

**Empowerment through expression:
the land dispossession story
of the Marburg Black Lutheran Community
in KwaZulu-Natal**

BY

Clementine Sibongile Yeni

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Declaration

I, Clementine Sibongile Yeni,
hereby declare that,
except for the quotations specially indicated in the text,
and such help as I have acknowledged,
this dissertation is wholly my own work,
and has not been submitted for a degree
in any other university.

Clementine Sibongile Yeni

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Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Theoretical Framework	9
Methodology	10
The History of the Marburg Lutheran Mission	12
The Effect of Land Dispossession on the Marburg Community	18
Background to the Marburg Community's Stories	21
The Graveyard	28
The Special and Specific Incidents that Sources Remember	31
The White Man with White Sticks	31
The Imprisonment of the Reverend Schumadeck	32
The First School Building	33
The First and Second Church Buildings	33
Building the Dipping Tank	36
Incidents that went Unnot(ic)ed	36
The Feelings of the Marburg Community towards and about the Missionaries	40
Empowerment through Expression	41
The Hope that they Hold for the Future	45
Economic Empowerment Strategies	46
Conclusion	49
References	51
Appendix A: Details of the Interviews	54
Appendix B: 'The Big Day' – Sunday 27 th February 2000	55
Appendix C: Extracts from the title deed records of the Marburg Mission Settlement.....	60
Appendix D: Surveyor's plan of the layout of Marburg	62

Illustrations

1. Reverend Stoppel and Daughter	12
2. Marburg, Oberhessen, Germany	17a
3. The Marburg Mission, Alfred County	17a
4. Christian Gwala of Marburg	40

Introduction

The pain of land dispossession, as a result of colonization, brought about by the encounter between orality and literacy is still felt the whole world over by many oral communities on whose lives this process exerted great influence. As a member of the Marburg Lutheran Mission Community on the Natal South Coast, this is a thorn that still pricks every day of my life – and which motivated me to focus this study on oral history with particular reference to the stories told about the role played by the German Missionaries in the process of colonization, and the events of the Apartheid era, and the consequent loss of the communal land (Kunene 1999:22).

In this qualitative study, I report on the case of Marburg Mission by interviewing a variety of Community members: mostly elderly and middle-aged, and some of the youth. I have also attended the Mission Farm Residents' meetings in order to ascertain the influence this endeavour had on this community. I discuss the oral-literate interface and the Oral-style elements as identified by Marcel Jousse, that emanate from the stories told. I have restricted the study to narratives only and therefore I will not devote any attention to other Oral-style traditions such as proverbs, praises and myths.

This account attempts to record the oral history of this community which has been insufficiently recorded in writing. My aim is to fill the gap by providing the oral point of view. The illiteracy of many dispossessed people means they cannot and will not write their own history, therefore it dies with them. Research studies such as this are necessary to record these oral histories before it is too late. This will help overcome some of the shortcomings of our past as Roth suggests (1998:100), but she warns that it cannot give voice to those who have already been silenced by

history. She is of the opinion that oral history provides an opportunity to explore and record the views of the defeated and the under-privileged, those who - by virtue of being illiterate are politically inarticulate - have been overlooked in most studies of the past. With this study, I hope not only to get people's impressions of this particular case of land dispossession, but also to develop an impression of its various parts such as forced resettlement as seen through the eyes of the affected communities: African women's experience of events is still largely untold.

Narratives such as those recorded here serve as an epistemological base, and because they are grounded in the experience of the individual, they form a foundation for an awareness of reality and truth. From the stories related by the Marburg elders in particular, the reader will be able to explore the truths embedded in them.

Land dispossession has been an issue in anthropological affairs since time immemorial. The following quotation from the Holy Bible provides clear evidence.

They covet fields, and houses, and take them away, they oppress a man and his house, a man and his inheritance (Micah 2:2).

Land has always been a controversial issue in South Africa, particularly since the arrival of missionaries who had a great interest in this continent. Mthetwa (1995:1) maintains that, particularly in South Africa the land issue is a highly emotive issue. He further states that the availability of land, and who controls it, has been a thread running throughout South African history. Today land dispossession is still of great concern to those affected because they feel that the injustices of the past should be redressed in this African Renaissance period.

Professor Pitika Ntuli writes that:

The African Renaissance is the new struggle for delivery, a struggle to find ways and means to activate the entire community of African to find a clear vehicle for its rebirth (*City Press* August 15:1999).

The number of laws on land reforms formulated since 1994 reflect how problematic the issue of land is, as a result of the laws of land ownership during the colonisation and apartheid periods. The land reform laws formulated since 1994 address the injustices of those laws.

In the Old Testament, land was also the source of conflict between Naboth and King Ahab. King Ahab wanted Naboth's ancestral land to be his. Because of the power imbalance, King Ahab used his status to dispossess Naboth of his land with the help of Naboth's wife, Jezebel. Such power imbalances also result from the inequities occurring at the oral-literate interface. In the South African context, land dispossession has resulted from a variety of initiatives - bribery, forced removal, land tenure acts - all of which were informed and empowered by writing and unequal legal status.

After the nation of Israel lost its independence in Palestine, there were many expectations of conquest each of which introduced a wave of new settlers who imposed the religion of Islam and the Arabic language on all the inhabitants. A similar scourge of land dispossession has also befallen the African continent. Conflict that resulted from the encounter between the two worlds of orality and literacy was motivated by the issue of land. The oral and the literate found themselves in competition over this valuable resource and the power of the literate was used to

settle this problem in its favour. The Shona people in the former Rhodesia, the San in the Kalahari desert (*Land Info* 1999 Vol 6 no2), the Kat Rivier community in the Eastern Cape, *inter alia*, all experienced the pain of losing their land to their more powerful literate counterparts. In contemporary Kenya, Zimbabwe and Namibia the struggle for land has been a major factor in post-independence development (Bernstein 1993 Report 4 and 5:1). Although the causes of the revolt included racial discrimination, economic exploitation and political subjugation, the revolt also arose out of conflict over land. Problems in the African reserve were acute and similar in their pattern to those in the South African 'Native' Reserves and later Bantustans. Lands that were fertile were often fragmented into tiny plots because of Africans' limited access to the land, as well as the traditional mode of tenure (Bernstein 1993:2).

In South Africa, the Homeland Policy (1940s), the Group Areas legislation (1960), relocation and what is defined as 'squatting' are directly responsible for exacerbating the critical situation of 'homelessness' in South Africa where, for political reasons, land is not available for housing or people have been dispossessed of their land and houses (Land Info 1988:26). In KwaZulu-Natal province, voices of dissatisfaction are still heard from places like Muden (Mtetwa 1995:12), Richmond (Cross and Haines 1988:74), and Marburg Mission at Port Shepstone, the last being my area of research. These places, just like those situated far and wide, were dispossessed in different ways and under different circumstances. However, no matter how land dispossession happened, it affected people by tampering with the stability of their communities, their livelihood and their identity.

A great deal has been written on land dispossession in general. Marilyn (1996:9) defines land dispossession as disempowerment. Gerlach and Hire (1970) identified two types of changes to which all people are subject, namely “radical change” and “developmental change”. The former entails change in social structure and customs and which mark those moments in history which are seen as significant turning points. Each of these radical changes involve new forms of religious thoughts and new concepts of the relationship between man and man. Isabel Hofmeyr (1993) and Bitterh Urs (1987) among many writers have revealed the tension that emerges in the encounters between settlers and hunter-gatherers, this being closely related to the worldviews of such groups which are a reflection of the preferred mode of communication: the oral and the literate. There is a fair amount of agreement that oral communities’ stories are their ‘title deeds’. In effect, this means oral communities know the history of their place of origin and can tell stories about it. They have a full right to claim ownership of the land featured in the stories. From an oral perspective, this implies that people who cannot tell stories about the land have no right to it. Very frequently, literate communities do not value stories in the same way as oral communities because their stories are recorded in books. From an oral perspective, the inability to **tell stories** precludes people from ownership of the land. In actual fact, the land struggle is about power imbalances related to ‘remembering’ and ‘forgetting’. Kanderer (Guardian 26–11-97) supports this statement when he says:

The struggle of man against Power is struggle of memory against oblivion.

And the notions of ‘Memory’ and ‘Oblivion’ are contested at the oral-literate interface: what is recorded is not necessarily remembered. Oral narrative, on the other hand, is impossible without memory, hence the irony of *The Power of Writing* (Martin 1994).

Theoretical Framework

Vansina (1973:19-20) is primarily concerned with the transmission of history through oral tradition. When he refers to oral tradition, verbal testimonies, which are reported statements concerning the past, either spoken or sung, enter into consideration. His statement further indicates that not all oral sources are oral traditions, only those which are reported statements, that is sources which have been transmitted from one person to another through the medium of spoken language. He also contends that oral traditions exclusively consists of hearsay accounts which are testimonies that narrate an event which has not been witnessed and remembered by the source himself but which he has learnt about – and remembers - through hearsay. Harris (Oral History Project 1999) reminds us that:

What we Remember, we Remember in the Light.

What we Forget, we Remember in the Dark.

