

PAPERS FROM  
THE PRE-COLONIAL  
CATALYTIC PROJECT  
VOLUME 1

EDITED BY  
LUNGISILE NTSEBEZA  
&  
CHRIS SAUNDERS

RETHINKING AFRICA SERIES



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## INTRODUCTION

*LUNGISILE NTSEBEZA & CHRIS SAUNDERS*

As part of the new Humanities Initiative of the Department of Higher Education and Training, the University of Cape Town (UCT)'s Centre for African Studies (CAS) was given a grant in 2012 'to coordinate a network of researchers from at least three institutions (other than UCT) located in different provinces in order to construct a history of broader South Africa from the 11th – 16th centuries'. The Director of CAS, Professor Lungisile Ntsebeza, communicated with a range of scholars from various universities and research institutions in South Africa to elicit their interest in this project. Academics from the Universities of Cape Town, KwaZulu-Natal, Witwatersrand and Fort Hare, as well as the Director of the South African Democracy Education Trust (SADET), based in Pretoria, confirmed their interest. A working group, which included historians, anthropologists, archaeologists and historical sociologists, met at CAS on 2 March 2013. The Director of SADET attended the meeting from Tshwane and others from outside Cape Town shared their thoughts through email communications before the meeting.

After discussion, the working-group agreed to recommend that:

- ❖ while the importance of the 11<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries period and the spirit behind 'pre-1652' was recognised, to give attention to the relatively under-researched pre-colonial eras of the southern African past, the title and scope of the project should be broadened to embrace all the pre-colonial eras in southern Africa, which end at different times in different parts of the region. The project should also include the impact of the pre-colonial on the colonial and the present. Limiting it to the 11<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries would place too much of a burden on archaeologists and archaeological work. The project should be trans-disciplinary and should aim to open up new methodologies based on trans-disciplinary perspectives for the pre-colonial in general.
- ❖ the envisaged project would build on relevant work already done, especially the 500 Years project based at Wits, which had led to the publication of the important book entitled *Five Hundred Years Rediscovered* (Wits University Press, 2008), and would draw upon

relevant work done on the pre-colonial in other parts of Africa and elsewhere in the global South.

- ❖ the initial proposal should be for a two-year project, but that is envisaged as the first phase of what should be a longer and larger project, one that will extend over decades and for which further funds will be solicited from various sources, such as the National Research Foundation (NRF) and elsewhere.

The overarching aim of the initial two-year project was thus seen as the creation of a platform that would support and nurture research in these areas over the long term and would promote the development of methodologies that will take forward the study of the pre-colonial eras in southern Africa. This would be done by drawing upon existing work, by bringing work being done in different disciplines together, and by subjecting such work to critical trans-disciplinary analysis.

One of the outcomes would be a conference. This was duly held at CAS on 28 and 29 March 2014, and the present volume includes most of the papers presented there, together with two papers that came in after the conference.

The working group hoped to create a network of researchers, located in different provinces, that would include historians, archaeologists, anthropologists, historical linguists and natural scientists involved in relevant work relating to environmental and climate change, geomorphology, etc., and that we would draw in universities in neighbouring countries (e.g. Namibia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland and Mozambique). It was hoped that the regions would report on their activities at the conference and that an attempt would be made to compare the pre-colonial eras in southern Africa with those in other parts of the continent. A number of meetings and workshops were held in the various regions of the country. They involved people from, inter alia, the universities of Fort Hare, KwaZulu Natal, the Witwatersrand (Wits) and Walter Sisulu, as well as from the Mapungwe Institute (MISTRA), the Mthatha archives and the Nelson Mandela Museum in Mthatha. Participants included not only academics but also poets, artists, and organic intellectuals researching and writing clan and/or family histories.

The March 2014 conference, in part because of where it was held, drew mainly papers by academics, most of whom were connected in one or

other way with UCT. One visitor came from Barcelona, Spain. Those at the conference agreed that CAS should, under Professor Ntsebeza's leadership, continue to play a leading and facilitating role in both consolidating gains made and expanding the network of researchers, particularly in historically disadvantaged institutions. The target will be to produce a new generation of young scholars at these institutions, particularly women. Those leading projects should form a committee, whose main tasks would be to pursue the task of establishing and consolidating research networks particularly in the Eastern Cape, Limpopo and in neighbouring countries, especially those sharing common borders with South Africa, and to allocate resources with a bias for historically disadvantaged institutions and initiatives like in the Eastern Cape where academics should work with 'organic intellectuals' bent on writing their own history.

Those who prepared papers for the conference were asked to produce a survey of their own particular fields, showing what had been done to date, what needed to be done, and how this could be done. In the event, the contributors did not always follow this brief, but their work, as reflected in the papers in this volume, should point to where the study of the pre-colonial should go in the future and suggest ways of getting there. It was recognised at the conference that there was a need for a more popular engagement with these issues. In the final session, John Wright, a historian who now works with archaeologists at the University of the Witwatersrand, spoke of the need for a book aimed at a general readership that would 'discuss historiographies, concepts, methods and ideas about evidence with the aim of producing a critical understanding of the range of ways in which the preindustrial past has been taken up historically by different groups in South Africa, and how and why they continue to do so in the post-colonial presence'. He suggested that such a volume should begin with a discussion of stereotypical ways of thinking about the preindustrial past, such as the notion of 'tribe', that exists in the present and how and why such ways of thinking developed historically.<sup>1</sup>

A general paper by Wright begins this volume, after which we move to the archaeology of the Western and Northern Cape, with papers by

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<sup>1</sup> Transcript of proceedings of the March 2014 conference, available at the Centre for African Studies, UCT



Janette Deacon and Andy Smith, leading scholars on the early history of the peoples of that region. Jeff Peires then takes us to the Eastern Cape, where he points to ways in which archaeologists can do work that ties in with the interests of historians. Sekibakiba Lekgoathi, another historian, tackles the theme of gender, relating it to ethnicity in Ndebele societies in what became South Africa. The social anthropologist/historian Carolyn Hamilton then reports on the 500-year archival online project she directs, before the linguist Matthias Brenzinger presents his findings on non-Bantu click languages. Jose de Prada-Samper, a specialist in folklore and story-telling from Barcelona, considers some of the oral traditions he has been told by people of the Karoo, and gives us an example of one of the stories he has collected. The historian Candy Malherbe then analyses early interactions between the Khoisan in the Western Cape with European colonists and slaves, showing that any idea of a break between the pre-colonial and the colonial is ahistorical. The pre-colonial continued, of course, to have an impact long after the end of pre-colonial period. June Bam, who is herself of partial Khoisan descent, investigates Khoisan heritage issues in the present, and the volume ends with two papers that take us back to Kwa-Zulu Natal: the historian Vukile Khumalo writes on the way in which those who wrote and read late nineteenth century newspapers constituted a new form of *ibandla* or council, and the anthropologist Grant McNulty describes an online project to collect and share indigenous knowledge, a project that links the pre-colonial with present-day identities.

These papers, then, range widely over what is now South Africa – no such notion existed in the pre-colonial eras, as John Wright reminded us at the conference - and take us from the very early past to the present. They all represent work in progress and publication here does not preclude their being published elsewhere subsequently. It will be noted that the authors do not all agree on key issues and no attempt has been made to reconcile different approaches. It is hoped that these varied papers will stimulate new work on the pre-colonial, and that this volume will serve as a useful indication of aspects of the state of the field in early 2014. As this catalytic project proceeds, further volumes will follow.

## WORKING WITH SOUTHERN AFRICA'S PASTS 1500-1880

*JOHN WRIGHT*

The Department of Higher Education's catalytic project on the pre-colonial history of South Africa aims to release new energies in research that goes beyond conventional modes of thinking rooted in colonialism and apartheid. In establishing directions for the project, its organizers would do well, in my opinion, to take account of the research energies in this field that are already in play. In both the key disciplines of Archaeology and History, there are numbers of researchers, mostly in universities and museums, who are actively engaged in work on the history of South Africa before the establishment of colonial rule. The issue at this stage for the Department should be not only how to 'catalyze' new energies but also how most productively to support, and tap into, currents of on-going research.

In this paper I briefly describe a research and writing project that I am involved in at the University of the Witwatersrand, and raise a number of points on research into the period after 1500 that seem to me to warrant wider discussion.

The project involves writing a 'popular' book, provisionally entitled 'Working with Southern Africa's Pasts, 1500-1880: Issues and Engagements'. It is driven by a small editorial group of historians and archaeologists at the University of the Witwatersrand, backed by a wider advisory group of scholars from the Universities of the Witwatersrand, South Africa, and Cape Town. The editors will recruit authors to write 15 or so shortish essays on how knowledges of this period have been made over time, and how they are being rethought in the present. It is aimed at a readership of teachers, lecturers and students in education, history and archaeology, heritage workers, and interested members of the public.

The book explicitly does not aim at developing a new narrative of the period 1500-1880. Rather, it aims at taking stock of issues and problems involved in writing the history of this period that have emerged over the last twenty years or so. Numbers of scholars are now challenging many



of the ideas that have previously informed research into this history, while other scholars remain resistant to new approaches. The issues involved are little known outside the academy: to the members of the editorial group it seems more important at this stage to put them up front for wider discussion than to try to weave them into a new narrative history where they would by and large take second place to the business of ‘telling the story’ and probably be little noticed.

Among the first of the issues to be discussed will be the usefulness or otherwise of the term ‘pre-colonial history’. It is a convenient term commonly used to label the era of African history before the establishment of colonial rule, but there are several problems with it. First, it is imprecise. It is used to describe periods varying in length from a few centuries to many thousands of years. Second, it is defined not in terms of its own history but as a kind of preface to another period, that of European colonization. Third, by highlighting a precolonial/colonial divide, it downplays the continuities, which many historians are now discerning, in African institutions and cultural practices across the moment of colonial annexation. In many cases, newly established colonial administrations had to adapt in numbers of ways to African modes of governance and ways of living because they did not have the power to force new political and social systems into existence. Fourth, in implicitly foregrounding the historical phenomenon of colonialism, it tends to reinforce the portrayal of the racial oppression of Africans by European colonizers as the main defining feature of African history in recent times, and to underplay analysis of the related but distinct historical phenomenon of capitalist expansion into the continent.

The book aims to move beyond the kind of colonial-era stereotypes, produced by both white and black writers, about the history of African societies. Many of these stereotypes survive strongly into the present. It will discuss historiographies, concepts, ideas about sources, and methods of using evidence, with the aim of producing a more critical understanding of the range of ways in which the past has been taken up over time by academic historians and other dealers in the past in South Africa. The challenge for the contributors will be to present these issues in a way that makes them interesting to, and understandable by, a wider public. In the process, they will flesh out their analyses with reference to historical case-studies.

The book takes 1500 as the starting-point of the history that it discusses for two related reasons. First, the date marks the beginning of a new era in the history of southern Africa's place in the global economic and political order. Since at least the ninth century CE, the north-eastern regions of the subcontinent had been linked into overlapping networks of a sea-going trade in luxury goods that reached from south-west Asia to India and China in the east, the Mediterranean and Western Europe in the west, and the coasts of eastern Africa in the south. After 1500, as first the Portuguese, then the Dutch, English, and French penetrated the Indian and western Pacific Oceans, southern Africa was gradually drawn into economic and political orbits controlled from Western Europe rather than Asia.

Second, 1500 marks more or less the beginnings of the production of written records on the ethnography and history of southernmost Africa, records which, for historical reasons touched on in the previous paragraph, have been written mainly in the languages of Western Europe rather than of Asia. For the long era of history in southern Africa before 1500, our knowledge comes mainly from the research carried out by archaeologists since the 1920s. For the period after 1500, our knowledge comes from both archaeology and, increasingly as we get closer to the present, from written sources, including records of oral histories.

The book takes 1880 as its end-point because the date marks roughly the beginnings of the 'modern' era of southern Africa's history. By this time most African societies in the subcontinent had been brought, or were in the process of being brought, under the rule of colonial governments dominated by officials and settlers of European origin. And the decade of the 1880s saw the discovery of major gold deposits on the Witwatersrand, and, for the first time, the investment of large amounts of capital in what capitalists and many settlers called the 'development' of the region. For African agropastoralist societies generally, this meant the beginnings of migrant labour on an increasingly large and oppressive scale, and the erosion of the rural economies that had sustained them since the advent of ancestral farming communities in the subcontinent some 1500 years before. The book, then, is concerned with the processes in which knowledge of the final three or four centuries in the history of independent African communities has been made.



Central to the book will be consideration of the kinds of research work, some of it with intellectual origins going back to the 1960s and 1970s, that has fed into interactions between archaeologists and historians over the last dozen years or so. This work is conceptually at a cutting edge – perhaps *the* cutting edge – of present-day scholarship on the period 1500-1880. Most of it has focussed on two broad and adjacent regions: the KwaZulu-Natal area and the Limpopo-Gariep area. The proposed book will do the same: there will not be room for it to do more. This means that the different kinds of historical work that have been done on the Western Cape and the Eastern Cape will not be covered: these could be the subject of separate books by archaeologists and historians working in these fields. But the implications of the issues discussed in the proposed book would, in the opinion of the editorial group, be significant for the researching, writing, and reading of the history of regions beyond KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo-Gariep.

The book will start off with an outline of the powerfully stereotyped ways of thinking about the period under discussion that exist in the present, and of how and why they developed historically. This will involve discussion of the three ‘master narratives’ that have shaped discourses about the past in South Africa since the first extended histories of the region were written in the 1820s and 1830s, and particularly of how they have portrayed the history of African societies. These master narratives are what can be called the settlerist narrative, the nativist (or Africanist) narrative which emerged largely in opposition to it, and the liberal developmentalist narrative which emerged out of impatience with the other two. All of them are, in one way or another, products of South Africa’s troubled history as a region which has experienced particularly violent forms of settler colonialism and mining capitalism.

For its own part, the master narrative of the past developed in the nineteenth century by European settler ideologues emerged as an overriding alternative to the numerous vernacular histories narrated in the African communities which they sought to dispossess and dominate. These histories, though politically and socially subordinated, continued to be narrated throughout the colonial period, and, from the late nineteenth century onward, to some extent became known more widely in South African society and elsewhere through the recording and publishing work of literate researchers, both black and white.

Academics inside and outside South Africa began to pay serious attention to histories of this kind from the late 1960s onward, and since the 1980s recorded oral histories have formed one of the main bases for on-going rethinkings of the history of the KwaZulu-Natal region and of parts of the Limpopo-Gariep region in the period after about 1700. Since the establishment of constitutional democracy in South Africa in the early 1990s, vernacular histories have begun to resurface more widely via the public media. Critical studies of oral histories, oral historians, and their literate interlocutors will form an important part of the book. A central issue here will have to do with the question of how far the long-established notion of ‘oral tradition’ as transmitted knowledge, as against ‘oral histories’ as constructed knowledge, continues to have purchase. Another will raise the question of why it is that in the course of their researches many otherwise critical scholars often tend to ‘plunder’ oral histories off the page, as against subjecting them to the kind of critical scrutiny that they would apply to other kinds of documentary evidence.

The book will go on to describe the main kinds of documentary evidence that bear on the history of African societies in the period 1500 to 1880, and give a critical account of the circumstances in which they were produced, and of their strengths and limitations. In doing so, it will take up the argument sometimes made by Africanist scholars and public figures that ‘colonial’ documents are too contaminated with racist biases to be usable as sources on the history of African societies. The easily demonstrable reality is that, from the early nineteenth century onwards, accounts of African history written by white writers drew in part on information provided by black interlocutors. Later on, black writers on African history very often drew on sources produced by white writers. Black writers and white writers had quite different experiences of what colonialism meant, and hence wrote from very different subject positions. But, whatever the antagonisms – or alignments – between them might be, they drew on one another’s work, as they have continued to do to the present. ‘Entanglements’ of this kind make it impossible to draw a line between ‘biased’ white sources and ‘authentic’ black sources.

The other major source of evidence on the history of African societies in the period under discussion comes from the results of archaeological research since the establishment of professional archaeology in South



Africa in the 1920s. The book will describe the main focuses of research undertaken since then, and will critically examine the main approaches taken by archaeologists who have worked in this country, particularly in KwaZulu-Natal and the Limpopo-Gariep region. In the 1960s and 1970s the first archaeologists and historians to work on the history of African agropastoralist societies often showed a close interest in one another's work, but in the 1980s the two disciplines went in different directions and conversations between them largely dried up. Many archaeologists became much more interested in using evidence from recent ethnographic studies to establish models of what African cultures might have looked like in the past than in trying to explain continuity and change over time, which is what the historians were interested in. Many students of southern Africa's rich heritage of rock art, most of them archaeologists, also became more interested in using ethnographic evidence to interpret the meanings of the art than in trying to analyse it in historical terms. It was only after 2000 that some archaeologists and historians began working together again. The book will aim to explain why this was so, and also examine the difficulties involved in trying to bring evidence from the two disciplines together.

At the heart of recent rethinking of the past before colonialism has been a firm move away from the notion of the 'tribe' as a meaningful unit of study. Inside and outside the academy, the tribe has usually been seen as a well-defined, discrete group of people who live together in a common territory under the rule of a hereditary chief. The assumption is that the members of the tribe share a common ancestry, practise broadly the same culture, speak broadly the same language, are politically more or less united, and share a common identity. Since at least the 1960s, ethnographic and historical research in many parts of Africa has shown that before the colonial period people were politically and socially organized in ways that do not fit this picture. The territories ruled by chiefs did not have well defined borders, and the people who gave them allegiance came from different backgrounds, had variant cultures, and spoke variant dialects. It was common for sections of chiefdoms, as we can call the political units of the time, to break away and either seek to establish themselves as independent chiefdoms, or else go and give their allegiance to other chiefs. In turn, new groups of people might arrive and give their allegiance. At all levels of society, there was frequent political and social conflict. Chiefs faced constant opposition from their

close male relatives; men had to manage homesteads where wives were constantly seeking advantage for their own sons and daughters; sons sought to establish autonomy from their fathers. As a result, group identifications were constantly being contested and remade.

In brief, societies were more loosely structured, and identifications more fluid, than the tribal model allows for. Many scholars today prefer to talk of 'ethnic groups' instead of 'tribes', but others argue that this notion too is misleading when applied to societies in the era before the establishment of colonialism. In their view, it was only after the mid-nineteenth century, in the face of expanding colonial rule, that the more consolidated and homogeneous groupings which we can call tribes or ethnic groups began to be formed. The processes of consolidation were reinforced by colonial rulers, who found bounded tribes useful as the basic units of administration. These processes reached their fullest development with the establishment of tribally based Bantustans under apartheid rule in the 1960s and 1970s. Tribalism had long been breaking down in the towns and cities of South Africa; it seemed to be finally on its way out with the collapse of apartheid in the late 1980s and early 1990s. But more recently, and contrary to all expectations, ANC governments have sought to revive certain aspects of tribalism for their own administrative purposes. For scholars today the overall result of 150 years or so of tribe-based discourses is that it is often difficult to think back to 'pre-tribal' times when people in African societies were organized quite differently. The book will explore the implications for historical research of thinking about political organization and the making of identifications in non-tribal terms.

In conventional accounts, much of the history of African societies before the colonial period is built round the story of the rise of the Zulu kingdom under Shaka in the 1810s and the 'wars of Shaka', or mfecane as they are often called, that followed. Shaka is often portrayed as the archetype of despotic African king who ruled a highly militarized kingdom. The wars of the 1820s are seen as having led to a chain reaction of population movements across the eastern half of the subcontinent that culminated in the formation of numbers of new states – that of the Ndebele under Mzilikazi, the Swazi under Sobhuza, the Pedi under Sekwati, the Basotho under Moshoeshoe, the Bhaca under Madzikane, the Gaza under Soshangane, the Ngoni under Zwangendaba, and others. These states formed the bases of

communities which have continued to play important roles in the history of southern Africa into the present.

Since the 1980s new lines of thinking have challenged much of this depiction. The Zulu-centric notion of the mfecane has been unpacked and shown to be based on limited historical evidence. It was in essence a product of generations of stereotyped thinking on the part of black and white dealers in the past who had their own particular reasons for developing and holding on to it. Similarly, the common notion of Shaka the great military conqueror has been shown to rest on thin foundations, and his role in the dislocations of the 1810s and 1820s to have been exaggerated. Revisionist historians do not disagree that the period was one of major political and social upheavals across much of southern Africa, but they see its causes as lying deep in the history of colonial expansion in the subcontinent, with the formation of the Zulu kingdom as a product of the upheavals rather than the ultimate cause. Some of these new ideas are starting to seep through into schools text books, but by and large they have so far had little effect on popular images of Shaka and his times. Discussion of them will form an important element of the proposed book.

Another major stereotype that will be examined has to do with the history of the Tuu-speaking people commonly called 'Bushmen' in the literature. Until as late as the 1960s there was virtually no recognition in the literature that the people so labelled had histories in which they were active agents and planners; even among academics who were in frequent contact with them they were widely seen as survivals from the 'Later Stone Age' who had intriguing cultures but very little history worth studying. It was not until the 1980s and 1990s, to the accompaniment of often angry debates, that scholars began taking the history of Tuu-speaking groups seriously. Since then, the study of 'interactions' between these and other groups has become an important focus of research by archaeologists and anthropologists, but much of this work remains informed by ahistorical assumptions that 'Bushman' culture and identity did not change much over time. In the popular literature, 'Bushmen' continue to be seen as having always formed a separate ethnic group, with its own distinctive culture and history. The ethnic term 'San', now widely used in the literature for people formerly labelled as Bushmen, itself forms a major obstacle to investigation of the place of Tuu-speakers in the history of the regions under study. The

epistemological issues involved are complex, and will require careful discussion if they are to be understood by a popular readership.

In conclusion, the book will also need to tackle the concept of ‘South Africa’ as itself a product of history. While the term ‘southern Africa’ had been used by geographers and map-makers for many centuries before, it was only in the nineteenth century that the notion of ‘South Africa’ as a political entity began to become common in the literature. In the first instance it was primarily a notion developed by British imperialists and colonizers to define the sphere of interest which they worked to establish in the region extending from the Cape to the Zambezi and beyond. It would have meant nothing to the great majority of African people in the subcontinent, and little to most Afrikaans-speaking people of the time. It was not until after the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910 that the concept began to gain a wider purchase, and the idea of South Africa as a ‘nation’ with a distinct history to take root. Even then, ‘South African’ was seen primarily as an identity for white citizens, and it was not until after the collapse of apartheid in the late 1980s and early 1990s that black citizens were able to see themselves as South Africans on equal terms. Today the leaders of a newly democratic South Africa seek to proclaim a new and inclusive South African national history in place of the old exclusive one. Like all national histories, it tends to project its particular ideas and myths unproblematically from the present back into the past. To be able to understand the nature of the past before the idea of ‘South Africa’ came into existence, we first need to understand the nature of the political, social and intellectual forces that shape thinking about that past in the present.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank colleagues in the project on ‘Working with Southern Africa’s Pasts 1500-1880’, based at the University of the Witwatersrand, and others in the Archive and Public Culture Research Initiative at the University of Cape Town for discussion of many of the ideas expressed in this paper.



# THE HOLOCENE ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE KAROO

*JANETTE DEACON*

It was during the Holocene, the last 11,700 years in geological time, that Stone Age hunter-gatherers in many parts of the world gradually changed their economy and lifestyle to herding, farming, city states, colonies and empires, and invented and dispersed metal working, the wheel, guns and a multitude of other artefacts. These transitions took place relatively late in the Karoo – some within the last 2000 years and others only within the last 200 years – and were triggered not by independent development, but by immigrants who came on foot from central and eastern Africa and, latterly, by Europeans who came by sea and expanded inland from the coast.

In southern Africa, the picture that emerges from archaeological research on Holocene sites is one of a relatively stable genetic population that was able to adapt to changing environmental and social circumstances. Population numbers in drier regions dropped in times of drought, and rose when rainfall increased. When herders moved into the Karoo, they lived alongside the hunter-gatherers. Despite territorial rivalry, there was on-going acculturation, and exchange of material culture and marriage partners. Could they have continued living as neighbours for another thousand years or more if European colonists had not arrived? Or would the Karoo have remained a marginal environment for both hunter-gatherers and herders? This paper focuses on changes that preceded European colonisation.

Some of the results of archaeological research on Khoesan identity in the Karoo, and the possible reasons for change and continuity during the Holocene, are summarised in terms of environmental change, physical anthropology, material culture, and economy in an attempt to find answers to questions such as: How did Holocene climatic changes influence hunter-gatherer distribution and lifestyle in the Karoo? Was the Karoo population genetically stable throughout the Holocene and ancestral to the indigenous San and/or Khoe population? Were the changes in material culture during the Holocene unique to the Karoo or

did they coincide with similar changes in neighbouring regions? What impact did the introduction of herding have on hunter-gatherers in the Karoo in the last 2000 years?

## IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Unreliable rainfall and lack of surface water during the Holocene (and indeed in earlier periods) undoubtedly posed an on-going challenge for Karoo hunter-gatherers, as well as subsequent farming populations. The archaeological evidence indicates that the Karoo was inhabited only intermittently for most of the Holocene (Beaumont, Smith & Vogel 1995). Even after 2000 years ago, neither Khoekhoe herders nor Nguni and Tswana-speaking farmers settled there permanently. Only within the last 300 years, and then only after the introduction of wind pumps, was farming sustainable in the long term. The assumption has been that at least some of the changes in settlement pattern were largely driven by climate change.

The Holocene marks the end of the Last Glacial Maximum (MIS2) when temperatures worldwide at 18,000 years ago were about 6-8 degrees Celsius cooler than at present, and global sea level dropped by about 130 m (Deacon & Lancaster 1988). This would have placed the southern margin of the Karoo as much as 50-100 km further inland than at present. Mean annual temperatures gradually rose after about 14,000 years ago. By the mid-Holocene between 7000 and 4000 years ago, global temperatures were as much as 3-4 degrees C warmer than in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Since 4000 years ago they have fluctuated over hundreds rather than thousands of years around the present-day mean with the threat of global warming as a result of human activities looming on the horizon.

Along with temperature changes, precipitation also fluctuated. Proxy data on rainfall in the winter rainfall zone of the western Karoo during the Holocene has recently been correlated from several sources (Weldeab et al. 2012). The results suggest that the wettest episode in the Holocene coincided with the global period of cooler temperatures (known in Europe as the 'Little Ice Age') between 700 and 100 years ago (ibid.: 2347). In the eastern Karoo, drier conditions began from about 300 years ago and karroid shrub vegetation gradually replaced grass in pollens in hyrax middens (Scott & Bousman 1990). Similarly,

in the period between 11,500 and 9000, when it was still cooler than at present, precipitation was also slightly higher. The driest episode in the Holocene as interpreted from isotope analyses of hyrax middens in the Cederberg and Swartberg on the western and southern margins of the Karoo respectively, was between 8000 and 4000 years ago (Chase, Meadows et al. 2009; Chase, Boom et al. 2013).

In general, these results indicate that precipitation in the Karoo appears to have been slightly higher than at present in the early and late Holocene, i.e. both before and after the hottest temperatures of the mid-Holocene between 8000 and 4000 years ago when it was generally drier than it is now. If hunter-gatherers were adversely affected by hotter and drier climate, we would expect to find less evidence for occupation during the mid-Holocene than before or after.

### CHANGE AND CONTINUITY IN MATERIAL CULTURE

The distribution of hunter-gatherer sites in time and space, and the nature of material culture changes, are both indicators of adjustment to environmental change.

Many of the Later Stone Age artefacts that were still made and used by indigenous San and Khoekhoe at the time of European contact have been found in Holocene archaeological deposits (Deacon & Deacon 1999), although not always in the Karoo where rock shelters and caves are rare. They indicate a fairly stable range of stone tools for day-to-day use in hunting and gathering as well as clothing and ornamentation such as beads and pendants. The list includes parts of bows and arrows, digging sticks and bored stone digging stick weights, ostrich eggshell and sea shell pendants and beads, tortoiseshell and ostrich eggshell containers, fragments of leather garments, and polished bone artefacts. Pottery was added to the toolkit within the last 2000 years. The most common occurrences in the Karoo date to the late Holocene between about 4500 and a few hundred years ago (Beaumont, Smith & Vogel 1995).

The changes that took place in the Later Stone Age artefacts made during the Holocene can be described as adjustments in size, shape and design rather than in the tasks for which they were made. Those found in the Karoo are essentially similar to those found in neighbouring regions. The stone tool sequence for the whole of South Africa has

recently been reviewed (Lombard *et al.* 2013) and the following broad sub-divisions within the Later Stone Age are proposed. The subdivisions are based on the size and design of certain distinctive stone tools that were made during particular time periods as set out below (Table 1).

STONE TOOL TRADITION	DATING IN RADIOCARBON YEARS BEFORE PRESENT (BP)	CHARACTERISTICS
Ceramic final Later Stone Age	Less than 2000	Pottery with large stone tools
Final Later Stone Age	4000-100	Microlithic stone tools with few segments
Wilton	8000-4000	Microlithic tools with segments
Oakhurst	12,000-7000	Large stone tools

Table 1: Holocene stone tool traditions in the Karoo (from Lombard *et al.* 2013).

As was noted in the 1970s (Deacon 1974; Deacon 1984), stone artefact assemblages classified as Wilton, with significant numbers of small half-moon-shaped stone tools called ‘segments’ that have a straight cutting edge and a blunted curve, are rare in the interior of South Africa. The small number of sites with artefacts of this tradition in the Karoo is presumed to relate to changing climate which affected the availability of water. The mid-Holocene coincided with the time when the Wilton tradition flourished in higher rainfall regions. The Karoo was not totally abandoned, as there are a few Wilton occurrences dating between 4000 and 5000 years ago in the Upper Karoo (Beaumont *et al.* 1995; Parsons 2008).

In contrast to the low visibility of mid-Holocene artefacts, there are many sites and dates in the Karoo for the final and ceramic Later Stone Age (Table 2) that indicate a much higher population inhabited the region during the last 4000 years than at any other time in the past (Sampson 1984, 1988; Beaumont & Vogel 1989; Deacon 1984; Beaumont *et al.* 1995; Deacon & Deacon 1999; Parsons 2008).

Sampson (1984) undertook a major recording project in the Seacow River valley in the Eastern Cape section of the Karoo between 1979 and 1982. He logged about 16,000 mainly surface sites over several thousand sq. km. Nearly 5,000 of these, dating within the last 3000



years and into the 19<sup>th</sup> century, were classified within the final Later Stone Age and ceramic final Later Stone Age. In a detailed analysis of a sample of about 2,100 sites, 21% included pottery (Sampson 1984:16), indicating that they were inhabited within the last 2000 years. They were concentrated on low dolerite hills and ridges and results of a cluster analysis in a sample area demonstrated that the proximity of water holes, and raw material (mainly hornfels) for making stone tools, were strongly associated with higher densities of stone tools (Sampson 1984). A similar pattern probably pertains in the Karoo region of the Western and Northern Cape.

Raw material – the type of rock preferred for making stone tools – had cultural as well as technological significance. It influenced the choice of places to camp in the Seacow Valley, and in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. /Xam men from the Upper Karoo mentioned that the Flat Bushmen made their arrowheads out of iron, while the Grass Bushmen used a particular kind of white stone, an unusual milky chalcedony found in the vicinity of Brandvlei (Deacon 1996a).

Earthenware pottery, introduced to southern Africa around the same time as herding, has been a useful temporal marker for ceramic Later Stone Age surface sites, and is also regarded as an indicator of the identity of the people who made it. Most researchers agree that stone artefacts associated with pottery made with quartz temper were made by herders, whereas hunter-gatherers who acquired the skill of making pots tended to use grass temper. Sampson (1986) has used this feature, and the types of decoration on pottery, to model a hunter-herder contact zone in the Seacow Valley. The results suggest that herders lived there over a relatively short period, but hunter-gatherers remained.

While drier conditions might be the main cause of a lower population in the Karoo in the mid-Holocene, there does not seem to be a similar reason for the lower visibility of artefacts in the earlier Oakhurst tradition. They are rarely mentioned in the literature for the region and it is unclear whether this is a result of sampling or some other process. More striking is the exponential increase in the number of hunter-gatherer sites in the period between 4000 and a few hundred years ago which is repeated in neighbouring regions.

## CHANGE AND CONTINUITY IN ROCK ART

While the geological formations in the Karoo limit the number of places where rock paintings could have been made in rock shelters, there are hundreds, if not thousands, of places where rock engravings occur in the open, particularly on dolerite outcrops.

The rock engravings of the Karoo are an integral part of the broader corpus of rock art in southern Africa and are similar to the paintings in many ways. Both engravings and paintings were made over much the same time period; the images illustrate much the same range of animals with the eland as the most common; there are illustrations of animals that cannot be identified to species in both; men are more numerous than women amongst human figures; therianthropes (people with animal body parts) are illustrated in both; many human figures are in dancing postures; and grids and geometric patterns are common themes. The folklore and beliefs of the /Xam recorded by Bleek and Lloyd (1911) have been very helpful in understanding the motive and meaning of the rock art made by ancestors of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century San. Location of places where the /Xam informants lived in the Upper Karoo in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century indicates that there was significance attached to certain places in the landscape and that the rock engravings enhanced this significance (Deacon 1988, 1996b; Deacon & Foster 2005).

In an effort to ascertain the age of rock engravings in the Upper Karoo north of Carnarvon, Beaumont collected mostly ostrich eggshell fragments, with bone and occasionally charcoal, associated with stone artefacts near to rock engravings at open sites. These were radiocarbon dated in the expectation that if the dates clustered consistently with one or more of the three rock engraving techniques, and with the stone artefact traditions in the region (Beaumont & Vogel 1989), a sequence of rock engraving techniques would be discernible.

The oldest technique for engraving seems to be a single fine outline depicting animal and human figures. An example on a small slab found associated with early Holocene stone artefacts from Wonderwerk Cave north and east of the Karoo near Kuruman in the Northern Cape, has been dated to 10,200 years ago (Thackeray et al. 1981). In the Upper Karoo, five dates obtained by Beaumont and Vogel (1989:75) on materials associated with Wilton artefacts close to fine-line engravings

range from c.1430 to 4630 years ago, with one near an Oakhurst assemblage dated to c. 5630 years ago.

Scraped engravings, where the weathered outer crust of dolerite was scraped away to create an image that was lighter in colour than the rest of the rock, are reported to be associated with 15 radiocarbon dates that range from 410 to 2730 years ago (op. cit.) and are associated with final Later Stone Age artefacts. Pecked engravings, made by removing the outer weathered skin of dolerite with a chopping or pecking action, were near to stone artefacts and pottery typical of the Ceramic final Later Stone Age at 11 sites associated with organic material dated to between about 130 to 2630 years ago, partly overlapping with the dates for scraped engravings (Beaumont & Vogel 1989).

While the precise associations and dates might be questionable, and the sample small, the fact that the majority are less than 3000 years old (Table 2), supports information from other sources that population density over the past 3000 years was substantially higher than it was between 3000 and 6000 years ago (Deacon 1984).

