist of a total area of 260 000 ha, which includes 55 000 ha in South Africa (21%), 75 000 ha (29%) in Botswana and 130 000 ha of land in Zimbabwe (50%) (GMTFCA, 2010:ix) (See Map 2.2).



**Map 2.2: The Greater Mapungubwe Transfrontier Conservation Area**

*(Source: Peace Parks (2013))*

The proposed TFCA includes the area comprising MNP as well as a number of other private and communal lands in the three countries (GMTFCA, 2009:4). As far as tourism facilities are concerned, the TFCA has about 500 tourist beds and some well-maintained access roads on both the South African and Botswana sides. Although the Zimbabwean portion of the TFCA is the largest in terms of surface area, the number of access roads and amount of accommodation are limited and the quality of the roads is generally poor (GMTFCA, 2010:26).

Being situated on a border, attractions such as MNP have the potential to attract not only nature-based or heritage tourists, but also “border tourists”. According to Timothy (2006:10), borders are potential tourist attractions. He analyses the historical background of borders as tourist attractions and then states the main reasons why these sites attract

tourists. The first reason (Timothy, 2006:10) is that borders as a demarcation line attract tourists. Tourists attracted for this reason primarily want to experience a country from within another country by means of, for example, viewing platforms and watchtowers, or they merely want to see a place where countries meet at a particular geographic point like a river boundary. When given the opportunity, these tourists would also often like to cross the border and experience two or more countries simultaneously.

The second main reason why tourists are drawn to border attractions is to experience different cultures within a small geographic area – in some cases laws, ethical issues and languages change as soon as one crosses the border (Timothy, 2006:10). In effect, TFCAs could give tourists an opportunity to experience a political border and the associated divergent cultures associated with crossing the border(s). Image 2.1 provides an indication of the confluence lookout at MNP where the Shashe River flows into the Limpopo River. It is here that the three countries of South Africa, Botswana and Zimbabwe meet.



**Image 2.1: Confluence lookout MNP.**

*(Photo by UP Hermann)*



The above photo was taken from the South African side, looking at the Limpopo River (the ribbon of blue between the trees) and the Shashe River (the sandy river) to the north. Botswana is located to the left of the Shashe River (the dry river bed) and Zimbabwe to the right.

## **2.5 PROCLAMATION AS A WORLD HERITAGE SITE**

Destinations around the world utilise the World Heritage designation of their cultural and natural sites as promotional tools in their marketing campaigns, especially those directed at international visitors (Buckley, 2004:70). There are eight designated United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) World Heritage Sites in South Africa, namely:

- ❑ The Cape Floral Region
- ❑ The Cradle of Humankind (Sterkfontein, Swartkrans, Kromdraai and environs)
- ❑ uKhahlamba-Drakensberg Park
- ❑ Mapungubwe Cultural Landscape (MCL)
- ❑ The Richtersveld Cultural and Botanical Landscape
- ❑ Robben Island
- ❑ iSimangaliso Wetlands (St. Lucia Wetlands)
- ❑ Vredefort Dome

The MCL (managed within MNP) was declared a World Heritage Site by the 27<sup>th</sup> session of the World Heritage Committee of the United Nations (UNESCO) in 2003.

World Heritage Sites are selected according to a predetermined list of ten criteria. These criteria apply to the two themes of cultural heritage and natural heritage (UNESCO, 2008:7-8). Table 2.2 provides more particulars of the ten UNESCO criteria and how they apply to the MCL.

**Table 2.2: UNESCO World Heritage criteria**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Application to MNP</b>
<b>I</b>	Represent a masterpiece of human creative genius.	Not recognised by World Heritage Committee.
<b>II</b>	Exhibit an important interchange of human values, over the span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town planning or landscape design.	The MCL contains evidence of an important interchange of human values that led to far-reaching cultural and social changes in southern Africa between AD 900 and 1300.
<b>III</b>	Bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilisation which is living or which has disappeared.	The remains in the MCL are a remarkably complete testimony to the growth and subsequent decline of the Mapungubwe state, which at its height was the largest kingdom in southern Africa.
<b>IV</b>	Be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history.	The establishment of Mapungubwe as a powerful state, trading through the East African ports with Arabia and India, was a significant stage in the history of the African subcontinent.
<b>V</b>	Be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea which is representative of a culture(s), or human interaction with the environment, especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change	The remains in the MCL graphically illustrate the impact of climate change and record the growth and then decline of the Kingdom of Mapungubwe as a clear record of a culture that became vulnerable to irreversible change.
<b>VI</b>	Be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal	Not recognised by World Heritage Committee.

