

Explorations in Ethnicity and Social Change
among Zulu-speaking San Descendants of
the Drakensberg Mountains, KwaZulu-Natal

By

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List of Acronyms used in thesis

ANC – African National Congress
CKGR- Central Kalahari Game Reserve
IFP – Inkatha Freedom Party
KZN – KwaZulu-Natal
NKCC – National Khoi-San Consultative Conference
RADP - Remote Area Dweller Programme
SASC – South African San Council
SASI – Southern African San Institute
SI – Survival International
TAKI – The Ancient Knowledge Initiative
UN- United Nations
UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WIMSA – Working group of Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa

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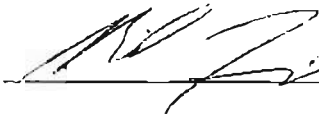
Abstract

This thesis is an ethnographic exploration of the people of the Drakensberg Mountains of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa that trace Zulu and San or Bushmen ancestry. I found that as these people attempt to reclaim rights lost through colonization, assimilation and Apartheid they are creating new rituals and attaching new significance to rock art sites. I also found that the contemporary ethnography of the Drakensberg peoples in general can aid interpretations of the rock art and also challenges established hegemonies of interpretation. The research also challenges the ethnic/cultural distinctions that are assumed to be salient between different peoples of South Africa and adds to the 'Kalahari debate' by questioning notions of an either/or situation of assimilation or subordination. The ethno-historical record indicates a much more complex web of relations existed historically than is related in the dominant academic discourses. The extent that these people will be recognised as aboriginal remains to be seen, and currently they are creating social and political links with San organizations with the hopes of future gains and political recognition of their rights and identity.

Declaration

I, Michael Francis, hereby declare that this thesis is my own original work, has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university, and that the sources I have used have been fully acknowledged by complete references. This thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Culture, Communication and Media Studies in the Faculty of Humanities at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa.

Signature



Date: March 22, 2007

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In both the field research and the writing of this thesis, I owe a great deal to many people. I would like to thank Keyan Tomaselli, my supervisor, for freedom to select my topic and for his guidance throughout. I would also like to thank him for our annual trips to the Kalahari, which acted as a much needed break from my PhD topic and a second research topic. These trips were most useful as they served as three week long seminars and many ideas were either developed or dreamt up in the desert. My field research was facilitated by Frans Prins who introduced me to the community that became my second home, and he was a valuable source of information and obscure references.

I would also like to thank Matthew Durlington for his advice at all stages of the field work and writing and thanks to my fellow PhD student Nhamo Mhiripiri, who also conducted some research amongst the Duma, and who read and commented on an earlier draft of my thesis. I, of course, would also like to thank the rest of the staff and students in the Culture, Communication and Media Studies programme for making me welcome, challenging my ideas and being my academic home. I made my home in Durban and so many friends made it my home for the four years I lived there. South Africa feels like home now and has been and will remain a great inspiration for me, as it has revealed to me all the great things Africa is and can become.

Of course, *Zlato moje, hvala ti...*

Finally I owe the genesis of this thesis to the peoples of the Drakensberg Mountains, whom this thesis is about. The Duma family gave me a home and were gracious hosts and facilitated numerous interviews, introductions and invitations to weddings, funerals and ceremonies. I especially want to thank the three brothers, Richard, Fana and Faku and their immediate families. I also would like to thank their nephews Mondli and Chris, and all the rock art tour guides from the Kamberg Valley Nature Reserve. The rangers and staff at Kamberg Nature Reserve were also of great help. I would also like to thank Cosmos and James for keeping the beer cold at their shebeens, where many an introduction and interview took place.

All errors and omissions in this work are mine and mine alone.

A note on pronunciation

The Zulu and other Nguni languages contain three clicks represented by the letters:

c q x

The 'c' is a dental affricate.

The 'q' is a palatal click.

The 'x' is a lateral affricate.

These clicks are represented differently with the San/Bushmen languages which also contains a fourth click, an alveolar stop.

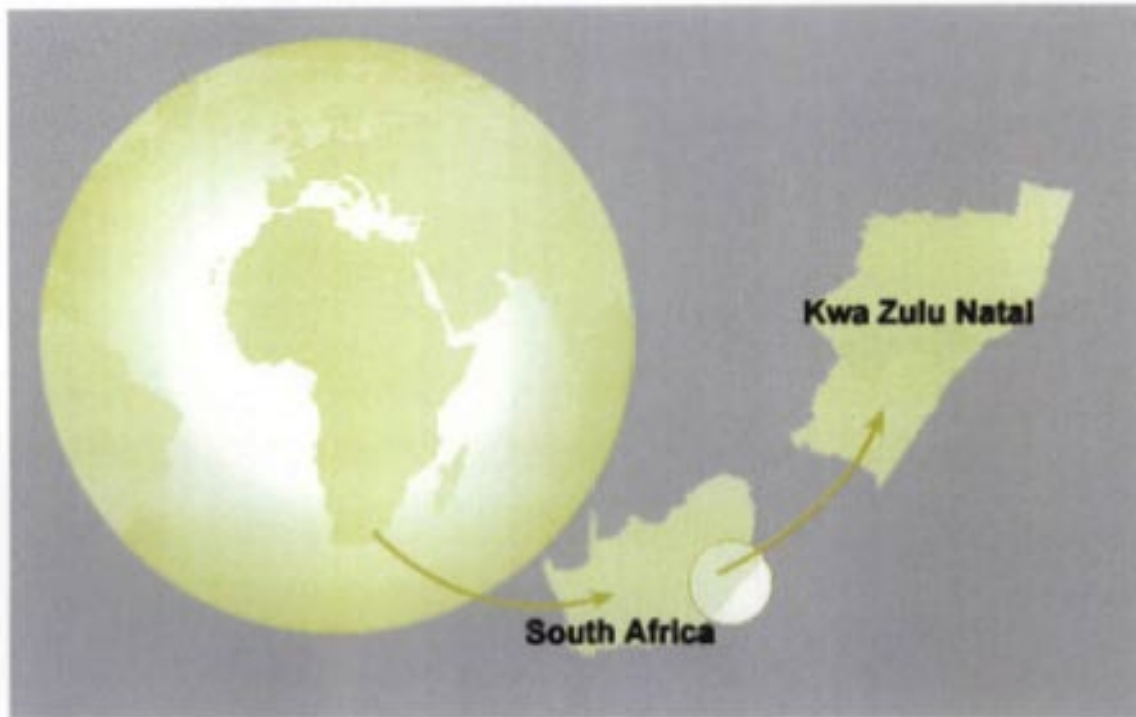
The signs are:

/ ; . #

The first three are the same as the letters c, q, x respectively and the fourth has no commonality.

The Nguni languages were written down in the 18th Century by missionaries who chose these three letters as they were considered redundant as “for example: cat could be written as [kat]; queen could be written as [kween]; axe could be written [aks]” (Kirsch, Skorge and Khumalo, 2004: 3).

The Field site



(Map adapted from <http://www.kznwildlife.com/worldmap.htm>)



(Adapted from www.safarinow.com)



(Adapted from www.sa-venues.com)

Introduction

"Hamba njalo. Abatwa nobantu bahamba njalo."

They always go together. The Bushmen and the Bantu have always gone together (Bonakele Sibisisi¹).

I nod earnestly, *"ngiyazwa"* - I understand. Even in my broken Zulu I am able to understand that the peoples I wish to know more about are all around me. I am sitting in a small house nestled in a picturesque valley of the Drakensberg Mountains collecting stories about the Bushman who used to live here. They left behind the beautiful rock paintings and made an indelible mark on the people of the area. From June 13, 2003 through to March 11, 2005, I spent much of my time living with a family in the Drakensberg Mountains who trace Bushmen ancestry. I interspersed these fieldwork trips with returns to Durban to write, read and study the in the archives located at the University. This family welcomed me into their home giving me a place to sleep and study. They assisted in translating and gave me numerous introductions throughout the region. I hope that this thesis is a start to understanding their history and lives, and that it addresses some of their personal struggles to be acknowledged as an extant group.

The Bushmen have played a major role in shaping the contemporary peoples of Southern Africa despite their influence being largely downplayed or neglected². The Nguni language that dominates South Africa owes a legacy to the hunter-gatherers who were encountered by the Bantu migration from the north almost two thousand years ago (Bryant, 1945; Smith, 1992). Many have forgotten and do not acknowledge their Bushman ancestry. Material culture of the entire region would also have been influenced by various initiation schools and rites, through to the use of medicinal plants (Prins and Lewis, 1995; Fieldnotes, 2003-2005). The full extent of the aboriginal addition to contemporary culture has been largely erased from history through assimilation into the

¹ Fieldnotes August 2004. Sibisisi is her married name and the Sibisisi clan is not of San descent. She is a Duma maternally, and therefore of Abatwa descent.

² Much has been written on the cultural and linguistic legacy of the San on the people of Southern Africa that I address in part. For further information see Dickens (1992).

dominant culture. This followed a period where they were classified as vermin – as non-human – by the colonial settlers of the late 18th and early 19th centuries who attempted to exterminate them (see Skotnes, 1996).

Many of the people I talked to in the Kamberg Valley only know that the Bushmen once lived in the area. Others, such as Bonakele Sibisisi the sangoma³, quoted above know much more as they are the direct descendents of the Bushmen. The San of the Drakensberg are not 'extinct' even though their original language is lost, as are much of their cultural traditions and practices. Nobody in the Drakensberg lives as a hunter-gatherer anymore; most live in 'western' or 'Zulu' style houses with couches and tables, heaters and appliances; a blend of cultures and artefacts embodying a history of rapid change.

The Drakensberg 'Bushman' have been relegated to history, a sad story of extermination and a lost people (Vinnicombe, 1976; Wright, 1971). Yet, there are Zulu speaking peoples in the Drakensberg who still identify as San and who have been recently vocal about their continued existence⁴. I wonder what is it that makes these people who apparently live as Zulu, speak the Zulu language and who have married into Zulu families for generations still identify as *Abatwa*, the Zulu word for 'Bushman'? This research studies the formation of multiple identities that are constructed by marginalized groups in the Drakensberg that identify as both Zulu and *Abatwa*.

This project examines the development of these border identities within one such community, although I am aware of other groups in other communities⁵. Many more came to light during my study period (Fieldnotes, March 2005; Prins, forthcoming). The

³ A Sangoma (properly *iSangoma*) is a traditional healer, often defined as diviner; a distinction I find problematic as they may do divination of illness and misfortune, but they also often prescribe medicine and treat illness with physical means such as herbal medicines.

⁴ It is difficult or impossible to put a date on the opening up of such discourses and to do so may privilege debates only upon their entering the mass mediated public sphere. I also keep this intentionally vague because within the local community the San descendents have always discussed their San ancestors with other families alongside whom they live. I do not wish to privilege mass media discourses over local.

⁵ In the Underberg area I met with a group of youths from fifteen other clans all of whom had some self-identified San ancestry. They were interested in learning more about this aspect of their families' ancestry even if they were not actively claiming a San identity (Fieldnotes, March 2005).

Abatwa have become vocal about their continued existence and are once again becoming part of the public discourse (see Carnie, 2003: 3; Mkhwanazi, 2003). Despite being largely assimilated into the dominant Nguni groups, those that recognize San ancestry have recently been trying to organise and start asserting social and political rights⁶. The recognition of San identity⁷ in the Drakensberg coincides with the recent development of rock art sites as viable tourism enterprises and the international recognition of the Drakensberg Mountains as a World Heritage Site (UNESCO, 2003).

The recent claims to an aboriginal identity are not contingent on the recognition of the rock art sites as important, but due to a variety of material and non-material factors. The shifting material relations do have an impact on identity formation. This is not in a crude Marxist or deterministic sense, but reflects more of people making sense of their lives and their identity in order to manipulate potentially dehumanising structures within which they are embedded⁸. These new developments gave me an opportunity to inquire into an active revitalization of Bushman identity in the Drakensberg amongst a primarily Zulu community. I wish to understand why this group would forgo the 'prestige identity'⁹ in favour of a marginalized San identity. Furthermore, with Bushman identity formally supplanted by Zulu identity, I aim to examine how the two identities inform and shape each other in the contemporary context of post-apartheid South Africa.

This thesis is based on two years of anthropological fieldwork from June 13, 2003 through to March 11, 2005¹⁰. The location was community of Thendele, KwaZulu-Natal; situated in the picturesque Kamberg valley, part of the Drakensberg Mountain range.

⁶By rights I refer to the tangible benefits of being allowed to access the numerous rock shelters in the Drakensberg with the aboriginal rock art and the right to control representations and ideas of what it means to be Abatwa.

⁷ The recognition of the Drakensberg San as extant by NGOs and the government started after 2000, but with limited success in terms of political organizing (SASI, 2002).

⁸ The dehumanizing structures I refer to here are both material issues of poverty and social exclusion but also the ideological issues of representation best adumbrated in the 'Miscast' art exhibit by Pippa Skotnes (1996) that collected images and articles by leading scholars on the representation of the 'Bushman'.

⁹ The expansion of the Zulu Nation under Apartheid has been linked to it being seen as a 'prestige identity' compared to other smaller ethnic identities, such as Tembe-Tsonga (Felgate, 1982).

¹⁰ Fieldwork varied from a month to a few days in length. I also refer to fieldwork trips conducted with my department to the Kalahari Desert in the Northern Cape and to Ngwatle area in Botswana. I mainly use the Kalahari fieldwork to frame events in Thendele and I do not claim to have done *long-term* participant observation there.

The community is physically hemmed in by two mountain ranges to the north and south, at the top the Kamberg Nature Reserve, and in the east by Riverside Farm. The name Thendele refers to the partridges that were hunted here by early farmers¹¹ (*ithendele* – Zulu for partridge). The other name is *Mpofana*, which is used interchangeably with Thendele by the locals. It means either poverty or calf of the eland in *isiZulu*¹². Both meanings resonate with locals here; the former as a cruel irony and the latter as a reference to the rock art sites with the eland being the most represented creature. The entrance to the Valley is dominated by the Kamberg Peak (*Elengeni* in *isiZulu*) an anomaly of erosion setting it apart from the rest of the mountain range. Its name simply means 'cock's comb' in Afrikaans, so called by the early settlers and also by Zulu speakers (*Elengeni* means cock's comb in *isiZulu*).



Figure 1: A view of the Kamberg Peak from the village.

¹¹ Fieldnotes, June 2004

¹² *isiZulu* is the word for the Zulu language and I use it to distinguish between the language and the people.

Thendele is like many small Zulu villages, a mix of 'traditional', circular rondavels with thatch roofs, and 'modern' houses of varying quality. There was a marked distinction between the rich and the poor with the latter being the largest group of the estimated 1300 people that lived here at the time of my fieldwork (2003-2005). A few cattle lolled about, some chickens scratched in the dust, skinny dogs basked in the sun, generally the children ran about barefoot, and women washed clothes in the gentle stream. All in all very picturesque and serene with the occasional rumble of a car or truck passing through to the Nature Reserve or a mini-bus picking up labourers for the farms in the area. Most people only enjoy sporadic employment at the nature reserves or on the farms. Most live on government grants or remittances from urban and employed relatives, and they supplement their income with large gardens of maize and potatoes¹³.

The village stands as an example of the diverse heritage of much of the Drakensberg residents. My fieldwork was facilitated by the Duma family who welcomed me into their home and gave me a place to live. Much of my study concerns the Dumas, not because they are unique, but because they stand in as an example of San descendents struggling for recognition in contemporary South Africa. Furthermore, they defy monolithic representations of the Zulu people and signify the diversity inherent in the compilation of the Zulu Nation¹⁴. The Duma of Thendele occupy eight homesteads in the Valley with much of their family scattered to other parts of the Drakensberg stretching from Underberg to Didima (Southern Drakensberg to Northern Drakensberg).

Out of this history flows the tale of this family, part Zulu, part San and wholly South African. They have been living in this area as long as their family memory can recall¹⁵, their last name, Duma, which means 'to thunder' in Zulu, appears to come from further South and is recognized as an originally Mpondomise clan name (Faku and Richard Duma, Interview, July 2004). The Mpondomise people are now considered to be part of

¹³ Most of these were only used for subsistence agriculture with very little cash generated through sales and many people freely gave produce to other community members and occasionally to me.

¹⁴ Diversity within the Zulu nation is also recognized by Krige (1936: vi).

¹⁵ They do have a sense of people that share their name. Duma, as being from elsewhere, but they refer to their family as always being from the Drakensberg Mountains. Other Zulu people have old myths that speak of a land from the north where their ancient ancestors come from (Fieldnotes, July, 2004).

the Xhosa Nation¹⁶ located in the Eastern Cape of South Africa. The family, however, has no memory of living in Pondoland¹⁷ or any land to the south. They remember a grandfather figure that was not one of the Nguni peoples, but San or a Bushman¹⁸. Their family had adopted an Nguni clan¹⁹ name six generations ago. This was a strategy for survival and family continuity in face of settler violence towards the San population, resulting in the need to assimilate and ‘disappear’ from obvious sight. History reports that the San were hunted like wild animals, despised by both Nguni and Settler (Vinnicombe, 1976; Wright, 1971). The neglected aspect of integration and intermarriage feeds into the discourse of extinction and genocide. Within the history there is a gap, a blank spot, where the San of the Drakensberg have disappeared. Out of this gap appears the community of Thendele and the contemporary Abatwa people. The full details of the San of the Drakensberg can never be fully known as colonial arrogance and ignorance swept them away with scant traces left to tell their tale.

This thesis is a part of that story as their tales are told and their history reworked. More importantly, I challenge the issues of representation that dominate aboriginal and African discourses regarding ethnic groups. There are key discourses about African aboriginal peoples that impinge on their lives and how they are understood. Discourses that resonate with notions of exclusivity via ethnic relativism and ethnic nationalism negatively impact on our understanding of African peoples and ultimately create divisions and fragment communities. By examining one such mixed group that defies the stereotyped imagery of aboriginal Africans I hope to decentre the debates and offer some new perspective on the local diversity and the local imagery.

My research questions current understanding of San communities by challenging the continued notion of separate or distinct ethnicities. This is premised on “the fundamental

¹⁶ I use this as a linguistically defined group as there is no political or social grouping that exists that defines who or what it means to be Xhosa, such as a Kingdom of the Xhosa or likewise.

¹⁷ A somewhat vaguely defined geographic area in the Eastern Cape around Port Elizabeth (see Beinart, 1981).

¹⁸ See lineage and kinship chart on page 85.

¹⁹ I use the clan name instead of surname as clan name implies a sense of belonging together that defies actual distance in relations while surname refers to a shared name. E.g., a Duma could never marry someone else with the Duma clan name, while I could marry someone with the same surname of Francis.

assumption that people are always trying to make sense of their lives, always weaving fabrics of meaning, however fragile...” (Ortner, 1999: 9). This ‘border land’, both in the figurative sense of identity and in terms of geographic location can be framed as a zone of friction where meanings clash and identity is used to enact social or political change (Rosaldo, 1989). This is an intersection between identity, politics, legal rights, issues of self-determination and culture.

My research will explain the formation of multiple identities that are constructed by a marginalized people. The San of the Drakensberg experienced a violent history of dispossession by the colonial settlers and Zulu peoples as these various groups encroached into their former territory (Mazel, 1996; Vinnicombe, 1976). The early state of South Africa actively promoted their extermination due to conflict with colonial settlers (Skotnes, 1996). Research often focuses in on these peoples as distinct cultural groupings. While people often reify their own identities, individuals in this community identify multiple ethnicities. These identities are drawn upon differentially within specific contexts or social encounters²⁰. Just as Zulu identity was claimed for survival by the San at the beginning of the 20th century to avoid outright genocide (Wright, 1971), people now can reassert past cultural categories to claim socio-economic rights relating to the rock art sites and cultural tourism. Despite attempts to exterminate the San many survived by adopting Nguni²¹ clan names and settling in Nguni villages or even on colonial farms in the Drakensberg as labourers (Prins, 1990, 1997).

The problems of ethnic classification are absurd in this day and age following from the demise of Apartheid, but yet the notion of separate ethnicities is enshrined in the constitution and language laws (Constitution, 1996). The way disparate groups were lumped together under apartheid contributed to the consolidation of groups while blurring boundaries between others (Wright, 1983). The mix of ethnicities in Thendele comes together under the banner of Zulu, but Zulu-ness is a recent phenomenon as historically

²⁰ My informants would self identify as Zulu or Abatwa depending on who was present or what event they are describing.

²¹ Zulu, Xhosa, Ndebele and Swazi are the main groups that all are distinguished by the three clicks described above.

only those who swore allegiance to the Zulu Kingdom north of the Thugela River²² were considered Zulu (see Guy, 1994). It became the prestige language of KwaZulu-Natal and subsequently people began to not only speak the language, but also adopt the banner of Zulu (Felgate, 1982).

It is easiest to rely on autonyms as I have done with the use of the category *Abatwa*, but Thendele is a community of Zulu people with only a few claiming San ancestry and its role in contributing to their identity. Normally we can be “at least moderately confident they reflect a locally salient category” (Metcalf, 2002: 93). Yet, the Dumas main claim to what it is that makes Abatwa a salient category is the patrilineal connection implied in the Duma name that ties them back to a progenitor of known Bushman ethnicity. Their idea of a divorce from Zulu ethnicity is neither to exclude others from within the community nor is it to gain an advantage over others. It is evocative of their past and their current struggle to be recognised. In this is a critique of the salience of Zulu-ness, even as the Dumas do not dispute their own Zulu-ness. Richard Duma claims both ethnicities thus:

There is no Nation without language and culture. Our intent here is to recreate ourselves and our language. We don't want money from this. We do it for ourselves and for the future of the Abatwa people (Interview, July 2004).

The term, 'Nation', as commonly used by Zulus, indicates an ethnically-based Shakan heritage, now nestling within the larger South African nation as an administrative entity. Culture is used essentialistally as equivalent of nation. A common theme is to rebuild their Abatwa culture, due to their perceived lack of the markers of that culture, such as a separate language. The impossibility of such a task of returning to an extinct culture and language does not daunt the Dumas who nevertheless consider themselves part of the Zulu Nation. Just as Frans Prins reminds us people will create meaningful lives with; “Whatever is handy and accessible, such as myths, beliefs, western and other 'foreign' notions, and concrete objects, are incorporated into their world-view and presented as tradition” (1999: 50).

²² The Thugela River bifurcates the province of KwaZulu-Natal north to south considerably north of my fieldsite.

The term 'identity' with its problematical nature still has to be used: "there is nothing to put in its place – yet there has to be a necessary reflexivity in its use, a recognition that it represents an analytical problem as well as a fallible solution" (McGuigan, 1999: 86). The flexibility of their culture should be viewed as a continuation of their past culture as they survived by adapting to changing circumstances under colonisation. Bantu expansion into their territories was another factor. It is a common assumption that "San society is characteristically static" ... [B]ecause it was unable to adapt changing socio-political circumstances [it] is now virtually extinct" (Prins, 2000:6). This myth has been perpetuated across hunting-gathering studies whereby changing strategies of livelihood is viewed as extinction. As Prins notes, "it would indeed be short-sighted and arrogant to deny a people their past because a group does not display the same cultural package as their archaeologically construed ancestors" (Prins, 2000: 8).

The San and their descendents are particularly victimised by such attitudes. Nobody would argue that Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi²³ of the Zulu Nation is not Zulu due to changes within contemporary Zulu culture that allows the use of a cellular phone or wearing a suit. The San are subject to stereotyped ideas of how they should appear and behave in order to be considered aboriginal. Ethnographies and films that speak of hunter-gatherers still have their use and do inform our understanding of contemporary peoples. They do not speak to a universal truth of humanities' past. Too much research has been done that presumes they live as separate way of life from other peoples. It creates false images and maintains racist stereotypes that cross over from research into the in the media and popular culture²⁴.

The various peoples of the world labelled as hunter-gatherers are often used "as a foil to our own societies" (Bender and Morris, 1988:10). The idea that aboriginals must have a pristine culture is very powerful, and the length of time for that idea to be eroded

²³ Buthelezi is a prominent Zulu politician of the IFP. He served as chief minister of the KwaZulu Bantustan (1970-94) initially as head of the Zululand Territorial Authority (Mare and Hamilton, 1987).

²⁴ The media images that predominate echo *The Gods must be Crazy* (Uys, 1981) imagery of loin cloths and wearing skins and as a isolated separate people. Newspaper headlines such as 'People of the wild' (*Mercure* 29, 2004) are indicative of such stereotyping.

suggests that it is very important to the *researchers/activists* that they remain pristine as “we wanted to know what they were like beforehand, as we wanted to know what we were like” (Bender and Morris, 1988:10 emphasis in original). This idea fits neatly into 19th and 20th century evolutionary frameworks and ideologies whereby hunter-gatherers are seen as the least culturally evolved and can stand in for our Stone-age ancestors²⁵ (Lee, 1979). The notion that hunting-gathering was an undesirable or a savage existence has been challenged by Marshall Sahlins (1972) with his discussion of the ‘original affluent society’ where wants were easily taken care of and needs always met in such societies. Two strains of thought emerged: i) Western social structures and standards should be applied to ‘primitive’ peoples in order to let them ‘evolve’; or ii) they should be preserved for posterity as examples of our stone age past²⁶.

In the past it was absolutely necessary to be considered Zulu due to extreme violence against Abatwa that continued into the 1900’s²⁷. As apartheid developed the Zulus became the prestige identity as well as a basis of solidarity, a rallying point (Felgate, 1982). Furthermore, with the demise of apartheid and racially based labour practices the ‘reserves’ no longer serve as a basis for the reproduction of labour (see Walker, 1982). The rural poor are merely rural poor, with only a marginal few serving as a reserve of labour for the mines and farms. Generally the mines and farms now have a labour pool supported through localised wage labour and do not rely on reproduction from the reserves²⁸. Currently the rural population has become redundant in many senses as they now are only rarely drawn upon for labour, and may even be seen as a burden upon society²⁹. By placing them within contemporary ways of life as part of greater society we can begin to fathom a place where they belong, not as beggars on the periphery, but as

²⁵ By linking the hunting-gathering society into an ecological adaptation to the desert Richard Lee (1979) suggests an evolutionary framework that reveals continuity to the Stone Age past. This framework unwittingly supports views that are pejorative as San are viewed as primitives and not contemporary peoples.

²⁶ This notion appears in debates about vanishing cultures that strip them of their actual contexts and ossify African cultures (see Radithalo, 2001: 249-260).

²⁷ See Morris (1996: 75-79) in his discussion of trophy heads of San with one of the last San skeletons collected in 1917.

²⁸ See Walker (1982) for a historical perspective on rural reserves as labour pool.

²⁹ See Freund Padayachee (2002) for an analysis of the processes and forces of urbanization in KwaZulu-Natal.

fully active citizens trying to realise their socio-economic rights and responsibilities. Their histories still need to be written and the record set straight. This thesis is an attempt to redress a part of one family's ongoing struggle.

Naming the Bushmen

Here I break from the now standard use of the term, 'Bushman', to describe South Africa's indigenous peoples³⁰. The term has been reclaimed by many, refuting the original derogatory usage and meaning (Gordon, 1992; Dyll, 2004). The Duma, however, do not like the term because of its implications of savagery and primitiveness. They prefer the Zulu word *Abatwa* (plural), or *umutwa* (singular) or the longer *Ongibonabonephi*³¹ (literally where did you see me?).

During a discussion with Richard Duma about the naming and what name would he consider to be the original or best to use, he asked:

What is the real original name? Not Bushman, it is not an original name. Bushman is maybe the name from white people. The original name is Abatwa, maybe they chased them from the mountains and find them in the bush, that is why maybe they call those people the Bushmen, because those people are running from the mountain...in the lowlands where some bushes, I think it is where that word arises.³²

While he joked about the reason for the term 'Bushman' playing off of a literal notion of 'Bushman' he is quite close to the original derogatory connotations embodied in the word (see Barnard, 1992).

Any use of such terms as 'Bushman', San, or Abatwa is implicated in the very notion being deconstructed and any given name should be seen as short hand with the caveats

³⁰ Due to the dominance of such a term in Southern Africa any attempt to refute its usage is difficult if not impossible and I catch myself time and time again using it in ways I would rather not.

³¹ This term is used by the rock art tour guides in the Kamberg Valley Nature Reserve, and is also known locally. The guides' story is that *ongibonabonephi* was used as greeting between Zulu and Abatwa. the reply was that you saw the Abatwa from far away so as not to cause offense for their small size by implying that you saw them only once close (Werner, 1915, Fieldnotes, December, 2003).

³² Interview with Richard Duma (April, 2004).

supplied. There is a reified notion of ethnicity embedded in the terms being used; a double bind that goes round with no end to the debate even possible, only a series of caveats to justify why I choose to use a certain name. Despite the ongoing debates about naming, I will not engage in any justification or defence of the generic terms, 'Bushman' or 'San' or indeed any defence of any generic name. The "Bushman"/San/etc. are a disparate, non-homogenous population and to give credence to one is to silence others and to speak for many.

I know of no other 'group' of people with so many names and so little consensus. Most ethnic groups in South Africa have definitive names with a general agreement as to their validity. Who is Zulu is usually agreed upon as a general organising category based on a shared language and history, as it is for the Xhosa, and so on. These categories are problematic as they are subject to change and contestation, as the Abatwa claims testify to. Similar claims are made by the AmaHlubi in the northern Drakensberg to as they attempt to reclaim political and economic rights from the British (Pewa, Mon. Oct 11, 2004:1).

The Bushmen/San/Khoisan/Abatwa/Ongibonabonephi/etc has no such consensus. The two most common names are the 'San' or the 'Bushman', which in no way makes them the most desirable for all. Both are historically loaded names with derogatory overtures – 'Bushman' implying savage and 'San' meaning thief in Nama (Gordon, 1992: 6-7; also see Barnard, 1992: 7-11). Yet, today these disparate people argue amongst themselves that they are the 'Bushman' or they are the 'San' (etc.). Research partners from the Kalahari Desert in Botswana refuse to be called San and co-opt 'Bushman' to mean something positive without removing the original implication of 'man' from the bush (Kalahari Fieldnotes July 2003). It is seen here as a form of resistance to the externally imposed politically correct 'San' (Bregin and Kruijper, 2004:52-55). They draw on the imagery and ideas of 'man' in a partnership with nature, of closeness and intimate contact

with Nature; reified images so popular in contemporary mass media³³. Other communities in the Kalahari use 'San' drawing on the metonymic similarities to sand, because they feel they are the people of the sand – again drawing on closeness to nature (Tomaselli, 2003). Zulus with 'Bushman' ancestry reject the name because they feel it implies savage and that it means a people with no culture, no society, and thus no identity³⁴.

The debates over names are, more often than not, arguments over ascribed names. The people themselves often use these externally assigned names and seem to take them on with pride (see McLennan-Dodd, 2003; Dyll, 2003: 14-15). Robert Gordon argues for the term 'Bushman' (1992: 6-7). Yet he also describes how fractured the voice of the Namibian Bushmen are, how inarticulate the people are about their situation and lives. The same can be said of South Africa's traditional #Khomani³⁵ populations, now beset with alcoholism, drug abuse, violence and crime (Groenewald, June 6-12, 2003: 45; Kalahari Fieldnotes July 2003; August 2004).

The issue of naming of the Bushmen also has ramifications for the study of hunter-gatherers as a whole. Ascribed names like San, a Nama word meaning bandit, are very telling. Many peoples from diverse ecosystems and economies are lumped together under the general heading of *hunters and gatherers*³⁶. The assimilation and domination of aboriginal peoples is made to appear as an historical inevitability³⁷.

³³ This imagery is powerful and exists in the depictions used for tourism such as 'Nature's gentle people' (de la Harpe, 2002), films such as *People of the Great Sandface* (Myburgh, 1985) and *The Great Dance: A Hunter's story* (Windermath, 2000).

³⁴ The Dumas repeatedly told me of their discontent with the 'Bushman' with its association with wildness and especially the accompanying imagery of 'traditional' hunter-gatherers in loin clothes that for them marked the aboriginal people as part of nature and not as fully human (Fieldnotes, December 2003, April 2004).

³⁵ I delineate the 'traditional' from the 'modern' as the #Khomani is split into two main groups seeking two opposing aims within the recent land claims (see SAS, 2002; Robbins *et al.*, 2001).

³⁶ The relationship may be inverted, such as gathering and hunting, to put the primacy on gathering.

³⁷ The annihilation of the Beothuk Indians of Newfoundland in Canada (see Marshall, 1996) and the extermination of the Aborigines in Tasmania (Moses, 2004) are two examples. They document extreme violence and not a passive disappearance in light of a different way of life.

The naming process is a lesson in political economy. At the immediate or local level a highly individual name was used, such as !Kung in the Kalahari. This can be done to assert land rights or exclude other seemingly related peoples. A name may be broader and therefore include neighbouring groups of similar peoples across regions, as San is now used in South Africa and Namibia. The names, 'San' or 'Bushman', are used to show solidarity or highlight widespread problems of marginalisation common to indigenous populations of Southern Africa³⁸. The term aborigine may be used to link with similar groups worldwide that are seen to be facing similar issues (Tallbear, 1999). Aborigine is a useful sign for global media campaigns and to gain international solidarity and international recognition.

I can offer no resolution as to this bind as we can use individual group names such as #Khomani, !Kung, etc., but the people with whom I worked have no name they can use as such, due to it being lost in history. They choose Abatwa to describe themselves, but this name is derogatory in some parts of KwaZulu-Natal. I was told by Swazi (also *SiSwati*) speakers that the term *Abathwa* is an insult in Swaziland³⁹ – the linguistic ties imply that Abatwa is once again externally imposed, and there seem to be no other options. The other name from the Drakensberg is *Ongibonabonephi*, which used to be a greeting used during cross-cultural encounters⁴⁰. It was argued by an informant that it may be the best possible ethnonym for the Drakensberg San⁴¹, but I cannot see it becoming common due to lack of general use; nor do I see a desire from the people to make it the general ethnonym. Mwelwa Musambachine writes about another Abatwa group in Zambia and connects the origin of the word to the Bemba-related languages to the verb '*twa*' to be sharp (1994: 79). "In addition, the term "Abatwa" or simply "Batwa" is used to identify pygmy groups living in the equatorial forests of the Republics of Congo, Zaire, Burundi and Rwanda. It is also used to identify Bantu groups living in isolated swampy areas of Zambia and parts of South Africa (Musambachine, 1994: 81).

³⁸ Such as the use by South African San Institute, SASI or the Working Group on Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa, WIMSA.

³⁹ Anon. Swaziland. 2004.

⁴⁰ See Werner (1915: 73) for a description of these encounters although the English translation is used and not the Nguni phrase.

⁴¹ Fieldnotes, June, 2004. The justification was that at least it is a locally inscribed name even if it is a Nguni phrase.

Musambachine states that members of this society acknowledge its aboriginal roots that trace to stone-age pygmy groups. They now are a society defined as “a group of people coming together voluntarily to form an organisation that serves a common purpose and satisfies a common interest” (Musambachine, 1994: 77).

The term Botwa/abatwa etc. is contested however. It is understood elsewhere to mean foreigner, wanderer, slave and a host of other possible appellations (see Jeffreys, 1953). Jeffreys argues for the term to mean foreigner or outsider and even draws a conclusion that there is a chance of an Arab influence. Such arguments are based on broad conjecture and have little direct relevance to the issue here except as an interesting aside. The common Bantu root across Africa that is used to refer to various aboriginal peoples generates interest, but to seek a specific single root seems to mean, with some irony, that we are always searching for names not necessarily enunciated by the communities so named. Despite the differences the notion that ‘*twa*’ is a Bantu root from antiquity is interesting and bolsters claims to the word being used as an ethnonym by the descendants of the aboriginal peoples. It is clearly a word relating back to aboriginal peoples that encountered the Bantu as they moved south⁴².

The use of a term such as ‘Bushmen’ or any of the other general terms is similar to the use of Nguni to describe the Zulu, Xhosa, Swazi, etc. It is a way of describing heterogeneous groups that share a common language and ancestry. The size, social/cultural and political coherence of the Nguni groups allows for individual recognition as Zulu, Xhosa, Ndebele, or Swazi. The marginalized status of the ‘Bushmen’ does not allow for each cultural group to be regarded as distinct. The history of violence between the various groups of Nguni and the San⁴³ as colonisation pushed the Nguni into the mountains suggest that to be Abatwa was not a good thing – resulting in one hundred years of silence, as only now are people renewing their “Bushman-ness”. The violence is not to be overstated as there was much contact and reciprocity present, and much violence seems to be much more recent in origin than from original encounters

⁴² See Smith (1992) on the spread of the pastoralist peoples across Africa.

⁴³ Violence also occurred between the Bantu groups in general across Southern Africa (Stow, 1905. Bryant, 1945; Wright, 1971).

between Abatwa and Nguni. I have already mentioned the linguistic ties of the Nguni clicks to the aboriginal languages and also the intermarriage between these groups (Bryant, 1945). There is much more to be said on this later in Chapters and 4.

These disparate terms will be used alongside each other as they mark specific aspects of the debate as well as certain historical trajectories. 'San' will be used as a general term for describing contemporary aboriginal populations due to its common usage by umbrella organisations such as the South African San Institute (SASI) and the Working Group for Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa (WIMSA). San is also the most common term in general use in South Africa. The umbrella term 'Bushman' will be used with reference to certain aspects of the debate, as a rhetorical device (thus marked with inverted commas), or within an author's body of work or in reference to such works. From here-on-in the term *umutwa/Abatwa* will be used to describe the contemporary San descendants of the Drakensberg Mountains.

The historic and Xhosa spelling, *Abathwa*, will only be used in reference to other bodies of work (such as in Prins, 1996; 1997). The term *Botwa* is another gloss of this word but will be used to describe a historic grouping of disparate peoples, both Nguni and San, who were titled *Botwa* for their nomadic lifestyle (see Chapter 3). The compound term Khoi-San will be used only in reference to the National Khoi-San Consultative Conference (NKCC) group (Le Fleur, 2004). This term is used to refer to the historic indigenous groups of both the Khoekhoe and San people. The Khoekhoe also appear in texts as 'Hottentots' (Barnard, 1992). I do not use the compound term as a general label, but do appreciate how it combines all the indigenous peoples into one group for the purposes of obtaining political unity while recognising the diversity within such a broad general category (see Le Fleur, 2004).

The names of my Abatwa informants that are used within my thesis remain the real names of individuals, as do key Zulu people of non-Abatwa descent. Obscuring the names is often a standard anthropological practice especially when discussing politically sensitive issues. The Abatwa wish their names to be known and tell me that they are tired

of hiding their culture and their identity. The importance of the clan name Duma makes it impossible to obscure and remain true to the historic record; the clan names tell much about where a person comes from and to whom they are connected. The names I use are often common African names in KwaZulu-Natal and others are common European derived names. African People in rural communities often have two first names, one Nguni and one European that are used in different settings, depending on to whom they are speaking to (Fieldnotes, 2004-2005). This is still a common practice and people may use either name or both interchangeably. I use the name that the individual chooses to go by in daily life. Some names will be obscured as they were not key informants and I never received permission to use their full names. I will clearly state this where appropriate.

Outline of chapters

Chapter One sets the academic scene in which my fieldwork is framed. The popular imaging of the San is a powerful discourse that is dominated by issues of racial purity and origin. It is against the academic debates of the 'Bushmen' as a First People that the San of the Drakensberg must be viewed; I argue that the Duma are an assimilated group, neither relegated to the ecological margins of the country nor do their lives directly correlate with a hunter-gatherer way of life.

Chapter Two describes the methodological processes I follow as I try to understand identity as process. I refer to anthropological methodologies as I use long-term participant observation. I integrate these methods with some drawn from cultural studies. The setting of my research in a rural community is framed by mass-media and national discourses that structure our understanding, but more importantly our subjects' understanding of the world in which they live and create for themselves.

Chapter Three is an archaeological and historical overview of the San of the Drakensberg. I also outline a family history and their understanding of their history as contrasted against the colonial histories of the area. The family history is reflected in the

written record and it outlines the changes they faced and adapted to. This resulted in their assimilation into the dominant Nguni population, retaining continuity with their aboriginal past. A case study follows of a recently invented ceremony performed by the subject community that ties the discourses together and which offers a way of making sense out of their world.

Chapter Four is a continuation of the historical and pre-historical analysis. It offers a critique of the rock art literature and its totalising explanations. The significance of the Drakensberg rock art for the Dumas is discussed here.

Chapter Five is about the subject position of the researcher and my relationship to those in the research site. Here I frame cultural tropes and processes that must be understood in light of recent history and events to understand these people in the present. Their worldview as well as my own is interrogated through the research process as I document an extant people who are not fully recognised.

Chapter Six examines the issues of poverty, powerlessness and the very real structures of South African society that maintains people on the margins as a rural underclass. Here I interrogate the idea of development and identity as the San of the Drakensberg try to create a meaningful life and future for themselves.

Chapter Seven is an elaboration of ideas developed during fieldwork experiences. I engage the debates on who represents the San at local, national and international levels by analysing key debates involving local San and international organisations. Both groups seek alleviation of poverty and powerlessness of aboriginal peoples and draw on images of the San in order to do so.

These chapters break down into seven different but related themes 1) the veritable industry of imaging and representation that has grown around peoples of San descent through history and continues unabated today; 2) the importance of anthropology's notion of creativity and invention in culture as opposed to a static view; 3) the prehistory

of the KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa and the history of the Duma family, my main informants; 4) the concept of cultural re-invention and its relevance for the understanding of southern African rock art and ethnicity; 5) clarifications and suggested appropriate stances regarding the role of the observer of 'others'; 6) issues of rural development and how they are directly affected by the imagery of cultural description; and 7) the political representation of the San and how theories of human nature and culture directly affect their well-being.

Chapter One – Imaging the San

Ethnography of the Southern San

No contemporary ethnography of the Abatwa that stitches together a coherent picture of their lives as an extant ethnic group exists. Such a task is indeed impossible, as the population of San descendents are by and large assimilated into the dominant populations of other African peoples amongst whom they live. The Abatwa cannot be models for a clear ethnography of that larger group defined by Prins (1990) as Southern San. They are one part of a greater puzzle of the multilayered identity and ethnicity in South Africa. The Abatwa may even be viewed as a counter-culture in so much as they articulate differences within the dominant ethnic group of Zulu, of which they are a part. An ethnography of the San descendents is therefore an ethnography of the Zulu. My aim is not to give an ethnography that explains the minutia of a different culture. Rather, I examine how the ideas behind what it means to be aboriginal in Africa is seen through the lens of a community far from the generalised Kalahari representations. .

The Southern San are a largely assimilated people. Their cultural legacy is reflected in the fragmented collection of stories and ideas of what it means to be San. Ethnographic information is largely confined to influences on the dominant African populations of which they are a part⁴⁴. Ethnography that examines their continued presence in the form of remnants of a San culture are starting to challenge holistic views of culture and the idea of ethnic purity.

The purity of the ‘Bushman’

“For ethnographers, the purity of the sign ‘Bushman’ in Western thought necessitated that an equally ‘pure’ ‘Bushman’ was studied in the field” (Suzman, 1999: 3). Such views have glossed over external events and power dynamics that impact on the lives of

⁴⁴ The majority of such work deals with their influence on healers and rainmakers in the Southern Nguni peoples. See Jolly, 1996; Prins, 1990; 1992; 1994; 1996; 1997; Prins and Lewis, 1995.

the 'Bushman'. Two dominant strains have developed from such a conceptual notion of purity. The first is to study these people as if they are in isolation from the other peoples around them, with whom they trade, marry, fight and live (as in Lee, 1979; Shostak, 1981). The second strain is to study them as a temporal anomaly where their hunting-gathering lifestyle has been interrupted by agro-pastoralists or even created by others as a response to external forces of domination (see Wilmsen and Denbow, 1990). The second view attempts to examine their lives in light of violent histories and colonisation, but ultimately makes them victims of history as an automatic underclass forced out and dominated by other 'naturally' more powerful groups. This appears to be based on an assumption that hunter-gatherers' existence is threatened by the mere presence of agro-pastoralists, and that such a domination happened across Southern Africa, if not the world (Brody, 2000).

Essentialised imagery of the Bushmen

There is little purpose in setting out to find some truth of Bushman-ness of the Duma people. To do so would imply a positivist framework that states that there is indeed a scientific truth to be discovered that can pinpoint a person's identity. Indeed, there is a desire for empirical data that can be measured or seen. The most common is an expectation that the Dumas should look like 'Bushmen' from the movies, small, yellow and armed with a bow and arrow cum *The Gods Must be Crazy* (Uys, 1980). Yet the Dumas look like everyone else in Thendele. No 'Bushman' features manifest themselves, although I have heard many people describing certain Dumas as having more 'aquiline' features or 'finer bone structure'. Some even remark every time a short Duma is met that it must be the 'Bushman' ancestry (anon, Fieldnotes, 2003; Mellet, Fieldnotes, July, 2003). These statements are meant to be supportive about the Duma claims to aboriginal descent. I accept the Dumas position, but I do not ascribe to some essentialised notion of what a 'Bushman' looks like⁴⁵.

⁴⁵ I met a man in the Kalahari in Botswana who lived in a Bushman community who was over six feet tall and when I asked him about his ancestry (people had assumed he was Tswana or another Bantu group) he said with great solemnity that he was Bushman, but that nobody believed him (Kalahari Fieldnotes, 2004).

The 'Bushman' of the Drakensberg by common sense are assumed to be short and yellowish. Co-habitation of the land by San and Bantu peoples has been long enough to have three clicks introduced into the Bantu language. These clicks are used to mark a schism in the Bantu language group into the Nguni language group (see Bleek, 1862; D. Bleek, 1956). The implication of this linguistic marker implies a depth of involvement over a considerable length of time (Bryant, 1945). The difference from the recent past is about mode of subsistence and it may be assumed that the linguistic divide was decreasing or missing by the time the first settlers arrived⁴⁶. No record of a separate language exists apart from a few words collected from other regions. The flattening of the jumbled, chaotic, confusing multiple identities in order to present a tidy picture of Zulu or *Abatwa* is to paint a false picture and to tell a tall tale, obscuring the reality faced by these people that includes and even celebrates the arbitrariness of life and identity.

Zulu is the largest ethnic group in the KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa (*Statistics South Africa*, 1990). The consolidation of the Zulu Nation in the early 19th century involved the incorporation of many smaller distinct tribal groupings into one nation due to a variety of military conquests and political alliances (see Laband, 1995; Bryant, 1945; Krige, 1936). The Zulu Nation continued to grow under apartheid due to the relative prestige of Zulu identity that conferred political and economic gain (see Felgate, 1982; Guy, 1982). With the advent of a democratic state in 1994 some reasserted past ethnic identities. One such group is the *Abatwa* who identify as both San and Zulu in the Drakensberg Mountains.

The reality of any attempt to delineate the *Abatwa* as a distinct ethnic category runs afoul of the multiple and contradictory positions in which they live⁴⁷. While ethnographic holism is no longer seen to be theoretically sound due to notions of the pluralities of identity and the largely fluid boundaries between peoples, it is still common practice to refer to our subjects of study with a categorical name. The *Abatwa* are significantly

⁴⁶ In Orpen (1912) his informant on San culture was speaking in Sesotho and not a San language even though he was living with the San.

⁴⁷ They speak Zulu, follow Zulu norms and customs and even attend rituals held by the Zulu King, Goodwill Zwelintini (Fieldnotes Aug, 2004).

enmeshed and intermixed with the Nguni peoples. No physical or obvious cultural difference is manifest and the only possible way to know about the ancestral descent is to ask or be told⁴⁸. Indigenous people have suffered disproportionately from violence and have been exposed to powerful forces of integration, but it cannot be assumed that they are automatically destroyed by these processes. Many indigenous people also survived despite loss of language and being exposed to massive cultural change.

Current studies show how Kalahari Bushmen construct an identity as a subjugated and oppressed group instead of an identity based on past or present status as hunter-gatherers (Gordon, 1992; Suzman, 1999). The majority of Bushmen today are labourers on farms, petty agriculturalists, herders, marginalized under-classes or subsumed under dominant ethnic groups (Prins, 2000a). The Abatwa have been assumed by some local authorities to be liars. Where no 'Bushman' features are visible it is believed that individuals are trying to leverage preferential treatment and developmental funds⁴⁹. Due to their integration the entire community would benefit from any projects that arise⁵⁰. I will discuss this below in 'ethnicity and development' in Chapter 6.

The Duma are trying to mark themselves out as culturally distinct. By marking out the distinctness of the 'Bushman' they allow for internally adopted strategies of survival and the inclusion of other marginal peoples. This inclusion is "the making of collective worlds" (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1992: 10). While the ethnic divorce from Zulu may be impractical, it is necessary for personal gains to be 'distinctive'. My point of departure is that "ethnic entities refer to relational categories between human groups, composed primarily of mutual images and moral loyalties, rather than specific tribal or cultural traits" (Hall, 1996: 15). Forwarding this use of ethnicity refutes essentialised notions of

⁴⁸ The easiest way is to get their praise song and lineage that differs from other people of the same clan name - The Duma clan is split into two groups one Abatwa and one Xhosa (Fieldnotes, 2004).

⁴⁹ Interview with S. Brummer, 2004; Fieldnotes, anon, 2005.

⁵⁰ Faku Duma is involved with a local council that meets with government to discuss community needs and development projects such as road improvements and water supplies. However, this activity is kept separate from hopes of benefits for the Abatwa and he labours hard to convince the government for general community benefits (Fieldnotes, 2005).

ethnic categories already unpicked above. Abatwa ethnicity is premised off of their alliances and obligations to each other and to others that claim Abatwa identity⁵¹.

The Wild Bushmen

The San of the Drakensberg had received some media attention during my fieldwork. An entire newspaper supplement on their rock art appeared (*Mercury*, Wed. Sept. 29, 2004: 7). The dominant depiction was strangely exotic, echoing 19th century ideas of ‘Wild Bushmen’. The title of the article was ‘People of the Wild’. This article quite upset the Drakensberg San since they actively reject the imagery of wildness⁵². The article makes use of the mountain climber Reg Pearse’s book, *Barrier of Spears* (1989), and his description of the ‘Bushmen’ they cited is worth quoting in full:

They were small in stature, these Bushmen, the average height being about 122 to 137 cm. Their general build was slim and lean, and even their young people showed little of the rounded outlines of youth. The amount of fat under their skin was remarkably small, with the result that the skin became as dry as leather, falling into strong folds around the stomach.

