

IZITHUNGUTHU

Southern African Pasts before the Colonial Era, Their Archives and Their Ongoing Present/ Presence

16, 17 AND 18 JULY 2015

Archive and Public Culture Research Initiative, University of Cape Town

Abstracts

(in order of presentation)

PAUL LANDAU

“Getting Past the Ethnic: Discerning African Politics of the Past”

In his opening address, Professor Landau will adopt a common perspective in understanding history, African and Western, and revisit South Africa’s deep political past. While it is so that Africans rightly look back at histories of particular associations and kingdoms or chiefdoms, an ethnic view of the past can misleadingly suggest a long “pre-history” of persisting, discrete, simple forms. The categories of the colonial archive must instead be broken open. Professor Landau, drawing on his research and others’ pioneering work, will discern shared patterns in the political strategies of the South African past. He will argue that millennia of sub-continental political activity produced a kind of political theory stored in oral history; and that foreign ideas and markets critically shaped the deployment of that theory, all across “pre-colonial” South Africa. The story we are beginning to make out still holds surprises for us.

YVETTE ABRAHAMS

“Why am I Still Writing This Paper 20 Years Later? Viewing Whiteness with the Native Eye”

This paper analyzes ‘Pre-colonial’ historiography from an indigenous perspective. It seeks to re-construct an indigenous knowledge system about ancient history through an engagement with the ‘Other’, the ‘Other’ in this case being white males who have written on Khoesan history prior to 1657. The date is chosen as being the year Jan van Riebeeck decided to actively dispossess land as opposed to merely holding a trading station on these shores.

The paper begins by asking: what could be a constructive engagement between historically colonizing race and gender identities and indigeneity? By way of illustration it looks at exponents of the environmental movement in the USA, such as Wendell Berry, Wes Jackson and others, as examples of how scholars have seriously tried to grapple with their history of colonization in ways that can lead them to positive decisions about the future. This engagement, though not always unproblematic, has much to teach us in Southern Africa about how we can deal with the complex history we inherit in both theory and practice.

The paper goes on to look at some scholarly engagements with Khoesan history pre-1657 done by people of the ruling race and gender identity to see whether the same hope of constructive interaction is possible. It concludes that the prospects are dismal and explains why this conclusion is reached. In comparing and contrasting two opposite ways of dealing with race and gender from above, the paper clarifies the viewpoint from below.

CAROLYN HAMILTON

“Along Time: Rethinking the Pre and the Post in Favour of the Long Term”[provisional title]

One of three opening contributions, my paper will make the argument for a long view of southern African history which challenges the scholarly separation of what is often termed the pre-colonial from anything that came later, and which understands that the subject obliges scholars to extend their foci beyond current national boundaries. The exploration of the key conceptual, theoretical and methodological issues involved will be organized around an approach that couples contingent time with a critical discussion of what is understood to be the available archive. The contribution will offer a critique of what are understood to be the specialist concerns and methods in the study of the five hundred years or so before European colonisation, and set up what I consider to be the central methodological challenge, the way in which the key concepts used to interpret these periods, amongst other things, shaped the making of the archive concerned and were in turn shaped, in their own making by, amongst other things, that archive.

BODHISATTVA KAR

“What Tribal Histories Need Not Be”

These hesitations of a non-specialist in southern African history are offered in the spirit of conversing with the general set of conceptual, methodological and political issues that the historians of tribality in this region may be grappling with in one way or another. Drawing upon my readings and research on the connected and coconstitutive histories of the customary across the global south, I wish to offer in this presentation a critique of the identity grammar of

tribal history that seems to have seized the dominant imagination of non-statist modes of being in the world. In its attempt to rethink the intellectual history of the precolonial particular in relation to the evolving regime of global governance, this presentation offers a range of provocations on the issues of recuperation, commensurability, exceptionalism and chronology in identitarian histories.

ROBERT ROSS

“The Political Thought of the Cape Khoekhoe: Pre-colonial and Mission Influences”

In this paper I will try to see how far a number of the most salient texts of produced by Khoekhoe in the (modern) Eastern Cape and Free State provinces can be used to reconstruct the main lines of pre-colonial Khoekhoe thought on matters of political order, especially the constellation of ideas around matters of wealth, leadership and personal worth. In so doing, I investigate five major (collections of) statements, namely the speeches held by Khoekhoe at Bethelsdorp to celebrate Ordinance 50, the Kat River protests against the Vagrancy Acts, Hendrik Hendricksz’s arguments about Griqua control of the southern Free State, the description by James Read Jnr of the ideas of the Kat River rebels and the letters by Speelman Kievit and Willem Uithaalder trying to persuade fellow Khoekhoe to join the rebellion. In the event, my main conclusion is that any attempt to “filter out” mission influences would require a reification and simplification of Khoesan (and indeed missionary) culture to a degree that is unacceptable.