This means that oral tradition should be studied according to a theoretical framework which provides for memory. Such a theory is that of the global Oral Style as described by Marcel Jousse. The Oral Style accounts for Mnemonic Laws and Mnemotechnical Devices which support and aid memory and enable the keeping of oral records. In practice this means that human memory could be a reliable source of information. However, unless the stories of the elderly people are recorded, the time will come when some important historical events will go missing. It is true that “With the death of every old man in Africa a library disappears”. (Amadou Hampaté Ba). We must make haste to collect and record valuable information from the living archives of the narratives of those who have lived the history of times and events long gone.

Methodology

How the literature was sought and used

A variety of searches in the library provided information about cases of land dispossession around the whole world. I then identified literature that particularly referred to my area of research, viz. the dispossession of Mission Farms and the process of empowerment through expression, specifically the Oral Style. I also read widely on qualitative research methods which informed the methodology in this case study.

How the sources were chosen

My sources for this study are/were all prominent figures in the Marburg mission. I decided to select and organise my sources in different age groups so as to compare their respective perceptions concerning our dispossessions as a community.

My sources were:

- Mark Ncama (1930-1996), was married to (1) Mirriam Khumalo with six children, and to (2) Duduzile Dlomo with one child.
- Christian Gwala (1930-1998) was married to Maggie Cele with five children of which I am the second born.
- Evelyn Buthelezi, born Zondi in 1912. Widowed.
- Inah Gwala born Lushaba in 1927. Widowed.
- Christinah Ncama born Gwala in 1903. Widowed.
- Gogo Mbili born in 1915. Widowed.
- Judith Gwala born in 1959. Single.

How the interviews were conducted

My interviews served two purposes and were organised into two sets. In both instances, the interviews were unstructured. (See Appendix A)

The first set of interviews served the first purpose, which was to collect the stories of dispossession. I had the sources tell me how we, as a community, had been dispossessed. In other words, they told me their stories as they experienced them, and as they had been ‘traditioned’ to them by their forebears who had actually experienced the earliest events in the history of the community. I interviewed them in the comfort of their homes and at whatever time they preferred and in their mother-tongue, Zulu. I had prepared the following questions in advance which I used in an unstructured way to direct the interviews:

1. What do you remember about the situation in the Marburg Mission?
2. How did you feel when these things happened?
3. Did the events that happened have an effect on your life? How?
4. What hope do you have about this place?
5. If this place could be restituted, would you come back? Why? Why not?

The second set of interviews served the second purpose which was to establish to what extent the sources had felt ‘empowered’ as a result of telling the stories of dispossession. The questions I prepared for these unstructured interviews included:

1. How did you feel after you had told me the stories about the Marburg Mission?

In all instances all sources were most co-operative and enthusiastic to help me in this project, the significance was clear to them.

How the data was recorded

A great deal of data was forthcoming, which I recorded in a notebook during the interviews. From the data collected, I chose the most relevant stories and used them to construct this account.

The History of the Marburg Lutheran Mission

The Hermansburg Mission Society which is the Lutheran Mission Farms' headquarters, was among first groups of Germans to arrive at Port Natal (Leusche 1985:4). They bought a portion of land - Lot 35 of the Marburg settlement - from the Government. In 1827 Reverend Peter Stoppel arrived from Germany and he established himself on a hill overlooking the *uMzimkhulu* River from the South side. He had one hundred acres of arable land and five hundred acres of commonage. It was here that he founded a Mission and named it Marburg after his home town in Oberhessen, Germany.



Rev. P. Stoppel and Daughter

This area was called 'Nomansland', not because it was uninhabited but because it was occupied by natives of different ethnic groups who had fled the Shakan wars at that time in Zululand, but nevertheless the majority was the Zulu-speaking people. (Halland and Adreason 1882:17) Reverend Peter Stoppel hoped to encourage more Germans to emigrate and settle around him at

Marburg. This plan was unsuccessful, so the farms that had been laid out in anticipation of the German missionaries were taken up by those German citizens who came to Africa of their own accord, and who were not part of the mission.

The local chief was Duka Fynn, son of Henry Fynn. Henry claimed that Shaka had provided him with land in this area in return for his friendship and medical assistance in 1824. When the laws governing land ownership were in place, the Government removed the Zulus to the far North Western hillside in order to accommodate the settlers (Pridmore 1991:24). The mission farm was subdivided and Elias Adreasen settled with his wife Eline and their four children on one of their plots in 1890. In 1891, Abel Andreason and his wife, Hanna with their four children also arrived. Christian Gwala told me that Chief Duka Fynn donated a portion of his land to the Missionaries so that they could spread the gospel even further.

This area incorporates the most important traditional structures, the church and the school buildings, the dipping tank and of most importance, the graveyard, by the late 1970s. There were forty-two Zulu-speaking families living on the mission farm. The Pondo's and Bhaca's had moved to Port Alfred. The Zulu-speaking community had been predominantly oral with a rich oral tradition which incorporated ancestral religion and a belief in *uMvelinqangi* (The Omnipresent), and an intricate system of community organization and Administration which was often expressed in colourful dance, music and story telling. This material included historical facts, incidents and even judgements enshrined in otherwise simple traditional stories told particularly by the storytellers and which were traditioned from generation to generation. That was why the way of life of this community was known throughout their lifetime. These people

had lived a traditional lifestyle and the elders were responsible for teaching good morals through the use of proverbs. Traditional institutions were built where ceremonies such as coming-of-age had been practiced. They had fed on wild fruits and had planted only for their farm families. The womenfolk had done domestic work and the menfolk used to hunt and herd cattle. The missionaries introduced literacy into this community which contributed to the erosion of the oral tradition.

In 1868, Reverend Stoppel, with the help of the black community built a church with mud walls and thatched it with grass. Church services were conducted there regularly. When the need for a school arose it was also constructed with mud walls and thatched with grass. By this time children started attending school where they were taught German and Arithmetic. At church both young and the elderly people were taught Christian values. The elders of today still remember that they were occasionally called together to have the literate religion instilled in them because the Missionaries regarded the Zulu-speaking community as total heathens. At first the natives were allowed to continue with their traditional customs, but were required to honour the time for worshipping God. Gradually the pressure to follow the Christian way increased and the traditional beliefs and values diminished. One anonymous author maintained that the converts could keep their tribal surnames on condition that the surnames did not “incorporate any marginal heathen inferences”.

For virtually the same reason, mission stations were invariably given Zulu names because those were easy for the Zulus to remember and to identify with. The Marburg Mission was later known as *eNyenyezi* which meant that the Zulus on the mission farm should stop shouting as they used

to if they called for attention by calling out with full voices [*u - u - u - u - - - - - wi - i!*] ('HEY THERE!'). With the influence of the Christian tradition, they had to '*nyenyeza*' (whisper).

When the church and school buildings fell into disrepair new structures were built. On this mission farm lay the graveyard where the ancestors were buried. In the Zulu tradition, a graveyard constitutes the community's history and is consequently of paramount importance. My sources confirmed that the dipping tank was built about one kilometre from the Mission. The community felt that it was too far so they requested for permission to build it at the mission. They were allowed to do so. Every Thursday, the children were able to take the cattle to be dipped at the dipping tank before going to school. The herds of cattle were then taken to the grazing camps.

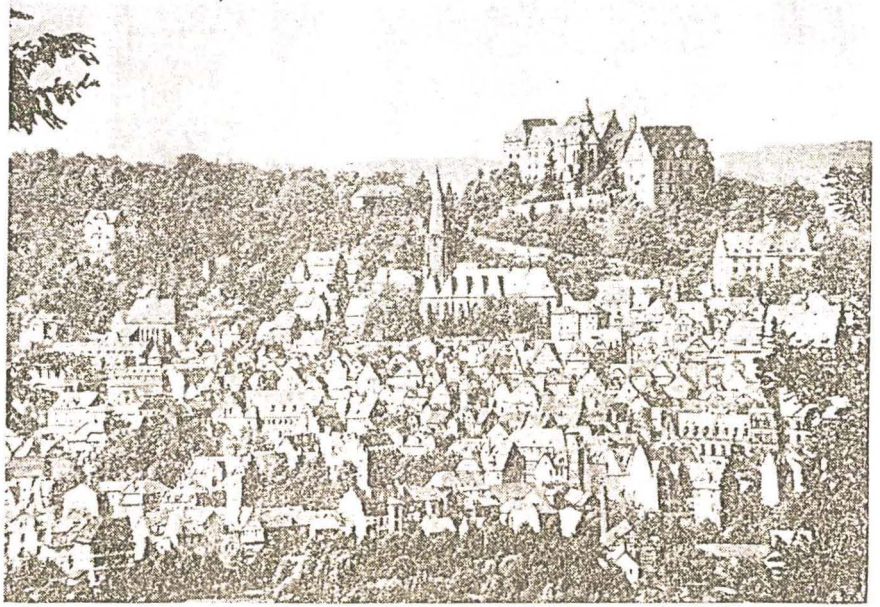
1960 marked the turning point in many communities around the world. Hofmeyr (1993) confirms such change in the Transvaal. On the south coast of Kwa-Zulu-Natal, the Group Areas Act of 1960 whereby the Nationalist Government decreed that part of the Marburg Mission was to be declared a 'Coloured area', precipitated rapid change in the lives of the Zulus associated with that mission. The families that lived on that part of the mission were forced to demolish their houses and look for another place to live. Some went to Gamalakhe Township, others to Bhubhoyi and Murchison. What distressed the community the most was the fact that the school, the church, the dipping tank and the cemetery were situated on that part of the Mission, so these people were deprived of their livelihood. Of particular concern to us as the Zulu community is the fact that the graves in the cemetery were leveled by the Municipality and many of them are now lost. Moreover in order to gain access to use the cemetery, residents now have to pay for the graves,

Over the years, both the school and the church have fallen into a state of disrepair. The land and the facilities have been wasted in the name of a destructive and inhuman political ideology. It was necessary for the remainder of the Zulu residents to contribute some cash towards the building of the new church and school at Bhoohoyi Location. Both buildings were quite a distance of about three kilometres away from the mission itself, but given the circumstances, there was no alternative. The restrictions placed on them and the boundaries that were set forced the community to part with their herds of cattle, the yardstick by which they measured their wealth and wellbeing.

