



Opposite: Composite page of images from essays in Volume 1

## Tribing and Untribing the Archive

Carolyn Hamilton and Nessa Leibhammer

'Verbing,' comments Calvin to Hobbes in Bill Waterson's comic strip, 'weirds language'. Our purpose in 'verbing' the title of these volumes, *Tribing and Untribing the Archive*, is to propose that 'tribe' is not an observable thing, but an activity, or doing, word. The focus on doing immediately opens up the notion to a consideration of the power relations involved. 'Weirding' is, moreover, a tactic for disrupting what is taken for granted. The neologisms help us to distinguish the processes we are interested in from 'tribalising' – another closely related verbal form that focuses attention on the advocacy of tribe and how people are mobilised with reference to tribe. In the late 1970s and 1980s Africanist historians worked on the question of how tribes and tribalism developed historically, focusing largely on the colonial making of tribal or ethnic identities.<sup>1</sup> Southern African take-up of the issue was primarily in the form of a historical discussion of the creation of twentieth-century ethnic identities.<sup>2</sup> More recent critical work has examined the commodification of tribe in the form of heritage tourism, a phenomenon memorably dubbed 'Ethnicity Inc.' by Jean and John Comaroff.<sup>3</sup> Our title signals a desire to develop a further angle on the interrogation of the notion of 'tribe'. While certain of the essays in these volumes speak directly to foundational developments in the creation of tribalism, which are essential background to the concerns of this book, our focus is on the effects of ideas about tribe on the archive.<sup>4</sup>

'Tribing' assists us in keeping a focus on how political developments involving ideas about tribes and engagements with the notion and with linked ideas about 'tradition' in

1 South African Archie Mafeje's radical critique was seminal here. See 'The Ideology of "Tribalism"', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 9(2), 1971: 253–61.

2 See L. Vail (ed.), *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989. See also P. Skolnik, 'Tribe as Colonial Category' in *South African Keywords: The Uses and Abuses of Political Concepts*, edited by E. Boonzaier and J. Sharp, Cape Town: David Philip, 1988, pp. 68–78.

3 The literature on the commodification of tribal heritage in South Africa is substantial, dating back to Carolyn Hamilton's early study of ShakaLand in what became KwaZulu-Natal. See her *Terrific Majesty: The Powers of Shaka Zulu and the Limits of Historical Invention*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998, Chapter 5. The Comaroffs' overarching discussion locates its many manifestations as an emerging global phenomenon. See J.L. Comaroff and J. Comaroff, *Ethnicity Inc.*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009.

4 A genealogy of 'tribe' is long overdue, given the term's troubled history, multiple and varied applications and notorious imprecisions. These include its form of take-up in nineteenth-century evolutionary and racist theories concerning the designation of some people as less developed than others, as well as its particular applications in places such as Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) after its Unilateral Declaration of Independence in 1965 until 1979 and apartheid South Africa, its rejection by social anthropologists as analytically useless and its late twentieth-century commodification as heritage, all resulting in its contemporary and contested nature. Its applications in various regions of the world, themselves changing over time, share features and differ in certain respects that invite consideration.

popular and public discourses, academic disciplines and museum practices, as well as processes of commodification, all of these themselves changing over time, have shaped what is available to us to think about the past.<sup>5</sup> We are interested in how a domain became marked out as the tribal and traditional and sharply distinguished from modernity, how it was denied a changing history and an archive and endowed instead with timeless culture, attested to by other forms of evidence, notably ethnographic in nature and often in the form of items of material culture.

Yoked together in the service of colonial and later apartheid rule, the pernicious combination of tribe and tradition continues to tether modern South Africans to ideas about the region's remote past as primitive, timeless and unchanging, despite substantial scholarly and public critical discussion of the fallacy of these notions. Any hunger for knowledge or understanding of the past before European imperialism thus remains to a significant degree unsated, even denied, in the face of a narrowly prescribed archive and repugnant, but insidiously resilient stereotypes.

Our volumes take up the challenge that this presents, addressing the conceptual, methodological and imaginative issues involved in mobilising archives pertinent to the long past before industrialisation. They pay attention simultaneously to the construction of a particular body of knowledge as archive (the singular form drawing attention to archive as an epistemological concept) and to the role played therein by repositories designated archives. Our purpose is both to probe how things were framed in institutions named 'archives' and to look at how other things, many of them designated 'tribal', were exiled from those institutions – notably to ethnographic collections and art galleries – but are available for recuperation as resources that inspire, illuminate and enable thinking about the past. In so doing we challenge the organisational structure and limits of what is understood epistemologically to be the pre-colonial archive or perhaps, more accurately, the lack of a pre-colonial archive. We do this through a primary focus on tribally rusticated items of material culture and in relation to a circumscribed area and time, the southern part of what is today the South African province of KwaZulu-Natal, in a particular period, the later independent and early colonial eras.

### **Subsumed as Zulu: The Thukela-Mzimvubu region**

We are interested in the Thukela-Mzimvubu area because of the particular complexity of identity ascription activities involved there in the eras before British colonialism and in the colonial period when much of the available record pertinent to these periods was laid down. It was a place, perhaps the first, where the idea of tribe was systematically developed and imposed by the British colonial powers.<sup>6</sup> Seldom distinguished from the

5 On tradition, see A. Spiegel and E. Boonzaier, 'Promoting Tradition: Images of the South African Past' in *South African Keywords: The Uses and Abuses of Political Concepts*, edited by E. Boonzaier and J. Sharp, Cape Town: David Philip, 1988, pp. 40–57; E. Boonzaier and A. Spiegel, 'Tradition' in *New South African Keywords*, edited by N. Shepherd and S. Robins, Johannesburg: Jacana and Athens: Ohio University Press, 2008, pp. 195–208.

6 Activities in this area, notably of the colonial administrator Theophilus Shepstone and a variety of associates, were precursors to the development of indirect rule that Mahmood Mamdani places as following the Indian Mutiny of 1857. Mamdani attributes the introduction of the key tenets underpinning indirect rule, based on the idea of the tribal native whose differences mitigated

Zulu kingdom to its north, it is an area apparently without historically distinctive items of material culture of its own. In many respects it is all too readily subsumed within the category 'Zulu', the latter an identity that is in many respects overdeterminedly tribal. Yet the area has a history quite distinct from that of the nineteenth-century Zulu kingdom north of the Thukela River and a specific history of colonial rule.

In the course of the nineteenth century, the Thukela-Mzimvubu area was first subjected to Zulu domination and subsequently to British rule. Both the Zulu king Shaka (who ruled in the 1820s) and the Natal colonial official Theophilus Shepstone (successively Diplomatic Agent to the Native Tribes and Secretary for Native Affairs in Natal from 1845 to 1876) intervened actively in the political organisation of the region and in the assignment of identity.<sup>7</sup> It was in this particular region, in the time of Shepstone, as Jeff Guy argues in 'The Tribal History Project, 1862–4' in Volume 1, that the concept of tribe was brought into southern Africa, rather than found there. Other essays explore some of the ways in which the notion of tribe was elaborated and developed within the region, in the process giving particular shape and character to what is available to us as an archive for the region pertinent to preceding eras.

In Shakan times, the inhabitants of the region were the subjects of claims about the past made by Zulu rulers and were themselves active in making arguments about the past, sometimes as a form of resistance to Zulu domination, at other times seeking to make connections with their new overlords and to claim office and resources, as well as to distance themselves from or ally with neighbours. Under colonial rule complex claims on the past, variously as indigenous inhabitants of the region, refugees from the Zulu kingdom, active allies and subjects of the British at different points in time and so on were mobilised by the inhabitants of Natal to secure land and other forms of resources and recognition from the new British regime. Thus, for much of the nineteenth century, the areas north and south of the Thukela River had distinctive historical experiences and were identified, and identified themselves, as different from one another, as well as recognising differences among themselves.<sup>8</sup>

With the defeat of the Zulu kingdom in 1879, the distinction between the regions north and south of the Thukela River began to blur, as a common 'native policy' for the wider region was developed, first by the Natal authorities and then, after 1910, under the government of the new Union of South Africa. Historian Michael Mahoney suggests that in the period between the 1879 Anglo-Zulu War and the 1906 rebellion, in a process

against assimilation to the comparative jurisprudence of Henry Maine. See *Define and Rule: Native as Political Identity*, Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2013, Chapter 1.

7 For a detailed discussion of the way in which King Shaka intervened in the assignment of identity, see C. Hamilton, 'Ideology, Oral Traditions and the Struggle for Power in the Early Zulu Kingdom', MA thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 1985; on Shepstone, see Jeff Guy's 'The Tribal History Project, 1862–4' in Volume 1.

8 C. Hamilton and J. Wright, 'The Making of the *AmaLala*: Ethnicity, Ideology and Relations of Subordination in a Precolonial Context', *South African Historical Journal* 22(1), 1990: 3–23; J. Wright, 'The Dynamics of Power and Conflict in the Thukela-Mzimkhulu Region in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries: A Critical Reconstruction', PhD diss., University of the Witwatersrand, 1989; J. Lambert, 'Chiefship in Early Colonial Natal, 1843–1879', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 21(2), June 1995: 269–85; T.V. McClendon, *White Chief, Black Lords: Shepstone and the Colonial State in Natal, South Africa, 1845–1878*, Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2010.

connected to migrant labour experiences on the mines in Johannesburg, young men in Natal, notably from the underclasses, began to cultivate a broad conception of Zulu ethnicity. This happened, he suggests, in order to foster social cohesion in a society that was characterised by intense internal conflict. In his view, the activities of colonial officials in the creation of divisive tribalism, bolstering local chiefdom identification and doing what they could to inhibit the emergence of a broader Zulu identity, was a response to this development.<sup>9</sup> While it may well be that young men from the region working on the mines were beginning to think of themselves as Zulu, in this period the identities of the inhabitants of the new colony of Natal were far from settled and the factors that promoted identifications other than with the Zulu kingdom were many and varied. The essays in these volumes make contributions to our understanding of the complex considerations at play in both the making of tribes and of archives, offering a picture of processes of identification that is in many ways more fluid, indeterminate and complex than that presented by, *inter alios*, Mahoney.

In the course of the twentieth century, the inhabitants north and south of the Thukela River were increasingly identified and self-identified as 'Zulu'. These processes were partly a response to huge public take-up of the image of the Zulu in popular forms of military history and in fiction, notably in so-called 'white writing' in Britain and in South Africa, but also more widely following the Anglo-Zulu War and the heroic Zulu defence against the British at Isandlwana in 1879.<sup>10</sup> The conflation was further driven by political and economic developments in South Africa, including growing land shortages, labour demands and increased taxation, as well as the policies of separate development and later apartheid. In various ways, all of this gave shape to particular tribal identities, with 'Zulu' serving the wider region. It was a conflation reinforced by the rise of Zulu nationalism, in which inhabitants, north and south of the Thukela River, participated in response to these political developments.<sup>11</sup> The conflation was also rooted in various scholarly projects of the twentieth century, notably the much-cited and, for much of the twentieth century, ethnographically definitive *Social System of the Zulus* by anthropologist, Eileen Krige, published in 1936.<sup>12</sup> It was a time not only of an entrenchment of a single tribal identity as Zulu for the inhabitants of the wider area, but also of the elaboration of a concept of tribal (or in its later instantiation, ethnic) identity, as the basic building block of African

9 M.R. Mahoney, *The Other Zulus: The Spread of Zulu Ethnicity in Colonial South Africa*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2012.

10 S.J.R. Martin, 'British Images of the Zulu c.1820–1879', PhD diss., University of Cambridge, 1982; D. Wylie, *Savage Delight: White Myths of Shaka*, Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press, 2000. The phrase 'white writing' is, of course, J.M. Coetzee's. See *White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa*, Johannesburg: Radix, 1988.

11 N. Cope, *To Bind the Nation: Solomon kaDinuzulu and Zulu Nationalism, 1913–1933*, Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1993; P. la Hausse de Lalouvière, *Restless Identities: Signatures of Nationalism, Zulu Ethnicity and History in the Lives of Petros Lamula (c.1881–1948) and Lymon Maling (1889–c.1936)*, Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 2000; B. Carton, J. Laband and J. Sithole (eds), *Zulu Identities: Being Zulu, Past and Present*, Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2008.

12 E.J. Krige, *The Social System of the Zulus*, London: Longmans, Green, 1936. Three lesser-known works by anthropologists drew attention to regionally specific identities, namely A. Vilakazi, *Zulu Transformations: A Study of the Dynamics of Social Change*, Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1962 (Nyuswa and Qadi); W.D. Hammond-Tooke, *Bhaca Society: A People of the Transkeian Uplands South Africa*, Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1962 and D.H. Reader, *Zulu Tribe in Transition: The Makhanya of Southern Natal*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1966. Except in specialist anthropological circles, these studies were sidelined in favour of a notion of single Zulu identity.

society.<sup>13</sup> This was overlaid by classification processes rooted in linguistics and ethnology and taken up in social anthropology, which identified larger language-culture complexes, such as Nguni and Sotho.<sup>14</sup> In the 1930s, the national government ethnologist, Nicolaas van Warmelo, while attending to the most intricate details of lineages and chieftainships in listing the ‘tribes’ of Natal (and by this he meant both north and south of the Thukela River) grouped them under one umbrella term, ‘Natal Nguni’, based on linguistic affinity.<sup>15</sup> This was adapted by ethnology curator Margaret Shaw in ‘A System of Cataloguing Ethnographic Material in Museums’, which determined that items from the region were to be classified as “‘Natal Nguni’: Zulu and others (not differentiated)”<sup>16</sup> (see essay by Byala and Wanless, Volume 2). In the 1970s, when art galleries in South Africa began to collect material from southern Africa previously classified as ‘ethnographic’, the term ‘Natal Nguni’ fell away and was replaced by ‘North/Northern Nguni’ for the KwaZulu-Natal region and Swaziland. As a consequence of these interlinked developments on different fronts, distinctions that were recognised in the nineteenth century between people north and south of the Thukela River were gradually obliterated. This included the loss of the distinguishing appellation ‘Kaffir’ for the southern peoples, dropped in part because of the deeply offensive connotations that it developed in the twentieth century.<sup>17</sup>

The published literature on the making of Zulu ethnicity is now substantial and is essential background material to our project. Our volumes have somewhat different aims, however, notably to give critical attention to the appearance in, and disappearance from, the available archive of other forms of identification and to come to grips with how the organisation of records affects critical inquiries into identity.