CHARLES UNWIN

“*Metonymica Hottentotica*: Critical Investigations into ‘Hottentot’”

This paper presents the first draft of a chapter of my PhD research, in which I will unpack the historical traverse through the nineteenth century of ideas about who the ‘Hottentots’ were, into their twentieth-century transposition as the Khoekhoe or the Khoe-San. The PhD examines the treason trial of Andries Botha, ‘Ghona Hottentot’/Khoekhoe field cornet in the Kat River Settlement, for his alleged part in the Kat River Rebellion of 1851. The Settlement was created in 1829 as a buffer zone between the white colony and the Ngqika Xhosa. The land on which around 1000 ‘Hottentot’ families were settled by the colonial state had been inhabited until at least 1752 by Gonaqua Khoekhoe, but had been lost to the amaXhosa by the end of the 1700s. The amaXhosa were driven off the land by colonial forces in 1828, to make way for the settlement.

An issue for the PhD is what was meant by, and who was referenced by, the term ‘Hottentot’. A large literature exists on the issue. I will take stock within the debates to show how the term

Khoisan or Khoe-San (first coined in 1928) carries an irresolvable entanglement of colonial thinking in later attempts to provide an ethnography and historiography for the KhoeKhoe and the San/Bushmen. The desire to understand 'who they were' before colonial intrusion haunts the popular historical imagination. The proposed paper will examine the limits of what can be said about the KhoeKhoe, and particularly about their situation in the Eastern Cape in the early decades of the nineteenth century.

RACHEL KING

"Cattle Raiding as Social Complexity: New Perspectives on an 'Illicit' Institution"

In southern African history and historiography, cattle raiding has become iconic of the colonial frontier. Incorporating colonists and African populations as aggressors and victims alike, cattle raids have been portrayed through archives and ethnohistories as attempts to steal goods, subvert authority, and incite conflict, from commandos on the northern Cape frontier to the ambitious African leaders of the Highveld and the Thukela-Mzimkhuluregion. In the Maloti-Drakensberg, John Wright and Patricia Vinnicombe were the first to draw attention to the phenomenon of 'Bushman raiding' as a reaction to the advance of colonial frontiers. Recent work by Geoff Blundell, Sam Challis, and Lara Mallen has identified 'Bushman raiding groups' as dynamic, ethnogenetic communities for whom raiding was as much about building an identity as reacting to regional politics. Despite the attention given to the phenomenon of Bushman raiding and to frontier commandos, comparatively little work has focused on the social and cultural function of cattle raiding within Bantu-speaker society; that is, examining cattle raiding as a social institution rather than simply as a transgression of authority and property ownership. This paper offers some new ways of thinking about the social significance of cattle raiding within southern African Bantu-speaker societies, beginning from the premise that these are, at least functionally, pastoralist cultures. Drawing on historical and archaeological data from the Maloti-Drakensberg region and its surrounds, this paper explores the pre-colonial antiquity of cattle raiding, its role in the creation and spread of complex state-like societies, and the interactions (cooperative and agonistic) that cattle raiding fostered among various populations. By developing a view of raiding as a cultural practice, we can look past the longstanding archival perceptions of raiders as outlaws and investigate the motivations of past actors (particularly those hitherto mis-cast as 'freebooters' or thieves). As a result of this conceptual innovation, it becomes necessary to address the corollaries of these shifting dynamics in the colonial past: to what extent can we continue to consider raiding as a social pathology, and how can we define concepts such as 'resistance' if acts viewed as subversive are revealed to be more complex and socially ingrained?

MARK MCGRANAGHAN

“Imagining Indigenous Idioms: The Role of Anthropological Knowledge in Translating the Bleek-Lloyd Narratives”

‘Evaluation of the aptness of readings of the !Xam testimonies does not require extensive anthropological expertise.’

: A. Solomon, “Broken Strings: Interdisciplinarity and !Xam Oral Literature”, *Critical Arts: South-North Cultural and Media Studies*, 23: 1 (2009), 33.