RADIOCARBON YEARS BEFORE PRESENT (BP)	FINE-LINE ENGRAVINGS AND WILTON / OAKHURST	SCRAPED ENGRAVINGS AND FINAL LATER STONE AGE	PECKED ENGRAVINGS & CERAMIC FINAL LATER STONE AGE	TOTAL
6000-5000	1			1
5000-4000	2			2
4000-3000	1			1
3000-2000		4	2	6
2000-1000	1	3	3	7
1000-100		8	6	14
TOTAL	5	15	11	31

Table 2: Number of dates on organic material excavated from sites with stone artefacts near to engravings made by fine-line, scraped and pecked techniques in the Upper Karoo (Beaumont & Vogel 1989: table 1). Note the significant increase in the incidence of sites after 3000 years ago.

Since rock paintings in other parts of South Africa are not significantly older than the engravings in the Karoo, the reason for a higher number

of sites in the late Holocene is probably more complex than simply favourable climatic conditions.

## KHOESAN PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS AND DNA

The Holocene Later Stone Age population has been generally assumed to be the direct ancestor of the indigenous hunter-gatherers and herders who lived in the Karoo at the time of European colonisation (Deacon & Deacon 1999) and the assumption is supported by DNA studies (Behar *et al.* 2008; Schlebusch *et al.* 2012; Barbieri *et al.* 2013) although no ancient DNA has yet been extracted from skeletal material from the Karoo. Mitochondrial DNA studies suggest that introgression of additional lineages to the Khoesan mtDNA gene pool occurred about 40,000 years ago, and again during the recent Bantu expansion (Behar *et al.* 2008). A further divergence is apparent between Southern (Karoo) and Northern San about 10,000 years ago (Schlebusch *et al.* 2012).

As Later Stone Age people began to bury their dead in formal graves only within the last 10,000 years, and there are few places in the Karoo where graves older than 1000 years have been found (Morris 2006), the sample is too small to accurately determine the relationship of the Holocene hunter-gatherers either to pre-Holocene populations or to recent ones on the basis of skeletal features. It is equally difficult to identify the shared characteristics amongst groups in the Karoo, and impossible to define any differences that might imply territorial ownership between extended families or even language and dialectal groups. However, there is no reason to assume that the Karoo population was significantly different from populations in surrounding regions.

There is a relatively large sample of several hundred individuals dating back about 10,000 years from Holocene graves in middens and rock shelters in the coastal belt and Cape Fold mountains. At the long sequence hunter-gatherer site of Matjes River rock shelter near Plettenberg Bay, the height of adults decreases over time with taller individuals in the early and mid-Holocene and shorter individuals in the late Holocene (Louw 1960).

There has been renewed interest in the major change that occurred around 2000 years ago when domesticated sheep and cattle were introduced into the Karoo together with pottery. Most researchers



hypothesised on linguistic grounds that the domesticated animals were introduced to the sub-continent by Bantu-speaking Iron Age farmers. Their presence led in turn to some Khoe-speaking hunter-gatherers in Botswana changing to herding and gradually migrating southwards along the west coast and through the Karoo. Maps hypothesizing the possible routes followed by these early herders have been published since 1905 in most books on the subject (Stow 1905; Smith 1995; Deacon & Deacon 1999).

From a linguistic perspective, however, Güldemann (2008) challenges the assumption that the first herders were of purely Khoesan origin, and proposes instead:

that the spread of pastoralism into southern Africa is associated with a Pre-Bantu population that was originally characterized by the following profile: it spoke a language of the Khoe-Kwadi family which was structurally closer to Kwadi than to Proto-Khoe; had a stone-age food-producing culture with a focus on pastoralism; and did not have a typical southern African Khoisan genetic profile. This hypothesis implies that not all groups lumped together in the spurious category of ‘Southern African Khoisan’ emerged within southern Africa and were ‘pristine’ hunter-gatherers. [My emphasis]

This view could find some synergy with results from the morphological analysis of a large sample of recent burials from the Karoo dating to the last 300 years. Morris (1995:160) concluded that the remains from a late 18<sup>th</sup> century population on the banks of the Orange River near Kakamas, although associated with artefacts typical of Khoekhoe herders of the time, had features characteristic of the Bantu-speaking population: ‘The morphology of the Kakamas skeletons can best be explained as a local development related to the dynamics of group contacts in the protohistoric and early historic periods.’ These ‘dynamics’ of contact were probably taking place south of the Orange River as well.

## CONCLUSIONS, PROBLEMS AND QUESTIONS

The information that has been gathered on the Holocene archaeology of the Karoo in the Western Cape and Northern Cape indicates no major

cultural or morphological differences between the Karoo Khoesan population and the population in surrounding regions, but it does suggest that there were changes through time that were possibly driven more by social relationships than environmental adjustments.

In terms of the spatial distribution of archaeological sites, there are major gaps which make it difficult to address in detail questions about change and continuity in relations between people, land and landscape. For example, there has been almost no research on Holocene archaeology in the-south western sector of the Karoo from Ceres to the Moordenaars Karoo and east to Beaufort West. In terms of change through time, the noticeable temporal gap in the Karoo during the mid-Holocene might have been the result of conditions less favourable for hunter-gatherers when temperatures were highest and rainfall was low, but again this is difficult to establish with certainty, given the general increase in population.

As in neighbouring biomes, the density of archaeological sites increases exponentially after 3000 years ago and probably reflects population growth. This requires some explanation as the population increase seems to have begun before the introduction of herding. Furthermore, even in areas like the Seacow Valley which has been intensively studied, there is only ephemeral evidence for the presence of herders in the Karoo in the last 2000 years.

Lastly, historical information from the last few hundred years – such as the Bleek and Lloyd archive and early travellers’ accounts – is a potential source of information about specific places in the landscape. If these places could be accurately relocated, we could possibly answer some of the questions about differences in material culture between hunter-gatherers and early herders. Sampson used this type of information to good effect in the Seacow valley. His methodology could be extended to the /Xam heartland.

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# THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE KHOEKHOEN

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The archaeology of the Khoekhoen<sup>1</sup> cannot be divorced from other studies which contribute to their history, such as historical studies, anthropology, contemporary accounts, linguistics, and, increasingly, genetics. There are serious debates over (a) Khoekhoen antecedents, and (b) the use of the term ‘Khoesan’: a) Some scholars are convinced that the Khoekhoen developed from local hunters who had obtained stock to become ‘pastoralists’. The alternative model sees the antecedents of the Khoekhoen as being derived from herders who came from East Africa to the river systems of the northern Kalahari, then dispersed southwards along the Atlantic Coast to the Southwestern Cape. b): Because of clicks in the language, and perceived phenotypic similarities with the hunters of southern Africa, the Khoekhoen were conflated with the Bushmen under the rubric ‘Khoisan’ (Khoesan) by Schultze (1928) to incorporate all the indigenous non-Bantu language speakers of southern Africa. This is a term which still retains a high degree of validity among people descended from both the hunters and herders of southern Africa. Recent linguistic work (Güldemann 2008) suggests that Khoesan should be disaggregated and Bushman (San) languages, of which there are two groups (Ju-ǀHoan and Tuu: mutually unintelligible to each other), and Khoe need to be considered separately.

The contribution of archaeology to these arguments is to use material culture from well-dated contexts to elucidate sequences that demonstrate change over space and time. We can thus show how people lived, moved and adapted to new lands and conditions while still maintaining their basic economies and life-styles, even when coming into contact with different people and languages.

## DEBATING THE ARGUMENTS: ANTECEDENTS

Sheep were first introduced to southern Africa between 2400-2200 years ago in northern Namibia (Pleurdeau 2012), probably initially attracted by the Cunene and Caprivi river systems. The earliest Introduction of

sheep to the Cape from Namibia was probably down the west coast. A date of 2100 BP has been run on sheep-bone from Spoegrivier Cave in Namaqualand (Webley 2001), and a later date of around 2000 years from the south coast at Blombos Cave (Henshilwood 1996), De Kelders (Schweitzer 1979) and Boomplaas (Deacon et al. 1978) (Figure 1).

Unable to make connections with pottery decorations found to the north, Sadr & Sampson (2006) are convinced that this means the ceramics of the south were independently created, and thus there is no connection between the groups. This is their argument to support Sadr (2003) that hunters of the south obtained stock through internal exchange mechanisms, similar to *hxaro* among the Ju/'hoansi of northern Namibia described by Wiessner (1994). These they refer to as 'hunters-with-sheep'.

Unfortunately, although the Sadr model may be logical in archaeological terms, it fails the anthropology test by not addressing the difficulties of changing from the sharing ethic of hunters to private ownership built into animal husbandry, and the need to maintain over 60 sheep to have a viable breeding flock. Today, small stock owners among the Bushmen do not 'herd' their animals, letting them look after themselves (Yellen 1984). The animals are equally not built into the ritual life of the hunters, and thus they would not be considered 'pastoralists'. The difficulty, or perhaps reluctance, to take on the responsibility for domestic stock, especially if there are adequate supplies of wild game, was also found at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century when the first British governor of the Cape, Lord McCartney, attempted to prevent hunters of the Sneeuberg from raiding farmer stock by giving them sheep. The idea was that the British assumed the hunters would jump at the chance to become herders. This exercise was only partially successful. Although the raiding decreased, the hunters just slaughtered the sheep and ate them.

## DEBATING THE ARGUMENTS: LINGUISTICS

In southern Africa, Khoe languages are today spoken by Nama and by 'black' hunter-gatherers (G//ana, Shua, Tshwa, etc) along the Botletle River in Botswana and Nata River in Zimbabwe, and were closely allied to the now extinct language of south-western Angola, Kwadi. There is a distinct possibility that Khoe-Kwadi was in turn connected to extant



click languages of East Africa, such as Sandawe. The importance of language suggests considerable differences between indigenous hunters coming into contact with immigrating herders bringing domestic stock from East Africa possibly via the tsetse-free corridor through Zamiba (Figure 1).

Güldemann (2008) contributes to this immigration model by offering a scenario whereby the language of the Khoekhoen was developed over time and space with the movement of herders across the northern Kalahari first coming into contact with Ju-ǀHoan-speakers, then later, further south, with Tuu-speakers. Each of these languages has substrates within Khoekhoen.

### DEBATING THE ARGUMENTS: GENETICS

Genetic relations in Y-chromosomes between East African pastoralists and southern Africa have been established (Henn et al. 2008). Similarly, Coehlo et al. (2009) make the assertion that the lactase persistence marker -14010C (the ability of the human body to tolerate lactose, and so metabolise milk, common among pastoralists) in southwest Angola originated in East Africa, and was transferred via Khoe herders of southern Africa.

The genomics of Cape Coloured people done recently (Petersen et al. 2013) make the assumption that Khoesan genetics are the aboriginal populations of southern Africa, using Bushmen to represent all 'Khoisan', and not separating Khoe and San. Unpublished sequencing of ancient mtDNA of a hunter on the coast of the Vredenburg Peninsula, dated to 2300 BP (before the arrival of the first domestic stock) (Morris et al. in prep). The closest modern link of the mtDNA is with the Nama in Namibia, suggesting the probability of introgression between the coastal hunters and herders.

Currently, there has been no attempt to separate the genetics of the 'black' hunter/gatherers of the northern Kalahari from the Bushmen, or how they might fit with the pastoralists and click-speaking herders of East Africa, in spite of the mtDNA, Y-chromosome and lactose persistence studies mentioned above.

To really complicate the situation, West-Eurasian genes have been identified in southern Africa that the researchers believe came from the

Yemen into Ethiopia before migrating southwards some 2000 years ago (Pickell et al. 2014).

## HERDER ARCHAEOLOGY: KHOEKHOEN

The first pastoral population at the Cape, were most likely to have been the antecedents of the people who became known as the ‘Hottentots’ during early colonial times. The archaeology of these early pastoralists is typified by excavations done at Kasteelberg on the Vredenburg Peninsula (Smith 2006a). The first dates of occupation at the Kasteelberg ‘A’ site (KBA) is 1860 BP on top of the hill. At the foot of the hill is KBB which has dates between 1300 and 880 BP.

The herders of Kasteelberg had large flocks of sheep, with a few cattle. The proximity of Kasteelberg to the coast, only 4 km. away, meant that marine resources could be tapped. These included shellfish, crayfish and marine mammals. In fact, seal bones dominate the faunal component at the site, suggesting that this might have been a ‘sealing camp’ (Smith 2006b).

An unusual feature of Kasteelberg, particularly around KBB is the high number of long lenticular grooves ground into the granite bedrock. Portable versions of these were also found in the excavations. All of these portable types had ochre staining, indicating their use for grinding red pigment. The Khoekhoen are known historically to have mixed butter fat with ochre as body adornment (as is also done today by the Maasai in East Africa, and the Himba of Namibia). It is quite probable that the former inhabitants of Kasteelberg mixed seal fat with ochre for exactly the same purpose. This suggestion is supported by the choice of seals: 25 kg animals which were carried intact from the beach onto the site, and which maximised the fat to meat ratio.

Seals also give us another indicator of seasonality of occupation from the ages of the animals at death. Since the African fur seal (*Arctocephalus pusillus*) breeds at the end of the year, and the age of a seal at death can be calculated from mandible length, the month of death is known. The seals of Kasteelberg were killed mostly in May and October, the rainy months.

All these indicators hint at the site being used as a ceremonial place which is well known among African herders who congregate during the

wet season when there is plenty of forage for their animals, to celebrate marriages, and other *rites de passage*, etc. This idea is further strengthened by the discovery of a small lamb skeleton whose bones were covered in ochre, while the surrounding bones were ochre-free. The lamb was probably sacrificial, and had possibly been buried, wrapped in a skin, which prevented staining of the surrounding bone, but which had subsequently disintegrated.

The distinction between hunters and herders in the Western Cape can be seen in the material culture: hunters made fine stone tools, small ostrich eggshell beads (<5mm outside diameter, and had very few potsherds on their sites. They also had high proportions of small antelope in the faunal record (Smith et al. 1991). The herders, by contrast, seemed to use just stone flakes, had larger beads (>5mm outside diameter), had huge numbers of potsherd fragments, and large numbers of sheep (Table 1). The pottery was finely made: well-fired, with red slip and burnished surface. The pottery sequence at Kasteelberg began with spouted wares, later replaced by lugged pots (Sadr & Smith 1991) (Figure 2).

After 800 BP the archaeology of the herders in the Western Cape is woefully sparse, but they appear three hundred years later, when they enter the historical record with Bartolomeu Diaz making his landfall at Mossel Bay in 1495. There are some archaeological hints of the relationship between the Khoekhoen and early colonists in the form of the bones of fat-tailed sheep which were traded across from the indigenous herders. These appear in the moat of the first castle at the Cape, which is under the present-day Parade in Cape Town (Abrahams 1993). From around the dam at Voelvllei in the Swartland, large ostrich eggshell beads were found associated with stone tools and pieces of copper and lead shot, suggesting, again, exchange of goods between Khoekhoen and colonists.

The original herders at the Cape were primarily shepherds, but they were no strangers to cattle, as a few fragments of bone have been found in the early part of the first millennium AD (Orton et al. 2013). A few centuries before the first European contact larger numbers of cattle probably arrived at the Cape. This may have been due to the arrival of Later Iron Age Nguni-speaking farmers around 1000 years ago at the southeastern part of the continent, bringing their herds with them. These animals could well have spread westward in numbers along the south

coast (Sealy 2010), as there appears to have been considerable overlap between Khoekhoen and amaXhosa in the Eastern Cape.

The archaeology of the Khoekhoen in the Western Cape is virtually absent during the colonial period, even though they are very prominent in the Journal of Jan van Riebeeck and later records. It is to the Northern Cape, along the Orange River at the Richtersveld, that recent herders could be identified (Smith et al. 2001, Webley 1997), as the lifestyle continued up to the present, and ethnoarchaeology of herder sites was done (Brain 1967; Robertshaw 1978).

### PROBLEMS AND QUESTIONS

If we talk about the separation of Khoe and San in the term ‘Khoesan’, then we have to consider the possibility of different genetic groups occupying the Western Cape with their domestic stock some 2000 years ago. Reading between the lines of the historical record (Parkington 1984) it would appear that hunters and herders were different<sup>22</sup> and retained a degree of separation up to the colonial period. Three indigenous groups were identified by Van Riebeeck at the Cape when the Dutch first set up their fort in 1652: Watermen or Strandlopers (probably Soaqua) who had no stock, Fishermen who only had cattle, and the Saldaners (Gorachoqua and Gorahaicona) who had both small stock and cattle (Thom 1952). The fact that the Fishermen did not have small stock, suggests they were also Sonqua who had stolen the cattle from the Khoe. In economic terms, all African pastoralists have small stock which is both their main meat source and animals used in rituals. Cattle are kept primarily for milk (Figure 3).

This idea of a Khoe connection with East Africa is in sharp contrast to the influential work of Seligman (1930) who propounded a theory that a ‘race’ of people called Hamites was to be found among East African pastoralists, such as the Maasai. The Hamites were considered to be racially similar to ‘Caucasian’ North Africans, such as Afro-asiatic Berbers, who had migrated south, and were different from Bantu-speaking people. Such ideas have been discarded, but the present study does not shy away from connections between southern Africans and people from the north. In fact, the spread of domestic animals into East Africa along with their keepers from the Sahara after it dried out 4500 BP is a distinct possibility. These people could have been the ‘black-

faced' herders depicted in Saharan rock art (Smith 1993), antecedents of the Peul (Fulani).

The genetic connection between East and southern Africa seems to be well-established. This means people were moving between the two regions, and the dating indicates it was happening when domestic stock and pottery were also being introduced to the south. It is thus reasonable to suggest that ceramic-making herders were emigrating southwards.

Why are there no Khoekhoen archaeological sites from the colonial period in the Western Cape? The products of exchange (such as domestic stock) are mostly to be found on colonial sites. One answer may be that with the introduction of large numbers of cattle to the Cape some 1000 years ago, the Khoe had to be much more mobile to fit the needs of bulk grazers, and their transhumant camps became very ephemeral, and difficult to see, especially in the plough lands of present farms (cf. Arthur 2008).

### NOMADS MEET THE 'STATE'

To the Khoekhoen, land and its resources (grazing and water) were shared and not bounded. The Khoe were transhumant and occupied their grazing lands on a seasonal basis. This was clearly demonstrated by the initial contact between the Dutch and Khoe in 1652. The 'Saldhanars' (Peninsula Khoe) did not appear at Table Bay for the first six months that the colonists were there.<sup>3</sup> As far as the Dutch were concerned, the concept of *terra nullius* prevailed, so 'empty lands' were seen to be for the taking.

The 'State', in the form of the VOC and Dutch merchant capital, was poorly understood by the Khoekhoen. Instead of pushing the early settlers back into the sea from where they had come, the herders thought to steal their cattle to undermine the Dutch economic and social holdings, just as they would have done with a competitor or rival herding group. They did not know the power that lay behind the VOC, and concepts of land and rights to land, bounded and written into documents that required payment of tax, but which underwrote firepower, and ships that could move armies and enslave.

Khoekhoen studies, such as Elphick (1977), have been state-centred. The assumption was that they were politically weak, thus not allowing

Khoe nomads agency. To the colonising Dutch they were just ‘savages’ and were refused equal space of political structures or their viable knowledge that had no need for borders. The trekboers had to learn to be just like the Khoekhoen to survive when they went beyond the limits of state control. The sad ending is that this knowledge of herding skills and the use of terrain were usurped by the trekboers, and water points were stolen to create ‘farms’, which were ultimately surveyed and bounded. This left little space for itinerants, such as the karretjiemense of the Karoo (de Jongh 2012), who had to work in the interstices. The Khoekhoen were always in the shadows of the laager fire.

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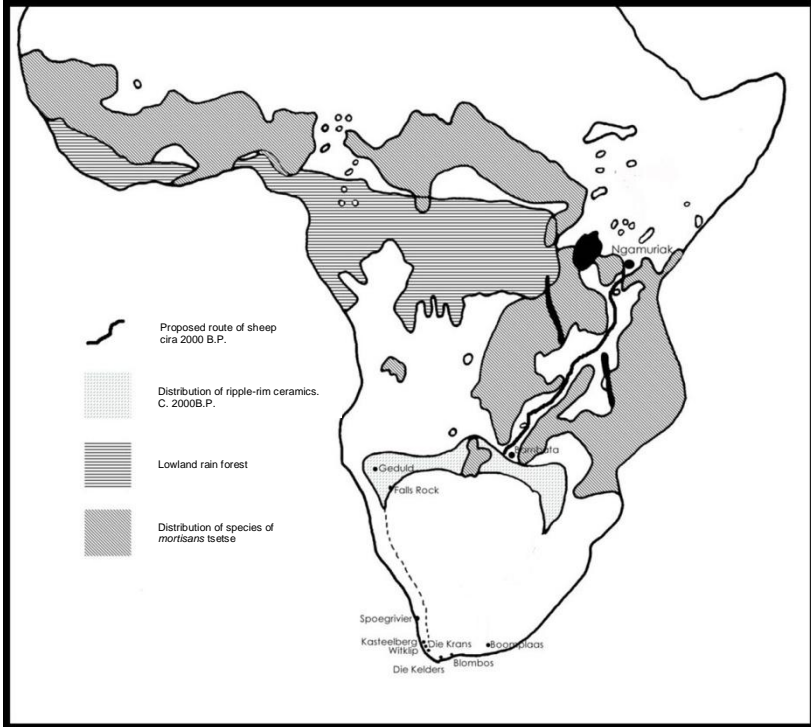


Figure 1: Estimated route of sheep migration to southern Africa.

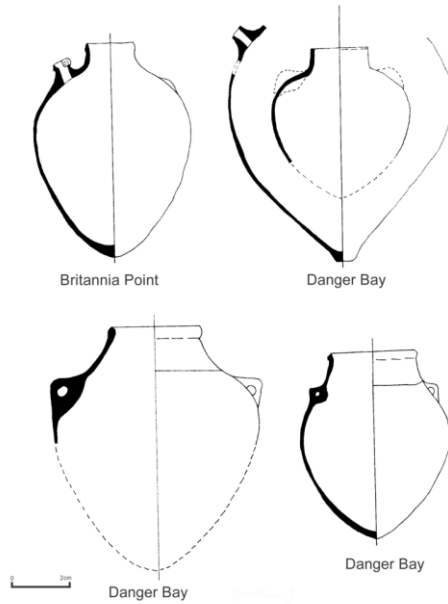


Figure 2: Spouted and lugged ceramics from the Vredenburg Peninsula (after Rudner 1968).



Figure 3: Late 17<sup>th</sup> century drawing of a Khoe woman milking (from: Smith & Pheiffer 1993: Plate 16).

THE PRE-COLONIAL CATALYTIC PROJECT

KASTEELBERG	WITKLIP
Open air site	Small rock shelter
c. 1800 – 800 B.P.	c. 3000 – 350 B.P.
Cultural Material	Cultural Material
Very few microlithic tools – 0.2% formal	Microlithic tools
Coarse grained rocks	Fine-grained rocks
Potsherds: 750/m <sup>3</sup>	4 % retouched
Grindstones	Potsherds: 10/m <sup>3</sup>
Ostrich eggshell beads – large > 5mm	Ostrich eggshell beads: small <5mm – increase in size after 500 B.P.
Economic Material	Economic Material
Low % small bovids	High % small bovids
High % seals	Low % sheep
High % sheep	No seals

Table 1: Comparison between cultural material from herder (Kasteelberg) v/s hunter (Witklip) sites.

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- <sup>1</sup> ‘Khoekhoen’ is the preferred collective ethnonym used by Nama-speakers in Namibia today (Smith 1998).
  - <sup>2</sup> Van Riebeeck’s journal notes on 9 October 1652 that: “...two Saldaniers were very much more robust and much stouter than the Strandlopers...” (Thom 1952: 71).
  - <sup>3</sup> Only one cow and a sheep were available when the Dutch arrived in April 1652. Not until the Saldanhars came back to their grazing grounds at Table Bay in October of that year did the Dutch obtain any stock (Thom 1952).

# HISTORICAL PRIORITIES FOR EASTERN CAPE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH

*JEFF PEIRES*

The shallow time depth of the historical record in the Eastern Cape relative to the longer time scales required to make archaeological research meaningful have resulted in a situation where, except perhaps for maritime archaeology, the two disciplines barely connect. The Eastern Cape archaeological sites with which I am familiar – Mpame, Ntsitsana, Kulubele, Maclear – have been identified via archaeological methodology rather than through the efforts of historians or other social scientists.<sup>1</sup> This paper hopes to close the gap by drawing attention to four historically important sites where, frankly, historians are stuck without archaeological input. Not seeking, on the other hand, to reduce archaeologists to the status of handmaidens, it is sincerely hoped that archaeologists will find these sites significant inasmuch as they relate to broader archaeological concerns going far beyond the limited borders of the Eastern Cape. These are the structure of specifically Khoekhoe society, the trilateral relationship between Nguni, Khoekhoe and San,<sup>2</sup> and the relationship between apparently different San cultures. All of these sites can be dated back to the 18<sup>th</sup> Century or earlier, thus hopefully falling within the scope of archaeological investigation.

## INQUA

In 1662 Commander Van Riebeeck described the Inqua (“Hancumqua”) as follows:<sup>3</sup>

[The Inqua] according to the hopes held out to us, and from all we have been able to learn, are the greatest and most powerful of all the race of greasy Hottentoots, living in houses which .. are covered with mats, but of a very large size, and living permanently on the same spot where they cultivate and dry a certain plant which they call *Dacha* .. The Chiefs of this tribe appear to be Chiefs over all the other Choques or Kings, being entitle Choebaha, which seems



to mean Emperor, or at least Upper King, or Lord over all the others.

Van Riebeeck himself never managed to make direct contact with the Inqua, but in 1688, after three years of ‘great trouble, and sending presents’, the Inqua were persuaded to send a messenger to Governor Simon van der Stel ‘requesting that he might be admitted into the friendship and confidence of the Company; and that both parties might enter into an exchange of their overstocked articles of merchandize; adding that their country was very populous, almost overstocked with oxen, cows and sheep, and that no white people had ever been there.’ About the same time, Van der Stel had learned from the *Stavenisse* shipwreck survivors that the Inqua were the westernmost ‘Hottentots’ known to the Xhosa; moreover that they had access to copper which they traded to the Xhosa in exchange for dagga.

Whereupon Van der Stel dispatched an expedition under Ensign Isaq Schrijver ‘to endeavour to purchase some cattle, or whatever merchandise or mineral their country may produce .. keeping a minute account, in writing of all his proceedings.’ Schrijver’s visit (19-26 February 1689) seems to have been a great success as far as bartering cattle was concerned. But it is noteworthy that ‘Heijkon’ (Hinsati), the Inqua king never allowed Schrijver’s party to enter his capital, insisting on meeting them at their own encampment, which they named the ‘*Vervallen Casteel*’:<sup>4</sup>

Near us across the “Revier Kaluiga [Kariega]” lay a high mountain to the S.S.E. which resembled above a ruined castle. Before us on the hither side we had high mountains in the N.E. by N. which were separated from one another by a long crooked kloof. In this kloof lay Captn. Heykon with his kraal and people and our kraal lay more than a cannon-shot thence.

The Inqua disappear completely from the written record in 1719. Driven from their country by the colonial advance, many of them were absorbed into the Xhosa kingdom as the Sukwini and Gqwashu clans.<sup>5</sup> The Inqua fallen castle, however, still remains, helpfully located by E.G. Mossop, Schrijver’s editor:

Called locally The Ranges, it is now marked as Camdeboo upon district maps. Heykon probably camped on the flat at Middelfontein in the kloof, Schrijver's party below the small kopje at the Elands Kloof entrance beside the river .. Heykon may have used many portions of the Camdeboo ... but for reasons of fertility and rainfall his most probable permanent site would be The Ranges.

No archaeologist could wish for a more precise description of a major potential site. And yet, more than eighty years after Mossop, nobody has investigated it. Let me recapitulate for the sake of emphasis: the Inqua kingdom was the biggest and most sophisticated Khoekhoe political structure known to the Dutch, and was seemingly recognised as such by all other known Khoekhoe political entities of its time. It had a fixed capital, at which substantial numbers of subjects and cattle resided. The Inqua traded north and east, being the conduit through which the Tswana exchanged copper for cattle, beads and dagga. They had 'Sonqua Hottentots' living among them, but they also had independent 'Sonqua' neighbours with whom they were perpetually at war. Understanding Inqua socio-economic structures would certainly enhance our understanding of the Xhosa-Khoekhoe relationship, relatively neglected by comparison with Xhosa-San relations, as well as providing fresh evidence with regard to the controversial question of Khoekhoe and San identities.

It may well be that Mr C.P. Watermeyer, who owned The Ranges when Mossop published his edition of Schrijver in 1931, was not overly enthusiastic to learn that his farm had been established on the ruins of a Khoekhoe capital. But Mr Watermeyer is no longer around, and times have changed. The officials of Camdeboo Municipality are aware of the importance of the site, and there is every reason to believe that they will do whatever is necessary to facilitate its excavation.

### NGCWANGUBA

No attempt has been made to investigate the gravesites of the Xhosa kings, though several of these were identified by J.H. Soga in 1930. The most promising of these would appear to be the grave of King Tshiwo, who died about 1700 and whose grave is described by Soga thus:<sup>6</sup>

Tshiwo's grave is at the Ngcwanguba. He died while away from home at a hunt, but his body was brought back and buried at his kraal. A forest of considerable size and a landmark .. has grown up around the grave. The original shrubs (imi-lenya) growing on the grave multiplied, through the protection afforded to a chief's grave, until a respectable forest is the result.

During the reign of Tshiwo, the amaXhosa lived between the Mthatha and the Mbashe, far to the east of the districts they now inhabit. Even further east, around the Mngazi river in present-day Mpondoland, lived a Khoekhoe (amaLawu) group called the amaGqunuqhwa, who were 'moving around in those forests.'<sup>7</sup> Tshiwo's reign was marked by conflicts in which Khoekhoe as well as Nguni elements participated, and his death was followed by a succession war between his Right-Hand son Gwali and his brother Mdange, acting as regent for his posthumous son Phalo. The circumstances and indeed the duration of this struggle are unknown, but ultimately resulted in the westward migration of both Gwali and Mdange. Not later than 1730, Phalo himself embarked on the quest for a new home, travelling as far as the Qagqiwa mountains (present day Uitenhage) over 400 kilometres away, and never returning to his original home. The councillors scattered too, some going beyond Qagqiwa to Storms River, others northeast towards Whittlesea. The amaNqabe clan, however, were tasked to remain behind and look after Tshiwo's grave, indicating perhaps a desire among the emigrants for the option of returning home at a later date.<sup>8</sup>

Ngcwanguba is therefore the site of a major dispersion, the reasons for which remain unclear. It may have been something to do with the power struggle, but it may also have been a reaction to the Dosini wars which convulsed the neighbouring amaMpondomise about the same time.<sup>9</sup> Mqanduli district, in which Ngcwanguba is situated (at the junction between the roads to Coffee Bay and Hole-in-the-Wall) was something of a crossroads during the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century, which saw not only the dispersion of the amaXhosa as above related, but the departure towards Queenstown of the amaGcina (relatives of the amaNqabe), and the arrival of the amaTshomane from Mpondoland and, later still, the amaBomvana (invited by the amaXhosa to fight the amaNgqosini).

Why Ngcwanguba? The probable answer was provided by the missionary Stephen Kay:<sup>10</sup>

We arrived at the Cwanguba, a small forest, which clothes the very top of one of the most conspicuous peaks in the whole country, and in which Chaka's forces encamped when on their devastating tour in 1828. From this point they commanded a full view of all the land below; a circumstance which in all probability determined their choice of the station. On the right, twelve or fifteen miles distant, is the Umpakoo, which forms the boundary... of the Amaquean [amaQiya branch of the Thembu] territory; and from that river to the Bashee the line of coast is occupied by the Amaboovana [Bomvana] .. who join and are bounded by Hinza's clans to the westward.

There can be no doubt that the Zulu army did reach Ngcwanguba, as confirmed by the statement of Maziyana kaMahlabeni in 1905.<sup>11</sup> One more good reason to excavate. In addition, it might be illuminating to compare Ngcwanguba, north of the Mbashe River, with the already excavated Lujोजोzi, a hilltop site from the first millennium south of the Mbashe.<sup>12</sup>

### AMANGQOSINI

Our knowledge of the 18th Century Eastern Cape has been immeasurably enhanced by newly available documents relative to the wreck of the *Stavenisse* in 1686. Previously, we were forced to rely on the limited extracts published in D.Moodie (1838), but Randolph Vigne's 1993 volume entitled *Guillaume Chenu de Chalezac: the 'French boy'*, provides us for the first time not only with the evidence of the ship's senior officers, but also with the first English translation of Guillaume Chenu's memoir, obscurely published in German in 1748. These documents reveal for the first time a critical incident omitted in Moodie's compilation. It appears that sometime around March 1687, the *Stavenisse* survivors departed from the neighbourhood of the Gonubie river in an effort to reach the Dutch settlement at the Cape of Good Hope. Five days and five rivers later – somewhere around the Chalumna or Keiskamma rivers they encountered more the 'Makenanen' or 'Maquenasses', who brutally attacked them and drove them back to Xhosaland. These Makenanen kept great herds of cattle and some sheep. They spoke a language which was not intelligible to isiXhosa speakers,

and they fought with sticks, stones and poisoned arrows. The Makaanen fought bitterly with the amaXhosa and Chenu, describing a battle in which he personally participated, states that ‘we [Xhosa] took no prisoners, all were massacred, men, women and children, and quarter was given to no one.’<sup>13</sup>

Guillaume Chenu specifically contrasts the heavy wood of the Xhosa spears with the weapons of the Makaanen, who had ‘no arms but bows and arrows, which they shoot into the air and thus attempt to hit the heads of their enemies as they fall.’ This detail seems to indicate that they were Khoisan, but it is interesting to note that the *Stavenisse* survivors do not describe them as ‘Batuas [abaThwa]’ the usual Xhosa term for San which they use elsewhere. Instead they refer to the Makaanen as ‘Caauws, a type of Caffers’, distinct presumably from the more familiar abaThwa.<sup>14</sup> The ‘Caauws’ were almost certainly the people known to the Khoekhoe as ‘d’Gauas’ and to the Dutch as the ‘little Chinese’ or Oeswana.<sup>15</sup> The Xhosa called them the amaNgqosini. And thereby hangs a tale.

The amaNgqosini are today a clan (*isiduko*) of the amaXhosa but, in former times, they were an independent chiefdom. 19<sup>th</sup> Century Xhosa sources refer to a war between the amaNgqosini and the amaXhosa, which broke out about 1725 when Gaba, the Ngqosini chief, refused to hand over an elephant tooth to King Phalo and himself raised the elephant’s tail (a symbol of independent chiefship).<sup>16</sup> Gaba’s chiefdom was referred to by the informant of the missionary Kropf as “die herrschaft der Hottentotten” and W.W.G., writing in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, refers to ‘Ngqosini, the chief of the amaGqwashé and the amaGwangqa,’ likewise indicating that the amaNgqosini were Khoisan by origin. War between the amaXhosa and the amaNgqosini continued intermittently until the next generation, when Phalo’s rival sons, Gcaleka and Rharhabe, joined forces to drive the amaNgqosini into Thembuland. There they succeeded in killing Zondwa, the heir-apparent to the Thembu throne, thus earning the enmity of the abaThembu and returning to vassal status in Xhosaland. Even so, they continued to be a threat until the reign of the Xhosa king Khawuta (reigned 1778 – 1793) , who finally obliterated the independence of the amaNgqosini by the foul stratagem of murdering their chief while his army had been enticed away to a hunting party.