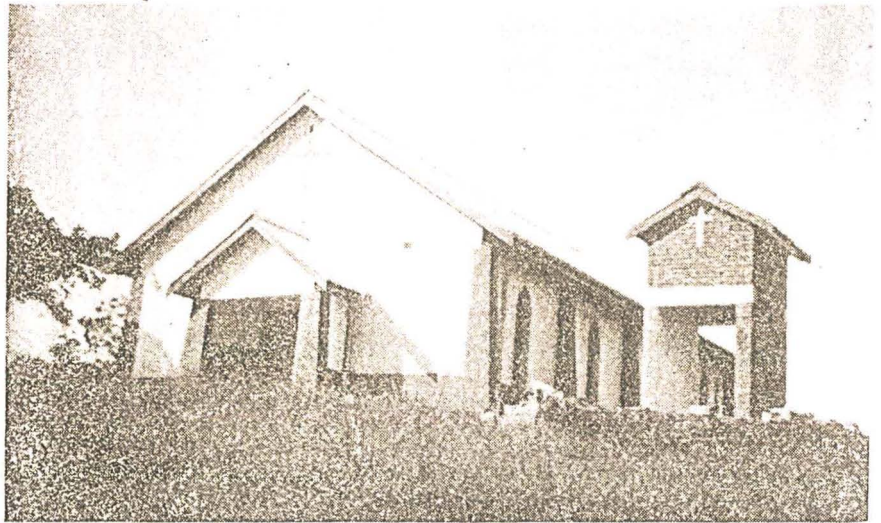
The community members that lived on the part that was donated by the chief to the Missionaries lived in fear that the same fate would befall them. In the 1980s, Practical Ministries, under the leadership of Danny Chetty, intervened in the Marburg Mission to help the people. In the early 1990s the retired Chief Inspector of Education, Mark Ncama joined them. As a member of this community, he was able to give them the details about how the dispossession took place. When his nephew, Christian Gwala retired in August 1996, he collaborated to address the issue concerning the community, and the living conditions on the Mission farm. The Germans continued to have ties with this mission although the white pastors were no longer there. They visit the mission almost every year in order to keep abreast of the state of affairs. Several meetings are held yearly with the residents in order to inform them of the current issues. These residents are now represented by the farm committee, to which I have recently been elected, which helped in the formulation of the constitution regulating membership. This committee is chaired by Dr Eric Gumbi. There is another committee known as the G15 the members of which are the chairpersons of the fifteen Mission Farms in KwaZulu-Natal together with the local

pastors of these mission farms. The church negotiates on behalf of its members for the living conditions to be improved. The Parish is called 'Marburg Gamalakhe' because as from the 1980s these two churches had no pastors: Reverend Mbatha of Marburg was transferred and Reverend Kunene of Gamalakhe died, so the Dean of the South Eastern Diocese Mr Mbuli amalgamated the two parishes.

When the Restitution of Land Rights Act (*Land Info* 1999 Vol 6 No 4) was passed by the Parliament in 1994, hope was renewed. The oral testimony of this issue lies in those Zulu Communities that have been dispossessed. The then Minister of Land Affairs, Derek Hanekom invited land claims applications from those who were dispossessed up until 1913. The issue of Marburg fell within this period and the chairperson of the farm committee lodged our claim on 5th December 1996. On the 8th December 1999, when I visited the land claims offices in Pietermaritzburg to ascertain whether our claim had been processed, Victoria Jama assured me that the claim was then ready for processing since the initial screening had already been completed. This Land Reform programme will expedite both matters of redistribution and reform of tenure. On 29 January, the Practical Ministries with its partners from abroad is scheduled to hold a ceremony whereby Mark Ncama, Christian Gwala and Reverend Linda Makhanya will be commemorated for the initiative they took to be the voices of the Marburg Mission Community. (See Appendix B) On this occasion a tomb stone will be erected in the churchyard and will be dedicated to their memory. This will be highly significant because when Christian Gwala died on 27 July 1998, the church was used by the Zulu Community once again. By the end of 2002 I am quite sure that our land will have been restored to us through our communal efforts. (Or so I thought at the time I first wrote this – see Appendix B)



Marburg, Oberhessen, Germany



The Marburg Mission, Alfred County. This building was erected near the original site of the first church built by Stoppel in 1867. The bell is the original bell.

The Effects of Land Dispossession on the Marburg Community

The land dispossession of this community resulted in the disempowerment of people. This created power imbalances as the power fell into the literate hands only, Zulu people were cut off from their traditional way of life because they could not hunt, collect firewood or graze their herds as they had done for many generations. They lost touch with their roots, the soil of their forefathers. Dispossession divided the community as some were in favour of the development and others wanted individual compensation notwithstanding the threat this situation posed.

As a community we need to unearth our tradition that is just below the surface of the Christian Modality. As African aboriginals we attach great value to the land on which we live. It contains features that trigger our memories to re-organise our experiences. Although those features might not exist at the present moment, they are still in our memories because they provide mnemonic devices which help reconstruct our Oral Style of communication. The meaning of our existence is attached to the land.

Loss of land triggered and contributed to a loss of identity. As Hetherington (1989:5) contends, space has a significant symbolic role in the production of identities. He identifies empathy and identification with the rights and freedom of marginalised oppressed others, seeing the body as a focus of well-being and an expressive source of communication and identification with others, using space as the basis for groupings that are held together by their emotional and moral solidarity as the characteristic of expressive identity. Losing land means losing themselves, their being, who they are. In this way they lost their pride because they had to settle in areas where the lifestyle was considerably different from their traditional one. They had to change their dress-

code and adapt to new situations. The material *geste*¹ of traditional dress-code was so colourful and expressed meaning and pride in themselves. The traditional dress included beadwork that they alone could interpret. Some traditional customs such as polygamy and the drinking of home-brewed sorghum beer was prohibited. Paying the bride-price in the form of life cattle was partially replaced by money. Because they had lost access to traditional grazing, material wealth was also lost. Their herds of cattle had to be decreased thus sacrificing their status within the society. In traditional Zulu society the number of cows, wives and other material possession determined a man's status. A Zulu man's well-being depended traditionally on the health and extent of his livestock. In addition this move led to hunger and malnutrition because they could not get milk, meat and *maas* (sour milk) as usual.

Literacy contributed to a dilution of culture, which resulted in the use of loan words such as *ishethi* for 'shirt' from English, instead of *iyembe* as in Zulu, their language. The Zulu was no longer pure. German names were adopted but had no significance for the Zulus, whose own Zulu words correlated with the individual characteristics they described. Names with other than Zulu origin therefore, in most cases, did not refer concretely to the person him- or her-self. On the whole, dispossessed communities suffered particular social disorientation. The home and *umgonqo*, the traditional educational institution, had its function taken over by the formal literate school. The elders of the community lost their duty partially because children learnt at school during the day but after school they still had to pursue their duty of handing down information pertaining to good behaviour from one generation to the next. As fathers were forced to work out of town, young boys did not get enough time to stay with their fathers who were traditionally obliged to teach them how to behave as young men. The demands of the modern workplace were

so great that by the time fathers got home they are extremely tired. In some instances, these long separations ended the marriages in spite of the money that they sent home regularly. At work they lived in single sex barracks. Mark Mathabane describes the numbing effects this artificial setup had on workers:

(Migrant workers) were prey to prostitution, alcoholism, robbery and senseless violence; they existed under such stress and absorbed so much emotional pain that tears, grief, fear, hope and sadness become alien to most of them. They were the walking dead.

The menfolk of Marburg who went to work in Durban were likely to be prey to prostitution because they were used to polygamy so they were going to feel a great sense of loneliness. Because of the stability incurred by the Oral Style, 'bad behaviour' was still reprimanded by proverbs such as:

Isalakutshelwa sibona ngomopho

Umvundla zowunqanda phambili

Hamba juba Bayokuchutha phambili

All these proverbs mean: "If you don't listen you will suffer the consequences."

Although these usually related to the youth, such proverbs were aimed at the adult men-folk as well. Mathabane, in his book titled *African woman: the three generations* (1994) wrote about the African women who depended on oral tradition to confirm their marriages by accounts of bride

price paid by their husbands. In the towns, women clung to pieces of paper as proof of their marriages. Although at Marburg they gradually adopted the colonial customs they still have the residual remnants of their own religious beliefs. They still believe in the power of the ancestors as well as that of Jesus. And they lived in two worlds, both the oral and the literate. *Hlonipha* exists on both sides of the communication boundary. Woman did washing and housekeeping for the white farmers. After a day of long and arduous labour, and being pushed around by their masters, they got home tired and angry and had not time at all for the celebration of traditional function and ritual. Instead of the tradition of the *gogo* (grandmother) being the story-teller at the end of each day, the *gogo* could only listen to the *makoti*'s (daughters-in-law) and men's stories of things that had happened at work. Prett (1995:24) confirms this situation in his statement.