The Bleek-Lloyd notebooks constitute one of the most famous ‘archives’ of South Africa – and are certainly one of its most extensively researched. Widely disseminated during the opening decades of the twentieth century, their influence on the disciplines of the social sciences concerned with the ‘Bushman’ (San) hunter-gatherer communities of southern Africa has been considerable: the field of rock art studies, in particular, has drawn heavily upon this resource in developing convincing interpretive frameworks for understanding painted and engraved art produced by Bushman communities. Post-1994, the archive attained a new prominence in popular and academic discourse, which culminated in the digitisation and publication of the notebooks in their entirety. As part of the re-evaluation of the Bleek-Lloyd project that accompanied this resurgence of interest, academics (and others) have repeatedly questioned the ways in which such an archive should be used and understood by twenty-first century audiences. These critiques have targeted particular forms of academic knowledge production – especially archaeology and anthropology – as being predicated on notions of static ‘tribal’ cultures that produce problematic, ahistorical conceptions of the pre-colonial past.

Starting from the premise that (whether pre-colonial or otherwise) the past may indeed be seen as another country, this paper argues that anthropological forms of knowledge (predicated on interactions between the familiar and the unfamiliar) offer vital tools in attempts to unpick the complex relationships that generated the materials and documents that now constitute the Bleek-Lloyd archive. Drawing on a transcription generated from the digitised images of the Bleek-Lloyd notebooks, this paper examines the utility of the anthropological category of the ‘hunter-gatherer’ when discussing these nineteenth-century individuals. It touches upon three key domains: firstly, it stresses the importance of attending to !Xam words and concepts rather than relying solely on individual English translations. Secondly, it explores the ontological premises revealed in themes recurrent throughout the archive, and thirdly, looks at the ways in which these premises influenced !Xam relationships with the animals and plants of the Northern Cape. In each of these areas, it is argued, the deployment of ‘extensive anthropological expertise’ allows us to develop more nuanced interpretative insights than those possible with more naive readings.

SAM CHALLIS

“Rock Art as Archive: Reading the Past from Inside and Outside”

This paper examines the archive that is the material culture of the San Bushmen and others, as represented in their parietal painted images, with particular emphasis on the nineteenth-century record and an historically situated ethnographic reading.

If we wish to study the people of the past, particularly from a perspective as close as possible to the way in which they saw themselves, we err if we do not pay attention to the material record of their culture. Given that terms like culture are fluid and contested, archaeology (and anthropology) as a discipline works with long-problematized broad terms in the knowledge that they are often western and modern constructs or tools that make the inside view intelligible to the outside.

The first aim – to come as close as possible to the view from within a culture is commonly called the ‘emic approach’. The second aim – to make a culture intelligible by using outside terminology and observation is generally known as the ‘etic approach’. Archaeologists and anthropologists frequently use a combination of these approaches. In South Africa it has come to prevail in recent decades that an insider view of cultural remains is preferable to that gained by outside observation, and this is the line that this paper takes, though not excluding the observations which help situate these remains in a wider context.

The remains themselves – in this case the rock paintings made by the San Bushmen and other groups – constitute a rich archive which, though not a narrative in a western sense, can still be ‘read’, if only we take time to learn its language. Different rock arts were made at different times and with different dialects. As far as possible we should aim to find those dialects and this, it is argued, is approached both emically and etically on increasingly familiar archaeological paths.

There are images that were clearly made in the nineteenth century which constitute their own record. Not a record of events but a temporally situated record of indigenous beliefs beyond the Colony. Learning to ‘read’ these images requires taking the time to explore other archives – those of the surviving ethnographic record.

SIFISO MXOLISI NDLOVU

“A Case of Contrasting Images of Two Queen Mothers in ‘Pre-colonial’ and Colonial Times: Queen Mother Ntombazi – ‘the Sorcerer’ and Queen Regent Novimbi okaMsweli Mzimela – ‘the Backbone of the Zulu Nation’ in Colonial Times”

My focus is on the role of powerful African women who participated in mainstream networks of power and politics in the area now referred as KwaZulu-Natal. They exercised their power during two distinct periods, namely, ‘pre-colonial’ and colonial times. Some have argued that they had no voice, power and authority in the political structure of pre-conquest/‘pre-colonial’ and colonial societies. This paper argues that that this is not always the case. Probably

one of the well-known powerful women in our shores is Queen Regent Mantathisi of the Batlokwa who assumed power during the turbulent years 1815-1824. The Batlokwa warrior Queen Regent, together with her contemporaries, Queen Mother Ntombazi of the Ndwandwe, Queen Regent Mkabayi of amaZulu and later, Queen Regent Novimbi okaMsweli also of amaZulu challenge popular misconceptions dabbled by feminist discourse that African women, as a group, are victims of patriarchal oppression since time immemorial.

