

to arms'



elithini at an event to welcome back 295 circumcision initiates at
PICTURES: THEMBA MNGOMEZULU

Figure 1 (opposite and above).
Newspaper article 'Zulu King's
"Call to Arms"' *The Mercury*,
15 January 2015. National Library
of South Africa

We Need New Names Too

Mbongiseni Buthelezi

In South Africa, as in other formerly colonised societies, part of the ongoing project of decolonising society involves reclaiming pasts previously denied to those who were colonised and represented as having no history.¹ These volumes are a contribution to the ongoing work of developing methodological and theoretical approaches for decolonising knowledge production. They do the essential foundational work of engaging with the fundamental, inherited building blocks of what we know about the past in an innovative way that offers a promising route out of an impasse in which we find ourselves. Jeff Guy, borrowing from Mahmood Mamdani, calls this impasse a 'paralysis of perspective' in this volume.

Guy's neat summation of Mamdani's project in *Citizen and Subject* crisply captures the problematic:

Mamdani identifies 'two clear tendencies' in the debates on contemporary African affairs: the modernist, with its insistence on civil rights in civil society, counterposed by the Africanist call for a politics derived from precedents in African history and culture. In his attempt to resolve these two opposing approaches, Mamdani examines the colonial roots of what manifests itself today as African tradition.²

Indeed, in South Africa there is a strong polarity between Africanist and opposing positions overwhelming debates about redressing imbalances of power, wealth and landholding, deriving from at least two centuries of colonial rule.

Following Mamdani, I want to examine an Africanist perspective on overcoming colonial legacies and demonstrate how it keeps us locked in a 'paralysis of perspective', from which we need to think our way forward at this juncture in South African public and academic discourses. Indeed, much damage has been wrought by at least two centuries of the development of a sophisticated apparatus of corralling colonised peoples into administrative units termed 'tribes', under the cover of recognising pre-existing African forms of social organisation. This has taken the form of developing extensive codes of

1 I have borrowed the title of this essay from NoViolet Bulawayo's novel *We Need New Names*, London: Vintage, 2014.

2 J. Guy, 'A Paralysis of Perspective', in this volume.

'native law', establishing academic disciplines to study the 'natives', as well as collecting, arranging, labelling, storing and exhibiting materials in museums in line with developing ideas of how Africans lived, thought and behaved prior to the advent of colonial rule. The editors of these volumes, which make these processes visible in further ways than the self-critique that disciplines such as anthropology have undertaken over the past few decades, have coined a neat term for these activities and processes – 'tribing' – a term that usefully signposts what we need to grapple with in thinking about these processes and activities and the legacies with which they have saddled our present.

In general, when the shackles of colonial rule have been thrown off, projects of repairing some of the damage wrought by colonialism begin in earnest. At its most fundamental, the question that confronts formerly colonised societies and confronts us with particular force today is: How do we move past deeply entrenched and internalised racialising colonial stereotypes and hierarchies about people/s, their intelligence, their civilisational statuses, their historic forms of social organisation and so on?

The question is in need of much more sophisticated answers than have been proffered so far in public discussion in South Africa by those who claim to speak as leaders of projects of decolonisation, positions that bear questioning. In this essay, I show how the speeches by two such public figures – King Goodwill Zwelithini kaBhekuzulu and President Jacob Zuma – on actions that need to be taken to overcome legacies of colonialism and apartheid lock the debate into the logic of colonialism and condemn discussion to a circular repetition of the very problems that need to be overcome. I draw out the problems in their articulations in order to argue that to move past the paralysis we are beset by, we need to engage with its terms by turning our attention to the vocabularies and concepts we use to speak about the problematic. To be sure, most politicians are unlikely to speak in any but the crudest of terms to further their own ends. Nevertheless, it is well worth surfacing the problem as a matter for discussion.

The vexed problem of what we are talking about moving beyond surfaces most readily in discussions about land reform and culture. One of the major, and most contentious, state interventions to redress the imbalances of the colonial and apartheid pasts has been the restoration of land previously taken by settlers from prior inhabitants, land that remains in the hands of a few (mainly white) people as a result of previous, racially discriminatory political orders. It is a programme about the future: to forge a more just and equitable society than the one we have come from under apartheid and before, in which greed and avarice wrapped up in a language of racial superiority created a fundamentally unequal distribution and unjust ordering of, among other things, land ownership and economic and educational institutions.³ Redress is an attempt to rebalance the society by dismantling the racialised hierarchies that existed at the end of apartheid in 1994.