The only obstacle to the firm identification of the amaNgqosini as a Khoisan people lies with the historian J.H. Soga who, in his detailed history of the amaNgqosini, identifies them as baKwena, that is Sotho-speakers.<sup>17</sup> One might speculate that the word ‘baKwena’, heard by Soga in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, was a garbled version of the word ‘baKhoenkhoen’, the correct meaning of which had faded from human memory. On the other hand, one cannot exclude the possibility that Sotho-speakers might have penetrated as far as the Eastern Cape coast by the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. This is not quite as far-fetched as it may at first appear. The history of Sotho-speakers south of the Orange River has yet to be written, but it needs to be emphasized that the Orange River was not an impenetrable boundary and that the line of the Kraai/Holspruit rivers more accurately reflected the ethnic border as it was before the unilateral annexations of Sir Harry Smith in 1847.<sup>18</sup> The Monaheng branch of the baKwena occupied the Stormberg mountains in the 1830s, while the army of Makhabane, brother of King Moshoeshe, was defeated in the Ndukunduku forests south of Ngcobo in 1835. Admittedly, these latter events may reflect the impact of the Mfecane, but an earlier Sotho immigration into the Eastern Cape is clearly recorded in the case of the amaMfene (baFokeng) who arrived in Thembuland during the reign of King Nxego, some time in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century.<sup>19</sup>

The likelihood that the amaNgqosini were Sotho rather than Khoekhoe speakers is however less probable once one considers that unlike the amaMfene and amaVundle, Xhosa clans of transparently Sotho extraction, the amaNgqosini have no seboko or totemic animal associated with them. But both the Ngqosini and their associates the Banqo share the *-nqo* syllable, and *-nqo* is the ‘Mountain Bushman’ word for eland.

Any Ngqosini site going back to the years before 1795, when Ngqosini independence was finally crushed by the Xhosa, should hopefully reveal whether Ngqosini culture was closer to Khoisan or Sotho. Where, however, would one find such a site? Xhosa sources are clear that the earlier Ngqosini wars took place when Phalo was living at the Nxharuni (Bell Rock farm in Komga district). Soga says that the amaNgqosini occupied lands between the Kei and the Fish ‘without Bantu inhabitants,<sup>20</sup> which fits in nicely with the *Stavenisse* survivors’ picture of the Makanene blocking the road between the amaXhosa and the

Dutch colony. It would indeed be nice to locate a site but that is a very big haystack in which to find a very small needle. Archaeologists might be better advised to search the area between the Qolora and Kobonqaba rivers on the Centane coast, seemingly the final residence of Mjobi, the last Ngqosini chief.<sup>21</sup>

## OESWANA SAN

The muddled state of Khoisan history, of which the artificial term Khoisan is itself a prime example, reflects the inconsistent terminology of contemporary observers who sometimes used different names - 'Bushmen,' 'Hottentots' or even 'Bushmen Hottentots' - to refer to the same people. Central to the muddle was the conflation of lifestyle (hunting/herding) with physical appearance. The pioneer historian Richard Elphick went as far as to postulate that the so-called Khoekhoe and the so-called San were actually one single people, but that they assumed different identities according to whether they gained or lost their cattle.<sup>22</sup> Elphick's somewhat facile interpretation has been generally discarded in the light of demonstrable linguistic and even biological distinctions, but historians remain very shy of imputing ethnic attributes to specific Khoisan groups.

My own starting-point would be that since different "Khoisan" groups spoke distinctly different languages,<sup>23</sup> they must have had other distinctive cultural attributes as well. Granted that archaeological sites are mute and that few colonial invaders took heed of the cultures of the people whom they were ruthlessly exterminating, the attempt should nevertheless be made to align specific sites with specific Khoisan sub-groups in order to determine the extent to which material culture correlated with ethnic identity, if at all.

The San of the Eastern Cape/Natal region would seem to present a peculiarly intractable problem. They are lumped together as 'Mountain Bushmen' in Alan Barnard's 1992 typology.<sup>24</sup> Barnard distinguishes them clearly from the well-known /Xam, and proposes to call them N/(n+q),<sup>25</sup> or 'people of the eland,' this being their own name for themselves, and linking them clearly with the amaNgqosini, as indicated above. Barnard, however, was seemingly not aware of Dr H. Anders' obscure article of 1935, based on lengthy interviews with two native speakers, giving details of the vocabulary and phonology of the

Matiwane mountains (Mthatha/Tsolo) San, which he called the *!gā!ne* dialect.<sup>26</sup>

Some prominent Eastern Cape residents claiming San descent call themselves /Xam, but this is almost certainly a recent notion picked up at the Schmidtdrift military base.<sup>27</sup> The *Stavenisse* survivors, as we have seen, referred to the Makenene as ‘d’Gauas’, namely Oeswana San. This identification is extremely persuasive inasmuch as we know from other sources that the Oeswana were a people of San appearance but possessed political structures and economic practices far more complex than those of a hunting band. Oeswana culture north of the Sneeuwberg has already been investigated by Garth Sampson and his associates; further investigation may therefore seem superfluous. Questions remain however concerning the distinctions between the Oeswana and other Eastern Cape groups also identified as ‘Bosjemans’.

Thanks to the 1752 journal of the Beutler expedition, we are able to pinpoint one likely boundary between the Oeswana and their neighbours. ‘The region the Bosjemans inhabit’ ended just south of the confluence of the Great Fish and Tarka rivers, after which, recorded Beutler’s diarist, ‘we came to the country of the d’Gauas’.<sup>28</sup> Shortly before that:

A certain chief called Geyma came to us with a group of Bosjemans. Since they understand the language of the people we call Little Chinese, whom the Hottentots call the d’Gauas, and because the Hottentots who were with us were ignorant of their language, we hired some of these Bosjemans to act as interpreters.

Three distinct languages converge in this one paragraph: (1) that of the Khoekhoe, who accompanied Beutler from the west; (2) that of the ‘Bosjemans’ who joined Beutler near the Amathole mountains to the southeast and who did not speak the Oeswana language; (3) the language of the Oeswana, which was neither Khoekhoe nor ‘Bosjemans.’ The same language distinction was confirmed by Colonel Robert Gordon, travelling near the Seekoei river in 1777, who observed that the Oeswana ‘speak Hottentot, but their dialect and many words, although pronounced with clicks, differ greatly from the others, so that they do not understand each other properly’.<sup>29</sup>



Up to this point, the Beutler expedition had observed no rock art, but as soon as they entered Oeswana territory they found ‘many pictures .. painted on the rocks, these being the work of the d’Gauas.’ Near Halesowen, south of Cradock:

We went to a place about two hours from our camp to see these (pictures). Under the ridge of a kloof, in a kind of cave in which one could shelter from wind and rain, we saw pictures of wild horses, baboons and people in various positions, painted on the rocks in red, white and black. Some were rather well drawn, others not, the latter seeming to be the work of pupils.

If this undoubtedly Oeswana rock shelter could be excavated and compared with another Khoisan site south of the Tarka river, one might reasonably hope that any material distinctions between the Oeswana and the other Bosjemans would come to light. Another important Oeswana site from the Seekoei river area would be ‘De Schanse Kraal,’ identified by Gordon in 1777 as the fortress of the Oeswana chief known as Koerikei or ‘escaper from bullets’.<sup>30</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The inherent constraints of archaeological knowledge, given the inadequacy of material markers – eg ‘Stone Age’, ‘Iron Age’ – have tended to collapse all other cultural differences into the single distinction between hunter-gatherers and farmers. The biggest losers, in the historical stakes at least, have been the Khoekhoe, wandering homelessly in the grey area between sites which are unmistakably Nguni and those which are unmistakably San. Would it be too much to hope that the excavation of the indubitably Khoekhoe Inqua site at ‘The Ranges’ might facilitate the identification of specifically Khoekhoe features, which might thereafter prove useful in the analysis of Second Millennium communities throughout South Africa?

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<sup>1</sup> An exception could perhaps be made for the well-known Tsolo rock art site described by F.E. Prins, ‘Living in two worlds: the manipulation of power relations, identity and ideology by the last San rock artist in Tsolo, Transkei,’ *Natal Museum Journal of Humanities*, 6(1994); J.Binneman, ‘Preliminary results from investigations at Kulubele, an Early Iron Age farming settlement in the Great Kei

River valley,' *Southern African Field Archaeology* 5 (1996); M.Cronin, 'Radiocarbon dates for the Early Iron Age in Transkei,' *SA Journal of Science* , 78 (1982); F.E. Prins & J.E. Granger, 'early farming communities in northern Transkei: the evidence from Ntsitsana and adjacent areas,' *SA Journal of the Humanities* (1993); G. Blundell, *Nqabayo's Nomansland* (Uppsala, 2004); J.M. Feely and S.M. Bell-Cross, 'The Distribution of Early Iron Age Settlement in the Eastern Cape: some Historical and Ecological Implications,' *South African Archaeological Bulletin* 66 (2011). The most comprehensive survey of archaeological sites in former Transkei remains J.M. Feely, *The Early Farmers of Transkei, Southern Africa* , BAR S378 (Cambridge, 1987).

<sup>2</sup> I am aware of the problems around the use of the word 'San' but adopt it for lack of a more recognisable alternative.

<sup>3</sup> D.Moodie, *The Record* (1838): I, 248. Van Riebeeck's Hancumqua were identified by G.Harinck, 'Interaction between Xhosa and Khoi' in L.Thompson (ed), *African Societies in southern Africa* (London: Heinemann, 1969), 163, as the Inqua, an identification left open by G.S. Nienaber, *Khoekhoense Stamname* (Pretoria: Academica, 1989), 468-472. My view is that different sources used the term Hancumqua at different times to refer to different peoples, but that Harinck is correct as far as the Van Riebeeck text is concerned

<sup>4</sup> E.G. Mossop (ed), *Journals of the Expeditions of... Bergh and Schrijver*, VRS 12, (Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society, 1931), 236.

<sup>5</sup> Moodie, *Record*, V, 12. For the last documentary reference to the Inqua, see S. Newton-King, *Masters and Servants on the Cape Eastern Frontier* (Cambridge: University Press, 1999): 36. Let me take this opportunity to correct a mistake in J. Peires, *The House of Phalo* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1981): 23 in which, following Harinck (1969): 156, I had assumed that the Inqua kingdom was destroyed by the Xhosa. The mention of 'Quama' in Collins's text makes it quite clear that his informant was referring to the Inqua. Inviting the Kat River Khoekhoe to enter the War of Mlanjeni on the Xhosa side, King Sandile promised to 're-establish the kingdom of Chama .. you shall be completed with cattle and all that a man should have; and farther, the first cattle that shall be taken will be distributed to the children of Chama.' Quoted in R.Ross, *The Borders of Race in Colonial South Africa: the Kat River Settlement, 1829-1856* (Cambridge: University Press, 2014), p.214.

<sup>6</sup> J.H. Soga, *The South-Eastern Bantu* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1930), 114.

<sup>7</sup> According to AZ Ngani, *Ibali lamaGqunukhwebe* (Lovedale 1947Z), 1-2. For further discussion of the broader context, see J. Peires (2012): 'He Wears Short Clothes!': Rethinking Rharhabe (c.1715–c.1782),' *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 38:2, 333-354

<sup>8</sup> For the migration of Phalo and his brothers, Mqhayi 2009: 276; for the migration of the Cirha councilors, interview with Imbumba YamaCirha, Grahamstown, 29 March 2010; for the amaNqabe, Soga, *South Eastern Bantu*, 286.

<sup>9</sup> Jeff Peires, 'The Dosini Wars' (work in progress).

<sup>10</sup> Stephen Kay, *Travels and Researches in Caffraria* (London: Mason, 1833): 344.

- <sup>11</sup> C Webb and J Wright eds, *The James Stuart Archive*, volume 2 (Pietermaritzburg and Durban, 1979), 274. ‘Esikaleni’ is the Xhosa name for Hole-in-the-Wall.
- <sup>12</sup> Excavation by T.S. Robey of UCT Spatial Archaeology Research Unit. Feely, p.80.
- <sup>13</sup> R.Vigne ed, *Guillaume Chenu de Chalezac, the ‘French boy,’* VRS II-22 (Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society, 1993), 36.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, 86, 108-109.
- <sup>15</sup> H. Crampton, J.Peires & C.Vernon eds, *Into the Hitherto Unknown: Ensign Beutler’s Expedition to the Eastern Cape, 1752*, VRS II- 44 (Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society, 2013), p.xlv.
- <sup>16</sup> The battle was fought before the circumcision of the future Chief Rharhabe (born c.1715). Kropf 1889: 36). W. W.G. ‘Umkhondo wamaGquukhwebe’ in W.B. Rubusana, *Zemk’iinkomo Magwalandini*, ed. S.C.Satyo (Cape Town:New Africa Books, 2002), 109.
- <sup>17</sup> J.H. Soga, *The South-Eastern Bantu* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1930), 292-298.
- <sup>18</sup> Jeff Peires, ‘The Sotho drive south’ (work in progress).
- <sup>19</sup> The amaMfene participated in the war between Hlanga and Dhlomo, and were settled in the Stormberg by Dhlomo under the care of his brother Ndungwana: Sihele MS, Cory Library, Grahamstown. We know that this war was long over by the time that Ensign Beutler crossed the Kei in 1752: Crampton, et al, *Into the Hitherto Unknown*, xlv.
- <sup>20</sup> Soga, *South Eastern Bantu*, 296.
- <sup>21</sup> P. Kirby, *A Source Book on the Wreck of the Grosvenor* , VRS 34, (Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society, 1953), 175-177. But note Kirby’s caveats: *ibid*, 156-157.
- <sup>22</sup> R. Elphick, *Khoikhoi and the Founding of White South Africa* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1985), Chapter 2.
- <sup>23</sup> My thinking on this matter has always been shaped by E.O.J. Westphal, ‘The linguistic prehistory of southern Africa: Bush, Kwadi, Hottentot, and Bantu linguistic relationships,’ *Africa* 33 (1963). I am pleased to hear that Westphal’s day seems to have come again.
- <sup>24</sup> Alan Barnard, *Hunters and Herders of Southern Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 90-91.
- <sup>25</sup> (n+q) is my own inexcusable version of a symbol which does not feature on my computer. See Barnard, 90, for the real thing.
- <sup>26</sup> H. Anders, ‘A Note on a South Eastern Bushman Dialect,’ *Zeitschrift für Eingeborenen-Sprachen*, XXV (1934/35), 81-89.
- <sup>27</sup> Interview with Mr Lukas Padda, Middelburg (Eastern Cape), 24 January 2013.
- <sup>28</sup> Crampton, et al, *Into the Hitherto Unknown*, 151-155.
- <sup>29</sup> R.J. Gordon, *Cape Travels, 1777-1786*, eds P.E.Raper and M.Boucher , 2 vols, (Johannesburg: Brenthurst Press, 1988), I, 83. It is symptomatic of the terminological confusion of the time that Gordon refers to the Oeswana as ‘Hottentots’ whereas almost all other sources refer to them as ‘Bushmen.’ Gordon (I, 71) gives the Oeswana word for hyena as ‘doe’ or ‘kor’ or ‘gaar’, which he contrasts with the word for hyena in other click languages which he gives as ‘thoeka’ (isiXhosa *ingcuka*). There is a short vocabulary of specifically Oeswana words in A. Sparman, *A Voyage to the Cape of Good Hope from the Year 1772-*

1776 , ed. V.S. Forbes, 2 vols. (Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society, 1977), VRS II-7, 266.

<sup>30</sup> Gordon, *Cape Travels*, I, 81-83.

## ETHNICITY AND GENDER IN PRE-COLONIAL NDEBELE SOCIETIES IN 'SOUTH AFRICA'

*SEKIBAKIBA PETER LEKGOATHI*

Two of the most deeply-rooted assumptions about pre-colonial 'South African' societies are: firstly, the notion that ethnic identity determined how people saw themselves or identified others; and secondly, that gender constituted the most fundamental line of division and conflict within these societies. Regarding the former, it is commonly believed that African societies were since ancient times structured along clearly defined ethnic or tribal lines; that kinship ties, a shared language and rituals formed the basis of membership to communities; and that groups forged solidarity on the basis of ethnic affiliations. In short, this perspective holds that ethnic identity trumped all other forms of identification in precolonial 'South Africa'. As to the second belief, it is often asserted that the oppression of women was a perennial feature of precolonial African societies; that women had no decision-making powers and were completely subordinate to their menfolk and treated as perpetual minors. Despite the abundance of historical evidence to the contrary, both beliefs still command a great deal of influence and attract many disciples among broad sections of the South African society today. Both assumptions have contributed towards a jaded perspective of the nature of precolonial African societies and as such need to be reconsidered.

This chapter picks up on on-going debates on identity issues and gender dynamics in precolonial South African societies, with specific reference to several Ndebele polities. Identified as the 'Transvaal Ndebele' by 'native experts' (i.e. white researchers) employed by the state, the Ndebele were formed when groups of Nguni-speaking people migrated from the south-eastern coastal regions (the midlands of present-day KwaZulu-Natal province) into the interior and settled in what would later be named the Transvaal where they intermixed with the Sotho-Tswana and established new communities from as early as the mid-1500s. Today the descendants of the 'Transvaal Ndebele' live in scattered communities in parts of the provinces of Limpopo,

Mpumalanga, North West and Gauteng. Until recently the Ndebele communities settled in parts of Limpopo Province were officially identified as the ‘Northern Ndebele’ whereas their counterparts in Mpumalanga, Gauteng and parts of the North West province were classified as the ‘Southern Ndebele’.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the Ndebele discussed in this chapter should not be confused with the Ndebele (or Matabele) of Mzilikazi of the Khumalo clan, later emigrants also from present-day KwaZulu-Natal who migrated into the interior in the context of the *mfecane* and established a formidable kingdom in the ‘Transvaal’ before being forced to relocate across the Limpopo River in Zimbabwe.<sup>2</sup>

The chapter suggests, firstly that ‘tribe’ or ‘ethnicity’ as an analytical category does not adequately capture the nature of the Ndebele social and political formations in the precolonial period; and secondly, that the notion that gender was a fundamental cleavage as presented in popular scholarship, especially that which is inclined towards Western feminism, is quite crude and tends to oversimplify a far more complex reality. Like other pre-colonial African societies the Ndebele existed within a reality of multiple and overlapping identities and while ethnicity may or may not have existed as a distinct category, it was most certainly not a primary marker of identity or group consciousness amongst them, and women were not as ‘right-less’ and/or voiceless as they have often been depicted.

Before delving into the substantive issues it is important that this chapter is prefaced with some brief comments about methodological issues and challenges of studying precolonial African societies. The most fundamental challenge concerns the fact that these societies did not possess the art of writing in the modern sense of the word. As such, there are no documents produced by ‘cultural insiders’ to give us an insider’s perspective about social and political practices and rules in precolonial African societies, documents that today’s historians can consult and base their own interpretations of those societies. However, there are various other forms of evidence that scholars have consulted to provide some interesting interpretations of those societies. Firstly, archaeologists have studied the material culture of precolonial African societies such as the ruins of settlements, grave sites and rubbish dumps. Although such material remains are mute on specific values and processes, they have enabled archaeologists to make some fascinating

inferences about diet, consumption patterns, gender relations, as well as about issues of social class and political stratification.

The second key source of historical evidence on precolonial African societies is oral traditions. These are stories about the past passed down from generation to generation by word of mouth. Oral traditions were extensively drawn upon by colonial officials (such as Theophilus Shepstone and James Stuart) in the process of ‘inventing’ African customary law and political administration, as well as by new African elites (mission-educated African nationalists such as John Dube, Sol Plaatje and others) who sought to provide a reinterpretation of precolonial African societies in the late 19th and early 20th century. However, it was not until the 1960s – following the publication of Jan Vansina’s seminal study on the subject – that oral traditions came to be accepted in African Studies as a legitimate source of historical information.<sup>3</sup> Oral traditions provide important insights about precolonial African societies but they tend to take a new shape with every telling. Furthermore, they tend to focus on the lives and accomplishments of great men, namely kings and chiefs, and have little to say about the more everyday aspects of life of ordinary men and women.

Finally, scholars have used the accounts of precolonial African societies written by a range of literate European observers before and after colonial conquest. White traders, explorers and hunters but above all missionaries and colonial officials wrote down their accounts of the African societies that they encountered or administered. Commissions of enquiry are also a key source of historical information, and so too are anthropological texts. These accounts provide invaluable insights on the nature of precolonial African societies but must be used carefully as they were produced by ‘cultural outsiders’ who came with strong preconceptions and prejudices about African societies. Their producers had limited language capacity and often drew information from a narrow range of informants, mainly chiefs and senior men, while women’s and youths’ perspectives were excluded. Notwithstanding their limitations, the sources described above are a valuable source of historical information on precolonial African societies and should not be disregarded. However, they need to be read critically and meticulously for the nuances of these societies to be illuminated. This is precisely what this chapter will do, i.e. draw upon a combination of oral

traditions, missionary accounts and archaeological evidence to reflect on gender dynamics and issues of ethnic identity in a number of precolonial Ndebele societies in South Africa.

## GENDER RELATIONS IN PRE-COLONIAL NDEBELE SOCIETIES

As noted above, the position of women in precolonial African societies in general, including Ndebele societies was not a straightforward and uncomplicated case of oppression as widely assumed to be, i.e. with women essentially serving as ‘beasts of burden’, to borrow a phrase from Margaret Kinsman’s characterisation of pre-colonial Tswana women.<sup>4</sup> Like other societies in southern Africa, rank or status played a major role in Ndebele society, meaning that there was a marked division between royals and non-royals, or commoners. For one thing, oral traditions tell us something about how some royal women, despite being structurally subjected to male authority, were able to influence major decisions taken in the male public political realm.

The tradition about the split of the Ndebele polity and the dispersal of its people across the Transvaal, which has been recorded in ethnographic texts and is widely known among most Ndebele communities, suggests the critical role that royal women played both directly and indirectly in influencing political decisions.<sup>5</sup> According to this tradition King Musi – the third in line from the supposed founder of the ‘Transvaal Ndebele’, whose kingdom was based at a place called KwaMnyamane in present-day Pretoria during the mid- to late-17<sup>th</sup> century – had six sons (some say five, others seven) from his polygamous household. Manala was the eldest and heir to the throne, Nzunza the next in line. Apparently Musi had gone blind in his old age and when he realised that he had limited time to live he called Manala to his house and told him that he desired to hand over the chieftainship to him before he died. But firstly Manala would have to go for a hunt and bring him some venison, prepare a dish for him which he (Musi) would bless before giving him the ‘namxali’ (a kind of oracle made out of the horn of a rhinoceros and a calabash that had no opening or mouth, which only the king was entitled to consult).

Meanwhile Nzunza’s mother overheard the instruction, and she went to Nzunza and said, ‘Get up early, because your father is dying, and he wants to hand over the chieftainship to Manala’. The next morning



Manala went on the hunt as ordered by Musi and Nzunza did as instructed by his mother and went to Musi's house: 'Father, I have come'. Musi enquired: 'Who are you?' 'It is I, Hlungwane', replied Nzunza. Hlungwane was his other name. Musi said: 'I don't want you I need your brother Manala!' Nzunza went back to his mother and they came up with a plan to trick Musi. The difference between the two men was that Manala was hairy all over his body. The old woman (Nzunza's mother) took a goatskin and wrapped it around Nzunza's arms with the hair on the outside so that when Musi touched his arms he would think he was Manala. This deception worked and Musi handed over the chieftainship to Nzunza (thinking he was Manala) before he died, a development which culminated in a deadly internecine succession struggle and splits whose reverberations are still being strongly felt today.

It is not hard to recognise the strong similarities between this narrative and the Biblical tradition of Jacob and Esau (in Genesis chapter 27), who fought over seniority and inheritance. However, even the early ethnographers from the 1920s and 1930s (such as H.C.M. Fourie and N.J. Van Warmelo) had doubts that this tradition was simply 'borrowed' or appropriated from the Bible. But this is not where the story ended. Manala was understandably upset, and Nzunza saw it wiser to run away with his followers, taking along the 'namxali' with him. Manala dispatched his regiments to go after Nzunza's followers in order to rein them in and retrieve the 'namxali'. Three wars were fought between the two factions of the Ndebele kingdom, the first at a place called Masongololo. Manala's regiments soon ran out of provisions and had to withdraw and return home to get supplies. The second engagement took place around the mountain of Qhoni near Loskop Dam. Upon arrival the Nzunza found that the Bhalule (Olifants River) had broken its banks and so they could not cross to the eastern side. While they were still figuring out what to do they saw Manala's regiments closing in on them. At this point an old woman of the Msiza clan of Mrholosi section of the Ndebele stood up and said: 'Give me the skin of *indila/inrila* (otter)!' They gave it to her and she tried to wrap it around her body, but it proved to be too small. Then she said: 'Bring me another one!' She tied the two skins together and the third one she placed on the ground and sat on it saying: 'Those (referring to the Manala) are your peers (same age

group). They will kill you and you will kill them.’ The Manala regiments soon arrived and the battle resumed.<sup>6</sup>

Here again is evidence of a woman of high rank commanding some influence in the battlefield and instructing young warriors to show bravery in their fight against the enemy. Similar examples can be found in the histories of other kingdoms. In the Zulu kingdom Princess Mkabayi was influential in plotting the assassination of her brother King Shaka and the takeover of Dingane; and Regent Queen Manthatisi played a major role in the consolidation of the Tlokwa kingdom after the death of her husband while the heir Sekonyela was still a minor.

Going back to the fight between Manala and Nzunza, when it became clear that a stalemate was about to be reached, an astute man named Mnguni from the Mrholosi clan intervened and mediated a peace treaty. The first resolution stated that Manala would rule west of Bhaluli, while Nzunza would rule on the eastern side of the river. In this way the boundary between the two Ndebele polities was settled. The second point of the agreement was that the Nzunza were to give a young royal woman as wife to Manala, and in exchange a young woman from the Manala section was offered to Nzunza as wife.<sup>7</sup> On the surface this might seem to suggest that women were treated as objects and that they had no say over whom and when they married. At a deeper level however, this arrangement conferred great authority on the women concerned in that it elevated their status and rank as the rulers’ wives and mothers of the heirs of the two chieftainships. Most importantly, the agreement was a conscious deviation from the normal exogamous rule whose main intent was to cement bonds of blood between the two divisions going into the future.<sup>8</sup> Thus, while this oral tradition is completely mute on the activities of ordinary Ndebele women, it is quite vocal on the political influence of women of higher rank in precolonial Ndebele society.

### MAPPING AFRICAN TRIBES: GERMAN MISSIONARIES, LANGUAGE AND NDEBELE IDENTITIES, 1860S-1890S

Besides oral traditions, the accounts penned by the German missionaries employed by the Berlin Missionary Society (BMS) provide some crucial evidence on identity issues in precolonial Ndebele societies. The BMS commenced with its missionizing work and established stations and

outposts in various parts of present-day Limpopo Province from the 1860s onwards. Upon arrival in an area the German missionaries paid close attention to the language(s) spoken by local people in trying to map out African societies and classifying them into tribes or ethnic groups. For missionaries, language was a key marker of identity that would help determine the medium in which their proselytising efforts would be executed. The German missionaries' archival records paint a picture of societies marked by a great deal of cultural fluidity, of physical spaces inhabited by communities within which a diversity of languages was used, and of communities where alliances were made on the basis of factors other than common language or cultural practices.

The Northern Ndebele are among the communities the missionary documents reflect upon. The correspondence on the Berlin Mission Society's winter conference of 1862 make reference to 'Mapoch's Matebelen' [i.e. the Nzunza Ndebele who were ruled by Mabhoko at the time] who apparently frequently stole the Boer farmers' livestock, thus sparking a second Boer offensive against them. About 300 white Boers entered into a military alliance with 'Zebedeli's Matebelen' (the Kekana Ndebele under the leadership of Sebitiela, classified as the Northern Ndebele) against 'Mapoch's Matebelen' (Southern Ndebele). This clearly illustrates that ethnic solidarity played an insignificant role in determining the nature of collaborative linkages that were established between different groups.<sup>9</sup> According to oral traditions the two Ndebele chiefdoms shared a common descent from King Musi, and yet regardless of their kinship connections they were on opposite sides of the conflict.

Furthermore, the diaries of the missionaries Grützner and Moschütz make reference to the arrival at the Gerlaachshoop (Gelukshoop) mission station, of a contingent of about 130 'Matebele' migrants 'from the tribe of Chief Mankopane' who passed through Gerlaachshoop on their way from the Cape Colony...that live five days away in the northwest...beyond the Lepalule (Lepelle/Olifants River).<sup>10</sup> In an account of their reconnaissance journey to Mankopane's polity, the missionaries touch on a number of other Ndebele and Sotho communities through whose territory they passed. Their stories give us a glimpse of some of the complexities surrounding Ndebele identities in the region. One of these was the community of 'Zebedeli' (Sebitiela, commonly referred to as Zebediela) where, 'on closer inspection of the

town it became apparent that its people were Matebelen, but they all understood the Sesotho dialect that was spoken in Gerlaachshoop'. Before they reached Mankopane's country the missionaries passed through another Ndebele chiefdom of 'Makapane' (Mokopane) where, it is alleged, 'they were received in an unfriendly way.'<sup>11</sup>

Missionaries were not the only literate foreign observers who provided descriptions of the local communities in the area. Besides the Boers there were also traders, one of whom was a British woman named Sarah Heckford.<sup>12</sup> Heckford's biographer describes her 'amusing' encounter with chief Makapaan II (Mokopane) and his people in the late nineteenth century. Heckford seems to have been a regular visitor to the German mission station of Makapaanspoort, bordering the chiefdom, whenever she happened to be in the northern parts of the country, yet she erroneously identified Mokopane as 'one of the Sotho chiefs'.<sup>13</sup> Her confusion about the chief's ethnic identity might be attributed to her own ignorance of the cultural nuances of the local people that she traded with. However, it might also be attributed to the dominance of the Sotho language in this particular Ndebele chiefdom and in several others in the region where the people spoke several local languages.

Heckford's account should be compared with the Berlin Missionary Society's rich description of Mankopane's Ndebele chiefdom, which was situated a few miles away from Mokopane's polity. This account provides some insight not only into missionaries' perceptions of Ndebele identities but also into the role of African intermediaries – notably catechists – in mediating the missionaries' understanding of local societies. The description is also important in highlighting local people's perceptions of their own identities, as well as about how their neighbours defined them. Missionary records provide the following details about Mankopane's chiefdom:

Grützner calls Mankopane's peoples a mix of *Matebelen* and *Bassuto*. The people call themselves the former [*Matebele*]. Nevertheless, our messengers are of the opinion that elements of the *Bassuto* are prevailing. Both languages (*Setebele* and *Sessuto*) are spoken and understood by everybody, except maybe by the oldest. Grützner also noticed that Mankopane's people are mainly *Bassuto*. The majority emigrated from the regions around our station of Phatametsane [in Sekhukhuneland]. He did not consider minor variations in their dialect

as noteworthy. Difficulties will not arise from communication problems.<sup>14</sup>

The quote above exposes an interesting tension between the ascription of identity by ethnic outsiders on the one hand, and self-identification by ethnic insiders on the other hand. While the ethnic insiders self-identified as 'Matebele' or Ndebele, the German missionary saw them as 'a mix' of Ndebele and Sotho, versus their Pedi messengers' view that they were 'Matebele', even though the Sotho language was prevailing in the Ndebele polity. In this case missionary accounts provide powerful evidence of how the Ndebele people identified themselves. For example, Masebe, chief of the Mapela or Langa Ndebele, was apparently very upset after the death and burial of Tois Kekana – his most trusted councillor, father-in-law and Christian convert – in 1882. He burst out crying, 'Tois o kae? Letebele o kae?' ('Where are you Tois? Where are you Letebele?' [Letebele = singular; Matebele = plural]). Although Masebe purportedly uttered these words in the commoners' language, Sesotho, he was clearly not confused about how he or those around him identified themselves, namely as Matebele.<sup>15</sup> Thus, within the culturally heterogeneous settings of most Ndebele communities in the Northern Transvaal, being Ndebele meant a political identity that the people embraced by virtue of belonging to a Ndebele chiefdom rather than an expression of their linguistic or cultural belonging.

Another BMS missionary, Endemann, also commented on the cultural heterogeneity of Mankopane's chiefdom in his description of a new station at Malokong established in March 1867. The population, he noted (as well as exposing his own prejudices against the Ndebele which were probably shaped by the missionary encounter), 'consists of Matebelen that are more barbarous than the Bassuto (meaning Basotho)'.<sup>16</sup> This quote and Grützner's observations above provide ample evidence not only about the existence of Ndebele identities in the period prior to colonial conquest, but also expose the general missionary perception – which over time developed into an ethnic stereotype – that the Ndebele on the whole were more hostile to Christianity than other groups. It also reveals the German missionaries' obsession with language as a critical marker of culture and ethnicity, as well as the beginning of the process of elevating ethnicity above all other forms of

identity, i.e. the tribalisation of African societies which would become a characteristic feature of 20<sup>th</sup>-century South Africa.

Mankopane's mostly Sotho-speaking subjects on the western side of the polity, who constituted the vast majority of his people, seemed not to have had any qualms about identifying themselves with their Ndebele rulers even as they widely used the Sesotho language in their daily lives. Like other rulers during this turbulent and conflict-ridden epoch, Mankopane cared less about the language or cultural background of his followers and more about attracting followers into his polity as the basis of his political and military strength.<sup>17</sup> The society that emerged was culturally heterogeneous, though perhaps retaining a greater sense of homogeneity at the political centre. The next section explores both gender dynamics and ethnic issues in precolonial Ndebele society.

### TRACKING THE FLUIDITY OF NDEBELE IDENTITIES IN MATERIAL CULTURE, 1600S-1800S

The main focus of this final section is on past Nzunza identities. It borrows heavily from the work conducted by archaeologists, mainly Alex Schoeman. Her examination of past Nzunza identities was carried out through the use of a contextual interdisciplinary approach centred on archaeological data on sites in the Steelpoort area of Mpumalanga Province. The starting point of the research was the use of oral history to identify, locate and contextualise key Nzunza royal sites that date from the early 1600s to the 1880s. The choice of royal sites was based on the fact that they were occupied by people who shared a common genealogy and would thus reflect 'official' identity, rather than the fluid group membership historians noted amongst commoners.<sup>18</sup> It is likely that the royal sector, with vested interests in some level of group stability for the appropriation of labour and tribute, would have formed the core of this constant congregation and dispersal.<sup>19</sup> However, stability in the royal house does not suggest any continuity in identity. On the contrary, the fluidity of this process implies that there was, for example, not one 'fixed' Nzunza identity, but that a contextual group identity existed that was constantly manipulated, redefined and shifted in response to the regional political or economic landscape. What do existing sources tell us about these identities, as well as about relations between men and women?