SHAMIL JEPPIE

“The World, the Text and the Manuscript”

[Abstract to follow]

NESSA LEIBHAMMER

“Modalities of Meaning: Light and Shadow in Archaeological Images”

Images do many things: they capture data, they analyse and explain it in very particular ways; they are used as evidence to give weight to arguments; they stand in for the original; they contain and convey information to specialists and the public alike and they do this by transforming vastly complex and unknown material into usable and visible form. But they are not neutral. All images are sign systems that are more or less effective for the uses they have been chosen. Some are even purposefully misleading pointing to what is not, in fact, there. This essay explores the phenomenon of light in pictorial images showing its many and varied applications in archaeological and rock art imaging and how each genre carries with it conceptual, metaphysical and phenomenological weight. Examples from fine art are used as examples to explain some of the genres used in archaeological illustration and their links to past and present conventions of visual imaging.

JUSTINE WINTJES AND JOHN WRIGHT

“The Qing and Orpen Project: Ideas for an Exhibition”

In 1874 Cape colonial official Joseph Orpen published an article in the *Cape Monthly Magazine* entitled ‘A glimpse into the mythology of the Maluti Bushmen’. It was based on stories told to Orpen the previous year by Qing, a Bushman whom he had met during the course of a military expedition into the mountains of what is now eastern Lesotho. The article was illustrated with

copies of field sketches of rock paintings which Orpen had made during brief visits with Qing to three rock shelters.

As the only known source of ‘insider’ knowledge of the subject, the article has become a canonical text in southern African rock art research. Since the 1970s it has been read and re-read and used numerous times by scholars interpreting Bushman rock art, but has not yet been subjected to comprehensive, in-depth textual analysis and historical contextualizing.

The idea for the exhibition grows out of work on a book by a group of scholars, based in Barcelona, Pietermaritzburg, Johannesburg and Cape Town, who are investigating in detail the particular circumstances in which the original encounter between Qing and Orpen took place, and in which the text was produced. They are folklorist Jose de Prada, archaeologist Jeremy Hollmann, art historian Justine Wintjes, historians John Wright and Jill Weintraub, and linguist Menan du Plessis.

While the academic text, starting with Orpen’s own publication, plays a central role in the project, the exhibition aims to extend the project’s reach beyond the textual mode, and beyond the confines of the academy. It will provide an opportunity for its conceivers to give prominence to other elements of the story of the encounter between Qing and Orpen – landscapes, material objects, pictures, people, ideas – in order to widen the context within which the text’s origins and resonances can begin to be understood.

The material displays will point towards more immaterial threads of meaning and representation that underscore the value of Orpen’s text as a unique archival document. Objects will be placed into the exhibition space in ways which are intended to enrich viewer’s understanding of that original encounter in 1873, how it has been imagined since, and why it remains significant in the present.

The Standard Bank has expressed strong interest in publishing the book and putting on the exhibition. The Izithunguthu conference provides an important opportunity for ideas for the exhibition to be discussed in an appropriate academic context.

JOHN WRIGHT

“Socwatsha kaPhaphu, James Stuart, and Their Conversations on the Past, 1897-1922”

We know of Socwatsha kaPhaphu primarily through the copious notes made by Natal colonial official James Stuart of discussions with him over the years from 1897 to 1922 about the history of the Zulu kingdom. His testimonies, which were published in 2014 in volume 6 of *The James Stuart Archive*, constitute a rich source of empirical historical information. They also provide rare insights into the micropolitics of the contexts and processes in which knowledges of the past were made and circulated in African societies in colonial Natal and Zululand in what was a period of deeply disruptive political and social change. In my paper I aim to examine what Stuart’s notes tell us about the scope of Socwatsha’s anecdotes and narratives on the past; about the particular social and political influences which shaped his views of the past; about his sources of historical knowledge; about his possible influences on Stuart’s own views of the past;

and, reciprocally, about Stuart's possible influences on Socwatsha's views. These themes cannot be understood without accompanying examinations of Stuart's own (changing) working methods as a recorder of oral histories, and of the changing contexts in which he produced the texts which serve as our main sources of evidence.

HEATHER HUGHES

"Pursuing Madikane Cele through the Archive"

Madikane kaMlomowetole, or Madikane Cele, was an important informant of James Stuart's on the history of the Qadi chiefdom, and of the Lala. He was born in the 1820s, around the time Dingane succeeded to the kingship of the Zulu; his father had been in Shaka's Ntontela regiment. Following Dingane's attack on the Qadi, he fled into Natal in the late 1830s. He was an important figure in maintaining the continuity of the chiefdom and was a close advisor to Chief Mqhawwe. In the 1870s, he converted to Christianity and cut off his head-ring. Most commentators would treat this event as a decisive rupture with the past; yet in Madikane's case it was nothing of the sort. He not only established a church at Amatata but remained extremely close to the chief.