3 The 'Rhodes Must Fall' movement that in March 2015 forcefully made the argument that decolonisation had stalled at the University of Cape Town and in South Africa demonstrates what is felt by some (mainly black) students as an unjust ordering of an educational institution and the larger society. See rhodesmustfall.co.za.

Yet this project of redress has run aground in many ways, stymied by the kind of paralysis to which Guy refers. What is clear to me is that we are still taking the initial and unsteady steps in figuring out how to reckon with our oppressive pasts most productively in order to move forward towards these more just futures. Questions we have yet to answer adequately for ourselves as a society include: How do we most productively wrestle with overcoming legacies of land dispossession and civilising missions with their attendant assignment along racial lines of civilisation and barbarism, the traditional and the modern and other such dichotomies?

My contention is that we need new vocabularies to better articulate what needs to be wrestled with because we are still struggling to name with clarity what we are trying to overcome and how to overcome it. Public debate is paralysed by both the languages in which it is conducted, with English continuing to dominate as the language in which we talk across different social and racial groups and, especially, the vocabularies that are deployed in these debates. Existing terms are proving unable to do the work of opening up some of the lines of enquiry that may be most productive to pursue. Instead, our current vocabularies inhibit enquiry and are thus in need of interrogation themselves as a foundational ground-clearing move towards the discussion we are struggling our way towards. What do I mean by this? Let me begin to suggest answers to my questions by analysing reports of speeches by the two protagonists of the African(ist) position.

On 15 January 2015, journalist Bongani Hans writing in *The Mercury*, a daily newspaper distributed in KwaZulu-Natal province, reported in an article with the title ‘Zulu King’s “Call to Arms” ’ that the Zulu king, Goodwill Zwelithini, had ‘come out guns blazing against people trying to “destroy African culture” and prevent him from reclaiming land colonials seized centuries ago’ (Figure 1).⁴ Hans reported that, speaking on 7 January 2015 at a ceremony to celebrate the ‘traditional circumcision’ of more than 200 young men in Kokstad at the southern end of KwaZulu-Natal, the heart of the area with which these volumes are concerned, the king had ‘called on young men, who are members of his traditional regiments after being circumcised, to unite and be ready to defend the legacy of the Nguni nations’. Describing the circumcision, Hans states that the young men ‘had undertaken the traditional initiation in November and this month and included members of the Zulu and Hlubi tribes. In South Africa Ngunis are made up of Zulus, Xhosas, Mpondos and Ndebeles.’

The king was making a call to his *amabutho* (regiments) to be ready to defend his intended lodgement of a claim to potentially all land in KwaZulu-Natal following the promulgation of the Restitution of Land Rights Amendment Act in July 2014, which reopened for another five years the state’s land restitution process that had closed in 1998. The king’s claim is based on his contention that the land was seized by white settlers from Zulu people from 1838 when Boer trekkers entered the region from the Cape. Hans reports that, in relation to criticism of his intended claim, the king further

4 B. Hans, ‘Zulu King’s “Call to Arms”’, *The Mercury*, 15 January 2015 (<http://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/kwazulu-natal/zulu-king-s-call-to-arms-1.1805077#.Vd7alKYWE7C>) (accessed 21 February 2015).

stated that critics 'are accusing us of destabilising (development) trusts by claiming our land. This is shocking, because this land was not taken from the trusts, which are now popular in the country, but was taken from traditional leaders, and your fathers and mothers.'

I want to draw attention to three problematic formulations in Hans's article that point to the problem I am surfacing here. The first is that the king is talking about claiming the restitution of all land in KwaZulu-Natal to *amakhosi* ('chiefs' or 'traditional leaders') primarily and to ordinary people in the second place as 'African culture'. The second is the statement by 'cultural expert Professor Sihawu Ngubane of the University of KwaZulu-Natal', who is quoted as saying, 'There are some among the Nguni people who are hell-bent on undermining African culture because they have adopted Western culture.' Finally is the set of terms deployed by Hans in his reportage: 'traditional circumcision', the 'traditional practice' of circumcision and, especially, 'Zulu and Hlubi tribes'. These kinds of statements and terms signal the crux of the challenge with which we are wrestling. As I have suggested, the problem lies in language and so we must turn our attention to language in order to open a path forward. In my view, for many black South Africans, the paralysis in large measure has to do with negotiating what it means to be African and modern, with cultural and religious inheritances that have been so mangled by colonial discourses and practices that we do not yet know whether and/or how to own them. For many white South Africans, perhaps the question of what it means to be African is at the heart of the issue.