Thus the tension stirred up indirectly by a father who is worked to death in the only job the regime will let him and his family is left to cope however it can.

So the stories of the community - both traditional and current - were kept in the human memory of the people.

Background to the Marburg Community's Stories

The issue of land dispossession informs the oral-literate interface because the modes of communication occur in the narrative accounts of the historical and traditional situations. This state of affairs connotes the metaphoric perception of land whereby the African Communities rely heavily on oral narratives constituted of myths, proverbs folklore and stories. These according to Finnegan (1989:10) are the 'verbal arts' which tend to highlight the aesthetic aspect

of a society at large. The term 'oral narratives' is preferred by Okpewho (1984:163) not only because it leaves little room for prejudice which the earliest generations of scholars had, but also because it gives primary emphasis to the medium of expression of this form of art, which is by word of mouth. Although many stories depicting this situation are minimally documented the physicality of the Africans - their bodies - have a lot to tell about the experiences impressed on them by their respective environments. To fully appreciate the significance of this understanding that Oral-style expression have, is constituted of Mimism, Bilateralism, Rhymism and Formulism; the elements that fix laws as well as histories in human memory (Jousse 1997).

Land has different meanings for the different cultural groups. To the African traditionally oral communities, land signifies both their livelihood and their place for dying. It means "The place where their forefathers were buried and where I will be buried. Touch my land and you touch me and my children and their children" (Philcot and Zondi 1998:2) while to the literate communities it means "a property to be owned" and this difference in perceptions manifest in different forms of expressions. By examining the 'expressions of different views that we gain a clearer understanding of the metaphors and their meanings'.

These two concepts have some commonality in that they are different forms of the *geste*. In our individual experiences as anthropos we share in varying degree in both worlds. "We have gone in our individual developments from orally conceived word without visible representation, existing within boundaries defined by utterance rather than spelling, to a sense of word with rigid visual limits" as Lord contends (1985). Chamberlin, in his article "Doing things with words, Putting performance on the page" (1998), quotes Lenny Bruce asking "Where is the distinction between

a word spoken and the same word written?” and Chamberlin continues’ “Where indeed? What is there about the power of the spoken word and of performance? Wherein lies its exceptional power to offend?” (Chamberlin 1998:5-6) What Chamberlin is referring to is what Jousse (1997) identifies as “*geste*”, and its energy in the spoken word in performance which is direct and immediate in its face-to-face transmission. It is this energy in the *geste* of the spoken word that has the ‘power to offend’, but equally the power to influence people strongly in a multitude of ways, including their own self-empowerment. When people **speak** their stories, their **speaking** empowers their belief in the stories and themselves.

Finnegan (1989) refers to ‘oral’ as a qualificative qualifying general terms like narrative, testimony, history or text either emphasising the distinction between written and oral forms or drawing them within the same comparative perspective. According to her ‘oral’ also contrasts with what is non-verbal and is the recollections of the past that had been commonly handed down from generation to generation, these include proverbs, narratives, praises, songs and lullabies which get fixed into our memories for replay at a later stage.

“Mimism [the capacity to imitate or replay his experience of the world] is therefore an instinctive tendency possessed only by the anthropos. This enables them to transposit the global *geste* [that of the whole body] onto the laryngo-buccal mechanism” of speech. (Jousse 1997:668). How would it be possible for me to know the story of land dispossession of the Marburg Lutheran Mission residents if it were not for the gift of corporeal-manual and laryngo-buccal expression, because it started thousands of years ago and is ‘written’ now in a non-literate community? Okpewho (1992:71) supports Jousse by stating that repetition is the device that not only gives a

touch of beauty to a piece of oral expression but also serves certain practical purpose in the overall organization of the oral performance. Lord (1985) is also of the opinion that “words heard were characterised by repetition of sounds, and by parallelism of structure, for example, which had the function of rendering magic utterances more powerful and hence more surely affecting”. The repetition of *Izwe lobaba* (Our Father’s Land) in the ‘struggle-for-land’ song, and the rhythm caused by rocking forwards and backwards, for example, in the performance of:

Tshelan’ uBotha nina
Tshelan’ uBotha
Ayekele izwe lobaba
Tshelan’ uBotha nina
Tshelan’ uBotha
Ayekele izwe lobaba
Izwe lobaba
Wemama Izwe lobaba
Izwe lobaba
Wemama Izwe lobaba

You tell Botha
 You tell Botha
 To leave our Fathers’ land
 You tell Botha
 You tell Botha
 To leave our Fathers’ land
 Our Fathers’ land
 Oh! Our Fathers’ land
 Our Fathers’ land
 Oh! Our Fathers’ land
 (My translation)

helped the Marburg residents to fix this issue into their memories. The ‘literate’ on the other hand refers to words seen and written. Thus literacy means the ability to read and write, making use of a page, whereas the oral refers to a landscape as a page on which literate people, particularly the settlers and missionaries, wrote their authority. Literacy is considered by Moto as:

... a fundamental human right, an instrument for social and economic development and a means to politicise a generation.

Kunene (1999:22) maintains that:

... writing did not evolve with the indigenous cultures but it came in as part of a powerful imperialistic invasion that revolutionalises the whole social system.

At this point, I would rather turn to Chamberlin's contention that the encounter between the oral and the literate - the agriculturists and the hunter-gatherer - is an encounter between ways of being in the world, and between ways of accommodating forces that are beyond our control. He further claims that it is no wonder that the agriculturalists are forever on the move "to find more places to be stuck in" (Chamberlin 1998:8). How then can our tears be wiped off our cheeks if the agriculturalists, the missionaries, are land hungry in such a way? They are capable of moving the fence so as to push the oral societies to the edge. One youth member, Judith Gwala complained in the residents' meeting that was held on the 15 November 1997 at church, saying:

Labalimi abasakhele bayidla kancane kancane bayoze bayiqede lendawo. Umlungu weplazi uthulile nje ngoba sebekutholile ababekufuna. Izwe leli lethu

(The neighbouring farmers are eroding the mission farm. Gradually, ultimately they will take the whole area. The Missionaries are just quiet because they have accomplished their mission). (My translation)

Kunene (1999:22) describes the colonization as

that which was aimed purposefully at disarming the people through inculcating in them new systems of thought.

It is important then to ascertain how the incidents that took place long ago were remembered by all the elderly sources. Hayes (1997), and Papalia and Olds (1988) support each other in the belief that, in order for a person to remember anything, he must have seen it, perceived it, heard it or become aware of it. "People tend to remember meaningful and well organized information, the unusual events and links to emotionally significant events. Events that capture such memories are usually memories out of one's personal life, that one eye-witnessed. These are moments characterised by surprises, shock and of great personal biological significance" (Papalia and Olds 1988:36). The Marburg residents personally witnessed the arrival of the first missionaries in the vicinity, and many of the key figures are personally well-remembered by the elders themselves. These events live with them and are vividly recalled therefore are easily reconstructed from the memory when similar occurrences happened later on. The way the events were impressed in their memories has a great influence on its restructuring for reproduction at a later stage. Most psychologists claim that the first and the last incidents are also easily remembered. This is supported by the fact that most of my sources remember the first and the last special events that happened at Marburg, with the exception of Gogo Mbili whose memory has recorded a lot that happened in between 1867 and 1998, both at first hand and as a result of firsthand accounts.

Balcomb (Oral History Project Conference 1999) maintained that stories play a major role in epistemology because they create meaning and are important for all spheres of life, therefore are to be put into context. Balcomb further stated that things that happen need to be explained and it is crucial that people need to know the beginning and ending in order to understand reality. Wright (Oral History Project Conference 1999) makes it clear that stories help to uncover the past. Although historians can reveal a small amount of information, it is believed that a much

fuller and richer history existed and this can only be confirmed through recounted stories and written documents. It is not surprising that the stories of the Marburg Mission are usually told by women. These folk are the ones who stay at home. They hear and see everything that happens during the day while the menfolk go to town for work, and hear the day's events from their wives when they return.

These womenfolk have been doubly dispossessed; once together with the community at large, and then again individually. When they are widowed, or living apart from their husbands, they are given no opportunity to talk about land nor do they have the right to the land itself. The homestead was usually registered in the name of the son or brother. Those who were not blessed with boys in their marriage often lost everything to their husband's brothers. Ma Mthembu's story provides evidence of this situation. Through the native tribal laws she lost ownership of homestead which was given to her husband's brother who had his own family. Ma Mthembu became a tenant in her own home. Carol Christ says:

If women's stories are not told, the depth of women's souls will not be known.

She further examines women's stories as the source for discovering women's spiritual experiences, particularly their encounters with greater powers. In 'Diving deep and surfacing; women writers on a spiritual quest', she demonstrates how stories can function as texts that can empower women to create the shape of their worlds (*Missionalia* Vol 25 No 4 Dec 1997). The women's stories in this study demonstrate their empowering effect and the consequent rehabilitation and rediscovery of voice and identity.

The Graveyard

The Marburg Mission had a grave yard. I am intentionally including this aspect in order to emphasise the special significance of the graveyard for us as a community. Graveyards recount history and ours are no different: Reverend Stoppel's wife and three children's graves there are evidence of the primitive medical situation the whites encountered when they arrived in this area. The weather conditions were considerably different from what they were used to in Germany.