Contemporary debate has shifted the discussion about identity decisively away from essentialised and fixed identities of any kind and towards the operation of identity

13 P.S. Landau, *Popular Politics in the History of South Africa, 1400–1948*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

14 W.D. Hammond-Tooke (ed.), *The Bantu-Speaking Peoples of Southern Africa*, London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1974; W.D. Hammond-Tooke, *The Roots of Black South Africa*, Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 1993.

15 N.J. van Warmelo, *A Preliminary Survey of the Bantu Tribes of South Africa*, Pretoria: Department of Native Affairs, 1935, pp. 7, 70–83.

16 E.M. Shaw, ‘A System of Cataloguing Ethnographic Material in Museums’, unpublished paper, South African Museum (Iziko), 1958. It should be noted that in a much later 1988 volume of the *Annals of the South African Museum*, Shaw and Van Warmelo offer a compendium of the material culture of the Cape Nguni of the Eastern Cape, including a comprehensive overview of information on items of material culture from publications dating from sixteenth-century travellers’ accounts to researchers and scholars such as David Hammond-Tooke and Joan Broster, working in the twentieth century. This information, accompanied by explanatory texts, as well as images of examples in collections and photographs taken in the field, is meticulously documented. While some of the references remain prisoner to classification influenced by ideas of tribe and tradition, others have richer information contexts. Dating is recorded and historical changes recognised. While this catalogue is concerned with a region on the margins of our area of concern, it shows elements of the crossing and permeability of boundaries in the northern areas of the eastern Cape and the southernmost regions of our study. See E.M. Shaw and N.J. van Warmelo, ‘The Material Culture of the Cape Nguni’, *Annals of the South African Museum* 58(4), 1988: 448–915.

17 As is now relatively well known, the word ‘Kafir’ was first used by Arabs trading along the east coast of Africa to refer to black people considered non-believers because they did not follow the Muslim faith. The term was later taken up by the Portuguese, Dutch and British and used without the pejorative associations it later acquired, most notably during the apartheid era. In the mid-twentieth century, because of these insulting associations, museums moved away from the term, replacing it with ‘Zulu’ in the case of the inhabitants of the KwaZulu-Natal region.

politics and processes of identification.<sup>18</sup> While this is not the place to offer a review of the multiple axes of theoretical discussion about the concept of identity, it is apposite to comment on the way in which the cataloguing, in terms of fixed identity categories, of the very materials that must be mobilised to deconstruct those categories, is fundamentally confounding of projects of thinking about the relationship between peoples and discursive practices, of identities as strategic and positional and as constructed through difference. Our two volumes represent an initial attempt to develop lines of approach to the available records that address these challenges. They do this chiefly in two ways, but are suggestive of others.

The first takes up Anne Stoler's point about treating archives as subjects in their own right.<sup>19</sup> It further draws on Carolyn Hamilton's argument that, far from being immobilised and rendered inert in repositories, archival materials are dynamic, undergoing losses and gains of all kinds, being relocated, reclassified, relabelled and recontextualised and much more besides:

Sometimes . . . changes in the environment precipitate changes to the record. Sometimes, the record precipitates changes in the environment. When we start to consider change in relation to the preserved record, much more activity comes into view than we might initially suppose. Archival collections are reframed and refashioned over time, subject to the ebb and flow of reinterpretation, and in turn affecting interpretation. Thus it is that the archival object, perhaps more accurately, archival subject, charts a course over time, lived in a continuous relationship with an ongoing, changing context, sometimes exerting a form of agency.<sup>20</sup>

The essays in these volumes, with their twin focus on the archive itself and on events in social and political life in which the archive was made and reshaped, invite enquiry into how identities and archives concerning identities were constructed within discourses, sometimes congealing but often, as Hamilton argues, shaping and being shaped by changing public, political and academic discourses and practices.

The second line of approach concerns the capacities of made things to instantiate thinking about identity and subjectivity and, in certain instances, to constitute forms of theorising about identity.<sup>21</sup> The essays in these volumes and some of the discussion

18 Stuart Hall's thoughtful and wide-ranging introduction to the volume *Questions of Cultural Identity* remains a definitive statement of the theoretical range of this terrain. See S. Hall, 'Introduction: Who Needs "Identity"?' in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, edited by S. Hall and P. du Gay, London: Sage, 1996, pp. 1–17.

19 A. Stoler, 'Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance: On the Content in the Form' in *Refiguring the Archive*, edited by C. Hamilton, V. Harris, J. Taylor, M. Pickover, G. Reid and R. Saleh, Amsterdam: Kluwer and Cape Town: David Philip, 2002, p. 86.

20 C. Hamilton, 'Forged and Continually Refashioned in the Crucible of Ongoing Social and Political Life: Archives and Custodial Practices as Subjects of Enquiry', *South African Historical Journal* 65(1), 2013: 11–12.

21 Premesh Lalu's intervention concerning whether subaltern subjectivity is expressed in the colonial archive has placed a spotlight on questions about whether and how the ideas and consciousness of colonised people are manifested in the documentary archive. See P. Lalu, *The Deaths of Hintsa*, Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2009. The issue is equally pertinent, though possibly open to being differently pursued, in relation to the archive of material culture. The essays that follow offer a variety of perspectives on this question. One interesting instance not much discussed in these volumes, but with direct bearing on the matter is M.M. Fuze's *Abantu Abamnyama Lapa Bavela Ngakona*, Pietermaritzburg: City Printing Works, 1922. The text renders in words what Fuze wanted to say – as Hlonipha Mokoena notes, the text is 'an expression of historical consciousness in motion' (*Magama Fuze: The Making of a Kholwa Intellectual*, Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2011, p. 25) – but the choice of its publication in book form is an articulation realised also in material form. Trained as a printer under Bishop Colenso



below offer perspectives on the question of what the material culture record contributes to thinking about questions of identity and subjectivity that may be different from or additional to what the written and oral textual archive offers.

### **Contingent time and the constituting of archive**

The time period with which we are concerned is less readily delimited than the area. We are interested in the archive pertinent to the later independent periods and the early colonial era, that is, a period dating back to roughly the beginning of the second millennium and especially the latter part of that extended period and the later nineteenth century when the combination of increasingly entrenched colonialism and rapid industrialisation began fundamentally to change the way life was lived in what was by then the Colony of Natal. The volumes challenge persistent ideas of a hard boundary between pre-colonial and colonial times, research specialisations correlated with that periodisation and indeed the periodisation itself. Drawing a sharp line between the late independent and early colonial eras misses two key ways in which these seemingly separate periods fold into each other, namely, how and to what extent earlier institutions, ways of thought and forms of cultural logic persisted in subsequent eras and were actively taken up and, secondly, the way in which interpretations of the earlier period were produced in the later period.

A central challenge that these volumes address is that many of the materials most useful in helping investigators to think about the periods that we are focusing on are themselves products of later periods. Some of the materials may well have clear roots in Shakan and earlier times, but almost all were shaped and reshaped by subsequent events. Very few of the materials available to us to think about the eras of the past before colonialism are survivals from those eras and few, if any, have survived into the present unaffected by the intervening periods. Amongst these, archaeologically excavated materials are almost the only remainders from those distant eras, in that they fulfil the archival ideal of being from the time being investigated. Many of the archaeological remains – notably household items, such as baskets, wooden trays, grass and withy beehive dwellings – barely survive as they were made from organic materials that decay rapidly. What does persist from the time is burdened by interpretive frameworks drawn from later periods, notably from twentieth-century ethnographic observations in the same area.

Ideas about timeless, unchanging tribal life informed many of the early ethnographic descriptions or were frameworks of interpretation that were brought to bear on ethnographies by those who consulted them. Such ideas have been the subject of sustained auto-critique within anthropology. These critiques draw attention to culture understood as process, as dynamic and changing. They are alert to the challenges and dangers of the cross-cultural representations that much ethnography entails; to the conditions of the ethnographic encounter (who has the authority to speak about the identity and

at the latter's mission station, eKukhanyeni, Fuze had a first-hand understanding of the materiality of text and its manufacture. The book was a portable form capable of circulating and travelling. The choice of the book as his medium offers a challenge to processes by which the colonised were documented and was a move that gave Fuze control over the publication process.

authenticity of others and how researchers and subjects engage with one another); to the way in which such ethnographies were written, as well as to the need to broaden the field of representational practices.<sup>22</sup> More recently, this critique has been augmented by detailed intellectual biographies of a number of the anthropologists concerned.<sup>23</sup> Taken together, such developments set the scene for a critical engagement with the classical ethnographies, allowing us to see them as productions of a particular time, made under particular circumstances and raising in their wake a host of important reservations about what light the ethnographies can and cannot throw on events and developments hundreds of years earlier. The pioneering ethnographies of the first half of the twentieth century are themselves best treated as a form of archival source for that period, that is, as products of a specific time and process, undertaken under particular conditions, which have since accrued and lost statuses of various kinds that affect how they are read and apprehended, rather than as neutral evidence of the societies being studied.

In recent years, as collaboration between archaeologists and historians has deepened, archaeologists increasingly turn to oral accounts recorded before these ethnographies were written, which are free of their influence and also closer to, though far from co-terminous with, the periods investigated by the archaeologists.<sup>24</sup> But these oral records are themselves complex materials, not only recorded after the events that they discuss, but also often shaped by how they were handed on across time in oral forms, from whom they were obtained, how they were first recorded and what happened to them thereafter. Thus not only must archaeologists grasp something of the processes over time of the making of these other sources on which they draw, they need also to be aware of the changes that occurred in the periods between the time investigated by the archaeologists and the time when the ethnographies were written and the oral materials recorded, as well as what has happened to the materials subsequently.

The problem associated with the illumination of the past through the use of materials from later periods is exposed especially sharply in relation to archaeological investigation, but it is as much a challenge for historians interested in, for example, the political history of the region in the decades immediately preceding the establishment of colonialism. Many of the written and recorded oral sources on which they rely are also the products of periods later than the ones to which they refer.<sup>25</sup>

22 J. Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988; J. Clifford and G. Marcus (eds), *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986.

23 A. Bank and J.L. Bank (eds), *Inside African Anthropology: Monica Wilson and Her Interpreters*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013; W.D. Hammond-Tooke, *Imperfect Interpreters: South Africa's Anthropologists, 1920–1990*, Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 1997.

24 N. Swanepoel, A. Esterhuysen and P.L. Bonner (eds), *Five Hundred Years Rediscovered: Southern African Precedents and Prospects*, Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2008; P. Delius and S. Marks (eds), Special Issue: Rethinking South Africa's Past: Essays on History and Archaeology, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 38(2), 2012: 247–419.

25 The 'diaries' and first-hand accounts of the early traders in Natal provide cases in point, many of them having been written after sojourns in the area. See, for example, J. Pridmore, 'The Writings of H.F. Fynn: History, Myth or Fiction?' *Alternation* 1(1), 1994: 68–78; Wylie, *Savage Delight*, Chapters 4 and 5.



Immediately when researchers eschew ideas about timeless tribes and traditions and allochronic ways of working, they – we – have to grapple not only with societies that change over time, but also with sources that change over time.<sup>26</sup> In relation to the latter issue, researchers have to reckon with two kinds of changes. The first is the kind of changes that these materials underwent before they were invested with the status of ‘sources’, that is, changes that happened in the course of their own initial social lives as materials of various kinds in circulation in society for reasons other than their capacity to attest to the past or in addition to any such emic capacities.<sup>27</sup> The second kind of change flows from the processes of their identification as ‘sources’, their subjection to particular preservatory regimes and how they have changed under those regimes.<sup>28</sup>

These volumes are thus predicated on a recognition that it is neither methodologically nor imaginatively satisfactory to work with a simple temporal template of two periods in time: the events in the past that researchers might be seeking to understand and the sources they have in hand in the present to undertake the task. This recognition draws on Hamilton’s arguments about archives and the contingencies of time.<sup>29</sup> It involves understanding that the past events that are objects of inquiry are perceptible in the present only because of a history across time and particular knowledge production processes that have brought them into view in a particular way. Likewise, the ‘sources’ researchers have to illuminate those events are not survivals of that past time in the present, but travellers across time that have changed shape and accrued new meanings through time. The past that is the object of interest is thus not firmly in a place distinct from the present time of enquiry. Rather, as Hamilton argues, both are enfolded into each other and into what lies in between and into the way in which a hoped-for future influences how we handle questions of archive in the present. Our volumes explore this enfoldedness. They offer methods of tacking backwards and forwards across time, paying attention to the double-storiedness of all archives. It is a double-storiedness that involves working simultaneously with the story of the making of an archive over time and the making (of the story) of the past to which the archive attests, also often a matter extended across time and itself involving change. Thus, for example, the historian who is interested in the nature of the socio-political units that existed in the Thukela-Mzimvubu area in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries would find relevant material in the published six volumes of *The James Stuart Archive of Recorded Oral Evidence Relating to the History of the Zulu and Neighbouring Peoples*.<sup>30</sup> But before the researcher could use this material to offer an account of socio-political changes

26 J. Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1983.

27 On the backstory of archival objects, see C. Hamilton, ‘Backstory, Biography, and the Life of the James Stuart Archive’, *History in Africa* 38(1), 2011: 319–41.

