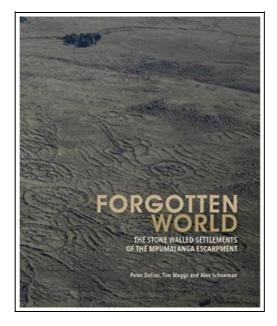
Forgotten World: The Stone Walled Settlements of the Mpumalanga Escarpment



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(Ivah West)

FORGOTTEN WORLD: THE STONE WALLED SETTLEMENTS OF THE MPUMALANGA ESCARPMENT



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Wits University Press, South Africa, 2015. Paperback. Book Condition: New. 238 x 198 mm. Language: English. Brand New Book. The Mpumalanga Escarpment, stretching from Ohrigstad in the north via Lydenburg and Machadodorp to Carolina in the south, saw massive changes in precolonial times. Still visible today is a vast expanse of man-made stone walling which connects over 10 000 square kilometres of land into a complex web of circular homesteads, towns, terraced fields and linking roads, stretching for 150 kilometres in an almost continuous belt. Oral traditions recorded in the early twentieth century named the area Bokoni u the country of the Koni people. Very few people know much about these settlements, how and when they were created, and why today they are deserted and largely ignored. A long tradition of archaeological work which might provide some of the answers remains cloistered in universities. The ensuing knowledge vacuum has been filled by a wide variety of exotic explanations u invoking ancient settlers from India or even visitors from outer space u that share a common assumption that Africans were too primitive to have created such elaborate and complex stone structures. In Forgotten World two leading archaeologists and a distinguished historian provide a rich account which defies the usual stereotypes about backward African farming methods. They show that these settlements were at their peak in the period between 1500 and 1820, that they housed a substantial population, organised vast amounts of labour for infrastructural development, and displayed extraordinary levels of agricultural innovation and productivity. The inhabitants were connected to a trading system which linked them to the coast of Mozambique and to the wider world of Indian Ocean Trade beyond. They straddled trade routes, especially in metal, that connected the mineral-rich northern reaches of South Africa to more southerly areas....



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