There used to be no charge for the use of the graveyards even as recently as the 1980's. I remember when my two brothers - the youngest and the eldest - died in 1977 and 1984 respectively, they were buried without paying any fee. From the late 1960's until 1994 when we were cut off from this area by the Group Areas Act of 1960 we were neither allowed to bury our relatives at our homes nor in this graveyard. Makhumbane who died during that period was buried in the Nositha graveyard which is about fifteen kilometres from the mission. I don't think her husband can even identify the grave any longer. During that time we did not understand why the situation was like that. Now I know that the missionaries knew that we claimed our land-rights in terms of the graves of our ancestors.

In his submission to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on behalf of the residents of Marburg Mission on 7 March 1997, my father said:

I, Christian Gwala, speak on behalf of the committee which represents what is left of the community at Hermannsburg Lutheran Mission, Marburg which was split up by the application of the Group Areas Act of 1960. We are still suffering from the breakup of our

community facilities. We believe that we have the right both to the restoration of the land and to compensation for our material losses. (Personal Notes: Danny Chetty, Practical Ministries)

As he uttered these words with great concern, his face reflected the deep pain he felt.

Wright (Oral History Project Conference 1999) mentioned that in many communities the graveyard is the ancestral world and its originality depicts the connection they have with the mother earth which makes it possible for the living to communicate with those beyond. That is why it is the Zulu tradition to burn *impepho* (incense) in order to communicate with the ancestors because it is our belief that the dead live with us in spirit. We take care of our graves by weeding and planting flowers. Our living archive, Gogo Mbili, (see Appendix A) can identify almost all graves in this graveyard even at midnight, that is why we depend on her so much. When I was interviewing her, she remembered MaMthuli who stuck her husband's cross on somebody else's grave, and when asked:

Usifakelen 'isiphambano ethunem okungesilo na?

(Why did you put the cross on a wrong grave?)

she answered

Osh...mf...uMbele indoda yami Uyabona ukuthi ngikwenze Lokhu ngoba ngimkhumbula nowa Ngingasbiliboni. Kufanele aneliswe ukuthi nakuba sekwadlula iminyaka eminingi kangaka ngisamkhumbula njengenyama yenyama yam'. Nethambo lamathambo ami.

(Ish... mf... Mbhele, my husband, sees that I did this out of his remembrance although I could not identify it. He must be satisfied that although so many years have lapsed I still remember him as the flesh of my flesh and the bone of my bones)

The middle-aged members of the community are deeply concerned about the way respect for the dead has been lost. During the funeral rituals in the past, the priest usually led the mourners to the graveyard with the men carrying the coffin, everybody walking behind him on foot so as to avoid disturbing the ancestors. Not a single car entered this place. The Christian funeral songs were sung softly giving the deceased person due respect. Inah Gwala stated in the interview that there is no more respect saying:

Lendawo seyanikwa amakhaladi

Abantu abangenamlando nale

Ndawo yamathuna.

(This place has been given to coloureds,
people who have no history about this grave yard)

The municipality leveled some graves as if no-one was there. When Mirriam Ncama was buried in May 1997, the family dug the grave very deep until eventually they came to a coffin. They had to dig another grave. I strongly support Mabhekashiye in his contention when I spoke to him in August 1999. He said:

If one can walk on tiptoes in the graveyard and listen carefully, one could hear the conflict from beneath the ground.

Paying for the use of this facility is heart-breaking. We would rather engage in the modification of mother earth by making our graves with cement bricks in order to preserve them. The Stoppel family graves are clearly identified in this effort.

The Special and Specific Incidents that Sources Remember and Recount

‘The White Man with White Sticks’

Inah Gwala heard from her great-grandmother that in 1867 the Zulu community of Marburg saw a white man for the first time, and the converse was probably true for the whites. In 1897, MaMbanjwa (Inah’s mother-in-law’s sister) saw two white men arrive on horseback with white sticks in their hands. As they rode around they stopped occasionally, looked around and stuck these sticks into the ground at intervals. Inah laughed as she remember the way they concentrated on this, as it was told to her by her great-grandmother saying:

Wawungayibona indlela ababefiyela ngayo, wawungaba-gqema ingozi bangakuboni kwakona.

(You should have seen the way they concentrated on the white sticks. You could have even hit them with the knopkierie, and they would not even have seen you. My translation)

This community didn’t know what was going on. A few months later privately owned farms emerged. I was told this by Inah Gwala who reported her conversation with Evelyn Buthelezi on 26 December 1937, who told her:

Kwaba kubi ukuba bavumele lomlungu ukuba azohlala la ...

(It was a bad idea for the Zulus to allow this white man to come and stay here.)

and after a long pause

... uyabona uselande abakubo manje bazogwala la ...

(You see now he has invited more whites from his home town to come and fill this place).

Although she did not say anything at that time, Evelyn suspected that there was something wrong with these people. History confirmed her worst fears.

The Imprisonment of the Reverend Schumadeck

One day in 1942, it was the first week of the season of 'Advent', Reverend Schumadeck - *Simomondiya* (Handsome Guy) as he was called by the Zulu's - was imprisoned. Gogo Mbili heard from her uncle that he had refused to go back home to fight in the German war. Although Inah knew about this story, she did not know the details as well as Gogo Mbili does. This is because in the process of traditioning, some information gets lost along the way. At the time of this arrest, the Reverend refused to sit in the front seat of the vehicle which was to take him away to prison, but wanted to be kept in the tail of the police-van claiming that sitting in front would not change the fact that he was being taken prisoner. His family-members told the story to the residents who mourned with them. In the Reverend's absence, his wife stayed among the Zulus with her daughter and cousin. Her mother-in-law seldom visited them. Later, the Reverend's family left the mission. Although the missionaries seemed to have good relations with the Zulus,

this was superficial in that on the surface it looked good but covertly there was anger which could not be expressed in the Zulu community, for fear of reprisals from the authorities.

The First School Building

The school walls were made out of mud and the roof was thatched with grass as has already been mentioned: an excellent example of the operation of the oral-literate interface - the literate behaviour being developed in a traditional oral setting. Evelyn's speech supports Hofmeyr's statement that in bringing their everyday cultural resources to bear on the literate edifice of Christianity, the Zulus were also trying to make a relatively strange religion hospitable. They were also trying to protect a way of life and a system of representation. Gogo Mbili said:

Izindaba esizebhayibhilini ziyafana nezindaba esizixoxayo zomlando walendawo. Okungenami labelungu bazolugeina usiko lwethu ngale zindaba zabo ezihehayo.

(The bible stories are similar to the stories we tell about the history of this place. At least the Missionaries will preserve our oral tradition the way they relate their appealing stories).

The First and Second Church Buildings

In 1868 the first church was built of mud, and thatched with grass, as was the custom for the building of huts. My sources support each other in providing an account of the roofing being replaced with corrugated iron, when the thatching was worn out. In 1935 when Gogo Mbili was working, she also contributed her earnings to fund the rebuilding of the church. When the walls were cracked the need for the construction of a new church building arose. Maggie Gwala confirmed that the new building was constructed on the original site of the first building.

Gogo Mbili was unable to keep quiet about inaccuracy in a speech by Jethro Sithole at Christian Gwala's funeral:

Ngijabule kakhulu uma ngizwa Ukuthi uGwala lo uhambe esenze Umsebenzi ongaka wokubuyisela AmaLuthela kuledlu yesonto. Lendlu iligugu ngoba yakhiwe Ngezithukuthuku zenu. Abanye badayisa izinkomo zabo oTembe, NoMbanjwa, noButhelezi, ukuze Kwakhiwe leliso. Ama Jalimane Awakhiphanga lutho.

(I was happy indeed to hear that Gwala has done such a good job of taking the Lutherans back to this church. This church house is a treasure because it was built through your concerted effort. Some residents had to sell their cattle – the Mbanjwas, Tembes and Buthelezi families - to build this church. The Germans contributed nothing.)

Shaking her head, Gogo Mbili said when I interviewed her:

Ngamangaliswa inkulumbo ka Jethro enkonzweni yomngcwabo kababa wakho. Ayezothini amaJalimane ezwa lento. Akazi luthu uJethro kodwa unina uyazi.

(I was amazed by Jethro's speech at your father's funeral service. What would the Germans say if they heard such a thing. He knows nothing but his mother knows):

Gogo Mbili rejected the statement that the Germans did not contribute funds towards rebuilding of the church. Jethro had not stayed at home because after having been confirmed he went to Durban to work and he even got married there. Gogo Mbili claimed that he was not talking the truth and his mother should have told him the correct story. This might be true because Jethro was Reverend Sithole's son. This family came to the Marburg Mission in 1942 so they did not

eye-witness the incident. Gogo Mbili knows very well that the Germans contributed four hundred pounds towards the rebuilding of the new church. The Mission residents had to raise funds to match this four hundred pounds. Mr Leo and Mr Mkhomo requested the Company of Gogo's husband who had stopped working for the manager of OK Bazaars, Mr A. Ross. They had to request for permission from the Reverend to organise concerts in order to raise funds. Although the majority were against these concerts, and this even included Gogo herself, it was the easiest way to fundraise. These concerts were organised in pairs of families: Buthelezi and Mbanjwa; Leo and Mkhomo; Mbili and Cele; Gwala and another Mbanjwa. This structure created a balance which made this a success. The original bell erected in the churchyard was brought from Germany: this gave the bell a metaphoric implication for the missionaries and the Zulu Community, in that it was the voice of the home that the Germans had left behind. The deacons knew how to ring the bell for different occasions. I don't know the original meaning of the bell peals for the Germans, but for us the different sounds it made depicted different occasions. The peal for the church service, for the death of a community member and the one for the Easter period were all recognisably different.