28 See Hamilton, ‘Backstory’. See also C. Hamilton and A. Wanless, ‘Archival Biography, Sources and Methods: The Case of the Louis Fourie Archive’ in *The Courage of //Kabbo*, edited by J. Deacon and P. Skotnes, Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 2014, pp. 41–59.

29 C. Hamilton, ‘Archives, Ancestors and the Contingencies of Time’ in *Laute, Bilder, Texte: Register des Archivs*, edited by A. Lüdtker and T. Nanz, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht Unipress, 2015, pp. 103–18.

30 C. de B. Webb and J.B. Wright (eds), *The James Stuart Archive of Recorded Oral Evidence Relating to the History of the Zulu and Neighbouring Peoples*, Volumes 1–6, Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 1976, 1979, 1982, 1986, 2001, 2014.

at the turn of the century, s/he would need to come to grips with the story of the making of *The James Stuart Archive*, grappling in the process not simply with the biases of the collector, but with the full gamut of the ideas that Stuart and his interlocutors brought to bear in their conversations about the past, as well as what happened to Stuart's notes thereafter, how they have been arranged and rearranged over time in their repository, as well as how they have been changed in the course of publication.

In the effort to keep this double-storiedness in focus, the organisation of these volumes is not chronological, beginning with an essay by archaeologists and finishing with one on a contemporary public institution. Rather, it deliberately sets a tacking course that allows us not only to see how archives give shape to history, but also how history gives shape to archives and to grasp something of their mutual constitution over time in a manner that facilitates critical interrogation of the processes involved.

'History' here has, of course, more than one meaning, being at once what happened in the past, the constructed account(s) of the past and the practice of research about the past. Students of history are typically trained to draw a distinction between primary sources and secondary ones and the bibliographies attached to histories are often divided along these lines. Yet the division is not always clear-cut. The published volume, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal* (first published in 1929) by Alfred T. Bryant (discussed in a number of contributions in these volumes, notably by Norman Etherington) offers a case in point. It is a primary source if the object of investigation is Bryant himself, his working methods and his text. The book is an object produced by him and it offers his understanding of the history of the region. It can be investigated as his production, a line of enquiry that Etherington pursues. Books are thus subjects of attention in these volumes, as items of material culture, texts and as archives.

*Olden Times* is also a secondary source in that Bryant refers to and synthesises a host of accounts that he solicited from local historians. But even those accounts, when offered to him seemingly 'first-hand' were themselves, in all likelihood, exactly the same sort of combination of primary and secondary accounts, being both what the speaker thought about a topic and a synthesis of what that person had garnered over time. Similarly, much of the archive that we deal with is characteristically at once neither-nor and both a primary and secondary source. The essays collected in these volumes contribute to our understanding of how some things have come to be regarded as primary sources and others as secondary, as well as of the recursive constituting loops involved.

It is in all these many ways that the essays pay attention to the *constituting* of the record pertinent to the late independent and colonial periods. The term 'constituting' focuses attention on the establishment *in a specified state* of certain things as records, highlighting the forms of composition, organisation and arrangement involved. It invites consideration of the acts of *decree and ordination* entailed, with some records gaining the status of archives and others being given other kinds of status. We favour the word 'constituting' in the continuous present tense form, so as to draw attention to constitution as an ongoing process through time (a point that applies equally to 'tribing' and 'untribing'). The multiple valences in the everyday uses of the terms constitute/constitution – as

calling into being, operational in settings of legal rules (as in ‘the written constitution of an organisation’) and as a term for the make-up of the body (as in ‘daily exercise benefits the human constitution’) – resonate in the operations of archive coming into being as regime and as having life processes involving change over time.

This book thus considers how the materials that are available to us in the twenty-first century to think about the long history of the region came to be assembled, shaped and reshaped over time. We are interested in how such materials were created in the distant past by actors and agents, whether ambitious leaders, ritual specialists, family custodians, praise poets or the builders of homesteads, operating with a shared conceptual apparatus and within largely shared structures of thought, often navigating situations of dramatic social and political change.<sup>31</sup> We are further interested in how such materials were also shaped later in time by various actors and agents, some of them again the same kinds of leaders, specialists and custodians, but now in processes of engagement with incoming strangers with a different conceptual apparatus and different structures of thought: missionaries, colonial administrators and early recorders of ethnography. In some instances, the time of original making of the materials concerned is unknown to us, its relevance to the period with which we are concerned only suggestive. In eschewing the idea of unchanging societies, we oblige ourselves to consider critically why the suggestiveness asserts itself to the point that it underpins certain methodologies that are used to investigate the earlier period and to investigate explicitly how and when both changes and continuities occurred.

Although there are documentary materials in the colonial archive – shipwreck accounts, colonial historical research such as Shepstone’s 1863 ‘Historic Sketch of the Tribes Anciently Inhabiting the Colony of Natal’ (discussed in ‘The Tribal History Project, 1862–4’ by Guy in Volume 1) and so on – which are available to us to think about questions of identity in this region across the roughly 500-year period before the introduction of colonial rule, there are also other things with different testatory capacities, notably items of material culture as well as recorded oral texts. They contain within them the traces of identities that were being asserted at the time when they were first created, as well as signs of processes of identification. In the case of an excavated pot fragment or a collected wooden staff, the trace is from the time when the pot or staff was made. In the case of a recorded oral account, this was the time when the recording was made, even if the events under discussion concerned an earlier time. The pot and staff were shaped in subtle ways by the learnt and embodied practices of the potter and carver, with design often being an overt signal of identity assertion of the time, and technique an implicit, unintended expression by the maker, sometimes of such assertions or counter-assertions or even perhaps of processes of identification.<sup>32</sup> Such objects may have incorporated

31 We follow Hamilton’s usage of the term ‘shared structures of thought’ (with its obvious debt to Raymond Williams’ concept of ‘structures of feeling’), rather than ideology or worldview, to refer to ways of thinking of a particular time that were at once both firmly structured and also themselves involved in social processes. See C. Hamilton, *Life of the Archive*, in prep.

32 S. Hall, ‘Identity and Political Centralisation in the Western Regions of the Highveld, c.1770–c.1830: An Archaeological Perspective’, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 38(2), 2012: 301–18.

inherited ideas about style that pre-dated the production event or they may have design innovations that set them apart from what went before. Recorded oral accounts in their turn were shaped by the ideas about identity that narrators held in their minds at the time when the recordings were done. Some of these would have been inherited ideas. They would have been given a particular shape by the narrators' understanding of what it meant to be discussing identity issues at the time of the recording (typically a time when the effects of colonialism were beginning to have an impact on local forms of identification in a direct way and when colonial administrators were intervening actively in the meaning and shape of what were called 'tribes'). The recorded oral materials would further have been shaped by the understandings of all of these issues held by the particular recorder.

The excavated remains, collected items and recorded oral accounts have further accreted the traces of latter-day understandings of identity with which generations of recorders, scholars and curators have imbued them, most notably understandings of tribe and ethnicity. These concepts are the complex result of the way in which the disciplines have evolved, themselves being formed in an iterative relationship with these very materials and being shaped by the ways in which the earliest writers on these subjects, often officials, travellers and missionaries, conceptualised the identities of the people they encountered.

### **The marooned archive of material culture**

For the most part, the institutions holding objects such as pots and staffs are not termed 'archives', nor are these kinds of objects subjected to the same regimes of custodial care as those accorded to the documentary holdings of archival institutions. Other than in the case of archaeological collections, when they occur in ethnographic museums or art galleries, such items are typically organised by type, without dates of origin or details of provenance and are labelled by tribe or, in a more modern form, ethnic group.<sup>33</sup> This is often the consequence of twentieth-century modes of classification, with deleterious effects for materials collected earlier that may originally have had more extensive contextualising information and then became, one way or another, increasingly alienated from such information.<sup>34</sup> Such items are thus largely marooned out of time.

Work by art historians and museum curators writing on material objects has gone some way to historicising certain of these materials. The work pertinent to the region and period with which these volumes are concerned falls into two distinct phases. In the first phase, from the early 1970s until about 1986, research was undertaken largely, but not exclusively, by English and American scholars. These studies focused on questions of style and design without historical positioning and with a strong ethnographic influence.<sup>35</sup> Committed to placing collected items within their 'tribal' context, they tended to

33 Dates of collection and accession into museum collections are often recorded and the name of the collector is frequently noted. Dates of production and the names and locations of producers and users are almost universally absent.

34 Carolyn Hamilton and Nessa Leibhammer's essay in Volume 2 focuses on this issue.

35 For English scholarship, see, for example, M. Carey, *Beads and Beadwork of East and South Africa*, Oxford: Shire Publications, 1986, pp. 5, 39–59. In American scholarship, publications by B. Brottem and A. Lang, 'Zulu Beadwork', *African Arts* 6(3), 1973: 8–84; C. Kennedy, 'The Art and Material Culture of the Zulu-Speaking Peoples', Los Angeles: UCLA Museum of Cultural History Pamphlet

assume that the indigenous inhabitants of the regions north and south of the Thukela River constituted a homogenous ethnic group. Work in the second phase, mostly by South Africans, paid greater critical attention to the attribution of identity.<sup>36</sup> Some of this writing was influenced by two bodies of historical research that challenged prevailing assumptions about identity. One of these, undertaken by the historians Carolyn Hamilton and John Wright, showed that the Zulu kingdom of the 1820s created by Shaka was an amalgam of distinct identities, with 'Zulu' reserved for a restricted dominant class. Another, undertaken by historians of the early twentieth century, such as Shula Marks and Nicholas Cope, accounted for the later rise of Zulu nationalism and for the creation of a Zulu ethnic identity that straddled areas north and south of the Thukela River. Leveraging off these bodies of work, art historians in the second phase began to distinguish distinct styles and identities within the category 'Zulu'.

The pioneering work in drawing attention to the differences in items used north and south of the Thukela River was by Sandra Klopper.<sup>37</sup> Her study of illustrations by British artist George French Angas, who visited South Africa in 1847, marked a further development in art historical scholarship. It was significant for the way it showed that what were long regarded as quintessentially 'Zulu' images were in fact based mostly on what Angas observed in two of the newly established so-called native locations, Umlazi and Inanda in the Natal Colony, as well as at Maphumulo further north. In each case, local American Board missions facilitated entry points for Angas. Klopper went on to show that not only did Angas actively favour the inclusion in his works of items of material culture that seemed pristinely indigenous, but also that he picked up on the framing ideas of his mission hosts, notably of a larger encompassing Zulu identity that was at odds with the ideas of identity prevalent in the Natal communities he visited. Klopper's article was distinctive for how it provided detailed contextual information on the making of what is regarded as one of the most important visual archives pertinent to what was general-

Series, for an exhibition at the UCLA Museum of Cultural History, Fall 1978; and M. Conner and D. Pelrine, *The Geometric Vision: Arts of the Zulu*, Lafayette: University Galleries, 1983, focus largely on colour, design and the symbolic meaning of beadwork. While Kennedy notes the heterogeneous nature of the people and regional variations, she does not apply this knowledge to the beadwork illustrated in her volume. See also C. Kennedy, 'Art, Architecture and Material Culture of the Zulu Kingdom', PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1993. C.S. Boram-Hays, 'A History of Zulu Beadwork 1890–1997: Its Types, Forms and Functions', PhD diss., Ohio University, 2000 fits into this category of writing.

36 A. Nettleton, 'History and the Myth of Zulu Sculpture', *African Arts* 21(3), 1988: 48–51; M. Wood, 'Zulu Beadwork' in *Zulu Treasures: Of Kings and Commoners*, Ulundi: KwaZulu Cultural Museum and Durban: Local History Museums, 1996, pp. 143–70; M. Wood, 'The Girl Who Ran Away' and 'Enigma Dolls' in *Evocations of the Child: Fertility Figures of the Southern African Region*, edited by E. Dell, Cape Town: Human & Rousseau, 1998, pp. 77–90, 91–98. (Work by scholars such as Frank Jolles and Eleanor Preston-White falls out of the period with which this book is concerned.)

