

Cultural Villages, Inherited Tradition and 'African Culture': A Case Study of Mgwali Cultural Village in the Eastern Cape.

Dissertation submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Masters in History.

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DECLARATION

I declare that “Cultural Villages, Inherited Tradition and ‘African Culture’: A Case Study of Mgwali Cultural Village in the Eastern Cape” is my own work, that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other University, and that all sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

Solomzi Victor Bovana – January 2010

Signature.....

Supervisor: Professor Gary Minkley, University of Fort Hare, South Africa

Abstract

A growing number of studies concerning cultural villages have in most instances tended to focus on the cultural village as almost legitimately self-explanatory and have not been particularly concerned with either how a particular history is produced in and through these villages, or with the ways that particular discourses and practices associated with heritage, tourism, community and development intersect in the production of these meanings. As such Mgwali Cultural Village seemed to promise something different in the form of cultural villages. The thesis argues that Mgwali Cultural Village is unique in the history of cultural villages in that it moves away from presenting a cultural village in Africa as tribal and primitive. It does this by opening up spaces for other aspects such as Christianity and resistance politics, story of Tiyo Soga rather than focusing and confining itself only to aspects cultural portraying Africans and traditional. It is imperative that cultural villages ought to be understood within a broader framework and context where its definition and presentation is not trapped into an anthropological paradigm thinking of exploring and discovering something new by tourists which they are not familiar with. However, the thesis also argues that much as Mgwali Cultural Village promised something new from the known through depiction of other aspects, those histories seem to be absent or marginal at the Cultural Village. The only aspects that are fore grounded are traditions and culture thus freezing Mgwali as a village and its people in time as if they have not evolved and its cultures are static and not dynamic. The thesis therefore explores all those contradictions, silences, or absence thereof of other stories and histories.

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Acronyms

CV	Cultural Village
CVS	Cultural Villages
KCV	Khayalabantu Cultural Village
TSDT	Tiyo Soga Development Trust
WTO	World Tourism Organization
SAHRA	South African Heritage Resources Agency
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
GRC	Grahamstown Rural Committee
MRA	Mgwali Residents Association
PTOS	Permission to Occupy Certificates
SATOUR	South African Tourism
ECDC	Eastern Cape Development Corporation
ECTB	Eastern Cape Tourism Board

Introduction

Chapter one in essence reviews the literature used in the thesis in detail and makes some pointers as to what it is to be argued in the thesis. Through a case study of Mgwali Cultural Village in particular, it shows how cultural villages come to represent and perform a particular kind of past and history as heritage. A growing number of studies relating to cultural villages, most of these have tended to focus on the cultural village as almost legitimately self-explanatory and have not been particularly concerned with either how a particular history is produced in and through these villages, or with the ways that particular discourses and practices (and meanings) associated with heritage, tourism, community and development intersect in the production of these meanings.

It argues that Mgwali Cultural Village seemed to promise something different in the form of cultural villages. As a village Mgwali was the site of one of the early attempts to create a 'buffer strip' of 'civilised natives' under colonial rule through the establishment of quit-rent ownership relationships (and later leading to restitution claims); and later it was the location of resistance to being forcibly removed from Eastern Cape 'black spots', as well as wider struggles against forced removals and the homeland government. It therefore argues that a cultural village in Mgwali held the promise of 'a different approach' in terms of cultural villages and their potential representations of pastness. Indeed early documentation records the 'uniqueness of Mgwali's history' and of a 'unique and different experience' available there.¹

More generally, though, the emergence of the cultural village as a particular phenomenon in South African and the Eastern Cape needs to be located in wider discussions about the changing nature of heritage, tourism and development, particularly in the post-1994 period.

¹ Cape Printed Annexures/Papers [CCP] A68-1880 Draft of Regulations and Conditions under which it is proposed to grant title to Africans under the *Location Act No 40 of 1879*; Title Deeds that were issued as early as 1879 and 1883 to the people of Mgwali by Sir Henry Bartle Edward Frere attached to *Mgwali Quitrenters' Restitution Claim*, 19 February 2001.

The second chapter explores the history and dynamics of cultural villages. It further argues that prior to the dawn of democracy in South Africa in 1994, South Africa's cultural tourism 'product' was dominated by sites associated with European cultural heritage, including the legacies of the Anglo-Boer and Anglo-Zulu Wars. During the apartheid years in South Africa, African cultures were largely invisible in the public domain with the exception of museum displays and governmentally supervised presentations. Museums exhibited artifacts in an unchanging 'tribal' context. In these museums emphasis was put on the tremendous cultural difference that separated 'white' civilization from 'native cultures'. Witz, Rassool and Minkley have argued that in this period, three sites were central in attempting to promote South Africa as an "African" cultural destination: cultural villages, township tours and theme parks.² Schutte has similarly argued that since the abolition of apartheid, the "cultural village" as a display of "authentic" tribal life has become increasingly popular and that the "form the indigenous people take as tourist attractions is the cultural village which is within easy reach of the main tourist routes and holiday resorts".³ Lastly the chapter explores challenges faced by cultural village owners and cultural performers. Other cultural villages have easy access to funding from financial institutions and as such are in a position to market them. Others are not so fortunate and are forced to sell their stakes to those who have financial muscle.

Chapter three gives a brief overview of Mgwali as a village, where it comes from and how it has evolved over the years, the quitrent system together with the attendant history of forced removals by the then apartheid regime and Ciskei homeland government in the last quarter of the twentieth century. As cultural villages are deemed to be the centres for the preservation, performance and display of certain African cultures and artifacts, the chapter shows how unique Mgwali is as a rural community in the history of forced removals in South Africa.

² Witz, L., Rassool, C. and Minkley, G. (2001) 'Repackaging the Past for South African Tourism'. In *Daedalus*, Vol 130, No 1, Winter 2001, pp 177-296.

³ Schutte, G. (2003) 'Tourists and Tribes in the "New" South Africa'. *Journal of Ethnohistory* 50: 3.

As such, it represents the possibility of a very different history and available past for the cultural village.

Chapter four attempts to argue that the history about Mgwali discussed in the previous chapter about forced removals, resistance and quitrent system disappear with more emphasis being put on 'culture' and 'tradition'. It argues that these representations are not just 'invented' or imagined by the tour operators and the tourist industry. In a very critical and determining sense they are shaped and formed by the actual experience – on the ground as it were – of the spatial, experiential and structuring of the tours by the cultural villages and its participants themselves and the actual 'real experience' of the visit in Mgwali cultural village itself.

Chapter five traces the evolution of Mgwali Cultural Village and how different people directly and not directly involved with it view it. Mgwali Cultural Village comes a long way and its existence can be traced to the intervention by Grahamstown Rural Committee in Mgwali during the forced removals. It started with a sewing project for women for their survival and to acquire skills necessary for survival in difficult times. It later grew into a cultural village where people saw it as a means for their survival in hard economic times they were facing.

In chapter six it is argued that the construction and reconstruction of views of authentic tribal life in these villages, if Mgwali Cultural Village is anything to go by, are also rooted in the ways that 'Africa' and particular understandings of culture, heritage and development are not only deployed, but simultaneously also 'lived' as the 'truth' of 'African culture' in various ways. In the process, other ways of understanding 'culture', and its relationships to pasts and to presents, and thus to history and heritage are silenced, and 'culture' is once again reduced to static, bounded and old ethnographic 'volkekunde' notions of authentic timeless Xhosa tribe, custom and ritual as indigenous, previously marginal, and equally necessary for recuperation and display.

The overall argument of the thesis is that the construction and reconstruction of views of authentic tribal life in these villages, if Mgwali Cultural Village is anything to go by, are also rooted in the ways that 'Africa' and particular understandings of culture, heritage and development are not only deployed, but simultaneously also 'lived' as the 'truth' of 'African culture' in various ways. In the process, other ways of understanding 'culture', and its relationships to pasts and to presents, and thus to history and heritage are silenced, and 'culture' is once again reduced to static, bounded and old ethnographic 'volkekunde' notions of authentic timeless Xhosa tribe, custom and ritual as indigenous, previously marginal, and equally necessary for recuperation and display. The activities and actions of the cultural village, then, it is argued, operate at a local public history level, as a form of localized 'cultural museum' to enable, consolidate, and reproduce these views. Finally, at a more historical and public history level, what the dissertation also attempts to demonstrate is that this 'inherited tradition' and definition of authentic Xhosa 'African culture' is neither simply 'inherited', or the only or necessary 'tradition', or unquestionably African or singly indigenous and Xhosa. Rather these meanings are the consequence of a series of intersecting historically, socially and politically constructed meanings, knowledges, representations and associations.

CHAPTER ONE

Literature Review

This dissertation is concerned with exploring the emergence and development of Mgwali Cultural Village (and on a much more limited scale the Tiyo Soga Development Trust) in Mgwali Village in the Eastern Cape.

As such, it is interested in the form and nature of cultural villages and how, through a case study of Mgwali Cultural Village in particular, cultural villages come to represent and perform a particular kind of past and history as heritage. In addition, it is argued in the dissertation, that while there have been a growing number of studies relating to cultural villages, most of these have tended to focus on the cultural village as almost legitimately self-explanatory and have not been particularly concerned with either how a particular history is produced in and through these villages, or with the ways that particular discourses and practices (and meanings) associated with heritage, tourism, community and development intersect in the production of these meanings.

This study relied on qualitative research, in particular participant observation and related oral and performance related research. For a researcher to study people's lifestyles, it is significant that he/she stays in the focus village for prolonged periods of time so to have a close and intimate interaction with the local people. This is also what the researcher in the present study did. For Riley⁴, tourism research requires approaches of classical ethnography and qualitative methods which may include personal experiences, diaries, conversations and semiotics. Why participant observation is used here is because as MacCannell⁵

⁴ Riley, R. (1999) 'The State of Qualitative Tourism Research'. *Annals of Tourism Research* 27(1): 164-187.

⁵McCannell, D. (1973) 'Staged authenticity: arrangements of social space in tourist settings'. *American Sociological Review*, 79: 589-603.

has argued, the host communities are at the 'back stage' whereas they represent their culture at the 'front stage'.

Interviews played a significant role in the study. I conducted unstructured interviews in an informal way and structured interviews in a formal way through the prepared questionnaires. At times I had to ask informally about something in order to test if answers were the same with what I have observed. People were asked about their perceptions of culture and tourism in the area. Informants were drawn from cultural performers, locals, crafters and those in charge of the cultural institutions, both men and women. During my stays in Mgwali I was hosted by Tyhilelwa Bolana who is the chairperson of Mgwali Cultural Village and Mr. Wotshela, a retired teacher and resident of Mgwali. Mr. Wotshela also transported me to various locations in Mgwali.

I conducted approximately fifty-one interviews during my visits and interacted with people every time I made my visits to Mgwali. Most of my informants were all directly/indirectly involved in tourism. Also when I visited the area in November 2005, the great grand-daughter of Tiyo Soga was on a visit. She visited the Tiyo Soga Development Project and after that went to Mgwali Cultural Village and she bought herself a traditional shawl.

From a different angle, as well, though, and before I spent time in the village and conducted the research 'on site', Mgwali Cultural Village seemed to promise something different in the form of cultural villages. Located outside the small town of Stutterheim, but in the former Ciskei homeland, Mgwali was the site of a range of intersecting historical moments that seemed particularly significant for heritage development. Tiyo Soga was stationed here for over ten years, as the first black religious minister and the architecture (the church) associated with him remains visible; Mgwali was the site of one of the early attempts to create a 'buffer strip' of 'civilised natives' under colonial rule through the establishment of quit-rent ownership relationships (and later leading to restitution claims); and

later it was the location of resistance to being forcibly removed from Eastern Cape 'black spots', as well as wider struggles against forced removals and the homeland government. These aspects are explored in more detail below – they are listed here simply to signpost the sense that a cultural village in Mgwali held the promise of 'a different approach' in terms of cultural villages and their potential representations of pastness. Indeed early documentation records the 'uniqueness of Mgwali's history' and of a 'unique and different experience' available there.⁶

More generally, though, the emergence of the cultural village as a particular phenomenon in South African and the Eastern Cape needs to be located in wider discussions about the changing nature of heritage, tourism and development, particularly in the post-1994 period. Mgwali Cultural Village was first formed in 1995, and is marked by these developments, and by this periodisation, as is explored later on. I will use the term heritage tourism as shorthand to connect these connections, although it will also be necessary to draw distinctions between them at various points, as they come to influence the production of a particular history as heritage.

As has been widely remarked by a whole lot of studies, the very notion of heritage is uncertain and plastic. Ashworth has argued that heritage can be 'a vehicle for the expression of local, even individual, distinctiveness, a lever for social inclusion and cohesion, and a brand for consumption (especially by overseas visitors).'⁷

There are therefore many possible definitions of heritage and it can be interpreted differently within any one culture at any one time, as well as between

⁶ Cape Printed Annexures/Papers [CCP] A68-1880 Draft of Regulations and Conditions under which it is proposed to grant title to Africans under the *Location Act No 40 of 1879*; Title Deeds that were issued as early as 1879 and 1883 to the people of Mgwali by Sir Henry Bartle Edward Frere attached to *Mgwali Quitrenters' Restitution Claim*, 19 February 2001.

