

**ORAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION
OF SOUTH AFRICA**

*CULTURE, MEMORY
AND TRAUMA*

Proceedings of the Third Annual National Oral History
Conference

Richards Bay, 7-10 November 2006

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Series Editor: Christina Landman

© 2013 Research Institute for Theology and Religion
University of South Africa, P O Box 392, Unisa, 0003 South Africa
First edition, first impression

ISBN 978-1-86888-

Typesetting, typographical editing and final lay-out:
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University of South Africa

Cover design:
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University of South Africa

Printed by:
Bontshi Business Services
PO Box 51248
Wierda Park
Centurion 0149

Acknowledgement:
This publication was made possible with a financial contribution by the
Department of Arts and Culture.

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Introduction

Philippe Denis
OHASA Chairperson

This book is a record of the proceedings of the 3rd South African Oral History Conference held on 7-10 November 2006 in Richards Bay, KwaZulu-Natal. Fifteen papers – out of the twenty-seven presented at the conference – are reproduced here. The presenters were university lecturers, heritage workers and government officials. These presenters came not only from KwaZulu-Natal, the hosting province, but also from Gauteng, Limpopo, the Free State, the Eastern Cape, the Western Cape and Zimbabwe. The conference was jointly organised by the Oral History Association of South Africa (OHASA), the Department of Arts and Culture, and the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Arts, Culture and Tourism.

The existence of OHASA, the regular holding of oral history conferences and the multiplication of oral history projects throughout South Africa demonstrate the importance that oral history as an academic endeavour and a tool in heritage development has gained in South Africa since the advent of democracy in 1994. In a country still wounded by a legacy of racial discrimination, the retrieving of oral memories is a task that is more urgent than ever. The interest raised by conferences such as the one held in Richards Bay shows that oral history has a unique role to play in post-apartheid South Africa.

Perhaps I should start by saying that, in a sense, oral history has always existed. From time immemorial conversations have taken place about the past. Stories have always been told in a formal or informal way, particularly in Africa. Oral history was only established as an academic discipline in the late 1940s in the United States. In South Africa the first two oral history projects, at the Killie Campbell Library, University of Natal, and with the History Workshop, Wits University, were initiated in 1979. In recent years, numerous oral history projects have seen the light and countless scholars and postgraduate students have made use of the methodology of oral history to gain a better knowledge of the past. OHASA was formally constituted at the 2nd South African Oral History Conference held in Boksburg in October 2005. The objective of the Association, according to its constitution, is “to promote and facilitate the recording, preservation, access, popularisation and study of oral history in South Africa”. This includes “poetry, music, oral praise, oral performance and oral traditions”.

The theme of the Richards Bay conference was “Culture, memory and trauma”. Such a theme was fitting in a province divided, for many years, by a brutal civil war and which is now suffering the impact of HIV/AIDS. Several papers in this volume guide oral history practitioners, through examples, in the difficult task of retrieving painful memories. But oral history is not only about pain and suffering. It can also be used to affirm and develop the nation’s cultural heritage. As a result of the combined effect of colonial rule and segregation, certain aspects of this heritage have been maintained under tutelage for too long. The time has come to ask the bearers of oral tradition to share their knowledge with new generations of South Africans. Oral history is one of the ways in which this mission can be carried out.

Our gratitude goes to the authors of the papers included in this volume for their having taken the time to revise their papers for publication. We owe a special debt to Dr Patricia Opondo, who painstakingly collected and edited these texts. Other volumes of OHASA conference proceedings are still to come. This one is the first to see the light. We hope that it will help to illustrate the work of OHASA and that it will encourage more academics and heritage workers to become practitioners of oral history.

Series foreword

Christina Landman
OHASA EXCOM: Publications

Oral Historiography is an exciting new field of scholarship and a rapidly emerging science within the Human Sciences. This publication bears testimony to this fact.

This publication is a record of the Proceedings of the 3rd South African Oral History Conference, which was held in Richards Bay in 2006. This publication is made possible owing to a grant given by the Department of Arts and Culture. The impetus for the publication came from the Oral History Association of South Africa (OHASA). The publisher is the Research Institute for Theology and Religion at the University of South Africa.

This is the first in a series of three books that contain a selection of the proceedings from seven of OHASA's annual conferences. The publication of these volumes will be concluded by June 2013.

The content of these three volumes will be organised as follows:

Book 1: *Culture, memory and trauma*

3rd conference 2006 (Richard's Bay): *Culture, memory and trauma*

Book 2: *Oral history: representing the hidden, the untold and the veiled*
4th conference 2007 (Polokwane): *Truth, legitimacy and representation: oral history and alternative voices*

5th conference 2008 (East London): *Hidden voices, untold stories and veiled memories: oral history, representation and knowledge*

6th conference 2009 (Cape Town): *The politics of collecting and curating voices*

Book 3: *Oral history: heritage and identity*

7th conference 2010 (Nelspruit): *Oral history and heritage: national and local identities*

8th conference 2011 (Mahikeng): *Past distortions, present realities: (re)construction(s) and (re)configurations(s) of oral history*

9th conference 2012 (Bloemfontein): *Oral history, communities and the liberation struggle: reflective memories in post-apartheid South Africa*

The present publication has been peer-reviewed by three academics: Prof Graham Duncan from the University of Pretoria, Dr Mary-Ann Plaatjies-Van Huffel from the University of Stellenbosch, and Dr Wessel Bentley from the University of South Africa. The manuscript was submitted in full to each of the three reviewers and a report expected from each of them, as well as a recommendation about the viability of its publication. The reviewers' suggested changes were incorporated into the text, and all three reviewers recommended the publication of these conference proceedings as academic essays.

A special word of thanks goes to Mss Mandy Gilder and Brenda Kotzé from the National Archives, as well as to Ms Nonnie Fouché and Mr David Kahts from the University of South Africa, both of whom contributed to the financing, presentation and layout of the book.

We are confident that this publication – and those following – will make a substantial contribution to the science of Oral History in South Africa and beyond.

Inaugural address

Ntombazana Gertrude Winifred Botha
Deputy Minister of Arts and Culture

Chairperson of the Oral History Association of South Africa, Professor Denis,
MEC for Sports, Arts and Culture, C^{de} Thusi, colleagues, members of the Academia,
government officials, members of the media, ladies and gentlemen:

Good morning!

It is indeed an honour and a great pleasure for me to address you this morning and to open the 3rd Annual Oral History Conference.

I may sound like an old cracked gramophone record, but I must confess that I know of no other so apt and powerful quotation than the words of President Seretse Khama, the first president of democratic Botswana, who said: “A nation without a past is a lost nation; a people without past is a people without a soul”. Oral history is an important tool for keeping that past alive, for understanding it, and for preserving it for the future in order to preserve our soul.

I have met many people in my lifetime who have told their stories about what they did or what had happened to them as political activists during the difficult days under the apartheid regime. Some of these stories are quite horrifying. Some are almost unbelievable, and yet they make sense.

I have not had an opportunity to interview comrades. But I have been privileged to be in their company, listening to their stories as they recounted events of almost twenty-two years ago and what happened in the “trenches”. They tell their individual stories in detail, with great passion and conviction, filling in the gaps and providing answers to some of the questions, but leaving others unanswered. When listening to a comrade tell her story, one starts by appreciating the words she uses to express her emotions and the trauma she experienced as she tries to relive the past – one notes her gestures, her facial expressions, her emphases, her silences, her chuckles, her tone and voice inflection – all this gives meaning to the story she is telling, meaning that is absent in the written word. As I listen to her story, I am amazingly able to connect with what she has been through. I empathise. And after telling her story, she sighs with relief, she has told someone and then the healing process begins. This is oral history and it is important that it be recorded in the way that it was told.

Oral history, however, is not something new in South Africa. It is, in fact, the indigenous culture of our people. It has always been our way of life. We are all storytellers and some of the stories we tell contain historical facts worth recording. Our stories have been transmitted from generation to generation by word of mouth.

Some of us have had the pleasure of being told stories by our grandmothers (*oogogo*), usually at night time. I remember my grandmother used to say we should not tell stories (*iintsomi*) during the day, because *uzakuphuma izimpondo* (you will grow horns). The underlying meaning is “there is work to be done during the day, so you cannot sit around telling stories”. “The best time is the evening when all the work is done.”

Our grandfathers, too, told stories about their experiences and how they related to their environment, the land, rivers, forests, livestock and their general way of life. These stories or histories of importance are embedded in the memory of elderly people. But there were important lessons that we learnt from their stories. These stories moulded us in those formative years and later shaped our lives and our culture.

The challenge is that of collecting and preserving such stories and appropriately recording them because ooMakhulu nooTat’omKhulu are not going to be with us forever. When the time comes, they will pass on. It is therefore urgent that we act speedily to capture their stories sooner than later.

Stories told by our veteran comrades who fought against the unjust and repressive apartheid system so that we could attain the freedom we enjoy today are vital in shaping a shared memory. A few weeks ago we laid to rest Comrade Kati, a veteran of our struggle. Listening to people paying tribute to this great hero, it became clear that there are many stories that he had not shared with us. The reality (and this is my fear) is that when an elderly person, such as Comrade Kati, departs, the collective memory of the nation will be interred with that person.

In the last decade of apartheid, attempts were made to document and record the voices of ordinary people as an alternative to a history written from a different perspective that was largely inaccurate and often contradictory or distorted.

A well-known example that comes to mind is the recording of the so-called prophecy of Nongqawuse. This is the story of the suicide of a tribe, a suicide that was stage-managed by the colonial masters and missionaries of the time. The people of Nongqawuse’s tribe were ordered to slaughter all their livestock and dispose of their belongings. People believed her and did as they were told. In fact, this was a ploy of the *Boere* to drive Nongqawuse’s tribe to starvation and eventually off their land so that they (the *Boere*) could take possession of the land. Today, the validity of this so-called prophecy by

Nongqawuse is being contested and dismissed by some people as a myth. I know that research is now being undertaken by a film-maker who is making an attempt to shed new light on the contested aspects of this story.

Obviously, the records that are kept and preserved in the National and Provincial Archives reflect the fact that the oppressed and marginalised are destined to remain invisible or incapable. Given this, oral history is the most important and relevant method of research, a method that can provide new insights and challenge such established distortions and myths.

Oral history is “a means of recording and preserving people’s memories or testimonies and eyewitness accounts of the past”. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) proved that oral history is an important tool in uncovering our silent past. However, oral history does much more than document our people’s past. It is interactive and, in that interaction, relationships are created.

When one deals with traumatic memories, the interview situation gives the person who shares his or her memories the opportunity to come to terms with grief. In South African we have seen how the oral testimonies presented at the TRC restored the dignity of a people who had suffered violations and untold atrocities. The TRC allowed both the victims and the perpetrators of apartheid violence to speak for themselves in their own words. This was the TRC’s significant role in our nation’s healing process.

The TRC shifted the focus from oppression and resistance to reconciliation, reconstruction and transformation, and indeed, in the words of our former President Nelson Mandela, to the “reconstruction of the soul”. But there remain many more stories that have not been told and, with the departure of people like the late PW Botha, part of our collective memory is lost forever – or is it?

There are two lessons that we learnt from the TRC process:

- 1 It made us acutely aware of the need for oral history to be documented and preserved and of the need for many more practitioners of oral history, people with special and unique skills that will enable them to practise their profession effectively.
- 2 We also became aware that the process was not an easy one and we began to ask ourselves “what other stories or issues from our past are we silent about and how can we use oral history to bring to the fore all these other issues we are silent about?” Until these issues are attended to, we will not be able to understand and address the challenges we face as a country.

Our government recognises the importance and the value of oral history for our country and the Department of Arts and Culture is mandated in terms of section 3 (d) of the National Archives and Records Service Act 43 of 1996 to promote the collection and preservation of oral testimonies. Section 3 (d) prescribes that the National Archives collect non-public records with enduring value of national significance which cannot be more appropriately preserved by another institution with due regard to the need to document aspects of the nation's experience which had been neglected by archives repositories in the past.

In line with recommendations of the *White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage*, the National History Programme was officially launched in March 2000. Its aim is to reconstruct those aspects of the nation's memory that are neither recorded nor preserved in the National Archives of South Africa and relevant institutions.

Oral history is an international practice. However, the practice cannot be the same in all countries. In South Africa it is essentially a communal practice. It is dictated to by the social, political and cultural contexts that prevail and, as you know, we have so many stories to tell. Oral history creates a space for the sharing of these stories and memories.

"Culture, memory and trauma" – I think that the theme of this conference captures the essence of what oral history is about in South Africa. The challenge in the second decade of our hard-won freedom and democracy is to celebrate our memories in their cultural richness and to give due attention to all the experiences of the past, painful as well as joyful.

I understand that there are amongst us today delegates from the Department of Education. I trust that they will take advantage of this conference and come up with methods for incorporating oral history into the classroom, if not into the school curriculum. Something must be done to assist the young people of this country to deal with the trauma they have been through and to start the healing process.

I am certain that all delegates present will find this conference very informative and fruitful. I hope that you will take back to your institutions and communities the knowledge gained. There is a lot that we have learnt during the past twelve years of freedom, but I believe that there is a lot more that we can still learn. Institutions of higher learning are the best places to take on this responsibility. However, I think that this matter needs to be dealt with as a matter of urgency, because it may well be the answer to ending conflicts and bringing about peace and prosperity, not only to South Africa, but to our continent as a whole.

I wish you a very successful conference. I hope that, when you gather for the 4th annual conference next year, we will receive exciting reports on your projects in South Africa and other NEPAD initiatives.

This conference is now officially opened.

I thank you.

**The resourcefulness of Elders and their strategic intelligence
in dealing with culture, memory and trauma:
an African perspective**

Langalibalele Mathenjwa
South African Heritage Resources Agency, KwaZulu-Natal

Introduction

In this discussion, I intend to look at the role played by the elders in the preservation, promotion and distribution of culture, in building, injecting and influencing future citizens' memory and in dealing with trauma and other stressful experiences and situations.

Psychological counselling is not new among Africans, and is certainly not new among the Zulus. Given that we are at the crossroads, it is imperative that we place beacons that will mark the direction we have taken or else the one we intend taking, otherwise those coming after us will lose their way. Before we place these beacons, however, we need to revisit our indigenous knowledge systems to check on the accumulated body of knowledge and see if we can retrieve something that will help us to deal with our current tragedies, trials and tribulations.

Without pondering too much on defining what an elder is, we can say that an elder is not only defined as an adult person. Besides adulthood, one qualifies to be an elder, a resourceful person, by one's maturity of mind and soul, responsibility, accountability and knowledge. In an African context, being an elder goes beyond definitions dictated to by one's age.

The grounding idea suggests that elders are said to be elders because they know what is right and what is wrong. They can clearly define what is good and bad. They are capable of identifying what is good for an individual child, a person, a home, a ward and the nation at large. A decision is said to be sound when made after its possible repercussions have been weighed. It is perhaps for this reason that elders are regarded as resourceful generators, preservers, purveyors and distributors of knowledge. It is thus common among Africans that the death of an elder is usually seen as the destruction of a library, the drying up of a pool of knowledge, and the destruction of a scarce resource. It is important that we start asking ourselves where exactly these elders keep their body of knowledge. Asking this question will lead us to the role of memory as a rich repository of oral history that the current

generation needs to visit for the purpose of obtaining knowledge and a source of reference.

Elders had and still have technical strategies to deal with both social and psychological phenomena such as trauma and stress. They are known to have profound knowledge about life as a whole – elders are believed to be able to solve all the possible problems and challenges society can face. They had and still have profound knowledge and understanding of all stages of development, from the womb to the tomb, and to be properly acquainted with the ceremonies associated with each stage of life. Furthermore, elders are well equipped to deal with social pathologies.

In dealing with matters pertaining to trauma, memory and culture – the theme of our conference – what I have said so far suggests that we cannot succeed without touching upon this body of knowledge, a body of knowledge held by the elders in society. It is therefore important to check on how elders dealt with such matters and possibly adopt and modify their methods if necessary. For the purpose of this presentation, we will approach this body of knowledge using the following avenues:

Effects of social intelligence on social pathologies

Almost all African dealings are communal in character because they involve almost all the members of a particular community. Most Africans led and continue to lead a communal life where most things are shared among community members, which is why African communities have less traumatic and fewer stressful experiences than their western counterparts. What also helps is the social structure of the African extended family, wherein the upbringing of children is the joint responsibility of every older member of the community. This remained true until the unitary/individualistic paradigm was introduced into African society by westernisation.

Elders as responsible citizens

Elders had and still have an important role to play in society. They are there to guide and give direction to the nation. It is therefore a fact that, before a young child has read a book, he/she will have read his/her parents' lives and their ways of doing things. What is it that the child learns from his/her elders? Esterhuysen (2006:11) suggests that:

Training our children to behave with integrity and truth will be unsuccessful unless we parents integrate these character traits into our own lives.

Esterhuysen is of the opinion that parents have a responsibility to equip children with a sound and reasonable moral foundation. This was the strong foundation that the elders of yesteryears relied on in their own children's upbringing. Furthermore, they were engaged in this venture (bringing up children) together as a community and not as individuals.

A good example here is the socialisation process where, before marriage, both boys and girls belonged in groups under *iqhikiza* and or *igoso lezinsizwa* (man/woman in charge of that group). All the young people's problems – mainly as a result of love affairs – were reported to their group leaders. This life of sharing was instilled in people at a very young age: young children shared food and, for example, household chores.

As custodians of history, culture, land and all of the nation's pride and heritage, it was also the elders' sole responsibility to ensure that these remained secure. The elders would guard against unacceptable behaviour, such as uncontrolled love, teenage pregnancy and birth outside marriage. It was also the elders' responsibility to adjudicate in family disputes, care for orphans, and look after the destitute. They also ensured that people were accorded their hereditary and customary rights in society. Their overall responsibility, however, was to guide neophytes until they become independent and responsible adults. The elders would ensure that, at each stage of life, certain rituals were performed. It must be noted that the effectiveness of each ritual was strongly determined by the granting of an elder's blessing. These rituals had a profound impact on the development of an individual, so much that a slight anomaly would have a devastating effect on the person's whole life.

National disaster and tragedy

Like all nations, Africans – but especially Zulus – possess what they regarded as their most significant information. This information was entrusted to specific elders, people who were responsible for its safekeeping and who ensured that it could not be misappropriated. This was done to safeguard the nation and society from serious social disturbances, such as military attack.

Certain occurrences were regarded as disasters or national tragedies. Floods, military attacks, volcanic eruptions, diseases, and the death of national figures could traumatise the nation and thus warranted special

“treatment”. It should, however, be pointed out that most of the tragedies that occurred in a Zulu context were (and still are) associated with the anger of the ancestors. This on its own is a valid reason that can heal a person psychologically and enable him/her to deal with such traumatic experience/s.

In the case of a king passing away, the nation would not be told until all arrangements regarding the successor and the funeral had been made. The purpose of this was to avoid the possibility of civil rivalry. The whole exercise of “keeping quiet” would last for about two months.

The African intelligence “network” was the responsibility of the elders. They were the first people to know if the nation was in any danger. They were also the people who would initiate and discuss the need to attack rival nations. To carry out this responsibility, they used *izinhlozi* (spies), who were the major role-players and the people who would obtain all necessary information. Such information was, of course, extremely confidential – *isifuba sakomkhulu* – and could not be passed on to anybody. This information was only passed on to those deemed utterly trustworthy.

Extended family’s role in dealing with trauma

Most of the tragedies that people experience today are by no means new. What is, however, new is the ways and means of dealing with the trauma and stress caused by such tragedies. Traumatic and stressful events and occurrences such as death, rape, single-parenthood, domestic violence, poverty, disease and many others were dealt with historically through the extended family structure and through customs such as *ukusisa*, *ukuthekela* and *ukwenana*. Modern life patterns came with their positives and negatives in the socialisation process of Africans. An exodus from an *African extended family scenario* to a *Eurocentric unitary scenario* has its own implications in the socialisation process of Africans. This exodus has influenced the way Africans deal with, for example, orphans, widows and widowers, and victims of wars (going to war and dying on the battlefield carried with it an honour that it does not have today). Historically, because of the way in which African society was structured, Africans had no orphans or divorce, and nor did people suffer from poverty. The customs mentioned above made provision for any social problems that did arise.

As far as marriage was concerned, the elders were entrusted with social responsibilities such as surrogating, *ukungena* custom, intramarriages (practising *ukuphihliza igula* custom), “illegitimate” births, and other customs. Elders were the custodians of information when it came to birth, marriage and death in a family. Women elders would know who were the “legiti-

mate” and “illegitimate” children in the family, and would keep such information strictly to themselves – there was simply no chance of it being disclosed to others.

The developmental stages discussed below show how, in almost all of a person’s life stages, the elders played a vital role.

Stage one

This started at birth, when the arrival of a newly born baby was officially announced through a cultural function known as *imbeleko*. This was a way of telling the ancestors about the arrival of the new family member and pleading with them to guard and guide him/her through the long route of life. In some ways, this custom is similar to baptism in the Christian religion. The person responsible for carrying out *imbeleko* was the head of the family or a close senior member of the family acting on his behalf.

Stage two

This child was then monitored throughout his/her life. At round about age two or three, certain customs would be followed: cutting off the little finger in the case of the Ngubanes or making incisions on the child’s face (in the case of the Zondis, Mbheles, Zumas and many others). The belief was that, if such a custom was not practised, that particular child would suffer in some way later on in life. All this relied solely on the knowledge of the elders who knew when and how such customs were to be carried out and honoured.

Stage three

At about age seven, young children were monitored to make sure that their growth was normal. Assuming they were, this fact was also proclaimed to the ancestors in the form of a thanksgiving, which involved slaughtering an animal as a symbolic act of appreciation.

Stage four

At about age eleven (although, today, it may be earlier), young boys and girls reach puberty. This is an important stage that most Africans treat extremely seriously. This is mainly because the birth of a boy marks the extension of the family and that of a girl signifies increased wealth in the form of cattle.

At puberty both boys and girls are put in seclusion. During this period they are formally equipped with the coping skills that will safely lead them

on their journey towards manhood or womanhood. This will involve teaching them appropriate behavioural patterns. They are encouraged to practise safe sex (which was not based on penetration (*ukusoma*)), thus combating the threat of teenage pregnancy and the possibility of contracting a sexually transmitted disease. (Traditionally, an intact woman (a woman who has not lost her virginity) would be paid a full price during *lobola*, thus enhancing her moral status and that of her family.) Once they have passed through initiation school, participants will know what is expected of them as they approach adulthood. Again, initiation involves the slaughter of an animal as a way of informing the ancestors and the neighbouring community. It was regarded as imperative for neighbours to know the status of young people because they, too, were responsible for monitoring their progress.

Stage five

The next stage after puberty would be *umemulo* (coming of age). At this stage the young woman and her parents proclaim that she is intact and ready to be courted. This is a public statement during which the father thanks his daughter for behaving morally and for not indulging in sexual activities and conceiving before marriage. He is grateful to her for resisting temptation, thus maintaining the good name of her family. He is also grateful to his ancestors for guarding and guiding his daughter and urges them to continue to do so. Once again, an animal is slaughtered to inform the ancestors and the entire community that a man's daughter has come of age. Today, this ceremony is normally associated with the young woman's 21st birthday celebration, although this is a distortion of traditional custom.

After the celebrations, the young woman is then at liberty to fall in love with any young man who courts her. This is not an individual affair, however, because it involves the *iqhikiza* (woman elder in charge of all the young women of the ward). When a young woman accepts a suitor, she does so through the *iqhikiza* who would be monitoring their affair. She would not be allowed to have sexual intercourse before marriage, and the *Iqhikiza* would monitor her until she reached marriage. This is one of the significant life stages that specifically focuses on adolescent morality. Today there is an outcry owing to the moral degeneration caused by the desertion of such traditional practices. The abandoning of these practices has undoubtedly led to stress, and to various traumatic occurrences.

Stage six

Marriage was accorded more value in traditional African society because it was regarded not only as union between two individuals, but between two families – and these families included the living and the dead. The trauma of divorce and single parenthood was unknown in African society.

Rituals such as *ukukhonga*, *umbondo*, *izibizo*, *ukucimela*, all of which are associated with marriage, laid the foundation of a very stable marriage that was highly unlikely to break down. The marriage itself is a “crowd puller” with no number restrictions or limitations on the guests – even the uninvited are welcome. Furthermore, nor is the marriage only a family members’ affair, because the rituals listed involve people from outside the family as well.

During the official day of the marriage itself, the bride’s father would report officially to the ancestors inside the cattle kraal about the young woman’s departure. This is done in the kraal mainly because it is where the male ancestors of the household are believed to reside. In a Zulu traditional setting, there are three holy places: the kraal, the upper place (*umsamo*) and the dumping site (*izala*), where ancestors are believed to stay.

When the bride is signed off from her maiden home, she is officially transferred to her new marital home. This is confirmed by the exchange of *inanzi* meat, which is believed to be eaten by the ancestors (who are represented by woman elders of the family). The involvement of other people contributes in solemnising a marriage, which is why there has always been a very low divorce rate in Zulu society.

The married couple would then bear children and take them through the very same path they had travelled.

Family/group therapy in dealing with trauma

As mentioned before, Zulu culture is not individualistic in character. It is mainly group based. This is evident from the fact that at some stage Africans were referred to as Plurals mainly because they normally do things in “numbers”, that is, in a group and not as individuals. The advantages of mass group involvement are that therapy involves a number of people rather than the counselling of a single person. Group counselling also has the advantage of helping a number of people at once, which means that solutions to various problems are found at the same time. Another advantage is that it encourages unity, togetherness and respect, thus enhancing trust and confidence.

Elders play a key role in nation-building because they possess resources that enable them to deal with a variety of social issues. African society is based on a complete and fully-fledged support system which, in turn, is based on the communal structure as a whole.

Death and orphans

Most Africans did not fear death; they regarded it as a gateway through which they passed in order to meet their ancestors. It was an honour to die in a battle that was fought for their kingdom (which they regarded as a just cause) – hence the war cry “*Uyadela wen’ osulapho!*” (“Happy you are who is there!”). As such, death in battle was an honoured death that was not experienced as traumatic.

It was not common for a person to die young; if they did, such a death was associated with witchcraft and regarded as a tragedy. An unusual death (e.g. being struck by lightning), being bitten by a venomous snake, death after a long illness and other deaths were all believed to be the result of witchcraft. Such deaths were regarded as tragedies and therefore caused trauma and stress, simply because such deaths were unexpected. However, the elders catered for such tragedies through psychological counselling in the form of a mass counselling. This is very different from the western counselling process. According to the Zulus, immediately the alarm has been raised, people stop their daily chores and visit the bereaved family where, in a number of different ways, they attempt to comfort the members of the family. They assist them with almost everything, starting from cleaning, cooking and making all the funeral arrangements. This is seen as the pre-trauma counselling stage because all this takes place days before the actual funeral. After the funeral, community members regard it as their responsibility to help the bereaved family until the family is once again able to resume normal life (post-trauma counselling).

Many people lived long lives and when they eventually died they felt it was time for them to go and meet their ancestors. When an elderly person died, the family would accept it and say that he/she has joined the ancestors (*ugodukile*). This type of death was not regarded as a tragedy.

As already mentioned, the upbringing of children was the joint responsibility of every older member of the community; orphans were non-existent. The social scenario of the extended family committed other members to looking after a child whose parents had died.

Ukusisa and ukwenana customs

Social customs were used as interventions that could remedy trauma. As far as hardship was concerned, there were customs such as *ukusisa*, which involved lending out an animal to someone who did not own one. One could lend stock to someone for the cultivation of land and for milking; later on, as a reward for doing this, the person being lent the animal would keep the animal's progeny. This meant that there were no destitute people simply because the "haves" lent to the "have-nots". Such lending could be in the form of stock, of food or of something else.

On one hand, in the case of *ukusisa* one was expected to look after my stock or land for his own benefit; on the other hand, in the case of *ukwenana* one was expected to bring back whatever was given to him. This is a way of lending someone something to use in the hope that he will return it when he has acquired his own.

Many of these customs are no longer practised because there has been a drastic change in African societies. Unfortunately, today, most people have become selfish and most tend to focus on their individual wellbeing without making any attempt to care for the less fortunate.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is fair to say that the monitoring of traditional milestones in someone's life was a joint endeavour for both the family and the community, and one which laid a firm foundation for the creation of mature and responsible citizens. The problems that we have with our youth today are largely the result of individualism. Elders should be seen as knowledge databases that youth need as they start out on their long journey through life. Young people should refer to these "databases" because doing so will help to guide them through all the hardships that life may bring. Matching the type of knowledge discussed above with new knowledge and new ways of doing things can help young people take new routes that the nation as a whole can follow. Enhancing their cultural knowledge will enable them to deal with any trauma they experience in their daily lives.

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Apartheid, memory and other occluded pasts

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The relationship between apartheid and the collective memory of its principal victim – the black population of South Africa – is complex. The apartheid system was distinct from prior political orders in South Africa's past in as much as it aimed at comprehensive and systematic racial separation and discrimination. In urban areas, which are the main focus of this paper, apartheid became the great leveller of black society. A wide variety of living situations which had been allowed to arise and even flourish in earlier years, such as multi-racial and multi-class 'African' freehold townships like Sophiatown and Kliptown, inner city locations such as Dukathole and Payneville in the east rand towns of Germiston and Springs, inner-city slums and the various peri-urban settlements were ruthlessly shut down. African self-employment and virtually all areas of independent capital accumulation in the towns were savagely restricted. The few African traders that were permitted to function were allowed to operate only one business, and were confined to selling a restricted range of goods; exemptions from the pass laws previously granted to sizeable number of middle-class blacks were withdrawn; the old daily self-employed pass was cancelled, and opportunities for sub-letting to tenants in the earlier, somewhat more loosely regulated African residential areas earned a blanket prohibition. The area of individual autonomy and the scope for individual self-expression which had existed on the margins of the old order was radically curtailed. Aside from ethnic differences which apartheid actively encouraged and cultivated, apartheid endeavoured to impose a deadening uniformity, the most visible expression of which was the endless rows of identical houses and streets which radiated out through the new model township erected well away from white towns, mostly in the decade of the 1950s.

One express goal of apartheid, especially with regard to blacks, was to flatten class and elevate nation (*volk*) and race. In the 87% of white-owned South Africa, it sought to achieve the goal of rendering all blacks subordinate and inferior to whites. This required, among other things, comprehensive racial separation or "apartheid", the name by which the system became famous and which involved an elaborate system of controls over all spheres of life. In the evocative words of American journalist Joseph Lelyveld and

African photographer Ernest Cole, South Africa under apartheid became “a land full of signs”,¹ signs prohibiting, obstructing, channelling, discriminating. One core characteristic of the system was to render all blacks vulnerable and at the mercy of the arbitrary whim of all whites, especially police, township administrators, railway clerks, and factory foremen. The experience was profoundly dehumanising, debilitating and disempowering.

At the heart of this oppressive, invasive, all surveying system was the pass – the single uniform pass introduced in 1952. Inscribed on the pass were the same categories of information for all men and, later, all women. Passes in effect reduced Africans to more or less identical interchangeable labour units. Like the houses in which the African population dwelled, passes imposed a suffocating uniformity on the regimented African urbanites of the Reef. Being arrested for pass offences is a constant refrain of African oral testimonies from this period. One particular cameo repeats itself in such personal narratives – a man leaves his jacket in his house and ventures to his garden gate or onto the street. A police van draws up disgorging police who stream out to arrest anyone whose papers are not in order. Our victim is seized by the police who refuse to even let him go back into his house to get his pass. He is arrested, incarcerated and fined. What runs through all of these accounts is a sense of the profound injustice and the cold inhumanity of such acts, but the real damage that they inflicted on the human spirit and psyche is only rarely revealed. This raises the question which this paper seeks to confront. The only two accounts which I have come across are graphically self-expressing, which is perhaps why such memories tend to be repressed. ANC veteran Thomas Nkobi, who went into exile from South Africa in 1962, remembers how he remained haunted by the experience:

“To us” Nkobi reflected, “a pass is a matter of life or death, because without it you would never see the day setting, because without it you would be arrested...that was one of the pieces of legislation which really degraded the African people ... This question of a pass...when I was outside in exile after years I would dream about the police asking for a pass ... they used to call it ”pasi isikhudu abantu bethe”, in other words, the ”pass is the evil of all evils”.²

¹ Cole, E. 1967. *House of bondage*. New York: Random House. (p. 82)

² Interview with Thomas Nkobi conducted by Philip Bonner, Shell House, Johannesburg, 1993 cited in Bonner, P.L. & Nieftagodien, N. In press. *Alexandra: a history*. Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman. (p. 99)

Nkobi was not the only one to wake up in a cold sweat. Mitshaka Mlangeni likewise gives an unusually full and unvarnished account of the pall it cast over daily living:

There were so many sections in the pass ... In fact, it was difficult to get through a pass raid, because a pass authority would just find fault with your pass, whereas you thought your pass was all right. And then you [are] dragged to a queue and locked in ... Before you walk out of your house you go to your breast, and when you see a policeman you touch your pass. It, you know, it dominated your thinking. In the first place, you think, you think of the pass first.³

Most informants are equally reticent about the experiences which commonly followed being arrested for some or other infringement of influx control or pass regulations – incarceration in gaol. The reasons again are not too hard to fathom. Time spent in the common prisoner's cells was invariably debasing, dehumanising and degrading.

Interviews with ex-prisoners in "Number 4", Johannesburg's main awaiting trial prison, now part of Constitution Hill, testify to the traumatic ordeal so many African men had to endure. Beatings, abuse, theft, torture and sexual assault greeted new prisoners from the moment they were arrived. Mr S., who was imprisoned in 1960, remembers the first time he was escorted to the cells:

Those that were there for a long time and they used to scream. There were a lot of people. Two policemen used to come with a list and if we were eight in a group then they would take ten people and put them in a cell. Then they would take another ten to another cell. They take another twenty to another cell and then another forty to a cell until everybody was finished. Those who were screaming were saying "Mr. Langa, Mr Langa. Bring them, bring them this side. We want to buy them. Bring them all, we will give you your thing." In other words, they wanted to buy us. Some of us were already bought. And the one who bought you used to say that they were looking for you for a long time ago. While we were still walking, they were shouting

³ Interview with Mitshaka Mlangeni, cited in *Alexandra*, page 99.

from their cells and when you turned around, you couldn't see them because it was very dark. We could not see those people in their cells but they could see us. We could only hear their voices. When you arrived early after being arrested yesterday, they would divide you and put you into different cells. Sometimes you find out that you have bad luck and you have been put with your enemies.⁴

Violence and homosexual rape or coerced sex was routine in the cells. Upon arrival as Mr S. recalls:

They would then say that they are now going to test the new ones. There were big drums there with water that was used as toilets before. They would call us one at a time to come forward and they would ask you for money. If you didn't have money then they would tell you to drink all that water in the drums that were used as a toilet. There was also stool in there. You would have to drink it and then they would tell you to vomit it out into the drain. They used to make you vomit cause some people used to swallow their money. The money was folded in plastic. While you vomited, the money would come out. These men used to take the money. They would hit you and slap you while you were vomiting. They would take that money and there was nothing you could do and all those people did it every day, even if you reported it or not. All these things were happening in room number four and it was where people used to get tortured.

Mr T. remembers:

Sometimes you choose to have a man and sometimes they force you to have one because you are still new and you don't know anything. After we have gone into one cell, the policeman would come and count us. After he leaves, if one of the old prisoners wants you, then he would ask you to come and sit next to him. He will ask you to tell him about you, like your name and where you come from. He will tell you that from today, you will sleep with him and he will do anything for you.

⁴ Interview with Mr S.S. conducted by Joy Phelo for *Ochre Media*, 11 September 2003.

It's up to you if you want a man but if you don't then you could end up in trouble like being killed because you are alone and they would think that you want to be better than them. The one with a man will have security and get whatever he wants ...⁵

These accounts are usually full and graphic, largely because they were used for the Constitution Hill exhibit, and informants were asked specifically about their experiences in goal. In these instances, the most forthcoming were long-term inmates. Those spending shorter terms in jail for administrative offences were invariably more reticent and guarded, and spoke in general terms about violence and sexual harassment.⁶

African men who were forced by the pressures of privation to find loopholes in the system or who simply refused to submit placed themselves beyond the ambit of civil society, and at least on occasion likened themselves to wild animals. Setschedi Moses recalls the life of a young man in the African freehold township of Alexandra, once this decision had been taken to remove the pass, and all those without work and a pass were subject to arrest.

Then came their thing of introducing section 17... it was meant for those who were not working they arrest us for *loaferskap* they take us to jail in Leeuwkop... 18 months for nothing.

Unable or unwilling to take a pass, Setschedi and many of his contemporaries preferred

... rather [to] remain a springbok, keep on jumping fences until today ... when we were aware of the sound of the "swakini" [the boers] outside, that is the sign they are coming in force. But then we lock up the doors, use the back exit, jumping fences, running away.⁷

Young migrants from Nqutu to the East Rand in the 1970s used almost exactly the same imagery to describe their daily lives. Employed illegally and not possessing a pass, they lived the life of *izimbali*, that is, bucks in the forest, constantly on the run due to fears of hunters and other animals to

⁵ Interview with Mr W.T., conducted by Joy Phelo, no date, 2003.

⁶ See Bonner, P. L. & Segal, L. 2000. *Soweto: a history*. Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman. (p. 56)

⁷ Cited in *Alexandra*, pages 99-100.

which they might fall prey. Sometimes they slept on mine dumps, sometimes in pipes; always they flirted with the possibility of arrest.⁸

Those that submitted or were able to conform depicted themselves in equally vivid and revealing imagery. Nqutu migrants likened themselves to oxen, and coined a motto to characterise their life strategies in the towns. These young Nqutu migrants, who would ordinarily prefer to associate themselves with aggressive bulls, had been emasculated by migrancy and apartheid. Survival or what limited success was achievable in this system depended on assuming the posture of dumb, long suffering docility. Individually, manhood was stripped away in an ongoing nightmare of a different kind.

The Nqutu case suggests migrants internalised a sense of inferiority or subordination. This, arguably, was one of the greatest crimes as well as one of the greatest triumphs of apartheid. Few recognise how relative meagre the manpower was that was deployed by the repressive force of the South African state. The police force in particular was comparatively small. Apartheid survived because people acquiesced. Of course, apartheid went through several stages. Its imposition in the 1950s was accompanied by numerous explosions of resistance, as was its demise. But, in the lengthy interval between its heyday in the 1960s and early 1970s, it remained stable because those whom it oppressed were too mentally cowed to even consider how it could be toppled. One photograph by Ernest Cole, the leading African photographer of the 1960s, tells us more than a mountain of newsprint. It shows a station platform with densely packed African commuters. On the other side of an imaginary line stands open space, occupied by a few solitary white passengers waiting to board the train. As Cole writes, "No physical barrier separates black and white zones ... What keeps blacks from spilling into white preserve is the unseen power of apartheid."⁹ The reminiscences of Clement Twala evoke a sense of the self-policed passivity of this time in the African township of Soweto. Clement Twala was a municipal policeman or "black jack". At the beginning of the month, he would round up rent defaulters in the early hours of the morning to be arraigned for non-payment at the township's superintendent's office. Clement Twala remembers herding thirty at a time.

⁸ Interview with N. Ndimba, M. Sithole, J. Sithole, K. Ngobene conducted by V. Ndime, Katorus, 1996, cited in Ndime, V. 1997. "Ayizond 'nkrabi" (an ox perseveres): the changing lives of migrants from the Nqutu district of Kwa-Zulu Natal to Germiston, 1950-1980s. MA Research Report, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 60-67.

⁹ Cole, E. 1967. *House of bondage*. New York: Random House. (p. 66)

These people would come very peacefully without fighting back at all. We would move right behind them and they would never dream of running away. We were never scared that these people would turn against us. We didn't carry guns. They feared punishment. It used to be a disgrace for any black person to be found defying the law then. I don't know why.¹⁰

Experiences or episodes of this kind were not readily or naturally summoned up to mind by those who had passed through them, nor naturally recounted to younger generation. From the early to mid-1970s, however, with the growing influence of Black Consciousness thinking and the outbreak of the 1976 Soweto students' rebellion, more and more sections of black urban youth became increasingly impatient with their parent generations' political passivity, and their apparent complicity in their own degradation and oppression.¹¹ One of the most conspicuous features of contemporary South Africa began to emerge – a cross-generational silencing and breakdown in the generational transfer of experiences and values. As resistance further intensified from the early 1980s, a struggle history began to displace historical narratives of all other kinds. Billed as the "People's History" and supposedly privileging the role of ordinary men and women, in reality this history celebrated struggle personalities, struggle organisations and struggle themes. Politically flawless individuals and organisations of unquestionable integrity assumed centre stage. A grand narrative of oppressive laws and regimes and of uncompromising struggle and struggle heroes displaced the more pliable and morally ambiguous survivor of apartheid's travails. This focus on heroic figures has been noted in analogous situations elsewhere. In South Africa it was further consolidated and entrenched by revisions in the schools' history syllabi following the end of white minority rule in 1984. Now the subject of apartheid became a core element of the syllabus and was taught at several levels. The revised National Curriculum Statement for Grades 8 and 9 in South Africa's public schools identifies as follows the issues to be covered under the syllabus entry "apartheid":

Apartheid in South Africa

- Impact of World War II

¹⁰ Interview, Clement Twala, cited in Bonner, P. L. & Segal, L. 2000. *Soweto: a history*. Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman. (p.. 69)

¹¹ *Soweto*, chapter 3.

- What was apartheid?
- How did it affect people's lives?
- Repression and resistance to apartheid in the 1950s (e.g. the Defiance Campaign, the Freedom Charter and popular culture)
- Divide and rule: the role of the homelands
- Repression and the growth of the mass democratic movements in the 1970s and 1980s: external and internal pressure
- Building a new identity in South Africa in the 1990s: pre-1994 negotiations, the first democratic elections and South Africa's Constitution¹²

The subject of apartheid soon threatened to acquire the status that the "Great Trek" had had in the school syllabi of previous generations. The central problem with this obviously massively important focus was that it was a source of shame to white students and of humiliation to blacks. How then to teach such a thorny subject? One temptation was to focus on struggle heroes. Another was to apply some cosmetic touches to the more hideous features of apartheid, which then ran the danger of rendering it seemingly anodyne and banal. Even more decisively, the lived realities of apartheid were lost. Indeed, history in general was shied away from by the younger generation.

These developments have placed a growing onus of responsibility on the professional and amateur historian. The grand narratives of struggle and apartheid capture only a fraction of its lived reality, and convey a picture drained of meaning and feeling. Since official documents are silent on many of these subjects, and written participant accounts are few and far between, and often cast in heroic mould, oral testimonies provide one resource that can redeem and bring to life this crucial period of South Africa's past. These were collected on a substantial scale in the golden age of social history from the early 1980s to early 1990s. Current exercises in reconstruction, recovery and public memorialisation, such as Kathorus on the East Rand, in Alexandra (Northeast of Johannesburg), in Soweto, in Kliptown, in Constitution Square and in District 6 generate testimonies of a similar kind. These nevertheless imprint themselves on public consciousness and public history very unevenly, and have yet to grip the public imagination. For the first time, memory has no public and no partner. The dance has yet to begin. Like Holocaust survivors, those who survived through the dark years of apartheid can possibly be thought of as being doubly victimised – firstly, as victims of the system, and secondly as victims who have been silenced and prevented from

¹² South Africa. Department of Education, 2002. *Social Sciences*, (p. 62)

telling their tales. It may be years before South Africans can squarely confront this past.

Other occluded pasts

A variety of other memories were also blotted out by apartheid, particularly those of forms of living that were at variance with its central precepts and practices. It was here that apartheid achieved one of its most notable successes. It not only removed most racial groups from meaningful contact with one another, thereby entrenching profound mutual ignorance and incomprehension of each others' values and ways of life, but it also gradually effaced most memories of other non-racial, multi-racial and multi-class ways of being. In so doing, it in effect naturalised apartheid, persuading much of South Africa's population to accept and internalise its founding premises and myths. This proved so effective that the etymology of the very word that described the new order was rarely, if ever, considered or probed. Literally translated, "apartheid" means separateness. Inscribed into the very term is the presumption of the possibility or reality of racial mixing. It was this that apartheid not only effectively prohibited, but even banished from thought. Among the multitude of trivial ways in which this was accomplished which I personally remember was blanking out the African township of Soweto from familiar oil sponsored motorists' road maps of Johannesburg and South Africa. If you did not know Soweto was there, you would never guess its existence, and you would certainly find it difficult to get there if you did happen to know that it existed.

Racial mixing was in fact relatively common prior to apartheid. As a consequence, in the first four decades of the twentieth century white politicians were gripped by recurrent paranoia about racial mixing or miscegenation. "Poor whites" and "detrified" blacks were seen as the heart of the problem, and poor whites were commonly characterised as the soft underbelly of white supremacy and white domination. The reports of countless commissions and select committees testify to the wide currency of such fears.¹³ The prime sites of racial mixing were in and around the main towns. The co-residence of blacks and whites in slums of inner city Johannesburg up until the late 1930s is relatively well known,¹⁴ but similar living arrange-

¹³ Berger, D. 1982. White poverty and government policy in South Africa: 1892-1934. PhD thesis, Temple University, Philadelphia, 1-198.

¹⁴ See, for example, Jochelson, K. 2001. *The colour of disease: syphilis and racism in South Africa, 1880-1950*. Oxford: Palgrave. (pp. 34-110)

ments were present in or around many of South Africa's other main cities. In Port Elizabeth, for example, 30 000 poor whites lived in inner city mixed race slums until the 1950s.¹⁵ The mixed neighbourhood of District 6 in Cape Town has acquired iconic status, but others, such as Salt River and Woodstock, grew up in the urban shadows.¹⁶ On the fringes or just inside the perimeter of practically all of the main cities of South Africa, mixed race freehold townships evolved, generally fairly early in the country's history. Some, like Sophiatown, are household names. Others, less well known, such as Kliptown on the west side of Johannesburg, Korsten outside Port Elizabeth, and Raisethorpe outside Pietermaritzburg in Natal, were perhaps even more emblematic of racial mixing than their more celebrated counterparts in the mother city and the City of Gold.¹⁷ Finally, a more anarchic kind of mixing developed in the smallholdings of the peri-urban areas surrounding the main towns. The Cape Flats were home to poor whites and poor coloureds from a relatively early stage.¹⁸ The peri-urban areas around the Witwatersrand housed an assortment of unregulated quasi-squatter groups which attracted larger and larger numbers of illegal residents in the 1930s and 1940s.¹⁹

Apart from the celebrated exceptions of Sophiatown and District 6, these communities or contact zones are little or wholly unknown, yet they are a far more significant part of South Africa's social landscape than is generally acknowledged. The reasons why they have languished in such obscurity are because they are poorly documented in the archival record; this is because they were generally uprooted under apartheid and because they so transgressed apartheid's assumption and tenets that they were banished not only from view but from mind. As a result, virtually the only way of accessing information about such communities is through oral testimony and individual memory. This is a fast disappearing and in many cases is completely lost.

As just mentioned, a major factor which has helped to obliterate memories of these pasts has been physical uprooting and removal. As a result of such acts, acts which punctuated the 1950s and 1960s, families and former

¹⁵ Baines, G.F. 1994. *New Brighton, Port Elizabeth, c.1903-1953: a history of an urban African community*. PhD thesis, University of Cape Town, 26.

¹⁶ Du Toit, M. 1996. *Women, welfare and the nurturing of Afrikaner nationalism: a social history of the Afrikaanse Christelike Vroue Vereeniging, c.1870-1939*. PhD thesis, University of Cape Town, 165-190.

¹⁷ Isaacs, H. 2002. *Full circle: reflections on home and exile*. MA research report, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 10-20. For Korsten, see Cherry, J. 1998. *Blot on the landscape and centre of resistance*. BA Honours dissertation, University of Cape Town.

¹⁸ Du Toit, *Women, welfare, nurturing*, pages 165-190.

¹⁹ Bonner, P.L. 1988. *Family, crime and political consciousness on the East Rand, 1934-1955*. *Journal of Southern African Studies* 14 (3).

neighbours were scattered across new townships or took refuge in homelands. Stable contexts facilitating the transmission of such memories were shattered. Individuals became increasingly isolated and atomised, especially with the passage of time. Key features of these pasts lost their relevance, particularly to new generations, and were replaced by a kind of misty nostalgia suffused with a sense of harmony and peace. I have found, particularly in my recent work on public memorialisation, that relatively few places and contexts survive which still reinforce and reproduce memories of such pasts. This happens in especially those communities where apartheid only partially succeeded in implementing its goals and in places where sections of such communities still survive. The two examples of such relict communities with which I have had contact are Kliptown and Alexandra. I will discuss Kliptown now and Alexandra later. For reasons which I will not go into here, Kliptown was the first area near a major town in the old Transvaal where Africans could buy freehold land. In 1904 the first Africans purchased freehold plots in Kliptown, a right which they jealously guarded and preserved until the 1950s. Freehold tenure was then revoked but Kliptown still survives and a section of its residents still managed to retain a foothold within its precincts until the demise of apartheid in the 1990s. Through a large part of its life Kliptown thus persisted as a pocket of freedom for black and some white South Africans. It was a place where different races could mix freely and where black South Africa could express their individuality and indulge whatever entrepreneurial inclinations they might have. Interviews conducted under my supervision in 2005, which must necessarily be corrected for “golden age” bias, reveal it as an exceptionally cosmopolitan and exuberant community. Kliptown, for example, was an important place of refuge for mixed race couples. The best known of these among Kliptonians was Mr Harrison, an Englishman, who married a Sotho woman. When they came to Kliptown is unclear. Their house still stands. Grandfather Harrison bought each of his children a house in Kliptown. Grandmother Harrison owned the first shop in Maakasparo (Racecourse) and let it to a Chinese trader named Lizes. Besides this the family owned the first bakery and dairy in Kliptown proper.

Other mixed couples also gravitated to Kliptown. One of these was the Bendiles. The history of this family also illuminates a corridor of South African history stretching well back into the past. The original home of the Bendiles was Grahamstown in the Eastern Cape. There the armed support that they gave to the British was recognised by an award given them by Queen Victoria, and the gift of a hill, known as “Bendile” to the family. Johnson Bendile left the Cape for Bloemfontein at some unspecified point in

the past and married a Scottish wife by the name of Oldrich, who was born in Basutoland in 1902. She was the daughter of a Scottish soldier who fought in Basutoland wars. According to Emily Patricia Brothers (née Bendile), "my parents had a problem because they could not get married because of apartheid laws ... This angered my father very much". They eventually sought and found sanctuary and acceptance in Kliptown.²⁰

Kliptown was a refuge for many races and ethnic groups including Chinese, Indians, coloureds and east Africans. Johannesburg's early Chinese community was scattered across the city's mixed race freehold townships and inner city slums. Most had migrated independently from the South China province of Kwandung.

The Chinese in South Africa were officially designated "non-white". In the 1960s, Japanese were allowed the status of "honorary whites", but the Chinese retained their former status. As a result, the areas in which Chinese could live, trade and, above all, buy property were limited. Johannesburg's Chinese were concentrated in Ferreirastown near the police headquarters of old John Vorster Square, Ophirton and Vrededorp (two other mixed race "slums") and the freehold townships of Sophiatown and Newclare. Since these areas were declared "white" from the mid-1930s to the mid-1950s, parts of their Chinese trading population sought refuge in Kliptown. Thomas Johnstone's family, for example, lived and traded in Vrededorp before being forced out to Kliptown. His father, who had emigrated from South China, soon built up a chain of five coal yards in Kliptown. This was a reliable trade because Kliptown was not served by electricity. Everybody therefore cooked and heated with coal, which left a pall of smoke hanging over Kliptown throughout the winter months. Jimmy Lai, known as Pam Pam, came from the doomed Sophiatown to set up business in Kliptown. Another Chinese trader, Mr Lee, came to settle in Kliptown in 1948. By the 1960s, about 19 Chinese businesses were plying their trade in Kliptown, mostly along Beacon Road. A handful still remains.²¹

Kliptown has for several decades been home to the most diverse Muslim communities in South Africa. Because of the relative freedom Kliptown offered, Muslims from all over east central and north Africa converged here, and gradually created their own space in places such as Malawi Yard and Somali Yard.

Some came by legal means, using the railways and buses. Others crossed into the country illegally. As Tamara Banda puts it:

²⁰ Interview, Emily Brothers, Kliptown, 2005.

²¹ Interview with Thomas Johnstone, Kliptown, 2005.

They used to come by foot or raft. They had no proper transport. They would cross the borders illegally, thus there was some footing to be done and also the use of normal transport. They used to get jobs on their way to South Africa.²²

Tamara's father set out from Nkata Bay in Malawi for Johannesburg in the 1920s. He himself followed in 1960. Tsha Mawa, whose name means the rising sun, travelled by bus for three days from Malawi via Mozambique before reaching South Africa. He also recalls the previous generation travelling by foot. As he remarks:

The people who came before us were on foot. They came as a team of five or ten ... They would first prepare the food which was bananas ... they would cook it and dry it. They would also go to the mosque for some rituals related to the Muslim religion. The journey would take about a month. It was a very difficult journey. Tye would cross the Zambezi River, a very dangerous river without a bridge or ferry. This river had crocodiles and snakes. They used to take off their clothes and hold their hands together and fasten their clothes on top of their head. In a chain form they would cross the river. After crossing, they would pray and have a meal. They would perhaps meet a lion the next day. They would fight the lion or scare it ... They also used medicine which would make them immune from snake bites, or it would make them smell the snakes. Most animals attack in the evening so when they were tired they would sleep in the trees ... This became better and safer when the buses and trains were introduced.²³

Somali came from Northern Tanzania, via Mozambique, as a young boy accompanying his uncle. He recalls:

Most of our fellow country people, the Somalis, died on their way trying to come to South Africa. A lot died of wild animals.²⁴

²² Interview with Tamara Banda, Kliptown, 2005.