Criteria	Description	Application to MNP
	significance.	
VII	Contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance.	Not recognised by World Heritage Committee.
VIII	Be outstanding examples representing major stages of earth's history, including record of life, significant on-going geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features.	Not recognised by World Heritage Committee.
IX	Be outstanding examples representing significant on-going ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and marine ecosystems and communities of plants and animals.	Not recognised by World Heritage Committee.
X	Contain the most important and significant natural habitats for in situ conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science and conservation.	Not recognised by World Heritage Committee.

*Adapted from: UNESCO (2003)*

The MCL is inscribed as a World Heritage Site on the basis of criteria II, III, IV and V. These criteria lie within the theme of cultural heritage. This inscription was provided under a number of ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites) (UNESCO, 2003: 98) recommendations. ICOMOS recommended the following:

- The area comprising MNP is surrounded and in places separated by agricultural land. SANParks should engage in a process of obtaining these lands either through purchase or through management agreements to return these lands to a “natural” landscape. (This is an ongoing process. See section 2.6.).

- ❏ Some sections of the park are not associated with the World Heritage Site; however, they do include archaeological material and should be protected.
- ❏ Exclusion of certain areas in the park from the World Heritage Site might cause a management problem. (Who is responsible for what?).
- ❏ Tourism activities should be expanded in a sustainable way.
- ❏ An interpretive centre should be provided (This was completed in 2011)

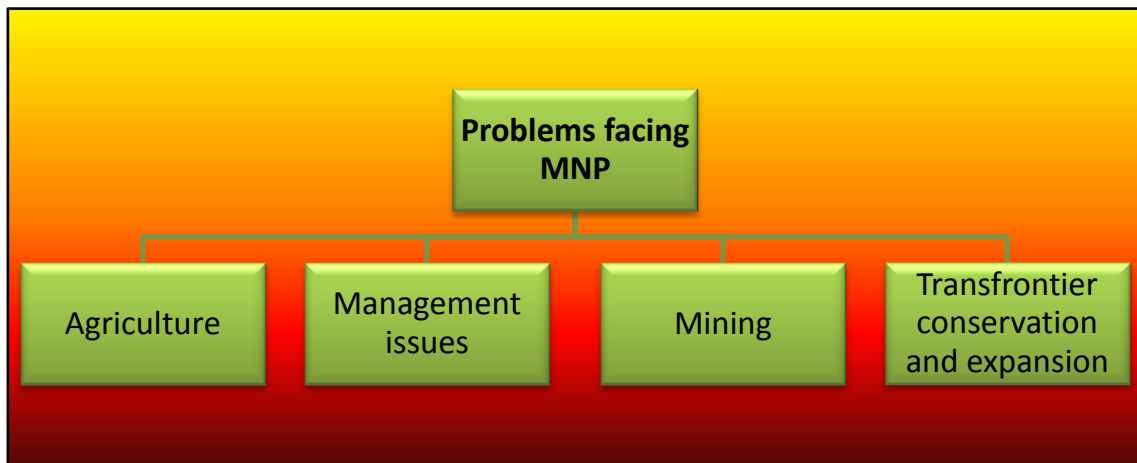
Generally, World Heritage Sites have to contend with the problems of high visitor numbers that threaten their sustainability (Gilmore, Carson & Ascenção, 2007:254). However, MNP suffers from low visitor volumes (see 2.6.2), which may threaten its sustainability as well, as Eagles, McCool and Heyns (2002:120-122) state that revenue generated from tourism in protected areas is imperative for the success of such sites. With decreasing subsidies and other grants from government, protected areas now rely more than ever on commercial tourism income (Eagles *et al.*, 2002:122).

As opposed to the findings of Gilmore *et al.* (2007:254) some data from Australia found that although World Heritage status may not have a significant influence on visitor numbers to national parks, there has been an increased proportion of foreign visitors to these parks as a result of World Heritage status (Buckley, 2004:70). Thus merely having World Heritage status would not guarantee a site such as MNP increased tourism numbers, but it might make the site marketable to a more diverse and possibly more international market (Buckley, 2004:70).