⁷ Ashworth, G. (2006) *Report on Effective Learning in Heritage Programmes*, Gloucestershire, February 1.

cultures and through time, but at the same time all show that it is a social construct in that it is that part of the past which we usually select in the present for contemporary purposes, be it economic, cultural or socio-political. It is an economic resource exploited everywhere as a primary component of strategies to promote tourism, economic development and rural and urban regeneration. It is also knowledge, a cultural product and a political resource which possess crucial socio-political functions.

The complex nature of heritage has further been exacerbated by the qualification applied both to tangible and intangible forms of heritage. The distinction has been drawn and adopted by UNESCO⁸, but not without problems that continue to hierarchies and to unevenly separate out tangible from intangible. In essence, 'Western' heritage definitions located in the tangible built and natural environment continue to dominate, with the list of European and North American (and other 'built' Heritage sites around the world) replete with walled cities, cathedrals, palaces, transport artifacts and national parks as almost self-evidently defining 'real' heritage.

On the other hand, heritage in Africa and Asia is often envisaged through forms of traditional and popular folk cultures that include languages, music, dance, rituals, food and folklore. However, to pulverize the tangible-intangible dichotomy in heritage to an east-west or north-south division is simplistic at its best, as all societies contain both intangible and tangible heritage even though the balance may differ spatially. However, as Andrews has argued that while there is an 'inseparability of tangible and intangible heritage', the creation of these categories and the intellectual and managerial means by which they were separated needs to be understood and engaged with.⁹ Waterton and Smith have argued that the discourse of 'grand', 'tangible' and 'aesthetically pleasing' heritage set out in the 1972 World Heritage Convention has become naturalized

⁸ UNESCO General Conference, 32nd Session, Paris, 2003.

⁹ Andrews, C. et al (2006) 'Report of the Tangible-Intangible Cultural Heritage Seminar', Cambridge. In *International Journal of Intangible Heritage*, vol 2, 2007, 125.

and largely unquestioned, and this explains why, globally, the idea of intangible heritage has not been wholly adopted by scholars and policymakers. This can be seen in the significant lack of Western Nations who have ratified the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. In fact, Waterton has argued that the establishment of intangible heritage as a third exclusionary category of heritage (after 'natural' and 'cultural', set out in the 1972 Convention) has only resulted in the unquestioned adoption of the 'authorised heritage discourse'; and Smith argues that this 'authorized discourse ... obfuscates what heritage actually does in our society by seeing heritage as the actual 'thing' (monument, artifact, building) – as opposed to the values and meanings we ascribe to objects, acts and events'.¹⁰

This discussion is important for a South African and Eastern Cape context. For, unlike the contexts described above as 'Western' opposition to intangible heritage, the new South African government embraced the notion of the intangible. In this regard the White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage argues that

a nation that is not at the forefront in the preservation of its cultural and heritage resources is doomed for failure. These heritage and cultural resources are nontangible aspects of inherited culture such as cultural tradition, oral history, performance, ritual, popular memory and indigenous knowledge systems. If they are not preserved and promoted, the next generation would be denied the knowledge of the rich cultural and historical heritage of their forefathers. The significance and importance of a nation's history is evidenced by the pronouncement once made by Sir Seretse Khama, the first President of Botswana when he put it thus: "A nation without a past is a lost nation. And a people without a past is a people without a soul."¹¹

In post-apartheid South Africa, 'cultural diversity' is the official word that is on every government officials' lips and government institutions. Whilst claiming to be promoting cultural diversity of all the people, the government is also trying to retrieve and rescue 'African culture' or 'indigenous culture' from the apparent oblivion caused by colonialism and apartheid. In the period preceding the 1994

¹⁰ Waterton, E. 'We have Trouble communicating' and Smith, L. 'Heritage and its Intangibility'. Papers presented at the 7th Cambridge Heritage Seminar, 2006.

¹¹ Cited in *White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage*, 4 June, 1996.

elections and after, argues Schutte¹², African people became interested and curious to know better their distorted and hidden culture and history caused by the apartheid regime. He suggests that African people strongly believe that with power changing hands, a clear and accurate perspective of their history and culture will be given. As one of the first steps towards the realization of this political aspiration, the post-apartheid state passed pieces of legislation at national and provincial level, thus placing transformation of heritage, and in particular that of addressing and including what is perceived as 'African heritage', on the national agenda. The National Heritage Resources Act No 25 of 1999 and the Eastern Cape Heritage Resources Act No 9 of 2003¹³ were passed.

The stated Acts both define heritage resources as any place or object of cultural significance and may for example be historical settlements and townscapes through to geological sites of scientific or cultural importance. They also define heritage as nontangible aspects of inherited culture such as cultural tradition, oral history performance, ritual, popular memory, skills and techniques, indigenous knowledge systems and the holistic approach to nature, society and social relationship. As a result, it is in culture and heritage, it is argued, that we find history that is passed from generation to generation.

To preserve culture and heritage, then, it is further argued, it is important for the communities and societies to 'attach an inherent value on them' because, owing to its 'uniqueness, it cannot be renewed'. With the post-apartheid regime, the government is therefore trying to bring what is identified as the 'previously marginalized African culture and heritage that ... has been hidden from the public gaze' to the fore. This is succinctly pronounced in the Preamble of the National Heritage Resources Act No 25 of 1999 and is centred around the terms of intangible heritage and living heritage. With all the relevant stakeholders

¹² Schutte, G. (2003) 'Tourists and Tribes in the "New" South Africa. *Journal of Ethnohistory*, 50: 3.

¹³ *National Heritage Resources Agency, Act No 25 of 1999; Eastern Cape Heritage Resources, Act No 9 of 2003.*

stressing the significance of preserving this 'living' heritage and culture, it is of no surprise that heritage sites are 'cropping up' at every corner of the country.

It is not my purpose to rehearse and review these contexts of the nature of post-apartheid heritage policy and development – it has been undertaken elsewhere. As Leslie Witz has noted in the looking forward to the "... commonality of a post-apartheid nation, the idea of forging a collective past that would be aligned with the present and the anticipated "never-ending" future ... [this was] ... [p]resented as a national inheritance and labeled as heritage, this past was to be utilized as a "powerful agent for cultural identity, reconciliation and nation-building".¹⁴ From this context, as many writers have pointed out, the primary indigenous 'national inheritance' has been identified as 'intangible heritage'. Thus Harriett Deacon has said (and it is worth quoting in some length):

In South Africa after 1994, intangible forms of heritage have become politically acceptable, even attractive, in the attempt to insert new interpretations onto the colonial landscape. ... The South African National Heritage Resources Act of 1999 emphasized the importance of the 'living heritage' associated with places and objects. ... In spite of the lack of analytical differentiation [between tangible and intangible] the notion of intangible heritage remains attractive, both to those who wish to keep the status quo by implying that this is a new kind of heritage; and to those who wish to redress the historical imbalance in heritage identification and to emphasize the importance of alternative forms of heritage. National definitions of what constitutes intangible heritage thus vary according to what has been perceived as marginalized. ... In South Africa, the apartheid and colonial governments prioritized buildings and monuments defined as "white" heritage. They also emphasized ethnic differences between indigenous groups. To turn this situation around, the 1999 heritage legislation explicitly recognized intangible heritage values and living heritage forms like ritual and orality. But there was also resistance to validating purely ethnically-defined heritage as the apartheid state had done. ...¹⁵

As Deacon further points out, in many countries and contexts, then, concerns to insert and to develop intangible heritage often resulted in the prioritization of 'marginalized indigenous ethnic heritage' as being that which most represents and contains intangible or living heritage, and that this has often meant a process

¹⁴ Witz, L. 'Transforming museums on Postapartheid Tourist Routes'. In I. Karp et al. *Museum Frictions*

¹⁵ Deacon, H. (2004) 'Intangible Heritage in Conservation Management Planning: The Case of Robben Island'. In *International Journal of Heritage Studies*.

of re-ethnisation and of aligning intangibility with the non-Western, the 'indigenous' and with the traditional. However, Deacon argues that in South Africa there was 'resistance' to validating ethnically defined heritage, because of the apparent apartheid connections, and because of the modern democratic forms of political power that the new South Africa sought to construct, and therefore suggests that this connection of the intangible to the indigenous and ethnic traditional did not occur or 'has not been as heavily promoted' as significantly in the South African context as elsewhere. (Rather she suggests that oral histories of racism and slavery have been the primary forms for intangible heritage).¹⁶

While this might be true for the event of the TRC (although this was never seen as being an event of intangible heritage, but more of history and of justice, truth and reconciliation), this might be a particularly Western Cape, or perhaps even a Western Cape and Gauteng view, where ethnicity does not have spatial homeland roots and traditions, as are found in the Eastern Cape. Because in the Eastern Cape, intangible heritage and living heritage has primarily been located in ethnic indigenous forms, while new 'tangible heritage' has been located in sites and figures of resistance – in heroes houses, gardens of remembrance, massacre sites and in the 'frontier wars'. This can be seen in terms of both the activities of the Provincial Heritage Resources Agency, in the form taken by the Provincial Heritage Resources Act (only promulgated as a duplicate of the National Act in 2006/7) and in its translations into provincial government heritage work, and in the various meetings, Indabas, and the like, as well as through heritage declarations. Chiefly memorials, graves and their Great Places proliferate as apparent key intangible heritage sites, with little else and intangible heritage is discussed, debated and understood as being that associated with

¹⁶ Ibid.

Xhosa indigenous arts, crafts, language, rituals, and forms of authority, rule and morality (like ubuntu).¹⁷ I will return to this tension later in the dissertation.

Relatedly, Ashworth has argued that the heritage of resistance to apartheid is communicated through two very commonly encountered heritage narratives. These, he says, can be labeled 'the progress thesis' and 'the freedom struggle'. He argues that

the 'progress thesis'[is] whereby the historical chronicle of events is reduced to an inevitable sequence of improvement from bad to better in a straight and unswerving line. This is the 'road to freedom' or equally could be the 'road' to prosperity, enlightenment, civilization or any other such description of the completed present. It is the dominant narrative of ... 'national histories' worldwide ... it is chronologically simple, it is easy to comprehend and avoids the complications of contradictory or competing ideas. ... The 'freedom struggle', a term that encapsulates both goal and process, has similar attributes of simplicity and inevitability as the progress thesis, but within the context of struggle. The dichotomy between the conditions of freedom and oppression, and the actors as freedom fighter and oppressor, admits of only two homogenous categories. This is unifying, both within the group and in relation to the external and necessarily demonized enemy outside. The nature of 'struggle' introduces the elements of drama and heroism ... [and] it thus produces heroes as role models and foci of identification and critical events, 'turning points', around which the narrative can be constructed ... [and which operates] as a founding mythology.¹⁸

Drawing on Ashworth, Minkley, and others, it is argued that in the Eastern Cape, the elements of 'ethnic indigenous culture' have been connected with that of the 'freedom struggle' through the processes of cultural and heritage tourism (amongst other political processes), placing the chiefs and their great places and associated indigenous traditions as the foci of identification for the founding of the ultimately successful freedom struggle. In this way their leadership in securing the indigenous traditions and the drama and heroism of their lives and actions come to be seen as symbols of the group as a whole, and thus also as the basis and the boundary markers of intangible heritage and its national inheritance in the Province. Intangible heritage then is linked to ethnic indigenous forms and is, at the same time, promoted as the heritage of the 'freedom struggle' and as 'progress' to the new nation. In effect, these links and

¹⁷ Minkley, G. 'A Fragile Inheritor: The post-apartheid memorial complex, AC Jordan and the re-imagining of cultural heritage in the Eastern Cape'. In *Kronos*, 34, November 2008.

¹⁸ Ashworth, G. (2004) 'Tourism and the Heritage of Atrocity: Managing the heritage of South African apartheid for entertainment'. In T. Singh (ed) *Tourism seeks new Horizons*. Basingstoke.

associations remove the 'tribal' associations of apartheid, and re-introduce ethnic traditions, via their status as inherited intangible heritage, as homogenous, indigenous and national. It is argued here, that we can see these processes taking place in Mgwali.¹⁹

In this way the values, traditions, rituals, etc rooted in indigenous ethnic tradition have become the intangible heritage of resistance in the Eastern Cape, rather than those potentially located in a complex range of oral histories mentioned by Deacon²⁰, or in regimes of individual and social memory, or in the actual values and meanings ascribed to a range of objects, acts and events, or in Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's²¹ terms, in the cultural manifestations (knowledge, skills, performance) linked to persons and to repertoires beyond, or even within this narrowly defined sense of the traditional. A complex range of resistance pasts are reduced, via intangible heritage, into an ethnic traditional past as representative of the indigenous in the resistance and 'freedom struggle' past.

Another part of the explanation, though, also lies in the contexts generated by the insertion of heritage into the ambits of tourism and of development and of the explosion of heritage, globally. This context is amplified by Lowenthal²² when he puts it thus:

All at once heritage is everywhere – in the news, in the movies – in everything from galaxies to genes. It is the chief focus of patriotism and a prime lure of tourism. One can barely move without bumping into a heritage site. Every legacy is cherished. From ethnic roots to history theme parks, Hollywood to the holocaust, the whole world is busy lauding – or lamenting some past, be it a fact or fiction. To neglect heritage is a cardinal sin, to invoke it a national duty.

While Lowenthal makes a different set of arguments about the problematic relationships between History and Heritage which are not explored here, these

¹⁹ Ibid; Minkley op.cit.