²³ Interview with Tsha Mawa, Kliptown, 2005

²⁴ Interview with Mr Somali, Kliptown, 2005.

Both Malawi and Somali Yard were situated in Tamatievlei, behind the Grand Bioscope. Somali came to Kliptown around 1960 together with Oupa Sayele, a herbalist, to make "gamadi" (community) in the area. They were expelled from Somali yard in the removals of the mid-1970s.

The Somalis rubbed shoulders with Muslims from Malawi, from Mozambique and from East Africa, as well as with Muslim Indians and Cape Town Malays in Kliptown. Each offered prayers in their own distinct groups in Kliptown's mosque. Mr Somali remembers:

Though the other races looked down on Somalis, the Somalis were the main people of the Muslim religion.²⁵

Because of their low incomes, however, they were unable to import Muslim wives from their homelands into South Africa. As a result they married South African wives whom they attempted to convert to Islam. Partly as a result of this, "our children never followed in our footsteps". From the 1960s, Kliptown Moslems suffered severely at the hands of the peri-urban police, being repeatedly arrested for permits and passes. Today, many have returned to walk the streets of Kliptown.

Kliptown provided a space not just for racial mixing, but for racial miscegenation. Mixed race couples sought refuge there. Others formed mixed race liaisons inside of its borders. Among South Africa's battery of racial laws were the Race Classification Act, the Mixed Marriages Act and the Immorality Act. Between them, these laws sought to ban inter-racial marriage and sex across the colour line. Kliptown was one of a handful of twilight zones in South Africa where these restrictions broke down. As Clive Jacobs explains:

You know, love is a thing you can't explain ... you see, whether you're white, black, coloured or what nationality, you get married too. If you are in love with that woman, nobody is going to stop you.²⁶

Interracial liaisons and marriage were quite common in Kliptown. Even white police were not exempt. Clive Jacob's sister

²⁵ Interview with Mr Somali, Kliptown, 2005.

²⁶ Interview with Clive Jacobs, Kliptown, 2001.

ran away to get married to a white man. We used to cover that white man. Put some black stuff on his face. You see, he by his hands must look like a black man when he came to check my sister.²⁷

One of the abiding memories older Kliptonians have of their community is one of cross racial friendships and mixing. Donovan Mitchell is fairly typical when he talks of his life as a child in Kliptown:

We played together, all the different races, Shangane, Indian, Coloured. We were happy as kids playing different games.²⁸

For Hughie Sampson learning one another's languages was a key to communication and interaction. Kliptown, for him, was

the only place where you don't just speak Afrikaans and English ... you learn three or four languages ... Zulu and Sotho sometimes you don't know how to speak it, but you understand.²⁹

Mrs Snell, who left Kliptown for Eldorado Park in 1990, now regrets the decision. One aspect of Kliptown's life which she much prized was the respect commanded by older people. As she remarks:

It was worthwhile staying in Kliptown because people were so respectful towards each other. It was a very cosmopolitan place, because we lived with what we now call all nations and we played together and it was so peaceful, unlike today when we live in fear. Colour did not matter. It was not a racist place. We all stayed together as one happy family ... When I grew up, respect was the most important thing. If I don't call another man "oom" (uncle) it was the first and last time. My father gave me a hiding. He said children must respect grownups irrespective of their colour.³⁰

²⁷ Interview with Clive Jacobs, Kliptown, 2001.

²⁸ Interview with Donovan Mitchell, Kliptown, 2005.

²⁹ Interview with Hughie Sampson, Kliptown, 2005.

³⁰ Interview with Mrs Snell, Eldorado Park, 2005.

Kliptonians also treasure the sense of security and support they experienced in old Kliptown. For Mrs Snell,

Kliptown was really a peace of mind place and happiness. Even though the community was very poor, we were a family, not like here (Elderado Park). I live here for ten years and I do not know the people across the road.

According to Billy Ocean, black business men were rare outside places like Kliptown because

in those days [you are] not allowed to sell anything at all. Even if you have a decent watch you must have a paper for a decent watch ... If you put R100 in the bank they will say to you, "Stand one side. Just wait until we call the police to find out how you get this money." You wait for the police till you put it in the bank ... A black man was not allowed anything for himself. He was supposed to work for a white man. Some of us worked from the trains selling sweets, soft goods [before setting up business in Kliptown]. It's hard to climb up these hills.³¹

Alexandrian golfers who ventured outside of the freehold township to play golf on the weekends testify to similar humiliations. Oliver Tambo was among several who had his golf clubs temporarily confiscated when he was unable to produce a receipt for a white policeman.³² A spectrum of other communities on the edge of large towns (among which were the African freehold township of Alexandra and a considerable number of squatter camps such as Cato Manor in Durban and various per-urban settlements) offered scope for some measure of self advancement before the advent of apartheid.

The better known freehold township of Alexandra was home, by virtue of the title deeds it possessed, to only Africans and Coloureds. Much like Kliptown, however, it represented a site of freedom and opportunity not known to the majority of black South Africans, the memory of which mainly survives only among those who managed to escape being removed from its precinct. One goal and achievement of apartheid was to suppress, and even

³¹ Interview with Billy Ocean, Kliptown, 2005.

³² *Alexandra*, page 115.

eliminate, all signs of black entrepreneurship. Alexandra and Kliptown were among the few (partial) exceptions where this did not happen.

Oral testimonies from Alexandra in particular expose dimensions of South Africa's past that are almost beyond imagining. Many African Alexandrians who purchased plots in Alexandra were former share croppers who farmed vacant white farming land on behalf of its owners and then gave over half of the crop. One benefit of this arrangement was that they could own and run large numbers of stock. African sharecroppers were progressively squeezed out of these small pockets of prosperity in the late 1910s and 1920s. Simon Noge's family fled the Free State in the late 1910s to establish another sharecropping arrangement in Balfour in the southern Transvaal. During the early 1920s they prospered once again. As Noge explains,

at [the farm] Kaydel we had the biggest stock of cattle and sheep. But because he was a very competitive person the owner of the farm decided he must cull his cattle and his sheep. That's what made my father begrudge living on a farm ... He says when you have made the land nice and fertile you have your stock and the white people will pass a law and just wipe you out.³³

As a result of these events, Simon's father left to follow a career of building in Heidelberg; he then moved from Heidelberg to build and buy plots in Alexandra.

The collective experience of having worked on white farms left a distinct impression on the face and collective consciousness of Alexandra. White farms were the only sector of South Africa's economy which did not practise job reservation. As Leepile Taunyane puts it:

There's one thing about people on the farm, especially if they've got good farm masters – they learn a lot of things; making butter. Until recently we had equipment for making butter. My mother would buy milk and make butter and make cheese. My mother would bake and ask us to sell the scones. She was doing this work as a seamstress, she was making

³³ Interview with Simon Noge, cited in *Alexandra*, pages, 9-10, 24.

vetkoeks to sell at home ... and quite a number of things. She really was a busy bee.³⁴

Simon Noge takes up the same point:

Ja, Alexandra really it was, it's still a fertile place for businesses. By that time it was business for us. People had their own bakeries like Mr Makoa on Eighth Avenue ... they had a bakery you know, a big stone oven I can say, where they baked bread and cakes and people used to go and buy there. There was a candle man named Vilakazi. He owned a dairy of his own and sold them milk even to suburbs nearby here at Louis Botha. The other was Mr Madiba. You know, they used to travel by horse carts to nearby white areas ... That is where ... you find some people having more than ten properties in Alexandra.³⁵

Simon Noge's own father was a master builder, a profession which many other Alexandrians took up. He learned his craft on the farms and in the small rural town of Heidelberg.

Mishaka Mlangeni's maternal grandfather arrived in Alexandra in 1918. As Mishaka's grandmother explained to him,

we had, you know, skills. We have farming skills. We have to put these farming skills into action ... [then] grandfather said, yes ... you see people use wood here, than let's track down the dead wood, bush, bring them to the lazy people of Alexandra and sell wood, then they started to sell wood. Then my grandmother saw an opportunity that people didn't have sweeping brooms ... she knew grass very well as a farm girl.³⁶

A place which was equally valued by the African population of Natal was the squatter camp at Cato Manor, known as Mkhumbane. When World War II began in 1939, Mkhumbane consisted of 500 shacks. By 1946, at the high point of land invasions and the creation of squatter camps all over South

³⁴ Interview with Leepile Taunyane, conducted by N. Nieftagodien, 27 October 2003, cited in *Alexandra*, pages 9-10.

³⁵ Interview with Simon Noge, cited in *Alexandra*, pages 9-10.

³⁶ Interview, Mishaka Mlangeni, cited in *Alexandra*, page 24.

Africa, its population had grown to 30 000 – a figure which leaped to over 100 000 by the late 1950s (at which point it was the biggest African settlement in Natal).³⁷ Mkhumbane was a space of relative of freedom lying partly outside the government's structures of control. As a result, it was a place packed with people earning informal incomes and engaging in entrepreneurial opportunities – which gives an entirely different slant to the conventional story of black urbanisation in South Africa. To Ambrose Africa, for example,

Cato Manor was like a blessing, because although the place belonged to Indians, they allowed us to build our own house. We built cottages where people rented. A cottage would have 12 people. The Indians would then take money for the plot ... They would just take money for the plot. It didn't matter how many rooms each cottage had or how they were built. We made money, people of Mkhumbane made a lot of money. Women brew beer, *isishimeyana* and things like that to sell in order to take children to school ... Mkhumbane was a gold mine, was really a gold mine because there were many things that could make a person survive without having to work. We were digging gold there because we sold everything we liked.³⁸

Alfred Nokwe makes the same point:

Cato Manor was a heaven for a whole lot of people ... During the time, you see influx control was tightened and people couldn't get to work on time. They were deported out of the city, but what they did was to go home, come back and go to Cato Manor. That is where they could hide because nobody would ask papers from them.³⁹

A third largely unrecognised and certainly largely forgotten feature of South African black urbanisation is the zone of autonomy established there by black immigrant women. During this period, the social fabric of rural society was beginning to come apart under the impact of labour migration. It now became

³⁷ Ludlow, L.K. 1975. The Cato Manor beer hall riots. MA Dissertation, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg.

³⁸ Interview with Ambrose Africa, conducted by Thokozana Xaba, 12 February 2002.

³⁹ Interview with Alfred Nokwe, conducted by Thokozana Xaba, 25 February 2005.

increasingly common all over South Africa for migrant men to desert or neglect their rural wives and to establish more temporary relationships with urban women. In consequence, their wives began to seek a better living in the towns. The freedom of Mkhumbane acted as a major magnet for such women. Trypina Ntuli recalls:

If a woman had come from rural area, whose husband had stopped supporting her, they would teach her and give her a start. They would let her choose what she would like to sell ... There were no poor people in Umkhumbane.

Miaketso Thipe makes a similar point:

There were more good times than the bad in Umkhumbane ... You did not have to look hard for a job ... You would simply go to the rank or bus stop and sell whatever you had and people would buy ... Another reason why life was so easy? The way of living was cheap...A cottage would house four families ... a family would stay in one room, the whole family. There was no competition between them. People were united.⁴⁰

Solidarity was especially strong among Mkhumbanes's women. As Mrs Thipe, once again, recalls:

What was great was that when we were still in Umkhumbane the people were united...If, for example, maMkhiza was arrested for having beer or *isiqatha* and taken by the police to Kato, the neighbours will brew beer for her so that when she comes back she would find something at home. People were united in Umkhumbane. When they were happy together they would be happy, as well as when sad.

Women also dominated political life in Mkhumbane to an extent that has never been told. Conrad Buthelezi recalls a mass march organised by the women of Mkhumbane to secure the release of detained ANC President Albert Luthuli.

⁴⁰ Interview with Miaketso Thipe conducted by Thokozana Xaba, 2 March 2002.

On that day everybody left Mkhumbane. We were marching to Sentela, we wanted them to release him ... There was a name Tell-a-woman because women did most of the things in Mkhumbane, for example, knit jerseys. While they knit jerseys, they would be talking about what they would do next and that is how we found out about that march because as children we would sit with our mothers. The whole of Mkhumbane went out because the houses had to be left open. Some people would stay behind to check if everybody had left the house. I remember my grandfather who had to be pulled out of the bed by my grandmother. She asked me where he was on our way to the march where he was and I told her that he was not well. She told me he was lying and we went back to get him. When we got there we found him under the bed and my grandmother pulled him out and told him that all men were going out to die why should he stay behind. The women of Mkhumbane were going to be mourning why shouldn't she do the same. We went with him, ill as he was. The march started on the left next to Mjafethe, we met there. People from Banki, Two Stick, Mafutha and Nsimbini came together and we went to Mjafethe together. It was a nice march because the women led us with brooms sweeping everything before us and moving anything that could disturb our march. They were ululating. At the back were women as well with knobkierries hitting men who ran backwards, pushing them forward. When we got down the corner of Boot Road, there was a shop belonging to Abraham. There were soldiers there lined up with Saracens just like what you see when you watch TV although there are no Saracens now they were taken by the English in 1960. They were blocking us. Indians had supported us because we were using their trucks. People came from all directions, some came from Bonella, some from Wiggins Road, some from Second River and I was going straight to the soldiers. They spoke in loud speakers telling us to stop and move back but we refused. Back then we used to show our thumbs calling out 'Africa' and the women would say "forward, they can shoot if they feel like it".

Events in Cato Manor ushered in high or grand apartheid and the stamping out of most signs of African independence and assertion. On two occasions, in mid-1959 and early 1960, major riots broke out in Cato Manor in protest

and in boycott of municipal beer halls for African men. Cato Manor women led and dominated all of these protests. In the second episode, which took place on 29 January 1960, and which shocked both white and black South Africa, nine policemen were killed. After this, Cato Manor was speedily demolished, only to rise once again after 1994. The second riot occurred only six weeks before the Sharpeville massacre of 21 March 1960, which is generally taken as a defining moment in the history of apartheid. That distinction is perhaps equally earned by the preceding Cato Manor riots. Certainly at the inquest into the killings at Sharpeville, the policemen testifying claimed that the crowd shouted "Cato Manor, Cato Manor", after which the police fired their fatal fusillades into the marchers' backs.⁴¹

The removal of Cato Manor closed down this pocket of personal, social, economic and political freedom and extinguished for many South Africans memories of this other way of life. Unpublished interviews undertaken in 2002 constitute some of the few limited resources for reclaiming this past. Agrippa Lebekulu recalls the crushing effects that the removals had:

That was a very low point of my life. It was that sense of loss that you cannot describe. A sense of being beaten. A sense of helplessness. If you are a black man then you know that I am a nobody ... They are doing this to me because I'm black, because they conquered me.⁴²

Removals ruptured neighbourhood networks and atomised individuals.

"We wouldn't continue keeping in contact", remarks Mrs Mabel Mlambo, "because we moved to different places and we didn't know how life in a township would be like...we were being brought to a place and then they would say the following week we are being moved and the friendship will end there and we would like meet accidentally in the town and enquire about what happened or where did they actually move".⁴³

Mrs Miaketso Thipe makes more or less exactly the same point:

⁴¹ On these events and Cato Manor generally, see Edwards, I. 1994. Cato Manor June 1959, in *The people's city: African life in twentieth century Durban*, edited by P. Maylam & I. Edwards. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press. Also see Ludlow, The Cato Manor beer hall riots.

⁴² Interview with Agrippa Lebekulu, conducted by Thokozani Xaba, 8 March 2002.

⁴³ Interview with Mabel Mlambo, conducted by Thokozani Xaba, 11 March 2002.

It was painful being moved to Umlazi ... When we got there we were not out together with people who had been in our neighbours. One person would get house number 712, another 14. We were divided like that. That is how the whites had decided to divide us. The day we were moved was a very bad one ... friends were lost, and some people went to rural areas because they could not stand life in the township. People's belongings were just thrown up – corrugated iron, your furniture, thrown on the truck ... and the white men stood there with a pen and paper ... some elders were crying ... there was a feeling we would never see our friends again.⁴⁴

The longer-term impact was also huge. As Mrs Thipe recalls:

Eh, it was not the same. Others showed their true colours since some thought highly of themselves by moving into four-roomed houses. There was also division among the people living different lives. Life really changed. Some people started working and there was no more time for people to sit and sell together. People's lives changed when they started working for the white people.⁴⁵

For women in particular, life changed abruptly. They could no longer sell illicit liquor or other goods and so lost their economic autonomy. They had to provide proof of marriage to move into a house, but then always by grace of a connection to a man, and so lost their personal autonomy from men. This was most graphically signalled when many were literally married on the spot by the local administration/removal officer as they were waiting for their houses to be broken down. For them in particular, an earlier way of life was lost; a new one was rudely imposed. It is this that most South African's dimly remember today. It is a memory that many would prefer to forget.

⁴⁴ Interview with Mrs Thipe, 2 March 2002.

⁴⁵ Interview with Mrs Thipe, 2 March 2002.

The resourcefulness of Elders and their strategic intelligence in interpreting the footprints of missionaries

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We have been presented with a Christ with whom we have no identity at all. The European (i.e. whites) draws him as a hippy, an effeminate Christ, sentimental and not a real man. (A member of the Zionist Church in Mafikeng)

Memory is not immutable. It is a dynamic process of recuperation, recognition and, often, complete invention that is engendered, provoked, manipulated and promoted by visual images, rituals, performance or, simply, by the telling of stories. Memory is frequently used to provide a sense of security, to confirm expectations of how things always have been and should be. But forgetting is as integral part of memory as is recalling or remembering; the erasure and selective elimination of historical facts or events is as critical to memory as the retention and meticulous preservation of others. And sometimes it is important to remember in order to forget (De Bruyn 1998:101).

Introduction

The period from 1830 to 1920 was not a good one for Africa and its indigenous people. During the last part of the 19th century, a new cultural force came to impact on the emotions of Africa and the emotions of its indigenous people. Through the London Missionary Society (LMS), the Hermanburg and Berlin Lutheran Society, the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (WMMS) and the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC), the Christian faith was introduced to the Batswana in the western Transvaal and to Bechuanaland, a British Protectorate. It was mainly these two groups that were responsible for colonising the consciousness of the Batswana states instead of protecting them against the Boers and for failing to protect the indigenous people's local culture. The questions that are being asked by Maundeni (2004:12), which I fully endorse, are: Did the missionary displace the indigenous traditions? Or

did religious imperialism displace Tswana state culture? Or was religious imperialism absorbed by the Tswana state? Bennet and Bolaane (1999:87) presented similar arguments when they stated that "the centre was maintained by political control of the chief, both in direct control of settlement and in ritual which defined and celebrated the social order. No one could begin to plough before the chief gave permission, even though this could mean lost ploughing time in some areas". (This inconvenience was not of course necessarily pointless: in the case of the ploughing restriction, it had the function of demonstrating power.) This power was later weakened by the acceptance of Christianity by Tswana chiefs and their subsequent interaction with *sekgoa*.

This interaction with missionaries was regarded in different ways by Tswana political powers. The colonial powers built a hegemony which, when Africa gained its independence, was partly dismantled. However, re-colonisation then began again as a result of impositions placed on Africa by the UN, the IMF and the World Bank. Earlier cultural traditions of indigenous peoples can best be understood by looking at what really happened in the first meetings between indigenous people and Europeans. Schapera in 1943 records that "the main factor in the chief's control of spatial organization was his control of productive resources, notably land. Furthermore it is recorded that as soon as the agricultural season started, every family was expected to go to its lands but not before the chief had given the signal. No planting, weeding reaping threshing or letting cattle eat stubble could be done until his word had been given". These practices did, in fact, change – especially during the period of 1830 and 1920.

Batswana chiefs and the Christian world

There was a third destroyer: the missionary who wanted to replace all knowledge of indigenous fables – even to the point that our children would laugh at them. We told the white missionary we had such fables too, but kept them for the entertainment of the young. Our fables, too, included stories of gods and devils and a supreme being above everything. We told them that young minds needed such illusions, but that mature, adult minds looked beyond these fables (although we acknowledged that there is indeed a great force in the world) (Aye Kwei Armah 2000:15).

Unlike, for example, chiefs in the northern part of Africa, Batswana chiefs had no success in imparting their stories (that Africa had known great miracle-workers and magicians long ago, people who had lived on this continent long before the birth of Jesus Christ). Africa was the centre for all these events, events that took place at a time when so much was already in place, events that are recorded in fables long told by travellers from the north. In the case of the Batswana, the chiefs saw their polity change, which included the ushering in of new gods.

The Tswana polities were dynamic structures that had undergone a complex process of transformation over time. The travel diary of Henry Lichtenstein (1930) bears testimony to the nature of the cultural polity of the Tswana in the years of 1803 to 1806, and long before the missionaries began their trade in the "Word". The colonials wanted to achieve their mission of misappropriating and disempowering the natives. Lichtenstein (1930:415-16), for example, stated the following:

The power of the chief or king among the Beetjuans (sic) (referring to Batswana, my explanation) is much more extended than among the Koosas (sic) (referring to Xhosas, my explanation). This is a natural consequence of their having permanent habitations, which renders the means employed with so much effect by those more wandering tribes to resist all encroachments in power on the part of the prince impracticable. The king of the Beetjuans has nearly uncircumscribed power, since he can punish all offences according to his own pleasure, and no one has any right to oppose his decisions...If, however, a complaint be laid before him, and his judgment be requested, he take the matter very warmly; and the missionaries have seen examples when he has scourged some of his subjects almost to death for robberies committed by them. The title of the chief is *Morina* – lord; a word strongly resembling *Murimo*, which expresses the Godhead. He has no other outward mark of distinction, but the people have a certain veneration for his person, and for everything about him.

Further amazing experiences by the early travellers can be seen in their reaction to Tswana ritual practices, as in this example as captured by Lichten-

stein¹ (1930:417). Here the writer demonstrates how the European lacked experience and knowledge of Tswana cultural practices (which formed part of Tswana religion).

But among the most remarkable superstitions of the Beetjuans is the consecration of their cattle by the priest, before they go to war. By this ceremony, these animals, the possession of which is often the subject of the contest, are secured against the enchantments of the enemy, and even against all danger of being forcibly carried away by him. This consecration consists in the priests taking each animal individually, as it is brought to him, and painting a particular mark upon its hind leg, with a jackal's tail dipped in a kind of black paint. This he performs kneeling, pronouncing at the same time certain mysterious words, during which, another person, kneeling behind him, repeats the same mark with a little brush upon his back or arms.

It is this interaction with the early Europeans that describes the nature of the discourse which this thesis tries to elucidate. With regard to the concept or the existence of God the same author noted, in no uncertain terms, that the Tswana had no religion whatsoever. He records his observation as follows:

their ideas with respect to the deity are not much clearer than those of the Koosas. They venerate an invisible Being, whom they call Murimo, as the cause of all appearances in nature, and the origin of all the good and evil that happens to them, without any act of their own. They do not, however, agree among themselves whether this being is an entirely beneficent or malevolent being; and if, on the one hand, they neglect to thank him for any good received, they never hesitate to show their indignation at any ill experienced, or any wish unaccomplished, by the most bitter curses. They have no religious worship, and could never be persuaded by the missionaries that this was a thing pleasing to God.

¹ Lichtenstein was not a missionary, but a scientist who appears to have recorded his observation of the natives in a more objective way than did the Christian missionaries. Unlike them, he did not set out to influence and convert the indigenous people.

As cited in Weaver (1998:55-6), Christianity found its way into Native American lives as a result of the work of missionaries and explorers. It was not until the colonial settlements were in place that missionaries with any true vision character began to work among native people. As in America, a large percentage of missionaries who worked among the native people were extremely arrogant, and this arrogance led to failure and, in extreme cases, disaster.

The diaries of John Campbell (1815s) and David Livingstone, and later studies by J.I. Comaroff (1985) testify to the fact that the Tswana had a long history of interaction over long distances with the Arab world and that they traded with the Arabs. They had large cities, one of which, Kaditshwene, was reported as being bigger than Cape Town at the time (1820s). The colonial encounter did serious damage to the cultural traditions of the Tswana through colonisation of Tswana consciousness, especially as this related to the traditional religions of the Tswana. David Livingstone (*Missionary travels and researches* 1857) cited in Jeal (1973:36) and Comaroff & Comaroff (1999:66) talks about "sending the Gospel to the Heathen ... (must include more than) a man going about with a bible under his arm. The promotion of commerce ought to be specially attended to ... (I wish) to promote the preparation of the raw material of European manufactures in Africa, for by that means we may not only put a stop to the slave-trade, but introduce the negro family into the body of corporate nations".

Molema (1966:205), while not professing Christianity, makes the point that Montshiwa, the son of Chief Tawana of the Barolong, was sympathetic to the work of Christian missions and friendly with missionaries. This was not only for political reasons, but also because he enjoyed a number of benefits from them and also received help from Christian missionaries in times of both peace and trouble. Molema (1966:206) goes on to note that Montshiwa took great delight in conversing with them (missionaries) and trying to learn something of their teaching. He found pleasure in having the Bible read to him, and became, all things considered, quite a good Bible student, and was adept in aptly quoting some of its more noble passages, especially from the book of Isaiah.

In nearly every part of Africa, black people had fought bitterly with the white man before the white man started preaching Christianity to them. This conflict included slave raiding, destruction and violent wars, and it seemed that fate had ordained that the white man win time and again. When Christian missionaries arrived, therefore, Africans were eager to learn about and accept the White man's God which, they were made to believe, was more powerful than theirs; like the white man, they wished to shelter under His

protection. Indeed, Africans surrendered themselves to the white man and sought his protection, and were willing to be completely assimilated with the “white tribe” to the extent that they were willing to adopt not only his religion, but his entire culture (Mutwa 1964:340).

Montshiwa did not accept Christianity at first. In fact, he treated the first Christians of his tribe with implacable hostility, resisted all manner of spiritual innovations, and was not averse to persecuting them in much the same manner as the Roman emperors persecuted the early church. A salutary change in Montshiwa’s attitude towards the Christian religion took place in 1882 (Molema 1966:204). This was after the death of his brother whom he steadfastly opposed. Montshiwa ordered the Barolong Christian leaders to say prayers at the royal Kgotla. Making way for the new religion, he nominated Setlhakonyane Maselwanyana to be royal chaplain, and requested the Reverend Owen Watkins, Chairman of the Wesleyan Missionary Society in the Transvaal, to send him a resident missionary. In 1882, he bequeathed a five-acre plot to the Society for the manse and gardens. Three years later, in 1885, he accepted General Sir Warrens’ offer to build a chapel for the Barolong in his town. (The chapel still exists today and is now protected by the South African Heritage Agency under the 60 year clause.)

Generally speaking, in the early part of the last century, every chief of the time, heathen or Christian, was a hero to his people. But a Christian chief became a hero beyond the limits of his tribe in that he had a much larger audience to appeal to, a common platform, so to speak, from which he could make his pronouncements. In his various works, Molema speculates whether, if Montshiwa had been a Christian chief (e.g. like his northern contemporaries Sechele and Khama), he would have been even more famous than he actually was². Given the nature and shape of the influence these leaders had at the time, I believe that the African chiefs and leaders who were most famous and who exercised the greatest influence both among their people and on the general outside population were those who professed Christianity. This remark is not a criticism of the sincerity of their profession, but based on the fact that public opinion demanded Christian character in a leader; even a pseudo-Christian was believed to be able to perform miracles.

In a report of the Native Churches Commission (1925), it is noted – with disbelief – “the rapidity and ease with which the South African Native has received the teaching of Christianity... remains one of the most

² The chiefs adopted Christianity as a religion of convenience for themselves. Comment by Geoffrey Phillips, the curator at the Mafikeng Museum, who provided me with archival material while I was researching this paper.

remarkable phases in his acceptance of Europe civilization". Missionaries were almost shocked when they realised how easy it was to convert the native. In the land of the Batswana, most were converted to the new religion, although, of course, the extent to which Christianity was adopted varies greatly.

Dr Emil Holub, an Austrian scientist and traveller, who met Montshiwa in 1873, says of him: "a plump, jovial looking man of 50 years who inspired me with confidence immediately... Although he was the first of the Batswana kings to profess Christianity, he has the reputation of standing lower in moral character than any of them. His northern neighbour Khama, the present king of the Bangwato, is ranked highest, our good friend Montshiwa being assigned the second place".

Many of the Tswana chiefs became Christian rulers, and the most influential were baptised first. The Tswana states switched from practising their long-standing cultural ceremonies and turned to Christianity, thereby bringing themselves under the strict control of the Christian religion. The early travelling missionary who traversed the land of Barolong and Bahurutshe was met with warmth, love and cooperation, and this obviously laid the foundation for future visits and gave missionaries more opportunity to convert the native. The Tswana subjected themselves to the white man's religion for a somewhat different reason: according to 4(1966), they believed that the white man's contempt of the Black man was because he despised "our kaffir religion" and barbaric customs. The Tswana believed that the white man's attitude would change and that he would accept them as blood brothers if they adopted his religion and customs. Try to fathom, then, the native's disillusionment when, many years after baptism, this attitude of contempt remained the same. Natives spent years and sacrificed all they possessed to learn at the white man's school, to seek the white man's God, and they were treated no better than their "savage" compatriots. After the best part of a lifetime aspiring to become a fellow Christian with white man, a black man was still called a "kaffir". For many years, a "kaffir" was a "kaffir", whether he be learned, Christianised or not. Wanting to be treated as a "blood brother" does not mean or suggest that the black man aspired to complete assimilation and intermarriage, or even to "wining and dining" with his white counterpart. Most blacks could not be induced to change their outlook, frame of mind, most of their inborn nature and many of their habits. However, much as the Germans, the English and the Afrikaners treated each other as equals in South Africa (although they have different cultural traditions), the blacks expected the same sort of treatment.

Missionaries came with different agendas, all wrapped in the “packaging” of the Christian faith. Others introduced foreign agricultural practices which brought more confusion among the natives, the worst enemy being the introduction of a money economy. Comaroff (1985:115) states that among the Tshidi (Barolong in Mafikeng), for instance, the response to proletarianisation was to involve an elaborate, ritualised attempt to reintegrate, once and for all, things and persons objectified in capitalist production. The Tshidi were to encounter the depersonalisation effects of such productive process when they became directly integrated into the labour market. All this was prefigured in the ideology and organisation of the missionary.

The process of capitalism became visible later in the economic practice of the missionaries. There were many missionaries working in South Africa (especially in the western Transvaal) and, at the time, the missionary movement included the Baptists, Moravian, Lutheran, and the Wesleyans. Some of the missionaries were cold,³ self-seeking and even brutal men, and never did this fact become more obvious than during the times of fierce competition between the different churches (Mutwa 1964:34).

Misappropriations and dirty tricks

The different churches were embroiled in a silent battle to win as much territory for themselves as possible. (Credo Mutwa)

Converting campaigns are, of course, a thing unknown. This is due to the fact that the religion is interwoven with traditions and social customs of the people. (Jomo Kenyatta)

Traditional religions do not have missionaries to propagate them and one individual does not preach his religion to another. (John Mbiti)

Broadbent (1865:179) cited in Comaroff (1985:112) states:

The people (display) all the essential elements of a Christian community; in an infant state, I allow, but a spiritual church against which the gates of hell shall not prevail, raised up

³ For further reading, see Bothale, T. 2005, *The people of Walgeval*. Zebra.

among a people who not long ago sat in darkness, and the shadow of death, and in a land of war and bloodshed, where they knew not the way of peace.

When John Campbell (1815) asked the residents of Dithakong⁴ after he and fellow travellers had a morning worship which was attended by some residents if they know what the travellers were doing, they were told: “You were praying, but we do not know to whom.” The traveller then said “to the Great Being”. Campbell reported that the residents said they believed there was a Great Being, but they did not know him, for they had never seen him. In his journal, Robert Moffat (1820-1828) says:

This afternoon I had some more conversation with Makabee on the subject of a missionary living with him, with which he professed to be highly pleased. I explained to him the work and objects of a missionary and at the same time acquainted him that a missionary should be sent to the Baharootse. To this he very wisely remarked that such men of peace should live in every town, then they should cease to rob each other.

The other missionary who will be quoted later on in this article is David Livingstone, who baptised Kgosi Sechele – an event that caused civil unrest (because Kgosi switched from the Tswana to the Christian religion). Note that David Livingstone lived among the Bahurutshe for a prolonged period of time.

The missionary had little knowledge of the cultural scheme and the role that rites played in the hegemonic social ordering of things. Comaroff (1985:125) refers to the Tswana poetic structure of ritual as having carried a more complex and elaborate semantic load than did the inconspicuous signals of everyday life. But such rites as healing, first-fruit, or initiation were not merely expressive vehicles: for the Tswana, they were pragmatic acts which effected the transformation of the world; from an analytical perspective, they constructed, rather than merely reflected, meaning. Thus no simple distinction between instrumental and symbolic practice makes sense here, or indeed anywhere – instrumental action is always simultaneously semantic, and the

⁴ Dithakong was one of the most economically and socially active cities in the 1700-1800s in the area of Taung/Kudumane. The city was excavated in the 1900 and evidence of copper wearing was found. It is reported to have trades and bartered with the Kaditshwene near Bahurutshe.

opposite is also true. This is where the missionary got into trouble as far as indigenous traditions were concerned. These traditions involved a form of consciousness (what we might term a “worldview”) – a holistic vision of the cosmos, an ideology, an order of values that supported a given set of social arrangements. All were implicit in Tswana thought and action. The Tswana had *mekgwa le malao* and *maele le diane*, *dithamalakwane/dikinane*, all of which were part of dealing with a cosmology, and something the missionaries simply had no appreciation of.

Tswana consciousness included the total social phenomenon or sphere. For example, the concept of cattle, grain, time and work are part of a precolonial system. The circulation of animals, for example, permitted the human persona to extend beyond the spatiotemporal confines of physical being; similarly, grain and beer contained something of the substance of the producer, so that to consume it was to imbibe the self of the producer. For the precolonial Tswana, the social universe imposed a fragile order upon the dynamic flux of the wild and, as such, was constantly threatened. The maintenance of order was a function of both normative prescription and ritual reinforcement. Both of which the missionary sought to destroy. The Tswana, for example, regarded the heart as the epicentre of feeling (*utlwa*, which meant “hear”, “understand” and “sense” in the physical manner), hence concepts such as *pelo ethata* or *pelo etelele* – longhearted or patient. This cultural order seem to construct sharply with *sekgoa* epistemology in which persons appear as self-contained, determining individuals, acting from a basis of rational utility upon a compliant world.

The challenges of the many sides of colonisation of the consciousness and conscience among the Batswana of the former western Transvaal and the British Bechuanaland Protectorate (now Botswana) need to be revisited, something alluded to by Dr Zibani Maundeni of University of Botswana. I strongly argue that there needs to be a re-investigation into the nature of colonisation by the missionary of the Chief of the Batswana and that fact that this was part of the erosion of their cultural strength. Schapera notes that Linchwe (chief of Bakgatla in the early part of the last century) not only joined the Dutch Reformed Church, but refused to let any other denomination work in his territory. Before this, in 1892, when Linchwe became a Christian, and later as chief and also a great tribal rainmaker and magician, he accelerated the decay of the old forms of ritual by the nature of ceremonies for whose performance he was directly responsible. For example, Linchwe did away with the old circumcision ceremonies and also prohibited the payment of *lobola*. In the interests of the missionary’s religion and in direct violation

of African cultural practice, he put away two of his wives (he had married three), although he continued to acknowledge their children as his.

Given that we are now talking of an African Renaissance, we also are faced with the reinterpretation of South African history and to acknowledging the fact that certain ethnic groups were colonised rather than protected by the imperial forces, British in particular. Ideological positions such as the British Protectorate in the Bechuanaland should be properly reinterpreted as part of re-affirming the challenges of the African Renaissance.

Unlike Sechele, initially Montshiwa held certain opinions on religious matters, opinions that were based on the assumption that a person's best religion is that of his country. Initially, therefore, Montshiwa strongly believed that indigenous practices be upheld. One can compare his thinking to that of Rene Descartes, as cited in Molema (1966:203-4): "Our religion should not be acquired by the teaching of others, but should be worked out by ourselves. It is not to be borrowed from antiquity, but it is to be discovered by each man's mind. It is not traditional, but personal." Another relevant link with that of the classic thinkers of European culture can be found in the following statement: "Worship the gods according to the rites of your own country. Pursue with hatred and punishment those who introduce foreign religion, and culture for they entice others to use foreign laws, and hence arise conspiracies, societies and assemblies, things very unsuited to a homogenous empire" (Lecky 1869).

Comaroff and Comaroff (1999:112) make the point that it is the most powerful figures in the tribe who must first be converted. Moffat read the essence of rainmaking as unreason and noted "rainmakers are our inveterate enemies, and uniformly oppose the introduction of Christianity among their countrymen to the utmost of their powers". This is why the Dutch Reformed Church managed to accelerate the conversion to Christianity of the Barolong and Bakgatla – it converted the chiefs first. When Linchwe did away with rituals, including rainmaking, the evangelists linked that to the triumph of bourgeois reason, and regarded it as a major indicator of their success.

It was easy to market cultural changes among those tribes that officially embraced Christianity. Hardly any of today's generation knows what is meant by the "ancestral spirit", and even among the Elders there is no positive cult outside the religion of Christianity. Those who still adhere to ancestral practices hold a vague belief, largely derived from echoes of missionary teaching that is confusingly blended with memories of "ancestor worship" (although Africans do not worship, but simply honour their ancestors). The project of gardens, irrigation and various new materials were introduced among those communities which embraced Christianity. According to Coma-

roff (1999:127), in most places and at most times, the colonisers tried to gain control over both the material and semantic practices through which their would-be subjects produced and reproduced the very bases of their existence. Colonisation everywhere gave rise to struggle, which is precisely why Montshiwa was hesitant about accepting the Christian faith. But later on, following the white man's way, or what Tswana people would call *sekgoa*, as opposed to the Setswana way was regarded, by the chiefs, as being the only way out of the troubles that they faced. Without introspection and without interrogating the Christian faith, Africa's leadership was seduced into becoming Christian. For example, the rejection of rainmaking has a serious impact on the Tswana people. They began to believe that the *sekgoa* was better because it could bring water from the wells and trenches and from the underground, all of which was totally new to the native.

There was no way in which "rational grounds" could make the Tswana people accept Christianity except by defying the long-held understanding that established knowledge is not falsified by evidence external to its logical structure. Such was the case with rain making, which involved the whole community and which was not carried out in isolation with other observations – such as a state of calm in the village, and the spiritual and emotional participation of members (led by the rainmaker). As it was, praying to the God whom the missionary had just introduced and a lucky downpour soon afterwards were enough to convince the natives that the *sekgoa* was good. This sort of thing quickly began to undermine the Tswana's "cosmogonic assumptions". Another example was the white man's ability to produce water from under ground – this, too, the native found extremely impressive.

The reader also needs to remember the early encounter between the missionary and the residents of Dithakong. Their response about the Great Being was that they had not yet seen Him – a response that suggests they believed that the white man would show them the Great Being. The Christian conception of God has so effectively displaced the old indigenous conception of a Supreme Being that no clear account can be obtained of the latter and His attributes from the general Tswana community. The decay of traditional practice was further hastened by the introduction of western marriage, the funeral and other rites performed within the Christian faith and practice. Many of the most significant rituals, and almost all the great tribal ceremonies for which the chief was formerly responsible, have long been discarded. Christianity has introduced churches and a completely new ritual:

Sunday⁵ as a compulsory day of rest for all members of the community. The church created new sanctions, and traditional music has been replaced by hymns.

The notion that the South African native adopted Christianity rapidly and easily is not necessarily true. Missionaries laid exaggerated emphasis upon doctrinal instruction, so that the people tended “to adopt the externals of the new creed without assimilating the fundamental truth of Christian belief and conduct” (Schapera 1947). The other opinion that was popularly held by the missionaries was the control of the Christian faith by the Tswana state. In this instance, the different Tswana states embraced a particular denomination and opposed the other. This can be seen in the fact that the Barolong were mostly Methodists, the Bakgatla were mainly Dutch Reformed, the Ngwaketse Congregationalist, and the Maletse mainly Lutheran.

Through baptism both the elders and the young were converted into something unknown, ill-understood and unrelated to their traditional African way of life. Chief Linchwe was baptised at the same time with his son. But long before he was baptised, he already practised the new religion, and his new faith constantly clashed with his African traditional lifestyle which, according to Mutwa (1985:11), gave social meaning because it was premised on constant communion with the spirit world. The ritual of baptism dismissed such views as primitive superstition, as unscientific “mumbo jumbo” that was unworthy of enlightened human beings (Fowler 1992:20). Baptism in effect is based on the claim that only one ideology can give our social life authentic meaning. This ideology, an ideology held by the missionary, provided the singular framework for understanding human society. The missionary not only described the way society is, but also specified the way it ought to be. The baptised came to regard Christian norms as self-evidently right. Indeed, it is worth noting that many Christians regard deviations from these proposals as threats to human wellbeing. This formed the basis for early missionary programmes in Tswana politics; to act righteously, to use the coercive power of the state to enforce these proposals on society as a whole, and to treat all who stand in the way as enemies of human well-being.

It was this ideological premise that the Rain Doctor and the Medical Doctor debated. The Rainmaker – who is more inclined to support traditional forms of religion – was regarded as an “object” whose acts justified rejection by the converted (those who received the new faith). In fact, events proved

⁵ The name “Sunday” is taken from the old Greek deity of the Sun. There are others like Tuesday and Monday (moon deity). Thursday is based on “Thor’s day” – an Anglo-Saxon god.

that this new faith was opposed to diversity. In some cases, this had very real consequences – for example, the Khama Ngwato civil war broke out after Khama III switched from Tswana to Christian ceremonies. At the same time, Christian missionaries planned to provide more resources for those chiefs who won and cleared the path for the missionary to continue with the work of colonising their subjects' consciousness. For their part, the Tswana were motivated by a desire to appropriate the cultural and technical powers of the whites – without losing their autonomy (Comaroff 1999:223). But did they maintain their autonomy? The critical part of the colonising process is the "joining in the conversation" that was to profoundly alter their sense of themselves. Montshiwa was seduced by the conversation of the missionary. He enjoyed their talk and learnt a great deal from them. The baptism of the Tswana chief and his subjects was, in the opinion of the missionaries, a victory for further colonisation. Once the chiefs turned against their own traditional religious practices, then it became clear that the missionaries would have an easy victory in creating a Tswana state that was prepared to defend the new faith.

The meaning of the word

The precolonial Tswana system was founded upon the relationship between agnatic descent and endogamy as principles of social reproduction, between agnation and matrilineality as bases for constructing social relationships (Comaroff 1985:115). The construction of the cosmology and the abstract world by the indigenous people differed from that of the missionaries and their worldview. Mutwa (1964:323) put forward the suggestion that the white man brought Christianity to the blacks, and the black, who grasped that Christianity with both hands, have had the pain and shock of seeing the same white man turn away from his religion to the extent of even ridiculing and rejecting it. The Tswana have been schooled to accept religion without question, never doubting for one moment the existence of the gods or goddesses exalted in that religion.

Mutwa (1964:324) goes on to say "the white man believes that God created a religion for Man. We believe the opposite – that Man was created to serve the laws and religion of God. The white man feels that, while given a religion, there is scope for him to interpret it his way; our view is that no scope for interpretation – only blind acceptance". Weaver (1998:157) writes

that the process of colonising is more than an exchange of economic, social, and political power from a militarily weaker community to a stronger; it is also the exchange of the intellectual and spiritual worldview of one people for that of another. This violent stripping away of cultural norms and the forced mutation into new paradigms is the formative social experience of the colonised. Further to this violent misappropriation of the indigenous belief is seen in the conversation by Tweedy Sombrero, a Native American:

Until then, my knowledge of the church was very limited. I knew about God and God's love for us all, but I knew very little about the church. During my last year of junior college, I met a young Native American who invited me to participate with him in a project. When he told me that he was a united Methodist pastor, I was surprised. My image of clergy had always been that they were white and getting up in years; yet he was a native American, and he was young. As we talked, I shared with him some of my belief about God that I had learned from my grandfather. He encouraged me to hold on to those beliefs. Later on Sombrero reported that trouble started when, without turning a Methodist, he accepted a post of Christian education in the Church. He says that this church looked down on Navajo belief (the belief of Sombrero's community). It taught Navajo people that, in order to be good Christians, Navajo must give up being Navajo.

I use this story to make the point that the missionaries who operated in the Tswana state were similar to missionaries elsewhere in the world. These missionaries all believed that they had the duty to save those troubled in spirit, and to rescue people from their indigenous ways and introduce them to the *sekgoa* way. In the case of the Batswana, adhering to one's cultural practices was certainly not encouraged by the missionaries of the time.

Going back to what Mutwa said: "Man was created to serve the laws and religion of God." Weaver (1998:77) states that the ways of *sekgoa* differ from those of the other tribes: "Each group must be respectful of how, as a people, its respective ways of behaving may be quite different from the other's, yet acceptable to the other." Native people do not recognise a separation between themselves and the spirits and instead speak of their oneness with creation and their spiritual ties to Mother Earth. According to native belief, a race or tribe is as good as the gods or God in which it believes. We believe that, if a tribe is successful in any way (in battle, in material pros-

perity or in other blessings), this is a sure sign that the gods or ancestral spirits of that tribe are truly powerful (Mutwa 1964:340).

Robert Moffat translated the bible into a cultural register that was true to neither the coloniser nor the colonised; instead, his translation was a hybrid creation born of colonial encounter itself. In Matthew 7:22; 8:28, 32 Moffat translated the word “demons” to refer to the *badimo* (the ancestors). This did violence to both biblical and conventional Tswana usage (Comaroff 1999:105). Eventually, the Tswana were to learn that ancestors were phenomena of a different valence in *Setswana* and *sekgoa*. The ancestors were seen as signs of the “primitive”. To cite Comaroff (1999:106):

The subversion of native signs, then, was part of the struggle that took place within the speech field of the mission. Indeed, the colonization of language became an ever more important feature of symbolic domination at large, and Setswana soon began to bear the lasting imprint of Christian Europe. This was evident in the commanding of everyday words like *Moruti* (‘teacher’) for ‘minister of the church’, and *modumedi* (‘one who agrees’) for ‘Christian believer’; such terms, in turn, becoming marked by contrast to the lexicon of *bongaka*, ‘traditional’ ritual and healing.

Linguistic praxis and ontological “isms” amongst the Batswana

The development of Setswana as a language tends to encourage “loan words”. The Tswana also relied increasingly on loan words to demarcate a semantic domain whose origin lay in *sekgoa* (Comaroff 1999:284): English was normally used for signs and practices associated with the mission (e.g. *madi* for “money”, *tikiti* for “members’ ticket”). While the Afrikaans or Dutch for terms linked to their experience of the Boers (e.g. *bereka*, from “werk for wage labour”, *toronko* from “trunk”, ‘jail’).

Translation and the writing of Setswana by nonconformists often missed entirely the poetics of Setswana, which draw on diverse and subtle semantic distinction. Setswana was reduced to vocabulary and simple normative grammar. Setswana had to be synonymous with those of basic English. The orthodox Setswana that was established by the missionaries was “offered” to the Tswana as a gift of civilization. Setswana was to be used in church and taught in schools. It was to be a “simple, unvarnished tongue,

carefully organized and free from the confusions that the evangelists read into vernacular poetics” (Comaroff 1999:285) This reduced Setswana to reflect the true spirit of rationalist empiricism. The ”thin” narrative genre which the translations took involved telling childlike stories in the sparsest of terms, in a language that portrayed itself as an instrument of naming and knowing, speaking and specifying. The oral richness of Tswana poetry in the past two centuries carries the richness of language from the Tswana polity. The poetics cannot be removed from the language: later creativity is ”sparked” with biblical idiom. What is particularly surprising is mentioned by Comaroff (1999:286) that the Tswana’s linguistic ideology, in which words shared the reality of their referents, was dismissed by the European as ”animist”, part of the heathen baggage of ”spells” and ”superstitions”. Even praise poetry, itself an enormously rich literary tradition, was devalued as an aesthetic genre for ”civilized” people. These dirty tricks and other unpalatable missionary interpolations positioned themselves into the politics of Africa’s systems of knowledge. Vernaculars⁶ such as Setswana were treated as no more than simple, written languages whose poetics were of no real importance, thereby reducing the language of its roots, vocabulary, and so forth.

Language, however, is not just the power of speech used by human persons. Instead, it is an integral feature of social being. Setswana is not just a language, *teme* or *loleme* (tongue). By reducing Setswana to language – either a spoken or written tongue – is to deny the holders of such a “Setswana culture” the platform to take their ‘culture, that is, Setswana, to the highs that other foreign languages and “cultures” have attained. To the missionary, Setswana was just a language that they could use to communicate their intentions to the native and later enjoy being responded to. Comaroff (1999:287) emphasis that Setswana, as a term that the evangelists took to mean “the Tswana language” would have been more accurately translated as “Tswana culture”. The language “Setswana” and the culture “Setswana” flowed from the indigenous life pattern of particular community.

“Setswana” as a language was therefore just part of the community’s expression and was not a totality of its existence (as later used in the many translations of Shakespeare and the Bible), notwithstanding the Setswana novel and text (which, unfortunately, were first produced by nonconformist missionaries). The first professors of Setswana were not Batswana, but academics, academics who had a strong link with the missionaries and mis-

⁶ I am opposed to the use of the term ‘vernacular’ among indigenous or native. The term local or indigenous language should be promoted.

missionary education. If you visit Unisa, you will understand exactly what I mean. The language patterns or, rather, speech patterns that are used in the churches today have borrowed enormously from the evangelist orientation. The use of “great words” during prayer by Tswana males is symbolic of the exclusivity that the missionary promoted: the missionary was concerned that only men be allowed to speak “great words”; women were expressly forbidden to preach. Today the “great words” “Mahoko a magolo” were part of colonial intellectual disempowerment exercise, certainly as far as women were concerned. However, worse still was the colonial consciousness imposed on the Tswana male.

The chauvinistic tendencies of the European were evident in the running of the *mahoko a a boitshepo*, in which the male was the only person allowed to lead a prayer. It is no wonder that Tswana Christians retained a rather distinctive attitude towards prayer, seeking, as an evangelist put it, “to sway God with many words” (Comaroff 1999:286). The formula that the lay preacher and the man of the Word used was a sign that certain words or speech patterns constituted a “powerful personal substance”. The missionary ignored the linguistic differences in the Tswana world culture; he believed all was well if he could hear the Tswana speaking in the same manner as the preacher. In this connection, perhaps it is worth my pointing out that I have personally observed that the preacher man with missionary training emulates and imbibes the white man’s rotten Setswana and corrupt forms of articulation/speech patterns. In short, learning the wrong manner of speech from the nonconformist missionary was seen as right. Setswana had to stand for events of the state that it created through the missionary’s constructed reality.

Setswana as a language and culture violates the empiricists’ epistemology, an epistemology that is part of the European thought pattern. In this thought pattern, which is ruled by positive knowledge, there is a definitive separation of the construct from the concrete. European epistemology fails to separate the word from the thing or the act. It is these and many other acts, concrete, constructs and so on, that the missionary conveniently interpreted as being evidence that the Tswana were irrational, magical thinkers. With a marked lack of respect for indigenous people and how they valued their language, the missionary simply went ahead and reduced Setswana to grammatical and conceptual terms that enhanced their own preaching, ideology and mission of conquering and converting the heathen. This mission involved teaching the people who lived in “darkest Africa” a certain amount of civilization and turning their spoken words into written words: a miracle that the colonised Tswana never thought as possible. For the Christian, remaking African consciousness entailed freeing the native from this weed bed of

animal superstition, this epistemology of unreason (Comaroff 1999). As Molema (1966) and Comaroff (1999) make clear: the Tswana were to speak back to the missionaries to give voice to their side of the conversation.

The Tswana embraced and incorporated into their mindset the deeds of the missionary; they imbibed and imitated the missionary ways of doing things to the point of utilising the missionary's same utterance and "ways".

Mutwa (1964:342) states that, when a black man turns to God, he wants to talk to God, not to repeat standard recitations. He wants to unburden his troubled heart and soul before the Almighty. He wants to bring his own problems, as well as his personal fortune, to God's attention. He is not interested in reading something written by foreign hand in a book written many aeons ago, a book about people confronted with a completely different set of problems. The same is true of the way in which the African chooses to praise God. The missionaries were opposed to the "native dance" – in fact, this dance turned the human body itself into an instrument of veneration (Comaroff 1999: 288) and *Go bina* carries the meaning of both to "sing" and "to dance". Mutwa (1964) reiterates the point that blacks prefer to rejoice, to sing, to clap hands and dance before his gods and goddesses. Hymns composed by white men sound dirge-like to black people's ears; they are dull and solemn. When one sings these hymns one does not feel that one is honouring God, but rather that one is lamenting the death of one's soul.

Mutwa presents a counter-hegemonic reaction which frequently seeks out alternative modes of expression that form part of a long, bitter struggle that nearly caused him his life. Such a counter-hegemonic reaction to the anti-colonial struggle waged by some traditional healers and intellectuals of the time continue to be observed even in the 21st century: the dominant religion still seeks to interpret the "other", label them and deny them space in the public media. The mind has been colonised to the extent that even talking about anti-colonial moves is another struggle in the decolonisation of the mind from false reality. The Christian Tswana regards prayers read from a prayer book as dull and insipid, without meaning or spirit, completely insincere. One does not feel free to glorify God according to the wishes of one's own heart. There is too much standardisation and rigidity.