37 In 'Zulu' Headrests and Figurative Carvings: The Brenthurst Collection and the Art of South-East Africa' Sandra Klopper highlights such distinctions in the text, drawing attention to the misleading impression that terms such as 'Zulu' create a cultural wholeness. However, for the most part the quotidian objects themselves that make up the major part of the Brenthurst Collection continue to elude historicisation. See *Art and Ambiguity: Perspectives on the Brenthurst Collection of Southern African Art*, Johannesburg: Johannesburg Art Gallery and Johannesburg City Council, 1991, pp. 80–103. See also S. Klopper, 'From Adornment to Artefact to Art: Historical Perspectives on South-East African Beadwork' in *South East African Beadwork: 1850–1910*, edited by M. Stevenson and M. Graham-Stewart, Cape Town: Fernwood Press, 2000, pp. 9–43 and S. Klopper, 'Kings, Commoners and Foreigners: Artistic Production and the Consumption of Art in the Southeast African Region' in *The Art of Southeast Africa: From the Conru Collection*, edited by S. Klopper, K. Conru and K. Nel, Milan: 5 Continents, 2002, pp. 39–51. See also S. Klopper, 'The Art of Zulu-Speakers in Northern Natal-Zululand: An Investigation of the History of Beadwork, Carving and Dress from Shaka to Inkatha', PhD diss., University of the Witwatersrand, 1992.

ised, wrongly, as the Zulu kingdom in the first half of the nineteenth century and, more specifically, for the way in which it established that conditions north of the Thukela River were different from those recorded by Angas in neighbouring Natal. The propositions of this seminal article are further developed in Klopper's contribution to these volumes. Other essays, such as those by Heather Hughes and Mwelela Cele, Christoph Rippe, and Carolyn Hamilton and Nessa Leibhammer, also draw attention to these locations and to a small number of other mission stations in Natal, notably those most accessible by rail or road, where there were established interlocutors, such as resident colonial officials, missionaries and enterprising chiefs. These particular sites are revealed as playing a determining role in the creation of the archive of material pertinent to the late independent and early colonial period, often extrapolated, in a manner seldom recognised, to refer to a much wider and, in key respects, very different region and labelled 'Zulu'.

Despite a growing body of scholarship discussing problems in ready correlations of style and ethnicity, museum classification practices have continued largely unrevised and even the scholars often remained captive to the use of ethnic labels.<sup>38</sup> In addition, in work on the later independent and early colonial periods, notions of a 'culture' (as in the 'Zulu culture') have proved to be as obdurate as the associated ethnic identity descriptors. Insights about culture in motion and as creative process have been little mobilised in relation to the late independent era and this area of study remains largely innocent of the sophisticated developments in the understanding of culture in a field such as cultural studies, the latter seemingly appropriate only for 'modern societies'. So great is the instantiation of difference between societies constituted as tribal and those regarded modern that their investigation all too often takes place in discrete theoretical, methodological and conceptual universes.

The understandings of culture, style and identity that persist in much work on the eras before colonialism is a consequence of the kind of vigorous coupling of ethnography and archaeology that marks the work of the structuralist archaeologists,<sup>39</sup> though this has been criticised for its failure to take account of historical research on the fluidity of identities in the intervening periods, that is, the periods between those that the archaeologists investigate and those in which the ethnographies were produced.<sup>40</sup> Where archaeologists tend to focus on cultural continuities over time, historians are primarily concerned with

38 S. Littlefield Kasfir, 'One Tribe, One Style? Paradigms in the Historiography of African Art', *History in Africa* 11, 1984: 163–93. See also D. Levy, 'Southern African Beadwork: Issues of Classification and Collection' in *Art and Ambiguity: Perspectives on the Brenthurst Collection of Southern African Art*, Johannesburg: Johannesburg Art Gallery and Johannesburg City Council, 1991, pp. 104–22, who argues that as beads were freely available only in the Colony of Natal, virtually all extant 'Zulu' pieces in collections, including those in the Brenthurst Collection, were probably collected in Natal. However, this did not change the N. Nguni attribution given the objects in the Brenthurst catalogue. Noting a persistent tentativeness in dealing theoretically with the relationship of style to identity, Hamilton has tackled the tenacity of ethnic categorisation of items of material culture by curators and scholars, in the face of widespread acknowledgement by these same researchers of the inadequacies of this form of classification. See C. Hamilton, 'Women and Material Markers of Identity' in *Evocations of the Child: Fertility Figures of the Southern African Region*, edited by E. Dell, Cape Town: Human & Rousseau, 1998, pp. 21–7.

39 P. Lane, 'Barbarous Tribes and Unrewarding Gyration? The Changing Role of Ethnographic Imagination in African Archaeology' in *African Archaeology*, edited by A. Stahl, Oxford: Blackwell, 2005, Chapter 2; Hamilton and Wright, 'Making of the AmaLala'.

40 T.N. Huffman, 'Broederstroom and the Origins of Cattle-Keeping in Southern Africa', *African Studies* 49(2), 1990: 1–12.



change. It is only in recent years that both archaeologists and historians have begun to give attention to the precise historical circumstances that lead to cultural continuity over time or to an appearance of continuity being used to buffer change, as well as those that lead to change.<sup>41</sup> Here the notion of ‘inheritance’ has been helpful in resolving aspects of the theoretical impasse between structuralist archaeologists and process-orientated historians. At its most basic, the concept has been productive in allowing researchers to recognise that certain ideas and things are handed on across time, but are redeployed, reinterpreted, refashioned and refurbished according to changing circumstances. The extent of the changes involved is subject to limitations set in place by how the inheritances are understood or regarded in context and what those who were involved in conveying the inheritance considered important to preserve. In some instances, claims about cultural continuity were asserted in order to mask changes or basic cultural forms continued, while their content changed. The theoretical ‘trick’ then is to understand what changes and what remains continuous over time and how this ‘balance’ itself varies over time. The focus in these volumes on archive seeks to facilitate this line of approach.

Photographic images, many of them including the presence of items of material culture, played a central role in entrenching the idea of the traditional and in instantiating a vision of timeless tribal life. Alfred Duggan-Cronin’s work, for example, was highly influential in conveying such ideas, attested to in particular by the nature of the costumery involved.<sup>42</sup> Recent scholarship unpicks the ways in which Duggan-Cronin’s photographs were arranged and choreographed, as were a number of other photographic series,<sup>43</sup> while essays in the 2013 publication, *Distance and Desire*, make a point of looking beyond the construction of stereotypes. They pick up on recent analytical developments that pay attention to how the subjects of photographs were active in how they were depicted, challenging the idea that the images only reflect a reductive colonial gaze.<sup>44</sup> Certain essays in *Distance and Desire* and elsewhere are alert to signs of respect and appreciation, empathy and intersubjectivity in such photographs.<sup>45</sup> Hlonipha Mokoena’s essay in that

41 C. Hamilton and S. Hall, ‘Reading across the Divides: Commentary on the Political Co-Presence of Disparate Identities in Two Regions of South Africa in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries’, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 38(2), 2012: 281–90.

42 Duggan-Cronin’s photographic work reached a general public. It was used to illustrate the eleven-volume series *The Bantu Tribes of South Africa*, Cambridge: Deighton, Bell, published between 1928 and 1954 and Henri P. Junod’s *Bantu Heritage*, Johannesburg: Hortors, published for the Transvaal Chamber of Mines in 1938. However the images were not used in publications of a more academic nature produced at more or less the same time, such as *An Ethnographic Survey*, edited by I. Schapera and published by Routledge in London and Maskew Miller in Cape Town in 1937.

43 Michael Godby reveals how Duggan-Cronin actively arranged sitters in imaginatively performed tribal identities, sometimes dressing them from a store of ‘costumes’ that he travelled with. See M. Godby, ‘Alfred Martin Duggan-Cronin’s Photographs for *The Bantu Tribes of South Africa* (1928–1954): The Construction of an Ambiguous Idyll’, *Kronos* 36(1), 2010: 54–83. Tamar Garb’s essay in the illustrated volume *Distance and Desire* offers a close reading of a set of 39 images of racial types and groupings. See T. Garb, ‘Colonialism’s Corpus: Kimberley and the Case of the Cartes de Visite’ in *African Photography from the Walther Collection: Distance and Desire, Encounters with the African Archive*, edited by T. Garb, Göttingen: Gerhard Steidl, 2013, pp. 55–69.

44 E. Edwards, ‘Looking at Photographs: Between Contemplation, Curiosity, and Gaze’ in *African Photography from the Walther Collection: Distance and Desire, Encounters with the African Archive*, edited by T. Garb, Göttingen: Gerhard Steidl, 2013: pp. 48–69 and in the same volume, C. Geary, ‘“Zulu Mothers” and Their Children: Travelling around the World: From Photograph to Picture Postcard’, pp. 70–80.

45 See also A. Putter, ‘Native Work: An Artwork by Andrew Putter Consisting of 38 Portrait Photographs’ in *Uncertain Curature: In and Out of the Archive*, edited by C. Hamilton and P. Skotnes, Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 2014, pp. 229–40; G. Mahashe,

volume, for example, considers the act of 'being Zulu' as a pictorial event.<sup>46</sup> Innovations and inventions in sartorial gear, Mokoena holds, were exemplars of an emerging metrosexuality amongst Zulu men, a vehicle through which they expressed their changing identities. Her deployment of the term 'metrosexuality' offers a welcome relief from the tired anthropological vocabulary to which students of the area and time have become habituated. There is now a sophisticated critical literature on what needs to be considered when photographs are used as forms of documentation of material culture and as archival sources and when their biographies, as circulating objects in social life, are explored.<sup>47</sup>

If the work on photography enjoys a relatively high profile and attracts interest across disciplines and creative practices, much of the work by the art historians, archaeologists and historians discussed earlier is published in discipline-specific journals, is difficult for researchers to track and has little or no public presence.<sup>48</sup> No comprehensive overview is available in print. While art historians are meticulous about carefully historicising materials and, in the few instances where the information is available, naming people correctly, beyond the discipline, bad habits of tribal or ethnic nomenclature, usually at a gross level, are widespread in relation to South African materials in collections. The categorisation of material proceeds on the basis of the visual perception of stylistic affinity without the supporting details of provenance and context. The result is that the significance of the material archive for the study of the late independent period is recognised only by the occasional art historian and archaeologist and is little drawn on by researchers outside or even across these disciplines. Its capacity for challenging and expanding the written and textual archives is little explored.

Our volumes seek to make the marooned archive of material culture more visible and more available for consideration as an archival resource than it is currently. They do this in a way that recognises that items of material culture are, in a sense, articulations that, over time, retain significant elements of their original formulations. However, much has happened to them in the intervening period that frames and reframes them, sometimes actively muting or manipulating them, at other times amplifying and distorting them, re- or decontextualising them and so on. Our volumes also seek to spring the identity trap, releasing the material from pre-assigned identity positions as tribal – as, for example, 'Zulu' objects – into settings that enable them to be used as resources for thinking critically about identity.

"Siliva Zulu" at the Iziko Slave Lodge: A Review, a Response and a Reflection', 13 December 2011 ([http://www.archivalplatform.org/blog/entry/siliva\\_zulu/](http://www.archivalplatform.org/blog/entry/siliva_zulu/))(accessed 19 December 2011); P. Davison and G. Mahashe, 'Visualizing the Realm of a Rain Queen: The Production and Circulation of Eileen and Jack Krige's Lobedu Fieldwork Photographs from the 1930s', *Kronos* 38(1), 2012: 147–81 ([http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext&pid=S0259-01902012000100004](http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0259-01902012000100004))(accessed 5 June 2015).

46 H. Mokoena, '“Being Zulu”: A History in Portraits' in *African Photography from the Walther Collection: Distance and Desire, Encounters with the African Archive*, edited by T. Garb, Göttingen: Gerhard Steidl, 2013, pp. 104–11.

47 E. Edwards, *Raw Histories: Photographs, Anthropology and Museums*, Oxford: Berg, 2001; I. Kopytoff, 'The Cultural Biography of Things: Commodification as Process' in *The Social Life of Things*, edited by A. Appadurai, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986, pp. 64–94.

48 Photography has been featured in numerous celebrated exhibitions with substantially researched catalogues, such as the 2010 *Events of the Self: Portraiture and Social Identity*, curated by Okwui Enwezor, and Tamar Garb's 2013 exhibition *African Photography from the Walther Collection: Distance and Desire, Encounters with the African Archive*.

The same identity trap is sprung differently by contemporary artists who draw on such materials in a variety of ways that subvert and evade the historic interpolations of traces of the past as tribal, traditional and primitive. This is the subject of Nontobeko Ntombela's essay, which examines how these artists seek to free themselves through their artistic practice from speaking on behalf of tribal or ethnic collectivities, a positioning that has for many years defined African art. Both the move to invest the material culture record with the status of archive and the way that artistic practices subvert the ethnographic in turn pose critical questions about the very concept of archive itself, challenging its limits and its foundational assumptions. Crossing mediums, these volumes suggest, is a productive tactic for bringing those limits and assumptions into view.

### **The disruptive tactics of cross-medium archival focuses**

Where research located squarely in the area of African art history is primarily concerned with advancing our knowledge of material forms that express things such as identity and belief, or of the processes of the production, circulation and consumption of things in past and present times, these volumes take a somewhat different approach. They attempt to extend the kind of archival baseline work that certain art historians do by convening a cross-disciplinary focus on the making – and sometimes acts inhibiting the making – of the archive of material culture. They also discuss these processes in the context of the making of the available archive in other media. A cross-medium approach draws attention to the conventions of the various media and their effects in ways that we find provocative.<sup>49</sup> The cross-medium approach has a further advantage: collections in one medium were often assembled with a particular purpose and were designed to service a particular agenda or disciplinary ambition. Crossing media allows the conventions of one established domain to disrupt those of another, sometimes with productive effects that expose assumptions, biases and lacunae and sometimes by filling in absent dimensions, both with significant effects. Furthermore, as these volumes reveal, many connections tie records that occur in different media together, while cross-medium research related to a shared location is important in making records in any single medium more intelligible.