Unlike so many of Stuart's informants, Madikane's life and memories can be traced in a number of different archival collections: Stuart; the American Board; official colonial Natal records. His influence can be detected in tales told by his son Madikane Qandeyana, recorded in the USA in the early 1900s. Others, such as Robert Plant, wrote of him from personal recollection. An attempt was made by this author in the 1980s to understand what local memories of him survived at the place where he founded his church, Amatata. Such traces are contained in various mediums: oral, written and visual.

What is most striking is that Madikane Cele's life – and this is to some extent reflected in his archival presence – challenges received notions about the divide between 'precolonial' and 'colonial', 'traditional' and 'modern', 'oral' and 'literate'. This paper will attempt to assemble the various archival contributions concerning Madikane Cele, foregrounding the way he is represented in Stuart's archive. In this way, his distinctive presence in (and absence from) Stuart can be better understood, which in turn may help to apprehend his overall contribution to our knowledge about indigenous Natal/Zulu history, as well as the nature of the archives themselves in facilitating such knowledge.

VUSI BUTHELEZI

“Killie Campbell and her ‘Special’ Collections: Beyond Colonialism”

The paper focuses on the role of Killie Campbell collections in the post-colonial era and draws upon some historicized definitions and phrases that articulate the role of archives and museums as a colonial invention and compare these with the ‘will’, motives and the course that Killie perused in her collection development during the zenith of colonialism, that will later become the solution toward post-colonial social justice.

JOCHEN S. ARNDT

“From UkuKhuluma to IsiZulu: The Emergence of ‘Zulu’ as a Distinct Language Community in Southeast Africa, 1800-1900”

Until the early 1850s, European missionaries working in the Eastern Cape region and American missionaries working in the Natal-Zululand region argued that a single ‘Caffre’ language unified the African communities residing between the Cape Colony and Delagoa Bay. However, when in 1854 the Eastern Cape missionaries proposed to their American counterparts the idea of jointly producing a single ‘Caffre’ translation of the Bible that would lay the basis for a unifying written language, the latter rejected the proposal on linguistic grounds. Since the rejection resulted in the bifurcation of ‘Caffre’ into separate ‘Xhosa’ and ‘Zulu’ languages, the year 1854 represents a crucial moment in the historical development of two of South Africa’s major languages and language communities. Drawing on documentary evidence from missionary and bible society archives located in South Africa, Europe and the United States and on oral evidence available from the James Stuart Archive, this essay explores the genealogy of this bifurcation from the perspective of the American missionaries. Following constructivist interpretations that view missionary linguistics as a discourse rather than as a reflection of linguistic reality, it argues that the bifurcation was not the result of the linguistic differences but the missionaries’ attitudes toward such differences. However, this essay also provides a corrective to such interpretations by showing that these attitudes depended on the American missionaries’ self-conception as a ‘Zulu’ mission which, by 1854, was entangled in complex ways with precolonial African ideas about the relationship between language and identity, notably the idea that individuals belonging to the Zulu kingdom’s social elite (*amantungwa*) and residing north of the Thukela River spoke a ‘superior’ language called *ukukhuluma* (the King’s Zulu), while those belonging to the kingdom’s social underclass (*amalala*) and living south of that river spoke an ‘inferior’ language called *ukutekeza* (also called *ukutekela*). By drawing attention to the entanglement between American and precolonial African ideas about the relationship between language and identity in the Natal-Zululand region, the essay suggests that an Afrocentric, deep history approach is crucial for developing a more nuanced understanding of missionary linguistics and its impact on the development of modern African languages and language communities.

CAROLYN HAMILTON AND JOHN WRIGHT

“Political Differentiation in the Chiefdoms of the Phongolo-Thukela Region before Shaka’s Time: The Case of the *Amalala* Revisited”

Recently there has been a revival of interest in questions relating to the making of collective identities and social categories in the KwaZulu-Natal region in the centuries before the establishment of colonial rule in the region in the mid-nineteenth century. In the process, some of our earlier work in this field has come in for comment from other scholars. In this paper we revisit our ‘first-generation’ work in response. We indicate where we think it needs modification, address what we see as misunderstandings or misrepresentation on the part of critics, and, at a more empirical level, go on to re-examine basic source-material in the JSA with an eye to fleshing out, substantiating and developing in new directions our earlier lines of argument. In the final section we use our focus on the ‘*amalala*’ identity to reflect on the capacity of research into an era before the advent of European colonialism to contribute to contemporary theoretical reflection on the nature of identity formation and identity politics, and consider the contribution of indigenous thinkers and structures of thought to the intellectual history of southern Africa.