Having a World Heritage Site in a national park may be challenging. Do tourists visit the national park for the purpose of nature/ecotourism or because of its cultural significance as is the case with Mapungubwe? As can be seen in Table 2.2, the MCL was inscribed as a cultural site and not as a natural heritage site. In the case of MNP, Van der Merwe *et al.* (2009:9) found that the main motivation for visitors was the attraction of exploring a new destination followed by escaping from daily routine, for relaxing, for family recreation and for educational reasons. Attending conferences and events and the park's fame were considered of least importance in terms of motivation (Van der Merwe *et al.*, 2009:9). As seen above, visitors' reasons for visiting MNP as a World Heritage Site are minimal, thus there is a limited understanding of the general profile of tourists visiting the park. These are merely some of the problems facing the park. In the following section the major problems facing MNP will be discussed in more detail.

## 2.6 PROBLEMS FACED BY MAPUNGUBWE NATIONAL PARK

Fleminger (2006:108) identifies the challenges faced by Bernard van Lente (the first park manager of MNP) at the inception of the park as negotiation with local farmers, rehabilitation of farmlands incorporated into the park, the stabilisation of archaeological sites, and the construction of tourism accommodation and facilities. Many of these earlier problems have now been resolved. The Integrated Development Plan for the TFCA specifies habitat fragmentation (fencing), mining and agriculture as the major challenges facing the park (GMTFCA, 2010:43). The current challenges facing MNP as identified in literature are discussed in this section and are summarised in Figure 2.1.



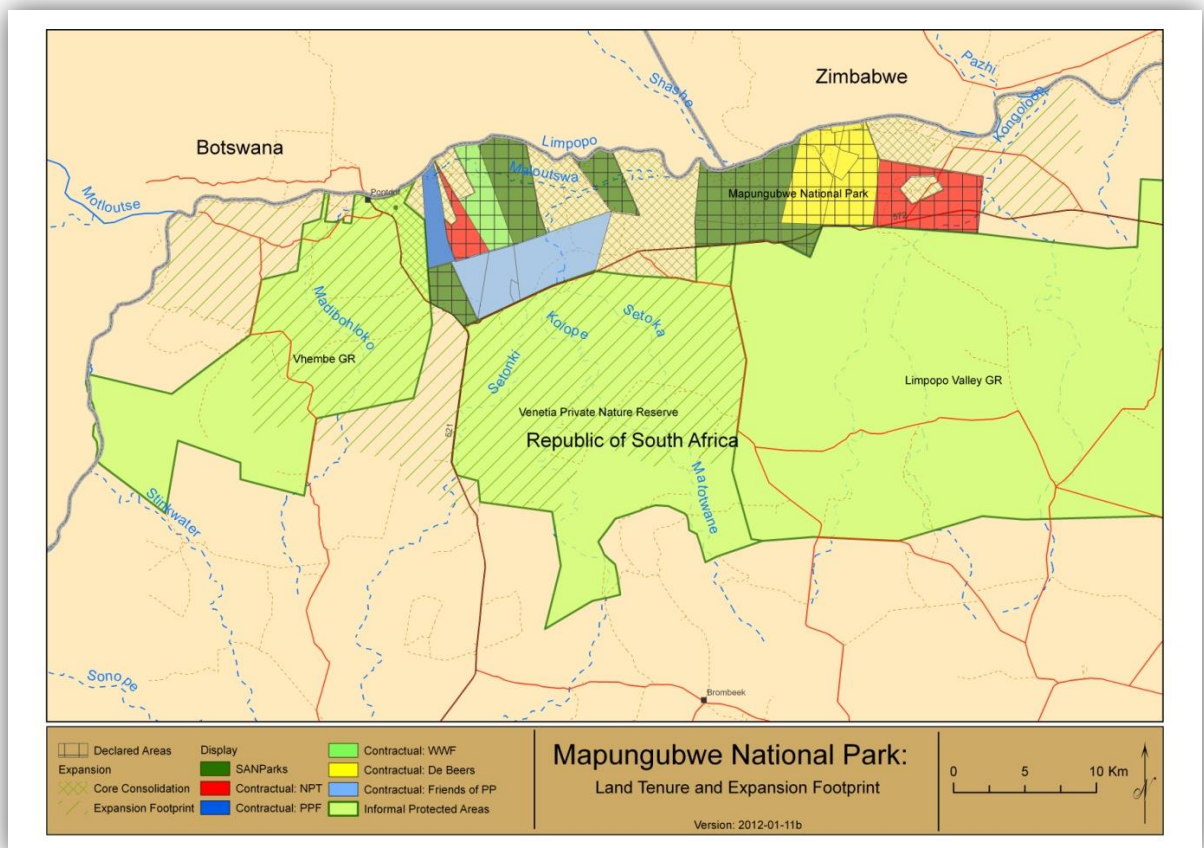
**Figure 2.1: Potential problems facing tourism at MNP.**