The back was hollowed, the stomach often protruding. Their colour was light brown, lips thick, the nose small, depressed and flat. The chin was receding, as also the forehead. There was little body hair, the eyes often bright, the mouth smiling, often impishly – their folklore and their mythology are only equalled by the scope and extent of their famous rock paintings.

The absurdity of such descriptions being used in 2004 should not need to be repeated. The description only fell short of 19th century depictions by excluding a description of the genitals⁵³. The imagery is offensive and draws on racialised caricatures.

⁵¹ They know Abatwa elders from other communities who are invited to important events and ceremonies (Fieldnotes, March, 2003).

⁵² I was repeatedly told that the word ‘Bushmen’ was offensive and that its implication was that of being from the wild and thus no more than an animal.

⁵³ Previous studies measured and examined in detail Bushman genitals. Descriptions of these appear in many texts as truths and as ways of expressing difference between ‘races’ of Africa (see Morris, 1956: 17 for a crude example).



The mention of “lack of fat” and “the stomach often protruding” are images of malnutrition; they are not racial characteristics as the old Dorothea Frances Bleek photo on the left shows. Moreover, Pearse is no expert on the Bushmen, but a mountain climber who copied this information from elsewhere. He never met any Bushmen as he was writing in the 20th century, and he never claimed to do so (Pearse, 1989). The article is further inaccurate as it reports that 400 San descendents are still living in the Drakensberg. There are about 1500 members of the Duma family alone and many other families of San descent also exist⁵⁴.

Figure 2: Bushman Boy (Photo by Bleek, 1911)

People declare themselves San or Bushman without being able to speak one of the San languages⁵⁵, wearing the stereotyped clothing of loin cloth and leather or hunting with a bow and arrow.⁵⁶ Contemporary studies of the descendents of hunter-gatherers can no longer continue to apply tropes and analytic categories that maintain that the organising principle of these peoples is that of hunter-gatherers⁵⁷. The descendents and their lives need to be understood in light of current political and economic structures of societies in which they are a part. To do otherwise is to relegate them to a past that no longer exists and which may never have existed. Whether they are a rural underclass, urban slum dwellers, teachers or professionals, they cannot be expected to conform to ideas and conceptual frameworks that resonate with a hunting-gathering lifestyle.

⁵⁴ To suggest a number at this stage is impossible. I am personally aware of at least fifteen other clans within the Drakensberg area that acknowledge San heritage (Fieldnotes, March 2005).

⁵⁵ I refer here to the Khoisan linguistic group (Barnard, 1992) and not to languages used by San as many speak Afrikaans as their first language (Suzman, 2000; Kalahari Fieldnotes, 2004/2005).

⁵⁶ I refer to these as the stereotyped cultural markers of ‘Bushman’ identity due to their pervasiveness in media images, popular films, tourist advertising and political organising around aboriginal peoples in Africa.

⁵⁷ San who still wish to live in this manner cannot be depicted as timeless hunters from the stone age as the majority that do not live this way. They suffer from the stereotype that maintains that they are ruined aboriginals or corrupted due to change in lifestyle. Survival International (www.survivalinternational.org) continues to use depictions of ‘tribal Bushmen pure and untainted in their political strategies despite protestations by aboriginals to not speak for them (see WIMSA, 2005).

Research into the San of the Drakensberg

Research about the Drakensberg San generally follows two main trajectories: i) that of interpreting rock art (Lewis-Williams and Dowson, 1989; 1992; Lewis-Williams, 1981; 2002; Willcox, 1956; Vinnicombe, 1976); or ii) reconstructing a colonial history of conflict with early settlers (Wright, 1971; Vinnicombe, 1976). Little is said about the culture, language or lives of the San. Colonial officials recorded some of the beliefs of the San people (Bleek, 1875), but these accounts do little to distinguish between separate groups despite acknowledging language and material cultural differences⁵⁸. This topic is largely encapsulated in the debate of representations of the San and has been well addressed and summarized in Skotnes's edited volume *Miscast* (1996), a book version of an exhibit held in Cape Town. My thesis forwards research on the Drakensberg San building links between archaeological findings (Mazel, 1992, 1996) history (Wright, 1971, Vinnicombe, 1976) and contemporary anthropology (Prins, 1999; 2000; Wilmsen and Denbow, 1990).

Many of the early historical sources are problematic due to colonial and racial biases of the times⁵⁹. Such sources still can contribute to our appreciation of pre-colonial times as African ideas and concepts also aided in the construction of colonial understanding of the people they encountered (Hamilton, 1998). Edward Said's notion of the western construction of a colonial 'other' is powerful in showing how the discourse was knitted together off of a series of fabrications and stereotypes (1978). What is lost in such a critique is the power of other voices and how they help in that very construction of the 'other': "The notion of the West's construction of the Other loses sight of the historiographies of the people labelled 'Other', and the way in which they have shaped the 'West's' knowledge of those communities" (Hamilton, 1998:27).

⁵⁸ Bleek (1862) recorded one language and one set of folklore which became general 'Bushman' beliefs (Bleek, 1875).

⁵⁹ This shows up in the belief that the "Bushmen" are savages (in Stow, 1905) or incapable of trade (in Mackeurtan, 1948).

Carolyn Hamilton discusses the way in which colonial officials used African ideas and notions actively in their representations of Africans, “not as a consequence of struggles from below, but because of the power and attractiveness of indigenous concepts” (1998: 28). She argues that early colonial rule over the Zulus involved the explicit adoption and adaptation of a “Shakan” mode of governance by Shepstone⁶⁰, which involved a detailed knowledge of native forms of power and control (1998). Early colonial contact in Natal⁶¹ is limited to few colonial figures and their documentation of the peoples they encountered. To dismiss their writing as merely examples of “colonial discourse” (see Mudimbe, 1988; Wylie, 2000) is to dismiss that very history. History is not merely inscribed by the victors of colonialism and the powerful; the subaltern do speak and are often heard even as their voice is appropriated by the dominant. A careful and conscientious reading of the history retraces indigenous ideas and influences, while never recovering them wholesale. Zulu discourses in the early history of Natal left an indelible mark, and moreover, still impact on today’s discourses in popular circulation⁶². The Abatwa have a much less known and documented influence on the early times in Natal. They are relegated to the margins and denied a place in shaping historiographies (Prins, 2000a). Few sources examine explicitly the role of San peoples in colonial history except as victims (Wright, 1971, Vinnicombe, 1976). Frans Prins examines the unspoken presence of Bushmen involvement in the Anglo-Boer War in his report titled ‘A glimpse into Bushman presence in the Anglo Boer War’ (2004). Prior to 1890 the Southern San appear prominently in South African history books⁶³, but with their assumed extinction their contribution to modern history is ignored. “[T]hese scholarly notions, perhaps more than any one historical event, have led to the final deathblow for many ‘first peoples’ as distinct entities” (Prins, 2004: 3). During the Anglo-Boer War (now called the South African War) the Boer used mounted attendants who would have been of San descent, as would have been many farm labourers. Oral accounts suggest that the British used San

⁶⁰ Shepstone is an early colonial figure in Natal and whose policies led to the Anglo-Zulu War and ultimately to the destruction of the Zulu Kingdom as a sovereign power (see Guy, 1994).

⁶¹ Natal is a reference to the early colonial colony and not to the contemporary Natal province that has subsequently been renamed KwaZulu-Natal.

⁶² Shaka Zulu is the founder of the Zulu Kingdom and ensuing myths. His image and the idea of Shaka is still very evident in various guises (see Wylie, 2000).

⁶³ This is also seen in the *Reverend Jenkins Archive* in debates about ‘Rebel Hottentots’ and the cattle thieving in the Eastern Cape (1852: 192).

descendants as spies on Boer commandoes (Prins, 2004). In the Drakensberg where the residents encounter few written histories, the Bushmen do have a presence as well. They are inscribed in the landscape and sacred sites of the local community, whether Zulu or Abatwa, such as rock features, rock shelters, waterfalls, and pools of water involving a syncretism of belief and practice (Fieldnotes, 2003/2004/2005).

Although the San were assimilated into the dominant Nguni groups they exert major cultural influences that persist (Prins, 1992, 1999). The ethnographic literature is well developed in regard to social change among the Zulu (Vilakazi, 1962; Preston-Whyte, 1969; De Haas, 1984, Elliott, 1986). Traces of San culture still inform certain Zulu and other Nguni beliefs and practices (Prins and Lewis, 1995; Prins, 1990; 1992; 1994; 1996; 1997; Fieldnotes, 2003-2005). Research into Abatwa-Zulu identity builds on this pre-established work on changing social conditions and changing cultural practices among Zulu peoples. This follows from other anthropological works on resistance (Comaroff, 1985) rethinking development in Africa (Gardner and Lewis, 1996; Fergeson, 1990), ethnography of Southern San descendants (Prins, 1990, 1992, 1997), and builds on pre-established Zulu ethnographies (Ngubane, 1977, Krige, 1936).

Discussions on San culture often narrowly focus in on distinct uses of the environment, ancestral ties to the land and distinct genealogical bloodlines (Sylvain, 2002). It has been suggested by Saugestad to include political economic features but again shifts to a focus on “rights to their land and other natural resources...so they can continue their way of life⁶⁴” (2001: 43). In the Drakensberg that ‘way of life’ has been long changed and it is no longer a clear distinction between San descendants and Nguni peoples premised on salient cultural traits or racialised physical appearance. Concerns have been raised that claims of indigeneity may increase as more land claims are successful and economic concessions are made to dispossessed San⁶⁵ (Jolly, 1996). Dismissing claims of

⁶⁴ Way of life is being used here to refer to a hunting and gathering (Saugestad, 2001).

⁶⁵ I grew up with a similar notion in Canada that it was ‘profitable’ to be aboriginal due to the way on which treaties held between the government and the natives were paid out. This was an urban/rural myth that suggests claims and economic concessions paid out to aborigines is unfair. They supposedly received more than their fair share of benefits from society. I was always perplexed by this attitude as the most

indigeneity are once again premised on an essentialised notion of indigenous and what this means. The San of the Drakensberg do not and cannot fit into any of the essentialised notions due to a lack of visible or recognised continuity with their past⁶⁶. They also cannot fit with the dominant notions of ‘San-ness’ due to a lack of connections with the Kalahari peoples.

The Kalahari Debate

The construction of a ‘Bushman’ identity has been linked to numerous causal factors, mostly of the unpleasant kind (Skotnes, 1996). The academic debates have reached a heated peak between two different ‘schools’ of thought referred to as the ‘revisionists’ and the ‘evolutionists’⁶⁷. The debate about hunter-gatherers has been raging for a long time where the two poles are roughly between those who claim the San as an autonomous group of hunter-gatherers⁶⁸ with a distinct culture from that of their Bantu agro-pastoralist neighbours and those who claim them as a rural underclass⁶⁹ within the larger agro-pastoral society that lost their hunter-gatherer lifestyle 1,500-2,000 years ago when the Bantu peoples arrived from the North (Dutton, 1970; Smith, 1992). The final break from their hunting-gathering past was the advent of a colonial presence that introduced a series of drastic social changes with the arrival of a capitalist economy:

What picture of the !Kung would one draw if instead of defining them as survivors of the stone age and a delicate and complex adaptation to the Kalahari desert, one looked upon them as survivors of capitalist expansion, and a delicate and complex adaptation to three centuries of violence and intimidation? (Pratt, 1986: 49 in Gupta and Ferguson, 1992:15).

destitute in Canada were grossly overrepresented by the recipients of such ‘largess’ and despite payouts no massive rush to claim aboriginal identity has ensued.

⁶⁶ The lack of continuity is not genealogical, but refers to the break in lifestyle due to the abrupt and violent change to a sedentary, agro-pastoral lifestyle with the loss of language and cultural markers, such as rock painting or hunting techniques.

⁶⁷ I hope not to fall in either ‘camp’, as dogmatic adherence to one side of the debate stifles engagement.

⁶⁸ The evolutionists following from the Harvard School under Richard Lee (1979 also see Kent, 2000 for a synopsis).

⁶⁹ The revisionist stance is best articulated by Wilmsen and Denbow (1990).

It is argued that Pratt “retains the notion of the !Kung as a pre-existing ontological entity – “survivors,” not products (still less producers) of history” (Gupta and Ferguson, 1992: 15). “They” are victims, having suffered the deadly process of “contact” with “us” (Gupta and Ferguson, 1992:15). Such a stance ignores cultural change among African peoples outside of European influence and promotes a view of the San as a victim. The San people have suffered a disproportionate amount of violence over the centuries and have been victims of many of the events described. The contention is that a theoretical portrayal that is overwhelmingly that of victim eliminates agency in the past and also must eliminate future possibilities of action⁷⁰. It also unintentionally promotes an ahistorical African Eden⁷¹, which dismisses other processes of change that predates colonial influences such as the Bantu expansion (Smith, 1992; Bryant, 1945).

These ‘Kalahari debates’ are far from resolved (see Wilmsen and Denbow, 1990; Gordon, 1992; Suzman, 2000; Kent, 2002). Everything is implicated from occidental mythology (Said, 1973), colonial construction of the ‘savage other’ (Taussig, 1987), poor relations with black neighbours (Schapera, 1930), military service under Apartheid (Uys, 1993), Apartheid separation and distinction of races (Le Fleur, 2004), western media (Gordon, 1992), anthropologists and other academics (see Prins, 2000a), museums (see Skotnes, 1996), and how all these discourses articulate with one another.

The discussions surrounding the San of Southern Africa, as well as the global issues of aboriginal Peoples Movements, are germane to our understanding of the San people’s current plight. It is also argued that both groups may be correct depending on which groups are being studied (Kent, 1992; 2002). While the vitriol is less than helpful⁷², it is these very passions that keep the San in the spotlight. The imaging and imagining of the San crosses many levels from the local to the global. The San are implicated in their own discourses as are archaeologists and anthropologists. The diversity across the San groups

⁷⁰ This is a logically foregone conclusion as no new process is being shown to now exist and therefore it cannot be possible to see self induced change.

⁷¹ I use a biblical metaphor of an original Eden due to two strains of thought, that all was good in Africa prior to Europeans eruption on the scene and due to the notion that hunting and gathering is seen as idyllic lifestyle by some (Brody, 2001; Sahlins, 1972).

⁷² The arguments between schools of thought and between individuals have been fierce and I do not refer directly to them here as I do not wish to engage these debates.

is great and no singular model will work; there are variations in mobility, interaction, colonial histories, and so forth. It is noted that “when anthropologists speak of hunter-gatherers [in Africa] more often than not they write about one single group, the !Kung” (Hawkes, 1987: 342). A similar issue arises when trying to describe the Abatwa as an aboriginal group as they do not mimic any of the archetypes of the Kalahari Bushmen⁷³.

In the aboriginal studies we must be careful about praising ethnic consciousness and political movements based on ethnicity while such movements fragment communities and benefit one group at the expense of another⁷⁴. The debate whether the culture of the San is a result of their isolation (in the desert) due to European domination and displacement (Wilmsen, 1989) or that of differing niches within the Kalahari (Lee, 1979) seems at this stage spurious. It appears as if ‘Bushmen’ were integrated into the political economy of the Kalahari, as were the Abatwa of the Drakensberg, long before Europeans erupted on the scene⁷⁵ (cf. Wilmsen 1989). This does not mean that they had or have no customs, traditions, beliefs and culture of their own⁷⁶. How they are integrated into the economy and indeed the political economy is done on their terms, even under conditions of duress, such as colonialism. The ‘Bushmen’ were created as an *underclass* due to various pressures resulting from colonisation and, as the Drakensberg Abatwa’s history suggests, is that the current population groups should not be described in isolation from their surrounding neighbours who comprise part of *their* community and quite often *kin*. To fix them into assigned roles as either foragers or farmers without granting them agency to move freely between different ways of life resonates with a romanticism of the aboriginal whereby the ‘Bushmen’ must live in the ‘bush’ and as soon as they no longer choose to do so they are vanished forever. The San have been inscribed with meaning over and above that they themselves use. This feeds into academic and political debates concerning their lives and livelihood. As their population decreased they became to be

⁷³ I refer to the racialised characteristics assumed to be markers of San descent, such as short stature, yellowish skin and the outward cultural markers of the loin cloth and skins, a bow and arrow.

⁷⁴ Here I refer to Le Fleur and the Khoisan Council’s struggle to be recognized as aboriginal and not as the Apartheid era category of ‘Coloured’ (Le Fleur, 2004).

⁷⁵ Eric Wolf has argued that the various peasants and many other aboriginal peoples around the world have long been part of the world system (1982).

⁷⁶ To paraphrase Sahlins (1993).

seen as an example of a lost past using the very imagery that was used to depict their savagery⁷⁷.

It is difficult to describe the Abatwa as aboriginals when they are far removed from the Kalahari San and the dominant discourses surrounding this group. Their way of life does not fit a preconceived idea of being San which is dominated by hunting-gathering imagery. The Abatwa's ancestors have not been hunter-gatherers for a long time. While there are peoples who are said to be one or two generations from such an existence (Prins per. Comm., 2004), the Abatwa I worked with are distanced by six generations of removal from a hunting-gathering way of life. The details of their ancestor⁷⁸, who adopted an Nguni name and way of life are lost. It is not known if he had still lived entirely as a hunter-gatherer or had already settled and lived as a forager-farmer, purely an agro-pastoralist or some other combination of way of life⁷⁹.

Many other *Abatwa* appear in historical texts as the *Botwas*, were living as ivory traders and hunters for the early settlers (Fynn, 1950; Isaacs, 1937). What is clear from the contested history is that any expectations of a way of life secluded or removed from the other inhabitants of the Drakensberg Mountains, be they AmaZizi⁸⁰, Basutho⁸¹, other Nguni peoples or European settlers, is inaccurate. The Abatwa had already been drawn into a larger political economy of Southern Africa stretching from the heights of the Drakensberg to the coast of Natal, and even beyond as European traders and explorers expanded trade routes culminating in Europe and the farthest flung colonies⁸².

⁷⁷ I refer to the presumed closeness with nature and relationship to animals (see Gordon, 1992).

⁷⁸ This ancestral figure, Ngeczu, is described below in more detail in a 'family history', Chapter, 3.

⁷⁹ They are adamant that he was aboriginal, but they are unclear on who his wife was; whether he had lived in the rock shelters, painted and hunted (Fieldnotes, 2004-2005). They know he was a medicine man as that is a family tradition passed on to every generation from father to sons (Fieldnotes, 2004).

⁸⁰ An Nguni people that lived along the base of the Drakensberg and were said to hunt with bows and arrows like the 'Bushmen' (Bryant, 1929)

⁸¹ The Basutho are a non-Nguni language speaking people, but one of the Bantu peoples that live in the Drakensberg (Ellenberger, 1912).

⁸² Their ancestors were selling elephant ivory to the earliest settlers in the Natal colony (Fynn, 1950; Isaacs, 1836).

The timelessness of the 'Bushmen' is continuously played as if they still hunt and gather and live in idyllic family clans⁸³. Part of this portrayal is the endless victim discourse that plays into the notions of a fragile and 'Lost World'⁸⁴. The ≠Khomani of the Northern Cape continue to receive coverage celebrating their land claim victories with follow up stories of their continued marginalisation and oppression (Groenewald, *Mail and Guardian* June 6-12, 2003: 28). Failed land reforms and unsuccessful poverty alleviation result in more land claims being lodged, leaving one wondering who is benefiting? The traditional ≠Khomani do not appear to do be benefiting⁸⁵ though they have received support for land claims and development projects. In contrast, San groups in KwaZulu-Natal are recognised as being San, but no logistical support or otherwise has been forthcoming⁸⁶.

These debates are further complicated by the interrelations between Abatwa and Zulu peoples blurring lines – which is exactly the problem with separating out 'San' versus 'others'. Within Thendele there are families that claim Zulu origins and identity and have lived in the Drakensberg for around one hundred years alongside the Duma family. One family, the Mncube, also lived within the bounds of the Nature Reserve when it was a farm. The family was moved out in 1988 and they have lived alongside the Dumas (Promise Mncube, Fieldnotes January, 2004). They too visited the rock art sites as children and inscribe the landscape with meaning and history.

Research into the Southern San must take into account this diversity and the complexity of the past as peoples mixed and merged. The dominance of the Kalahari imagery and

⁸³ Mass media images are mainly to blame and they are the most pervasive (see *Mercury*, Sept, 29, 2004; de la Harpe, 2002: 8-10; Uys, 1980; Myburg, 1985; Windermuth, 2000).

⁸⁴ See Laurens Van der Post's *Lost World of the Kalahari* (1988) as an example of the popular discourse that depicts the timelessness of the Kalahari and the people of the Kalahari.

⁸⁵ I mean here that despite the successful land claims and the money injected into the community it is one of the most despondent and sad places I have ever visited. It is characterized by open inter-community violence, drug and alcohol abuse, domestic violence, allegations of sexual abuse, child abuse and so forth (Kalahari Fieldnotes, 2004, 2005; Tomaselli, 2005: 3-4).

⁸⁶ The KwaZulu-Natal San Foundation was in 2003 helping a small group of elderly San descendants survive by supplying a place to live. It withdrew from the Drakensberg and is not involved with the Dumas. Its current status as an organization is unclear as it has no website or public contact details. The Foundation changed its name to the Ancient Knowledge Initiative, which also appears to have disappeared.

ethnography needs to be revised so that academic writing does not exclude those peoples who can never fit into a pre-conceived notion of what it is to be aboriginal in Africa.

Contemporary ‘Culturalism’

The representation of ethnic groups has an unsavoury history in South Africa in light of the maintenance and creation of ethnic boundaries under Apartheid (see Posal, 2000).

Despite this there is much ‘culturalism’ as people redefine themselves in light of changing political and social structures of society:

What distinguishes the current “culturalism” (as it might be called) is the claim to one’s own mode of existence as a superior value and a political right ... More than an expression of “ethnic identity” – a normal social science notion that manages to impoverish the sense of the movement – this cultural consciousness, as Turner again remarks of the Kayapo, entails the people’s attempt to control their relationships with the dominant society, including control of the technical and political means that up to now have been used to victimize them (Sahlins, 1993:4).

Culturalism impinges on the public discourses used in defining a people. These discourses range from film, news media, literature, tourism, politics from local to global, and in everyday discussions. The mass media and tourism structured representations of a people are seen as ‘inauthentic’ representations as compared to documentary film or news media as they are constructed explicitly for consumption and/or entertainment (Tomaselli 2006). The Abatwa are attempting to recreate a culture that “has been submerged to a point at which it is probably not recoverable” (SASI, 2002).

Such a reified notion of cultural essence is an unfair expectation in light of the changes to all San cultures across Southern Africa. None of the groups live as their ancestors did. Other African groups recreate their ‘culture’ from ideas and imagery created for popular viewing and consumption, which is not to claim it as inauthentic (cf. Tomaselli 2001; Mhiripiri and Tomaselli 2004).

Anthropological Authenticity: Synthetic memory, Performative acts, and Anthropological Facts

The rituals and public acts of culture to be discussed need to be understood within a conceptualisation of culture and society that is mass-mediated. The very icons and images of identity and norms of behaviour are manufactured and conveyed through many means. The Abatwa are creators of their culture, but they conduct themselves within bounds and within sets of images and ideas that are transmitted to them from external forces and discourses. They also act upon these as active actors selecting and interpreting the imagery in terms that are understandable within the context of their own lives.

During my research into the invention and representation of culture I travelled to various cultural villages that showcase Zulu culture to tourists. I discuss here Simunye Cultural Village⁸⁷ due to the fervour the performers exhibited in their belief in the importance of what they were doing in terms of representing Zulu people 'accurately'. At Simunye guests are shown various aspects of Zulu culture. The experience includes lessons about Zulu culture and history, song and dance, which include times past and present and Zulu food as it exists today. They do not attempt a blind recreation of the past, but show a mix of old and new, in a personal experience that relies on interaction instead of outright spectacle (Tomaselli, 1999). Some critics denigrate cultural tourism due to its inauthenticity and inaccuracy in portraying how the Zulu actually live today (cf. also Buntman 1996 on the ≠Khomani; and Sylvain, 2001). Yet the missionary zeal of the cultural performers at Simunye belies the agency behind such employment (Fieldnotes May, 2002). The synthetic memory of film and media carries over into daily life of the Zulu people⁸⁸. People may see the creation of a spectacle for consumption as artificial, but I would challenge whether they have interrogated their own lives and asked the same questions. Is a Zulu in furs with an assegai less Zulu than a Zulu in Nike shoes with a

⁸⁷ I visited Simunye Cultural village near Melmoth, KwaZulu-Natal in May 2002 on a fieldtrip with my department. Other researchers were Keyan Tomaselli, Nhamo Mhiripiri, and other students who have not written about this trip. See also Mhiripiri and Tomaselli (2004).

⁸⁸ The ideas and representations of Zulu-ness are often kitsch reproductions following from media representations.

backpack? The former Zulu is seemingly out of time and place, unless s/he is a member of the Africanised Christian Church of Shembe⁸⁹ on his way to the church, where a blend of Zulu icons exists alongside Christian icons. Thus specific stereotyped images are seen as reifying, while others are deemed false even as they draw on the same sets of icons and imagery.

I argue that the constructed nature of the show at a cultural village does little to detract from the 'truth' of Zulu life. Cultural villages are generally anthropologically grounded in the historic ways depicted with "some modern conveniences for the guests [who] might want to rediscover themselves *in* the other, but they draw the boundaries in being and living *like* the other" (Mhiripiri and Tomaselli 2004). Many Zulus now enjoy 'modern' conveniences and I doubt anyone would be comfortable arguing that they are no longer Zulu. These modern Zulus simply do not fit into the tired "Other/Same" role (from Mudimbe, 1998). The imagery represented at cultural villages is not necessarily intended to represent the Zulu Nation as a whole, but is entertainment for a paying public. Those who perform and tourists who visit cultural villages are aware of this and they structure their experience in terms of their own ideas and beliefs (cf. e.g. Tomaselli 2001).

The examples of tourism explained above and the films I analyse below are areas that relate to the mass media debate and to the generalised representation of African peoples. These areas are accessed by numerous people, and even the producers themselves reproduce these images in their lives, creating a dialectic between the kitsch, the imagined and the real. I refer to the desire to represent the real in these mediums as 'anthropological authenticity' as they all claim to be, and most are, ethnographically based. While the discipline has moved beyond absolutist reading of culture it may be argued that the three different 'Zulu' experiences of film, tourism and a rural village represent a continuum of 'real' from Hollywood style myth-making to lived experience. I do not argue for an essentialised conceptualisation of what is real, but instead I argue

⁸⁹ See Roberts (1935) on the advent of the Shembe Church and for a discussion of the clothing and dress see Brown (1995).

that all three merely represent different forms of representation and ‘that truth’, therefore, is irrelevant. The three examples of Zulu cultural expression I have selected are not to be ranked in terms of *authenticity*. *Shaka Zulu* (Faure, 1985) may deserve criticism for inaccuracies, but it *should not be read* as a documentary series (The same argument could be made for *The Gods Must be Crazy* (1980); cf. Tomaselli 2006) Many of the wildly fantastic scenes may appear more at home in a Shakespearian production of *Macbeth*. These scenes depict myth and mythology, which is very much alive in Zulu culture (as all cultures), by referring to Hollywood tropes and representations to convey meaning to a visually literate population. Thus *Shaka Zulu* needs to be read in terms of the visual medium in which it appears. The historiographers and critics got it wrong (cf. e.g., Davis 1996; Hamilton 1998); the series was not inaccurate, as it was not meant to be a historic representation, *per se*. Even as their critiques were accurate in terms of fact, they were wrong for being unable to *read* the series in terms of filmic tropes. Moreover, the myths and legends wildly depicted do exist – they are alive in Simunye and in Thendele and in Durban. It is the filmic tropes being used to convey meaning that are not clearly understood and needs to be interrogated (cf. Mersham 1993).

The images or visual tropes used in *Shaka Zulu* cue the production in terms of a Hollywood style film. It does not resemble a documentary as does Basil Davidson’s series, *The Africans* (1984). Within the first episode of *Shaka Zulu*, as the first Natal colonials enter KwaBulawayo (Shaka’s village or *imuzi*, literally the place of the slaying) they are debating the theatrics of their endeavour. Dr. Firth asks, “What did you have in mind, Othello?” Lt. Farewell responds, “More like Macbeth I fancy.” This is not coincidental; the inclusion of direct referencing to other famous works is to queue the audience to pre-established plots and ideas. Within the first episode the scene is (pre) set for a tragedy of Shakespearian acclaim.

The more wildly fantastic scenes of witches and magic are a visual way of representing the un-representable. A historian may argue that Nandi (Shaka’s mother) was not saved by the witch-doctors hyenas (Episode 1), or that Shaka had his newly designed spear built by some magician *cum* blacksmith (Episode 2), and I too would doubt these events took

place outside of the series. However, the use of such fantastic imagery cues us to greater mythology and also other titles. The witch-doctor figures that appear resemble the stygian witches from *The Clash of the Titans* (1981), as the myth around the spear making cues viewers to myths concerning magical weapons as they relate to the formation of kingdoms (perhaps Sir Arthur and the sword in the stone). This film, *Clash of the Titans*, released three years earlier, is based on Greek and Roman mythology with a touch of other Western myths (A Norse Kraken for example). Similar imagery (albeit no mythical monsters in *Shaka Zulu*) serves the same purpose of referencing specific myths shared by the audience. A visually literate audience, weaned on Hollywood, should be able to relate to the imagery and themes used by William Faure (the director). This is a common ‘trick’ used as movies reference one another⁹⁰.

The fantastic scenes are used to represent Zulu myths surrounding Shaka’s rise to power and general Zulu mythology. For example, the hyenas that accompany the witchdoctor are used to cue us to the evil of this individual. Hyenas are associated with evil – an idea readily understandable to a Western audience raised on notions of Platonic beauty (that good is beautiful and ugly is evil). In the series, it is a conflation of *isangoma* (diviner) and *umthakathi* (witch or sorcerer). This misunderstanding misrepresents Zulu beliefs by conflating good and evil magic users. *Umthakathi* were not welcome individuals and it is recorded that false diviners were put to death by Shaka (*James Stuart Archives*). To be accused and found guilty of being *umthakathi* was a death sentence (Krige, 1936 Bergelund, 1976). There are also stories of people being executed in rural communities today when accused of being witches (Fieldnotes, May, 2004). *Umthakathi* again makes an appearance during the forging of Shaka’s spear as “The Nameless One”. Here human flesh is used to ‘bless’ the spear, further echoing dark myths.

Zulu myths, despite misrepresentation, remain in the narrative forefront, despite the critics’ misunderstanding. Critics saw these dark rituals as maintaining an opposition between traditional Zulu beliefs and Christianity (Tomaselli and Shepperson, 2002).

⁹⁰ See *James Bond: The world is not enough* (2002) for an obvious example as it overtly references the earlier Bond movies.

These critiques miss that current Zulu identity is intimately tied to Christianity⁹¹, which I would argue was shown by Shaka's interest in the religion even as he was shown to mock Christianity at times (Episode 1). The lingering doubt of Shaka, played out on the screen, feeds into contemporary Zulu Christian practices. Zulu Christianity ties into the Zulu social system without merely refuting or dismissing Zulu cultural idioms, such as *isangomas* and respect for ancestors, to name but a few examples. While the series has been rightly challenged for playing into the "great man" theory of historiography, which then appears to play into Apartheid discourses of the 1980's (Tomaselli and Shepperson, 2002: 133); is this a critique of the film or the Apartheid era in which it is made?⁹² Locals do not often question the accuracy of mediated imagery of that which is said to represent their own culture and history.

In documentary films the supernatural/spiritual is difficult to represent due to the conventions of such films. In an attempt to overcome representing the un-representable, the documentary film, *The Great Dance – A Hunter's Story* (2000), uses various camera 'tricks' during the main hunt scene, which has the Bushmen track and chase a springbok (antelope). The film hints at a 'paranormal' aspect as the "hunter becomes the hunted" through the "frenzied blur" of images and creative camera shots (Douglas, 2001). Scenes shift from colour to black and white shifting from the hunter's view to an animals' point of view. These far more subtle tactics would not fit into the genre in which *Shaka Zulu* belongs. While I cannot easily place *Shaka Zulu* into one genre, as it crosses between drama, adventure, history, costume-drama, tragedy, etc, it is not a documentary or docu-drama. Potential for discrepant readings of such a film exists, as evidenced by historians' disdain and white children whom were fearful of Zulu attacks amongst South African viewers of the 1980s (Tomaselli and Shepperson, 2002).

Heading into a rural community and living alongside Zulus at home and at work would seem to be a more authentic experience. Yet it is as contrived as the other two

⁹¹ Christian beliefs are fairly ubiquitous across Zulu communities and church involvement is high, especially among the women (Fieldnotes, 2004).

⁹² Film making and cinema during Apartheid was heavily influenced by the state as a tool of propaganda (Tomaselli, 1988).. which would have framed the critics' assessments of the series.

experiences. This is not derogatory towards Zulu culture but acknowledgement that Zulu life is replete with signs and symbolism whether or not it appears in a TV series, cultural village or in a rural village. The mediated images resonate throughout Zulu communities and the impact of the mass-mediated imagery, even in far-flung corners of KwaZulu-Natal, does occur. The signs of such an impact appear in clothing worn by the youth, American hip-hop music and the like. Zulu-specific imagery used can be seen in the influence of the Zulu King and the IFP's Zulu nationalism. Furthermore, Thendele is a border community, culturally crossing between Zulu, Abatwa, Basutho, and other groups from the surrounding areas, and is yet generally described as being a Zulu village drawing on the use of Zulu imagery and language usage.

The San are one of the most studied groups of indigenous people in the world. They are also disproportionately represented in the media – feature films, documentary, fiction writing, non-fiction and news media. This small population group is only rivalled by the representation of the Zulu people. The community of Abatwa are as a result caught between these images and ideas of two peoples. The Zulu are the largest South African ethnic group, and they gain 'popularity' from past military acclaim, at such battles as Isandlwana⁹³, and a number of films which celebrate Zulu military power (*Zulu Dawn*, 1964; *Zulu*, 1979).

The Zulus are best known, even celebrated, for this supposed ferociousness and warrior skills, an image they also push through rituals and remembrances, and now in sports. The San are often drawn up in counter distinction to this – as a passive people in harmony with nature. This image is a relatively new construct as they were once seen as the most fierce and wild; the 'untameable' Bushman, most Savage – even prompting the geographer George Stow to be accompanied by soldiers on one of his expeditions into the Kalahari (1905). The overall western attitude towards the concept of African primitivism remains complex (Campbell, 1997). However, three strands co-exist: i) the fear of primeval savagery as expressed through the pulp media; ii) the colonial nostalgia that

⁹³ This one was one of the major battles of the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879 and has a special resonance due to the Zulu victory over the English (Laband, 1995; Morris, 1958).

persists in Europe for 'our' African monarchs as well as the so called 'martial' tribes like the Zulu; and iii) the social constructionist notion that Africans can choose their own identity (Campbell, 1997: 54).

Living within a poor rural community in South Africa one is struck by how incredibly engaged people are with the national discourses and events. Mass media circulates as surely as it does within the urban communities, and many a night we crowded into one of the *shebeens* (informal drinking places) to watch the news, football, or the occasional film. There was a time when we had a TV and VCR with which to watch films, and we enjoyed *Shaka Zulu* (1985), *Zulu* (1964) and *Zulu Dawn* (1979) during one of the weeks I visited. Mass media images of Africa and Africans are often debated in terms of Orientalism and 'othering', as the exotic is glorified and held up as a counter point to the 'West' (Said, 1978). African people and their images are used as fund raisers for charity groups whose existence requires (Jefferess, 2002) Such dominance of theory and understanding of media representations denies the very active way in which media is consumed, understood and re-projected out into and onto African or indigenous communities.

These ideas and representations perpetrated in the media or in the dominant Western discourses do not stop there; they pervade the very societies being represented. In doing so these societies, communities and people draw upon these representations, sometimes seeing themselves in the images presented and sometimes even invoking the very stereotypes they resent. They may even find themselves reifying such imagery for political purposes – the images and ideas associated with Africans are often a powerful discourse and not merely a one way flow (see Chapter 7, below).

My own research and time spent living among the Zulu showed me not crude 'Shakan' warriors so evident in media and even political discourse, but a community of farmers, of tight knit families, and very little violence as the media would have us assume. Yet these images pervade society. The family with which I stayed greatly enjoyed me bringing these videos of *Shaka Zulu* and *Zulu Dawn* and never questioned the racial bias or

problematic representations so debated by scholars (see Wylie, 2000). They enjoyed the imagery of brave Zulu warriors recklessly attacking British positions at great loss, and howled in laughter at the images of the upright/uptight British, gallant to the end. The political imagery and language of Inkatha Freedom Party, the Zulu Royal family and certain dominant chiefs, is also that of proud warriors and not humble farmers. Chief Buthelezi of the IFP even appears in *Zulu*, as the defiant King Cetshwayo (1964). Zulu military icons such as spears, shields, clubs and axes are prominently displayed at political rallies and cultural events or meetings. As a counter point the San appear at political and media events dressed as hunters and trackers replete with their bows and spears.

There is still a notion that there is some essential truth to be discovered, that some things are more authentic than others. What is forgotten is that it is irrelevant whether or not these events are an 'authentic' reflection; it is not even a category whose possibility I wish to support. I argue this way in order to give salience to the ideas of Zulu-ness expressed by Zulu people themselves, which refuses to reify an essential core. These three disparate events or places, or representation of Zulu-ness all have impacts on the daily lives of Zulu people and how people perceive them today. School children take trips to cultural villages, see the films and these impinge on the way they view those around them. This may be seen to create and maintain negative stereotyping, such as Zulu as savage or warlike, but contemporary Zulu celebrate their warrior status. Their songs, their ceremonial dress, their dances all reflect a warrior heritage. The idea that flattened images and short sound bites only contributes to maintenance of stereotypes is to deny the audience a critical faculty. This audience is not only the tourists and those viewing films, but those who encounter Zulus in their daily lives in the cities and elsewhere. The images on the screens and at the cultural villages are augmented by other images and other contexts.

The filmic and stereotypical images used to portray Zulu culture stemmed from cultural knowledge of the Zulus, albeit regulated for easy consumption. Now Zulu culture uses these images as a source of knowledge for contemporary culture. This dialogical

interplay has erased the absolute distinction between the 'real' and the representations of the 'real' (see Tomaselli 1999-2001). Real Zulu people use these mass-mediated images to understand their culture and these images do say something about the Zulus. In a modern culture these images help to create and maintain Zulu-ness. All these different contexts build their idea of Zulu-ness on impartial myths, fantasy, and a bricolage of bits and pieces from all over. Anthropology has changed in many ways from its older roots of "translating the exotic into the understandable" (Fischer, 1991: 529). As Fischer further argues;

Today, the accent may be different, not so much translating the exotic as translating contested and competing perspectives. It is not that anthropology should buy into the 'metanarratives' of media disseminated discourses, the soap operas of the nightly news defined around politics, media, and, to a less degree and in very dilute way, science. On the contrary, the role for anthropology could be to deconstruct these discourses precisely by drawing attention to their presumptions, their particular groundings, or the social contexts from which they are staged. Among the analytic categories that need to be drawn in are the older ones of social organisation - semiotic cultural analysis, or culturally constructed motivational structures - and also the newly elaborated ones, such as gender and the body; the dialectical relation between global and local cultural processes; historicity, space, and voice as culturally constructed and socially mediated forms; and the multiple processes or determinates of feelings of agency... (1991: 529)

The media and popular representation do recreate colonial stereotypes of African people, but the process runs both ways and the imagery is re-worked and re-articulated to suit current modes of life. The real challenge is to sort out how is it that the past impacts on the future and how it is that culture has been affected and altered without denying them any cohesion or ability to remember their own past. This goes for all African ethnic claims.

Synthetic Memory and Mass Mediated Imagery

In contemporary media and other discourses the inalienable differences between Zulu and San is also very common and presents similar imagery to that used by the San at their political rallies. The media also represents these peoples as separate entities through the celebration of their differences. Recent reports on the “Secret San” push this notion of difference between peoples and celebrate diversity (Carnie, 2003; Derwent, June 2003). The celebration of diversity is not bad in and of itself, but it maintains a specific image of the San as an ‘untainted’ cultural group, or as a grossly tainted group forced into the unwitting and undesirable position of miscegenation and assimilation. The Duma family and their claim to a dual ethnicity of Abatwa and Zulu draws on two images and representations that are often depicted as contrary to one another. The popular images in the media express a radical contrast between Zulu and San ‘archetypes’ drawing on selective sources of history, popular media and political imagery. These popular images are not merely confined to media representations as they impact and impinge on the lives of the peoples being represented. These images are also used in tourism enterprises and films and people claim popular representations as their own in order to tie into benefits that may arise, be they economic, political or social.

Zulu identity and claims to authenticity as a topic is worth a thesis unto itself, but space and time denies me fully exploration of that here. I use such an enquiry to frame greater issues on aboriginal authenticity as these debates are germane to the discussion on representation of the San. Furthermore, the Abatwa are part of the Zulu Nation and its representations impact on their immediate lives. Thus by focusing on Zulu imagery I draw on an important part of their lives as well as very powerful representations within which they are immersed and confronted with in their daily lives. The dominant images of Zulu-ness are very pervasive and powerful.

During the 1990s mass mediated imagery of warlike Zulus and especially Shaka, were used politically to maintain political power within KwaZulu-Natal province. This celebration of glory and its constant evocation, ironically, has spelt its death. This is the

lost 'aura' referred to by Walter Benjamin (1997), a separation of ritual and production from the actual product – broadened out to include mythology – through mass-produced images. It may be argued that, "for centuries, the keynote of history was glory; a very powerful illusion inherited from one's ancestors and would be handed on to one's descendents" (Baudrillard, 1994: 21). The glory of Shaka Zulu has passed away through twin processes of: i) forgetting, the "violent extermination of memory"; and ii) the "spectacular promotion of a phenomenon". This occurs as Zulu are shifted from "historical space into the sphere of advertising, the media becoming the site of a temporal strategy of prestige" (Baudrillard, 1994: 21). Through spectacular promotion we have created a form of "synthetic memory, which serves as our primal reference, our founding myth..." (Baudrillard, 1994: 21). The glory of Shaka Zulu has passed from a nation-building exercise to a synthetic post-modern representation of images, flattening history into consumable bites and disjointed representations. The notion of synthetic memory is not to separate it from other types of memory, but to refer to the manner of transmission and storage through mass-media technologies.



Figure 3: Shaka Zulu bus

The image of Shaka Zulu appears everywhere in KwaZulu-Natal. It is always hyper masculine with other stereotypes of Africa such as the sunset over the savannah, a lion and a topless maiden at his feet.

Zulus as Different Types of Africans

No image of the Zulu people is more powerful than that of Shaka Zulu as he is the most salient symbol of the Zulu people. He acts as a metaphor on multiple levels where he may represent all of the Zulu people, the Zulu political system or he may stand in as an exception echoing racist ideas about Africans' ability to govern (Hamilton, 1998:32-35). The Zulu also were used to symbolise "the seat of order and culture, and its peripheries, regarded as the disordered wilderness of cannibals and of nature... (Hamilton, 1998: 99). The 'Bushmen' and the 'rebel Hottentots' were set up as a contrast against this (*Jenkins Archive*, 1850: 367; 1856: 242, *James Start Archive*). Hamilton argues that "the Africans with whom Shepstone was dealing were not part of nature, they were part of culture ..." (Hamilton, 1998: 101). The 'Bushmen' as part of nature were, after the mid-1990s to be 'tamed' and brought into a recognisable cultural system, while the Zulu-as-culture were to be controlled. This manifested itself in the dealings and political manoeuvres used by early colonials in dealing with the Zulu, while the 'Bushmen' could be exterminated and dispossessed of all land and erased from history.

Apartheid also reshaped ethnicity by its gross categorisation of peoples, but more influential was the resistance to it as Black Consciousness and Black Power movements arose. These movements influenced the liberation of many other African states which began in the 1970's (Wright, 2004). Under Apartheid the migrant labour system also entrenched ethnicity as mine hostels were set up along 'ethnic' lines maintaining Apartheid boundaries and preventing mass alliances among 'Black' peoples (Walker, 1982). The Africa Institute under Apartheid wrote a manual on the 'Black Homelands' that never even mentioned the San. The manual implied that the land was empty between where the Cape settlers lived and the Bantu people lived (Malan and Hattingh, 1975: 1-3). While the history represented is blatantly incorrect with its assertions that there was

“no significant contact with blacks” until 1770 (Malan and Hattingh, 1975:1). The significance of the enslavement of the Indigenous population that they experienced at the hands of the Dutch settlers is missing; the indigenous peoples were not considered fully human due to their perceived wildness. Moreover, the indigenous people were regarded as closer to the animal kingdom than to humankind, or at least among the most primitive of human types” (Martins, 1996: 9). Such contrasts still haunt the contemporary San and Zulu peoples in a very different manner. The ‘wildness’ of the ‘Bushmen’ is celebrated and admired for its very primeval-ness and as a sign of something lost in contemporary industrial society with its concomitant alienation and anomie. The core ideas still stand: The San are wild, primitive, close to nature, thus far from culture and the Zulu are a violent warlike people.

The images of Shaka as a barbarous and violent ruler were used by segregationists and later Apartheid ideologies to explain the innate violence of Blacks and the inevitability of inter-tribal conflict (Wylie, 2000). The images of Shaka were used by Zulu nationalists to invoke a powerful leader and to show that he, and by implication all Zulu, are unrelenting against their foes (Golan, 1994). Historically, Nguni peoples outside the full control of the Zulu Kingdom south of the Thukela River were seen as ethnically inferior (Hamilton and Wright, 1990; and *James Stuart Archives*, Vol 1:118). There were thus great inequalities within the Zulu Kingdom, deep-seated divisions, and signs of considerable dissension (Hamilton, 1998: 49). The invention of Shaka as a racist colonial myth neglects the turmoil to the south of the Zulu Kingdom, as well as reports by natives (see Hamilton, 1998: 68-70). The disdain and hostility of the Natal government to the Zulu Kingdom and the Zulu chiefs does lend credibility to arguments that Shaka’s image was used negatively to further a colonial legacy (see Wylie, 2000). What is missed is the respect, albeit grudgingly, of the officials for his control and military escapades, which led Shepstone to attempt to control the Zulu people using a model of rule, adopted from the Zulu Kingdom (Hamilton, 1998: 72-129). The notion that the tribes of historic Natal had been wiped out or dispersed by the Zulu armies under Shaka needs to be revised as “many of the tribes had been broken up, or at least disturbed, not by the Zulu but by one of at least four non-Zulu groups of ‘refugees’ from north of the Thukela, and one from

the Natal midlands (Wright, 1990: 107). The original area of the Zulu Kingdom is much further north than my field site.

The details of the civil wars and disruptions known as the *mfecane* (the crushing) are beyond this thesis (see Guy, 1998; Hamilton, 1998 and Cobbing, 1988 for a more controversial view). The effects of the *mfecane* impacted on the peoples here as waves of refugees and displaced clans fled south. The AmaZizi who had once lived along the upper reaches of the Mooi River (the Kamberg area) were driven over the Drakensberg Mountains into Lesotho (Bryant, 1929). Their fate appears to be another ethnicity assimilated into the dominant Nguni groups or other ethnicities⁹⁴. Thus the Natal midlands area was not emptied by Shaka's Zulu style of despotism; the chaos and movement of peoples through the area was a result of various groups striving for political ascendancy. The lands were also not empty of people; thus they were not free for the taking by colonial settlers.

The *mfecane* reordered identity claims as tribes were 'eaten up' and subsumed under the banner of Zulu. How cohesive a nation this was during this time is widely debated (Wright and Hamilton, 1989; Guy, 1994). The various wars of resistance against colonisation would have bolstered Zulu nationalism, but also allowed for splits within it as different alliances fractured the Zulu Nation (see Guy, 1994). Following the demise of the Zulu Kingdom new nationalistic forces were emerging following the 1906 Bambatha Rebellion against the new poll tax being imposed and a desire for *African* people to control their *own* affairs (see Hamilton, 1998: 156-159). The Land Acts of 1913 and 1936 would have influenced ethnic identity by forcing disparate groups into much more intimate contact and much less land, thereby imposing interdependencies. Shortly after the Act of Union the African population was forced off even more of the land into smaller regions or 'homelands' under the Land Act of 1913. Under the Act it was declared illegal for Africans to own or even rent land without being a labourer on that land (Plaatje, 1916). They were used as a migrant labour pool that could travel to

⁹⁴ Some informants from outside the Kamberg Valley claim AmaZizi descent but identify as Xhosa, but this needs much more substantial research and is beyond this thesis.

industrial areas for work. When no longer necessary they could return to their 'homelands' to subsist or merely survive on their own (see Plaatje, 1916, Worden, 2000). In the Drakensberg refugees from the *mfecane* and civil wars were already being settled along the base of the berg in the late 1800's, acting as a homeland even prior to these Acts. In part this was done to create buffers between settlers and 'Bushmen raiders' (Wright, 1976; Vinnicombe, 1972).