GRANT McNULTY AND CAROLYN HAMILTON

“The Five Hundred Year Archive: Building a Digital Archive for the Southern African Past Before Colonialism”

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

An initial move in the Five Hundred Year Archive (FHYA) project is the creation of an accessible online research exemplar, which is capable of convening, in virtual form, visual, textual and sonic materials pertinent to these periods. The exemplar aims to be a conceptually innovative intervention geared to engaging, in a critical manner, inherited forms of knowledge organisation. It is being constructed to work across multiple institutions, to incorporate a variety of media formats, to be capable of handling diverse types of objects, and to provide context, by taking into account, most notably, the provenance and spatial and temporal

locations of the various materials, as well as their multiple histories. The exemplar will be designed in such a way as to facilitate recognition and understanding of the ways in which disciplinary conventions and colonial and apartheid knowledge practices have shaped the materials concerned.

This paper presents some of the challenges involved in translating the conceptual thinking behind the FHYA into a practical project. It offers details of what the FHYA does – its research intervention – and how different aspects of this intervention can be distilled into the core functionality of the FHYA Exemplar. The paper further proposes a standardised framework for the FHYA Exemplar that can accommodate the variability of materials emanating from different institutions. It uses a selection of institutional examples to test how they might function within this framework.

FAISAL GARBA AND JADE GIBSON

“Africa in the World: Sketches of an Alternative View”

This paper conceives of Africa (historic and contemporary) as a differentiated unity. It emphasises enduring regional, inter-regional and extra-continental contacts.¹ It begins by flipping through major pre-colonial African polities: their internal dynamics as they relate to class/cleavage configuration, relationships between coasts and hinterlands and accompanying division of labour in the production and procurement of surplus; the nature of extra-continental contacts with a particular emphasis on the terms of such interactions, i.e. the status of the African parties relative to external actors. This is to further understand the impacts of destructive European interventions in the forms of the trans-Atlantic slavery (on the entirety of the African continent - slave trading as well as non-slave trading regions - and its enduring legacy on a BLOCKED Africa), and formal colonialism. The reactions to colonialism in the various regions of Africa are briefly highlighted, according to forms and the factors that made resistance possible and those that led to alliance or accommodation. Given the enduring pre-colonial contacts between portions of Africa and some BRIC member countries, Brazil, China and India - the marginal and subservient roles that they once shared with Africa, and the present attempts at global politico-economic and cultural re-alignment between south Africa and the BRIC – we raise questions around what can be gleaned from history on the likely course of the BRICS grouping: Does it portend a qualitatively different relationship likely to contribute towards the unblocking of Africa? What are the conditions, internal and external to the BRICS arrangement that could facilitate Africa’s unblocking? Does BRICS rescue the goals of South-South co-operation, Third world-ism and Bandung, or does it only carve a niche for the BRICS countries in a fundamentally unequal world.

A major objective of this paper is to map out what an alternative global history that critically studies the place of Africa in the emergence of an interconnected world would entail. It

¹This presentation is an excerpt from ongoing research project on *Reconfiguring the World System: BRICS and the Challenges of Historical Change Research* led by Prof Ari Sitas of the Department of Sociology, UCT.

proposes that the narrative of the Africa of “lack”, “un”, “pre” and “exceptions” can best be countered by a deep history which takes seriously the imperative to think through innovative methodologies in recovering the past that dislocates hegemonized centres for an episteme guided by a commitment to undo wilful obfuscations and distortions without creating wilful negations.

LAUREN WHITE

“Plotting the Precolonial: History Textbooks in South Africa, 1948-2015”

South Africa has a long history; but one that has often been shortened, by the exclusion of its precolonial past. This can be seen through an analysis of history textbooks. Thus, I have decided to research that excluded past in relation to education and more specifically high school textbooks. Hence the central question: how and why has the precolonial history of South Africa been differently silenced and posed in history textbooks between 1948 and 2015? I expect an interesting discussion to emerge, related to the way in which political agendas are negotiated and taught through the medium of education and textbooks; noting that textbooks do not operate outside of the social and political arena.