In terms of indigenous practice, when blacks feel that their prayers have been granted, they want to show their gratitude to God (Mutwa 1964:345), which includes "clapping of hands and booming drums, leaping, twisting and turning". Although he writes from a reactionist viewpoint, Mutwa assist us in understanding that the Tswana have not accepted Christian teaching and the ways of *sekgoa* without many internal struggles. It was easy for some to accept the missionary faith, to practise and teach the

missionary the *loleme*, which later became the instrument for further colonisation of the mind. Mutwa concludes by saying that “throughout Africa the Black man and woman are now beginning to feel that they have been betrayed into accepting Christianity. They equate Christianity with the White man’s power to dominate; they reject Christianity as the first step towards rejecting the White man” (1964:344). In reading the good words from the good book, one tends to read a vernacular bible which has Setswana poetics represented in the mode of a thin *sekgoa* narrative. This determines a pattern or mode of knowing and being.

In interpreting the footprints of the missionaries who traversed the western Transvaal and the British Protectorate of Bechuanaland, one finds a number of cases of a colonised mindset: chiefs who sold out their work force, their militia, their strong bodies to the farms in order to profit the missionaries and their various farmer friends. In studying the linkage between the lifestyles of certain tribes prior to the arrival of the “man of the Word”, one observes what Molema (1966) describes as progress – materially, socially and intellectually, after turning to Christianity. The wealthier classes among the Barolong acquired not only cattle, goats and sheep, but also horses, wagons and, of course, guns. They also built houses in the European style and even bought house furniture and modern agricultural implements (Molema 1966:208).

Missionaries in the Mafikeng region helped the Tswana to develop agriculture, business and to send their children to good missionary schools. These missionary schools gave children a good education, and conscientious parents obviously wanted to send their children to such schools. The change in the economy as observed in the change in architecture by the wealthy Tswana can be attested to by the building in the Stadt-Mahikeng in the precincts of the Molemas’ House. The European influence that came with the Methodist church created a consciousness that lifted the Tswana to the white man’s level of affluence. Living in the same type of house, wearing same clothing and being able to earn a salary just like a white man turned out to be great motivators as far as obtaining a relationship with the missionary was concerned, irrespective of the missionary’s destruction of the minds of millions of Africans by creating a reality which, in the case of the Tswana, was reflected in the Setswana language. Comaroff (1985:155) argues as follows:

The articulation between the Tshidi world and the colonial order was profoundly unequal; it was a vertical relationship structured by centralized domination and extraction. As the process unfolded, the evangelists, initially forced to operate

within the parameters of the Tshidi system, developed an emergent order of values, rooted in a model of an idealized African Christian peasantry under British protection. This, in turn, motivated the development of formal missionary imperialism. But their technical and ideological innovations had already initiated significant sociocultural transformations among the Tshidi, on whose experience the signs and practice of Christianity were imprinted, whether or not they were 'converted'. These signs and practices were soon to resonate with those of colonial politico-economic institutions – their dualistic categories, their construct of time and agency, and their projection of the world as an order of material relations.

In Mafikeng, the original church came to replace the chiefly courts as the focus for collective ritual such as prayers for rain, and emerged as the power base of the educated elite. Although the Anglican Church was to establish itself in the area, the Methodist church remained the recognised "official" denomination of the Tshidi. It became clear, by the middle of the nineteenth century, that denomination was subsumed as a status-group signifier. The Bakgatla accepted a number of different churches, while the Barolong specifically rejected some. Ethnic boundaries were formed along denomination lines.

Missionary education and religion brought with them certain structural contradictions. The Batswana tended to perceive the structural contradictions of their predicament in term of opposition between an idealised and objectivised *Setswana*, "traditional *Tswana* ways" and *sekgoa* "white culture". The original Setswana lifestyle, which was characterised by strong traditional practice and belief, was now overshadowed by *setswana*, which connoted modes of production and social relationship obtained in the advent of coercive white domination with the performance of rituals based on Protestant orthodoxy. *Sekgoa* remained the focus of state or church control.

I do not dismiss the reactionist action by other Africans (Mutwa, Hobsbawn, Vilakazi) who have written about the southern African region and who attest that, in fact, black religious innovation in southern Africa has sought to wrest "the Christian message from the messenger" and I do not dispute the fact that its history has been littered with battles over the control of master symbols (e.g. the "right" to baptize or dispense communion). The Tswana have been purposive actors in the process of articulation, despite the superior determining force exercised by the neocolonial state. There has been, in the years since the missionary established root patterns of response,

growing awareness of the structures of oppression and emerging resistance to cultural forms of colonialism. Such acts are not the bases of my argument. They are important in the later part of Christianity's development on the continent of Africa. For now, however, it is imperative to concentrate on the early history of the missionary; this was the period during which the Tswana were vulnerable to poverty, when they were repeatedly attacked, and when they endured a great deal of misery brought on by events of the time, including the Mfacane. The relationship of the earlier encounter later turned into "exploiter" and "exploited". The conversation that Motshiwa enjoyed as opposed to the conversation that John Campbell spoke about turned bitter in the later part of the nineteenth century. It is fair to say that the damage done to the Tswana by Christianity and the colonisation process is irreparable. A whole century of cultural re-orientation is needed to even begin to undo this damage.

As far as the symbolic importance of control over water is concerned, as an essential part of politico-ritual power in the pre-colonial system, rain-making was undermined. With the advent of colonization, the rainmaking and the well became focal signs in the colonial encounter, the object of struggle between missionaries and chiefs. When the Christian won it became a victory for the missionary, who wanted to see the Tswana work to undermine their own cultural beliefs. Water also had an important role in the indigenous symbolic scheme; it was included in Tswana rites of purification, in healing, and in initiation.

Like many other indigenous churches across the continent, the Zion Christian Church includes Christian principles and African cultural traditions. New members are not asked to forsake their beliefs, ancestor "worship" or customary rituals. Instead, all these rituals are embraced by the church (BBC *Focus on Africa* 2001: 44). With the introduction of Zionism in the Tswana community, certain concepts were reintroduced, such as *go tlhapiswa* (ritual washing) as opposed to *go kolobetsa* (to make wet) which was used by the Orthodox Church. As part of an attempt to contradict the colonial, reactionary movements such as the Zionist Christian Church used the term *didiba* (wells) to refer to their own churches. This I find interesting as a form of struggle: using words which colonised the Tswana to now set them "free" from mainline European churches. Hence the statement "those who have drunk at the well of Zion become the physical bearers of the Spirit", a statement that is made outside the limited confines of the ritual itself, and which implies a healing rite (Comaroff 1985:254). In short, a revaluation of highly significant concepts became a trend in the Zion Christian Church in reclaiming some traditional cultural concepts. The Zionist brought back the *go*

bina, a concept that was specifically denied by the missionaries. By eliminating the altar, they marked the space for the dance form of *go bina*. In direct contrast to the missionary, the Zionist evoked the structure of rituals of the pre-colonial community, some of which are related to initiation.

The advent of new national consciousness after the 1920s brought with it resistance movement within the Christian religion. Such a movement began to question certain issues that the colonial church practised; Africans began to reclaim some sense of awareness about the importance of regarding their traditional culture as part of their religion. The new religious movements started to incorporate into their practices certain aspects of indigenous culture, a culture that was practiced many years before the arrival of the colonial powers in Africa.

In conclusion, certain observations can be made about the character and change in governance by Tswana chiefs. The fact that Montshiwa opened his arms to the Methodist and enabled the Methodist to build a church meant that the members of the tribe would belong to this denomination. Early travels by Father Porte OMI, who had explored the country of the Batswana in 1893-1894, give us another view of events. Porte travelled to Mafikeng, Ganyesa, Morokweng, Ramotswa and Kanye trying to get land to build a (Catholic) church. On arriving in Mafikeng, Porte reported as follows:

At last, on 4 January 1894, I arrived in Mafikeng. With great eagerness I started to sort the post for which I had been waiting for the past two months ... I had called on the Catholic farmers in the area; I spoke for the last time with Montshioa, the Paramount Chief of the Barolong. On my return at 4 pm my drivers ask me for permission to drive the cart to the other side of the Molopo River. Much rain had fallen: the river was high and was still rising. A frightful storm broke loose over the entire Mafikeng region. I told my helpers to make haste while I was going to baptise a few children in town.

Father Porte was unsuccessful in establishing himself in the area of Montshiwa. There was, of course, a certain amount of hostility between the various churches at that time. After addressing Chief Montshioa at a Kgotla, Porte was promised land for a Catholic Mission station. The mission had a twofold main focus: Christian education and Christian charity. Education for all who desired to know and serve God in sincerity and fidelity; Christian charity for the poor and the sick (St Mary's Mission 1928-1878). What this story illustrates is that it was not always easy for the missionaries to establish

themselves in Tswana country. However, once they were granted permission and land, they operated on the basis of “full speed ahead”, to the point of dividing the tribe itself.

One can see how the power of hymns and prayer was used on many occasions by Tswana cultural gatherings. The Word of God is feared, as is God Himself. Singing and praying in many churches affected the oral ability of many leaders in Tswana polity. The period between 1830 and 1920 remains important to observe in terms of finding a discourse between consciousness and colonisation, between the eradication of traditional cultural practice in favour of the western culture; between rejection of the self and the acceptance and practice of a foreign cult. The acculturation of the Kgama, Kgatla and Rolong chiefs affected the running and organisation of their state in more than just one way. The colonial powers prepared for what was to be over hundred years of colonisation by the careful positioning of their missionary churches. They abused the Christian God and used His name in order to colonise both the mind and the soul of the local indigenous people. The competition that emerged between the missionaries in trying to win favour from the chiefs shows that their intention was not just to bring “light to the dark land”. The consequences suffered by the Tswana in losing their identity, rituals, cultural and indigenous knowledge have still not been overcome many years after independence and many years after new, indigenous churches have gained ground.

The reality in which the Tswana people are living is, to a large extent, a false one that was created by the missionaries. For a start, the missionaries did what they could to reduce the Tswana people’s languages into simple narratives. The missionaries caused people to lose their memory of their living heritage, and to cease respecting their ancestors and cultural traditions. A new understanding of social reality came into place and, out of nowhere, economic practices were also influenced by the Christianisation and colonisation of the tribe through their chief. Unless people reclaim their consciousness, a rebirth to a past less known will not be easy. The road to a reawakening should be traced beyond the period of colonisation. The great intellect and talent that was used by Africans in both Sudan and Egypt can only be realised in southern Africa if we accept that “for too long, African history has been divided into pre- and post-colonial periods, with the centuries before European involvement largely ignored”. We should try by tracing the footprints of missionaries to find and show that, before Europeans were even aware of the existence of the continent of Africa, Africans themselves were evolving complex states which were socially and culturally advanced. In so

doing we will eliminate the conflicting memories of the missionary experience on our past.

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Ukuhlonipha:
Gender and culture at Emmaus Hospital

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Ukuhlonipha has been practised among the Zulus and other tribes from time immemorial as a way of regulating family and clan relationships and maintaining harmonious co-existence between human beings. In Zulu patriarchal society, the conduct of women and younger people in particular was monitored through the *ukuhlonipha* code to ensure that androcentric life remained undisturbed. With the introduction of schools and the adoption of western culture, especially around the mission stations, the *ukuhlonipha* code was challenged. This paper looks especially at the Emmaus Mission Hospital run by the Berlin Mission Society (BMS), a place where the *ukuhlonipha* code was directly challenged by the trained Zulu nurses who staffed this hospital. The Emmaus Mission Hospital is situated in the land of the Amangwane tribe near Bergville on the Drakensburg Mountains, about 150 km away from Pietermaritzburg en route to Johannesburg. The seeds of western medicine were sown by the missionary Christiaan Schumann in 1930 and these seeds “germinated” into the establishment of a hospital in 1947, when Dr Magdalene Schiele established a proper hospital on the mission site.

By using interviews and literature, in this paper I am going to employ cultural hermeneutics in order to critique Zulu culture and gender. Although the explanation of cultural hermeneutics by Musimbi R.A. Kanyoro is based on feminist theology, it is valid for this paper because *ukuhlonipha* is grounded in the ancestral religio-cultural beliefs. This paper will adopt Kanyoro’s explanation of cultural hermeneutics: this explanation does not condemn African culture *per se*, but critiques some of its negative aspects. She writes:

Despite this seemingly holistic notion of religion, it is also a fact that African religions or cultures are neither free from negative practices nor are they immune to external changes. The unity of the community, as well as the power of the community, is one area that continues to be challenged most from the pressure of modernization. Not all factors considered to be good by the community benefit all members of the community.

At other times, the pressure to adhere to community norms become as oppressive as it can be helpful.¹

This paper does not seek to criticise the Zulu *ukuhlonipha* code as if this code was void of any good whatsoever, but employs cultural hermeneutics in order to highlight, in the *ukuhlonipha*, the elements of empowerment and disempowerment within Zulu patriarchal culture. In this paper, I intend to discuss how, in Zulu culture, women were socialised to be subordinate to men; how they were raised in a way that ensured they had no voice to question culturally entrenched patriarchy.

The socialisation of Zulu women in the 1930s

When a Zulu child is born, it is traditionally introduced to the ancestors who are believed to have participated in its procreation.² The child is integrated into the life of the living through a number of rituals such as *ukubikwa*, *imbeleko* and, (later) for post-adolescent girls, *umemulo*. Among other things, these rituals invoke and maintain the presence and protection of the ancestors over the child from the cradle to the grave. In return for protection from all forms of harm and danger, for provision of life's needs, the child's parents and, when it is older, the child himself or herself must conduct themselves in a way demanded by the ancestors. The child must participate in a series of family and clans rituals that are connected to the ancestors, so that the child grows up with that connection.³

The traditional way of raising children aims at inculcating in the child a culture of respect for Zulu customs which, in the late 1800s and early 1900s, were basically patriarchal and androcentric. This then meant that girls and women were at the receiving ends of this culture. Girls were raised to acknowledge that men were in charge of the life as lived in the community and that their existence was largely geared at ensuring men's welfare and supporting men. For these reasons, women strove to conduct their lives according the expectations of their society, which was governed by men; women were anxious to please both men and the ancestors. Women in Zulu

¹ Kanyoro, M.R.A. 2002. *Introducing feminist cultural hermeneutics*. Sheffield: Academic Press. (p. 66)

² Berglund, A-I. 1976. *Zulu thought-patterns and symbolism*. London: Hurst. (pp. 94, 100, 117, 207)

³ Ntsimane, R. 2005. Memory boxes and Zulu culture, in *Never too small to remember memory work and resilience in times of AIDS*, edited by P. Denis. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster: 36-37.

culture received honour by the very fact that they lived in their father's or their male guardian's homestead. When they left their father's or guardian's homestead, they went via marriage to live in the homestead of their husbands. Any woman who had no male with whom she could associate herself for the purposes of protection was vulnerable and considered to be without honour.⁴

Let us briefly look at how Zulu culture socialised women to conduct themselves in a manner that pleased men and ancestors. This manner of conduct, called *ukuhlonipha* (although it included all people of traditional Zulu society), was largely expected to be visibly practised by women. We shall then look at how the formal western school system, in collaboration with the church, promoted another form of respect, one that was contrary to *ukuhlonipha*. This will enable us to analyse how women nurses challenged Zulu patriarchy and acquired power through their professional knowledge of nursing.

Cultural socialisation and the *ukuhlonipha* code⁵

All societies have a code of respect which is designed and modified through the ages in order to ensure that its members co-exist peacefully with each other. Such codes govern relationships based on age, gender and class. Like other human social codes, *ukuhlonipha* has been practised among the Zulu people for centuries. *Ukuhlonipha* is similar to showing someone respect in English society, and means that *ukuhlonipha* must not only be practised, but must be seen to be practised. It manifests itself in someone's behaviour towards or the behaviour they display in the presence of the party so respected. It is also manifested in the specific avoidance of certain behaviour towards that same party.

When *ukuhlonipha* is manifested in terms of avoiding certain behaviour, among the Zulus it broadens slightly and is called *ukuzila*, avoidance. Benedict Carton shares his findings when he writes about this aspect of *ukuhlonipha*: "In *ukuhlonipha*, a custom of deference, male and female youths and married women avoided male elders as means of respect and homage."⁶ The showing of respect is done by avoiding certain people,

⁴ Ntsimane, R. 2006. Dominant masculinities in the Zion Christian Church: a preliminary investigation. *Journal of Constructive Theology* 12/1 (July): 30.

⁵ Grammatically, *Ukuhlonipha* is the infinite verb form. The noun is *inhlonipho* and has the same meaning as *ukuhlonipha*. These forms are used interchangeably.

⁶ Carton, B. 1007. Men before their time: youth power and African generational conflict in South Africa, 1880 – 1906 in *Colloquium: masculinities in South Africa*. University of Natal, Durban. 2-4 July: 5.

actions, places and words. A betrothed or married woman has to avoid all forms of contact, including eye contact, with her future prospective father-in-law. She is not allowed to be anywhere near her father-in-law and his brothers when they are having a meal. All women and men and younger people are to be careful not to pronounce the name of their father-in-law or utter any syllables that may have a sound that is related to his name. For instance, if the *umnumzana's* name is Mnyamana, all words that have *mnyama* ("black" colour) in them will be avoided out of respect. The Zulu language has many substitute nouns and verbs used in order to avoid mention of the "sacred" words. This form of *ukuhlonipha* is used over and above the common use of third person form of address by both women and younger men, should direct address be necessary. Since *ukuhlonipha* is about *showing* respect, it depends on being seen. In the absence of certain people or by the very fact that they are not in a certain place, people behave as they please and are not said to be disrespectful.

Different expectations of *ukuhlonipha* are put on boys and girls as they grow up. Girls are specifically groomed to show respect – more so than boys. Axel-Ivar Berglund is among the few anthropologists who have written about *ukuhlonipha* and its various perspectives.⁷ As far as relationships between men and women are concerned, custom demanded that women avoided touching or speaking directly to men, especially those related to their lovers or husbands. The mission school system changed some traditional Zulus into *amakholwa* and their *ukuhlonipha* code was changed in the process.

The mission schools and the creation of the *kholwa* culture

Wherever western education has been introduced in southern Africa, schools have been used by missionaries and colonial governments as places via which to change the culture of indigenous people. In fact, the western formal school system has a culture of its own which needs to be adopted in order to succeed in that specific system of education. Along with literacy and numeracy, learners are also taught how to behave in a manner that is acceptable to western standards. Historically, the manners and conduct inculcated in Zulu learners who attended such schools were in directly contradiction to the manners taught in a traditional Zulu homestead and village. Axel-Ivar

⁷ See Elliott, A. 1970. *The magic world of the Xhosa*. Cape Town: Collins. (pp. 85, 48-49). See also Krige, E.J. 1950. *The social systems of the Zulus*. Pietermaritzburg: Shuter & Shooter. (pp. 30-31)

Berglund, a Lutheran missionary from Sweden who has written extensively on Zulus and their symbolism, has observed the shift that occurred in raising children the traditional way and the “western way” or the *kholwa* way.

We need to bear in mind that the missionary’s chief objective to live among the Zulus was to convert them from their traditional religion into Christianity. The mission societies used formal schools to introduce Zulu learners to the new way of life and make them adopt this new way of life at the expense of their own. Schools introduced minor changes in the behaviour of Zulu learners that added up to a victory for western, missionary culture. Given that wars are won in a number of battles, these minor changes which Berglund writes about count for much. He observed changes such as learners looking directly at an adult person and initiating a greeting accompanied by enquiry about the adult person’s health. “The schools have taught quite the contrary”, Berglund wrote, “a school-boy of about 12 years told me that the first thrashing he received at school (he related many instances of such treatment) was on the second day of school when he failed to greet his class-teacher!”⁸

Although this paper is about gender and culture issues as these manifested themselves in the mission hospitals, I believe it is necessary to explain the changes in the way Zulus were traditionally socialised. This will enable us to appreciate the changes brought about by the missionaries through their work in the mission schools. Although Berglund laments the changes brought by missionaries and their schools, we shall see later how such changes became a weapon used by nurses to undermine and modify – to their advantage – the *ukuhlonipha* code as supported by patriarchal and androcentric culture. The tension arises between maintaining what is Zulu and handed down by the ancestors on the one hand (which Berglund supports) and, on the other hand, these Zulu nurses’ training. This training was acquired from western strangers, but it nevertheless equipped them to challenge Zulu patriarchal hegemony. Berglund laments:

Christian interference with the cult of the forefathers, respect for and general behaviour towards them was detrimental to the complete life-approach of the Zulu. When the missionaries started their evangelization and education work, it was precisely at this juncture that they aimed. The forefathers were discre-

⁸ Berglund, A-I. 1971. Church and culture change in a Zulu tribal authority, in *The church and culture change in Africa*, edited by D. Bosch. Pretoria: NC Boekhandel: 60.

dited, at times ridiculed, on other occasions their existence denied. Besides the downfall of moral standards and of parental authority which, to a very great extent, rested on the cult of the fore-fathers, I dare to suggest that we have here the key to the readiness with which the converted and schooled Zulu so readily adopts Christian and Western life approaches with attached cultural elements.⁹

Having adopted Christianity, or at least some tenets of the western culture, and abandoned in part or in total Zulu culture for its thoroughgoing patriarchy, the women *amakholwa* seized the opportunity to train as nurses in mission hospitals when the opportunity came in the 1930s.

Gendering the nursing profession

When Christiaan Schumann, the BMS missionary, employed the first nurse Nukuna as a midwife, to help the women in the tribe of the Amangwane, he was met with opposition. In his self-published booklet, Lawrence Zikode, an elder in the Emmaus church, reported on this opposition purely from an androcentric perspective:

Missionaries and their wives did always offer First Aid, but in 1930 Rev. C. Schumann arranged that Doctor Freestet from Weenen came every other week to Emmaus and that a clinic was available for which a staff nurse, Millicent Nukuna, a Xhosa, was employed. She had to visit homes where there were expecting women. When she started, men in the community said: 'Rev. Schumann is only wasting money paying this nurse; our wives know what to do when they are expecting children.'¹⁰

It is interesting to note that it was the *amangwane* men who opposed midwifery services, and not the women, all of whom were vulnerable in the case of difficult deliveries. The women had no voice even about their health.

Initially, African men were recruited to work as nurse aids and orderlies especially in the mines and industrialised centres of South Africa. While black men served as nurse aids, women nurses were almost exclu-

⁹ Berglund, in *Church and culture change*: 64.

¹⁰ Zikode, L.A. Undated. *A history of the Emmaus mission*: 15-16.

sively the white religious sisters who came from abroad (usually). This is partially because black women who wanted to train as nurses faced certain obstacles. Charlotte Searle, one of the early developers of the nursing profession in South Africa, mentions a number of impediments to the entrance of young black women into the nursing profession. Although Searle writes for the general nursing profession, her observations are valid and apply to the Zululand of Natal and Zululand of the 1930s:

Tribal prejudices, a lack of sufficient secondary facilities, the poverty of the people, a tendency of Bantu parents to give preference to their male children in secondary school opportunities, early marriage of young women, the *lobola* system, a drive by the Cape educational authorities to absorb women with secondary education into teacher training schemes, and the use of Bantu hospital beds in urban areas for the training of White nurses all tended to retard the training of Bantu women as professional nurses.¹¹

In the west, nursing became gendered in the late 1800s, when women were recruited to serve in government hospitals as religious sisters. Men used to serve as nurses and orderlies during the wars and in the mines of Kimberley. Later, in the 1930s, the mission hospitals that were being established at the time began to train non-religious black women nurses in small numbers and at an elementary level of nursing (nursing helpers). Shula Marks observes that, "It was only when confronted with the dire shortage of nurses during the Second World War that the authorities turned to the problem of training black nurses on any scale: as General Pienaar put it to a conference on Nursing Education held in Pietersburg in 1948, 'if the European nursing shortage was to be overcome, more non-European nurses must be trained'."¹²

Unlike in the case of men, who did not have a conspicuous uniform, trained women nurses wore white distinct uniforms that made them easy to identify in their communities. Like all uniforms, nurses' uniforms suggest that one belongs to a group, is subject to a certain discipline, and is bound by a code of conduct. For the group, the uniform symbolises a controlled form of power. Paradoxically, the nurses' uniform was empowering to black

¹¹ Searle, C. 1965. *The history of the development of nursing in South Africa 1652-1960*. Cape Town: Struik. (p. 268)

¹² Marks, S. 1994. *Divided sisterhood: race, class and gender in the South African Nursing Profession*. London: MacMillan. (p. 91)

nurses: it symbolised knowledge and resources. It gave honour and respectability to the wearer.

Nursing served as a way to empower women to control a larger and a sophisticated institution such as a mission hospital and to have a voice in decision-making forums. With desperately needed cash in their pockets, women nurses became both independent of men and dependable. After their training as nurses, Zulu women had knowledge and resources and felt empowered.

Re-ordering of power relations in the hospital space

The fact that gender roles differ significantly from one society to another and from one historical period to another is an indication that they are socially and culturally constructed. (Musimbi Kanyoro)¹³

When the black nurses took up their jobs in the Emmaus Hospital, tensions were inevitable. These women were going to change and were going to act in ways that differed markedly from the conduct taught them by their parents and grandparents (i.e. conduct befitting a proper and dignified Zulu way of life). What the custodians of Zulu culture in Emmaus and elsewhere disregarded is specifically referred to in the Kanyoro quotation above: gender roles are constructed. And, given that gender roles are constructed by society (as we have seen in the two subsections above), these roles can also be reconstructed and modified by the same society in the course of its history. Such modification happened in the Ceza Mission Hospital of the Swedish Mission Society in Zululand. To show the changes that occurred in young Zulu women as a result of their nursing training, and the power they acquired through such knowledge, the authors of *Ceza: a roundabout way*, give an example of a young nurse who convinced an *umnumzana*, head of a homestead, not to take his son away from the hospital to an *inyanga*, a healer. They explain how the nurse was successful in her pleas:

The young girls sometimes start their training with such ideas. It is important then that teachers and students understand each other, and know each other's cultural and religious background. It was interesting to see how knowledge of anatomy and physiology sometimes opened the students' eyes to reality

¹³ Kanyoro, *Introducing feminist cultural hermeneutics*: 17.

and could help to make clear what had seemed mysterious before. And we noticed how our students could soon explain to their relatives what might be the causes of their illness and the means of treatment. They could explain to their patients too and this could diminish the fear of the patients when they were confronted with new strange things in the hospitals.¹⁴

The Zulus coming to the hospitals to seek health obviously had great respect for the Zulu young women who were conversant with white people's health system. The nurses had knowledge which gave them power to provide health or, at least, to nurse any patient in the hospital.

While men acting as *abanumzana*¹⁵ could be in charge of almost all the spheres of influence, their influence did not extend to clearly demarcated spaces such as mission hospitals. Similar to mission schools, mission hospitals had their own codes of conduct, to which all had to adhere, irrespective of gender and social status. In an interview with R. Ntsimane, Matron Dorcas Mkhize told of two similar incidents, one in the King Edward VIII Hospital in Durban and the other in Emmaus, where an *umnumzana* refused to be treated by nurses who were as young as the Matron's daughters. Since these daughters were not allowed even to wash him, he chose to leave the hospital without being treated. The Nurses' Pledge of Service, which is the oath taken by all registered nurses under the South African Nursing Council, compelled nurses to provide their services indiscriminately. In fact, the pledge clearly goes against the "spirit and the letter" of the *ukuhlonipha* code when the nurse pledges, among things, "I will not permit considerations of religion, nationality, race, or social standing to intervene between my duty and my patient."¹⁶

The Nurses' Pledge of Service, the Hippocratic Oath, and the mission hospital constitution and rules regulated life within the hospital confines. Like the mission schools and the mission stations, the mission hospitals were ruled by a code of conduct different from that expected by Zulu patriarchal society, a society in which men made decisions that all had to abide by.

As a necessity rather than as a self-driven initiative, women nurses had to do things that were frowned upon in their communities. (For example, the *ukuhlonipha* code barred women from interacting with men other than

¹⁴ Adolfsson, M. & Berntsson, A. 1984. *Ceza: a roundabout way to the goal. Three decades of medical missionary work in South Africa*. Uppsala: Adolfsson. (p. 157)

¹⁵ The isiZulu plural form of *umnumzana*, the male head of a household.

¹⁶ This pledge is read out aloud during nurses' graduations and during the funeral services of nurses, especially among black members of the profession.

their husbands when it came to anything connected with sexuality. Indeed, sexuality was a taboo topic.)

Two types of nurses developed from the training they received: those who, despite their training, continued to conform to the patriarchal system of oppression and those who “rocked the boat” and used their training to undermine patriarchy and androcentrism. For these women, life was no longer going to be dominated and centred on male figures, irrespective of their knowledge and resources. (We shall see later in this paper how women members of the Black Peoples’ Convention of the late 1960s and the 1970s rebelled against male domination when they had equal or better education qualifications.) Those nurses who rocked the boat realised that their training was empowering and that they were no longer obliged to remain in a position of subservience to men. Their training empowered them to challenge patriarchal culture and undermine androcentrism.

Zulu patriarchy was supported by a number of strong cultural institutions and practices such as *ilobolo* (bride price), *ukwemulisa* (coming of age of women), *ukuhlaba* (slaughtering), *ukukhuluma emsamo* (ancestors’ rituals), *ukubusa* (governance), *ukungcwaba* (burial) and others. Indeed, patriarchy invaded all spheres of a Zulu person, something that was not true of other African cultures (which at least modified or even undermined the patriarchy of such cultures). Indeed, on the face of it, patriarchy in Zulu culture was virtually unchallengeable. In some cultures that gave men dominance over women, the women found ways to challenge and interrogate the validity of that domination. In the east African tribes of Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania and Uganda, there are religious cults exclusively for women. These women serve as mediums through which the gods speak to the tribes. According to Iris Berger, who interviewed someone called “Lewis” for her research, the cult women use their positions as spirit mediums in order to challenge patriarchy. Berger writes:

Lewis argues that such therapeutic pretensions simply masked the cults’ real aim of protest against the dominant sex, offering women both protection from male exactions and effective vehicle for manipulating husbands and other male relatives. He terms such cults peripheral – that is, they play no direct part in upholding the moral codes of the societies in which they

appear, and they are often believed to have originated elsewhere.¹⁷

(Note that, although the east African cults provided space for attacking male domination at home and in society, that space lasted only for the duration of the trance.) Impregnable though it seemed to be, Zulu patriarchy suffered lasting blows from the training of nurses. In the case of the nurses under Matron Evelyn Sommerfeld and Matron Mkhize, these nurses were sufficiently empowered to be placed in charge of Emmaus Hospital which, at the time, was an extremely sophisticated institution.

The “sisters” and new identities: better training bestowed more authority

The title of “sister” in the nursing profession has its origins in the religious sisters of Europe who were also nurses. They were called “sisters” not because of their level of training, but because of their calling into a religious community. When black nurses qualified to be in charge of sections of the hospitals, their qualification gave them the responsibilities previously held by white sisters. They also became “sisters” by virtue of their training.

Black nurses who went on to do higher training and gain new qualifications were given more authority over the mission hospital. These were a select few, a cut above the rest. Given the ethos of *ubuntu*, which espouses egalitarianism, one sister, Sister Ndaba, was reluctant to take the position of Assistant Matron when it was offered to her. Matron Evelyn Sommerfeld explained the situation to R.Ntsimane in an interview:

What I wish to have changed was that our Zulu, Xhosa and Sotho nurses will be more able to take over more of the work that one did, take more responsibility. And that, as I said, I only got a little bit done with Sister Ndaba who I got to be my vice matron, it’s very hard. For her own personal views she was not happy in these positions because of other sisters who did not accept it that she was in this position because they told her that she would tell me everything, they said. That I could not make them understand how important it was for them to take over this post, it was for their own good and for their people, that

¹⁷ Berger, I. 1976. Rebels or status-seekers? Women as spirit mediums in East Africa, in *Women in Africa*, edited by N.J. Hafkin & E.G. Bay, Stanford: University Press: 167-168.

was very important and I have a feeling I could not make them understand that.¹⁸

Notwithstanding the above, this powerful breed of black women succeeded in moving into territory traditionally reserved for white women, whose nonsense attitude they also adopted. I believe that a collision was inevitable between the Zulu nursing sisters and the custodians of the *ukuhlonipha* in the village and in the mission station. Concerning a disagreement about the usage of the hospital chapel and nurses' attendance of chapel services, Matron Dorcas Mkhize¹⁹ ended up colliding with Mr. Lawrence A. Zikode, the elder of the local Lutheran parish. In an interview with Radikobo Ntsimane, Matron Mkhize shared the debacle:

Ntsimane: Do you know Mr. Lawrence Zikode?

Mkhize: Ahh, very well, very well!

Ntsimane: Was he not in the committee of the hospital?

Mkhize: No, no! In fact Mr. Zikode imposed his authority, but he had no authority at all at the hospital. And that was one of the things that annoyed him so much. Because the government wouldn't allow that. We were run completely by the government now. There was no board; there was no committee from the community. It was just the hospital directorate (laughter).

Ntsimane: How did he impose his authority?

Mkhize: He used to come and tell us. For instance, as a Methodist, we had an old house which was dilapidated and falling apart. We requested the Superintendent that we use the chapel after the Lutherans had come in. Because they used to use the chapel at 8 am, by 9 o'clock they were through. And then we requested to start at half past nine, and up to 11. The Superintendent said it was OK and the directorate had agreed. And Lawrence was annoyed because the house became full with the Methodists. But in the mornings it was empty.

¹⁸ R. Ntsimane interviewed the retired Matron Evelyn Sommerfeld of Emmaus Hospital on 05 August 2002 in her home in Walsrode, Germany. She was the second matron of Emmaus after Hilda Prozesky, who started working in the hospital in 1947.

¹⁹ R.Ntsimane interviewed retired Matron Dorcas Mkhize on 10 December 2004 in her home in Grange, Pietermaritzburg.

(In a follow-up interview, Matron Mkhize explained that Zikode loved authority so much so that he did not realise that it was limited to the community and the church.²⁰)

Zulu nurses became alienated from their people. They became outsiders who were insiders. They were Zulus and women, but their presence among the Zulus and among women caused discomfort to all parties. Their training was not in the least like that given to traditional *sangomas*. They, like their white colleagues, subscribed to a different ethos altogether. They operated in a space with which a traditional Zulu simply could not identify. The language, the manner of dress, the kind of “exaggerated cleanliness” called hygiene, the “unrestricted and liberated” personnel, the regulated times, registration of names and recordings, the “endless” questions²¹ about the history of the illness etc., were foreign to people who were used to the work ethos of the *sangomas* and herbalists. Many black nurses can identify with the story of Matron Mkhize, whose grandfather refused her permission to become a nurse. The following beliefs, all of which portrayed nurses in the worst possible light, are referred to as being prevalent in Matron Mkhize’s community:

Ntsimane: Why was he against nursing?

Mkhize: Well, there were many stories about the nurse. That the nurses were killers, nurses were witches, and nurses never get married, that they actually abort. All those things ... were said about nurses.

Their qualification and subsequent identity meant that their communities could not associate with them in a “normal” manner. They were looked upon as higher than the regular members of society. Even among the *amakholwa*, who were a class above the traditionalists, the sisters were in a class above the other women. With regard to the *amakholwa* in general, Berglund wrote that “they consider themselves as superior, having better knowledge and

²⁰ Matron Dorcas Mkhize, interviewed by Radikobo Ntsimane on 4 November 2006, in her house in Grange, Pietermaritzburg.

²¹ Some Zulus liken questioning to the colonial and Apartheid oppression. If they are subjected to what they regard as a demand for many answers, Zulus will explain in disgust that the enquirer demanded i-Pass and i-Special. These documents (Pass Book and Special Permit) were supposed to be carried at all times and produced on demand by black people working in industrialised areas in order to show that they were not illegal migrants working in a restricted area.

hence greater ability than the traditionalists”.²² They had a higher status and power. In her explanation of power, Sue Russel wrote that the power is acquired through possession of a special knowledge or material resources in which other people have an interest. In the case of Zulu nurses, the power they wielded came from their training as nurses. They had special knowledge that enabled them to nurse people back to life. Their presence in mission hospitals was a clear indication that, like the white nurses before them, they were competent human beings. Indeed, these sisters were in charge of a sophisticated institution that was hitherto unknown in their communities. It is fair to say that they were seen as gate-keepers.

Conclusion

From the encounters Matron Mkhize had with white doctors in the Emmaus Hospital, we can sense another spirit at work, other than the anti-patriarchal spirit I have been discussing so far. Mkhize emphasised the fact that she had to fight the spirit that undermined her as a black matron and her nurses as professionals. She fought against the Superintendents who were determined to conduct management meetings in Afrikaans. At the time, the spirit of being black and proud was prevalent among educated Africans. In her book, *Mamphela Ramphela: a life*, the author writes about how, in the period 1960 to 1970, she directly challenged the patriarchal culture prevalent within the Black People’s Convention (a convention which purported to fight all forms of inequality). She also took to defying white academics who patronised her.²³

The Nursing Council, which was responsible for the training and the registration of nurses as a professional body, worked at transforming racially discriminating laws that barred black nurses from working with people from other race groups. White nurses were not supposed to work under non-white nurses.²⁴

Using Musimbi Kanyoro’s cultural hermeneutics, I have attempted to show how their mission education and training as nurses empowered Zulu women to have a voice in the process of decision-making that directly influenced their lives. With their knowledge and resources, Zulu nurses became valuable to their nation as this nation gradually accepted and appreciated the

²² Berglund, in *Church and cultural change*: 54.

²³ Ramphela, M. 1995. *Mamphela Ramphela: a life*. Cape Town: David Philip. (pp. 66, 69)

²⁴ Adolfsson & Bertsson, *Ceza*: 155.

benefits of western medicine. Unlike other nurses, they were in a better position to treat Zulus simply because they were familiar with Zulu culture and Zulu worldviews. Although the struggle against patriarchy and male domination is far from over, this paper (which is only an introduction) has shown that to empower women is to empower society. Just as it was selective in who it benefited, *ukuhlonipha* can be modified to emancipate women. The question is whether the tensions caused by gender and culture are starting to subside in other spheres of life. The more we allow South Africans to tell their stories, the more we can learn about the groans that our own cultures, the cultures we love, have been silenced.

Reconstructing the figure of King Shaka in our cultural heritage

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The “Shaka phenomenon” has captured the interest and imagination of both serious researchers and fiction writers. Valuable documentation has been undertaken, as can be seen in the various literatures and historical studies available. Traditional historians often describe Shaka as a monster who sought utter destruction of the whole of Nguniland. He has thus been made into a scapegoat, someone who automatically carries the blame for the Mfecane diaspora. The destructiveness of his various campaigns has certainly been exaggerated. Farrer (1879:15), one of the early writers on Shaka, presents us with some very far-fetched statistics, stating that the destruction caused by Shaka reduced the local population of Natal to a total of three or four hundred people by the time that the white Europeans arrived. Revisionist historians, however, present a more positive view of Shaka, by describing him as a competent leader and nation-builder, a man who was able to unify the Nguni tribes and who possessed the qualities of a military genius and inspired statesman. Unfortunately, and especially in the post-apartheid era, the reconstruction of King Shaka’s image has, to date, received little in the way of contributions from indigenous African oral historians.

The primary purpose of this paper is to reconstruct the figure of King Shaka by retracing his footprints in certain urban heritage places that are historically linked to known events in Shaka’s life, to promote conservation of these historic places, and to deepen the nation’s understanding and enjoyment of its cultural heritage.

The paper also argues that King Shaka’s name should not be used for commercial gain without involving those communities that can have a hands-on role in caring for and protecting their own historical sites as part of their own cultural identity and hence their own heritage.

The reason for building KwaDukuza

Zizwezonke Mthethwa has this testimony about Dukuza at eNgudwini (18 December 1997):

Dukuza comes from the verb 'thukusa' which means 'to hide'. Shaka had had a dream, seeing an army coming out of the sea of isiBubulungu, presently known as the Bluff. He then sent warriors to await the arrival of this army. He gave these warriors the order to kill the incoming army as soon as it came out of the sea. When the whites arrived, as he had prophesied, he did not kill them. Instead, he became their friend. This is what angered the senior members of KwaBulawayo, Dingane included, because he became a friend of foreigners after many of their sons had died on the sea expedition. Shaka had no alternative. He had to leave KwaBulawayo.

He built a temporary homestead along uMhlali River. During his stay at this place, he referred to himself as an *uMhlali* (a lodger). Some informants assume that uMhlali River might have got its name from this incident. There is also a Zulu saying, which says: '*Koduka iNgisi neNkinsimane*' (the Englishman and the King's man will get lost). This saying was used by Shaka, telling the people that one day he would build himself a huge homestead to hide with his English friends where no one would interfere with them.

In spite of stern opposition, Shaka extended his hospitality to the white traders who, at the time, were facing destitution. This is what Bird (1888:101) says about the conditions of the settlers during Shaka's reign:

In our position we were wholly dependent on Shaka. We had no articles fit for traffic. We were almost destitute of clothing and provision.

Isaacs (1936:1/173, 184), one of the early traders, also gives us a picture of what happened at KwaDukuza between Shaka and the traders:

At Dukuza I had the pleasure of meeting my friend, Lieutenant King, who had come expressly to see me ... The king was glad to see me. I remained several days.

KwaDukuza has long been highly valued by indigenous African communities for its significance as a place of cultural heritage, as the royal seat of the founder of the Zulu kingdom, Shaka. However, municipal policies have tended to focus on the commercial attributes of this historical homestead,

treating cultural heritage conservation as the background rather than as significant in itself. As a result, the following historical and cultural dimensions of this memorial site are neither well understood nor adequately managed:

- Shaka's Spring – from where unpolluted water was fetched for the king.
- Shaka's Cave – a shelf of rock above the pool where King Shaka would rest.
- Shaka's Rock – a symbol of stability and a link with Mother Earth. Shaka used this rock as an outdoor, elevated seat from which he addressed his audience. There are other rocks all over KwaZulu-Natal which Shaka used as his seat of vantage.
- Shaka's Pool – a swimming and bathing place on the Imbozamo River. The imbongi in Shaka's praises regards this river as a source of information on Shaka's assassination. According to imbongi, this river saw the culprit crossing over its banks before killing Shaka. The imbongi proclaims as if he were there himself:

*Amanz'eMbozam'osal'ebabaza,
Ebigez'uDukuza neNkinsimana*
(The waters of the Mbozamo will continue to wonder,
Which watered Dukuza and the King's men.)
(Rycroft 1988:76)

Indigenous oral historians have loudly demanded that KwaDukuza be reconstructed as a cultural heritage site. The focus is not on the structures per se, but on the spirit, values and cultural heritage that were buried in this royal homestead. Cultural heritage gives a nation a sense of living history and provides a physical link to the work and way of life of earlier generations. It also enriches the lives of the current generation and helps them to understand who they are today, and where they are going. The nation needs to retrace Shaka's footsteps as part of its cultural heritage.

The Prime Minister of India, Manmohan Singh, has given South Africans an example of how to honour the living-dead by retracing their footprints. He came all the way from India in search of the fallen hero of his soil, Mahatma Gandhi. In doing this, he enabled Gandhi to retrieve the dignity he lost when the colonial powers of his day threw him off a train at Pietermaritzburg station.

During the 21st century, the unifying spirit of Shaka can be retraced and revived in KwaDukuza, the place where Shaka left such an indelible mark. This could be an example of the African Renaissance “in action”.

When the President of Italy, Ciampi, was interviewed on television about what was likely to happen in the 21st century, he declared that this century would be an African century. Addressing the South African Parliament on 14 March (South Africa 2002:6), he stated:

I deeply feel the responsibility to say aloud to all of you here today: the 21st century must belong to Africa.

Kilgour (2001:3) adds: “This must be the century of Africa.” In this conference, we should all together say: this is why, for the first time, the Soccer World Cup was held in Africa.

If KwaDukuza, which has a definite claim to be a site of both historical and cultural heritage, is preserved by being registered as a world heritage site, we can indeed be “proudly South African”. Besides being the home of an historical icon, King Shaka, it is also home to the first African to win the Nobel Peace Prize: Chief Albert John Mvumbi Luthuli. Furthermore, the deeply respected scholar (whom I personally call the “black Shakespeare”), B.W. Vilakazi the Great, was born in the vicinity of KwaDukuza. The bones of these great sons of Africa are laid to rest at KwaDukuza and their spirits should remain with us as part of our African heritage and African pride.

Kwakhangelani amaNkengane and why it was built

As far as Kwakhangelani amaNkengane is concerned, Reggie Khumalo makes the following remarks (19 September 2006 at uLundi):

Kwakhangelani amaNkengane (“watch the foreigners or the strangers”) was the first homestead which Shaka built at the place presently known as Congella after his dream about the army coming out of the sea. He used this homestead as a watchtower for the incoming army. However, he eventually used his homestead as a guesthouse for the strangers he had dreamt about.

Joseph Maphumulo of KwaBulawayo adds that many of the warriors who were sent to the sea left for Mpondoland, known today as Bhaca territory, because they lost hope when they saw nobody emerging from the sea.

Kwakhangelani amaNkengane with a multiracial community

Kwakhangelani amaNkengane soon became a multi-racial community: it consisted of Nguni and Sotho groups, Europeans and Khoisan people who had come with the traders from the Cape. All these groups were all under Shaka's protection:

This day we were visited by a Zulu chief named Mhlophe who resided in the vicinity of our abode, and who had been commanded by Shaka to offer protection to the white people. (Isaacs 1936:1/33)

For Shaka, there was no land that had to be declared "whites or blacks only", as happened under both colonial and apartheid regimes. Instead, Shaka showed *ubuntu* (humaneness) even to strangers in his land, and it is worth remembering that *ubuntu* empowers all to be valued so that all reach their full potential in harmony with those around them (see Biyela 2003:76). Tracing Shaka's footprints at Kwakhangelani amaNkengane is an endeavour that is endorsed by *ubuntu*, which he bestowed upon all people of all nationalities who lived in this homestead. *Ubuntu* itself must be preserved as our cultural heritage too, because it is a value and a norm which is greatly cherished by indigenous Africans. Indeed, it is one of the values which have been carried down from traditional times to the present day. If there is an ethos of *ubuntu* in our relationships, there is no place for segregation policies:

The one thing that transcends language, or the outward expressions of culture, our physical appearance, our age or sex, belief, is the values that we cherish and live by, values that give meaning to our individual and social relationships, even our solitary spiritual journeys and our intellectual and imaginative excursions. (South Africa 2001:10)

In the absence of *ubuntu*, when Shaka died, indigenous Africans were forcibly removed from Kwakhangelani amaNkengane. Even the name of his homestead was changed and baptised with a foreign name, Congella, as it is known today. The original name of this place must be retrieved and registered as an official entry in the eThekweni Metropolis if both historical and cultural records are to be set straight.

UMdloti River versus La Mercy

There are many places and industries in South Africa which use the name “uShaka”. The underlying motives for doing this are not clear. It is often used as “bait” or a signpost to attract tourists or audiences. For example, ”Boom Shaka”, “Shakaland”, “uShaka Marine World, the fifth biggest aquarium in the world” and the planned “King Shaka International Airport” at La Mercy.

If the local community is considered as part of this planned project, the features of the proposed airport should be based on the identity and specific features of the surrounding area in order to preserve what may be called a “community heritage”. This community heritage should be the starting point for the development and conservation of the area so that the following properties of cultural heritage are preserved and maintained.

The cultural heritage of a community consists of three main heritage resources ... of these the movable heritage (objects, artworks, documents, audiovisuals) and immovable heritage (sites, places, landscapes, structures, sculptures) form a tangible heritage. The third group, the intangible heritage (voices, values, traditions, languages, oral history, folk-life, creativity, adaptability and distinctiveness have to a large extent been marginalised. (Museum New Policy 1995:9)

Although the official plan is to build uShaka International Airport at La Mercy, my respondents told that this name is not popular amongst indigenous members of the local community. They prefer the name uMdloti, which comes from Shaka owing to the *umdloti* or *ugwayi* plants (traditional tobacco plants) that grow along this river. They also say that this is the place that Shaka gave to his best friend, Magaye, the son of Dubandlela. For them, there is nothing new if an airport with Shaka’s name is built at uMdloti. This will bring back memories of Shaka to this urban place, the place where he left his indelible mark. (Shaka used Magaye’s homestead at this place as his “inn” when he spent time with his friend Magaye before proceeding to Kwakhangelani amaNkengane.) About the hospitality at Magaye’s homestead, Isaacs (1/65) states:

I travelled in a most painful plight about ten miles, and reached chief Magaye’s kraal, where we halted for the night. Soon after my arrival my younger friend, Magaye’s daughter, with her usual sympathy and kindness, brought me a pot of thick, sour milk.

ULembe, the invincible Shaka

Zizwezonke Mthethwa says:

ULembe or uSomadela was the name of the mad man who lived in the forest. He was of the Nxumalo or Ndwandwe clan and a relative of Malusi. This story begins with Dingiswayo wanting to punish Shaka for killing Bhakubha. The only kind of a death sentence Dingiswayo could give to Shaka was to make him kill the mad man. Dingiswayo was sure that Shaka would come back dead from this invincible mad man. The unusual happened. Shaka killed the notorious man of the forest and bestowed upon himself the former's name, uLembe.

Most of my respondents maintain that this man was not mad in the true sense of the term, but a "Goliath" whom only people like Shaka could conquer. As imbongi confirms:

*UsiShaka kashayeki kanjengamanzi,
Umahlomelathin'onjengohlanya,
Uhlany'olusemehlwen'amadoda. (Cope 1968:89)*
(Shaka is unbeatable, is not like water,
He who is armed in the forest like the mad man,
The mad man who is in full view of men.)

Testimony as oral history

It is true that the methodology of oral history, like all other fields of study, has its own shortcomings. For example, the testimonies collected for this paper are not eyewitness accounts, but hearsay. However, oral testimony should not be underrated. As Ong 1982:2 says: "Human society first formed itself with the aid of oral speech, becoming literate very late in its history."

Denis (2002:9) states:

Conventional history almost exclusively relies on the use of written sources. In a predominantly illiterate society, this means that the point of view of the majority will never be taken into consideration, or if it is, it will always be seen through the eyes (or the pen) of people in situation of domination.

The historian in the new, democratic South Africa faces a big challenge: is he/she going to use the methods of domination or is he/she going to attempt to rewrite the history of South Africa in order to heal the traumatic experiences of the past? Since the fall of the apartheid regime, the search for historical truth in order to redefine one's identity is gaining momentum among all black communities (even those outside political organisations).

Luthuli, quoted in Golan, (1988:247) makes the following statement:

Both teachers and students have criticised the history syllabus severely. Black teachers claim that the bias in history textbooks originates from the syllabus. In the 1976 riots in Soweto, schoolbooks were burned, and history teachers resigned. The school boycotts of 1980 also focused partly on the history syllabus, with boycott supporters arguing that the biased syllabus reflected the white minority.

The above statement alludes to the fact that written historical documents do not present us with the guarantee of absolute truth. Both oral and written sources are based on certain preconceptions and sectional interests. What is needed in this context is to combine and harmonise written and oral sources in order to obtain a more complete, unbiased and comprehensive view of South African history.

Recommendations

Our recommendations are as follows:

- (a) Revise the history curriculum in South African schools.
- (b) Conduct research projects with the aim of collecting and analysing oral testimony. This testimony is not yet recorded in our academic institutions. Doing this will help to retain verbally transmitted information about past events that depends on human perceptions and mental recall. It is important that such projects are given priority: we need to avoid starting to value something only when it is threatened.
- (c) Understand that King Shaka is an international icon and both a historical and cultural heritage figure in both the urban and rural places of South Africa.
- (d) Remember that communities themselves are the force and foundation by which their local historical-cultural identity is maintained.

Conclusion

Cultural heritage refers to the entire spirit of a people in terms of their indigenous knowledge systems. This paper itself is based on oral testimony as a means of reconstructing the figure of King Shaka with a view to enriching written history.

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Appendix

1 Scope of research

The primary purpose of this study is to return to Shaka's roots to establish a persona of Shaka by pursuing a research in selected urban areas historically linked to known events in the king's life. Shaka's figure is contextualised through the introduction of oral primary sources and their analysis and interpretation from the perspective of Zulu socio-culture.

This paper consists of three interrelated components: Shaka's *izibongo* as they appear in published texts; oral testimonies of people connected either with important places or with personages in Shaka's life; and a comparative analysis of the two first components in the light of written sources.

The second component of this paper is field research, which involved collecting oral information from various persons at various, different places. It is therefore necessary to test their testimonies against historical sources. The critical and comparative analysis of these testimonies in the light of other literature and of historical sources constitutes the third component of this paper. The researcher has also made wide use of a fourth source: works of historical fiction which claim, to a greater or lesser extent, to be based on Zulu oral testimonies. Such works, be they in English or in Zulu, can only be used with caution, because their scope is to entertain rather than to accurately recount historical truths.

2 Field research: methodology

The researcher had to walk long distances, on rough terrain, to meet with some respondents for the purpose of interviewing them. The visits to places traditionally linked with Shaka gave the researcher a clear topographical setting of the events concerned.

The wealth of information thus gathered took into account both cultural and historical events and characters, as well as the places where such events took place. Although tape and video-recorders were extensively used in the interviews, a still photo camera was used to take pictures of rivers, mountains, valleys, villages, respondents, etc.

3 Choice of respondents

The first task was to identify knowledgeable people who could give their version of both historical and cultural events and of the people involved. I felt

it was important to understand Shaka's life through the memories of people and through places he made famous by his deeds.

It is natural to expect that these oral testimonies might be divergent at times: people's memories fade, especially where old people are concerned; local interests and ethnic identities play a role in what one is prepared to say. A few interviewees had been to school and had learnt certain facts from school books and now choose to interpret these "facts" in their own way.