²⁰ Deacon, H. (1998) 'Remembering tragedy, constructing modernity: Robben Island as a national monument'. In S. Nuttall and C. Coetzee (Eds) *Negotiating the past: The making of memory in South Africa*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

²¹ Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, B. (1998) *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums and Heritage*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

²² Lowenthal, D. (1998) *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

observations could have been made about heritage in post-apartheid South Africa. Referring to the South African context, Witz has powerfully argued then, that:

the increasing numbers of tourists worldwide in the late twentieth century have had a marked effect on the ways that pasts are represented in museums and other heritage sites. Writers have emphasized how the need to present neatly commodified, packaged products for the expanding tourist market has resulted in simplified, unthreatening, sanitized, superficial histories being presented as heritage. ...²³

While Witz points to ways that this is a simplistic understanding, failing to take account of differentiated, 'thinking' tourist audiences, and also the popularity of extensively researched complex histories, he further argues that

... tourism, as an industry, does rely upon sets of images of societies that appear as complete, isolated, and closed. These bounded societies are marked as different in order to make them desirable destinations. In promoting tourist activity as voyages of discovery and exploration to these enclosed places of difference, the industry draws upon and sustains the image of the colonial enterprise that indeed paved the way for the opening up of "primitive" and "exotic" destinations. As Kirshenblatt-Gimblett has pointed out, international tourism continues to provide a "safe haven" for "marketing a troubled history that glorifies colonial adventure and a repudiated anthropology of primitivism."²⁴

While Witz is concerned with understanding museums in post-apartheid South Africa, his observations that they are caught between these tourist industry demands and the need to 'discard colonial histories and reflect new national pasts in their policies, exhibitions and collections', can be broadened to heritage as a whole and are applicable here.

In this sense of pre-colonial, colonial and new national pasts, I also want to connect a final focus to this introductory discussion. Abungu²⁵ argues that prior to colonialism, heritage in Africa was managed through kinship, but with the advent of colonialism, all that changed. In many instances what was deemed African heritage was suppressed and much of it was also deemed pagan and savage under colonial rule in Africa. As such, 'African heritage' was seen in conflict with their Christian philosophy, was suppressed and such 'savage materials' were

²³ Witz, L. op.cit.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Abungu George, H. O. 'Heritage, Community and State in the 90s: Experiences from Africa.' Paper presented at *The Future of the Past* conference, University of the Western Cape, July 1996.

taken for exhibits but were detached from their context thus engendering irrelevance and powerlessness in them.

However, as Abungu points out, as much as there was disdain for African cultural beliefs, some traditional artifacts were objects of immense enthusiasm to the colonial officials, in order to precisely differentiate and divide the civilized from the 'uncivilised', the modern and historical from the 'timeless, primitive cultural' and the west from the indigenous. In a number of African countries, then, the process of preserving local cultures began in colonial times with the collection and exhibition of traditional artifacts in growing urban centres where they could be encountered in this 'exhibitionary complex'²⁶ by the European elite, diplomats, travellers and to a lesser degree by the emerging and educated African middle class. In Senegal, the construction of the first museums was accompanied by an idealization of the customary style of life. It presented it as the timeless counterpart of modernity, a tribal world unspoiled by the innovations and temptations of urban centres.

In agreement with Abungu cited above, Bellagamba²⁷ argues that these objects were disentangled from their original uses and meanings; they helped to construct an image of human history and its developments, "an image that mirrored the imperial mentality of the time and its partition between civilized and primitive societies".²⁸ He further argues that national museums in Africa got this kind of legacy and attempted to re-make it to suit nationalism and anticolonialism that predated and followed political independence. In the 1960s and 1970s, museums became spaces where the preservation and exhibitions from 'authentic and uncontaminated African cultures' were meant to nurture national pride. In so doing, curators of collections tried their best to minimize ethnic differences so as to strengthen the feelings of belonging to a common socio-cultural and political

²⁶ Bennett, T. (1995) *The Birth of the Museum*. London: Routledge; Coombes, A. (1994) *Re-Inventing Africa: Museums, Material Culture and Popular Imagination in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press.

²⁷ Bellagamba, A. *Africa Today* (No year of publication).

²⁸ Ibid.

space. The exotic, though, remains intact, now articulated as indigenous, authentic and as traditional and as bound together in a kind of timeless pre-colonial ideal.

Having already indicated however, in the Eastern Cape, that this discarding of colonial histories and the articulation of new national histories have connected intangible heritage, resistance and indigenous ethnic tradition together in particular narrowing ways, the space for its connection into these tourist industry 'simplified', 'sanitized' and 'superficial' histories and into 'bounded', 'primitive' and 'exotic' locations as heritage now need to be explored further.

Sabine Marschall relatedly argues that as tourism is "currently promoted as the panacea of all ills, associated with development, employment and income generation", at the same time as the country in the post-apartheid period became "fascinated – if not obsessed – with the identification, celebration, evaluation, reassessment, and not least, commodification of "heritage"", two trends synergized in the field of cultural and heritage tourism. The one was that "one now rarely encounters a 'heritage initiative that is not expected to become a major tourist attraction and the catalyst for development and poverty alleviation", while secondly, and simultaneously, they are expected to serve to "(re)define identity at community and national level, thus contributing to nation-building".²⁹

Importantly, then Witz and Marschall's observations also point to the ways that these 'industries', 'packages' and policies around heritage, tourism and development also generate their own narratives of the past, and in so doing transform meanings and understandings of heritage. In this section I attempt to look at these processes a little more closely.

As heritage is simultaneously knowledge, a cultural product and a political resource of which the nature of that knowledge is always negotiated as it is set

²⁹ Marschall, S. (2005) 'Making Money with Memories': *Historia*, 50. (1), May 2005, 103.

within specific social and intellectual circumstances, the key questions that have to be asked, are, why a particular interpretation of heritage is promoted?, whose interests are advanced or retarded?, and in what kind of milieu was it conceived and communicated? If heritage knowledge is located in particular social and intellectual contexts, it is time-specific and thus its meaning(s) can be changed as they are 're-read' in changing times, circumstances and constructs of place and time. It is then inevitable that such knowledge is also a field of contestation.

Heritage then is that component of the past which is selected in the present for contemporary purposes, be it economic or cultural, including socio-political factors. The value accorded to the artifacts rests less in their intrinsic merit than in a complex array of contemporary values, demands and even moralities that are transferred to these heritage sites and 'things'. Heritage can thus be visualized as a resource but simultaneously, several times so. It is an economic resource, one exploited everywhere as a primary component of strategies to promote tourism, economic development and rural and urban regeneration. It is also knowledge, a cultural product and a political resource which is seen to possess crucial socio-political functions of nation-building and 'reconciliation'.

As a result, as Graham points out in a different context, conflicting and sometimes complex arrays of identifications and potential conflicts occur when heritage places and objects are involved in issues of legitimization of power structures which are attendant on heritage definitions and meanings³⁰.

Heritage therefore is the contemporary use of the past and if its meanings are defined in the present, it means then that people create the heritage that they require, or perceive to be required and manage it for a range of purposes dictated by the needs and demands of their present societies and its power relations. In this respect, heritage tourism is at the centre of these definitions and 'creations' and in the context of development, heritage becomes defined as

³⁰ Graham, B. (2002) 'Heritage as Knowledge: Capital or Culture?' *Urban Studies*, Vol. 39, Nos 5-6, pp. 103-1017.

'human and social capital' – and emphasis falls on its 'forms of value' in terms of creating employment, generating income, and constructing markets and consumers.

This focus on what we might call the 'consumption of heritage' is further addressed by Chhabra et al.³¹ They argue that heritage tourism is representative of many contemporary visitors 'desires', where tourists directly experience and consume diverse past and present cultural landscapes, performances, foods, handicrafts and participatory activities in ways that comply with their own expectations and needs. They argue, however, that this consumption needs to take place in what they call visitor "comfort zones"³². These comfort zones, they suggest, are pre-defined by particular expectations, understandings and importantly, dictates of the tourist market and experience. As such, they suggest that while we cannot take the tourist as a homogenous, singular category, and as 'mindless', tourist consumption is conditioned by a series of stereotypes and 'stagings' which are as much determined by 'the tourist' as by the providers of heritage tourism. Heritage tourism, then, is widely looked upon as a tool for economic development and is actively promoted by local governments and private businesses and this commodification aspect turns cultural heritage into a marketable and saleable commodity, but so too, does the expectations and 'demands' of the tourists themselves.

Ooi³³ argues that because tourists lack the intimate and intricate knowledge of the local and its cultural products, for them to attach any value or appreciate the local product, cognitive resources and information have to be given so as to enable them to fully indulge and appreciate the 'beauty' of the products. This however, leads to what Ooi calls the 'decentring of cultures'. Cultural mediators in tourism select, accentuate and aestheticise particular local cultural productions

³¹ Chhabra, D., Healy, R. and Sills D. (2003) *Staged Authenticity and Heritage Tourism. Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 30, No. 3, pp. 702-719.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ooi, C. (2002) *Cultural tourism and tourism cultures: the business of mediating experiences in Copenhagen and Singapore*. Denmark: Copenhagen Business School Press.

to capture the imagination of tourists in an appealing and alluring manner. The tourists are then 'made to believe' that what they are seeing and consuming is genuine even in the context of the commercialization of tourism. Ooi calls this practice the particular 'recentring of culture'. One can gauge that in the context of commercialization of culture for tourism purposes, in most instances these products are packaged through these decentring and recentring processes so as to appeal to tourists. The 'locally real' of the cultural products is compromised and the tourists get what they want but what they have not 'bargained' for. This is so because whilst the product is packaged to the tourist terms, they have to be persuaded and convinced that what they see is the one considered to be 'authentic' even if it is not so. They thus consume recentred culture and heritage.

As has been argued by Sabine Marschall (and cited above), tourism in South Africa is currently promoted as the panacea of all ills associated with development, employment and income generation. However, in the process, she suggests, some aspects will be left out deliberately and new ones inserted so as to make it appeal to tourists' interests. As Witz and Rassool³⁴ argue more extensively, this means that heritage performance becomes located in what has been called a 'staged authenticity' and we might add, determined as much by 'development' and by the conceptions of heritage as social and human capital, as by notions of the authentic and the cultural. MacCannell argues that the touree, that is host communities, put their culture including themselves on sale in order to create an appealing package, to the extent that the packaging changes the nature of the product. This act then enables the making of an 'authenticity' sought by the tourist and staged by the communities to become 'staged authenticity'.³⁵

³⁴ Rassool, R. and Witz, L. "'South Africa: A World in One Country': Moments in International Tourist Encounters with wildlife, the Primitive and the Modern." *Cahiers d'Etudes africaines* 143, no. 36 (1996): 335-371.

³⁵ MacCannell, D. (1973) 'Staged authenticity: arrangements of social space in tourist settings'. *American Sociological Review*, 79: pp.589-603.

MacCannell argues to protect themselves from the intrusion of the tourist gaze into their lives, the local people being observed and the tourist entrepreneurs indulge in a contrived and artificial manner to construct 'front stages' which he calls 'staged authenticity'³⁶. For him the tourist setting operates at the 'front stage' while the 'back stage' is neglected or ignored. The 'front stage' is a place of interaction among the hosts and tourists whereas the 'backstage' is where people retire after making representations and where daily life and meanings are constituted. The tourists learn about people's lives at a certain performed 'front' place in an arranged and staged manner, while the realities and cultural implications of the village remain unknown to the tourists because they are not allowed to venture into the community back stage.

Fyall and Garrod³⁷ for example, define heritage tourism as an economic front stage activity that makes use of socio-cultural assets to attract visitors and therefore to 'package' the past and these assets in order to 'make them attractive'. Hollinshead³⁸ takes further what Fyall and Garrod have said to assert that local traditions and community heritage serve as 'constructed attractions' and that heritage tourism embraces and re-defines folkloric traditions, arts and crafts, ethnic history, social customs and cultural celebrations to fit development notions as much as authentic one's.

Relatedly, Jenkins and King³⁹ argue that the construction and reconstruction of cultural identity in Malaysia must be seen as a set of social relationships and processes by which cultural differences are communicated and one aspect of that construction is the promotion of cultural and ethnic tourism. For them that process must be seen in the broader context of national planning for economic development and in the arena of international political, economic and cultural

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Fyall, A. and Garrod, B. (1998) 'Heritage Tourism: At What Price?' *Managing Leisure*, 3: 213-228.

³⁸ Hollinshead, K. (1988) 'First-blush of the Longtime: The Market Development of Australia's Living Aboriginal Heritage. Tourism Research: Expanding Boundaries'. In Proceedings of the 19th annual conference of the *Tourism Research Association*, pp. 183-198. Salt Lake City: University of Utah.

³⁹ Jenkins, G. and King V. T. (2003) 'Heritage and Development in a Malaysian City: George Town Under Threat?' *Indonesia and the Malay World*, Vol. 31, No. 89, March.

forces. The interactions between local, national and global processes engender contestations in which diverse groups attempt to present the images of their past, present and future in order to promote their own political-economic and cultural agendas. Often these agendas are deeply rooted in the perceived benefits of, or dynamics of, the tourist industry as well.

The description of festivals, dress, rituals and performances as 'development' products of tourism as authentic or inauthentic, is dictated by whether they are seen to be made or enacted by local people according to tradition on the one hand, but also whether these traditions can be developmental (in terms of jobs, income, poverty alleviation and the like) on the other. Looked at in this light, for Zerubavel,⁴⁰ authenticity connotes viewing traditional culture and origin; that is a constructed sense of the genuine which can then be transacted in those authentic terms. Within cultural tourism, the production of authenticity is dependent on some act of reproduction, where value is acquired through this act of consumption. For Taylor,⁴¹ tourism sites, objects, images and even people are not simply viewed as contemporaneous productions. Instead they are seen as markers of past events, epochs or ways of life which then can be seen to have developmental potential and real or genuine – 'sincere' - tourist market and human capital value.