The Anglo-Zulu War was of significance to the formation of the images used today for a variety of reasons. The fierceness and brutality of the Zulu Nation was used to justify colonial rule and British settler expansion (see Wylie, 2000). The Anglo-Zulu war saw the British defeated at the Battle of Isandlwana (Laband, 1995; Morris, 1958). The significance of this battle is not so much in the defeat of one British column by a native group as so often cited (as in Morris, 1958). The political implications for the Zulu Kingdom were far greater; after this battle the Zulu Kingdom was crushed and split apart into thirteen British appointed chiefs in 1879 (Guy, 1994). Another significant feature of this war was that it was following from the new era of printing presses and mass circulation of popular press so that a British defeat resounded rapidly within Europe (Hamilton, 1998: 112). The Anglo-Zulu War altered the perception of the Zulu people and the Zulu Kingdom. While the images of tyranny of the Zulu kings were highlighted by colonial officials of the time, the military proficiency, discipline and bravery were circulated at the same time. The construction of Zulu as natural fighters was also being ingrained in the popular imagination by writers such as H Ryder Haggard (Hamilton, 1998: 121; Haggard, 1882). Such popular myths survive as new generations of readers and film-goers are exposed to the same myths, and perhaps to an even greater extent as the media circulation is much more pervasive and ubiquitous. The imagery also survives through the efforts of contemporary Zulu nationalism that has successfully employed these images to their own ends. The mythology also survives in commercial terms in the form of cultural tourism and in popular music.

Zulu Nationalism

The literature on Shaka is rich and varied from historical perspectives to more literary approaches. Zulu nationalist images and their genesis is traced by Daphna Golan (1994), Shaka as a metaphor for powerful African rulers is explored by Carolyn Hamilton (1998), Dan Wylie sees the creation of the myth as the result of white colonial writers and deep seated prejudices (2000), and many others explore this topic (See Hamilton and Wright, 1990 ; Tomaselli, 2003). The literature is rich and detailed and well summarised by John Wright (2004) so I will not repeat the full details here as they are beyond this thesis. Zulu Nationalism centred on IFP, Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi and King Goodwill Zwelitini has many sources for its genesis. Shaka Zulu is the most invoked figure assuming a long continuation from the 'founding' of the Nation to present day. John Wright and Carolyn Hamilton have argued that modern Zulu nationalism has its roots in rising pressures from British Imperialism and settlers' colonialism from the late 19th century onwards (Wright and Hamilton, 1989).

Zulu nationalism was at its most ardent in the late 1980's and early 1990's following Buthelezi's split with the ANC in 1979 (Wright, 2004). In KwaZulu (the Apartheid era Bantustan homeland) ethnic solidarity was violently enforced, but political splits were evident as 'faction' fights from this period attest to. The most visible split was the violence between IFP and the ANC (Waetjen, 2004). Ten years after the end of Apartheid strident Zulu nationalism appears to be on the wane in the periphery communities. The ANC swept to a clear majority during my fieldwork a much discussed event in the media. The community appeared largely unconcerned with the election and many never bothered to vote, citing a lack of care or support for the ANC coupled with full knowledge they would win anyway (Fieldnotes, 2004). ANC members shared beers with IFP members and no fights or arguments ensued. Political t-shirts said more about free shirts than political awareness or fervour in Thendele⁹⁵. Ethnic claims to Zulu ethnicity appears to be waning on the borders of the Zulu Nation, such as the AmaHlubi

⁹⁵ I am not dismissing the importance of political divisions in other regions. In fact an informant of mine lost a family member in a previous political conflict that had a particularly ethnic flair elsewhere in the province and had moved to Thendele as a result.

regaining recognition of their chieftaincy and winning a land claim (Pewa, Mon. Oct 11, 2004). As the political power of the IFP based on ethnic identity reduces in importance, so does ardent Zulu Nationalism. The full consequences of new claims to ethnicity have not yet been realised and many other identities may start to resurface. I also saw traces of this during my Masters research along the Swaziland/Mozambique border among people of formerly Thembe/Tsonga ethnicity (Francis, 2002). Claims to distinctiveness can be empowering as the AmaHlubi and Abatwa show, but chauvinism lurks as exclusion of others can slip in easily. Claims to scarce jobs and developmental ideals lurk behind Abatwa identity claims.

Who is Zulu and who is not seems like a straightforward idea, as most Amazulu (plural for Zulu) are Zulu due to specific ancestry and history. At the simplest, the Zulu are one of the Nguni peoples of Southern Africa who trace ancestry back to the clan *Zulu*. This, while accurate, excludes numerous other people with separate clan names whom consider themselves Zulu. Various 'clans' with a similar language and culture used to populate the area that is now considered Zululand⁹⁶, as the Zulu Nation was consolidated many of these peoples became known as Zulu. In a historical sense we can use a more restricted definition as "those people who gave their allegiance to the Zulu kings, who lived and worked land granted to them by the kings..." (Guy, 1994: xvii). Thus John Dunn, a European trader in the Natal Colony, became Zulu despite the hue of his skin (see Ballard, 1985). Despite this his numerous descendants are now considered coloured, the Apartheid era category for mixed race peoples.

It has been argued that "Nguni social structure allowed for a reduction in social distance with strangers, such as European shipwreck survivors, Khoi pastoralists, and Bushmen hunter gatherers, providing they were incorporated into Nguni society and/or could establish kinship links through marriage" (Prins, 1992: 8). Today the Zulu do allow a few 'white' Zulus, including Johnny Clegg⁹⁷, Barry Leitch⁹⁸, Ian Player, Malcom

⁹⁶ Roughly north of the Tugela (Thukela) River all the way up to Swaziland in northern part of KwaZulu-Natal is said to lie the land of the Zulu nation (see Guy, 1994).

⁹⁷ Johnny Clegg was an anthropologist for many years (for example Clegg, 1981).

Draper⁹⁹ and a few less famous people, often competent language speakers living in rural communities. A significant part of their Zulu identity is tied up with their proficiency in the language and knowledge of Zulu cultural beliefs. Due to the contestation of Zulu-ness, I make no absolute argument as to who is or what constitutes 'real' or 'authentic' Zulu. The contemporary Zulu population is rife with splits and contradictions as boundaries shift and people renegotiate their identity in terms of the past and the present circumstances. One such example is the AmaHlubi peoples of the Drakensberg whom also are reclaiming socio-political rights through their identity as AmaHlubi and not Zulu (Pewa, Mon. Oct. 11, 2004).

The synthetic memory of film and media carries over into daily life of the Zulu people¹⁰⁰. Zulu life is replete with signs and symbolism whether or not it appears in a TV series, cultural village or rural village. The media images resonate throughout Zulu communities, just as they were once based on Zulu communities. The impact of the mass-mediated imagery, even in far-flung corners of KwaZulu-Natal, does occur. The signs of such an impact appear in clothing worn by the youth, American hip-hop music and the like. As for Zulu-specific imagery we see the ongoing influence of the Zulu King and the IFP. It is unimportant whether or not an event is an 'authentic' reflection of a culture as it gains its authenticity from its creation and use. This may create and maintain negative stereotypes, such as Zulu people as savage or warlike¹⁰¹ as contemporary Zulu celebrate their warrior status at political rallies¹⁰². Songs, ceremonial dress, and many dances often reflect a warrior heritage as past battles are sung about, Zulu weapons are carried and dances re-create battle scenes¹⁰³. The idea that flattened images and short

⁹⁸ Barry Leitch is the designer of cultural villages and cultural adviser to the TV series *Shaka Zulu* (Faure, 1985). He is owner of Simunye and Shakaland.

⁹⁹ Ian Player and Malcolm Draper are iconic figures in conservation in KwaZulu-Natal.

¹⁰⁰ Media and film is consumed as access exists to TVs at a number of houses and shebeens.

¹⁰¹ See Dan Wylie (2000) for a detailed analysis of the perpetuation of myths of Shaka Zulu. I however find that his continued reification of the category 'White' needs interrogating as it is taken for granted.

¹⁰² They also celebrate this in games and sports competitions in Thendele. *Umlabalaba* (to covet in isiZulu) is a checker like board game that represents the taking of someone's cattle upon defeating them (Fieldnotes, April 2004).

¹⁰³ My favorite is the dance that depicts a fierce struggle against the British and then death by rifle fire and then the second line of dancers/warriors leap over the fallen to resume the fight (Fieldnotes, Simunye Cultural Village, 2002). This dance refers to the Battle of Isandlwana where the British suffered a defeat against the Zulu (see Morris, 1958; Laband, 1995).

sound bites only contributes to the maintenance of stereotypes is to deny the performers and thus the audience agency. This audience is not only tourists and those viewing films, but those who encounter Zulus in their daily lives in the cities and elsewhere, and indeed the Zulus themselves. The images on the screens and at the cultural villages are augmented by other images and other contexts. The filmic and stereotypical images used to portray Zulu culture stemmed from cultural knowledge of the Zulus, albeit regulated for easy consumption'. Now Zulu culture uses these images as a source of knowledge for contemporary culture. This dialogical interplay has erased the absolute distinction between the 'real' and the representations of the 'real'. Zulu people use these images to understand their culture; and these images do say something about the Zulus in a modern culture which helps to create and maintain Zulu-ness.

The assertion of Zulu ethnicity through the selection of mythology and imagery has more to do with function than it does with description (following from Barthes, 1969). These seemingly primordial differences have little to do with social distance between amaZulu and others. It is a way of transforming social boundaries in light of specific historic Zulu encounters. These flattened and jumbled representations of history that historians caution us against (see Guy, 1998) are products of the post-modern condition. The crisis of the representations of the past, following from Frederick Jameson's (1991) crisis of 'historicity', feeds into the obsessions with the past in public culture. "Curiously, 'the past' merely becomes a set of manipulatable signs which give little sense of the actual shapes and forces of material history" (McGuigan, 1999: 72).

The boundaries of Zulu-ness have always been porous, and this is even truer in the 'border lands' of the Zulu Nation. Here, people trace all sorts of Amazizi or Sesotho ancestry, and so on. Just as Metcalf saw the "paradox of ethnicity: nothing exists in pure form and nothing ever goes away" (2002: 101). "I use 'identity' to refer to the meeting point, the point of *suture*, between on the one hand the discourse and practices which attempt to 'interpellate', speak to us or hail us into place as the social subjects and particular discourses, and on the other hand, the processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be 'spoken' (Hall, 1996: 5-6).

Chapter Two - Methodology: Anthropological cultural studies

“Method is a way of looking at and living in the world” (Inglis, 2000).

In this section I outline my methodology and critique some dominant paradigms. Since few methodological sources were available on cultural studies¹⁰⁴ I examine cultural studies’ texts and combine these with anthropological methods with which I am familiar. A struggle over identity is a vague notion to interpret and as such no comprehensive anthropological ‘whole way of life of a people’ is possible. The methods I use speak to the complexity and even the impossibility to pin down ‘culture’ and identity. This is an anthropological study that draws heavily on cultural studies from a Southern perspective. The thesis bridges the conceptual divide between anthropology and cultural studies by marrying the various phenomenological levels of cultural representation and the multiple retailing of images and myths with the social mobilisation and contestation of cultural self-identification on the ground.

Participant Observation

Anthropological research is an iterative process involving long time communication with our subjects and their lives (Agar, 1996; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983). My fieldwork involved regular trips and long periods of stay in this community. Living within the community confers a depth to the context not gleaned from sporadic interviews premised off the assumption the truth is being told (see Raybeck, 1996, Metcalf, 2002). There are numerous reasons for informants not to tell the truth, which may stem from lack of trust in the researcher, to concerns about how the information will be used. The lack of truth in responses is not always direct lies, but is far more often information left out or only partial information being given.

¹⁰⁴ See *The Story of the Sony Walkman* for one explicit methods text (Du Gay et al. 1997).

The basics of anthropological methodology can be outlined as:

- 1) I was there;
- 2) Something happened I did not understand;
- 3) Find out what 'it' is (Agar, 1996: 31).

Anthropologists run through a whole iterative process till they comprehend what is going on. This is not to infer that there are automatic connections or some whole form of 'culture' to be detected and examined. As Clifford Geertz remarks about ethnography:

It calls for showing how particular events and unique occasions, an encounter here, a development there, can be woven together with a variety of facts and a battery of interpretations to produce a sense of how things go, have been going, and are likely to go (1995: 3).

The purpose of following anthropological methodologies is to gauge the numerous discourses that act upon individuals that I will engage through fieldwork in order to ascertain the primacy of culture and the generation of locally based meaning as it pertains to larger social issues. The actual performance of fieldwork that flows out of such a disparate set of theories is no different in practice than classic ethnographic enquiries following from Malinowski's (1922) work in the Trobriand Islands. More precise methods can be gleaned from methodology text books such as *The Professional Stranger* (Agar, 1996), *Ethnography, principles in practice* (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983), or on a lighter note *Mad Dogs and English Men* (Raybeck, 1996). The real question is in how these fieldwork experiences activate the theory. The methodological purpose is not to explicate a coherent account of a cultural group, but to understand the multiple levels of cultural representation and the multilayered processes of self identification that interacts with these processes.

Documentation will include field-notes, which include snowball sampling and social space mapping, recorded open-ended interviews, to be shared with informants, photographs and video recordings. Due to the formality that arises from the use of recording devices (see Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983) many interviews were not recorded mechanically at the behest of my subjects and many encounters and discussions

were informal. To record them would have been an imposition. The data was subjected to secondary scrutiny by informants upon subsequent interviews and interactions. Informants were selected from cultural workers in local tourism ventures, inhabitants who identify as *Abatwa* as well as those who did not, all from a variety of age sets to achieve a scattered sample. I also draw on my Kalahari Fieldnotes from three previous trips I took with my department as points of clarification in general themes that express similarities and relevant points across the country. This appears in generic issues such as naming of the San, depictions of the San and representing the San, or of Africans in general. I draw on these examples and interviews as they pertain directly to the imaging of the San, from the Kamberg to the Kalahari.

The three levels of interpretative fieldwork are: i) observations and interpretations by the fieldworker; ii) observations and interpretations by the informants; and iii) analysis of comparative contexts, especially within the community itself and between rituals and acts, but also in terms of external sources (Metcalf, 2002). The fieldwork will be contextualised against media images and secondary texts as well as relevant historical documents held by museums and archives. Oral histories, and local myths and legends, will be contrasted against these historical sources to build a more inclusive picture of the subjects' lives. This project studies Abatwa identity formation in relation to established ethnographic texts on Zulu ethnicity and San descendents.

This thesis furthers anthropological research in a variety of ways. First, it makes a contribution to understanding indigenous social movements from a cultural studies perspective where questions of ethnicity are linked to political and economic situations. The significance of my research is that I document a case of an indigenous group attempting to reclaim lost rights in a radically changed society. Yet, despite the changes to a non-racial South Africa, general communal rights often supplant indigenous rights, as all people of African descent are deemed indigenous at a certain level. Therefore, such research forwards understandings of indigency, in not only a South African context, but within the framework of a modern nation-state striving for full democratic rule based on universal applications of equality.

My contribution can be related more broadly to issues of post-colonial social movements and nation-building. Second, by problematising issues of ethnicity I build on anthropological understanding of culture as meaning-making located within specific contexts. This research charts how cultural continuity appears even in the most radically changed society despite material forces and historical contingencies. Finally, I challenge monolithic representations of the Zulu Nation, which are ahistorical, and analyse the contradictions of this within a local context. Zulu ethnicity is multi-various and this project will chart some of the contradictions and diversity within the Zulu Nation. This project updates rural Zulu ethnography, which experienced a lull under apartheid (Hammond-Tooke, 2001). In the historical overview that follows, the information gleaned from oral sources is contrasted against the historical record; information that could mean different things as it is applied in different settings and with different questions being asked. One thing that is for certain is that it shows the complexity of a social story told across time and through many sources.

Culture and tradition are debated concepts and very much out of style in certain academic traditions. I use the phrase 'out of style', as academic traditions do follow trends and whims¹⁰⁵. The problem is that anthropologists do often study culture despite their best intentions not to. By this I mean they examine those patterns that appear within society (also contested term) and how they are historically constructed or construed, the webs of power involved and so on. There will always be exceptions and the concept of culture is slippery and flexible enough to include this. Furthermore, our informants themselves use the word 'culture'; it has escaped the academics grasp and is on everyone's lips (see Sahlins, 1996). This results in people having culture even if academics dismiss the term.

The concept of culture has a variety of inclusive and exclusive potential definitions. I wish to be specific in my use of certain contested terms as many words are used in

¹⁰⁵ As remarked elsewhere: "At first, in the academy, it's usually Foucault, Derrida and Spivak ... We ask, what can these postmodern scholars possibly reveal to us about the facts of poverty-stricken, hungry, illiterate, HIV-ridden premodern/modern/postmodern communities in Africa (or anywhere)?" (Tomaselli, Dyll and Francis, Forthcoming).

multiple ways, often at the same time, to convey multiple meanings. This explicitness of terminology gives one a "useful orientation, or reorientation, of thought, such that an extended unpacking of them can be an effective way of developing and controlling a novel line of inquiry" (Geertz, 1973: 90). If we take culture to be;

[The] ensemble, or 'bundle' of meaningful practices through which self-defined groups within or across social classes express themselves in a unique way, or locate themselves within an identifiable web of significations. It is the process which informs the way meanings and definitions are socially constructed and historically transformed by people themselves. Cultures are distinguished in terms of differing responses to the same social, economic, and environmental conditions. Culture is not static or even a necessarily coherent phenomenon: It is subject to change, fragmentation, reformulation. It is both adaptive, offering ways of coping and making sense, and strategic, capable of being mobilised for political, economic and social ends (Tomaselli, 1986: 3).

This may seem to be an unnecessarily long and complex definition, but the term culture is one of the most problematic concepts in the social sciences/humanities today. I use this definition because it best describes not only what culture 'is', but how people use culture to make their lives meaningful. It can refer to the whole range of cultural practices from art to politics, and history to self-defined notions of the future. On a certain level I fall back on Clifford Geertz and say that anthropology is finding out what other people in another part of the world are up to (1995). This is coupled with a critical edge that attempts to understand what peoples are doing despite a violent history and domination by other people and larger events and processes, such as colonisation and globalisation. The ethnography I envisage takes that snapshot ethnographic moment with a sharp focus, then draws back widening the focus as the event is encapsulated in broader processes beyond the immediate image. The focus must then be allowed to soften and blur as the more abstract ideas and theory are brought to bear on the issue. All this is to be read against the history of the region and the people to trace out genealogies of ideas and concepts (Foucault, 1972).

There seems to be little consensus within cultural studies as how to actually go about and do research. This is, in part, due to very disparate areas of study from strict textual sources to interpersonal anthropological fieldwork. One fairly large part of the methodological equation is an analysis of history, class and especially power whereby “details disappear”, while “power and hegemony” rush “to the front of the stage loud and crude” (Kendall and Wickham, 2001: 106). My concern with the ongoing reduction of identity and ethnicity to power structures is not to dismiss the very real power structures involved in our lives, but that an analysis of power often reduces the subaltern to victims with no agency and, especially, no possibility of agency. The wealthy and the powerful are excluded from such analysis and the poor are assumed doomed or in need of external forces to make their lives better. Instead, I prefer an analysis of power that examines how we are all implicated from rich to poor and powerful to weak. Many acts of resistance against power may not radically change ongoing asymmetrical relations, but have more of an impact on perceptions of power and, more importantly, limit it. Ethnic claims to San identity in the Drakensberg are claims that will not alleviate poverty or change the genocidal history of these people. What it does do is mitigate the losses by making certain that they are not absolute; that is, to make the genocide started over 150 years ago, incomplete. It is the very claim or utterance of an older ethnicity that makes the claim exceptional and compelling. There is a need to understand the experiences of everyday life as they come together within the political-economic structures within which those lives we investigate are immersed.

With Bushman-ness all but vanished – gone but not quite – it is hard to point to anything that is unambiguously ‘Bushman’. Certain little acts of remembrance are being done, linguistic clues hidden in the naturalised clicks of the Nguni languages, a nod to the mountain spirits who bring rain, a collection of stories held in common about the predecessors of the area, and even those who refer to themselves as Zulu conduct many of these acts¹⁰⁶. There is no direct sense of continuity with the Bushman, just a ghostly echo. The Abatwa people know little more than the rest. Their Abatwa-ness comes from

¹⁰⁶ The main things that I would argue as being of San origin are the use of many of the local plants for medicine and the use of the rock paintings as spiritual sites. The mythology of the area draws on stories of San and of magical creatures such as the Inkanyamba described in detail below.

remembered ancestors who settled with the Nguni as a result of colonial pressures. The Abatwa are the first to remind me of their loss of language and cultures (used in the plural by many Abatwa). Just as Peter Metcalf (2002:146) talks of “ghosts of stories and (sometimes) stories of ghosts”, the Abatwa speak of stories of a phantasmal past.

My thesis engages a critique of post-modernism while utilising theories from cultural studies synthesized with anthropological methodology. I use post-modernity to signal a demise of the grand narratives, where “Reason loses its capital R, science softens its edges, and knowledge is seen - and felt – as (con)textual, local, and relative” (Lyon, 2000: xi). Meaning is no longer stable (I doubt if it ever was). Jean Baudrillard takes this to the point where people are overloaded with images and representations cut loose from their original referents where only the flow of images is left, a dismal future with no meaning beyond the surface (1981). Post-modernity can be positive as it replaces the apocalyptic despair and meaninglessness that accompany the fragmentation of old narratives, and moral parameters are altered.

The more affirmative side of post-modernity is the “spectrum of positions that is possible, not a matter of taking sides, creative, fresh forms, making normative choices, build issue specific political coalitions” and so on (Lyon, 2000: 54). The fading of the mega-narratives of modernity does not mean that *no* stories are available, rather, that the stories are much more fluid, malleable and personalised. The difficult task is then of representing ‘stories’ and interpretations without assigning them to fixed structures. Following from Baudrillard (1994), I argue that the absolute event only occurs in an absolute void, thus rendering absolute statements as less than useful, or as statements of faith. To be clearer, I am merely stating that in this world there are no absolutes that can be made absolutely. They exist as tautologies and teleology as we (people) force the world around us into time-lines and representational models, which are to reflect that ethereal ‘stuff’ surrounding us. This ‘stuff’ is the flesh of semiotics, the manifestations of signs and signifiers – that is meaning. The signs, created arbitrarily, speak of who we are and of our relations with others. These signs need to be contextualised and read within the discourses within which they exist.

Certain critiques of post-modern theory suggest that theory "has been more of a *symptom* of post-modernity than a way of comprehending or analyzing it" (Knauff, 1996: 69). I would contend that post-modernity/post-modernism is a range of possibilities or subjectivities vis-à-vis position that may result in ethnographic analysis that is potentially fragmented, ironic and creative. Such modes of representation defy cohesive layout in ethnographic accounts and theoretical 'fears' arise. "In post-modernity the problem of being becomes the panic and schizophrenia at being swallowed up by a promiscuity of sign images and simulations. These define our existence as devoid of purpose: a shadow with no substance, a reflection with no authenticity" (Knauff, 1996: 70).

A similar sentiment arises from Baudrillard with the notion of semiotic consumption due to the fetishisation of signifiers in that "the underlying secret of the commodity lies not in its physical production but its signification - semiotic alienation of the material object in favour of its image" (1981: 73). The peoples of Southern Africa are subject to these forces at work in the dominant global world as there are in existence powerful mass-mediated images and societal discourses that influence and affect their lives. Willis argues that,

The post-modern task, especially of the ethnographic imagination, is to analyse and depict the practices through which the structures of discourse, culture and communication find *new* articulations with, or dialectical uptake within (finally helping to constitute them) the structures of material and institutional life (2000: 68).

My approach is a synthesis of anthropological 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) with the idea of cultural studies as a politically engaged mapping of "terrains of struggle" (Tomaselli, 1986; Hall, 1996). In this sense culture is the webs of signification first articulated by Max Weber then clarified by Raymond Williams and the Birmingham School of cultural studies (Williams, Weber, 1958; and see du Gay et al, 1997). The reason for looking at 'signification' is that it contends that meaning is public because culture is public. It is only manifest between individuals and between groups. There is

no search for deep-seated structures or some innate mental faculty that explains behaviour. As Geertz explains:

Ideas are not...unobservable mental stuff. They are envehicled meanings...and the vehicles may be the usual signs of language, as monologue, tête-à-tête, or tumult, or they may be stylised symbolic actions – rituals, ceremonies, legal disputes, religious mediation, scientific experiment, childbirth, deathbed (Geertz, 1981: 46).

How those meanings are envehicled is the stuff of culture. Behind the notion of webs exists a 'taint' of the structuralist sense of the *active* nature of signification (culture making). This is not to give rigidity to the concept but to recognise that it is constitutive of other social processes, the economic, the political and so forth. Thus structures are not static but defined by culture and lie between the individual and the greater community or society. Culture is brought about by *need* not meaning, even as it means something.

While culture is not inherently political, signification and ideology are related, in that ideology is formed when signification is acted upon by power. Things only become political,

under specific historical conditions, usually of an unpleasant kind. They become political only when they are caught up in a process of domination and resistance – when these otherwise innocuous matters are turned for one reason or another into terrains of struggle (Eagleton, 2000: 122-123).

In relation to the notion of cultural studies as a mapping of the terrain of struggle, this terrain is embodied in the discourses (both in the sense of a conversation and realms of knowledge/power). We express webs of signification that are malleable, expressing the contestation of dominance, and other ways of understanding that are as valuable and viable as the socially preferred meaning. The matrix is one of signification that may be acted upon by power, but is not merely a reflection of power. Such an inquiry may be derided for its "humble indifference to the methodological apocalypse, history, class and power" (Inglis, 2000: 2). The social narratives are woven together in a dense tapestry of significance. As Clifford Geertz states: "It is not history one is faced with, nor

biography, but a confusion of histories, a swarm of biographies. There is order in it all of some sort, but it is the order of a squall or a street market: nothing metrical” (1995: 2).

Study of Ordering

A study of cultural forms and their appearance is not to ‘explain’ culture or to ‘reveal’ its origins, as power and knowledge are often paraded out, but to highlight the appearances of myriad cultures and the way in which they are ‘systemised’ and used (Kendall and Wickham, 2001: 108). This sweeps the dominating issues of meaning and power off centre stage. While I do not argue that these issues are of no import, the study of ‘meaning’ and ‘power’ are problematic as research potentially knows no bounds. Meanings are bound within the context described and not over and above it. Cultural studies, in this humble sense, can be described as the study of ordering (Kendall and Wickham, 2001). This fits with the anthropological idea of the understanding gained by an anthropologist in the field whereby the patterns of culture “once seen, [are] never again unseeable” (Inglis, 2000: 47). Cultural forms are instruments with which to live and to think, and the ‘system’ once described is not to be stripped of the active subject or mortified into absolute rigidity.

The study of ordering, the mapping of cultural terrain, is tied back to the anthropological practices used by Clifford Geertz in his highly detailed and rigorous fieldwork, but is also inclusive of other discourses at a macro level (Geertz, 1973; 1995). Just as the discourse around development is not a cultural system per se, neither is it necessary for it to fall under the rubric of cultural studies. What is offered is a point of crossing between cultures and between levels of discourse from the personal to the global. The media and their representations are part of ordering and of meaning-making within all of our societies, no matter how rural and distant they seem from it all. Media representations are made sense of by those consuming them, despite any dominant ideologies or hegemonies imbedded implicitly or overtly.

In a rural community, such as where I found myself, the discourses of development have attained a certain dominance. Development is one such contested 'concept': just as it crosses barriers it also erects them. It contains images of how society ought to be versus how it is. It seems odd to argue that the Duma community should be considered to be post-modern. It is easier to argue that it is traditional or even pre-modern. Social norms and standards reflect ideology and practices found in oral archives from the late nineteenth century (*James Stuart Archive, Jenkins Archive*, Fynn, 1950, Isaacs, 1836). This continuity of the past into the present is noticeably post-modern in the sense that modernity was seen as a clean break with the past and post-modernity (especially architecture) was seen to reflect historicism; "an architecture of memory and monuments..." (Ellin, 1996: 91-92 in McGuigan), resulting in a jumbled decontextualism, pluralism, metaphors, bricolage and the clutter of signs and signifiers in novel ways. Thus we see adobe huts with TV aerials, Mercedes hubcaps as building decoration, and a mixture of thatch and corrugated iron. 'European' style houses attached to Zulu rondavels, grass huts with electricity, and a range of social identifiers and practices that resonate with the past but done so in such a way to herald a new future¹⁰⁷.

By placing ethnicity and identity as the consequence of dominant conceptualisations and manifestations of power we assume, implicitly, a male dominated formation of identity. This is true whether or not we discuss colonial relations or relations with neighbouring Bantu tribes. The dominant politics of the time are determined by male dominance. Zulu patrilineage and the clan based system of social structure follow male patterns of descent and control. These ultimately dismiss female involvement in identity formation and ethnic consciousness. We have now theoretically left the women to reproduce the domestic, hence unimportant, life, while men are assumed important due to involvement in the macro economy. This ignores women's contribution as surely as Apartheid physically relegated them to the reserves to reproduce domestic labour (Walker, 1982).

¹⁰⁷ All of these I have seen in the rural communities as people build their homes not only out of what is available, but with a sense of aesthetic and symbolic designs.

Identity formation has a long trajectory of history and prehistory, and also a series of social and symbolic relationships. A political economy approach misses the creativity imbued in daily life as the household is reproduced domestically. Once again power rushes to the forefront loud and crude and the details disappear. What it means to be a young man or woman in rural South Africa is not entirely dependent or contingent on the dominant power structures in place within society. The details often embody the contradictions of power and the limits of power in the shaping of identity.

William Beinart understands that those attempting a materialist analysis of South African society had failed to locate social consciousness in broader political economy; he argues that divisions within African societies could also be deeply held by the people themselves (Beinart, 1981: 95). “Culturalist assumptions in the anthropological work on the area disguise the flexibility of self-perception, the situational nature of ‘ethnic’ boundaries and divisions and the complex play between class and culture (Beinart, 1981: 96). The interplay of socio-cultural activity and identity cannot be reduced to economic class grievances. Class and ethnic identity are dialectally related. When I use the concepts ethnicity and identity I do not mean to impoverish the sense of the movement. There is a cultural critique and a critique of culture built into statements of ethnicity. Assertions of being Abatwa are as much about what is not said as about what is said. That is, a claim to being Abatwa is also a statement against the domination of Zulu ethnicity and identity. The idea of anthropology as cultural critique¹⁰⁸ should not be merely a critique of western influences and practices and the anomic of modernity. It is also a critique of dominating practices within a cultural grouping or within border communities that have been dominated.

The contradiction is not in their expression, but that the material benefits are seen to override or be the sole reason for such claims. Claims to ethnic affiliation with physical sites are easier to make when shared or known frames of reference are being used, thus the need for broader political mobilising. The ethnic and identity politics behind such

¹⁰⁸ See Marcus and Fischer (1999) for a discussion on the role of anthropology as cultural critique in understanding processes of domination that are seen to emanate from Western society. A similar theme is argued by Taussig (1986).

claims are not to be derided as merely material, but as ways of understanding the world through their own tropes. Thus: "Looking at the ordinary in places where it takes unaccustomed forms brings out not, as it has so often been claimed, the arbitrariness of human behaviour, but the degree to which its meaning varies according to the pattern of life by which it is informed" (Geertz, 1973: 14).

Geertz asserts that "cultural analysis is (or should be) guessing at meanings, assessing the guesses, and drawing explanatory conclusions from the better guesses, not discovering the continent of meaning and mapping out a bodiless landscape" (1973:20). This analysis rejects absolutist readings of power as all encompassing webs. We are caught in webs of signification; these webs speak to power and not vice versa. All signs we analyse are tangible embodiments of these webs of culture, abstractions from experience fixed into perceptual forms - the semiotic. These signs are public because meanings are public and "small facts speak to big issues, because they are made to" (Geertz, 1973: 22). People are signs and are capable of making them; they are signifiers and signifying system creators. Social reality is a complex tapestry of symbols and relationships, which cannot and should not be reduced into simplistic models. Beliefs and social phenomena must be described in relation to the reality on the ground and the context in which they are created. The subaltern does have a voice and they actively construct their own meanings. This allows for discrepant readings or counter discourses to be heard. These alternate meanings are just as valid and reflect another way of ordering the world and of making a meaningful life.

Invention of Culture

In more theoretical terms the idea of all culture as staged or made up has a long trajectory in anthropology and cultural studies¹⁰⁹. Claims of authenticity are easily deconstructed as

¹⁰⁹ An early definition of culture that still influences anthropological theory is "the complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, laws, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (Tylor, 1871: 1).

they would at some stage have to have been invented in order to exist¹¹⁰. People and their cultures develop over time and “change is a permanent state” (Crick, 1989: 337): “There is no primordial human nature, but ethnic identity has its roots in specific historical conditions that are both structural and cultural” (Nygren, 1998: 54). Such ideas allow for change of culture and for the invention of culture in light of various processes and event. And, analysis must include active reconstruction of cultures or even the complete invention of a new culture. Such ethnic reconstruction is a global phenomenon as other ethnic groups, such as the Bribri struggle over meaning and meaning making in Latin America:

The Bribri struggle for ethnic reconstruction is seen as a dynamic historical process in which the interpretations of colonization and indigenous people are socially and culturally constructed. There is no clear-cut assumption that the Indians are totally oppressed; the central interest is on how power comes about in their oral tradition, ethnic identity, and social representation. A set of narratives that constitute a central arena of hegemonic and counter hegemonic discourses are analysed from the perspective that “politics” is something not opposed to “culture” but closely embedded in it (Nygren, 1998: 34).

Thus, “both the ethnological and the national naturalisms present associations of people and place as solid, commonsensical, and agreed upon, when they are in fact contested, uncertain, and in flux” (Gupta and Ferguson, 1992:12). Ethnic identity of the Zulu and Abatwa is such a struggle over contested histories and stories, both that of coloniser and that of colonised and, indeed, within the colonised themselves. I now turn to the contested history of the Abatwa.

¹¹⁰ Sahlins (drawing on Geertz, 1972) argues that ‘man’ is cultural first, as culture predates us *Homo Sapiens* by 2 million years (Sahlins, 1996: 403). Our hominid precursors of “various degrees of up-rightedness” left traces behind of culture and language ability and it may even be argued that the cultural aspect of our evolution is what drove our evolution into fully modern humans with “rocket ships, hand grenades, MTV and other ‘successes’ of evolution” (Sahlins, 1996: 403).

Chapter Three - A brief history of the Drakensberg

The Drakensberg Mountains have one of the highest densities of San rock paintings in the world (Lewis-Williams and Dowson, 1989; 1992; Vinnicombe, 1976). Archaeological interpretations of Rock Art have moved from crude depictions of simplistic people with simplistic art (Wilcox, 1956) to more nuanced analyses of deeply symbolic content and representations of rituals that embody full appreciation of the San as having their own fully developed cosmology and society (Lewis-Williams and Dowson, 1989; Lewis-Williams, 2002). However, these still rely on a narrow band of analogy - that is, images and representations of a lost past.

Prehistory and Archaeology of the Drakensberg

Archaeological remains confirm the existence of hunting-gathering populations pushing the prehistory of Southern Africa back at least to 25,000 years ago (Barnard, 1992). Little will ever be known about these people although it is presumed they are in direct lineage with contemporary San peoples (Le Fleur, 2004). It had been suggested that the Bantu peoples only came into South Africa about AD 1300 (Wilson, 1959), but such dates are incorrect as remains of farming sites exist that date back to AD 300 (Wright, 1976: 8). Iron-age forges have been found in Northern KwaZulu-Natal that date back to 200 AD (Dutton, 1970). These earlier dates suggest an earlier movement of Bantu peoples from the north, but the full extent of which is unknown at the present, although it is clear Bantu peoples were steadily moving down from the north bringing livestock and social change (Smith, 1992, Skotnes, 1996: 15). The Cape settlers encountered aboriginal peoples engaged in multiple forms of subsistence, speaking a variety of languages with no central political authority (Barnard, 1992). The aboriginal peoples of Southern Africa never formed themselves into a larger political organisation able to resist colonisation or even assimilation into the dominant tribes they encountered.

The Bantu that first came down and modified their language as a result of continuous social contact of trade, marriage and so on, would have been few in number, with little power over the indigenous peoples and no central organisation. These things developed in time, but the balance of power would have been originally in favour of the San. They had detailed knowledge of the land and plants, traces that reach through in the healing practices of today (Fieldnotes, 2004-2005). The increasing population density as the farming peoples set up their Kraals (Nguni homesteads) in an incessant search for new farm lands, is a theme common to all agricultural societies (Brody, 2000). The increasing population pressure slowly would have eroded the coherence of the San populations as they intermarried and lived side by side with Nguni peoples for two millennia (Deacon, 1984). Serious conflict only began as centralised power developed, a period of time by which most San had been assimilated, their language almost erased and coherent bands pushed to the margins of the mountains and sea. Most of their languages were lost as were cultural practices and knowledge, even while influencing the dominant culture of which they became part. The current languages spoken by aboriginal peoples are much reduced in numbers and have survived by isolation in frontier environments of expansion¹¹¹.

The language of the Drakensberg Abatwa is long lost and few examples of singular words or phrases from the Lake Chrissie Bushmen near the Swaziland border remain (see Potgieter, 1965). The language of the Drakensberg San has been given multiple names and is recorded as ||Xegwe, !,Xekwi, Batwa, Bush-C, Abathwa, Boroa, Tloue, T'loutle, Kloukle, Lxloukxle, Amankgwigqwi, Nkqeshe, Amabusmana, Gi!kxigwi, Ki kxigwi, and the last known native speaker died in 1988 (Gordon, 2005: www.ethnologue.com). After 1700 years of contact between the aboriginals and the Bantu have eroded and erased salient traces of the language and left no known native speakers alive today. Reports of white farmers and some elder San descendents living until the 1980's speaking a Drakensberg San language exist, but they have all since passed away (Prins, per. Comm., 2004).

¹¹¹ The frontiers of expansions I refer to are the Kalahari Desert as it would have been a hostile environment for pastoral peoples and their livestock.

The rock art of the Drakensberg has been dated back to 1800 BP (Mazel, 1996: 195). This pertains not to the settlement of the Drakensberg but to the advent of a painting tradition. Older paintings may not have survived leaving it open to speculation, but archaeology suggests a much earlier occupation of Southern Africa and the climate of the Drakensberg is highly hospitable in the summer months with much abundant game and water. The occupation by hunting-gathering peoples of the Drakensberg began more than 25,000 years ago followed by a lengthy gap¹¹² and a resettlement of the southern Drakensberg 8000 years ago and 3000 years later for the northern Drakensberg (Mazel, 1996: 193).

The Kamberg Valley is located at the upper reaches of the Mooi River and was sparsely populated prior to European settlers' onset into the scene. Prior to colonialism and during Senzangkona's (Shaka Zulu's father) days the Kamberg Valley was inhabited by the amaZizini [also spelt amaZizi] (Bryant, 1964: 39). The San peoples would have shared the lower Kamberg area with these Nguni peoples as recent dating of rock art shows periods of occupation by the San coincides with the dates for a larger Nguni presence (see Mazel, 1996: 195; Hall, 1994). There are stories of Nguni peoples, specifically the amaZizi¹¹³, who were noted for using bows with poisoned arrows as the San did, a trait learnt from long contact and hospitable relations, and one should assume intermarriage (Bryant, 1964: 39). Older sources also note that San women were desired by Bantu men as wives (Bryant, 1945; How, 1970: 7). In the 1980s anthropologists were already questioning archaeological notions that difference in material culture means differences in ethnicity (Bender and Morris, 1988: 10).

The period of cohabitation would have been in at least the late 1700s and is significant as it marks the ascension of the Zulu Kingdom (Krige, 1936). The sparse population in the

¹¹² This gap in the settlement of the Drakensberg is unexplained and may be the result of missing archaeological evidence or the absence of people living there.

¹¹³ The amaZizi people are an Nguni people who spoke the same or similar language as the Zulu and are now all but absorbed into the contemporary Zulu culture. People of amaZizi descent still live to the north at Giant's Castle and many others in the South at Underberg. The full extent of their continued presence is beyond this thesis, but such a study would be worthwhile and contribute to understanding the peoples of the Drakensberg Mountains, both past and present.

Drakensberg area at the time may be the result of the unrest in Zululand referred to as the *mfecane* (see Wright, 1989). There is much debate as to the cause of the *mfecane* from Shaka's savagery, civil war in Zulu land, to Portuguese slave trading from Deloga bay (see Cobbing, 1988). However, the significant point is that there was much unrest and shifting of population during this time, resulting in significant social change to numerous peoples across Southern Africa.

Early Colonial History

The earliest history of Natal suggests contact between the 'Bushmen' and other Nguni peoples. One source of early history is travelogues kept by explorers, traders and missionaries (Fynn, 1950; Bleek, 1965 [1855-1856]; Isaacs, 1836). Most of these writers were keen on physical description of the peoples they encountered, and the Cape San elicited some of the most fantastic and graphic details (see Bulwer, 1653 and Skotnes, 1996: 16-23 for early colonial photographs). The earliest journals and records by Nathaniel Isaacs¹¹⁴ (1836) or Henry Fynn (1950) never comment on the physical stature of the *Botwas* or remark on their appearance. As I mentioned in the introduction, there are no accurate descriptions of the Drakensberg San. The historic records from the earliest settlers, traders and missionaries make no mention of the stature or remark upon significant differences between 'Bushmen' and Nguni peoples, belying the notion that these peoples are of different racial groups¹¹⁵. The sole source of physical description is encounters recorded by Pastor P. Filter who interacted with two separate groups of Drakensberg 'Bushmen' who were migrating to the eastern Transvaal (1925: 186 in Prins, 2004). He remarks on the difference between the black Bushmen and the yellow Bushmen, with the 'black Bushmen' being from the foothills of the Natal Drakensberg and the 'yellow Bushmen' coming from Lesotho (Filter, 1925: 187). Oral memories of the Drakensberg San also refer to a difference between yellow 'Bushmen' and Black 'Bushmen' (Prins, per. Comm., December 2004). Omissions of appearance suggest that

¹¹⁴ Isaacs and Fynn were two of the earliest colonial figures in Natal and their role in mythologizing Natal history is discussed by Wylie (2000).

¹¹⁵ I personally put no stock in the importance of phenotypic diversity among humans. the point to be made is the Cape colonial figures did based on crude categorization by physical features. while the Natal colonial figures did no such thing.

by the time of the first Europeans, the Drakensberg San never looked remarkably different to Nguni due to close contact, intermarriage and common cultural practices. There is some Zulu oral evidence that suggests difference, but is reported in such a way that appears more fantastic than real: "...Zulus have stories about Abathwa, dreadful to all men because they are like snakes in the grass. They are small people, who live in the rocks up-country and discharge on the unsuspecting traveller their deadly, poisoned arrows" (Krige, 1936: 359).

The disdain towards *Abatwa* people grew from such myths into fantastic tales where I am informed by urban raised Zulus that they grew up learning that Abatwa were not 'Bushmen', but fantastical creatures much like a *Tokolosh* (goblin type creature or witch's familiar). I am also told that these fantastic tales of the Abatwa resulted in much violence towards them and their descendents, another reason for secreting themselves away as Zulu or otherwise (Fieldnotes, 2004). Krige's reference to oral evidence appears to hark back to a time of conflict between the Zulus and Abatwa (1936: 359). Acts of violence by the Nguni began as conflict and power struggles forced them deep into San territory. Tales of horrible and dangerous Bushmen raining down arrows on "unsuspecting travellers" and cannibals in the mountains echo these early conflicts (Krige, 1936; *James Stuart Archive*, 1905). While I do not dispute that there was some violence between these peoples there is also much evidence of cooperation and cohabitation. Such fantastical legends arising from early oral sources suggest a mythology constructed from fragments of a past where ethnicity and cultural differences may have been much more salient.

Contemporary expectations of difference in physical appearance of the Drakensberg San from that of the surrounding peoples evokes images of the Cape Bushmen so fastidiously measured and examined (see Skotnes, 1996). The notion of a pure race of 'Bushmen' had long been eroded and scathingly reported by Bryant: "The so-called 'Bushmen' still plentiful up north (the Sarwas, Tamahas, Lalas, and Narons, for instance) are merely Bushmen-Hottentot-Bantu half-castes" (1963 [1945]: 73). This spurious search for purity

is still occurring today, thus those of 'mixed' descent are dismissed as not true 'Bushmen'¹¹⁶.

To return to early travelogues mentioned above, Isaac's and Fynn's journals discuss trade with the *Botwas*, as well as suggesting that the *Botwas* were tributaries of the Zulu Nation (Isaacs, 1937 [1836]: 64). If these early accounts are correct these *Botwas* that were trading ivory to Natal were under the control of a 'King', named Fodo (Isaacs, 1937). These early travelogues also suggest that the *Botwas* were not necessarily 'Bushmen', but an assorted Nguni/native group that was referred to as 'Bushman', due to their adoption of a nomadic hunting lifestyle, mainly hunting elephants and trading ivory (see Mackcurtan, 1948: 157). Mackcurtan argues that the *Botwa* were a Bantu tribe called the Enhlangwini and not 'Bushmen', but merely referred to as 'Bushmen' due to their adoption of a nomadic lifestyle. His only evidence appears to be the assumption that the 'Bushmen' had "never approached civilisation as nearly as that [to be trading with Fynn]" (1948: 157). There exists much confusion about the 'true' identity of the *Botwa* who were trading with Isaacs and Fynn.

The confusion about these people's 'true' identity is due to a common confusion when discussing ethnic groups as distinct categories. The ethnicity of Nguni groups has long been fluid and able to absorb others with whom they come into contact. Tales of Portuguese shipwreck victims settling with and living as Xhosa or Mpondomise exist (see Morris, 1958: 19), as do many stories of 'Bushmen' wives being taken by prominent chiefs, such as Dumisa, Fodo, and others (*Jenkins Archive*, 1845-1852: 359). There is much evidence genetically about the connection between San and Bantu peoples where contemporary populations of Zulu- and Xhosa-speaking peoples have on average almost as many Khoisan as Bantu ancestors, and about 15% of the words of both languages contain click consonants derived from Khoisan (Wilmsen, 1996: 296). In light of such evidence we must not assume that cultural change was one-way or that the San must be accorded a subordinate position in social hierarchies. Contemporary ethnography of San

¹¹⁶ This is also reminiscent of Apartheid where the San were classified as Coloured as they were assumed to be mixed race. See Posal (2001) for a discussion of racial classification and its legacy.

descendants as well as Nguni peoples also reveals clues and practises that inform our understanding. In the Drakensberg close to Thendele the Nhangwini people appear on hut tax registers from 1849 in Natal as living alongside the AmaDuma and stretching up into the mountains (Bleek, 1965 [1855-1856]). Chief Dumisa is said to be *Botwa* and trading with Fynn and Isaacs, and the Nhangwini are referred to as ‘Bushmen’ (Gardiner, 1836: 313).

Chief Dumisa and the Botwas

It seems that the *Botwas*, regardless of ‘actual’ ethnicity, did intermarry with the San and learned much from them about hunting and life in the mountains (Isaacs, 1937; Mackeurtan, 1948). The Nhangwini tribe was located between 1849 – 1853 on “both banks of the Umtyezi at its confluence with the left bank of the Umpambinyoni below uDumisa” (Bleek, 1965: 43). The Umtyezi is now known as Bushman’s River, which flows out to sea near Port Shepstone. This furthers the connection between the Duma, the Nhangwini and the Abatwa peoples. Old maps show that the Nhangwini and the AmaDuma were neighbours and also places the Nhangwini territory stretching from the coast up into the Drakensberg Mountains (Bleek, 1965).

The story of the *Botwas* was that they learnt their hunting skills from the ‘Bushmen’ even down to the poisons and use of bows and arrows, a rarity amongst Nguni peoples (Mackeurtan, 1948). A history of contact and collaboration between Nguni and San is the story of Dumisa (spelt Dameser in Isaacs, 1836; Fynn, 1950) who had learned of elephant hunting from the ‘Bushmen’, recounted in a number of sources (*James Stuart Archive* 1909, File 59, nbk. 30: 13-16; Bryant, 1929: 531). He is said to have taken a Bushman woman as his wife¹¹⁷. The story of Dumisa is an essential part of the genealogy of the Duma family. Their ancestor six generations ago adopted the name Duma from the Dumisa clan, linking their present to the past and debunking Mackeurtan’s (1948:157) claim that the *Botwa* were not ‘Bushmen’. Moreover, the *Botwas* were said to hunt around the Mkomazi River in the early 1800s, a day’s walk

¹¹⁷ Another Mpondomise Chief, Newini, was noted for his taking a Bushwoman as his wife (Prins, 1992:3)

from the Kamberg Valley, showing definite overlap of territories. Furthermore, the Abatwa are listed as a 'Kaffir'¹¹⁸ tribe on hut tax lists in 1849 as being under a chief uCiko and having 235 huts and in 1853 as being under chief Uquiko with 101 huts and located on the right bank of the Umkomanzi [Umkomazi river] (Bleek, 1965: 45). He also lists the AmaZizi as being "across the Umzimkulu, high up" (Bleek, 1965: 46). The Umzimkulu is a river in the Drakensberg that passes through the Garden Castle Nature Reserve south of Kamberg Nature Reserve and is also a place that was frequented by 'Bushmen' as the name of the pass, Boesmansnek (Bushman's pass), implies. On the hut tax list there are also 10 huts of Bushmen listed with no location or chief given, which probably implies that they were living on private farm land as tenant labourers. These points show how the San descendents were scattered and being further enveloped into the dominant societies of the time.

According to Isaacs, the *Botwa* traded with him and Fynn exclusively in the 1830's prior to Boer occupation. The chief Dumisa appears in Bleek's *Natal Diary* as settled near in the Ifafa and Umpambinyoni locations ([1855-56], 1965). These locations are near to Port Shepstone, much further south in former Pondoland (See Beinart, 1981). As the settlers occupied the valleys of the Drakensberg the nomadic way of life would have been stressed and the native populations would have been resettled. The few San left would have been assimilated or settled with local Nguni people with whom they shared relations or they would have retreated to the deeper mountain fastnesses where they launched raids against the Settlers (Wright, 1971).

It appears that Dumisa learned the San ways of hunting and took up a semi-nomadic way of life, which corroborates the notion that the *Botwa* were Nguni who had changed their way of life due to pressures from civil wars in Zululand and recent demands for ivory from the colonialists (Fynn, 1950; Isaacs, 1836). However, this premise is problematic as Nguni peoples have been long interacting with San groups prior to this period and, as such, it should not be surprising that they were a mixed group by this time period.