JUNE BAM

“Challenges, Limitations and Possibilities: The Work of the South African History Project 2001 – 2004 on Introducing the ‘Pre-colonial’ in a New Post-Apartheid School Curriculum”

‘Our future is buried in the web of this paradox -- our perceived present as informed by our past and our past being omnipresent..’ (Bam, 2000)

The South African History Project was established as one of the outcomes of the recommendations made by the Working Group on Values, Education and Democracy presented to the then Minister of Education, Professor Kader Asmal in 2000 which led to the establishment of the History and Archaeology Panel led by Njabulo Ndebele. Established to promote and enhance the quality and status of the learning and teaching of history in schools and in higher education institutions, it actively campaigned in rural and urban areas with a range of stakeholders and interest groups in local communities (including museums, libraries and archives) for the recording of oral histories in a post-apartheid South Africa. A decade later, it seems that the project has had some successes (such as setting up an Indigenous Knowledge Network) and some limitations and challenges relating to introducing the ‘pre-colonial’ in school curricula and in higher education. This paper explores these aspects and argues for

realistic possibilities that can be attained in this area of research development and teaching in South Africa.

CYNTHIA KROS AND JOHN WRIGHT

“Working with South Africa’s Pasts, 1400-1800: Towards An Accessible Introduction” (The WOSP Project)

At the most recent biennial conference of the Southern African Historical Society (University of Stellenbosch, July 2015), John and I announced that our rather well-travelled academic paper introducing the principal themes of our proposed edited collection, provisionally entitled: ‘Working with South Africa’s Pasts’ (WOSP), was being aired in its final iteration. We made a public commitment to the imminent production of the next edition, which would be an ‘accessible’² version addressed to a non-academic audience. This is an intermediate discussion paper that offers engagement around the nature of our intended readership and, hopefully an opportunity for us to reflect on some of the critical comments provoked by presentations of our academic paper at various venues over the last few months.

GEORGE MAHASHE

“Christianity and Khelobedu: Reuter enters Bolobedu”

This paper grapples with the beginnings of Christianity in Bolobedu from a subjective position that asks what is of interest to me with regard to the Christianization of Bolobedu. In particular it hopes to explore the possibilities of what it means to consider the rise of Christianity as an internal development, rather than an external imposition by a missionary. It further speculates on the idea that the acceptance and success of Reuter’s mission was fuelled largely by a political desire by Bolobedu for a controlled entry into the new political formation in the Transvaal—the rise of the Boer in the region. It also includes a minor biography of Reuter and the beginnings of his missions.

MAANDA MULAUDZI

²We have struggled with nomenclature.

“We Are the ‘True Vhavenda’...’: The Vhangona National Cultural Movement – Contested Histories, Identities and Kingship”

Coinciding with the post-1994 “transition” to democracy and the constitutional recognition of customary law, the Vhangona National Cultural Movement (VNCM) has emerged as movement seeking to mobilize and “revive” a seemingly “forgotten” identity of the Vhangona as the “true Vhavenda.” In various official attempts to determine the status of various kingships, the VNCM has equally contested the claims of various contenders and insisted that the Vhangona are the only legitimate “kings” of the “Venda nation.” Mobilizing itself around the idea of indigenous status, the VNCM has constructed a historical narrative that upturns aspects of the long-accepted Venda history. This paper analyzes the VNCM’s counter-narratives and largely elite attempts to define customary law in contemporary South Africa. While it is about the more recent history, the paper also connects these debates with more distant histories. It argues that while these counter-narratives allow us to re-examine Venda ancient history, the VNCM’s versions are limited as they fail to offer an alternative understanding of either history or customary law.

MEMORY BIWA

“Afterlives of Genocide: The Return of Human Bodies from Berlin to Windhoek”

This paper explores the return of human bodies exported to Germany from Namibia during genocide in the early 20th century. These bodies were repatriated from Berlin and Freiburg in 2011/2014. Despite the prolonged silence and denial of war atrocities committed in Namibia by the German government, two archival collections of skulls were ‘discovered’ at these German universities which originated from this period. The paper describes the process in Berlin officiated by Namibian government officials, representatives of three Genocide Committees from central and southern Namibia and Charité Medical University. I argue that the Namibian delegation significantly reframed the repatriation process by attending to bodies through ‘rituals of history’ associated with war commemoration, thereby re-connecting bodies with affected communities and altering their relationship with the dissociated legacies of colonial history. The delegates from the Ovaherero/Ovambanderu and Nama committees also linked the repatriation process to their sustained claims for reparations from the German government since Namibian independence in 1990. Through continued interrogation of colonial violence and responsibility these practices therefore endeavour to open up silences and invert the dehumanising logic of genocidal acts and present alternative narratives to the national discourse on reconciliation.

MBONGISENI BUTHELEZI AND DINEO SKOSANA

“Are Precolonial Chiefdoms What Chiefs Want to Revive Today?”