I found it very difficult or even impossible to communicate by telephone with most of my respondents, because they all live in remote rural areas. I had to follow their traditional custom of reporting to the *inkosi* or the *induna* of the area to inform him of my presence and the scope of my visit. Most of the time it was the *inkosi* who would get the senior members of the community to tell me, the researcher, their stories. Very often, one respondent led me to another, who led me to another, and so on. During these talks, I was told the names of other knowledgeable people. This is how I managed to contact people such as Zizwezonke Mthethwa, Reggie Khumalo, Bongani Chiliza, John Dlamini, etc.

For practical reasons and to avoid repeating myself, I have decided to select certain respondents as a basis for reference. Outstanding among them, for their wide knowledge of places and events, are the following:

Zizwezonke Mthethwa

Zizwezonke Mthethwa is now deceased. I collected the information contained in this paper before his death. He lived at eNgudwini near Mandeni. He was a well-known traditionalist, diviner and herbalist, and someone who was often consulted by researchers (e.g. the late Professor Lugg).

Zizwezonke Mthethwa was reputed to have had a trustworthy knowledge about tradition and about Shaka's life. He was also one of the oldest members of the Mthethwa clan. Zizwezonke was an oral historian and a curator of the Mthethwa tradition. He knew all the *izibongo* of Dingiswayo and Shaka off by heart. Moreover, his interpretation always sprung from the socio-cultural context of the time mentioned in *izibongo*.

Reggie Khumalo

Reggie Khumalo is from the house of Mzilikazi of Mashobana. He was born at Nongoma, which was Zwide's land, and now lives in the Mahlabathini district. I realised that some of Reggie Khumalo's information about Zwide and the Khumalos is similar to a family history because Zwide's daughter, Nompethu, married Mashobana (who was Mzilikazi's father). Reggie

Khumalo is renowned for his valuable knowledge of Zulu customs, beliefs and etiquette. It was Thokozani Nene who recommended Reggie to me. Both Thokozani Nene and Reggie Khumalo specifically deal with Zulu traditions in the Ukhozi FM. Since the object of this study was to analyse Shaka's image from a Zulu socio-cultural perspective, I obviously needed to interview such people on the socio-cultural matters referred to in my paper.

Bongani Mdunge

Bongani is a young man and a curator of the KwaDukuza Museum, who was kind enough to show me the following sites:

- Shaka's spring, from which unpolluted water was fetched for the king.
- Shaka's swimming and bathing pool.
- Shaka's rock.
- Shaka's cave.
- Imbozamo River, etc.

In fact, when I started interviewing the local residents, I felt my mind lit up by a ray of light, a ray of light that would reveal a past deeply hidden. I hope that this method will prove to have some advantage for the comparative analysis and critical examination of each testimony.

**Do women tell stories differently?
Exploring the Zondi women of Greytown**

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I have studied rural women since 1999 and, in retrospect, I note that they have a story-telling style that differs from other groups of people. There are almost no records about the manner in which indigenous African women (especially rural women) tell stories and the form that these stories take. There is an even greater paucity of writings by ordinary rural African indigenous women. What is not in short supply are records and stories told by women who cannot be defined as ordinary and rural. The lack of records about the stories told by indigenous, rural African women may well lead to these stories remaining invisible; and it is very possible that these women's lives and stories will end up being distorted. My intention, in this paper, is to articulate the need to explore the story-telling practices of ordinary rural indigenous women. In doing so, I aim to encourage research in this field and pose a general question: "What does the women's practice reveal?"

This paper is a project that is largely based on data collected for a 2003-2005 "Bhambada" research project. The 1906 Bhambada Uprising, or *Impi Yamakhanda*¹ was the result of a British colonial imposition of a tax on all unmarried young males over the age of 18 years (following a 1904 census). The 1906 Uprising is regarded as the last serious armed revolt against the colonial government before the proclamation of the Union of South Africa in 1909. Bhambada was the heroic leader of the uprising. The survivors of the struggle had to suffer the consequences of Bhambada's and his clan's actions, consequences which have become ingrained in their history and memories. The aim of the research project, carried out at Ngome between 2003 and 2005, was to find out how this distant cluster of events remains alive in these people's collective memories.

This paper is exploratory in its pursuit. It poses a number of questions to which there have been, as yet, few responses. Emerging from the three-year study is an intention to re-visit the area of study in order to find out, from both women and men, the reasons and significance of their story-telling techniques. I have assumed that my respondents may not be consciously

¹ Literally meaning "the war over the heads."

aware of their story-relating practices; however, it was crucial that I engaged them on this subject in order to arrive at a conclusion that is informed by the people who relay stories. I submit that women relate stories differently from men. Having observed this trend, this raised a number of questions in my mind.

- Do women remember stories differently?
- Do women pay attention to different details?
- Do women have different reasons for listening to stories?
- Do women have different reasons for telling stories?

Generally, the main question I pose is whether there is anything we can infer or learn about women's memories from the content of the stories they tell.

Women adopt a different way of telling their stories from men. Indeed, it can be argued that they have a different story-telling culture. They may not be conscious of the fact that their style is similar to a style adopted by Zulu folktale story-tellers.² According to Zulu tradition, it is women, and largely elderly women, who are entrusted with the task of telling stories to the young.

Feminist scholars³ have long called for the need to define and tell women's stories in a manner that is not in line with mainstream formats. Bell Hooks⁴ in particular advocates for a "different" story for women, one that talks about race, sexuality and class boundaries. It has become essential to heed Rost's⁵ call for an ethical framework that speaks to the concepts of virtue and mutual purpose. Such a framework will challenge dominant ethics, ethics that "are based on traditional utilitarian theories and relativistic ethics".⁶ Essentially, these scholars encourage researchers and people who ultimately record researched stories to be cognisant of the unique features that present themselves in story-telling processes. They also urge that such

² What concerns traditional story-tellers the most is the lesson to be learnt from the story, which is why traditional story-tellers concentrate on the moral lessons the story attempts to relay.

³ For example, the biographical and autobiographical work of Carolyn Heinbrun in *Writing a woman's life* (1988, New York: Ballantine). See also Benham, M.K.P. 1997. Silences and serenades: the journeys of three ethnic minority woman school leaders, *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 28: 280-307.

⁴ Hooks, B. 1989. *Thinking feminist, thinking black*. Boston, MA: South End Press. Also, Hooks, B. 1990. *Yearning: race, gender and cultural politics*. Boston, MA: South End Press.

⁵ Rost, J.C. 1993. *Leadership for the twenty-first century*. Westport, CT: Praeger. .

⁶ Benham, Silences and serenades, 281.

features be presented in a manner that displays an appreciation and an intention to present stories, and that their idiosyncrasies be noted.

Hypothesis

Women tell stories differently owing to what the society expects and stipulates for them and owing to their responses to such expectations. Women do not simply comply with these expectations, but construct roles and responsibilities for themselves within the framework of these expectations.

Methodology and analytical framework

A narrative style is adopted in which details about how life experiences shape women's lives are related. It is through these varied narratives that one comes to learn about the women's values, beliefs, attitudes, practices and relationships. These narratives have been termed the "voice" that gives a greater sense of "self" and that makes meaning of the world.⁷

Using as a basis traditional constructions of gender roles, women construct and redefine a different, alternative role of their own. In the process, the constraints of biological deterministic explanations of gender⁸ are evidently challenged. The fact that women also accept a gender constructionist ideology is explained by Joann Martin⁹ as an unfortunate fact that reproduces equally deterministic models of gender roles. In analysing the content of the stories told by the rural women of Ngome, it is apparent that much of what goes into the details of their stories is unlikely to deviate. They make constant reference to female domestic and caring roles – roles that their society expects women to fulfil with commitment and dedication.

Research statement and ideological underpinnings of the study

Background and sample

The discussion and data of this paper is drawn from a bigger study that was based on interviews with 76 people. Of this number a research team con-

⁷ Personal Narrative Group. 1989. *Interpreting women's lives: feminist theory and personal narratives*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press. Also, Benham, Silences and serenades, 281.

⁸ Ortner, S. & Whitehead, H. 1981. Introduction: accounting for sexual meanings, in *Sexual meanings: The cultural construction of gender and sexuality*, edited by B. Ortner & H. Whitehead. Cambridge: University Press: 1-28.

⁹ Martin, J. 1990. Motherhood and power: the production of a women's culture of politics in a Mexican community, *American Ethnologist*, 17 (3): 470-490.

ducted two- to four-hour intensive interviews with 38 individuals (17 men and 21 women). In addition, we had two focus group interviews (three people in one group and five people in the other group). The interviews were recorded in the Zulu language, and transcription and translation processes then followed. Given that all forms of recorded stories are biased, subjective and need to be critically evaluated, the stories collected were verified with all the women interviewees at least twice. Contrary to the theory that history preserved in memory alone is suspect and requires strict validation, all the women interviewed told a similar story about the Bhambada Uprising and its relation to the present day circumstances. We obtained permission to use the data for wider audiences.

Ideological background

Two theoretical foundations inform the analysis of the study: social constructionism and the perspective of African Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS). In using the perspective of social constructionism, I argue that the women's stories – to a certain degree – reflect society's expectation of a woman. The woman is expected to provide care and to do the family's domestic chores. Although patriarchal environments within which they find themselves impose expectations on them, I argue that the women have a significant role to play in "constructing" what happens in their lives. "A constructionist perspective maintains that individuals are meaning constructors and the significance of those meanings must be understood as contextually embedded".¹⁰

Employing IKS and feminist research principles I mainly relied on oral testimony to collect the women's stories. These principles are also employed as I reconstruct and represent snapshots of the women's stories, lives and worldviews. This, of course, has its shortcomings because I myself do not share all the characteristics of the women I talk about in this paper. However, the research principles I adopt do allow indigenous people to express themselves with minimal interruption, and also validate their lives. We need to bear in mind that the women that were participants in this study have rarely spoken about their lives, aspirations, contributions and perspectives on the Bhambada Uprising. The women had their say but it is I who planned the process and interpreted data and it is I who now present their worldviews.

The perspective of IKS, particularly the *ubuntu* principle, is also used as a conceptual analysis. All the women cite the fact of giving their life and

¹⁰ Schwandt, in Thompson, P. 2000. *The voice of the past*. Oxford: University Press. (p. 156)

energy to others as an expression of holistic caring for their families and those with whom they come into contact.

For this research, I asked my women respondents the following questions:

- What does the name “Bhambada” mean to you?
- What memories does the name trigger?

Values and priorities

Largely, the responses given were not necessarily related and appropriate to the questions posed. Most women indicated similar values; they spoke of the 1906 series of events as if they were contemporary events. Essentially, the past and contemporary successes and struggles are seen as one continuum. The attention that the community is receiving, from researchers and other outsiders, is clearly viewed as a success for the contemporary Zondi clan (because of Bhambada’s successful challenge against British colonial structures). In the same vein, the failures of 1906 reflect and were viewed as the failure of all members of the Zondi clan.

An item that dominated the discussion was a realisation of the pain experienced by the men involved in the 1906 events. That pain was immediately aligned to the pain that the women’s husbands have had to live through as a result of evictions and being ”compelled” to ”abandon” their families in search for employment. Lengthy painful discussions about this came before discussions about their children and wellbeing. I found this emphasis unusual compared with other women I have studied. An explanation might be that my queries were about a war, a man’s terrain. Second to “men and husbands as an item of discussion” was highlighting the importance of elders. It was noted that the discussion on the importance of elders was coupled with their children. The value of the former was significant in the upbringing and “resuscitation” of good morals for the younger generation. The women also indicated the need to be protective of individuals, families, strangers and the community at large. “Everyone deserves justice and to be respected – whether they are old, young or not known in the neighbourhood. Are we not all created by God and therefore his children?” enthused a 55-year-old woman. All the women interviewed expressed concern about everyone else, with little focus on themselves.

Another crucial item of discussion was fertility. All the participants felt that being fertile and biologically giving birth to children is an important, life-giving, responsibility. Unfortunately, most women seemed inclined to blame themselves if they were failed to live up this expectation. At face

value, lot of pressure on the need to be fertile seemed to come from the women themselves.

Women's cultural expected role as mothers and care-givers is evident in the values the participants felt strongly about. Florence Muthuki, making reference to a Campbell study on motherhood, notes: "As taught by culture, many Zulu women view motherhood and wifehood as the highest fulfillment in their life." It is worth noting that, in contrast, the men did not prioritise the items listed above as matters of concern.¹¹

Story details

It was observed that there is a trend by the two genders to focus on different details of a story. In analysing the content of the stories that the women choose to tell, I noted the following:

- Real, warm bodies are attached to the stories.
- There is an attempt to contextualise the stories (contemporary).

In contextualising past stories into present-day circumstances, their own children and the community's youth feature strongly in their narration. There is, in particular, a tendency to concentrate on successful stories.

There is nostalgia about the good times that women had with their husbands. In relating any story, be it about their hero, Bhambada, or their own families, women talk most about other people, thereby playing a definite role in making themselves invisible. However, when intensely probed, they forge an identity and sense of self that is connected to their people (family, neighbours and larger community). Contrary to popular belief that women do not necessarily appreciate each other, the importance of their relationships with other women also comes through in their stories. Other women feature prominently in their speech. "It is good to know that we have neighbours who are always ready to render advice and help. Four of my closest neighbours (she lists their names) are a blessing in my family life."

Given the colonial and apartheid history of dispossession of chieftainship and land, it is not surprising that all the women make reference to this painful history. It is noteworthy that this sad history has a happy ending. Attempts are made to redirect the sadness towards expressing the need that everyone pull together. There is generally an attitude of concern for family

¹¹ Muthuki, F. 2005. Trends or counter trends? The gender identity dilemma facing Zulu married men and women at the University of KwaZulu- Natal. Unpublished Masters dissertation, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 69.

and community. Flowing out of this concern women then carve their role: that is, as carers, mothers and nurturers. Their role as they define it is a traditional one, constructed on the basis of their gender. It is extremely interesting to note that, even those women who are aware of the political nature of their burdensome role, accept their duty.

Women play a significant role in the politics of the community. Without being consulted, they intervene in quarrels and bring about peace between the people involved. In doing so, they use their own terms, terms that may not necessarily be acceptable to the men. For example, their bodies and clothing have been used in the public sphere to protect people escaping from conflict sites or stop the fighting.¹² In these instances, the women have demonstrated how their political participation is related to their expected roles within the home. This kind of participation has been defined by feminist scholars¹³ as a form of women's entry into politics, albeit that it is an extension of their domestic responsibility. Unfortunately, definitions such as these serve to further devalue women's participation and the important role they play in the public arena. I concur with Joann Martin's analysis of this form of participation:¹⁴ it reflects women's strength and power, both of which have been seriously underestimated. In Africa, similar attitudes have been reported among women themselves.¹⁵

Language use

¹² See Magwaza, T. 2006. The role of Zondi women during conflict situations: perspectives and expressions, in *Freedom sown in blood: memories of the impi yamakhanda*, edited by T. Magwaza et al. Thohoyandou: Ditlou. (p. 65)

¹³ On Latin American women's participation in politics see, for instance, Brana-Shute, R. 1980. Lower-class Creole women, clubs and politics in Surinam, in *Women and politics in twentieth-century Latin-America: studies in third world society*, edited by S.F. McGee. Williamsburg: Department of Anthropology, College of William and Mary: 33-56. See also Butler, F.C. 1984. Socialist feminism in Latin America. *Women and Politics* 4 (1):, 69-93. Also, Chaney, E. 1979. *Supermadre: women in politics in Latin America*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

¹⁴ Joann Martin (1990: 472) submits that this power is drawn from women's mothering capabilities, in particular, their reproductive power. She cites an instance wherein women have formed groups that demand information on the disappearance of their husbands and children. "The women in these groups legitimize their struggle (as being) driven by a mother's love for her family."

¹⁵ Julia C. Wells reports on how, in colonial Rhodesia (present day Zimbabwe) women sabotaged patriarchy, defining the sabotage as a form of resistance. (The sabotage of patriarchy in colonial Rhodesia: rural African women's living legacy to their daughters. *Feminist Review* 75: 101-117.)

Women's use of language proved to be more symbolic. They were figurative in their explanation, to the extent that they employed poetic language and analysis to express and conceptualise their realities. This was observed particularly in the case of stories about their husbands' infidelity. Indeed, it was interesting to note that these stories involved a cruder terminology and the use of impolite words. As a researcher, I get reminded of a caution issued out by Kathryn Anderson and Dana Jack. They state the need for a "realization that the interview is a linguistic, as well as a social and psychological, event".¹⁶ Women proved to be peaceful but forceful. This stance was revealed in the language they use.

Also noted was a tendency to use the pronouns "we and us" – which indicates that, in telling what may be called a woman's story, there is consideration and involvement of other people as well. This is in line with the African cosmological principle of "positioning oneself within a collective".¹⁷

Concluding remarks

Women demonstrate a "text" which is a composite of history, community, family and cultural memories. The "text" goes beyond a focus on oneself, but instead indicates concern and care for their families, community interests and other people with whom they come into contact. There is a uniform pattern that cuts across all generations that indicates a difference in the manner in which women perceive history and life in general.

Women are, in fact, mothers who are politicians, an idea borrowed from Joann Martin. Cherryl Walker¹⁸ makes reference to this kind of regard for women in her work on the ANC Women's League. It is essential that we have a different, African-based approach to gender ideologies in order to have a better understanding of the power of images found in women's advocacy. Western feminist scholars have a tendency to analyse gender ideologies and women's participation in the public arena and to employ the framework of male domination. I argue that such an approach in fact operates from a foundation that attempts to show how women's contributions fit into a male paradigm, thereby subordinating the position of women.

¹⁶ Anderson, K. & Jack, D. 1991. Learning to listen: interview techniques and analyses, in *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral history*, edited by G.S.Berger & P. Daphne. London: Routledge: 2.

¹⁷ Kunene, M. 1978. *The anthem of the decades*. Berkeley, CA: UCLA Press. (p. 38)

¹⁸ Walker, C. 1995. "Conceptualising motherhood," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 21 (3): 417-437.

Reconciling recent oral traditions with old documents: Bambatha and his family

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Oral history relating to a time beyond the reach of living memory becomes oral tradition after it has been consolidated and repeated for a long period of time. Yet consolidation and repetition do not make it immutable. What seems to be fixed in the communal mind can change in accordance with political or religious imperatives. The main story is twisted and the erosion of details makes it simpler to do such twisting. This seems to be the case with much of what happened in the Zulu Rebellion of 1906. That this has happened becomes evident when one compares old and new statements about the descent and family of the rebel *inkosi* Bambatha of the Ngome section of the amaZondi, which is the subject of this paper.

This year, selected results of three years' fieldwork among the abaseNgome by a research team of the University of KwaZulu-Natal have been published as *Freedom sown in blood: memories of the Impi Yamakhanda. An Indigenous Knowledge Systems perspective*. The publisher is Ditlou. The aim of the project was "to refine the principles and methods of the promotion of indigenous knowledge systems",¹ according to Yonah Seleti, who seems to have been the leader of the team. The book was edited by Thenjiwe Magwaza, Yonah Seleti, and Mpilo Pearl Sithole. The latter, with Nelson Zondi, grandnephew of Bambatha, has written the third chapter, entitled "Genealogies of the Royal AmaZondi of Ngome", tracing the succession from their putative origin to the present.²

¹ Magwaza, T., Seleti, Y. & Sithole, M.P. 2006. *Freedom sown in blood: memories of the Impi Yamakhanda. An Indigenous Knowledge Systems' perspective*. Thohojandu: Ditlou. (p. 3)

² Zondi's role in this has special importance. [Sithole] states (Magwaza et al. 2006: 28): "[O]ur indigenous perspective-sensitive approach involves writing with 'indigenous people' the people at the heart of the story. In this chapter we occasionally highlight the voice of Nelson Zondi, a royal Zondi of Ngome. This happens in sections where specific recollections or experiences are recounted ... Otherwise this chapter constitutes a joint project, in terms of mutual interpretation, planned layout and focus." Thereupon Zondi himself states (Magwaza et al. 2006: 3): "Being a descendant of Funizwe, Bhambada's brother, I, Nelson Zondi, know the core genealogy of *amakhosi* of *amaZondi* backwards, from the current *inkosi* to Zabela. My knowledge derives from the fact that Funizwe, my grandfather, brother of Bhambada, was *inkosi* from the 23rd of February 1907 to 1950. The political dynamics of

Information on the same subject was collected almost a hundred years ago by Father Arthur Bryant and James Stuart. These two researchers collected their information separately and independently. Bryant's was published in *Olden times in Zululand and Natal* in 1926, by Longmans of London, while Stuart's research remained in manuscript form until it was published, between 1976 to 2001, in *The James Stuart archive of recorded oral evidence relating to the history of the Zulu and neighbouring peoples*. In this case, the publisher was the University of Natal Press. Neither work pays particular attention to Bambatha, although Stuart has much to say about him in *A history of the Zulu rebellion 1906* (London, Macmillan, 1913), presumably based on knowledge from his acquaintance, in 1906, with Bambatha's brother Funizwe and other members of the abaseNgome.³

In addition to the above, there is information on the abaseNgome in the colonial government reports on chiefs and chiefdoms published in 1853.⁴ More information can be found in the colonial records, housed in the Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository; however, these references are very scattered among the record groups of the Secretary for Native Affairs and the Colonial Secretary's Office, and, in so far as they pertain to the trial of Dinuzulu, among the records of the Attorney General's Office and the Registrars of the Supreme Court.⁵

I shall draw on these documents, published and unpublished, for comparison with what Sithole and Zondi have recorded. The object is to note where the two source sets disagree, and then to try to explain why. In doing so, I shall follow the format of the Sithole-Zondi chapter, with the sub-headings "Zondi *Amakhosi* in history", "The house of Sondaba amongst other segments", "Mancinza consolidates Sondaba's legacy", and "Bhambada: the fighter for the Zondi and Nguni legacy". I shall not deal with the Ngome succession after Bambatha. As far as possible I shall use the terms and spellings of the chapter. There is one very notable and noticeable exception:

the Zondi, that were partly a result of the 'Bhambada-led *Impi Yamakhanda*, were such that the genealogy, particularly that of the royal house, was well known."

³ In late April 1906 Captain Stuart, Natal Field Artillery, rode from Greytown to the Nkandhla magistracy, in Zululand. He was accompanied by Funizwe, the Greytown court *induna* Kafula, and three others for the purpose of identifying Bambatha, then engaged in the Nkandhla Division, in the event that he, Bambatha, was killed or captured. Thereafter Stuart served as Intelligence Officer with Colonel Mackay's column of militia operating in Zululand and Natal. See the reports of the Umvoti Field Force and of Mackay's column in the records of the Colonial Secretary's Office, volume 2599, confidential minute 147 of 1906, and *The Natal Mercury*, April 25, 1906, in an article entitled, "The native trouble".

⁴ See footnote 15.

⁵ The records groups are cited hereafter as SNA, CSO, AGO, and RSC, respectively.

the use of Bambatha instead of Bhambada, which latter name, it is suggested in the book's glossary, is ahistorical.⁶

Zondi Amakhosi in history – the house of Sondaba amongst other segments

Sithole-Zondi give the Zondi succession as follows:⁷

Zondi
NoNdaba
Gagashe
Luqa
Nhlabushile
Zacela
Nomagaga
Magenge
Sondaba
Jangeni (= Mancinza) (mother : MaMyeza)
Magwababa (mother : MaMyeza)
Bhambada (mother : MaPhakade) 1904–1906
Funizwe (mother: MaPhakade) 1907–1950

⁶ “Bhambada [:] this is our chosen spelling for the hero of the 1906 Zulu Uprising. The choice is based on the prevalent use among his descendants, the *amaZondi* of Ngome and by play on word in his *Izibongo* praises, which describe him as *ubhambada* (‘he strikes viciously’) his enemies with a knobkerrie, in comparison to others who only fight with walking sticks. The other most common spelling is Bhambatha (from the verb *ukubhambatha*) which means a mother’s soothing action for her baby. This evidently has no meaning for our hero, known for his strong character and violent outbursts. A Zulu name is meant to describe the person, and a mother was traditionally believed to receive it from the family ancestors, interested to describe the destiny of the child from birth. Other spellings, found in the quoted sources, are Bambata and Bhambata.” (p. xii) The team and/or their informants are in effect saying that they use the name “Bhambada” because they like it better than the generally accepted (since 2001) name “Bhambatha”. It is quite singular that they should overthrow the name preferred by the ancestors and MaPhakade and to which Bambatha himself responded apparently without demur. The definition of “bambata” given in the Colenso Zulu dictionary of 1905 is to “pat with the hand, as a horse or a dog”. The Doke-Vilakazi dictionaries (1948 – 1990) define “bambatha” as to “pat with the hand (as a child or dog)” and to “slap on the back”; and the Dent-Nyembezi dictionary has for “bhambada” and “bhambatha”, which are evidently interchangeable, to “pat; slap on the back; press down hair”. There is nothing about striking viciously. The committee organizing the centenary celebrations use the spelling “Bhambatha”. (And yet M. M. Fuze and R. R. Dhlomo used the *d*.)

⁷ A consolidation of the lists on pp. 27 and 30.

After Nhlabushile, the amaZondi divided into four groups, of which Zacela's lived at Ngcengeni at Nathi. Subsequently, the senior house of the Zondi – it is not stated, but presumably it is Zacela's house – moved to Mkhabela, leaving the junior house under the *induna* Phungula at Nathi. When amaBomvu began to move into the Nathi area, the *induna* Vaphi reported this fact to the royal houses of Zondi and Sondaba, and Sondaba returned to Nathi, apparently with his own people and some of the other house, while the rest of the senior house went to KwaMachibisa (which they named Nadi) at Pietermaritzburg. Sondaba did not stay long at Nathi, but moved KwaMhlamvunkulu.⁸ The junior house of Mashobane remained at Nathi and “eventually became incorporated under the political patronage of *amaBomvu*”.⁹

Sondaba established his major homestead eNdabuko at KwaNhlamvunkulu. It is at eNdabuko that “the amaZondi of Ngome begin their separate historical journey”, for, it is implied, Jangeni was born there.¹⁰ Also mentioned at this stage is a Zondi tradition that the third wife of an *inkosi* was often *lobola*'d by the *isizwe*, and for that reason bore the heir.¹¹

The published accounts reflect a different procession.

Bryant suggests that the Zondi and Nxamalala peoples were Sotho immigrants, who settled in proximity in the Nadi and Thukela river valleys. The abakwaZondi were also called the abaseNadi, under Nomagaga, [the son] of Ntsele. Both clans were subjugated by Shaka.

Subsequently, the Zondi clan broke up. A portion of it went to Zululand. Another portion allied with the abaseNxamalala. Yet another became the abakwaMpumuza, who lived at the confluence of the Mpafana and Mpanza rivers. The amaNxamalala fled from Dingane, and some lodged at Zwartkop, near the future Pietermaritzburg, but the majority were overtaken and brought back. The Zondi remnant, under Jangeni, son of Maqenge, had their land taken by white “farmers”. There is an implication that they then might have moved away, but where they might have gone is not mentioned. About this time, a sub-clan of the abakwaMpumuza, called the abakwaMadlala, moved to a place near Table Mountain.

Sondaba is mentioned only as the son and heir of Siguqa of the amaNxamalala – but then it is suggested this might be one and the same

⁸ Pp. 30–31.

⁹ P. 31.

¹⁰ Pp. 31 – 33.

¹¹ P. 32. The Zondi peregrinations in and around Nathi seem to have resulted in a relocation from the middle Nadi river valley to the upper Loza river valley. It would have been helpful if the book included a map showing the places mentioned in the text.

person, who was given to Shaka as a hostage and died on campaign without leaving an heir.¹²

Mqaikana kaYenge, of the amaMpumuza, was about eighty-five years old when he was interviewed by James Stuart in 1916. He tells how the Nadi and several other peoples originally were Dlamini people from Swaziland, who migrated to Natal and, at “the tree of Dhlamini”, in a forest on a ridge near KwaPakwe,¹³ they broke into different groups to go and settle the country around. The Nadi people became known as the Zondi for having done a wrong in disliking a certain girl. Their first *inkosi* was Bihla – but later on in the interview he says Luqa. In any event the amaZondi seem to have divided into three separate branches – Nadi, Ngome, and Mpumuza – before the Shakan troubles. The Nxamalala (or Zuma) clan were their neighbours.¹⁴ Mqaikana is more interested in the careers of the amaMpumuza and the amaNxamalala than that of the abaseNgome. He does not mention the latter even by name and provides us with no more than the lineage of their leaders.¹⁵

Nomatshumi
Magenge
Jangeni
Mancinza
Bambatha
Funizwe

Mqaikana does not say if Nomatshumi was next in the line after Bihla/Luqa. He also places Nomagaga with the abaseNadi and Sondaba with amaNxamalala.¹⁶

In addition to the above, there is Magema Fuze, who states, in *The black people and whence they came* (1922), that the Ngome was the Zondi junior house, following the Nadi and Mphumuza clans.¹⁷ His line of descent is

¹² Bryant, *Olden times*, pp. 520 – 523.

¹³ Stuart’s informant, Sende kaHlunguhlungu, states that the tree was at oPisweni. *James Stuart Archive* (hereafter cited as *JSA*), V, 281.

¹⁴ *JSA*, V, 1, 3 – 4, 12, 22. See the completely different Zondi genealogy, ascribed to Nomgamulana, V, 12. Incidental information is also found in III, 6 and 12 (Mbokodo), and V, 281 (Sende) and 342 and 344 (Singcofela).

¹⁵ *JSA*, V, 2, 4, 12.

¹⁶ See *JSA*, V, 1, 12 and 17, 22, respectively.

¹⁷ Fuze, M.M. 1979. *The black people and whence they came: a Zulu view*. Translated by H. C. Lugg and edited by A. T. Cope from the original. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press. (p. 110)

Dlaba
Magenge
Jangeni
Mancinza
Bambatha¹⁸

The archival records provide no information on persons and events before the time of Jangeni.

It will come as no surprise to scholars familiar with legendary and mythical family trees to learn that sources disagree among themselves. Bryant's and Fuze's sources are not known, but presumably were similar to Stuart's, and presumably belonged to the same period. There are a few matching names between Mqaikana and Sithole-Zondi, while the correspondence of movements of people between Bryant and Sithole-Zondi is tenuous. Probably none of the sources is correct, certainly not *in toto*, but elements common to all suggest a factual basis.

Mancinza consolidates Sondaba's legacy

Sithole-Zondi state: "It is important to note that Jangeni became popularly known as Mancinza through his praise names; this has confused some writers who thought that Mancinza and Jangeni were two distinct individuals."¹⁹

Jangeni lived at eNdabuko. He had four wives, and "gradually he established independent houses for them" at or named Mhlabutho, Sikhaleni, KwaGade, and Mzinto. The wives were known as MaMzila, MaDlamini, and (two of them) MaPhakade. MaPhakade, daughter of the Chunu *inkosi* Phakade, was the third wife, *lobola*'d by the people, and so would bear the heir. She died and her place was taken by another of the same *inkosi*'s daughters. MaMzila bore (at least) one son, Nomatshumi, as did MaDlamini (Mazwi). The first MaPhakade bore two sons, Bhambada and Funizwe, and three daughters, Thenjiwe, Nonkasa, and Kiki. The second MaPhakade bore Mpabanga.²⁰

Magwababa succeeded his brother Jangeni.²¹ "Magwababa was appointed to the throne by colonial officials, who made the brief period of

¹⁸ *Ibid.* <<Author: are you referring to Fuze (1979)? J Smith>>

¹⁹ P. 32.

²⁰ P. 33.

²¹ P. 27.

Bhambada's reign questionable as they wished to impose [a? the?] colonial seal of legitimacy to Magwababa's succession."²²

There is now a sharp divergence between the two source sets.

The 1853 government reports state that Jangene, Iangene or Unjangene, was a petty chief of the Engome tribe at Table Mountain, acting for the chief Ngoza, who had twelve tribes under him, scattered over a wide area east of Pietermaritzburg. Jangeni claimed to be a hereditary chief, but the government did not recognise him as such.²³ Bambatha stated in 1895 and again in 1902 that Jangeni and his people moved to the Loza-Mpanza area when Dr. Kelly was the resident magistrate of Umvoti,²⁴ that is, between March 6, 1853 and February 20, 1856.²⁵

Bambatha also stated that Jangeni was his grandfather and Sobhuza was his father.²⁶

Mancinza was the son of Jangeni by Mahlali.²⁷ He was also called Sobhuza.²⁸ Other sons of Jangeni were Sotshangana, Zikwazi and Magwababa.²⁹ His homestead was called eMhlabatweni.³⁰ Mancinza married four

²² P. 29.

²³ See the "Statement, shewing the Names of Chiefs, whether hereditary of otherwise, their places of residence, the estimated number of their people, & the amount collected ... in payment of their taxes for the year 1851, by the Magistrate of the Inanda Location ...", in the Supplement to *The Natal Government Gazette*, March 8, 1853; the evidence of the Magistrate in the Second Supplement, of the same date, and of the Magistrate of the Umvoti Location in the Supplement of March 22, 1853. See also the *Proceedings and Report of the Commission appointed to inquire into the past and present state of the Kafirs in the District of Natal . . . 1852 - 1853*, pp. 32 and 35. Also, see SNA I/1/319: 853/1905, statement of Swaimana, chief of the Amagcumisa, April 17, 1905.

²⁴ SNA I/1/210: 1353/1895, Memorandum of the Under Secretary for Native Affairs, November 4, 1895. CSO 1714: 7764/1902, Petition of Bambatha to the Supreme Chief, October 4, 1902.

²⁵ See the *Blue books for the colony of Natal, 1854*, pp. 172, 1857 [n.p.]

²⁶ See Petition (footnote 15) and SNA I/1/210: 1353/1895, Magistrate Krantzkoop to Secretary for Native Affairs, December 2, 1895. Also, on Jangeni being his grandfather, see Memorandum (n. 15) and SNA I/1/296: 2278/1902, Memorandum of Interview with Bambatha *et al.*, by the Under Secretary for Native Affairs, August 25, 1902; and on Mancinza/Sobhuza being his father, SNA I/1/134: 1422/1890, Statement by Chief Bambata of Zondi or Engome tribe, November 20, 1890.

²⁷ SNA I/1/196: 1647/1894, Magistrate Umvoti to Secretary for Native Affairs, December 27, 1894: deposition of Nyaniso; evidence of Mahlali and Nyaniso.

²⁸ See footnote 18.

²⁹ These are the ones who have been found mentioned in the official records, e.g. SNA I/1/66: 760/1883, Magistrate Umvoti to Secretary for Native Affairs, October 30, 1883 and December 5, 1884; and I/1/84: 894/1884, Secretary for Native Affairs to Magistrate Ixopo, November 27, 1884.

³⁰ AGO I/7/67: deposition of Siyeikiwe, December 23, 1907. RSC III/3/2, pp. 292 -293: evidence of Siyeikiwe.

times,³¹ and his youngest wife was MaPhakade, daughter of the Chunu chief.³² According to Stuart, she was the principal wife, and by custom the tribe was called upon to contribute towards her *lobolo*; however, the tribe objected to their chief taking a Chunu wife and refused to provide for *lobolo*. Mancinza was determined to marry her, and provided the forty head of cattle from his own herd. A few months after the wedding, she accused his three other wives of wanting to kill her, and left his homestead to live in a Chunu one, where Bambatha was born. MaPhakade insisted on a homestead of her own, and got it. Mancinza's other wives complained that Mancinza gave too much attention to MaPhakade, and the old homestead was wrecked.³³

MaPhakade bore Mancinza two sons, Bambatha and Funizwe, just under two years apart, and three daughters, Nonkasa (who may have been older than they), Kiki and Tengiwe.³⁴ Mpabanga and Nomatshumi were half brothers.³⁵ Nonkasa married one Falazi, who lived near the Nhlazatshe, in Zululand.³⁶ Kiki married Koti, a Bomvu, in 1902.³⁷ There are reports that other sisters, whether full or half sisters is not stated, were married to the *amakhosi* Matshana kaMondisa (Sithole) and Silwana (Chunu).³⁸

Bambatha was born *circa* 1865.³⁹ His father died in 1883,⁴⁰ and his uncles Zikwazi (1883–1884)⁴¹ and Magwababa (1884 – 1890)⁴² acted as regents for Bambatha, who was appointed chief on June 6, 1890.⁴³

³¹ An inference from Stuart, *Zulu rebellion*, p. 157.

³² *Ibid.*, <<Author: **Zulu Rebellion? J Smith**>> who states she was Mancinza's principal wife; but she is referred to as the chief wife in the correspondence of the Magistrate Umvoti (November 11, 1884) and Secretary for Native Affairs (December 5, 1884) in SNA I/1/66: 760/1883.

³³ Stuart, *Zulu rebellion*, p. 157.

³⁴ AGO I/7/67: declaration of Siyekiwe, July 17, 1907. See also SNA I/4/19: C289/1907, declaration of Funizwe, December 13, 1907.

³⁵ SNA I/1/338: 841/1906, Memorandum of Interview between the Minister of Native Affairs and the Under Secretary for Native Affairs with Magwababa, Funizwe and 19 others, March 16, 1906. AGO I/7/68: Resume of statement made by Cakijana at Krantzkop on the 20th May 1908. Cf. SNA I/6/28: MJ C164/1906, evidence of Duluka

³⁶ AGO I/7/61: declaration of Siyekiwe, July 17, 1907; and I/1/67: deposition of Siyekiwe, December 23, 1907. SNA I/1/356: 3860/1906, Commissioner for Native Affairs to Under Secretary for Native Affairs, November 29, 1906, and Magistrate Vryheid to Under Secretary for Native Affairs, December 21, 1906.

³⁷ SNA I/1/296: 2278/1902, Statement of Bambatha, August 22, 1902.

³⁸ Memorandum (footnote 27) and SNA I/4/16: C146/1906, Magistrate Greytown to Minister of Native Affairs, April 5, 1906.

³⁹ Stuart, *Zulu rebellion*, p. 158.

⁴⁰ SNA I/1/66: 760/1883, Magistrate Umvoti to Secretary for Native Affairs, October 30, 1883. Cf. Stuart, *Zulu rebellion*, p. 158; and Bosman, W. 1907. *The Natal rebellion*. London: Longmans, Green. (p. 18)

The statements of the two source sets on the identity of Jangeni-Mancinza cannot be reconciled, nor consequently can the details concerning their wives be reconciled. Sithole-Zondi's statement that Jangeni and Mancinza were the same man is incorrect. The published information is sufficient to separate Jangeni from Mancinza-Sobhuza. Some time during the last century the Ngome people apparently obscured the distinction. For what purpose? Also incorrect are the Zondi informants' elevation of Magwababa to *inkosi* (and the confusing explanation) and dating of Bambatha's accession. How did these errors arise? Perhaps they reflect an attempt by the partisans of Bambatha to shift the blame for the many unhappy events preceding the rebellion onto Magwababa. Granted their awareness of and concern for the sensitivities of their informants, Sithole-Zondi could have pointed out at least the salient mistakes of their informants, rather than just pass them on, as though they were correct.

Bhambada: the fighter for the Zondi-Nguni legacy

Sithole-Zondi state: "All oral sources point out that Bhambada kaMancinza went through his youth and early married life without noteworthy troubles – politically and otherwise."⁴⁴ The outline of succession shows that Bambatha was *inkosi* for only two years (1904–1906).⁴⁵ They say nothing further about his career here although, in another chapter, Sithole deals with it at some length.⁴⁶ Nor do they speak of his demise, except to say that he "disappeared in 1906",⁴⁷ but again, the matter is referred to elsewhere in the book.⁴⁸

⁴¹ SNA I/1/66: 760/1883, Magistrate Umvoti to Secretary for Native Affairs, October 30, 1883, and February 9 and November 11, 1884, and Under Secretary to Magistrate, February 9, 1884.

⁴² *Ibid.*, Magistrate Umvoti to Secretary for Native Affairs, November 11 and December 5, 1884, and May 28, 1890.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, Secretary for Native Affairs to Magistrate Umvoti, June 8, 1890; and I/1/333: 78/1906, letter of the Supreme Chief deposing Bambatha, February 23, 1906.

⁴⁴ P. 34.

⁴⁵ P. 27.

⁴⁶ See pp. 152 - 154.

⁴⁷ P. 34; but see p. 43.

⁴⁸ See pp. x, 6, 120, 151 - 152. There is a prevailing belief that Bambatha was not killed at the battle of Mome on June 10, 1906, but uncertainty surrounds his later career. The team, if not all the informants, believe he fled to Mozambique. See Thompson, P.S. 2005. Bambatha after Mome: dead or alive? *Historia* 50 (1), May: 23–48. The question of Bambatha's whereabouts also touches on the authenticity of the photograph on the cover of the book. When and where was the original made? The caption states: "This is a picture of early Zondis with *Inkosi* Bhambada in the middle of the front row. It is originally from the

Sithole-Zondi state that Bambatha had four wives – MaMvanyana, MaKhuzwayo, MaSithole, and MaZuma. MaMvanyana bore him two sons, Ndabayakhe and Sizungu. MaKhuzwayo bore him two also, Nkani and Gosa. MaSithole bore a son, Cijo, and a daughter, Neleni. MaZuma, who was “popularly known as Manqukuthu amongst the Royal Zondi of Ngome” (and in the written records as Siyekwiwe), bore him two sons, Bulawayo/Nweleza-belungu and Mehlomyama, and a daughter, Libalele.⁴⁹

MaSithole was the third wife, and it was assumed that her son Cijo would succeed Bambatha.⁵⁰ Bambatha then made it known that his favourite wife, MaZuma, was the one who would produce the heir (Bulawayo), which “caused a few perplexities and was seen as unfair in certain circles. It led to some dissatisfaction within the royal *amaZondi* and led to MaSithole and her children leaving the homestead towards an unknown gloomy future”.⁵¹

Again, there are remarkable discrepancies between the source sets.

There is a great deal in the official records about Bambatha’s disorderly conduct as a chief.⁵² Stuart also has more to say about Bambatha’s tempestuous career⁵³ – and marriages.⁵⁴

He rapidly squandered the property his father had left and, like his father, ran counter to the wishes of the tribe in selecting his principal wife. The elders were in favour of his promoting a particular woman, and opposed to his own choice, on the ground that the woman was a twin. He ignored their wishes and, after one of his wives (there were four in all), had committed adultery and been expelled, whilst another had deserted, he erected a solitary hut for the principal one – calling it Emkon-

Illustrated London News of 16 June 1906, published during the Uprising. Although there is controversy over whether this is indeed *Inkosi* Bhambada, the present heir *inkosi* Mbongeleni Zondi has the picture displayed proudly in his house and confirms his forefather’s identity.” The head of this Bhambada has been used as the logogram for the Bhambatha Centenary Commemoration and on the commemorative postage stamp. The photograph is probably a press fabrication. There is no evidence otherwise of its being taken during the rebellion. If the photograph were taken before, then presumably it would have been as readily available in Natal as in England. There would have been no need for Stuart and Funizwe to go to Zululand to identify Bambatha (see footnote 3) or for the uncertainty about whether or not it was Bambatha’s head that was cut off after Mome.

⁴⁹ P. 34.

⁵⁰ P. 34.

⁵¹ P. 34.

⁵² See Thompson, P.S. 2004. *Bambatha at Mpanza: the making of a rebel*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, (chapters 1 and 2, especially the notes)

⁵³ Stuart, *Zulu Rebellion*, pp. 158 – 159. See Bosman, *Natal Rebellion*, p. 19.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

tweni (*the place of the assegai*) thereby following once more the irregular example set by his father.

More information on Bambatha's family comes from the statements made by Siyekiwe/MaZuma herself and two of his children by MaMqayana, made before and during the trial of Dinuzulu, and is eked out with bits and pieces from other contemporary sources.

According to these unpublished sources, Bambatha had four wives – MaMqayana, his first wife (whether in point of time or prominence is not clear), MaGogotshwane, MaMbalungeni, and MaSikonyana.⁵⁵ They are sometimes referred to by their (unmarried) names – Nontelelezi, Nomadhlozi, Nomakulu, and Siyekiwe⁵⁶ – the first being the same as MaMqayana⁵⁷ and the last as MaSikonyana,⁵⁸ also called Manqukutu,⁵⁹ of the Zuma clan,⁶⁰ who is variously described as Bambatha's youngest,⁶¹ favourite,⁶² and principal⁶³ wife. Bambatha married her about the time of the rinderpest.⁶⁴ The names of MaSikonyana's children – two of them – are not given, presumably because they were not with her at eMkontweni or afterwards, when the crucial events of the rebellion (which primarily interested officials taking statements) took place. They lived at eMkontweni for a while and then were sent to Sikonyana's homestead.⁶⁵ Bambatha sent the children of MaMqayana to be MaSikonyana's companions at eMkontweni.⁶⁶ These were the girl Kolekile (Bambatha's eldest child,⁶⁷ born *circa* 1883/4⁶⁸ or *circa* 1889⁶⁹), and

⁵⁵ AGO I/7/67: statement of Ndabayake, December 23, 1907.

⁵⁶ AGO I/7/67: deposition of Siyekiwe, December 23, 1907.

⁵⁷ AGO I/7/67: statement of Ndabayake, December 23, 1907.

⁵⁸ AGO I/7/67: declaration of Siyekiwe, July 17, 1907.

⁵⁹ SNA I/1/256: 3860/1906: Magistrate Umvoti to Under Secretary for Native Affairs, January 30, 1907.

⁶⁰ RSC III/3/2, p. 347: evidence of Kolekile.

⁶¹ SNA I/4/19: C289/1906, declaration of Funizwe, December 13, 1907. RSC III/3/2, p. 288: evidence of Siyekiwe.

⁶² AGO I/7/67: declaration of Kolekile, December 24, 1907. RSC III/3/2, p. 338: evidence of Kolekile.

⁶³ Stuart, *Zulu Rebellion*, p. 158. According to Siyekiwe (AGO I/1/61: deposition, July 17, 1907, and I/7/67: deposition, December 23, 1907) Bambatha did not appoint a chief wife.

⁶⁴ RSC III/3/2, p. 289: evidence of Siyekiwe.

⁶⁵ AGO I/7/61: deposition of Kolekile, July 15, 1907. RSC III/3/2, p. 238: evidence of Siyekiwe.

⁶⁶ AGO I/7/61: deposition of Kolekile, July 15, 1907.

⁶⁷ SNA I/4/19: C289/1907, declaration of Funizwe, December 13, 1907.

⁶⁸ Ibid. AGO I/7/67: statement of Ndabayake, December 23, 1907.

⁶⁹ SNA I/1/356: 3860/1906, Magistrate Umvoti to Under Secretary for Native Affairs, January 30, 1907.

the boys Ndabayakhe (born 1887⁷⁰ or *circa* 1892⁷¹) and Nonkobotshe (born *circa* 1896).⁷² The two other *lobola*'d wives remained at the eMnyembezi homestead.⁷³

MaMbalungeni was an aunt of Zungu, *inkosi* of the local aba-Thembu.⁷⁴ She was not fully *lobola*'d, and therefore returned to her father's homestead,⁷⁵ but she bore Bambatha an (illegitimate) son, Citsho (or Ncitsho),⁷⁶ who was acting as a herd boy when he was killed in 1904.⁷⁷ Zungu and one of his wives were charged with the murder, but in an official enquiry the charge could not be proved.⁷⁸

It is not surprising that Sithole-Zondi's respondents were ignorant of the details of Bambatha's complicated marital relations. These relations might well have been controversial, too, given what Nelson Zondi tells of us the tension between Bambatha's and Funizwe's descendants over the succession.⁷⁹ That there were – and are? – disputing factions is plain.⁸⁰ It seems clear from the book that any hostile criticism of Bambatha and his followers in the rebellion would have been and has been silenced.⁸¹ Information such as existed with MaSikonyana and Kolekile and others earlier seem to have been forgotten – or, given the circumstances, suppressed? – by Sithole-Zondi's informants, more probably by *their* informants earlier on. The married names of Bambatha's wives are totally different in the two source sets. The

⁷⁰ SNA I/4/19: C289/1906, declaration of Funizwe, December 13, 1907.

⁷¹ SNA I/1/356: 3860/1906, Magistrate Umvoti to Under Secretary for Native Affairs, January 30, 1907.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ AGO I/7/67: declaration of Kolekile, December 24, 1907.

⁷⁴ SNA I/1/324: 1912/1905, Magistrate Umvoti to Under Secretary for Native Affairs, November 1, 1905.

⁷⁵ Ibid. AGO I/7/67: statement of Ndabayake, December 23, 1907.

⁷⁶ SNA I/1/324: 1912/1905, Magistrate Umvoti to Under Secretary for Native Affairs, November 1, 1905.

⁷⁷ Ibid. *Greytown Gazette*, October 7, 1905: "A chief charged: with wilful murder".

⁷⁸ *Greytown Gazette*, October 14, 1905: "Week by week".

⁷⁹ See and cross refer pp. 28 and 35.

⁸⁰ See and cross refer pp. 29, 34, and 38 – 39. For the period of Bambatha's chieftaincy, see SNA I/1/196: 1487/1896, Magistrate Umvoti to Secretary for Native Affairs, September 15, 1896; I/1/228: 1496/1896, C. Tatham to Under Secretary for Native Affairs, September 3, 1896, and the Under Secretary's memorandum, September 9, 1896; I/6/27: MJ C163/1906, p. 98: evidence of Umfulatelwa, and MJ C194/1906: p. 53, evidence of Magwababa; also *Greytown Gazette*, February 24, 1906: "Scarecrows," a letter by C. Tatham, February 23, 1906. For the period just afterwards, see SNA I/1/348: 2581/1906, Notes on Interview (October 11, 1906): Secretary for Native Affairs and Magwababa; and in the records of the Chief Native Commissioner 178: 1175/1914, Acting Magistrate Umvoti to Chief Native Commissioner, July 17, 1914.

⁸¹ *Pace* Nelson Zondi. This construction can also be placed on the relative reluctance of women to speak out about the rebellion – see chapters 6 and 7 of Magwaza et al. 2006.

respective accounts of the unfortunate Cijo/Citsho do not so much contradict as miss each other. Kolekile and Nonkobotshe are omitted from the Sithole-Zondi genealogy altogether.

Conclusion

The net result of the comparison between the two source sets is to raise serious doubts about the accuracy of the oral history of Jangeni's progeny and the Ngome succession in the period *circa* 1850-1906 among the abaseNgome. This, according to Sithole-Zondi, is not really their concern:

We have been used to looking at history from the point of view of documents written by white archivists and historians who reflected the attitudes and concerns of the colonial authorities. This chapter has outlined an alternative history, handed down through the oral traditions of people who had to sustain their pride through resilience.⁸²

Thus the alternative history is a function of identity and resistance. But is the alternative history accurate? The published and archival documents give a plausible account of persons and events. The Zondi informants of Sithole-Zondi may well believe what they say, in which case we have a psychological fact, which has now been duly recorded. Oral history has become written history, making it more susceptible to methodical historical criticism.

In recording oral history, the historian must forbear any manipulation of the teller which produces an account the teller does not want. There is no reason to doubt the *bona fides* of the authors of the chapter on Zondi genealogy in this respect. Nonetheless, the oral sources might have been differentiated and their differences elaborated upon for the benefit of scholarly readers, who could also gain some insight into how individual and collective memories work in the Ngome community.

On the one hand, the authors do not, of course, wish to betray their respondents' confidence, and that is admirable. On the other hand, they have abstained from analysing and commenting upon the material in a way to vouchsafe its accuracy, and therefore have limited its usefulness for other scholars. How do we know whether or not what their informants told them is really true – or probably true? The authors have left methodical historical

⁸² P. 38.

criticism to others, and have presented these others with a formidable challenge.

**Freedom Park:
remembering culture and heritage**

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The dawn of modern democracy in South Africa has brought with it several challenges. Prior to this, South Africans had witnessed gruesome incidents of intolerance and racial discrimination, both of which were brutality fuelled by apartheid, land dispossessions, the deliberate deracination of people of African descent, genocide, several wars of resistance and a host of innumerable atrocities. South Africa then went through what most believe was a miracle transition: however, there was a need to sustain the peace efforts, and create a momentum of nation-building.

One such instrument used to do this was the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) which sought to heal the land of its intolerable past. Nonetheless, many questions remained unanswered after the TRC had completed its work. Commenting on the role of the state in an event like the TRC, Van Zyl (2000:53) believes that, in such an instance, “a state must provide victims of human rights abuses with adequate reparation” and, in addition, “the state must also provide some form of symbolic reparation by establishing permanent monuments or memorials to remember and honour victims or by establishing a national day of remembrance”.

It is our intention in this paper to offer a semiotic explication of the Freedom Park semiology, and to describe how the site can be used as a narrative of peace, reconciliation and nation-building. The toponymy and phraseology of Freedom Park is an attempt to re-member the past, using culture as a mnemonic symbol.

Why semiotics in the narrative of Freedom Park?

Our concern with meaning and landscapes of signification has driven us to various critiques of culture and symbols. The theoretical foundations of semiotics and our general training in the methodologies informing Folklore Studies and Media Studies seem to have influenced us to choose semiotics as an appropriate theory to interpret the whole subject of Freedom Park.

Semiotics is the science of signs dealing with those principles which underlie a structure of all things. As Elam (1988:1) puts it:

Semiotics can best be defined as a science dedicated to the study of the production of meaning in society. As such it is equally concerned with processes of *signification* and *communication*, i.e. the means whereby meanings are both generated and exchanged.

According to Elam, the breadth of semiotics is such that it cannot be considered a methodology, and yet it is too “multifaceted and heterogeneous” to be reduced to a method. It is thus a multidisciplinary theory whose methodological considerations are governed by the pursuit of meaning in any social communication event. One of the founders of semiotics, Charles Sanders Peirce, suggested a tripartite typology of signs, namely, *icon*, *index* and *symbol*. This typology is also linked to Peirce’s trichotomy of sign-functions.