¹¹⁸ This is a reference to a word used to refer to the Bantu peoples of South Africa and is considered derogatory.

Moreover, due to the long period of contact between peoples intermarriage between Bantu peoples and San was quite common, and San women were much desired as wives (Bryant, 1929; Stow, 1905: 190, 229; Ellenberger, 1912: 12; Prins, 1992: 3). We should not assume that they are of essentially different ethnicity.

The reason that so many disparate groups of people from the Drakensberg Mountains were referred to as 'Bushman' is that they were 'Bushmen' in the sense of the word being used to refer to those with a nomadic lifestyle. The fluidity of social relations and the economies of survival of the Drakensberg groups allowed peoples of mixed origins to change their lifestyle between that of hunter-gatherer to that of farmer or even to that of trader. The idea that a Bushmen must live as a hunter-gatherer to claim the status as Bushman is still very powerful and shapes contemporary debates and ideas¹¹⁹. The notion of fluid and changeable strategies of existence due to changes in social and economic realities is rejected as an axiom. The oral histories of the Drakensberg point towards a massive San influence into many groups of Nguni peoples and the historic confusion around who is really who is a direct result of this.

The 'Bushmen' past of the Drakensberg means that there currently exist thousands of individuals that trace some aboriginal ancestry within a remembered past. Some of these other clans are the Nhangwini, the AmaZizi, the AmaDuma, AmaBaca, AmaHlubi, Dlamini, and many others trace some remembered ancestry (Fieldnotes, 2003-2005). While many who share these clan names and origins do not remember their 'Bushman' past, many more do. It is in the melting pots of the Drakensberg where this is most poignant. The old 'Native Locations', where disparate groups were settled, often reflect this past. The last of the 'Bushmen' groups living a mobile existence would have been pushed into these reserves and wherever old locations exist one finds people with 'Bushmen' ancestry¹²⁰.

¹¹⁹ I discuss this in more detail in Chapter 7.

¹²⁰ This is opposed to more centralized locations in Zululand with a longer history of occupation and political consolidation of the Zulu Nation (Bryant, 1964).

This muddled past is difficult to unwind through the use of the limited archives available. Little information is available in the archives on the culture and languages of the San of the Drakensberg. It does appear through the archives that the San were scattered and few in number, with most assimilated into the Nguni peoples or secreted in their mountain fastness. With the categories of people being blurred by the reference of Botwa/Abatwa/Abathwa being used to describe San as well as Nguni who took up a nomadic hunting lifestyle, it remains unclear as to population numbers and what entailed actually being 'Bushman'.

The few-recorded settlements of 'Bushmen' in the colony imply that others in all likelihood also existed; some had amaBhaca allies, as well as Mpondomise, and dealings with Fynn and Isaacs (*Jenkins Archive* 1849: 363; *James Stuart Archive*; Fynn, 1948; Isaacs, 1937). The genocide claimed seems less organised than implied. The lack of organisation between bands further fractures a clear picture and claims of genocide between bands being standard practice (see Wright, 1976: 128) appears incorrect or at least overstated. In the 1850's the colonial settlers were making repeated claims to exterminate the Bushmen and that genocidal impetuosity did occur (Wright, 1976: 142). It is clear that the Zulus and other Nguni groups did commit some acts of violence against the Abatwa, through reports of fear of Zulu reprisals for trading with the settlers by the *Botwas* (Isaacs, 1937). Yet it is even clearer that there were relations between the peoples of respect, sympathetic trade and much cultural and social contact.

Archaeological Colonisation of the Southern San

It is argued that archaeologists and historians are responsible for the continued subjugation of the Southern San by denying them a place in the historical record (see Prins, 2000a). The record was already perjured by the notion of purity so sought after in San research. The Southern San's long interaction with their neighbours and the narrowing of social distance between the Nguni and themselves forbid recognition of them as a distinct people. The history of interaction and favourable marriage between the 'races' prevents a discourse of assimilation and interaction from arising. The record is

peppered with accounts of ‘rebellious Hottentots’ and acts of theft. These ‘rebellious Hottentots’ appear as disparate raiders robbing caravans and cause Shepstone to force Chief Faku to punish the raiders or pay restitution (*Jenkins Archive*, 1849: 363). These early accounts recognise the San as extant, but as the discourse of raiding Bushmen closes with their presumed demise (see Wright, 1972), and they disappear from the record.

Few sympathetic voices are found in the early record towards the ‘Bushmen’. One Reverend William Shaw sends an appeal to Reverend Jenkins that “... the rebel Hottentots are afraid to surrender; and it is they who keep up the robberies and murders in the colony for the purpose of obtaining food (*Jenkins Archive*, 1852:149). These early accounts do not appear to support the notion of theft as a political act of resistance to try and drive the settlers out of their last corner of the mountains, but as a desperate attempt to survive. These ‘rebel Hottentots’ are already appearing as a mixed ethnic group and the idea of purity has been instilled so anyone assumed to be mixed can no longer be ‘Bushmen’. This has an earlier genesis as at the Cape during the turn of the 18th century. Le Valliant describes two types of ‘Boshmen’. One is that of those deserting the colony to escape punishment:

far from being a distinct species, as has been lately asserted, are only a promiscuous assemblage of mulattos, Negroes, and mestizos, of every species, and some times of Hottentots and Basters; who all differing in colour, resemble each other in nothing but villainy (1790 II: 343-4 in Glenn, 1996: 41).

The second type is that of a race that uses the ‘Hottentot’s’ language and appears as a distinct race with specific features of a yellowish colour and small stature (Glenn, 1996: 41). The earliest contact of the Abatwa and the Nguni will remain unclear and while the Abatwa were seen as a distinct ethnic group up until quite recent times, it is unclear as to what degree of separation between the Drakensberg Nguni and the Abatwa was at the time of the earliest settlers. The presence of culturally and presumably genetically mixed groups such as the AmaZizi and Bothwas implies that the borders were fluid and changing from past times. Prior relationships were contingent upon different ways of

life, thus the Nguni becoming Abatwa or 'Botwa' are due to changing way of life, from agro-pastoralism to hunting and gathering and (trading).

The San were seen as completely different from the Nguni people and these racialised types were linked to their mode of subsistence. The San were considered with revulsion and contempt by some of the earliest explorers and settlers (see Skotnes, 1996). Hunting parties were created to rid the country of the 'bushman' menace and a bounty was placed on their heads (see Skotnes, 1996: 18). The depiction of savagery shows up in old texts:

[A] race of men, more fierce than wild beasts, and full of cunning, inhabit the mountains on the northern frontier of the European settlements, and descend, from time to time, upon the lonely farms or small villages scattered over the plain, and slaughter the inhabitants, burn their dwellings, and carry off their cattle and their goods. It is nearly impossible to guard against these attacks of these savages; and as a considerable force is required to resist them, it is no wonder that settlers are disposed to sacrifice many advantages of climate, soil, and productions, rather than be subject to the continual dread of a visit from the Bushmen, as these people are called (Martineau, 1832: 3-5 in Glenn, 1996: 46).

This passage highlights many aspects of the original perceptions of the 'Bushmen' as wildly savage as opposed to the more recent images of 'nature's gentle people' (de la Harpe 2002). Although Martineau (1832) does argue they are fierce from being persecuted and driven from their land, the image of savagery is central to her description.

The notion of a pure race of Bushmen has long been debated. As Schapera noted as early as 1939 that to use any single criterion for demarcating a people as Bushman or non-Bushman is problematic:

If we adopt the notion of racial purity, we shall probably have to exclude the vast majority, if not all, of these people; if we adopt mode of life, we must exclude all cattle-herding MaSarwa (Botswana Bushmen) and all the servants on European farms; and if we adopt language we must exclude the Heikum and also possible the Naron (Scapera, 1939: 12).

Culture as a bounded definable entity still haunts academics and society alike. I set out to show some of the complexity and diversity within a contiguous area, and indeed within a shared culture. Anthropological discussions abound about the permeability of cultures and societies, yet the dominant discourse is still one of exclusion and distinctness. Aboriginal discourses are often the most divisive. Rights based discourse abounds with notions of communal rights that are exclusively aboriginal as well as special relationships to land and a specific way of life¹²¹. These discourses have proved powerful in securing land claims for aboriginal groups worldwide as well as garnering support for currently displaced peoples. A tendency to deconstruct essentialised claims of identity as ways of gaining access to material resources were seen as “too instrumentalist, rationalist and reductionist, as well as being unlikely to serve the interests of these marginalised communities (Robbins, 2001: 837).

The history of the San is filled with brutality, violence and loss, but it is also filled with creativity and change from within. Some of the changes have lasting effects upon the Nguni peoples of today¹²² and no ‘ancient animosity’ exists as a matter of fact between hunter-gatherers and pastoralists (as in Brody, 2001). “The conception of hunter-gatherers as particularly vulnerable to outside culture is not supported by the archaeological data” (Kent, 2002: 9). It is external pressures of environment and politics that makes such ugly and violent tensions exist, not a de facto hatred of difference.

While I agree that the San are currently an underclass, the central argument of the debate coming from revisionist critiques of Kalahari ethnography assume that class formation precedes ethnic consciousness (See Wilmsen and Denbow, 1990). A discussion of categories¹²³ of people elucidates some of the tensions involved in San research, yet says little of who these peoples are. Much of the literature from the recent past depicts the San

¹²¹ This debate is discussed below in Chapter 7.

¹²² The San peoples have left a legacy of cultural change among the dominant Bantu people, from Cosmology and religion (Prins, 1992: 1997) genetics (Nurse et al. 1985) and language change (Bryant, 1945; Potgieter, 1955).

¹²³ I am referring here to the use of hunter-gather, farm Bushman or other descriptor that uses economy as a salient marker.

as hunter-gatherers living in isolation from other groups of people¹²⁴. Interactions with neighbouring peoples were actively excluded and their status as hunter-gatherers was never challenged. Anthropological research with highly localised content made certain 'pristine' groups stand in as representatives of the entire population of San with this San ethnicity being premised on a hunting-gathering lifestyle or a recent divorce from that way of subsistence.

The stereotype of the "Bushman" figure with specific physical traits were assumed to belong to a distinct 'racial' category. The image of this 'Bushman' was made to stand in as a metonym for a hunting-gathering lifestyle (Skotnes, 1996). The San people were placed in a racial category that relegated them to a part of nature (Gordon, 1992; Gunthier, 2003). The early scientists and naturalists at the Cape 'collected' skeletons from deceased San to understand the natural history of the region (Morris, 1996: 67). Among the strange ideas about the San to be found in late 19th century publications was the notion that the so-called pure San were the shortest and that taller members of any San group were the results of racial intermarriage (Tobias, 1997: 24). The racial purity that was assumed led these early collectors to discard those skeletons that did not fit the standard stereotyped view by placing them in a category of 'mixed race' (see Morris, 1996: 68). In the archaeology of the Drakensberg caves where skeletons were found, these are often assumed to be of 'Bantu' origin, if they do not fit the expected morphology of San typology (Morris, 1996).

I have already adumbrated the early archaeology of the region pushing back contact and Nguni presence in the Drakensberg to 300 AD. The early colonial traders and adventurers had begun to exploit the region and were pushing back colonial frontiers bringing various peoples into Europe's economic and, ultimately, political reach. The various peoples of the interior were not unaware of the external factors as extensive trade routes already existed. These would also have served as conduits of information from the coast. Within this colonial economy the Bushmen were at the peripheries and the

¹²⁴ This is well documented in debates on Marshall's film *The Hunters* (1958); see especially Ruby (1993).

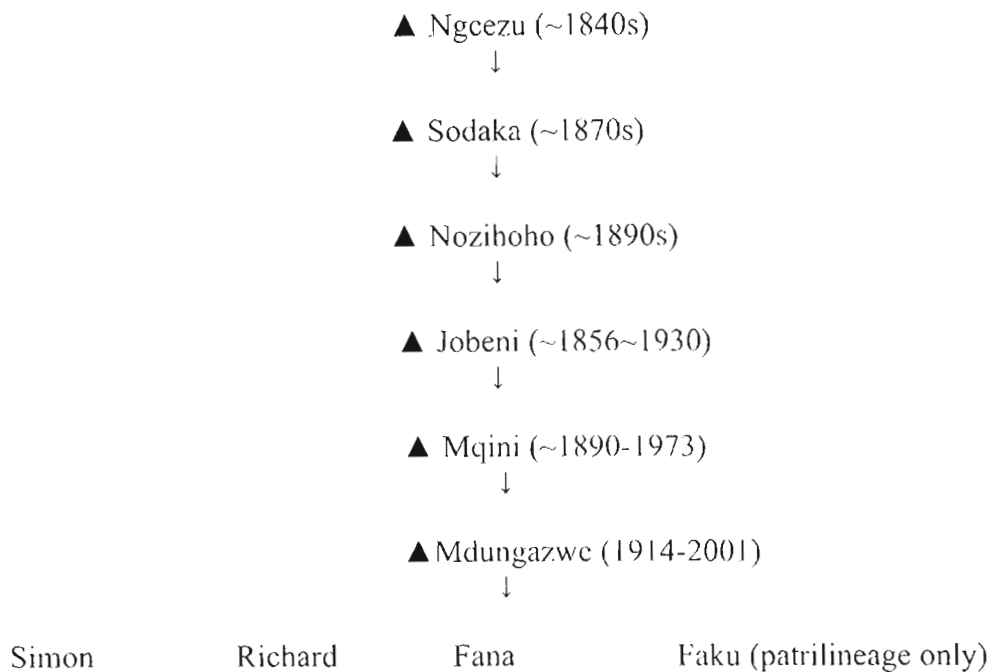
majority were further marginalized from playing an active role as anything other than exploited labour on farms (Suzman, 1999) or cattle thieves (Wright, 1976).

For all intents it appears the 'Bushmen' of the Drakensberg Mountains were a mixed group of ethnicities by the beginning of the 19th century, which would include San, Zulu, Khoi and others that had retreated to the mountains and survived by trading and raiding. While they are of mixed descent, they became labelled '*Botwa*' or similar label due to adoption of a nomadic lifestyle reminiscent of the hunter-gatherers of the region. Ethnic categories are fluid despite the best attempts to fix them with physical descriptions or salient cultural characteristics. We will never know for how long the language spoken by the Abatwa in the Drakensberg has been extinct. We will never know what name was used as an ethnonym. Either way, the San of the Drakensberg have clearly survived tumultuous times. The various survival mechanisms used ensure some continuity, but more ruptures. What is left is ghostly echoes and family memories, not as salient as people prefer, but it is something being held onto by the descendents, and due to its paucity all the more precious.

A Family Tree

The family tree below is not meant to be exhaustive. The Dumas include many other distant relatives and separate lineages extending both backwards and forwards through time. I end at the current generation that includes many of my key informants. I have excluded all six of their sisters and all three of their mothers as well. I have also excluded their children which would be another twenty one family members just between the four brothers. I wish to show lineage and descent patterns without complicating the process too much. The Abatwa are a patrilineal descent group as well so little memory of female ancestors exists beyond two generations. To add another layer of complexity, first cousins are also referred to as brothers and sisters and as such the family tree I had attempted became unmanageable without including a massive fold out chart.

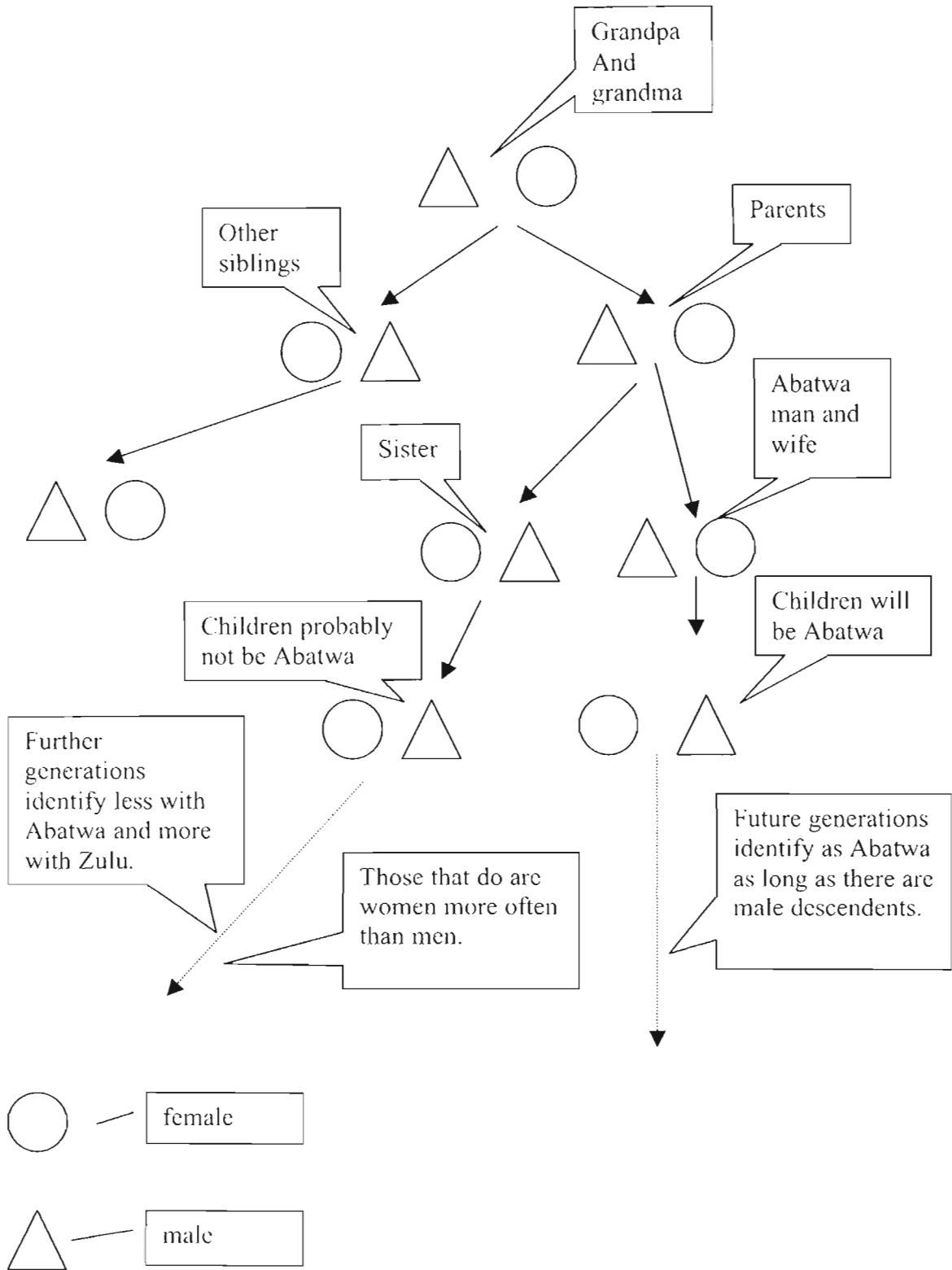
I am told by Richard Duma that “this old man [Ngeczu], he is a Bushman” (Fieldnotes, January 2004). Here Richard is referring to the ‘purity’ of their ancestor as the last to live as a ‘Bushman’ in the rock shelters. They trace their descent patrilineally so they are all considered Abatwa (see below). Ngeczu is said to be the first ancestor to live within an Nguni community and was the one to adopt the clan name Duma from the chief of the community that welcomed him to live among them.



The first four dates for death are speculative and the birth dates are completely unknown. They remember the times of death as they are more significant culturally in terms of ceremonies. The fifth set of dates for Mqini is accurate for his death, but speculative for his birth (Faku Duma, December 2003). The past for the clan loses clarity and, as is noted by Prins, , “some indigenous perceptions are based on historical occurrences” (1996: 217). But he states elsewhere that perceptions of the past are no less real when they cannot be corroborated with actual events (Prins, 1999: 44).

In the Drakensberg we have peoples that bear no resemblance to 'Bushmen', yet self-identify as an aboriginal people with a family history that correlates with the scant texts and dates.. Their family adopted the Duma clan name from an Nguni chief, Dumisa. Their family tree stretches back approximately to the period of time in which Chief Dumisa lived. If we assume 20 years a generation then we reach back to the 1840's. Dumisa would have been alive till the 1850's. If we assume a longer generational period of 25 years due to later marriages and polygamy, then their pro-generator could have grown up at the same time as Dumisa. The Duma claims match up with reasonable accuracy. The Duma family has a personal history and set of relations that set them apart from the general Zulu community in which they live. Due to intermarriage one would expect that the Dumas would become Zulus and many of them have taken on this identity. Generally Zulu and Abatwa people trace descent patrilineally -- down the father's side. This means that my informant whose grandfather who was Abatwa is also Abatwa by way of commonly held descent patterns. His nephew, the son of his sister, is considered Zulu as his father is Zulu. This does not mean that those who trace Abatwa ancestry down from their mothers or grandmothers cannot and do not consider themselves as Abatwa or 'Bushman', although the ties are not considered as strong and more people than not follow their father's line of descent when declaring ethnicity.

In the chart below I use regular English terms for relations. The main points to note are that with male descent the Abatwa lineage will continue in perpetuity despite non-Abatwa wives being taken. Future generations along the female side will not *typically* take on Abatwa identity beyond one generation. Those who do are most often sangomas or healers and they draw upon their Abatwa descent for their healing and ^{diving} abilities.



A Family History

The Duma family have their own remembrance of the past, which differs, but also supports, written records. The Duma name is acknowledged as an Nguni name that was adopted by an ancestor, known as Ngeezu (Fieldnotes, November, 2003). Their ancestors were in close contact with the Duma people and married into the Duma clan. My informants ancestors have long acted as healers for Nguni people and the trade has been passed down from father to son since time immemorial. The historical records show that the Duma lived in this part of the Drakensberg in the early part of the 19th century (Bleek, [1955-56] 1965). By tracing back the family tree we arrive at a period of roughly 1780-1800 for Ngeezu's generation when he settled with the Nguni people. This time also coincides with the arrival of settlers in the area and the beginning of the disappearance of a distinct San population as colonial pressures and violence started at this time. The period when their ancestors took the name Duma and settled with the Nguni people was a time of great violence and raiding between the San and the colonial settlers (Wright, 1971; Vinnicombe, 1976). They grew up hearing stories of past violence by the settlers and why it was important to not be known openly as 'Bushman'.

The Duma family I lived with in Thendele had moved from Loteni to the Kamberg Valley in approximately 1880. Loteni was one of the nearby 'Native Locations' that had been created to inhibit 'Bushman' raiders on the farms in the valleys (Wright, 1971). Loteni is located just over the mountain range to the west, a half day's walk. The other nearby 'locations' of significance are Mkhomazi and Eimpendle, sites created during the early settlement of Natal. All three areas have or had Duma family members living there, and only Mkomazi currently has none (Fieldnotes, 2004). I am told by my informant Fana that Loteni is a gloss on the Zulu word *umlotha* or *ilotha*, which means ash, and *Loteni* meaning the place of the ashes – in reference to the commandos trying to capture or kill 'Bushman' raiders, but only find the ashes of their campfires (Fana Duma, Fieldnotes, June 2004). Fana Duma, specifically took me to Loteni and would relish over stories of his ancestors stealing cattle and out-witting and out-running the angry farmers. Just down from Loteni is the *Mkhomazi* Nature Reserve another significant site for the

Duma family. Mkhomazi is said to be the home of the rain in the Drakensberg, and secret sacred sites of the Duma family are located there¹²⁵. The Duma's forebears also acted as rainmakers so the Mkhomazi site was important for this purpose as animals were killed here and thrown over a specific waterfall to assist in rain making. This waterfall we visited has supernatural powers and the water may be collected to make other medicine, other rites can be performed here for luck or wellbeing and we collected medicinal plants from the bank of the river as they are considered to be potent from this area. Further south in the Drakensberg lives many of the extended Duma family live. This is down in the Winterton and Underberg areas of the Drakensberg, a little further south, as do many other Abatwa people (see for example Mkhwanazi, 2003).

Game Pass Shelter, the main Rock Art site in the Kamberg, was part of Game Pass Farm owned by a local farmer¹²⁶. Game Pass is a large open pass up the escarpment that joins the lower berg to the upper berg. One can walk through to Giant's Castle, Loteni and Mkomazi Nature Reserves from the pass. The San used this pass extensively as the numerous painted rock shelters attest to. The farmer was forced to sell his farm in 1990 so that the Kamberg Nature Reserve and the High Moor Nature Reserve could be expanded (Brummer, March 2004). The Duma family were moved from the farm with plenty of notice, but were moved from a total of nine rooms contained in multiple buildings to an empty site with enough building supplies to build a four-roomed house. The farmer supplied some building materials, bricks, doors, posts and bags of cement and they were left to construct a new building on their own. No compensation was ever given for the move and they currently pay rent on the land on which they live¹²⁷. At the base of Game Pass are the graves of their grandparents, an older sister and three other relatives. The grave sites are of ongoing concern and consternation as they need tending. Most importantly they are sites they wish to be able to visit at will due to the importance of the ancestors.

¹²⁵ *Mkhomazi* is Zulu for whale cow and is also the name of a river running from the Drakensberg Mountains to the Indian Ocean.

¹²⁶ This was a Mr. Green who I never interviewed. He currently lives at Nottingham Road.

¹²⁷ The Dumas are aware that the farmer was paid for the land and that he supplied the building materials for their homes out of his own costs, but they themselves were not compensated (Faku, 2004).

These 'facts' of history are being contested as people doubt the authenticity of the Duma claims to Abatwa identity¹²⁸. They are doubted as many Zulu/Nguni peoples have also been in the area for a similar time of remembered history but trace no such heritage. The historical claims may be less about what they assert than the fact of their assertion. As we are reminded: "Human beings participate in history both as actors and as narrators...history means both the facts of the matter and a narrative of those facts" (Trouillot, 1995: 2).

The facts as recorded by early colonialists and traders are laced with biases of the times, even as most of those details are not directly disputed. The Dumas themselves agree that the Duma name is Nguni and that most Dumas live further south. I was told by Richard Duma; "We now are intermarried into this community including the other Abatwa, the Zulus the Sothos; we work as a community". The Dumas recognise their diverse heritage, but they do however, believe that Dumas of their lineage originated in the Drakensberg and not further south near Port Shepstone, where the Mpondomese are from. They claim that the Duma people of their lineage originated in or near Loteni (Richard Duma, June 2004). They acknowledge the name is from an area close to Port Shepstone, but the actual people are from the mountains.

Interestingly, another name given to me for Loteni is *Enghlangwini* - where two rivers meet. The same name is given historically for the ethnicity of the *Botwas* (Mackertan, 1948). It may be argued that any place where two rivers meet could be named *Enghlangwini*. However, the hut tax roster recorded by Bleek connects the Duma to the Enghlangwini peoples, at least in space (Bleek, 1965: 43). The journals of Mackeurtan also suggest that the *Botwas* were of the Enghlangwini tribe (1948). His views on the Bushmen and their lack of civilisation notwithstanding, Bleek does point towards a link between the Drakensberg and Port Shepstone area as peoples moved, traded, hunted and lived between these places.

¹²⁸ By doubt I refer to two strains of thought. one that they have no San ancestry and are making it up completely, and the second that they are of San descent, but as they have been assimilated into the dominant ethnic group of Zulu for so many generations it is meaningless to retrace this as an identity.

The change of the surname Duma to Dumisa refers to the history of the chief Dumisa who traded with Fynn and Isaacs. It also is said to refer to the Zulu meaning of Dumisa – to praise God. The Dumas are said to have changed their name from Dumisa after adopting it as their clan name, as they were praising God (*duma* is to thunder in isiZulu, but also to praise God in an idiomatic usage) for delivering them safely to the South into better grazing lands and away from the conflict with the ongoing Zulu wars of the times (Faku Duma). Their oral narrative works as a suitable counter narrative as it connects them to the written histories. It also connects them to other people with the same clan name who live afar, but who are seen to be of a separate descent. A connection between the formerly Mpondomise Duma people of Port Shepstone and the current Duma peoples of the Drakensberg is not in dispute. The Duma clan writ large is divided into those directly descended from Dumisa and those Abatwa who took his clan name (Fieldnotes, 2004). The Abatwa split in the clan also has praise songs and names¹²⁹ that are different than that of the other Duma peoples. These praise songs recount how they are from the mountains, resonating with their San past, and setting them apart from the other Mpondomise Dumas. I do not record their full praise song here at their behest. A fragment of another San descendent of the Khumalo clan that echoes the Dumas names is “*Ubuhlobo phakathi kwezithakazela nezilwane...*”, which is translated as “our names are from the animals”¹³⁰. This marks them as different from other Khumalo people who do not trace San descent.

The Dumas have a focus on their past in their claims to indigeneity, but their past is fragmented and largely lost. The importance of their personal history comes not in the richness of detail and recounting of a lost (documented) history, but in what it means, and especially what it means to them. The lack of a personal history that fits with recognised histories is as important as their history correlating with recognised histories. The “formulas of banalization” (Trouillot, 1996: 96), the trivialisation of events surrounding the pre-history and history of the San of the Drakensberg indeed is a silencing of the roles

¹²⁹ They can be sung or spoken.

¹³⁰ Praise names are empowering “connections with our inner being” (Interview with Lucky Khumalo, March, 2005). Lucky Khumalo is a San and Ndebele descendent from the Underberg area and I was introduced to him in March 2005 by Frans Prins who has also interviewed him.

of the San – the actors themselves. This silencing is in the active sense (following Trouillot, 1996) and takes on many strains in academic and non-academic discourse. The silences follow from: the published notions that the population density was very low – thus the insignificance of the *Abatwa*; that they were all gone by the 1900s – even more irrelevant than before; that they were assimilated into the Nguni peoples – therefore we need not worry ourselves about them; the genocide never really happened; or ‘Blacks also participated, even before the ‘whites’ arrived – excusing colonial appropriation of land from ‘Blacks’; they were less developed, subhuman, pre-human, evolutionarily behind or some other similar trope.

The *Abatwa* of today are trying to refute these silences by filling in the gap they inhabit with meaningful discourse, political alliances, academic alliances, and attempts to work with organisations like WIMSA and SASI, and trying to create cultural tourism with local hotel owners. The weight of history seems against these people, as academics cite paucity of materials, archival or archaeological (see Jolly, 1996), despite the reality of their presence, locals in the Parks Board claim financial and material gain as their reasons for claims¹³¹, and many claim the *Abatwa*'s own silence in the past as reason enough to refute them. This last claim denies colonialism and Apartheid in one swift stroke. It also ignores the very real violence against the Abatwas by dominant African groups. The Apartheid era classification of disparate peoples as homogenous is forgotten, and the reality of material and political existence under such a regime is ignored, where San were denied any voice. To speak up would or could have led to job loss, marginalisation from the greater community, and nobody would have listened anyways. It is no coincidence that it took almost ten full years since the demise of Apartheid before they could begin to discuss their very existence and to begin to articulate a future of possibility. It also took the decline of the politically dominant Zulu ethnicity under The Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) in KwaZulu-Natal¹³².

¹³¹ This is the reason a ranger believes the Abatwa are claiming a San identity (Fieldnotes January 2004).

¹³² During the 2004 elections that took place during a fieldwork trip the IFP lost their majority lead in KwaZulu-Natal province and the ANC took a huge majority across the country.

Academics participate in such academic silencing by questioning the relevance of Abatwa claims: “It is possible that there are descendents of these people [Bushmen] still living with some real connection to hunter-gatherers who were relatively unaffected by contact with herders and farmers” (Jolly, 1996: 209). The San descendents are expected to show a lack of change in relation to their agriculturalist neighbours to be considered a viable cultural group. They must conform to a preset notion of ‘San-ness’ that relies on an archetype of hunter-gatherer. This potentially gives the San descendents a history but denies them agency, to twist Wilmsen’s (1993) words on giving San antiquity but denying them history by studying them as separate apart from the greater geo-historic processes and political economy of the region while connecting them to an ancient past.

The history of the San peoples, just as many other hunter-gatherer peoples, is one of exploitation and abuse, but is also a history of creativity and survival despite the forces that were allayed against them. The incorporation of San into Nguni societies as healers and rainmakers is partially a history of identity being created by external forces but is also a history of cultural continuity and creativity. Marshall Sahlins (1996) discusses how aboriginals have their own ‘culture’ and how ethnic consciousness exists prior to the irruption of colonial forces. The amount of cultural change should not be the sole determining factor in the validity of identity claims by those outside the ethnic group concerned. Ethnic categories should not be contingent upon specific cultural and economic traits, such as a foraging economy or a relatively recent foraging economy. Ethnic identity cannot be determined genetically, especially due to multiple generations of intermarriage. Genetic markers for ethnicity have long been debated and largely debunked since the 1980s (See Leacock and Lee, 1982; Bahuchet and Guillaume 1982).

It is claimed that my anthropological informants may be lying or misrepresenting themselves as ‘Bushmen’ for gain, monetary, prestige or otherwise¹³³. Yet, the assumption that there must be a close degree of association with long extinct foraging peoples would relegate all claims to ‘Bushman-ness’ as false. As Jolly (1996) notes the category was used to refer to many different peoples as a convenient label for those who

¹³³ Anon, Fieldnotes January, 2004; Anon, 2003.

lived a peripatetic existence whether by choice or necessity. Abatwa identity in the Drakensberg will not resemble the past or any stereotyped notions of San-ness. The claims revolve around mutual ties and family genealogies that do not necessarily constitute a salient or 'complete' identity, but a process intimately tied into the history of the region and all of its complexity. Ethnicity is never measurable and to dismiss claims due to their perceived lack of coherence is to misunderstand the claims being made. The Duma's claims resonate with the colonial history of the attempted extermination of the San people by colonial settlers. Their oral histories and stories reflect these tumultuous times and distinguish them from the other members of the community of non-Abatwa descent.

The following chapter looks to the record left by the general San population and is a continuation of the historical critique above. Here I use the San's own record they left behind on the rocks and in the myths that resonate with the landscape and the mountains. I also examine some of the mythology of the Drakensberg that is a cultural remnant of Abatwa beliefs and cosmology that influences local beliefs. These stories build on current rock art interpretations that draw on contemporary ethnography of Kalahari Bushmen by including local ethnographic references.

Chapter Four- Contested histories: A critique in the Rock Art

In this chapter, I problematise the distinct cultural boundaries that are maintained in the historical and contemporary archaeological record of the peoples of the Drakensberg Mountains. Rock Art is most often used to show the decline and ultimate destruction of the San (see Vinnicombe, 1976). Rock art however also reveals continuity. I use the rock art record to make the point that the Abatwa still exist and are the continuation of up to two thousand years of contact and change with the Bantu speaking peoples.

I also critique the dominant interpretations of rock art as essentially religious and more importantly as essentially 'San'. Cultural convergence is a process, which I would argue, has always occurred as different groups of people interacted with one another, both directly and indirectly. Physical contact between peoples would have facilitated convergence, as would trade networks that would have brought not only new items but also new ideas into places separated geographically. The notion of purity is also germane to hunter-gatherer studies in general as the Kalahari debate continues with much discussion of the poles of 'autonomy or assimilation' (Kent, 2002). Such a debate allows little room for other points of view or less rigid interpretations of ethnicity and the fluidity of identity.

Images of Mystery

The Abatwa of today still know the best routes that connect the Kamberg with Loteni and other mountain parks where rock art images abound. They also know of the location of rock art not listed on the maps available to the general public, some of which are only known by archaeologists. The Abatwa even claim to know of some images in shelters that are not known by the archaeologists. The Duma brothers took me to some of these shelters. The four images that follow are from further up Game Pass well past the rock shelter used for tourism (*Game Pass, 2000*).



Figure 4: Red buck, actual size 8cm.



Figure 5: Red jackal, actual size 8cm

These images are much more worn than those at Game Pass and few elands appear at these shelters while they dominate the main caves at the Kamberg. They also appear to be of slightly different style perhaps reflecting a different painter, family or band that used these shelters. The image quality of the photographs is fairly high; it is the rock art itself that is faded.



Figure 6: White buck, actual size 10cm.

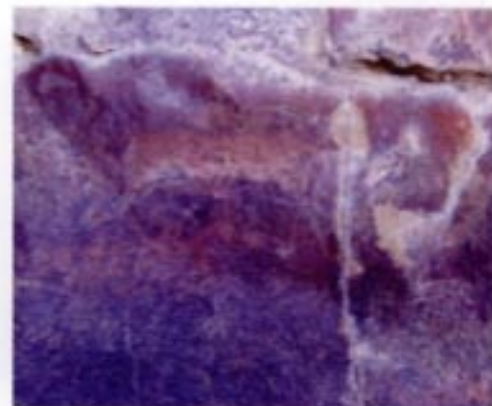


Figure 7: Faded eland, actual size 12cm.

The images that follow are from Game Pass Shelter. One can clearly see the difference in quality and size as well as the dominance of the image of the Eland.



Figure 8: Rosetta panel Game Pass Shelter

Figure 8 is termed the Rosetta¹³⁴ panel by David Lewis-Williams as it was the key image that enabled him to link rock art to San trance dancing (Lewis-Williams interview in *Game Pass Shelter*, 2000). The size of this image is about 50cm across.



Figure 9: Full panel of eland

¹³⁴. The 'Rosetta' is a reference to the Rosetta stone that allowed Egyptian Hieroglyphics to be deciphered (*Game Pass*, 2000).

This large panel stretches across the shelter for many metres and there are many layers of paintings adding a depth and sense of age. The size of each of the large eland images is around 30cm.

The mythology of the Abatwa embodied in the rock shelters also refers to times of peace and interaction with their Nguni neighbours, notions underscored by the history recorded of the *Botwas* adumbrated above. More than any of these romanticised images are the myths that are shared by both Zulu and Abatwa. Rock art images of rain bulls as interpreted and documented by Lewis-Williams appear in local stories and mythology of Nguni and Abatwa people. We had stopped at a nearby waterfall to collect medical plants and the story of the rain bull that lives within the pool below the falls was told to me. Their grandparents and others would sacrifice animals here and throw offerings over the waterfall to ask for rain in times of drought. Prior to their ancestors becoming agriculturalists this would have been done to sweeten the grass to bring game¹³⁵. The rain bull myth and its variations are shared in common with Zulu, just as medical plants and the knowledge of them is exchanged. The rich mythology of the Drakensberg today yields clues to past paintings and other potential interpretations. The San had been in some form of contact with the Nguni peoples for well over a thousand years and the Mountain San are known to have travelled and traded with coastal peoples as well.

What of interpretations that use the less known and vivid pictures? There exists little analysis of rock art that includes the drab and dull images (Prins, 2004). Many of the rock art sites are quite plain in comparison to the rich and massive panels found at Game Pass Shelter and Giants Castle Main Caves¹³⁶. The vividness of the images implies a more recent occupation and painting, and they lend themselves well to analysis as scenes are complete.

¹³⁵ The grass in the Drakensberg is seasonal and requires burning or extensive grazing prior to the rainy season to regenerate. If allowed to grow old it becomes woody and unpalatable to game and they descend from the mountains into the midlands (Brummer, Fieldnotes, January 2004).

¹³⁶ These are two of the main sites open to tourists and contain very rich and a great deal of images. I have seen many other rock art shelters that contain only few faded images or small size.

Lewis-Williams draws his 'trance dance' hypothesis from key sites and from Kalahari ethnography (2003). As he states: "I use the phrase 'trance dance' because more than the healing takes place during it and because, in it, present-day shamans activate a supernatural potency so that they can enter an altered state of consciousness..." (Lewis-Williams, 2003: 27)

The trance dance hypothesis suggests that the majority of images of men and men with antelope heads are that of San shamans in a 'trance dance'. The images are the record of the hallucinogenic experiences from the trance (Lewis-Williams, 2003). This is especially in reference to the images of men turning into Elands or men that are bleeding from the nose¹³⁷. Images of uncertain genesis or unclear image are also placed in the category of trance dancing shaman (Lewis-Williams, 2003). This hypothesis does not acknowledge other potential interpretations or consider that the rock art may be varied in its tropes and original intention.

The rock art sites are dominated by the images of the eland. Lewis-Williams (2003) argues the importance of the Eland as a possible pan-San concept of divinity that links disparate groups across time and space. This supposition is supported by key rock art sites in the Drakensberg due to the common theme of the eland depicted alongside humans. Megan Biesele (1993) and Lewis-Williams (2003) have described it as coming close to fulfilling a central unifying role in San cosmology.

Rain Animals and Snake Stories of the Rock Paintings

The eland is not the only animal that appears regularly in the rock art. Snakes often appear, but to call them snakes may be problematic as some of the common images are that of large snakes, some with antelope heads. This creature is known as the Inkanyamba:

¹³⁷ It is said that San from the Kalahari sometimes bleed from the nose during their trance dances (see Lewis-Williams, 2003: 34-35).

This mythical creature appears to inhabit rivers and lakes throughout Southern Africa. When angered, inkanyamba, as she or he is known in isiZulu, can vengefully visit people in a devastating storm or flood. In Lesotho, the monster is powerful enough to cause seismic tremors damaging foundations of houses in retribution for the recent damming of rivers, which reverses their flow and sends the water to Johannesburg (Draper, 2003: 60).

Similarly I am told of the Inkanyamba as it appears in this part of the Drakensberg as a large python-like snake of rainbow hues with the head of an eland and a mane like a horse or wildebeest (Fieldnotes, 2004-2005). It is said to fly through the sky and clouds appearing as a whirlwind or tornado. It usually passes by with no harm done, but occasionally destroys a few things. This mythical creature appears in many rock art sites, but I do not know of it appearing in the immediate rock art in the area close to the Kamberg Valley Reserve, but it exists in myths of the area. This creature is a powerful rain animal¹³⁸ that can bring rain, but usually brings storms and lightning and is considered a dangerous creature. I am told that this fantastic creature lives in the rock pools high in the Mountains. Wild creatures bring chaos and misfortune usually in the form of windstorms and lightning. They are linked to the rain and the storms and are greatly feared. A number of years ago there was a sudden fierce storm that appeared one evening and raged for an hour or so. The next morning there had been some trailers in the Park that were destroyed by a whirlwind. Nothing else was touched or damaged. The locals say that it was the *Inkanyamba* as it was so quick and fierce and targeted only specific things. In this case it appears as mischievous rather than cruel as it only damaged property, but it can also kill. Other stories from nearby Empendle talk of houses that were destroyed and people killed in 1998 (Fieldnotes, August 2004). The houses were in the middle of the settlement. If it was a natural tornado it would have destroyed more houses and more indiscriminately. These tales resonate with similar ideas of 'great snakes' of the /Xam descendents, which may have the head of a horse according to some informants (Hoff, 1997).

¹³⁸ Rain animals are mythological creatures that are said to cause the rain or to come during the rain and may be beneficial, breaking draught, or being mischievous and causing storms and lightning to strike.

The rock art images of such snakes are said to be shamans in trance. One example that is analysed by Lewis-Williams draws on the similarity of the image to that of a Rinkals (a venomous snake) to further support the trance hypothesis as the reptile becomes a death metaphor for trance experiences that are said to be like dying during trance (Lewis-Williams, 2003: 40). The snakes appear in local mythology with the antelope head and resonate with entirely different interpretations.

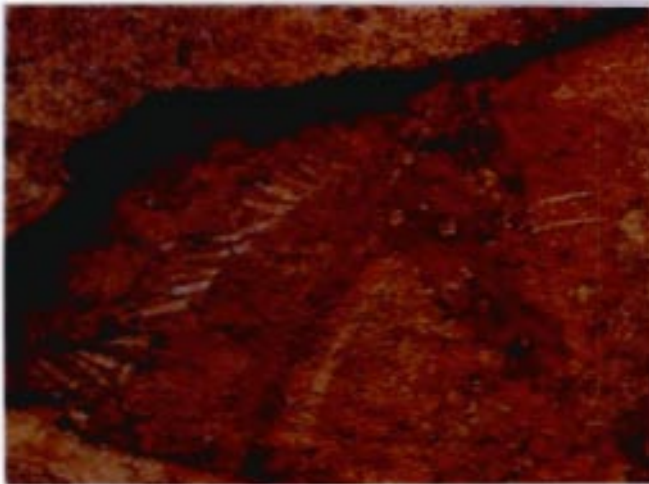


Figure 10: Eland headed serpent (Lewis-Williams, 2003: 53)

Nguni myths of snakes, rain bulls and other rain animals, link well with some of Lewis-Williams' discussion, but also discredit others. The snake with the antelope head, Figure 10 above, resonates with the myth of the *Inkanyamba* more than San trance dance. The snake images are not metaphorical, but images of real, albeit fantastic, creatures.

While certain rock art friezes appear to depict such creatures other images of snakes do not have an eland's head. These images resonate with local myths of rain animals and of rain snakes adding to the multiplicity of interpretations that take us beyond singular interpretations. The idea of quadruped rain animals that are also snakes appear in local mythology as well, twisting the images together despite multiple legs and physical appearance of the creature. One example is clearly shown when Lewis-Williams discusses a type of rain animal where an unknown four-legged animal is inexplicitly referred to a snake by an informant of Orpen's (Fig. 11 below)



Figure 11: Orpens untitled copy of rock painting (Lewis-Williams, 2004:67)

On the surface such an odd depiction of this quadruped being referred to as a snake bewilders interpretation. J.M. Orpen's informant Qing¹³⁹ gave this interpretation, and i cite the full passage here as quoted in Lewis-Williams (2004: 67-68).

That animal which the men are catching is a snake (!)
 They are holding our charms to it,
 And catching it with a long reim [thong].
 They are all under water,
 And those strokes are things growing under water.
 They are spoilt by the – dance,
 And told us to dance it,
 And people would die from it,
 And he would give charms to raise them again.

¹³⁹ Qing was a San descendent who had settled with a Basutho Chief, Nquasha or Quacha, as a hunter and interpreted some of the rock art images to Orpen (see Lewis-Williams, 2004:20).

It is a circular dance of men and women,
Following each other,
And it is danced all night.
Some fall down;
Some become mad as if mad and sick;
Blood runs from the noses of others
Whose charms are weak.

The first line seems the most inexplicable, yet during my fieldwork people told me stories of 'pythons' which have struck people with lightning and Inkanyambas that have destroyed houses and trailers. These mythological snakes/creatures are occasionally seen in water pools and may appear as either a bull or a sheep, or of course a snake. One such story that is said to have occurred recently is that one day a man went fishing along the upper ^(CACUSE) rushes of the Mooi River (near Thendele). He found a shady pool where the river curls back on itself and cast his fishing lure. Peering into the water he saw a sheep. Moving closer to the water to get a better look he was struck by lightning despite it being a clear sunny day without a cloud in the sky. He ran home stunned and hurt leaving behind his fishing rod. His wife returned later that day to collect his rod and saw a large snake in the water. She grabbed the fishing rod and ran home and confirmed his story about the snake in the water, even though what he saw was a sheep. When I asked about such a discrepancy, they stated that it may appear as a sheep, but is really a snake. This explains the discrepancy between the image of a four legged animal and it being called a snake. The rain creatures are snakes that may also appear as other creatures, but they are still referred to as a snake. Similarly, Hoff's informants also have tales of water snakes' that transform themselves into other things to catch or to injure people (1997: 28). The actual appearance of rain animals may be easily confused during discussions without this local ethnographic information.

The rest of the passages seem to suggest trance dancing, yet those falling in trance as if "sick or mad" and bleeding from the nose according to Qing are those "whose charms are weak". This is at odds with the notion that those doing the trance and bringing the rain

would be powerful and not weak. This does not detract from the idea of it depicting a shamanistic trance dance, but suggests that Qing is external to the culture depicted even if he has witnessed such an event himself as his description suggests (in Lewis-Williams, 2003: 68). This makes me suspect that Qing was not part of the Bushmen culture or at least not fully so. I suggest that coupled with other information Qing is part of a mixed group of people part-way between cultures. He is describing what he sees in the image and translating the implication of such an image to Orpen in language and symbolism he knows, which may be at odds with the shamanistic practices and beliefs represented in the rock. The shamanistic interpretation of this being a 'rain-making scene' is premised off of powerful healers/shamans who travel to the spirit world to capture such an animal and bring it back symbolically to create rain locally.

Rock art interpretations often rely on narrow bands of analogy. They rely on an either/or religious band or on a reality based imagery, that of hunting, colonial encounters and so on. Few interpretations rely on complex explanation based on multiple notions of possibility, or multiple overlapping meanings. David Lewis-Williams leans towards complex interpretations, where he sees scenes that may be religious incorporated into a colonial encounter, yet he reiterates that the image is essentially religious first and foremost (Lewis-Williams, 2004: 117-220). Many scenes in the rock art are of the 'trance dance' or are essentially religious in nature, but others are not. The rock art images of unknown figures of unclear purpose or design do not fit into the generalized or dominant interpretations. They especially show that one interpretation is too narrow to cover the range of images present. Just as Richard Duma tells me about tourist copies of rock art, "some of these images are of bad things [spirits] and should not be copied" (Fieldnotes, April 2004). These spirits are not worshipped or praised, but exist as forces that are beyond stock religious views as narrowly defined by Christian tropes.

The dominance of Christian tropes of understanding San cosmology is reflected by the notion of a duality of dimension between a spirit world and a real world (as in Lewis-Williams, 2003). The San appear to have a duality of spirit and nature in the work of Wilhelm Bleek (*Bleek Archives*) as well as the continuation of his work by Lucy Lloyd

(also contained in the *Bleek Collection*). Bleek's work is a major influence on the interpretation of David Lewis-Williams pertaining to rock art (2003). He maintains a Christian duality in his interpretations despite there not being a clear cut division in San cosmology. Just as the indigenous Kaluli people of Papua New Guinea recognise a difference between spirits and people they are at the same time one in the same inhabiting this world and not in a separate world. As Shieffelin (1976:96-7) states

When asked what the people of the unseen look like, Kaluli will point to a reflection in a pool or mirror and say, "They are not like you or me. They are like that." In the same way, our human appearance stands as a reflection to them. This is not a "supernatural" world, for the Kaluli it is perfectly natural.

The world was not an object or a source to be exploited (even as it was), but instead it was seen as an active subject containing both the natural and supernatural without an absolute split between the two. In Nguni culture the split, despite Christian influences, is not absolute either; just as for Zulus a snake may be a snake, but sometimes that snake is an *indlozi*¹⁴⁰ (spirit of an ancestor). Thus spirits inhabit this world and intercede with the next, blurring the divide away from a clear 'here and there'.