Ethnographic research documented strong avoidance rules (*hlonipa*) between Nzunza women and men which were mediated by space. Nzunza communities like most other southern African pre-colonial farming communities were also characterised by a division of labour along gender lines.<sup>20</sup> Men worked with stone, wood and animal products, whereas women worked with the earth, agricultural production and other plant materials. Men built stonewalls and determined the settlement layout. Women made ceramics. Obviously then, men could express cultural values and identity as well as negotiate power relations through the control of settlement pattern, and women could negotiate power relations and express identity through ceramics and other material, such as wall decoration.

Nzunza gender relations articulated with a context of regional economic and political processes, and these are evident in a contextual interpretation of the archaeology. According to Schoeman, there is clear continuity within the Nzunza royal sequence between the settlement layout of the seventeenth and eighteenth century KwaMaza and the early nineteenth century Esikhunjini. At both sites the stonewalled central enclosures (both cattle byres and assembly) are constructed in the same 'bi-lobial' manner with a large upper and smaller lower lobe, and the entrances to the enclosures face upslope. In addition there are a number of similarities in the layout of the assembly area, the cattle byres and the houses, that relate to the structuring principles of left/right and front/back.<sup>21</sup>

The mid-nineteenth century UmKlaarmaak settlement layout marks a dramatic rupture from the preceding settlement patterns in terms of design and layout. It is a defensive stronghold and in contrast to the earlier sites, both royal and commoner areas are stonewalled. The layout of the settlement was designed and constructed by men. The settlement articulates internal social processes and ways of negotiating space, but simultaneously it expresses Nzunza men's view of themselves as a distinct socio-political unit.

Unlike the unique settlement layout, the type of ceramic decoration found at all Nzunza sites in the Steelpoort area including UmKlaarmaak is similar to Marateng ceramics. Marateng ceramics look a lot like historic Pedi ceramics, and their decoration comprises of a band of decoration on the rim, and a series of arcades or chevrons on the shoulder associated with graphite and ochre. Marateng pottery is also

found on Koni sites.<sup>22</sup> Thus, people from different political, economic and 'ethnic' groups in the region produced a similar ceramic style. Marateng pottery, therefore, is a regional style rather than ethnically or politically specific, and clearly, there is no ceramic style that is specifically Nzunza. The continuity of this style throughout the Nzunza sequence suggests that the regional processes that initially gave rise to it were continually reinforced.

It is possible that some of the ceramics were imported, but this does not completely explain the regional style. Schoeman excavated the remains of small ceramic vessels, with imprints of child-sized fingers, at KwaMaza and UmKlaarmaak. These suggest that the Nzunza did make their own ceramics, and that the regional style formed part of the ceramic imagining of women from an early age. Important factors that must have contributed to the process of the initial Nzunza production of a regional style related, firstly, to the demographic fluidity between groups.<sup>23</sup> A second factor was Nzunza exogamous marriage laws, whereby Nzunza men had to marry women from outside. It is entirely possible that significant numbers of women within Nzunza/Ndebele communities were Sotho, Koni or Swazi speakers. A third factor was women's visits to their families once they were married, thus maintaining ties outside their husbands' settlement. A fourth factor is the role of ceramics in Nzunza society. All these factors would have ensured that women remained highly mobile.

The choice, by royal women, to produce a regional ceramic style operated outside the boundaries of any one group. All Nzunza women that produced ceramics operated within a fluid regional context, characterised by ever changing group composition. Homogeneity of ceramic style was, therefore, a material expression of regional identity processes, in which women, due to their own individual mobility, defined themselves in relation to one another, and flexible group composition mitigated against fixed ethnic boundaries.

On a smaller scale, unlike other southern African communities, ceramics did not mediate Nzunza gender relations; this function was performed by space. Nzunza women were also perpetual 'outsiders': in the beginning they married in and later, once they had 'become' Nzunza, they were still located on the margins of public political power, which was controlled by men (though, as illustrated in the earlier section, women had indirect influence over the public sphere). By



participating in a similar pottery style, women networked widely as ‘outsiders’ to access regional resources, such as food and shelter in times of need, in contrast to men who defined group boundaries through settlement form. The adoption of a regional ceramic style could further be a reflection of women adopting the terms of men’s definition of them as ‘outsiders’ as a basis for collective assertion of women’s power and interests.<sup>24</sup>

Ceramic styles speak powerfully to the issue of the fluidity of identities. Archaeologists have demonstrated the presence of ‘Nguni-type pottery and beehive houses among those groups that had settled north of the Vaal River between the mid-seventeenth century and the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>25</sup> In the Mokopane and Polokwane areas where most of the ‘Northern Ndebele’ s established their settlements, both Moloko (Sotho) and a variant of Letaba (Venda) pottery from the 1600s were identified which reflected the various relationships captured in the complex body of oral traditions that connect these communities to the Sotho of the *lowveld* east of the Drakensberg. By comparison, from before 1700 the Nzunza Ndebele of the Steelpoort Valley further south used Moloko ceramics that resembled those of their Sotho-speaking Pedi neighbours, ‘but built Nguni-style beehive houses’.<sup>26</sup> After the destruction of their capital by Mzilikazi’s Ndebele in the 1820s, the Nzunza regrouped at a new centre called Esikhunjini (the place of the animal skin) where they continued to make Pedi-style ceramics and beehive huts with low walls made of mud-plaster.<sup>27</sup> Both practices, Schoeman suggests, may have indicated unity with the Pedi, with whom the Nzunza were now politically aligned, though they also held on to the Nguni practice of covering middens with red earth.

The Ndebele groups’ manufacture of pottery in the styles associated with Sotho- and Venda-speakers in the 1700s and 1800s directly challenges the link between ceramic style and language. By the early 1800s both the Northern and Southern Ndebele groups had abandoned the simple decorative styles of ceramics associated with the Nguni in favour of the more complex Sotho designs. But at the same time they retained the Nguni settlement pattern and the capping of midden ash, which suggests a sense of fluidity and serves as warning against essentialist notions of identity.<sup>28</sup>

## CONCLUSION

In South Africa, as in the rest of the African continent and the world, gender relations formed an important part of the way in which societies were organised. In general men and women performed different but complementary roles and tasks and certain spaces were clearly demarcated as men's or women's sphere. Scholars writing from a Western feminist perspectives have drawn upon aspects of these gender relations to demonstrate how right-less and powerless precolonial African women were. By homogenising the experiences of women, these scholars have been unable to tease out some of the complexities about the differentiated experiences between women of higher rank and commoner women. This chapter has demonstrated the degree of indirect influence that royal women had over some of the major decisions taken by men in the public sphere.

As to the issue of 'tribe', the correlation within a community of language, custom, physical appearance and group identity occurred, and continues to manifest itself, in only a very limited number of cases. This is not new, but goes back hundreds of years. As such, the tribal or ethnic model cannot be a useful category in trying to explain the nature of social organisation and political formation within precolonial African societies. Precolonial South Africa was not a static region inhabited by self-contained 'tribes' where language determined where individuals or groups belonged (as it would become state policy under apartheid). Rather, it was marked by considerable social and political instability that gave rise to large-scale dispersal of established communities and the regrouping of new, culturally heterogeneous communities where a sense of belonging was determined by factors other than ethnic identities. Ethnicity was negotiable and reconfigurable; ethnic outsiders were welcomed and offered a place to settle and resources to sustain themselves by rulers who wanted to expand their influence and wealth.

In general South Africans today have become prisoners to the tribalisation syndrome 'invented' by colonialism and entrenched by the apartheid state. This makes it hard for many to imagine cultural fluidity being a norm rather than an exception in precolonial South African society. Thus this chapter suggests a more rigorous interrogation of various forms of historical evidence as one of the most critical ways of

shaking off these deeply entrenched but unsubstantiated assumptions about our past.

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- <sup>1</sup> The issue of the naming of the Ndebele in the country as the 'Transvaal Ndebele' is discussed comprehensively elsewhere. See, for example, S.P. Lekgoathi, 'Colonial Experts, Local Interlocutors, Informants and the Making of an Archive on the 'Transvaal Ndebele', 1930-1989,' *Journal of African History* 50, 1, 61-80.
- <sup>2</sup> R.K. Rasmussen, *Migrant Kingdom: Mzilikazi's Ndebele in South Africa*. London, 1978; J. Cobbing, 'The Ndebele under the Khumalos, c. 1820-96,' Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis. Lancaster University, United Kingdom, 1976.
- <sup>3</sup> J. Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press), 1960.
- <sup>4</sup> M. Kinsman, 'Beasts of Burden': The Subordination of Southern Tswana Women, ca. 1800-1840'. *Journal of Southern African Studies* 10, 1, 39-54
- <sup>5</sup> H.C.M. Fourie, *Amandebele Jan Fene Mahlangu* (Zwolle, 1921), 33-39; N.J. van Warmelo, *Transvaal Ndebele Texts* (Pretoria, Government Printer, 1930), 61. J. Peires, 'History versus Customary Law: The Commission on Traditional Leadership, Disputes and Claims, 2004-2012', *Journal of Southern African Studies* (forthcoming); Interview with Chief Chillies Mahlangu, conducted by S.P. Lekgoathi, at Roosenekal, 19 December 2007.
- <sup>6</sup> Interview with Chief Chillies Mahlangu, conducted by S.P. Lekgoathi, Roosenekal, 19 December 2007.
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid.; Peires, 'History versus Customary Law', 9.
- <sup>8</sup> Chief Chillies Mahlangu Interview, 2007.
- <sup>9</sup> *Berliner Missionsberichte* (hereafter BMB), 21, 1862, 'Articles of the History of Bapedi,' 353-358.
- <sup>10</sup> BMB, 7, 1865, 'The Latest Exploratory Trips of our Bassuto-missionaries,' 99-109.
- <sup>11</sup> It is not surprising that the Mokopane Ndebele reacted with hostility against missionaries since the memories of their experiences of the Boer brutalities associated with the Makapansgat siege of 1854 were still fresh in their minds. In his hostile reaction to the missionaries and literacy, the chief's intermediary 'started a long story about how the [Boer] farmers, who had God's word, had robbed and murdered them.' He ended with: 'I thought you came to sell us something. If you still want to, we can continue negotiating. I don't want to be educated and none of my people want to be educated. If you don't have anything else to offer please move on.' See BMB, 7, 1865, 'The Latest Exploratory Trips of our Bassuto-missionaries,' 99-109.
- <sup>12</sup> Sarah Heckford peddled various wares such as hides, biltong, corn, ostrich feathers, ivory, and some of the common Western consumer items such as tea, sugar, pins, needles, dress materials, crockery and saucepans to both Boer and African societies. V. Allen, *Lady Trader: A Biography of Mrs. Sarah Heckford*, (London: William Collins Sons Co. Ltd., 1979), 123.
- <sup>13</sup> Allen, *Lady Trader*, 34.
- <sup>14</sup> BMB 7, 1865, 'The Latest Exploratory Trips of our Bassuto-missionaries,' 99-109.
- <sup>15</sup> BMB 19, 20, 1883, 'News from Our Station Malokong (Synod of Transvaal-North)', 394-408.

- <sup>16</sup> BMB, 13, 18, 1869, 'The Mission in the Soutpansberg District', 263-269.
- <sup>17</sup> Mankopane's ability to incorporate ethnic outsiders and increase his followers, which also amplified his political influence and military power in the region, rested on his skill in mobilizing young men to engage in migrant labor in the Cape Colony. With the money they earned as workers these young men purchased firearms that they took back to their chief upon their return home. The accumulation of firearms enabled Mankopane's polity to withstand Boer settler encroachment in the period between the 1860s and 1900. See BMB, 21, 1862, 'Articles of the History of Bapedi', 353-358.
- <sup>18</sup> For a discussion of cultural fluidity, see for example, P. Delius, 'The Ndzundza Ndebele: Indenture and the Making of Ethnic Identity, 1883-1914', in P. Bonner, I. Hofmeyr, D. James and T. Lodge, (eds.), *Holding their Ground: Class, Locality and Culture in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century South Africa*, (Johannesburg: Wits University Press & Ravan Press, 1989), 227-258.
- <sup>19</sup> P. Delius, *The Land Belongs to Us: The Pedi Polity, the Boers and the British in the Nineteenth-Century Transvaal* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1983).
- <sup>20</sup> C. Walker, *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945* (Claremont: David Phillip, 1990); Kinsman, 'Beasts of Burden', 39-54; J. Guy, 'Gender Oppression in Southern Africa's Precapitalist Societies, in C. Walker (ed.), *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945* (Claremont: David Phillip, 1990).
- <sup>21</sup> M.H. Schoeman, 'The Ndzundza Archaeology of the Steelpoort,' Unpublished MA Dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 1997; 'Excavating Ndzundza Ndebele Identity at KwaMaza,' *Southern African Field Archaeology* 7, 1, 1998, 42-52, 'Material Culture 'Under the Animal Skin': Excavations at Esikhunjini, an Mfecane Period Ndzundza Ndebele Site', *Southern African Field Archaeology* 7, 2, 1998, 72-81.
- <sup>22</sup> Schoeman, 'The Ndzundza Archaeology of the Steelpoort,' 1997; P. Delius & M.H. Schoeman, 'Revisiting Bokoni: Populating the Stone Ruins of the Mpumalanga Escarpment,' in N. Swanepoel, A. Esterhuysen & P. Bonner (eds.), *Five Hundred Years Rediscovered: Southern African Precedents and Prospects 500 Years Initiative 2007 Conference Proceedings* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2008), 135-167.
- <sup>23</sup> Delius, 'The Ndzundza Ndebele', 227-258; Delius, *The Land Belongs to Us*.
- <sup>24</sup> In pre-colonial southern African societies there was a strong symbolic connection between pottery and women. As such the analysis of pottery is likely to reveal some of the ways in which women may have identified themselves. The manufacture of ceramics was a symbolically invested activity which mirrored and possibly reinforced gender taboos, rites and practices. For more details of the debate, see, for example, S. Hall, 'A Consideration of Gender Relations in the Late Iron Age 'Sotho' Sequence of the Western Highveld, South Africa', in S. Kent (ed.), *Gender in African Prehistory*, (London: AltaMira Press, 1998), 235-258; T. Huffman, 'Archaeological Background', in J.A. Van Schalkwyk & E.O.M. Hanisch (eds.), *Sculptured in Clay: Iron Age Figurines from Schroda, Limpopo Province, South Africa* (Pretoria: National Cultural History Museum, 2002), 9-19.
- <sup>25</sup> See for example, Schoeman, 'Excavating Ndzundza Ndebele Identity', 42-52, 'Material Culture' 72-81; T. Huffman (1990) and J.H.N. Loubser, 'Ndebele

Archaeology of the Pietersburg Area`, *Navorsing van die Nasionale Museum Bloemfontein* 10, 2, 64-147.

<sup>26</sup> Schoeman , `Excavating Ndzundza Ndebele Identity`, 42-52.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

# THE FIVE HUNDRED-YEAR ARCHIVE ONLINE PROJECT: A PRELIMINARY REPORT

CAROLYN HAMILTON

Research and enquiries into aspects of the Southern African past in the periods predating the existence of European imperial and colonial archives have been complicated by the absence of contemporary written sources. One crucial move to address this apparent obstacle has been to make use of material and sonic objects. Yet much of the material concerning the remote Southern Africa past – including artifacts in daily use, objects that testify to trade activities, artistic works that have the ability to theorise societal issues – is misidentified, often undated, lost or dispersed in institutions across the world or held in settings that are largely inaccessible and/or not recognisably archival. A second concern lies in the ways this material, as well as the written documents that refer to earlier independent periods, were shaped by colonial and later apartheid knowledge practices.

The aim of this project, *The Five Hundred-Year Archive (FHYA)*, is to develop and promote understandings of the archival possibilities of materials located both within and outside of formal archives and to facilitate their engagement. It does this in order to stimulate research and enquiries into the Southern African past in the later independent and early colonial periods.

An initial move in this endeavour is the creation of an accessible online research portal, which is capable of convening, in a virtual format, visual, textual and sonic archival materials pertinent to these periods. The portal aims to be a conceptually innovative intervention geared to engaging, in a critical manner, inherited forms of knowledge organization. It is being constructed to work across multiple institutions and to incorporate a variety of media formats, be capable of handling diverse objects, and provide context, by taking into account, most notably, the provenance and spatial and temporal locations of the various materials, as well as their multiple histories. The portal is designed in such a way as to facilitate recognition and understanding of

the ways in which disciplinary conventions and colonial and apartheid knowledge practices have shaped the materials concerned. In some cases, it undoes aspects of that shaping.

The project is a feasibility exercise that explores the possibilities of new ways of thinking about, and stimulating activity in relation to, archives for a region long denied an archive, i.e. a preserved record from/of the time concerned; a region that was offered instead ideas of timeless traditional culture. It does not aim to create an authoritative, stand-alone digital archive that will exist in perpetuity. It is, instead, a catalytic intervention that seeks to activate new kinds of archival energies.

The Archive and Public Culture Research Initiative (APC), based at the University of Cape Town, with the direct support of the KwaZulu-Natal Museum, Wits Historical Papers and the Killie Campbell Africana Library, and with expressions of interest from a number of overseas institutions, took the lead in raising the funds for an initial three-year project, which directly addresses both the conceptual and technical aspects of such an endeavour. The initial feasibility study is made in relation to one area (what is today southern Swaziland, KwaZulu-Natal and the north Eastern Cape region of Southern Africa), but is designed in such a way that its regional coverage can be readily extended in an aggregative way to a much wider geographic area. The feasibility study has two phases: an initial consultation and preparation stage (July 2013 – June 2014) and a second implementation stage (July 2014 – June 2016).

## RATIONALE AND SCOPE

The Southern African past before the advent of European colonialism remains one of the most under-researched aspects of the history of the region. There are several reasons for this, of which two stand out. Firstly, while some of the relevant resources are text-based, many exist in other forms, the archival potential of which is not readily apprehended. The second reason is the way in which materials pertinent to the remote past came, through a combination of politically-charged processes and certain discipline-based academic interventions, to be treated as timeless, traditional and tribal materials.

The *Five Hundred Year Archive (FHYA)* project – a name inspired by an earlier initiative (see Swanepoel N., Esterhuysen, A and Bonner, P

(eds.), *500 Years Rediscovered: Southern African Precedents and Prospects* (Johannesburg, Wits University Press, 2008) – aims to bring into a single searchable framework – an online portal website – a variety of such materials, providing as much relevant information as possible about their production, use, meaning, provenance and circulation over time. While the focus is on materials pertinent to the five hundred years immediately before colonialism and the early colonial period in which aspects of the preceding periods persisted, we know that much of the material with which we will be concerned will have been assembled and subjected to some form of processing, preservation and management in subsequent periods. In addition, we are alert to the way in which materials dating from the early colonial period are used by researchers to illuminate preceding periods. Our project attends explicitly to the problems and challenges that these practices present.

The institutional partnerships that underpin the project are designed to encourage and facilitate the use of various collections, comprising different media, which, on their own, often lack context. The challenge in refiguring the five-hundred-year archive in this way involves finding ways to enable collaboration across particular institutional mandates in a manner that enhances the research profile of each institution, and engages its constituencies. While the actual objects, and indeed most probably their digital surrogates, will be retained in their respective institutional homes, the intervention will coordinate interaction across institutional barriers, connecting related objects which are separately housed, thereby actively breaching the separate silos created by disciplinary or medium-specific constraints.

The project will attempt to provide an example capable of precipitating and facilitating a national, and potentially regional, conversation about underdeveloped and neglected aspects of the Southern African Archive with implications for the Catalytic Project of the Department of Higher Education on the pre-colonial past, as well as various projects of the KwaZulu-Natal Premier's Heritage Unit, and a variety of national digitisation and electronic record endeavours. FHYA acts thus as a test-bed for how a collaborative archival intervention might function and whether it can affect change with regard to the available archive in a way that shifts the epistemological terrain and is sustainable over the long-term. In this way the FHYA seeks to make contribution both to a



de-colonial intellectual agenda and to a national strategy on digital heritage. Hence, it is both a conceptual and a technical intervention.

The conceptual aspect draws on a now well-established body of work on the production of colonial and apartheid knowledge, as well as that on the making of the southern African archive, and on emerging radical scholarship on the decolonisation of knowledge. One aspect of the critical work involved has concerned itself with what the APC terms “the ethnologisation of the past” (see [www.apc.uct.ac.za/projects](http://www.apc.uct.ac.za/projects)). In relation to the remote past, this involves recognition of the archival potential of ‘ethnologised’ materials that were historically exiled in institutions and spaces other than archives, the liberation of certain of the materials from inappropriate or politically-charged forms of categorisation, as well as rethinking the status of the concept of archive itself.

The conceptual and intellectual work necessary to prepare for the FHYA online intervention crystallised in an APC workshop in 2012. Participants with diverse interests and capacities relevant to the five-hundred year period with which we are concerned, though in relation to a smaller area, that of the southern part of KwaZulu-Natal, were invited to present papers on topics pertinent to a thematic focus on ethnologised pasts and the archive. As a result of the workshop and subsequent debate and discussion, these papers were revised and prepared for publication in the form of a book (*Tribing and Untribing the Archive: An investigation into the constituting of the material record pertinent to the late independent and colonial periods of southern KwaZulu-Natal*) in press in 2014. The findings of this work, along with prior research, directly inform the FHYA. One of the outcomes of this body of work concerns the way in which inherited disciplinary separations were key in robbing certain materials of archival capacities. FHYA aims to restore these capacities, notably by reuniting materials that were historically segregated. As the book manuscript indicates, a key intervention needed to develop an archive for the period is to treat items that were not historically deemed archival, notably visual, material and sonic items, as *archives* and not merely as *sources*. This entails investing them with various kinds of contextual information that their historic exile from archive denied them. The volume further makes it clear that archival items in forms other than documents can provide views of the past other than those afforded by the documentary record with valuable capacities

both to enrich, and to unsettle, the yet highly authoritative documentary archive and to move beyond its colonial and apartheid frames. Finally, the volume makes a major intervention in challenging normative ideas about the temporal position of archival materials themselves, arguing that they have to be understood as subject to the contingencies of time. This involves a recognition that it is neither methodologically nor imaginatively satisfactory to work with a simple temporal template of two periods in time: the events in the past that researchers might be seeking to understand and the sources they have at hand in the present to undertake the task. The ‘sources’ are not survivals of that past time in the present, but travelers across time that have changed shape and accrued new meanings through time (*Tribing and Untribing the Archive*, in press). The FHYA portal is designed to try and facilitate such an approach. This conceptual shift raises in its wake manifold technological and logistical challenges. The project is an opportunity to work through these systematically. We discuss some of these below.

FHYA is an intervention with a limited three-year funding period, following which it will be offered as a model for a national/regional resource. It is designed with the aim of being easy to add to, such that similar teams working on other parts of the southern African region could undertake the same exercise and upload archival material pertinent to their area into the shared portal, thus eventually offering archival coverage for the entire region in a continuous, mutually searchable format. It is central to our vision that the totality of archival materials across formats and media, across institutions and private holdings, and across currently resilient local foci will add up to much more archive than the sum of the parts.

As the FHYA does not seek to own digital resources in its own right it aims for maximum compatibility with other platforms. These include the South African Heritage Resources Information System (SAHRIS), which covers heritage site case management and is integrated within the National Inventory of Heritage Sites and Objects, and ICA Atom, the international archival standard open-source<sup>1</sup> platform used by WITS Historical Papers and to be incorporated by the South African National Archives. Once we have developed the portal template, we will promote it actively to the various bodies with responsibilities in this area such as the National Research Foundation (NRF), SAHRIS and the National Archives.

Finally, we aim to design the portal in such a way that it can effectively be used and contributed to by academic and non-professional researchers with a wide range of research expectations, levels of expertise and digital skills.

### PROJECT PHASE ONE (JULY – JUNE 2014)

The initial phase of the project July 2013 – June 2014, with a pre-preparation phase (February 2013 – June 2013), was dedicated to processes of consultation and planning with the proposed partner institutions. In particular, this phase was designed to ensure that partner institutions had the opportunity to discuss their respective concerns and needs with the core operational team, to participate in the development of the aims and scope of the project, and finally, to sign on formally to the project. As a starting point, the core team engaged with the partners on an individual basis, as well as collectively as a group of participants. Ongoing contact was maintained and two FHYA workshops were held in 2013.

The first workshop built on the work carried out by the project team prior to 2013, with the aim of clarifying and expanding on the types of research enquiries that users would bring to the portal. With this in mind, ten academic participants, with some form of exposure to the conceptual issues discussed above, were assembled from the disciplines of Anthropology, Literature, Archaeology, Music, Heritage and Historical Studies. Each participant was invited to present a particular research case that was of interest to them and what type of information about it they would hope to find on the FHYA portal.

The research questions highlighted in this workshop and the ensuing discussion allowed the project team to get a sense of how users from different research backgrounds, and with varied research foci, would search and find materials, records and associated items. This informed the initial conceptualisation of the online portal, which is detailed in the section, Conceptualisation of the Online Portal, below. The needs of lay researchers, along with modes of participation by non-institutional contributors, will be tested in the next stage and is likely to affect in significant ways final conceptualization of the portal. Some of the groundwork for a focus on the needs of lay researchers has been laid in the form of two recently completed PhD research projects, one

undertaken by FYHA coordinator, Dr. Grant McNulty, on contemporary community archives and forms of custodianship in KwaZulu-Natal, and another by FYHA team member, Dr. Mbongiseni Buthelezi, on the contemporary uses of oral artistic forms to recall the past among the Ndwandwe, also in KwaZulu-Natal.

The second workshop invited participation from 16 representatives of the five local institutional collections, namely Wits Historical Papers; Johannesburg Art Gallery (JAG); KwaZulu-Natal Museum (KZNM); Killie Campbell Africana Library (KCAL) and the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) Press. It included inputs on materials from the Berlin Phonogram Archive, the British Museum, the Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (MAA) and the collections of the Mariannhill Mission. All of these repositories were identified in the processes leading up to the project as having materials relevant to the project focus areas. This workshop specifically addressed issues like different institutional databases, modes of archival management, curation and particular copyright/intellectual property issues. It took in perspectives from a range of institutions including archives, museums, art galleries and libraries. Representatives presented on their collections. FHYA team members presented on the conceptualisation of the portal and Nick Wiltshire of SAHRIS outlined the SAHRIS database and its potential to collaborate with the project. The outcomes and discussions of this workshop are leading to draft, in-principle agreements with the institutions and an understanding of how each might participate in the FHYA project.

Along with developing partnerships, 2013 included research into online databases and digital information management structures in the South African context, as well as the review of a number of audits and policy documents that have been drafted regarding the state of South African archival collections. These reflected an understanding, not only of the growing need for, but also the complexity of the issues surrounding, digitising, archiving and accessing South African archival collections. Over the last 10 years there has been a groundswell of interest and movement toward the digitisation of archival material for preservation and to improve access. Locally, this has resulted in a number of initiatives and projects, including, *inter alia*, SAHRIS, Digital Imaging South Africa (DISA) I and II, which involved the large-scale digitisation of journals and posters that documented liberation history in South

Africa, the digitisation of the ANC archives, the Stanford Map Project (a collaborative effort by the Universities of Cape Town and Stanford to digitise and make available their extensive collections of African historical maps) and, more recently, the Google-sponsored online presentation of materials of the Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory. Notable international initiatives that featured prominently in South Africa included Aluka, a digital library of scholarly resources to which a number of South African institutions contributed. This rapidly changing environment brings with it new needs, assessment and risks which have been addressed in documents such as the draft national policy on the Digitisation of Heritage Resources and the Carnegie reports on Digitisation Projects in South Africa. FHYA research in this area involved assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of these various initiatives, the challenges they face, including critiques of the neo-imperial effects of certain kinds of interventions. The research reveals the enormous complexity of the terrain of digital archival and collections management.

Educational and public institutions have specific responsibilities to their constituencies, which affect archival collections management and digitisation possibilities as each institution deals with the materials in a different way. The large variety of cultural policies, mandates, constituencies and cultural custodians within South Africa is reflected in a lack of standardisation of archival materials across institutions. This includes a number of proprietary and open-source platforms and content management systems such as SAHRIS, DSpace, Fedora, MS Access and Star. There also exists a varied understanding of the archival standards for metadata, which differ across formats and institutions. For example, Library of Congress METS standards are often used for paper-based records while audio-visual records use Dublin Core fields. Certain institutions embed metadata within digital files while others have stand-alone metadata spread sheets, which are then linked to digital records. This terrain is further complicated by the access and copyright requirements of different partner organisations, national strategies for access and international reassessment of colonial artefacts in international collections. Discussions with partners over the course of 2013 sought to engage with the particular concerns and needs of each individual institution.

## INITIAL CONCEPTUALISATION OF THE ONLINE PORTAL

The FHYA project aims to bring into a single searchable framework a variety of textual, visual and sonic materials, which are pertinent to the remote past in Southern Africa but currently dispersed across various institutions, often inappropriately catalogued and difficult to gain access to. The portal will provide as much relevant information as possible with regard to the materials' production, use, meaning, provenance and existence over time, and will encourage contributions from non-professional historians and researchers for an initial, limited period of six months. It thus draws in new materials and invests archival potential into items historically denied that potential.

A key decision that emerged from the preparatory stage of the project is that the portal does not aim to be an online archive. It aims to draw scattered materials into archival view, to contextualise them as fully as possible and, in doing so, to make an argument about their future archival potential. Thus, the FHYA plans to hold no archival materials in perpetuity but to perform a showcasing function. The extent of its lifespan remains open to determination.

We have researched a number of platforms used by different organisations, both locally and internationally, looking at compatibility between platforms, functionality and operability including the display of different content (images, sound files, text, etc.) within one search results page. We are quite clear that open-source (as opposed to proprietary) software is the preferred option. Proprietary software can be very costly to buy and upgrade; it requires the purchase of site licenses and annual licensing fees; and often requires specialised technical expertise to customise, build and manage the CMS (content management system). There can also be significant costs involved in trying to migrate the content to another platform if the technical service provider is no longer available or becomes too expensive to work on the project. There are various open-source CMSes that offer the functionality the FHYA project plans to implement. Drupal is one option that would allow us to customise and create controlled metadata, interactive forums, comment sections and be able to manage various media formats etc. Drupal is used by a number of web developers in

South Africa, so it would be easy to find technical staff. SARHIS also uses Drupal so the FYHA portal would be compatible with it.

Partner institutions use different databases/systems and some have no digital CMS at all. The KZNM uses Access and plans, in stages, to start using the SAHRIS system. WITS Historical Papers use ICA Atom 2.0 (archival open-source software) while JAG is currently sharing a networked system, Star, hosted at Museum Africa. Following on from discussions with each of the partner institutions, it became clear that the different institutions would not necessarily want to migrate or change their current databases or management systems. Therefore, the FHYA portal will not be a singular database of all institutional holdings, but rather be a metadata aggregator (like Europeana in Europe) in that it will 'harvest' metadata from the digital objects contained within various institutional databases and display results in an accessible and user-friendly manner. To achieve this, we will draw on the combined expertise of all the partners to invest heavily in providing the richest possible contextual information for all items. That information will not only benefit the portal but will directly enhance the institutions' information bases.

The proposed portal is pioneering in that it will combine the holdings of several entities, searchable through one access point. This means that material searched will also yield results on related material or contextual information, often situated in a separate location or collection with the relevant connections not hitherto recognised. For instance, a preliminary level search on the clan name Nganga could include, on one results page, photographs from the Frans Mayr collection at the KZNM, archaeological remains from the KNZM, objects from the Johannesburg Art Gallery collection, textual references from the Killie Campbell Africana Library and from the voluminous 1929 publication by A.T. Bryant, related audio material from the Berlin Phonogram Archive, material from the Mariannhill Mission collections, as well as the *izithakazelo* (clan praise names) of the local amaNganga people who live in the area surrounding Mariannhill. The latter would be invited to participate in the project and offered the kind of support that is being extended to the partner institutions, similarly tailored to their particular needs. If a portal user thus clicked on a search result to open an image from the Mariannhill collection, all available provenance and subject/

technical/ descriptive metadata would be available, thereby deepening research possibilities and referential connections.

The portal is being designed as a carefully framed and readily searchable website that will allow researchers to locate materials across the partner institutions. It will also provide the provenance and contextual information about the materials thereby increasing the research potential of related materials across institutions. Cross-institutional referencing is central to restoring provenance details to materials that have been historically denuded of such information. In order to achieve this goal – the ability to search across different types of materials, institutions, locations and periods of time etc. – a fairly complex search functionality is required. The portal will include a fixed vocabulary of searchable terms but will also have to accommodate orthographic differences and the addition of new terms from a variety of users. It will need to include discipline-specific terms but also to be accessible to, and satisfy the requirements of researchers from different disciplines, as well as everyday users such as non-professional clan and family historians.

The FYHA actively seeks to develop methods and modes of approach designed to overcome the limits of inherited classification and meta-data systems. OCR (Optical Character Recognition) scanning enables searching within the digitised textual documents. A key intervention in this regard will be the use of maximum searchable text as entry points to unsearchable material. Thus the FYHA will, wherever possible, use typed documents, not as accessible archival alternatives, but as searchable texts with hyper-links to the relevant sections of handwritten text or to original sound recordings, which will have little, or in some cases, no meta-data. An example of this would be the Swaziland Oral History Project collection which has edited typescripts in English, which can be searched and which afford the researcher a quick link to the relevant page in the handwritten original in siSwati, or to a section of the original sound recording. In the case of the edited volumes of the James Stuart papers of the KCAL, the portal will offer hyperlinks on the digitised pages of the published volumes to scans of certain original, handwritten pages, to afford the researcher insight into the original text. In order to achieve a similar effect for collections of objects the FHYA will use, in addition to existing metadata, maximum searchable text (e.g. an essay discussing a collection of material objects) with hyperlinks to



the discussed objects. The advantage of the use of maximum searchable text entry points is that the researcher is not limited to the vocabulary and conceptual apparatus put in place by a collection's custodians and is, in certain cases, able to use the searchable text to get close to a search term's occurrence or point of application in a medium that otherwise offers limited searchability. Files of differing quality will be used. For example, web resolution scans would be available for online use and high-resolution scans (created as part of the digitisation workflow) would be available off-line with the host institution as a preservation master.

The desired user-friendly search tool will nonetheless also rely on more conventional metadata functionality and cross-referencing possibilities. In part this will be achieved through cross-institutional referencing. It is anticipated that, together with the FHYA, institutional partners will enter controlled metadata, developed in conjunction with the project team. During the six-month period in which a section of the portal will be open for interaction, registered users from the partner institutions and those with an interest in the project, will be encouraged to add contextual information to the digital objects in the form of 'tags'. These tags will generate 'tag clouds', which, following moderation (a challenging intervention requiring sustained careful and critical attention in its own right), might also feed into the controlled metadata thereby allowing for a high level of metadata population. Tags might be added to items in the collections by those with niche knowledge of a particular subject such as local or academic historians, as well as people who feel they have more information about the materials. We see the tags as a way of referencing other, similarly tagged content, although it may require some (most likely, language-specific) moderation. During this period we would also use web metrics to understand the behaviour of portal users to help us refine the portal's functionality.

## CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

In the workshops, participants foresaw that opening up a section of the portal for this kind of interaction could result in possible misuse or spam. There were also valid concerns about the proliferation of generic, user-generated terms (like 'KwaZulu-Natal' or 'Zulu') affecting the specificity of the search functionality and thereby undermining what the project as a whole is trying to achieve. Hospitality to content and

contributions in isiZulu, and dialect and language variations thereof, further complicates the situation. The suggestion of a (bilingual – isiZulu and English) moderation team during the six-month period in which a section of the portal will be open for interaction, who could direct specific queries to relevant ‘experts’, would address this issue.

As outlined in the previous section, this broad vision takes into account the specific needs and constraints of different institutions. In some instances, larger parts of collections would be available, yet in other cases, such the Berlin Phonogram Archive, smaller samples or examples of collections would be made available online. The reason for this is twofold. Firstly, the digitisation of entire collections would require a lot of time and money and is beyond this scope of this intervention. Secondly, some partners, like the KCAL, have noted that while they are willing to have examples online, they would also like to encourage researchers to visit their institutions. Therefore, during the second phase of the project, we will identify key examples of collections for online use. These examples will be digitised and hyperlinked to searchable text. In addition descriptive metadata will be embedded into the ‘digital objects’ that will then be searchable through the FHYA portal.

Partner institutions have made it clear that much of their material is not digitised, and that, in certain instances, inventories are thin, equipment is lacking or non-existent and staff are not adequately trained or available to assist with the digitisation process. Through discussion with individual partner institutions we feel that we have developed a good understanding of specific institutional needs, and aim to address them by working collaboratively with each institution in a manner that takes account of its particular circumstances.

The FYHA has further attempted to ensure that the project benefits the partner institutions in their own core business. It offers the institutions opportunities to gain experience in the management of archival objects across various media. It is anticipated that the digitised materials and the project’s online infrastructure will facilitate in-depth research, inter-institutional dialogue and knowledge-sharing, as well as stimulate interest in respective institutions’ collections through increased access and public engagement. Within institutions it is likely that the FHYA project will, by its very existence, stimulate interest in the neglected area of the pre-colonial past, leading to the prioritisation of relevant inventories, and will lead to training and expertise development

opportunities. It is further likely that participation in the FHYA project will directly expand the available information about specific collections.

Broadly, the project offers partner institutions the following support:

- ❖ In certain instances digitization of selected materials.
- ❖ Help in precipitating and endorsing institutional fund-raising efforts to digitise other materials.
- ❖ Lobbying, in conjunction with partner institutions, to try and secure sustainable funding for the online research portal from their parent institutions and government organisations.
- ❖ Increasing the use of specific collections through web access and monitoring through web metrics the effects of this access.
- ❖ Using the occasion of the digitisation process to enhance digital skills within the institution.
- ❖ In each case, identifying a mode of digitisation for the selected items that benefits or intersects with the institutional discussion of digitisation and that includes, *inter alia*, mentoring of or partnering with local staff members and building staff members' expert knowledge for this region and period.
- ❖ Researching and promoting approaches to, and uses of, materials in ways that encourage deeper archival management, strengthen institutional capacity and facilitate new ways to engage with archival objects, collections and their contexts of production.

In this way, participation in the project by the partner institution staff will be a form of capacity building, including sustained exposure to regionally-specific research issues and will facilitate the development of regional expertise. In the course of the project, individual staff members will develop a network of contacts in other institutions, and indeed, with partners outside the institutions, that will be helpful in the advanced custodianship of their own institution's materials. In addition to institutional partnerships, the project aims to facilitate contributions to the portal from non-professional historians interested in the archive for this region and this period, such as those involved in *imibumbano* associations focused on clan affairs.

## THE WAY FORWARD

In 2013, the FHYA project concentrated on refining the conceptual thinking underpinning the intervention and on specifying the parameters and needs of the project. We paid close attention to the specifics of the partnerships and the concerns of each institution. In the first six months of 2014 we sought firm commitments from the partners and planned how to use the remaining period to implement the portal. Thereafter, we will design, test run, revise and then present, and actively promote, the template.

## FUNDING AND PROJECT INFRASTRUCTURE

The Five Hundred Year Archive has received the support of an independent South African government agency, the NRF, through its African Origins Platform, and is further supported by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. In addition, the project has infrastructural and developmental support from the host institution, the University of Cape Town. FHYA is piloted by the APC at the University of Cape Town, led by NRF Research Chair, Carolyn Hamilton. It is currently being coordinated by APC post-doc, Dr. Grant McNulty. This report was drawn up by the FYHA core team and prepared for publication by Carolyn Hamilton.

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<sup>1</sup> Open-source denotes software for which the original source code is made freely available and may be redistributed and modified. It is very often developed in a public, collaborative manner.

# CLASSIFYING THE NON-BANTU CLICK LANGUAGES

*MATTHIAS BRENZINGER*

Research over the past decade has revealed that there is no “Khoisan” language family, as a common origin of the Non-Bantu Click languages of southern and eastern Africa could not be verified. The term “Khoisan” is closely associated with the controversial claim of the existence of such a genetic family and it is therefore suggested - as Ernst Westphal already proposed 40 years ago - to erase “Khoisan” from any further scholarly discourse related to languages. Furthermore, there are no genetic groupings of hunter-gatherers’ and pastoralists’ languages; thus no complementary opposition of “San (Bushman) languages” versus “Khoe (Hottentot) languages” exists. Both terms, San and Khoe, are used to refer to different groupings in language classification, and should likewise be avoided. Instead of “Khoisan” languages spoken by San/Bushman and Khoe/Hottentot, it seems much more appropriate to speak of Non-Bantu Click languages spoken by hunter-gatherers and pastoralists.

Only twelve Non-Bantu Click languages - and not 30 to 70 as stated by other scholars - are still spoken today. A bottom-up approach and the historical comparative method allow for the following classification of the Non-Bantu Click languages: There are only two established language families, namely Khoeid (formerly Khoe, Central Khoisan, Hottentot) and Kx’a. The Khoeid family includes Khoekhoe, Naro, !Gana-!Gui, Khwe-!Ani; Shua and Tshwa, and the Kx’a language family comprises !Xun and #Hoan-Sasi only. Isolates or single language families are Taa, N!ng (consisting of the N!uu & l’Au varieties), Sandawe, and Hadza.

## EARLY LANGUAGE CLASSIFICATIONS

Travellers, missionaries, colonialists, scholars as well as other foreigners who arrived at the southern tip of the African continent met people and categorised them on the basis of physical features, means of subsistence, and also by the languages they spoke. The distinction

commonly made was between “Hottentots” and “Bushmen” and it was based on physical and cultural differences, namely “short hunter-gatherers” and “tall pastoralists”.

Remarks on the click languages in earlier travelogues, with very few exceptions such as Lichtenstein (1808), were generally naïve and largely ignorant. This changed when Wilhelm Bleek in the late 1840s began his comparative study of the “prefix-prenominal languages” of Western and Southern Africa. In 1851, he submitted his PhD thesis *De Nominum Generibus Linguarum Africae Australis, Copticae, Semiticarum Aliarumque Sexualium*, in which he discussed the regular correspondence between noun class prefixes among languages, not only among languages spoken all over Africa south of the equator, but also of several languages from West Africa. Bleek in 1952 stated that “the word “Ba-ntu” is common to almost all languages of this kindred” and established the Bantu<sup>1</sup> language family. If one considers the limited data available on African languages at that time, this is a rather remarkable achievement.

The other languages, namely the Non-Bantu Click languages of Southern Africa were hardly known at that time, with the notable exception of Nama. Schmelen (1831), Tindall (1857), Wallmann (1857), Krönlein (who studied Nama since the 1850s) and others had collected language data on Nama, which was considered a variety of a language called “Hottentot”.

“The Hottentot language is known to us in three or four different dialects, one of which (the Nama language) is represented by a large amount of missionary literature.” (Bleek 1862-691)

Almost no language data existed on the languages spoken by the (former) hunter-gatherers. In 1857, a year after his arrival at Cape Town, Wilhelm Bleek engaged fully in the linguistic research of “bushman” languages. For the last 20 years of his short life, the last seven years together with his sister-in-law, Lucy Lloyd, he studied the language of former hunter-gatherers of Southern Africa.

“The Bushman tongue is as yet too insufficiently known to allow us to assign to it its proper place in a general classification of

languages: but it seems to be clear that its relationship to the Hottentot language is, at least, very remote.” (Bleek 1862-69:1)

With an astonishing clarity and profound understanding of the linguistic facts, Bleek stated the following in the early 1860s about the Southern African languages:

“These languages are, according to their structure and origin, divided into three classes. As representatives of these classes we may name the languages of the Kafir, the Hottentot, and the Bushman.” (Bleek 1862-69:1)

In 1881, Theophilus Hahn was most likely the first to conflate the hunter-gatherer (Bushmen) and pastoral communities (Hottentot) under the label “Hottentots” (Hahn 1881). Alan Barnard (1980:7) points out that neither before Hahn nor after was “Hottentot” used in this extended sense. Hahn’s merger of “Bushmen” and Hottentot”, however, marks the beginning of an unfortunate era in which scholars from a wide range of disciplines felt the urge to fuse hunter-gatherer communities and pastoral communities speaking Non-Bantu Click languages. Seemingly shared cultural and physical features led to contrast the “Khoisan” people and cultures, as opposed to the other people speaking closely related Bantu languages.

### THE FORMER “KHOISAN” LANGUAGE FAMILY

In the following, the rise of a “Khoisan” language family will be discussed in some detail. Its fall and the current classification of the Non-Bantu Click languages will be presented further below. The inverted commas stain the unsuitability of the term “Khoisan”, which consists of *khoë*, the general term for ‘person’ in most of the Khoeid<sup>2</sup> languages, and *saan*, meaning ‘hunter-gatherers, foragers’ in Khoekhoegowab (Haacke & Eiseb 2002). The term was coined by Leonhard Schultze (1928) as a cover term for the herding Khoekhoe, formerly known as “Hottentots”, and the foraging San, who are often referred to as “Bushmen”. Isaak Schapera took over the German spelling of the term and extended its meaning by including the languages spoken by the people under discussion. For the classification of his Khoisan Language Family, Schapera (1930:419) adapted

Dorothea Bleek's groupings (Bleek, D. 1929, 1956), namely: 1. Northern Group, 2. Central Group, 3. Southern Group and finally 4. Hottentot Group.

In 1935, Diedrich Wesermann was the first linguist to use the term "Khoisan" for a supposed genetic family comprising the Bushman and Hottentot languages (Westermann 1935a, 1935b).

From the 1950s onwards, Joseph Greenberg began to work towards the establishment of a genealogical family of "click languages". In 1950 he used "Click-using Family" (Greenberg 1950), followed by "Click Language Family" (Greenberg 1955). In 1963, "Khoisan" became one of the four major phyla in his comprehensive classification of the *Languages of Africa* (Greenberg 1963). He could have adopted the term "Khoisan" from Schapera, but a more likely source is Westermann (1935). In his classification, Greenberg took D. Bleek's work (D. Bleek 1927, 1929) as a starting point. The most important turn in his classification is that Hottentot (Khoekhoe) suddenly was no longer a branch on its own, but one among other languages of "Central Khoisan".

"The appearance of D. Bleek's comparative Bushman vocabularies showed that the language of the Khoisan area fell into three groups – a northern, central, and southern – and that Hottentot belonged to the central group, being particularly close to the language of the Naron Bushmen." (Greenberg 1955:82)

Greenberg challenged the deeply entrenched dichotomy between Hottentot versus Bushman, or Khoe(khoe) versus San in more modern terms. The fact that he was never in contact with the speakers most likely helped Greenberg to base his language classification exclusively on linguistic grounds. While this must be acknowledged as a major step forward, Ernst Westphal rightly pointed out that by using "Khoisan" as the name for his language family, Greenberg at the same time provoked the return of extra-linguistic, namely racial and cultural aspects into language classification, namely the problematic division of "Khoi" versus "San languages".



“Greenberg’s classification did away with the linguistically irrelevant distinction between ‘Bushman’ and ‘Hottentot’ – although it linked these terms in the composite ‘Khoisan’ whose intention can be translated as ‘Bush-Hottentot’. (Westphal 1971:387)

### NEITHER “SAN LANGUAGES” NOR “KHOE LANGUAGES”

This paper will elaborate on the linguistically doubtful division between San and Khoe(khoe) languages. The linguistically incorrect contrast between San (Bushman) and Khoe (Hottentot) languages has become quite popular among language and cultural activists. Kuela Kiema in his book *Tears for my land* for example uses Khoe to refer to Khoekhoe, the most common use of Khoe among non-linguists.

“The splitting of the name Khoisan into two syllables ‘Khoe’ and ‘San’ was considered an ideal approach, and this delineation is now used to keep the Khoekhoe from working in ‘San’ organizations.” (Kiema 2010:70)

Linguistic classifications of the Non-Bantu Click languages are often attacked on political grounds, by ignoring the underlying scientific facts. The Penduka Conference held by members from different San communities in April 2001, was featured in the Mail & Guardian under the heading “The Khoi don’t share our culture, say San.”

“San teachers and linguists last week said attempts to lump the Khoi and San languages into one group smacks of apartheid practices.” (Mail & Guardian 26.04.2001)

“San” or “Bushmen” might be a valid category of representation in cultural, political, economic, racial, marketing and other contexts, but it surely is not with regard to languages.

Hunter-gatherer and pastoralist are terms that relate to main features of mode of economic production and San and Khoe are often mistaken to simply express this opposition in economies. San and Khoe, however,

are used by scholars from the same disciplines and even more so by those from other disciplines with very different meanings and complex connotations. John Wright (p.c.), one of the most prominent historians of South Africa, pointed out that up until about 12,000 to 10,000 years ago all humans were hunters-gatherers and calling humans of that time San would not make sense. Hunter-gatherers in Southern Africa became San when the ancestors of the pastoral Khoekhoe arrived.

In public discourse, “San” has developed into the currently most widespread term of self-reference among former hunter-gatherers in southern Africa. While some reject the previously used label “Bushman”, others seem to take pride in identifying themselves as “Bushman”.

Alan Barnard discusses the problematic aspect of the concept San when used to state an opposition to Khoekhoe:

“Recent thinking sees the earliest Khoekhoe as a kind of San with cattle. Eighteenth-century travelers sometimes seem to have seen San as a kind of Khoekhoe without cattle. Classic ethnographic sources saw Khoekhoe and San as related peoples, one with livestock one without. Some in recent years have suggested that Khoekhoe and San are unstable ethnicities, shifting back and forth with the acquisition and loss of livestock.” (Barnard 2008:61)

Additional problems are caused by the fact that not all the people and communities who refer to themselves as San share the stereotypical biological features set up for them by physical anthropologists, such as short size and fair skin. People may call themselves San because they speak a Non-Bantu Click language or claim a hunter-gatherer past. Such languages are also spoken by non-hunter-gatherer communities, namely Khoekhoe and Sandawe. One of the Non-Bantu Click languages is spoken by the hunting-gathering Hadza, but since they live in Tanzania, they are also not considered to be San.

In the course of adjustment to a politically correct naming of the people, the term San entered discussions as a reference for languages, i.e. “San languages” replaced the former term “Bushman languages”. “San languages” is used by archaeologists such as Garth Sampson (1988:15), “San-speaking people, San-speakers” is employed by anthropologists

such as Edwin Wilmsen (1989:1) and “San language family” by Jiro Tanaka (1978:XIV/XV, “San language families, Bushman-speaking people” (Tanaka 1980:9).

Unfortunately, even experts in the field, such as the late Anthony Traill (1995), one of the finest “Khoisanists” ever, widely employed these inappropriate terms. Traill himself states:

“San, however, lacks any linguistic validity and it may even be confusing when used as an ethnonym. Thus, there is no valid family of ‘San’ languages, and some ‘San’ speak Khoe languages. Equally there is no family of ‘Bushmen’ languages; ...” (Traill 2002:45, note 1)

Having said this, Traill in the very same publication sub-divides his paper on “The Khoesan languages” into “The Khoe languages” and “The San languages”. Like many other linguists, Traill uses “Khoe languages” to mean Khoeid, but to contrast them with “San languages” makes no sense at all. All “San languages” are spoken by San, but with the exception of one, namely Khoekhoe, the same is true for all “Khoe languages”, i.e. Khoeid. To conclude, languages of the various hunter-gatherer communities are fundamentally diverse, while Khoekhoe associated with herders is a member of the Khoeid family, i.e. is closely related to several languages spoken by hunter-gatherer communities.

The misconceptions caused by relating modes of livelihood with language do not end at this level. As mentioned, Khoekhoe is commonly regarded as a language spoken by the pastoral Khoekhoe. However, even Khoekhoe itself does not qualify as a “Non-San language” as it is not only the language of Nama and Damara herders, but also of the Hail’om and of about 100 †Korana, both former hunter-gatherers. Thus, “San” with its cultural and physical connotations has no meaningful role to play in the discourse on language classification.

In using “Khoisan”, even expert linguists occasionally mix up aspects of mode of subsistence, physical features of people and genetic affiliations of languages. Attempts by some “Khoisanists” to replace the seemingly “wrong” German spelling “Khoisan”, by a presumed “correct” English spelling “Khoesan” show that they are trapped in the Bushman versus Hottentot paradigm.

The abstract, technical term “Khoisan” provokes scholars regularly to engage in historical semantics. The splitting into “Khoe-saan” (Haacke & Eiseb 2002:iii), Khoe-San or Khoe-Saan, as used by WIMSA, SASI and other NGOs working with San people, is done in order to analyse the original meanings of the elements of the compound. The segmentation of the linguistic term into “Khoe” and “San” motivates the problematic division between “San languages” and “Khoe(khoe) languages”. “Khoisan” as a classificatory term as used by Greenberg 1963 was meant to overcome exactly this partition in San (“Bushman”) versus Khoekhoe (“Hottentot”), groupings which makes no sense on linguistic grounds.

This two-fold division – emphatically upheld by Dorothea Bleek (1927, 1929, 1956) and also by Diedrich Westermann (1935a, 1935b, 1949) – clashes with the established classifications of today. There is no language family of pastoral Khoekhoe speakers in opposition to hunter-gatherer, or Bushman languages, as Khoekhoe itself belongs to the Khoeid language family which is dominated by languages spoken by former hunter-gatherers. There are no “San languages” spoken by hunter-gatherers, as opposed to “Khoe(khoe) languages” spoken by pastoral societies. Scholars such as Dorothea Bleek and Oswin Koehler saw themselves as “Bushman scholars”, and because of this, they defined the languages they studied as Bushman languages. D. Bleek (1956) in the end refused to incorporate Khoekhoe (Hottentot) into her language classification of the Bushman languages, even though the close relation to her Central Group of Bushman languages was more than obvious. Koehler (1975:326) acknowledged the fact that Khoekhoe belongs to “Central Khoisan” or Khoe, but always emphasised that the “Khoe-sprachigen Buschmänner” spoke proper Bushman languages, which had been under linguistic influence of Hottentot speaking pastoralists in the past.

“Popular usage is very confusing. It is difficult to know when Bushman is intended to mean Bushman and when it is intended to mean bush-man, i.e. one who lives in the bushes by hunting and collecting and does not generally breed cattle or sheep. The Nharo are bush-men but they are not Bushmen.” (Westphal 1962:2)

The only way out of that confusion, in which San, i.e. hunter gatherers such as the Naro, don't speak San, but Hottentot (Khoe or now Khoeid) languages is by avoiding the use of San and Khoe in discussions on languages altogether.

Ernst Westphal managed quite well to keep the terminology of the linguistic classification and its colloquial use apart; however, it may sound rather bizarre for non-linguists. On July 3rd 1961, Westphal (ms) wrote a letter from Maun to Malcolm Guthrie at SOAS in London.

“Dear Professor Guthrie,

I have now completed another full month on dialects hitherto described as Bushman. I have not yet come across a single real Bushman language these all being dialects of the Hottentot groups already established. At Tsau south of here I think I will come across the first real Bushman language.”

Westphal had recorded Shua and Tshwa varieties and rightly classified them as belonging to the “Hottentot groups” even though their speakers were Bushman, i.e. hunter gatherers.

The term “Hottentot language” has been replaced by Khoekhoe and Westphal's “Hottentot group” by “Central Khoisan”, “Khoe language family” and Khoeid is proposed by the author of this paper (Brenzinger 2013). Non-linguists and even many colleagues don't make this distinction and take Khoe (or Khoi) as equivalent of Khoekhoe (Khoikhoi).

“... the Khoi and San languages do not seem to be genetically related, and the lifestyles of their speakers were also significantly different, the San being mainly hunter-gatherers and the Khoikhoi nomadic cattle herders.” (Webb & Kembo-Sure 2000:33)

In order to avoid this kind of confusion, “Khoe” should no longer be used as a classificatory term, i.e. not as “Khoe languages”, “Non-Khoe”, “Kalahari Khoe”, etc. Just as Khoekhoe is the name of one language, also Khoe in the spelling of Khwe (formerly Kxoe) is the genuine name of a clearly defined language community and also their language. The

suggested Khoeid - as a strictly linguistic classificatory term - will help to avoid the confusions caused by the ambiguous use of Khoe in the different classificatory levels.

### A BOTTOM-UP APPROACH TO CLASSIFYING THE NON-BANTU CLICK LANGUAGES

There is common consent among linguists that in genetic classifications the historical comparative method and a consequent bottom-up approach are the only means by which families can be established. Unfortunately, top-down mass comparisons have dominated language classification since the early 1960s and have led to the superficial lumping of unrelated languages into non-existing language families.

Non-Bantu Click languages are those languages of southern and eastern Africa which are characterized by “original”, i.e. not borrowed click-systems. The Cushitic language Dahalo, spoken at the Kenyan coast, and the click-using Southern Bantu languages are explicitly excluded, as they borrowed clicks. These languages are Xhosa, Zulu, Swati, Southern Sotho, Ndebele, Thonga, as well as, Kwangali, Rumanjo, Mbukushu, Fwe, and Yeyi. “Bantu Click languages” not only borrowed lexemes with clicks from Non-Bantu Click languages, but also click sounds into their phoneme inventories.

Greenberg’s “Khoisan” phylum, along with his classification into Northern, Central, Southern “Khoisan”, and Hadza as well as Sandawe as isolates, was taken as the given classification of African languages for more than 40 years. Doubts in the classification were already expressed by Köhler (1975), Traill (1986), and most of all by Westphal (1966, 1971), who never accepted the claim of a genetic “Khoisan” family.

“The work of E.O.J. Westphal has underlined an uncomfortable situation for scholars who have reached over-hasty conclusions about genetic relationships in this linguistic area. His point is that the only secure grounds for establishing cognate linguistics forms is to demonstrate the operation of laws which will relate the forms. He has shown for a significant body of data that traditional assumptions about Khoisan language families are not based on

such laws and hence that purposed relationships are either fortuitous, or that “cognate forms” are really examples of borrowing.” (Traill 1974:2)

Today, most expert linguists agree that a common origin, i.e. genetic relationship of all of the languages in question cannot be verified. Ernst Westphal suggested:

“Where it is necessary to speak of the languages of this [Linguistics in Sub-Saharan Africa, M.B.] chapter collectively I shall use the term NON-BANTU CLICK LANGUAGES and will avoid the term KHOISAN LANGUAGES with its implication of KHOISAN LANGUAGE FAMILY.” (Westphal 1971:369)

Non-Bantu Click languages should be acknowledged in their own right by using their individual language names. This is a fairly easy request, as only twelve of these languages are still spoken today. This low number is in sharp contrast with much higher figures provided, such as “30 or so” (Güldemann & Vossen 2000:99), “35” (Heine & Nurse 2000:1), “50”<sup>3</sup> (Webb & Kembo-Sure 2000:31) and “40-70” (Childs 2003). The reasons for these inflated numbers is that regional varieties of the same language are counted as separate languages, and extinct languages, such as Kwadi and !Ora show up as still spoken.

Exonyms, i.e. names commonly given to people by their neighbours, e.g. Barakwena for the Khwe people, are often considered to be derogative by the people themselves. For that reason, it is preferable to call the language by the names the speakers have decided for themselves. Since we are dealing with linguistic groupings and languages, and not with ethnic groups, there are, however, cases in which linguistic realities do not allow accommodating terminological requests by communities.

Heine and König (p.c.) ask for caution when matching names for ethnic groups with linguistically defined speech varieties. A safe choice in language classification is the use of technical labels. Other than Heine & König’s E1 variety of !Xun, which is spoken by the Jul’hoansi, they could not match ethnic names with !Xun varieties. For the E3 variety in their classification, Heine and König (2014) reject the often used names

!K'au-len (Bleek, D. 1956, Traill 1974, Köhler 1975), †'Aul'eĩ (Westphal 1974), †Kx'aull'e (Güldemann 2008:128), or !X'aull'e (Güldemann & Voßen 2002:102). They found †X'āō-l'Aèn as used by !Xun speakers not to match with any particular linguistic !Xun variety (Heine & König 2014:18).

Dialectal variation in Khoekhoe is generally also not distinguished along ethnic lines, i.e. Nama or Damara speak not particular Khoekhoe varieties associated with their ethnic affiliation. However, Hail'om and †Ākhoe can be distinguished as ethnic groups and as separate Khoekhoe dialects (Haacke, Eiseb & Namaseb 1997; Rapold & Widlok 2008; Haacke 2008).

A final remark on language names is their spelling, which in most cases has been established in the practical orthographies developed for community use. In !Xun, nasalization is indicated by -n following a vowel, such as in !Xun or Jul'hoan, while the same phonetic feature in Koeid languages is written with a ^. Language names such as Khoekhoe-gowab, literally “Khoekhoe-language” and Khwe-dam, literally “Khwe-tongue”, or those with noun class prefixes, such as Se-Tswana or Thi-Mbukushu are reduced to their bare lexical stems, i.e. Khoekhoe, Khwe, Tswana and Mbukushu.

## THE LANGUAGES AND FAMILIES OF THE NON-BANTU CLICK LANGUAGES

By using a bottom-up approach and relying on historical-comparative studies only two language families of the Non-Bantu Click languages can be considered as established: Koeid (Koe, Central “Khoisan”) with Khoekhoe, Naro, !Gana-!Gui, Khwe-!Ani; Shua and Tshwa, and a Kx'a family with !Xun and †Hoan-Sasi. Isolates or single language families are Taa, N!ng (N!uu & !'Au varieties), Sandawe, and Hadza.

More than 100 distinct languages characterized by “original” click systems might have been spoken in southern and eastern Africa in the more distant past. Since the first contacts with Europeans between 20 and 30 of these languages have become extinct. Some of these extinct languages, such as Kwadi, !Ora, //Xegwi, and !Xam can be studied to various degrees, as language data of different extents and quality had been recorded with the last speakers. *The 12 modern Khoisan languages*, published in 2013, presented a complete overview of the



Non-Bantu languages that are still spoken today (Brenzinger 2013). Written several years ago, the term “Khoisan” was unfortunately still employed by the present author.

Serious doubts might be expressed towards the validity of claims of language families based on limited archived sources on extinct languages, such as Kwadi, //Xegwi, and /Xam. Even though the latter two languages seem to be closely related to the still spoken N!ng, this might not justify the postulation of a “!Ui family” formed by these three languages. A language family Tuu, which comprises an assumed !Ui family and the Taa language is obviously even more hypothetical.

Only these twelve Non-Bantu Click languages are still spoken today, with two of them being on the verge of extinction. The sizes of the language communities vary significantly and the following overview presents figures for speakers that have been collected and verified in 2013.

Ts’ixa, most likely a new Khoeid language to be added to our list, is spoken by less than 200 people in Mababe, north of the Okavango Delta in Botswana. Anne-Maria Fehn’s PhD dissertation seems to place Ts’ixa next to Khwe-!Ani and further away from Shua-Tshwa (Fehn, p.c.). A Master thesis by Blesswell Kure (UCT) focuses on the internal relationship of the regional varieties of the Shua-Tshwa cluster. Kure’s research might suggest that Shua-Tshwa are not two languages as indicated in this paper, but constitute one single dialect cluster.

Previously claimed by Greenberg (1963) as Central Khoisan, Vossen reconstructed Proto-Khoe and established this family under the name Khoe in 1997. Due to the problems associated with this term (see above), Brenzinger (2013) introduced the term Khoeid for this language family.

1. *Khoekhoe*, also known as Khoekhoegowab in official use, is spoken by up to 200,000 people in Namibia, with a few thousand additional speakers in Botswana and South Africa. Khoekhoe is the mother tongue of predominantly pastoral Nama (Namibia, Botswana, South Africa) and Damara (Namibia), and former hunting-gathering communities, namely Hail’om (Namibia) and about 100 #Komani (South Africa). Khoekhoe is well-documented and receives official recognition as a language of instruction in the Namibian educational system.

Khoekhoe speakers identify themselves as Nama (70,000) and Damara (100,000) (Haacke, ms), Hail'om (8,000) and †Khomani (100). Haacke distinguishes the following regional varieties of Khoekhoe in Namibia. From the north to south, he mentions †Akhoe, Hail'om, (Gaub Damara), Sesfontein, Namidama, Central Nama, (Gobabis), Bondelswarts. (Haacke, p.c.)

2. *Naro* is mother tongue to between 10,000 and 12,000 speakers and to several thousand additional second language speakers. The majority of Naro speakers work on commercial farms in the Ghanzi area of Botswana. Apart from that, there are still some Naro dominated villages, such as East- and West-Hanahai with 300 inhabitants each, and D'Kar with 1,000 Naro inhabitants. About 1,000 Naro speakers live in the bordering area in Namibia. Since 2012, the New Testament is printed in Naro and there is an active use of the language, even in writing. Naro is a one of the dominant languages in the Ghanzi district. Ts'ao is often mentioned as a distinct Naro dialect, spoken in the Kuke region, but it is about to be replaced by “standard” Naro (Hessel & Coby Visser, p.c.).

3. *Khwe-!Ani* is the geographically most widespread language community among the Khoeid languages. Khwe, Khoe and Kxoe are different spellings of the same name which means ‘person’ in all Khoeid languages. The Kxoe spelling goes back to Oswin Köhler who studied Khwe between 1957 and 1995. In 1998, the community members decided for the spelling Khwe. The names Barakwena and Zama, used by Bantu-speaking neighbours and also with the foreign armies, are considered to be derogative.

The up to 8,000 Khwe speakers live in the Caprivi Strip of Botswana, several hundred of them in the Sioma plains in Zambia and the Rivungu area of Angola. About 3,000, among them all roughly 1,200 !Ani (“River Bushman”) settle in the north-western part of Botswana. Approximately 1,300 live in Platfontein near Kimberley in South Africa, by far most of them had left their homes in Southern Angola during the wars and arrived to South Africa in 1989.

Before the South African intervention in the mid-1970s, a western !Xo-Buga variant in Botswana/Namibia, and an eastern !Xom-Buma variant of Botswana/Namibia/Angola could be distinguished.

Khwe and !Ani distinguish their ethnic affiliation, but claim to speak dialects of one common language. In 2000, Khwe and !Ani speakers formed one single language committee to standardize and develop their language, as well as to produce written materials for their common language.

4. !Gana-!Gui are varieties of one language spoken by roughly 2,500 !Gana and !Gui. Before 1997, these former hunter-gatherers lived in Xade and other settlements inside the Central Kalahari Game Reserve (CKGR).

Junko Maruyama, a social anthropologist from Kyoto University, remarks that identity is flexible between !Gui and !Gana, and even with Bantu-speaking Kgalagadi of that region. In addition, intermarriages are common and people migrate between farms, cattle posts, and towns, often in response to seasonal shifts, employment opportunities or social relationships (Maruyama, p.c.). This explains why even detailed census surveys of these rather mobile speech communities still only produce approximate numbers of speakers.

5&6. The *Shua & Tshwa* cluster consists of approximately 4,000 speakers. The variants of the Shua-Tshwa cluster seem to form a dialect continuum from north to south in the western part of Botswana. Represented as two languages in this overview, it may turn out that Shua-Tshwa might be better treated as one language with regional varieties. Most of these former hunter-gatherers have shifted their way of life and became pastoralists. Language shift towards Bantu languages, especially Kgalagadi, Kalanga and Setswana are widespread among the younger generation.

Rainer Voßen (1997) distinguishes a Shua and a Tshwa group, with Ts'èxa, Danisi, Deti (now extinct), Cara and !Xaise in the first, and Cua (Cire-Cire), Kua, and Tsua in the second group.

More recent findings by Heine and Honken (2010) link #Hoan to !Xun, and they name this two-language unit “Kx’a family”.

7. !Xun might be spoken by roughly 16,000 former hunter-gatherers. While the !Xun speaking people are well known through numerous studies by social anthropologists, for most areas the numbers of speakers of the !Xun dialect cluster are still preliminary

guesses. The main problem with figures for !Xun speakers is the lack of demographic and linguistic surveys in Angola. Furthermore, most !Xun live on farms, a setting which doesn't allow for an easy collection of reliable data on language use patterns.

Just before 1975, up to 8,000 !Xun still lived scattered over the entire southern part of Angola. In that year, however, many !Xun especially women and children living in the southwestern part of Angola, were killed in warfare. In the mid-1970s, a total of about 6,000 !Xun managed to escape from Angola to Namibia and many of them withdrew from Namibia together with the South African Army in 1989. 3,700 !Xun from Angola now live west of Kimberley in Platfontein (with few still in Schmidtsdrift). The eastern dialects, including Jul'hoan, are spoken on both sides of the Namibia-Botswana border. The figures for speakers of the eastern dialects range between 9,000 and 10,000.

Heine and König published a grammar of !Xun, based on data from all regional !Xun dialects and state: “!Xun can be defined as a complex language whose dialects are presumably linked by a chain of mutual intelligibility” (Heine & König, 2014:375).

8. †*Hoan-Sasi* are two closely related varieties, with less than 10 remaining †Hoan speakers, and about 20 Sasi. It is the least known of all Non-Bantu Click languages and is spoken south and south-east of the Central Kalahari Game Reserve (CKGR) in Botswana. While Güldemann and Voßen (2000:102) left †Hoan as an “isolate” within the “Non-Khoe” grouping, Heine and Honken convincingly established a genealogical “†Hoan - !Xun unit”, which they call *Kx'a* (Honken & Heine 2010).

9. *Taa* is spoken by roughly 2,600 people. The name *Taa* has been suggested by Güldemann (Güldemann & Voßen 2000:102), and refers to !Xóǝ as used by Traill (1994). The majority of the *Taa* speakers live scattered over a huge area of southwestern Botswana, and some 300 in an area known as Corridor, next to the Botswana border in Namibia.

Traill (1985) identifies a west-eastern dialect continuum for !Xóǝ. Significant numbers of *Taa* speakers in Botswana are abandoning their own language and shifting to *Kgalagadi*, while those living on farms or in town locations in Namibia are shifting to *Afrikaans* and *Nama*.