The vision of our chosen site, Freedom Park, makes very interesting reading for a semiotic interpretation: “to be a leading national and international icon of humanity”. Described in semiological terms Freedom Park is undoubtedly an icon. Elam (1988:21) quotes Peirce who defines an icon as:

a sign which refers to the object that it denotes merely by virtue of characters of its own, and which it possesses ... Anything whatever, be it quality, existent individual, or law, is an Icon of anything, in so far as it is like that thing and used as a sign of it.

To be an icon, Freedom Park has to share in the governing principle of iconography, which is similitude. The site has to bear reference to something that relates to it. Freedom Park is therefore a visual landscape connected to the hearts and minds of South Africa. It is an open stage upon which government hopes visitors will re-enact the South African past, reflect upon it, improve the present and build a future as a united nation.

The Garden of Remembrance

The rationale behind the establishment of Freedom Park is to address gaps, distortions and biases, to provide new perspectives of South Africa’s heritage. In order to attend to these gaps it was necessary for the Freedom Park Trust to incorporate all the known events that characterised the conflict in

South Africa, starting from the clashes that took place before South Africa was colonised. Of the many periods of conflict and trauma that shaped South Africa, the following were centralised to mark the narrative of remembrance:

- Pre-colonial wars
- Colonial wars, genocide
- Slavery
- Wars of resistance
- The South African War (Anglo-Boer War)
- World War I and World War II
- The struggle for liberation

Freedom Park is divided into Phases I to III. For the purpose of this discussion, our attention shall be limited to Phase I, which consists of the Garden of Remembrance. The Garden of Remembrance consists of *Isivivane* (see below), the spiral path which in itself is the extension of the shrine, *lešaka*, the boulders collected from the international world, and nine of our provinces.

Isivivane is an isiZulu word which refers to a heap of stones. It comes from the verb *ukuviva* which means getting ready for war, muscling energies together and pledging solidarity as one approaches an enemy. The idea of *Isivivane* is borrowed from the experiences of travellers. For travellers at an intersection, a stone would be put to indicate that they once passed there at some time. Over a period of time, as the stones would be placed on one another, a mound would form. These accumulated stones made the travellers remember the place and this would reconnect them with the place. The heap of stones would stand there as a symbol to all passersby that, at this place, a traveller had passed by at some time in the past. Whoever approached such a place would know that somebody else had been there before him or her.

This accumulated mound of stones, called *Isivivane*, was believed to bring good luck to travellers paying homage to the landscape and all that it contained. We are reminded of the biblical Jacob who, we are told, also put up a stone at Bethel as a symbol of remembrance that at this place he came into contact with God (Gen. 28:18). Possibly he erected the stone to mark the place so that his descendants would know that their ancestor once passed there and therefore had some connection with the place.

A heap of stones would be placed next to a homestead to mark that place as a sacred place. Inhabitants would go there to pay homage to their progenitors who were believed to reside at such a place (i.e. a place marked by a heap of stones). People would go to the place, pick up a stone, breath or spit to it and placed on top of the other stones. They believed that this would connect them with spirits of the living-dead.

Isivivane is by itself a shrine made from a collection of stones gathered into a heap by travellers who would find, in the middle of their journey, a place where they could seek guidance and divine intervention.

They would spit on the little stone, and ask for a safe passage ahead. *Isivivane* therefore stands for the divine spirit and society's dream for a better future.

Isivivane is the final resting place of all those who fought in the conflict events. It was constructed after extensive consultations with elders, youth, women, the labour movement, veterans' organisations, disabled people's organisations, groups of creative people and so on. These consultations are acknowledged by Dr Wally Serote in a speech delivered at the University of Pretoria in 2004. In his speech, Dr Serote acknowledges that *Isivivane* is a re-membering of our African Indigenous Knowledge Systems:

The consultations sought to find the manner in which the African voice can be emancipated in our country. We believe that, within the cultural diversity of our nation, the African voice remains stifled and muted as a result of colonialism and apartheid, therefore no voice from within this diversity will be heard leave (*sic*) alone believed. But also it is when this voice is emancipated that all other voices will also be emancipated. We will free this nation from prejudice and discrimination. We will seek justice. *Isivivane* was constructed on the basis of borrowing deeply from the Indigenous Knowledge System of this country. *I ask that you visit for we await your comments as to whether we were honest in our attempts to free the African voice.*

In this journey, the government borrows icons and symbolisms from African narratives of communication as a gesture to centralise not only the African voice, but also African spirituality, which has been subjugated for many years under various guises of colonialism. *Isivivane* monumentalises the African spirit, and integrates it with the other forms that have dominated the space for centuries without hindrance. The re-appropriation and repositioning of African belief systems is evident in numerous government initiatives where traditional leaders are called upon to heal the land. It happened in 2001 at Vlakplaats, we have seen it at Mapungubwe, and also at Tjate, Sekhukhune's stronghold. None of this would have happened before 1994.

The cleansing at the *Isivivane* involved every nook and cranny. But, in this instance, we assume that all people of South Africa share the same cultural convention because all different groupings (i.e. traditional leaders, traditional healers, different religious groups, political groupings of diverse ideological inclinations) and, indeed, anybody who participated in the cleansing ceremonies conducted in all the nine provinces agreed that this

symbol could be used. The understanding was that *Isivivane* represents your journey from bondage to freedom, whoever you are and whatever culture you come from.

Monuments and parks such as Freedom Park are landmarks created to memorialise the past, especially for a country such as South Africa, a country that wants to create a new sense of identity. Like all other monuments, parks and heritage sites, Freedom Park was created to construct a new sense of nationhood, and to bury the unpleasant history of the past with a view to sowing the seeds of a united nation bound together by a common heritage. Writing on the foundation myth of the new South Africa, Sabine Marschall (2004) also makes reference to strategies that new governments employ to re-create an identity and shape a common consciousness among civil polity:

The erection of monuments often constitutes the final part of a larger and long process of reworking memory and rewriting history, which is currently under way everywhere from community level to academia.

She goes on to suggest that “not only are new monuments erected to visually represent the foundation myth, some older monuments are being re-interpreted to fit in with the new meta-narrative”. Monuments are used as a site for defining a new heritage, and creating a new consciousness for the future. In this way, South Africa seeks to shed her unfortunate historical past, and build on the strength of an emerging new nationhood defined by a common rule of law and a common Constitution.

The Garden of Remembrance is the pinnacle of the very essence of what Freedom Park stands for. *Isivivane* and *lešaka* are two sanctuaries, that is, shrines overlaid like a tapestry on the open space provided for reflection and contemplation. *Lešaka* is actually a burial place for the head of the family; it, too, is as sacred as *Isivivane*. It is fascinating to note that both icons represent the same set of beliefs and practices. They represent a place of worship, a space of contemplation for self-reflection and submission to the ancestors, and ultimately to the Supreme Being. *Lešaka* is a traditional kraal made of stones or logs of wood. The stones that form the *lesaka* at the Garden of Remembrance have been collected from the nine provinces, and two of them come from abroad. In terms of their intended signification, it is believed they represent the contribution of the provinces in the struggle, and a gesture of thanks to the external world for its help and support in the struggle against apartheid, and to honour those who died in this struggle outside South Africa’s borders.

Drawing on the Indigenous Knowledge Systems of our country, the boulders are an added contribution to the shrine, that is, *Isivivane*, and thus continue to pay homage to our fallen heroes and heroines, be it here or outside South Africa. It is part of the religious practice of honouring the dead, and submitting ourselves to the ancestors in order to rid ourselves of the baggage of the past. Visitors at the site also pay homage to the fallen souls, and become “witnesses” of the road travelled, and the road ahead. They will pay homage to South Africa’s heritage, her new history, and also be part of the struggle for re-definition, albeit metaphorically.

The Spiral Path leads the traveller to three concentric circles: *Isivivane*, *mošate*, and *lešaka*. A circle is a symbol of perfection, a balance of unity and harmony. At the cosmological level, the circle integrates the spiritual, terrestrial (vegetation and animals) and the living (humans). Whether there is a coincidence or not, the eleven boulders can be related to the eleven official languages of South Africa.

Conclusion

It has been noted that Freedom Park employs both naming and monumenting as strategies for re-remembering the past.

The *Isivivane* erected at Freedom Park reminds us that South Africa lost its liberation fighters not only within its borders: the two stones donated by other countries remind us that we lost our heroes and heroines – both those we know about and the unknowns who simply disappeared – outside South Africa as a result of the “dirty work” carried out by the Apartheid forces of the time.

We are therefore reminded of the stark realities of the past so that we can tell ourselves and the generations to come that these things will never happen again. We are called upon to stand together, just like the eleven stones that make up *Isivivane*, as one nation that has undergone a great many hardships in its past and has no wish to go back to the past. *Isivivane*, therefore, will stand there as a lasting monument for all South Africans. This symbol brings back into the present the memory of what once happened in our country, that there was once a time when we were all at each other’s throat, but that, today, we can now come together to remember and celebrate the history of our country together. Places such as Freedom Park are necessary to prevent us from forgetting where we came from and where we are going. *Isivivane* allows us to think about the past but, at the same time, it

gives us hope for the future as a nation that has become reconciled and wants to move on from the memory of its past.

The most disturbing thing about the role that Freedom Park should play in nation-building and reconciliation, is that it is not accessible to the ordinary man/woman in the street. For example, anybody living in Limpopo or the Eastern Cape and who belongs to the poorer sections of South African society is extremely unlikely to be able to visit Freedom Park and participate in this experience of memory-making. Although we are told that the Trust tries to bring people to Freedom Park from time to time, this in itself will never ensure that the majority of our people get to visit this site and become part and parcel of the nation-building. Only those that can afford to travel, the economically viable and the elite, will end up representing the masses of our people – people who cannot afford the transport and the entry fee (that may soon be introduced). Sadly, then, *Isivivane* as a symbol of the struggle and reconciliation will end up being a tourist attraction rather than a symbol of a country's attempt to bring its different peoples together. People who had nothing to do with the struggle will be more likely to get the opportunity to celebrate our fallen heroes/heroines. This symbol, without any doubt, if one understands the cultural interpretation connected to it, could go a long way in enabling the nation to remember where it comes from, where it is now, and where it is headed in the future.

The greatest challenge of Freedom Park is the extent to which the Park will capture memories of the past inclusively, without discriminating on the basis of race or political affiliation. The inscription of names on the wall of remembrance, *isikhumbuto*, will pose another challenge as to who qualifies to be enlisted on the wall. The inclusion criteria will make or break the reconciliation sought if not handled with extreme care.

We wish to end up with a quotation from Patricia Davison (1998:147): "The conceptual frameworks that order collections and underpin exhibitions also mirror dominant forms of knowledge. Change may occur imperceptibly but at certain moments, as in South Africa, it becomes programmatic."

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Preserving oral histories through learning: an educational perspective

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Oral history is an essential means of preserving the experiences of the past for the youth or the younger generation. Also, as the years go by, more and more uses are found for oral history. More and more people are increasingly using oral history to recollect what was and has been known and, in some cases, lost over the years. In this way, oral history is being used to pass on knowledge and wisdom to the new generations (Dyer 2002). A similar viewpoint is expressed by Collins (S.a.), who states:

... we are preserving people's stories so that hundred years from now, people will be able to pick our book and read all about the valley. Things will change around here, but the stories will always be there.

The core thesis of this paper is that education is an important means of preserving and recollecting information in order to save it for generations to come. In the South African context, the paper will explore the new educational measures put in place by the South African government to encourage the preservation of oral and cultural histories in the new curriculum. In this paper, appropriate examples will be given and discussed, thus giving a whole new perspective to how oral and cultural histories can be preserved through educational policies such as the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) (with a particular focus on Arts and Culture).

In view of the context described above, in this paper I will discuss the different educational methods used to preserve oral and cultural histories in schools. A critique of these methods will also be provided. Furthermore, the paper will focus on the role of education in preserving oral histories and cultures. The argument and discussion will be presented in view of the contributions made by two well-known education scholars: Freire and Vygotsky. To begin with, it is important to make the point that oral history has been part of human history ever since people could talk. Indeed, Chapman (2003:17) claims that it has been linked to the late Stone Age. In support of Chapman (2003:17), Russell (S.a.) states that oral history is as old as antiquity itself. It was the first type of history in pre-literate societies. Humans transmitted their history and culture by word of mouth, by reciting poems, and by telling

stories. People's legends and stories are orally passed down through the generations as younger members of a society learn the narratives from the elders (Hunner, Villa & Staski). Classical examples are those of the *Iliad*, an epic poem of Homer describing the conquest of Troy, passed down as oral history from *circa* the 8th century BCE, until it was recorded in writing by Pisistratus (6th century BCE). And the Old Testament was originally a collection of folklore which, eventually, was put together in the collection of books we know today. The New Testament Gospels were created by several different, original, authors whose slightly differing versions were based on oral tradition. In short, the Bible is almost entirely based on people's oral history.

Oral history also involves in-depth interviewing and recording of a person's life experiences (Oral History Society). Russell (S.a.) states that historians have always had recourse to interviews. Elders are interviewed in order to obtain insights about their experiences and reflections of certain situations, especially with a view to teaching and educating the youth about past events. A major advantage of oral history is that it helps to explore a person's ancestors, one's family of origin and life experiences from childhood to the present, and examines as much as possible the joys and sorrows, the success and failures, and the everyday occurrences of that person's life (Hunner et al.). In the same vein, Gee (1991:4) in Cobley (2001:2) agrees that it is true that people tell stories about life histories.

These stories must be protected from diminishment and preserved for the future so that they can never be forgotten. Given that they are part of everyone's oral history, they are partly responsible for bridging the generation gap (Travers 2003:8). They remind the youth of past events that may continue to be relevant. This information must be presented in such a way that it helps its listeners to develop and helps to educate them about a specific issue of interest.

Oral history as a preservation instrument

The nation's cultural memory is threatened unless we choose the most proven preservation strategy. Given the important factors and definitions of oral history referred to in the previous section, oral history should obviously be regarded and used as a way of preserving the histories and cultures of peoples and communities.

Oral history is defined by most historians as interviewing participants or experts in a particular subject or issue and thus preserving their judge-

ments and recollections. Oral history materials range from sound and video recordings, transcribed interviews, interview notes and memoranda supplements, although it should be noted that there are official written records on the transcripts. Oral history materials contain information not normally preserved in official documents. It is therefore important to note that oral history preserves, from beginning to end, interviews and individuals' interpretations or recollections of past events. Contemporary oral history involves recording or transcribing eyewitness accounts of historical events.

We want to preserve our elders' memories and the cultures that have nurtured us as human beings; in our eagerness to look forward to the future, we should not forget our origins and our histories. Russell (S.a.) emphasises that oral historians document the past by preserving insights not found in printed sources. Oral history helps us to remember who we are and where we come from and thus help us to know where we are going. The only way we can make sure this happens is through education. We need to educate the young generation so that they are familiar with their origins, cultures and histories.

Oral history and education

As explained earlier, it is important that we highlight the ideas of credible scholars on the role of education in society. This is a crucial factor that will enable oral history to be translated into a useful instrument in education. It is therefore important at this stage to focus on the contributions of the Brazilian educator and theorist Paulo Freire and the Russian social scientist Lev Vygotsky. Both these scholars have written about re-thinking the way education should be conveyed to those who are taught, and their work forms an important part of current teacher instruction in the United States, in most parts of the world, and in contemporary South Africa. Their work thus has an important bearing on the preservation of oral history.

In his work, the late Paulo Freire talked about a teacher-student dichotomy, and came close to insisting that it should be completely abolished. It is hard to imagine how this would happen, because there must be an interaction between the teacher and the student. What Freire suggests is that we should think in terms of a teacher-student and student-teacher; in other words, a teacher who learns and a learner who teaches. This takes us back to Freire's well-known attack on the "banking" concept of education, in which a student is viewed as an empty "account" that has to be filled by a teacher. Instead, the teacher must recognise that the learner does not come to the class empty;

he or she must be given the opportunity to be an active learner. We should put aside Rousseau's notion of the child as a *tabula rasa*.

In the "banking" approach to teaching, the teacher is the only source of knowledge, and he or she dispenses this knowledge to students much as a bank teller gives out money to customers. There is no discussion of where the knowledge comes from, why it is important, how it relates to students' lives, or what it will be used for in the future. The students are simply expected to memorise the knowledge given to them, and then give it back in a form of a test or an examination. This was certainly the case with the old education system in South Africa, especially the Bantu Education system. In such a system, emphasis is placed on the ability to memorise certain facts, with little attention given to whether or not the knowledge will be retained for future use. While this method may be useful for certain tasks in teaching, it does not lend itself to building the skills which students can use throughout their lives (Hunner et al.:S.a.).

Given the shortcomings of this system, Freire went on to propose what he called "critical teaching". In this method, students are invited to join a discussion about a certain topic in order to better understand it. They are not expected to simply memorise material, but to look at how it pertains to everyday life. They are expected to challenge the teacher in a constructive manner, to invite the instructor to connect the course material with the world they know and in which they live. In so doing, the students bear the responsibility of telling the teacher about their world, thus in a real sense becoming teachers themselves and, importantly, becoming involved in their own teaching and learning – in this scenario, the teacher facilitates. In this back-and-forth discourse and exchange of ideas, students and the teacher form a group in which the instructor acts as a guide, a guide who points the way, but who does not necessarily explain how to get there.

The teacher must recognise the validity of students' everyday experiences and the skills they bring to the class. On their part, students must recognise that the teacher is not some kind of supervisor who is there to keep them quiet and in their seats, but rather to acknowledge him or her as someone trying to give them tools which will be useful for the future. As is the case in oral history, mutual respect and trust are essential in passing on knowledge from one generation to the next.

In Freire's approach, the teacher becomes a facilitator, the traditional class becomes a cultural loop, the emphasis shifts from lectures to problem-posing and solving strategies, and the content, previously removed from the learners' experience, becomes relevant to the group. The starting point of any educational process according to Freire, therefore, is not the world of the teacher, but the world of the learner. He also suggested that a critical analysis

of reality could start with a critical reading and reformulating of the official curriculum. In his work, Freire pointed out that teachers and students alike tend to consider the curriculum as something given, a neutral content to be transmitted, and he claimed that neither student nor teacher understands that education is a political act. The more teachers and students challenge this naive perspective, the easier it becomes to engage in a critical analysis of social reality. In a similar vein, Vygotsky declares that true learning happens through social interaction. That is, one best acquires knowledge through talking with friends, relatives, neighbours and other teachers. Vygotsky also believes that it is important to start with what we know in order to be able to reach out and successfully acquire new knowledge. This is called the "zone of proximal development", which means that the world we know, the everyday experiences that we have, form a solid foundation for building new ideas and new perspectives on the world. Vygotsky's ideas influenced what we refer to as a "social constructivist" approach to education (Goldfarb 2001:11).

Vygotsky believes that cultural inheritance is carried in the meanings of artefacts and practices. Resources of knowledge and skill brought to a situation depend upon the past participation of the individual within the culture. Resources depend on culture and the stage of human development reached (Goldfarb 2001).

Vygotsky also makes the point that knowledge within a discipline is important, but solving problems that encourage students to go beyond their current skill and knowledge level is of most importance. By implication, new knowledge can be built. According to Vygotsky, education should help us to act to improve our human situation. He adds that, because teaching is an effective means of educating, it should be based on the next stage of the child's development rather than on the current stage of development. The instructor therefore needs to have a knowledge of child development. He or she must also provide educational materials and content which go beyond the child's current capabilities. The teacher's role is not that of simplifying the content, but of providing unfamiliar content and the setting for learners to step from their current level to a higher level of understanding (Goldfarb 2001:15).

Both Freire and Vygotsky emphasised the fact that learners must be given the opportunity to be involved and participate in their own learning. They agree that the learner's experiences, capabilities and prior knowledge are all crucial in an educational setting. If, therefore, our curriculum does not recognise this fact, then we have failed in our efforts to create a good and productive education system. If learners are not given the opportunity to

participate and become actively involved in their own learning, we have also failed to develop critical learners.

The curriculum versus the preservation of oral history

The work of Paulo Freire and Lev Vygotsky has unquestionably made a huge contribution to education as it is practised today. School curricula must be formulated in such a way that the learner's experiences, prior knowledge and level of development is recognised and acknowledged. If oral history is to be practised in schools, this means that learners should be given the opportunity to reflect on their own experiences. As Freire suggests, they should be challenged to fend for themselves and acquire information and be actively involved in their own teaching and learning.

In short, the curriculum must give learners the opportunity to be active and education must not make the mistake of treating the learner as a *tabula rasa*; nor should education base itself on the banking concept. This section of the paper looks at the South African curriculum in view of the need to preserve oral history.

In South Africa, Outcomes Based Education (OBE), which was implemented after 1994, reflected and incorporated the ideas of Paulo Freire and Lev Vygotsky. In this curriculum, the teacher is seen as a facilitator. Learners are expected to be critical thinkers and contribute to their education through exploring, adventuring, solving problems and making decisions, all with the assistance of the teacher, who acts as a guardian of learning. To develop and enrich their minds, learners are encouraged to acquire knowledge and learning through society, by talking to other people, and by interacting with other people at different levels. Most importantly, they are expected to collect stories and experiences and be able to present them practically in the form of drama, dance, music and visual arts. (This is what is envisaged in the new RNCS, specifically in the learning area of Arts and Culture.) Schools are expected to incorporate such activities and to include them in their extramural activities in order to develop and recognise all the cultures within the school environment.

The above is an example of active participation in education through the use of oral history. What learners learn can be performed in reality today as a way of representing the past. In the case of oral history, students are challenged to talk to people, ask questions and to critically think and analyse what is narrated to them.

While the curriculum allows learners the opportunity to be actively involved in their learning, the schools themselves face certain challenges in this regard. In multicultural schools in particular, the teachers have to deal with learners from different racial and cultural backgrounds. In such schools, it is probable that a dominant culture will receive more attention and get promoted at the expense of other cultures. For the most part, teachers are not

trained to deal with diversity, multiculturalism and issues of inclusivity. For instance, a white teacher who teaches a multicultural class might only be familiar with and understand European culture. This teacher will, in all probability, promote this culture in his/her class without giving enough attention and consideration to other cultures that are represented in that class.

For oral history to work in schools, therefore, several important factors need to be in place. First, the teacher responsible needs to be enthusiastic about the incorporation of oral history into the curriculum. Ideally, the teacher should have some training in oral history and in multiculturalism and diversity – this will enable him or her not only to recognise, but also to acknowledge, the presence of all the cultures in his/her classroom. The RNCS envisions teachers who are qualified, competent, dedicated and caring and who will be able to fulfil various roles in their teaching (RNCS 2002:9).

Oral history and the RNCS

There are eight learning areas in the RNCS: Languages, Mathematics, Natural Sciences, Technology, Social Sciences, Arts and Culture, Life Orientation and Economic and Management Sciences. These learning areas are formulated in such a way that they promote a relationship between human rights, a healthy environment and social justice, these being the basic principles on which are built the visions and values of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996. In particular, the RNCS attempts to be sensitive to issues of poverty, inequality, race, gender, age, disability and to challenges such as HIV/AIDS.

This section will be based on the background described above, with particular focus on the *Arts and Culture* learning area. As stated in the RNCS (2002: 11), there are critical outcomes that the learners are expected to achieve. These are:

- Identify and solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking.
- Work effectively with others as members of a team, group, organisation and community.
- Organise and manage themselves and their activities responsibly and effectively.
- Collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information.
- Communicate effectively using visual, symbolic and/or language skills in various modes.

- Use Science and Technology effectively and critically, showing responsibility towards the environment and the health of others.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation.

These critical outcomes reflect the ideas of both Paulo Freire and Lev Vygotsky. According to this curriculum, learners are expected to participate in their learning by being able (for instance) to identify and solve problems and make decisions using their powers of critical and creative thinking. These outcomes encourage and recognise orality and oral history in schools in that learners are expected to be able to collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information. Learners are also expected to be able to communicate effectively using visual, symbolic and/or language skills in various educational modes.

The Arts and Culture learning area, in particular, covers a broad spectrum of South African arts and cultural practices. According to the RNCS (2002: 25), within this learning area, learners are encouraged to

- move from being passive inheritors of culture to being active participants
- reflect on art, performances and cultural events
- identify the connections between art work and culture
- understand the geographical, economical and social context in which Arts and Culture emerge
- identify the connections between art work and culture
- understand the geographical, economic and social context in which Arts and Culture emerge
- identify the links between practice, power and cultural dominance
- analyse the effects of time on Arts and Culture
- understand how the arts express, extend and challenge culture in a unique way

These above expectations show again how learners are encouraged to participate in their education. They are expected to be active and not passive, to reflect and analyse so that they understand their worldview.

Given this, there are outcomes that are outlined in the RNCS that further stress this point and, indeed, take it further. These outcomes specifically emphasise the need to implement oral history in the curriculum.

These outcomes are as follows:

Creating, interpreting and presenting

The learner is able to create, interpret and present work in each of the art forms.

Reflecting

The learner is able to reflect critically on artistic and cultural processes, products and styles in the past and present context.

Participating and collaborating

The learner is able to demonstrate personal and interpersonal skills through individual and group participation in arts and culture activities.

Expressing and communicating

The learner is able to analyse and use multiple forms of communication and expressions in Arts and Culture.

Oral history is about communicating with other people in order to acquire information from the past that will help with the development of the future. Learners in *Arts and Culture* are also expected to participate and collaborate with other people using their personal and interpersonal skills and, in the case of oral history, to have the ability to interview people, to engage in interpersonal conversations and use good communication skills to obtain information. In schools, this involves not only talking to people, but being able to interpret and present oral history in practice through different art forms (dance, drama, music and the visual arts) and also as part of the extra-mural curricula that are practised in schools (e.g. cultural evenings and/or days). Learners are thus encouraged to obtain information about the past and to preserve the past by practising it and by making sure it remains known to other people of other cultures (i.e. by performing it).

Conclusion

This paper discussed how education can be used as an important means of preserving and recollecting oral and cultural histories. The argument and

discussion were presented in the light of the contributions made to education by both Paulo Freire and Lev Vygotsky.

The paper further explored the new educational measures put in place by the South African government to encourage the preservation of oral and cultural histories in the new curriculum. Appropriate examples were given and discussed, thus giving a new perspective on how oral and cultural histories can be preserved through educational policy, with an emphasis on the RNCS and a particular focus on the *Arts and Culture* learning area. The specific, critical and expected outcomes of the learning area were highlighted and explained accordingly and this article shows the important role played by education in preserving oral and cultural histories. Different educational methods used to preserve oral and cultural histories in schools were stated and a brief critique of these methods was presented.

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**Through the limits:
trauma, memory and Rwandan refugees
in post-apartheid Cape Town**

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Over a period of 100 days, from April to July 1994, between 500 000 to 850 000 Rwandans (mainly Tutsis and moderate Hutus) were murdered in the most efficient mass killings since the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.¹ The machete was the most common weapon used in these labour-intensive, "intimate killings" that were carried out by extremist Hutu groups, who killed proportionately five times faster than the Nazis did during the Holocaust (Mamdani 2001). When the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) took state power in July 1994 and stopped the genocide, more than 2 million people fled to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Tanzania, Burundi and several other countries across the globe (Malkki 1996). In a painful moment of historical irony, while the Rwandan genocide was unfolding in April 1994, South Africa was having its first post-apartheid democratic elections. While exact numbers are unclear, during the post-genocide period one to two thousand Rwandans found refuge in Cape Town and more in other South African cities.²

An early warning is necessary. This article presents graphic stories about extremely violent events. My intention is not to sensationalise but to record how Rwandan refugees remember, narrate and cope with memories laced with post-traumatic legacies.³ I will explore two intersecting themes: how we can interpret memories of "limit experiences" of genocidal violence in Rwanda, and how we can interpret vulnerable refugee existence within the

¹ The estimated number of people killed varies from just over 500 000 by Alison des Forges (1999) to the RPF government estimate of 1 million. Most academic sources cite figures of between 500 000 and 850 000 (Prunier 1995).

² The Cape Town Refugee Forum estimates two to three thousand, and the Legal Aid refugee clinic at UCT estimates one to two thousand. This is a small group compared with the Nigerian and Congolese migrant groups, which run into tens of thousands. After Johannesburg, Cape Town is the second largest South African city and has a population of approximately 3.5 million.

³ Created by an event(s) or contexts, the term "trauma" refers to the rupturing of an individual's sense of internal and external worlds, and leaves post-traumatic legacies such as dissociation, depression and hypersensitivity (BenEzer 1999).

racially constructed "liminal spaces" of post-apartheid Cape Town.⁴ As Rwandan refugees remember and live at the limits, so we, as academic researchers, need to confront the implications of working at the limits of our knowledge and emotional tolerance. I therefore provide neither closed nor redemptive conclusions, but describe my conceptual and emotional "working through" of popular memories.⁵

Dogs feature as an unusual example of working through these different limits. The excess and lack of dogs figure vividly in my memories. As fears over crime increased in the middle and working class areas of post-apartheid South African cities, so did the number of dogs. Dogs are a relatively cheap and effective means of protecting your property. In contrast, when I visited Rwanda in both 2003 and 2004, I was struck by the absence of dogs.⁶ Our Rwandan hosts explained that one of the initial tasks of the Rwandan Patriotic Army in post-genocide Rwanda was to kill all dogs. The dogs were hungry because their owners were either dead or on the run as refugees. To survive, the dogs fed on the bodies of those killed in the genocide. Back in South Africa, dogs loudly martial the limit-setting boundaries between rich and poor, citizen and foreigner, private and public.

This article commences with a brief description of the context for the Rwandan genocide and then describes my difficulties in gaining research access to refugee networks and the legitimate fears of the refugees. I then present a selection of oral history narratives about events during the genocide and the ways these refugee respondents name these events. I shall also interpret memories shaped by trauma, and ponder the conceptual limits of "trauma theories" (Hodgkin & Radstone 2003). Finally, I shall discuss the invisibility and visibility of refugees living within the racialised spaces of post-apartheid Cape Town. Rwandan refugees find it less difficult to settle in the predominantly white, historically older suburbs and business areas close to main

⁴ Dominic La Capra conceptualised the term "limit experiences" (2001; 2004) as experiences that are usually but not necessarily produced by "limit events", which shatter or puncture the boundaries of the victim's conceptual, linguistic and psychological frameworks of comprehension.

⁵ I am using the notion in a fairly broad sense here, but note La Capra's rigorous treatment of Freud's notions of "working through" and "acting out" the psychic residues of one's past. These are useful tools to understand how research informants and researcher's "navigate" transference and counter-transference in the fieldwork setting.

⁶ In 2003 I was part of an evaluation team whose job it was to assist the Aegis Trust (an NGO) in their efforts to record testimonies at the *gacaca* courts, and to build an audio-visual archive. *Gacaca* ("on the grass") is a legal process directed to attaining forms of justice and reconciliation amongst survivors and perpetrators. In 2004, I was a consultant for DFID Rwanda on an educational project that was designed to promote peace and reconciliation through school curriculum transformation and heritage education work at the emerging genocide memorial centres.

roads. Refugees are more likely to face direct xenophobia from black African, mainly working class, South Africans. It is not that white South Africans are necessarily less xenophobic, but that refugees are “invisible” to them. Paradoxically, “invisibility” provides some protection for refugees. But, like all marginalised groups, Rwandan refugees still desire recognition, understanding and consistent support.

Context to the Rwandan genocide

The Rwandan genocide was historically produced by colonial and post-colonial events, but in an attempt to understand the impact of these socio-economic and political dynamics, the pre-colonial period cannot be ignored. In the dishing-out of colonial territories to European powers at the Berlin conference of 1885, Rwanda was given to Germany, but the first white explorer had only arrived in Rwanda in 1894. In the aftermath of World War I, the League of Nations gave trusteeship over Rwanda to Belgium (in 1926). Rwanda remained a Belgian colony until 1962, when Rwanda and Burundi became fully independent. In contextualising Rwanda in general and the genocide more specifically, it is essential to locate events within the interlocking colonial and post-colonial regional histories of Burundi, Uganda, Northern Tanzania and the DRC (Mamdani 2001). By 1994, the Rwandan population consisted of approximately 85% Hutus and 14% Tutsis and less than 1% of Twa in a population of 8 million.⁷ Given that both Hutus and Tutsis share the same language (i.e. *Kinyarwanda*) and have similar religions and customs, it is reasonable to ask why there has been so much “ethnic tension” between these two groups.

In pre-colonial Rwanda, most conflicts tended to be between clans, and rarely across ethnic boundaries (Newbury & Newbury 1999). Under Belgian rule, the Tutsi dominated kingdom was politically reinforced, as were richer Tutsi cattle-owning households (compared with the poorer Hutu farmers). While both Hutus and Tutsis were peasant farmers and cattle owners, the colonial manipulation and linking of ethnicity to cattle ownership was significant. The Belgian colonists implemented the use of identity cards stipulating ethnic designation. A crude measure used by the Belgian authorities in the 1930s was to determine that those with ten or more cattle were Tutsi and those with less than ten cattle were Hutu. This key feature of the colonial period has been strongly asserted by the current RPF government as

⁷ Estimates vary considerably. According to Prunier and others, the official government statistics before 1994 tended to under-count Tutsis (for political reasons).

an historical explanation, but academic views on the significance of this differ (Pottier 2002). However, whatever one's analysis of the cattle ownership issue, the predominance of wealth, in cattle, land and cash, became concentrated amongst Tutsis during the colonial period. These resource disparities have been described as either manifesting "class" (Pottier 2002) or "caste" (Kapuschinski 2001) differences.⁸ During the anti-colonial uprisings of 1959, the Belgian administrators shifted allegiance to emerging Hutu political parties and, at the time of independence in 1962, it was Hutus who dominated the central organs of the state, but the colonial administrative systems and Tutsi/Hutu socio-economic hierarchies were left intact.

The 1st independent Rwandan Republic under President Kayibanda existed from 1962 to 1972, and the 2nd Republic began when President Habyarimana came to power through a coup. The 2nd Republic existed from 1972 to 1994. Both regimes were Hutu dominated and primarily autocratic, and experienced varying degrees of multiparty activity, especially during the 2nd Republic. President Habyarimana steered a flourishing economy in the 1970s and 1980s, but the crash of global coffee prices (the main export) in 1989 dealt a severe blow to the country's wealth. In the following year, the invasion of the RPF from Southern Uganda into Northeast Rwanda marked the beginning of the civil war, which destabilised the country until mid-1994. The RPF emerged out of the Rwandan refugee camps in Southern Uganda. It consisted of refugees who had been displaced by various atrocities and the discriminatory practices of the Tutsis in Rwanda (since the 1959 revolution).

Other significant, unresolved factors that run through Rwandan history are citizenship and land. These relate to the thousands of Rwandans who had been living in Northern Tanzania and the Eastern DRC for generations. For example, massacres in the Eastern DRC during the 1994 to 2003 period cannot be reduced to ethnic factors. The work of Mamdani and Pottier demonstrates how these conflicts go back decades. The primary origins are the arbitrary drawing of colonial boundaries, and the Mobutu (i.e. Zaire) regime's refusal to grant citizenship to the *Banyumelenge*, who have lived in the Eastern DRC since the 19th century. Unresolved citizenship issues are compounded by over-population and the scarcity of arable and grazing land in Rwanda. I cannot do justice to this complex regional context, but Mamdani succinctly hones in on central issues (2001:14):

⁸ I will not even begin to list the plethora of journalistic accounts that reduce the Rwandan situation to a "tribal war" with "primordial origins". For a more nuanced journalistic account, see Gourevitch (1998).

To understand the logic of genocide ... it is necessary to think through the political world that colonialism set into motion. This was the world of the settler and the native, a world organized around a binary preoccupation that was compelling as it was confining. It is in this context that Tutsi, a group with a privileged position before colonialism, got constructed as a privileged *alien settler* presence, first by the great nativist revolution of 1959, and then by Hutu Power ... It was genocide by those who saw themselves as sons – and daughters – of the soil, and their mission as one of clearing the soil of a threatening *alien* presence.

In the post-colonial period, racist and ethnocentric discourses flourished. For example, Tutsis were constructed as *inyenzi* (cockroaches) and "foreigners" from Ethiopia who, by implication, did not have claims to authentic citizenship in Rwanda. This discourse has a further racist twist that identifies Tutsis as the descendents of white people through the biblical "Ham" (Taylor 1999; Mamdani 2001). A common chant during the genocide was that the *inyenzi* should be "dealt with" and thrown back into the river, so that they can return to Ethiopia. These potent, popular myths were central to an extreme form of "ethnic absolutism" articulated by "Hutu Power" propagandists who emerged as a powerful faction within the ruling party in the years preceding the genocide.⁹ As Taylor puts it, "By casting Hutu as 'slow-witted' Bantus and Tutsi as 'quick-witted' Hamite invaders, Hamitism has contributed to the recurrent violence in Central Africa and has impeded attempts to reconcile the two groups" (Taylor 1999:55). A central tool for disseminating Hutu Power's absolutist ideas in the months preceding, and during, the genocide was the radio station: *Radio des Mille Collines* (One Thousand Hills Free Radio). This radio station warned listeners that a "big event" would happen on 6 April 1994 and that they must be ready to participate in "the work of chopping down the tall trees" (i.e. killing Tutsis).¹⁰

During 1993 to 1994, President Habyarimana was engaged in peace talks with the RPF, and after signing the Arusha peace accords in Tanzania, he flew back to Rwanda on the evening of 6 April 1994. As his plane approached the runway of Kigali Airport, it was shot down with RPG rocket

⁹ Gilroy's notion of "ethnic absolutism" refers to "a reductive, essentialist understanding of ethnic and nationalist difference" that separates, subjugates and in some cases justifies the slaughter of people in the service of absolute constructions of cultural identity. See Malkki's (1995) use of Gilroy and Gilroy (1993).

¹⁰ *Why did they kill their neighbors?*, 1998. [Motion picture, documentary]. Japan Broadcasting Corporation.

launchers. Within the hour, roadblocks were set up across Kigali and the murders began. The organised way in which extremists took control of the transitional government and the immediate killing of moderate Hutus suggest that the President's plane was shot down by extremists. The coup and unfolding genocide was not a spontaneous explosion, but a carefully planned, conspiratorial operation (Dallaire 2003; Melvern 2004). Hutu Power extremists mainly operated from within the Rwandan army and the youth militias known as the *Interhamwe*. Nevertheless, the question remains: why did so many ordinary Hutus participate in the genocide? In responding to this question, we must not lapse into primordial or mystical explanations about "evil", but critically analyse the agency of the perpetrators. Mamdani provides complex historical analyses of the *popular agency* of Rwandans who participated, some willing, some coerced, in the genocidal killings (2001). This mass participation of ordinary Hutus in the violence evokes the suspicious shadow of "all" Hutus "potentially" being perpetrators. This suspicion is also perceived and felt by the predominantly Hutu Rwandan refugees who now live in South Africa.

Research access to refugees

Rwandan refugees in South African cities have, in most cases, spent several months or even years in refugee camps either in the Congo (especially at Goma) and Tanzania (especially at Ngara). Life in the camps is usually followed by unsettling attempts to settle in various countries such as Tanzania, Kenya, Zambia and Mozambique, before these refugees ultimately arrive in South Africa. Displacement is at the heart of refugee experiences and memories. A dominant sense of social being that emerges from this displacement is a lack of trust.

From its inception the experience of a refugee puts trust on trial. The refugee mistrusts and is mistrusted. In a profound sense, one becomes a refugee even before fleeing the society in which one lives and continues to be a refugee even after one receives asylum in a new place among a new people (Daniel & Knudsen 1995:1).

Gaining research access to Rwandan refugee networks in Cape Town was characterised by a greater suspiciousness on the part of research respondents that I had ever before experienced. Nevertheless, during 2004 to 2005, I spent

twelve hours interviewing five men and two women. While the selection was not my choice, all the interviewees identified themselves as Hutu, but at least two had mixed-ancestry and prioritised their national identity over ethnicity. The overwhelming majority of Rwandan refugees in Cape Town, it seems, are defined as Hutu. As a result of the repeated refusals of many potential interviewees, I sensed the deep fears and anxieties that these refugees live with. Their most immediate fear is of the RPF government in Rwanda.

... if you go to Rwanda today and come back tomorrow, then some people they will never talk to you again, they say “you’re a spy”, that’s why some people don’t like to speak about our story. You working for the government because that’s our culture that’s how we are ... everyone is scary, I don’t know what we can do to change, you lucky, if you find anyone to talk to you or to say something to you... they say, “you want to take my story, you go to the government, and the government come and pick me up”, that’s the problem. They don’t believe you are professor doing research, no, no, they don’t believe it, it’s trust we don’t trust each other, from our country (Mr C.M.).

This interviewee perceptively points to the lack of trust between Rwandan refugees themselves and their suspiciousness of South Africans. There are several reasons for this. In addition to the unsettling experiences of displacement, most Rwandan refugees in South African cities have a “temporary” legal status, and many are in the country illegally. Many speak Kinyarwanda and French, and a smattering of English, which makes everyday interactions difficult in a multi-lingual, but predominantly Anglophone, South Africa.¹¹ As refugees, they are often unable to secure legal employment and consequently they predominantly work in very low paying casual forms of labour, as car guards and cleaners, and are exposed to the harsh socio-economic circumstances that such work inevitably entails. The in-between space of visibility and invisibility, which I will discuss later, also fuels refugees’ fears and anxieties.

In this uncertain social location, withdrawal is a common method of protecting the self and the family, and the local refugee

¹¹ However, even though Rwanda was a Francophone colony, amongst middle-class Rwandans (especially those who are exile returnees) there is a high frequency of English speakers. Amongst Rwandan refugees in South Africa, if they have had higher education training, the possibility of finding fluent English speakers is reasonably high.

networks they rely on for material and emotional support. This tendency to withdraw is also rooted in the fact that most of these Rwandan refugees have to live with the constant burden of the emotional legacies of the civil war and genocide. This often translates into emotional introversion on the part of the refugees. In addition, all the refugees I spoke to had spent long periods in various refugee camps, and these camps were always described in very negative terms. Furthermore, as Malkki (she worked in Tanzanian camps) puts it (1996:386):

... refugees suffer from a peculiar kind of speechlessness in the face of the national and international organizations whose object of care and control they are. Their accounts are disqualified almost a priori, while the languages of refugee relief, policy science and “development” claim the production of authoritative narratives about the refugees.

It is quite conceivable that the Rwandan refugees in Cape Town also feared that I would again render them silent or fail to really listen or understand what they had to say. Given the proliferation of fears that dominate the lives of refugees and consequently the site of research fieldwork, access is likely to remain difficult. There is no Rwandan refugee community in the cohesive sense of this term, a community that can be accessed through the typical research “gatekeeper”. Instead, what I confronted in Cape Town was a myriad of very small Rwandan refugee networks. Some are dominated by young men, and others are formed around fragmented family groups. These Rwandan networks are loosely structured, but some, especially those that are grouped around supportive churches, are becoming socially cohesive. My best hope for gaining access to more interviewees is through such churches, but this is a slow process that involves “building trust” in a fearful, uncertain context.

Through the limits: memories of Rwanda 1994

Is it possible to comprehend the killing of hundreds of thousands of people? The easy answer is “no”. The difficult answer is “yes” and means that one has to face the descent into what Hannah Arendt described as the “banality of evil”. While I suspect the answers do lie within “the banal”, I consider the notion “evil” to be myth-laden and emotionally avoidant. As an oral historian

listening to the anguish within these testimonies, I believe we cannot give up on trying to push through the limits of our empathy and understanding. We need to be open to what La Capra has called “empathic unsettlement” (2001; 2004). This empathic tool is crucial to understanding “limit experiences” which create a division between the “then and there” of the violent past, and the “here and now” of listening audiences (Kurasawa 2002). And yet in the moments when memories of traumatic events are evoked within survivors, these events are often experienced as happening here and now (i.e. it is *as if* the traumatic past event is being relived). These different manifestations of and links between trauma *and* memory need to be listened to by the researcher and should obviously evoke the researcher’s empathy. They should not be approached as an external “infection” of the individual, but as a subjective reconstruction of experiences, memories and fantasies of violent “limit events” (Hodgkin & Radstone 2003). For the interviewees, then, it takes considerable courage to verbally narrate private memories laced with trauma and which involve constructing a public representation for listeners, readers and other observers:

... trauma brings about a dissociation of affect and representation: one disorientingly feels what one cannot represent; one numbingly represents what one cannot feel. Working through trauma involves the effort to articulate or rearticulate affect and representation in a manner that may never transcend, but may to *some* viable extent counteract, a re-enactment, or acting out, of that disabling dissociation (la Capra 2001:42).

Many of the interviewees were “numb” during their narration. Others were frequently unsettled by the interwoven mental imagery and emotions of their memories, which they had to “work” to put into words for me, the interviewer.

On the night of 6 April 1994, a mixture of fears and even hopes of a post-civil war peace were prevalent in Kigali. The assassination of the President was experienced by most as a sudden shock, quickly followed by terror. Those resident in Kigali on that night remember:

We saw the flames of the plane. My mom said, “That could be the President’s plane.” We switched on the radio and heard it was ... After two hours we heard screaming of people, that’s how we remember that day (Ms J.N.).

We were scared, our President is dead. Outside we see the people, everyone is killing. We don't know what to do, that was very bad ... You know guys around here are killing Tutsi people ... Once we inside the house, we heard the voice, "Here, here kill him, kill him", we see someone running, the people running, they catch him, I don't know ... (Mr C.M.).

One interviewee, who was visiting a friend in a Kigali suburb close to the airport, heard the explosion and feared the worst. A central impression from all the interviews is the mass chaos that hit Kigali and the outlying regions. The interviewees from Kibungo (South-East) and Cynangugu (South-West) heard it on the radio.

My parents did close me in the compound ... Tutsis my friends just come to my house, to hide and think my family can save them. There were three guys my family did manage to hide them and when they (i.e. soldiers) suspect that this family is hiding Tutsis ... and the next day, it's too much, I start to say that and get a headache, and then that family, OK the mother and father of those ladies, they say "we don't want to be killed" ... "we are going outside, just to try and protect our children". One of my brothers, come and put them in a car, they stop my brother and took the parents of the children and I heard that they threw them in the toilet of the primary school (Mr J.C.).

While being from a Hutu family, this refugee feared the *Interhamwe* because, in the initial instances of violence, his family aided Tutsi victims; also, this man came from Kibungo where there was a high density of Tutsis. When the RPF took control of the Kibungo district in early May, thousands of Hutus fled for fear of being killed. As one refugee put it, "...if we are not moving, we are dying" (Mr J.B.). Or, as Ms C.N. experienced on the night of 6 April (she lived in Kigali, but was in Kibungo on a business trip):

That night they asked everybody not to move ... You had to stay where you were, you know it's terrible (crying) it's the first time I talk about these things ... So when the shooting was getting closer and closer then they told us we have to go, have to flee ... I thought they were dead (her family). I went to Tanzania and lived in a refugee camp for two years. I tried to, the International Red Cross was trying to put people in contact

with others ... One day they surprised me, I had a message back.

Reliable information about family, friends and the political situation during the genocide was scarce, and heightened the terror experienced. For women there was the added fear of rape and gang rape, which was widespread during the genocide (Africa Rights 2004). This was an extremely volatile context where, for people on the ground, their experiences were influenced by "mass hysteria ran unchecked" (Dallaire 1998: 78). As Mr J.C. moved towards Gitarama (in the centre of Rwanda), he narrowly avoided death:

I was sitting in the back of that *bakkie* (i.e. truck) and some Hutus come and start hitting me and saying I come from Kibungo and they considered Kibungo as all RPF supporters. They just hit me and are going to kill me and take the belt and chain me with the belt and that person comes out and says why you going to kill this child, this child is with me.

Killings at roadblocks were ubiquitous. In some cases, people were killed because their identity document indicated "Tutsi" or, in other cases (as above), people came from Tutsi-dominated areas. Being away from your town/village was also extremely dangerous.

I was not in my province and in that time if you were not in your province where people know you, you can die any time because people don't know you and think you are the other side, RPF supporter or government supporter, confusing, so everybody was trying to get home (Mr J.B.).

In other cases, such as Mr. H.B., his identity book said "Hutu", but he was nevertheless attacked because he was recognised as being from a mixed family (i.e. father/Hutu and mother/Tutsi). He was caught at a roadblock and repeatedly stabbed and beaten.

I was left dying, the money taken, my father say no he will not leave his son behind, he came back, pick me up. He was beaten and had to take the family away. I was collected like any other dead body to be buried on the mass grave in the cemetery. That's when one lady from the Red Cross identifies me ... She was there (at a mass grave) instructing people to put some disinfectant for the smell. She was a Tutsi by the way. She was

forced to do that. She saved me. She saw the fingers moving and say that this guy is alive. They (i.e. *Interhamwe*) say “You shut up, you are next.” She sneaked my body under the seat (of a minibus) that is how I survived.

Being able to “prove” your “pure ethnicity” and political affiliations was critical to surviving. The genocidal obsession with ethnic purity is reminiscent of the Holocaust and the apartheid regime in South Africa. Notions of ethnic purity were bizarrely influenced by myth-laden stereotypes of how Tutsis (i.e. tall and slender) and Hutus (i.e. short and stocky) were supposed to look (physically). In addition, the genocide was also a time where petty rivalries were settled. In the midst of the “mindless” slaughter driven by puritanical vigour, the thousands of families who lived across the rigidly enforced, ethnic absolutist constructions of identity boundaries suffered excruciating agonies.

Those, especially Tutsis, pay the price. Those who stick on Hutu and marry Tutsi, they pay the price as well. They died, called moderate Hutus. So there are mixed up ones and we pay our price, because you don’t know where you belong. You have one side they don’t trust you, you have the other side, they don’t trust you. There are those children or families who chose to be on one side. There is children who choose to kill their fathers ... So my father prevented that happening in our household and said I cannot change who I am, I cannot change that I love your mum and she loved me and we ended up having seven children together and build many things together. I cannot say, “Son that is your mum, but she is a Tutsi, kill her. So if it is your mum who has to die, I must die first so she die after.” My mum the same way. So that is how we maintain that. But there is a price to pay for that (Mr H.B.).

This interviewee survived near-death experiences, years in camps, death threats, drug addiction and has nevertheless rebuilt his life and now provides emotional and material support to other Rwandan refugees in Cape Town. All the above testimonies, especially those of an individual such as Mr H.B., who has a “mixed” parentage, problematise the drawing of crude binaries between “Tutsi victim” and “Hutu perpetrator”. Furthermore, in the midst of socio-economic and political collapse, civil war and genocide, all interviewees suffered the loss of family, friends, possessions and their previous livelihoods. While “losses” refer to absence, these losses have “remains” (Eng &

Kazanjian 2003). It is not only the physical remains of those that died, such as the mass graves of nameless thousands, but also the emotional remains that are evoked and re-evoked by the memories of the survivors. As researchers, we cannot label these “remains” as mechanical manifestations of “trauma”. More subtlety is required in understanding the conscious and unconscious links between “traumatic event” and “memory”.¹²

Various authors have criticised “trauma theories” for locating their analysis in the crude search for “traumatic secrets” or for ignoring the significant function of childhood fantasies and language formation in shaping how people experience and remember traumatic events in later life (Hodgkin & Radstone 2003). Furthermore, drawing on Freud, Douglass and Vogler argue that while “... many subjects experience the same event, only some may develop a trauma linked to it, and that trauma can be experienced when the event did not happen...” (2003:11). For example, while several interviewees were direct eyewitnesses to limit events, several were not, but it is especially within the context of “mass hysteria” that imagining or fantasising violent events may also have a traumatic impact.

Yet to understand the specificity of the traumatic impact of the Rwandan genocide requires deeper understanding of the society that preceded the genocide. More research needs to be done on the cultural and social patterns of how Rwandans, across generations and social cleavages, are socialised or expected to cope with painful, disappointing and traumatic events. The boundary lines that define what is or is not a “limit experience” are not universal, and need to be understood in dynamic historical and psychological terms. With this in view, the role of popular myths and legends in shaping “limit experiences” need to be traced within specific, historicised cultural formations. For example, the seemingly hegemonic acceptance of the Hamitic hypothesis amongst thousands of Hutu and Tutsi Rwandans has, according to Taylor, inflicted “enduring psychological damage” in the Great Lakes region (1999:92). Tracing the historical evolution and impact of Hamitic myths will help to analyse constructions of the “self” and “other” in Rwandan families, schools, churches and broader society. Furthermore, how these myths were not only a contributory factor to the Rwandan genocide, but set the “limits” that defined peoples’ “limit experiences” and how violence was experienced, processed and remembered is significant. The concepts used to understand these “limit experiences” cannot be assumed to be

¹² I am here referring to “historical trauma”, which relates to specific datable “limit events”, but must also acknowledge “structural trauma” that pertains to conditions or contexts that also traumatise people and that also raises fundamental questions about the formation of “self” and “other” (La Capra 2001).

operating on a universal, potentially Eurocentric, standard of what is or what is not “traumatic”. In this vein, then, it might astound some to discover that many Rwandan refugees challenge whether the events which occurred during the period 6 April to 17 July 1994 in Rwanda can be termed “genocide”.

Naming the “genocide”

The naming and the narration of the genocide are keys to understanding post-genocide politics. Campbell argues that, “Genocide is a first order threat to today’s embryonic global village ...” (2001: 26). As the killings spread in Rwanda during April 1994, hesitant UN and US administrations described the events as “acts of genocide” (thereby avoiding their moral and legal responsibility) or as a “civil war” or “double genocide” (term used by French authorities, thereby imposing an inappropriate moral equivalence) (Power 2002). From the perspective of the present: the RPF government, international governments, researchers and aid professionals believe that it is obvious that a *genocide* occurred in Rwanda because of the orchestrated intent to exterminate people defined as Tutsis and all those that opposed the implementation of genocidal plans. Prunier (1995) argues that we need to distinguish between the deaths at the frontline of the civil war, and the planned, mass slaughter of civilians behind the front.¹³ However, the narratives of refugees in Cape Town reveal how the killings that happened during those 100 days are named in conflicting ways.