Chieftaincy has been a resilient institution in democratic South Africa. In the past two decades customary leaders have gone from being tentative to very assertive in calling for being accorded roles by the state in governing. To understand the ability of the traditional institution to adapt to contemporary socio-political and economic conditions, this paper explores how chiefs are mobilising custom and tradition in order to lay claims to positions in the present. It draws from case studies conducted in KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo to examine how chiefs mobilise the past to advance claims for recognition. Recent and present claims about restoring African society to something of how it was before the advent of colonialism often reference mid- to late nineteenth century notions of African societies as tribes. The paper probes what view of African social organisation is being put about in attempts to revive chiefly authority by reconfiguring customs and culture in the new political dispensation. Ultimately, the question we want to propose is: to what materials do we turn to get a more accurate and fuller view of what chieftaincy was before colonialism in order to have a richer discussion of the institution today?

MXOLISI R. MCHUNU

“The Continuation of Ritual Killing: The Use of *Muthi* and War-Doctoring in Zululand”

James Stuart, in reporting on the ritual murder of Olivier Veal for body parts to use in strengthening of the *impi* during the Bhambatha rebellion, an incident which lost the rebels sympathy and caused outrage, said:

“...the principal motive of the murder was, no doubt, to enable the local war-doctor to obtain parts of the body for doctoring the *impi* and rendering it so terrible to its opponents as to ensure victory on a conflict occurring. There is no truth in the rumour that the sole of the deceased's foot was removed whilst he was still alive and that he was compelled to walk. Zulus are undoubtedly barbarous in certain respects, but to say that the above took place is a libel.” (J. Stuart, *A History of the Zulu Rebellion 1906 and of Dinizulu's Arrest, Trial and Expatriation*. London: Macmillan, 1913).

Jeff Guy is one of the few contemporary historians who confronts this incident, by looking at the court martial records in an attempt to understand the evidence of what seemed such a heinous crime and how to read it. He investigated how the law in the courts was used to ‘deal’ with the ‘troublesome’ natives, (J. Guy, *The Maphumulo Uprising: War, Law, and Ritual in the Zulu Rebellion*. Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2005).

Muthi and associated rituals have played an important role in the lives of Africans for many centuries. For almost everything they do, *muthi* and rituals are applied, more so during times of war. Controversy around the use of *muthi*, ritual killing and the role of *izinyanga* (war-doctors), prior to and during the colonial period, is well documented. In this article, I will argue that ritual

killing and *muthi* use continues into the present and was prevalent during the political violence in the Natal province and KwaZulu homelands between 1986 and 1996. I will discuss the centrality of the use of *muthi* during the violence. I reason that *izinyanga* played a clandestine but powerful role in this violence. They were at the core of the violence and the rise of warlords to power in the region. I will also present reasons why historians should pay attention to these practices in the recent past, as well as in colonial times. For one thing, they are a means of understanding the present. This does reflect earlier history, but is also pertinent to the cultural continuity of the practice, as well as to the mainline Western historian's reluctance to broach the subject. The statements and testimonies collected by James Stuart concerning this practice in 1906 are similar to those I collected in 2008 in Vulindlela.

JILL KELLY

"Nomsimekwana's Tale: An Amalala Oral Tradition in 20th-Century Claims on Land and Zuluness"

In the late 1930s South Africa, the elite members of the Zulu Society set out to record the stories and *izibongo* of various KwaZulu-Natal notables as part of efforts to refashion their collective cultural identity. In an interview with Inkosi Somquba Mdluli, the Zulu Society captured the oral tradition of the Mdluli clan of rural Pietermaritzburg. This oral tradition collected by the Zulu Society to preserve Zulu culture is a tradition of an *amaLala* chiefdom historically not Zulu. The tradition relates the story of Somquba's grandfather, Nomsimekwana, who traversed Natal and Zululand during the era of rapid social change known as the *mfecane*. This adventure-filled oral tradition of a young *amaLala* chief's encounter with *amazimuzimu* has been used for over a century by Africans, missionaries, and colonial administrators for various justifications. Using colonial, segregation and apartheid era government records and oral traditions—both old and new—of the Mdluli community, this paper examines the use of the tale by chiefs to justify access to land that had been given to created chieftaincies during the colonial era. It also examines how the tale has adapted to reflect an *amaLala* chiefdom's claims on Zuluness in the post-apartheid era. The paper examines this use of tradition and *Lala* category through reconsiderations of the sources—oral tradition and *The James Stuart Archive*—and how those sources have been shaped by various actors and historical moments. The paper contributes to several of the conference themes but perhaps most strongly the making and use of pasts designated "pre-colonial" in the present.