Paralysing dichotomies

Attempts to think past colonial stereotypes are plagued by a false opposition between what is identified as African and what is Western – modes of thought, forms of social organisation and so on. In this speech and many others, King Zwelithini calls for a return to modes of social organisation that he and many others see as pre-dating colonial control and were disrupted and fundamentally altered by British colonial encroachment – citizens living under the rule of *amakhosi* who fall under him as the sovereign. In Hans' report, the king calls the support for development trusts shocking and promotes the return of land to 'traditional leaders' and 'your mothers and fathers'. There is a tension in the speech between, on the one hand, the king's call for a return to tradition by rejecting trusts, which are a vehicle created by the Land Restitution Act of 1994 to hold land restored to people of which their forebears had been deprived – i.e., a 'modern' solution to a problem of landholding in our contemporary moment – and his operation within some of the 'modern' institutions when he says he defeated some of his opponents in court.⁵ The king posits the control of land by 'traditional leaders' and the practice of circumcision as well other institutions and practices, such as 'traditional courts', the annual reed dance and the *umkhosi woselwa* or *umkhosi wokweshwama* (first fruits

⁵ On landholding trusts, see B. Cousins, 'Contextualising the Controversies: Dilemmas in Communal Tenure Reform in Post-apartheid South Africa' in *Land, Power and Custom: Controversies Generated by South Africa's Communal Land Rights Act*, edited by A. Claassens and B. Cousins, Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 2008, pp. 3–32.

festival) as African culture to which people should return. He lumps together all those Hans refers to as 'human rights activists' as people opposed to African culture.

The false opposition is articulated even more starkly and crudely by Professor Ngubane when he opposes African and Western cultures. According to this logic, there is one simplistic way of being African proffered, which is to support a return to the control of land by 'traditional leaders' and to stand for 'traditional' ceremonies. This sounds eerily like a reprise of arguments about not bringing the African too quickly into civilisation lest you ruin 'him'. Mamdani quotes Jan Smuts, one-time South African prime minister, waxing lyrical while advocating racial segregation in 1929:

The political system of the natives was ruthlessly destroyed in order to incorporate them as equals into the white system. The African was good as a potential European; his social and political culture was bad, barbarous, and only deserving to be stamped out root and branch. In some of the British possessions in Africa the native just emerged from barbarism was accepted as an equal citizen with full political rights along with the whites. But his native institutions were ruthlessly proscribed and destroyed. The principle of equal rights was applied in its crudest forms, which was little good to him, it destroyed the basis of his African system which was his highest good.⁶

After two centuries of the deep entanglement of modes of being, forms of government and social organisation, ways of producing and transmitting knowledge and so on in southern Africa and elsewhere, it is no longer viable to make such sharp distinctions between what is Western and what is African. What originally was introduced by colonists, settlers and missionaries as European culture has been so thoroughly transformed in African and other contexts into which it was imported that it is thoroughly of the place. The drawing of distinctions between Western and African appears to be wrestling with a ghost we do not know how to exorcise. Moreover, the call for African cultural purity is futile. Both King Zwelithini's and Professor Ngubane's words suggest that those 'Ngunis' who count among the 'human rights activists' opposing the king's attempt to lay claim to all land in KwaZulu-Natal are opposing 'African culture' because they have adopted 'Western culture', in this case a democratic state governed by a Constitution and the rule of law as a fairer form of social organisation than chiefship. The terms 'Western' and 'African' are so vague and imprecise that they close off articulation of what it really is that we are talking about. They are particularly stunting of debate when deployed to silence those posing uncomfortable questions about the nature of the society we are attempting to imagine and foster into being and the pasts we narrate as part of those processes.

At the same time, King Zwelithini talks about sending his 'men [lawyers]' to court to challenge animal rights activists who were opposing the killing of a bull by a platoon of young men who break its neck with their bare hands during the first fruits ceremony. On the one hand, he calls for the traditional – 'chiefs' and 'traditional courts' – to be at the forefront and rejects 'Western culture'. On the other hand, his representatives

6 M. Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*, Cape Town: David Philip, 1996, p. 5.

are using the very court system he rejects in favour of courts presided over by chiefs. Similarly, Ngubane is a professor at a university, an institution that is deeply implicated in, and imbricated with, colonial histories after its importation from the 'West'. The false opposition of Western and African is unable to delineate where the African stops and the Western begins. Discussion of how we construct knowledge projects, institutions and a society for the future is repeatedly overwhelmed by the deployment of such crude categories and their being posited as opposites.