During one of the concerts a certain man was stabbed to death. Inah told me about this incident with obvious distress because of the stabbing. The church building will always remind her of this tragic incident which resulted from the fact that home brewed sorghum beer was sold at the concerts. When people were drunk they quarreled with one another.

When sufficient funds had been collected, the concerts stopped and the church was built. Reverend Deppe built this church with the help of a black man, Mr Ndovela, who was among

those who volunteered to build in exchange for soap for washing his clothes. Those who wanted salaries for their help, did not contribute: there was no money for salaries. The Tembe, Buthelezi and Mbanjwa families sold their cattle in order to donate towards this construction.

Building the Dipping Tank

Since this Marburg Community owned herds of cattle, the dipping tank was a necessity. Most elders confirm that the site of the first dipping tank is marked by a specific *umdoni* tree. This tree was about three kilometres from the mission farm. The community members requested permission from the Reverend to build it on the mission, which permission was granted. Children, among whom was Gogo Mbili, collected stones after school. Together with the women, they crushed stones and the men were the ones who did the building.

It was imperative to dip cattle every Thursday otherwise they would be fined. The cattle were made free from all parasites because the water therein had some poison used specifically for this purpose.

The Incidents that went Unnot(ic)ed

Although my sources have told me every detail they thought I needed to hear about the special incidents, some changes were so gradual that they went unheeded, or the consequences of which were at noted at the times. I am quite sure that some important incidents that went unnot(ic)ed included the conversions to Christianity and the ‘forced removals’. Christian Conversions are perceived as a source of deprivation because they remove people from their tradition, culture and values. This happened incrementally: at first the residents were allowed to keep to their

traditional customs but this accommodation was gradually removed. This confirms that early converts were not allowed to wear hide skirts and their traditional attire. They were discouraged from believing in *uMvelinqangi*. A perception related to conversion was provided by my sources: While missionaries recited long prayers, the Black people had to keep their eyes shut. When the missionary said “Amen” they would open their eyes and rise only to find that their land had been taken over by the whites while they were praying. Furthermore, they were allowed to use their Zulu names only as long as they had no ‘heathen’ bearing. The word ‘conversion’ in itself speaks a lot, implying a need to exchange the ‘bad’ old for a ‘good’ new. The forced removals of families as a result of the Group Areas Act of 1960 was sometimes achieved by means which obscured its significance. Such forced removals were sometimes effected through bribery. The process of incremental encroachment on the mission farm by the neighbouring farmers forced the mission farm residents further and further away from their traditional lands. The social destruction of the Marburg Community as a whole chipped away at individual Black family life. More apparent were the direct blows to the family caused by the separation of male heads of the homesteads who were forced to work away from home (Prett 1995:24). Women had to raise their children alone. The Group Areas Act of the 1960 in itself was another form of dispossession which might have gone unnoticed if it had not impacted so significantly and directly on the livelihood of our community.

When it was announced that as from the beginning of January 1984 we were no longer allowed to use the church and the graveyard because the place ‘belonged’ to the coloured Community, MaZondi exclaimed with anger:

Yake yenzekaphi leyonto? Bangadayisa kanjani okhokho bethu esizweni abangasazi? Sazini sona ngalendawo Ngiyaqala ukuzwa into enje.

(Where has such a thing happened? How can our forefathers be sold to Strangers. What do they know about this place. What stories do they have about this place? It is first time I hear such a thing.)

In the first line of her outburst she questions the anthropological justifiability of the event: in fact she is asking whether this situation has ever happened to other people in the world. And the answer is sadly that it has happened, and sadly continues to happen often with the same consequences as for the Community of Marburg. In fact, her words echo almost exactly the words of the first native Canadians reported by Chamberlin when confronted by a scolded edict informing them that their traditional lands belonged to the Great Queen Victoria: “If this is your land” they said, “where are your stories?” (Chamberlin 1998:13)

Landloss has a subtle but direct effect on the social mores and customs of a community. In the case of the Marburg Community, landloss has exacerbated the gradual modification of our traditional rituals, customs and ceremonies such as *umemulo*, (marriageable ritual for young women), *ukuthwala* (ritual abduction) and funerals, which modifications have not been documented.

Although we still perform *umemulo* and the beast is still slaughtered, it has turned into a Westernised ‘party’: the girl for whom *umemulo* is performed often does not even bother to put on her traditional attire which is an authentic material expression of an ‘oral’ culture. The colours of the traditional *umemulo* attire are specific to the developmental status of the young celebrant’s

womanhood. Nowadays if a young boy abducts his intended bride in the traditional way as a mode of proposing love, the police intervene. In time past - as recently as the 1940s - abduction was highly respected followed by an exchange of cattle as a mark of the value placed on the young woman's virginity and fitness to be a wife to her husband, a daughter-in-law to her husband's family and a mother to her husband's family and a mother to her husband's children. It is not clear what impact a cash payment has on the attitudes and values of the bride.

The funerals have turned into disco parties at which bereaved family members often cannot be identified. Recently, my father was buried in a steel casket and because he died in an accident we were told by MaGwala, the diviner, that we should not slaughter a beast, claiming that it would cause another tragic death in the family. But recently a well-known *inyanga* (diviner), Mayihlome, informed us that we should have slaughtered three goats at the time of my father's death: one, together with a branch of an *umlahlankosi* tree, for taking him from the road on which the accident had occurred to the family home, one for cleaning his wounds so that the ancestors would welcome him and the third one for stopping accidents from occurring among the rest of us. After my father's death, he appeared to a diviner in a dream. Because my father was a Christian, he asked her to tell us that we must pray hard for him, thus not defying the tradition - prayer being a Christian substitute for the traditional slaughter of goats. This is the spirit of the word to which we must listen. Home-made sorghum beer was brewed a week before his funeral and we still use *impepho* to communicate with the other world. Fortunately it is used in Lutheranism although with different implications. Rituals like *igubuga* (traditional musical choir practice) and *imibondo* (sending presents to consolidate the relationship with the groom's family) were performed on the mission but with permission from the local pastor and not during Easter and

Christmas. Thus, the issues of cultural and ritual translation were ‘managed’ and accommodated to the mutual acceptance of the community and the church, but it was obviously not a perfect arrangement.

The Feelings of the Marburg Community towards and about the Missionaries

The stories of human history are told and tallied with passion which recreates their effect and influence on human lives in the telling: the events counted and recounted are the account of human experience. In the speech made by Christian Gwala delivered to the TRC on 7 March 1997, as I have stated earlier on, he said:

*Nakuba sasingakuthandi lokhu,
ngalezozukhathi kwakungelula ukuphikisana
nakho.*

(Although we objected to this: the removal of other families from the mission; in those days it was not easy to resist).



This was the period when Black Consciousness movements were formed to fight against Apartheid. When I interviewed Inah Gwala at her home on 17 August 1999, she told me that her husband had been an ANC member for many, many years. He worked at the Durban railway station. Together with other comrades, they used to sit among the passengers at the station appearing to read newspapers while in actual fact they were listening to what people were saying about Rolihlahla Mandela. They would then relate that information to their offices. The day Mandela was imprisoned, they were threatened that their hostels as well as their homes would be

searched by the Government. If the ANC membership cards were found in their possession they would also be imprisoned. They took those membership cards down to Marburg one midnight in the middle of the week. His family was amazed to see him appear in the middle of the night without warning. There was no time to sit down and talk. He looked for all the ANC correspondence and threw it into the pit toilet and then went straight back to Durban.

Inah Gwala makes little distinction between the missionaries and apartheid officialdom. She harbours a deep hatred for the Missionaries, revealed not only in the words but even strongly in the facial expression which accompanied the following statement, in which the missionaries are referred to as *lezizinto* ('things'):

Hey Nhi, bawudiliza umhlaba wethu, yeka amadumbe ami, umquba, lezizinto ezokuthelwa ngamanzi abilayo.

(Oh, Nhi, (my nickname) they destroyed our land. As for my Madumbes; my kraal manure.

These are 'things' that should have boiling water poured on them.)

Christinah, on the other hand, says that she prefers whites to Blacks because they do not gossip about poor people. She recalled the incident when her husband could not bring money home from Durban for a period of three weeks. The white pastor scolded her which she interpreted as a kindness, for she did not tell anyone that her children had no food to eat.

Empowerment through expression

The Marburg Black Lutheran Community was silenced by fear of the Apartheid mechanism, unable even to object to their treatment and publicly express the pain they felt when they were

dispossessed of their land. The only way that they were able to tradition their stories was through the private talk they shared on their way to the rivers to fetch water, and when they gathered there to do their washing, and as they walked to and from the forests collecting firewood. They were multiply disempowered, in that they had no platform on which to express their feelings about their losses of land and identity. Even after the establishment of the new democratic dispensation, the stories of the women – those who like Inah Gwala lost their “madumbies” and “kraal manure” - remained untold. Wright records that until a history has been told with passion, feelings remain hidden. (Oral History Project Conference 1999)

The interviews I conducted for this study with my sources created a platform for the expression of these stories. In order to know how my sources felt after they had told their stories with me, I conducted a second set of interviews.