Very often, too, heritage tourism relies on a deep sense of nostalgia. Usually people are nostalgic about the past, the 'old ways of life' and as such they want to relive and rekindle them in the form of tourism, even if for a short period of time. Lowenthal⁴² argues that if the past is a foreign country, 'nostalgia has made it a foreign country with the healthiest visitor trade of all'. Given the centrality of nostalgia as a motivating factor for tourism, it has been hypothesized that satisfaction with a heritage product or activity depends not on its authenticity in the literal sense of whether or not it is an accurate re-creation of some past

⁴⁰ Zerubavel, Y. (1995) *Recovered Roots*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

⁴¹ Taylor, J. (2001) 'Authenticity and Sincerity in Tourism'. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 28: 7-26.

⁴² Lowenthal, D. (1990) *The past is a Foreign Country*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

condition, but rather on its perceived, staged, and consumable authenticity. Heritage is thus created and re-created from surviving memories, artifacts and sites of the past to serve contemporary, particularly tourist demand and developmental needs. Hence the notion of staged authenticity utilized here, as one which adds the 'developmental' to the cultural elaborations and explanations.

Postulating further, the past, as integral both to individual and communal representations of identity and its connotations of providing human existence with meaning, purpose and value, is also staged and made and re-made through developmental discourses of heritage to the extent that it can be entirely 'made up'. Such is the importance of this process that people cut off from their past through migration or even by its destruction, deliberate or accidental, as in war, will rebuild it or even 'recreate' what could or should have been there but never actually was. Tunbridge⁴³ argues, for example, that, in the Polish city of Gdansk, the Gothic/Baroque city centre, largely destroyed in World War II, has been reconstructed, not least to link the heritage patrimony of the post-war Polish state to the medieval era before the city became part of the Hanseatic League.

For South Africa, then, the question to be asked owing to the political importance of heritage is whether the heritage development initiatives which in most instances are initiated and driven by the government, do not in reality authenticate the political agendas behind the promises of staged economic development and poverty alleviation?

In a South African and Eastern Cape context various development and heritage initiatives have been proposed and promoted by the Eastern Cape Provincial, Regional and Local Governments as keys to employment creation and economic development of the province. The province sees tourism as an initiative that will make maximum contribution to the Eastern Cape's economic, social and

⁴³ Tunbridge, J. E. (1998) 'The question of heritage in European cultural conflict'. In B. Graham (Ed.) *Modern Europe: Place, Culture, Identity*, pp. 236-260. London: Arnold.

environmental well-being by promoting Eastern Cape to the already existing and new markets as an exciting, vibrant and a high quality destination with the hope that visitors will be afforded an enjoyable experience that will encourage them to spend time and money in the Eastern Cape⁴⁴. The various initiatives that have been suggested or put in place by the Eastern Cape Government include Eco-tourism, Agri-tourism, Special Events Tourism, Conference Tourism, Heritage Tourism and Cultural Tourism.

But what will this mean? Heritage sites are places of consumption to the effect that they are arranged and managed in such a way as to encourage consumption. Such consumption can create places but at the same time, it can also alter those places. Landscapes of consumption have a tendency to consume their contexts, not least because of the homogenizing effect on places and cultures of tourism⁴⁵. A further negative aspect for heritage is that preservation and restoration 'freezes artifacts [and cultures] in time', whereas previously they had been constantly changing. Tourism is, by nature, largely parasitic upon culture to which it will contribute very little, if anything at all. Taken to the extreme, the economic commodification of the past will so trivialize that cultural past to the effect that the heritage resource which is its *raison d'être* can be destroyed.

These are the questions this dissertation seeks to address in relation to Mgwali Cultural Village. Before turning to the village, however, the next chapter considers cultural villages in more detail.

⁴⁴ Preface to the *Eastern Cape Tourism Master Plan* (2003).

⁴⁵ Sack, R. D. (1992) *Place, Modernity and the Consumer's World*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Chapter 2

History and dynamics of cultural villages

Prior to the dawn of democracy in South Africa in 1994, South Africa's cultural tourism 'product' was dominated by sites associated with European cultural heritage, including the legacies of the Anglo-Boer and Anglo-Zulu Wars. During the apartheid years in South Africa, African cultures were largely invisible in the public domain with the exception of museum displays and governmentally supervised presentations. Museums exhibited artifacts in an unchanging 'tribal' context. In these museums emphasis was put on the tremendous cultural difference that separated 'white' civilization from 'native cultures'.

After 1994, though, South African Tourism (SATOUR) is now 'promoting more attractions based on the history of its non-white population in an attempt to correct the skewed imbalances of the past'. Witz and Rassool have effectively analyzed these changes arguing that the 'world in one country' idea both opened new arenas for cultural tourism, while also reproducing dominant narratives and stereotypes of race, culture, heritage and identity.⁴⁶ Relatedly, Witz, Rassool and Minkley have argued that in this period, three sites were central in attempting to promote South Africa as an "African" cultural destination: cultural villages, township tours and theme parks.⁴⁷ Schutte has similarly argued that since the abolition of apartheid, the "cultural village" as a display of "authentic" tribal life has become increasingly popular and that the "form the indigenous people take as tourist attractions is the cultural village which is within easy reach of the main tourist routes and holiday resorts".⁴⁸

While a few commercially re-created 'tribal' dances and village scenes were accessible to tourists during the apartheid period, they were relatively rare until

⁴⁶ Rassool, R. and Witz, L. "'South Africa: A World in One Country': Moments in International Tourist Encounters with wildlife the Primitive and the Modern". *Cahiers d'Etudes africaines* 143, No. 36 (1996): 335-371.

⁴⁷ Witz, L., Rassool, C. and Minkley, G. (2001) 'Repackaging the Past for South African Tourism'. In *Daedalus*, Vol 130, No 1, Winter 2001, pp 177-296.

⁴⁸ Schutte, G. (2003) 'Tourists and Tribes in the "New" South Africa'. *Journal of Ethnohistory* 50: 3.

the 1980s. A few notable early examples were centred around public relations exercises on the gold mines where gum boot and 'tribal' dances were staged by their migrant workers; and an open-air cultural historical museum north of Pretoria at Klipgat which conveyed the same essentialist message of discrete ethnic tribal units of identity and belonging. Schutte also points to a few "well-preserved villages" in Venda in the Northern Province now Limpopo, during the apartheid period. Access to the above centres was restricted and permits were needed. Requisite permits from both the South African government and homeland authorities had to be sought for anthropological fieldwork. The public was thus denied or had very limited opportunities to observe indigenous 'traditional' culture, argues, Schutte more generally, also owing to the restrictions imposed on touring the homelands.⁴⁹

However, as Witz, et al argue, while the new sector of cultural villages in post-apartheid South African tourism drew on the long-established practice of 'seeing "natives in tribal setting"', cultural villages form a central component of a vast new industry which was developed in all corners of the country after 1994. They argue that in these multiplied spaces "... urban and rural communities ... sought to present a heritage that has until now been "hidden from view"⁵⁰ and that these apparent 'encounters with living cultures' jostle to 'take their place as the authentic representation of the past'. As such, they argue, the cultural village forms the most significant primarily rural basis of heritage tourism for representing 'real Africa' and African heritage in the new South Africa.⁵¹

More generally, though, Witz et al argue that the cultural productions in cultural villages always did, and continue to reproduce the dominant media and stereotypical images of Africa as constituted of distinct tribal entities. Each village reproduces a specific ethnic stereotype that has its genealogy in colonial

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Witz et al (2001) op.cit, p278.

⁵¹ Ibid.

encounters⁵². They critically dissect the cultural villages' forms and nature of development, arguing that it works "through the reconstructed 'native village'; that it enables "tourist portable, snapshot histories" of these villages which are "constructed markets of authenticity"; and they argue that they reproduce performances of 'ethnographic spectacle' in the interests of new-nation-building, which ironically reproduce notions of static cultures and ethnicities, and racialised traditional identities, amongst other critiques. From a different perspective, Jansen relatedly argues that cultural villages in South Africa were/are predominantly owned by whites, and thus this further emphasizes the racial aspects and divides that potentially define cultural villages in South Africa.⁵³ He makes comparisons with the international experience of indigenous people with tourism, which points to historically and politically determined factors that have shaped ownership and benefit flows from cultural villages.

Cultural villages whether in the form of theme parks or arts festivals where culture is displayed and performed, are not only unique to South Africa but a world-wide phenomenon. Generally, cultural tourism in the form of 'cultural villages' is defined as a kind of indigenous tourism with the involvement of the indigenous people through their control and ownership of resources, be it cultural or ecological, and with their culture serving as the focal point of attraction. This definition essentially identifies the two main strands of discussion related to cultural villages and their central concerns and dynamics. The **first is what we may call 'indigenous tourism' and cultural villages**, which has been getting increasing international currency and which has prompted Hinch and Butler to define it as "tourism activity in which indigenous people are directly involved either through control and/or having their culture serve as the essence of the attraction".⁵⁴

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Jansen, V. V. E. (2001) 'Transforming Cultural Villages in the Spatial Development Initiatives of South Africa'. *South African Geographical Journal*, 83 (2), 137-148.

⁵⁴ Hinch, T. and Butler, R. (1996) 'Indigenous tourism: A common ground for discussion. In Butler, R. and Hinch, T. (eds.), *Tourism and Indigenous Peoples*. London: International Thomson Business Press.

In the context of New Zealand indigenous tourism, Zeppel advances two definitions of Maori tourism which most clearly elaborate on what this first strand means. Firstly for him, Maori tourism encompasses any tourist experience of Maori culture; and secondly, concerns any tourist activities or attractions directly owned, operated and interpreted by Maori people.⁵⁵ Seemingly for him, the two defining factors of indigenous tourism are an outsider experience of a particular bound Maori cultural experience (no matter its form) and indigenous Maori control and ownership. These simple definitions are important, as they seem to operate far more widely, and to apply in a South African context – particularly where forms of ownership and control seem to have dominated the cultural village debates.

However, cultural villages seem to be a much more contested terrain with many inherent contradictions. In order to illustrate **this more contested second strand, in terms of what we might call the politics and poetics of representation**, I will draw on Stanley here. Stanley, writing about cultural villages in the Solomon Islands, argues that national culture is in conflict with the provinces from where the traditions emanate, thus rendering the material and mental culture reproduced in the capital to be seen as a form of neo-colonialism.⁵⁶ These tensions are captured in the responses made by the Guadalcanal Provincial Government to the proposed plans by the National Cultural Centre as discussed by Stanley. In essence, as Stanley points out, The Provincial government argued that it viewed their culture as their own way of life and a vital resource for future development. On the other hand they saw the centre as putting the needs of tourists before theirs. This contradiction convinced them that the ‘commercialization of their customs will pulverize their heritage to a bastardized form of tourist culture’.⁵⁷ The people likened the performances through the Centre as putting their ‘customs on show’ and as being “caged like

⁵⁵ Zeppel, H. (1997) ‘Report: Maori tourism in New Zealand’, *Tourism Management*, 18(17) 475-478.

⁵⁶ Stanley, N. (1998) *Being Ourselves for You: The Global Display of Cultures*. London: Middlesex University Press.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

animals in a zoo to be seen by tourists and visitors anytime they want to without taking into cognizance the needs and aspirations of the local people”.⁵⁸

This is similar to what Leslie Witz has argued.⁵⁹ Writing about the Van Riebeeck Apartheid Festival where Bushmen were displayed in the commemoration of three hundred years of Jan Van Riebeeck’s landing in South Africa in 1952, he argues that a sense of outrage began to come through some sections of the media criticizing the display of the Bushmen for visitors to Van Riebeeck’s festival. One individual from Milnerton only identified as “Scandalized”, argues Witz, saw the exhibition of “non-European men and women as [like] exhibits in a zoo”, repulsively calling for the immediate closure of the “kraals”. The Bushmen who were being displayed began to speak out and question things. According to Witz, they found the curiosity of the white people so amazing which prompted them to ask their interpreter thus: “why are the White people like baboons?”⁶⁰

The above argument and discussion opens up questions of the politics and poetics of representation in relation cultural villages: as to whether the culture presented at the cultural villages or centres are or should be reflections of lived cultures or staged according to bound and static views of authentic or traditional culture? In posing these questions here, they also enable associations about thinking about representation of African cultures and how they are reduced to a spectacle and a circus. Stanley argues that critics of cultural villages, be they particular villages and centres, or located in theme parks, are skeptical of them, owing to the theatrical nature of the presentation and the attendant implications these have on ‘authentic’ treatment and life within these cultural practices.⁶¹ He argues that a suspicion lurks in the minds of the performers that they are ‘captives’ in a similar way the actors of imperial expositions were ‘held captive’. Stanley argues further that whilst these tourists are keen to observe and even be

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Witz, L. (2003) *Apartheid’s Festival: Contesting South Africa’s National Pasts*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Stanley, op.cit, pp. 121.

part of the indigenous performances in these cultural villages, they do so strictly under their own tourist terms and conditions, in that the performances they are expecting from the performers representationally strengthens and reproduces the position of the already powerful, to the exclusion of the other, which in this case are the 'native performers'. At the same time these cultural representations are a source of entertainment for the tourists and these representations may vary from dance performances to the sale of traditional crafts. It is also of significance and essential that tourists are offered what they can regard as culture in order to satisfy their expectations. Stanley argues, then, that whilst the tourists are keen to observe and even be part of the indigenous people in these cultural villages, they do so strictly under their own terms and conditions.⁶²

Commenting about the Pentecost land dive, Stanley argues that it has now become a spectacle for tourist attraction. It is so because the performance was traditionally done during harvest time in April but people had to succumb to tourists' whims and demands wishing to see the spectacle at other times and places. The custom was made a commodity because its season was extended and sites increased, promoting the occasion as an experience of a lifetime. This had to be so because the tourists are the paying customers. This is also the case in South Africa because the performances at the cultural villages were done on special occasions in the African society but now have to be performed at any time there are tourists. Relatedly African customs and rituals that are sacred and sacrosanct to the African community and its people have to be performed and displayed at any time for tourist consumption, thus depreciating their value in that these cultural products have to be constantly packaged and repackaged to meet the expectations of the tourists.