For me that word genocide, it was done because RPF want to get power, but there is no genocide. Because people have killed each other, the Tutsi killed the Hutu and the Hutu killed the Tutsi. I don’t know the meaning of the word genocide ... why I can say genocide is to put that colour of killing to the government (i.e. previous regime), so the government cannot come back anymore ... That’s why you can see many, many people now, the majority of the Rwandan outside the country (Mr J.P.).

¹³ I think Prunier’s distinction is correct, but it is complicated by the fact that “the frontline” was not clear-cut, since battles happened from the Northeast and in around Kigali during the genocide. It is also complicated by the reprisals committed by RPF soldiers (but not condoned by the RPF government).

They supposed to revise that word because if you see the RPF side, many people died ...The government side they kill the people. Maybe what I saw is there is, the government side was really not organised, they killed people here and there, which is really a problem. Maybe the RPF was more strategically organised they know who to kill for what. So the term genocide is very extreme (Mr J.B.).

I don't describe it as genocide, because that means one ethnic being killed. But many people got killed, I almost got killed, I am not a Tutsi ... So many people got killed because they were rich and had money or maybe had enemies who didn't like them or jealousy (Ms C.N.).

These interviewees accept the previous Rwandan government's version of events, but it is also crucial to remember the chaos that reigned in Rwanda at the time. For three of these interviewees, the RPF was the aggressor that invaded in 1990 and brought instability to the country, and the deaths of 1994 were perceived as a new phase of civil war killings. In contrast, this interviewee said:

Some people deny it, that there was a genocide, and that's where people misunderstand and say it was just a war ... after they shot the President's airplane it's a member of the government who instructed Hutu to kill the Tutsis. I confirm that. Also another part, which I didn't like to see, also some Hutus killed by RPF ... That was my fear that the RPF would finish off all Hutus (Mr J.C.).

Even though he narrowly missed being killed by the *Interhamwe*, this interviewee joined other refugees who fled from the advancing RPF. Government troops and *Interhamwe* militia, who wanted to move their support base outside of the country, encouraged the refugee exodus. This created a complex dilemma for aid organisations in the post-genocide period (and continues to do so) because of the mixture of armed militants and refugees who either did or did not participate in the genocide, but who required humanitarian assistance inside the refugee camps.

All seven interviewees saw themselves as "victims". For the three interviewees who did not name the 1994 events as "genocide", the colonial and post-colonial past of the "Hutus" being oppressed by the Tutsis was central to their construction of victimhood. Of the four who termed the events

of 1994 “genocide”, the events during and after the genocide were central to how they understood their victimhood and struggles for survival. But two of these four interviewees were children during the genocide and their relationship to these events are marked by a diminished or different sense of responsibility for what was or not done during those chaotic times. The ways in which the events of 1994 are named and constructed is also highly significant at a macro-level: on the one hand, the RPF government “imagines” the new nation-state around “the genocide”, and manipulates international guilt to garner much-needed development aid (Pottier 2002). On the other hand, the RPF government repeatedly demands that refugees must return and those that do not are unfortunately “demonised” with the label of being perpetrators of, or complicit in, genocidal violence.

Visibility and invisibility in post-apartheid Cape Town

Globalisation promises greater international cooperation and prosperity, but the 20th and 21st centuries reveal that the First World powers only intervene in regional or internal conflicts when there is a direct, self-interest involved (Power 2002). Post-apartheid Cape Town, and other South African cities, have been compelled to be more “open” to global trade and the city has consequently witnessed the steady decline of its main source of manufacturing employment (the clothing and textile industries). However, there is a saviour for the city’s economic woes: global tourism! On the one hand, the city of Cape Town “welcomes” foreign tourists and has emerged as one of the major tourist destinations on the globe. On the other hand, “unwelcome” refugees eke out an existence in the marginalised spaces of the city. For Rwandan refugees, then, why choose South Africa as one’s destination? This is an especially pertinent question, given the unpleasant stories that circulate back into the refugee camps. As one refugee puts it, “... we heard that black South Africans did not like foreigners, and white South Africans did not like blacks” (Ndereyimana 1999:47). But the in-between position that refugees have to navigate is more complex. As some refugees said:

I think South Africa is very interesting compared to Rwanda ...
The camps are a kind of stress itself. That’s why it’s not a good life. So in South Africa at least it’s free movement, relaxing situation for refugees (Mr J.B.).

I was living in a camp and the malaria was terrible. Every month you are sick, every single month ... I was just looking for a better life and try to go far away from Rwanda because I just wanted to put my past behind. Also to avoid the risk of being forced to go back against my will (Ms C.N.).

Many of course come to Cape Town to find secure employment. But I have encountered numerous African refugees who are trained teachers, engineers, administrators and so on, but they eke out an existence by being car guards, newspaper vendors or selling crafts in the streets. Also, at times, refugees choose Cape Town because they have a family member or friend here or they feel that:

Cape Town looks more secure and friendly, like when you compare it to other places like Johannesburg ... too much crimes also, I know in Cape Town there is crime also but you don't compare it to like Johannesburg also for security reasons much better be in Cape Town (Mr J.C.).

Many of the interviewees experienced xenophobic physical abuse and all have experienced the humiliation of xenophobic verbal statements.¹⁴ Xenophobia is most likely to be experienced inside the black township areas, and refugees therefore choose to live and work in the predominantly coloured or white areas of the city. The racialised spaces of the city are a visible legacy of the apartheid past.¹⁵

Very difficult, living in the township as a foreigner, rather in town (i.e. the older inner-city suburbs). Because in town you don't meet people who think too much about you being a foreigner, like *mkwere kwere* (derogatory words for "foreign outsiders"), but when you go to township it's very difficult. Even when you go to small shops to get like bread, when you buy they say *mkwere kwere* and children on the streets saying that (Mr J.C.).

First I live in Guguletu (a black township). But there I move in the street and I arrested by the black guys ... they say I take their job, so the money in my pocket that take all and that time I was suffering. It was very bad and I just decide to leave that place and go to Parow (a white suburb), where I don't have a problem (Mr J.P.).

¹⁴ The South African Broadcasting Corporation, channel 3, television programme, *Special assignment*, exposed xenophobic and corrupt practices amongst South African police in Johannesburg (broadcast on 6 and 13 September 2005).

¹⁵ Under the apartheid government's Group Areas Act of 1950, every inch of space in South African urban and rural areas was "racially zoned". This law has been scrapped, but a pervasive legacy of the apartheid era is how most areas in South African remain racialised through the actions and perceptions of South Africans. These patterns are changing but this change is slow, especially in a city like Cape Town, where the impact of the Group Areas Act was especially destructive, not simply reinforcing pre-apartheid social distinctions, but forcibly removing communities and thereby "tearing apart" the social fabric of the culturally cosmopolitan pre-apartheid city of Cape Town (Field,2001).

For many interviewees, not having your "foreign" identity constantly noticed or scrutinised in the predominantly white spaces of the city gives them a sense of greater safety.

In the black area like Guguletu, Nyanga they will know immediately that you are a foreigner. Even if you don't talk, they will know which is not all right. That is the reason why all foreigners run away to areas of the coloured and white people ... They are not going to ask what you are going to eat? Why did you come? Where you come from? What kind of job you do... nobody ask your identity. They know you are black, maybe a Zulu or Sotho ... (Mr J.P.).

Paradoxes abound for refugees, who have an acute sensitivity to spatial origins, identity and visibility in South Africa and which echoes the issues they faced in Rwanda. The marginalisation they experience in Cape Town is painful, but they often find ways of forging an in-between niche between the racialised perceptions of South Africans. As one refugee ironically said, "I never have a problem with the white man because he doesn't care about you." It is not that white (and coloured) South Africans are necessarily less xenophobic. Rather, their responses are attributable, in some cases, to their racism towards black Africans, but it is probably more the case that most white South Africans remain blind or ignorant to the cultural and linguistic distinctions amongst black Africans, both local and foreign.

For refugees, then, the differing perceptions of white and black South Africans create liminal spaces, which are sharpened by a constant awareness of potential xenophobia or racism. On the one hand, the liminal positions of refugees are marked by the spatial boundaries of post-apartheid "group areas". On the other hand, and more significantly, these liminal spaces do not have spatial boundaries. Instead, this is an ambiguous liminal position defined by the seeing, not seeing and plethora of "outsider" constructions produced by the perceptions and actions of South Africans.¹⁶ As Malkki argues, refugees are "... liminal in the categorical order of nation-states ..." (1995:11). Given that South Africa is still a "young" democratic nation-state and post-apartheid cities are still undergoing changes means that the liminal positions of refugees are potentially more vulnerable, and are certainly more

¹⁶ There are echoes here of Homi Bhabha's work on the "in-between" spaces and narratives created by colonial and post-colonial negotiations of culture and identity, and these contestations are "incomplete" but vulnerable to "fixed" appropriations by different grand narratives (1994).

threatening to black, working class South Africans. The contestation of the South African nation-state is between “ethnic absolutist” constructions of African nationalism, with their xenophobic reactivity, counter posed to the more inclusive – anti-racist, anti-xenophobic and anti-sexist – imaginings of the nation-state. Put differently, are there new kinds of “apartheid” emerging in our cities: “... the question becomes: are we creating a system of global apartheid based on discrimination against migrants and refugees from poorer developing countries?” (Richmond 1994:208).

The city of Cape Town markets itself to First World tourists as the “Gateway to Africa”, but African immigrants and refugees enter through the city’s proverbial “backdoor” and live in these uncertain spaces defined by illegal or temporary immigrant status and the differing perceptions of South Africans. These refugees and transnational African migrants are impacting on Cape Town at a time when the city is grappling with ways to memorialise its colonial and apartheid past. But, by and large, these post-apartheid processes have excluded non-South Africans and primarily define memorialisation as an exclusive act of South African “nation-building”. The city government of Cape Town is appropriately arguing for transforming the city into “A Home for All”, but this is often only articulated or perceived as referring to increasing the inclusion of black South Africans into all spheres of the city’s social and political life. However, African refugees are bringing their life stories and collective memories of conflicts from across Africa into all South African cities. They pose the challenge that their stories be recognised and represented in the articulation of a post-apartheid identity for “the city”. This is not merely an inclusion/exclusion problem; it is a problem that requires a sensitive working through by refugees/immigrants *and South Africans* of the limit-setting relationships between insider/outsider, private/public and conscious/unconscious memories of traumatic events that have a repetitive presence in the present.

Postscript thoughts

There is no a-historical closure from the horrors of genocide or apartheid and I have no redemptive message for the future. This article has provided narrative glimpses into the vulnerable but resilient lives of Rwandan refugees. While oral histories are, by definition, the construction of “micro-histories”, these are never separate from broader social and even global forces. In Rwanda the lack of global intervention in the genocide shamefully shaped the number of deaths, injuries and displaced lives that occurred

(Dallaire 2003). In South Africa, a country that has, since 1994, rapidly re-entered the global economy, foreign tourists are desirable, foreign African refugees are not. Tourists arrive with foreign currency and stay for short periods; refugees arrive with problems and might stay for years. South African government and non-governmental organisations need to combat xenophobia amongst South Africans who often – and amazingly – cannot see the links between the discourses of xenophobia and the racism of apartheid. We also need to empathically understand the vulnerabilities of black, working class communities, who now compete for jobs (or, at least, that’s the perception) with trans-national migrants and refugees from across the African continent.

When I visited sites of genocide in Rwanda, people exhorted us to make sure that others remember the genocide. In a small way, this paper is a response to that request, but I have raised more questions than I can answer. Most troubling for me are the shadows under which the second and third generations of Rwandans, be they in or outside Rwanda, constantly live. How these generations – many are orphans – retain, interpret and act on, what Hirsch called “post-memory”, might be significant in terms of what happens to Rwanda and the Great Lakes Region.

Post-memory, then, signals the shift from narrative based on direct memory to cultural productions, which explore what it means to live under the shadow of past wars. It is constantly negotiating events and experiences, which are outside personal experience, but which nevertheless shape subjectivity of the “outsiders” in profound ways (Ashplant, Dawson & Roper 2000: 47).

“The outsiders” are the children and their children, but what of refugee children, who are “outsiders” in multiple ways? Will they someday rise to avenge past events or current responses to past atrocities? How many of these children will grow up hearing and naming these events, especially the genocide of 1994, in different ways? The “new” limits of what can and cannot be spoken created through cross-generational post-memories and the shadows of dead or traumatised parents pose complex challenges for Rwanda. Much will depend on how these can be worked through with sensitive listening and empathic attunement, and the necessary educational and development strategies that are required for the reconstruction of Rwanda. The “place” or “displacement” of refugees and their children in or from this reconstruction process might be decisive in determining its success or failure. The RPF government demands that all Rwandan refugees must

return, and repeatedly insinuates that refugees were involved in the genocidal killings of 1994. The RPF's desire to be rid of the estimated 10 000 *Inter-hamwe* combatants who still operate from the forests of the Eastern DRC is understandable. However, its propaganda strategy of Othering refugees contradicts its laudable attempts at peace and reconciliation through the ongoing *gacaca* process. When I asked a refugee why the RPF government felt such an antipathy towards them, he perceptively said, "They fear us because they too were refugees" (Mr H.B.).

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**The Living Heritage Project:
using oral history as a tool to retrieve our living heritage**

Derek du Bruyn
Free State Provincial Archives

The purpose of this paper is to share our experiences of the progress made to date with the Living Heritage Project, to discuss the lessons learnt in the process and to examine the problems and challenges raised by this Project. The focus will be on the oral history part of the project. The project leader is Mr Derek du Bruyn assisted by Mr Tshitso Challa of the Free State Provincial Archives. A small display will accompany the presentation.

What is the Living Heritage Project?

Early in 2005, the Library and Archives Services Directorate of the Free State Department of Sport, Arts and Culture launched the Living Heritage Project as a community-based project. This project was born out of the success of heritage events and workshops presented in Free State towns during 2004. The idea was to develop the concept of *living heritage* further and to stimulate an interest in and awareness of oral history, community history, storytelling and local heroes among community members. The main aims of the Living Heritage Project are:

- To make local communities in the Free State aware of their unique living heritage as well as the history of their communities and local heroes/icons.
- To record and preserve previously unrecorded history by means of oral history.

In order to understand the Living Heritage Project, the concepts of *living heritage*, *community history* and *oral history* should also be understood. In the context of this project, *living heritage* may be defined as those intangible aspects of inherited culture that include oral history, oral traditions and expressions, popular memory and indigenous knowledge systems. *Community history* (also known as local history) is the history of the people of a specific town or community and how they themselves have shaped history.

Oral history may be defined as the recording of historically significant information and this include oral testimonies and oral traditions. In this project there is a special focus on oral history, because of its potential usefulness as a tool to effectively retrieve people's living heritage.

Why is the Living Heritage Project necessary?

It is common knowledge that, for political reasons, the previous dispensation neglected and ignored a major part of our communities' living heritage. As a result, community members themselves know very little about this heritage. The younger generation, in particular, is largely unaware of the importance of this living heritage and shows little interest in it. This Project aims to address this problem by creating an awareness of the value and importance of living heritage, oral history and local history in our communities. Today it is widely agreed that living heritage and indigenous knowledge should play a crucial role in transforming our society. It is also agreed that oral history needs to play a crucial role in achieving this.

How does the Living Heritage Project work?

During 2005, pilot projects were launched in five Free State towns in order to assess the feasibility of the Living Heritage Project. One town was identified in each of the five district municipalities. A library in each town was selected as the venue where the project was launched. In each of these towns the pilot projects were implemented as follows:

- *Consultation sessions* were held with the relevant stakeholders of the local communities and the purpose of the project was explained to these stakeholders.
- *Local heritage hero competitions* were held at the chosen library in each town in order to select a suitable living or deceased local hero. Community members could nominate any person whom they thought was a local hero and explain their reasons for choosing this person (their motivation).
- *Oral history projects* were launched in all five towns using field workers who were employed on contract basis. The purpose of these oral history projects was to interview community members about the

- history of the town and the community. Transcriptions of these interviews were then placed in the libraries for use by the community.
- *Local history corners* were put up in selected libraries. The corner is a permanent display that focuses on certain local heroes, oral history, community history, and information about the town's history.
 - *Heritage events* were held in each of the five towns during September 2005 to coincide with heritage month (September). The events included a prize-giving ceremony for the winners of the local heritage hero competition and for community members who wrote the best motivations on their entry forms. Oral history interviews were conducted with these local heroes. A separate programme for children, focusing on heritage activities such as storytelling and family history, also formed part of the event. It is worth mentioning that storytelling is a very effective way to teach children the value of oral history.

Building on the success of the pilot projects, the Living Heritage Project continues and it has now entered its second phase. We now aim to launch similar projects in each Free State town. We will implement these projects gradually and focus on a separate district municipality each year. Because the project is essentially a community-based project, the eventual success of the project is based on the participation of community members of all ages. In order to effectively facilitate the project, the local library workers in each town will launch the project with the assistance of the Steering Committee of the Living Heritage Project. The size and scope of each individual project will be determined by the library employees responsible for the project.

To help library employees implement their own projects, a "Heritage kit" was compiled as an instruction manual for the Living Heritage Project. The kit basically consists of the *Heritage kit manual* and *Oral history basics: training manual*. The *Heritage kit manual* contains practical information on how to implement and manage a Living Heritage Project at a local level by doing so in phases. It gives practical advice on how to make the project known among the community, how to get the community involved, and how to get and keep the project up and running. The manual also contains information on oral history, local history, living heritage, storytelling and includes a bibliography of available publications on the subjects mentioned. The *Oral history basics: training manual* is aimed, as its title suggests, at training community workers in the basics and essentials of oral history. It is compiled in such a way that library employees and even field workers will be able to use it as a training manual themselves. This manual primarily teaches how oral history can be used as a tool to retrieve living heritage. By using the

methodology of oral history, one gets access to sources of information that would otherwise have been inaccessible.

A holistic approach

For a community-based project such as the Living Heritage Project to be successful in the African context, it is essential that the approach adopted should be holistic. We therefore believe that the concept of living heritage cannot be separated from those of community history, storytelling and, above all, oral history. All these disciplines form an intertwined network of knowledge and skill that cannot be viewed in isolation. Our experience of the past two years has also shown that communities prefer an approach that emphasises the bigger picture. Such an approach makes it easier to keep the project focused and thus keep the community involved.

Conclusion

Although the Living Heritage Project is still in its infancy, we have learnt from experience that it is possible to successfully launch such a project in any community, provided that the following steps be taken:

1. Clearly define the project and its aims.
2. Balance objectives with resources available.
3. Communicate the project and its aims clearly to the community before you start.
4. Identify all stakeholders in the community and get them involved.
5. Inform the community of what you plan to do and distribute information leaflets. Organise a community briefing session and explain concepts such as living heritage, oral history etc.
6. Identify the living heritage of the community and understand how the community perceives it.
7. Involve community leaders and local historians.
8. Encourage the formation of a local Heritage Committee.
9. Identify possible field workers to help with the project, especially with the oral history interviews.
10. Think about various practical ways of implementing the project, such as the following:
 - Local history corner
 - Story hours and storytelling sessions
 - Documented history

11. Organise community events, such as a heritage event, where community members can tell stories to other members of the community and showcase their local talent (e.g. song and dance). Also involve pupils from local schools.

In conclusion, it is absolutely essential that the community perceives a project like the Living Heritage Project as something that will be to their benefit and that they themselves take ownership of it. The value of such a project is that, in the process, many community members become aware of something they never really realised was valuable, namely, their living heritage. Using oral history as a tool to retrieve that heritage, they also become aware of the power of the spoken word as a means to give substance to that heritage.

**Capturing a fading national memory:
the role of oral historians in Zimbabwe**

Catherine Moyo
National Archives of Zimbabwe

The theme “Capturing a fading national memory” is likely to remain in our minds for some time, because it successfully encompasses the work of the National Archives. It is a multifaceted theme, and one that caters for the oral histories the National Archives are collecting; the theme also specifically refers to the role of the oral historian.

Capturing a fading national memory involves recording the oral traditions and oral histories before both are effectively deleted. The title itself refers to an ongoing oral history project, but it has a real bearing on our daily collecting since the oral history collections were first gathered together in 1968. The title is appropriate because it takes into account the importance of capturing oral histories and traditions before both become extinct. The theme centres on oral history, which seems to fade into extinction since so many forces exclude it from the very outset.

According to Mazrui:

Archival tradition is a cultural preoccupation with keeping records, a tradition of capturing the past through the preserved documentation. It is sad to note that archival tradition was so weak in Africa such that the scientific tradition became weak, our languages atrophied and so did the philosophical tradition with ghastly consequences for our people across the centuries.¹

The archival tradition was weak because most indigenous African cultures refuse to regard the past as a bygone or the present as transient. The ancestors are still with us and we ourselves will be ancestors. If the present is not transient, why bother to record it?²

¹ Mazrui, A.A. 1983. Archives and the New World Order. *7th Conference Proceedings of the East and Central African Regional Branch of International Council of Archives*. Harare.,(p. 143)

² Mazrui, A.A. 1986. *The Africans: a triple heritage*. London: BBC. (p.78).

These remarks demonstrate the fact that our history has been negated by ourselves in such a way that it is difficult to redress the situation unless some sort of action is taken at once, and taken as a matter of priority. Capturing a fading memory has revealed the existence of an unprecedented array of testimonies and is emerging as an important source of research resource.

In my presentation, I shall focus on the role of the oral historian. Before one enters the terrain of the oral historian, one needs to note that there is a background to any story. The role of the oral historian cannot be dissociated from the oral history collections in the unit. The mandate of the oral historian stems directly from the mission statement of the National Archives: “to acquire, preserve and provide public access to Zimbabwean documentation, in whatever format, in an efficient and economic manner”. Guided by this mission statement, the oral historian has to devote his or her time to making sure that at least a part of that mission statement comes to fulfilment in reality.

It is vital that we note what has happened so that we can clear the dust and move forward. The following quotation gives some background to the work of the oral historian:

Whew! A lot of stuff went up in smoke in this country in the early 1980s [year of independence] A helluva lot. Salisbury was surrounded by a little cloud of black smoke – from all the army camps, government offices, police stations. And shredding too. The Special Branch shredders were working overtime. You've never seen so much paper in some of those police posts cartons of files, all being carted off to the incinerators and shredders. When the city incinerators were all full, they sent us off to the crematorium for more burning. If one asked what was destroyed the answer was very clear: the past. Records of interrogations, army set-ups and strategies, profiles of people, personal records – guys involved in this, guys involved in that. TV films and radio tapes too. All the propaganda. Anything that had to do with the starting with the cease-fire and then reaching a kind of fever-pitch at the time of elections.³

³ An ex-Rhodesian army soldier quoted in Federikse, J. 1982. *None but ourselves: masses vs media in the making of Zimbabwe*. Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House (p.89). See also Ranger, T. 1982. Approaching Zimbabwe's colonial history through the district study. *Conference on Zimbabwe History*, University of Zimbabwe, 29.

It is imperative to analyse this statement so that our deductions of what oral history and oral traditions stand for are correct and true. These sentiments, expressed by an ex-Rhodesian soldier, are just the tip of the iceberg of what happened and bring in another element, namely, that indigenous knowledge was simply not catered for at the time. The story of the oral history unit of the National Archives is directly linked to what was, and what was not, collected. Mazikana pointed out the inadequacy of official history as contained in the documents of archival institutions.⁴ A good example of this is the case of Terence Ranger, who wrote of the African revolts of 1893 and 1896-1897.⁵ Some of the documents to which Ranger had access disappeared soon after his book was published: the colonial regime evidently were shocked that the documents they themselves had created could be used to write a history of resistance. Given, then, that these documents vanished, the only way in which the history of resistance can be reconstructed is through oral traditions and oral history.

Oral history in Zimbabwe

One cannot run away from the fact that any government in place is likely to push the agenda of what it believes in. The oral historian in the colonial era was forced by circumstances to collect the history of the colonial government in order to augment the country's archival sources. Today, the oral historian is faced with the mammoth task of trying to interview people on a wide array of topics so that oral history will be represented – at least to some extent – in the collections we have now. The National Archives of Zimbabwe are also engrossed in a national project to collect as much information as possible on the liberation struggle. The incompleteness of the archival records in Zimbabwe is further compounded by the fact that those documents which do remain are written from the standpoint of the settler, who took very little account of the viewpoint or wellbeing of the indigenous people.

Our oral history programme at the National Archives of Zimbabwe started in 1968. At the time, the programme was the preserve of Europeans and was conducted in English only. Indigenous languages (Shona and Ndebele) began in 1977 and 1981 respectively. According to Dawson Munjeri, "by 1980 the time of the independence, the natural and cultural heritage of the then Rhodesia was a preserve of the white minority. The

⁴ Mazikana, P. 1987. Archives and oral history: overcoming a lack of resources. *Information Development* 3/1, January: 37.

⁵ Ranger, T. 1979. *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia, 1896-97*. 2nd edition. London: Heinemann.

majority of the black populace was ignored or discouraged from enjoying their heritage".⁶ In the eyes of the white man, the African had no heritage.

Oral history complements and supplements the written record. According to Jan Vansina, "traditions occupy a special place among various historical sources".⁷ He further elaborated that "oral History can be used by those who do not have documented information and can be used for documenting information".⁸ Besides being incomplete, information contained in the public archives and historical manuscripts is Eurocentric. Anthropologists and historians studied the life of the indigenous people through the spectacles of their own culture and these "spectacles" were obviously an extremely unreliable tool.

"We knew nothing of their past history, who they were or where they came from", a Native Commissioner admitted in the late nineteenth century. "Although many of the Native commissioners had a working knowledge of their language, none of us really understood the people or could follow their line of thought. We were inclined to look down on them as a downtrodden race who were grateful to the white man for protection."⁹ It is through these explicit statements that we endeavour to work towards reconstructing oral history and putting the record straight.

Oral history can be a means of transforming both the content and the purpose of history. It can be used to change the focus of history itself and open up new areas of inquiry; it can break down barriers between teachers and students, between generations and the world outside and can help to inform the writing of history. Oral history can give back to the people their own words and make these words a central place in the annals of history.

It is from this basis that the oral historian in the Zimbabwean context operates. The inadequacy of the official record as contained in the documents of archival institutions cannot be overstated; time and space constraints make it impossible for me to pursue this matter here.

The task of the oral historian

The role of the oral historian is included in his or her job description:

⁶ Munjeri, D. 1982. Oral history: the archival approach in Zimbabwe. *Conference on Zimbabwe History*. University of Zimbabwe, 33.

⁷ Vansina, J. 1965. *Oral tradition: a study in historical methodology*. Chicago: Aldine. (p. 88)

⁸ Vansina 1965.

⁹ See Frederiks, *None but ourselves*, 91. ("Wiri" Edwards, Native Commissioner, Murehwa District, Rhodesia, c. 1890.)

- Undertaking research to identify individuals or groups who are undocumented or under documented in existing archival sources. Approaching potential interviewees, doing background research on the lives and times of those who agree to be interviewed in order to be able to compile a list of questions that future researchers can use to elicit valuable information.
- Arrange and carry out the tape-recorded interviews themselves, collecting manuscripts from interviewees if possible, negotiating, and signing copyright agreements.
- Passing on tape-recorded interview to be typed for the purpose of draft transcription.
- Checking tapes against draft and transcripts, editing both and posting carbon copies to interviewees for checking.
- Final checking of returned transcripts, compiling of introductory information, and passing on checked drafts to stenographers for the typing up of final versions.
- Proofreading of final draft, indexing and filing it, passing on of index sheets to stenographers for typing onto cards, passing on the duplicate transcript to interviewees.
- Checking and filing of newly typed index cards.
- Transferring processed cassettes to audio-visual archives unit for copying to reel tape for permanent preservation.
- Dealing with queries, questionnaires, etc. about issues relating to oral history.
- Keeping up to date with oral history projects and methodology by reading appropriate literature and attending meetings, seminars and workshops.
- Care and maintenance of equipment, movable assets and supplies; informing the Chief Archivist (Technical) of need to replace old equipment/purchase new equipment.
- Annual stock-taking of the Oral History Unit's equipment and holdings.
- Digitising and computerising oral history interviews.
- Providing reference services.

The oral historian's main task is to do as many recordings as possible. He or she has to be familiar with the available written sources on the subjects to be discussed, and has to put some preparation effort into the questions that are going to be asked. The process starts with the oral historian doing a preliminary interview to ascertain the credibility of the interviewee before conducting a final interview.

There are other tasks we no longer do for a number of reasons. For example, we no longer translate transcribed interviews owing to our lack of human resources and the fact that doing this translating was extremely time-consuming. As it is, our collecting of oral history is being impeded because there is only one oral historian and the main job of the provincial archivists who assist in the collection programmes is, in fact, records management. In the restructuring phase of the National Archives, we are appealing to the powers that be to give us two more oral historians and a principal oral historian help us collect the oral history of Zimbabwe.

The oral historian has to be proactive if he or she intends to collect a significant amount of information. There is no policy governing the procedures for collecting oral history. Nor is there any code governing how interviews are to be conducted and collected. Instead, the choice of interviewees and the code of conduct are solely the decision and responsibility of the oral historian. The other guiding principle is the requests of our researchers who, in effect, give shape to what we do and do not collect. The major problem is that it is difficult to cover the whole country on one's own. As a result, we are currently losing a lot of history owing to human resource constraints. We need a quick remedy to curb this loss, otherwise our collections will remain small indeed. To date, we have collected oral history interviews on subjects ranging from chieftainship, land, the liberation struggle, and various agricultural methods that were practised before the advent of the white man.

Below is a table of the comparative output statistics showing the progress we have made so far.

	2003	2004	2005 to date	
Preliminary interviews conducted	10	205	28	280
Interviews conducted	15	186	23	250
Draft transcripts	15	15	4	4
Editing of transcripts	40	10	4	3
Checking of drafts against tapes	10	2	6	4
Transcripts sent for checking	–	–	–	–
Interviews fully processed	24	14	10	6
Donations received	2	–	–	–
Index cards prepared and	150	30	25	10

filled				
Transcripts transferred from flimsy to bond	40	20	34	80
Enquiries	–	–	2	6
Transcripts consulted	–	124	138	110

The interviews conducted were fairly distributed in terms of output from our oral history provincial units. Most of the interviews collected were those conducted as part of the oral history project. The collections centred on the first and second Chimurenga.

During the past three years, material on the following themes has been used by researchers:

- Land issues
- Farming
- Chieftainship
- Liberation struggle
- Politics
- Role of women
- Medicine
- Witchcraft
- Mining
- Urban migration

The oral historian is now faced with the mammoth task of interviewing and transcribing material on a variety of topics. The researchers who consult our materials are interested in a vast array of subjects. This, of course, encourages the oral historian to source out interviews as widely as possible.

Successes and challenges

The unit has managed to acquire recording equipment, and we use university students to help us do our recordings. To date, several recordings have been done by students and these students are certainly helping the unit to make an impact by the work they do.

In the past two years, we have been able to exhibit at the Harare Agricultural Show and the Trade Fair. This has given oral history a great boost and has given us some guidelines on how our oral history interviews should be conducted.

During the same period the National Archives faced the following constraints:

- Inadequate resources
- Human resource constraints
- Communication problems
- Lack of transport
- Inaccessibility
- Coordination
- Unsuitable methodology

The National Archives face the following challenges:

- Need to revise job descriptions to cater for electronic records.
- Need to embrace IT to keep up to date with new challenges.
- Need to design a code of ethics.
- Need for seminars/workshops. We need to organise ourselves so that we can arrange for local and regional workshops to take place.
- Need to resuscitate the Oral History Society – Oral Traditions Association of Zimbabwe (OTAZI).
- Publicity. We lack appropriate publicity mechanisms.
- Need for policy formulation.
- Outreach programmes.
- Copyright issues.
- Clear backlog.
- Transcribe collected interviews.
- Editing and creation of finding aids.
- Training.
- Transport.
- Communication.
- Lack of human resources.
- Fund raising.
- Geographical distribution.
- Interviewee distribution.

Today, the oral historian occupies a pivotal role in the remoulding of Zimbabwe's history. Unfortunately, conducting oral history interviews is an expensive business, but the solace is that we are collecting history that we will be our own. The authenticity of this type of collection can always be validated. It is high time that oral history is recognised in its own right as a source of authentic information and that it be allowed to stand on its own.

**Exploiting the traumatised:
a study of Zakes Mda's *She plays with the darkness***

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Although this paper is written from a literary point of view, the authors deem it to be of importance for a conference on oral history, since Mda “knows how to draw events and characters from lived history, deepening his narrative, amplifying characters and their motives, and imbuing events with serious significance” (Ndibe 2003:213). It is also a well-known fact that when Mda refers to historic facts, he is fastidious about portraying true historic facts. Courau (2004: 6) states:

Writing in a supplement to *The Daily News* celebrating the tenth anniversary of the 1994 democratic elections in South Africa, Nadine Gordimer considers the fundamental role that writers play in the formation and narration of national identity and history through literary expression. She draws distinctions between colonial and postcolonial versions of official history, and considers authors such as Zakes Mda the creators of our literature who have made South Africa's history of its people ‘from the inside’.

The aim of this article is two-pronged. Firstly, it will examine the way in which Mda deploys and juxtaposes traditional African notions and tenets such as *ubuntu* and caring for the weak and vulnerable against modern and Western systems of capitalism and individualism in *She plays with the darkness* (1995). Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, the article will endeavour to examine the interface between fiction and reality in the aforesaid narrative as Ngugi in Mapara (2003:25) expounds the fact that “literature does not grow in a vacuum; it is given impetus, shape, direction and even area of concern by the social, political and economic forces in a particular society”.

This paper focuses on its authors' conviction that a study of Mda's *She plays with the darkness* will reveal how post-apartheid South Africa has become a dog-eat-dog world while corruption and extortion were unheard of as the youth followed the instructions preserved the cultural norms presentation of folklore. These stories stressed the point that everybody pos-

sessed almost equally the same in terms of material wealth: fields of maize, chickens, cattle, and more importantly, *ubuntu*; these stories also make it clear that the sharing of goods was vigorously promoted. Even the mentally deranged would get their share of food from the chief's kraal without any argument. In contemporary South Africa, however, westernisation and capitalism has resulted in "every man for himself", and the majority of leaders concentrate on accumulating as much wealth and power as possible with little regard for their fellow countrymen who may well be living in greater poverty than they did in the era of colonialism and apartheid. This paper will examine the theme of greed and corruption by contrasting the lives of the two protagonists in this novel. The paradox between the virtually mythical sister, Dikosha, and her brother Radiseme, juxtaposes urbanised African lifestyles against traditional rural ones, but strongly criticises, among other customs, traditions that thwart the artistic talent and deny females equal access to advanced learning.

In the next section, we will provide some necessary background information about Zakes Mda and a brief plot outline to make the paper understandable to readers who have not yet read Mda's novels, including the novel under discussion. This will be followed by a discussion of Dikosha as an example of a traditional, rural but semi-mythological character. The next section will portray the exploitation of the traumatised by the patriarchy, while the final part will show the disastrous effects of the abuse of power by legal agents who, like scavengers, prey on the vulnerable in society by revealing the increasingly corrupt life and eventual downfall of the urbanised brother, Radisane. The paper will conclude by evaluating *She plays with the darkness* as an excellent example of Mda's clever employment of elements that, in western novels, would be classified as "magical realism" but which are, in this novel, used for the edification and upliftment of South Africa and Africa as a whole (as encapsulated in Mbeki's plans for an African Renaissance).

Background

Zakes Mda is the pseudonym of Prof Zanemvula Kizito Gatyeni Mda, well-known pre-apartheid dramatist, painter and filmmaker. He hails from Lesotho, which forms the backdrop of *She plays with the darkness*. *She plays with darkness* is his second novel, and this novel was published in 1995 a few months after his first novel (*Ways of dying*). Although *She plays with the darkness* has not received with the same critical acclaim as *Ways of dying*, which created quite a stir in literary circles, *She plays with the darkness* is a skilfully constructed novel that has served to reinforce Mda's position as a

leading post-apartheid South African novelist. Mda has proved himself as a prolific novelist by having had three more brilliant novels published since *She plays with the darkness*, namely *The heart of redness* (2000), *The madonna of excelsior* (2004), and *The whale caller* (2005).

Mda has lectured at the National University of Lesotho, Yale University, the University of Vermont, and the University of the Witwatersrand, and is an acclaimed speaker, both nationally and internationally. He currently lives in Johannesburg.

Mda has always been aware of the power of the word to give “a voice to the voiceless” (Mda 1994:4) by maintaining that we should (Mda 1994:4)

... wean ourselves from the liberal notion of ‘doing something’ for the people. Sustainable development is meaningful only if we ‘do something *with* the people ... Development is meaningful only if it allows for the empowerment of local communities ... to promote a spirit of self-reliance among the marginalized”.

The authors of this chapter thus concur with Margaret Mervis (1998:39) who claims that, in the new South Africa, Mda “becomes a writer of ‘Fiction for Development’ ... [who] draws on the narrative traditions of folklore ... [so] that the result can be read as a kind of magic realism”, especially to reveal the exploitation of the traumatized.

She plays with the darkness, like Mda’s earlier *Ways of dying*, is “set in an era that appears to belong in equal measure to the past, present, and future” (Farred 2000:184) and portrays the history of the Ha Samane twins, Dikosha and Radisene, against the political uncertainty of Lesotho during three different coups. One of the outstanding characteristics of this transitional novel is Mda’s skilful use of paradox, especially in the portrayal of the two protagonists.

The introduction to the novel immediately draws attention to the lives of the Basotho, and to their beliefs in magic and myth (Mda 1995:1):

Don’t be fooled by the sunshine in their faces. They are a sad people inside, tormented by the knowledge that one day the great mist will rise and suffocate them all to death. And no one can do anything about it. The mist has a mind of its own. It does what it wants to do when it wants to do it. No one can stop it. Even those who have the gift of controlling lightning

and of sending it to destroy their enemies are powerless against the mist.

Yet they conduct their lives in song and laughter, as if their world will live forever.

Exploiting traumatised individuals

The novel then focuses on Dikosha and stresses the derision with which she is treated because she is regarded as a spinster: “Her mother merely glanced at her, and continued to stir the pot of papa ... She had long given up hoping that Dikosha would one day participate in preparing the family meals. Dikosha’s talent for dancing and singing is then described, which contrasts with her habit of silence: “she broke the silence only when her twin brother, Radisene, visited from the lowlands” (Mda 1995:2). Mda continues the narrative by revealing that Dikosha is also scorned because she was conceived at a night dance when her brother Radisene was only four weeks old. This improper conduct has earned her mother the name of Mother-of-Twins. This serves as an example of the victimisation of the traumatised because even Dikosha’s mother, who was responsible for the unfortunate position in which her daughter found herself since birth, lacks the necessary insight to realise that it is she who is responsible for the derision her daughter has always suffered. The plot also highlights the differences between the brother, who has always been privileged because he is a male, and Dikosha, who is constantly derided – so much so that she eventually draws into herself completely. The paradox is completed when Radisene becomes corrupt and Dikoshi becomes virtually a complete recluse, but nevertheless serves her society by listening to the confessions of the village men. She thus helps to conserve tradition and “the humane existence of all that is human” (Mbeki 1998:243) – one of the fundamental principles of President Mbeki’s African Renaissance and a principle that differs radically from that which claims it is acceptable to exploit the traumatised and vulnerable.

Dikosha perhaps serves as the best example of what Johan Jacobs (2000:68) calls “idiosyncratic people”, that is, people who possess “complex (extra)-ordinary, individuality”:

Unlike the stereotyped figures in the liberationist stories of Sepamla, Mzamane and Tlali, the characters in Mda’s narrative, which relativises the actions of the rulers of Lesotho and of the apartheid state, are allowed their complex, and (extra)ordinary, individuality.

Jacobs thus underpins the idea that Dikosha is an embodiment of a figure in Basotho history, conserved through oral tradition. The name “Dikosha”, which literally means songs, is pertinent to the unfolding of events in the story.

In the novel, Dikosha is usually involved in singing and dancing, both of which are part of the rich cultural heritage of Africans. Although, later in her life, Dikosha isolates herself from community activities, she never abandons singing and dancing. It is through these activities that Mda wants to inform his readers that every culture has good attributes, attributes that must never be renounced if one wishes to lead a fulfilling existence. At the same time, Mda indirectly chastises and commends Dikosha’s behaviour. He criticises her for being aloof and uncaring about community issues. No man is an island. This seems to be Mda’s method of telling Africans in particular that they will find it extremely difficult to attain prosperity if they keep to themselves and discard *ubuntu*, a philosophy that exhorts them to be part of humanity. In the same vein, Mda praises Dikosha for doing things on her own, things that her community had deemed to be impossible. For example, Dikosha successfully grows cabbages which, in the past, had always imported into Lesotho from South Africa. Mda uses this as an example to encourage Africans to be as self-reliant as possible. Sitting back and staring at the horizon will never bring development to Africa. It is high time that Africans knuckle down and produce their some goods in order to generate income. They cannot always be dependent on foreign aid whose availability is contingent on the whims of foreign powers. Mda’s exhortation is eloquently echoed by Mbeki (2006a), when he comments:

It is up to all of us ... to build a winning nation, to do all the things that will ensure that the mountains and the hills of our country break forth into singing before all our people, and all the trees of the field clap their hands to applaud the people’s season of joy.

Mbeki’s appeal to the nation to earn an honest living is in sharp contrast to the actions of a large number of characters in the novel; these people are quite prepared to prey on the traumatized, as shown by the actions of Radisene and his cronies.

Exploitation as a result of patriarchy

The society in which the events narrated in *She plays with the darkness* occur is largely predicated on selfish, patriarchal rules. This is a society where masculinity is tantamount to wisdom, bravery, leadership, and ability, while femininity is said to represent immaturity and other negative characteristics. The Northern Sotho proverb, *tša etwa pele ke tsadi di wela ka leopeng* (women lack leadership skills) is illustrative of these fallacious beliefs. Unfortunately, these beliefs translate into unpleasant consequences, especially for the females in this society. This is why, despite her formidable intelligence, Dikosha is denied the chance, by a western Christian church, to further her studies, simply because she is a girl (Mda 1995:18-19):

What she detested was that they denied her the opportunity solely on the grounds that she was a girl, even though she was smarter than any boy in the history of that primary school.

From some of the events in the novel, it is clear that patriarchy cannot save Africa from the economic, political and social quagmire in which it finds itself. This is because, among other reasons,

[men] generally did not like to work in self-help projects, even at those times when they were not digging the white man's gold. When the farming season was over, they preferred to sit under trees, drinking beer and playing morabaraba. (1995:104)

In contrast, many women (as can be seen in the life of the Mother-of-Twins) are not individualistic in nature and instead would like to see their communities experiencing both economic and social upliftment:

I am working in this project not because I am starving, my child, but because I am building something for my community. When we finish the road even buses will be able to come to Ha Samane, and we are going to see more progress in our village.

This constructive thinking proves beyond any doubt that progress must not be held to ransom by negative, traditional values such as patriarchy. All African people, regardless of their sex or status, should view it as their fundamental

obligation to work for the well-being of their communities. Indeed, unless such a paradigm shift occurs, Mda warns, Africa will remain a continent plagued by conflict, backwardness, and poverty.

Ubuntu is an ancient African word, meaning “humanity to others”. The emphasis is on “I am what I am because of who we all are”. Others add that *ubuntu* “means humanity to others” (Ubuntu 2005) Archbishop Desmond Tutu (quoted in Ubuntu 2005) sums up the concept of *ubuntu* by pointing out that “a person with *ubuntu* is open and available to others, affirming others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she has a proper assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole ...”.

Examples of this humanist ideology abound in *She plays with the darkness*. For instance, Dikosha’s childlike behavioural traits espouse *ubuntu*. This is clear when she plays with other children and shares her snake meat with the boys, and the boys, in turn, share their potatoes with her (Mda 1995:1-6). In an African context, the significance of sharing cannot be overemphasised. Adults also find it necessary to share whatever little goods they have with their kin and neighbours, as Mother-of-Twins exemplifies (Mda 1995:7-9):

Ntate Hlong, may I leave this bag of cabbages here? I’ll come back with a donkey to fetch it.

Mother-of-Twins was also very happy to see her son, after almost a year. She was particularly happy about the bag of cabbage. She was going to share it with her friend and neighbour, Mother-of-the-Daughters.

Traditional African philosophy stipulates that food is meant to be shared. This is why, although Radisene was a complete stranger to her, the chieftainess regards it as only humane to offer Radisene breakfast (Mda 1995: 62):

Radisene woke up early the next morning. The chieftainess was already sweeping the clearing in front of her rondavels. He thanked her for her hospitality. “You cannot go without eating. It is a long road to Quthing, and then to Maseru,” she said.

It goes without saying that such gestures of hospitality and kindness, as reflected above, are no longer common. Africa’s humanist tradition is deeply opposed to contemporary behaviour, behaviour that is marked by selfishness,

stinginess and a complete lack of compassion. Today, the middle classes and the rich, who form a significant part of the populace, buy food in bulk and store it in large freezers for their personal consumption. What happens to the poverty-stricken majority is, they believe, none of their concern. At least some of this food ends up rotting and being thrown away – this, while underfed children roam the streets. There are large numbers of black economic empowerment (BEE) companies that are making substantial profits, yet these companies fail to give anything back to their communities. Such companies revel in accumulating as much wealth as possible and are indifferent to the poor, who are very often the people who make such wealth possible. It is heart-rending to observe indigent children and adults foraging for rotten food in dustbins while the ‘fat cats’ of our society drive past, blind to the suffering around them. A return to the constructive features of African tradition, such as *ubuntu*, could save Africa, Mda suggests. This state of affairs compelled Mbeki (2004) to warn people not to blindly embrace the ‘get rich at all costs’ syndrome, because this will surely spell doom, not only for South Africa, but for the world as a whole. In his own words, Mbeki proposes:

These circumstances suggest that perhaps the time has come for the emergence of a united movement of the peoples of the world that would come together to work for the creation of a new world order. This would respond to the urgent need to address the concerns and interests of the billions in our universe who are poor and marginalized, as are the same masses in our country who must be the principal focus of our efforts to build a caring and people-centred society.

Like Mbeki, Mda deliberately portrays scenes of unimagined hardship to prick our consciences, in the hope that these consciences will metamorphose and become alert to the claims of compassion and empathy.

Exploitation of the traumatised by legal or semi-legal professionals

Paradoxically, while *ubuntu* is a major feature in *She plays with the darkness*, events that are an antithesis of *ubuntu* also proliferate in the novel. The love of money is one of the greatest impediments to achieving prosperity for all in Africa. Money has changed inherently decent people such as Dr Joe Bale, A.C. Malibu, Trooper Motsohi, several widows, and the main character himself, Radisene, into ‘scavengers’ and ‘vultures’. This is not totally surprising, as Mbeki (2006b) elucidates:

With reference to this lecture, the central point made by [economic historian] Karl Polanyi is that the capitalist market destroys relations of kinship, neighbourhood, profession and creed, replacing these with the pursuit of personal wealth by citizens who, as he says, have become atomistic and individualistic. Thus every day and during every hour of our time beyond sleep, the demons embedded in our society that stalk us at every minute seem always to beckon each one of us towards a realizable dream and nightmare. With every passing second, they advise, with rhythmic and hypnotic regularity – get rich! get rich! get rich!

However understandable it may be, it is completely reprehensible that such characters (Dr Joe Bale, A.C Malibu, Trooper Motsohi, and Radisene) are able to abandon their morals and ethics purely for the sake of money and simply so that they can outdo each other when it comes to buying more expensive and bigger cars, and building bigger and bigger mansions. To such characters, money has become omnipotent, omnipresence, the lynchpin of their existence. In fact, money has become their god. The extract below describes the insidious way in which the love of money comes to dominate the lives of some human beings. (Mda 1995: 93):

As he walked to the China-eye, he decided that he would touch all bases. He would drive to the caked man's village and get his dependants to sign the papers. After all, they were going to the claimants if he died. Then he would come back to the hospital to check if he had died or not. If he had survived the operation, he would get him to sign as the claimant. He would have to return quickly, in case someone else came and cheated the man into signing. With any luck the fellow would die. But all the same, he could not take things for granted.

The scene as depicted above tallies with Mbeki's reading of capitalism when he states that "many in our society, having absorbed the value system of the capitalist market, have come to the conclusion that, for them, personal success and fulfilment means personal enrichment at all costs and the most theatrical and striking public display of that wealth" (Mbeki 2006b). Radisene and those like him forget that money thus accumulated may not always bring happiness because "the compromised nature of his cultural aspirations becomes evident when Dikosha refuses to enter the mansion and

continues to live in her rondavel, and Mother-of-Twins eventually withdraws into the kitchen, letting the rest of the building fall into neglect” (Jacobs, 2000:69).

The extract above roves that some people’s consciences have become numb and that the owners of these consciences are unable to distinguish between right and wrong. Motsohi seems to have forgotten that one “is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed” (Desmond Tutu in Ubuntu 2005). Mda thus makes a clarion call to all and sundry, especially leaders, to revive structures whose sole purpose would be to teach the citizenry acceptable ethics. If this does not happen, Africa will remain ‘the dark continent’. Concurring with Mda, Mbeki (2006b) proposes that “we must therefore strive to integrate into the national consciousness the value system contained in the world outlook described as *ubuntu*”. Perhaps the time has come to re-examine certain outdated African tenets (such as patriarchy).

The rape that Mother-of-the-Daughters suffers (an act perpetrated by Motsohi) is also inimical to *ubuntu*. Apart from the economic issues that Mda alludes to, he also shows that social issues cannot be shifted to the periphery. Traditionally, giving birth to a child confers on a woman greater respect. Mönnig (1967:98) confirms this when he remarks:

Among the *Africans* (our addition) the birth of a child is an event of great importance. Not only does it initiate a new member into the group, but ... it confers on the mother the status of parenthood which, for the *Africans* (our addition), is synonymous with attaining the full status of a woman.

Thus, failing to give birth to a child is, in traditional African society, tantamount to contributing to the extinction of human beings (Mbiti 1991:115). Given this social backdrop, Mother-of-the-Daughters is supposed to be highly respected because she has done her share in keeping the torch of life burning (Mbiti 1975:110). The fact that this mother has given birth to ten daughters should, in fact, have conferred upon her increased respect.

Moreover, the rape of a grandmother is nothing short of morally horrific. Of course, rape is never acceptable, but this particular rape is morally repulsive because Motsohi rapes his former mother-in-law. African tradition does and will not condone an act of such barbarity (Mda 1995:188):

The general feeling was that Motsohi deserved the death sentence, especially because he had raped his own mother-in-

law. According to custom it was taboo to touch your mother-in-law. You were not supposed to shake hands with her. What Motsosi had done was unheard of.

Lastly, the unsympathetic way in which the magistrate pronounces his verdict in the rape trial of Mother-of-the-Daughters is yet another indictment against patriarchy.

As I have mentioned, rape is a serious crime. But there are mitigating factors that have to be taken into consideration in this case. The victim is an experienced woman who was not a virgin at the time of the crime, and she therefore suffered no serious injury. She was drunk when the crime was committed. It is well known that drunken women sometimes invite such actions. I therefore sentence the accused to three months' imprisonment suspended for two years. (187-188).

The magistrate (a man) seems oblivious to the fact that all civilised people find rape to be a uniquely inhuman and despicable crime. In contrast, the magistrate seems to regard rape as of little importance; in fact, his words suggest that he thinks that women invite and even enjoy it. Needless to say, his judgement is seriously flawed because "the emotional after effects of rape include eating disorders, sleeping disorders, agoraphobia, depression, suicide attempts and sexual difficulties" (Rape Crisis n.d.). What males and other members of society who adopt the same view as that of the magistrate should realise that nothing ever justifies rape. In an interview with a law lecturer at the University of Limpopo, Adrian Anders, (27 October 2006) Anders affirmed that, at the time when the novel was written, females, especially in rural areas such as Ha Samane, were still regarded as being of so little value that such a verdict was indeed possible.

Research findings

On the basis of Mda's novel concerning the exploitation of the traumatized, a short preliminary research study was undertaken to ascertain whether or not these malpractices have ended with the dawn of democracy in South Africa or whether they are still prevalent. If these malpractices are indeed prevalent, this would support the argument that the exploitation of the traumatised is a universal human evil that is not confined to certain people in certain circumstances. Because the researchers knew that the novel is an account of certain

situations in Lesotho, which had a democratic government, and because all the major characters in the novel are black, the researchers distributed their questionnaires to blacks only in order to simulate the representation of race in Mda's novel. In other words, the choice of blacks as respondents is not based on racial bias.

A questionnaire was devised which concentrated on the exploitation of traumatised people; the aim of the questionnaire was to establish whether the respondents had ever experienced nepotism, institutionalized brutality, coup d'états, unbridled greed, and sexual exploitation (as portrayed by Mda). This questionnaire was distributed to five illiterate rural blacks and five educated urban blacks to determine the vulnerability of these different populations to exploitation in situations where they are perceived as being vulnerable.

Concerning the question about whether the respondents had ever been exploited by funeral undertakers, most of the rural respondents reported in the affirmative, while none of the urban respondents reported any such exploitation. This is probably because most of these respondents were teachers and thus better educated.

One elderly rural woman complained that she and her late husband's co-wife had paid premiums to two different insurance companies. On his death, one of the funeral undertakers delivered all the necessary burial services. When they endeavoured to reclaim the money from the other company, the latter refused to do so and they suffered a heavy financial loss. And one of the elderly rural male respondents was very upset because a burial society had charged them R650 for the removal and storing of his late wife's corpse for a single night before the body was taken to the hut where the traditional nightwatch took place. The respondent regarded this payment as a serious financial setback.