10. The *Nlŋg* language is spoken by only 5 elderly women in the Northern Cape of South Africa. A western variety, known as *Nluu*, is spoken by three in Upington and a eastern variety, *l'Au*, by two in Olifantshoek. These speakers are not in regular contact with each other, i.e. they no longer use *Nlŋg* in their daily lives. They communicate in *Nlŋg*, however, when brought together by linguists and activists, which has been happening quite often in the last couple of years. Language maintenance efforts are carried out by one of the last speakers, however, the language as a spoken medium will become extinct with the death of the last speakers.

11. *Sandawe*, spoken by 60,000 people in Tanzania, is the second largest Non-Bantu Click language. Even though the *Hadza*, live just north of the *Sandawe*, they seem to have no contact with one another. The *Sandawe* farm and keep livestock. For a long time, scholars have been speculating about possible links of *Sandawe* to *Khoeid*.

12. *Hadza* is spoken by less than 950 people. The *Hadza* people live in the vicinity of Lake Eyasi and the adjacent areas in the central part of Tanzania. *Hadza* generally live in temporary camps of roughly 30 people and while they are beginning to stay in one location a little longer now, they still tend to move places about 7 times a year. About 2 or 3 settlements have developed over the past 10 years where *Hadza* do stay semi-permanently, but even these places are abandoned at times.

According to Kirk Miller (p.c.), there is no substantial dialectical variation in the *Hadza* language, except for greater degrees of loans from different neighbouring languages; in the south the *Hadza* are bilingual in *Isanzu*, and in the west in *Sukuma*. A number of *Hadza* speak *Datooga* in the central areas. Few know *Iraqw*, despite the large number of (pre-*Iraqw*) Cushitic loans in *Hadza*. No closer link to any Non-Bantu Click language has been established yet.

## SUMMARY

The proposed revision of the current practice of classifying Non-Bantu Click languages will hopefully allow for more transparency in scholarly

discussions, not only among expert linguists and other scholars, but also among interested laymen.

While “Khoisan” has found some use as a pre-theoretical notion, there is no justification for it as a term of academic discourse on Non-Bantu Click languages, and much the same applies to labels such as “San/Bushman” and “Khoe”.

The term “Khoe” is problematic already in its use by linguists, who employ it on different classificatory levels, first as a generic term for “human beings” in all Khoeid languages, second, as the name of a specific language and people in the spelling Khwe, and, third, as a term for a language family in the spellings Khoe or Kxoe.

Most problematic is the fundamentally controversial contrast Khoe versus San languages. Khoe has most commonly been mistaken to be equivalent to Khoekhoe (Nama/Damara). And this has led to the misleading implication that “Khoisan” can be sub-classified into Khoe (Khoi) and San (Saan) languages.

No linguist ever defined what “San” should mean in notions such as “San languages”. With that the term San opens up for the ambiguous mix of economic, racial and cultural criteria implied in the usage of San among archaeologists, historians, geneticists, etc. In discussions concerning languages, “San”, “Bushmen” and “Khoe” are best avoided as they contribute to confusion in the interdisciplinary discourse on languages spoken by former hunter-gatherer and pastoral communities.

A further concern addressed in this paper is the genetic classification of the Non-Bantu Click languages. A top-down approach and methodological shortcuts for arriving at presumed “genetic” families, championed by Joseph Greenberg, are increasingly challenged by bottom-up methodology. Expert linguists no longer accept Greenberg’s so-called “Khoisan language phylum” and with that, the term should also no longer be used. Serious doubts might be expressed towards the validity of reconstructing language families based on limited archival sources on extinct languages, such as Kwadi, //Xegwi, and /Xam. The classification of the still spoken Non-Bantu Click languages is as follows:

- Khoeid***
1. Khoekhoegowab
  2. Naro
  3. Khwe-!Ani
  4. !Gui-!Gana
  - 5/6. Shua & Tshwa
- Kx'a***
7. !Xun
  8. †Hoan & Sasi

Isolates, or single language families

9. Taa
10. N!ng (N!uu & !'Au)
11. Sandawe (Tansania)
12. Hadza (Tanzania)

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<sup>1</sup> The term *Bantu*, established in African linguistics some 160 years ago by Wilhelm Bleek, denotes a family of many hundreds of languages that are spoken all over Africa south of the equator. There are also negative associations among South African citizens with this term, as it was a key term used by the Apartheid regime in their systematic suppression of the black majority of South Africa.

<sup>2</sup> Khoeid is a term introduced by the author to replace the problematic former names of this family, namely Khoe language family or “Central Khoisan”. See discussion below.

<sup>3</sup> “The Khoisan languages of the Khoikhoi (called Hottentots in the colonial times) and the San (also called Bushmen), number about fifty, each spoken by 1,000 people on average.” (Webb & Kembo-Sure 2000:31). Apart from the inflated number, the information on the size of the language communities also must be taken with care.

# CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN THE ORAL TRADITION OF THE KAROO: A PRELIMINARY REPORT

JOSE M. DE PRADA-SAMPER

ABSTRACT: In 1929 D. F. Bleek wrote that |xam people she encountered in the Upper Karoo two decades before were unable to tell her a single story, and that their folklore ‘was dead’ and so was, by extension, their culture and sense of community, thus encouraging the notion that the |xam people had become extinct. Archival research and fieldwork in the area by the author in 2011-2014 shows that no such extinction took place and that a rich oral tradition, with strong connections with that documented by Bleek and Lloyd in the 19th century, is still very much alive in the area.

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In her 1929 article on |xam folklore Dorothea Bleek certified the demise of the rich oral tradition that her father and aunt documented in the 1870s and, in doing so, also set in motion the idea, still very much alive, that the |xam themselves had become extinct. For example, Neil Bennun’s 2004 book *The Broken String*, a history of the Bleek and Lloyd Collection of |xam ethnography, bears the poignant subtitle: ‘The last words of an extinct people’ and concludes with a extensive quotation from D. Bleek’s 1929 article.

In the 1990s, however, Ansie Hoff conducted fieldwork in the area of origin of the main informants of Bleek and Lloyd and, as she puts it in one of her publications, ‘over the years I met more and more persons from the ... Upper Karoo and Bushmanland who regarded themselves as |xam descendants’ (Hoff, 1997: 21). The articles and books she has published since 1997 (see, for example, Hoff, 1997, 2007, and 2011), based on her interviews with these elderly descendants, offer a wealth of information essential to anyone interested in the study of the history, rock art and ethnography of the area. Curiously enough, Hoff’s re-encounter with the |xam did not cause any noticeable stir in academic circles or stimulate other scholars to follow her lead and conduct their own field research. The notion that, after all, Dorothea Bleek was right

when she stated that none of the people she met in 1910-1911 ‘knew a single story’ (Bleek, 1929: 312) may have been reinforced by the fact that Hoff did not collect folktales or any of the other more sophisticated genres of oral literature, and that, rather than offering full transcripts of her conversations, she has always published her materials in paraphrase and in a synthesized format, what she calls a ‘culture-historical reconstruction of the information’ (Hoff, 2011: 8).

After several trips to the Upper Karoo between 2005 and 2009 it seemed to me that a lot of the people I saw there in townships and farms had to be at least genetically |xam, but I accepted the general consensus that, culturally speaking, they were indeed ‘an extinct people’. I thought, however, that recording the personal histories of people of the area could contribute to have a better understanding of the tragedy that had taken place there in the 19th century, so I took advantage of a fieldtrip in March 2011 with my wife, Helena Cuesta, and photojournalist and independent publisher Neil Rush, funded by the Centre for Curating the Archive, to being interviewing people. I was surprised when in Brandvlei, during the second of these interviews, a woman who was then 56 years old, Magdalena Beukes, told us a story that until then was only documented in the Bleek and Lloyd manuscripts, and had never been published before (de Prada-Samper and Winberg, 2012). Although I initially thought this might be an isolated case of cultural conservatism within a single family, further fieldwork conducted in 2012, 2013 and 2014<sup>1</sup> confirmed that the present-day descendants of the |xam are still the bearers of a rich oral literature.<sup>2</sup>

After four field trips, in which I have interviewed about 50 people and recorded more than a hundred stories (not counting personal and generational histories), I have no doubt that in the former |xam territory and adjoining areas there is a rich and still a living, although fragile, oral tradition in the Afrikaans language that is not of recent origin and which coexists with other forms of cultural expression such as singing and dancing. The complex genetic make up of the present-day population is reflected in this oral literature, in which narratives of European and Bantu origin live side-by-side with others that are clearly Khoisan, including a number of tales directly connected to the |xam tradition as documented in the 1870s by Bleek and Lloyd.

Since the 1862-1863 reports from Kenhardt of magistrate Louis Anthing about the extermination campaigns against the |xam unleashed by Baster

and White farmers in the previous decade (de Prada-Samper, 2012a, 2012b), suggested indeed that the !xam had succumbed to genocide, after my initial findings on the field I turned to the archives for information on the period that followed Anthing's mission. Fortunately, because the area around Kenhardt became the centre of operations of the colonial forces during the so-called 'Korana wars' in 1868-1869, and later in 1878-1879, I found a wide range of documents<sup>3</sup> that prove beyond any doubt that, although they were the victims of a failed genocide and suffered heavy losses, the !xam people were never physically exterminated and are the direct ancestors of at least a very substantial segment of the present inhabitants of the area. These sources, which I will discuss in a separate article, also indicate that, under pressure from the authorities and the farmers, which increased greatly in the 1880s, the !xam were forced to abandon their nomadic lifestyle and were co-opted into the farm economy with its corollary of servitude, poverty, alcoholism and illiteracy (see Dooling 2009, Legassick, 2006). Yet, in spite of this, they succeeded in transforming substantial elements of their ideology and intangible heritage that were relevant to their new situation. In this, they were perhaps helped by the adaptability and flexibility which has been described by Matthias Guenther (1999) for the Kalahari hunter-gatherers who, in more recent times, have been subjected to similar, although perhaps not so violent, pressures. Key to this attitude, according to Guenther, is what he describes as 'foraging for ideas', that is, the processes by which 'the ideas, beliefs, and stories are locally adapted and newly interpreted and recreated' (1999: 86-87) in order to fit the needs of those who carry them. All the narratives I have so far recorded show signs of having been shaped by this kind of process and of having been part, and still to a large extent are part, of such a 'cultural and psychological coping mechanism' (Guenther, 1999: 93), by which the dispossessed and impoverished 19th century bands of hunter-gatherer succeeded in overcoming the consequences of 'radical discontinuity' with their past (Lear, 2006: 65) and reinvented themselves in the new order dominated by the farm economy of the settlers.

Much more, of course, could be said about this, but I will now turn to the oral literature itself. While we wait for a more nuanced classification, the traditional stories told by the contemporary !xam

descendants can roughly be grouped in the categories already established for the 19th century materials:

- 1) Animal stories, which includes a rich cycle of ‘Jakkals en Wolf’ narratives, some of which, it appears, have not been previously documented.
- 2) Stories involving animals and people (for samples, see de Prada-Samper and Winberg 2012, Swartz et al., 2014).
- 3) Stories about the rain creature, mostly the Water Snake, although the idea of the ‘Rain Bull’ is still present.
- 4) Stories with only human characters
- 5) Trickster stories

It is worth noting that the narrative aesthetics followed by many of these stories is more in line with that of the |xam than with the aesthetics of the European and even Bantu folktales. The underlying notion of causation, linearity and narrative logic does not correspond to that most Westerners are familiar with. Yet the majority of the stories tend to be set in a post-contact world in which the characters work in farms, are settled or semi-settled, and do not hunt. In spite of this, however, the hunter-gatherer ethos still lingers in some of the stories so far recorded. The narratives are also very relevant to the study of the late rock engravings and paintings (mostly images of trains, horses, and women in crinoline dresses) found in the areas where the storytellers live, as there can be no doubt that the contemporary tradition began to take shape at about the same time most of these images were made.

For reasons of space, I will offer here a sample and a brief description of the stories in category 5, the trickster narratives. The existence of a rich cycle of stories that revolve around a human trickster was one of the major surprises of my research. As in the initial stages of the work of Bleek and Lloyd the name |kaggen was translated as ‘Devil’, at the onset of my project I imagined that the mythical Mantis of the |xam could very well have survived among the Christianized descendants in the guise of the Devil, which, after all, in many European and creolized traditions is very much a trickster figure. Yet all my inquiries in that direction proved fruitless. I had given up all hope when during a recording session at the Sonskyn Dienssentrum in Calvinia, in October 2012, one of the elders present, Mrs. Johanna Jooste, told us about an outlaw called Dirk Ligter, who was the nightmare of local farmers,

whose sheep he systematically slaughtered and ate. Ligter always managed to get away with the thefts, partly because he was an extremely cunning man, partly because he was a very fast runner, but above all thanks to his *paljas*,<sup>4</sup> the magic that allowed him to transform himself into anything he wanted, and even manipulate reality to confound his pursuers and captors. Ligter, however, was more than a mere sheep thief: he was also an accomplished *ramkie* player whose instrument, if he so wished, could stand in the air and play by its own. Unfortunately, I could not then ask Mrs. Jooste and the other people present for more about this intriguing character, but back in Cape Town, I soon found out about the 1930s Dirk Ligter stories by the writer Izak van der Merwe, also known as Boerneef (1897-1967). These stories (Boerneef, 1938) are based on a real sheep thief who was active in the Tankwa and Ceres area from the 1880s to the 1930s (Dauth, 2001),<sup>5</sup> yet it seemed clear to me that the oral tradition about him that I had tapped in Calvinia, was quite independent from this literary source.

The next opportunity to further explore this contemporary trickster tradition came in 2013 in Beaufort West, about 400 km east from Calvinia. At first the results were not very encouraging, as the name Dirk Ligter did not ring a bell for any of the storytellers I interviewed there, but it eventually transpired that a character of identical characteristics is known there under the name Kapokkie Davids. This name, however, and that of Dirk Ligter, are not known as one moves north from Beaufort and turns west towards Vanwyksvlei. Yet the character itself, with a similar set of stories associated to him, is definitely known as far afield as Brandvlei, north of the Hantams, although all through this area, the home territory of the main informants of Bleek and Lloyd, his name is Jan Thomas. This is quite intriguing, as Thomas was a serial rapist that operated in the area and was convicted twice, in 1905 and 1919.<sup>6</sup> His exploits are also known in the Hantam and Ceres areas, where, especially in the latter region, he is seen as a separate, and quite nasty, character, in no way connected with the invincible sheep thief, who is seen in a much more positive light.<sup>7</sup> The trickster character is also known in the Namaqualand region, where his name is Jantjie Rooiklaas (Winberg, 2007: 51-56).

In spite of the changes of name and location, the general traits of the protagonist of all these stories are almost identical everywhere, so I will call him from now on the Master Sheep Thief of the Karoo (MSTK),



this being one of his main attributes wherever he is known. Because the folk motifs associated with the MSTK tend to recur over this wide territory, it is clear to me that even if the stories are attached to a historical character, as is certainly the case with Dirk Ligter, the tales themselves pre-date this character.

From the material gathered so far, it seems highly likely that the MSTK is the modern-day avatar of |kaggen or Mantis, the mythical trickster of the |xam, with whom he shares many traits.<sup>8</sup> As |kaggen, the MSTK is playful and naughty and can benefit his community, although he is not above playing tricks on his own people; he has the gift of transformation, and possesses things that have a life of their own. His spectacular escapes from the police or the farmers resemble those of |kaggen from his many enemies. The dream-like element of some of the |kaggen narratives, noted by Hewitt (1986: 177-178) and Guenther (1999: 104), is also present in the stories about the MSTK. The elders who told me tales about him did so with evident relish, threading one narrative after another, as the |xam informants of Bleek and Lloyd did with the |kaggen stories. Most of them stated without hesitation that he was a *bruin man*, that is, one of their own. According to the narrators, the stories about the MSTK are true, because he is a real person who lived two or three generations ago. This is also a trait of |kaggen, who belongs to the world of belief.

The universe in which the stories featuring the MSTK unfold resembles closely the world in which the |xam and other communities of the area lived during the transitional period between the total collapse of their hunter-gatherer lifestyle and their irreversible incorporation to the farm economy. This was neatly summarized by magistrate John Scott in 1882, when he reported to the government that '[t]he Bushmen consider the whole country to be theirs, and that they have a perfect right to supply their wants from the flocks and herds that have caused their game to disappear. By preference they would live on game, but failing that, farmers' stock will do ... They cannot organize, so they can hardly become a serious danger. Meanwhile they make themselves and intolerable nuisance' (G8-'83: 123-124). The stories about the MSTK very likely began to take shape around the time this report was written, and they reflect the spirit of resistance and defiance that exasperated John Scott and the Bushmanland settlers in general. Yet the stories about him intersect with history also in other, no less intriguing, ways.

For example, in a long narrative about Dirk Ligter told by Siena Leukes (80 years old) in Calvinia (May 2013), Ligter rescues a group of Afrikaner ladies from a British concentration camp during the Boer War. He does so by using trickery, but also, at some point in the story, by becoming a lion.

That the trickster-hero of |xam tradition survived not as the Christian Devil, but as an entity closer in his appearance and nature to the people that created him, is another proof of resilience and creativity. Among the immediate descendants of people like ||kabbo, Diä!kwain and |haŋʔkass'o, only similarly gifted storytellers could have transmuted the divinity of their ancestors, the creator and protector of the antelope that sustained them, into a livestock thief that, although not divine, is certainly more than human.

The myth of the extinction of the |xam people explains in part the scholarly neglect of their present-day descendants. Similar communities in the Western, Eastern and Northern Cape have suffered an identical neglect, based also in the wrong conviction that they are, at best, acculturated and watered-down residues of the peoples that inhabited these areas before being dispossessed by European and Bantu-speaking farmers. Since it is evident that their culture is far richer than we ever imagined, and that what they have to say can contribute to many of our current academic concerns, it is to be hoped that this neglect will soon be a thing of the past.

## APPENDIX

Kapokkie Davids<sup>9</sup> (Told by Serena Jacobs at her home in Beaufort West, 26 April, 2013)

Kapokkie Davids through the years did that to the whites. Then he slaughters a slaughter thing here. He goes and simply slaughters everybody's things, and then tonight he just comes and gives you meat.

"There you're, here is a slaughter thing for you. Do you want meat?"

Now they also look at the guy.

"C'mon! Take the meat and keep quiet, keep you mouth shut!"

Then he goes away. Yes, over the years he did this with the people.

And listen lady, he kept slaughtering ...

Listen, I heard that they caught him. Now they come with him to the cells, here to Beaufort, hmm. And they say that, in the morning when they must take him out of the cell to bring him before the court, when they came into the cell there was just a bag of old shoes ...

Then they ask among themselves,

"Did you put a bag of old shoes here in the cell?"

"No, the man was here last night, hands and feet tied fast."

"Take the bag of shoes, throw it out again, go and throw it in the rubbish bin."

[But that bag of shoes was him.]<sup>10</sup> ...

And then, one year, when they caught him again, and went back again to look in the cell, [but they looked for him in vain.]

"C'mon! Why are you looking for me? I am still here. You only need to look well. Look how I hang from the roof, like a drop of water."<sup>11</sup>

He is then like a drop of water.

"Yes, yes, I'm not going with you any more. If you must punish me, I want you to get it over with."

He says,

“I’m here, man, open the door! I want to go out.”

And they let him out.

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<sup>1</sup> These trips and other aspects of my research have been possible thanks to the support through the years of Pippa Skotnes, John Parkington, Michael Wessels and Simon Hall, to whom I express my gratitude.

<sup>2</sup> Not only my own findings in the neighbouring Upper Karoo and in Beaufort West, but also the materials recorded by of Renée Rust (2011) in the Little Karoo, and Philip John (2006) in the Eastern Cape tend to indicate that wherever there are long-established 'Coloured' communities, stories are told that often are more than recent borrowings on the part of these communities.

<sup>3</sup> The more readily accessible are the 1880-1888 Native Affairs Blue Books for the Northern Border District but the Western Cape archives hold a substantial amount of

- unpublished materials connected with this area. Some of these are extensively extracted in Legassick, 2006.
- 4 This Afrikaans word (meaning “charm, spell”) could be the direct translation of the |xam term *!gi*, ‘magic power, sorcery’ (D. F. Bleek, 1956: 382).
  - 5 Although I have not yet been able to record personally in the area, it is clear that Dirk Ligter is also well known in the Cederberg mountains; see for example, Petrus Hanekom’s memoir, *Diep Spore* (2012: 13).
  - 6 See Western Cape Archives, CSC 2/6/1/261 ref. 10 (1905) and CSC 1/2/1/154 (1919).
  - 7 The association of the trickster hero with the nasty rapist could be due to the fact that stories are told about the former’s sexual exploits that have some points in common with the Jan Thomas tales.
  - 8 In his study of Ruitertjie Ruiters, a similar character well known in the Langkloof and other areas of the Eastern Cape, Philip John had already suggested his possible connection with Heitsi Eibib, the Khoi trickster figure (2006: 25-28).
  - 9 These are just extracts from a much longer narrative. The translation from Afrikaans is mine, with the assistance of Izak Meyer and Helize van Vuuren. Sanet Lombard (pers. comm., June 2014), who has translated several of the interviews recorded so far, tells me that “kapokkie” (“a kind of chicken that is small but feisty”) is “the name usually given to someone who is cheeky and/or small”.
  - 10 The motif of the trickster’s transformation while inside a container is found also in the 19th |xam narratives, as is that of his portentous escapes. See for example de Prada 2009, 217-231.
  - 11 The motif of the transformation of the trickster in water is also found in one of the !kun narratives about |xue recorded by Lucy Lloyd in 1880 (see Bleek and Lloyd 1911: 406-409).

# THE KHOISAN: EARLY INTERACTIONS WITH EUROPEAN COLONISTS AND SLAVES

V.C. MALHERBE

Historians writing about hunter-gatherer and herder societies in the Western Cape have relied on archaeologists, anthropologists, linguists and the accounts of early mariners when attempting to represent those societies at the time of European settlement at the Cape of Good Hope. Archaeologists have shed light on social organization, for example, the size, and fluctuations in size, of bands as well as their migration patterns. They know much respecting the exploitation of resources: of water; of grazing by the pastoralists; of marine life and land animals; of pigments for body ornamentation and rock art; and so on. They have dated the occupation of certain sites. Linguists have joined forces with archaeologists and other disciplines to better understand early interactions.<sup>1</sup> Anthropologists, beginning with Winifred Hoernlé, have felt frustrated by the ‘disappearance’ of Khoisan societies but her observations (1912) of the Nama, placed side by side with the reports of early travelers, have facilitated useful inferences. Drawing on such sources, social anthropologist Isaac Schapera suggested (amongst much else) that a chief’s role was political - leader in war, negotiator in peace, presiding officer in the tribal council - and not sacred in character.<sup>2</sup>

Major R. Raven-Hart conferred a blessing on historians with his compilations of early documents: *Before Van Riebeeck ...1488-1652*, and *Cape Good Hope, 1652-1702*.<sup>3</sup> Concurrent with the latter is Jan van Riebeeck’s *Journal*<sup>4</sup> and a wealth of archival material, notably the minutes and correspondence of the Dutch East India Company’s Councils of Justice and of Policy. The 18<sup>th</sup> century brought detailed accounts by travelers, e.g. Peter Kolb,<sup>5</sup> whose observations respecting the indigenes have been invaluable, albeit subject to much debate respecting their authenticity.

As an historian who focused on the interactions of Khoisan and settlers - Europeans and slaves - I have found that non-professionals who show an interest in my work nearly always conceive of it in ahistorical terms.

The Khoisan are frozen in time. They are one with nature. They have attributes that will be lost forever when the last representative of the culture dies. There's a grain of truth in this, of course, but historians work with interactions that are transformative. Indeed, all the disciplines referred to here chart change over time. To achieve a better understanding of this appears to me to be a worthy object. If successful, it may guide the way we commemorate our past and, also, how we recognize who we are today, and why.

Existing explorations of Khoisan experience may be grouped under a number of broad headings, e.g.:

- 1) Khoisan interactions with non-Khoisan societies in the pre-colonial period;
- 2) Khoisan resistance to European settlement;
- 3) Khoisan absorption into the colonial economy as farm and domestic workers;
- 4) Khoisan participation, informally or formally, in the colonial military;
- 5) Khoisan engagement with Christian missionaries;
- 6) Khoisan under officially recognized chiefs, or in areas set aside for them;
- 7) Khoisan outsiders, as bandits within the colony or migrants beyond the frontier;
- 8) Khoisan influence on the colonists' language, medical practice and so on.

A large body of research exists respecting these topics, which may be revisited with a view to drawing inferences respecting the pre-colonial past. As my own work focuses on sheep and cattle keepers, any insights on my part are likely to pertain to Khoi more often than to Bushmen.

Richard Elphick's doctoral thesis and subsequent publication, *Khoikhoi and the Founding of White South Africa*, are foundational to the state of Khoisan historical studies that got underway in the 1980s.<sup>6</sup> It inspired my research for a master's degree, which focused on the employment niches filled by colonial Khoikhoi prior to the Labour Law of 1 November 1809.<sup>7</sup> Ahead of Elphick's seminal offering, Shula Marks had published her article entitled 'Khoisan resistance to the Dutch in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries' which challenged the widely held belief that the Cape's autochthonous people had tamely surrendered to the colonists.<sup>8</sup>



Susan Newton-King and I contributed to that discussion with *The Khoikhoi Rebellion in the Eastern Cape (1799-1803)*.<sup>9</sup> It soon became apparent that the new Khoisan studies had a strong Eastern Cape bias. Nigel Penn commenced inquiries that illuminate the experience of Khoi and Bushmen of the Western and Northern Cape.

Elphick speculated on the ways and means by which herders and domestic stock infiltrated Africa's southern tip, for millennia home to hunter-gatherers. His scenario was soon contested, as were his conjectures respecting movement from a hunting to a herding economy.<sup>10</sup> Now – in 2014 - exciting findings, summarised by Alan Morris,<sup>11</sup> raise new questions of great interest to this project. Elphick also addressed the matter of trade, for example with metal-working societies. We want to know about Khoisan interactions, before and after settlement, with neighbours.

In the early years of Dutch settlement, the governors repeatedly reminded settlers that the Khoisan were free people - a distinction needing reinforcement in a slave society. For their part, Khoisan exhibited a strong sense of their freedom, observing those who were enslaved. It is likely that more might be made of Khoisan self-perceptions in this regard.

Early on, in my archival work, I began to keep records of individual Khoi, as their names cropped up. In only a handful of cases did it prove possible to construct a life story. Those examples all lived in the late 18<sup>th</sup>/early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Prior to that, only certain chiefs and 'trouble-makers' could be firmly identified over an extended period. The exceptions were men who were useful to early navigators: Coree and Autshumato. There was also a well-documented woman. Van Riebeeck's *Journal* is the chief source for the life of Krotoa, who was one of his interpreters. Her story acquired special interest in the 1990s on the strength of the focus then on gender issues. My book, *Krotoa, Called 'Eva': A Woman Between*<sup>12</sup> was followed by a host of treatments on a range of themes, e.g., her place in resistance, her religion, her marriage. More recently her life story was featured by the South African Broadcasting Corporation in the series, 'Hidden Histories'.<sup>13</sup> Specialists were invited to present their take on Krotoa's life and its significance. As a participant I was impressed by the fair-mindedness of the film-makers with respect to our inputs. The film seeks to represent Khoi society as it was before European settlement. A

participant asserted that the Khoi never struck their children. No source is given - the film is not an academic treatise! We may wish to establish the grounds on which we might incorporate that interpretation.

My first biographical article concerned a London Mission Society convert, Cupido Kakkerlak, whose story played out at Bethelsdorp and points north.<sup>14</sup> Since then, Elizabeth Elbourne has made valuable contributions to our understanding of Khoi interactions with Christian missionaries and interpretation of the Christian message.<sup>15</sup> The Kakkerlak article inspired Andre Brink's novel, *Praying Mantis*. It had always been my hope that creative people like Brink would apply their imaginations to such historical texts, to show us how they might be extrapolated. Brink's treatment deserves consideration, and his elaboration of Cupido's story might be measured against Elbourne's insights.

The Khoisan's exposure to Christianity began in the Western Cape. We have the work of Henry Jatti Bredekamp and others respecting the Moravian mission at Baviaanskloof/Genadendal. That site has yielded the astonishing life story of an early convert, Vehettge Tikkuie.<sup>16</sup> Khoi millenarianism, as a response to social pressures and novel religious concepts, has been explored by Russell Viljoen. Such manifestations have been examined as links with pre-colonial beliefs and practices.

My second biographical subject was David Stuurman, brother of the better known Klaas.<sup>17</sup> David has been adopted by Khoi activists as a heroic figure and a fitting symbol of Khoisan treatment at the hands of the colonists and, more latterly, the apartheid government. Repatriation of his remains from Sydney, Australia, where he died, was supported by the South African Heritage Commission. That project was modeled on the successful intervention honouring Saartje Baartman, but as Stuurman's remains could not be found, repatriation took a 'spiritual' form. In general, his chiefly attributes have been construed in warlike terms. My impression is that he attuned his actions, as best he could, to circumstances. He deserves a more nuanced representation of his contribution to Khoi resistance and his place in heritage.

David Stuurman's story is shadowed by that of an Eastern Cape bandit named Hermanus. His narrative may be a yet richer source of insights into the persistence of Khoisan modes of thought, for example, their frequently observed attachment to family and to place.<sup>18</sup> A follower

referred to Hermanus as a Master Hottentot: a ‘Conjurer who could protect his people from danger’. I am not aware if this phenomenon has been explored elsewhere. The relevant archive is rich in references to, e.g., band formation, dagga use, revenge and vendettas (noted by Elphick), millenarianism, Khoisan relations with neighbouring Gunuqwebe, and so on. The interactions of Hermanus and his band with local colonists/farmers also hold promise as a source for understanding modes of thought.

I have found Khoi service in the military to be a source of clues with respect to predispositions and skills seeming to originate in tradition and culture. From the start, Khoisan exercised their judgment as to where their interests lay, thus we have Willem ten Rhyne observing in the 17<sup>th</sup> century: ‘Finally, those who mingle freely with our men about the Castle form auxiliary troops ... [Klaas and Kuiper are] both excellent soldiers and tacticians.’<sup>19</sup> All militaries sought single men but, as a Batavian official noted, the Khoi soldier was ‘always a married man’.<sup>20</sup> Perforce, arrangements were made to support families who followed the Khoisan recruits. European officers were astonished to find in their camps not only whole families but large numbers of livestock.<sup>21</sup> Much may be gained by treating military history as an integral part of our investigations.

There are many things to follow up. To give a few examples: an account of gang formation in Graaff-Reinet in 1810; a problem in the military – where the Khoi exhibited many desirable talents and qualities – re the safety of ammunition due to their constant smoking; the old spat about ‘idleness’ vs ‘habits of industry,’ which J.M. Coetzee among others has explored; the panic amongst residents of Caledon in 1851, regarding the ‘revolutionary and communist principles’ held by many of their ‘coloured fellow subjects’ – and much more. There are also the Khoi testimonies: of Janze Spielman (in the *British Parliamentary Papers* (1824); of Klaas Platjes (1836) which begins: ‘My father was a Hottentot, and mother a Gonah’; of Bretanje Jantjes (1836), about whom I wrote for the *Dictionary of South African Biography*; of Klaas Klaasen (no date) which begins: ‘A tribe of Hottentots lived in the Winterbergen much blacker than Hottentots generally are ...’; and of Platje Swartland (1836). There is the copious testimony recorded by Donald Moodie respecting an incident in 1829 of alleged assault by a colonist on a Bethelsdorp Khoi named Wildschut Platjes. The District Surgeon, C.A.

Wentworth, visited Platjes in his hut, where he found him asleep – the hut is described in detail, as are Platjes and others seen with him. Moodie was an assiduous investigator and more may be found in the article I wrote for *History in Africa*: ‘Donald Moodie: South Africa’s Pioneer Oral Historian’. New questions can be asked of all such material.

I have referred to Krotoa and David Stuurman as icons of Khoesan experience in the colonial context. In March this year (2014) there were two hour-long programmes on SABC 2 titled ‘The Khoe.’ The first dealt mainly with language rights, the second with land rights. Both are concerned with identity, and hark back to the pre-colonial era. These developments signal that this catalytic project, which aims ‘to identify the gaps in our empirical and conceptual knowledge’ respecting ‘precolonial Khoesan archaeology and Khoesan history’, is relevant to felt needs amongst the populace. Much is happening outside the academy, at a rate that presents some pertinent questions. These include: How important is nuance, when a new history is being written? How can scholars – aware of complexities, of gaps in knowledge – best contribute in ways that honour their disciplines?

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- <sup>10</sup> See e.g. Emile Boonzaier, Candy Malherbe, Andy Smith & Penny Berens, *The Cape Herders, A History of the Khoikhoi of Southern Africa*, Cape Town: David Philip, 1996, Chapter 2.
- <sup>11</sup> A.G. Morris, 'Going Full Circle on Khoekhoe Origins,' *The Digging Stick*, 31 (1), South African Archaeological Society, April 2014, 1-4.
- <sup>12</sup> V.C. Malherbe, *Krotoa, Called 'Eva': A Woman Between*, Cape Town, Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town, 1990.
- <sup>13</sup> Produced by Penguin Films and broadcast on SABC2 in 2013. A square on St. George's Street, Cape Town, has been named for her.
- <sup>14</sup> V.C. Malherbe, 'The Life and Times of Cupido Kakkerlak,' *Journal of African History*, 20(3), 1979. This article inspired Andre Brink's novel, *Praying Mantis*.
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- <sup>20</sup> V.C. Malherbe, *The Cape Regiment in Peace and War, 1781-1817*, Cape Town: Castle Military Museum, 2012, 41, 66.
- <sup>21</sup> Malherbe, *The Cape Regiment in Peace and War*, 78.

# CONTEMPORARY KHOISAN HERITAGE ISSUES IN SOUTH AFRICA: A BRIEF HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

JUNE BAM

The overarching current contentious heritage issue for ‘contemporary’ Khoisan communities appears to be the notion of ‘identity’ and its concomitant ‘sense of belonging’. Both inform a range of contemporary campaigns: land restitution and justice; language diversity revivalism; constitutional accommodation; appropriating education and knowledge systems; occupying sacred and ancestral spaces; indigenous ‘self-identification’; and returning human remains.