King Zwelithini's Africanist arguments even require the invention of a past. His claim that 'before King Shaka was murdered, Zulu, Mpondo and Xhosa nations had been talking about uniting to fight the colonists' does not seem to have any basis in available evidence.⁷ Yet, as I argue at the end of this essay, to get past these false dichotomies, we need the past more than ever in order to name the effects of colonialism in a way that makes it easier for those who are wrestling with being African and modern to lay claim to their mangled pasts.

What we need to overcome then is the stereotyping of the Western and the African that continues to be represented and articulated at the highest levels of party politics and the state. Hear President Zuma addressing the National House of Traditional Leaders in 2012 in a report that is worth quoting from at length: 'A dramatic departure from a prepared text to traditional leaders in Parliament revealed [Zuma's] true agenda. It was supposed to be a measured response to critique of the controversial Traditional Courts Bill, but it quickly turned into a roaring endorsement of solving "African problems the African way" '. Zuma contradicted his prepared speech, 'which asked for a rethink of the bill, by pleading for a return to an African way of resolving disputes and a rejection of "the white man's way" '. 'Zuma also slammed black people "who become too clever", saying "they become the most eloquent in criticising themselves about their own traditions and everything" '. Asking traditional leaders to help people understand who they are, Zuma said, 'Because if you are not an African, you cannot be a white, then what are you? You don't know. You can't explain yourself. How then can you grow children?' Zuma asked in isiZulu: 'Whose traditions will they [the children] practise? The Zuma traditions or the Smith traditions? We have lost direction. Even if I live in the highest building, I am an African.' Zuma continued: 'Apartheid took away our dignity . . . because our traditional system and leadership was undermined. But once you get freedom, you must bring it back. (Figure 2)'⁸

After 200 years of the entanglement of practices imported from Europe with those that existed before, during and after the imposition of colonial rule, albeit on unequal terms, what do we bring back when we attain liberation? Which traditions and practices do we recover? After all, culture has not stood still during colonial rule waiting to be available for recovery after the end of colonialism. It is ironic indeed that King Zwelithini

7 Hans, 'Zulu King's "Call to Arms"':

8 'Zuma Scolds "Clever" Blacks', *City Press*, 3 November 2012, <http://www.news24.com/Archives/City-Press/Zuma-scolds-clever-blacks-20150429> (accessed 15 May 2016).

Figure 2 (opposite).
Newspaper article 'Zuma Scolds
"Clever" Blacks'. *City Press*, 3
November 2012. National Library
of South Africa

This week President Jacob Zuma put his Mangaung campaign into overdrive and showed himself to be a political chameleon. But a dramatic departure from a prepared text to traditional leaders in Parliament revealed his true agenda

ZUMA SCOLDS 'CLEVER' BLACKS

THE CHIEF



It was supposed to be a measured response to critique of the controversial Traditional Courts Bill, but it quickly turned into a roaring endorsement of solving "African problems the African way".

President Jacob Zuma was clearly inspired by the response he received from traditional leaders when he started making off-the-cuff comments during his address to the National House of Traditional Leaders on Thursday.

This caused him to contradict his prepared speech, which asked for a rethink of the bill, by pleading for a return to an African way of resolving disputes and a rejection of "the white man's way".

The bill has been rejected by most provinces and rural women's organisations, which object to its empowerment of a patriarchal system of chieftains.

Zuma also slammed black people "who become too clever", saying "they become the most eloquent in criticising themselves about their own traditions and everything".

In an angry-sounding tone, Zuma asked traditional leaders to help people understand who they are. "Because if you are not an African, you cannot be a white, then what are you? You don't know. You can't explain yourself. How then can you grow children?"

Zuma asked in isiZulu: "Whose traditions will they (the children) practise? The Zuma traditions or the Smith traditions? We have lost direction. Even if I live in the highest building, I am an African."

He said he felt "very passionately" about resolving disputes in a traditional way.

"During our time we did not have prisons because never did we say it was a problem we could not resolve... Prisons are done by people who cannot resolve problems," he said, and then asked traditional leaders not to be "influenced by other cultures".

Apartheid took away "our dignity... because our traditional system and leadership was undermined. But once you get freedom, you must bring it back", the president said.

Realising the PR nightmare he had caused, Zuma's spin doctors have re-released his prepared address. - Adriaan Basson

► Listen to extracts from Zuma's speech at www.citypress.co.za

THE POPULIST



On Friday, President Jacob Zuma told more than a thousand unemployed people in East London what they wanted to hear - that the public works department had created 600 cleaning jobs.