Although a few of both the rural and metropolitan respondents claimed that they had been exploited by legal representatives when they were emotionally upset, only one respondent, the principal of a rural school, gave details of the exploitation. He claimed that he had to pay R1 500 maintenance per month so that his son could be sent to a private school because his ex-wife insisted that it was "fitting for the son of a school principal" to attend a private school.

A number of both the rural and metropolitan respondents claimed that they had been subjected to mild forms of police brutality, although none of them described the incidents in detail. In addition, a number of respondents from both groups claimed that they had been subjected to unfair legal procedures, but neglected to describe these incidents in detail. Surprisingly,

none of the elderly rural respondents mentioned any knowledge of the coup that took place in Venda in the early nineties.

Although only two of the rural respondents admitted to being the victim of sexual harassment, most of the metropolitan respondents admitted that they had been sexually harassed. One female metropolitan respondent in her early twenties reported that she felt humiliated when men “undressed” her with their looks. She claimed that she “felt naked”.

To summarise, this brief research study has undeniably proved that the forms of discrimination and victimization as described by Mda in *She plays with the darkness* still occur, even in the new democratic South Africa.

Conclusion

To conclude, Mda’s writing is unique in that, in the words of Pechey (1998:73), it is a “many-voiced discourse of an *ekstasis* which frees us from the future of hopes and fears and admits us to a sphere of ‘unexpectedness, of ‘obscure innovation, miracle’”. *She plays with the darkness* serves as a concrete example of “such a miraculous sphere that Mda’s writing is able to draw at once on the facts of colonial history, and on the spiritual reserves of indigenous ancestral belief” (Courau 2004:138), so frequently expressed in folklore and ancient myths, to serve as a tool of instruction and edification or in the words of Courau (2004:138):

Within this spirit of inventiveness ... Mda’s novels may be understood as part of a process of national self-scrutiny ... In this sphere the literary imagination has been liberated from the confines of having to adopt a polemical, overtly political-historical viewpoint, and it is now free to engage with the minor, idiosyncratic histories of the everyday and the ritualised mundane. This has all occurred within the context of rebirth and regeneration associated with the African as a construct of identity.

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The forgotten history of the Black mineworkers on the West Rand mines

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The origins of a new investigation can be traced back to the awakening of a person's mind: the moment when a person begins to inquire, understand, judge, and make a decision or a choice on the subject of his or her study. The study could refer to the engagement with the subject that is known in the mind. At this point of engagement the issue in question is not only the subject known by the mind but is also a person composed as subject by the mind. In this sense, we are all subjects only when we are awake and we are subjects to different degrees, depending on the type of activity in which we are engaged. To illustrate what is meant by the awakening of the mind and a person's engagement with the subject, I shall refer to Shane Dladla's review of Hilton Hamann's book, *A town like no other: Randfontein, more than 75 years of history*:

Hamann does nothing but play an *imbongi* to whites who settled in Randfontein. He fails dismally to articulate a fair and balanced history of the town ... This book perpetuates the myth that South Africa is what it is because of whites.¹

This critique is an expression of the awakened sleeper who has understood the subject of Hamann's book, passed judgement in accordance with his understanding of the subject and decided to reject Hamann's subject as contradictory to the basic gains of the new democratic South Africa. Put differently, Dladla takes serious issue with a historian who wrote a 75-year history of Randfontein as if certain people who helped to make this history were never subjects of this history, but only objects. What this criticism basically means is that the historian, in writing the history of the people, in interpreting what the people were, is not the first person to step into the field of interpretation. There is an understanding that was formative of the history that is written about, not only the understanding of the historian. In this respect, history points towards the existential memory of the people, of their self-interpretation. In other words, whether people are writers or non-writers,

¹ *Sowetan*. 2006. Tuesday, 16 May.

all life is history because it is people who deal with people and things in their making of history. All life, therefore, is an engagement well understood in people's mind, as well as a principle of change that necessitates an ongoing process of thinking, judging, and deciding in accordance with people's self-interpretation in the past.

Dladla's criticism is a demand for new investigators, people who will recognise the huge amounts of data omitted, this omission being the deliberate forgetfulness of the Black people. This deliberate forgetfulness adds to the myth that the Black people did not help to make the history of Randfontein. Dladla's criticism is an appeal for a radical revision of history. For these revisions are continuous in accord with the concrete processes of learning to live under deliberate exclusion from the annals of history, thus as struggles of survival. It could be said that these revisions are compulsory as a result of further discoveries of new data: history is rewritten not only by each new culture but also by each stage of progress and decline in each culture. The advent of a new investigation seems the alternative way of demonstrating that the new way of doing history is nothing else but a process of revision. In this paper, therefore, the arguments for this position will unfold as following:

- The Lonerganian way of doing oral history
- The West Rand mines
- The forgotten Black mineworkers
- An explanatory history

The Lonerganian way of doing oral history

There are still a number of people who feel that an oral historian is merely another amateur historian whose field is precritical and only appropriate for occasional history. Such people are inclined to believe that, because an oral historian is concerned with experiential data, he (or she) must end all his operations in fieldwork. According to this viewpoint, the only task of the oral historian is to collect and compile data, data that later may provide scientists with something to work on to guide their interpretation and analysis with a view to discovering history in the technical sense of the term. The oral historian remains in the precritical stage of common sense and far removed from the technical stage of doing history proper. Obviously such points of views raise serious concerns about the relationship between the resources of oral history research and oral history itself. And, above all, they hoist a flag against the oral historian movement from the resources of oral history

research to the oral history itself when doing research in his or her historical situation.

These views are reinforced by an even more frequent and dangerous misconception: that oral history may be something that belongs to history, but is nevertheless something that consists entirely of word of mouth. Such a view confuses an oral historian with the storytellers of old and assumes that historians (including students of history) are obliged to believe that it is only written history that can be regarded as objective history. Such historians, and Hilton Hamann is clearly one of these, end up identifying history with a blind fidelity to the authorities, traditions and the available documents at their disposal. Such a one-sided emphasis may lead us to forget our duty to the present or may lead us to think that our mission in post-Apartheid South Africa is simply to revamp the prejudices and biases of colonial historians; to recite a one-sided manufactured version of the land of dispossessors and oppressors, to uphold an admiration of the heroic gold speculators of the Rand or the biased presentations of the Maropeng synthesis of the origin of human-kind. Unfortunately, time and history are irreversible. Any vision that is more concerned with restoring and re-establishing the past than facing the challenges of the present or fulfilling the mission of the future is, *a priori*, doomed to failure.

Many people are seriously convinced that, even after nearly twenty years of democracy in South Africa, the very core of historical scholarship ought not to be concerned with its own subjects of history but with its objects. Of course, this object of history has been, and can be, represented in the historiography of South Africa. This object of history itself belongs in the historical data which are and remain the necessary prerequisite in doing history. The objective of this assumption found its home in the pattern long awaited to emerge after the analysis of historical data at level five of the basic research process. For the sake of clarity, the emergence of a pattern takes place in the seven steps or levels of the basic research process. The initial level of the emergence of the pattern is in the selection of a topic, which is followed by the level of defining the focus question. The third level concerns designing the study, while the fourth level involves collecting data. At the fifth level, the data collected is analysed to see if any pattern emerges, and the sixth level is concerned with the interpretation of data based on the pattern. The seventh level is about dissemination – that is – informing others by writing a report. When that pattern at level five is discovered, and in the next is retrieved and used to define the historical results. Of course, if this object is properly researched, it serves its own, first and foremost cause, which is the understanding of the human being as the maker of history. It will

be incorrect, after its long development, to assume the object of history as having reached its final stage in the discovery of the pattern that is always present in the mind of an historian even prior to his or her doing history, and indeed, particularly oral history.

Oral history is a process and an event of living memory, a traumatic, processed experience understood by the subject via various levels of consciousness; the subject is an embodiment of the mind in a particular cultural context, in the ongoing process of doing or making sense of human living. Obviously, there can be no history which is not based on human living and human beings themselves, the makers of history, and the subjects of history. It is also possible to say something about the mediatory role of the subject in his or her making of history. I can be certain that I am writing this, and you can be certain that you are reading it. But it is quite another matter for you to be certain that I am correct in affirming that I am writing this text, just as I cannot be certain that I am correct in affirming that you are reading it. The common elements in the operations are of an oral historian, who is aware of himself, present to himself operating, and experiencing himself operating. In this process the quality of consciousness changes as the oral historian performs different operations.

An oral historian in his performance is, to use Bernard Lonergan's² words, "intrinsically intentional and intrinsically conscious". Lonergan maintains that there are four levels of consciousness and intentionality: empirical, intelligent, rational and responsible. The empirical is about experiencing; intelligence is about understanding; the rational level focuses on judging; and the responsible is concerned with deciding. Furthermore, Lonergan laid down a formula of four levels of transcendence: being attentive, being intelligent, being reasonable and being responsible. Lonergan writes succinctly thus: "When we wake, they take on a different hue to expand on four successive, related, but qualitatively different levels"³. These different levels of consciousness and intentionality, and different modes of being conscious⁴,

² The late Bernard Lonergan (1904 -1984) was a philosopher, a methodologist, a theologian and a Canadian Jesuit priest. His knowledge is so sublime that it awakens the sleeper. It is needed and belongs to this world. It is needed, particularly, in South African universities, colleges, government, and can be liberating to many people, whatever their socio-cultural situation. Lonergan's knowledge liberates the intellect and unifies the mind of a person, of a leader, of an elder and, above all, sheds a liberating clarity in the significance and role of consciousness and intentionality in the South African cultural matrix.

³ See Lonergan, B. 2003. *Method in theology*. Toronto: University Press. (p. 9)

⁴ Lonergan, B. 2003. *Insight*. Toronto: University Press. (ch. 19) See Braxton, E. 1962. *The wisdom community*. Mahwah, NJ: The Paulist Press.

are an expression of a psychological event. This event, therefore, discloses a shift from the object of history to the subject doing history.

Basically, what Lonergan suggests is that the oral historian's acts are grammatical and psychological. They are psychological in the sense that operations are intentional to the operations as consciousness gives rise to an awareness of intending which, in itself, is in contrast to what is intended. They are grammatical in the sense that they are transitive and have objects. For example, in the case of the "intention", the verb is "intends", the adjective is "intentional", and the noun is "intentionality"; when the presence of the object of intention becomes reality, this is a psychological event. In this sense, to say an oral historian is intrinsically intentional and intrinsically conscious is to ground achievement in self-appropriation. Self-appropriation is a process of self-introspective attention, inquiry and understanding, reflection and judgement. It is a gradual process from consciousness to knowledge⁵. It is led to knowledge through the operations of rational consciousness as experience, understanding and judgement. These operations are not limited by strictly logical operations, such as propositions, terms and relations. They also include operations of describing, of formulating problems and hypotheses, of deducing implications and operations of inquiry, of observation, discovery, experiment, synthesis, and verification. These operations, therefore, are an oral historian's actions; as such, they are transitive and they possess objects.

Accordingly, Lonergan noted that when the historians in the field of historical investigation want to grasp what was going forward in particular groups at particular places and times. Lonergan recognises that people of that group are thinking beings and that they reach out to knowledge insofar as they possess a basic set of operations; these operations are related, which means that the terms and the product of the operations will be related. "Going forward" is meant to exclude mere repetitions of a routine. Instead, it refers to the change that initiated the routine and dissemination. It also means process and development – and it also means decline and collapse. All in all, this is what history is, and history "is rooted in a total and dialectical source of meaning"⁶. History, then, is concerned to determine what contemporaries do not know what is likely to happen next (what Lonergan calls "going forward"⁷). There are four reasons for this historical determination: firstly,

⁵ Lonergan, B. (2003: 166f.)

⁶ Doran, R.M. 1999. System and history. *Theological Studies*, 60: 665

⁷ Lonergan,(2003: 177). What this statement means can be explained through what Lonergan says when he writes: "Even if one supposes the data to be complete, so that there is available a cinema of past deeds, a sound track of past words, an inner reenactment of the past

Loneragan points out that experience is individual, while the data of history are found in the experiences of many. Next, that the actual course of events is the result not only of what people intend, but also of their oversights, mistakes, and failures to act. Thirdly, history does not predict what will happen, but reaches its conclusions from what has happened. Fourth and finally, history is not merely a matter of collecting and testing all available evidence, but also involves a number of interlocking discoveries that bring to light significant issues and operative factors.⁸

In other words, historians have an obligation to engage in self-introspective attention, inquiry, understanding, reflection and judgement. Admittedly, there are only a few people who possess a theory of cognition that can be regarded as satisfactory.⁹ The process of consciousness and intentionality discloses a succession in the flow of conscious and intentional acts, and reveals identity in the conscious subject of the acts. Lonergan explains that there may be either identity or succession in the object intended by acts. As analysis may reveal that what actually is visible is a succession of different profiles and what is perceived is the synthesis of the profiles into a single object.¹⁰ Consequently, there is a psychological present, which is a time span and reaches into its past by memories and into its future by anticipation. Anticipations are not merely of the prospective objects of our fears and our desires, but shrewd estimates carried out by men and women. Memories, then, not only refer to the memory possessed by an individual, but to our heritage, the pooled memories of a community of people, their celebration in song and story, their preservation in written narratives, in coins and monuments, and every other trace of a community of people's words and deeds left for posterity. Such is the field of historical investigation¹¹ and this brings us to the issue of the West Rand mines.

West Rand mines

In ancient times, mining was practised extensively in Southern Africa, but less so within the country known today as South Africa. However, in what is

feelings, emotions, and sentiments still there remains to be determined by some approximation to the insights and judgments, that beliefs and decisions, that made those words and deeds, those feelings and sentiments, the activities of a more or less intelligent and reasonable being." See Lonergan, *Insight*, p. 564.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 179.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 175.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 177.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

now the Gauteng province, there is some evidence to suggest that the Batswana mined and melted ore. Many of the ruins of these early settlements and villages, dating back some 200 years, have recently been discovered and are now the subject of intensive study. Evidence of the Iron Age has also been found, evidence that shows that the early tribes who inhabited the area were excellent iron smelters and smiths. Ruins also exist in the suburb of Northcliff, Johannesburg, and around Mogale City, particularly on the farm Uitkoms near Magaliesburg.¹²

Gold mining has always been the principle socio-economic activity in the West Rand regions. The Main Gold Reef follows a line across the Witwatersrand from Springs in the East to Randfontein and Westonaria in the West. The mining areas referred to as the “West Rand mines” are associated with all the economic and social benefits that arose from gold mining in the West Rand region.

Development in the western area began in earnest over a century ago when George Harrison, an Australian gold digger, discovered what he considered to be “a payable goldfield”. The oldest gold mine in the West Rand and Gauteng province was the Blaauwbank Gold Mine; it was here, in 1874, that gold was discovered by Henry Lewis (also an Australian digger) on J.H. Jennings’ farm at Blaauwbank. The gold claims were pegged and the government appointed W.S. Sanders as gold commissioner and declared the area a public diggings on 28 January 1875. This discovery was officially recorded by President Burgers on behalf of Henry Lewis and Jennings brothers. This led to the founding of the Nil Desperandum Cooperation Quartz Company (N.D.C.Q.Co.), the first gold mining company in the Witwatersrand. These events were followed, in 1881, by the discovery of gold at Kroomdraai by Johannes Stephanus Minnaar and Kroomdraai was established as a gold mine in 1882. The population of the area expanded rapidly¹³ and later, in 1886, the government proclaimed the farms of Langlaagte, Paardekraal, Vogelstruisfontein and Roodepoort. Then followed the establishment of the following mining companies: East Champ d’or Gold

¹² Mason, R. 1962. *Prehistory of the Transvaal: a record of human activity*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press. See Mason, R. 1987. *Origins of the African people of Johannesburg*. Johannesburg: Skotaville. Du Plooy, J. 1995. *Die Goudmijnbedrijf in Krugersdorp*. Krugersdorp Museum, August. See also: http://www.dme.gov.za/pdfs/minerals/d3_2006.pdf (Accessed 25/10/2006.)

¹³ See Van Onselen, C. 1982. *New Babylon, new Nineveh: everyday life on the Witwatersrand 1886 -1914*. Cape Town: Jonathan Ball. (pp. 3ff). See Moodie, D.T. Ndatshe, V. & Sibuyi, B. 1988. Migrancy and male sexuality on the South African gold mines. *Journal of Southern African Studies* 14/2 (January): 228-256.

Mining in 1886; West Rand Consolidated Gold Mining Co. in 1887; Luijaardsvlei Estates Gold Mining Co. in 1888; and the Randfontein Estates Gold Mining Co. in 1889¹⁴. In 1894 there were about 107 mining companies in the West Rand. Over the course of years and despite various serious disruptions, such as the Anglo-Boer War (South African War) 1899 -1902,¹⁵ a number of industrial strikes, and finally the Second World War, gold continued to be mined. It must be noted that this mining industry continued and grew because of the substantial encouragement and support of the government of the day. I say this because mine representatives have always spoken as if the achievements of the mine industry are only ever a mark of the triumph of capitalism.¹⁶ That aside, the mining industrialists saw themselves as pioneers, men who worked to build the Transvaal economy.

However, this growth did not happen by itself; it owed its success to the establishment of the Chamber of Mines. The Chamber was formed with the primary aim of attracting cheap labour to the mining areas and ensuring that the wages of Black mineworkers were kept to a minimum. According to V.L. Allen, in 1890 the Chamber members of about 66 mine companies signed an agreement to reduce Black mineworkers' wages from 63s 1d to 40s. Needless to say, this wage reduction did not help to attract many Blacks workers to the mines. Then, at the end of 1895, the Chamber raised the Black mineworkers' wages to the 63s 6d.¹⁷ However, this increase did not solve the problem of attracting more cheap labour to the mining areas. According to Allen, the Chamber of Mines decided, in about 1893, to establish a Native Labour Department which would ensure a secure and permanent, constant and regulated supply of migrants, and the Department appointed a Native Labour Commissioner who would supervise these migrants. As a result, the Rand Native Labour Association (RNLA) was formed, and a close and formal relationship between the Chamber and the recruiters was

¹⁴ There were a number of small mines that were established from the 1880s onwards in the West Rand such as: French Rand, Windsor, Grey's mine, Lancaster, Lancaster West, Violet Gold Mining Co., White Rose, Botha's Reef, Zambezi Gold Mining Co., George May, Vera Gold Mine, Horsham Montor, West Rand Gold Mining Co., Van Wyk Gold Mining Co., Vulcan, First Netherlands, Midas, Queens Battery, York Mine, Tudor, Emma Gold Mining Co., King Solomon's mine and Tautonic.

¹⁵ See Van Onselen, *New Babylon, new Nineveh*.

¹⁶ The annual reports of Chamber of Mines; see also Cartwright, A.P. 1967. *Gold paved the way*. London: MacMillan; Fitzpatrick, J.P. 1900. *The Transvaal from within*. London: Heinemann.

¹⁷ Allen, V.L. 1992. *The history of black mineworkers in South Africa*, vol. 1. West Yorkshire:Moor Press. (p. 153)

established.¹⁸ The RNLA operated for a number of years, and helped the Department to recruit cheap labour from other African countries (e.g. Mozambique).

The beginning of the Anglo-Boer War, also known as the South African War, which broke out in 1899, forced the mines to close down. The mine managers who suddenly found themselves on an extended, enforced holiday were more preoccupied with the labour supply problem than the war. According to Allen, “they convinced themselves that when the war was over they will operate a single, centralized recruiting mechanism which could cover the whole country, systematically drawing in African workers from every region no matter how remote, and equally systematically dispatching them back home when their contracts expired”.¹⁹ We can certainly say that, after the war, a new recruiting structure was formed: the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association (WNLA). The WNLA was established as a non-profit making organisation and was legally independent of the Chamber of Mines. Indeed, its primary focus was on the recruitment of foreign labour. What is of note here is that the Board of Directors who controlled the WNLA was the same Board who controlled the Chamber of Mines. The Chamber of Mines retained control over wage determination and working conditions, while the WNLA was in charge of recruitment. The receiving centre of recruitment was established in Johannesburg, through which all recruits had to pass before being allocated to whichever one of the mines required labour. This receiving centre eventually became the WNLA’s head office.²⁰

The Chamber of Mines had two recruiting arms, both of which were organised on virtually identical lines. The WNLA directed its activities at foreign recruitment and the Native Recruitment Cooperation (NRC) focused on domestic (local) recruitment. These recruiting arms (i.e. of the Chamber of Mines) set up a network of recruiting stations and receiving centres throughout the country. By the 1940s, the NRC had 107 recruiting stations (most of which were in Transkei, Ciskei, Lesotho, Zululand and Swaziland), while the WNLA had stations in Botswana, South West Africa, Angola, Zambia, Tanzania, Malawi, Rhodesia and Mozambique.²¹ With these two recruiting structures in place and functioning, the Chamber of Mines had a monopoly on the supply of Black mine labour. Indeed, the Chamber began regarding the whole of central and Southern Africa as its personal giant chess board. It

¹⁸ Allen 1992: 154

¹⁹ Allen 1992: 157

²⁰ Allen 1992: 158

²¹ Allen 1992: 231ff

identified and cultivated different sources of labour and played one off against another. This scenario determined the destiny of the Black mineworkers' and the way in which they engaged in their struggle for survival.

The forgotten Black mineworkers

The phrase "Black mineworkers" refers to Black, male wage-earners who experienced all the pressures of land dispossession, forced labour, exploitation, subordination, degradation, racism and social control that were the implicit fate of mineworkers at the time and for many years to come. According to Allen, Black mineworkers' "class position permeates their whole lives in all of its facets for, in a general way, it determines their level of subsistence, their ownership of property, their share of the national income, their access to educational facilities and their social status within the society at large".²² The state of affairs referred to above meant that Black mineworkers became totally dependent on the wages offered by the mine employers. Note that this definition of a mineworker not only explained the fate of the South African Black mineworker, but included those mineworkers sourced from African countries outside South Africa.

Whether born and bred in South Africa or elsewhere in Africa, Black mineworkers in the Witwatersrand mines in general and in the West Rand mines in particular shared the same fate. None of them had entered wage employment through choice. They were all forced to do so as a result of the disruptive influences of colonialism,²³ land dispossession and poverty. In turn, they became not only the source of cheap labour but social pariahs. This status of "pariah" is described by Frans Fanon in *The wretched of the earth*, by Oswald Mtshali in his poem "Nightfall in Soweto" and by André Brink in *A chain of voices*. All these writers agree that, as a result of the actions of the mine owners, Black mineworkers were doomed forever to live in a state of dependence. Dependence has been associated with existence and livelihood, and was twisted into a natural desire of the mineworkers to be like their employers.

This situation was aggravated by the passing of the Native Labour Regulation Act, 1911, which benefited the mine owners, which was followed by the Mines and Works Act, 1911, which enforced segregation laws to safeguard and protect the existence and livelihood of Whites. The Squatters Bill of 1912 served to concentrate Black people in what was known as labour

²² Allen 1992: 4

²³ Allen 1992: 190

reserves. When the Native Land Act of 1913 was enacted, native society was given only 7.5 % of the country's land. This made it impossible for black people to acquire, hire or buy land. Sol Plaatje managed to capture this reality in lucidly moving words, when he writes, "awakening on Friday morning, 20th June 1913, the South African Native found himself, not actually a slave, but a pariah in the land of his birth ... The vast South African expanses which God in His providence had created for His Children of the Sun"²⁴. Land ownership was related to the White settler's connotation of permanency which, by the end of the First World War, was confirmed at the Versailles Peace Conference of 1917. Generals Smuts and Botha were entrusted with Namibia (South West Africa) as a "sacred trust of civilisation"²⁵.

As a "sacred trust of civilisation" Namibia, for General Smuts, meant "a country suitable for White settlement," writes Ruth First, "ready for parcelling into White men's farms. South Africa had acquired a colony. If the African was to survive, he would have to adapt himself to South African's traditional system, entering the White man's service in a permanently subordinate position".²⁶ What these words really mean are in line with what I mean by the forgotten Black mineworker. This can be illustrated by the case of King Michael Tjiseseta (1872-1927) of Omaruru, Namibia who, after being defeated by the Germans²⁷, fled to South Africa. On the 29 January 1906, a total of 198 Herero left Walvis Bay for the Witwatersrand Gold mines, amongst whom were King Michael Tjiseseta and 82 men, presumably his Omaruru followers²⁸. Tjiseseta resided on a farm in the Magaliesburg and worked as a recruiting officer for the WNLA, surrounded by his followers

²⁴ See Karis, T. & Carter, G.M. (eds.). 1978. *From protest to challenge: documents of African politics in South Africa 1882-1964*, vol. 2, part 2. 2nd edition. Stanford, CA: Hoover Press. (pp. 82-84)

²⁵ See First, R. 1963. *South West Africa*. Harmondsworth: Penguin. (pp.94-97)

²⁶ First 1963: 106

²⁷ First 1963: 27-31.

²⁸ See also Gewalt, J-B. The road of the man called love and the sack of Sero: the Herero-German war and the export of Herero labour to the South African Rand. *Journal of African History* 25: "on the morning of 12 January 1904, shooting started in Okahandja, a small town in German South West Africa, present-day Namibia. When the Herero-German war finally ended four years later, Herero society, as it had existed prior to 1904, had been completely destroyed. In the genocidal war which developed, the Herero were either killed in battle, lynched, shot or beaten to death upon capture, or driven to death in the waterless wastes that make up much of Namibia. Within Namibia, the surviving Herero were deprived of their chiefs, prohibited from owning land and cattle, and prevented from practicing their own religion. Herero survivors, the majority of whom were women and children, were incarcerated in prison camps and put to work as forced labourers for the German military and settlers."

from Omaruru, who worked at the Blaauwbank mine in Magaliesburg. Tjiseseta remained in Magaliesburg until his death in June 1927 and was laid to rest by the railway line to Rustenburg, which runs parallel to the Magalies River. The precise cause and date of his death are not certain. According to the Namibian Embassy, some historians think he may have died in the year 1926²⁹.

The story of King Michael Tjiseseta illustrates the fact that the past is not dead but alive and ever present with those of us who are alive today. It is a form of commitment to memory: memory is the source and origin of the land and it is memory that raises the issue of cheap labour. Tjiseseta's unmarked grave, and the graves of others who lie beside him, is authentic testimony to the inhumanity of the mine owners. Whether or not these graves arouse a sense of public indignation against the injustices done to the forgotten Black mineworkers or not, these graves are the silent witness of the past. This past is a resource that can be used by those adopting a new approach to history, an approach that would enable historians equipped with new data to revise, genetically and dialectically, the various stages in the evolution of the history of the gold-mining industry in the Gauteng province (and particularly in the West Rand). In this would be demonstrated differentiation strategy which is the dawn of the advent of a new investigation, an explanatory history.

An explanatory history

What is meant by "history"? According to Bernard Lonergan, history can be understood in two ways. History is the history that is written about and the history that is written. The history that is written is the subject of a specialised field of inquiry, investigation, and research and is characterised by procedures and cumulative results. It is a process of composition, publication, criticism and use, that is, of doing the same thing over and over again. This is a field of knowledge that develops and is sustained by the academic

²⁹ I came in contact with this story during fieldwork as part of research for the office of the Mayor of Mogale City in 2003. I was doing research on the history of Kgosi Mogale Mogale, the young heir of the Bapo Bamogale who resided along the Magalies River. I came across the graves and intuitively knew that these were graves. That said, I was not sure so I consulted a Sangoma who confirmed my beliefs. Final affirmation was reached when the Royal House of Zeraeua from Namibia came to explore the whereabouts of the remains of King Michael Tjiseseta and his wife in close consultation with the Mogale City local municipality, along with both the central governments of Namibia and South Africa.

process of libraries, teachers, students, classes and degrees.³⁰ History that is written about is all about the knowledge of history which is expressed by the history that is written.³¹ Lonergan further differentiates between narrative, descriptive and critical history and a synthetic, systematic and explanatory understanding of history.³² The latter is the concern of this paper rather than the former because explanatory history is history in its concreteness. This type of history is subject to revision. New issues will become significant in the future that were previously ignored or discounted. In other words, as new data come to light the historian will have data to connect his history.

What is explanatory history about? The answer is simple: in our case, the history of the forgotten Black mineworkers of the West Rand is a history of the struggle for survival. The unit of study is the struggle for survival. In the book, *Gold and workers 1886-1924*,³³ Luli Callinicos writes that his aim is to narrate the story of the gold mining industry in the Witwatersrand from the perspective of the mineworkers, who came into the area and, by their hands, created the wealth of Gauteng. It is the same story of progress, of modernisation, of technological achievement, of expanding economy by South African mines, of the NRC and the WNLA. It is told in a different way, though, as the mineworkers' struggle for survival.³⁴ In my view, this is well captured by V. L. Allen, when he writes:

Yet in their everyday lives black people in general and black mineworkers in particular helped to forge their own destinies. Through a multiplicity of minute defiant decisions they imposed some of their own conditions on their struggle for survival. They disregarded laws and evaded regulations despite the consequences. Some, such as the colour bar, were difficult to disregard because the white unions policed their enforcement and highlighted every single aberration. But overall, with a skill which grew out of necessity, they exploited every crack in the control system and widened it through constant wear and tear until their situations were transformed and bore little resemblance to the legally prescribed ones.³⁵

³⁰ Lonergan, B. 1996. Philosophy of history, in the *Collected works of Bernard Lonergan*, vol.6. Toronto: University Press: 54.

³¹ See Lonergan (2003: 175).

³² Doran, R. 1999. System and history., *Theological Studies*, 60: 657.

³³ Callinicos, L. 1985. *Gold and workers 1886 – 1924*. Johannesburg: Ravan.

³⁴ Callinicos (1985: introduction)

³⁵ Allen (1992: 206)

These two citations pin the study to the struggle for survival and defines this struggle as a field of interdependence. In the last two sections about the West Rand mines and the forgotten Black mineworkers, two different stories are told, one from a mine owner's point of view and what the mine owners achieved, the other from the black mineworkers' perspective. These two perspectives disclose the difference and conflict between the mine owners and Black mineworkers. Furthermore, the history of the gold-mining industry in South Africa and in the Witwatersrand eventually poses the question whether the two stories can be integrated without falling into the trap of their difference and without conflict. Each story has its origin, its development, its breakdowns, its decline and its decay. There are relationships in space and time between different accounts of history. The moving thing behind the whole account of the history of the forgotten Black mineworkers of the West Rand is the struggle for survival. Expressed differently, the basic "carrier wave" is the struggle for survival. There we have a set of explanatory categories and a set of principle questions that we can direct to the oral historian. If an oral historian adverts to the forgotten Black mineworker as a subject known in the mind and constituted by consciousness, so this human person is known and constituted in his humanity by the historical dimension of reality.

In other words, he is what he does, says, approves and disapproves, wants and does not want, decides or chooses. This choice involves not only the chosen, but also the chooser. The chooser is the operating subject who, according to Lonergan, is an intrinsically intentional and intrinsically conscious recurrent structure of the mind. In this respect, the oral historian deals with the operations of the mind. These operations are not limited by strictly logical operations, such as propositions, terms and relations. Instead, there are also operations of describing, of formulating problems and hypotheses, of deducing implications and operations of inquiry, observation, discovery, experiment, synthesis, and verification. These patterns of operations are our actions and are transitive and have objects, both grammatically and psychologically. For example, the word "intention". Its verb is "intends", its adjective is "intentional", and its noun is intentionality; and when the presence of the object of intentions are becoming reality this is a psychological event.

Expressed differently, the operations are of an operator, the subject who is aware of himself, present to himself operating and experiencing himself operating. In this process the quality of consciousness changes as the subject performs different operations. The operating subject is intrinsically intentional and intrinsically conscious. The psychological event, therefore, discloses a shift from the object of research to the subject doing research

under the different levels of consciousness and intentionality, and involves different modes of being conscious as far as the subject of the research is concerned. Given all this, we can understand why the title of this paper is so deeply immersed in the question of an explanatory history of the forgotten Black mineworkers of the West Rand mines. This paper is directed to providing some answers to the acute problems of inheriting a methodology of doing history that is one-sided; the paper also seeks to show that the intellect is liberated and the mind unified through the subject rather than the object.

Doing oral history in the Lonerganian way involves the discovery of a subject of history, such as the discovering one's own mind. In our era, not only is doing this possible – it is nothing short of a necessity in doing oral history in South Africa. It is indeed possible to achieve this goal because the process of discovery starts from the question of historical intelligence. This process starts from some defined situation in the past one wants to understand. In this sense, the more history one knows, the more data are within one's possession, the more questions one can ask, and the more intelligently one can ask them. History, then, grows out of history.³⁶ Hence the existence of an explanatory history.

Conclusion

This paper has located the origins of a new investigation in the awakening of a person's mind. It has argued for the retrieval of the memory from our common heritage which is pooled with memories of different communities of South Africa. It is made more apparent that the object sought in oral historical investigation not only weighs heavily upon South African history, but has also caused historians to overlook important data, that is, the Black mineworkers as the subject of history. This has heightened the urgency and provided a reason for the need of a cognitional theory that will promote the subject of history rather than the object of history. It was shown through the history of mining in the West Rand that the context of the so said technical history is a leap forward from any ordered recital events of forgotten Black mineworkers. The significance and role of the forgotten Black mineworkers' struggle for survival reopen an autonomous discourse about dispossession, exploitation, oppression and racism in the recovery of the liberating gains of the distinctive contributions of all personalities, events, thoughts, views,

³⁶ See Lonergan (2003: 187).

stories, poems, legends, myths, folklore, tradeoffs and struggles of those who left us the legacy of social culture and great leadership in our local communities. This was illustrated in the case of King of Omaruru, Namibia, who was laid to rest beside the railway line to Rustenburg. Furthermore, reflection on the meaning of Lonerganian explanatory history grounds the advent of new investigators of oral history who focus on the methodic exigencies of doing oral history in the Lonerganian way in South Africa.

**Language, oral tradition, song, and the mobilisation
of Northern Ndebele ethnicity in post-apartheid
South Africa, 1994-2004¹**

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Introduction

This study is a discussion of contemporary ethnic politics in South Africa, the focus being on the Northern Ndebele ethnic nationalists' reinvention of tradition in post-apartheid South Africa. The Northern Ndebele form part of the group classified by white anthropologists in South Africa as the 'Transvaal Ndebele', a group that migrated into the interior from the Kwazulu-Natal region in the 1500s and 1600s. They are not, in fact, remnants of Mzilikazi's (Zimbabwe) *Matebele* (as is commonly believed). Most Northern Ndebele communities have settled among Sotho-Tswana people in the different parts of the provinces of Limpopo and Northern Gauteng.² This paper discusses the relationship between "invented traditions" and "imagined communities" among these people.³ It looks at how the Northern Ndebele ethnic nationalists

¹ This paper is drawn from a chapter in my doctoral thesis. See, for example, Lekgoathi, S.P. 2006. *Ethnicity and identity: struggle and contestation in the making of the Northern Transvaal Ndebele, ca. 1960-2005*. PhD Thesis, University of Minnesota.

² For a more comprehensive discussion of the origins of the Northern Ndebele see, for example, Lekgoathi, S.P. 2006. *Ethnicity and identity*; also Lekgoathi, S. P. 2003. *Chiefs, migrants and Northern Ndebele ethnicity in the context of surrounding homeland politics, 1965-1978*. *African Studies*, 62 (1): 53-77.

³ I draw my cue from the "invention" scholarship which has been very influential in studies of ethnicity in Africa and globally. See, for example, Hobsbawm, E. & Ranger, T.O. (eds.). 1983. *The invention of tradition*. Cambridge: University Press; Anderson, B. 1983. *Imagined communities: reflections on the origins and spread of nationalism*. London: Verso. This study is also informed by other studies that have explored the concept of invention or reinvention of identity in other contexts. See, for example, Hamilton, C.A. 1998. *Terrific majesty: the powers of Shaka Zulu and the limits of historical invention*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; An appetite for the past: the re-creation of Shaka and the crisis of popular consciousness. 1990. *South African Historical Journal* 22: 141-157; Harries, P. 1993. *Imagery, symbolism and tradition in a South African Bantustan: Mangosuthu Buthelezi, Inkatha, and Zulu history*. *History and Theory* 32 (4): 105-125; Golan, D. 1994. *Inventing Shaka: using history in the construction of Zulu nationalism*. London: Lynne Rienner; Inkatha and its use of the Zulu past. 1991. *History in Africa* 18: 113-126.

have reconstructed the histories of their communities, the motives behind their reinventions, and the effects of the past on their present and future. I argue that language, oral traditions, and song have become essential tools in the Northern Ndebele's living cultural traditions today, ingredients through which the cultural activists or ethnic entrepreneurs (*ethnpreneurs*) seek to gain access to power and limited economic resources.

The paper is divided into three interlinked parts. The first section documents the language struggle in the period after the 1994 general elections; this struggle culminated in the Northern Ndebele people's march to the Union Buildings in Pretoria in August 1997 in a bid to register their disquiet about the exclusion of their language from South Africa's list of eleven officially recognised languages. The second part explores the ethnic nationalists' use or manipulation of oral traditions relating to the Northern Ndebele's encounters with the Boers in the nineteenth century. It examines the accounts of the heroic figures and chiefs who, in trying to forge Ndebele identity, challenged the Lebowa Bantustan administration in the 1970s and early 1980s. The final section probes the role of music and performance in mobilising and creating awareness among ordinary people of the significance of the Northern Ndebele language. The *ethnpreneurs* have invoked these various living traditions – language, history, and song and/or performance – simultaneously in a bid to build an exclusivist Northern Ndebele ethnic identity. And underlying this mobilisation of ethnicity is a quest to gain access to scarce political and economic resources.

Language planners, experts, culture brokers and the politics of Northern Ndebele orthography

In August 1997, thousands of people who identified themselves as Northern Ndebele marched to the Union Buildings in Pretoria to submit a memorandum to protest against the continuing marginalisation of the Northern Ndebele communities — which have historically been part of the political landscape – in the new South Africa.⁴ In the opinion of the organisers, this marginalisation was reflected in the post-apartheid government's failure to grant the same recognition to Northern *Sindebele* as it did to the other eleven officially acknowledged languages.⁵ The marchers submitted a memorandum

⁴ *Sowetan*. 1997. 28 August.

⁵ The new constitution has a number of provisions that protect various languages and cultures in the country. Chapter 1, clause 6 (1) mentions Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, and isiZulu as the country's official languages. Clause 6 (2) says that "recognizing the historically diminished use and

listing their demands, and these demands included financial support for efforts to develop Northern *Sindebele* into a fully-fledged written language, so that this language could be taught in those schools in which Northern Ndebele children formed the majority of pupils. They also pleaded for the recognition of their language as the country's twelfth official language and submitted a short manuscript of excerpts from the Bible translated into Northern *Sindebele* to the Mandela administration. This they did in order to strengthen their demand for financial support for the development of their language, and to demonstrate that it was indeed possible to reduce it to writing, like all the other official languages.⁶

The Mandela government was conscious of the potentially divisive nature of politicised ethnicity, or political tribalism. The "rainbow nation" was still in its infancy and needed to be handled with care. Perhaps fears that this fragile nation could be shattered in its infancy played a major role in the acceptance of the memorandum which the Northern Ndebele nationalists submitted, together with a small book manuscript. Addressed specifically to the State President, R.N. Mandela, the manuscript entitled *Livi Elimnandi* (meaning "the sweet word") consists of translations into Northern *Sindebele* of certain biblical texts. Its author, Percy M. Nyadlo, is a prominent Northern Ndebele nationalist, a local schoolteacher and linguist.⁷ He gave the following reasons for writing the manuscript:

This was in preparation for the historical moment when we marched to Mandela at the Union Building to submit our memorandum in August 1997, so that we could give this booklet to our great leader [Nelson Mandela]... Our wish was that he would pass it to the educational authorities and say:

status of the indigenous languages of our people, the state must take practical and positive measures to elevate the status and advance the use of these languages." Clause 6 (5) provides for national legislation that would establish a Pan South African Language Board, which must promote, and create conditions for, the development of all official languages, as well as for the sign language and the virtually extinct Khoi, Nama and San languages. The Bill of Rights (ch. 2) also has numerous interesting things to say about individual rights to education in the official language of choice. Refer to Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996, Act 108.

⁶ The Northern Ndebele nationalists were not the only group jostling to have their language recognised as the twelfth official language. There were also the Lovhedu, Phuthi, Khoi, and others. Private interview with Madimetja Percy Nyadlo, Bakenberg, Mokopane, 14 October 2000.

⁷ Nyadlo, M.P. N.d. *Livi Elimnandi* [The Sweet Word]: A biblical translation into Ndebele. Unpublished manuscript of demands addressed to the State President, R.N. Mandela.

“Look here, you are saying that [Northern] *Sindebele* doesn’t exist but I received this booklet. Will you read it to me so that I can get a sense of its contents?” Yes. So we left it there and so far we don’t know how they have evaluated it.⁸

Two remarkable points need to be noted about the manuscript and its contents. The first is that the beginnings of the reduction of African languages, specifically *Sesotho* to written form, in the northern and eastern parts of the Transvaal by the German missionaries in the nineteenth century, had invariably involved the translation of biblical texts in order to serve the Christianising mission in South Africa. Over 130 years later, Nyadlo seemed to be simply following in the footsteps of the German missionary pioneers by appealing to the sensibilities of the Northern Ndebele converts who might have had an interest in reading the “holy word” in their own language. The second point relates to the reverence for literacy in contemporary African society. Within the world in which written texts have come to command absolute respect and almost unquestionable authority over oral texts, the manuscript was produced to demonstrate that Northern *Sindebele* could indeed be reduced to writing and that it had the same qualities, force and cultural usage as any of the other officially recognised languages in the country.⁹ It does seem, however, that both the protest march and the book manuscript had the desired effect because, shortly afterwards, the Northern Ndebele nationalists were advised to knock at the door of the language planners, the Pan South African Language Board (PANSALB).¹⁰

⁸ Nyadlo, M.P. N.d.

⁹ The Northern Ndebele language is one of the many languages apart from the eleven official languages, which have not attained official status in the country’s constitution in part because they are perceived to be spoken by a very tiny minority of the population. There has been an ongoing debate between the Ndebele nationalists and government about whether or not Northern Ndebele is a language or dialect. The government’s assumption was that it was a dialect of the *Sindebele* language, a language that was given full recognition as one of the country’s eleven official languages. According to the statistics provided by the *Economist* (in 1995), there were roughly 588,000 Transvaal Ndebele in the country, a mere 1,5 percent of the population of 39,189,000. It would seem, however, that this figure excludes the Northern Transvaal Ndebele because it refers specifically to the Ndzundza and Manala, which are groups that have been classified as Southern Transvaal Ndebele. Cited in <http://www.sil.org/ethnologue/countries/Sout.html>. Nevertheless, Molomo’s claims that there are over six million Northern Transvaal Ndebele is a gross exaggeration and very unlikely, although this claim is significant as a political statement.

¹⁰ Interview, Madimetja Percy Nyadlo, Bakenberg, Mokopane, 14 October 2000; Interview, William Lesiba Molomo, Mamelodi, Pretoria, 02 March 2001; Interview, Gojela Peter Kekana, Mošate, Valtyn Village, Mokopane, 29 December 2003.

Headquartered in Pretoria's city centre, PANSALB was established in accordance with the Pan South African Language Board Act, 59 of 1995, to promote multilingualism in the country. Its governing structure is made up of twelve board members and, by June 1999, the top three positions were occupied by black women.¹¹ This board is made up of officials and academics, and the academics were drawn mainly from the language and linguistic departments of the country's universities; these people now found themselves working for the new government as language planners. PANSALB is the primary language planning agency or wing of government. It seeks to accomplish the mission set out above through the development of previously marginalised languages by

... creating the conditions for the development of and the equal use of all official languages; fostering respect for and encouraging the use of other languages in the country; and encouraging the best use of the country's linguistic resources.¹²

During 1998, PANSALB had to address the protests not only from representatives of the Northern Ndebele nationalists, but also those of the *Baphuti* and *Valovedu* (Lovhedu), who argued that their languages be accorded equal status with that of the eleven official languages. In response the Board advised the language groups concerned to "approach relevant government departments that deal with this issue" on the grounds that this was a political matter. In the meantime, however, the Board commissioned a research study to determine the linguistic relationship between Northern Ndebele and Southern Ndebele languages, with a view to finding out whether the former was not just a local variant of the latter.¹³ In 2000, Professor Arnett Wilkes from the Department of African Languages at the University of Pretoria was

¹¹ The racial and gender composition of the Board seems to be an attempt to ensure that there is a balance among the different groups, i.e. that it reflects the rainbow character of the nation. The positions of chief executive officer and chairperson were occupied by African women, and an Indian woman occupied the position of deputy chairperson. Pan South African Language Board. 1999. *Annual Report*, June. See the inside of the cover page.

¹² In addition, by the terms of Section 8 (8) of the PANSALB, Act 59, provincial language committees, national language bodies, and national lexicographical units were put in place to focus on projects and research studies. These fall under six focus areas, namely; (a) Status Language Planning, (b) Language in Education, (c) Translation and Interpreting, (d) Development of Literature and Previously Marginalized Languages, (e) Lexicography, Terminology and Place Names, and finally (f) Language Rights and Mediation. PANSALB. 1999. *Annual Report*, June: 13, 16.

¹³ PANSALB (1999:27).

appointed to research this issue.¹⁴ Wilkes' findings contradicted the government's argument, an argument that was based on earlier linguistic and anthropological scholarship that regarded the Northern and Southern Ndebele languages as variants of the same language.¹⁵ On the basis of his research, Wilkes found that the Northern Ndebele language was "still widely spoken in most, if not all, the Northern Ndebele communities" in the Limpopo Province. Furthermore, he insisted that the language was independent and distinct from Southern Ndebele and that it "has developed out of a mixture of different languages". He then concluded that blending the two was destined "to fail as it inevitably will lead to the creation of an artificial speech form that the Ndebele people are certain to reject".¹⁶

This linguistic finding gave added impetus to Ndebele nationalist agitation. William Lesiba Molomo, an elderly language advocate and founder member of the Northern Amandebele National Organisation (NANO), together with other activists now had support (i.e. in Wilkes' findings). In their quest for the accommodation of Northern *Sindebele* they referred to the constitutional provision that accorded official status to Southern Ndebele and argued that Northern *Sindebele* be given its fair share of national resources and prestige. The role played by the modern elites, especially teachers, within NANO in harnessing and articulating the sentiments of non-elite Ndebele men and women on the issue of cultural marginalisation is particularly significant. It is quite common to hear ordinary Ndebele people, especially the elderly, lamenting the fading of their language because of the dominance of Northern Sotho and other dominant languages in the schools. The response

¹⁴ Professor A. Wilkes specialises in the Zulu language at the University of Pretoria. His interest in Northern *Sindebele* started with the resurgence of Northern Ndebele identity after 1994. Many of my informants refer to him as "one of our key allies" in the struggle for recognition. For example, at one of the gatherings of the language activists organised by the PANSALB on October 31, 1997 at Johannesburg International Airport, Wilkes formed part of the Northern Ndebele delegation. See, for example, Interview, Madimetja Percy Nyadlo, Bakenberg, Mokopane, 14 October 2000; Interview, William Lesiba Molomo, Mamelodi Township, Pretoria, 02 March 2001; Interview, Gojela Peter Kekana, Mošate, Valtyn, Mokopane, 29 December 2003.

¹⁵ Earlier scholars, mainly linguists and anthropologists attached to universities and the Ethnology Section of the Department of Native Affairs, had believed that the Northern Ndebele language had for all practical purposes ceased to exist as its speakers had rejected it in favour of Northern Sotho, the dominant language of the surrounding ethnic groups. See, for example, Wilkes, A. 2001. Northern and Southern Ndebele – why harmonisation will not work. *Southern African Journal of African Languages* 21 (3): 1; Van Warmelo, N.J. 1930. *Transvaal Ndebele Texts*. Pretoria: Government Printer.

¹⁶ Wilkes, A. 2001. Northern and Southern Ndebele – why harmonisation will not work. *Southern African Journal of African Languages* 21 (3): 1, 24.

to this by cultural activists such as Nyadlo, Molomo, Kekana and others is that, if the language is to survive and grow, it has to appear in print.¹⁷ Virtually all Northern *Sindebele* advocates have been extremely vocal about the need to produce educational material in *Sindebele* for use in the foundation grades of schools that are situated in predominantly Northern Ndebele communities.

Although PANSALB would be drawn deeper into the Northern Ndebele's language struggle in the post-1994 period, work on Northern Ndebele orthography – albeit fairly scattered and thin on the ground and carried out mainly by indigenous scholars – has a longer history, one that dates as far back as the 1940s.¹⁸ Ndebele consciousness and the quest to develop their language into a written form were both accentuated by the homeland system, an issue I explore at length elsewhere.¹⁹ However, the Ndebele's fighting spirit did not simply dissipate when the Bantustans were

¹⁷ Interview, Madimetja Percy Nyadlo, Bakenberg, Mokopane, 14 October 2000; Interview, William Lesiba Molomo, Mamelodi, Pretoria, 02 March 2001; Interview, Gojela Peter Kekana, Mošate, Valtyn, Mokopane, 29 December 2003.

¹⁸ The main early publications are Ziervogel, D. 1959. *A grammar of Northern Transvaal Ndebele*. Pretoria: Van Schaik; Notes on the noun classes of Swati and Ndebele. 1948. *African Studies* 7 (2-3), June-September: 59-69. In recent years, Ziervogel's book has become an inspiration and tangible evidence for the Northern Ndebele linguists and nationalists that their mother tongue can and should be written. Apart from these two publications, there were a few earlier attempts by Van Warmelo's African researchers to write down the stories they collected for the Native Affairs Department's Ethnological Section. Some of these writers preferred to jot down the stories they collected in the Northern Ndebele language rather than in Northern Sotho, perhaps as proof even back then that the language could be standardised like other written indigenous languages. These stories form part of the manuscripts that constitute the Van Warmelo Collection in the national archives. Eucharius Ledwaba, Sethosa, Jonathan M. Maraba, and C.M. Mokgohlwe are some of these researchers (discussed fully in chapter three). While they wrote most of their stories in Northern Sotho, some made an attempt to write in *Sindebele*. This perhaps points to the fact that the desire for the language to be put down in written form is not as recent as it appears. From the 1960s onwards this work was carried on by more literate people, especially schoolteachers in the different Ndebele communities in the north. When Lesiba William Molomo, a schoolteacher in the township of Mamelodi in Pretoria, joined the Ndebele nationalist movement in the late 1960s, he was more enthusiastic about the development of the language than the politics of unity with the Southern Transvaal Ndebele. Aphane recalls how, upon assuming the leadership position in the Ndebele nationalist political organisation, Molomo almost immediately tried to reorient the organisation away from the immediate problem of ethnic unity to the language struggle. See Interview, Maesela William Aphane, Mamelodi Township, Pretoria, 05 March 2005.

¹⁹ Lekgoathi, S.P. 2003. Chiefs, migrants and Northern Ndebele ethnicity in the context of surrounding homeland politics, 1965-1978. *African Studies* 62 (1): 53-77.

abolished. Molomo has this to say about what drove him to participate in the language struggle:

This feeling of Ndebele consciousness, the one about our desire to speak our own language and so on, was brought about by the creation of the homelands. Yes. It was brought about by the homeland system. That was because some people took it for granted that simply because they were the *Bapedi* and they had a written language, we [the Ndebele because we only had a spoken language] are nothing. We are nothing! In other words, we are going to dwindle ... Ndebele consciousness was strengthened by domination.²⁰

In fact, the flames were rekindled by the recognition of eleven official languages *excluding* Northern Ndebele. That perhaps explains why, to this day, Molomo has remained an ardent advocate of his mother tongue, the Northern *Sindebele* language, and a sharp critic of South Africa's current language policy. Now an elderly man, he is as dedicated to the codification of the language as he was when he was still a young, energetic teacher and an ethnic nationalist organiser. Together with a group of the new educated elite (mainly schoolteachers), from different Ndebele communities in the countryside, Molomo is presently organising seminars and workshops for the development of the language. By doing this, he hopes that the language will gain recognition as a written language, and that it will be introduced in those schools in which the majority of children have Northern Ndebele as their mother tongue. In his study of black church leadership in the northern parts of the country, M.S.J. Ledwaba hints that there has been significant "progress" in the Mašašane area through the activities of the head of one of the local schools.²¹ Molomo has single-handedly masterminded the art of agitating and petitioning PANSALB to put in place concrete steps for the development of the language, particularly since the dissemination of Professor Wilkes' findings. However, although a committee dealing specifically with the Ndebele language issue has been formed to look into the grievances of the Northern Ndebele nationalists, so far there has been a

²⁰ Interview, William Lesiba Molomo, Mamelodi Township, Pretoria, 02 March 2001.

²¹ Ledwaba, M.S.J. 2004. The development of indigenous leadership in the Church of the Province of Southern Africa, with special reference to the diocese of St. Mark the Evangelist. Ph.D. Thesis, University of Pretoria: 51.

marked lack of activity on the part of the authorities.²² Wilkes attributes this lack of progress to

[t]he perception prevailing among language planners and other decision makers that... [Northern Ndebele] language is a variant form of Southern Ndebele and that consequently it will be in the best interest of both these languages if they are harmonised into a single unified language.²³

There are several other local linguists who have played a role in the language struggle. Percy Nyadlo, another elderly language advocate and schoolteacher from Matebeleng (the place of the Ndebele) in Bakenberg (northwest of Mokopane), claims to have written several studies covering folktales, oral traditions, and Northern Ndebele customs.²⁴ In his own words,

It was in 1969 when I started this Ndebele issue because when I was growing up this issue had always concerned me and I noticed that the elderly men in my community spoke a purer type of *Sindebele*. Yes, and they really loved their language and they were also wondering why their language was not being taught in the schools. So, even now I still have my first books in which I wrote down this language but I don't quite remember where exactly I stored them ... Yes, that is where I began to document a sort of *Sindebele* grammar with them [the elderly people]. I documented a lot of things including the history, showing where we originated from and how we left and where we went ... Alright, I walked that solitary road getting information from the old men in the area where I was a teacher, until in 1975 when I posted a manuscript that I had written to Van Schaik [Publishers] with the title "Ndebele Grammar". They returned it and said, "No, it looks exactly like Professor Ziervogel's ... We cannot publish two things that look alike."²⁵

²² Interview, William Lesiba Molomo, Mamelodi Township, Pretoria, 02 March 2001.