In many ways historical scholarship concerned with the wider KwaZulu-Natal region and this period is already distinctive for the extent of the attention paid to the nature of the available archive, notably the written archive.<sup>50</sup> Our volumes are an opportunity to revisit the work already done on the making of the written and recorded oral archive and is an attempt to extend it still further through a focus on the relatively neglected material record and the circumstances of its development. The material record differs in a number of ways from the documentary one and from the recorded oral archive, as well

49 This includes objects, photographs, texts, drawings, databases, digital accessioning, oral accounts, archaeological data, etc.

50 See, *inter alia*, Hamilton, *Terrific Majesty*; Wylie, *Savage Delight*; Mokoena, *Magama Fuze*; J. Cobbing, 'The Mfecane as Alibi: Thoughts on Dithakong and Mbolompo', *Journal of African History* 29(3), 1988: 487–519; J. Cobbing, 'A Tainted Well: The Objectives, Historical Fantasies and Working Methods of James Stuart, with Counter-Argument', *Journal of Natal and Zulu History* 11(1), 1988: 115–54; D. Wylie, "'Proprietor of Natal": Henry Francis Fynn and the Mythography of Shaka', *History in Africa* 22, 1995: 409–37; J. Pridmore, 'Diaries and Despatches: The Life and Writing of Henry Francis Fynn (1803–61) and Henry Francis Fynn Junior (1846–1915)', *African Historical Review* 36(1), 2004: 126–47; J. Wright, 'A.T. Bryant and the "Lala"', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 38(2), 2012: 355–68.

as from residues of the past that are present in contemporary cultural forms. The differences complicate the understanding of how various traces of the past speak to that past. Our focus on the material culture record in relation to other forms of inheritances from the past seeks to desegregate disciplinary silos that pair documentary and oral archives with history, ethnographies with anthropology, images and objects with art history and excavated remains with archaeology. By bringing to the fore previously uncharted connections among disciplines and records of various kinds, across the local and global and between individuals across the social spectrum, we extend in dramatic ways our understandings of the conditions and circumstances of the production of the materials that have become the record of this region and time, as well as of their reproduction over time. We further use insights drawn from sustained engagement with material that was denied the status of archive to rethink and theorise afresh aspects of the formation and practices of the designated archive. The most obvious effect here is the transferral of the commonplace recognition that collected objects are manufactured cultural forms that speak to questions of identity to archival documents whose manufactured, material and cultural aspects are frequently ignored.

The materiality of documents sometimes facilitates historical analysis, as in the case where, for example, a watermark in the paper may belie or augment a claim asserted in writing. Handwriting, that is, the physical mark made on the paper being a matter of degree of pressure, tightness of grip affecting the rounding of lettering and so on, is often critical in identifying authorship. It can also express stylistically an origin – such as training in one school and not another – that may be very different from the one claimed in the words that it renders. While for the most part analysts of claims made discursively pay attention to the text in words, the written texts that are discussed in these volumes are also open to consideration as items of material culture. Hamilton and Leibhammer's essay, for example, pays close attention to museum labels not as metadata, but as items of museum culture that the authors treat as archival objects of interest.

The existing body of historical research has involved a range of techniques utilising the available text (written documentary and recorded oral) archives. Much of this work is scattered in publications. Our volumes present an opportunity to foreground the techniques and approaches to the engagements of such materials and to consider their implications for the material record. Scholars are increasingly attentive to the history and circumstances of the production of documentary archives, reading them both against and along the grain, noting anomalies and paying attention to fault lines within them. Use of the documentary archives is complemented by decades of scholarly engagement with the relevant recorded oral materials. The primary sources of recorded oral material for the region and period with which these volumes are concerned are the accounts assembled by the colonial official, James Stuart, between 1897 and 1922. To date, six volumes encompassing the materials provided by 185 interlocutors have been edited, annotated and, where the original text is in the Zulu language, translated into English, and published as *The James Stuart Archive of Recorded Oral Evidence Relating to the History of the Zulu and Neighbouring Peoples*. Considerable editorial research underlies the publication in

this format of the original handwritten texts by Stuart. In addition, scholars now have a reasonably good and constantly expanding understanding of the conditions of production of these texts.<sup>51</sup> The fact that the majority of the texts that make up *The James Stuart Archive* were actually recorded in the area with which we are concerned, rather than in the area north of the Thukela River, which was the historic centre of the Zulu kingdom, has gone unremarked in the pertinent scholarship. This kind of contextual information affects how the texts are read and used. It militates against approaches that simply trawl the texts for handy 'facts'. In relation to both the documentary archives and the recorded oral texts, researchers increasingly recognise that they have to pay close attention to how the materials were produced and how they came to be archived and all the many others things that have affected them over time. We extend these points made in relation to written and oral texts to the archive of material culture.

Crucially, the scholarship shows that while the recorder Stuart's own writings on the Zulu kingdom tended to focus on 'the Zulu', and more specifically the first Zulu king, Shaka, and to be infused with ideas about tribe that were prevalent at the time, the accounts that he assembled from various interlocutors are concerned with a host of other identifications and are filled with all manner of details that do not fit cleanly into a conception of bounded tribes. Close analysis of this extensive body of discursive material suggests that it preserves much of the structures of thought of the various interlocutors with whom Stuart engaged. For all of these reasons, this particular body of material has come to play a definitive role in how the history of the region is interpreted.

The region is relatively well served by a number of other bodies of materials recorded and reproduced over time under different circumstances.<sup>52</sup> We flag a number of these in the volumes, notably the texts published by Magma Fuze, Bryant and Van Warmelo.<sup>53</sup>

Each of these texts was produced under particular circumstances and researchers increasingly recognise that they need to grapple with the significances of their contexts and conditions of production, as well as their respective roles in the making over time of understandings of the history of the region. The archive of material culture offers yet

51 J. Wright, 'Ndukwana kaMbengwana as an Interlocutor on the History of the Zulu Kingdom, 1897–1903', *History in Africa* 38(1), 2011: 343–68; Hamilton, *Terrific Majesty*; Hamilton, 'Backstory'.

52 The archival potential of works of creative non-fiction, such as the plays by H.I.E. Dhlomo on the early Zulu kings, or John Dube's *Jeje, the Body Servant of Shaka*, is open to a treatment similar to that we accord the collections of material culture, though for different reasons. Where it is a burden of our argument that the denial of the status of archive to the collections of material culture effectively limited their ability to attest to a dynamic history, the works of creative non-fiction were, as Bhekisizwe Peterson has pointed out, in part a tactical response to the difficulties experienced by Africans in getting into the archives of the apartheid state. See B. Peterson, *Monarchs, Missionaries and African Intellectuals: African Theatre and the Unmaking of Colonial Marginality*, Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2000, pp. 187–8. In addition, we had wished to include in these volumes a small selection of essays originally written for an essay competition in the 1950s, which provide insight into how the history of the period we are concerned with was thought of and written about at the time by the contributors, many of whom wrote accounts of their own families' histories. The essay collection offers a view of how an archival collection captures, in a very specific format, materials concerning the remote past that circulated in public life. However, this proved not to be possible. The collection is located at the Killie Campbell Africana Library in Durban.

53 Van Warmelo, *Preliminary Survey*; M.M. Fuze, *The Black People and Whence They Came*, trans. H.C. Lugg; ed. A.T. Cope, Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1979; A.T. Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal: Containing Earlier Political History of the Eastern-Nguni Clans*, Cape Town: C. Struik, 1965.

another form that circulated in pre- and post-collection public life, its certainties and circuits sometimes destabilising those of the written texts and vice versa.

The essays by Nokuthula Cele and Grant McNulty make it clear that such processes of circulation and the production of records continue in the present. As political life in the region frees itself from formerly hegemonic interpretations of tradition and identity, notably those imposed by the apartheid government and the Zulu nationalist organisation, Inkatha, alternative accounts of the remote past grow in public visibility. In each case, their visibility is itself the product of particular conditions. In the case of Machi historical accounts discussed by Cele, the visibility arises in response to the identification of contemporary Machi living in the Durban area as outsider 'Mpondo' in situations of ethnicised violence. In the case of the Mkhize discussed by McNulty, accounts of the remote past of the Mkhize grow in prominence in response to the shift of power in KwaZulu-Natal, away from Zulu royalists and Inkatha-aligned politicians towards African National Congress (ANC) politicians and the many historically marginalised clans that make up their ranks. In many instances, the producers of these alternative accounts appreciate the power of archive and work actively to enter their accounts into the record, sometimes tribing and at other times untribing the archive they are working assiduously to constitute.

Our focus on material forms alerts us both to the differences between material sources and word-based ones and to the extent to which it may, on closer inspection, lead to the recognition of unexpected similarities. While the differences can be mobilised productively, it is important to recognise that what seems to be distinctive about items of material culture can turn out to be a difference of degree, itself a matter of potential productivity for those interested in the remote past.

One of the differences concerns the contemporary status of certain items of material culture as alienated objects. Much has been written about the pressures on metropolitan museums in the centres of former empires to return such items to the countries of their origin.<sup>54</sup> Somewhat different considerations are at work in the situation of the alienation of objects from formerly subordinated communities that continue to be held by the museums of those communities' home countries. Our volumes look at objects in both metropolitan and South African museums. These particular objects are not, for the most part, the subjects of restitution demands. However, their alienation and neglect within the collecting institutions is marked.

54 See most recently the 'Debate on Restitution' in *Dark Matter: In the Ruins of Imperial Culture*, Special Issue: Afterlives, edited by Artefakte/anti-Humboldt, 18 November 2013 (<http://www.darkmatter101.org/site/2013/11/18/debate-on-restitution/>) (accessed 21 January 2014). See also, *inter alia*, J. Greenfield, *The Return of Cultural Treasures*, second edition, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995; F. Shyllon, 'Negotiations for the Return of Nok Sculptures from France to Nigeria: An Unrighteous Conclusion', *Art Antiquity and Law* 8(2), 2003; J.H. Merryman, *Imperialism, Arts and Restitution*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. Ari Hawass, Egypt's chief of antiquities, teamed up with 25 countries to press institutions such as the Louvre and the British Museum to return antiquities that were stolen from Egypt (<http://www.nbcnews.com/id/36280732#.UsvwZWQW2NQ>) (accessed 7 January 2014).



### The vexed contemporary presences of the long past

Leibhammer's essay sets out some of the terms of this alienation as it affects one institution, the Johannesburg Art Gallery (JAG), which holds one of the most substantial collections of material pertinent to this period and region. Leibhammer offers a first-hand account of the challenges faced by curators of inherited collections of items described as traditional.<sup>55</sup> She draws attention to the ways a new generation of curators, especially black curators, avoid engaging with the material, demonstrating both anxiety and aversion. She notes the simultaneous and very diverse desires of members of the public in relation to these materials. These encompass everything from appreciation by connoisseurs to the heartfelt sentiments of ordinary South Africans who record in the visitors' book their excitement at seeing 'their culture' valorised. Tracing the trajectory of the Traditional Collections at the JAG, Leibhammer advances the argument that the project of modernism falters especially in relation to the southern African material. Previously deemed 'ethnographic' but, from the late twentieth century, repositioned as 'art' following the earlier redefinition of West and Central African collections,<sup>56</sup> southern African material culture still remains largely constrained within ethnographic paradigms of the tribal and the timeless. This is a problem compounded by the pieces' small scale, perceived quotidian nature, attenuated information bases and their persistent identification almost solely in terms of timeless tribal labels such as: 'Knobkerrie. North Nguni (Zulu)'. Unable to redeem themselves formally and spiritually through a modernist lens, they remain caught between discourses and practices of Western aesthetics and ethnology. While the JAG serves as an example, it is not an isolated case. Collections of southern African material culture across the globe are in much the same position – seemingly allochronic opposites to modernism's contemporaneity. Noting that the problem is not particular to the southern African material, Leibhammer observes that it emerges in relation to this material more starkly than is the case to the north and west of the continent where it is, in fact, just as much of a problem, only less obvious. Leibhammer's essay thus sets the terms for one of the central questions underpinning these volumes: what does it take to unshackle the material from the abjection of this kind of positioning and to open it up for dynamic contemporary engagement?<sup>57</sup>

In the essay that immediately follows, Ntombela, herself – like Leibhammer – formerly a curator at the JAG, examines how black contemporary artists navigate the troubled inheritance of the tribal and traditional. Ntombela focuses specifically on a post-1994 selection of artists whose work is strongly self-representational: Langwa Magwa, Zama

55 It is difficult to pinpoint exactly when the word 'traditional' was added to the lexicon used to describe art from the African continent. The terms 'primitive', 'tribal' and 'African' art have been popular since the early twentieth century but, according to Anitra Nettleton, 'traditional' started to gain currency in the late 1970s as people searched for an alternative to the previous three terms. By the time the large Brenthurst Collection went to the JAG in 1987 'traditional' was the term in play and was used to exclude the contemporary (Nessa Leibhammer, pers. comm. with Anitra Nettleton, 21 January 2014).

56 W. Rubin (ed.), *Primitivism' in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*, New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1984.

57 Cf. S. Leeb, 'Contemporary Art and/in/versus/about the Ethnological Museum' in *Dark Matter: In the Ruins of Imperial Culture*, Special Issue: Afterlives, edited by Artefakte//anti-Humboldt, 18 November 2013 (<http://www.darkmatter101.org/site/2013/11/18/contemporary-art-and-in-versus-about-the-ethnological-museum>)(accessed 21 January 2014).