The project was approved months ago, but it only sprang into action this week. He said cleaners' jobs would be increased nationwide to 35 000 by the end of next year.

"We recognise unemployment in South Africa is deeply structural. Decent work will take time to reach the marginalised.

"Joblessness has a history in South Africa... Others want to twist things (and make) as though it came with the (ANC) government," he said.

Zuma repeated what he told traditional leaders on Thursday - that the notion of a growing income gap between the rich and the poor was a myth. "It can't be (the case that inequality) is growing as we have given grants to 15 million people. The clever people are lying. Before 1994 there was no black economic empowerment, black companies on the JSE or grants."

Zuma also said people should stop saying the ANC is corrupt, because it is "untrue".

On Thursday Zuma said: "People who write in papers are educated. They think they are telling the truth. It is not... It is propaganda that is very dangerous."

Zuma has fought a populist fight to stay out of court, portraying himself as the victim of a political conspiracy.

The president and his attorney, Michael Hulley, are currently fighting the DA's attempts to obtain transcripts of the so-called spy tapes used to get Zuma off the hook on corruption charges.

This week the DA accused acting prosecutions boss Nongcobo Jiba of being in contempt of court for refusing to hand over the transcripts.

The party said it was "more important for (Jiba) to accommodate (Zuma) than to comply with the Supreme Court of Appeal's order".

Zuma's playing to the crowd goes way back. In 2006 he had to apologise after telling a Heritage Day rally: "When I was growing up, an unggqilli (a gay person) would not have stood in front of me. I would knock him out." - Sabelo Ndlangisa, Carien du Plessis and Charl du Plessis

THE STATESMAN



If you listened to President Jacob Zuma addressing the Foreign Correspondents' Association on Monday, you would think all was right in the world - or at least in Zuma's world. It was a charm offensive like never before.

Marikana, economic downgrades and the ANC's leadership battle have left Zuma and South Africa bruised, and this was an opportunity to set the record straight.

But Marikana was a mere "mishap", Zuma said, the wealth gap was apartheid's fault and to say there were "battles" in the ANC was wrong; it was merely democracy playing itself out.

He insisted the Marikana massacre, in which 46 people died, was not too serious. "South Africa is moving forward. We've had particularly the mishap of Marikana... You could say it was an unfortunate incident." As for mining sector strikes in general, he said: "There is no crisis. The workers have a right to raise their concern."

He criticised the view of those who say the income gap in South Africa has widened since 1994, saying there were no reliable statistics to measure the wealth gap before 1994.

He denounced the suggestion that he had failed as a leader, blaming past injustice. "It makes no sense that, because of colonialism, apartheid and exploitation, this presidency must be blamed. Why should the sins of the oppressor be our sins?"

He didn't want to comment on Nkandlagate, save to say "there'd been an exaggeration".

And all was well in the ANC, he argued. "This business of saying there are fights in the ANC is a misinterpretation. This is democracy and democracy is about competitiveness."

He noted that people "loved raising Kgalema Motlanthe's name" as his challenger at Mangaung, but this did not worry him. "Kgalema Motlanthe is my comrade."

"He went to prison because of me. I don't have sleepless nights."

He assured foreign journalists that corruption was under control. "We have legislation to deal with people, including people of the ANC who are corrupt." - Mandy Rossouw

BABALWA SHOTA DISSECTS ZUMA

rejects some 'modern' institutions – trusts as communal landholding institutions – but operates within others – courts in this case. Similarly, Zuma is president and at the same time advocates the return of 'traditional' leadership. Where does that put the state and where its president or provincial premiers or municipal councillors and mayors? What does a state that is African and of its time in the contemporary moment look like? The paralysis comes into full view in this then: how is a follower, or any citizen listening to these ambiguous messages, to determine what aspects of the traditional to embrace (or even what is traditional) and what 'Western' things to accept or reject in order to be African and not pseudo white? Do we even know enough about how things were before colonialism to attempt to recover some of the cultural practices, forms of authority and social structures that the king and the president are advocating? How does one become African and modern without falling into the trap of being a 'clever black' when asking critical questions that trouble the easy dichotomies being handed down from above?