San cosmology does not have such a neat distinction between the spirit world and the real world, nor are Nguni beliefs so set up – even today with strong Christian influences. The spirits of the mountains – rain or otherwise – do not live elsewhere, but here alongside us in this unitary world. The Nguni beliefs do have a spirit world where *uNkulunkulu* (now means God) lives, but it is not a place where one would travel to after death or during ceremonies in order to access spirits or supernatural benefits (Krige, 1936: 280). Prior to overt Christian changes in belief, *Nkulunkulu*¹⁴¹ lived in a heaven-like place from where he sent forth mankind to live in the world. Despite the similarity it was not heaven or a place where people went to live in the afterlife (Bergelund, 1976). The spirits are all around acting in the here and now, places are set-aside for them; areas of the hut are left

¹⁴⁰ Snakes are said to be the form with which the *amadlozi* visits the world, and there are distinct snakes that are seen as ancestors and not real snakes (see Krige, 1936: 285-286).

¹⁴¹ During the Anglicization of Zulu words one usually drops the first vowel so *uNkulunkulu* becomes *Nkulunkulu*, just as *iSangoma* becomes *Sangoma*.

open for them. The spirits here may be ancestors or spirits of the mountains or rivers. The notion of *journeying to* the spirits is inaccurate. An interpretation of rock art depicting hallucinations and not 'real' experiences reveals a biased view based on a duality of a real world and a spirit world. Lewis-Williams reports that an "account of a shaman riding the rain to the top of the mountain reads more like a hallucination than reality" (2004: 73). It does read as supernatural or mythological, which is not to say it must be hallucinatory. It may simply be tropic elicitation of another way of understanding the world – put simply a metaphor misunderstood. As Hoff states,

due to a gap in the ethnographic method several authors assumed the Water-animals depicted in the rock art to be hallucinatory animals seen only during trance experiences... To the Khoekhoen and descendents of the /Xam, however, the reality of the Great Snakes goes without saying. They are regarded as real animals, albeit with supernatural abilities (1997: 32).

For the Abatwa and Nguni of the Drakensberg these 'spirit' animals are also real and not to be dismissed as living external in some spirit world or only accessed through trance. Informants of mine continue to have visions at rock pools in the Mooi River, and continue to be wary of the Water Snakes and Inkanyamba in the here and now (Fieldnotes, 2004-2005). Thus a shaman would not go to the spirit world to ride the rain to the top of the mountain; he would ride the rain in this world, albeit invisibly.

Rain Makers and Shamans: a continuation from the past

The shaman asking for rain resonates locally as the Abatwa ancestors are said to have been rainmakers and healers for the Nguni people in the past (Fieldnotes, 2004). The rock art images act as powerful mediators between the spirits and traditional healers when they ask for luck on someone's behalf or for the spirit to cause no harm to an individual. Traditional healers, including sangomas (diviners), inyangas (herbalists) and faith healers (Christian) draw upon the images in the rock art and see the rock art sites as places of power (Fieldnotes, 2003-2005). Water from the shelters is collected for healing and baptism, bringing together traditional beliefs with introduced Christian beliefs. Examples of the mixing of Christian and traditional beliefs abound in the use of ancestors

to intercede with God or to speak with the spirits. The legacy of the San still plays a role in local spirituality and especially in the role of the rain animals/snakes [spirits] in calling sangomas to the trade of traditional healer (Fieldnotes, 2004).

One such sangoma who was called due to an experience with a snake is Ma Duma¹⁴². She was already at the time a faith healer and she dabbled in some herbal remedies. She is considered a powerful and well-respected healer now fulfilling roles of diviner and herbalist. She is also very active in the local Pentecostal church and used to be a faith healer, both leading prayers in a group and praying on behalf of people¹⁴³. I visited her on a number of occasions and I was told the story of her calling (Fieldnotes, January 2004; September 2004). This was told to me while sitting in the rondavel she uses for healing practices. She had become a sangoma after she saw a rain snake in a water pool along a bend in the Mooi River. She killed this magic snake and skinned it. The massive python skin still hangs in her rondavel along the rafters to the back where a place is set-aside for the ancestors and spirits. Much blackened by soot it is at least three metres in length. Her tale of her calling and the events with the water snake/spirit was embellished for the film screened to tourists at the Kamberg Nature Reserve (*Game Pass Shelter*, 2000). In the story she was taken away by a large magical snake and forced to live underwater for two days where it taught her various healing skills. She then killed the snake, escaped and returned home wrapped in a rainbow-hued hide a fully trained healer. While the true story is much less exciting, it is still a fascinating account of San mythology, Nguni beliefs, syncretised and maintained into the present day. It also points to the performative aspect of culture when used for public consumption. The story in the film about going underwater was a series of dreams she had about being underwater and in the gloss for the film it was altered into an actual event (Fieldnotes, 2004). These dreams of water and going under water are said to be common among healers in the Drakensberg.

¹⁴² I call her Ma Duma as that was how I was introduced to her as she is my mother's age. Her name is Zilingene Duma an older sister of my key informants in the chart.

¹⁴³ She never practiced faith healing of 'laying on hands' or other practices meant to cure instantly.

The categorisation of peoples into absolute categories despite much blending and despite the recorded contact between the people maintains these racial distinctions.

Lewis-Williams maintains a distinction between Nguni and San despite 1700 years of contact and interaction, even as he acknowledges the mixing of peoples and hints at the San ancestry of people of the Drakensberg¹⁴⁴ (2003: 7). This maintenance of boundaries influences interpretations of the rock art as well. An example is the interpretation of another rain bull scene (Figure 13 below). This image is best understood when using local ethnographic information about San rainmakers in Nguni communities. Lewis-Williams interpretation (2003: 72) ignores the right hand side of the picture.

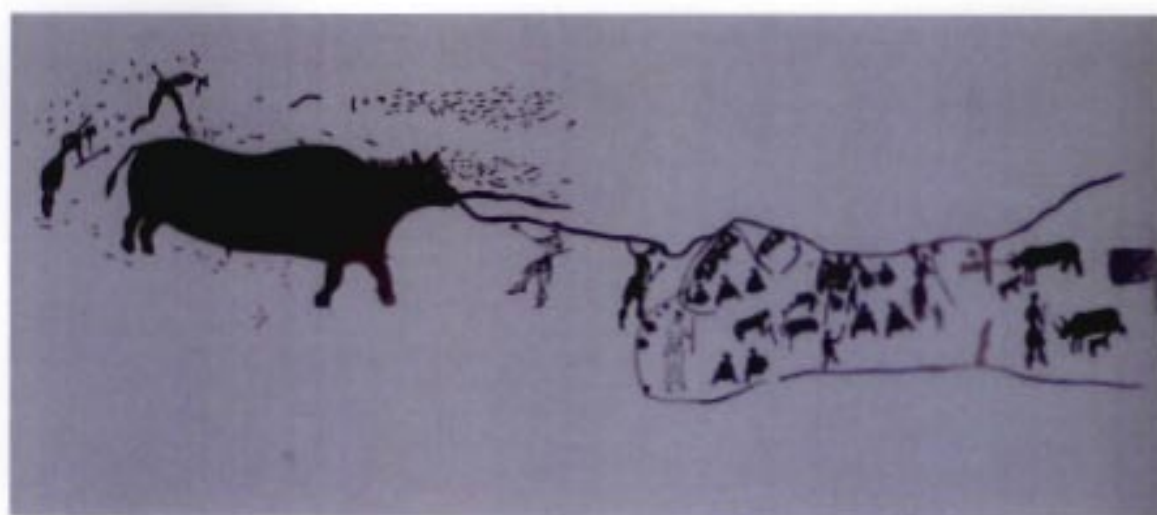


Figure 12: Rain Bull (Image from Lewis-Williams, 2003:72)

This scene also includes images that are of Nguni cattle towards the far right in what appears to be an Nguni Kraal. This image fits in well with concepts of rain animals used in the Drakensberg as well as depicting the blending of cultures in this area. In fact Qing himself lived with Nguni peoples and spoke Xhosa, further complicating his interpretations of myths and rock art (Lewis-Williams, 2003). The people in this image also appear to carry knobkerries (Nguni clubs) and live in a village setting and yet it is assumed to be San and a San rainmaking scene (Lewis-Williams, 2003: 72). While the ethnographic record attests to San working for Nguni peoples as rainmakers there should

¹⁴⁴ This distinction is best shown by statements that acknowledge the San presence and their assimilation into dominant groups: "Their history and their art are inextricably associated with both the mountains and the histories of the other peoples who became their neighbours and, in some cases, their conquerors: the Sotho of the highlands, the various Nguni communities..." (Lewis-Williams, 2003: 7).

be no assumption that the image is made by a San person who is not part of the Nguni community depicted.

To describe Fig. 12 as a 'Bushman' painting is to ignore combined traditions and syncretism of beliefs. Images of water animals are important for understanding rock art sites. The use of Qing's testimony as unproblematically as is used by Lewis-Williams is challenged by Jolly (1996). Jolly notes that "during times of drought, cattle were thrown into a deep river pool that contained remains of an Mpondomise chief...This suggests that the beliefs of cattle breeders were adopted by the San who executed this painting" (1996: 284-285). It is true that the use of rock pools for sacrifice was a common Nguni practice to bring rain. I was taken to a waterfall and shown where the Abatwa used to perform this ceremony. While this ritual can be considered Nguni, the ritual is often associated with San descendants within these Nguni communities (Prins, 1994; 1996). The importance of mythical water snakes in the Drakensberg mythology is a result of San influences on Nguni culture. The Inkanyamba and the water snakes associated with rain and misfortune due to weather are San deities turned into monsters¹⁴⁵.

The interpretation of rock art and its varied meanings must not solely rely on distant Kalahari ethnography and the idea of an inalienable divide between peoples living in contiguous territories. The history I relate above shows the Nguni groups that had mixed and merged with San (as in the *Jenkins Archives*; *James Stuart Archives*; Fynn, 1950; Isaacs, 1836). Furthermore, it is noted by Jolly that there were groups of San hunter-gatherers under the chief Mdwebo who interacted and his group included Mpondomise people and should be seen as a "hybrid" group (1996: 285). Once again, the evidence cautions against drawing a distinction between San and Nguni peoples in absolute terms.

Imitation or Non-San Rock Art

Rock art images appear in the Drakensberg that are not the same style as the majority and should not be considered necessarily San, or at least as 'purely' San. Imitation art shows

¹⁴⁵ I need to thank Frans Prins for this insight (per. comm., 2004).

other cultural groups that mixed with and were influenced by the San had some tradition of painting. This ranged from the knowledge of how to mix the paints using natural materials and this information would be derived from San descendants within their communities. The Dumas still mix natural paints using clays and soils from the area, and this is information passed down from their ancestors (Fieldnotes, 2005).



Figure 13: Imitation eland

Some images such as this 'imitation' eland (Fig. 13) do not follow the usual conventions of 'San' rock art. Images like this one as well as others that appear to be finger-painted, are most likely from Basutho initiation school paintings (Prins, per. Comm., 2004).



Figure 14: Imitation buck

This unusual antelope (Fig. 14) is also a Basutho painting imitating the rock art that is present and should be viewed as such. It does attest to cultural contact and the importance of rock art to other local cultures.

Images such as these show the hybridity of cultures locally and across the Drakensberg Mountains. These images are not strictly San and are largely absent from discussions on rock art (Prins, 2005). Debate about rock art that centres on interpretations of the art devoid of context may be seen as a form of neo-colonialism (Prins, 2000). This is all the more pertinent when we acknowledge the continued existence of the descendants of the

painters to be extant. Another example is the debate as to the appearance of colonialists and horses in the paintings as a means to date the pictures (Lewis-Williams, 2003: 117-118). These depictions of colonial raiders mark not only dates of conflict and settlement by Europeans – the historical record is far clearer – but an indelible mark of a people determined to survive such intrusions. They are not passive markers of a lost world (see Lewis-Williams, 2003: 119-120 for a potential reading of San cosmology in terms of such conflict). The dominant interpretations of rock art follow from the main ideas that it is exclusively San and religious in nature. The preservation of rock art sites is a valued and valuable exercise as is the tourism that seeks to educate people¹⁴⁶. Yet, the Kamberg guided tour still refers to the extinction of the San as a fact. Guides unproblematically use the terms San and Bushman despite opposition to such terms. The importance of local ethnographic information is not to ignore other cultural groups of extant San populations in the Kalahari. The use of Kalahari ethnography can and does inform our understanding of rock art, but must not be the only source of information. To do so ignores localised traditions and reifies ‘San’ culture as essentially different from the peoples they traded with, lived among, married and shared culture. The Abatwa remember their ancestors as do the Zulu, marking graves, pouring libations and recognise the rock shelters as places of their ancestors in a very Zulu manner (Fieldnotes, 2004-2005). During ceremonies and personal visits they burn Impephu and leave small tokens as gifts. They are not alone in this; Zulu people have done this for a long time without acknowledging the Bushman-ness of the paintings found there. The rock art sites are of significance to the Abatwa due to their personal connection to the shelters.

The following is an ethnographic account and analysis of a ceremony that was created recently by the Abatwa. As it is a newly created ceremony it sits as an example of the creation of culture in explicit terms, and yet as new as it is, created in 2003, it resonates with the past and other cultural practices. The following is an example of their struggle to set themselves apart from the general community into which their family was

¹⁴⁶ I refer to the more nuanced views now being depicted at tourism sites the Rock Art Research Institute takes up the teaching of guides and production of materials (2004).

assimilated, and also to create an annual remembrance to these ancestors listed here so they are not forgotten by the passing of time.

The Crossing: The creation of the Eland ceremony

The silence of the ancestors; their ghostly absence; memories of memories. Who can speak of what happened? The witnesses themselves are silenced. The few who do speak must relive a past that is a long account of losses, or recollect times when so much was so different. And for many, perhaps most, the very language of the witnesses is dead or dying (Brody, 2000: 214).

I begin with a subtitle for this ceremony, *The Crossing*, which is the title from a Johnny Clegg song (1993). He is a popular South African vocalist who sings in a mixture of Zulu and English. He used to be an anthropologist studying rural conflict and violence (see Clegg, 1981). *The Crossing* is a remembrance for those who have passed away and was composed specifically for a friend, Dudu, who was killed during Apartheid by a death squad (Clegg, live concert, 2004). The song is a symbolic account of the journey the soul takes during the year following the death of the physical body¹⁴⁷. This period is said to be a hard time for the spirit, it must journey through this world and cross through many hardships while coming to terms with the death of the physical body (Clegg, 1981; 2004). It is only after ten months to a year that the spirit has come to terms with its death and is ready to take the next step and accept its new role as an ancestor watching over and influencing her descendents¹⁴⁸ (Fieldnotes, 2004-2005; Krige, 1936).

During the year after death there are further funeral rites and a ceremony of remembrance (*ukubuyisa idlozi* –) where a cow, sheep or goat is ritually slaughtered and offered to the ancestors (Krige, 1936: 169). This is to welcome them to this new position of importance and influence as the deceased takes on her rightful role (Krige, 1936; Clegg, 2004; Fieldnotes, December 2003). The animal is stabbed with an assegai [spear] in the neck to

¹⁴⁷ This 'journey' is associated with the ceremony referred to as *ukubuyisa idlozi* [literally, come back ancestor] or the bringing home the spirit of the deceased (Krige, 1936: 169-170; Clegg, 1981). This is where the deceased becomes one of the ancestors and is asked to come back to the village and help the living.

¹⁴⁸ This is also a very strong belief in other related Nguni groups (Opland, 1983: 119).

start it bleeding, and once it weakens and starts to collapse its throat is cut. The animal is skinned immediately and a small portion of meat is taken into the *Imizi* and placed near the back of the hut¹⁴⁹ and burnt with *imphepu*¹⁵⁰. The meat is left here for the ancestors and is usually accompanied with a pot of traditional sorghum beer, *utshwala*. The sacrifice and butchering is strictly done by the men, but the overall event involves the entire extended family¹⁵¹. The meat is cooked and becomes a feast with much drinking of beer (all kinds) and the entire community is welcome. The main idea behind the ceremony is to introduce the recently departed to the pantheon of ancestors¹⁵² where the ancestors' role is to assist and guide the living. I attended other ceremonies during my fieldwork with similar themes of respect and remembrance for the ancestor.

This is a very strong belief and has ramifications concerning the sale of land with graves on it. This section begins with the ideas and beliefs behind what I refer to as the '*the crossing*' as this belief and the attendant ceremonies constitutes the heart of the Eland ceremony. While the ancestors have long ago died and crossed over, it is only now that they are welcomed into their proper place whereby they can be beseeched to help the Dumas here in the present as befitting their role of the *amadlozi* (ancestors).

Ceremonies and rituals have held a large role in anthropological studies of peoples over the years as they are overt markers of culture or heritage. They have been used to explain differences between cultures or ways of showing similarity between distant cultures. This has been problematic or celebratory of difference depending on the political stance of the anthropologist and the times in which it was written¹⁵³. Some studies have used ritual as a societal wide metaphor for an entire worldview and a way of interpreting that culture. Edward Schieffelin used an annual ceremony in a Papuan New Guinean society "as a lens through which to view some of the fundamental issues of Kaluli [tribe from the

¹⁴⁹ This section of the hut is called the *umsamo* (Fieldnotes, 2003; Krige, 1936: 169).

¹⁵⁰ This local herb is burnt as incense in various ritual contexts, known as the Yellow Everlasting.

¹⁵¹ It is typical that the slaughter and butchering of a beast is done by the men (Fieldnotes Aug, 2004; see also Krige, 1936: 289-296).

¹⁵² I use pantheon here to refer to the collective ancestry of the recent dead to the ancient dead (Fieldnotes, 2004; this is also retold in Krige, 1936: 169).

¹⁵³ I refer here to ethnographic accounts that supported Apartheid separation of ethnic groups (Hammond-Tooke, 1993).

High Lands of Papua New Guinea] life and society” (Schieffelin, 1976). This can become an illuminating societal level metaphor for explanation. When we turn our attention to such a substantive event, such as a dominant ritual or religious event, the minutiae of these acts are no longer merely banal, but become potentially indicative of entire worldviews or politically charged ‘terrains of struggle’ where meaning and not power is central, even as power dynamics are evident. The Eland ceremony cannot be used as a lens to view the Abatwa society due to its fragmented and transitory nature as they try to create or recreate something substantive from their past. Yet, the unclear picture presented by such a ‘lens’ is indicative of the struggle the Abatwa are experiencing as they attempt to reclaim their identity. Perhaps the much fractured ceremony can express, if only metaphorically, the Abatwa struggle to have a coherent idea of their lost culture they so long for.

Examples abound around the world such as Alan Campbell’s (1995) research among the Amer-Indians of South America. It strikes an eerie chord that echoes with the past of the Abatwa just as they both lost their land, their language, yet positively Campbell writes for their descendents (1995). The descendents are nothing like their ancestors were and cannot be. The details are lost in time through a twin process of violent dispossession and forgetting, thus becoming integrated into one of the dominant ethnic groups¹⁵⁴ and using their language and names to survive. I have been stripped of any romantic illusions that I had, I knew from the outset that little cultural integrity of the Abatwa has survived¹⁵⁵. The Abatwa themselves harbour their romanticism harkening back to days they do not and cannot remember. The idea that cultures and identity are constructed, imagined, made-up, is a hard notion for many people to understand and accept. Symbols from the past get attached to the artefacts, the rock art, and the elands.

The (re) creation of rituals is not an isolated phenomenon in KwaZulu-Natal. Kendall documents rituals being recreated to honour *Nomkhubulwane* (a female goddess figure in Nguni cosmology) in other rural communities. This is also claimed by her informants as

¹⁵⁴ The Zulu is the largest ethnic group in South Africa (*Statistic South Africa*, 1990).

¹⁵⁵ In a coherent sense that would distinguish them easily from those around them.

being due to a loss of “identity amongst a general sense of going away from the past traditions and beliefs” (1999). It must be stressed “that these group identities must be understood not in terms of primordial loyalties, but as affiliations established by specific, and recent, historical events” (James, 1990, 34). It has been shown why tribes or ethnic groups should not be understood through objective, unchanging cultural features, but rather why their members should want to maintain themselves as distinct from other groups (Barth, 1969). In Deborah James’ (1990) discussion of cultural traits of the Ndebele¹⁵⁶ she argues that even if cultural traits can be linked to Nguni traits they retained from the past, such an interpretation asks the question as to what historical or contemporary circumstances have led to the retention of these traits. The historical circumstances of the Ndebele and Pedi have distinct ramifications on current identities and differences in contemporary identity; it was worse social conditions of existence and less political and social autonomy that led to the revival of older social institutions, in this case male initiation and the importance of the homestead (James, 1990: 40).

Cultural Re-invention

The cultural re-invention I witnessed is not to construe it as a farcical attempt, where cultural images and cultural identity is premised off cheap simulacra or mass-mediated images. What I am in fact witnessed is the creative and regenerative actions of the Abatwa. There may be little direct cultural continuity from the San past to the current San present for the Abatwa. To follow this line of reasoning is to argue that there was a reified culture, and is therefore a type of romanticism of a real or authentic past. If we take, in a positive sense, the invention of tradition and culture then we can celebrate such acts of regeneration, and still avoid facile representations of the subaltern doomed to cheap simulation of their own romanticism of the past. Furthermore, the notion that there can be no cultural continuity where so much is lost is to misunderstand the Abatwa claims to having a lack of culture. This culture does follow directly from the past and even as they actively create traditions, such as the Eland Ceremony, this ceremony makes sense in light of the past. The importance of the eland in San beliefs, the sharing of the

¹⁵⁶ She is discussing the Ndebele a Nguni group of contemporary Zimbabwe not the Ndebele of South Africa, though both groups are considered the same ethnic group (James, 1990).

flesh with the greater community, the offerings, the dances, the songs all come together in new novel ways, but never in a vacuum.

The creation of the ceremony was done with the help of the KwaZulu-Natal San Foundation¹⁵⁷. The Abatwa accessed books and held discussions with Frans Prins about the history of the Drakensberg (Fieldnotes, June 2003; June 2004). I know that they used Lewis-Williams's (2003) books on rock art and contrasted this against memories from their childhood where they were taken to the rock art shelters by their father and grandfather. This ceremony never previously existed and yet it resonates with small family prayers and remembrance ceremonies and offerings left at the shelter by the Abatwa over the years. The use of the Eland was granted by KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife and due to its prominence in the rock art of the area it resonated with their idealised ritual.

The eland has been a central figure in San cosmology long before the advent of colonialism, and prior to the arrival of the Bantu peoples. It has been described as the closest thing to a pan-San cosmology as the eland appears as a central figure from the Cape San (Bleek, 1875; Lloyd, 1889) to the Drakensberg San (in the rock art, see Lewis Williams, 2004) and all the way into the Kalahari (Biesele, 1993). While the eland appears as important in many San communities it is unclear whether the eland plays the same role throughout. Nonetheless, the appearance and centrality of the eland's role allows for it to be re-inscribed with new features for the Abatwa people.

The renewal involves an active drawing upon San cosmology and mythology recorded in the rock art by their ancestors. The eland is the main animal depicted in the rock art throughout the Drakensberg Mountains, and seen as a key spiritual beast/being. In the Bleek collection many stories refer to the creation of the eland and it plays a central role in much of the mythology depicted. It is the favourite creature of Kagaan, the creator in San mythology. The eland also plays a significant feature in puberty rights for young women (Shostak, 1981). Yet, this information is only applicable to the cultures of the

¹⁵⁷ This is now called the Ancient Knowledge Initiative but seems to be inactive as no news about its activity is known. The Foundation does not have a website or address (as of November, 2006).

past or from peoples that live afar, and bears little importance to the Drakensberg Abatwa.

The eland as symbol of the past and the present aspirations was selected by the Dumas due to its prominence in the rock art of the Kamberg Valley, the regular presence of living elands in the valley and due to their prominence in the books they have read on rock art and San mythology. I mentioned above that the Dumas are not doomed to imitation of cheap simulacra and even if there exists evident elements of simulacra in their selection of elands as symbolically important, the meanings inscribed into their symbols are not merely surface representations. They are ways of embodying deeper meanings of loss and alienation, but more importantly, they are ways of affirming relationships to family and to ancestors that are precious.

The rock art shelters have served ritual purposes for thousands of years, and now that they are being reused for ritual is not due to accommodating anthropologists, western intellectual efforts or imitation of media images/simulacra. The Duma family used the shelters prior to the demise of Apartheid, but they were not allowed to talk about it; they used the shelters prior to the creation of Apartheid; and they continue to do so, continuing at least 6000 years of history and prehistory. The contemporary use is often limited to the leaving of a few coins as an offering to the ancestors, a quiet place to pray¹⁵⁸, to ask the ancestors for good luck, jobs or otherwise¹⁵⁹. The contemporary use is further limited by the lack of general access to the Park and to the rock art sites in particular. The following is an example of one use of this rock shelter as they re-inscribe it with meaning.

The Eland Ceremony

This ritual loosely referred to as the 'Eland Ceremony', was specifically created in 2003. Its articulation comes in a fragmented fashion and is subject to much change as elands

¹⁵⁸ I mean pray to God in the Christian sense as the Dumas consider themselves Christian (Fieldnotes, December, 2004).

¹⁵⁹ The ancestors intercede on the living's behalf with God. The less the importance of the ancestors in cosmological/spiritual beliefs is not new even if it has changed due to external influences (Krige, 1936).

become/do not become available, dates of access to the Reserve and rock shelters, and so forth, leaves the ceremony in the realm of the postmodern. In tying in claims of ethnicity and identity into a post modern discourse of fragmented and contested identities, one line of critics of postmodernity writ large draw an occidental line between 'Africa' and the 'West':

Crisis of identity and epistemology, the chronic choices of those freed from tradition and modern restraint, do not much concern the famine stricken and dying of Africa. These are specifically Western problems that do not touch upon the material and cultural realities of the Rest (McGuigan, 1999: 89).

These ideas, building from Sardar (1998) resonate with their own biases. Sardar argues that "these Other cultures have retained values of community, belonging, morality and meaningfulness (1998: 65). It is still seen by many Zulu, San and Abatwa that 'it' however defined, redefined, and changed, is worth preserving. The fact that some see it as worth creating says even more. We are reminded by Sahlins that social institutions and rituals exist for many reasons:

The purpose is to synthesize form and function, structure and variation, as a meaningful cultural process, sequitur to a specific cultural order rather than an eternal practical logic. The practical functions of institutions will appear as meaningful relations between constituted forms and historical contexts...So would the local people integrate the World System in something more inclusive: their own system of the world (Sahlins, 11, 1993).

Using the idea of 'their own system of the world' is not to maintain a notion of difference between 'us' and 'them'. Rather, the intention is to draw attention to the fact that despite colonisation, 'globalisation' and ongoing cultural change people still draw upon their past, their present material world, the current political and social realm to make sense of the world and as well as sense of themselves. Thus the Abatwa draw upon 'Zulu' tropes and the Zulu draw upon 'Abatwa' mythology in order to imbue the world around them with meaning, and all combined with numerous other bits and pieces drawn from all over.

The Duma family has created an annual ceremony where the family comes together to celebrate their dual heritage. The event is to unite the family (in the broader sense of distant relatives of up to four degrees) around a new central identity that recognises their history. They discuss what was lost, but also use the ceremony to publicly announce to the extended community that they are still Abatwa, while being integrated into and participating in the general life of the community. The event is divided between a family ritual and then open access to full community participation. The ceremony occurred once in June 2003, but was unable to happen in 2004 due to lack of support, chaotic communication surrounding dates and whether an eland could be obtained for the event. It was discussed but once again was unable to again occur. This is a sore point with the Dumas.

In 2003 the Duma received permission from KZN Wildlife to butcher an eland. It was supplied by a local farmer, who has permission to hunt the eland as part of a deal to compensate for the loss of crops due to the eland leaving the Reserve and consuming his crops (Brummer, Fieldnotes January, 2004). The ceremony was problematic in the first instance for the Nature Reserve and the rangers as the use and hunting of them is against the idea of the Reserve's mandate to preserve nature. The population of eland is quite sensitive and not that large (Brummer, Fieldnotes, January 2004). In the end an eland was supplied due to political pressures -- as the 'Bushmen' were much in vogue in South Africa during the first year of my research¹⁶⁰. The game rangers and game guards duty is to protect the animals against poaching and to monitor the environment. The head ranger, Mr Brummer, was not happy about the first Eland Ceremony as the population is stable. An annual ceremony would put some pressure on the population. There were fears that other communities with similar ancestry will start coming forward and claiming rights to annual eland ceremonies was also a consideration. The mixed heritage could potentially result in numerous claims across the Drakensberg being made. The initial desire was to have the Duma family kill it themselves and collect its blood and butcher it immediately. The logistical and ethical issues raised by KZN Wildlife vetoed this action.

¹⁶⁰ I refer to the interest shown by the media during the first year of my research that has all but disappeared.

The Dumas desire to have an eland instead of a cow to butcher was so that they could use the power of the eland to benefit their family¹⁶¹. They wished to sacrifice and butcher it nearby or at their *umuzi* as described above.

The first time this event was held was to (re)introduce their more contemporary ancestors to the ancestors of the mountains (San) and to the spirits of the river. The mythology of the river spirits and the importance of the eland are common themes amongst the Duma family (Fieldnotes, June 2003; April 2004). It is important to note the difference between the spirits and the ancestors. The spirits are part of the local mythology and are not deceased people, but mythical creatures and beings that inhabit the natural world. Many Drakensberg sangomas (Zulu or Abatwa) become sangomas only after encountering one in the river or the mountains (Fieldnotes, Richard Duma, June 2003; MaDuma, April 2004). Local sangomas also used to visit the caves and ask for help from the spirits and to give offerings (Fieldnotes, June 2003). Local rainmakers drew upon these spirits for their rainmaking or hail and lightning stopping powers (Fieldnotes, Faku Duma, April 2004). I explain below the importance of the *umuzi* and the centrality of the patrilineal descent. The Duma family visits the rock art shelters to honour their ancestors as if they were visiting an ancestral *umuzi* or gravesite, and also visit the spirits that live there. The rock shelters are also home to spirits of the Drakensberg that may bring good luck or fortune, but also may bring harm in the form of lightning or bad luck. In the past they also went there to meet with or appease these spirits to prevent lightning strikes and to ask for luck (Fieldnotes, Richard Duma, April 2004). It is important to stress that the spirits and the ancestors are not the same thing, they are separate entities¹⁶².

The use and access to the rock art sites of KwaZulu-Natal are controlled by the provincial heritage organisation, Amafa¹⁶³. The main rock shelters with the most vibrant paintings

¹⁶¹ The centrality of the eland in San cosmology is explained elsewhere (see Lewis-Williams, 2003) and the Dumas see it as important due to its predominance in the rock art locally (Fieldnotes, 2003-2005).

¹⁶² The spirits I refer to here are supernatural forces or creatures that may be malevolent or good and they can bring fortune and luck or disaster. They can cause storms and lightning strikes, whirlwinds and can appear as animals, people or just sounds. It is important to note that these are not worshipped, but occasionally beseeched to stop causing mischief or to intercede in daily life (Fieldnotes July 2004).

¹⁶³ Amafa is the isiZulu word that means inheritance or legacy and this was taken by the provincial heritage organisation as their name when they restructured after the end of Apartheid.

and are easily accessible are fenced off to prevent unfettered access to prevent vandalism and wear from touching, copying and smoke from camp fires¹⁶⁴. Another problem is that some traditional healers¹⁶⁵ scrape paintings off of rock faces to collect the paint for healing, general luck and rainmaking and lightning prevention medicines (Fieldnotes, June 2004; Staehelin and Wicksteed, 1997). The power of the medicine echoes the belief in the power of the Bushmen as healers and rainmakers. These fenced off sites may be accessed with a guide and are used as tourism attractions to generate an income for the parks. The sites are also used for educational activities and for training new tour guides about the rock art. It is also common for archaeology students to visit the sites. A guide sanctioned and trained by Amafa¹⁶⁶ must accompany all individuals who visit the sites.

During the Eland Ceremony Amafa insisted that a guide accompany the Duma family as per their rules. One of the rock art tour guides is a nephew so they were able to have a family member accompany them. The Amafa representative stipulated that due to the size of the ceremony and the number of people in attendance an Amafa approved representative was to be present. This became a point of tension during the ceremony as the Amafa representative felt that the rules must be adhered to absolutely¹⁶⁷. The Dumas wished for some privacy from all external people in attendance (anthropologists, photographers and guides). As Richard told me¹⁶⁸ the next day:

I am very disappointed because as we planned this ritual we needed to be alone at the cave to do whatever we want to do. But yesterday they say that they want to see if we are going to touch the paintings or want to put the blood on the painting. I say no, we know how to handle these paintings (Interview, March 2003).

¹⁶⁴ A common Drakensberg activity is camping out in the rock shelters during overnight hikes, but it is not allowed in painted caves.

¹⁶⁵ The Dumas are traditional healers but they do not scrape off the paint and see the maintenance of these sights as important and are glad they are being protected (Fieldnotes, March 2003).

¹⁶⁶ The training is done by the University of Witwatersrand School of Rock Art on behalf of Amafa (Rock art Research Institute, 2003).

¹⁶⁷ In fact the representative could have allowed the Dumas nephew Mondli, an approved guide, accompany them, but insisted that she attend the ceremony herself defying common-sense and the rules themselves and thus causing strife and mistrust that lasted for years.

¹⁶⁸ These interviews were conducted by a group of students from my department and Nhamo Mhiripiri writes about this encounter elsewhere (Forthcoming).

Unfortunately this gatekeeping role played by the Amafa representative saw her becoming very arrogant and condescending. This was not necessarily a reflection upon the organisation, but perhaps the personality of the representative¹⁶⁹.

Amafa has acknowledged that the Abatwa people are the descendents of the painters, but limited their access to their heritage. By dictating who could enter and when, Amafa impinged on the community and what it felt was their rights. The Abatwa understand that the fence and controlled access is necessary to preserve their heritage, which they have a vested interest in preserving. Instead they felt ostracised from their heritage and dread future dealings with Amafa. As Faku Duma told me that day:

We failed what we had planned to do. I don't exactly understand why Amafa do this to us, I don't understand why. Bushmen paintings are our heritage, our forefathers left those paintings. They are the ones to do it. We want to do it [their ceremony] without being restricted by anybody (Fieldnotes, March 2003).

Already their general access to the rock art sites is restricted¹⁷⁰ and as such they rarely visit the main caves. The Dumas find this frustrating as they visited these sites as children with their father and grandfather¹⁷¹. They also used to visit other caves in the area. These other caves cannot be visited without entering the Reserve and thus they would need permission from the head ranger. They would probably not be given permission if it was known they were going to visit any rock art sites without a guide.

The Eland Ceremony brought together a couple of hundred extended family members over a two-day period. There were two main public events, the ritual and prayers up at

¹⁶⁹ The Amafa official had caused a series of offenses all day long by expressing disgust at the food being eaten, the smells in the hut, expressing disdain at seating arrangements (men to the right women to the left). As a colleague of mine wryly noted as Abatwa had mistakenly assumed that we had come with her; "she makes me embarrassed to be white" (Anon, Fieldnotes March 2003).

¹⁷⁰ They are allowed to visit the paintings if accompanied by a guide and as long as it does not interfere with the tours to the sight.

¹⁷¹ Keyan Tomaselli made the comparison with Catholics visiting the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican where they are escorted through; no religious service takes place, despite it being a part of their history and heritage (per. comm. Sept, 2006). While the comparison may be apt on a level, the rock art site was used as a family sacred site and their ancestors may have been the actual painter(s). A more direct comparison may be the use of a small Catholic shrine that was used by a family for multiple generations and then is closed to their personal use to protect it for the general public's viewing.

the rock art site at Game Pass Shelter within the Kamberg Nature Reserve, and another ceremony the following day at the side of the Mooi River at the edge of the Nature Reserve. The first night was reserved for immediate and close family, important friends and community members. My department had been invited and spent the weekend with the family and we attended the entire event with the exception of the private family ceremony held inside the rock shelter. A small private prayer was held by the brothers and a couple sangomas at the grave sites of their sister and great grandparents within the Reserve. This was not attended by any outsiders and I only heard about it the following year when discussing attempts to organise another ceremony. That year we did visit the graves during the time in which they would have had the ceremony. As a researcher I was given permission to access the Kamberg Reserve and I obtained permission for them to accompany me from the rangers.

The event began at the main *umuzi* (homestead) where meat and beer were taken in the main hut reserved for important events and the ancestors. Immediate family members and invited guests were allowed in. Offerings were left here for the *amadlozi* (ancestors) and praise for the strength and continuity of the Duma family. The long walk up the mountain to Game Pass Shelter then began (it is about an 8km walk from the *umuzi*). Below the cave a fire was lit and the senior men went up to the cave with a sangoma to pray and give offerings. This was the point at which their private ceremony was intruded upon by the Amafa official who refused them privacy and decided who was allowed in and at what time¹⁷².

Family members were not allowed in more than ten at a time and at no time were they allowed absolute privacy. At the rock shelter they left a small portion of eland meat and blood, poured *utshwala* (traditional sorghum beer) libations, and left some money in the cave for the spirits of the rocks and for their ancestors. They were introducing the ancestors from the rondavels at the *umuzi* to the ancestors and spirits of the Abatwa. In a sense they were bringing together and introducing their ancestors to one another. After

¹⁷² I do not use her name here as it is unimportant as she is no longer with Amafa. I do point out the actions of an individual, albeit sanctioned by Amafa as their representative, and not the organisation as a whole as I know other far more sympathetic members who I am certain, would have behaved in a different manner.

their prayers and ceremony they joined the rest of the family for a feast of eland meat and *utshwala*. The party carried on till late and we walked back by the light of the moon well past midnight. The following morning we joined the Dumas at the riverside for further feasting and celebration. The location alongside the Mooi River was chosen to be next to the river where locals have seen various water snakes/creatures and figures prominently in local lore as it is where a prominent sangoma had seen a water spirit in the form of a large snake and ultimately became a sangoma as a result (Fieldnotes, July 2004). This feast was open to the entire community and almost 200 people showed up. More prayers and libations were given to the spirits of the river. The party carried on till the meat was gone late in the afternoon.

In many ways this ceremony was a common event similar to many across rural Zululand. The eland stood in for the cattle or goat that is often slain for the ancestors – at weddings, at funerals, for childhood coming of age ceremonies, for crossing over to the ancestors one year after death and so on. They were not allowed to slaughter the eland themselves with an assegai as they had hoped, which would have replicated the way in which they slaughter cattle. They were able to use the meat and skin as they liked. The role of cattle in appeasing and respecting the ancestors within Zulu culture is well documented and commented upon (Krige, 1936; Hammond-Tooke, 2000). My own research reaffirms the importance of the cattle and how they represent continuity of family and ties of kinship. Whilst I claim that the ceremony is similar to other ceremonies it is also a one of a kind event that has a very recent genesis involving this renewal of Abatwa tradition. This ceremony was largely created from scratch for this event and is being reshaped as the family debates what they wish to do for subsequent years.

So where does this place my analysis now caught between tradition, false-tradition and something else? Can there be any truth in any of these perspectives? Or is the truth contained in all of them? This ceremony is a synthesis of past and present and at the same time neither; it combines an imagined past with an idealised image of themselves as they seek their position in the new South Africa. The active reconstruction of past traditions to make sense of the present, and indeed to change it, seems to resonate with

this line of thinking and with the definition of culture I use above. Culture is being mobilised for a variety of reasons from the deeply personal and symbolic to political and social gains.

While the event began as deeply personal and private affair for the family it then reached out to the greater Abatwa community by inviting other non-Duma Abatwa elders as special honoured guests. From there it extended to the pan-San level of identity and organising by trying to tie in with greater San/aboriginal politics in South Africa. It is also spectacle for the local community, part of which is to proffer thanks for its support. The event also communicates cultural validity to disbelievers, while the media and anthropologists were invited for further legitimisation. What we witnessed in the Drakensberg is "without doubt the record of [Abatwa] efforts to breathe intelligibility into an idea...in terms of which these realities ... can be confronted, shaped and understood" (Geertz, 1973: 253). The idea being access to the Duma's historic lands and rock art sites, their traditions, all of which are self defined realities that through their invoking of tradition defend and unite around a common purpose, and in doing so "breathe intelligibility into an idea" (Geertz, 1973: 253). "Looking at the ordinary in places where it takes unaccustomed forms brings out not, as it has so often been claimed, the arbitrariness of human behaviour. but the degree to which its meaning varies according to the pattern of life by which it is informed (Geertz, 1973: 14). Geertz asserts that "cultural analysis is (or should be) guessing at meanings, assessing the guesses, and drawing explanatory conclusions from the better guesses, not discovering the continent of meaning and mapping out a bodiless landscape" (1973:20).

If we accept Geertz's (1973:20) premise then the imaginative effort to grasp something fleeting should be celebrated. It's an act of defiance that states that the Abatwa are still here despite the violence, the dispossession, language loss, and genocide. These new ceremonies are "...a defiant refusal to give up what has gone. However faintly they echo the past, they are a defiant reaffirmation of ways that were precious" (Campbell, 1995). Just as Campbell argues that a hundred years from now the descendents of the Amer-Indians will have to "gather up all the creative procedures they can think of, and start

imagining in a regenerative way...it will be up to them as survivors to invest the spaces around them with the imagined presences [of their people] (1995: 238). Many Amer-Indians are already re-imagining their ancestors in this regenerative way, but here Campbell is referring to the need for this in the future if the current degradation and assimilation of a currently non-assimilated group continues (1995). The Abatwa are imagining in such a regenerative way and investing the places around them - the Kraals, the *umuzi*, their homes and their lives with such created images and ideas of their lost past. As Robert Venturi argues "I am for richness of meaning rather than clarity of meaning; for the implicit function as well as the explicit function" (1977 [1966]: 16).

Ceremonies and cultural artefacts that are created or used for whatever purpose must be understood beyond their material manifestations as they are taken into cultural circulation and use. This is not to regress to a structuralist stasis of cultural form. The 'forms' are not fixed; nor are they arbitrary. Cultural forms do not "have identity only through the articulations of difference in the combination of arbitrary signifiers" (Willis, 2000: 19). This links well with Bordieu's concept of *habitus* (1972; 1980) where the focus is shifted from models (Strauss for Bordieu) and language/parole distinction to actual performance. Cultures are understood and related through language, but go beyond language: "Cultures are good for many things: good to communicate with, good to find identity through, good for establishing mutuality and reciprocity. They are good for all these, and more perhaps, because at bottom, they are also good for 'thinking with'" (Willis, 2000: 35). The notion of 'thinking with' culture fits in well with the webs of significance to which I refer above. The way in which the world is made to make sense by people is the web of signs and signifiers created for such a purpose.

Cultural Survival/Cultural Revival

Cultural survival, cultural revival, twin processes not mutually exclusive, amount to the same thing. The Abatwa celebrate their San ancestors through simple story telling, visits to the rock art sites, taking part in cultural tourism and for the first time a ceremony to be held annually to honour their San ancestors. Some of it is new, some of it is only being performed openly now, and some of it was always done. Crucially, this making of

identity is achieved through creative cultural practices which produce something that was not there before, or least not fully in the same way” (Willis, 2000: xiv).

Lest I be accused of mistaking a ‘wink for a twitch’, one can observe a number of things happening here. Clifford Geertz (1973) explained that the deeper meaning of an event, such as what a wink means compared to a twitch of the eye, may be different than the apparent meaning. Therefore, the revitalisation of a traditional practice can be understood as follows:

- i) It is the resurrection of a lost tradition that reasserts their aboriginal identity;
- ii) the altering of a traditional practice in light of current concerns;
- iii) and a form of resistance against continued marginalisation.

These reasons need not be mutually exclusive and all may contain some element of that oft-elusive concept ‘truth’. I argue that all these reasons, and probably more, could be found as part and parcel of the process of reinvigorating a tradition once relegated to history. Resistance, in this sense, are any acts by members of the subordinate class that is intended to mitigate or deny claims by the dominant class (Scott, 1985). It is not necessarily directed towards the overthrowing of the dominant class, but more about reasserting identity despite domination. Active resistance from individual cultures maintained the diversity of the region, and despite convergence and the concomitant increase in contact between people it does not appear to be all that likely to cause this diversity to diminish. What is most changing through the processes of convergence is not a decline in diversity, but how people locate themselves in the new global world. How people do so is rooted in culture, or the “ensemble... of meaningful practices”(Tomaselli, 1986: 3).

While the Eland Ceremony may have copied of tradition this does not mean there are no real traditions involved, on the contrary there are traditions involved, but this is articulated through a new synthesis of old and new - traditional and yet fabricated for the occasion. Culture, here, is used to inform people’s lives - the way in which change is understood and meaning is historically transformed. Culture here is not merely traditions or behaviour, but the way in which meaning is imposed on reality and how people make

sense of their lives. This was performed under the name of tradition and can be seen as a public unfolding of that meaning. It is a manifestation of meaning onto reality, with the intent of transforming it.

Instead of an academic debate over authenticity and that of defining a people, “identity is more fruitfully treated as a product of what people do in the complex and often contradictory social contexts in which they are implicated” (White, 1995: 55). Cultural objectification is occurring through the eland ritual. It is distinctively Duma and is used to assert difference from their Zulu brethren and even from family members (matrilinal descent). It is community manifested and maintained through ritual. The Duma community grows each year as more people open up about their San ancestry. With the ceremony intended as an annual event it is to become a creative performance in that it is helping to create the Duma community as a whole. The newness of the ceremony lends itself well to fluidity and rapid change and as more people become involved we should expect more additions and changes. We are reminded: “No one knows what the social maps are any more, there are no automatic belongings, so, more than ever, you have to work for, and make, your own cultural significance” (Willis, 2000: xv). To do otherwise is to keep mistaking winks as twitches and never understanding the complexity of cultural practices and the motivation of people to transform their world. The significance of such a constitutive event is only now being realised as it becomes codified and gains a collective reality for the community.

Unfortunately for the Dumas the vogue of the San of KwaZulu-Natal ended in 2005 and interest from media and political support has waned. The year of the ceremony saw the creation of the KwaZulu-San Foundation to assist some other San descendents providing accommodation and support, and they looked eager to assist the Dumas with their ceremony. Unfortunately the KwaZulu-Natal San Foundation has left the Drakensberg¹⁷³ and is no longer involved with the Dumas. The provincial government and KwaZulu-

¹⁷³ I was told that the San Foundation was not working in the Drakensberg anymore with the Dumas as they were supporting San descendents elsewhere (Personal communication with the director/founder of the KZN San Foundation Sept. 2005). The San Foundation is now known as the Ancient Knowledge Initiative and they too appear to be inactive (in 2006).

Natal's Ezemvelo Wildlife has currently no interest in their ceremonies or existence anymore¹⁷⁴. Interest that came with the building of a new Rock Art centre at Didima, a promise of a book of their mythology that never materialised, a period of over three years, has all but vanished. Institutional bureaucracy and false promises have once again ignored the San of the Drakensberg and their very real concerns. The government involvement had looked promising for the Duma family and they had hoped that the attention being focused on their lives would see development benefits in the community. They wished to see themselves be directly involved in rock art tourism in the forms of jobs and further cultural tourism. While none of these things happened, and it may be unfair to blame the government, it seems it is only their voice left, a voice not yet silenced by genocide, racism, Apartheid and Zulu nationalism. This is no final statement on what it is to be 'Abatwa', but an opening of a dialogue to challenge all of us to look at issues of representation. Disparate events, places, or representations of African-ness all have impacts on the lives of these people and how they are perceived by others.

The silence of the Abatwa in giving input attests not to their in-articulation, but to their marginalisation. The idea of silences historically is addressed above, but I wish to address and hopefully redress some of those silences historically created but maintained through inactivity and missed educational responses. The educational aspects of tourism are dominated by popular readings of history that are further augmented and informed by academic silences. The notion of the San as extinct from the Drakensberg is given credence by the archaeologists and historians whom maintain that they are extinct. As Marshall Sahlins has argued elsewhere this is to do in theory what was done in practice (1993).

This constructed ceremony was part of the earliest events I had attended with the Dumas. In order to finally understand the significance of the event took numerous trips and long stays with the family. The following chapter charts this long term encounter and the subject position of researcher/researched.

¹⁷⁴ No more ceremonies are being held and there are no new plans for the immediate future.

Chapter Five - Subjects and subjectivities: Where do we all fit in?

The community of Thendele has been a second home to me during my stay in South Africa. After two years of interaction I felt most comfortable living in and visiting Thendele. Now, some of the individuals from Thendele have become part of life beyond academic purposes as they are now long term friends; but this was not always so. The first time I entered this community was a group visit¹⁷⁵ with my department along with Frans Prins, an anthropologist who had worked locally on previous projects, and who is familiar with the local community. Prins had arranged for us to meet San descendants of the Drakensberg in the context on our prior research on the Kalahari San (see Tomaselli, 2003a; Tomaselli, 2003b; McLennan-Dodd, 2003; Dyll, 2004; Simoes, 2001; Wang, 2000). The intent was to build links with this community and find potential sites for future research.

We were introduced to Richard Duma and some other family members. Richard often acts as spokesperson for the family, despite being the second oldest. The oldest male relative is usually the patriarch of the family¹⁷⁶. He works thatching roofs and performs odd jobs, but his main occupation is that of *inyanga* (herbalist). During our introduction noticeable gatekeeping by the Dumas, especially by Richard, occurred. The students were unable to engage the Dumas, as everything had to be translated from English to Zulu and only one translator was available, Richard's nephew, Wellington. What it meant to be *Abatwa* was unclear and the history of the region was a blank slate for me. Upon subsequent meetings with Richard I discovered that he spoke English quite well and merely refused to let us know in order to put us at a disadvantage and as bit of a joke. He had also been concerned that our intentions were not genuine, or interesting enough

¹⁷⁵ This was in March, 2003.