This is also the case in South Africa because the performances at the cultural villages were done on special occasions in the African society but now have to

⁶² Stanley, N. (1998) *Being Ourselves for You: the global display of cultures*. London: Middlesex University Press.

be performed at any time there are tourists. The customs and rituals that are sacred and sacrosanct to the African community and its people have to be performed and displayed at anytime for tourist consumption thus depreciating their value in that these cultural products have to be constantly repackaged to meet the expectations of the tourists. The sanitized villages are far removed from the real life of the majority of the people presenting instead a fictionalized, idealized lifestyles and activities of the indigenous people

Volkman is among the first authors to note that people engage the significance of representing imagined lifestyles⁶³ and of the related processes and meanings associated with staging authenticity. These lifestyles are imagined because they are not practiced in everyday life. They are imagined so as to generate income. He further argues that contemporary culture is represented in these performances, so as to define and mark out ethnic identity of modern Toraja people in Indonesia through their ritual performance. The construction of their ethnic identity is done so as to make meaning in the present, then and not just to recall the past. Tourism contributes significantly to these 'cultural interactions between the contemporary and the ethnic' as interaction among tourists and local people takes place. Cultural change tends to be prevalent due to the fact that in their encounter with the tourists, the hosts construct their identity both in relation to ethnic demarcations, and within contemporary cultural meanings and practices. Thus, he suggests the issues around representation and identity are complex, interactive and negotiated.

For Nash tourism equally connotes transactions between different people, the tourists and host communities⁶⁴, while Van Beek argues that tourists bring their own culture with them and representation is as a result of such kind of encounters between the locals in a host community and tourists as well.⁶⁵

⁶³ Volkman, T. A. (1984) 'Great Performances: Toraja Cultural Identity in the 1970s'. *American Ethnologist* 11(2) pp.152-168.

⁶⁴ Nash, D. (1992) 'Epilogue: A Research Agenda on the Variability of Tourism'. In Valene L. Smith and William R. Eadington (eds.) *Tourism Alternatives*. Washington: University of Pennsylvania Press.

⁶⁵ Van Beek, E. W. (2003) 'African Tourist Encounter: Effects of Tourism on two West African Societies'. *Africa* 73(2), pp.251-289.

Consequent to this, there is a tendency by the locals to represent their lives differently from the way they live to please the tourists in their curiosity and presumptions and false assumptions about the host communities. On the other hand, locals have their own perceptions about tourists whom they see as stinking rich and as 'walking dollars, euro's' and pounds, and as largely ignorant.

To return to the South African context, as already pointed out, when the new political dispensation was established in 1994, new possibilities and opportunities for cultural villages were also opened up.

These new cultural villages are usually defined according to what happens at the village. A description of the building structures is also given. Citing Hughes, Mearns, Du Toit and Mukuka, define cultural villages as referring to those "tourists destinations that are located or near an established tourist route in a rural area and would usually consist of a homestead to depict the living arrangements, a stage for dance performances, music and other live cultural displays, a restaurant and a craft centre or shop".⁶⁶ In some instances added features like enclosure for a game, museum displays, historical video facilities and a visit to the actual homesteads nearby also apply. Jansen further defines cultural villages as "purpose built complexes which are intended, with the assistance of cultural workers [to operate] ... as a simulation of aspects of the way of life of a cultural grouping, as it was at a specific period (or over several periods) of time".⁶⁷

Usually traditional-style homesteads are the focal point of attraction. Most villages would be linked to craft shops, traditional and conventional food outlets and accommodation facilities. They offer traditional dance performances and cultural displays. They are also referred to as places of cultural interest where cultural performances and displays are rendered for the international tourist and

⁶⁶ Mearns, M.A., Du Toit, A.S.A. and Mukuka, G. (2006) *Mousain* 24 (1) pp. 23-50.

⁶⁷ Jansen (2001), op.cit.

local market for consumption.⁶⁸ Sometimes they are referred to as areas set aside to depict the lifestyles, activities and artefacts of a particular culture.⁶⁹ They are also often described as “living museums”.⁷⁰ As argued by Enevoldsen, some cultural villages may be attached to hotels.⁷¹ He makes examples of Izintaba Cultural Village which is attached to Rob Roy Hotel in KwaZulu-Natal which is under the management of the hotel. Another example is that of Phezulu which is attached to Botha’s Hill Hotel on the outskirts of Durban also in KwaZulu-Natal.

‘Cultural Villages’ as variously defined in terms of these definitions, became prominent through cultural tourism and a key tourist, development and local heritage buzzword, particularly as applied to the rural areas. The over-riding definition seemed to cohere around the construction of cultural villages in order to “stimulate, preserve and reenact some aspects of the way of a cultural grouping(s) as it was at a specific period or over several periods of time” because “their history and culture was hidden and suppressed by the colonial and apartheid regimes”.⁷² Thus, with the abolition of apartheid, the ‘cultural village’ as an “arena for the display of ‘genuine’ and ‘authentic’ tribal life has now become immensely popular”.⁷³ But beyond this formulation of the cultural village as allowing for ‘hidden history’ and a move beyond the suppressions of the past, the debates around cultural villages can be read as a parallel process to those identified as the two key themes related to cultural villages and heritage tourism more generally. In other words, the South African debates echo these same ‘global’ themes.

On the one hand, writers like Jansen have argued that the key objective of cultural villages and ‘cultural preservation’ has changed where the focus is now “more on empowerment through ownership, control and livelihood creation” than

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Enevoldsen, K. (2003) ‘See No Evil, Hear No Evil: An “Outsider’s” Encounter With Cultural Tourism’ in *South African Cultural Studies – Critical Methodologies*, Volume 3, Number 4. Sage Publications.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Schutte (2003), op.cit.

⁷³ Ibid.

it is on the traditional, cultural and heritage aspects.⁷⁴ He argues that after 1994 there was an explosion in the construction of cultural villages and this was followed by a rise in their commercial development.⁷⁵ He argues that the phenomenal rise in the construction of cultural villages can be attributed to the post-apartheid boom in international tourism to South Africa, as foreign tourists make the vast majority of visitors to commercial cultural villages.⁷⁶ According to Jansen, the rise can also be attributed to the role of the state and in particular, its local and developmental aspects. The fact that most people depend on state grants, remittances, pensions, informal employment and migrant labour, meant that tourism became defined as a key local driver of development. And, essentially, tourism development, at the village level, translated into cultural villages as a vital new locally based and grounded alternative in attempting to eradicate poverty and unemployment for many small towns and rural villages.

Cultural villages can be grouped into various kinds of categories. They can be grouped into privately owned, state owned, community owned and individually owned entities differing in size, resources and financial support. However, what is common in them is that they are arenas for cultural displays and cultural performances enacting the previous past.

According to the study conducted by Jansen, the majority of cultural villages in South Africa are privately owned.⁷⁷ They differ in size from small attachments to hotels or craft shops, to vast and large complexes that can be described as 'cultural theme parks'. Usually, the owner is a single entrepreneur, a family or a small company but nevertheless, a handful of villages are owned by large tourism companies. One such privately owned entity which is of interest is the Shangana Cultural Village which was built on private land between the periods of

⁷⁴Jansen (2001), Op.cit.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Koch, E. (1999) 'Culture, Tourism and the Spatial Development Initiatives: Opportunities to Promote Investment, Jobs and People's Livelihoods', Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, Pretoria.

⁷⁷ Jansen (2001) Op.cit.

October 1998 to March 1999. Two white young business graduates with financial experience and tourism marketing secured a loan of R1 000 000 from the Industrial Development Corporation to kick start their business “owing to their sound business plan”.⁷⁸ Jansen argues that the privately owned cultural villages have an advantage over community and individually owned cultural villages in that they have easy access to funding through loans from financial institutions to finance their entities.

Many small individually-owned cultural villages and community owned (and state owned) cultural villages are not well developed and marketed and the overall perception is that lack of infrastructure derails their development which, in turn, also derails their tourism potential. These entities are usually outside main tourists routes and as such, are not easily accessible at most times, owing to the lack of good access roads. These villages are also faced by a lack of funding from financial institutions. This is illustrated by one such cultural village known as Jonopo Cultural Village in Mthatha owned by one Mavis Paqela. The owner has been refused funding on the basis that she is an individual. The capital she invested for the building came from her private funds accumulated through informal food and grocery-selling businesses. Its modest success was built over time but occupancy in accommodation facilities remains low. The owner attributes it to lack of hot water and shared ablution facilities which can then also be strongly argued that it is because of funding.⁷⁹ If she had easy access to funding, she would have improved her facilities and installed a geyser for hot water. On the other hand, finance becomes more readily available for white entrepreneurs who are more likely to have security, equity and the skills to present an acceptable business proposal than the indigenous entrepreneurs. One such example is Shangana Cultural Village.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Interview with Mavis Paqela at Qunu Village, Umthatha, 17 September, 2007.

According to Jansen, these scenarios exist despite the stated intentions in the White Paper of the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT 1996), which aims to provide appropriate finance for small black tourism entrepreneurs.⁸⁰ Such facilities still do not exist for the majority of poorer black 'indigenous' people. This can also be attributed to the fact that the apartheid legacy left glaring inequalities in the skills base between white and black people and between the then white South Africa and the then homelands. These villages are also faced with a low turnover which also affects the payment of its cultural workers. It has also forced some owners to trade off their share of ownership in exchange for a better salary and profit share as demonstrated by Khosa at Nyani Tribal Village.⁸¹ Some Cultural Villages had to rely on the underpaid/unpaid services of their family members for their continued existence.⁸² Overall, Van Jansen alleges that these individual and local black owned cultural villages generally "run at a loss" and the majority had "no distributable profits".⁸³

Relatedly, the cultural performers and workers in both these individual and in the commercial cultural villages are faced with difficult but also different challenges. In some cultural villages the performers are not paid but depend on the tips offered by the tourists and visitors. The performers work under demeaning conditions and are exploited in some cultural villages. For example, at Kraal Kraft they are paid through tips. The cultural village is reminiscent of a human zoo and the conditions are demeaning.⁸⁴ It is alleged that black dummies in traditional attire are displayed inside the curio shop alongside stuffed animals. The much talked about issue of privately-owned cultural villages offering better employment conditions and good wages as opposed to other kinds of cultural villages, has been proved not to be true. There are exceptions to the rule as is shown in the Kraal Kraft Cultural Village. The cultural workers have no basic salary but are

⁸⁰ Jansen (2001), Op.cit.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid

⁸⁴ Ibid.

dependent on tips given by the tourists.⁸⁵ As the important stakeholders of the village and the lifeblood of it and without them the entire notion of a cultural village would be meaningless, they do not get the real value of what their presence is worth to the cultural village, but instead are more often than not exploited within prevailing margins of marginality.

However, another group of authors have addressed the representational issues - the second theme identified - more directly. Schutte, for example, argues that cultural villages in South Africa are “carefully sanitized and removed from the way of life of the vast majority of people.”⁸⁶ As such, for him, they represent fictional and idealized recreations of ‘tribal’ lifestyles and activities.

Amplifying the above argument, in Mooiplaas for example, the people within the community, who previously despised the African customs and traditions or were discouraged by their parents from familiarizing themselves with them, jumped on the bandwagon when they saw the construction of the cultural village. They saw an opportunity to exploit the customs and rituals they despised. They reformed and repackaged them to be sold to the tourists in a repackaged form for their economic benefit. The construction of Khayalabantu Cultural Village (KCV) sparked and instilled some sense of pride in their African culture, customs and rituals. Zinzi and other women of Mooiplaas from school backgrounds, argues Bank, “came to recognize the power of ‘tradition’ and the value of their identities as modern Xhosa women. They expressed these identities through creating hybrid cultural products and a revival of folk costumes, not only at traditional rituals but at all events of social significance”.⁸⁷ Bank however, argues that this new resurgence of pride in women’s tradition and folk costumes cannot in any way be interpreted or associated with a retreat into the distant past. Rather it involved a dynamic re-articulation that was neither Red nor School, modern nor

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Schutte (2003) op.cit, pp. 473.