Dunywa, Nandipha Mntambo and Nicholas Hlobo. Ntombela argues that because these artists work with representations of self, they draw on individualised experiences and avoid participating in any form of discourse about or speaking on behalf of any stereotypical identity, be it black, tribal or ethnic. Seeking not to legitimate an African 'authentic', they deconstruct issues of power and identity in often ironic, playful, evasive and obscure ways. Arguing that a discussion of the notion of 'race' and specifically 'blackness' in the case of these artists is unavoidable, Ntombela suggests that it cannot be conducted in terms of reductive dualisms, nor should blackness be approached as a negative state, a state of victimhood, or even a 'special' case. All of these artists incorporate but subvert, disturb or otherwise redeploy aspects of what has been historically conceptualised as 'traditional' in their work. As Ntombela points out, these aspects are potent parts of modern individual identities *and always have been*. This challenging essay puts the spotlight on the proposition that far from being a place where modernity encountered the traditional and the tribal, a thoroughly modern encounter happened between residents and newcomers in colonial Natal. As other essays demonstrate, the division of reality into a traditional and a modern component was, from its first moment, a device of discrimination.<sup>58</sup>

Offset against distaste for the tribal, notably among young intellectuals, is conservative endorsement by patriarchal traditionalists and especially certain chiefs, who operate as the custodians of tradition. For them, the museums are either rival custodial institutions that threaten their monopoly over the resource termed 'tradition' or they are dismissible as irrelevant or 'foreign'. But drawing a sharp distinction between modern young intellectuals and artists, and conservative traditionalists, is in danger of missing clear indications of growing interest in the history of the remote past in other aspects of contemporary public life. Two developments speak to this. The first is the bubbling up of enormous public and political interest in the many different forms of identification in the region that for so long have been subsumed under an overarching ethnic identity as Zulu. It is an interest that is especially evident in the southern half of the KwaZulu-Natal province, the area with which these volumes are concerned. In part this upwelling is a response to the breaking of the grip on the area of nationalist Zulu politics that was for long championed and imposed by Inkatha and centred in the heartland of the historic Zulu kingdom. Many ANC supporters were drawn from political groupings that had historically been outside of the ambit of Zulu power or who had resisted or evaded incorporation under Zulu rule. With the coming to power of the ANC and especially after the 1999 elections that saw the ANC take a majority in KwaZulu-Natal, these other smaller, often clan-based identities have been much celebrated. Some of this takes the form of animated politicking for resources based on claims to having being stripped of rights by the Zulu kings. For others, it is part of a sense of local modern self-fashioning.

58 See Mamdani's discussion of the role of Henry Maine in the making of the tribal native as colonial subject. As Mamdani puts it: 'If the settler was modern, the native was not; if history defined the settler, geography defined the native; if legislation and sanction defined modern political society, habitual observance defined that of the native.' Mamdani, *Define and Rule*, p. 6.

McNulty offers an account of the extraordinary interest in contemporary KwaZulu-Natal in the remote past and in the diverse histories of the various groupings who came collectively to be thought of as 'the Zulu'. His essay encompasses the activities of contemporary community historians, academic historians, heritage bodies, extended families, politicians, chiefs, government departments and archivists, all interested in the state of knowledge of history of the later independent and early colonial periods. It indicates that questions of evidence are today the subject of sustained attention. Explorations of the remote past are revealed to be dynamic ingredients of a contemporary vernacular modernity that braids together aspects of distinctly indigenous, often contested inheritances together with those of other global origins.

While scholars have for some time been aware that oral narratives and written ones seldom exist in forms sealed off from one another, the idea of a division between sources and synthesised histories has proven more resilient. In practice, many oral accounts are synthesised histories just as surely as written and published ones. Vernacular moderns, such as the community historian Siyabonga Mkhize who is the focus of McNulty's discussion, grasp well the significance of evidence and the terms of the contemporary developments that require them to establish records to bolster claims and secure resources and work productively laying down records, using existing records and creating synthesised accounts.

These three opening essays, by Leibhammer, Ntombela and McNulty, as well as the Epilogue by Mbongiseni Buthelezi, situate the volumes in contemporary life, suggesting something of the complexity of current public engagements with the region and period with which we are concerned and the linked archival possibilities and challenges. Many of these engagements are overtly political, either in their rejection of colonial attitudes or in the way they are linked to questions of access to resources, notably land and chiefly office. Matters of identity loom large, in some cases in politically charged ways and in other instances in the imaginings of self. As the essays by Leibhammer and Ntombela show, in many cases the significance of objects associated with the past is undermined by uncertainty of provenance and compromised contexts. Hence, following Walter Benjamin, these items struggle to manifest aura either as art or as authentic ancient artefacts with pedigreed historical existences.<sup>59</sup> Interrogating what we might provisionally term their 'anauratic' condition, as well as their uncertain status and publicity, constitutes one of the rationales for the volumes.

### **Locating people and developing tribes**

The second part of Volume 1 goes back in time to look at issues of identity and identification in the late independent and early colonial periods, examining how an imported idea of fixed tribes came to be mapped onto fluid local forms of identification. In each case, the contributors do ground-clearing work in distinguishing between imported ideas about tribes and the ideas about social formations and identities onto which such

59 W. Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' in *Illuminations*, edited by H. Arendt, London: Fontana, 1968, pp. 214–18.

ideas were mapped. The multiple forms of identification that they reveal are challenging to write about and the focus on constantly shifting identities pushes us to give up entrenched habits of thinking in terms of consistent ethnic blocks.

Gavin Whitelaw and Simon Hall confront the problem archaeologists face in using ethnographic material from the first half of the twentieth century to interpret remains that date back to hundreds of years before. Historical research on the Shakan kingdom shows that appellations such as Nguni, Ntungwa and Lala meant something in the 1820s that was different from what they meant in the 1930s. It speaks to how, in the 1810s and 1820s, the Zulu ruling elite and those whom they sought to dominate actively mobilised the past, drawing on elements of what was established knowledge about the past and refurbishing it in certain respects. The work by Hamilton and Wright on these processes and on their archival traces remain fundamental to any understanding of the constituting of the archive with which these volumes are concerned.<sup>60</sup> It offers archaeologists a new place, significantly closer in time to the periods with which they are concerned, from which to draw ideas about identities to illuminate their findings. It also gives them a very good indication of what kinds of changes have taken place historically in relation to identity questions. The archaeologists then have to consider the problem of what might have changed in terms of how identities were understood between the Shakan period, about which historians know quite a lot, and the periods that the archaeologists are seeking to write about, significantly earlier in time. The corollary issue is, of course, what would have been continuous across that time? Leveraging off Igor Kopytoff's model of the internal African frontier as localised, fluid and open to influxes of newcomers, Whitelaw and Hall set out to investigate the existence in the past of a set of shared ideas about political entities as containing within themselves distinct categories of people, marked out as original inhabitants, incomers and latecomers.<sup>61</sup> This brings into view the ways in which these categories related status and origins, resulting in political arrangements that recognised layered occupations of the landscape, with the layers linked to degrees of access to power, status and wealth and specialist occupations. Noting what the historians are able to show as happening in the Shakan kingdom, the archaeologists interpret these layered identities as both reflecting real shared origins, some of them distant in time, and as open to forms of manipulation within limits and a certain amount of change over time. This essay inaugurates a thematic thread that is drawn throughout the volumes concerning the way in which change and continuity are always hinged together in the playing out of processes of identification and identity interpolations.

Wright's contribution provides a baseline historical account for the region. He summarises the large and scattered body of pertinent research on the political history of the region from about 1750 into the later nineteenth century. He provides a detailed discussion of the many small, often emergent identities in the region and the complex

60 Hamilton, 'Ideology, Oral Traditions'; J. Wright, 'Politics, Ideology, and the Invention of the "Nguni"', *Southern African Studies* 4, 1986: 96–118; Hamilton and Wright, 'Making of the *AmaLala*'.

61 I. Kopytoff (ed.), *The African Frontier: The Reproduction of Traditional African Societies*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987.

historical processes that shaped and reshaped these identities over time. In each case, Wright draws attention to how these groupings maintained – or were obliged to maintain – identities very distinct from those closer to the centre of Zulu power and how they in turn distinguished themselves from neighbours and subjects they regarded as inferior. This was often achieved through the manipulation of what was at that time the store of available material about the past. In the 1830s Zulu overrule south of the Thukela River ceased and this opened the way for the region to become a zone of refuge and settlement for groups seeking to evade Zulu dominance. The picture that emerges is one of constantly shifting alliances and movements, some over long distances and others relatively localised, which saw the development of a variety of different situational identities, typically but not always made up of relatively stable basic clan level units, composed of people descended from common ancestors, combining with others. The profoundly mixed nature of the area was further extended by the settlement of immigrant Griqua stock farmers and the existence of increasingly marginalised hunter-gatherer communities, made up of people from varying historical and cultural backgrounds, predominantly but far from exclusively, people identified as Bushmen.

Onto this was mapped the idea of tribe, most notably through the activities of the man most central to Natal native administration, Theophilus Shepstone. In ‘The Tribal History Project, 1862–4’, Guy argues that in the 1850s Shepstone recognised that settler proposals for native locations were insufficient for the existing population. His solution was the introduction of the notion of tribal title in trust. To underpin this proposal and to counter settler claims that Natal was largely unpopulated at the time of settlement, Shepstone compiled a research report on the history of Natal, organised as the histories of 94 tribes that occupied the area before Shakan times, much of it based on interviews with members of the communities concerned. The circumstances under which Shepstone researched and compiled the report was the subject of earlier research by Wright.<sup>62</sup> The enormous detail of the report was rendered in an abridged form in two accompanying maps. It is Guy’s contention that these readily digestible maps fixed people and places in time in a way that did not reflect social realities on the ground. This close mapping of people onto bounded spaces, he argues, was a central part of the process of the creation of tribes, rather than the representation of pre-existing tribes.

The central role played by maps in giving substance to the notion of tribe is expanded on in Etherington’s essay, which investigates Bryant’s ‘Map of Zululand and Natal showing the adjacent territory as now divided and the Native Clans as Located in Pre-Shakan Times’ in *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal* (1929). Bryant’s tome offers almost 700 pages of detailed information about the many small clans of the KwaZulu-Natal region. A dense, florid and sometimes offensive text, it is redeemed by its extensive index. Etherington adds to the increasingly substantial body of work on the context and conditions of the production of this text with a detailed consideration of the thickly

62 J. Wright, ‘A.T. Bryant and “the Wars of Shaka”’, *History in Africa* 18, 1991: 409–25.

annotated fold-out map.<sup>63</sup> The map, which seemingly offers a static tribal picture of the type typical of the time, when used in conjunction with the detailed historical text that describes people in constant motion and other tables of information, is a source, not necessarily about the period to which it refers, pre-Shakan times, but about a variety of times. In their discussion of activities of the Mariannhill Monastery where Bryant was based from 1883 to 1893, Hamilton and Leibhammer and Rippe (both in Volume 2) make further contributions to an understanding of the sources drawn on by Bryant and his working methods.

The essay that follows, by Nokuthula Cele, focuses on one small grouping, the Machi of the Harding area in the far south of KwaZulu-Natal. Demonstrating the fluidity of identity that Wright discusses, this case study tracks what happened to the Machi when the processes that Guy outlines were brought to bear on them. The essay shows how, across time, Machi selectively emphasised or played down their connections with their northern Zulu neighbours and their southern Mpondo neighbours. They also maintained a variety of connections with patrons, clients and near and distant relatives. Again, the picture that emerges is of communities of people with plural and shifting identities.<sup>64</sup> The Machi case reveals how slow and uneven the process of the tribalisation of the region was, only finally being realised in the Machi case after 1894 when what was Pondoland was annexed to the Cape. It provides a lens, too, on how tribe and bounded areas came to be attached to each other, this also being an uneven process across the region.

Cele probes contemporary understandings of the past held by Machi community officials to find indications of past considerations of identity issues and the relationship of identity to land. In part, these understandings are shaped by contemporary politics, in terms of which Machi identity is a highly charged and contested matter. Cele considers how Machi community officials use materials about the past to make arguments about the present. While their purposes are contemporary and while it is obvious that they are selective and strategic about how they use such materials, what is also clear is that they have available to them abundant materials about the past that attest to the fluidity of forms of identification. Cele deploys perspectives gleaned from their understandings of the past to interrogate the relevant documentation in the inherited colonial archives. This essay seeds the ground for further discussion of the ways in which materials of this kind, circulating in contemporary social life, might be used by historians – a subject that

63 As early as 1969 Shula Marks offered an initial assessment of Bryant's work, highlighting his role in the invention of the notion of 'Nguni'. S. Marks, 'Traditions of the Natal Nguni: A Fresh Look at the Work of A.T. Bryant' in *African Societies in South Africa*, edited by L. Thompson, London: Heinemann, 1969, pp. 126–44; see also S. Marks and A. Atmore, 'The Problem of the Nguni: An Examination of the Ethnic and Linguistic Situation in South Africa before the Mfecane' in *Language and History in Africa*, edited by D. Dalby, New York: Africana Publishing Corporation, 1970, pp. 120–32. In 1986 John Wright returned to the question of the invention of the Nguni, offering an extended genealogy of the term and explaining why Bryant's understanding of the term was readily taken up by academics and administrators alike (Wright, 'Politics, Ideology'). In a later essay, Wright tracked the sources of the central organising ideas of Bryant's text and identified the extent of his indebtedness to Shepstone's research (Wright, 'A.T. Bryant and "the Wars of Shaka"').