¹⁷⁶ A similar situation is described by Krige (1936: 25) where a man's brothers are called father and treated accordingly with an allowance being made according to age whereby the eldest brother is given the most respect even more so than their own father. In this case here the eldest brother, Simon, does not act as spokesman for the family, and is quite close in age to Richard so the age divide does not apply strictly here.

for him to take part in, and that our visit and future research could not help him and his family. By speaking Zulu he knew we would be less inclined to pursue the topic unless we were genuinely interested. Richard often plays up language difficulty with strangers, gauging whether or not translations are accurate¹⁷⁷. Upon the completion of this visit they expressed interest in research within their community and about their lives. I was invited to proceed; as they were interested in the possibility of receiving legitimacy, as academics have for a long time identified the Abatwa as a lost people (Prins 2000a).

I was offered accommodation¹⁷⁸ at the Kamberg Nature Reserve in a trailer reserved for researchers, who generally research elands, birds and things of that nature. Staying about three kilometres from the village kept my subjects at a distance literally and figuratively, as I would walk to the community and to try and find them. It was a frustrating few weeks where I was able to do few interviews and meet new people and I felt I was separate from the community. Each night I was alone in the trailer from 4:30 pm till the next morning. With the distances and the time taken to walk I had little time left for social interaction. This was compounded by the midday being devoted to chores, employment or other activities. I did however have a great opportunity to get to know the people who worked in the Reserve as I often went with them into the mountains on guided walks with tourists and often cooked my lunches with them at the main camp kitchen. The tour guides were one of the best sources of information on local events and assisted me in locating important elders and in introducing me to others in the community. The seven tour guides are not representative of the community as they are better educated, fluent in English and have hopes of further upward mobility. However, they do represent the complexity of the general community's genealogy. Most of the tour guides surnames echo common Zulu clan names, Mncube, Ndlovu, Mbelu, Dladla, Mnikathi, and Ngbese. Muelase, the final surname, shows Basutho heritage (Fieldnotes, July, 2004). Yet, many also trace some other genealogy from their mothers' sides, Basutho, AmaHlubi, or Xhosa, and Mbelu's mother is a Duma, one of the Abatwa. More

¹⁷⁷ San descendants elsewhere keep up a 'trickster' identity and adopt different identities depending on circumstances (Prins, March 2003, Interview). I do not see Richard's behavior as influenced by his San ancestry, but a playful manner in assuaging his shyness.

¹⁷⁸ Brummer the head ranger at Kamberg kindly assisted me by offering accommodation in the reserve.

importantly, Mbelu is able to access the rock art sites and accompany the Duma family during ceremonies so they comply with regulations and laws designed to restrict and control use of fragile sites.

The Significance of the *Umuzi*

The distance from the community was a barrier to full social interaction, a fact recognised by the Dumas. They thus invited me to stay within their *umuzi* (homestead). This collection of houses and huts formed the central unit of the family and was accorded symbolic respect as the starting point for ceremonies and family celebrations regardless of residency of family members. In traditional Zulu lives the *umuzi* formed the central unit of production and clan power, and ultimately kingly power, was based on controlling these units (see Guy, 1994:21-40). These units faded in significance economically as people were incorporated into a cash economy beginning in the 1880s after the partitioning of Zululand following the loss of independence in 1879 to the British (Guy, 1994). The Native Land Acts of 1913¹⁷⁹ and 1933 along with the creation of native reserves¹⁸⁰ further fractured royal power and forced Zulus into a reliance on a cash economy diminishing the economic importance of the *imizi* (plural).

The Drakensberg was not part of *historic* Zululand¹⁸¹. The people of the Drakensberg have a longer history of economic dependence on farm labour and loss of political independence, as they appear on hut tax lists of the early Natal Colony from as early as 1849 (Bleek, 1965: 42-47). Despite the long history of a cash-economy and the loss of economic importance of the *umuzi* the socio-symbolic factors remain. The *umuzi* still plays an important role as a central locus of symbolic power. The *umuzi* will be maintained despite financial hardships such as rent or subsidising impoverished family members (Fieldnotes, 2004-2005).

¹⁷⁹ Sol Plaatje writes about the first Native Land Act and its impact on the fracturing of African politics and peoples at the time it occurred (1916).

¹⁸⁰ These reserves in the Natal Colony were to assuage settlers fears about the sizeable population of Africans who were competing for land in the early days of the colony (Mackeintan, 1948).

¹⁸¹ Here again I refer to the old boundaries of the Zulu Kingdom that existed north of Natal Colony north of the Thugela River (Morris, 1956).

The importance of the *umuzi* comes from its role in the continuity of family based units. The ancestors are buried within the boundaries of the *umuzi* and those who have moved out to set up their own *umuzi* follow the same pattern within their new unit. But the main *umuzi* of their father remains of central importance. This process of division with continuity based upon male lineage is described as a patrilineal, segmentary, lineage system (Guy, 1994: 23, Krige, 1936). It is only upon the next generation that the new *umuzi* begins to become the locus of symbolic importance for the most recent descendents. Urbanised Africans maintain rural ties and speak of ‘visiting the family farm’ and often remit money and goods to maintain the *umuzi* (Fieldnotes, 2004).

The Duma’s home at which I stayed is a collection of ‘traditional’ wattle and daub huts, round and rectangular, and more westernised houses of brick with tin roofs.



Figure 15: My hut



Figure 16: Kitchen rondavel

The building on the left was my home for over a year and the building on the right is the main kitchen of the homestead. The mix of styles is the norm across South Africa as different African peoples and their architecture mixed together, as well as European styled houses were adopted. A fairly standard *umuzi* contains many buildings, multiple generations and the extended family. The youngest brother, Faku, stayed on to look after the homestead as the older brothers had moved out to set up their own *umuzi*. This is a fairly normal Nguni practice as the older brother moves out first and the youngest looks after the older generation and the maintenance of the ancestors’ graves (Krige, 1936; Fieldnotes, 2004). This *umuzi* I inhabited is significant as it is where parents’ graves are

located and it is the first place they settled after being moved during the expansion of the Kamberg Nature Reserve. Their houses are painted with a mixture of clay and soils and water that are direct survival of the elaborate spiritual art in the rock paintings found in the area (Fieldnotes, February, 2005). The reddish colour of their huts is not a commercial paint, nor is it a general community practice. It is a great long lasting coating that has taken on utilitarian usage of painting with no sense of artistry involved¹⁸².

Within Zulu and Abatwa culture there is a difference between a house and a home. This is embodied in the words *indlu* and *ekhaya*. The former means building, hut or house, while the latter means home. A home embodies the ancestors and continuity of family, just as the word *umkhaya* means family members. A Zulu home will have the graves of the ancestors and even when one lives away from home in an *indlu* they still have a home in their place of origin (Fieldnotes, 2004-2005). This important difference is rarely understood when people are moved off of land to make way for a new reserve, or as they are laid off from a farm where they resided as labour tenants where their families have lived for generations. They may be given some land and a new house, but their graves and memories cannot be moved so easily. It is only after some time and new roots are developed that the new place becomes accepted as home (Fieldnotes, 2004). Even so, the old place still embodies part of their collective home and graves are maintained, if at all possible, a detail that people involved in land claims ought to be aware of.

The family with whom I lived, especially the three Duma brothers and their immediate family, is central to this thesis. Within a rural African community the immediate family includes grandparents, husbands, wives, children, first cousins and occasionally second or third, as well as uncles and aunts. These form a network of support and obligation centred on the *umuzi* and the recent extensions to new *imizi*. Children may move between these homesteads depending on family wealth and extenuating circumstances. At the *umuzi* I stayed at there was a circulation of children and youths between homes for a number of reasons. One young unmarried man had moved in from his father's *umuzi* in

¹⁸² Interestingly, a side note is the story by a San descendent from Underberg, Zanele Mkhawanzi (October 10, 2003) of her childhood memories of her grandmother painting clands on the walls inside of their home when she was a little girl.

order to help with chores and building as no other men of that age were available to help out. Another young man had moved in from the nearby Empendle location after finishing school as prospects for jobs were better here and more family members were working at Thendele. Smaller children, some of whom I never got to know, circulated around to attend closer schools and to stay with relatives while their mothers were working in town. Babysitting was never a problem as children could be dropped off with any family member without prior notice, as some young women or adolescent girl would be able to look after the children.

Being invited to stay with a local family was a great honour and they made me feel welcome. Not all of the members of community felt this way and there were a few uncomfortable experiences over the following years. My first stay with the Duma family ended abruptly as the family wished to have further discussions concerning my presence in the *umuzi*. Part of the family felt that I, like previous researchers with whom they had dealt, would record their stories and mythologies and never return copies of them despite promises made¹⁸³. During this meeting, accusations were levelled that I was involved with the previous researcher due to a misunderstanding over my name¹⁸⁴. I returned to Durban to wait, fearful that my research project had ended prematurely. I was worried I would need a new PhD topic. They phoned me two weeks later and I returned to Thendele and took up residence at their home.

The tension appeared to ease and months went by with no further incidence although I never interviewed or spoke to those members of the family during my stay. I discovered that the source of tension was a previous project to record myths of the Drakensberg and that those who told the stories believed they were to receive a copy of the unpublished material. This project was done by the KZN San Foundation which recorded stories from San descendents in the Drakensberg in 2002. The book had been delayed in publication and is not actually on the topic that the people expected. Isolda Mellett, the founder of

¹⁸³ Mythology from the area had been recorded and had never been returned to the community and they were still waiting for a copy of these recorded stories.

¹⁸⁴ Frans Prins had been involved and they mistook Francis and Frans as being the same surname.

the KZN San Foundation¹⁸⁵, told me in a phone conversation in September 2005 that the Foundation was no longer doing any work in the Drakensberg and was currently supporting some San elders on a farm near Underberg. This publication is actually to be about one individual, an Abatwa elder named Kerrick Ntusi and his life and stories he tells¹⁸⁶. He is an Abatwa elder from the Underberg area, south of the field-site. The misunderstanding appears to not lay with broken promises, but a lack of communication. The Duma family has little understanding of the publication processes and are not aware it may take some time to be actually released in print. The delay in publication was never explained to them, and one phone call would have set them at ease, as would a rough draft of their stories and transcripts. After this incident was cleared up and behind me I continued my fieldwork and things went smoothly for the most part. One matter that bothered me was with some people insisting on calling me *baas* (boss).

Baasskap and Apartheid Era Race Relations

This Afrikaans title I associate with the Apartheid era, connoting past relationships of inequality and it therefore placed me as part of the old system and not a member of the community. The first time I was referred to as *Baas* I asked the man to call me Michael instead and shook his hand. This man was exceedingly drunk and refused to let my hand go and continued to call me *baas*. He seemed to think I was being disingenuous and causing him some insult. The term *baas* has been pointed out to me as a potential term of endearment and respect (Tomaselli, per. Comm., 2006).¹⁸⁷ In my case '*Baas*' was uttered with derision as an insult and accompanied by a threat of violence. Other times I encountered this man followed a similar routine of *Baas* not *Baas*, till someone reintroduced us and explained that I was from *peshaya* (overseas) and too young to have been part of Apartheid. On one occasion he even threatened to attack me and he was

¹⁸⁵ I can no longer find any reference to the San Foundation's current work and as far as I know they are still supporting these elderly San descendents. They have no active website and I have no communication with them at the time of this thesis.

¹⁸⁶ Kerrick Ntusi is an elder from another community and lived in Underberg, south from my field site. He is said to have lived in a rock shelter up until 1920's and used to raid cattle in his youth until he was injured in a raid. He then went to live as a farm laborer looking after cattle (Fieldnotes, Prins, per. comm. 2004).

¹⁸⁷ Prof Tomaselli is called *Groot Baas* (big boss) by his Botswana !Xoo informants at Ngwale. The term connotes respect, not rank, while the #Khomani in the Northern Cape, South Africa, identify him as 'The Professor'.

physically ejected from the shebeen (informal bar) and then knocked down by the shebeen owner. He returned with a club to fight those who threw him out, but was dissuaded from attacking by some thrown rocks and threats by others. This was a terrible experience that revealed to me the depth of problems the legacy of Apartheid had sowed. As time wore on, I met with this man and shared beers with him with no incidence or violence. He explained to me that I was the first white person to ever shake his hand, share a beer with him, and talk with him as a friend, a sentiment that was echoed by so many others. He had experienced some horrible encounters while working on farms in the area and had been imprisoned for being in a 'white' area of town without a pass¹⁸⁸. Similarly, while visiting other *imizi* (plural for *umuzi*) I was often told that I was the first white man to enter their homes or that had shared dinner and drinks with them

On outlying farms corporal punishment by the white farmer against his workers was common under Apartheid (Suzman, 1999). In the Kalahari and some parts of KwaZulu-Natal I am told it still happens (Fieldnotes, 2004). Rural violence against white farmers is often heralded as a mystery, a result of racist thought against whites or some structural violence ingrained in rural communities (see Steinberg, 2002). The threat of violence against me as a white man in rural areas can be scary and visiting new communities on one's own can be daunting. I am associated with the past violence against the black population experienced by many farm labourers under Apartheid¹⁸⁹. Despite so many examples there are other positive instances and I do not wish to overstate the negative race relations in all rural communities. For example, this community has good relations with the local farmer, Mr. Mueller, from the large Riverside farm. However, the past continues to haunt the present and I am told that there are some 'white'-owned farms where employees are treated like property and racist slurs and abuse remain the order of the day (Fieldnotes, 2004; *New York Times* March 31, 2001). Some of the people who had experienced abuse under Apartheid associate all 'white' people with that past and

¹⁸⁸ The notorious pass laws of Apartheid South Africa prohibited the African population from entering 'white' areas of the country without official permission and were strangely titled: Natives (Abolition of passes and co-ordination of documents) Act (Act, No 67 of 1952; see also Louw, 2004).

¹⁸⁹ See also Sylvain (2001) for more information on *Baasskap* relations elsewhere in Southern Africa.

they are as a result difficult to meet. Over time I became a regular feature with my recorder and notebook and surprise reactions to my presence and queries disappeared.

Vincent Crapanzano wrote one of the rare ethnographies on the white population of South Africa. His book is concerned with;

social entrapment – with the way in which a people’s understanding of themselves, their world, their past, and their future limits their possibility. Potentially there is tragic dimension to entrapment but tragedy demands a kind of consciousness that is generally lacking in white South Africa. In that South Africa what could have been a tragedy is often little more than a tale of self-indulgence, cowardice, and bad faith (1985: x).

His book may be out of date following the ending of Apartheid, but many white people depicted in his book appear as bigoted and contradictory, echoing experiences shared by my own informants who worked on various farms from the Kalahari to the coast (Fieldnotes, 2003-2005). The abuses can range from having to call the farmer *baas* and consistently defer to him, riding in the back of the *bakkie* (pickup truck) even when it is cold while the dog rides up front¹⁹⁰, to being fired without notice or cause, to being beaten for mistakes¹⁹¹, assumed or real. There are even acts of murder such as driving over workers (Siso, April, 2004). Such events register as cause for dislike or even hatred of whites in rural communities by certain black people. Yet, this does not register with many whites, echoing Crapanzano’s tragedy lost in “self-indulgence, cowardice and bad faith” (1985: x). It was disconcerting to be initially included in such a category by certain people during my time in the field.

The time spent with my friends and informants at public events and socialising at the local shebeens eroded mistrust and all people I had encountered spoke to me civilly by the end of my fieldwork, even if declining to be interviewed formally. The social entrapment referred to above should not to be read as absolute as the local white farmer’s son plays football (soccer) with the local boys.

¹⁹⁰ This was echoed in the Kalahari by Vetkat Kruijer who spoke about being like a “gas-bottle” in the back of the *bakkie* (Kalahari Fieldnotes, 2004).

¹⁹¹ Interview Duzi, April, 2004.

Fieldwork Experiences as Subjective Encounters

These fieldwork experiences are of course subjective and may not be replicable by others in the same situation as me. The use of personal narratives is essential to the interpersonal nature of anthropological research. Some authors take their personal accounts as the heart of their research, where they use cultural reflexivity to "bend back on self and look more deeply at self-other interactions" (Ellis and Bochner, 2001: 740). The interaction between the researcher and their subject/s is highlighted through personalised narrative, written in the first person, and accompanied by personal anecdotes. It is seen as a "radical transformation in the goals of [their] work - from description to communication" (Ellis and Bochner, 2001: 748).

My role as interpreter of the events I experienced is shaped by my own background and life. I grew up in a rural community in Canada and our small honey farm was run by family labour. My experiences of rural life was not one of abject poverty, lack of infrastructure or services and serves as a counterpoint to the rural poverty of South Africa. Poverty in rural South Africa is a real threat to life and exhibits the worst type of deprivations. People may lack clean water, access to medical services and supplies, access to transport, and of course jobs. The simple act of collecting a pension requires a forty-five minute journey each way and a full day wasted (Fieldnotes, 2004-2005). The people of Thendele are luckier than other rural communities as the Drakensberg is well supplied with potable water¹⁹². Those who live further downstream fare worse as sewage, runoff, and waste accumulates,

The fact that I am Canadian with some Zulu language skills bought me a lot of social credit. I am asked why white people (from South Africa) never try to learn Zulu. While this may be untrue, as many whites, especially from farms, speak Zulu, the local experience is that few appear to have little interest in learning Zulu. I was the sole point of direct personal contact with white people for many. It is beneficial to be a foreign researcher as I often bypass expectations locals may have of white South Africans. I am

¹⁹² People in the community have run water pipes up into the mountain streams that feed into the Mooi River and most households have a stand pipe with unlimited potable water

white yet not part of the historically placed dominant group of South Africa; I existed in another category, with a few minor incidents¹⁹³.

Who I am as a researcher plays a role in my gaining access to remote communities. I am introduced as Michael from Canada (*peshuya*- overseas, for locals who are unaware of Canada's location). Another researcher from South Africa may find more barriers than me due to association with the past, especially those older than me who likely would have served in the army¹⁹⁴. A key informant moved to Thendele in the late 1980s from a Township outside Pietermaritzburg to avoid escalating violence during the height of violent anti-Apartheid movement and the low-grade civil war in Natal¹⁹⁵. His association of soldiers and white people with Apartheid has specific history and antecedents. His family also has a long memory of struggle; his grandfather was involved in the Bombatha Rebellion of 1906 and was a source for a book on the Rebellion¹⁹⁶.

It is an important step in research that one acknowledges how the people amongst whom we work perceive us and our relations with them. I am fully aware of the class difference between myself and some of my informants¹⁹⁷. These should not be overstated as one of my key informants is the principal of a high school at Loteni and, while he claims poverty, he is far from the majority of rural poor in Thendele. There are also others who played roles, direct and indirect, in my research who are well educated and part of this community through channels of remittances and family ties.

The social relationships that are formed in the field are a hallmark of social anthropology. These informants become integrated into our lives whilst in the field and some of our informants become long-term friends. Through these interpersonal relationships we learn

¹⁹³ I mentioned the man who threatened me at the Shebeen. A man in another location tried to open my *bakkie's* door and attack me while visiting some relatives of the Dumas (Fieldnotes, 2004). In contrast, the Botswana !Xoo are much more trusting of whites than blacks, whom they consider their oppressors.

¹⁹⁴ Conscription for all white males in South Africa ended in 1993 (*New York Times*, October 7, 1993).

¹⁹⁵ The internecine violence in KwaZulu-Natal and elsewhere in the 1980's affected many rural and peri-urban townships, (see Fredrikse 1986).

¹⁹⁶ I cannot find the reference due to incomplete author's name remembered by my informant (Mbelu, Fieldnotes, 2004).

¹⁹⁷ I consider myself middle-class even though I do not own property. My education and access to resources is different between me and the majority of my informants.

more details and nuances of village life. I was told of acts of theft and illegal activity and I have helped to skin and butcher a cow that may or may not have been stolen¹⁹⁸. I learnt of how one man was driven out of the community for theft of roofing materials and his house subsequently destroyed by vigilantes¹⁹⁹. These things would not be told to anyone, only those prepared to stay a long time and delve into the community and their lives.

Where I fit in is a difficult question to answer. I know of the racial differences that resonate with such an ugly history, as well as the class differences that perpetuate divides along racial lines. Yet, the family I stayed with refers to me as *Mfwethu* or brother as a term of endearment and mutual respect. I am introduced as Michael kaDuma (of the Dumas), giving me their surname, to assist in new introductions so I can be placed within social relations. This also helps ease myself into these new settings without having to explain in great detail how I, a white man, came to be attending a wedding or celebration where none have tread before. My difference in skin colour coupled with the understanding that I was there to learn about Zulus and Abatwa gave me access to women's dances at a wedding, where men do not attend (Fieldnotes, 2004; also see Krige, 1936: 120-158). It also gave me access to the head game ranger as he, also a white man, belonged to the same category as me and I was able to approach him as an equal. The locals and the staff at the nature Reserve do not feel free to approach his home or to interact with him socially. Access to local white farmers is similarly proscribed (Fieldnotes, 2004-2005). This pertains even though most are said to be a kind and generous employers; the social distance between them and the locals is telling. Despite the central role in supplying jobs and long-term contacts with the community they rarely interact with locals by attending weddings, funerals or parties.

The social distance between the few white people and the Zulu majority is clearly seen at a nearby restaurant, which opened in 2004. The race barrier is broken by one of my key informants of the Duma family. Fana Duma is the third oldest brother out of four (see family tree). He studied for a Master's degree in Afrikaans at the University of Zululand

¹⁹⁸ I do not claim to know and would not say if I did.

¹⁹⁹ Fieldnotes April, 2004. These events are not meant to depict the community in a bad way and I claim no knowledge of names of people involved in any of these events.

and is currently the principal of a high school at Loteni (Fieldnotes, December 2003). Due to his education and status as principal the social difference between him and local white people is reduced. He feels free to dine at a local restaurant whereas most do not. Many cannot afford to eat there, but even those who can often feel awkward or even threatened. During visits to the restaurant with other informants their discomfort was visible. A friend of mine felt threatened and refused to go to the restaurant on a Friday evening when it would be busy with local white farmers (Fieldnotes, June 2004). He was worried we might get beaten up for being friends across the racial colour bar by the more extreme racists.

Within the Drakensberg and across rural South Africa there are still many places where people of different race categories do not go and do not interact. Simple things from what is eaten and how it is eaten cause discomfort²⁰⁰. The barriers are also based on ignorance of what life is like in rural areas²⁰¹. The fear and media portrayal of attacks against 'whites' keeps most white people out of rural communities²⁰². In Thendele tourists on the way to the nature Reserve rarely use the local shop and none have yet to stop at the local bars even when invited by others and myself (Fieldnotes, 2004-2005). These communities are associated with imagined violence and the 'farm violence'²⁰³ is highly sensationalised in the media drawing on myths from the late days of Apartheid that the Shaka inspired 'Zulus are coming' or that all 'whites' will be driven out (see Tomaselli and Shepperson, 2002: 129). The reality is that violence and crime appear far from Thendele. I never had cause to feel in any real danger and never felt insecure about theft of my personal belongings²⁰⁴. The daily life was governed by social norms and standards to which I slowly grew accustomed, and it is to these to which I now turn - the

²⁰⁰ At the Eland Ceremony, discussed in Chapter 4, the Amafa official embarrassed the students visiting the Dumas home by her open disdain and revulsion at the food we were given (Fieldnotes, March 2003).

²⁰¹ See Posal for a discussion of the continued racial segregation within South Africa (2001).

²⁰² Articles such as 'Violence besets rural South Africa' (Carter, June 21, 2003) discuss in much detail the violence against the white farmers. This needs to be contrasted against the rarer articles such as 'South Africa: farm violence, enough is enough: two recent accounts of white farmers throwing their black workers to lions or driving their pick-up vans over them ...' (Siso, April, 2004).

²⁰³ There are frequent evocations of 'farm violence' that is marked in the media as something other than straight forward criminal actions (see Steinberg, 2002).

²⁰⁴ I had the opposite of having my wallet returned to me with cash still in it and my pocket knife was returned on four occasions as I lost it numerous times. I also felt no need to lock my vehicle at night and I used a small suitcase lock on the door of my hut that could not stop anyone let alone a determined thief.

banality of daily life and practice. The following is an overview of a common ritual activity in rural South Africa, drinking beer.

Utshwala, Beer, and ‘Hotstuff’: Drinking with the Amadoda

Ethnographic research has come a long way since Bronislaw Malinowski (1922:25) wrote his initial ideas on participant observation with his famous dictum: “The final goal of which the ethnographer should never lose sight ... is ... to grasp the native’s point of view, his relation to life, to realize his vision of his world”. Ethnography that purports to explain the entire life-ways of a people or a culture has all but disappeared.

Anthropology has been linked to racist thought, colonial pasts, sexualisation of the ‘exotic other’ and other negative connotations (Hammond-Tooke, 2001). New ethnographies focus on political or societal level structural issues of violence, development or influences that emanate from the dominant society (see Ferguson (1998) and Escobar (1994) on development; Taussig (1986) on capitalism; White (1994) on gender; and Comoroff (1985) on post-colonialism.)

Ethnography is not simply a collection of the exotic ‘other’; it is reflective of our own lives and cultural practices even when discussing another culture. Autoethnography involves the use of cultural richness for self-reflection and understanding the nature of the encounter. “How much of my self do I put in and leave out?” is the way Holman Jones (2005:764) frames the question. Instead of only questioning why people react as they do to the presence of researchers, we must also question social assumptions about the nature of research. An example from my department’s group research trips to the Kalahari is that of the wind that blows prohibiting the purchase and the slaughter of a sheep (Tomaselli, 2001). The Bushmen wax existential about the wind imbuing it with attributes and virtues that sap energy and so on. The metaphors are difficult to understand from an external view – on a certain level. A classic ethnographer could use Bushman metaphors and their relationship to the wind to discuss cultural behaviour,

including material structures such as *bomas*²⁰⁵ around fire pits, their hut structures, and the role of nature in their lives and how it informs their culture and so on. The more developmentally minded could use it to talk about lack of infrastructure and those bent on examining asymmetrical power relations could examine the history and political economy of the Kalahari that has made the Bushmen a set of vagrant squatters with little motivation or will.

All of these approaches offer some form of explanation and analysis that would be correct – they are not mutually exclusive. We do have to be aware of pushing forward western agendas, especially the developmental angle, but at the same time realize that these people have been, for better or worse, part of the world system and are stuck on the periphery (Wolf, 1982). Thus the wind blows, sheep may or may not be slaughtered, and other people in other parts of the world have other strategies, other understandings, and other behaviour. I make no apology for their difference or for representing it as different.

The task is to select an ethnographic moment – this is largely a literary tactic of how to write up an event and make it explain something more general about a people. The textual aspect of our research must be made clear, anthropologists are authors (Geertz, 1995). This is not to reduce the importance or the accuracy of what is said, but a challenge for academics to write well²⁰⁶. This follows from Geertz (1972) and his use of a singular event, a cockfight, to explain broader patterns within Balinese society. In the example that follows I select the banal act of beer drinking as one such moment that can be used to describe a wide range of things with Zulu culture. Zulu drinking as an ethnographic event plays a large part in socialization of Zulu society and is a cultural commonality²⁰⁷ shared with my informants that facilitated fieldwork and introductions. Such events as I describe pertain to all the ceremonies I attended over the years and my socialisation into the community.

²⁰⁵ *Boma* is a South African word for a wind break constructed around a fire pit typically constructed out of tree branches or woven grass as an outer perimeter around the camp site.

²⁰⁶ I aim to write clearly and concisely, we cannot all be as good as writers as Geertz (1995) or Sahlin (1994).

²⁰⁷ I would argue that Canadian men also have a beer drinking culture readily recognizable to Zulu men.

Dinner or drinks with people seem to involve little more than table manners and other mundane practices. However, it is these daily rounds that inform people's existence. This is not to wax existential about the banalities of daily life. It is these seemingly trivial acts that need our interpretations most, due to their taken-for-granted-ness. This brief description is based on long-term observations; the daily rounds are often the most difficult to interpret without such time being spent involved in the activities related here²⁰⁸. Due to the predominance of beer drinking I spent much time socialising over beer. *utshwala* or 'hot stuff' (brandy, vodka, or other spirits) during my fieldwork.

Utshwala is Zulu traditional beer brewed from sorghum and maize²⁰⁹. It was a standard beverage drunk often (Krige, 1936: 58-60). As a visitor to Zulu homes many people wished for me to try traditional beer²¹⁰ and I was taught the 'rules' that are to be followed when drinking traditional beer that differ when drinking bottles of beer. There are protocols to follow when drinking *utshwala*, such as removing one's hat, the tipping a small libation onto the ground for the ancestors, and it is a communal beverage shared from one beer pot²¹¹. It is generally passed from the oldest man around to the youngest. This drink that began as a ubiquitous product of every household is now generally produced only for special occasions. It is the rare household that always has *utshwala* on hand for every guest that may drop by. Houses with a ready supply are now shebeens (informal bars), where the beverage is made and sold for profit. Although *utshwala* has largely been replaced by quarts of mass produced beer, a good shebeen always has both.

The large 'quarts' of beer (750ml) follow some of the ritual practices from *utshwala* drinking. The beer is generally drunk communally, where the oldest has a drink from a glass then passes the glass to the next to be refilled and so on. There may be two bottles open at once and as long as the oldest has poured his glass then the other begins that

²⁰⁸ My first fieldwork interview was spent having a beer with Faku and Richard Duma after their first Eland Ceremony along with other graduate students from the University.

²⁰⁹ The recipes for traditional beer can vary from the historical record (Krige, 1936). One contemporary recipe is to take a large bucket of water, two loafs of bread shredded, one kilogram of sugar, two packs of bakers yeast and allow fermenting for 24 hours, strain and drink. This can be varied with the addition of pineapples as well or the use of two kilograms of corn flour in place of bread.

²¹⁰ Fieldnotes, 2003-2005.

²¹¹ Beer drinking vessels may be a traditional clay pot or even a small bucket or cooking pot.

round. Libations are not poured to the ground, but if a spill occurs someone often jokingly says; “that’s for the ancestors” (Fieldnotes, 2004). In rural areas the women do not drink with the men at the shebeens, and do not drink in front of the men, even if the men do so in front of them. There are exceptions of course. I have seen an elder and well-respected female sangoma enter a shebeen, drink a quart of beer with the men, without sharing or observing any of the general practices the rest usually follow (Fieldnotes, 2004). I was told that she represents a chain of male ancestors who called her to the trade and as such she is given free range of behaviour that is generally reserved for older men (Fieldnotes, 2004). The smaller cans or bottles (340ml) are typically drunk individually but in the same order of service. Drinking remains a social act, but the socialisation behind the act has changed. The amount of alcohol is a factor in the consequences of drinking but I will leave that issue aside. Social ills of drinking too much need not be stated by me, and though this community does have some alcohol related issues, it is far from the broken Kalahari communities I have witnessed²¹².

Most of the drinking occurs at the local shebeens whereas in the past it was done to welcome guests to one’s home, to honour the ancestors, and to enjoy after a hard day’s work²¹³. It now can mean all of these things, but the context has changed radically. The beer consumed at shebeens is bought and not made by individual households. It becomes a large expense for poor people. The social pressure on men to drink beer or other alcohol, as a regular part of their lives, appears to be quite high (Fieldnotes, 2004-2005). The commoditisation of the act has altered the parameters of socialisation processes. What is interesting is that in light of social change, even the most radical, is that we find: “The old conceptual oppositions on which scientific ethnography was founded are dissolving: we discover continuity in change, tradition in modernity, even custom in commerce” (Sahlins, 1993: 25). Thus:

Cultural continuity thus appears in and as the mode of cultural change. The innovations follow logically – though not spontaneously, and in that sense not

²¹² The Northern Cape community lives very much in the public and I have witnessed the acts and the results of heavy drinking and the ensuing violence during fieldwork trips in July 2003, June 2004, June 2005 (see also Tomaselli, 2005: 3; Bregin and Kruijer, 2004).

²¹³ This was told to me as a lament against alcoholism by a community member (Fieldnotes, June 2004).

necessarily - from the people's own principles of existence. Traditionalism without archaism (Sahlins, 1993:25).

Now reporting on social behaviour regulating drinking seems to imply that there are rules and practices that are observable and able to be pinned down²¹⁴. I discussed above that the “stuff of culture” is how meaning is being carried, which implies a structuralist sense of things (following from Bourdieu, 1972; 1981). The structuralist taint recognises the other social processes involved. The Thendele drinking circles exude a sense of traditional decorum, transmitted into a capitalist economic system as well as the current political milieu of rural KwaZulu-Natal. Young men and old men drink together based on political affiliation. The older men are supposed to drink first, but if one is not related to or specifically visiting with them then sharing is not enforced. Standards of age relations are not so strict anymore, and money matters as much as tradition. Drinking *utshwala* at ceremonies is much more rigid and practices are followed that stretch back beyond current memory (Krige, 1936). The context of drinking is impacted, especially when it is sold at bars removing it from a home context to that of a business. Only when the *utshwala* is placed and performed in a traditional ritualised context does it fit into the rules we can observe and a record that resonates with the past.

In the case of beer drinking much of it is easily observable, but what counts most is how it is used to explain social life writ large. Here we can draw on beer drinking to show gender divisions, Zulu age sets, accompanying norms concerning status and decorum, the breakdown of social norms (alcoholism, lack of respect, to name a few), respect and remembrance of the ancestors, cultural artefacts (beer recipes, Zulu pottery, etc), social change and capitalist penetration, to name some of the possibilities (for an example of how it may be argued that racial discourse, political control and economic practice became intertwined in the making of the African liquor market (see Mager, 1999).

²¹⁴ Despite the post-modern shift general rules of behavior can be found with the necessary caveats about non-totalizing explanations.

To reduce the beer drinking and associated social acts to issues of power and domination would miss the creative engagement with social reality by the people immersed within it. So we can use the beer drinking ceremonies and their changes to highlight more positive manifestations of culture, such as how the quart bottle has come to replace the beer pot and the glass the drinking gourd. This stuff may be the banalities of daily life, but they are also the creative expressions of the past in terms of the present. Just as “nothing exists in splendid isolation as a thing in itself, a self, a nation, any kind of identity. The signification of identity exists only in relation to something else” (McGuigan, 1999: 83). This idea does not mean that identity must be drawn in contrast to some ‘other’, but can also be in relation to those considered ‘same’, those who claim similar allegiance, aims and goal. This is reified through their rituals and the banality of daily life, in beer drinking and sharing, and through friendship and loyalty. It was through such banalities of daily life that I began to understand their lives in the Drakensberg.

Why Study Others?

The question then is why do we study others? This is equally true of hunter-gatherers or any ‘other’ society we study that is different from our own. In South Africa anthropology had close ties with the Apartheid state and was used to prop up Apartheid discourse and beliefs. This was especially true among Afrikaans anthropologists of the *Volkekunde* type (Hammond-Tooke, 1992). *Volkekunde* is the Afrikaans name for their particular style or tradition of anthropology that reified ethnic categories. Rob Gordon notes: “...white South African Afrikaans-speaking anthropologists have had an impact on government policy out of proportion to their numbers (1988: 535). He argued: “that Afrikaner anthropology has played a significant role in the legitimation and reproduction of the apartheid social order on two levels: as an instrument of control and as a means of rationalizing it” (Gordon, 1988: 536).

Other anthropologists used their knowledge to fight on behalf of oppressed peoples; even to the extent that David Webster lost his life due to his anti-Apartheid stance and research (Ellis, 1996). He was killed by the Civil Cooperation Bureau, the principal death-squad

setup by the Special Forces of the South African Defence Force. It had been suggested that the real reason for his murder was that he may have discovered that South African security forces involved in illegal smuggling of weapons, ivory and rhino horn to fund illegal acts abroad and locally (Ellis, 1994: 66). During the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings the former Civil Co-operation Bureau operative Ferdi Barnard confessed that he was the one who assassinated Webster outside his home in 1989 on orders from the Civil Cooperation Bureau. He is currently in prison for the crime (<http://www.dispatch.co.za/2000/09/28/southafrica/TRCWEBKI.HTM>).

Further afield, the creation of Cultural Survival in America is based on anthropologists applying their research and highlighting the plight of hunting-gathering peoples from forced change through land dispossession, language loss and violence²¹⁵. Many organisations exist that utilise anthropologists and anthropological knowledge to fight court cases, such as WIMSA and SASI, where Nigel Crawhall a Canadian linguist is currently recording and salvaging languages. He has also played a role in the creation of these institutions that support land and aboriginal rights in Southern Africa (see Crawhall, 2005a, 2005b). Many anthropological studies are concerned with subaltern or minority groups, but we must be conscious that ethnic or “cultural categorization alone is inadequate to relegate a group of people to marginality” (Motzafi-Haller, 1994: 54).

The interest in human difference is in part the legacy of an interest and belief in diversity of human cultural forms as well as the urge to seek out human universals. No matter how different we are we are all the same on some level. This notion is not entirely vanished, as race is now generally understood to be a social categorisation that says little about the people lumped under such a term as black or white. That is, we are all the same species (see Appiah, 1995). There exists no evolutionary difference between contemporary peoples whether they are hunter-gatherers or otherwise. This means that the hunters and gatherers of the world are no less evolved or any closer to our simian relatives. It is even seen now as spurious to link them to our Stone Age relatives of the past (see Wilmsen

²¹⁵ Cultural Survival was set up in 1972 by the anthropologist Mayberry-Lewis with his wife Pia, and it is involved in community radio, preservation of cultural artifacts, promoting the plight of indigenous peoples and various other projects (Cultural Survival, 2004-2005).

and Denbow, 1993 for example). The interest in marginalised peoples is often a desire for our research to have a positive impact on our subjects' lives; that our research has some benefit or at least brings awareness about their lives with the hopes of bringing about some amelioration.

Getting involved in other people's lives, whether it is for the sake of learning how they live and understand the world, to furthering human rights, is fraught with difficulties. Attempting to intervene in rural development may be paternalistic or do more for your own life than the 'beneficiaries' (Escobar, 1995). Attempting to rework a commonly held history and idea of the Southern San as extinct may seem an inconsequential endeavour. This is most clearly held by those academics who refuse to acknowledge that the Southern San still exist in a much-changed form (Mazel, 1996: 191; Jolly, 1996: 209).

My own role is compounded by a sense of futility, whereby I can do little to change the material circumstances of my informants' lives. I desire to get involved and to try and secure developmental goals, but seem to come up short caught as I am between my own studies and the illegality of working in this country without the correct visa. One such simple project we tried to launch in Thendele was to build toilets using as few resources as possible. I had previously volunteered with a small development NGO during my Master's field work (Francis, 2002) when I learned how to make a simple septic system out of old tires buried in the ground in a row. I learnt this from Rodney Harber, an architect with rural development experience (pers. comm., 2002).

The physical structures are the simplest part of development to create. Engineers and architects can be found to work pro-bono or be used for advice and building plans, but it is in the mess on the ground, in the field, the town, and the community that the difficulty begins (Francis, 2002; Gardner and Lewis, 1996). Problems arose even before I could begin collecting the needed supplies. I risked ostracising myself from some family members if we built toilets at only one *umuzi*. The solution of building eight toilets could solve this problem, but I did not have access to sufficient funds and did not have the time to be involved in the digging of the huge pits to make this possible. Tensions within the

family over wealth and its redistribution existed which would be augmented by aiding one side and not the other. Furthermore, many of my informants are not Dumas, and I would exclude them as well unless I decided to build twenty toilets, or so, across the community. I discussed building communal toilets in a central area of the village only to find that there is no central communal area viably placed to benefit everyone. I went from a position whereby I felt I could assist the community to realising that the exercise was so fraught as to cause more harm than good.

The point of this anecdote is to explain how difficult the notion of reciprocity is for the fieldworker anthropologist. Anthropologists have been under much critique especially in light of post-structural thought (see Said, 1978 for the opening salvo), and there has been much angst within anthropology as a discipline (Clifford, 1988, Barnard, 2000).

Anthropology is often accorded the harshest critiques, probably due to the close and interpersonal nature of our research as well its past colonial legacy (Hammond-Tooke, 2002). This close encounter based on reciprocal (ideally at least) relationships shapes our research and our time in the field. I am not allowed to pay rent in Thendele²¹⁶ so I attempt to assist the family with local transport (I could fit twelve people in my old Series III Land Rover), returning copies of photographs, lending library books and information, and keeping them abreast of events in the Kalahari that may concern them.

The roles we play as researcher depend on our own personal predilections and political stance. Science as a vocation (ala Weber, 1958) still infiltrates the social sciences where 'objectivity' and 'scientism' are the order of the day where a Truth that is verifiable, replicable and beholden to specific methodology borrowed from the natural sciences, still holds weight. I do believe that the results and findings within my research are open to verification by others; but what they mean could be radically different. Interpretations are always less than precise as we would like.

²¹⁶ It was decided as a family that they could not invite a guest to stay and then ask for money from me. They also wished to now cause jealousy within the community or to be seen as gaining financially through my presence.

The project in the Kalahari uncovered similar issues relating to poverty, development and research. The discourses of suffering, poverty and victimhood thus predominate within community relations - the so-called beneficiaries of development aid. Academics are often part of this enddistancing and alienation: they tend to insert walls of texts between themselves and the real world, thereby protecting themselves from getting involved (Malan, 1995). No matter how much comes in, the target community is more often than not always broke. And, their more assertive members always tell you so. However, researchers only learn this if they are there. Then when chaos erupts amongst the communities targeted for 'development', blame them, not the models, the funders or the government (Tomaselli, Dyll and Francis, forthcoming). Performing research among poor rural peoples can be frustrating and emotionally fraught exercise. The poverty and social exclusion experienced by our informants has serious ramifications. The following chapter examines these issues of access to land and resources.

Chapter Six - Poverty and Parks: Rural development, rural poverty and structural violence

“Remembered places have often served as symbolic anchors of community for dispersed people” (Gupta and Ferguson, 1992:11).

The cycle of poverty

The rural poverty cycle is a brutal trap for many people. The youth understand all too well the subsistence nature of agriculture that is possible to them and, as such, they have no interest in farming. The youth realise that a life of subsistence agriculture is futile in terms of wealth creation in the capitalism sense²¹⁷. Moreover, many people have little access to land even if they wished to engage in cash crop farming. In Thendele there are plots of land available for farming and most families here do sow and tend these gardens. Family garden plots and the associated work is mainly performed by the women here. Within the Duma family the young men and boys perform chores such as cutting firewood and mending fences, rounding up the cattle and they even do their own laundry. They also cook quite often, preparing lunches and breakfast before work. Strict gender divisions surface more often, like the beer drinking norms, at ceremonies and larger public events. The landowners strictly regulate access to meaningful plots of land and no expansion is readily available even if so desired.

Access to land is a powerful issue in South Africa with millions living in shantytowns and peri-urban areas (Freund and Padayachee, 2002). In rural communities the land issue is also emotive as plots of land generate little if any income, usually augmenting food purchases. The youth do not desire to farm and in Thendele some plots lie fallow and filled with weeds. Even more frustrating for local youth is that they lack access to jobs. Those unable to find jobs in urban centres return to sit idle, unable to secure work locally

²¹⁷ Interview with Thobani Duma (Fieldnotes, April 2004). I also heard similar things from other young men who dreamed of regular jobs and a life in the city (Fieldnotes, 2004-2005).

and unable to afford to live elsewhere while looking for employment. Some of the youth have university degrees and certificates from colleges and training programmes (Fieldnotes, 2004-2005). Savings are scarce or nonexistent and the youth become trapped and unable to seek out employment elsewhere. The subsistence nature of rural communities helps to maintain their unemployment as the youth are needed to maintain the homestead for which their labour is needed²¹⁸. The unemployment of the educated also reflects the lack of affordable transport. People cannot afford to attend job interviews or seek jobs. They also lack regular access to the print media to look through the help-wanted ads at the back (Fieldnotes, March, 2005).

The few who are employed locally do very well compared to those with chronic unemployment, even though local wages are very low and jobs²¹⁹ often sporadic. The cost of living is low as rent (if it is even paid) is only 450 Rand per plot for the year with most families having two plots per *umuzi*, one for the homestead and one for a larger garden. The subsistence crops and chickens raised offset some of the monthly grocery purchases. Another large source of income for some families is remittances from urban relatives that have regular employment. Poorer families may even send their children to live with better off relatives or to be closer to a decent school, which are few and far between in rural KwaZulu-Natal²²⁰.

The schools are shockingly equipped as they lack textbooks, electricity, desks, toilets, sports equipment, and many other basic supplies (Fieldnotes, 2003-2005). The graduates from rural communities can hardly compete at university or colleges, as their education is marginal in comparison²²¹. Individuals here have received some further education but

²¹⁸ The young men cut firewood, care for cattle, build houses, thatch roofs and do daily chores. Young women fetch water, do laundry and care for youngsters. The division of labour is not absolute and the youth often do chores that would be normally assigned to the other gender.

²¹⁹ The jobs locally available are on dairy farms, back burning grass annually in the Reserve, digging potatoes and other vegetables as seasonal work, fencing at the reserve or farms, housekeeping and tour guiding at the reserve, and a few small businesses such as small shops for household goods and shebeens.

²²⁰ I did my Masters fieldwork with a small NGO that built schools in communities that had a complete lack of infrastructure for schooling (Francis, 2002).

²²¹ The local high school lacks text books, has no computers and does not have enough teachers of specific subjects such as math, science and English and these are a striking contrast against certain wealthy urban schools with swimming pools, sports fields, proper laboratories, plenty of teachers and resources.

upon completion they return home to poverty and are unable to even look for work. The transport here is better developed than elsewhere, as semi-regular kombi taxis (mini-buses) and large buses run to larger towns nearby. But these are generally used for supply runs and emergencies, as the cost is too high to use regularly if one had a job in town²²².

Thendele is divided into three sections of land held by three separate Zulu landowners who are said to live in Johannesburg (Fieldnotes, 2004). According to informants these men have owned the land for decades having received it from previous white landowners in the seventies (Mncube, Fieldwork March, 2004). Even prior to these white landowners the land had a long history of black ownership²²³. It was owned by Lazarus Xaba, who was Cetshwayo's interpreter when he went to Europe. This information seems correct as Cetshwayo had an interpreter Lazarus Xaba who was from Edendale and had also been an assistant to Sir Theophilus Shepstone (see Guy, 1994). Cetshwayo had been sent abroad to England to plead for his kingdom after the destruction of the Zulu Kingdom in 1879 (Guy, 1994). I do not know more of Xaba locally, but it is an interesting sideline to see if he is this historic figure or merely shared the name. The land was owned by Xaba until 1948 when it was sold to two white ladies who subsequently sold it to the current land owners (Mncube, Fieldnotes, March 2004). The current land owners charge the local population rent based on a per annum lease premised off of long-term occupancy. Most of the families have been there for multiple generations and others have moved in recently. The more recent arrivals often have extended family in the community or were shifted from Game Pass a few kilometres away, and as such were de facto part of the greater community sharing schools, transport routes and social connections extending back through the generations.

Aspects of rural identity feed into the cycle of poverty. The maintenance of the rural homestead and the refusal to leave it to seek employment elsewhere feeds into a cycle of

²²² Many men from the community used to work in Mooi River at a textile plant and commuted daily on buses that ran direct to the factory. These were much sought after jobs and when the factory was open and employment high among the men the commute was affordable.

²²³ I dislike using such racial terms as an analytic category, but due to specifics of South African history and social categorisation I am obliged to use these terms to remain true to my informants who gave me this information and for the comments to have relevance in a still highly racialised context of South Africa.

unending poverty. With rural African life so intimately tied to the land and landscape the importance of rural development is apparent. Urbanised and Europeanised leaders, despite race or ethnicity, fail to grasp the importance and desire of African people to stay in the rural communities and build and continue a meaningful existence there. The social, political, religious/spiritual ties to land are ill understood or misunderstood. It waits to be seen what significant development in terms of infrastructure will be put into these communities, but to date government-led development has been in the form of road improvements and the building of a community centre on the edge of the community. The centre had been unoccupied for four years and weeds grew up around it, making a new building look derelict and forlorn. It was never opened and used to date and the community did not understand why it was built as they have development forums where they discuss development needs and wants of the community. The hall was seen as a waste of resources as the school already serves as a community hall. Locally led development projects took the form of running water being installed at many homes by running water pipes from high up the mountain springs and allowing gravity to pump water to the homes. Local development that was desired was a betterment of the school by adding in electricity, more books (text books and reading material), another footbridge over the river, cultural tourism projects (in the style of Simnuye discussed above) and access to grazing land for their cattle.

Competition Over Resources Between the Parks and People

South Africa has many national parks, reserves and numerous private conservation areas. There is a history of dispossession that accompanied the creation of these but I will not repeat this here. We should however note that when we consider the communities that live outside the parks that the “national Parks [of South Africa] have traditionally been run by whites for the recreation of whites” (Ellis, 1994: 54). The Kamberg Nature Reserve was proclaimed in 1913²²⁴ as a protected area and was expanded in 1990 with

²²⁴ This information is from a signpost within the reserve and from a discussion with the head ranger at Kamberg Valley.

the sale of a large farm, the Game Pass Farm²²⁵. This extended and connected the Drakensberg protected areas into one cohesive and contiguous territory. The previous owner of the farm was not a willing seller and currently lives at Nottingham Road where he owns another farm²²⁶. The consolidated Drakensberg Park, also known as oKhahlamba²²⁷, was established in 1997 by the KwaZulu Nature Conservation Management Act and the 1998 Republic of South Africa National Forests Act. It is now the largest protected area on The Great Escarpment of the southern African subcontinent.

In the Drakensberg, the locals are competing with the parks and nature reserves for access to resources found within the Reserve²²⁸. Once these were grand farms and the locals a pool of labour, now they are nature reserves with a limited need for labour and the rural poor are generally excluded. Current practices allow for minimal use of the land by the locals, such as: gathering of thatching for roofs - half of which is 'given back' to KZN Wildlife; the gathering of wood, serving to eradicate alien species from nature reserves; visits to rock art sites accompanied by guides. These minimal use practices prevent destruction of the Reserve, a World Heritage Site, and facilitate policing borders by acting as buffers between farms and Lesotho - echoing past practices of placing Nguni peoples between the Drakensberg and 'white' owned farms to stop 'Bushmen' raids (Mazel, 1996: 191).