⁸⁷ Bank, L. ‘Beyond Red and School: Gender, Tradition and Identity in the Rural Eastern Cape’. In *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 28(3), September 2002, pp. 631-649.

traditional. He argues further that it 'represented something quite new, innovative, malleable and 'situational'.⁸⁸

It is also worth noting the gendered aspects of cultural villages and its dynamics in relation to the politics of representation. Many local and small scale and community cultural villages are run by, owned and managed by women and their 'imagined communities and identities' which are drawn on, mobilized and developed in modifying and repackaging culture so as to give something new that appeals to the imaginations of tourists needs to be investigated further in terms of what they perceive as genuine and authentic African 'culture'. It shows that potentially gender has a significant role to play in thinking about the construction of representations of culture and identity as cultural representations are a source entertainment for tourists because they want to see what they believe to be African culture.

The contentious issue about the authenticity of culture and the staging of performances at the cultural villages is always creeping in. It seems clear that what is usually presented and performed at the cultural villages is not authentic but something reconstituted anew. Manenana Qhomorhoshe who is a performer at the Khayalabantu Cultural Village, whom I had the opportunity to interview at Mooiplaas, argues that the performances they are rendering at the cultural village for tourists are not genuine or the same as they would do in the locality for a ceremony demanding such kind of performance.⁸⁹ While he attributed this staging to the exploitation of performers by the owner of the cultural village, it also seems very clear that the issues of 'staging' are more complex, more contradictory and more intricately connected into the politics and poetics of representation, identity, history, heritage and tradition, than any simple material economic explanation.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Interview with Manenana Qhomorhoshe, Khayalabantu Cultural Village, Mooiplaas, 6 June, 2005.

This chapter has given a brief overview of different kinds of cultural villages in South Africa, be it privately, community and individually owned and the attendant challenges facing them. Also it has touched on the challenges and difficulties faced by the cultural performers. By their nature, cultural villages are geared towards profit making although they are masked as centres for cultural preservation and development. This is so because the cultures that are promoted are often, regularly and almost routinely refashioned and packaged for the tourist market. The chapter has also argued that as opposed to privately owned entities that can source funding from financial institutions, on the other hand, the community and individually owned cultural villages are faced with financial challenges as they cannot source funding from financial institutions. But, the issues associated with cultural villages are not just financial, or even developmental. They are also representational, and the material and social politics associated with the past, and with cultural heritage and tourism, open the space for destination cultures to not only be staged, but also to be lived as if they were the real. The next chapter seeks to begin the process of tracking how these various issues played themselves out in Mgwali cultural village.

Chapter Three

History and location of Mgwali as a Village

This chapter seeks to explore the history and origins of Mgwali as a village and what shaped it. It also explores some important historical figures that made a mark in the shaping of Mgwali in the name of Tiyo Soga who was the first African in South Africa to be ordained as a priest. He was also the first African to obtain a degree from the University of Glasgow in Britain. Though he did not practice Xhosa customs as a person, he advocated the dissemination and preservation of African history and its customs. The chapter will also tackle the issue of communal resistance of Mgwali to forced removals, as Mgwali, like many other villages, was considered to be a 'black spot' in the so-called 'white-corridor'. In a different context, the various pieces of legislation that were promulgated by the colonial government which gave quitrenters the sole use of the commonage land, and their impact on the history of Mgwali is also considered.

As such, this chapter offers what might be identified as the local village history of Mgwali, identifying the 'critical events' and 'foci of identification' that would show its own 'uniqueness' and could also locate the village in the potential 'freedom struggle' heritage narrative (as suggested by Ashworth above). In other words what will be explored and expanded on here is a local history of Mgwali in terms of what might be called the 'real story', framed through the pulses of 'modernity', Christianity, apartheid and 'resistance'. Existing accounts, local understandings and interpretations and Mgwali's place in the Eastern Cape's history all converge around the three components mentioned above: Tiyo Soga, the quitrent story and the resistance to forced removals story.

Tiyo Soga in Mgwali

Tiyo Soga, the first educated black South African and African minister to be ordained as priest of the Presbyterian Church in South Africa, was a pioneer of African literature and a seminal public intellectual. Soga was born in 1829 at Mgwali in the Eastern Frontier of the Cape Colony. His birth was at the time

when Chief Jongumsobomvu Maqoma and his people were being expelled from their ancestral lands on the Kat River Valley by the colonial government. This is an event which according to Ndletyana,⁹⁰ even Soga's illiterate mother later remembered as marking the year of Tiyo's birth. Soga was the son of Jotello or Gadu mostly referred to in literature as Old Soga and Nosuthu his great wife, who belonged to the Amantinde tribe – the tribe of Jan Tshatshu of Exeter Hall Celebrity.⁹¹

Soga was the seventh of the nine children born by his mother Nosuthu. The first name given to Tiyo at birth was Sani, a contraction for "Zisani" which means what bringest though. Shortly thereafter, it was changed to Tiyo by his father after an influential Gcaleka councilor who was brave in the battlefield and wise in his counsels at the great place. According to Chalmers,⁹² in changing his name, his father might have dimly expressed the hope that Tiyo would become famous in his country's annals as his namesake before him had been, whereas Tiyo was destined to be celebrated for his wisdom and courage in the bloodless conquest of the gospel. He was the first black and African to be ordained as a religious minister, the first African man to obtain a degree and build a church which is still a testament to his living legacy up to the present day. Besides being a preacher, Soga was an astute politician, composer of church hymns, translator and a prolific writer of note.

Soga's parents played a pivotal role in the development of their son and this is manifested in Soga's Christian and western outlook in his later years when he was a Church minister in Mgwali. Having converted to Christianity, after much thought and prayer, Nosuthu asked her husband who had eight wives to be freed from the marriage. Her central argument was that she wanted her son to grow up a Christian. He was placed under the guardianship of missionaries early in his life

⁹⁰ Ndletyana, M. (2008) 'Tiyo Soga' in *African Intellectuals in 19th and early 20th century South Africa*. Cape Town: HSRC Press.

⁹¹ Cousins, H. T. (1899) *From Kafir kraal to pulpit: the story of Tiyo Soga*. London: SW Partridge.

⁹² Chalmers, J. A. (1877) *Tiyo Soga: A page of South African Mission Work*. Grahamstown, Cape colony: James Kay.

by his mother who also refused to allow him to undergo the traditional rite of passage for Xhosa boys which is circumcision. That proved to be a stumbling block where matters of culture were concerned as he was not considered by the traditionalists to have passed the test of manhood. Soga's mother took him to Tyhume Mission which was founded by Reverend John Brownlee in 1818. There, Tiyo Soga grew up and attended the school of Reverend Chalmers, his biographer. He caught the eye of Chalmers who mentored him and he proved to be an ardent scholar under him.⁹³ What is ironic and interesting from the above, is that the patriarchal nature of Xhosa traditional rules and traditions is subverted by Nosuthu.

In 1844 Soga got a free scholarship to study at the Lovedale Seminary, about thirteen kilometers from Tyhume. When the War of the Axe broke out in 1846, Lovedale was closed because the military personnel took over the buildings. Tiyo and his mother took refuge at Fort Armstrong where other war refugees were kept. His ardency as a scholar was reaffirmed again at the refuge camp when he studied his books at night using sneeze wood light from the fire made by his mother. When the principal of Lovedale, Reverend William Govan decided to return to his homeland of Scotland, he took Soga along and paid all his expenses. He was convinced of Soga's capacity to benefit from higher education in Scotland hence he took him there believing that Soga would be of great value to his fellow country-men.⁹⁴ Tiyo's mother did not know whether she would ever see her son alive again but did let him go with the words: 'My son belongs to God; wherever he goes God is with him... he is much in God's care in Scotland as he is here with me'.⁹⁵

On January 31, 1849, Soga returned to South Africa to begin his missionary work. He worked as a catechist and evangelist in Tyhume. Whilst stationed at Tyhume, he was asked by Reverend Robert Niven to assist in opening a new

⁹⁴ Shepherd, R. H. W. (1971) *Lovedale – South Africa, 1824 – 1955*. Lovedale Press.

⁹⁵ MacGregor, A. (1978) 'Missionary Women'. *Annals of the Grahamstown Historical Society*, 2 (4).

mission station in the Amathole Mountains – the Uniondale Mission in Keiskammahoek. For the first time there, notions of culture and custom reared their ugly heads when scholars of the school were withdrawn by their parents because Soga was ‘inkwenkwe’⁹⁶ (uncircumcised boy). He preached to a congregation that identified religion with the colonial authorities that they were at war with.

The parents feared that their children would die as a result of being taught by ‘inkwenkwe’, that girls would be unmarriageable and that boys would turn their backs to the customs of their fathers. The boycotting of schools and church was seen as a resistance against colonial and military pressure. It was during that time that he began to compose sacred songs. Whilst preaching at Mgwali in 1863, Soga was taunted by abakhwetha (youths at circumcision school) with the full support of their parents who were elders of the church. That was a clear demonstration of the thin dividing line between the two worlds of Christianity and western civilization on the one hand, and traditional native religion and values on the other hand.⁹⁷

When the War of Emlanjeni of 1850-1853 broke out in 1850, Soga’s educational and missionary endeavours were disrupted. The colonial government offered him employment as an interpreter which he declined and instead opted for going back to Scotland with Reverend Niven. In June 1851, Soga together with Niven set sail for Scotland. The John Street United Presbyterian Church welcomed him back and formed a committee to oversee his studies. In November of the same year, he was registered as a ministry student at Glasgow University. He was the object of racist ridicule. Despite all the racial insults he was subjected to, Soga took advantage of his time in Scotland and read widely. He read the works of

⁹⁶ According to Xhosa custom and tradition, where the rite of passage to manhood through circumcision is practiced, a boy who is not circumcised is called ‘inkwenkwe’. Inkwenkwe cannot hold a teaching post or preach to a congregation is a taboo in the Xhosa tradition hence Soga was the subject/object of ridicule and parents withdrew their children from Uniondale Mission where Soga was teaching them.

⁹⁷ Christian Express (1878) Op.cit; Williams, D. (1978) *Umfundisi: a biography of Tiyo Soga 1829-1871*. Lovedale: Lovedale Press; Khabela, G. (1996) *The struggle of the gods: a study in Christianity and the African Culture*. Alice: Lovedale Press.

Washington Irving, William Hickling Prescott, Thomas Barbington Macaulay, James Foster, Alexandre Rodolphe Vinet and others. John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, which he later translated into Xhosa, was his closet companion.⁹⁸ At the University, Soga spent only one session instead of four. The idea behind that, one would argue, the powers that be wanted to get him through as quickly as possible so that he could return to the mission field. He then moved to Divinity Hall in Edinburgh. Each and every second month he had to appear before the Presbytery of Glasgow to be examined in theological studies and trial preaching. At soirees, Tiyo Soga was the favourite. As a tamed and emasculated Zoo animal, he was the centre of attraction. He was a live Kaffir. To be treated as such was tedious and degrading for Soga.⁹⁹ On 27 February 1857, Soga married a Scottish woman by the name Janet Burnside from Craignestock.¹⁰⁰

Some commentators and scholars have argued that Soga's marriage to a Scottish woman was a clear demonstration of how he completely embraced Scottish culture and its people. His love for Scottish culture was strong that he cherished a lifelong affection for it as well as culture, institutions and trappings of British life. He thought of himself as a subject of Queen Victoria because of the benefits it afforded by enlightenment but at the same time he wanted to reproduce that enlightenment amongst his own countrymen.

When the War of Emlanjeni broke out in 1850, for the first time in his life, Soga had to make an independent choice because previously that choice was made for him by his parents and missionaries. He had to make a decision whether to continue on the missionary path or join the anti-colonial struggle. Soga had split loyalties. Chief Maqoma personally asked Soga to translate the letters they had confiscated from the colonial forces. Maqoma had hoped to get intelligence about the military strategy of the colonial troops. Soga declined the request because he would not mix himself up in a context that carried death to his fellow creatures,

⁹⁸ Khabela, *ibid*, p.18.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*. p.56.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, p.57.

Maqoma saw him as an accomplice in the colonial project and deserving death as his fellow missionaries. Soga returned the letters and fled to the Kat River Valley. The Christian converts who were Soga's followers remained neutral and fled to the mountains for their safety. Faced with charges of selling out their fellow brothers to the white people, they returned to the Colony with the hope that they would get support and sympathy from the white people. Instead they were disarmed and made to work in the homes and farms of the colonists.¹⁰¹

Soga returned back to South Africa in July 1857 together with his wife Janet Burnside. Janet proved herself to be 'a most honourable, thrifty, frugal and devoted woman who marched heroically and faithfully by her husband's side through all the chequered scenes of his short life'. She soon realized what it meant to be a white woman married in colonial South Africa to an African man. Soga recorded that when they landed in Port Elizabeth, people looked in wonder and astonishment to the unfolding scene in front of their eyes of a black man with a white lady leaning on his arm and they were viewed with suspicion by all racial groups and classes. Burnside was viewed both by black and white with suspicion whereas her husband had to contend with accusations that he was trying to become a 'black Englishman'.¹⁰²

By marrying a white Scottish woman, Soga transcended the racial and cultural barriers that were prevailing in colonial South Africa at the time. He proved himself to be a modern man and it was not surprising because he saw himself as a subject of the Queen and as such he aspired more of its culture and its trappings and enlightenment. He was not accepted by the people in his traditional society because marrying a stranger especially a white woman was seen as a taboo by the adherents of the Xhosa traditional culture. The taboo was further validated by Sir George Grey who was the Governor of the Cape Colony then. When Soga was posted to Mgwali with his wife, Grey was concerned about

¹⁰¹ Khabela, (1996), p. 19-20, 24; Williams, D. (1983) *The Journal and Selected writings of the Reverend Tiyo Soga*, Cape Town: A. A. Balkema, p.3; Ndletyana, (2008), p.20.