### 2.6.1 Agriculture and private lands

The Kingdom of Mapungubwe and the associated kingdoms of Zhizo and K2 are significant in this context as these are recognised as forming one of the first societies in southern Africa to have practised organised agriculture (Fleminger, 2006:23-30). However, the area has long been characterised by significant climate change, which could have diminished its potential for sustainable agriculture. This is seen as at least one of the reasons for the collapse of the Mapungubwe Kingdom (Fleminger, 2006:23-31). Berry and Cadman (2007:3), in describing the development of the MNP, discuss the challenges of practising agriculture in the area that now comprises the park, including the climate and soil conditions. Consequently, conservation was at one time preferred and promoted over agriculture in the area (Berry & Cadman, 2007:3).

More recently, a number of agricultural developments were established in the area along the Limpopo River, the most significant of which are citrus, cattle and game farming. Although these agricultural activities have an influence on the environment, it must be noted that they are labour-intensive and provide much needed employment in the area (GMTFCA, 2010:26). In the past, vast areas of riparian forests were cleared for agricultural purposes, resulting in significant rehabilitation efforts by SANParks for the post-agriculture lands included in the park (SANParks, 2010a:15). The incorporation of elephants in the park has also created problems, as these animals are known to destroy boundary fences and to invade citrus plantations (SANParks, 2010a:48).

Private lands, most of which are used for agriculture, also split the MNP into an eastern and western section. This could inconvenience tourists visiting the park, as the reception area, major attractions and infrastructure are in the eastern section of the park (Map 2.3).



**Map 2.3: Land use and potential expansion of MNP.**

Source: SANParks (2010).



In section 3.2.1 of the MNP management plan, reference is made to the potential impacts and management of land claims in and around the park (SANParks, 2010a:6). In effect, the whole area comprising MNP is currently lodged as a land claim and it is in the process of being resolved. An obligation therefore exists to find redress on the land issue by way of community beneficiation (GMTFCA, 2009:27). Here SANParks states that it is aware of land claims in the area, which include private as well as SANParks land, and it is willing to cooperate with these land claimants towards the potential co-management of the land within MNP. However, land claims have hampered surrounding land owners in actively engaging in the development of MNP and the TFCA. This is mainly due to the uncertainty and insecurity caused by the process (GMTFCA, 2009:25).



**Image 2.2: Domestic cattle on the eastern side of MNP.**

*(Photo by UP Hermann)*

As can be seen in Image 2.2, over and above the remnants of agricultural activities, there are still domestic animals such as cattle in MNP.

## 2.6.2 Management issues

Wearing and Neil (2009:67) elaborate on the importance of the involvement of tourism in modern national park and protected area management. They describe the relationship between the protected areas and the capitalist realism of economics. Even though national parks are managed by a government agency, they have to operate within a market-orientated rationale. "Protected area agencies have found themselves under intense pressure to be more 'commercial', 'customer focused' and to produce more of their revenue from the services provided by the parks" (Wearing & Neil, 2009:67). Ferreira (2004:302) notes that although national parks are created for the primary purpose of environmental (and in the case of MNP cultural) conservation, there also has to be a balance with economics, in the sense that national parks should be able to pay for themselves.

Although MNP is state owned and publically financed, significant funding is still required from revenue generation. In protected areas such as national parks these revenues are normally generated through the charging of visitor fees (Eagles *et al.*, 2002:130) such as entrance fees, accommodation charges, activities and merchandise sales. However, MNP has a problem in terms of revenue generation as visitor occupancy rates are relatively low at only 51.85%, according to SANParks (2012b:21). Although the park receives quite a number of day visitors (mostly school groups) (Fleminger, 2006:117), very few of these people utilise overnight accommodation. This ultimately has an effect on the spending power and the economic impact of visitors to the park. Stevens (2012) highlights the importance of finance within SANParks and MNP. He mentions that MNP and the organisation as a whole needs to identify and study alternative sources of revenue in the management of parks. As revenues (government subsidies) are limited and in some cases decreasing, the appropriate management of income generated from tourism may alleviate this problem. The park thus has a problem with the sustainable management of tourism in terms of revenue generation.