64 Cf. evidence of similar fluidity in Zondi identity at much the same time, discussed in Hamilton and Leibhammer's essay in Volume 2.



extends well beyond the established methods for the use of what have been cast as oral traditions – that will surely attract ongoing attention for a long time to come.

Much scholarship to date has looked at the large polities of the period, notably the Zulu and Mpondo kingdoms, at the reasons for their emergence and how they operated. The histories of the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal have long been separated in this way. These volumes' concern with an interstitial zone between two points of focus is designed to look closely at strategies of existence on the edges of power. Indeed, one part of that borderland, including the area occupied by the Machi, was for a significant part of the nineteenth century known as Nomansland, the precise boundaries of which were far from fixed.<sup>65</sup>

Sam Challis also focuses on a part of Nomansland and raises fundamental questions about the constitution of late independent and early colonial groups considered distinct and homogenous. By bringing the archive of rock paintings of the southern Drakensberg region into play, alongside oral and other historical knowledge, Challis questions the applicability in this area of the classic stereotype of Bushman identity that comes out of Kalahari San models. He offers an alternative reading of what the label 'Bushman' signified on the destabilised frontier of the southern Natal Drakensberg region from the 1830s until the late 1860s. Challis argues that groups living in the mountains were referred to as San or Bushman because of their perceived economy of hunting and gathering. Far from existing in the kinds of ideally egalitarian circumstances attributed to Bushmen, these were creolised amalgamations of people from different cultural backgrounds, organised hierarchically and led by recognised individuals, some of whom can be identified by name today.<sup>66</sup> Challis contends that their creolised character is evident in the rock art of the region, which reveals atypical imagery. In contrast to the depictions of trancing that are found in other areas, in these paintings shamans shape-shift into baboons, cattle or horses, rather than the more typical eland or buck.<sup>67</sup> Images of riders wearing hats, mounted on horses, carrying powder horns and knobkerries, previously read as depictions of Europeans, were rather self-depictions by 'AmaTola' – the raiders and stock thieves who preyed on black and white farmers alike from Giants Castle in the north to Mount Fletcher in the south.

In the final essay in Volume 1, Heather Hughes and Mwelela Cele focus on the Qadi chiefdom, examining how, in the course of Qadi incorporation into the Colony of Natal, ideas of tribe and chiefdom were elaborated. They point out how in colonial Natal the categories of indigene, refugee and settler were distinguished from one another according to origins in ways that invite comparison with the layered identities discerned by

65 Nomansland subsequently became East Griqualand (1863–79) and then part of the Transkeian Territories. The districts of Matatiele and Kokstad, which were predominantly white-owned farmland, were separated off from what became the Transkei, though still part of the Cape. In 1994 the 'independent' Transkei was absorbed back into South Africa as part of the Eastern Cape, and Matatiele, as well as Kokstad, became part of KwaZulu-Natal. In 2006 Matatiele was made part of the Eastern Cape.

66 G. Blundell, *Nqabayo's Nomansland: San Rock Art and the Somatic Past*, Uppsala: Uppsala University and Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand, 2004.

67 When shamans trance, they experience an out of body state where they travel to the spiritual dimension in order to fight demons and heal the sick. In this state they may morph into the form of elands, flying creatures or fish.

archaeologists across the last 500 years and discussed by historians in relation to identity politics in the Shakan kingdom, in particular. This essay offers insight into the ways in which the Qadi leadership mobilised ideas, engaged in processes of the development of tribes and intervened in the making of colonial records, so as to shape the circumstances of their participation in the new colony. The picture that emerges is of a strategically modern, changing chiefdom actively recruiting supporters in the form of ‘Qadi *omhlophe*’ (white Qadi), such as Marshall Campbell, participating in tribal dancing displays where tactical, and making some of the most significant intellectual contributions of the time to the debates and discussion about the forming colonial order. Continued Qadi involvement in the constituting of the archive in subsequent eras is a point vividly attested to in this essay by the discussion of the contribution of Victoria Ngidi in 1950 to what became the Killie Campbell Essay Collection.

The contributions in this section make it clear that ideas of tribe, ethnicity and even nation cannot be uncritically applied to groupings on the ground in this region.<sup>68</sup> There were larger-scale polities manifesting degrees of internal differentiation, sometimes existing as clients of even larger polities in the region and sometimes autonomous. There were also large and small defensive and strategic amalgamations of various kinds. Ideas about kin were used to bind and to differentiate people, while deep-seated conceptual structures recognised that the people in any one place comprised some recognised as original inhabitants, others as newcomers and still others as latecomers. Rather than a modern world encountering a traditional world, these essays reveal a dynamic situation in the new colony of Natal in which notions of the modern and of the traditional and tribal were in formation in relation to unfolding events of the time and informed by the ideas that both the long-term residents and the newcomers brought to bear.

### **Ambiguities, hybridities and entanglements**

The first five essays in Volume 2 explore the archival potential of items of material culture and images, paying attention to the processes by which late nineteenth-century experiences and formations came to be divided up into the separate spaces of the tribal and the modern. Klopper reprises material from a number of her earlier papers and presents new research to offer a perspective on self-fashioning tactics involving items of material culture and active styling engaged in by a variety of marginalised people – refugees, newly urbanised workers and young men resisting forced labour obligations. Her contribution makes it clear that as early as the 1840s and 1850s and well into the early years of the twentieth century, material culture was not being produced in timelessly unchanging, ‘traditional’ ways, but was constantly being imaginatively mobilised in response to rapidly changing and often unstable situations. Far from objects and styles being linked to established ethnic identities, they were being deployed as markers of distinction, both of status and of rebellion, within emerging larger ethnic or smaller

68 Emic and historic nuances – elided in the notion of tribe – are linguistically recognised in the existence in separate noun classes of two words in isiZulu with the root form *-zwe*: *izizwe* (pl. *izizwe*) referring to a body politic or a group with some form of kinship relationship, and *izwe* (pl. *amazwe*) referring to an area and the people in it.

clan-based identities, across such identities and colonial society, as well as across generations, and typically involved inherited and foreign elements in varieties of unorthodox combination and mix-up.

Modernity's inability to accommodate this space of hybridity is the subject of Guy's second essay in these volumes. He delves into the genealogy of a mid-nineteenth-century image of a Natal chief, Ngoza kaLudaba surrounded by his *izinduna* (appointed officials), an image that has been repeatedly recast and reframed as timelessly tribal and quintessentially Zulu over the last 150 years. Guy argues that the ambiguity of meaning that this image possesses lies both in the persona of the subject and in the nature of photographic images themselves. While he became the most powerful chief in Natal, Ngoza's position was not hereditary, nor achieved through the support of the 'tribe' he presided over.<sup>69</sup> As a commoner he rose to power through his allegiance to the colonial authorities, Shepstone in particular. He was a chief, a symbol of African authority, a successful farmer, entrepreneur and consumer of Western goods, known to dress smartly in European clothing, but also to appear resplendent in traditional costume surrounded by his *izinduna* all holding 'Zulu' war shields and knobkerries, when the occasion demanded. The second ambiguity lies in the nature of the photographic image that is dependent on its text and context for meaning. Already an ambiguous figure, the image of Ngoza is thus open to multiple recontextualisations and readings, including the docile colonial subject, the quintessential Zulu chief and the 'savage'. Guy argues that any attempt to accommodate a reading of Ngoza both as a symbol of African traditional authority and as a modern individual results in a 'paralysis of perspective'. This essay draws attention to the nature of images and their use, their sensitivity to context and the possibility of their multiple readings – a theme explored throughout these volumes.

The multiple uses and manipulations of the photographic image is the subject of the following essay by Rippe. Between the late 1880s and 1939, the Catholic monastery and mission, Mariannahill, near Pinetown, launched a variety of photographic images taken in Natal and East Griqualand into global circulation. The Mariannahill missionaries used photography to collect and convey knowledge about their relationship to their mission subjects, directed at several European audiences. Mariannahill's photographs found their way into many of the major ethnographic museums in the world – either through the purchase of original prints directly from the mission's photographic studio or in other forms of reproduction, such as postcards. They were widely published in travel reports, tourist guides (such as the railway guides discussed by André Croucamp in Volume 2) and ethnographic literature. Like the Angas images 50 years earlier and the photo of Ngoza, these images were to play a definitive role in the global imaging of the tribal Zulu. Rippe analyses production at the Mariannahill photographic studio and the dynamics between the missionaries in South Africa and European consumers of the images, showing how certain photographs lost their primary identity as mission subjects and became ethnographic objects. Rather than being ready-made products, Mariannahill's photographs are

69 A group made up largely of refugees from north of the Thukela River.

an outcome of an ongoing engagement in an ever-unstable field of encounter and understanding, not only between the missionaries and the people around them whom they photographed, but also between South Africa and Europe. Rippe's essay provides an understanding of why missionary photography mimicked anthropological photography and popular European imagery, but also why the images deviated from their aesthetics and compositional conventions. Scrutinising production and circulation in tandem complicates and nuances the photographs' usability as historical sources and thus what can be said about what they depict.

As is well recognised, the number of missionaries in nineteenth-century Natal was higher than anywhere else in southern Africa.<sup>70</sup> For the most part, studies of missionary activity in southern Africa have focused on missionary attempts to export their ideas, their efforts, as the Comaroffs put it in their study of missionary engagements with the Tswana in the interior, to colonise the consciousness of the local inhabitants. However, missionaries played a key role in the production of what was known at the time elsewhere in the world about the population of the region. They were, to varying extents, intent on finding out about the existing beliefs and concepts of those they hoped to convert. To this end, many invested in learning to speak the local languages and were instrumental in the production of the earliest dictionaries. As Wright notes in his essay, they were among the most frequent commentators on questions of African identity. Current scholarship on the Natal missions offers clues about the lenses that they brought to bear on interpreting what they encountered, the interlocutory roles played by African evangelists, the quantity and form of records demanded by missionary headquarters in Europe, the ways these records were subsequently edited and preserved and all the many other aspects relevant to development of a critical understanding of the roles played by missionaries in the making of the archive pertinent to the region and period with which we are concerned.<sup>71</sup> Full-length studies are required to do justice to this topic, well beyond the scope of these volumes.

What these volumes do, however, is to draw attention to the fact that many actors and locations discussed in one essay pop up repeatedly in other contributions. Rather than activities taking place discretely in widely dispersed locations, much collecting was concentrated in mission and colonial networks south of the Thukela River, with identifiable individuals as both makers, facilitators, suppliers and acquirers of material. This is vividly demonstrated in the contributions that follow, notably those by Hamilton and Leibhammer, and Croucamp.

Assembling a range of information across two continents, Hamilton and Leibhammer show that the acquisition of museum objects in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was often embedded in complex, but tightly circumscribed local and global networks

70 For an early comment on this, see N. Etherington, *Preachers, Peasants and Politics in Southeast Africa, 1835–1880*, London: Royal Historical Society, 1978, p. 4.

71 See, for example, the substantial body of scholarship on the missionary activity of Bishop Colenso and his adherents, as well the study of the Swedish missions by Lars Berge, *The Bambatha Watershed: Swedish Missionaries, African Christians and an Evolving Zulu Church in Rural Natal and Zululand, 1902–1910*, Uppsala: Studia Missionalia Upsaliensia, 2000.

of interaction and coevality. This essay underscores the point made in a number of other contributions about the role played by colonised subjects in participating actively and strategically in the making of records. Treating labels, accession registers, index cards, catalogues and vitrines as items of museum culture, rather than metadata, the authors bring together information previously separated by race, class, culture, politics, institutional practices and taxonomies, thereby reconnecting things separated in the course of their institutional lives. This enables them to position the materials archivally. However, the essay goes on to argue that the conventional archival practice of privileging acquisition details as provenance occludes the story of how a particular object ended up in a collection and is not helpful in understanding why some things were collected and others were not. Hamilton and Leibhammer also show that once collected, the materials continue to undergo changes. Filling in crucial details about their pre- and post-collection lives – paying attention to both their backstories and biographies as archival objects – the authors rescue numerous items from being marooned out of time and without firm location. The essay manages, amongst other things, through this combination, to invest a hairpin in the Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, generically labelled ‘Zulu’ without further details other than that it was collected by Alfred Cort Haddon, with a precise provenance in the home of a Zondi chief, Laduma kaTetelegu, in Swartkops, Natal, on Saturday 26 August 1905. The essay fills out in considerable detail the circumstances of how it was collected and offers an explanation, rooted in the earlier activities of Laduma’s well-known father, Tetelegu kaNobanda, of how it came to pass that Haddon and other collectors ended up in this particular homestead and not another. The essay’s exploration of the multiple photographic representations of Tetelegu chimes powerfully with Guy’s analysis of the photographs of Ngoza.

One of the lines of connection that determined where many of the items discussed by Hamilton and Leibhammer were collected was the Natal railway that was extended across the colony in the 1880s.<sup>72</sup> Tackling the vast archive of images currently moribund in the Transnet Heritage Library, Croucamp investigates how, from its earliest days in the mid-nineteenth century, the Natal Government Railways took it upon itself to promote Natal through its travel guides, magazines, postcards and calendars as an attractive destination for tourists, a safe haven for investors and a place with a bright future for potential settlers. Croucamp reveals how, in its mission to establish Natal as a destination of choice for a European audience, the Natal Railways media machinery marketed particular stereotypes of ‘natives’ through texts, but more particularly through photographic images. He tracks changes in the imaging of the inhabitants of the region that occurred in response to wider political changes and racial imaginings. The neglected and eschewed railways archive holds materials that are central to understanding how ideas about tradition and tribal life gained a form of publicity outside scholarly networks. The essay’s punch lies in its dramatic demonstration of how the modern technologies of photography and rail were marshalled to create their polar opposite, the tribal primitive.