¹⁰² Khabela, *ibid*, p.43; Cousins, *op.cit*, p.67.

the safety of Burnside. Because she was white, Grey knew that she might not be accepted among the Xhosa people and enquired about her safety from King Sandile whereupon the King promised him about her safety among his subjects.

In 1857 Soga took up a post as a missionary at Mgwali. The Bantu Presbyterian Church Mission in Mgwali was established on land granted to Reverend Soga by King Sandile. Having been influenced by the prophet Ntsikana, Sandile appealed to the Presbyterian Church to help educate the Ngqika people. The Mission was originally intended to be a refuge for a few Xhosa, possibly cattle killing victims. However, the Governor of the Cape, Sir George Grey, issued a permit that allowed the Mission to accept anybody that the missionaries might approve. Soga and his wife together with Reverend Johnson constructed the early buildings. The school established for girls became well known and many girls were trained as teachers and came from all parts of South Africa.

Mgwali Mission is unique from other Missions in the missionary endeavour in that it was the first Mission Station in the nineteenth century to be governed by a black man. The post, having been abandoned for four years, Soga made a firm resolution to revive the station. He embarked upon building the first modern church ever in the native territory without the assistance of the Glasgow Missionary Society which was then reluctant to fund churches in Africa because of the disruptions and destructions caused by war.¹⁰³

¹⁰³ Williams, D. (1978) *op. cit.*



(The photograph shows the “modern church” that Tiyo Soga built with the money he raised on his own without the assistance of the Glasgow Missionary Society. It stands as a testament to his legacy and the work he did at Mgwali. The people in front of the church in the picture are the residents of Mgwali in November 2005 to welcome the great-great grand daughter of Soga Camilla and her husband from Scotland who were hosted by Tiyo Soga Development Project. The legal status of Mgwali Mission is that of a provincial heritage site which was declared thus in 2001 and the Manse¹⁰⁴ was restored a few years ago with funding from South African Heritage Resource Agency (SAHRA)).

The above statement clearly demonstrates that if it was not for the bravery and initiative of Tiyo Soga, there would be no Mgwali we speak of today, modern Presbyterian Church standing in Mgwali and schools. He used his position and influence to secure a title deed for Mgwali and more land concessions for development not only for himself but for the whole community and generations to come. He built the first modern church ever in Mgwali. He was not discouraged by the reluctance and refusal of the Glasgow Missionary Society to approve funds for the building of a modern church in Mgwali which they saw it as a waste

¹⁰⁴ A residence where the Reverend of the Church together with his wife and other family members stay.

of money and resources owing to the disturbances of the Frontier Wars. He then raised the money without the assistance of the Glasgow missionary Society. If it was not for Soga's courage, the Church could have remained that made of daub and wattle. His influence was not only confined to Mgwali, it went beyond the shores of Mgwali to far-flung places across the Kei River to Centani. Two more churches under his tutelage were built by him in Qholorha and Thuthurha in the district of Centani. Mgwali is significant even today as it remains a testimony to the life and work of Reverend Tiyo Soga.¹⁰⁵

Whilst working in Mgwali, Soga traveled all over Sandile's territory to spread the influence of the Presbyterian Church. Whilst still busy working there and busy with the construction of the Church, he turned the whole civilizing project up-side-down. He scrutinized the whole assumptions that informed it. Rather than simply accept the virtues of whiteness and the supposed vices of blackness, he held them both to the same level of scrutiny by condemning criminal behaviour amongst Africans as just as bad as among whites. He believed that modernity was not a function of race but that of socialization. He led the crusade against the use of alcohol in the black community. He believed that alcohol had been a more effective way of colonialism because it undermined the moral fabric of the black community. For him it had ushered indecency, immorality and loss of sense of responsibility in that it undermined the Xhosa will to resist the war against the colonists. He made an example of the most powerful chief of the Xhosa Ngqika, who had become a complete alcoholic. He blamed the colonists as they brought temptation among the Africans. He wrote thus:

Why was the temptation brought here? If you say you drink what is yours, we ask why do you bring canteens among black people? Again why is it that Sir George Grey had ruled that liquor must not be sold to the black people, you do not give ear to this ruling instead canteens are patronized more and more.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Ndletyana, (2008), op.cit.

¹⁰⁶ Khabela, G. op. cit. pp. 111-112.

In accepting Christianity, argues Khabela¹⁰⁷, Soga was following in the footsteps of the Xhosa prophet Ntsikana. They were both accommodating to the colonial question, the only difference between them being that Soga was well traveled, formally trained and had a deep understanding of “the Western culture”. His fellow Xhosa people accepted Soga with some ambivalence. He was venerated and accorded deference equal to the one they gave to their prophet-type leaders such as Ntsikana, Nxele, Mlanjeni and Nongqawuse. The ambivalent treatment with which his own people regarded him was touching to Tiyo Soga. This was captured in the letter he wrote on 1st March 1858. The letter states that:

My poor countrymen! With what interest did I regard them, even when they, perhaps, ignorantly, supposed an indifferent stranger. I cannot describe the emotions with which I preached in the Native Church at Algoa Bay. They looked upon me as an extraordinary personage, who has bridged over the apparently impassable gulf, fixed between their degraded condition and that of their pre-eminently distinguished white neighbours.

Soga had an insight into the “psyche of the settler community” because he did understand that they tolerated him because of his education and missionary standing and that he could not remain for long out of the main stream politics. He moved cautiously against colonial aggression and prejudice but he was careful to hold back. He did not want to antagonize the official opinion against missionary activity. Soga’s theological and political life was undergirded by his resentment of the colonists but he hid that fact from his white colleagues. He feared that he would be misrepresented in the white community and that his unguarded remarks about the colonial community would be produced in the colony to the detriment and prejudice of himself and the cause of uplifting his race. White people regarded Soga as a ‘Kafir’ albeit a ‘better one’ and nothing could be done to change it. Although forced to live in it, Soga was denied entry into the white world although he confirmed it.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ndletyana, op.cit.

The unabated colonial aggression against Africans in the 1860s changed Soga's attitude. He took a firm stance against racism and colonial expansion but at the same time he did not want to become the victim of the racial prejudice he was opposing. He began to understand that in a world controlled by white people, there was nothing much a black person could do. His arrest by police for not carrying a pass engendered in him a realization that though accomplished, he was still a native and that he must not presume total acceptance within the colonial society. Even though he was exempt from the burden of carrying a pass owing to his 'civil status', Soga was treated badly and in a racial manner by the tollgate officials to Alice because of his colour and when he complained to the higher authorities, he was told that the council could do nothing.¹⁰⁹

The African clergy of the nineteenth century were expectant and hopeful that prejudice and racism would in the end disappear and that black people would eventually be accepted as equals by the white people. Tiyo was not an exception because in the early years of his ministry, he believed the myth that black inferiority would be dispelled as more of his people acquired education and accepted Christianity. He had the firm belief that noninterference in gospel would promote the social well being of his people and civilize them. Commenting about the early African converts, Ngugi¹¹⁰ asserts that in accepting the Christian Church, for them it meant the outright rejection of all the African customs, values and rituals that held the African people together. It meant adopting what in effect was a debased European middle-class mode of living and behaviour. He argues further that as such the European missionary had attacked the primitive rights of the people, condemned their beautiful African dances and the images of their gods whilst recoiling from their suggestion of satanic sensuality. As a consequence of this, the early African convert did the same with greater keenness for he had to prove how Christian he was through the rejection of his past and roots. Soga was not an exception to the assertions made by Ngugi.

¹⁰⁹ Khabela, (1996), Op.cit; Ndletyana, (2008)

¹¹⁰ Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1972) *Homecoming*, Heinemann: London, p. 32.

Exposure to education, Christianity and Scottish life made Tiyo aware of certain realities his fellow Xhosa people could not understand and comprehend. It engendered in him an understanding that waging war against colonists using spears and assegais was a futile exercise because the colonists had improved their weapons to the point of excellence. He believed that it was only through the acceptance of gospel and education by Xhosa people that the colonists could be exposed at their own game. It were these assertions that set Tiyo against the chiefs because they believed that it was only through going to war that they could reclaim their land back. Chiefs hated the intrusion of missionaries on their land, their traditional way of life and the chiefly authority. The chiefs saw Tiyo as in collusion with white missionaries. The difficult life of Tiyo was also exacerbated by the prophet Mlanjeni who was seen by the people as more nearer to them and more powerful than the unknown 'King Jesus' that Tiyo proclaimed. When he preached about the King who healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, made the lame walk and the dumb speak, it is alleged that people retorted that "Mlanjeni can do the same". Soga was accused of having sold out the blacks to the white people by Mlanjeni who claimed that he could make bigger miracles than those of the Christ whom Tiyo proclaimed and people believed Mlanjeni.¹¹¹

Despite all the mishaps of the 19th century, Soga did not discard all his African cultural influences. He still observed some African norms and values by paying homage to the chiefly authority as its subject. A sensitivity in him grew towards Xhosa oral tradition and history. He would sit deep into the night listening to stories told by chiefs and tribesmen. As a literary writer, his mission was to influence his people not only through the preached word but to also make them aware of their history and heritage. The ideal for him was to understand the Xhosa culture, its rites and custom and to record all the Xhosa stories and fables. Soga wrote that:

Our veterans of the Xhosa and Embo people must disgorge
all they know. Everything must be imparted to the nation

¹¹¹ Williams, D. (1978), *op.cit*; Khabela, G. (1996), *op.cit*.

as a whole. Fables must be retold; what was history or legend must be recounted. What has been preserved as a tradition must be (re)sited. What was seen, heard or done under the requirements of custom should be brought to light and placed on the national table to be sifted for preservation.¹¹²

In one way or the other, the above quote clearly demonstrates the nature of split identities and the ambivalent nature of Tiyo Soga. Whilst Soga attached great premium on the preservation of African cultures and customs, he was immune and not subject to its application or practice as it is a well known fact that Soga denounced circumcision and other cultural rites. It is also a known fact from history that he was not circumcised and he died a boy as he had not passed the Xhosa traditional rite of passage through circumcision for Xhosa boys. Circumstances and conditions that were prevailing in the colonial South Africa, forced Soga to make such a clarion call for the preservation of African traditions and customs. It must also be taken into cognizance that Soga was not advocating blanket acceptance and imbibing of the African customs. As an intellectual and a social commentator, he was aware that custom was not static but dynamic and as such they must also be put to scrutiny and only those cultural practices and customs that were worthy of preservation, beneficial and of value to the communities had to be preserved.

Despite being educated and regarded himself as a British subject who aspired more for its culture, trappings and enlightenment, he was not accepted into the white world. White people saw him as a 'kafir' albeit a 'better one'. This engendered in him a realization that in a world controlled by white people, nothing much a black person could do. It further engendered in him a realization that though he was accomplished and educated, he was still a native and that he must not presume total acceptance within the colonial society. This further gave rise to awareness in Soga's thinking that the rejection and denouncement of one's culture does not mean total and automatic acceptance to the white community and its culture.

¹¹² Khabela, *ibid*, p.114; Ndletyana, *op. cit.*

But to preserve these African customs and history, he undertook extensive research on various aspects of African history, fables, legends, customs and genealogy of chiefs and contributed in newspaper articles to promote African literature beyond ethnic divide. He put it that to a weak race or party, unity above everything is strength. He advised all coloured people that since they were a degraded, despised and down-trodden people, they must assist one another by patronizing talent in one another, and in business and shops, basing his argument on the fact that it was better to prefer and elevate kindred and countrymen before all others. He saw it as the only way that blacks could elevate their influences and positions amongst their white counterparts. Soga also advised his children that though they were born of a white woman, they should identify themselves as 'black men' in order to gain respect and as such, he wrote them a letter which spelled out clearly what they must do. To escape racism in South Africa, Soga sent his three oldest sons to Scotland to receive tertiary education as he had done himself.¹¹³

From 1850 Soga began composing Xhosa hymns that culminated in the publication of a Xhosa hymnal in 1860 thus making him a literary pioneer. In 1866 he was unable to work for some time owing to ill-health and he used that time productively to translate John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's progress* into isiXhosa titled *Uhambo loMhambi*. It was a classic work. In 1868 he was on the board with the task to revise the Xhosa Bible but never lived to see its publication. Towards the end of his life, he was posted to Sarhili's country to open up a new mission in Thuthurha, Centane. His removal from Mgwali hastened his death. The climate was not conducive to his health because it was moist and damp. He passed away on August 12, 1871 at the tender age of 42. He left behind his wife and seven children. His four eldest sons, William Anderson, John Henderson,

¹¹³ Cousins, (1899), op.cit, pp. 146; Ndletyana, (2008), *ibid*.

Kirkland Allan and Jotello Faster would later emulate their father's illustrious public life.¹¹⁴

The name Soga is central to the history and heritage of Mgwali. Mgwali is synonymous with Tiyo Soga. The Church that Soga built in Mgwali served as a venue for meetings when people protested and challenged their pending removals and is also where they prayed for their salvation. The Cape African Native Congress under Walter Benson Rubusana held its meeting in the Mgwali Church in 1909 when they debated the impending Union Act of 1910 that would exclude Africans and disenfranchise them.