These volumes show us that we know neither enough about the past before colonialism nor about the ways in which local institutions were reshaped in the early years of colonialism to suit a form of indirect colonial rule through chiefs. It also lays bare how our attempts to study the deep southern African past are still nascent because of two centuries of knowledge projects that have marooned as representation of timeless tribal cultures materials we could use to gain a better view of those pasts. A conclusion to draw when we take together the essays in these volumes is that Zuma's and King Zwelithini's imagined pasts are so thoroughly cast in the tribal mode that their calls are themselves caught up in colonial ways of apprehending African societies as tribes. These modes of seeing are a dead end. And it is not only King Zwelithini and Zuma who see in this way. It is a way of seeing that indelibly marks our daily lives.

Language: Where the dichotomies continue to hide

The third thing to which I drew attention above is the terms deployed in Hans' report. Many of the terms we use in public discourse carry with them colonial stereotypes and the same false oppositions articulated by Ngubane in the quote above. Whereas Ngubane articulates the dichotomy, however crudely, the same opposition remains submerged in many terms we see in Hans' article. Even as colonial discourse is being analysed and challenged, in public discourse today terms such as 'tribe' and 'traditional' persist. Hans makes reference to King Zwelithini's 'traditional regiment', the ceremony at which the king spoke as being the celebration of a successful 'traditional circumcision' and the king referring to 'traditional courts'.⁹ He also describes the initiates as being of members of the Zulu and Hlubi 'tribes'.

It is in such language that our inability to get past thinking of African societies as previously hordes of half-naked, uncivilised tribes persists. 'Traditional' conjures up

9 The revival of circumcision as a traditional practice is itself a telling move, given that the very Shaka who is invoked banned the practice in order for young men in his *amabutho* (regiments) to avoid spending time immobilised by the initiation procedure and not available for service. See C. Hamilton, 'Ideology, Oral Traditions and the Struggle for Power in the Early Zulu Kingdom', MA thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 1985, pp. 344–5.

images of the long-ago past and falsely suggests continuity between practices being conducted and claims being made in the present with how things were before the advent of European settlers that changed African modes of existence. The term 'traditional' also readily conjoins with 'tribe' as it is often deployed to make claims for a return to how things were in a timeless past when African societies were egalitarian. This suggests the continued existence of groupings that have been known as 'tribes' for the past two centuries.¹⁰

Moreover, our inability to move beyond such language derives from the easy deployment of the term 'tribe' by people who claim to be progressive when they criticise certain tendencies in the African National Congress (ANC) as 'tribalism', for instance. Periodically there is concern in political debate about the rise of ethnic nationalism, such as when former president, Thabo Mbeki, 'lamented the tendency of people to put up car stickers proclaiming they were "100% Venda" or "110% Tswana" '. He is reported as saying, 'I am sure all of us need to be very concerned about a regression to tribalism.'¹¹ This verbal move suggests the existence of entities called 'tribes' that those being criticised are identifying as. Mbeki is correctly cautioning against both mobilising people on the basis of 'tribes' and identifying people by tribe.¹² However, this caution points to the problem of the concept of 'tribe' without naming it. It stops short of articulating that tribes are precisely the creation of colonial processes and practices of the kind that essays in these volumes make visible and that we need to name better to be able to overcome some of their effects on how we think of ourselves. What becomes clear is that Zuma, King Zwelithini and even Hans and Mbeki continue to lock us into this logic of tribes with their terminologies and versions of the past.

The deployment of terms such as 'traditional' and 'tribe' often inadvertently, but sometimes deliberately, invoke their opposites, which are never far from the surface, even in the most innocent usage of these words. In cases such as Zuma's speech, such terms are used to blindly valorise the African, whereas in often racism-laden criticism the terms quickly turn into put-downs. Tellingly, Mbeki sees identification along ethnic lines and valorising such identification as 'regression', a return to something we are meant to be past that carries negative connotations. Colonial assumptions about moving past backward tribal mentalities on the journey towards civilisation are latent in this formulation.

We are haunted by inheritances from the colonial past. This is because in the shadows of traditional, tribes and so on, lie their opposites that live on from civilising missions.

10 It is always surprising how, on some national commemorative days such as Heritage Day, 24 September, people 'go back to their cultural roots' by hauling out every imaginable stereotype of a tribal African that they imagine as their past – posting pictures of themselves on social media sites such as Facebook in rural areas among livestock, decked out in 'traditional dress' and bearing 'traditional weapons' such as knobbed sticks.

11 D. Barkhuizen, 'Tribalism's Rot Bared', *DispatchLive*, 27 October 2013 (<http://www.dispatchlive.co.za/opinion/tribalism-rot-bared/>) (accessed 3 March 2015).