Expansion is impossible due to the geographically bound parameters of the community. As the population grows homesteads become crowded and land overgrazed. The contestation over land is a 'terrain of struggle' in both the geographic and the cultural senses. The cultural terrain is that of claims of ownership by the tenants, the refusal to pay rent by many and the misappropriation of resources held by those external to the

²²⁵ The Game Pass is a large mountain pass that leads through the mountains and is named after the game species, mainly eland that use this to travel between the high mountain plains and the lower grasslands as they follow the seasons.

²²⁶ He contest the expropriation of his farm without success (S. Brummer, Interview 2004).

²²⁷ This is a gloss on the Nguni name for the mountain range, *uKhahlamba* - Barrier of Spears.

²²⁸ Resources found within the Reserve that are largely unavailable outside it are medicinal plants, firewood, grass for thatching, grazing land and more land for homes and fields.

community²²⁹. This involves the theft of wheels off of the Park's Toyota²³⁰, theft of cattle²³¹ and fencing materials, and basic feelings of ill will towards wealthier neighbours. The cultural struggle impinges on material relations, but to misconstrue it merely as a material struggle is to miss the deeper meanings involved. The desire to expand the community carries with it a sense of justice based on past injustices. The Duma family wishes to gain land within the Park due to past occupation. This previous occupation is not merely used by the Duma family to recover economic losses, but to re-appropriate status and identity as Abatwa. The graves of their ancestors are neglected and are fading in the grass. Access to the rock art shelters is limited (Fieldnotes, 2003-2005).

The Reserve embodies a tension between protected areas and the local population. The bureaucracy that needs to be navigated by the Duma people to access their sacred sites and ancestor's graves points to the contestation between reserves and local communities' use of such areas. The relationship between the local people and the Reserve sounds almost feudal in nature as people help reproduce its needs without remuneration for the right to access and use the resources. The Reserve permits limited use of the land such as the collection of firewood and for harvesting grass for thatching of roofs. Both practices are allowed in so much as they also benefit the Reserve. The women that harvest the grass for thatching send half home and half to the Reserve for use by Ezemvelo Wildlife's roofing needs across the province²³². According to Ruth Kibirige, a similar practice occurs in other parks across KwaZulu-Natal where women harvest three for themselves and one for the park which is said by the Parks board "to promote sustainable utilisation" (2003: 24).

This is a form of exploitation of local women's labour. This also implies a subordinate relationship between local poor women and the management of the reserve. I argue that such a practice is exploitative as poor rural women's labour is utilised to harvest nature

²²⁹ I refer to the Parks staff that do not live within the community but within the Park itself, including the farmers in the area.

²³⁰ The wheels were stolen from one of the Park's vehicles in March 2004 and left it sitting on blocks

²³¹ Farmers along the Drakensberg occasionally have their cattle stolen and driven into the mountains, which often means they had to pass through a Zulu village and people claim to not have noticed.

²³² Brummer, Interview, Fieldnotes, March 2004.

for the benefit of a provincial organisation. The firewood the women collect is from an alien invasive species of tree²³³ so its collection is free labour used to benefit the Reserve and the purposes of conservation. Such a practice also benefits Ezemvelo Wildlife in general as the thatching is sent to other reserves for maintenance and building of chalets and other buildings. Often the perception is that locals residing next to protected areas bear some of the costs with little of the benefits (Kibirige, 2003: 25).

The gathering of natural materials from the Reserve is an activity that locals believe should be free as part of the historic debt based on past and current dispossession (Fieldnotes, 2004-2005). Others see that the harvesting for the benefit of Ezemvelo Wildlife should be paid labour for the same reason and for an injection of capital into a desperately poor community. The parks do provide job opportunities to a few. Most people are aware of the limits in terms of employment, and see a similar case in other rural communities not adjacent to parks or reserves. Romantic visions of Africa lead to the belief that conservation is merely “a technical exercise devoid of political considerations. In reality, “conservation requires government to control land and the people and animals which occupy it” (Ellis, 1994: 54).

The idea that the Kamberg Reserve is part of public property held in trust by the government through Ezemvelo Wildlife seems to be generally understood. The lack of benefits arises from inaccessibility of the Park to most people. It is a source of grass thatching and of wood for some, but is also a limiting factor in the growth of the community. Its border is as solid as the mountains to the east and west and the farm to the south. The land within the park is often overgrown close to the settlement and is burnt off each year. While burning is part of the natural cycle of the grasslands it only occurs now through human intervention (Brummer, Interview, March 2004). Many people see wasted grazing land where their cattle have limited fields – limiting growth of herds. There are few signs of overgrazing in the community and complaints have as much to do with lack of wealth in cattle as they do about lack of pasturage. These

²³³ I was told it is called wattle gum and is an alien Australian species (Brummer, Fieldnotes, March 2004).

comments arise from local people's feelings that they do not, or rarely, benefit from the creation and expansion of the nature reserve.

There is an understanding about the role of nature reserves in the preservation of nature and wildlife, but the few jobs and opportunities within the Reserve, builds resentment. Resentment shows in the theft of building materials, fencing and even the wheels off of a park vehicle. These 'everyday forms of resistance' (Scott, 1985) do little to engender goodwill between locals and the park. Outspoken individuals, who have commented on relations with the Park and voiced complaints whilst working on jobs inside the Reserve, were not hired back the following year and accusations of theft were alleged against community members (Anon, Fieldnotes, 2004). The characterisation of some people as untrustworthy by Reserve employees does little to engender goodwill. The reality of who is or is not a thief is immaterial and I do not know anyways.

The exclusion from the land harks back to when people were first moved during the creation of the Reserve in 1913²³⁴ and even further back to the advent of the settlers to the Drakensberg Mountains²³⁵, but also resonates with recent moves whereby people were evicted starting in 1988 and going through to 1990 when the Reserve was expanded again. The resentment is worsened due to ancestors' graves that are located within the Reserve²³⁶, which they are allowed to visit. The Dumas wish to clear the graves and establish a fenced graveyard within the Reserve, but they have failed to secure funding to do so and do not have permission to erect fences around the graves (Fieldnotes, July, 2004). The Dumas also refuse to do the work themselves despite being able to utilise the labour of local relatives for free²³⁷. The refusal to clear the graves themselves points to the political importance of sites within the Reserve as points of contention and leverage. Grave sites are very important for the Zulu people and for the contemporary Abatwa

²³⁴ Plaque in the Kamberg Nature Reserve (Fieldnotes, September 2003).

²³⁵ The first settlers in the Drakensberg here would be mid 1800s (Ellenberger, 1912; Fox, 2004)

²³⁶ Interview Faku Duma July, 2003; Fana Duma August 2004; Richard Duma June 2003. Fieldnotes, 2003-2005.

²³⁷ I tried to organise this with them but I was unable to motivate participants (Fieldnotes, 2004-2005).

people (Krige, 1936: 159-175²³⁸). These graves could be cleared, but if they are not allowed to mark them clearly as graves or to section the land off to avoid the graves being trampled upon or destroyed completely there is little point in cleaning the plants off of them.

The graves could be relocated by a sangoma without moving the physical remains. According to sangomas the souls of the ancestors could be moved to a new location using *Inyathi* thorn tree branch (Buffalo Thorn)²³⁹. This ritual is most commonly used when a family moves or in the case of a tragic accident the soul may be transported home from the scene of the accident. While this ritual is quite common in Zulu communities, no one has the desire to enact it²⁴⁰. This is in part the desire to maintain a centre within the Reserve with the hopes of future gains from the park, but most importantly the land around the graves and up to the rock art site is of importance. The removal of the ancestors from the Reserve would diminish the significance of their claims and further remove the contemporary Abatwa from their San ancestors who are seen to be located within the Reserve and at the rock shelters. The spiritual sites within the Reserve are often located around rock pools and at the numerous rock art sites that cannot be moved or recreated²⁴¹. They wish the graves to remain in close proximity to the rock art sites as the graves contain Abatwa ancestors.

The access to sacred sites within the Reserve is also controlled by the earlier relationships of inequality created under Apartheid. Above I discussed the social distance between white and black people in the rural areas. This relationship also prevents people from fully accessing the Reserve. If local people wish to travel to the *Amanziphila* (living

²³⁸ She does also note that there was a time when only kings and chiefs were buried and the rest disposed of in the bush (Krige, 1936: 160). I know nothing of this practice and found the graves to be of extreme importance for families (Fieldnotes, 2003-2005).

²³⁹ Fieldnotes, March, 2004. This was also told to me during my Masters Thesis research in another Zulu community and appears to be a widespread practice.

²⁴⁰ The Dumas are traditional healers and the one sister could do the ceremony herself but has not done so.

²⁴¹ The KwaZulu-Natal San Foundation had a rock shelter painted at Escourt in the Midlands for the San descendents they look after, but it is not considered to be sacred by my fieldworkers. The Foundation had suggested that a new site be found and painted for the Dumas for ceremonies, outside of the Reserve. This was rejected by the Dumas. Richard was adamant that such a site would have no significance to them (Fieldnotes, December 2003; April 2004).

water) waterfall to collect water for religious rites they must obtain permission from the game ranger²⁴². Yet, the social distance makes this a difficult task. Many people are uneasy with approaching local white people to ask for permission, and others do not feel they should have to²⁴³.

The recent claims to a San identity coincided with developments of rock art sites as viable tourist enterprises and media interest in the San of the Drakensberg. This is often cited as one reason not to believe the Abatwa people and their claims. Such contestations of authenticity fail to grasp that San descendents have a long history of drawing upon their heritage as a strategy for survival and employment. San descendents have a history of being employed as rainmakers and healers²⁴⁴. Rock art sites also have a long history of development as places to see and visit for both African and European peoples. The claims being vocalised tie into local economic and, especially, social structures; just as I opened my thesis with a discussion with an old sangoma whose memory of the past is that the Zulu and the San “have always gone together”²⁴⁵. The use of the rock art sites is not novel to the local people. The Duma brothers told me stories of their grandfather sitting with them in the rock shelters telling stories of their Abatwa ancestors who hunted in the valleys below²⁴⁶. The continued struggle to access the sites within the Reserve is still ongoing, and is also related to the exclusion from the Reserve in general.

Above I mention the past claims and articulations of ethnicity as ways of fitting into the economic and social structures of a community. These claims were used in the past to gain employment as healers and rainmakers. The Abatwa family with whom I resided have a long tradition of being *inyangas*, *sangomas* and rainmakers. Two out of the four

²⁴² The head ranger allowed access. It is his role as the boss and employer that cause people to hesitate to visit him freely. People would be hesitant or refuse to accompany me to visit him at his house. This was not a dislike or mistrust of him I must note, he was well respected by the community.

²⁴³ The local white population is limited to Mr. Brummer in the Reserve, Mr. Green at Riverside Farm and his family, and one other household of a retired couple on the edge of the Reserve that has no role in the Reserve or community and a few people with connections to the reserve but do not live there fulltime.

²⁴⁴ Oral histories of the Dumas report this as well as local Zulu elders (Interview Mr. Ncobo, September 2004). The rock art also depicts rainmaking scenes (Lewis-Williams, 2004).

²⁴⁵ Bonakele Sibisisi Fieldnotes, August 2004.

²⁴⁶ Fieldnotes, June 2003; December 2003; March 2005.

brothers are well known as respected *inyangas*²⁴⁷ as the information was passed down through the generations. One day we journeyed up the mountain passes to look at some other rock art sites rock paintings. The pictures were very faded and they had last seen them as children when they lived at the base of the pass. The main reason for making the journey was to collect medicines²⁴⁸. Their knowledge of plants and their medicinal uses is remarkable and they earn some extra money through cures and remedies (Fieldnotes, 2004-2005). Their knowledge is not unique to them as Abatwa and it is shared with Zulu *inyangas* and *sangomas*, even though some of the knowledge of the plants is said to come from San knowledge²⁴⁹. Medicines too numerous to list here appear as remedies for hail prevention, lightning prevention, prevent miscarriages, headaches, snake bites, bladder infections, kidney stones, coughs, and a variety of other ailments (Fieldnotes 2004-2005). These medicines are collected and often shared with local Zulu healers (Fieldnotes, 2004). The main ailments they currently treat with San derived plants are stomach-ache, kidney or bladder infections and treatment for snakebite.

An interesting historical note on similar treatments is offered by Douglas Blackburn of Loteni who sent in these replies to an enquiry about aboriginal medicine that had been queried in the scientific journal *Man*:

No European treatment for snake-bite, for instance, is as good as theirs, and Englishman though I am, and brought up in a medical family, I would rather ride fifty miles to be treated for a puff-adder bite by a certain witch doctor than go ten to the district surgeon. I have twice been under treatment by them for bite, and though the physic is nauseous, and I was not too eager to know of what it consisted, I was free from pain within two and three days respectively. Persons similarly bitten and treated by English methods suffer agonies for weeks. Dysentery and gravel or stone in bladder they treat with marvellous results. Their surgery is, however, the crudest butchery and often fatal (1904:182).

²⁴⁷ Best translation is herbalist or traditional medicine man.

²⁴⁸ The day we went into the Reserve we joked about going poaching and it could be argued that this is what we did.

²⁴⁹ Some of the medicines for curing earaches and kidney infections grow high up in the mountains and their ancestors have collected them for as long as they remember (Fieldnotes, Richard Duma, July 2004).

The Duma family would have been in the Loteni area at this time and as they are a family of healers. They could have been the healers referred to here as Loteni is not a large community, especially not 100 years ago²⁵⁰. They also treat a plethora of smaller aches and pains and treat people with preventative medicine against lightning and witchcraft or jealousy. In fact most people here have scars on the back of their hands where medicine was applied in incisions in order to prevent lightning strikes.

The local healers are not allowed to collect herbs and plants from the Reserve. I learnt of medicine for coughs and for ear ache, stomach and bladder complaints, all available up the passes high in the Drakensberg. Many of these plants were not available outside the mountain passes, thus unavailable outside the Reserve. Most of the plants also appear in the book *Medicinal Plants of South Africa* and have been tested for efficacy (Gericke, 2002). Similarly, many sacred sites within the Reserve are unable to be visited without an external interlocutor. It is required for people to obtain permission to hold ceremonies or access important sites within the Reserve. Women who collect firewood and thatching, however, do not need to obtain permission on a daily basis as they have a general long-term agreement²⁵¹. Activities that benefit the Reserve are welcomed while activities that benefit the people only are regulated and controlled. Access to the rock art sites is based upon Amafa's rules that claim to be for the preservation of the archaeological heritage, but also preserve the sites for pay-tourism. Amafa's role as protector of South African heritage is not a simple one due to these complex relations between use and the need to preserve the sites.

The use of the reserve is a contested terrain as the mandate of the reserve is to protect a fragile ecosystem from degradation, and in some cases to rejuvenate land damaged by farming practices of the past. If locals were to be allowed unfettered access to the reserve there could be irreparable damage to the reserve and the ecosystem. Unfettered access could also allow for illegal activities such as poaching or running drugs across the

²⁵⁰ Fieldnotes, April 2004. Even today I estimate the Loteni population at no more than 2000 people.

²⁵¹ During my fieldwork I could see women going daily into the Reserve to collect firewood or thatching and only during days of really poor weather did I not witness this (Fieldnotes, 2003-2005).

border²⁵². All of these concerns are fair and the Duma family understands why the reserve exists and why unlimited access would destroy it. What the Dumas wish for is access solely for traditional and personal reasons that reflect their cultural connection to the land and the area. Free access to the rock shelters or collecting medicinal plants by a family that lived within the bounds of the reserve until 1990 does not appear to be a threat to the ecosystem or the mandate of the reserve. This contestation of land use reflects the Duma's claim to aboriginal identity. They wish to highlight their direct connection to the protected lands and protected sites in order to leverage fair use of the land according to their traditional role as healers and their status as Abatwa. They do this without desire to reify past hunter-gatherer practices, but are discussing contemporary practices of remembrance and their role as healers in the community.

Selling Ethnicity and Development

Romantic attempts to maintain the image of the San as hunter-gatherers is argued to harm political/social movements as it maintains the San as something other than part of society²⁵³. By keeping the San and their descendents as separate from the rest of society means that we can expect to see them to continue begging on the periphery of game reserves, doing marginal craft projects, and generally living in a cycle of dependency and poverty. Craft projects that 'celebrate' Bushman as distinct and special do little, if anything, to empower and build viable skills to play a constructive role in society²⁵⁴. These projects are meant to celebrate their distinctness, but in reality reinforce racist stereotypes, exclude other rural poor, and contribute few real benefits to the people desperate for a meaningful and viable lifestyle.

²⁵² Game guards and military patrol the reserves to stop drug running, cattle theft and to protect the game from poachers.

²⁵³ There is a very heated debate between Survival International's director Steven Corry and James Suzman in 'Kalahari conundrums' (2003). I engage this debate below in Chapter 7.

²⁵⁴ See Caleb Wang's (2000) Thesis *Is pro-poor Tourism Viable? Cultural tourism as sustainable development in Zulu and Bushman Communities* for an in depth discussion of issues of empowerment and poverty alleviation through cultural tourism.

The San in general are used to attract tourists to the Drakensberg²⁵⁵. The rock art sites are visited for a fee and every park I visited sold San 'art' as tourist trinkets. Companies have employed people to make replica cave paintings for tablecloths, fridge magnets, postcards, birthday cards, actual painted rocks and many other similar objects. Objects for sale represent the Kalahari San culture. There are tiny 'love bows' supposedly used to show affection for a girl by shooting the arrow at her, as well as larger bows and arrows that all were made in the Kalahari. Pictures and postcards are sold that depict San in the Kalahari Desert (Fieldnotes, 2003-2005). These representations draw on images from the Kalahari San transposing the 'generic' San from the Kalahari to the Drakensberg. This is inaccurate in terms of the historic and more recent prehistoric populations of the Abatwa. It is also inaccurate in terms of how the Kalahari San of today actually live.

Locally some of these images and ideas were created by a company based in the Midlands of KwaZulu-Natal, called Everything Ethnic, which had employed twenty people²⁵⁶ then reduced that number to five then finally closed the Thendele workshop within six months of opening (Fieldnotes, January, 2004). The community was upset as they had been promised jobs and only received part-time temporary work. No Abatwa were employed in the centre at that time and yet Everything Ethnic claims that its crafts were made by San descendants in the Drakensberg²⁵⁷. They do have craft projects elsewhere, but the majority of the 'Bushman' art was made by non-Bushmen. They sell a people's ethnicity for a profit while those whose ethnicity it is do not benefit.

At the Kamberg Nature Reserve the Game Pass Shelter is a large tourist attraction as people take guided walks and watch a short documentary video on the people of the Drakensberg. The video, *Game Pass Shelter* (2000), is available for sale and is one of

²⁵⁵ The image of the San appears on brochures, websites and in all the reserves in the Drakensberg that I visited had San derived crafts available and books on the rock art.

²⁵⁶ These were mainly household items, such as table cloths, oven mitts, placemats, and coasters, with rock art images copied onto them. They also painted small rocks with rock art images on them.

²⁵⁷ The accompanying labels on the products they sold make this claim (Fieldnotes, March 2003).

the few documentaries that depict the Drakensberg San as still extant²⁵⁸. Some of the stories presented in the video and during the guided walks to the rock art site are embellished for the tour, and also were embellished during the making of the video by the locals: “anthropologists not only record ethnographic information and ritual performance. They may also unintentionally promote its invention” (Jolly, 1997: 110). In Thendele the stories I refer to below were embellished for the tourists, but they were not created solely for the tours²⁵⁹. They resonate with old myths and legends and variations of many of these stories were told to me during my stay. Some of the discrepancy also comes from the differences within the community as some myths are shared and some are not.

This also pertains to my writing as I gather stories and histories I give weight to some and ignore or exclude others. This may unwittingly lend credence and permanence to certain myths over and above local community importance. The rock art tours often promote certain myths that may become incorporated into local and even national discourses as truths whether or not they are believed by the local community. The stories told to the tourists have an antecedent locally, but are much transformed in the public telling for the tourists and given a sense of reality and permanence that they may not deserve. The following story of Thwalenye is one such example.

²⁵⁸ The San Interpretive Centre at Cathedral Peak north of the fieldsite also depicts the San as extant in a much changed form. Frans Prins consulted on both of these projects as did local people from the Drakensberg (Fieldnotes, 2003-2005).

²⁵⁹ Some other stories I was told were also embellished for me and their performance was as interesting as the details. I do not wish to overstate Jolly's (1997) position on this as it may unintentionally strip the actors of the narratives of agency in their own myth-making as the researchers influence is overstated.



Figure 17: Thwalenye

In the film and during the rock art tours the rock feature *Thwalenye* (rock carrying a rock in isiZulu) was said to be used for inducing pregnancy. The myth is that women who have difficulty conceiving climb this mountain to pray to the spirits of the mountains. Ignoring any possible phallic imagery, it appears as a truth for tourists who pass through Kamberg Nature Reserve. Yet, nobody in the village actually climbs this mountain to pray for a child and nobody I had spoken to knew of anyone that had done so. The story was heard first by certain locals when they saw the film *Game Pass Shelter* (2000) when they went on the rock art tour in the Nature Reserve. Other people reported to me that in the past people used to go there to pray for children.

Thwalenye was probably used in the past, but its current importance is in the cultural tourism within the Reserve²⁶⁰. Other myths are still very important, but there is a tension between local myths and translating them into sound bites for tourists as they are embellished and changed to make them interesting.

If we take representation in the media, "[as] an always partial and selected construction, the message can always only be someone's or some group's understanding. The question of truth and reality are in this way inappropriate measure for media analysis (Prinsloo,

²⁶⁰ This section is based on a series of Fieldnotes from 2003, 2004, 2005 and included interviews and conversations with the rock art tour guides, especially Promise and Rafiel, and Zulu elder Mr Mncobo.

1996: 42). The media has a role to play in disseminating information, but more often than not it echoes stereotypes and attitudes already present within society. There are more sympathetic accounts, but myths are maintained in such articles as 'Bushmen: Nature's Gentle People' (de la Harpe, 2002: 8-10). These 'gentle people' used to be the 'wild Bushmen' who were hunted like vermin and were so threatening that George Stow had soldiers accompany him into the Kalahari at the turn of the last century (1906). The 'gentle people' or 'nature's people' type of discourse echoes paternalism that borders on racism, where 'Bushmen' are victims of their own culture unable to survive, "their lifestyle all but exterminated by the aggressive cultures of others" once farmers, herders and colonial settlers move into the area (de la Harpe, 2002: 9).

These articles do not mention of the active genocidal campaigns waged against these people by the settlers, no mention of the intermarriage and symbiotic relationships that existed, continue to exist, as well as a denial of genetic, linguistic, archaeological and historical evidence that supports these claims (see Mazel, 1992; Wilmsen and Denbow, 1990). A powerful thread of romanticism²⁶¹ persists alongside this as people lament a lost past of hunting-gathering and a time when people were close to or part of nature. The romanticism surrounding the representation of the San spills over into the political representation. There is a combination of western guilt, nostalgia and a sense of anomie within our own societies and to assuage this we seek to maintain the aboriginal people as actually living as 'aboriginal' – or at least as caricatures of an aboriginal life.

The 'truth' power of media images is also shown through the use of the rock art tours and video used in the Kamberg (*Game Pass*, 2000). In the video and on the tours the Kamberg Peak (Figure 1) is described as a holy mountain not to be pointed at. I am told²⁶² that to the people of Thendele it is one of God's mountains and to point at it is to cause disrespect with potentially disastrous results. It is said that the San descendents can point at it with impunity without causing offence as it is said to be their mountain. The

²⁶¹ Mathias Guenther (2003) sees a similar thing in the viewing of contemporary San art in that western viewers see it within a 'primitivism' trope and link it to the past and with generic understanding of aboriginal peoples worldwide that were based on ideas of Stone-age peoples.

²⁶² This is what is told to tourists by the rock art tour guides (Fieldnotes, 2004).

film represents this as a true story as do the Rock Art tour guides. Despite the Rock Art tour guides being locals with quite a good knowledge of the area and the myths they were told the story of the Kamberg Peak during their training as tour guides. Despite their statements to the contrary they were told to tell the story of the Kamberg peak as they were told during their training (Interview with Tour Guides, 2004). Those who argue that the Kamberg peak is sacred above all other mountains had actually learned this through the film and by hearsay. It is not common knowledge held by all in Thendele. The mediated images and the Rock Art tour itself are seen as educational and accurate depictions of historical fact. The form in which it is presented becomes the synthetic memory and 'fact' and is no longer disputed; people from Thendele even told me it is true because it is in the film *Game Pass Shelter* (2000).

The real story has two different versions and both are 'true' in the sense that different people have different myths that pertain to it. Behind and invisible from the Kamberg Nature Reserve is a smaller peak that looks like the roof of a rondavel. This peak is definitely significant and is never pointed directly at by anyone in order to prevent causing offence. The symbolism of the roof shape relates back to the importance of the home I discussed above, thus this peak symbolises the ancestors and their role in interceding with God²⁶³.

²⁶³ I was told because it looks like a proper Zulu hut it is sacred and represents their beliefs in their ancestors (Fieldnotes, 2004).



Figure 18: Mtshilwane

This peak, *Mtshilwane* or *Ntaba Kayakhongwa*, is seen as a sacred mountain more so than the Kamberg Peak. Whether the real story was lost in translation or if it was merely told as if real by a certain local who seems to tell a lot of tales to filmmakers with an authority rarely questioned is unclear (Anon, Fieldnotes, 2004). What became clear is that *all* the mountains are seen as sacred³⁶⁴. Certain mountains are pointed out at different times due to events or stories that reflect no absolute truth but an explanation of myths and oral story telling. As Promise, one of the tour guides said as a metaphor between why stories they tell the tourists are different than from what is considered to be true locally, “you want to add flowers and make it beautiful” (2004).

The San have long been in a history of subservient economic roles, roles that are still played out in current economic relations concerning San artefacts. They may act as the

³⁶⁴ One of the guides to Game Pass Shelter, Promise Mncube, adamantly explained to me that the information they give tourists is both incorrect and correct in its assertion that the Kamberg Peak is sacred. It is correct in that the Peak is seen as 'God's Mountain, but wrong in that it singles it out as they are all God's Mountains and thus all are sacred (Fieldnotes, March, 2004).

creators of these tourist trinkets, but occupy it in a factory setting of low wages and lack control over distribution. Distribution is controlled by usually externally owned businesses that claim to be empowering people, but are actually employing them²⁶⁵. The difference is vast, as the empowerment strategies claimed do little to allow these people to either control the artistic creation of the goods or the pricing of them. Orders are sent to the workshop asking for x number of rocks painted with an eland or so many table clothes depicting a trance dance. Few Abatwa are aware of the end price, and those who are ask pointedly; “Why do they sell our art for 40 Rand when we only get 20 Rand?” (Fieldnotes, 2004). Little knowledge of pricing practices and misunderstanding tourist markets frustrates people well aware of their bottom-rung status.

The people staging their cultures for the entertainment of tourists or selling tokens of their culture for a few dollars may be some of the most marginalised people, but they are a result of a complex trajectory of history and exploitation. Tourism in and of itself is not the cause, but a symptom of inequality. We must also be cautious in assuming that the performers are the most marginalized. Many cultural performers I have met are some of the most educated and most outgoing members of poor communities²⁶⁶. They are some of the few with full-time employment and most enjoy their role in entertaining tourists as well as meeting people from around the world.

The problem with reducing the cultural invention of the Bushman to simulacra²⁶⁷ is the imperialist arrogance involved in doing so²⁶⁸. All culture is invented. I have no disagreement with that notion, but the framing of how it is done is problematic. Rocks painted with elands for sale at airports and curio shops are simulacra – cheap imitations devoid of their original meaning. The painters involved merely aim to make a living

²⁶⁵ I refer here to *Everything Ethnic* that has a shop of beautiful African crafts created by artists across South Africa in the Natal Midlands. My intention is not to denigrate the business as it employs many people and has an ethos of development and poverty alleviation.

²⁶⁶ These interviews include staff at Simunye Cultural Village (2002) and Thendele Tour Guides (2004).

²⁶⁷ I am referring to Baudrillard's (1981b) simulacra where it is a copy of a copy which has been so dissipated in its relation to the original that it can no longer be said to be a copy, there fore it is a copy with no original.

²⁶⁸ Marshall Sahlins wryly notes on the invention of culture that when “Europeans invent culture...we call it the reformation...” (1993: 239).

within a capitalist world system²⁶⁹. Yet, the meanings with which the symbol of the eland is imbued are not eradicated for those that trace symbolic meaning of rock paintings of elands²⁷⁰. The eland as a symbol of power does not lose its power as a symbol merely because it is sold. While an eland tourist trinket contains a radically different symbolic meaning than the original, it is the purchaser who imbues his/her painting with meaning²⁷¹. The progenitor of the symbol still keeps its' meaning sacred²⁷². The contradiction is not in the practice but in the portrayal by academics that reify (colonise) the idea of culture. Commodification of cultural capital may be derided for inaccuracy and incorrect information. For example the battlefields may be derided for the misrepresentation of historical events and the maintenance of colonial myths of British nobility and Bravery (Guy, 1998). However, the cultural commoditisation of British battlefields in KwaZulu-Natal is not derided as a cheapening of British culture. San culture is derided for doing so and this is due to the lack of a voice by the San. They may appear inarticulate about their own culture, not because their culture is necessarily fragmented, but due to the position in this world as an underclass. Their voices, despite the poetics and richness one finds in the field, are discounted as illegitimate. Developmental discourses in which land claims and socio-economic rights of indigenous peoples are articulated create homogenous populations, which are seen to have needs and problems, while development has the solution (Ferguson, 1990; Escobar, 1995).

The sale of tourist art is an interesting example of the central role of simulacra in contemporary economic social contexts (Stoller, 2002: 49). The object being sold may refer the buyer to some primordial time when man was in one-ness with nature as the image of the 'Bushman' used that of the stereotyped role as in the international film *The*

²⁶⁹ The Kalahari communities we work with also manufacture trinkets for tourists (Tomaselli, 2005: 46).

²⁷⁰ Indeed the importance of what is created has more to do with what sells than any traditional pattern or ingrained meaning (Tomaselli, 2005: 46). Thus even if the image/object that is being reproduced is that of a sacred or traditional image that fact is incidental.

²⁷¹ I interviewed an Australian couple and we discussed the arts and crafts for sale as they had purchased a few items. They did so to remind themselves of their trip to South Africa and to give as gifts to friends; the notion of African spirituality or primitiveness or the central importance of the Eland was never mentioned (Interview, August, 2004).

²⁷² The sale of traditional images from the rock art was discussed by the Dumas and while most did not care, a few expressed concern that not every images should be reproduced. The reproduction was not seen to impinge on the importance of the Rock Art iconography, but that some images were depictions of bad spirits and best left alone (Fieldnotes, 2004).

Gods Must be Crazy (Uys, 1980). If the packaging does not sell the image of a primordial 'Bushman' the sales probably would not occur. 'Bushman' identity has been commoditised, but only recently have the San done this to themselves²⁷³. It is usually premised on unequal roles in economic relations as well as unequal control over the production of their images. The end product of tourist goods is a simulacrum due to the removal of the original referent and spiritual significance.

The survival of aboriginal peoples today requires multiple strategies of articulating with modernity and external influences brought about by various forces and events. They should be seen as "drawing on the modern institutions and resources in a global civil society to reconstitute themselves as a 'traditional community'". Indeed, it is precisely by invoking this dichotomy that traditionalists are able to ground an extremely unstable and hybrid San identity" (Robbins, 1999: 843). Cultural tourism and its critics too often separate tourism as a separate activity from other geo-historic processes (Crick, 1989). An overly negative view of tourism and its activities dismisses local responses to tourism and the fact that despite an increase in dance and ritual for tourism the participants do realise the difference between ritual and tradition and that which is performed for income. We should not be so quick to make dupes of the tourists as well, they realise (at least most should) that what they are witnessing is in fact a form of entertainment. Moreover, the entertainment factor of traditions shown to people from abroad does not automatically dismiss the ritual act of devoid of substance or 'fact'. Thus a Zulu dance done for tourists often resembles or is identical to a dance performed at a wedding feast or any other celebration. It is also argued that cultural tourism can be seen as a form of internal colonialism where peoples of the "so-called Fourth World" (aboriginals) are represented as tourist attractions (Crick, 1989: 325). In some cases, a Bushmen cultural villages may be seen as a human zoo, as the performers are seen as victims of the saddest kind (Buntman 1996; White, 1995; Sylvain, 2003).

²⁷³ Related studies on poverty and development in Kalahari San communities such as Dyll (2003) and Wang (2000).

This fear of the inauthentic and of the staging of culture in anthropological condemnation of tourism activities that evoke culture and custom stem from the anthropologists' own romanticism of aboriginal peoples. The role of the San in tourism is not what made them victims. The long history of violation and discrimination placed them at the bottom rung of Southern African society. Tourism may exasperate the fact of their dispossession or it may alleviate it, as the single and only possible source of income in a world where hunting and gathering has all but vanished as a means of subsistence. It may seem crude or even cruel to celebrate, and I would not hesitate to conclude that tourism is their main option for survival. Hunting and gathering is not viable in South Africa and most San do not even have the knowledge to practice such a way of life and most do not have access to enough land to do so²⁷¹. "Given that social change in the third world is highly complex, the attribution of adverse changes to tourism rather than to urbanization, population growth, the mass media, etc, often appears arbitrary" (Crick, 1989: 336).

While cultural tourism may be cheap and gaudy, evoking Baudrillard's (1981b) simulacrum, it may also be a form of self-employment and creativity. The creativity of culture to draw on its own tropes as well as mass-mediated images circulating in society at large plays between the simulacrum and the real, the historic and the post-modern. Thus the commodification of culture is an aspect of self created development among San peoples. Thus we see that modern development in its many guises and forms has caused much of what the critics of tourism have noted (see Escobar, 1995). Development as a menacing force of modernity is implicit in tourism as the capitalist economy impinges to ever greater degrees in far flung corners of the world, areas both beset by tourists for 'authentic' tribal or 'wild' experiences and sought by developmentalists bent on bringing tribal and 'wild' areas up to world standards (see Gardner and Lewis, 1996; Taussig, 1995). This results in a tension between traditionalists and modernists within the communities themselves.

²⁷¹ James Suzman writes about Namibian Bushman who live and work on farms and are generations removed from a hunting-gathering way of life and yet it is that image that structures their lives as *Things from the Bush* (2000).

Commodity Culture and Cultures of Commodities: Ethnicity and Development

The Abatwa discourses about their poverty resonate with traditions they lost along with their original language. The master trope is about loss and fears about little chance of a self created and meaningful future. The void is not Baudrillard's (1994) yawning void of apocalyptic future of no meaning, but of a past that held much meaning. More importantly, it is about a future re-inscribed with meaning. They refer to ideas about jobs for the future, education for their children and full recognition and voice in the discussions pertaining to the San of the Drakensberg. In doing so they would claim the developmental discourse as their own. The past is invoked to not only describe what has been lost; it is invoked as a developmental claim to their future. Critics of development argue that 'development' in the dominant form under the guise of modernisation is a way of reordering life in terms of integrating people into the capitalist world system (Escobar, 1995; Ferguson, 1990; Gardner and Lewis, 1996). I do not disagree with such critiques, but South Africans are well integrated into the Capitalist World System already. In rural South Africa people have been a dependent labour pool to be drawn upon and released when no longer necessary for quite some time (Walker, 1982). Subsistence agriculture is a way of mitigating unemployment and in order to increase food security.

Developmental claims and desires of communities should not be read as merely desires to be included, but as local power relations and struggles; as raw power exercised through wealth; as an embodiment of gendered aspects of the community; as people's hopes and dreams for the future; as challenges to land tenure and ownership; as political struggles and all of which are articulated through development plans. The role of identity in all this is to mitigate imbalances and developmental lacks even as it has much more intangible aspects that relate to ideology, cosmology and so forth.

Developmental tropes are not merely systems of domination disguised by language (see Escobar, 1995) even as I agree that development is a discourse. This discourse is both Michel Foucault's (1972) notion that discourse is inextricably tied to power relations and to the idea of discourse as a conversation, a dialogue between groups as meaning is

negotiated. Foucault explains discourse as a contextual system of representation that is developed socially in order to communicate meaningfully about specific topics (1988). It is a systematic way of representing a topic in a particular way at a given point in history, which in turn limits other ways in which a topic may be represented, and consequentially shaping perceptions and social practice. Discourse contains a repertoire of "truths" produced as regular, systematic, coherent and historically specific set of concepts (Foucault 1988). The second meaning of discourse as a conversation has been subsumed under Foucauldian readings of power as central to understanding. The second view, while potentially anachronistic in light of reverence for Foucault's theories, points towards indigenous meanings of development being taken seriously. This is much like Sahlins' idea of the 'indigenisation of modernity' where modern tropes and practices become part of indigenous social practice (Sahlins, 1993). Local peoples' claim to developmental ideas is not false consciousness as they are duped by the capitalist world system. They are already part of that system and are negotiating the best life for themselves in terms of that system.

Development is a series of relations imbued with meaning and articulated through social and economic relations. It can be used to explain greater social facts, in the anthropological sense, of power and change, tradition and modernity and the accompanying ideologies of those involved at every step. When people describe what they conceive as development, they focus in a "particular 'band' of analogy, involving the word's most common referential usages in a tropic elicitation of the human condition" (Wagner, 1986: 59). "'Development' is as much a set of currently existing institutions and practices with an international remit and compass as it is sets of concepts containing powerful ideological visions with normative tools of reform on behalf of economic growth and poverty alleviation" (Rew, 1997: 81). Development is therefore rhetoric, practice and political theory. It is used as a framework for descriptions, often on a global scale (developed versus undeveloped states), filled with ideas as to the reduction of human misery and the creation of new opportunities, which are more often than not economic.

In this we see the contemporary position of the San as an oppressed group or as a subaltern reproduced in the daily lives of the Duma family. In their attempts to reassert their identity as San they set themselves off as different from the dominant group. The way in which the difference is ascribed is very often in terms of what is missing, such as language or traditions (Fieldnotes, 2004-2005). Their re-inscription of themselves as lacking something fundamental plays into the dominant representations of the Drakensberg San as extinct. What they have that makes them San is something they cannot have. "It might seem that lived penetrations heroically dare and challenge the world. In fact their forms and artistry are often the very means through which what they seem to oppose is reproduced" (Willis, 2000: 40). Thus the creativity of their rituals and San identity is not premised off of knowledge of San-ness, but created from a void prescribed by historical trajectories of violence and dispossession.

The positive side of this void is that it is their prerogative to fill it in from their terms of reference. These terms come from their lived experiences, oral memory, albeit imperfectly remembered and transmitted through the generations, as well as their own creativity. The Abatwa claim differential identities despite overwhelming similarities in habit, belief, custom, language, sympathetic histories, marriage ties and so on. They discuss what was lost and destroyed by their incorporation into the dominant social group using the very similarities they share as examples of their dispossession. Richard Duma uses his use of Zulu as his first language as an example of what is missing and lost, and he would like to learn a San language from the Kalahari to communicate directly with the San issues of shared or un-shared culture (Richard Duma, 2004).

The positive creation of identity in their own terms also allows them to attempt to draw upon their identity for developmental purposes or at least as a developmental idea. They use their identity in order to tie into cultural tourism and to access jobs in the Drakensberg Mountains. An example of this was that some of the Abatwa were able to get preferential hiring during the building of a museum dedicated to the Drakensberg San

at Cathedral Peak, a little north of my field site²⁷⁵. A nearby guest house from the village of Rosetta²⁷⁶ used to bring tourists to the Duma's home so they could see how San descendents and rural Zulus live. The Dumas discussed with me how they wish to create a cultural village to show people their way of life and especially to gain permanent employment (Fieldnotes, April 16, 2004). This is not to reduce identity politics to the desire for material gain, whether through access to jobs at the Nature Reserve and Rock Art Centre or by lodging a land claim and so on; they should be seen as a vivid and complex response to a changing social system. Social systems are always in flux as they are contested, negotiated and reworked in light of current affairs and events.

Taussig discusses how pre-capitalist or proto-capitalist societies often exhibit a deep-seated conflict between use value and exchange value (1980). Among the Zulu and Abatwa people this conflict occurred long ago and currently the people are fully wage labourers. The little subsistence agriculture is performed with derision and often left to the young boys and women. The men lament the lack of money to cultivate the plots of land. Inquiries into why it is not cultivated by hand were dismissed²⁷⁷. The need was money for the tractor and fuel, despite many people doing nothing for the better part of the year. Trade and barter of labour occurred where young boys would live with wealthier relatives or relatives who lacked enough male help. The notion of returning to pre-capitalist modes of peasant production was rejected as a return to a less meaningful way of life. There is much peasant production occurring as a necessity, but not as a lifestyle²⁷⁸.

²⁷⁵ This San Interpretive Centre also consulted with San descendents as to material presented and must be seen as one of the few examples of public acknowledgement of the continued presence and influence of the San descendents in the Drakensberg.

²⁷⁶ This is a small village nearby in the Natal Midlands popular with tourists and is part of the Midlands Meander tourist route (Fieldnotes, 2004).

²⁷⁷ I suggested we do this by hand and I thought it would be a good participant observation exercise and as a way of contributing to the family I was living with. They refused politely to do so and would only cultivate the field with a tractor. They thus created their own dependency on capital.

²⁷⁸ I do find considerable nostalgia for the ideal of a Kraal full of Nguni cattle in a rural idyl, far from a life of toil with scant reward. Such a claim must be viewed against the backdrop of the symbolic importance of cattle within Zulu society as well as nostalgic wondering. In fact one of the most vivid portrayals of this ideal I heard was from a Zulu friend in England who is currently doing his DPhil at Oxford University and is far removed from a rural way of life (per. comm., S. Phakathi, 2006).

Identity and ideology articulates with a dehumanising system that maintains many rural people in poverty (see Scott, 1985). To argue as such is not to deny human creativity and agency as they make sense of the world around them. People are not merely passive victims of a dehumanising world system. To argue as such is to make a master fetish out of a world system and, in effect, deny the roll of humans completely. The end point of such logic is to freeze all activism and resistance to inhumane and dehumanising forces operating within this world. The developmental articulations of the Duma are the demands of a people to create a way of life that is ordered by their own tropes and visions of how the world ought to be. It is a response to further alienation despite the recent changes in the 'new South Africa' and its concomitant promises, but more than this it is a statement about historical developments at a crucial and sensitive point in their history.

Structural violence

The term 'structural violence' is used by Paul Farmer to indicate "a broad rubric that includes a host of offensives against human dignity: extreme and relative poverty, social inequalities ranging from racism to gender inequality, and the more spectacular forms of violence that are uncontestedly human rights abuses..."(2003: 8). Of the many things that struck me through my social interaction with this community is the absolute poverty in which rural communities exist with lack of land, jobs, and infrastructure. The cycle of poverty is maintained through inadequate schools, lack of opportunities locally, lack of transport, marginal skills of the general population and general apathy and despair. In rural South Africa I witnessed an ever-present insidious violence in the form of deprivations by the state in the form of lack of services, healthcare and access to resources.

One case of extreme depredation that I witnessed was that of a dying relative of the Duma family²⁷⁹. His life and situation is not unique. This man lived in Empendle, an Apartheid era 'location', in a situation of dire poverty. Unlike Thendele, Empendle is much larger in overall size and housing density makes it feel almost urban. It is deep in

²⁷⁹ This short case study is based of my Fieldnotes from September 2004.

the Mountains locked away in a beautiful valley with an entrance to either end. The plots of land are small and subsistence agriculture is not possible beyond meagre supplements. The keeping of cattle and livestock is difficult and the communal land is overgrazed and barren. It is about one hour's drive from Thendele towards the south.

The Duma contacted me while I was in Durban and asked me to drive up to transport them to the next village for an important event. Upon arrival I was asked if I could drive the Dumas to Empendle to pay their respects to a recently deceased cousin's family. They had been told second hand that their ill cousin had passed away and that they should go and visit and help with funeral arrangements. There was no way to contact his family directly as they were too poor to have a phone and the place where they live has poor cellular phone coverage. We drove one hour through the mountains full of apprehension and sorrow. Upon arrival we found that their cousin was still alive, but gravely ill. The shock and joy of finding him alive was washed away once the realisation sunk in that he was dying. We spent the afternoon visiting with him and left after everyone gave their goodbyes, knowing that they were to be final. The following day he was transported to a hospital in Pietermaritzburg where he passed away. The doctors explained that his condition was not normally fatal. The first time he saw a doctor about this illness was the day he died.

This example reveals a number of the forms of structural violence experienced by many rural people in South Africa. The lack of infrastructure and access to telecommunications is telling. Unable to send and receive important life or death messages may leave people stranded and alone while sick or dying. Lack of transport delays treatment or denies it completely for the extremely poor. Rural communities lack meaningful health care services whereby people have to travel at their own expense long distances to access health clinics or hospitals. The ugly reality is that the "dismantling of the apartheid regime has not brought the dismantling of the structures of oppression and inequality in South Africa..." (Farmer, 2003: 45).

The representation of ethnic groups in South Africa is still a much politicised activity as people attempt to overcome these structures of inequality. The following chapter analyses the political representation of the San and the political discourses that structure the debates about rights for the San that exclude the Abatwa for a variety of reasons.

Chapter Seven – Ethnic identities and their Public Representation

The political representation of the San in Southern Africa is largely performed by three linked organisations, the South African San Institute (SASI), the Working Group on Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa (WIMSA) and the South African San Council (SASC). I also draw on debates concerning the international organisation, Survival International, not so much for their overarching impact on government policy, but for what they represent in terms of global representation and reception of San²⁸⁰ political imagery. The United Nations (UN) also makes use of San political imagery, but mainly in general terms of Indigenous peoples. They set broad definitions within which they set a mandate for Indigenous peoples and projects, which relate to rules to govern global standards relating to Indigenous rights. The definition of aboriginal according to the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations of 1993 is that:

Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of society now prevailing in those societies, or part of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples in accordance to their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal systems.

In Southern Africa, the term indigenous is most often used to refer to the black majority as opposed to people of European or Asian descent (Crawhall, 1999: 1). As a result there is a dual meaning where the second meaning is generally used “to identify non-dominant groups of aboriginal ^{of} prior descent with distinct territorial and cultural identities. In Africa, “most of these groups are pastoralists or hunter-gatherers, such as the Pygmies, Hadzabe, Maasai and Tuareg” (Crawhall, 1999: 1).

²⁸⁰ Survival International uses the term Bushman and rejects the use of the term San (Corry, 2003:1).

Despite the legal definitions that are being set at an international level, the most prominent identifying discourse is that of victim, and this is inexorably linked to their aboriginal status and non-dominance (as in Survival International). The San are one of the most studied and documented people of Africa and they are more often than not represented as powerless and in many ways are in a subaltern position (see Gordon, 1992; Bregin and Kruijper, 2004; Skotnes, 1996). I argue here that it is this representation itself that assists in the maintenance of their position as a subaltern group; they are continually depicted as being incapable of maintaining a rich and meaningful life due to their social/political/economic position and through such representation it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The representation of aboriginal peoples as different from the dominant groups within society is a common way in which they are represented. Inadvertently, aboriginal voices are used to depict an image of difference or separateness and are thus denied legitimacy by the dominant groups. The representation as victim promotes the idea of the San as an underclass that only recently has been divorced from a hunting-gathering. This is a common theme in San ethnographies, movies and in the news media. There are a variety of reasons for this occurring, and in many ways it is simply because it is a powerful discourse for mobilising support at the Global level. Most descriptions of the San and especially the way in which the San are seen to articulate with the global system is as an underclass, marginalised and excluded from an active role in shaping society. The debate is then not that the San are marginalised, but as to what is/are the solution/s to addressing this marginalisation. While I do not profess to have a solution, I am certain that an important issue is one of representation as it dictates the type of advocacy proposed and what are the proposed outcomes. Exclusivity of rights based on ancestral ethnic claims is often counterpoised against general human rights even as these are not mutually exclusive claims, or need not be.

Survival International

Survival International (SI) is a European based charity that “campaigns on behalf of indigenous and Tribal peoples” (www.survival-international.org). They broadly define ‘Tribal Peoples’ as:

People who have lived in tribal societies for many generations. They are usually the original inhabitants of the places they live in, or at least they and their ancestors have lived there for a very long time. They provide mainly for themselves, living off the land by hunting, fishing, gathering or growing vegetables, or keeping animals. They are usually ‘minorities’; fewer than the non-tribal peoples living in the area.

This definition could be used to describe many African groups in Southern Africa, but it is clear that the Bantu peoples are seen as non-aboriginal and even as invaders into ‘Bushman’ land²⁸¹ by Survival International. What is meant by ‘Tribal’ is not clear, and Survival International also distinguishes between aboriginal and Tribal in that “... ‘indigenous peoples’ are all the original inhabitants of a country, but ‘Tribal’ are only those who live in distinct tribal societies” (www.survival-international.org²⁸²). Survival International is worth noting in a thesis on representation of aboriginal peoples in Africa due to their high profile and vocal support of a group of ‘Bushmen’ evicted from the Central Kalahari Game Reserve (CKGR). The director Stephen Corry is also embroiled in a vitriolic and vocal exchange with James Suzman an anthropologist (see Corry, 2003:1 and the response Suzman, 2003: 4). This debate addresses issues of aboriginal rights in Southern Africa that are directly relevant to post-Apartheid South Africa and aboriginal peoples within the newly formed democratic nation state.

Survival International’s main cause in Southern Africa has been the eviction of Bushmen from the CKGR in Botswana for what they see as mining rights trumping aboriginal rights to their land (Corry, 2003). In Botswana the *Baswara* (Botswana term for San)

²⁸¹ Online they have fact file on the ‘Bushmen’ that highlights the problems they face and one of them being that “their homeland was invaded by cattle-herding Bantu tribes from around 1500 years ago...”