72 See also Nokuthula P. Cele’s essay in this volume on the significance of the train station at Izingolweni in the far south.

Indeed, much of the material that was recorded as traditional and tribal came from places not far from urban centres that were amongst the most dynamic sites of emerging local modernities, where local chiefs and African farmers sought actively to take advantage of changes underway, where missionary and colonial government presence were well established, in sites easily reached by road or rail, in situations where written accounts were needed for other purposes, where cameras were readily available or phonograms purposefully delivered and where purchased European-style items had to be packed away when the traditional and the tribal were to be photographed. The first five essays in Volume 2 thus attest to the ways in which key elements of what was later to become definitively tribal and traditional were in fact the products of changing circumstances, squarely of their own time, and were at the time themselves distinctly new and innovative. To make the point that much of the material demarcated and designated tribal turns out to have been part of an emergent African modernity that was then stalled and displaced into the domain of the timelessly traditional is not to suggest that it has no value in helping us to think about preceding eras. Some of it, undoubtedly, was produced in earlier times and held onto until the time of its collection. Things produced closer to the time of collection manifestly owe much of their form and content to what went before. It is, however, important to point to the extent of the challenge involved in using these materials as an archive for earlier periods.

Careful archival work of the kind presented in the penultimate three essays in Volume 2 is a further step in undermining the troubled opposition of the traditional and the modern discussed in the opening essays by the ex-curators at the JAG, Leibhammer and Ntombela, and in confronting aspects of the challenges involved in treating the collected materials as archive.

### **Collections historicised, personalised and untribed**

One of the aims of these volumes is to counter the dehistoricised, depersonalised and tribed status of material objects from the late independent and early colonial periods. Catherine Elliott Weinberg takes up this task through the careful examination of the objects, mostly from the Colony of Natal, amassed by the London-based collector Henry Christy (1810–65) as well as additions made to the collection since it passed to the British Museum.

By treating the Museum and archives consulted as ‘field site’, using a biographical approach to people and objects and taking the materiality of these largely unused objects into account, Elliott Weinberg is able to consider how the classification of these mid-nineteenth-century objects, first recorded as the work of ‘Natal Kafirs’ and subsequently as ‘Zulu’, is a process that obscures their complex provenance. Her research on Christy and the various collection networks, as well as her utilisation of Museum metadata as an archive, allows the material, now placed in historical context, associated with named individuals and identifiable loci, to be thought of and considered outside the ‘ethnographic’ confines and narratives in which it is usually caught. Elliott Weinberg is also able to throw light on methods of collecting, showing how, as early as the mid-nineteenth



century, local African agents were partly responsible for procuring and directing the acquisition of material for collectors.

While Elliott Weinberg's methodology is to examine a number of pieces in one collection, Anitra Nettleton considers only one type of object, the snuff spoon, represented in a number of collections in the British Museum. By perusing Museum records and objects for information pertinent to the identities of the makers and users of the objects, Nettleton attempts to distinguish patterns of use across the Zulu kingdom and the Colony of Natal. Following archival traces linked to these snuff spoons, Nettleton finds that the evidence points to a spread of usage across the whole region. In much existing literature it is commonly assumed that 'the Zulu' took snuff and 'the Xhosa' smoked pipes, but Nettleton shows that snuff spoons were also in use beyond the southern borders of Natal.<sup>73</sup> Her essay reminds us of the fact that geographical borders do not necessarily confine or delineate cultural identities and practices, a point that resonates with Cele's discussion of the Machi and Pondo of Nomansland.

In the nineteenth century the knobkerrie (also known as a kierrie, *iwisa* or *isagila*) was in widespread use both north and south of the Thukela River and further afield. As the images in these volumes accumulate across the essays, we see the knobkerrie occurring repeatedly in photographs signifying the traditional and the tribal. Mokoena explodes outwards its interpretative possibilities by considering a photograph, taken in c.1890 by William Laws Caney, of an armed member of the Nongqai or Zululand Police standing behind a seated and uniformed white man, probably from the same policeforce. Each carries a knobbed staff, but these differ in significant ways. The knobkerrie held by the white policeman is a smaller version of the one held by the black policeman behind. The disparity of scale and the contrast between their respective holders allows Mokoena to speculate on the variance of meaning that these items offer, extending into a discussion on law and order in the Colony of Natal and beyond, generating narratives about what it meant to be a uniformed policeman in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century South Africa. Mokoena broadens the interpretative range of the knobkerrie to show how, far from being only a traditional weapon, it was also an accoutrement for the smartly dressed. In addition, knobkerries occupy a space as art objects, as well as lending themselves to metaphorical appropriation. Her contribution is a vivid demonstration of the way in which museum classifications such as 'Knobkerrie. North Nguni' efface the rich, entangled social lives of objects.

Sara Byala and Ann Wanless apprise us of the fate of one collection in one museum, exposing the circumstances in which this kind of flattening of meaning occurs. The Clem Webb Collection was most likely assembled in a variety of places in southern Africa from 1886 to 1920 and was donated to the Africana Museum in 1937. Byala and Wanless show how museum methods, far from being objective modes for reaching an infallible system of 'truth', are shaped both by the times they are part of and the individuals who

73 In collections such as the Brenthurst held at the JAG, the majority of the carved wooden smoking pipes are classified as South Nguni and the snuff boxes either North Nguni or Sotho.

are responsible for their creation and execution. Prescriptive classificatory structures along linguistic lines were put in place by Margaret Shaw and were altered by Africana Museum curator Hermia Gifford Oliver to fit her specific needs. Oliver, a librarian by training, effectively ran the Africana Museum from 1935 to 1949. Aligned more closely with the Dewey Decimal System – a system designed for library classification – the ethnographic objects were positioned as binary opposites to the items from white culture – tradition versus history and stasis versus modernity. This move ran directly counter to the vision of the founder of the Africana Museum, John Gaspard Gubbins, whose driving rationale for the collections was that they be used to do the opposite – to mitigate against such racist hierarchies. However, Gubbins died shortly after the Museum was established and, without his vision, the system adopted was one of easy and apartheid-consistent classificatory solutions. Byala and Wanless show how information about provenance that was available at the time Clem Webb collected was progressively lost, not only through reclassification, but also due to accident, neglect and a lack of resources. The result is that the collection of over 600 objects is now, except for one item, subsumed under the label ‘Zulu’.

### **Conclusion**

In the first instance, these volumes draw attention to the extent of the material culture record, a point little appreciated by researchers outside art history and archaeology. It looks mainly at materials in South African and British repositories and even there it does so selectively. There is much in those institutions that remains unexplored and misidentified, as is the case in the many European institutions that collected actively in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and, to a lesser extent, in North America and elsewhere. Hopefully the information gains made in relation to the materials and the wider processes of the constitution of records discussed in these volumes will facilitate recognition of such materials in other sites and prompt similar activities of contextualisation and critical review.

The essays here tackle head-on the ways in which, in the course of the nineteenth century, notions of the tribal were developed in the region, setting in place some of the conditions that then allowed ideas of the timeless and traditional nature of such societies to take hold. Key players amongst those who were being organised into tribes were themselves active agents in search of new opportunities in the emerging colony and part of larger processes of the remixing of the indigenous and the incoming in manifold ways and settings. It is in this situation of entanglement that most of the record available to us to think about preceding periods in the region was laid down.

These volumes elucidate how locally inherited materials and ideas became wrapped up with ideas of the tribal and traditional and account for how the material culture record came to be deemed ethnographic evidence and was denied the status of archive. They pay attention to the questions of power involved at all levels of these processes and embark on the work of redeeming materials thus marooned out of time and space and investing them with the status of archive, not as an archive of a singular temporal moment in

distant time, but as an archive of the materials in motion through time. They do this through the active mobilisation of tactics of cross-medium investigations designed to disrupt the assumptions that separate components of the archive from one another and by focusing a lens on the life stories of the collected materials.

This approach recognises that the past, which might be the object of contemporary enquiry, is not firmly in a place distinct from the present or from the intervening time period and offers ways of addressing the contingencies of time involved. It shows how ideas about timeless, traditional tribal life were overlaid on materials that emanated from highly fluid, rapidly changing contexts and tracks the trajectory of those materials through time, drawing attention to the ongoing changes to which they have been subject. These volumes thus insist on a recognition and investigation in the archive, and beyond, of the traces of the archive's own historicity.

The contributions in these volumes further suggest a variety of ways of approaching such materials that are designed to personalise them, their makers and all the people who have handled them over time. Probing beneath the signatures of the big-name collectors, we discern a wealth of other people and activities responsible for the shape of the available archive. The particular forms of agency in the past and in the present of ambitious kings and chiefs, strategically minded *izinduna*, cash-strapped missionaries and colonial officials, beleaguered workers, skilled ceramicists and carvers, eager academics and attentive family and community historians in making identities and constituting and reshaping the archive are threaded through the essays. For all the variety in the kinds of people involved, it was nonetheless a relatively circumscribed and interconnected group of people, some of them long-term inhabitants of the area and others incomers of various kinds, some African and some European, who were highly influential in determining what became the record and what did not. They were concentrated in particular places in Natal and these volumes point to the way in which what was collected in those locations was extrapolated to become timeless 'Zulu' material. It offers an account of how a small number of images from colonial Natal, notably the Angas images and those from Mariannhill,<sup>74</sup> but also of individuals such as Ngoza and Tetelegu,<sup>75</sup> came to constitute the visual archive for the imagining of generic pre-colonial life. This is important for understanding how the contemporary ability to imagine the past is circumscribed, not only by the written information available but, as importantly, by the narrow range of images available as resources for visualising that past. Once images are established in academic and public consciousness, they are not easy to displace. The images with which these volumes are concerned leave a legacy of having given shape to what it means to be 'Zulu', a legacy that continues to be felt even in new visual reconstructions. The images of Ngoza in his war dress and Tetelegu saluting are used repeatedly in a variety of contexts.

74 The Wikipedia entry for 'Assegai' is illustrated with an anonymous photograph of Lokothwayo sourced from the New York Public Library online digital database. This image was sourced from the publication C.H. Patton, *The Lure of Africa*, New York: Missionary Education Movement of the United States and Canada, 1917. Here it is captioned 'Zulu Warrior'. The irony is that Lokothwayo, a Mariannhill subject, would probably not have thought of himself either as a 'Zulu' or a 'Warrior'.

75 See Hamilton and Leibhammer's essay in Volume 2 on the extensive use of this image.

So, too, is the Mariannhill archive of photographic images drawn on whenever handy images of tribal ‘Zulus’ are needed. Just as our information about the past comes from a circumscribed network of associations, so, too, do the images, making it difficult to move beyond a narrow and highly particular canon of visual images. The radical tactics of contemporary art are one of the few ways in which this lineage of imagery is disrupted.<sup>76</sup>

While a relatively few images have come to stand for what it means to be ‘Zulu’, hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of objects in museum and private collections around the world currently signify the essences of ‘Zuluness’. The enormous and little researched material record in museums holds a promise that, if strategically approached as an archival resource along with images, associated archaeological discoveries, oral accounts, written texts and museum documentation, it has the potential to release different readings and imaginings of the past, brimming with personal and political histories.

*Tribing and Untribing the Archive* begins the work of tracking conceptual shifts across time, examining ideas about original inhabitants and incomers, historical identities and political and social divisions that pre-dated the rise of the Zulu kingdom under Shaka, that occurred in Shakan times and that were set in place in subsequent eras. The Epilogue by Mbongiseni Buthelezi in Volume 2 takes up the challenge that this presents to the paralysing ways in which ideas about tradition and tribe are mobilised in contemporary public and political discourses. Arguing that the tracking of conceptual shifts over time is a significant contribution to the ongoing work of developing methodological and theoretical approaches for decolonising knowledge production, Buthelezi makes the case that tribe and tradition are elements of a flawed vocabulary for the discussion of inheritances of the past in the present. He argues persuasively on the back of the arguments presented in these volumes that the time is ripe for a new vocabulary for the entangled concepts and ideas that are ours to mobilise in the present.

Drawing analogies between colonial tribing and the rape and pregnancy of Chipo, a young girl in a novel by NoViolet Bulawayo, Buthelezi urges us, just like the protagonists in the novel, to adopt ‘new names’ so that we can more effectively chart futures for ourselves using vocabularies that lift us out of the tired old dichotomies of the ‘tribal’ and the ‘modern’.

Indeed, the extent of the radical possibilities entailed are perhaps most vividly signalled in the way that weird verbing unsettles the equation of the late independent eras with the tribal past, suggesting that what has long been termed the pre-colonial might, with a certain critical nimbleness and wry subversiveness, be open to being rethought as the pre-tribal.

76 The imagining of the southern African past before the advent of photography is a challenge also taken up in certain works of fiction, but is not much studied in its own right. That is a topic well beyond the narrow focus of the present volumes on objects and one that merits sustained attention in ways that will undoubtedly offer much complementary insight. See B. Peterson, ‘Black Writers and the Historical Novel: 1910–1948’ in *The Cambridge History of South African Literature*, edited by D. Attridge and D. Atwell, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, pp. 291–307.



Opposite: Composite page of images from essays in Volume 2