12 There is a vast literature on the invention and mobilisation of tribalism in southern Africa. See, for example, N. Cope, *To Bind the Nation: Solomon kaDinuzulu and Zulu Nationalism, 1913–1933*, Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1993; L. Vail (ed.), *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989; S. Marks and S. Trapido (eds), *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth-Century South Africa*, London: Longman, 1987.

In opposition to 'traditional' sits 'modern'. Similarly, in opposition to 'tribe' is often another category, whether 'nation', 'state' or 'country'. In a continuation of colonial discourses, the terms quickly slip into assumptions about the 'barbaric' and 'civilised'. In the last few years the interplay of these terms has been most visible in the criticism of President Zuma in radio discussions as well as social media debates on platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. Zuma is often criticised in public debates for attempting to be a 'tribal chief', rather than the president of a modern country and contrasted to his predecessor, Mbeki, who is said to be more Westernised. Zuma's choices of lifestyle, such as marrying multiple wives, having more than twenty children and publicly taking part in 'traditional' ceremonies decked out in 'traditional' dress (garments made of animal skins) and brandishing 'traditional' weapons such as shields and spears are often used as evidence of his Zulu tribalism. These are contrasted to Mbeki's choice of one partner and suits and ties. In this comparison, Zuma is seen as a tribal chief masquerading as a president and taking the country backwards and on a downward spiral, while Mbeki is seen as modern – hence Mbeki's ousting from being president of the ANC was a victory of the traditional over the modern. In the most noxious form of this debate, laced as it often is with virulent racism, Zuma is a representation of everything that is African and uncivilised against the civilisation (read: modern, educated, European, racially white) standard that Mbeki meets. Zuma himself deliberately performs the role of African traditionalist at key moments as a way of valorising Africanness in direct rebuttal of the historic and current representation of things African as not quite yet having risen to the level of sophisticated modernness occupied by the likes of a (Eurocentric) Mbeki. We cannot get past the shame of the colonial stereotype of having been 'uncivilised' before European encroachment as long as these vocabularies continue to be deployed with such ease. And so the paralysis repeats itself in ever-more forms and representations.

Lost in translation, we need new names

'In order to do this right, we need new names,' declares Sbho to her friends in NoViolet Bulawayo's novel *We Need New Names*, as they prepare to try and get rid of the baby in thirteen-year-old Chipo's 'stomach'.¹³ Sbho, Forgiveness and the protagonist Darling, who range in age between nine and thirteen, are trying to perform an abortion on Chipo, who is pregnant as a result of being raped, in order to instantiate a different future for their friend. In their understanding, they must not let Chipo give birth because she will die like Nosizi. 'Nosizi is dead now, from giving birth. It kills like that,' Darling narrates. Sbho tells her friends they need new names in order to perform the abortion. The names they assume are derived from the American television series *ER*. As Sbho sees it, the names will make them like the doctors who save lives in the series; that is, the names will make them equal to the major task of saving Chipo.

Like Darling and her playmates, as a society in South Africa we need new names. Darling and her friends assume new names in order to assume their responsibility of

¹³ Bulawayo, *We Need New Names*, p. 82.

charting a different future for Chipo in a children's game-like way. Like them, we need to chart a different future, not for someone else, but for ourselves. This requires new names. Unlike for the characters in the novel, the project we need is not play though and the names we need cannot be derived from cultural products from the global north. The trauma of colonial tribing remains as real as the trauma of Chipo's rape and pregnancy. However, unlike Chipo's friends, we do not need uncomprehending, childlike responses to the trauma. In the novel, Darling and her friends' attempt to get rid of Chipo's baby is foiled by an adult, MotherLove, and the children revert to being themselves.

Unlike the characters in Bulawayo's novel, the new names we need are not merely play names because the task at hand is not child's play in the manner in which the children try to perform an abortion on Chipo. Yet, like the names the children choose for themselves, the names we need must be up to the formidable task with which we are faced and it is a task we need to see through and not be foiled by detractors who think they hold either the civilisational or the decolonisation high ground. In order to move past the 'paralysis of perspective' we find ourselves in and to do it properly, we need new vocabularies to articulate the problematic that confronts us of how to decolonise knowledge production and to move past deeply entrenched colonial paradigms in academic and public discourses, as well as in institutional formations ranging from the state to universities. We need new names for things and practices. Our vocabularies are outdated, imprecise and inadequate. Contributing to the impasse is also the fact that what is being spoken (and spoken of) is lost in translation. King Zwelithini was almost certainly speaking in isiZulu when he made the statements on which Hans reports. Yet in reporting in English, Hans's article repeats the problem of deploying a terminology that carries with it assumptions that in large part remain unexamined and represent (deliberately or inadvertently) what is being referred to as being 'tribal' and, by implication, backward. The terms and concepts the king would have used in isiZulu are poorly approximated by 'traditional', 'tribes' and such words that come out of the colonial lexicon. Ngubane's 'African' and 'Western' cultures may also be a result of imprecise translation of what he may have said in isiZulu.