On Sunday 27th February 2000, the Church and the Cemetery were restituted to the Black community, and Mark Ncama and Christian Gwala were commemorated for their struggle. I chose this occasion for the second interviews with my sources. (See Appendix B)

After the ceremony, I got an opportunity to speak to Gogo Mbili. It was clear that she was enormously excited by the occasion, and I was concerned that her response to my questions about the effect of telling her stories to me previously was influenced by this. In Carol Christ’s words, I had to “dive deep” in order to separate her feelings about the ceremony we had both just experienced, and how she had felt after the interview that we had held some months previously. She commented thus:

Ngazizwe ngingasenawo umthwalo ngalendawo. Ubuhlungu engiphile nabo yonke leminyaka ngabukhipha ngethemba lakho, ukuthi noma ngingafa manje usuyobaxoxela nabanyengemi bhalo.

(I felt relieved from the burden I had about this place. The pain I lived with for so long, I was able to take out because of you: that even if I die, you will tell the others of it in your writings.)

With a smile she continued,

Ngasithanda isibindi sakho ungumuntu wesifazane. Ngawe nje nabanye bazofunda nkuba izikhalo zabo zizwakalo ngendlela enokuthula. Bengingazi ukuthi izwi lethu liyoke lizwakale.

(I liked your courage as a woman. Because of you, others will learn to voice out their dissatisfaction in a polite way. I did not think our voice would ever be heard.)

Gogo Mbili spoke as if it was because of my interviews that the Church and the Cemetery had been restored. It was clear that in her mind the events were linked, and therefore the one was the consequence of the other.

I later met Christinah Ncama, and she responded to my question about how she had felt after the first interview as follows:

Kwangijabulisa kakhulu ukuthi lezindaba zalelipulazi zizobhalwa phansi, Nokuthi zisazaxoxowa noma sesafa thina. Ubani owayazi ukuthi kukhona usizo esinalo thina esingafundanga siyizinto nje ezidlala izingane nje. Ngangimkhuza noMark ukuthi lezindaba zomhlaba angaboziklu luma ngoba ziyabophisa. Wayemane angihleke nje.

(It made me feel happy to know that the story of this Mission Farm will be written down and will be told when we have passed away. Who knew that the illiterate folk would be of help. We are just the laughing stock of the children. I used to prevent Mark from talking about the land issues because they put one into prison, but he simply laughed at me.)

In my interview with Inah Gwala, she informed me that she had felt weak after telling the story in the first interview, saying:

Ngaba novalo kabi usuhambile ukuthi nakhu ngizobophisa umzu kulu kasiVande bo. Ngiyazi ukuthi uChristian Wayeyindoda wayezi beka ngesisoka izinto wena useyingane. Kuhle ke kodwa ukuba nizazi lezindaba zesimo salendawo ngoba namhlanje izilokhu kusasa ijiloka..

(I had fear after you left. I thought how dare I put Sivande's grand-daughter into danger. Christian was a man and he had good ways of speaking. It is good for you to know the situation of this place because today it is this, tomorrow it is that.)

Hayes (1997) stresses the fact that telling stories helps a great deal in healing memories. I strongly agree with him because the interviews I conducted with my sources made them relate stories they had decided to forget because of the trauma these events had created - what was "remembered in the dark" in Harris's words (Oral History Project Conference 1999). But because I am part of the community, they remember(ed) things "in the light" (Harris: Oral History Project Conference 1999) that they would not have dared to talk about with strangers. This platform made them feel empowered that at last they had the chance of voicing their feelings out. This process will help them to heal their memories. Gogo Mbili's relief proves it. Although Mark Ncama and Christian Gwala had spoken on their behalf as a community, they had not previously

spoken themselves of what they personally had experienced within their families. Mark Ncama and Christian Gwala had not consulted them personally and thus the finer details of their stories were lost, which were captured in the later interviews with me. I am quite convinced that the fact that I am a woman and they are also women empowered them a great deal. It is maintained by Hayes (1997) that through speaking about truths embedded in their stories, people reconcile themselves with the past in that their voice has been heard. Therefore they feel empowered, they feel new meaning has been created and their stories can be used as examples for the future: what was negative and destructive becomes positive and constructive. Carol Christ (Missionalia 1997), confirms this, and supports Hayes (1997) when she says that stories function as texts that can empower women to alter the shape of their worlds.

The Hope They Hold for the Future

A number of factors anticipated the democratic dispensation. The Practical Ministries paved the way for the repossession of the land of the community. Mark Ncama courageously shared the community's story of how the mission farm was dispossessed, followed by Christian Gwala and the local Pastors.

Before Christian Gwala died, the Marburg Mission Community had high hopes for the future because he was their spokesperson who lived in their midst and knew all their problems. He was a man of integrity, but when he died, they started losing hope again. They attributed the restored use of the church and the graveyard to him, while in actual fact it was the passing of Land Restitution act of 1994 (*Land Info* 1999 Vol 6 No 4) which was responsible for this restoration. Hope for the future is now entrusted to the Mission Farm Committee which is executing the function of negotiating the restitution of this land to its rightful owners. The Practical Ministries

continue to give strong support and because the land claim has already been lodged we are hoping for a positive response from the Department of Land Affairs. These restitution and redistribution of land programmes will empower us to come together and initiate development projects that will open up employment opportunities. It is hoped that the women - the oral history archives of the community - will be encouraged to make a strong stand and take up their rightful roles in the restored dispensation.

The Empowerment Strategies

Before we turn to strategies for empowerment, it is important to look at the sources of disempowerment. A key to poverty alleviation and the empowerment of others is the understanding of the sources of lack of power of the community. The case of Marburg clearly points out the complexities of the community's lives and the complex strategies needed for their empowerment. In all areas that have been colonized by whoever around the world, power imbalances have occurred as a result of the constitutional laws that govern a country. These laws start operating gender power relations within our families where maleness is regarded as a means of power, in addition to the issue of male elders being leaders of the families. The entrenched and unquestioned capacity of men to lead is entrenched in the proverbial Oral-style wisdom of the community:

Umlomo wexhegu umuncu kodwa

uma likhuluma kuphuma

ubuhlakani bodwa

The smell of an old man's mouth is foul,

but when he speaks

the wisdom that flows from it is sweet.

In this study, I have demonstrated that the exclusivity contained in this perception is flawed: women have had as much, to contribute to the reconstitution of the identity of this community through the reconstruction of its history, as the men. The women - now the 'old' women - were the ones who were often at home in the community to experience the events which constitute the historical identity of the Marburg Black Lutheran Community. Theirs has been the 'wisdom' which is quite as 'sweet' -or bitter - as the old men's. But the women have been doubly disempowered: with everyone else by the church and state, and again as women by all local institutions each with its own rules and norms, the modern vestiges of the historical hegemonies of church and state.

As this study has demonstrated, the recounting of (hi)stories is empowering in and of itself. It is important that the empowering effect of story-telling is accessed for further empowerment.

Further empowerment strategies that are relevant for us at Marburg include financial intervention whereby sponsors will be invited to help in the businesses we as a community intend initiating. We need this because the majority of people in the community are unemployed, and need to be motivated and trained in business and management skills: enterprise development strategies will help in providing those skills, and revive our commercial endeavours. This is where the literate mode becomes powerful: reading and writing should be encouraged. Support groups should be created with the aim of coming together with others from other disempowered communities who have already embarked on these projects so that they will give the support we need. It is also important that expression be used to achieve further empowerment. We should voice our feelings, as my sources have done, both to achieve a sense of empowerment and to ensure the

transparency and ownership of the programmes that are put in place. People will have to speak out how about they feel about the empowerment programmes that will be initiated.

I think it is high time that the emphasis of identity be shifted from that established in terms of the group to that whereby the individual is a great value to his group, a human being capable of working alongside his fellows and providing for the group. Tyrrell and Jurgens (1983:112) suggest that Black African children must be encouraged to express themselves and use their individual talents to achieve and acquire for themselves, knowing that s/he is a combination of interests and talents. This implies that an individual is important within the group: it is not the group that establishes the identity of the individual, but that the group provides a firm base for the development of individual identity: her/his individual potential makes her/him respected within the group.

Conclusion

In this study I have gathered the vestiges of the stories of the Marburg Black Lutheran Community in order to record in writing the reconstituted stories so that they contribute to the reconstruction of the identities of the group and the individuals which constitute it.

In this article I have discussed the elements of Oral Style, and the stories emanating from the interaction at the oral-literate interface of the Marburg Black Mission Community which reveal their disempowerment through land dispossession. These histories have never been recorded or dated in the literate sense, but yet they live on in the memories of the old ladies who serve as a reliable archive. It is therefore important to make haste in recording these stories before they too

are called to eternal rest. From them we can learn critically important facts and something of the value and belief systems that were heeded in the community in the past. These facts and attitudes emanate from memories about the way the social setting and the stability of the Marburg Community was disseminated. Because of land dispossession by the missionaries, the life-style of the Marburg community changed. The Government laws operated against their well being. Men had to leave their families to look for jobs in towns. The work of the traditional institutions was taken over by the formal non-traditional institutions of the church and schools. The elders were deprived of their educator status. The boundaries that were set restricted their freedom of movement. The process of land dispossession affected the Zulu community in the sense that they lost their voice, identity, their pride, their culture, their material wealth and most important their land to which they attached great significance. They lost sight of their good old times and it could be said that it cut them off from their livelihood; and brought about division in the Community.