For the dominant self-identified Khoisan people, this sense of ‘identity’ is based on the assertion of historical ethnic entitlement to land, language, and various legal and cultural rights through ‘genetic ancestry’. For instance, Khoisan representatives Andrew Le Fleur and Lesle Jansen in August 2013, made the point that the enforced apartheid ‘Coloured’ identity is a big issue, as the Khoisan have ‘*a distinct ethnic identity*’ as ‘the indigenous people of South Africa’ evidenced through *genetic ancestry*. They also referred to the troubling ‘invisibility factor’, imposed through the apartheid ‘Coloured’ racial designation, and said that this ‘apartheid typology’ had (by default) negative implications for their claims to land.<sup>1</sup> This contemporary identity-assertion within Khoisan communities is also linked to a notion of a ‘pure’ ethnic identity, such as propagated by the Khoisan United Front (SanQua – ‘we belong’), which established a Facebook page in 2010 and said it intended to contest the 2014 elections.<sup>2</sup> According to South African History Online this unified ‘Khoisan identity’ was historically ‘fractured’ by the Group Areas Act of 1950 and enforced further through the ‘apartheid collaborationist’ role in the use of Khoisan people as trackers to fight the ANC and SWAPO on the borders. Bradley van Sitters (a close associate of Chief Van Wyk and a member of the national Khoi and San Active Awareness Group, KSAAG) makes the point that the contemporary Khoisan Movement is rooted in rejecting ‘Coloured’ as an assimilated identity and a form of continued oppression in contemporary South Africa. He has started to offer Khoi



language lessons at the Castle from May 2014 as a form of countering this identity in favour of fostering an indigenous one.<sup>3</sup>

Chief Hendrik Hennie van Wyk, a former housing and trade union activist of the non-racial United Democratic Front (UDF) in the 1980s and chief of the Xoraxoukhoe House since 10 April 2010, has added an influential voice to this notion of ‘distinct identity’ on evidenced ‘ethnic’ grounds; that ‘Coloured’ identity has been resented by the ‘Khoisan’ since the 1980s (one can possibly assume that this is to be interpreted within the context of the People’s Education Movement at the time).<sup>4</sup> However, the assertion amongst Khoisan activists that the enforced ‘Coloured’ identity goes back to apartheid race classifications is historically inaccurate as this population classification is well known to be rooted in British colonial segregationist policy predating 1948. In addition, ‘Coloured’ identity was embraced in the early indigenous spiritual and political movement in the 1920s.<sup>5</sup>

But the issue of a ‘Coloured’ identity in the Cape is more complex, noting (for instance) that there have traditionally been ideological tensions between the Griqua (Khoisan) Movement and the ‘Coloured’-dominated ‘non-racial’ Cape-based Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM) on precisely the issue of a ‘Coloured’ and ‘tribal’ identity. The Unity Movement (through its Teachers’ League of South Africa) has written extensively on the importance of debunking the myth of ‘race’, such as rejecting the enforced identity of ‘Coloureds’. Writings within the Unity Movement tradition, such as that by Mnguni (1952), asserted that ‘Batwa (!Ke) blood runs through the veins of all humanity, including through the ‘pure’ Zulu; and that the Batwa are part of the mPondo, Tembu and Xhosa’.<sup>6</sup> The NEUM Declaration to the People of South Africa (1951) called for a ‘non-racial nation’; there were no Coloureds, Africans or Whites’.<sup>7</sup>

In contrast, the Griqua Movement has historically been more closely aligned to government ‘collaborationist’ movements; consciously engaging in parliamentary politics as ‘Coloureds’ as witnessed in the ‘Griqua and Coloured People’s Opinion’ of the 1920s. The shift within the Khoisan Movement, from embracing a segregationist and, later, an apartheid racial classification to one of ‘indigenous racial ethnic entitlement’, is therefore worth noting. Contemporary Khoisan revivalism undeniably has its roots in global developments to recognise the hundreds of millions of indigenous peoples worldwide and their

rights: the Decade of Indigenous People (1995 – 2004). Hence campaigns for the recognition of ‘a distinct ethnic identity’, for ‘self-determination’ of their ‘nation’ and the recognition of their ‘minority rights’ within South Africa’s Constitution. Customary law in South Africa is viewed as not to include the recognition of their indigenous leadership. Although former President Nelson Mandela (himself of strong maternal Khoisan ancestry) established the National Khoisan Council,<sup>8</sup> with Griqua leader, Cecil Le Fleur, as chair for constitutional negotiation, in 1999, negotiations and dialogue remain an ongoing process with little, if any, tangible outcome.

During the Decade of Indigenous People, the UN working group officially recognised the Khoisan as the first indigenous nation of South Africa in 2000. The Khoisan Consultative Conference was formed in 2001 with 20 representatives from different communities representing 10 different religions.<sup>9</sup> Delegates to the conference included the Waterboer Royal House, Dawid Kruiper of the Khomani-San, Korana Royal House, Paramount Chief Abraham Andrew Stockenström Le Fleur II of the Griqua National Conference and Adam Kok V of the Griqua Traditional Royal House. These consultative conferences have focused on awareness raising campaigns for preservation of culture through fighting for constitutional accommodation and consciously excluded ‘academics’ (assumably ‘white’) as representative of ‘colonial modes of thought’. The speech made at their 2001 conference, by then Deputy President Zuma, encouraged ‘self-determination’ of the Khoisan people to take charge of their own heritage and history and noted the ‘shame’ of being called ‘Coloured’. However, almost a decade later, in September 2010 the Khoisan found it necessary to launch a suit at the Equality Court regarding alleged ‘cultural genocide’ and discrimination and denounced both the apartheid and ANC regimes for classifying them as ‘Coloureds’; that this term kept the Khoisan in bondage and they made a case for the recognition of their ‘18 clans’. The Traditional Affairs Bill, 2010, was rejected by leaders, such as Van Wyk, as not recognising and affording the Khoisan’s ‘indigenous rights’.<sup>10</sup>

In spite of the verbal acknowledgment of the Khoisan’s rights by Zuma over a decade ago, the battle for this national self-determination is ongoing. On 28 June 2012 the Khoisan asserted that they have no rights under the South African Constitution ‘as southern Africa’s first nation’.

Yet Zuma's State of the Nation Address, on 9 February 2012, spoke again of the recognition of the Khoisan's leadership and structures as a people 'most brutalised by colonialists' who 'undermined their languages and identity'.<sup>11</sup>

However, the Khoisan community remains politically challenged in their dialogues with government, as a unified front, as their networks remain fractured, plagued by internal clan-divisions and struggles over 'bloodline' chieftainships. Some groups and organisations seem stronger such as SAFIHRO (South African First Indigenous and Human Rights Organisation: 'Endangered but not Extinct') and CONFILSA – The Congress of First Indigenous Leaders of South Africa – with H.E. Hon Barend C. van Wyk as president and HE Hon Adam Kok as Vice Chair (based in Kimberley). These stronger organisations focus on sustainability and community development through programmes in advocacy, skills training, capacity building, land rights, and rights to mineral resources. SAFIHRO has in recent years expressed their concerns over the 'challenge of new mushrooming organisations' (especially with the then approaching centenary of the 1913 Land Act) as 'leadership claims must be based on bloodline leadership'.<sup>12</sup>

Ongoing unaddressed Khoisan heritage issues by the government have provided an opportunity for smaller political parties in their campaigns to protect 'minorities'. Pieter Mulder, leader of the Freedom Front Plus, has recently advocated 'a place' for the Khoisan in their party as 'minorities must feel accommodated.'<sup>13</sup> But the long battle for recognition and constitutional accommodation in the new South Africa has further reinforced a strong Khoisan position that goes beyond mere identity awareness campaigns to claiming justice in land restitution. The historical land claims of the Kruiper clan of the Khomani San are well known, as is their representation to the UN to speak about the rights of indigenous people in 1994 in Geneva. Though ignored by former President Thabo Mbeki (allegedly because he did not have an appointment to speak to him about land rights at Parliament after hitch hiking hundreds of miles to Cape Town), Dawid Kruiper was ironically (yet significantly) afforded a state funeral at Witdraai in the Northern Cape in June 2012 in recognition of his historic land claim campaigns for the San.<sup>14</sup>

The Khoisan land question intensified notably in the build up to the centenary of the 1913 Land Act with heritage identity being closely tied

to land restitution and economic justice. In February 2013 President Zuma met with Khoisan leaders to discuss and consider historical land claims preceding 1913. The follow-up National Khoisan Conference Dialogue, held in Kimberley, 16 April 2013, explored exceptions to the 1913 cut-off date for descendants of the Khoi and San.<sup>15</sup> It is now commonly acknowledged that land dispossession in South Africa precedes 1913 by far, and that the Land Restitution Act of 1994 is limited in terms of justice for the Khoisan people.

Of political significance here is Julius Malema's fast growing Economic Freedom Front (EFF) which campaigned amongst the Khoisan in the run up to the 2014 national elections. Malema met with the Khoisan chiefs and youth in October 2012 with a promise of 'the return of the land'. In early 2014 Malema campaigned in Vrygrond (an informal settlement within a few miles of the Cape Flats wetlands of Zeekoeivlei, Rondevlei and Princess Vlei).<sup>16</sup>

The process of restitution for the 'Coloured' community has been slow. Only in September 2013 was 4000 hectares of land given to the Mamre community – said to be the first 'Coloured' community to benefit from land restitution.<sup>17</sup> The slow progress with land restitution is further complicated by ignorance within white political leadership on addressing the land question as pertinent in South Africa. Shula Marks, who wrote of this, refers to the importance of the work of the South African History Project under the late former Education Minister Kader Asmal (2001 – 2004). Her article is entitled 'South Africa ignorant about its land struggle'.<sup>18</sup>

Notably, in recent years, various localised Khoisan-inspired 'Coloured rejectionism' campaigns in the Western Cape have become politically charged and volatile, particularly in small emerging civic protest movements. Cleansing ceremonies at sacred sites include burial of the 'Coloured' identity through laying of wreaths and protest placards (such as at the Castle on 28 June 2012) which read 'Khoisan Forever: Coloured never'. 'We fought in the struggle to have the name 'kaffir' removed, now how about 'Coloured'?'<sup>19</sup> Local Khoisan activist groupings continue to take forward the awareness campaign for land restitution by occupying spaces such as District Six (claiming ancestral rights to newly built apartments). Some of them were seen on television engaging in angry battles with predominantly black African policemen / women. The Khoisan activist protest movement in Cape Town has also

highlighted the tensions within ‘Coloured’ communities themselves around ancestral claims to land based on a particular ‘indigenous’ ethnic entitlement. In retorting to the claims by the Khoisan activists to ‘ancestral land’ in District Six, a fellow ‘Coloured’ resident shouted at the group, ‘Sort it out with Jan Van Riebeeck... the Castle [not District Six] belongs to them... [the Khoisan]’.<sup>20</sup>

For these Cape activists, Khoisan identity and revivalism link to solving current issues of poverty, ‘[We] want to bring homelessness [of Khoisan people] to an end. ‘There is also an evident impatience with South Africa’s reconciliation politics and resentment towards the Constitution of 1996, ‘We are sick of appeasement. We want restitution.’ ‘South Africa is found on stolen land.’<sup>21</sup> Khoisan heritage activism takes on civic urban protests through renaming rituals of ‘ancestral’ spaces, such as Rondebosch Common as ‘Tuit Goab’.<sup>22</sup>

In these protests, the Khoisan revivalist movement attempts to assert that ancestral languages are not entirely extinct and remain an important aspect of their identity and ancient entitlements to land. They argue that, through land dispossession and genocide, there were displacement and loss of their diverse and rich languages. Many Khoisan people and their direct descendants today therefore speak Afrikaans and English or only Afrikaans. Moreover, the Pan South African Language Board was established through an Act of Parliament in 1995 which excluded Khoisan languages as official South African languages, though striving to afford it equal status ‘in the future’. A Khoisan National Language Board was therefore established in 1999 to address the recovery of these languages and their absence in the public school system and in governance. Hence at the 2001 national Khoisan conference, delegates campaigned for their languages to be taught in South African schools and registered their anger that they were not any of the country’s official languages.

Though Khoisan language research is an established global academic field amongst linguists and has assisted a great deal in reviving and collecting Khoisan cultural data that may have been lost over the centuries of displacement, there is a growing discontent amongst Khoisan communities and heritage activism networks in recent years to reclaim all related knowledge and research as part of their identity affirmation for justice. Whilst Khoisan conferences held during the apartheid era, in the 1970s / 1980s, focused on themes of colonial

dispossession and resistance, the 1990s saw a shift towards dialogues and contestations on interpreting Khoisan identity and what it means in terms of restitution, cultural revival and heritage retrieval. A group representing the ‘Ghonoqua Peoples’ assert: ‘We hope to write about ourselves...it is time to write about our heroes, our icons, our knowledge, culture, language, and our experiences. It is time for us to write our own history.’<sup>23</sup>

As part of the Khoisan movement’s resistance to the writing of reconciliatory national grand narratives, the ANC regime’s cultural transformation programmes are particularly challenged through symbolic protest rituals such as public theatre, marches, renaming, cleansing ceremonies and spatial occupation. For example, the statue of Jan van Riebeeck in Cape Town was a couple of years ago covered in black plastic. A statement was made by one of the local Khoisan leaders that the statue belonged to the Apartheid Museum. The Castle has been identified as ‘the symbol of Khoisan oppression’. Various Khoisan names have recently publically emerged for certain places; their linguistic origins and meaning not always made clear. Cape Town has been renamed to its ‘traditional name’, Xh! Zha!, meaning ‘gathering of the clouds’ / ‘where the clouds gather’. Table Mountain was renamed! Koerikwaggo. Table Bay has also been renamed Hui! Gaep, also meaning ‘a place of the gathering of clouds’. The Institute for the Restoration of the Aborigines of South Africa (with a Facebook page dating 29 May 2012) plays a leading role in the current Khoisan renaming and occupation of spaces campaign.<sup>24</sup>

But the issue of historical entitlement to land rights remains a hotly contested and challenging one amongst self-identified Khoisan communities, which have in recent years drawn well-known Cape academics into the debates. For instance, Keith Gottschalk, has publically engaged in the debate about who inhabited which area – Cochoqua, Gorochoqua or Goringhaiqua in Cape Town? He posed the question of whether groups could possibly and legitimately claim settlement rights in the absence of documents.<sup>25</sup> Others work in close partnership with ‘Khoisan’ academics, such as Hout Bay’s Sentinel community, which is in the process of establishing a Khoisan Heritage Centre with retired UWC Professor Jatti Bredekamp (former CEO of Iziko Museums) as advisor. Bredekamp argues for ‘redefining’ and ‘reimagining’ South Africa’s heritage ‘more inclusively than in strict

Bantu-speaking ‘black’ terms’. At the inaugural meeting of the Princess Vlei Forum (PVF) on 31 October 2012, Bredekamp (as keynote speaker) asserted that, ‘Identity gives meaning to people’s existence; it’s a way to overcome poverty of the soul.’ Legend goes that a Khoisan princess was captured by Portuguese sailors while she was bathing in the vlei. Her tears formed the water. The campaign is one to restore her Khoisan royalty, such as through the ‘Dressing the Princess’ programme and ‘Save the Princess’ campaign.<sup>26</sup>

Princess Vlei was one of the few recreation spaces on the Cape Flats for ‘Coloured’ people under apartheid. Nearby Zeekoevlei was for whites, and adjacent Rondevlei was partially whites only. Princess Vlei was the place where generations of young people were taught to fish, and where the Grassy Park / Retreat communities gathered over weekends for ancestral stories and for political planning, against apartheid, around barbecue fires. It was also the public baptism place for local black evangelical church movements. The PVF conceptualised a ‘People’s Plan’ to campaign against the development of a shopping mall on the banks of the vlei. The forum wished to develop the vlei as a spiritual place and cultural environmental centre where young people can learn about their Khoisan heritage and about the ecology of the vlei and can stay in a Khoisan village. Religious leaders, civic housing movements, environment groups, schools, agrarian and rural organisations have become actively involved in the PVF.

At the launch of the PVF, Bredekamp took issue with current scuffles for entitlement to ‘ancestral leadership’ as ‘heritage’: ‘I urge you to portray the Khoisan not in static, primordial state of indigenous existence, but like all humans in a continuous, changing condition of adapting to the natural, spiritual environment from antiquity to the African city today. The discourse around Khoisan heritage has been limited in South Africa, focused on questions around chieftainship.’ Bredekamp asked that there be a formal shift in the discourse to explore the diversity of Khoisan heritage, its legacies and evidence in the landscape and to thereby help young people to find meaning in their lives to discover their historical identity. The spiritual, historical and cultural values of Khoisan ancestry should be identified, acknowledged and celebrated. It is now reported that the Princess Vlei project has thousands of people involved, from Kalabaskraal (in rural Malmesbury) to the controversial urban Blikkiesdorp (a ‘Coloured’ tin town on the

Cape Flats set up for evicted communities by former Mayor Helen Zille in 2007 - 2009). Khoisan revivalism is now increasingly used as a civic movement to combat social ills of drugs, gangs, poverty and homelessness and to engage in environmental education projects, such as to have endangered species restored.

As a social movement, Khoisan revivalism is inspired by the notion of the 'return' of losses in the landscape, culture, language, knowledge and human remains. Since the 1994 Griqua National Conference campaigned for the return of the remains of Sarah Baartman, her successful repatriation and reburial in 2002 became a national metaphor for justice. This was also inspired by Skotnes' MISCASST Exhibition at the National Gallery of Art, Cape Town (1996) and the seminal research in the McGregor Museum in the Northern Cape, by Martin Legassick (now also a notable civic activist with displaced people of Blikkiesdorp)<sup>27</sup> and Ciraj Rassool (a leading heritage academic and activist).<sup>28</sup>

Repatriation of Khoisan human remains continues to be a burning justice issue, high on the national agenda. The remains of the Khoisan couple used for scientific research and display, Trooi and Klaas Pienaar, were returned in April 2012 from the Museum of Natural History in Vienna.<sup>29</sup> There was a campaign to have the Khoi leader and British prisoner, Dawid Stuurman's remains, returned from Australia, and reburied to coincide with 20 years of freedom in 2014.<sup>30</sup> Chief Van Wyk is presently involved in addressing the issue of human remains in the Kleinsee Museum in the Northern Cape.<sup>31</sup>

Hence, the utterances of former Director General of Labour, Jimmy Manyi, on 9 March 2010 on 'Coloureds' in the Western Cape in his discussion on national television on the Employment Equity Act ('stop this overconcentration situation' / 'there is an oversupply of them')<sup>32</sup> were for many reminiscent of worldwide recognised precursors to 'genocide talk' and have significantly added to the intense emotional responses to and sensitivities around 'Coloured' identity. Minister Trevor Manuel (a leading former 'Coloured' Cape Flats anti-apartheid activist), angrily called Manyi 'a racist'.<sup>33</sup> Though Manyi apologised publically, the contemporary sense of 'deep loss' and even perhaps 'betrayal' felt amongst 'Coloureds' in 'post-apartheid South Africa' is hardly surprising. This sense is also strongly perceived amongst former teenage political activists, such as Rykklieff, who was wounded in the



internationally known Trojan Horse Massacre in Athlone on the Cape Flats in 1985 – asserting in international media the now widely believed (though not entirely truthful) notion that ‘Coloureds are not benefitting’ from their struggles and sacrifices for freedom.<sup>34</sup>

The process of justice and restitution of all sorts for the self-identified Khoisan people is progressing, albeit very slowly, and with much contestation and many difficulties. For instance, it has been reported that the Khoisan community will benefit from pharmaceutical gains in the buchu market through the recently signed agreement with the National Khoi-San Council.<sup>35</sup> However, a documentary in 2012 by Rehad Desai, titled ‘Bushman’s Secret’, exposed the battle of the Khomani San over land ownership and access to the hoodia cactus (a source of food and medicinal healing).<sup>36</sup>

Though community engagement has become an important research development in South African universities over the past decade, representation of the Khoisan remains a hotly contested area in terms of intellectual property, knowledge dissemination, appropriate research methodologies and so on. Furthermore, there is a proliferation of new self-identified ‘Khoisan’ groups. A small Khoisan Liberation march (by about a half a dozen men in traditional costume) down Voortrekker Road in Cape Town, in March 2013, was held to highlight the exceptionally disproportionate high number of ‘Coloured’ people in prisons,<sup>37</sup> the need for ‘belonging’ and to be recognised as an ‘indigenous people’.<sup>38</sup> The questions around ‘Khoisan’ ‘heritage’ and ‘identity’ remain complex and require further research. For now, it appears that the current hybridised ‘Khoisan self-identity’ has become the metaphor for organising campaigns for justice amongst ‘Coloured’ people (most likely of diverse genetic ancestry) who consider themselves ‘left out’ and at the margins of contemporary South Africa.

Another question remains. How much progress has been made with Khoisan community heritage research and skills development / higher education partnerships since 1994? To help address this challenge, the South African History Project (SAHP), 2001 – 2004, established a local history and heritage network within provinces such as with the Khoisan communities in the Northern Cape.<sup>39</sup> Though Khoisan Legacy projects have recently been established by the Department of Arts and Culture in each province, anecdotal evidence suggests that since 2004 the SAHP’s

work has ‘died’, and that young people have hardly any sense of the history and diverse heritage of South Africans.

Recent concerns, raised at the National Khoisan Dialogue Commission held on 16 April 2013,<sup>40</sup> highlighted the need for ‘community-driven’ research projects, rather than ‘top down’ ones, with a ‘renewed’ focus on oral history and a call for ‘the engagement with youth’. The Ministry of Higher Education (under the leadership of Blade Nzimande) opened the new Sol Plaatje University in the Northern Cape in early 2014, in part to respond to this urgent national need in relevant curriculum development and teaching.<sup>41</sup> Community-led research is a globally established practice, to demystify knowledge translation learning through making the methodology transparent to participants in a collaborative research approach, based on partnerships between community practitioners and academics. Value is added to the knowledge systems of communities in the process, leading to enhanced confidence, skills development and subsequent impact on policy making and implementation. Communities benefit in tangible ways, by gaining increased capacity and agency in using scholarly evidence for cases to be argued regarding community needs on service delivery, the viability of government policies, implementation and so forth.

This brief historical overview of the contemporary issues in Khoisan heritage strongly suggests that a community development partnership approach should be adopted by scholars. This will assist tangibly in shaping a grounded process to enable economic justice as well as to decolonise knowledge and research in Southern Africa.

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  - 2 See <https://www.facebook.com/pages/KhoiSan-United-Front/163071110382331>
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<http://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2014-05-29-you-too-can-learn-the-khoikhoi-language/#.U4zJ9HKSzNs>
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  - 6 ‘Mnguni’[Hosea Jaffe], *Three Hundred Years*, Cape Town: New Era Fellowship, n.d. [1952]
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<http://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/western-cape/princess-vlei-u-turn-1.1664932#.U4xjCHK1ZbE>
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# “WARM ONESELF AT THE SOCIETY OF MEN (AND WOMEN)”\*: RECONSTITUTING AN IBANDLA AS A SPHERE FOR THE LITERATI

VUKILE KHUMALO

I think it would be highly objectionable if our natives were either able to criticize the Pentateuch, or to point out the contradictions and fallacies of the leading articles in any of our newspapers.<sup>1</sup>

On 18 October 1898, four businessmen, Isaac Mkhize of Riet Spruit – Lions River Division, Bryant Cele, Walter Frazer Mzamo and Mark Samuel Radebe of Pietermaritzburg came before James Forder, the Acting Magistrate of City Division – Pietermaritzburg, to register a national weekly newspaper called *Ipepa lo Hlanga* (the paper of the nation). As subjects of the Queen (under a British flag) and businessmen,<sup>2</sup> with businesses at the capital, Pietermaritzburg, they followed protocol and made two declarations: that the newspaper would be printed by the Zulu Printing & Publishing Syndicate (ZP & PS) and that the ZP & PS would distribute the newspaper throughout Southern Africa.<sup>3</sup> Forder endorsed the proposed establishment of the newspaper and two months later, the ZP & PS began printing and distributing the newspaper.

In the first six months of *Ipepa lo Hlanga's* existence the publishers registered 550 subscribers and distributed 50 free copies to readers in the Cape Colony, Rhodesia, Beira, Delagoa Bay, Natal and Zululand Province.<sup>4</sup> Partly, because of the design, writing style and the issues that the newspaper covered, it attracted a diverse and *critical* readership.<sup>5</sup> According to the editor (Umhleli / printer), Mark Radebe, the main target market of the newspaper was young men in towns and cities who could read English and isiZulu. *Ipepa Lo Hlanga's* sub-title was ‘an Anglo-Zulu weekly newspaper’.<sup>6</sup> The printer and writers to the paper assumed that every issue affecting Anglo-Zulu relations in Natal and Zululand ‘were to be investigated and discussed in the paper’.<sup>7</sup> But, as they soon learnt, they were wrong. After publishing a series of articles

on the condition of Africans in Natal and Zululand and specifically how ‘Europeans’ had changed over the past 50 years [1850 to 1900], the Natal government military authorities closed down the ZP & PS offices and prohibited the staff of the company from getting access to their books.<sup>8</sup> Partly due to the action of the military, *Ipepa lo Hlanga* was not published for three months in 1901, the whole of 1902, and for three months of 1903.<sup>9</sup>

Seeing that the infrequency of publication would affect circulation and readers’ loyalty, the printer and manager urged subscribers and readers of the paper not to stop reading the newspapers and also reading in general. Radebe reminded readers that,

...kiti emva, wonke umuntu oyindoda ubelota ibandhla kwazise ilapo bekuvama ukupatwa indaba ezipete izwe, ezitokoziwayo nezihlumamisayo.<sup>10</sup>

...In our past, every man attended the community council where matters of national importance were discussed, matters that brought joy and sustenance.

Radebe went further to say that ‘even women knew the laws of the land’ (inomfazi imbala abe wazi umteto opete izwe).<sup>11</sup> Radebe’s seemingly ideal and romantic claim that in ‘our past (kiti emva)’ information or issues of ‘national importance (ezipete izwe)’ circulated or flowed through the body politic without let or hindrance was designed to let colonial authorities know that the idea of talking and writing about thorny issues in the *Ipepa Lo Hlanga* and the very practice of writing and reading newspapers were neither new nor seditious.<sup>12</sup>

But the printer and manager continued to claim that most writers and readers of the newspaper held an idea that by reading and writing to the newspaper they were ‘warming themselves at the society of men – and women (*botha ibandla*)’.<sup>13</sup> Radebe’s profound statements or claims suggest that the concept of *ibandla* was very central to writers and readers. And, for newspaper owners and printers like Radebe and John Langalibalele Dube, editor and founder of *Ilanga lase Natali* in 1903, investing the concept of *ibandla* with new meanings of print culture helped them to create and expand readership and also ensure that readers felt close affinity with their newspapers.

In this paper I consider the constitution of a new form of *ibandla* for the literati, conventions that governed its inner workings and the broader intellectual implications of these writers’ political project. I do this by investigating how writers used newspapers as a new form of *ibandla* and as both forum and parliament to discuss political and cultural

issues.<sup>14</sup> I argue that editors, printers and writers to newspapers carved a space where they nurtured each other through their writings while transforming the idea of *ibandla* from a highest council of state and church congregation into a less bounded network of readers and writers. But this nurturing, as I show, was not for everyone. Some, especially women and the poor, could not ‘warm themselves in the society of men (and women)’.

### THE IDEA OF AN IBANDLA

While the idea of an *ibandla* was significant in the editors’ interaction with readers as a marketing strategy, its definition was rather elusive. In its mid-nineteenth century meaning *ibandla* could mean, ‘all the men, young and old, in one place, whether only two or three or a large band, or the whole body; hence, company’.<sup>15</sup> In a second sense *ibandla* meant a ‘tribal council, assembly, strength of a kraal or tribe’. And, when missionary activities gained momentum in Natal and Zululand *ibandla* acquired a new meaning, a third sense, that of a ‘company of believers or church’.

One’s attendance at an *ibandla* gathering, in the first and second senses, was referred to as *ukotha* which meant ‘to warm one’ self at (acc.); wait upon (a chief); lay a charge, inform, against (a person)’.<sup>16</sup> I investigate how owners and printers (of newspapers) and writers to newspapers deployed and manipulated the concept of *ibandla* as a *neutral* idea with a genealogy going back to the past while, simultaneously, relying and exploiting its subversive potential or powers. As the nineteenth century wore on writers sought to purge the term of its religious connotations, what I refer to here as a third sense, and instead emphasized the *ibandla*’s political meaning. This discursive process of reconfiguring the *ibandla* into a public political and intellectual domain relied on the epistolary moment as a social system, that is, the constitution of networks of correspondence, circles and spheres; during this moment (1860 to 1900) epistolary practice was characterized by a culture of reciprocity and exchange.

But the process was not without contradictions. For in their attempts to redefine and reposition *ibandla* towards the end of the nineteenth century writers had to redefine the powers and position of the king. In pre-print media times (during the time of Zulu independence) the king

controlled *ibandla* and the outcome of the debates that took place at the forum, but redefining of the king's powers was not a problem to these writers. First, because when debates about the reconstitution of this sphere took place: there was no king in Zululand. Second, the center of intellectual activity on culture and governance had moved to the colony of Natal, in fact, right at the center of the colonial capital, Pietermaritzburg. But at this time writers faced a new kind of power, that of the colonial state. One of the things that the Natal government, especially the Secretary for Native Affairs, did was to appropriate the *ibandla* and other political institutions.

Thirdly, reconstituting this sphere also meant that writers had to deal with the very definition of what it meant to be a man of mature age. Because during 'the times of kings', as writers constantly reminded each other in the forum, the king authorized the rite of passage to manhood and, therefore, man's admission into the highest council of state. The symbolic act was accompanied by the bestowing of a head-ring (*isicoco*) as a visible sign that a man had entered into a particular age group in society. One of the things that the writers did away with was this sign of manhood, the head-ring.

### THE LITERATI ON CULTURE: REDEFINING IBANDLA

One of the things that connected readers and writers of letters was the sharing of information. If one of them had read something of interest in a book or newspaper, he or she shared it with others. Through this sharing and exchange of views letter-writers managed to create a network of readers who had a common language and some consensus on the issues they discussed. But the ideas that they shared were not givens; they constructed them as their connections developed. This construction or production of ideas about themselves and the society that they imagined was shaped to a large degree by the discussions they had in the sphere provided by magazines, newspapers, pamphlets, books and daily conversations. Reading the letters to the editor and private letters amongst themselves one gets a profound sense of the importance of these discussions and also of print.

Not only books, but also newspapers were shared. The letter-writers notified each other about the interesting latest news. In a letter to



Ekukhanyeni, Josiah Gumede, a resident of Rookdale in Bergville, wrote to Harriette Colenso,

Ngitumela ikasi *Natal Witness* ka 8<sup>th</sup> May 1903 ekuluma ngo Dinuzulu umntwana. Amanye amapepa ka 1900 – 1901 angedukele. ... ngitumele futi uMasuku amakasana uma asele hambile ungisize nkosi uwaqubele Mossdale, [...] via Dannhausa Str.<sup>17</sup>

I am sending a page of the *Natal Witness* of 8<sup>th</sup> May 1903, that talks about prince Dinuzulu. Other papers that came out from 1900 – 1901 have disappeared. ... I have also sent some pages to Masuku, and, please, pass some of the pages to Mossdale, [...] via Dannhausa Street.

The informal nature of the above note to Harriette suggests that the correspondence was regular. Gumede had no reason to explain what was said in the newspaper or write a long letter. Making sure that they were abreast with the contemporary situation was one of the ways in which they maintained their connection. But ascertaining the extent of their conversation and mechanisms that they used is only the beginning. One has to go deep into their conversation and how they constructed their sphere or *ibandla*. One of the first serious journals of *Amakholwa* came out in 1889 and was called *Inkanyiso Yase Natali*. The St. Alban's College at Maritzburg published the paper under the editorship of Rev. F.J. Greene, an Anglican minister. Unlike the above-mentioned magazines, this journal covered a wide range of issues, including religious, political and educational ones. But even this journal could not satisfy politically inclined readers and contributors to the paper. For, they felt that extensive coverage of biblical issues would impact on readership. Solomon Khumalo, who later became the editor of *Inkanyiso Yase Natali*, wrote:

Nxa lingena kakulu endabeni ezifundisayo songati abamkeli bayakuliyeka. Indaba ezimnandi sizizwa ngokweneleyo izincwadini ezingwele, (religious books) nasemasontweni. Epepeni lendaba (Newspaper) silindele indaba zombuso, nezinye ezimalunga nosizo lwomuntu lapa emhlabeni.<sup>18</sup>

If it (newspaper) enters the domain of (biblical) teachings (to a great extent) readers (receivers) might abandon it. Because we hear enough good news in religious books and at church services. And in a newspaper we expect news about governance, and those that deal with a person's duty on earth.

Such views got a sympathetic ear from Thomas Zulu of Spandekroon, who wanted to hear political issues in the newspaper ('Sidinga ukuzwa izindaba zelizwe kuleli pepa').<sup>19</sup>

Writing to the newspaper and taking part in the *ibandla* had its own conventions. Some of the conventions were created by readers and writers themselves as the network developed. Among many of these conventions was the salutation: ‘Bandla’ or some times ‘bandla lakiti le Nkanyiso’ / ‘good fellows’ (literal translation).<sup>20</sup> Writers introduced their letters with this salutation and return to it after making a particular point. And when writers wanted to put a point before readers they imagined themselves at the forum, for instance, Elias D. Khumalo responding to Sol. Khumalo on the issue of *lobola* put it,

Kumhleli we Nkanyiso, Ngisize  
ungifakele lamazwi ami, ngifuna ukuba  
nami ngike ngipendule uMr. S. Khumalo  
kulendaba yake kukona indawana nami  
engifuna ke ngi yibeke pambi  
kwebandhla.<sup>21</sup>

To the editor of *Inkanyiso*, could you,  
please, put my words [in your paper] I  
like to respond to Mr. S. Khumalo’s  
article on [lobola]. There is something  
in it that I want to place before the  
forum / *ibandla*

While editors of newspapers liked writers to see newspapers as a new form of *ibandla* writers like J.S Mdimma of Adams Mission Station south of Durban felt a sense of loss. Particularly in the way writers concluded their letters. Mdimma put it, ‘what does it mean to say “I am yours” in the Zulu tongue?’ (Ukuthi ‘ngongowako’ loku ukutini olimini lwesiZulu?).<sup>22</sup> Mdimma’s concerns did not end there. He continued, ‘does Bongoza (old Zulu general) know that manner of speaking, what about Mapita (another Zulu general) and others do they know it?’<sup>23</sup> (Ubongoza uyakwazi loko kukuluma, u Mapita yena nabanye bayakwazi nje konje?) Mdimma’s unease was caused by the fact that this was a direct translation of the English that he did not appreciate. He urged writers to borrow words from Sesuthu or Sitwa (San language). In this case, it seems, Mdimma wanted writers to widen their readership to include readers who spoke languages other than English and Isizulu. But to such concerns Fuze responded by saying that this represented no significant problem. For according to him it meant respect:

Yebo kambe, Mdimma, lelo’zwi silitola  
kumaNgisi, kepa nati ngokwetu senza  
njalo uma sikuluma, sikulume  
ngokuhlonipha, njengokuthi “yebo, Baba –  
mnumzana” – “nkosi” – “nkosikazi” –  
nakumfokazana, nakumfazi, nentombi  
yomfokazana, uma sikuluma  
singaxabene.<sup>24</sup>

Of course, Mdimma, we get that word  
from English, but we also speak like  
that when we talk to each other with  
respect, like saying Father, Nkosi,  
Nkosikazi, even when speaking to a  
man of less status, women, ... daughter,  
when we are not quarrelling.