²³ Wilkes, A. 2001. Northern and Southern Ndebele – why harmonization will not work. *South African journal of African Languages* 21 (3): 1.

²⁴ Interview, Madimetja Percy Nyadlo, Bakenberg, Limpopo Province, 14 October 2000.

²⁵ Ibid.

This negative response from Van Schaik did not, however, discourage Nyadlo in his quest. He persisted in his research and writing until his first encounter with members of NANO at one of their meetings in the north. After that encounter, Nyadlo worked with even more determination and energy to establish the language as a written language.²⁶

Gojela Peter Kekana, a prominent Northern Ndebele cultural activist from the village of Valtyn in Mokopane, a member of NANO and a teacher at one of the local primary schools, has had an interest in the history of his community since childhood:

From when I was very young I lived and spent a lot of time with old men ... some of them have died...even elderly women ... They used to relate the stories. But I often took initiative in enquiring from them. If there was anything historical bothering me I would try to find out what happened and so forth. Why was it that there was no church here? Why is it that we don't have schools in our community? Then they would explain and say: "My child, here we didn't have schools for these reasons ... You see, the *Mandebele* never wanted to have anything to do with the church. They didn't want to have white people near them because they feared that they would take away their land" ... Now that thing, this hostility towards the churches, *wekhethu* (addressed to the interviewer, meaning "my next of kin", or "relative"), or the rejection of missionaries, in my opinion shows the political savvy of those elderly men back then. I am very grateful to them. This *Sindebele* language, you would not be sitting here with me right now expressing ourselves in it ... White people often imposed mission stations upon the royal families. And by imposing it upon the royal family they destroyed *Sindebele* completely. They destroyed it. This tendency, of rejecting what we call mission station in this community, in my view, was the best thing that could have ever happened; those elderly men were very intelligent. As I speak now you would not be here with me had it not been for their resistance. We would not even have any knowledge of *Sindebele* ... When I was growing up I found myself developing a deep appreciation of traditional things.²⁷

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Interview, Gojela Peter Kekana, Mošate, Valtyn Village, Mokopane, 29 December 2003.

It was because of Kekana's strong identification with his Ndebeleness, and notably with the distinctive Northern *Sindebele* language, that he became more involved in the cultural activities of his community in the 1980s. When, in the late 1980s, Isabel Hofmeyr conducted her doctoral research on the stories of the 1854 Boer siege of the Kekana at the cave of Gwaša, she employed Kekana as one of the local interviewers.²⁸ This inspired Kekana to conduct further research on the conflicts with the Boers and the pre-colonial history of the area. Working independently, Kekana recorded these local oral histories collected from the elderly people and created a personal archive. He even contacted the local town museum to gain access to its collection of historical works on relationships between the Afrikaners and the local African communities.²⁹

In 1997, Kekana became more directly involved in the Northern Ndebele nationalist movement. This started with his collaboration with a few other Northern Ndebele-speaking teachers "in forcefully introducing Northern *Sindebele* at the local Magemi Primary School without the approval of the provincial government officials".³⁰ Gojela and his colleagues apparently translated the first grade African language (Northern Sotho) syllabus into his mother tongue in an attempt to meet the needs of the Northern Ndebele learners at the school. The parents had apparently been consulted prior to the decision to introduce the language and they were extremely enthusiastic about the idea of Northern Ndebele being launched as a language in the schools – provided the teachers supplied the children with suitable books.³¹ However, these efforts came to nothing once the learners had passed first grade and could not progress to the next grade level to learn the language. Government officials "insisted that they should be taught thoroughly in Northern Sotho in Grade Two".³² This did not, however, dampen the enthusiasm of the ethnic nationalists; they continued to pursue the matter without any tangible monetary assistance from government.

Nyadlo took a parallel initiative in the Bakenberg area. Nyadlo focused his energies on Malemocha Primary School, the local school where

²⁸ The informant is only identified as Peter Kekana in the acknowledgements section of Hofmeyr's book. See Hofmeyr, I. 1993. *We spend our years as a tale that is told: oral historical narrative in a South African chieftdom*. Johannesburg: Heinemann. (p. xv)

²⁹ Interview, Gojela Peter Kekana, Mošate, Valtyn Village, Mokopane, 29 December 2003.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

he in fact taught.³³ Initially, he had to contend with widespread hostility on the part of his fellow teachers. He attributed their resentment to the fear instilled in them by the Bantustan administration of Phatudi in 1977. Chief Dennis Langa and some of his headmen in the Mapela-Bakenberg region had confronted the administration in that year demanding their Ndebele identity. Phatudi's response was: "If you want Ndebele identity, pack up your belongings and relocate to Mahlangu's land (Kwa-Ndebele)." Almost seventeen years later (1995), the wound had still not yet healed. Nonetheless, in that same year, Nyadlo joined NANO and started mobilising people in the area for the recognition of Northern *Sindebele*. Many people still feared that they would be forced to leave the area:

Many teachers are still afraid because they came of age under the dominance of *Sesotho*, when everywhere you went there was a general belief that *Sindebele* is nothing. Now, right now if you start saying to them *Sindebele* is a separate language that warrants recognition, they tend to be overwhelmed by this deep-seated fear and their reaction is that this thing can't possibly happen ... At Malemocha School when I first introduced the issue of *Sindebele* language, there was no cooperation among us. Yes, to such an extent that it seemed we were going to split into two factions. But the strange thing was that the non-Ndebele teachers, such as those from Matlala, were the ones who supported me. They supported me. Yes. But those who were Ndebele in terms of their history and culture did not want to have anything to do with this. I remember one day when I translated a *Sesotho* Christian hymn called "*Re ya go boka morena*" (We praise you, Lord). So, I translated the hymn into *Sindebele* and informed the children that the following day we were going to teach other learners how to sing it in *Sindebele*. Indeed, we printed the hymn and gave each learner a copy. Well, I noticed that some teachers were antagonistic, and they influenced some of the learners to be resentful.³⁴

The antagonism only dissipated after Nyadlo and other Northern Ndebele nationalists flew from the local airport to Johannesburg (now O.R. Tambo International airport) to discuss the status of their language with government

³³ Interview, Madimetja Percy Nyadlo, Bakenberg Village, Mokopane area, 14 October 2000.

³⁴ Ibid.

officials.³⁵ In a country where boarding an aeroplane is associated with the most affluent and privileged, this demonstrated to all and sundry the elevated status of this marginal language, and its advocates began to command a certain amount of respect and envy.

Of course, flying from Polokwane to Johannesburg to meet government officials did not mark the end of problems experienced by the Northern Ndebele nationalists. In the pioneering workshops to develop the language held at the University of Pretoria and locally at Mokopane, for example, the participants had to make enormous personal financial sacrifices to get the process started. Gojela Kekana recalls:

Our initial workshops did not involve PANSALB. We often dug deep into our own pockets. For years we have been going up and down pooling our financial resources together to hire transport to go there [to Pretoria]. When we arrived there we would buy our own food. Yes. It was only after a while that we became aware that PANSALB could help us out. We often held our workshops at Mokopane College and those who came from remote areas would be provided with accommodation there. We had breakfast and dinner. Those who came from faraway places used to sleep there...many times. We even held some of our workshops at Park Hotel in town [Mokopane]. That is where we often went to discuss orthography and spelling of Northern Ndebele language. This booklet that says PANSALB and so forth (*holding a copy in his hand*) is one of the products of the workshops. We often spent several weeks at the University of Pretoria. The workshops involved teachers' organizations from around here at Mokopane, Kalkspruit, Mašašane, Sebitiela, Mapela, Tiberius, and other places. The idea was that those who attended these workshops would spread the message in their own communities.³⁶

PANSALB organised a number of workshops in consultation with NANO, where people with an interest in the development and standardisation of the Northern Ndebele language were invited. One of these meetings was held from 6 to 8 December 2000, at Mokopane College of Education in Mahwereng. At the time, NANO was already agitating vociferously for official

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Interview, Gojela Peter Kekana, Mošate, Valtyn Village, Mokopane, 29 December 2003.

recognition of the North Ndebele language and its introduction into the schools, particularly in the Limpopo and Northwest provinces. In these areas, the Northern Ndebele people constituted a significant proportion of the local communities. The organisation has been quite concerned by the fact that many Ndebele children have been compelled to study either North Sotho or Tswana as a mother tongue at school, which has had the effect of rapidly facilitating the Sotho-isation or Tswana-isation processes and has encouraged the apparent demise of Ndebele culture. In fact, the December 2000 workshop was not the first of its kind. The first initiative, also under the auspices of NANO, took place as early as 1996. However, the organisers were unable to sustain the momentum for a number of reasons, including a lack of financing and poor organisation.³⁷

A Zulu language expert, Professor Wilkes, was in fact the facilitator of the December 2000 workshop. Some of my informants credit him with playing a key role in standardising the Swazi language and South Ndebele language. In him the Northern Ndebele activists – such as Molomo, Nyadlo, Kekana and many others – saw a potentially powerful ally who had the expertise that was a prerequisite in legitimating their claims about the uniqueness of Northern Ndebele language.³⁸ Financially, PANSALB underwrote the December 2000 workshop, and³⁹ this workshop attracted participants from different Ndebele communities in the Northern Province. Over one hundred participants attended the workshop. Many came from areas such as gaMašašane, Mahwelereng, and Mošate (Valtyn). A few teachers came from the Bakenberg area, but the Ledwaba and Zebediela areas (also predominantly Northern Ndebele areas) had no representatives at the workshop. Molomo could not hide his disappointment about this lack of representation from these two areas, particularly in view of the fact that the two areas have been specifically invited to send representatives. Perhaps the attendance level was indicative of the relative strength or weakness of NANO mobilisation in some areas, as well as the degree of enthusiasm (or lack thereof) for a uniquely North Ndebele identity.

PANSALB's sponsorship of the workshop is particularly interesting in the light of the stance it held as late as 1999, namely, that Northern Ndebele failed to meet the requirements that qualified it as a language in its own right. At the time, PANSALB classified Northern Ndebele as a dialect, but because of the pressure exerted by NANO, they were compelled to commission a

³⁷ Interview, Lesiba William Molomo, Mamelodi Township, Pretoria, 02 March 2001.

³⁸ Interview, Madimetja Percy Nyadlo, Bakenberg Village, Mokopane, 14 October 2000.

³⁹ Interview, Gojela Peter Kekana, Mošate, Valtyn Village, Mokopane, 29 December 2003.

study to establish whether *Sindebele* was a dialect or a language. Apparently some of the qualities that distinguish a language from a dialect are the numbers of people using the language or dialect on a regular basis, and the extent of its distinctiveness from other languages around it. Lovhedu was cited as a prime example of a dialect that paralleled *Sindebele*.

At the December 2000 workshop, Professor Wilkes facilitated almost all discussions, dividing the *Sindebele* word categories into “nouns, pronouns, the qualificative, predictive, descriptive, conjunctive, and the interjective”. He would start by writing a word in an Nguni language, especially Zulu, and then ask the participants what it was called in *Sindebele*. He would then ask for synonyms and for suggestions about how the word should be written in *Sindebele*. Because of its minority status in a predominantly North Sotho area, *Sindebele* has unavoidably borrowed many Sotho words, and this discovery often caused some of the more conservative participants in the workshop a certain amount of chagrin.

There were visible divisions between the participants who acknowledged and accepted these Sotho influences in the language, and those who sought to purge *Sindebele* of those influences. Nyadlo aligned himself with the latter group. He argued that *Sindebele* was an Nguni language, and that the workshop should strive towards resuscitating the language to its 1930s level, purging it of Sotho borrowings and going back to its original distinctiveness:

A language which has been marginalised for a long time tends to change or deteriorate. Right now the *Sindebele* language that is spoken here today even you can hear that no, this is just a different thing altogether. It is a mixture which you can't understand where it comes from. So, we must get the right words and then – let me say I'm doing a sort of – I'm busy doing research on the terminology. This is in preparation for the next stage of writing so that when that commences the people should not be going this way or that way. They should know that these are the relevant words to use.⁴⁰

In order to restore the “purity” of the language, Nyadlo conducted research which involved interviewing elderly people in the Northern Ndebele communities in the Mokopane area to find out which uniquely Ndebele words had

⁴⁰ Interview, Madimetja Percy Nyadlo, Bakenberg Village, Mokopane, 14 October 2000.

been phased out of the daily language in favour of Sotho words.⁴¹ On the side of local intellectuals who have accepted the Sotho influences, and the fact that Northern *Sindebele* is a distinct language from Southern *IsiNdebele*, are individual activists such as Gojela Kekana:

We are often incorrectly lumped together with the Southern Ndebele. It is often said that there can only be one Ndebele language to which all of us – North and South Ndebele – should belong. That is not correct because we [Northern Ndebele] separated from those people a long time ago, not recently. Furthermore, their culture and customs have diverged from ours. Their norms and values – I don't know how to put it – but even the kinds of traditional games that youngsters play are totally different. You see? Even their traditional music is not like ours. But they are our people – we share common origins. It is in the same way that the Batswana, Southern Sotho and Northern Sotho are part of the same family. They originated from the same *n'gudu* [tree trunk, meaning source]. When we say “Ndebele” they also say “Ndebele.” We originate from the same source. We were never forced to belong to the Manala and the Nzunza Ndebele ... Even the language is no longer the same. For example, they say “*thoma*” (start) and we say “*kxwala*” ... Like the Zulu they say “*izinkomo*” (cows) and we say “*tikxomo*” ... That is why we are saying that there should be two recognised Ndebele languages – Southern Ndebele and Northern Ndebele.⁴²

Far from speaking with one voice, the Northern Ndebele nationalist organisation represents different individuals and groups of intellectuals who have conflicting strategies for attaining their major goal: the official recognition of their language.

Oral traditions, memories of the Makapansgat siege, and the mobilisation of Northern Ndebele ethnicity

Besides language, memories of the Makapansgat siege were yet another living tradition that the Northern Ndebele ethnic nationalists invoked in their

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Interview, Gojela Peter Kekana, Mošate Valtyn Village, Mokopane, 29 December 2003.

struggle for the recognition of *Sindebele*. It has been over 150 years since the brutal siege of Makapansgat (known by locals as legolo la Gwaša) in present-day Limpopo Province took place.⁴³ Situated on the farm Makapansgat about 16 km northeast of the town of Mokopane, the cave of Gwaša was the setting for the gruesome massacre of approximately 3,000 people by the Boer commandoes in September 1854.⁴⁴ The victims were the subjects of the chiefdom of the Kekana Ndebele chief Mughombani (in *Sindebele*) or Mokopane (in *Sesotho*), or "Makapaan" in corrupted Dutch. To this day the cave has been treated as a sacred site and holds a very special position in the hearts and minds of most Kekana Ndebele people who are descended from Mokopane.

The Gwaša cave is one of several caves situated in the Mokopane Valley (or Makapansgat Valley), which has a reputation internationally among archaeologists and palaeontologists for its rich fossil deposits and unique record of hominid habitation and evolution dating back to over three million years ago. It is also an important cultural and political symbol in the history of both the Kekana Ndebele chiefdom of Mokopane and Afrikaner nationalists. The Gwaša cave in particular has been the most pivotal icon in the mythology of Afrikaner nationalism and an important heritage site since the 1930s. Often perceived as the Transvaal counterpart of the battle of Blood River, where the Boers overpowered the Zulu warriors in Natal, the Makapansgat siege has always been given a place on other monuments, as well as in a series of contemporary popular magazines — such as *Die Huisgenoot* and *Die Brandwag* — and in books, public memorials, and even recently in magazines, booklets and brochures targeting the tourist market.⁴⁵ For example, the young Paul Kruger is depicted on one of the four reliefs at the bottom of Kruger's statue in Church Square, Pretoria, carrying the lifeless body of Piet Potgieter from Makapansgat. Each relief represents an incident

⁴³ "Makapansgat" is an Afrikaans name meaning "the cave of Makapan". Makapan is a Dutch corruption of the name of the Kekana Ndebele chief Mughombane which, in turn, goes by its popular Sotho variety, Mokopane.

⁴⁴ A researcher from the Archaeology Department at the University of the Witwatersrand, Amanda Esterhuysen, is currently conducting research of the material cultural in the cave of Gwaša. Her preliminary findings indicate that the number of over 3000 dead is probably accurate.

⁴⁵ A considerable portion of the article entitled "Caves of antiquity" is devoted to a discussion of the 1854 siege looking at the reasons for, and outcomes of, the incidents. Like most discussions of the siege, the article tends to reproduce Afrikaner myths that reinforce notions of African barbarism and nefariousness while invoking the apparent authenticity and purity of oral tradition. See, for example, The Northern Province Tourism Board. *Makapansgat: Northern Province South Africa*, Reprinted from *Getaway* magazine (no date).

in the life of the President of the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek (ZAR).⁴⁶ Rather than rehashing this myth, I will examine here the different and sometimes contradictory oral traditions told by local people about the 1854 massacre and contemporary songs about this historical episode and the position of the Northern Ndebele people in post-apartheid South Africa. Like their language, the Northern Ndebele's oral traditions have not yet been securely institutionalised in a pantheon of national heritage sites, although possibilities exist for them to find such a place.⁴⁷ Note that the fact that these stories reveal many contradictions should not be seen as grounds for their dismissal as sheer fabrication.

There is some scholarly literature on the 1854 Gwaša cave siege.⁴⁸ The most authoritative remains Isabel Hofmeyr's book (*We spend our years as a tale that is told*, 1993). Hofmeyr is a professor in the African Literature Department at the University of the Witwatersrand. The siege incident properly fits into a larger story of the repeated Boer invasions into the Northern Transvaal, which started in the 1840s. The Boers left the Cape because of their dissatisfaction with the British administration of the Cape Colony; they were particularly disgruntled by the British administration's abolition of slavery (in 1833). Included in their Trek, however, was a number of individuals who were attracted by the abundance of game, especially ivory, in the northern hinterland of South Africa.⁴⁹ After a couple of altercations with Mzilikazi's regiments, the Boer settlers, with the help of their Griqua and Barolong or Bakgatla auxiliaries, believed themselves to be at last in control of the Transvaal once they had forced Mzilikazi to flee across the Limpopo in 1837. The defeat of Mzilikazi had an important bearing upon the attitude of the white frontiersmen (even though their occupation of the Northern Transvaal failed to take root instantly, given that they were met with violent resistance from indigenous groups well into the 1890s). The Boers' attitude was that all the land previously ruled by the Ndebele king was now subject to their authority. And since they were in possession of guns, they were quite quick to use them in their enforcement of Boer authority.

⁴⁶ Hofmeyr (1993: 139)

⁴⁷ Movement towards institutionalising the perspectives of local people was made in the recent declaration of Makapansgat, now called Mokopane's Cave, as a national heritage site. Applications were also submitted early in 2003 to have the site recognised as a world heritage site (WHS), and the Cave has now been given that status.

⁴⁸ See, for example, Jackson, A.O. 1983. *The Ndebele of Langa: ethnological publications, no. 54*. Republic of South Africa, Department of Co-operation and Development; Naidoo, J. 1989. *Tracking down historical myths: eight South African case studies*. Johannesburg: Ad Donker.

⁴⁹ Hofmeyr (1993: 109)

The emigrant Boers' perceptions of Africans were largely dictated by their experiences and practices of slavery in the Cape and on the frontier; not surprisingly, the Boers tried to revive this institution in the interior. The Ndebele chiefdoms were just some of the communities in the Transvaal that the Boers started to raid for slaves (because they communities lived along the main routes to the far north). Not only did they take slaves, but the Boer invaders ignored African claims or rights to land and land is, of course, a critical means of livelihood in pre-colonial societies. Consequently, conflicts soon arose when the Boers arrived in the Waterberg region.⁵⁰ By 1854 white settlements had been established in the southern and eastern parts of the Transvaal. In the north there was also Schoemansdal and traffic increased between the towns. The route from Schoemansdal to the southern settlements passed through Makapanspoort near Potgietersrus/Mokopane. The old road through the Strydpoort Mountains, which the white travellers had used in their trek to the north since 1837, was abandoned in favour of the shorter one through Makapanspoort.⁵¹ The capital of Mokopane, chief of the Kekana Ndebele, was situated on what is now the farm Pruissen 48-KS, just east of the new route. Lekalakala, who was one of Mokopane's Sotho headmen, lived near Sefakaola Hill to the west of the route. The new path passed right through the territory of the Kekana Ndebele chief Mokopane, thus providing a perfect setting for what has been dubbed, in Afrikaner historiography, as the "1854 massacres".

The massacres involved 28 Boers – including women and children – who were brutally murdered and severely mutilated in three separate incidents that appeared to be a well-orchestrated plot carried out in late September 1854. Fourteen of them were killed by the Kekana of chief Mokopane – twelve at "the Lion's bush" (*esikgweni sengwenyama*) or Moorddrift about 11km south of the town of Mokopane on the Mogalakwena River. Two Boers were killed at Mokopane's capital at Chidi on the farm Pruissen 48-KS. The remaining fourteen met their gruesome deaths at the hands of the Langa under Nongumbane (Mankopane in Sotho) at the hill of Fothane, known as *Moordkoppie* in Afrikaans. The group massacred at Fothane consisted of Hermanus Philippus Potgieter, his two sons, his three sons-in-law, and their wives and children. A man of doubtful character, Hermanus Potgieter was a younger brother of Andries Hendrik Potgieter, leader of the second party to

⁵⁰ The ZAR's 'Volksraad' formulated a policy in 1853 that stipulated that "no one who is not a recognised citizen shall have any right to possess immovable property in freehold". In Boer Republics, non-whites were not recognised as citizens.

⁵¹ See Loubser, J.H.N. 1981. Ndebele archaeology of the Pietersburg area. MA thesis, Johannesburg, University of the Witwatersrand: 17.

leave the Cape Colony in 1836, and one of the commandant-generals of the Soutpansberg region. Early written sources suggest that, in stark contrast to his highly respected elder brother, Hermanus did not belong to what can only be called the “better class” of settlers. He had been on the frontiers of civilisation since his earliest youth, first in the Cape Province and then in the Transvaal. Not only was he an elephant hunter, but he was also a man who made outrageous demands on African polities for tribute and raided them for slave children.⁵² These depredations, as well as the incessant arrival of white settlers in their part of the country, were fast becoming a threat to the sovereignty of Mokopane’s and Mankopane’s polities; hence the retaliatory attacks and the resultant killing of the 28 Boers.⁵³

By these actions, the two Ndebele chiefs had hoped to scare white settlers away and check their influx into the area. As it turned out, however, the opposite happened. Boer reprisals followed. The local Boers asked for help from Pretoria to reinforce the local commando. This assistance took some time to arrive, which gave Mokopane and his people sufficient time to take refuge in the cave of Gwaša. Since their arrival in the area the people of Mokopane had used these caves on numerous occasions previously when facing similar attacks. The commando from Pretoria only arrived late in October and, on the 25th of that same month, the two commandos, assisted by some Kgatla auxiliaries, unsuccessfully stormed the caves. The Boers then tried to blast the roof off the dolomite caves, and when this too failed, they placed a large quantity of wood at the mouth of the cave and set it alight in order to suffocate those inside the cave. This also failed. The Boers then laid siege to the cave, and tightened their hold on it considerably to prevent people escaping by night. About two weeks later, the besieged people began to surrender, by which time multitudes had already died of starvation and dehydration.⁵⁴

⁵² Jackson gives additional motives for the murder of Hermanus Potgieter and his party. One story he tells is that Potgieter came across the youngest brother of the Kekana chief Mokopane, after the latter had killed a buffalo calf while hunting. It is said that Hermanus flew into a rage and insulted him for having killed a calf instead of a full-grown animal, and thereupon shot him dead. Another story is that a young man ridiculed Hermanus Potgieter’s son and that the father lost his temper and shot him. A third story is that he aroused the anger of the Ndebele by shooting a big snake which happened to accommodate the spirit of a deceased Kekana chief in a tree near the headquarters of the Kekana chief Mokopane. For further reading, see Jackson 1983: 14-15. See also Hofmeyr (1993: 110).

⁵³ The murder of 28 people was a major shock and setback for the Boer settlers in the Transvaal, who probably numbered in the hundreds.

⁵⁴ Hofmeyr, (1993: 110)

Before we turn to a discussion of how local people account for the siege in their own words, some general remarks are in order. The first is that the most coherent oral traditions of the siege are invariably those collected from individuals associated with the ruling lineage. This fact can be explained by their vested interest in retaining memories of the siege because this reinforces the legitimacy of their claims to chieftainship. Although "commoners" or non-royals have a general knowledge of the 1854 siege, their grasp of its specific details tends to be limited and quite often vague, especially among people living in the areas lying outside the chief's capital.⁵⁵ Secondly, the stories that local people tell often represent an assortment of oral traditions mingled with Afrikaner nationalist interpretations. Needless to say, these interpretations have been handed on, over the decades, via a number of media, including school textbooks. Historically, many of the "expert" informants on the siege story had spent a few years in the Bantu education system and had thus imbibed the Afrikaner nationalist version of the past. Thirdly, some of these "oral historians" have in fact collected written ethnographic accounts of their people. In many rural communities, in the context of ongoing disputes over succession to chieftainship, some literate "local historians" have visited local and national archives in search of material that they have used to bolster up or dispute claims to chieftainship and/or land. It should thus not be assumed that the oral traditions collected from local people that we use as raw data for the historical reconstruction of the local histories and heritage sites are somehow untainted by written accounts. Nor should we assume that these oral traditions are somehow "pure" or authentic, although they do provide important insights and new perspectives that are only recently being recorded. We should also bear in mind that, sometimes, stories that local informants claim were passed orally from their ancestors have in fact been taken from textbooks and other documentary sources. We also need to bear in mind the fact that there sometimes occurs a creative combination of oral and written accounts of an event.

Turning to the issue of the siege at the cave of Gwaša itself, there are numerous versions of events, even within the Kekana Ndebele community of Valtyn (Mošate), the direct descendants of the survivors of the siege. At the core of these various versions is the issue of Boer encroachment on local people's land and resources. Kenneth Kekana, a ninety-three-year old man

⁵⁵ Some of the non-royals interviewed were communities living in Mokopane Valley itself, the vast majority of whom are not descendants of the Kekana, but later arrivals who came to the area as farm labourers.

who is regarded as an authority on the subject of the history of the Kekana (he was eighty-nine years old at the time of the interview in 2001), begins the story with a discussion of the "expulsion" of the Boers from the Cape following the British takeover of the Cape at the end of the 1700s. When the Boers arrived in the Northern Transvaal in the 1830s and 1840s, the Kekana chieftdom was already established at Pruisen under chief Setšwamadi (Mokopane II). Conflict ensued when a group of Boer settlers shot dead the chief's son on the banks of the Mogalakwena River near a place now known as Moorddrift. The Boers who were camping at Moorddrift came across the Kekana hunting party carrying a young buffalo (*inyathi*). They demanded to know who the leader of the party was and the group pointed at the chief's son. Suddenly, and without provocation, the Boers shot him dead. The hunting party carried the corpse and the carcass of the young buffalo back home, and conflict ensued.⁵⁶ This oral story shows remarkable similarities with the oral traditions contained in Jackson's study (from the NAD's Ethnological Section).

The issue of the killing of a young Kekana man seems to speak directly to the problem of Boer encroachment on the land of the Kekana. Not only did the Boers appropriate the territory of the Kekana, but they also arbitrarily imposed new laws on the people who lived in the area, laws that were totally foreign to their way of life. . These laws included prohibitions on game hunting, particularly of young game. Given that it is highly unlikely that the Boer trekkers of the mid-nineteenth century would have been knowledgeable about conservationism, the account of the killing of the young buffalo seems to stem more from the conservationist policies rigorously implemented in the reserves and "Trust" farms by the segregationist government in the 1930s and 1940s, and by the apartheid government in the 1950s to the late 1970s. It is probable, then, that these government policies formed a major part of the consciousness of the elderly storytellers.

Nevertheless, the murder of the chief's son as a catalyst for conflict between the Ndebele and the Boers is corroborated in other oral traditions I collected. In the rendition of a renowned female storyteller, Lucky Kekana, the young man killed by the Boers was the son of the local headman (*nduna*) Ntata. The young, hungry herdsman could not resist the smell of "braai pork" (barbeque pork) coming from a group of Boer hunters camping on the banks of the Mogalakwena River.⁵⁷ His only sin was the courage to ask for food from the Boers. Another informant, Gojela Peter Kekana, a local teacher and

⁵⁶ Interview, Kenneth Kekana, Valtyn Village, Mokopane, 19 December 2001.

⁵⁷ Interview, Lucky Kekana, Valtyn Village, Mokopane, 18 December 2001.

also member of the ruling lineage, refers to the young man who was shot dead as the son of the councillor (*mokgomana*). He was apparently returning from a hunting expedition in the company of other boys and their dogs.⁵⁸ The latter story supports Kenneth's version of the story as far as the issue of the young buffalo is concerned. Despite minor variations, however, all traditions centre on the fact that the violent and bloodthirsty Boers spilt innocent royal blood, and all versions of the story refer to the Boers' lack of hospitality. According to Lucky Kekana's version, the incident so infuriated Headman Ntata that he retaliated by ordering his *mabutho* (warriors) to teach the Boers a lesson. The warriors killed the Boers except for a little boy and a girl whose hair they decorated in a style called *ndlopo* by Ndebele speakers and *topo* by North Sotho/Pedi speakers. They then smeared red ochre on the whole of their bodies, and sent them back to the Boer community.⁵⁹

Kenneth's account is different. He insists that Chief Setšwamadi (Mokopane II), outraged by his son's killing, sent a messenger to report the incident to the neighbouring Langa Ndebele Chief, Mankopane, who was experiencing similar problems with another group of Boers. The two chiefs decided to teach the Boers a lesson by launching a simultaneous attack. On the day that the Kekana attacked the Moorddrift group, the Langa attacked the group that was giving them so many problems in the area concerned.⁶⁰ This is corroborated by Gojela's account. The Kekana group killed almost all the Boers in the group except for the young woman whose life was spared so that she could convey the message to others about the fate of her people. But before they let her go, they dressed her in Ndebele clothing, gave her a typical Ndebele haircut called *ndlopo* and adorned her with red ochre.⁶¹ Gojela, on the other hand, is adamant that the Ndebele warriors massacred everyone in the Boer group, except for the women and children. Again, they shaved their heads and smeared them with ochre before letting them go.⁶²

On seeing this, the Boers were infuriated, thinking that the children (in Lucky's version), the young woman (in Kenneth's account), or the women and children (in Gojela's rendition) had been skinned alive. In order to amplify the notion of African savagery, which justified harsh retributive acts, the Afrikaner account of the siege insists that one of the white women was skinned alive. This account is vigorously disputed by most Ndebele informants, including Gojela, who says, "She was never skinned alive contrary to

⁵⁸ Interview, Gojela Peter Kekana, Valtyn Village, Mokopane, 29 December 2003.

⁵⁹ Interview, Lucky Kekana, Valtyn Village, Mokopane, 18 December 2001.

⁶⁰ Interview, Kenneth Kekana, Valtyn Village, Mokopane, 19 December 2001.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Interview, Gojela Peter Kekana, Mošate, Valtyn Village, Mokopane, 29 December 2003.

what the Boers were saying then. No, they [Ndebele] never committed such a brutal act.”⁶³ Meanwhile Boer groups had already established settlements in other areas to the south, such as Haakdoring, Naboomspruit, Nylstroom, Warmbad, all the way to Pretoria. Along these communities the message was sent to the seat of government in Pretoria about the “massacres” at Moorddrift and Langa’s chiefdom. Pretoria sent a Boer commando with reinforcements on a punitive expedition which, in Lucky’s version of the story, Ntata’s warriors tried in vain to repel. In the process some Kekana people were killed but most fled to the chief’s capital from where the chief ordered everyone (young and old) to take refuge in the cave of Gwaša together with their personal possessions, and their livestock. The Boers came after them and, when they realised that the Kekana people were hiding in the huge cave, they (the Boers) laid siege to it for about a month.

Lucky Kekana insists that the heir to the throne of the Kekana was a five-month old baby, Mokopane III. His father, Setšwamadi, was well aware that the war was not turning out favourably for the chiefdom: his people had been besieged and he was acutely worried about their fate and he was, of course, particularly worried about the fate of his heir. Given all this, he called his subjects to a gathering in the cave and told them to surrender their children to the Boers. Since the majority of the subjects were reluctant to do as their chief instructed, Setšwamadi ordered Mokopane’s mother, carrying little Mokopane, out of the cave, upon which everybody else followed suit and duly surrendered their children to the Boers. The commander divided the children among the Boer commando to be used as indentures (*inboeksellinges*) or forced or captive labourers. They showed no mercy to the people who remained inside the cave; instead, the Boers piled wood at the mouth of the cave and set it on fire in order to burn or suffocate the inhabitants of the cave. Unsurprisingly, many people were burnt alive, together with their cattle, goats and other possessions. Others, however, managed to escape through underground tunnels leading into other caverns until they found a way to the neighbouring Kekana chiefdom of Zebediela, from which they had split several generations previously.⁶⁴ While it is hard to prove the accuracy of the story about the underground tunnels connecting the two chiefdoms, its details are important because they reveal the degree of ethnic solidarity and mobilisation by the culture entrepreneurs that was occurring at the time the research was undertaken.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Interview, Lucky Kekana, Valtyn Village, Mokopane, 18 December 2001.

Another issue that most versions agree upon relates to Kekana's killing of a Boer commandant-general, Piet Potgieter, the son of Andries Hendrik Potgieter, who had taken over this position from his father. The town of Potgietersrus (now called Mokopane), which was rebuilt in the 1890s, was to be named "Pietpotgietersrust" in his honour. Potgieter was shot dead by a Kekana marksman as he was trying to peep into the cave from the upper lip of the cave's mouth to see whether the fire had caught on inside the cave or to see if the Kekana people had started to suffocate from smoke inhalation. Instead, he fell into the cave itself. According to Gojela, this was a major blow to the Boers. However, the young Paul Kruger showed his strength and courage by descending down into the cave despite being repeatedly fired at by the armed Ndebele men. Gojela's story obviously resonates with the Afrikaner interpretation of events, an interpretation that has been immortalised in public history and popular publications. It is not unlikely that the informant either read this somewhere, or that he heard it being related second-hand by local elderly, but also literate, informants.

Although severely depleted and weakened, members of the Kekana Ndebele chiefdom who survived the siege reconstituted themselves into a community at Pruisen. Shortly afterwards, Setšwamadi himself died (apparently he deliberately poisoned himself). The chiefdom was then relocated further west to the fertile area around the hill called Sefakaola, which was part of the land taken away from the Lekalakala people (a Sotho group). The capital of the chiefdom was established on the summit of the hill. In the meantime, the Ndebele people, including the children who had been captured at the cave of Gwaša, had been divided among the Boers as booty and turned into indentured servants on farms alongside the Magaliesberg Mountains in the western Transvaal. This means that Mokopane, like other young captives, grew up on white farms. None of the Kekana people knew where they were. Although Setšwamadi's brother, Makute (also known as Magemi), took over as an acting chief, there was concern in the newly reconstituted Kekana chiefdom that there was no apparent heir, given Mokopane's abduction by the Boer forces. A search for him commenced almost fifteen years later with a view to avoiding a break in chiefly succession. Traditional healers (*tinyanga*) were called to the capital (*emošade*) to determine the direction they should take in their search for the boy. They claimed that he would be found if the search party went in the direction of De Wilt, the area around the Kgatla chiefdom of Mmakau near Brits in the North West. A group of men was sent to Mmakau where the Kgatla people showed them great hospitality and provided crucial leads about the whereabouts of Mokopane. According to Lucky's rendition of the story, the Ndebele men "stole" Mokopane and

brought him back to the chieftom where he took over the throne at the unlikely tender age of twelve years. In Kenneth's version, negotiations were entered into with the Boer owner of the young Mokopane (who had been given a Dutch name "Klaas") and after paying a hefty sum of compensation in the form of livestock and elephant tusks, his release was secured. The young Mokopane III, acculturated as he was, had to undergo Ndebele initiation together with young men of his age group before he could take over as chief. In short, the various traditions of the siege of Gwaša are hedged around with the politics of succession, and their emphasis is on the tenacity and resilience of chieftainship in spite of the destructive white encroachment on the land and culture of the indigenous people.

There are also conflicting accounts about the causes of the Kekana's defeat. Some claim that lack of access to water precipitated the surrender as people began to die of thirst or were shot down as they ran to the stream below. Others hold that there was a stream passing through the caves, but that the Boers diverted it in order to hasten Ndebele surrender. Yet others claim that water was in fact plentiful and it was disease that eventually killed people or drove them from the cave. Whatever the situation may have been, by 17 November Ndebele resistance had almost ceased and the Boers could enter the cave without being fired upon. By 21 November, M. W. Pretorius, leader of the Boer forces, "broke open his laager," partly to mount a punitive campaign against Mokopane's ally, Mankopane, and partly because the smell of rotting flesh had become overwhelming. While the full extent of the fatalities will never be known, Pretorius himself reported that 900 bodies lay in front of the caves. He estimated a further 3,000 to be inside. As far as booty was concerned, the Boers claimed to have taken 6,300 large and 1,200 small stock animals from the surrounding area. Together with the people taken as prisoners of war, the stock was divided among the commandos.⁶⁵ The Boers also found 450 kilograms of ivory in the cave and this was auctioned off. In short, the Kekana were definitely dealt a severe blow; that said, they had not been wiped out and nor were they totally defeated.

In the aftermath of the siege and the defeat of the Kekana, their capital relocated to the summit of the Sefakaola Hill further westward, but still within the vicinity of the Boer settlement. Mutual livestock raiding continued, but the Boers, despite their earlier victory in the siege, lacked the

⁶⁵ A similar sort of Boer plunder is recorded by Delius (1989) in the case of the defeat of the Ndzundza Ndebele chief, Nyabela. See, for example, Delius, P. 1989. The Ndzundza Ndebele: indenture and the making of ethnic identity, in *Holding their ground*, edited by P. Bonner et al. Johannesburg: Ravan.

numbers and military resources to impose their authority in a significant way.⁶⁶ The two sides remained embroiled in a form of cold war, the type of stalemate that was only broken in the 1890s when the British became involved and subordinated African polities to British concerns.

Having dealt with Mokopane, the Boers then went after his ally, Mankopane, who fared better on a defensive mountain stronghold, from where he repulsed Boer attacks. While the Boers by and large remained a relatively weak group unable to assert political hegemony in the area, the conflict in the region continued to bubble up and, in 1858, the Boers mounted another campaign against Mankopane. Ten years later, in 1868, the Boers, led by Paul Kruger, again turned on the chiefdom of Mokopane, but the chief's forces defeated them and sacked the village of Pietpotgietersrust. In 1870 the village was abandoned, and it was not until the 1890s that the Boers, with the assistance of the British, could claim anything like decisive authority over Ndebele communities in the region. In short, mutual hostility was a primary characteristic of interactions between Boers and the Ndebele. Oral traditions exist about this relationship, and these traditions are often used and manipulated by ethnic nationalists in their quest for the recognition of Ndebele ethnic consciousness.

Memory, song, and performance in the mobilisation of Northern Ndebele ethnicity

Beside language and oral traditions as important conduits for the preservation of heritage, there are other artistic forms that Northern Ndebele ethnic nationalists have increasingly employed as methods for transmitting critical information about their communities' history. Some ethnic nationalists in the Valtyn community, such as Gojela Peter Kekana, have been involved in forming musical choirs to promote awareness of heritage issues such as the Gwaša siege to advance Ndebele ethnic identity and solidarity among the dispersed Northern Ndebele groups, as well as to promote the struggle for recognition of the Northern Ndebele language as part of our national heritage. The emotional topic of the 1854 siege and the popularising memories of that episode are today being deployed strategically to promote the growth of the troubled and controversial cause of Northern Ndebele ethnic nationalism.

⁶⁶ Hofmeyr (1993: 44)

One such celebration took place on 24 September 2000 at Mošate Valtyn, which I had the privilege to attend as an invited guest.⁶⁷ The activities of the Heritage Day commemoration commenced at around 12:00 noon, most of which had a cultural bias, with concerns being raised about the erosion and rapid disappearance of Ndebele ways and language as a result of modern schooling. Several speakers urged the elderly to teach the younger generations about some of the old ways as a way of safeguarding Ndebele culture – the point was made that this culture was facing extinction. Since one of the major concerns of my project is to look at the content of the cultural message marketed by cultural entrepreneurs, I also paid close attention to the meanings behind the cultural performances that were on show. Young girls performed traditional songs and dances; a youth choir performed some choral music; women were dressed in what they perceived as “traditional Ndebele dress” (some people might have seen it as Pedi traditional dress) and entertained the audience with their traditional dances and songs. Young men beat drums and performed the traditional *tikqolo* dance. Calls were made through songs and performances for North Ndebele unity in Zebediela, Mokopane, Bakenberg, Mašašane, Hammanskraal and other areas. Most of the songs invoked the history of the struggle of the Ndebele people against Boer domination in the nineteenth century, putting emphasis on the suffering caused by the siege of 1854.

At the public function referred to above, a number of songs were performed in the medium of Northern *Sindebele*. Such performances often take place at public functions organised by the provincial government, including ceremonies for the installation of *dikgoši* (chiefs) in and around the Limpopo Province, at funerals of chiefs and ordinary people, and during contemporary awareness campaigns (e.g. “World Aids Day,” and “No Tobacco Day.”)⁶⁸ Kekana asserts that:

⁶⁷ Since the democratisation of South Africa after April 1994, 24 September has been declared a public holiday as a day of celebrating our cultural diversity. Cultural activities are organised at provincial level and the different cultural groups in each province commemorate the occasion at a central location. In the Northern Province celebrations often take place in Polokwane. However, in that year the Mokopane Ndebele, who were still mourning the recent death of their chief, decided to honour the occasion by secluding themselves in accordance with old customs and they held a separate commemoration at the chief’s place in Mošate. In a way, doing this served the Ndebele nationalists well, since they could use the occasion to vent out their frustrations at the apparent exclusion of the Northern Ndebele in the new South Africa and rouse up “nationalistic” feelings among attendees.

⁶⁸ Interview, Gojela Peter Kekana, Mošate Valtyn Village, Mokopane, 29 December 2003.

These youths are regularly called upon to perform. And they sing in *Sindebele*. All that we are trying to do is to revive this language using different means.... Right now we have more than forty songs in *Sindebele*, some gospel songs in *Sindebele*, as well as Ndebele cultural music ... I made an example and said to them: “Look at the Zulu where it is not only adults who sing and perform but also the youths. And you should always remember that you are not only doing this for yourselves but also for your children so that the next generations will find this *Sindebele* language having been preserved.”⁶⁹

Because of the nature of performance, singing has proved to be a more resilient and effective weapon, not only in the promotion of the uniquely Northern Ndebele language, but also in the much wider dissemination of knowledge about the story of the siege of Gwaša. The telling of the Gwaša story would have probably disintegrated to a point of uselessness if it had been entirely left to the already diluted medium of oral tradition. It is through songs and performances that calls are made for Northern Ndebele unity in Zebediela, Mokopane, Bakenberg, Mašašane, Hammanskraal and other areas. Most of the songs invoke the history of the Ndebele’s struggle against Boer domination in the nineteenth century, and especially the sufferings caused by the siege of 1854. Two examples will suffice:

Song transcript	Song translation
<i>Ligolweni la Gwaša (2X)</i>	At the cave of Gwaša (X2)
<i>Ngulapha bo-koko na bo-mkhulu bethu</i>	It is where our grandmothers and grandfathers
<i>Ba thobele khona</i>	Are sleeping
<i>Khumbulani, khumbulani</i>	Remember, remember
<i>Ligolweni laseGwaša</i>	The Cave of Gwaša
<i>Maburu, mbabambhi</i>	The Boers are evil
<i>Nge kubulala sichaba sokxe</i>	For killing the entire Ndebele nation

⁶⁹ Ibid.

*SeMandebele akaMughombani*⁷⁰

Of Mokopane

Another song, bearing more or less the same message and drawing upon the same lyrics as the one above, was performed to a different tune by a group of little girls whose ages ranged from about five to ten years of age; this shows the degree of ethnic mobilisation in the local community of Valtyn. The song goes as follows:

⁷⁰ Song performed at the Mokopane Heritage Day Commemoration by a group of youths (boys and girls), under the guidance of Gojela Peter Kekana, on the farm Makapansgat, 24 September 2000.

Song transcript

Ligohweni la kaGwaša
Sitšhaba sa kaMghombani
si yeni ku li bona

Sitšhaba sa kaMghombani
Bo-koko na bo-mkhulu

*Ba thobele khona.*⁷¹

Song translation

At the cave of Gwaša
 The nation of Mokopane
 Let us go there and see it
 (the cave)
 The nation of Mokopane
 Our great grannies and great
 grandfathers
 Are sleeping there.

The siege incident has thus become a key symbol around which Northern Ndebele ethnic nationalism in the Mokopane area is fast becoming crystallised. While emphasis in this song is put on the suffering that the Ndebele experienced, other songs and praise poems stress the bravery and heroism of the Ndebele that precipitated the siege. After being besieged for three to four weeks, during the course of which they ran out of water and food, the Ndebele surrendered. Their numbers had been hugely depleted by death from starvation and fumes from the fire that the Boer commandos had lit at the mouth of the cave to smoke people out. The late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Afrikaner *dominees* (pastors) and intellectuals forged Afrikaner nationalism by embellishing the actual suffering of the Boers at the hands of their black foes and "wicked" British imperialists with account of various mythical happenings. In the same way, the Northern Ndebele "nation" is being built around memories of Boer barbarism. A new dimension has been added on to North Ndebele identity — a stress on North Ndebele suffering due to Sotho domination. This, the Ndebele are often reminded, contradicts their militaristic heritage prior to white conquest.

Political figures such as the late Chief Johannes Shikoane II of Zebediela, who vehemently resisted inclusion in the Bantustan of Lebowa and fought for the secession of Northern Ndebele chiefdoms, have been elevated to the status of martyrs in Northern Ndebele historical mythology. This is a classic case of an ethnic community in the process of re-imagining its past and of self-realisation. The idea of the Northern Ndebele as a "nation" is manifested sharply in the works of Petrus Nyadlo, another ethnic broker associated with NANO. Petrus, like his father Percy Nyadlo (discussed above), is passionate about the struggle of the Northern Ndebele language to

⁷¹ This was another song performed at the Mokopane Heritage Commemoration by little girls. Ibid.

be accorded official recognition. Like his father, he has taken up teaching as a career. Unlike his father (who is a linguist), the younger Nyadlo is an up-and-coming poet, local historian and musician. He was also in attendance at the local Heritage Day celebration held at Valtyn, where he recited some of his poems. One of the poems was a eulogy of Chief *Semanjemanje* Shikoane II of Zebediela; in the poem, the Chief is portrayed as a hero in the struggle against Pedi domination.⁷² Another of Petrus' poems was a praise poem of the nineteenth-century Langa chiefs who fought courageously against white colonialism.

The song that follows was addressed to the provincial government:

Song transcript

*Ngwalelani Somathodi (X2)*⁷³

Le mmote

Kore Sindebele si ya fundwa

Sisotho

SiShangane

SiVenda

Sindebele

Ti ya fundwa.

Song translation

Write to Ramathodi (X2)

Inform him that

Ndebele language is being taught

Sotho language

Shangane language

Venda language

Ndebele language

All these are being taught.

At the time of the performance of the song, Ngwako Ramathodi was the premier of the Northern Province; the name was subsequently changed to Limpopo Province. The song urges the Northern Ndebele to express pride in their cultural heritage, especially language. The call to write letters or petitions to Ramathodi symbolises the Northern Ndebele's assertion that their language has equal status with other regional languages. This is one of the key demands around which the ethnic nationalist organisation has proved effective in its mobilisation of certain communities. But social and political

⁷² "*Semanjemanje*" is a Ndebele nickname given to Shikoane II because of his constant usage of the term. "Semanje" means "the modern way." George Maboni Kekana described Shikoane as a chief who often said: "*Bjale ke pušo ya semanjemanje. Re buša sebjalo...re ibapile ka sekgale sa borena, sa bopapamogolo.*" Translation: "Now our rule is the modern one. We govern in the modern way... although we are also drawing upon our ancient traditions of our forefathers."

⁷³ "Somathodi" is the Ndebele-ized form of the name "Ramathodi." Ngwako Ramathodi was premier of the Northern Province, now Limpopo, from 1994 to 2004.

commentary was directed not only at the provincial leaders, but also at the national politicians:

When President Thabo Mbeki was here, I was the one who welcomed him here [with my youth choir], and we sang Ndebele songs, such as (singing) “Siyamthanda Mbeki, siyamthanda Mbeki, siyamthanda Mbeki. Nguye papa wethu.” (We love Mbeki, we love Mbeki, we love Mbeki. He is our father.) The young men would sing along from behind in a chorus saying: “Ufikile, ufikile...” (He has arrived, he has arrived...) I tell you if you could hear that song, tears would start welling in your eyes.⁷⁴

The various appeals to Northern Ndebele nationalism through the language struggle, oral traditions, songs and dance have clearly paid huge dividends in terms of a significant following in some areas (although not in others). In the community of Zebediela, which was one of the major hotspots of confrontation with the Lebowa Bantustan authorities in the 1970s and 1980s – the response to ethnic mobilisation has been both lethargic and lukewarm. The attitude has been promising among those living in some of the villages on the southern side of Zebediela – places such as Magatle, Molapo, Droogte and others – where “there are many interested people but poor coordination ensures that the information about our activities never reach their ears. If they had access to the information we would have a lot of support from Zebediela”.⁷⁵ Kekana seems to believe that access to a vehicle would remedy the problem of organising these outlying areas.⁷⁶ Molomo, however, attributes the problem of Zebediela to the issue of poor leadership and disarray within the royal family.⁷⁷ Kekana explains some of the problems among the Northern Ndebele communities in Zebediela and the neighbouring Ga-Ledwaba:

The real truth about the situation at Moletlane is that more especially in the royal family, the Kekana teachers and those from Ledwaba’s place that we have had meetings with in the past is that they have very low self-esteem or confidence

⁷⁴ Interview, Gojela Peter Kekana, Mošate Valtyn Village, Mokopane, 29 December 2003.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Interview, William Lesiba Molomo, Mamelodi Township, Pretoria, 02 March 2001; Interview, Daniel Kekana, Meadowlands, Soweto, 16 October 2000.

concerning their sense of being Ndebele. You often hear some of them complaining: “Hey man, I can’t even speak *Sindebele*.” We would respond that, “Here we are interested not only in those people who speak the language but also those who can’t. For as long as you are interested in the Ndebele issues even though your identity is not necessarily Ndebele, then you are welcome to join. And we do permit members to speak in *Sesotho* if they cannot speak *Sindebele*.”⁷⁸

Based mostly in the countryside in contrast to the urban migrant elites of the 1960s and 1970s, the youthful Northern Ndebele nationalists of the 1990s and the 2000s seem more determined to “pull out all the stops” in order to achieve their goal of language recognition.

Conclusion

In concluding this paper, several critical points need to be emphasised. The first concerns the visible shift in the nature and composition of the leadership of the Northern Ndebele nationalist movement. In the 1970s and 1980s, urban-based elites and migrants played a pivotal role in striving for secession from Lebowa and Bophuthatswana in favour of incorporation into Kwa-Ndebele. Few women were involved in this initiative; the driving force behind the early movement was mostly male migrants and a number of rural-based chiefs and their supporters. By contrast, from the 1990s to the present, rural-based elites – mainly schoolteachers, both male and female – have been at the cutting edge of the struggle for recognition of the Northern *Sindebele* language. Whereas, in the 1970s and 1980s, the ethnic nationalists were fighting for an exclusive Ndebele identity and an ethnic enclave within the context of the Bantustan policy, in the post-apartheid period the issue has shifted to the demand for recognition of Northern *Sindebele* as one of the historic languages within a unified South African polity.

In this struggle for the recognition of Northern Ndebele identity and language, oral traditions, songs and performance have been used by the new cultural entrepreneurs in a way that did not occur to older advocates of the cause. Traditions only survive if they change to reflect everyday realities. The new cultural activists have not been oblivious to the realities of living cultural traditions. As South Africa has undergone transition, many of its public institutions and monuments have also been revised. The Kekana

⁷⁸ Interview, Gojela Peter Kekana, Mošate Valtyn, Mokopane, 29 December 2003.

Ndebele of Mokopane have been witness to some of these transformations. Members of the ruling lineage have expressed a wish for a plaque to be designed at the Historic Cave as a monument to, and a tangible, permanent inscription of, both the suffering and heroism of the Kekana during the siege of 1854. For about a century Makapansgat has been a public symbol of Afrikaner nationalism. Amid contestation and struggle, a new chapter is now beginning to be written for the Gwaša cave site to serve either as one of the icons of a broader African nationalism in the country, or as a symbol of a narrow Northern Ndebele ethnic nationalism, or both. At the moment, the issue of Makapansgat is still in a state of flux and there is still too much dust in the air to determine with any degree of confidence which view is likely to triumph.