When speakers switch languages, much of the depth and nuance of what they say is reduced to crude arguments because of the inadequacy of the vocabularies available to the speakers or those who translate their words into English. This is the case too when journalists interview people or listen to them speak in one language and then write in another. Hence when matters of practices, such as the initiation on which the article reports, are discussed, the terms deployed misrepresent the practices, social phenomena, cultures and even social units that are being described and discussed. We thus need new vocabularies that are up to the task of describing what is being discussed, without the easy slide into the colonial assumptions that we quickly fall into. What is more, the meanings of words change over time. With usage, words accrue new meanings and older ones fade. However, older meanings are always entailed. It is thus often not clear whether discussion is about the same things when these problematic words are deployed in public discourse.

These volumes of essays offer a step along the long journey of decolonising knowledge in Africa and elsewhere. Guy's contribution to Volume 1 on the 'tribal history project' offers us a glimpse of the kind of attention to language we ought to pay. His contribution demonstrates how terms we conventionally use in English to refer to groupings of people and their social organisation fall short of describing the kinds of units people lived in. He suggests terms such as *isizwe/izizwe* (the 'people' of a particular polity; the body politic) and *izwe/amazwe* (an area and the people in it) as alternatives for terms such as 'chiefdom' and 'clan'. Guy, John Wright, and Carolyn Hamilton and Nessa Leibhammer are beginning to pay attention to Zulu language terms that describe social units, relationships, objects and location in a way that is long overdue and requires further research.¹⁴ In these terms lie clues towards pathways out of the impasse that the easy falling back on tired vocabularies keeps us in. 'Tribing' and 'untribing' are two such concepts that this book offers us as the kinds of new terms we need. The first term names the allocating, naming, displaying and thinking practices and processes that have created the impasse we are in. The second proposes one of the moves we need to make to get out of the paralysis. This requires that the inheritance of material culture – the material culture that Africanists sometimes mobilise as evidence of their timeless tribal pasts and that modern African curators, such those that Leibhammer discusses, shun – be understood as archive, construed, rather than fixed, and open to renegotiation. It is a form of this 'untribing' by artists that Nontobeko Ntombela discusses in her contribution.

What we thus need is further research into terms that includes both an investigation into their conceptual meanings and a historicisation of their usage as much as possible. Such research offers us the possibility of reaching into the past that can both challenge histories such as that King Zwelithini sucks out of thin air and get us outside of some of the terms that are part of the problem we are in (and that we see some authors use even in these volumes), terms such as 'chiefdom', 'clan' and 'kraal'. Other useful ways of knowing the past lie barely hidden in African languages to which scholarship has not paid serious attention, just as colonial assumptions remain masked in the seemingly self-evident English language vocabularies in use in daily speech. We must, therefore, develop scholarship in and on African languages.

What is more, we need more investigation into the longer past because the more we know about the forms of social organisation, leadership, relations between neighbours and so on that existed prior to the advent of European settlement, the better we can give back to the present and the future their pasts. In this way we can get out of thinking that tribes were the only kinds of entities that existed and that to own the past means to identify with a tribe, which only came into existence as a concept and an entity in the later nineteenth century. Nokuthula Cele's essay on the Machi of the Harding area as well as Wright's overview of the history of southern KwaZulu-Natal and the northern Eastern Cape show just how inaccurate ideas of what form polities took before the advent of

¹⁴ Similar research is required in other languages such as SeTswana, SeSotho, TshiVenda and others. The arguments I make here apply in other parts of the country – especially the Eastern Cape, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and North West – where the self-assertion of chiefs is following a similar trajectory to KwaZulu-Natal.

colonialism are. Research into the past along these lines has never been more urgently needed. Apartheid ethnology and nineteenth-century colonial research projects have cast a long shadow over what we know of the past and how we know it. To get past the paralysis these approaches have handed to us, we must go back even deeper into the past in the way that this book begins to demonstrate.