²⁸² This information is found on their website and is a downloadable poster with information on their campaigns and goals that can be used to advertise on their behalf.

were removed from the Central Kalahari Game Reserve²⁸³ (cf. Mikalsen 2004). SI argues that the removal was timed to make way for diamond mining (www.survival-international.org). The Botswana government policy towards aboriginal peoples is quite clear in that they wish to coercively modernise people from remote communities through the Remote Area Dweller Programme (RADP). The emphasis is placed on the geographic distances from existing social services, as well as economic marginalisation, rather than on ethnicity (Maribe, 2003). The RADP main goal is to promote “social, political, economic and cultural development of Remote Area Dweller Communities, to enable them to benefit from the economic growth of the country” (Maribe, 2003:4). The policy requires that a minimum of 250 people and being a minimum of 15 km away from existing village or settlement should qualify for recognition as a Remote Area Dweller Settlement. People residing in settlements of less than 250 people are persuaded and encouraged to relocate to or come together with others to form larger settlements where government would be able to provide services (Maribe, 2003: 4).

Problematically, in terms of the government discourse is that SI uses ethnic boundaries in absolute terms between the ‘Bushmen’ and the ‘Bantu’, whereby the Bantu are seen as foreign invaders into Bushman land (www.survival-international.org). Therefore the ‘Bushmen’ are recognised as marginalized and excluded from Park Lands (Survival International, 2003), but the Bakalagadi (a minority Bantu group) are not being recognised as oppressed by international organisations (Maribe, 2004). While Maribe is justifying the resettlement of Basarwa²⁸⁴ people in Botswana on behalf of the state it is pointed out that the Bakalagadi people and the Basarwa have been living together for a long time and both are an impoverished rural underclass (2004: 3). The separation of poor peoples into neat categories may have the result of limiting potential impact of land claims and political mobilisation to the benefit of a very small minority and denies potentially 1500-2000 years of interaction with Bantu groups²⁸⁵.

²⁸³ The campaign appears to have won with the court case being settled in favour of the evicted Bushmen. They will be allowed to return to the CKGR (December, 2006 see <http://www.survival-international.org/news>).

²⁸⁴ The Setswana term used in Botswana to refer to the San (Barnard, 1992).

²⁸⁵ The archaeological record shows Iron-age furnaces starting to appear around 2000 years ago and they are seen as a marker of Bantu intrusion (Dutton, 1970; Smith, 1992).

If more inclusive definitions were used to mobilise more people then land claims and political movements could be more successful²⁸⁶ without being exclusive. They would have potential to be more acceptable to the general African population all too sensitive, and rightly so, to the Apartheid era separation of people based solely on externally imposed ethnicities and race (Posal, 2000). A position of non-exclusion from political organising concerning neighbouring peoples and communities could strengthen position and have more salient gains. Michael Burawoy argues for political struggles that include “local struggles, of disparate kinds, connected across national boundaries in a simultaneous War of Position and War of Movement” (2003: 251). Whilst he is arguing for a socialist struggle on an international basis for resisting the dehumanizing forces of global capital, the tenets remain true, as do the causes. This is even more certain from the perspective of the creation of the ‘Bushman’ as a sub-class due to the colonial political economy of Imperial Capitalism (Wilmsen and Denbow, 1993).

While there is no disagreement on the fact that the ‘Bushman’ were removed from the CKGR, the reasons behind the move are widely debated (Mikalsen 2004). While I will not comment on the finer details of this case as it is far removed from my field site²⁸⁷, the issues of aboriginal rights and how aboriginal people are represented is germane to an understanding of the discourses the San in general are caught within. SASI and WIMSA tend to be the public political authority authorised to speak for the San of South Africa. In an apparent conflict over who represents the San, WIMSA released this statement to the press:

We, the San of Southern Africa welcome international assistance with raising awareness about human rights abuses. We appreciate that Survival International (SI) regards it as their duty to campaign about human rights violations by the Botswana government against the San of the Central Kalahari Game Reserve

²⁸⁶ A similar argument is presented by Le Fleur (2004).

²⁸⁷ We visited the CKGR in June 2004 but was unable to interview any San who had been evicted, but we did drive through one of the resettlement camps at Kuandwe where there was massive infrastructure built but not in use and people sat idle with no jobs and little livestock. I was told by the Kutze Lodge manager not to interview or photograph any San or the community as the government did not allow it (Kalahari Fieldnotes, 2004).

(CKGR)... However, we object strongly to the fact that Survival International seeks to give the impression that they speak on behalf of all 'the Kalahari Bushmen' when they handpick quotes from a few San only. (WIMSA, 2005:1).

The distancing of the San organisations from SI's campaign is due to a variety of factors beyond the immediate issue of relocations. The SI campaigns appear to draw on crude caricatures of aboriginal peoples that must live 'tribally' in order for their claim to be worthy. The use of an ethnic identity to claim special rights in Southern Africa is problematic. SASI has fought, and continues to, for rights for the San peoples, but does so under existing laws and agreements. They recently championed land rights for the ≠Khomani San of South Africa under "the legal framework provided by the Constitution [of South Africa]" (Chennells, 2002). SI draws on the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention 169 (1996) that would recognise land rights based on ethnicity and ancestral claims. This is seen as inappropriate for Southern Africa due to the memories of Apartheid and its policies of racial and ethnic divisions and assigning of traditional homelands to people based on their ancestry. The Apartheid era process of naming and controlling movement had created new ethnic identities that persist despite the removal of the legal category of 'coloured' with the end of Apartheid, although now subsumed under the category black (Le Fleur, 2004). What this will mean for aboriginal rights is unclear due to political fragmentation of such groups.

The rejection of externally imposed categories points to the heart of the difficulties experienced by aboriginal peoples across Southern Africa. Many peoples have been stripped of their past and self created identities through segregation and forced incorporation into broad categories such as 'black', 'coloured', Indian and even 'white'. Many of the aboriginal peoples also shared the majority fate of genocide suffered by so many of the Abatwa. The Cape Coloured community traces its genealogy back to the Khoi pastoralists, other aboriginal peoples, and a mix of colonial peoples (Le Fleur, 2004; Elboure, 2000). As a marginalized segment of the historic population they were not allowed to draw on European heritage, and at the same time were denied their aboriginal past (See Le Fleur, 2004).

The Constitution of South Africa recognises the rights for the expression of difference and has provisions for the legitimisation of Tribal Authority and Traditional Law within limits to preclude special rights based on ethnicity (*Constitution*, 1996: Chapter 12). The land claims that have been won in South Africa are based not on ancestral connection to the land, but due to laws drafted in to mitigate the violent dispossession of Apartheid and colonialism (see the Restitution of Land Rights Act of 1994). The Abatwa desire land restitution in the Kamberg Valley, but have made it clear they do not wish to own land that is in the Reserve, but to have unfettered access to the land that contains graves and the painted rock shelters (Fieldnotes, 2003-2005). Their desire for access to land is a social justice claim based on a recent dispossession (in 1990) and not an ancestral connection to the land, despite having a clear social and spiritual connection to the land²⁸⁸. The issues raised by SI must be taken seriously as violence and dispossession continues (see Tomaselli, 2005: 79-80 on decline of hunting rights elsewhere in Botswana). SI's continued use of essentialised imagery of 'Tribal' peoples and of cultural survival may resonate with their supporters in Europe, but their invocation of theories of cultural purity, despite all the profound changes to peoples of the region, may hinder the multitude of problems facing aboriginal communities in Southern Africa (see Suzman, 2003)

The use of strategic essentialism can be very effective as the size of SI's membership shows and the resources they can mobilise through their campaigns. Strategic essentialism should be seen as the deployment of images of aboriginals and the use of notions of purity of these peoples and their culture as a basis for support. The SI website is full of imagery of aboriginals in traditional dress and using traditional means to survive. They mention "uncontacted tribes" elsewhere in the world and depict the contemporary San as a hunting and gathering population being denied the right to live as they choose. The Abatwa as a mixed group can never fit into a model using strategic essentialism as they do not fit the stereotypes so powerful in the media and the political

²⁸⁸ As shown by their use of the land for medicines, the rock features, rock shelters and water pools of spiritual importance and use, in their mythology and the presence of their ancestors' graves.

organising. The following event is an example of the power of these images of aboriginality that reify one image at the cost of another's.

Day of Reconciliation: One hundred years late.

In March 2005 there was a 'day of reconciliation' between the Drakensberg San and the British at Fort Nottingham. Fort Nottingham had been set up to stop livestock theft due to 'Bushmen raiders' in 1856 (Fox, 2004; Wright, 1971). The total recorded amount of stock taken from the area was 2,287 cattle and 400 horses, thus the early colony seeing a need for a garrison (Fox, 2004: 1). The day of reconciliation was set up to coincide with the 150 year celebration of Fort Nottingham and the opening of a museum at the site (*Village Talk*, March 9, 2005: 1). In attendance were two San descendents Kerrick Ntusi²⁸⁹ and Richard Duma. Ntusi was the official guest for the ceremony and shook hands with Brigadier Keenan as a public act of reconciliation at a ceremony and presentation. I had brought Richard Duma to witness this event and he was invited by organisers. His presence was officially acknowledged as representing the Duma clan of San descendents from the Kamberg Valley.

Prior to the beginning of the ceremony Kerrick Ntusi was hounded for photographs by members of the public. Many of the public exhibited appalling behaviour over the appearance of a 'Bushman' by snapping photographs without permission and generally intruding during his lunch. It was so frantic at one time that ten people at a time were jostling for room to photograph him. Ntusi fits the stereotype of a 'Bushman' due to his very small stature and heavily lined face, except for his 'dark colour' as people openly remarked (Fieldnotes, March, 2005). Richard Duma does not fit the stereotype of a Bushman. He is tall and of similar appearance to other Africans from the area. He attracted almost no attention²⁹⁰. The paparazzi behaviour of the public with regard Ntusi's turned him into an exhibit. Such attitudes towards San descendents are common

²⁸⁹ Kerrick Ntusi is a San descendent from the Drakensberg and he claims to have lived in the rock shelter's until the 1920s. He was able to describe the rock paintings and a ritual associated with them. He also knows how to mix the paints even though he does not paint (Fieldnotes, March 2005).

²⁹⁰ Only one man approached Richard after the ceremony and politely introduced himself and made some inquiries into the Abatwa's lives. nobody took his picture (Fieldnotes, March 2005).

and their legacy is a long ugly history. San descendents in the Kalahari routinely demand payment for photographs and lament the money that has been made selling their image (Mlazi, 2002). The depictions of the San as nature's people has an ugly precursor in the colonial past; by linking the San to nature as opposed to culture or civilization, in this way being denied their very humanity. The colonialists used the lack of a seemingly coherent religious system and cosmology as a sign of animal-like behaviour and existence, thus denying them a possibility of land rights (see Chidester, 1996: 51-59). Skotnes discusses the imaging of 'Bushmen' in South African museums and notes that:

These are usually devoted to revealing them as timeless, ahistorical hunter-gatherers, cast all but naked and set in dioramas, which show a pristine landscape in which no foreign intrusion is evident. This image is further exploited by advertisers and popular film makers, who perpetuate the image of the Bushmen as cast out of time, out of politics and out of history – **miscast** (1996: 17, bold text in original).

It is a legacy of these attitudes and these representations that fed into the behaviour of the people at the museum opening. The photographic assault was crude and based on caricatures of San people that Ntusi can be fit into, while the Dumas cannot be. People who do not fit neat categories are dismissed as 'mixed race' or are categorised as different racial group, such as 'Black' or otherwise²⁹¹. The Abatwa are assumed to be a mixed race, and they are by their own categorisation. The result is that they are not media friendly for use in campaigns on aboriginal rights. Despite all the negative stereotyping the Abatwa refuse to be miscast and are making a place for themselves and their families. The representation of San people by themselves has gained strength in South Africa and I now turn to representations of the San by San organisations of Southern Africa.

²⁹¹ See the National Khoisan Consultative Conference and their identity formation around Khoisan identity as a break away from the imposed category of 'Coloured' (Le Fleur, 2004).

San Organisations of Southern Africa

SASI, WIMSA and SASC also mobilise stereotyped imagery as markers of culture. They released a report on the Abatwa. SASI received information from anthropologists working in the Drakensberg (Frans Prins initially followed by myself) about the presence of the Abatwa. SASI has not subsequently made contact with the Abatwa beyond their mention in the Annual Report²⁹² (SASI, 2002). I quote in full the report on the Southern San:

The "Secret San" is the title assumed by many of the San groups of KwaZulu-Natal and the eastern seaboard. These groups have been identified over the past years and encouraged to confidentially acknowledge their existence to SASI. They usually provide their names on condition that their "San-ness" is kept secret from the communities around them, for fear of retribution and discrimination.

The San were until recently commonly regarded as being extinct in KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Seaboard. However recent research brought to light that literally hundreds of San, still characteristically small of limb and light of skin, lived on the outskirts of Zulu society in Natal, often shunned as "Abathwa" or "small people". SASI commenced a programme to assist with the identification of core groups of San, and designed to inform them that far from being an issue of shame, a San identity should be regarded with pride in the changing world.

Most individuals who were contacted, short in stature and unmistakably of San descent, denied any San origin. After careful explanation that it would not be held against them in any way, they grudgingly admitted their San-ness and showed an interest in learning more about their culture and origin. Whilst some of the older individuals still hold memories of cave dwelling and hunting with bows and arrows, the San culture in KwaZulu-Natal has been submerged to a point at which it is probably not recoverable. However the "Secret San" are an important link

²⁹² It is available online at http://www.san.org.za/sasi/ann_rep_2002.htm

with the San past, and SASI intends to incorporate them into our development plans in the most appropriate way.

Achievements

- The establishment of a primary database of over 200 San individuals, living in twelve or more locations on the eastern Seaboard
- The formation of a team comprising a researcher, a fieldworker and a legal coordinator.
- The commencement of the process of advising the "Secret San" of their cultural rights as members of the broad San community

SASI makes claims on behalf of the Abatwa people in their *Annual Report* (SASI, 2002). The claim to have been working with the Abatwa is not quite true, but a pragmatic strategy to portray San people as a cohesive group. I know that they have made initial contact with the San of the Drakensberg, yet neglect the Southern San's voices and especially images in favour of those more coherent and recognised groups from the Kalahari.

How to include the Abatwa in planning and strategies is difficult as SASI has most of its resources tied up in the north where the majority of San currently live. SASI had been aware of the San Foundation of the Eastern Seaboard and not wishing to duplicate work never moved into the region. However, the Foundation has disappeared from public after changing its name to The Ancient Knowledge Initiative (TAKI). The South African San Council (SASC) has subsequently contacted the Abatwa community and tried to arrange meetings (Axel Thoma²⁹³, pers. Comm., 2006). The use of the physical description of light of skin and small of limb is a reflection of the image of Kerrick Ntusi who was revealed to them, while the image of the Abatwa I lived with can never fit this stereotype²⁹⁴. The power of these caricaturised images pervades regional politics beyond

²⁹³ Axel Thoma is a member of the SASC and is of San descent. He works full time lobbying and working on development and political representation for marginalized San communities.

²⁹⁴ Faku Duma is as tall as I am at 6' 1". None of the Dumas are 'light of skin'.

the Abatwa's lack of fit. The images of the San as hunter-gatherers also impacts on the San of the Kalahari and their political struggles.

Traditionalists Versus Modernists

Writing in 1999 Steven Robbins reports that one of the largest challenges to NGOs such as SASI was balancing between traditionalists and more westernised 'Bushman' (838-842). He uses the example of Petrus Vaalbooi, a more 'westernised' person who is in conflict with the more 'traditional' Dawid Kruiper (one of the community leaders of the ≠Khomani San). SASI is seen to valorise both groups by deferring to cultural markers of clothing or language for Kruiper and supporting Vaalbooi due to his use of articulate western discourse. The divide becomes a tension between the 'modernists' and the 'traditionalists' as they struggle over issues of authenticity and representation in a postmodern world. Despite the apparent dichotomy between these two groups, none of these people "fitted the mould of indigenous people untouched by modernity, neither were they modern citizens completely moulded by discourses of western democracy and liberal individualism" (Robbins, 2001: 834). A successful land claim has the potential to introduce a class division between poor people while doing little to alleviate real poverty and suffering²⁹⁵.

In the end it seems that the overt cultural markers won out as I met Vaalbooi in 2003 in the Drakensberg Mountains at the grand opening for a rock art centre at Didima, Cathedral Peak. He was dressed in a fur loincloth and was claiming to be the "cultural leader of the San". With some sense of irony, I met the traditionalist, Dawid Kruiper in the Northern Cape later that year. He wore western clothes and asked for money from us just to speak to him. Later I viewed San dressing in lion clothes to sell trinkets to tourists along the roadside (Kalahari Fieldnotes, 2004). The images of traditionalism are being perpetuated in political discourse by these NGOs that represent the San peoples of Southern Africa, such as WIMSA and SASI. San representatives show up at openings of

²⁹⁵ Visiting the ≠Khomani San in the Northern Cape the real poverty and suffering is evident despite the successes of the land claim. There is open domestic violence and alcoholism and drug use present.

cultural tourism venues in furs and loin-cloths, and in the Northern Cape San people dress in a similar fashion to sell tourist trinkets on the side of the road. It appears no matter how you are asking for money based on your ethnicity you must look the part. This 'proper' cultural dress must be used during times of authenticity claims such as for cultural tourism and political meetings.

These overt markers of dress and language were used by SASI to claim the entire collection of rock art in Southern Africa as belonging to the San people and even going so far as to state that the proceeds should benefit the San of *Southern* Africa. They used the threat of a court interdict to stop the construction of the San Interpretive Centre at Didima Camp in the Drakensberg Mountains (SASI, 2002). They demanded to be involved in the consultation of the building and information represented there and even claimed at the opening that the San of the Kalahari should benefit. Thus the pan-San concept of commonality between all 'Bushman' overrides internal differences. In this case the idea that appears to be perpetrated is that only the San organisations should benefit from Rock Art sites. This implies that the Zulu peoples and locals must be excluded from the benefits as well. The Rock Art sites are considered world heritage and this notion challenges this claim as well as overriding the Abatwa's input, which was used in this case.

Few San people actually have a tradition of rock painting, and this is true for those San from the Kalahari²⁹⁶; who are the most recognised and supported by SASI. Such a claim undermines local community ties to Nguni peoples and dismisses the interconnections between people within communities. It also denies Nguni people's claims to rock art as part of their identity and culture (see Prins, 1994; 1996; 1997). The claims to exclusiveness are well understood to be political strategies by the NGOs and their anthropologists (Robins, 1999: 840). Yet, over the construction of a rock art centre at Didima in the Drakensberg Mountain SASI reported that the "San were incensed by the fact that they had not been consulted..." (SASI, 2002: 35). The ≠Khomani San most

²⁹⁶ In a related discussion about contemporary San art Mathias Guenther (2003) points this out and makes the important distinction that current Kalahari San art is not related to the rock art.

represented by SASI live in the Northern Cape and do not have a tradition of rock painting²⁹⁷. Notions of “their heritage being stolen for commercial use” are insulting to the Abatwa people whom have never been consulted by SASI and despite claims that “in recent years [SASI] attempted to identify and work with the ‘Secret San’ of KwaZulu-Natal...largely living in a state of oppression and poverty” (SASI, 2002: 35).

SASI’s indignation at non-consultation on rock art and its use points to centralisation of power within the organisation and an essentialising trend that dismisses difference – the very heritage for which they claim to be fighting. The warning is echoed elsewhere;

However, in organizing internationally, we must be careful not to violate our political and cultural integrity as peoples with distinct beliefs, histories and cultural practices. If we racialise ourselves into one monolithic Indigenous race, we diminish understanding of the diversity among us and we present risks...to the specific knowledge and histories that we carry (Tallbear, 2001: 172).

Internationally, representation of aboriginals seems to be heading this way where difference is obscured and everyone is an equal with an equal claim to some vague notion of ties to land and hunting ways of life. There have been calls to determine indigeneity through genetic testing²⁹⁸ as a way of conferring legitimacy to claims made by people who lack sufficient historical or legal documentation to prove their ancestry. In the USA there are tribes that require proof of sufficient Indian blood to be deemed a legitimate member of the tribe (Tallbear, 2001: 165).

²⁹⁷ The Kalahari plains where the #Khomani live are over a thousand kilometres from the Drakensberg rock art shelters. The claim is premised on a pan-San concept of art that links art for tourist or ‘western’ consumption to the religious rock art. This inadvertently supports the notion of all San art as being prehistoric or primitive even though it is western markets and aesthetic that is dictating what art is being produced (Guenther, 2003; Fieldnotes, 2004).

²⁹⁸ The genome project at the University of Witwatersrand recently tested the San descendants of the Drakensberg for ‘Bushman’ markers. The Abatwa men never showed the marker sought after, but the women did (Prins, per. comm., 2006). The details of where the marker was from and the methods derived to show its connection to the Southern San was unclear, and I doubt the efficacy and accuracy of a test to determine closeness of relationship between people separated by thousands of kilometers and hundreds of years and two thousand years of contact with another ‘racial’ group.

This 'legal' definition is problematic for peoples like the Abatwa. They are struggling with their identity due to a break in continuity with their past. They were unable to maintain their lives as hunter-gatherers and as such joined up with the dominant society.

Authentic natives represent a world to which we should, apparently, wish to be returned, a world in which culture does not challenge nature. At the same time, the movement exploits the very general European belief that true citizenship is a matter of ties of blood and soil. In Europe today, this principle is used to justify anti-immigrant policies. The obverse of this, however, is the painless concession that faraway natives should be allowed to hunt in their own Bantustans (Kuper, 2003).

The warning by Kuper (2003) is not to dismiss rights-based discourses or to not seek redress for historic wrongs, but an appraisal of the mixing and movement of peoples across social boundaries and between economies, such reified essences that are used in certain discourses dismiss real connections between peoples. People of aboriginal descent do not need to be reminded of the dangers and pitfalls of a majority speaking for a minority. Global examples abound of aboriginal rights being dismissed to make way for the rights of the non-aboriginal majority (such as currently in Botswana). The debate and its terms must be defined not in eternal essences of aboriginality but in terms of the aboriginals as the most conspicuously marginalized peoples within Southern Africa (see Suzman, 2003). The boundaries of who is aboriginal or who is not must be redefined to include those who are not hunter-gatherers and have been sedentary for a considerable amount of time. The discourse of exceptionalism that is embodied in the political debates outlined above is reflected in Kalahari dependency relationships whereby the San have communal land rights granted. "They want to be paid to work on the communal property, but did little to facilitate income of any kind. Thus dependency relations become a culture of entitlement – we must be paid because we are 'special' – we are the Bushmen!" (Tomaselli, 2005: 59). The real life dependency of the San is not always clearly or honestly represented in political organising. They are made to stand in as models for us all:

Hunters and nomadic herders are sometimes taken to represent not merely the first

inhabitants of a country but the original human populations of the world. They are a world-wide First Nation, and theirs is the natural state of humanity. If that is so, then perhaps it follows that their rights must take precedence everywhere.

However, while Upper Paleolithic hunters and gatherers operated in a world of hunters, every contemporary community of foragers or herders lives in intimate association with settled farmers. In certain cases, including the Kalahari Bushmen and the Congo Pygmies, they interacted with farming neighbours for centuries, probably for at least a millennium, before the colonial period. Exchanges with farmers and traders are crucial for their economy, and their foraging activities are geared to this broader economic context. The divide between a foraging and a farming way of life is not necessarily hard and fast (Kuper, 2003).

A critique of the organisations is not meant to be a moral judgement of these organisations, as they do important and necessary advocacy. A critique of the discourses is still needed as these also tend towards ethnicised discourses surrounding the San as a primitive people, different from everyone else that far too often borders on paternalism. One such example I heard was well meaning people saying that alcohol should be banned from San communities till they learn to drink ‘properly’ (Anon, Kalahari Fieldnotes, June 2004). The San are once again not ‘our’ equals and set apart as fundamentally different and incapable. The discourse of the San as being different from those around them is powerful and persuasive. I am not finding fault with political strategies being fomented that are identity based, but cautious about which people get excluded. Often essential claims around aboriginal identity focus in on a narrow band of genealogy and appearance. To mention an example from my Kalahari research, a six-foot tall ‘Bushman’ is treated incredulously by some while a ‘Bushman’ who fits the caricature from the *Gods Must be Crazy* (1980) is assumed to be legitimate.

Even as I critique the claim by SASI and WIMSA to be working with the Abatwa, I understand that these organisations do not have unlimited resources and time in which to make salient moves in this direction. The Abatwa have been ignored, marginalised and even hunted like animals in the past, they have survived numerous assaults and forces of

assimilation and yet persist in their claims. This would appear to bode well for their future as it shows an active, imaginative people engaging with the dominant and reclaiming the right to represent themselves. Yet, the SASC that has been in touch with them to date (Thoma, per. Comm. November, 2006) has been frustrated in their attempts to organise meetings with the Duma clan. The Duma clan was invited to attend the SASC's general assembly in August but were unable to attend and cannot agree upon a date for the SASC council to meet them. The mistrust of external organisations and the lack of support over the years has frozen them into inactivity.

The political organising surrounding the San reflects much of the academic theorising about the San whereby the San are assumed to be a homogenous group that represents one way of life and one type of people – an archetypal aboriginal. The diversity and complexity, the contradictions even, found on the ground amongst our informants defying monolithic representations are played out in the ambiguities of the Abatwa demanding to be recognised and then faltering when they are contacted by San organisations.

Conclusions

In the field of cultural studies a thesis based on anthropological methods and theory is a strange fit as the context overrides the text (see Tomaselli, 2005; Tomaselli, Dyll and Francis, Forthcoming). The purpose of such a study is to contextualise the theory and ideas about 'Bushman' that circulate throughout society and even globally against a community of aboriginal people. These people are seen as a 'limiting case' of ethnic identity as interlocutors see that their claim is based solely on their own discourse. I argue that the biggest constraint against their claim is not the paucity of information or limits of their own discourse, but the very discourse of 'Bushman' and its associated imagery is the limiting factor in their recognition. Personally, I had moved to South Africa four years before the writing of this thesis with all sorts of ideas about Africa and Africans that were largely based on mass-mediated images despite my undergraduate courses of study. The issues and debates around representation always seemed sharpest in border communities. 'Border communities' is used to refer to all the various peoples that live on all of the boundaries within society, including, but not limited to national, cultural area, social, class, race, gender and so on. I have always been fascinated by these various border communities and those that are not part of the dominant sector of society. After years of research I realise that these minorities say as much about those around them as they do about themselves. Subordinate or marginalised peoples do play a role in shaping our societies and, despite the most aggressive and violent pasts, far too often associated with marginalised peoples, they definitely have a lot to say about themselves.

I have written myself into this thesis, this history, as a way to allow the reader a sense of the journey and methodological process I am attempting. I draw heavily on anthropological methodology for cultural studies partially due to a love of the messiness and chaos of interpreting daily life. This is one of the best ways to get to know a people. I enjoy the contradictory ways in which people define themselves and how they actually live. I broke taboos, norms and customs at times yet was always welcomed, warmly and

affectionately. This thesis is a tribute to my hosts and to their dogged determination over the years, centuries even, not to be wiped away without a trace. It is an unabashedly interpretive process and here I repeat the role of the anthropologist as author. I tell a tale here, not a tall tale or a lie with the hopes of benefiting a family I love and who live in deep poverty. What I attempt to do is to give credence to small voices, some echoes through history, and attempt to curtail some loud brash powerful ones. These are voices that deny the Abatwa's very existence and deny them access to their heritage and to the material benefits deriving from it. There are also some loud voices involved in protecting the San people, some of these also draw upon crude racial caricatures in their attempts to help them. The Abatwa, and indeed many of the San people I have met in the Kalahari, cannot fit these stereotypes and images. Separating aboriginal peoples out as exceptional or different from those communities of which they are part creates tensions and divisions that the rural poor do not need on top of their often daily struggle to survive.

Isaac Schapera pointed out as early as 1939 that there is no such a thing as a 'typical Bushman' (69-72). Yet this idea haunts the field and the ideas that circulate through society from the local to the global. People expect the Abatwa to look, not like the Kalahari 'Bushmen', but crude caricatures of the Kalahari Bushmen. I say this as even the Kalahari Bushmen does not fit one mould. In fact, this is even used to deny the ≠Khomani San's claims to being Bushmen, they are seen to be of mixed race as if this must disqualify people from an ethnic or cultural claim. As Kent notes, "some anthropologists still write as if culture is genetic" (2002: 25). If some anthropologists still write in this limiting way then the general public is not exposed to alternative discourses that are more inclusive and honest about the diversity within populations. The image and the idea of what it means to be aboriginal in contemporary South Africa can draw on the Abatwa as a realistic idea of what it is to be aboriginal in Southern Africa. The non-conformity of their appearance or lifestyles to the dominant tropes and discourses of the San is a counterpoint to the racist stereotypes and type-casting.

To this end I write about the Abatwa as a not entirely separate racial/ethnic group from the Zulu Nation. They are an aboriginal part of the Zulu Nation. The same claim should

be made for the various groups of Kalahari 'Bushmen' as they too are part of the Bantu society and have been so for millennia. I am sympathetic to the revisionists who wish to understand the San as an underclass systematically relegated to the desert, but I do not wish to 'join sides' as the story is very complex involving multiple peoples, events and histories that cannot be placed into an either-or. I also have issue with the other camp that posits a long duration of direct continuity with the past. This story too is only partial as a wider focus on these peoples reveals as many ruptures as continuities.

The very language used to describe the 'Bushmen' or the 'San' is part of the reifying discourse that limits claims and creates non-permeable boundaries between peoples. The use of the terms 'Bushmen' or 'San' as coterminous with forager or hunter-gatherer makes an assumption that the foraging lifestyle is the central organising aspect of their existence. Any deviation from this lifestyle is viewed as a temporal anomaly or act of victimisation. New terminology and descriptions could go part of the way, but essentially what is required is a new way of conceptualising the 'Bushmen' in terms of socio-economic struggles. The concept of 'aboriginal' as a working term has been very successful in global struggles whereby indigenous groups claim special rights and privileges based on original occupation of the land. I am not arguing against policies that directly benefit aboriginal peoples, but despite successes in terms of land rights, development and money thrown at the issues concerning aboriginal peoples worldwide, they are still some of the most despondent, shattered groups.

The marking off of the aboriginal as exceptional was expected to have been a major success. The success of claims to aboriginal status has been seen in terms of material gains, such as land or monetary compensation. The more salient issue of their continued treatment as an underclass has not been properly addressed. In areas the marking as unique is also to mark them as despondent or as victim as the salient organising feature. Linking issues of aboriginality to issues of poverty and development is a start, but the more intangible issue of a broken people living on the margins of greater society are kept at bay. Such marginalised and desperate people begs the question, "How does one repair a shattered soul of a people?" By this I mean how is it they as a people can recover and

live as full members of this society on their own terms. Thus the 'soul' of a people is only recoverable by themselves, and assistance is not to decide on the content of their lives through type-casting that only allows specific groups to be recognised.

The goals of the disparate peoples we refer to as San are to be part of society. This I believe to be true even for the traditionalists we find struggling for their land and language rights. This is not to give weight to the idea that these 'past' cultures' merely disappear in light of the dominant forces of globalization, but that globalization is a much more nuanced force and has room for multiple ways of living. Globalization is often derided, yet having been to one of the World Social Forums²⁹⁹ and have now lived on four continents, there are wonderful aspects of inclusiveness and sharing, it is not a one-way flow of power and domination. There circulates a powerful discourse that San people must be hunter-gatherers or recently were hunter-gathers to have a recognisable claim to aboriginal identity. This idea frustrates peoples that cannot fit this pattern and is also based on racist imagery and the assignation of specific physical characteristics, such as skin colour, height, eye shape and so forth. Regardless of social change and changing economies San people have coherent and engaging cultures. This is true whether or not they hunt or gather, or farm, or await government handouts. A general discussion of cultural or social behaviour cannot fix it in an unchanging pattern.

Identity, culture - those signs that exist to allow us to make sense of the world - is used to navigate through the unhinged signs of the times of contact and change. The pinning of a set of semiotic signifiers - the cultural - to the livelihood strategy as the sole significant feature of their identity is rather oddly applied to those disparate people labelled as hunter-gatherer. No one continues to pin the identity of agro-pastoralist on the Zulu anymore. Whether or not they practice agriculture or pastoralism is irrelevant, they are Zulu based on a whole series of signs, symbols and practices not assigned by anthropologists and archaeologists. Identity and the semiotic is contested and challenged, that is why anthropology cannot fix the ethnographic present and does not usually attempt to do so anymore, except as a rhetorical writing style. Studying the question of

²⁹⁹ Porte Alegre Brasil, January 2005.

ethnicity does not seem as politically charged today as it was prior to the demise of Apartheid, as state enforced ethnic boundaries are no longer maintained as legal entities, even as their legacy undoubtedly still exists. Attitudes from those politically fraught times still affect us. Ethnic consciousness does change in light of dominant political forces and changing economic times; it also changes despite of, in so much as ways of mitigating against dispossession (thus political), but also as a way of making sense of the world and of their own history (thus semiotic). Changing ethnic consciousness can be affirmative and positive.

Furthermore, the understanding of culture must also understand the difference between an ideal and actual lives – what people say they do and what they do. Again, this is not to make liars of our hosts, but to recognise that often how we live is governed by material limitations and external factors that also shape our lives. Culture is a web of understanding the world, shared and negotiated signs and symbols that are perhaps more significant during times of upheaval and change. The detailed oral histories of the Duma family counter any notion that their claims are false or manufactured in recent times.

The recent claims of the Abatwa are partially a result of an open political system where they have a right to be vocal and ethnicity is no longer assigned by the state; it is also a way of organising their past in light of their own family histories. I wish to see a rewriting of history of the people of KwaZulu-Natal and a more nuanced understanding of the compilation of the multifaceted compilation of the Zulu Nation. The Abatwa are dismissed as an extant group and written out of history by the process so aptly named by Frans Prins as the archaeological colonisation of the Southern San (2000). The Abatwa continue to be written out of history and in contemporary media coverage as well. They do not and cannot fit the idealised type of hunter-gatherer, as short, light skinned, fine limbed, and so forth. The history I wrote into this thesis I expect can be challenged due to the piecemeal sources and conjecture I read in the archives. I have drawn on scraps and pieces of a biased racist history that long ago began erasing the Southern San from the books while the settlers were exterminating them on the ground (Wright, 1971). I cannot stress enough the violence that occurred against the aboriginal population of the

Drakensberg or the ongoing structural violence that continues. If they are expected to remember the full details of their ancestry then one must demand that of any ethnic group. In my own case, few 'white' men from Canada remember or know of their settler roots; even fewer could live them out or replay their ancestors' past lives of struggle, hardship and exploitation of the land and people in Canada – yet no one doubts their/my authenticity of a connection to this past. The aboriginal people are held to a higher standard of truth than others based on a stereotyped view of them and a racialised set of physical characteristics. People expect/demand that they exhibit the physical racial signs of their ancestors (despite racial characterization being undesirable to voice publicly) and especially to have specialized knowledge of their ancestors.

The recent historical violence shows the extreme pressures the Abatwa experienced that led them to assimilate and disappear into the dominant ethnic groups. The scant history available does lend an understanding about the Abatwa people. They do appear in the record and there can be no doubt they have had long contact with the Bantu peoples. They played a substantial role in shaping and creating the current Nguni population. The San language impacted on the Bantu and the addition of the three clicks mark the schism from Bantu to the Nguni language. I am now convinced that to speak to a Zulu is to speak in part to a 'Bushman'. This does not dilute the claim of the Abatwa, but it is recognition of their role in shaping the people and society of KwaZulu-Natal. I wish to change the perception of the 'Bushmen' as being outside of history or society.

The perception of the San as being outside of history (Wolf, 1982) is false and their role in shaping South Africa is unrecognised by most. History loves to focus on the big men, Shaka, Napoleon, Alexander, and the everyday person is missing. The history of the world seems to imply that the aboriginals of the Drakensberg were doomed from the outset. The lands they lived on are perfect for farming with deep rich soils, plentiful water and a comparatively benign climate. Had the mountains been hostile spaces with little obvious use and no chance for agriculture or pasturage for domestic animals then the Abatwa would probably still live as a fully recognised and viable cultural/ethnic

group. Aboriginal peoples the world over have been able to exist in the harshest climates of Arctic ice, scorching desert or deepest rain forest by physically distancing themselves.

These far flung areas are now threatened as diamonds are found in the Kalahari, oil is discovered in the north, tourism encroaches in invasive and exclusionary fashion, and hardwood lumber is sought from remote islands and jungles (see Cultural Survival; Survival International). The notion that hunter-gatherers lose their language upon contact with agriculturalists and more dominant groups seems to bear out in many places of the world (Brody, 2000). One looks to the Kalahari and finds Nama and Afrikaans speakers instead of \neq Khomani or other San languages. In the Drakensberg the language too is lost, yet the three clicks in the Nguni language points to something else. The San of the Drakensberg, and indeed of all modern KwaZulu-Natal, were not so insignificant. They were not simply overrun and erased from history by a dominant people. When the first Bantu speakers came from the North with their livestock and iron furnaces they were not necessarily the strongest, the archaeological record shows few traces of Bantu people starting about 2000 years ago. The San had been living in Southern Africa for at least 25,000 years, and in all likelihood far before that giving continuity to occupation of the land upwards of 100,000 years (see Barnard, 1992; Smith, 1992).

In challenging the notion that the San are an entirely autonomous hunter-gathering group from this region we then must challenge the rock art interpretations (cf. e.g., Jeuren 1995; Solomon 1995). The dominant interpretations of the rock art as shamanistic must be questioned as the history and archaeology shows a different story. People were mixing and there can be little doubt that the interactions between peoples would have changed their cosmology and beliefs. It is a large assumption being made that the art is essentially 'Bushman' rock art. No contemporary San people have a tradition of rock painting and those alive today who remember the paintings are of 'mixed' ancestry. This in no way is to denigrate anything they have to say about the rock paintings or as a slur on their heritage. It points to the complexity of the people and his ancestry and should tell us that we cannot only look to the Kalahari for our ideas of what it is to be a Bushman from the Drakensberg. Nobody from the Drakensberg Mountains should be expected to look, act

or believe as the Kalahari San do, and the Kalahari San cannot be the sole source of information used to interpret the rock paintings. Ethnographic information about the local peoples will reveal much relevant data as they too have inscribed the landscape and the rock paintings with their own meanings that are not necessarily external to those that executed the paintings in the first place.

The eland ceremony I linked to a memorial ceremony referred to as the crossing, and the idea of a crossing is an apt metaphor for this thesis. The idea of 'a crossing' echoes my fieldwork, as I cross racial, linguistic and social barriers, as I rewrite the past in light of the present. I truly consider the notion of a crossing the heart of my thesis; it also encapsulates best the struggle of the Abatwa, as they cross between Zulu and San, past and present and appropriately the song itself is a dirge for a friend of Johnny Clegg, Dudu, who was murdered during Apartheid for political activities (Clegg, 2003). Just as the Eland ceremony was a dirge for their lost ancestors and recognition of their new role in shaping events and ideas of today, the song echoes the role of those lost in death and how they still affect our lives. The idea of being "in someone else's dream, awake..." as the song laments (Clegg, 1993) relates to the Abatwa as they are caught in other peoples' ideas of what it means to be aboriginal in Africa. It is through the intervention/idea of their ancestors that they express themselves as Abatwa. As a result of their struggle they create a ceremony and draw upon images from the past and from those that surround them; they make it up as they go, they use Zulu practices and Busman images in their own unique way.

Richard Duma is the Abatwa from whom I received much of my information. He told me that the whole fight for recognition began with a dream. His dream was about the ancestors who came down from the rock shelter and they came to him and told him to talk about their Abatwa past. These dreams never relented and he finally went to the elders and they discussed what he had been told to do. They decided that with the changing political and social times they need no longer fear isolating themselves by their claim and it would not create a rift within the community. The ancestors that had visited Richard could not be put off anymore. The Dumas slowly became more vocal about their

past ancestry and the community and beyond is slowly coming around to the idea. Many of the Dumas' close friends and people that lived alongside them for generations already knew they were Abatwa and support their claims. Nobody is entirely sure what it means to be Abatwa, and this is still being decided. I hope to be able to watch this develop over the years into a more coherent idea.

The ceremony they refer to as the Eland Ceremony meant many things. It was about public recognition of their ancestry, it was a claim to the rock art site as their heritage, it was a reflection of their spirituality, and it embodied ideals for the future. Just as Faku told me;

There are many things we want to build. We don't have money, we are struggling financially, the reason why we have gone to the cave, our forefathers were living with meat and wild fruit, they were not struggling, now that they were chased away by the white colonial settlers. The only way to survive is to get a job, we don't have jobs that is why we have gone there to talk to our forefathers to give us jobs... Our forefathers are guides, they guide us, even here. I strongly believe they are around here. The look at everything we do. (Interview, June 2003)

The Abatwa's creation of a ceremony and the way in which they do not fit stereotyped images leads many people to doubt the 'authenticity' of their claim. The San people are held to a different standard of truth than any dominant group of people and people believe that they made the claim in order to benefit selfishly and to gain prestige. Listening to the racist remarks and watching the maltreatment of the San people elsewhere makes me wonder what prestige these people were referring to, and it is with anger that I write with the hopes of erasing the notion of authenticity. Culture offers creative ways of understanding the world,; cultures are symbolic systems that include language, images, sounds and tools. They are physical and ideal. The 'authentic' is a way of freezing ideas and halting creativity engaged in by the dominant who feel they have much to lose by change. The Duma family has no desire to exclude anyone from any material gains made locally that may arise from the cultural heritage of their ancestors and they seek something perhaps immaterial, just as Faku said:

No it is not true that we want to exclude them [Zulus]. What we are trying to do, we want to go back to our cultures, we have left our cultures many years ago. So we are trying to go back and to do what our forefathers have done before. What we are trying to find what the Bushmen did. We have some indigenous knowledge, you know the Bushmen were not educated. When he dies, he dies with his knowledge. There are some older persons who have some recall of that knowledge of how the Bushmen do this and this and we also learn from the books (Interview, June 2003).

The Eland Ceremony was a creation of a tradition that drew on some real traditional practices. This is then rearticulated through a new synthesis of old and new - traditional and yet fabricated for the occasion. Culture is used to understand change and how meaning is transformed. Culture is not merely the traditions or observable behaviour, but how meaning is imposed on reality and how people make sense of their lives. Thus the ceremony is a synthesis of past and present and at the same time neither: it combines an imagined past with an idealised image of themselves.

The implications of my research are twofold. Firstly we must include our 'mixed race' people in our discussion about aboriginality, whether we are discussing land claims or development projects or anything that impacts upon their lives. Secondly we must study shared stories, histories and beliefs of the people around the aboriginal peoples in order to understand the aboriginal peoples and their lives. So we must include in our study of aboriginal peoples those that live around or with them, not as points of contrast (look at what is different), but look at the shared lives as well.

The implications are that political or developmental interventions must not be so narrow to construct barriers between people. The absolutes about who belongs and who does not must ultimately fade away as racist/nationalistic jargon, which despite attempts to the contrary ends up loaded with pejorative and derogatory statements that do as much harm as good. We must not ever search for purity or allow it to be a condition of inclusion. Self ascribed categories and belonging to a group is not to be conferred externally and the

Abatwa must be allowed to claim attachment to sights of symbolic importance, and to the signs of aboriginality.

The second implication for the Kalahari debate is that the two poles of the debate are spurious. The notion that the San are either survivors with continuity from the past or that they are a marginalised underclass relegated to the desert must be discarded. The Abatwa have a continuity from their hunting gathering past even if it is not immediately obvious (stereotyped), they also have ruptures from their past as they became enveloped as part of the dominant system (Bantu, colonial, and global).

There may appear to be a contradiction in my thesis whereby I argue for the recognition of the Abatwa as an ethnic group that still exists and at the same time deride political organising that excludes other groups. I am adamant that the organising of political, socio-economic rights for minority groups is important and must continue. What cannot be allowed to continue is the continuation of crude, racist caricatures of aboriginality that freeze time and say much more about Western guilt than they do about aboriginal lives.

Redefining 'primitive' or aboriginal as positive does not change the fact that the 'Bushmen' are mistreated, abused and marginalised. Call for acceptance of their non-hunter-gatherer way of life as also positive, normal and not a detractor from the ethnic affiliation they claim. To do otherwise is to forever condemn them as lacking, having lost something, an incomplete people eternally relegated to the margins of society. Their successes and achievements can be celebrated and we should acknowledge their tenacity throughout history of survival and of adaptation to radically changing social and political times. They must be recognised as a people in their own right without having to resort to mass-mediated images and stereotypes that are absurd, but unfortunately have been made necessary.

Throughout this thesis I examine the notion of ethnic identity and claims and practices used to maintain this ethnic claim. Ethnicity is often conflated with race. In South Africa race is fairly non-flexible and says little about the people despite such common use. The

wonderful variety of languages, practices and customs belies such similarity. Ethnicity is much more fluid – more so than it first appears – it is more about mutual social ties and obligations than about physical appearance. This flexibility of ethnic claims must be forwarded into San politics.

The most promising way would be to offer support and fight for access to sacred sites while not denying other peoples use of such sites that they also see as sacred. The beneficiaries of rock art should not be the Kalahari San, but the peoples who live at the base of the mountains and have special ties to places and spaces they have imbued with meanings over multiple generations. To argue otherwise is to deny the history and archaeology of the Drakensberg and to take pan-San identity too far and beyond intelligibility. The real challenge comes next in trying to make connections and links without marginalising Southern San descendants from the communities of which they are a part. The need for land claim strategies and political organising to have coherence seems politically savvy. Yet, “agencies have invested in images of the San as pristine hunter-gatherers while at the same time promoting the ‘civilising mission’ of western liberal civil society”(Robbins, 1999: 845).

I have argued for an accurate representation of what it means to be aboriginal in South Africa. We must attend to the histories expressing connections and shared lives of those not considered aboriginal in South Africa to arrive at representations that influence the public images that impact on their lives through the media and their politics. The San remain captive to a theoretical framework of difference and exclusion that assists in the marginalisation as they are refused full status as active members of society. We must re-evaluate for political and academic reasons how we represent the San. The Abatwa are but one example of the marginalised San, who are even further sidelined as they cannot fit the mould of a racist, stereotyped hunter-gatherer forever relegated to the deserts of society and the academy. I leave Richard Duma the last word with the reason they make this claim, and of course this was first said in Zulu; “We do it for ourselves and for the future of the Abatwa people” (2005).

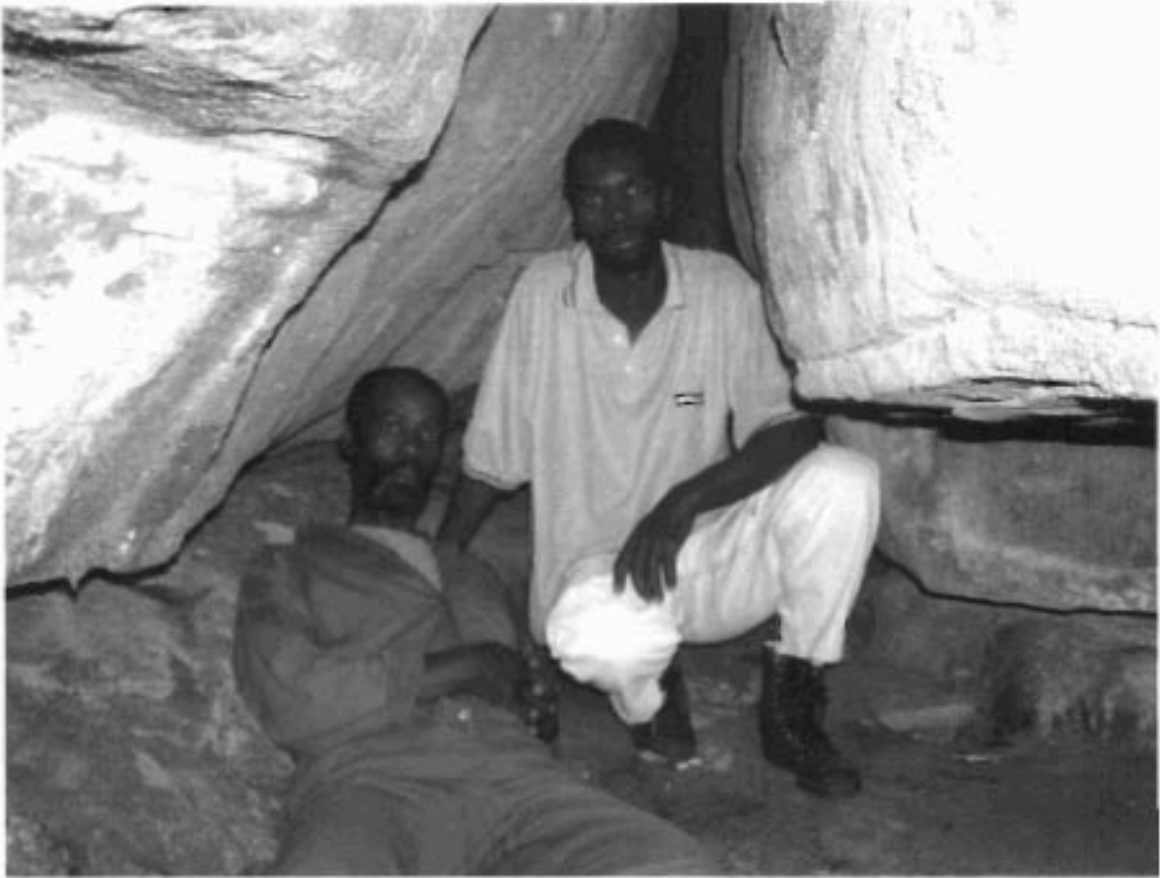


Figure 19: Richard and Faku Duma in one of the rock shelters of their ancestors.

Sala kahle 'bafwethu, ngiyabonga, ngiyabonga impela.

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This partial list refers to the first formal interviews conducted whether or not they were recorded mechanically. Supplementary Interviews were obtained through the three years of study. The dates of these comments are in the text. Numerous unrecorded interviews with other community members were conducted and they are referenced as Fieldnotes in the Text.

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