From the accounts, the different feelings they had about the missionaries, which include hatred, fear, helplessness, are revealed. Some of these feelings - such as resistance to forced removals and conversion to Christianity - are covert in the sense that they could not be freely expressed because of the fear of possible consequences. Consequently these events went unnoted, yet the sources' "corporeal-manual geste" (Jousse 1997:65) serves a good record of what was hidden in their indivisible psycho-physiology. They nevertheless hold some future expectations now that the land restitution laws have been passed and their interests are protected by the newly passed laws such as the Security of Land Tenure Act (1997). The way forward is for them to speak out about their feelings, initiate development projects and knock on the relevant doors for financial assistance that will enable them to be empowered through the development, organisational and

management skills. Now that some important features have been restituted – the Church and the Graveyard - we have to reconstruct our identity, work as a community or a group. Some families will have to be compensated individually for the individual losses they have suffered in having been forced to leave the mission for other places in order to give way for Coloured settlement that was propagated by the Group Areas Act.

The stories of the people of the Marburg Black Lutheran Community reveal the extent to which it has become dysfunctional as a result of the missions of the Lutheran Church and the legislation of the Group Areas Act and other discriminatory legal machinery put in place by the Nationalist Government. Balcomb suggests (Oral History Project Conference 1999) that these are lives that have fallen apart. Balcomb attributes the ‘falling apart’ of communities to the ‘falling apart’ of stories. By recounting the events of the painful past, they not only reconstitute the stories, but also empower the lives that the stories express.

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APPENDIX A

Details of Interviews

First set of Interviews

Person	Date	Time	Place
Gogo Mbili	05/12/1999	13:55-16:00	Her home
Inah Gwala	27/07/1999	15:30-17:00	Her home
Maggie Gwala	11/12/1999	12:00-15:00	Her home
Evelyn Buthelezi	21/07/1000	12:00-15:00	Her home
Christinah Ncama	09/07/1999	11:15-13:00	Her home
Judith Gwala	15/11/1999	14:25-16:30	Church

Second set of Interviews

Person	Date	Time	Place
Gogo Mbili	27/02/2000	15:20-15:45	Church
Inah Gwala	28/02/2000	16:00-16:30	Her home
Christinah Ncama	27/02/2000	16:00-16:30	Her home

APPENDIX B

'The Big Day' – Sunday 27th February 2000

(This was the event originally planned for 29th January 2000)

As those men who had started the movement for the restitution of the church, had died, it was agreed by the Practical Ministries to hold a commemoration ceremony for them in the church which was the focus of the application for restitution. Sunday, 27th February 2000, was the day marked for this commemoration. The prominent figures who were to be commemorated were Mark Ncama, Reverend Linda Makhanya and Christian Gwala. The ceremony was to be performed by the Practical Ministries in the church. On this day, the power of the spoken word – the expression of pain felt about the dispossession - was also commemorated. It was a joyous and moving occasion, in which the whole church community participated.

The Sunday dawned as usual but with longing hearts towards the beginning of the special church service. At home we woke up early to go and clean the church with Mother Maggie Gwala, Christian's widow, and to bring the cooking utensils needed for the cooking. Mrs Makhaye and Mrs Gwala, the *makoti*, were already there preparing for cooking.

When Mother Maggie Gwala went home to fetch some flowers, Maggie Moonsamy from the Practical Ministries came and placed a big flower arrangement on the altar. It was star-shaped and was big enough to fill the whole altar. It was very beautiful. When Mother Maggie Gwala came with her flowers, there was no place for them. She wanted to remove Maggie Moonsamy's flowers, claiming that there would be no place for the Holy Communion. I tried to convince her that her arrangements would look beautiful on either side beside the altar, but in vain. But she did

not know who had brought the flowers. When I explained that this was a special day arranged by Practical Ministries, and these were their flowers, she understood, and so she agreed to my suggestion and her arrangements looked beautiful in the corners of the church on either side of the altar.

I was amused and struck by this interchange between Maggie Gwala and Maggie Moonsamy, which I recognised as being about 'power'. Although, Maggie Gwala can read and write, she lives among the oral Black community which she perceives as being 'illiterate'. She recognises that Maggie Moonsamy, a coloured lady, is 'literate'. Much of this interchange was about the perceptions of power between people from literate and oral communities.

We then went back home to get ready for the church service. It started at 09h00 and our visitors from Norway had already arrived. The sermon was given by the local pastor, Reverend Nzama. The scripture reading was taken from the second Pauline letter to the Corinthians chapter 12, verses 1-10. In this passage, Paul talks about the power of the Holy Spirit within him that enables him to identify a man or a person who is in Christ by looking at his actions and his gestures, the way he speaks, sings, praises and prays. But he also contradicts himself when he says, "Whether I really know a person who is in Christ or not, but it is God who really knows". The Reverend was obliged to use both Zulu and English. After the Sermon, preparations were made for receiving the Holy Communion, by reciting confession prayers and singing songs pertaining to the death of Jesus Christ, His precious blood that He shed for us on Calvary and the power that this blood has for cleansing our sins. The Holy Communion was given by Reverend Nzama helped by a Norwegian cleric.

The commemorations of the day were then started. The Director of the Practical Ministries, Danny Chetty, opened by giving the opportunity to the Norwegians who rendered musical items and introduced themselves. Danny gave a speech on how he got involved in the issue of Marburg's dispossession. He mentioned that his farm was also taken away from him and today there are houses built on his forefathers' graves. He mentioned that it was the day of victory over the apartheid evil. The presence of the visitors from Norway was a sign of solidarity. He further said with passion, "Today we come that we may look back, get angry so that we can act". He referred to those who were remembered for their courage to speak out, to act against the injustices of the past. After a long pause he continued. "We have come to celebrate the three men for the outstanding work that they did for the Nyenyezi Mission, and to remember the community for the pain that they endured.

Danny had known Mark Ncama best because they had spent a lot of time together. He said that he was reminded of Mark's brilliant deeds. One day when they were holding a meeting they were disrupted by the police. Mark suggested that they move to another venue where they would not be bothered by anybody. That place was a 'pub' in the Marine Hotel in Port Shepstone. There they peacefully continued with their meeting.

Later, Reverend Linda Makhanya joined the peace committee section and was given a brand new car for this duty. By that time Mark was terminally ill and he passed away. Linda was expected to conduct Mark's funeral service but he could not be found for a whole week until after Mark was buried. It was later discovered that Linda had been tragically killed and his car was never seen

again. It was at this time that Christian Gwala stood up to involve himself in the negotiations for the restitution of the mission.

Danny mentioned that his first encounter with Christian Gwala was very bad because Christian was puzzled by the fact that Danny was an Indian. So he once said to him, “How can you speak for the dispossessed Black community? What do you know about our problems, being an Indian?” Christian Gwala did not know that the same fate had befallen the Indians as the Blacks.

Danny also reminded us of the day that he and Christian had a little misunderstanding about being ‘native’ – Christian claiming that he was a ‘native’ not Danny.

It is interesting and significant that Danny has both happy and unhappy memories of his encounters with Christian, kept in his body. Jousse (1997) accounts for this by focussing on the ‘balanced bilateral of the human whole - and noted that we also acknowledge the importance of balance even in our emotions’. In their arguments they used gestures as well as facial expressions. This is supported by Jousse (*ibid*) where he perceives that meaning is learned and expressed in whole-being notions of understanding which lend themselves admirably to the expression of their meaning through the whole being. When the chance for the family members was given, Mrs Dudizile Ncama, Mark’s second wife, and Sibusisio Ncama, Mark’s first wife Mirriam’s son, spoke on behalf of the Ncama’s, Mrs Kunene spoke on behalf of Linda Makhanya’s family and I spoke on behalf of the Gwala’s, my family.

This was followed by an unexpected announcement by Danny Chetty. Great was our amazement and joy, when Danny told us that on that very same day, Sunday 27th February 2000, the church and the graveyard were officially restored to us, the Marburg Black Lutheran Community. We sang with jubilation because we had not expected it to happen so soon. The name ‘*Merlewood Cemetery*’ was to be painted off and the original name ‘*Nyenyenzi*’ was to substitute it. A stone with the names of Mark, Linda and Christian was to be fixed onto the church wall during the week. It was a great day indeed for us. Some of my sources were so happy. They even thought it was because of the interviews I had had with them that the church and the graveyard were restored. The ceremony came to an end and we had lunch and then departed. I also felt empowered by my research into this topic and the collection of the oral history of the Black Marburg Lutheran community, which ended coincidentally at the same time that the Church and the Graveyard were officially restored to us.

¹ Geste: a term coined by Marcel Jousse to express the notion of performed meaning, experienced both internally (microscopically) and externally (macroscopically). In performance, ‘geste’ can be ‘corporeal-manual’ (movement, mime and dance), ‘laryngo-buccal’ (sound, speech and song) or mimographic (writing, sculpting, beading, weaving, drawing, painting and any range of material and mediated modes of expression). *Geste* and rhythm are mutually energising and together *ex-press* meaning, hence the “anthropology of geste and rhythm”. (Jousse, M 1997 *The Anthropology of Geste and Rhythm*)