In addition to issues with revenue generation, Uche-Okeke (2008:76) notes the problems relating to human capital at MNP, which relate to the management of the MCL (within MNP). There are problems with human capital in terms of skills and capacity as well as infrastructural constraints for management. Nicholas *et al.* (2009:205) note that managing a World Heritage Site in itself is coupled with management challenges related to



management commitment and coordination. Robbins and Coulter (2012:340) note that it is essential for an organisation to invest in competent and suitable employees. Recruiting and retaining the best human resources for an organisation may provide three main benefits for an organisation, namely:

- ✚ The achievement of a competitive advantage by providing superior value.
- ✚ Increased support for the achievement of organisational strategies.
- ✚ Increased organisational performance in the efficiency of service delivery. Poor capacity human resources may therefore result in failure to adequately manage an organisation or facility (Robbins & Coulter, 2012:340).

The problems facing MNP in terms of general management need to be addressed in order to promote the effective management of the park (Uche-Okeke, 2008:76). More particulars of general management are provided in Chapter 4.

### **2.6.3 Mining**

The area that incorporates MNP has been supporting mining activities for many years. During the period of the Kingdom of Mapungubwe, the local people were known to have had contact with mined minerals such as gold, copper and iron (Carruthers, 2006:4). In the later pre-colonial years, copper was mined around the area of Musina (Carruthers, 2006:5). In the early 1990s, the De Beers Company initiated the large-scale (open-cast mining) mining of diamonds to the area south of the current park. To counter the possible negative effects that the mining may have on the area, De Beers established the 26 000 ha Venetia Limpopo Nature Reserve (Carruthers, 2006:11) bordering the mine, with the same name. There are currently two operational diamond mines in the area comprising the TFCA, namely Venetia (South Africa) and River Ranch (Zimbabwe). There is also a small coal mine on Nottingham Ranch on the Zimbabwean side (GMTFCA, 2010:26).

More recently an Australian company, Coal of Africa Limited (CoAL), received the rights to mine coal on the banks of the Limpopo River, on the South African side, barely 6 km from MNP. This mine is known as the Vele Colliery and it is expected to provide five million tonnes of coking coal over approximately the next thirty years (Van der Merwe, 2009).

Although the mine states that it has put into practice various mitigation measures to counter potential environmental problems, including soil and land impacts, biodiversity impacts, surface and underground water impacts, noise impacts, air quality impacts, visual impacts and heritage impacts, there are concerns about its environmental impact (Van der Merwe, 2009). The TFCA Integrated Development Plan (GMTFCA, 2010:26) notes that there are numerous stakeholder groups who oppose this mine development, stating that the mining operations could result in the industrialisation of the area. Such industrialisation could change the character of the area, have a detrimental effect on the planned animal migration routes in the TFCA and negatively affect the World Heritage Site.

The mine recently had to halt all operations as it had not followed the correct procedures when applying for the required water licenses (Biyase, 2012:5). The CEO of the Vele Project, John Wallington, insists that the mine will provide significant economic benefits to the area and that it will coexist with conservation (Biyase, 2011b:5). The most recent development at the Vele Colliery was that the mine received the full go-ahead from relevant government departments (Mineral Resources and Environmental Affairs) (Biyase, 2012:8). Biyase (2012:8) also indicates that the mine has signed an agreement with SANParks and the Save Mapungubwe Coalition to manage the impacts associated with the mining activity.

Although mining in a South African national park is not sanctioned by the National Parks Act, 1976 (Act No. 57 of 1976), or other legislation, environmental activists have voiced their concern about the mining operations by identifying pollution (water, light, noise and air), a disturbance of biodiversity and the negative effect on current and future tourism (Keepile, 2010). The mine may also provide the platform for the development of a coal-fired power station in the area in the future (Van der Merwe, 2009). Additionally, the mining activities pose a threat to the park's World Heritage status, as noted by Biyase (2011a:5).