While questions about the conventions of the *ibandla* were important and attracted attention it was the discussion on head ring (isicoco) that solicited varying views. From the carpenter's shop at St. Alban's College, Jas. J.K. Khanyile wrote a letter to *Inkanyiso Yase Natali* challenging the view that people who wore head-rings did not want to keep up with changing times. In his letter he not only dealt with those whom he thought wanted to be assimilated into English society, but also the very act of trying to move out of one's community and customs. In the latter case, he referred to people who wanted letters of exemption from Native Law. Khanyile writes,

... sinombuzo ngodaba esilubone epepeni elidlulileyo ngendaba yokungena ebulungwini. Ngoba sizwa benziwa into enkulu, izicoco za oyise seku yinhlamba, into enkulu seku osheleni abane no sixpence.<sup>25</sup>

... We have a question concerning the news we saw on last week's paper about exemption from native law. For we hear this being made a big issue, and the head rings (izicoco) of their fathers have become an insult, and the big thing now is 4 shillings and six pence.

According to Khanyile, exemption and 4/6 (the money that was paid to receive papers of exemption and medals) did not remove discriminatory practices. Africans were still prevented from 'buying guns, taken into prison for ignoring the curfew bell and could not present their views in the Legislative Council'.<sup>26</sup> The son of a head ring[ed] father, as he referred to himself, asked those who wanted to abandon their fathers' head rings to tell him the names of their fathers and their social status.

Khanyile's letter, because of its provocative tone, started a debate between those who had been exempted and those who had not. Two days after Khanyile's letter appeared on the *Inkanyiso Yase Natali* newspaper, John Khumalo sent his response: 'I say, Mr. Kanyile, listen carefully to my words that respond to your letter' (Ngiti ngilalele kahle Mr. Kanyile emazwini engiza kuku pendula ngawo). According to Khumalo, Khanyile missed the point that, 'there are two people [small percentage] who have been exempted, whereas there are a hundred under the law of the head ring [Native Law]<sup>27</sup> (abantu abasemtetweni babili abasemtetweni wezicoco, bayikulu). This difference in numbers meant that there would be more people prosecuted under Native Law. What is significant is Khumalo's reference to Native Law as the 'law of the head rings' (abasemtetweni wezicoco), a reference he made five times in his three-paragraph-response to Khanyile. Such reference

further focused the debate on the head ring rather than on Africans' rights that, perhaps, Khanyile might have intended. And from then on the conversations revolved around the immense symbolic power of this male headgear.

As a property owner and businessman Khumalo detested the 'law of the head ring' because it deprived women (wives) all rights over their deceased husband's property. He writes:

... Uti uma usebenza uti ngisebenzela  
 abantwana bami ekusebenzeni konke  
 kobudoda bako. Akufike ukufa ke ufe.  
 Bese zifika ke izicoco lezi wena ozenza  
 igugu bese zitata yonke impahla yako  
 nabantwana bako.

... In all your active life you say I am  
 working for my children. There comes  
 death, you die. Then, there arrive the  
 head rings (men) you [Khanyile]  
 consider special and take all your  
 property including your children.<sup>28</sup>

Khumalo's response raised the perennial question that faced extended families: what to do with family members who did not apply or qualify for exemption from Native Law. For, according to Native Law, a woman regardless of her age and status in society [she] had no rights to own property. So when her husband died male members from her husband's extended family had all the rights over the property of the deceased. So for Khumalo and others who concurred with him the head rings came to symbolize all these legal inequalities. Partly because of space Khumalo ended his response on the property question but stressed that, 'I have not answered you. This is just to say come on, I am going to response properly' (angika kupenduli namhla ngisakuhola nje ngiti woza kukona ngizakukupendula).<sup>29</sup> The conversations went on and became quite bitter. Seeing that the debate might get out of hand, Sol Khumalo, a colleague of Jas. Khanyile, entered the fray to defend his colleague. But his defense was imprecise. In his plea titled, 'what wrong has Mr. Jas. Khanyile done' (Woneni uMr. Jas. Kanyile?), Sol Khumalo felt that the conversation had gotten out of hand and [it] threatened the good atmosphere and spirit that prevailed in the paper or rather *ibandla*. 'Hau! How dare you liter the paper with rubbish; has it (rubbish) enlightened anyone?' (Hau! Nenzani ukuba ipepa niligcwalise nge rubbish; yake ya kanyisela bani)?<sup>30</sup> What Sol Khumalo did, in this case, signaled an ominous future of the life of the forum. It set a precedent where the editor refused to publish letters that, he thought, were badly written or improper. It was not only the editor who urged writers to send

good letters but also Magma Magwaza, who was printer at St. Alban's College where *Inkanyiso Yase Natali* was published. Fuze referred to letters that were not well written as 'rubbish' (imfungumfungu) and told readers that their letters had been destroyed.<sup>31</sup>

Sol Khumalo advised people to stop responding to Khanyile if they did not understand what he meant. However, instead of clarifying Khanyile's stance on exemption, Sol. Khumalo reminded readers that there were still 'many issues that need[ed] to be discussed' (sinendaba zinengi esifuna ama sizikulume).<sup>32</sup> But of all the critiques of head rings (izicoco) Fuze's final words in the debate went to the core of what writers to the editor wanted to construct. Like Zagunde Zikalala, who urged people especially men not to pass time by drinking beer, Fuze said the same about the sewing-on of headrings. On January 17, 1891, he wrote that, 'the sewing-on [wearing] of head rings has caused an inability among us to think properly' ( ngoba ukutunga isicoco yiko okusibangele lobututa obungaka).<sup>33</sup> But he acknowledged that in the past, 'the head ring was a treasure when Zulu kings ruled the land; but today it is nothing' (naso-ke isicoco leso sasi yigugu kusabusa amakosi akwazulu; sesiyize nje namuhla).<sup>34</sup> Implicit in Fuze's statement is that the sewing-on of head rings bounded men to the power of the king and thus did not allow an individual to be himself. Moreover, the time that men spent sewing-on head rings or bonding in this fashion, it seems according to Fuze, was not appropriate for someone who had writing skills; rather the best place to be, metaphorically, was on the new forum they had created, in the *ibandla*. In addition not only did Fuze loathe the idea of the conferral of the sign of manhood but he also the shininess of its appearance when worn. He wrote that people should send their children to schools 'so that they [children] would not be attracted to the dreaded and shiny head-ring' (kona izingane zetu zingasayikufuza lobu'bucwazicwazi buka ngiyane otunekileyo).<sup>35</sup> To the men who participated in this sphere a new culture had emerged, one that valued individual's ability to write and write well. For in the mid-1890s Dinuzulu would be welcomed not so much for his position as heir to the Zulu throne but for the ideas he expressed in the letters he sent to the editor. Fuze helped to get his letters from St. Helena published in *Inkanyiso Yase Natali*. In one of the letters Dinuzulu writes about his experiences at St Helena and complained about irregular attendance of his teachers.

Ngilalele ukubona kwenu ngendaba yencwadi enganityela yona ukuti yabalwa yimi, nokubonga kwenu. Ehene, madona [bandla]... ungezwa udumo lwabelungu lokuti ngiyafundiswa. Umuntu ofundisayo ufika ngo fayifi (5 o'clock) amuke ngo sikisi (6 o'clock), ngolunye usuku apute angafiki. ...ngiqinisile ngokuba angifundiswa muntu.<sup>36</sup>

I am listening [reading] to your views about the letter I wrote, and your appreciation. Ehene, men [bandla] ... do not listen to the white people when they say I am being taught. The teacher comes at 5 o'clock and leave 6 o'clock, and on certain days does not come at all. . I am right when I say I do not have a teacher.

Ukuba ngangifundiswa abesengibona ingcosana; angiboni-ke, ngoba ngiyafohlozela nje!<sup>37</sup>

If I had a teacher I would be seeing [writing and reading] better; but I do not, because I am just stumbling!

As had become customary in the forum, writers thanked Fuze for sending letters and also passed their word of appreciation to Dinuzulu. But while writers shared the idea that *Inkanyiso Yase Natali* was a forum for discussion, they also had specific idea of the meaning and the materiality of the new *ibandla*. While the transformation of *ibandla* held up a promise of broad inclusion, it remained circumscribed by its very 'origins' as a council for men. Some writers saw *ibandla le Nkanyiso* as essentially a male domain. This had consequences for the issues discussed. Most of them centered round male concerns, for instance, lobola.

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\* Translation of 'ukotha ibandla' in isiZulu.

<sup>1</sup> The quote is taken from an article that appeared in the *Natal Witness*, 16 December 1873.

<sup>2</sup> All four businessmen were exempted from Native Law and had pledged allegiance to the British Queen.

<sup>3</sup> National Archives, NAD, C.S.O., 1597.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid: NAD, SNA, vol. 1/4/9.

<sup>5</sup> In referring to the paper's readers as critical readership I want to capture the rigour with which they engaged issues that they discussed on the pages of *Ipepa Lo Hlanga*.

<sup>6</sup> *Ipepa lo Hlanga*, May 17, 1901. Pietermaritzburg, Natal.

<sup>7</sup> *Ipepa lo Hlanga*, December 14, 1900.

<sup>8</sup> NAD, C.S.O. 1759.

<sup>9</sup> NAD, C.S.O. 1759.

<sup>10</sup> Leader, 'Makufundwe', *Ipepa lo Hlanga*, 1 May 1903. It appears that for the most part the writers of newspaper leaders did not want to have their names appear on the paper because of state prosecution.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> *Ipepa lo Hlanga*, 14 December 1900.

- <sup>13</sup> Taken from J.W. Colenso, *Zulu-English Dictionary* (Maritzburg: P. Davis & Sons, 1884). See also Alfred T. Bryant, *A Zulu-English Dictionary with notes on Pronunciation, A Revised Orthography and Derivations and Cognate words from many Languages; including also a vocabulary of Hlonipa words, Tribal-names etc., A synopsis of Zulu Grammar and a Concise History of the Zulu people from the most ancient times* (Maritzburg: P. Davis & Sons, 1905).
- <sup>14</sup> During the time of Zulu Independence *Ibandla* was the highest council of state.
- <sup>15</sup> John William Colenso, *Zulu – English Dictionary* (Natal: Messrs. Vause, Slatter & Co., 1905) fourth edition.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>17</sup> KwaZulu Archives: [Josiah] Gumede to Harriette Colenso, 3 January 1908. Colenso Collection, A204
- <sup>18</sup> Sol. Khumalo, *Inkanyiso Yase Natali*, 7 June 1889.
- <sup>19</sup> Thomas Zulu, *Inkanyiso Yase Natali*, 14 September 1889.
- <sup>20</sup> Most writers used this expression. See *Inkanyiso Yase Natali* and *Ipepa Lo Hlanga*. But for a specific case see Joel Msimang’s letter to the editor, Mahamba – Swaziland, 26 August 1890. See also A. Sililo, ‘Mngane / Friend’, *Inkanyiso Yase Natali*, 24 January 1891.
- <sup>21</sup> Elias D. Khumalo, ‘Ukulobola’, 1 October 1889.
- <sup>22</sup> J.S. Mdima, “Kumhleli weNkanyiso”, *Inkanyiso Yase Natali*, 15 October 1891.
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>24</sup> M. Magwaza, “Mngane / Friend”, *Inkanyiso Yase Natali*, 15 October 1891. For a critical discussion on Magma Fuze and his readers, see Hlonipha Mokoena, An Assembly of Readers: Magma Fuze and his Ilanga lase Natal Readers. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, volume 35, Issue 3, 2009, 595 – 607.
- <sup>25</sup> Jas. J.K. Khanyile, Izicoco / Head-rings, *Inkanyiso Yase Natali*, 14 September 1889.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>27</sup> John Khumalo, ‘Mngane / Friend’, *Nkanyiso Yase Natali*, 1 October 1889.
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>30</sup> Sol. Khumalo, ‘Woneni uMr. Jas. Kanyile’, *Inkanyiso Yase Natali*, 17 January 1890.
- <sup>31</sup> M. Magwaza, ‘Nkosi Yami Mhleli / My Dear Editor’, *Inkanyiso Yase Natali*, 30 July 1891.
- <sup>32</sup> Sol. Khumalo, ‘Woneni uMr. Jas. Kanyile’, *Inkanyiso Yase Natali*, 17 January 1890.
- <sup>33</sup> Magma Magwaza, ‘Mngane / Friend’, *Inkanyiso Yase Natali*, 17 January 1891.
- <sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>36</sup> Udinuzulu kaCetshwayo, ‘UmNtwana wakwaZulu / Zulu prince’, *Inkanyiso Yase Natali*, 14 January 1892.
- <sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

# THE ULWAZI PROGRAMME, THE PRE-COLONIAL PAST AND IDENTITY IN KWAZULU-NATAL

*GRANT MCNULTY*

Born of changes in the broader political context and the policy environment, the Ulwazi Programme is a South African library initiative that has been set up by the eThekweni Municipality's Libraries and Heritage Department to:

preserve and disseminate indigenous knowledge of local communities in the greater Durban area. It [the Ulwazi Project] creates a collaborative online database of local indigenous knowledge as part of the Public Library's digital resources, relying on community participation for delivering content and posting the content on the Web. (Ulwazi Programme, n.d.)

While the notion of heritage dominated early post-apartheid efforts to transform South Africa's cultural sector, when President Thabo Mbeki was in power and the Ulwazi Programme was conceptualised, significant attention was given to the concept of 'indigenous knowledge', linked to ideas around 'Africanness' and autochthony. The programme was the brainchild of a former Senior Librarian for Software Applications at eThekweni Municipal Library, Betsie Greyling (hereafter the Programme Leader). It is informed by local government, national and international policies, and draws heavily on the idea of indigenous knowledge as evidenced by its tag line, "sharing indigenous knowledge". In particular, it has followed the National Policy on Indigenous Knowledge Systems (NIKSO), which calls for the use of new technologies to allow what it calls "indigenous and local communities" to record and share their history, culture and language (Department of Science and Technology, 2005: 33). However, the Programme Leader explained that she only became aware of indigenous knowledge as a concept and NIKSO's policy once she had developed the programme model (Programme Leader, interview, 2 December 2009). As such, the Ulwazi Programme has adopted a loosely-defined,



flexible notion of indigenous knowledge that is hospitable to an array of materials, some of which are pertinent to the pre-colonial past and contribute to contemporary discussions of the pre-colonial histories and identities of clans<sup>1</sup> in KwaZulu-Natal.

## THE ULWAZI PROGRAMME MODEL

The Ulwazi Programme was established in 2008. It is the first project of its kind in South Africa to promote an apparently democratised collection policy through the library, the use of digital media and community participation.<sup>2</sup> It uses the existing library infrastructure, volunteer ‘fieldworkers’ from local communities and Web 2.0 technologies<sup>3</sup> to create what its advocates term a collaborative, online indigenous knowledge resource in the form of a wiki<sup>4</sup>, much like Wikipedia, but localised for the eThekweni Municipality. Once she had conceptualised the programme model, the Programme Leader hired digital media consultants, McNulty Consulting, to develop and maintain the Ulwazi Wiki. She then selected ‘fieldworkers’ from the immediate communities served by the library and with the help of McNulty Consulting, trained them to create digital audio and visual material (such as recorded oral histories and photographs of material culture) in the areas in which they live. Together with library staff, fieldworkers were taught to add this content, which the programme deems “local, indigenous knowledge”, to the Ulwazi Wiki, in both English and Zulu, using their local libraries and the Ulwazi Programme’s central office at the municipal library in Durban as submission points. The libraries also serve as Internet access points where members of the communities served by the library can browse the Ulwazi Wiki and the Internet, and contribute to the wiki if they have user accounts. Since 2010, the Ulwazi Wiki has allowed for submissions via cell phone, for which the contributors are paid in cell phone credit if their submissions are accepted (Ulwazi Programme, 2010).

## AIMS

The Programme Leader designed the model first and foremost as a librarian. The primary aims of the Ulwazi Programme, as a library-affiliated initiative, are thus the preservation, organisation and dissemination of knowledge on a wide scale as, according to the

Programme Leader, “that is what libraries do” (Programme Leader, interview, 8 October 2009). Key to the programme is use of new technologies to preserve and circulate local, ‘indigenous knowledge’ through an online repository to which local communities contribute digital content. The programme has a preservatory inclination but also deals with the circulation of resources. As the Programme Leader wrote in an article she co-authored, by “providing an online, contextually-based information service to local communities, public libraries in Africa will ensure future-oriented access to cultural heritage resources through 21st century information communication technologies (ICTs)” (Greyling and Zulu, 2010: 30). In another article, she argued that the Ulwazi Programme strove to enable local communities to become part of the global information society by establishing a digital library of local indigenous knowledge that they create. The programme model is based on the idea that access to a digital knowledge resource of local relevance facilitates the growth of digital and information literacy skills, the preservation of local indigenous knowledge, as well as potential economic empowerment of communities through skills development and knowledge provision (Greyling, 2009: 13).

The Programme Leader thought that community involvement was essential for the development and longevity of the programme and, through skills transfer, she hoped that communities would be able to collect their own local history and culture within the infrastructure provided by the municipality. Interestingly, it is the focus on skills development that she highlighted as one of the primary objectives of the programme. As she stated: “The content to me was always secondary. It was to transfer skills in the first place because eventually every nation should take ownership of its own history and its own culture. It is not meant for outsiders to record and to preserve someone else’s culture” (Programme Leader, interview, 2 December 2009). Therefore, the Programme Leader was primarily concerned with creating the infrastructure, a digital platform, to be populated with content generated by inhabitants of the eThekweni Municipality.

## INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK, POLICY AND POLITICS

In order to appreciate the Ulwazi Programme and its operations, it is necessary to understand the institutional framework in which the

programme was established, is now situated, and the policies that have been used to develop it. The Programme Leader explained that given her position in the eThekweni Municipality, she was required to observe its Integrated Development Plan (IDP) when devising the Ulwazi Programme model. The Municipal Systems Act 132 of 2000 required all municipalities in South Africa to develop IDPs, which are five-year strategic documents that direct all municipal activities and are reviewed annually in consultation with stakeholders and communities. Municipal IDPs are informed by both national governmental policy and local circumstances. The plans are implemented at municipal level and aim to address locally defined needs but must also follow the national government's policy (Deputy Head of eThekweni Libraries and Heritage, interview, 30 October 2009). Therefore, in order to be eligible to compete for limited municipal funding, projects must adhere to their municipality's IDP, which in turn relates to, and is governed by, the national policy.

The eThekweni Municipality's IDP is an eight-part plan and the Ulwazi Programme straddles, or addresses, Plans Five and Six. Plan Five focuses on empowering citizens by "enhancing skills, providing easily accessible information" and bridging the "digital divide" by making Durban a "digitally Smart City", although no further elaboration is offered on how this might be achieved. Plan Six deals with cultural diversity and the promotion and conservation of heritage through local history projects and the use of gallery and museum spaces (eThekweni Municipality, 2009: 73 – 74, 80). Location specific needs must also be taken into consideration. The Programme Leader explained that through library surveys from various library-using communities, "we were made aware of the needs in the communities; their lack of digital literacy, their lack of empowerment, the lack of digital skills, their lack of knowledge of their own communities, the fact that their indigenous knowledge was getting lost at an alarming rate..." (Programme Leader, interview, 8 October 2009).

The programme model is thus based on community needs as identified by the municipal library, as well as various national and international policies. It follows the eThekweni Municipality's IDP and the national Department of Science and Technology's NIKSO mandate for libraries, which encourages, "indigenous and local communities to actively record and share their contemporary history, culture and language" and

emphasises the creative use of new technologies to “support Indigenous and local community development” (Department of Science and Technology, 2005: 33). It is also informed by the Geneva Plan of Action, generated by the World Summit on the Information Society, which calls for free or affordable access to information and knowledge via community access points (such as a digital library service), the development of Information Communication Technology (ICT) skills and the empowerment of local communities to use ICTs, as well as policies that support the respect, preservation and promotion of cultural and linguistic diversity, and the generation of local content to suit the linguistic and cultural context of the users (Presidential National Commission on the Information Society and Development n.d.: 42 – 44).

### INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE?

It is important to note the Programme Leader’s interpretation of the indigenous. In my conversation with her, I became aware of a more flexible approach to indigenous knowledge, evident in the following:

I had a problem with the categorisation of indigenous knowledge as African knowledge because I am also an African. My knowledge is just as valid as indigenous knowledge. I do not come from Europe, even if my forebears did. My knowledge has originated here. The term non-Western is a no-no for me. The Indian people having been born and bred here are part of the local people. I regard their knowledge as just as indigenous as my own or the African peoples. I know it is not the popular definition of indigenous knowledge but to me, for the purposes of Ulwazi, we would be exclusive if we did not include everybody who lives here [eThekweni Municipality] (Programme Leader, interview, 12 December 2009).

She elaborated, “eThekweni Municipality is funding the project, so the term ‘local indigenous knowledge’ must apply to denote the boundaries of eThekweni” (Programme Leader, interview, 8 October 2009). Moreover, in developing the Ulwazi Programme, one of her primary concerns was not the recording and preservation of indigenous

knowledge but rather the longevity of the library and finding new ways to engage with changing constituencies, based on:

the fact that we had to admit that the library's clientele had dramatically changed over the last ten years, with the urbanisation and influx of people from the rural areas. They have different needs and if we do not satisfy them at the library, they go elsewhere. That was the rationale behind it (Programme Leader, interview, 2 December 2009).

The Programme Leader explained that through the Ulwazi Programme she was interested in providing access to information, as that was her brief as a librarian. She also expressed concern about "losing young people from the libraries" and saw a programme that provided locally-generated content delivered via a medium that was attractive to them, namely the Internet and cell phones, as a drawcard. She felt that if the library could implement a programme that included these aspects, it would entice people back to the library (Programme Leader, interview, 2 December 2009). Indigenous knowledge as a concept and formal policy only came to the Programme Leader once she has conceptualised the Ulwazi Programme. However, she no doubt saw synergies between what she hoped to achieve with the programme and the mandate for museums and libraries, as detailed in the national Indigenous Knowledge Systems Policy, discussed above. The above discussion illuminates the potential for multiple understandings and applications in different contexts, of a broad conceptual category like indigenous knowledge. The Programme Leader's interpretation of indigenous knowledge was loosely-defined and flexible, was limited to the geographic boundaries of eThekweni Municipality and, although it was a category was informed by government policy, it also offered the potential to promote inclusivity, thereby accommodating a broad array of materials.

### WHAT IS COLLECTED?

The Ulwazi Programme is run through the eThekweni Municipality and as such, one might expect the municipality to frame it in a particular way and prioritise what it feels should be collected and by whom. With limited knowledge of the communities in which the Ulwazi Programme

was active, and not wanting to stifle fieldworkers' enthusiasm, the Programme Leader explained that she did not want to be prescriptive about what was collected. In an interview with me, she suggested that content could include: "...arts, crafts, science, history, the environment... The only limitation was that it must be relevant for the eThekweni community (Programme Leader, interview, 8 October 2009). However, fieldworkers needed guidance: "We need to give them some direction in terms of themes that would be interesting and that they can pursue and develop...they are young people with little life experience so they need themes to help them." (ibid) Themes for 2010, chosen to publicise the Ulwazi Programme website and direct traffic to it, included the history of soccer in local communities to coincide with the 2010 FIFA World Cup and the history of Indians in KwaZulu-Natal, as the 160<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of indentured labourers to Natal was in 2010. Other themes included the brewing of *umqombothi* (a type of beer) and the Zulu names of plants (Zanele Shange, fieldworker, interview, 6 October 2009).

The Programme Leader highlighted a "falling apart of the older societal structures because of the lack of transferring this knowledge from the older to the younger generation" (Programme Leader, interview, 2009 October 08), which most likely contributed to Ulwazi Programme's framing of indigenous knowledge, characterised by the (mainly 'traditional') knowledge of the older generation, underpinned by an urgency of preservation. This mandate resulted in a specific vision of what should be collected by fieldworkers – traditional culture and the knowledge of the older generation – evidenced by fieldworkers' collected content submitted over a period of six months between October 2009 and March 2010. Submissions included information about traditional clothing, the *isigubhu* (a traditional drum), *lobola* or bridewealth negotiations, traditional food and how to make 'Zulu' steam bread, the names of cows used to pay bridewealth, *magalobha*, presented as an 'indigenous game' and traditional women's work (fetching water from the river). Other submissions dealt with a recipe for brewing sorghum beer, Zulu folktales, children's stories and poems, herbal remedies and *umhlonyane*, a traditional rite of passage for girls reaching womanhood. This trend has continued and a sample of submissions from February – April 2014 included dreams and their meanings, the uses of a love potion, details of various traditional

ceremonies and rites of passage and ways of using traditional medicines. That is not to say that submissions do not include other types of information, including clan histories. However, the majority of submissions relate to generic ‘Zulu’ traditions.

Intriguingly, there are a number of examples that reveal subjects not envisaged by the Ulwazi Programme and quite apart from the traditional Zulu culture that was put forward as its notion of indigenous knowledge and the fieldworkers’ object of inquiry.<sup>5</sup> Real social issues and their histories such as poverty and dispossession, the history of regional and political conflicts, and identity and the making and remaking of the Zulu all surfaced, albeit obliquely, and were contained within an archive of ‘indigenous knowledge’. Of significance to the pre-colonial past is the wealth of *izithakazelo* (clan praises) and, to a lesser extent, *izibongo zamakhosi* (chiefly praises) and *amahubo esizwe* (clan ‘anthems’) available on the Ulwazi Programme Wiki. They record information about the histories and identities of the numerous clans in KwaZulu-Natal before they were incorporated into the Zulu kingdom and are indicative of contemporary shifts in ways of thinking about identity in the province.

### PRE-COLONIAL IDENTITIES IN KWAZULU-NATAL

A great deal of academic research has dealt with the rise of a broad Zulu ethnic consciousness in the early decades of the twentieth century (Marks, 1986; Cope, 1993 and La Hausse, 2000) and on iterations of modern Zulu nationalism, linked to the Inkatha movement and its leader, Mangosuthu Buthelezi, in the period from the 1970s to the 1990s (Maré and Hamilton, 1987; Golan, 1991; Maré, 1992; Harries, 1993). Although functioning in different contexts and with different political agendas, these successive Zulu nationalist movements promoted a particular version of the past and an overarching and generic notion of identity that at different times, both united and constrained various groupings in what is today the province of KwaZulu-Natal.

The power of Buthelezi’s Inkatha (and post-apartheid as the Inkatha Freedom Party) has subsequently waned and research into Zuluness continues to unpick the homogeneity of a politicised Zulu identity. However, the contemporary playing out of identity politics in KwaZulu-Natal is fraught with potential repercussions, perhaps best illustrated by

the Nhlapo Commission on Traditional Leadership Disputes and Claims, beginning in 2007, to which various clans in KwaZulu-Natal made applications for recognition of their pre-Zulu histories and identities. The Zulu king, Goodwill Zwelithini, responded to these challenges by rallying the support of government at provincial and national levels, as well as chiefs loyal to the monarchy and supportive of a singular Zulu identity, and denounced the applications as “mischievous challenges”, not only to his authority as the Zulu king but to the “Zulu nation” as a whole. Statements issued by Zweli Mkhize and Jacob Zuma, then the ANC’s deputy provincial chairperson and deputy president respectively, reiterated their support and recognition of the Zulu king as the province’s sole monarch. In the face of such stiff opposition, six of the eleven original applicants withdrew their applications and four of the remaining five asked the Nhlapo Commission for personal protection as they had received death threats. About a month after this, Professor Nhlapo and two of his senior commissioners resigned, citing work pressures (Sithole, 2008: xvi).

Nevertheless, emergent cultural movements continue to point to a growing opposition to the idea of a unified Zulu nation and calls for recognition of pre-Zulu groupings and identities, which former KwaZulu-Natal Premier, Zweli Mkhize, has acknowledged and supported. Academic historian Jabulani Sithole was tasked by the premier to assemble a team of researchers from various disciplines to research and publish on the province’s pre-colonial history, the first of three volumes spanning the pre-colonial era, and the periods 1840 – 1910 and 1910 – 1994. Sithole explained that work entailed looking at the pre and very early colonial political makeup of contemporary KwaZulu-Natal and the multitude of other chiefdoms, identities, customs and traditions, including the Ndwandwe, Qwabe and Hlubi, which existed before the assimilating rise of the Zulu (interview, 7 April 2011).

Mbongiseni Buthelezi’s doctoral research, *Sifuna umlando wethu* (We are Looking for our History): Oral Literature and the Meanings of the Past in Post-Apartheid South Africa, focuses on the oral artistic forms of the Ndwandwe, members of one of the most important kingdoms in south-east Africa at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The Ubumbano IwamaZwide (Unity Association of the Zwide People) has been reviving and popularising the memory of the violent incorporation



of the Ndwandwe into the Zulu kingdom in the 1820s, in part through adapting the meanings of Ndwandwe symbols such as the *izithakazelo* (clan praises), *izibongo* (personal praises) of the founding figures of the Ndwandwe kingdom and the Ndwandwe *ihubo* (clan ‘anthem’).

Members of the Qwabe have joined forces to create the *Ubumbano LwamaQwabe*, a non-profit organisation focused on exploring the origins of the Qwabe kinship grouping and Qwabe himself. The aims of the organisation include “uniting the Qwabe people as a ‘nation’ and (re)discovering its correct history, rekindling the dignity of the Qwabe and uniting the amaQwabe in celebration of their ceremonies and their identity.” *Ubumbano lwamaQwabe* is made up of two segments, a think tank and a task team. According to the findings of the task team, the history of Qwabe can be traced back beyond “Zulu identity [which] began in the 1800s during King Shaka’s reign. That means that Zulu identity is not (authentically) the entire Nguni nation’s. It was enforced on groups that were defeated by Shaka’s regime. The Qwabe are therefore Nguni not Zulu” (Hlatshwayo, 2011). The proliferation of clan websites also points to the claims being made in the public realm for pre-Zulu identities, customs and traditions. Southern groupings like the Bhaca, Cele and Nhlangwini all promote the origin of their clan and its history on their websites.<sup>6</sup> Mwelela Cele (interview, 17 January 2011), the former Senior Reading Room Librarian at the Killie Campbell Library<sup>7</sup> and Jabulani Sithole (interview, 7 April 2011) explained to me that similar groupings, such as the Ndimas, Mchunus, Macingwanas and Thembus, were intimating that they too, wanted recognition of their pre-Zulu traditions, customs and identities.

In Ixopo, in southern KwaZulu-Natal, Melizwe Dlamini has called for the recognition of the Nhlangwini as a pre-Zulu kingdom in its own right, and has contested the results of the Nhlapo Commission, which acknowledged the Zulu king as the sole monarch in the province. The Nhlangwini promote Melizwe Dlamini as their culturally-appointed king but await the second phase of the Commission for him to be officially recognised. The ongoing contestation around Melizwe Dlamini’s claims has stimulated significant debate on Zulu-language radio stations like *Igagasi* and *Ukhozi* FM, a vociferous backlash against him in the province’s main Zulu language paper, *Isolezwe*, as well as attacks on him (Mwelela Cele, personal communication, 6 April 2011). A Zulu language article detailing the attack on Dlamini included a

headline that, in English, read: “Dlamini fears for his life” (Sikhakhane, 2011).

The Ulwazi Programme is a government project with a strong bureaucratic foundation that seeks to preserve a particular form of indigenous knowledge. However, pressing social issues such as poverty, dispossession and identity, all surfaced within the Ulwazi Wiki. They percolate through the programme’s filters, through a loosely-defined notion of indigenous knowledge and are accepted as ‘indigenous knowledge’. We assume that a political power, in this case, the Ulwazi Programme, informed and constrained by the eThekweni Municipality and adhering to various pieces of legislation, will create a particular archive. Yet, as with any archive, the process of archiving often results in the creation and preservation of records that capture and can reveal unintentional information about the past. The Ulwazi Programme Wiki therefore offers insight into the pre-colonial histories and identities of a number of clans and contributes to a contemporary discussion about identity in the KwaZulu-Natal region.

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<sup>1</sup> I am aware of the complex genealogy of the term 'clan'. I use it not as an analytical concept, nor as a noun suggesting a social entity, but to refer to an *isibongo* or surname, of the people who share a common *isibongo* and who trace their descent to

a common ancestor. I use the English word ‘clan’ as this is the term that the subjects of my study used to refer to a particular *isibongo*.

<sup>2</sup> Following the establishment of the programme, the Presidential National Commission on the Information Society and Development (PNC on ISAD) aimed to create a similar project on a national level, the National Digital Repository (NDR), and approached the Programme Leader to elicit her perspective on how the national project should function. Through community participation, the NDR aimed to “collect, preserve, promote and disseminate South Africa’s cultural heritage” (National Digital Repository, n.d.).

<sup>3</sup> Web 2.0 describes websites that use technology beyond the static pages of earlier websites. It refers to cumulative changes in the way webpages are made and used. A Web 2.0 site may allow users to interact and collaborate with each other in a social media dialogue as creators of user-generated content in contrast to websites where people are limited to the passive viewing of content.

<sup>4</sup> A wiki is an editable website designed to enable contributions and modifications from multiple users.

<sup>5</sup> I discuss these in more detail in Chapter 2 of my doctoral thesis: McNulty, 2014.

<sup>6</sup> See for example, [www.bhaca.co.za](http://www.bhaca.co.za) and [www.cele.co.za](http://www.cele.co.za).

<sup>7</sup> The Killie Campbell Library’s manuscripts collection is an important source on the early history of contact between the Nguni-speaking people of the KwaZulu-Natal region and the British colonists, and a key resource on the pre-colonial history of KwaZulu-Natal. It was often used to strengthen and validate claims for traditional leadership submitted to the Commission on Traditional Leadership Disputes and Claims, also known as the Nhlapo Commission, and houses collections such as the nineteenth-century James Stuart Papers, part of which has been edited and published by Colin de B. Webb, and John B. Wright, eds., *The James Stuart Archive of Recorded Oral Evidence Relating to the History of the Zulu and Neighbouring Peoples* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1976 – 2001).

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This volume comprises papers that were presented at a conference that was held at the Centre for African Studies (CAS) at the University of Cape Town on 28 and 29 March 2014 under the auspices of the Pre-Colonial Catalytic project which is part of the new Humanities Initiative of the Department of Higher Education and Training.

The main aim of this project is to coordinate a network of researchers from various institutions in South Africa and beyond in order to construct a pre-colonial history of what is now recognised as South Africa. Those who prepared papers for the conference were asked to produce a survey of their own particular fields, showing what had been done to date, what needed to be done, and how this could be done. In the event, the contributors did not always follow this brief, but their work, as reflected in the papers in this volume, should point to where the study of the pre-colonial should go in the future and suggest ways of getting there.

These papers thus range widely over present day South Africa and take us from the very early past to the present. They all represent work in progress. The authors do not all agree on key issues and no attempt has been made to reconcile different approaches. It is hoped that these varied papers will stimulate new work on the pre-colonial, and that this volume will serve as a useful indication of aspects of the state of the field in early 2014. As this catalytic project proceeds, further volumes will follow.

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