#### **2.6.4 TFCA management and the future expansion of the park**

In 2006, shortly after the inception of MNP, the governments of Botswana, South Africa and Zimbabwe signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) stating their joint commitment and intention to create the Limpopo-Shashe Transfrontier Conservation Area

(known today as the Greater Mapungubwe TFCA). This TFCA is envisioned to include the 19 787.8 ha MNP, the Tuli Game Reserve of Botswana and the Tuli Circle in Zimbabwe (see Map 2.2). The final TFCA should have a total area of 136 900 ha (Fleminger, 2006:110). This MOU is in line with more tourists seeing southern Africa, rather than individual countries, as a tourist destination (Ferreira, 2004:203).

A TFCA has the potential of benefiting from the above by attracting visitors; it also provides the means to distribute the benefits of tourism among neighbouring countries. As Timothy (2006:10) notes, the physical border itself and the potential associated yearning of tourists to experience this border and the possibility of crossing multiple borders at one point may develop an areas appeal as a tourist attraction. Wolmer (2003:261) notes that TFCAs have a number of effects, which often underline the core reason for the establishment of these conservation areas. The main effects are, among others, biodiversity protection, national sovereignty, land reform and poverty alleviation. The National Department of Tourism (NDT) identifies TFCAs and World Heritage Sites as strategic nodes for tourism development (NDT, 2011:46).

A TFCA relies on all relevant governments and land management organisations to participate in the process. At MNP this process faces the following challenges:

- ❏ *Challenges from Zimbabwe.* While South Africa and Botswana have shown significant growth in the number of tourist arrivals, Zimbabwe has had a dramatic drop in tourist numbers over the past few years. Political instability and insecurity have also proved to be a problem related to tourism development in that country (GMTFCA (2010:29).
- ❏ *Communal land.* Large communities live on portions of land included in the proposed TFCA. This land currently serves the community as a place of residence and for subsistence agriculture. Challenges exist for the TFCA in terms of community consultation, ownership, incorporation and possible relocation to other areas (GMTFCA, 2010:6).
- ❏ *MNP as part of the TFCA.* MNP is seen as the main draw card in this TFCA as it is a WHS and an existing national park. This may be a problem, as different sites require different management approaches. The levels of economic growth of the three countries also differ, as do funding models and investment possibilities (GMTFCA, 2010:6).
- ❏ *Current TFCA management plans.* Although the Greater Mapungubwe Transfrontier Conservation Area Integrated Master Plan (GMTFCA, 2009) and the

Greater Mapungubwe Transfrontier Conservation Area Integrated Development Plan (GMTFCA, 2010) have been developed and accepted by all three governments, there are two main concerns related to implementation. They are the fact that there is no time-specific implementation plan and that the current plans only incorporate the input of public sector stakeholders and do not include significant input from local land owners and current tourists.

To expand the current park, SANParks has identified potential tracts of land that could increase the overall size of the park. These lands include the 5 700 ha of central land connecting the western and eastern parks of the park, 1 416 ha of private lands surrounded by MNP land as well as the potential inclusion of the Den Staat property, which was recently purchased by the state in terms of a land claim through the local community. Although this land is not officially part of MNP, SANParks hopes to negotiate the favourable contractual inclusion of the land from the land claimants (SANParks, 2010a:9), as has been concluded with some areas of current land as detailed in Table 2.1. Possible future expansion could also involve the inclusion of the Venetia Limpopo Nature Reserve of 34 000 ha owned by DeBeers. Should all potential land be incorporated with MNP, the park has the potential of expanding from its current 19 787.8 ha to 66 700 ha, which would result in the size of the park increasing by approximately 200% (SANParks, 2010a:9).

## **2.7 CONCLUSION**

MNP with its unique and remarkable history is one of only two national parks in South Africa that have the honour to be World Heritage Sites. The park is also progressing towards the attainment of a fully functioning TFCA. However, a World Heritage Site in a young national park with distinct threats and weaknesses brings with it management challenges. In addition, TFCAs are known to face a challenging management climate regarding sustainability.

This chapter provided a concise overview of the research area. To elaborate on this background, the three literature chapters that follow will focus on the foundation of management policies and literature relating to national parks and World Heritage Sites as

well as sustainable tourism management and the general management of tourism facilities in parks.