When Herman Gija narrated to the people of Mgwali how a young man by the name of Tiyo Soga from Mgwali went to Scotland to study ministry and upon his return, he came with a European wife and the land of Mgwali was given to him and his people, it is said and remembered as one of Mgwali's memorial touchstones, that the story that Gija told the people of Mgwali made them resolute in fighting for what was rightfully theirs.¹¹⁵ However, one can safely argue that Mgwali owes its existence to Tiyo Soga in that he was instrumental in securing a title deed for Mgwali and additional grants of land for educational purposes. As such, the Mgwali resistance against forced removals is tied to the Church and it was fitting that it was the venue used to hold their gatherings in attempt to fight their forced removals. This gives Soga, the church and forced removals in Mgwali a unique and particular local history, as will be shown below.

The Village: a selective history

Mgwali is a rural village in the Stutterheim Magisterial District. It has a rich and interesting history as a missionary station and for its objection to the forced removals by the apartheid regime for the sole purpose of it being incorporated to

¹¹⁴ Cousins, (1899), *ibid*, p. 147.

¹¹⁵ Teach and Learn, vol. 3, 1983, and Interviews with residents, who all remember this speech, and use it as a personal memory, but which is essentially a social memory, constructed by narrations of the 'struggle' and re-situating Soga within it..

the then Ciskei homeland government. It is a historically black-owned settlement surrounded by white-owned farms. Mgwali formed part of the Ngqika territory that was ruled by the last Xhosa-Rharhabe kingdom, under King 'Mgolombane' Sandile. Mgwali was established on such land given to Tiyo Soga by King Sandile in 1857. As Sandile was exposed to missionary and Christian influences, he accepted Tiyo Soga as a missionary to preach in Mgwali with the result that Mgwali Mission under the Church of Scotland was established in 1857.¹¹⁶

Consequent to the above, an orderly settlement of mission residents on Church land evolved. Each mission household had access to arable lands that were divided into allotments averaging between two and four acres. There were no individual title deeds or certificates of occupation to mission as was the case with quitrenters. Residents on mission land had to adhere to certain rules that were unique to the mission. Being a member of the Church, attendance of services and obedience to the rules, guaranteed a person mission residence and perpetual access to arable lands. A serious breach of rules could also lead to expulsion from Church land. Despite these stringent and restrictive rules, prominent individuals including King Sandile's mother Suthu, who died on the mission land in the 1880s, did find contentment living under missionary authority.¹¹⁷

The mission station of Mgwali formed part of an overall Cape Colonial government policy of pacifying the trouble-stricken Eastern Cape frontier with orderly settlements. It became a centre of agricultural progress and its residents adapted to new farming methods. They produced both for the mission's profit and the market. In tandem with agricultural prosperity was the establishment of educational institutions that were associated and linked with prominent

¹¹⁶ *Surplus Peoples Project Report*, Vol. 2, 1983; Wotshela, L. (1993) *Transformation in late colonial Ngqika society: a political, economic and land history of African communities in the District of Stutterheim*, Eastern Cape. MA Thesis, Rhodes University.

¹¹⁷ *Isigidimi samaXhosa*, 1 December, 1885; Wotshela, L. (2001), '*Homeland Consolidation, Resettlement and Local Politics in the Border and the Ciskei region of the Eastern Cape, South Africa, 1960 – 1996*. PhD thesis, Oxford University, United Kingdom.

educational centres such as Lovedale. On the Mgwali Mission property, schools for boys and girls were established by the turn of the twentieth century. The school for girls took significant numbers which ultimately resulted in a boarding facility and a teachers training course by the middle of the twentieth century.¹¹⁸

After the last Frontier War of 1877 to 1878, also commonly known as the 'War of Ngcayechibi', Sandile was killed and his forces defeated. This resulted into a large number of Ngqika¹¹⁹ subjects relocating to Transkei whilst Mgwali remained as the major African settlement in the area. It consisted of a group of Christians that had been associated with the Ngqika location.¹²⁰ After the 1877-78 Frontier War, the Cape Colonial government took a direct and active role in designing Mgwali and other neighbouring settlements. A large portion of the Ngqika area was carved and demarcated into settler land under Act 14 of 1878 which regulated the manner in which colonial crown lands were to be disposed. By the 1880s, Mgwali was surrounded by white farms. It was these white farms that caused Mgwali to be proclaimed a 'black spot' in a 'white corridor' in the 1980s. This also resulted in Mgwali facing forced removal and relocation which was ultimately resisted by the people of Mgwali successfully. However, much as land was given to white farmers, some portions of 11,791 old Ngqika location were reserved for the formal extension of its settlement in addition to the 500 acres of freehold Church land.¹²¹

The quitrent system in Mgwali can be traced back to the Native Location Act 40 of 1879. After its promulgation, the Act gave rise to quitrenters who were Africans being given plots and commonage rights. This kind of system was first pioneered for the Dutch colonial settlers in the eighteenth century. The Act then authorized the survey, carving, demarcation and separation of residential property from

¹¹⁸ Records of Emgwali Mission Girls' School, at Mgwali.

¹¹⁹ A portion of settlement or territory under the Kingship of Sandile and its people called Ngqikas or AmaNgqika named after Sandile's father King Ngqika who was also a King during his time.

¹²⁰ *Isigidimi samaXhosa*, 1 December, 1855.

¹²¹ Adams et al (1999) 'Land Tenure and Economic Development in Rural South Africa: Constraints and Opportunities'. Working Paper 125, London: *Overseas Development Institute*; Wotshela, L. (1993), Op.cit.

arable land and commonage. Titles were given to 154 rights holders in Mgwali. It also prescribed that right holders get secure tenure to their surveyed residential and arable allotments and that they enjoy exclusive collective usufruct rights to manage and use the commonage. Survey costs had to be paid by the individual rights holders.

Commonage rights were given subject to a number of conditions. Arable and residential land without the approval of the relevant officials could not be disposed. In certain exceptional cases, registered holders could be convicted for crimes such as breach of quitrent payments. In cases of non-beneficial occupation and absenteeism, the land could be forfeited to the state. Under the 1879 Act, the management of the commonage was under the governor. There were three distinct categories of land use that could not be altered in anyway whatsoever. These included building, arable and commonage land. Quitrent land could not be mortgaged or sold in execution of debt nor was it divisible by will. The rules were also exclusionary in that inheritance was by means of a table of succession based on male primogeniture.¹²²

In 1881, the Cape Colonial Government passed the Village Management Act. It provided the basis for the title holders to apply their rights over the commonage. It placed the management of the commonage which according to prior legislation in the hands of the governor, to locally constituted village management boards. The boards were elected by the right holders and their powers and functions included the following:

- *The management and protection of all commonage lands;
- *the fixing of the number and description of livestock any inhabitant could keep;
- *and the impounding of animals that trespassed on the commonage.

¹²² *Mgwali Quitrenters' Restitution Claim*, 19 February 2001; Cape Printed Annexures/Papers [CCP] A 68-1880 Draft of Regulations and Conditions under which it is proposed to grant title to Africans under the *Location Act 40 of 1879*.

Quitrent titles issued after 1881 were issued in terms of the Village Management Act. The 1899 Village Management Board which was established also functioned as prescribed in the Village Management Act of 1881. However, membership to the Board was exclusively restricted to titleholders. A title issued to the United Church of Scotland in 1886, confirmed that quitrenters had sole exclusive rights to the commonage. It clearly stated that the rights to the freehold land by the Church did not confer any rights to the commonage.¹²³

However, various pieces of legislation that were passed at different periods of early to the middle of the twentieth century, undermined and in a way constituted the dispossession of the commonage rights to the quitrenters. These included the Native Administration Act of 1927, Proclamation 117 of 1931, Land Act of 1936 and Proclamation 116 of 1949. In 1949 Mgwali was declared a betterment area. In 1959, Mgwali was re-proclaimed as a betterment area by Government Notice of 10 April 1959 in terms of section 4 of Proclamation 116 of 1949. It engendered an implementation of new land rights and use commencing in the 1960s.

The form and shape that betterment took saw state demarcating and allocating residential sites on the commonage to non-titleholders through the Permission to Occupy Certificates (PTOs). It undermined the powers of the Village Management Board which used to manage the commonage on behalf of the quitrenters. It resulted in Mgwali being villagised with arable and grazing lands fenced off. The Land and Trust Act culminated in the South African Native Trust taking control of all crown land including Mgwali. It placed Mgwali under the tribal authority system under the direct rule. Quitrenters' rights to the commonage were further undermined by the prevention of Illegal Squatting Act of 1951 resulting in more farm evictees moving to Mgwali. They were allocated residential sites on the commonage.¹²⁴

¹²³ Mgwali Quitrenters' Restitution Claim, 19 February 2001.

¹²⁴ Adams et al (1999), *op.cit.*

Much as this undermined the rights of the quitrenters to the commonage and reduced its size through the allocation of further sites to the commonage although it was for their exclusive collective use, when Mgwali was earmarked for forced removals as it was declared a 'black spot' in a 'white corridor' by the apartheid regime, the quitrenters in the forefront together with the PTOs residents, resisted the removals. The quitrent system that gave them title deeds, they in turn used those title deeds as a rallying point to resist the forced removals in the 1980s. They claimed legal rights and their rootedness to the land in Mgwali. They also invoked the name and memory of Tiyo Soga as somebody who made it possible for them to get land as it was given to him by King Sandile.

Like many other settlements or locations in the apartheid era, Mgwali was the subject of forced removals for a long time in the 1980s as it was seen as a 'black spot' in the so-called 'white-corridor'. Its inhabitants were faced with the possibility of being removed from their ancestral lands and relocated to other areas, an action that they successfully resisted. In the 1960s Mgwali was declared as a 'black spot' and the community was faced with 'a possible removal to Frankfurt in the former Ciskei homeland. The Pretoria regime¹²⁵ tried to force Mgwali residents to "relocate to barren land in the 'independent homeland' of Ciskei, but the people were firm and resolute in resisting those removals".¹²⁶ South African and Ciskei governments employed a variety of tactics to force the seven thousand people of Mgwali to move twenty one miles to Frankfurt in Ciskei. Ciskei was then given authority to distribute pensions and drought relief in Mgwali to abate public resistance to the removals. The people of Mgwali were also denied certain privileges by the apartheid regime. These included reference books and passes that every African had to possess to access legal employment

¹²⁵ Weissman, S (1985) 'Dateline South Africa: The opposition speaks' – *Foreign Policy*, No.58 (Spring) pp. 151-170.

¹²⁶ Interview with Thabile Diko, Veliswa Kosani and Zanele Gontshi, Mgwali Location, 11 August, 2005.

and housing in white areas of which without these documents they would be found wanting by the government.¹²⁷

Faced with these possible evictions, the quitrenters, at the forefront of the struggle together with tenants and Permission to Occupy Certificates holders, formed a united front against the forced removals. They constituted themselves into a community organization called Mgwali Residents Association (MRA). The MRA took over the administration of the community in the 1980s as they dethroned the tribal authority. The leaders of the MRA were harassed and detained both by the Pretoria and Ciskei government respectively.¹²⁸ In August 1981, six prominent opponents of forced removals were detained under R252 and were interrogated by Charles Sebe. In July 1982, Mr. Wilson Fanti, who was the chairman of MRA was detained by the South African security police and later deported to Transkei as a nominal Transkeian.¹²⁹

The MRA organized the people under the slogan 'Asiyi e-Ciskei' (We are not going to Ciskei). This showed their resolve to do all in their power to resist removals because it would result in hardship to the people who had been happily living in the land of their forefathers. Geographically, they argued, they were not within the boundaries of Ciskei. It was not a question of them not wanting Ciskei or wanting to be under the Republic of South Africa, they wanted to be allowed to stay in Mgwali. The stalwart of Mgwali forced removals, Herman Gija who was aged 93, is alleged to have said: "Some of our men have sunk boreholes in Frankfort in a bid to find water. They have found none. Why should we move? Our roots are here, our schools and our church. I would rather die now than be forcibly removed to Frankfort".¹³⁰ This shows that people were prepared to lay down their lives rather than be forcibly removed to a barren land without water against their will. It also shows the significance they attached to their roots which

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Adams et al (1999), Op.cit.

¹²⁹ Story and information documented at Mgwali Museum, seen during visits to Mgwali Cultural Village.

¹³⁰ Herman Gija, *Mercury*, 26 November 1981.

were firmly embedded in Mgwali as relocation would uproot them from their roots and dislocate them.

Mgwali is a unique rural community in the history of forced removals in South Africa. They refused to be victims but were active subjects and agents in the fight against forced removals. They did not fold their hands. They consulted widely to solicit support. The Grahamstown Rural Committee (GRC) together with the academics from Rhodes University played a significant role in the struggle of Mgwali against forced removals. They advised the MRA to seek legal services and advice from the Grahamstown Legal Resources Centre. The Grahamstown Legal Resource Centre referred the case to their national office in Johannesburg and appointed a legal representative for Mgwali to argue its case. The GRC, in its attempt to organize and empower marginalized groups such as women, initiated community work to help them to engage in self-help projects and consequent to that, a sewing project for Mgwali women was established. The GRC also helped to bring about the proposed relocation to the attention of the wider public and funds were also raised for the provision of a minibus for the MRA to pursue their struggle. The Frankfort community from Germany also came on board to support the opposition to forced removal of the people of Mgwali. They made a significant contribution by purchasing a vehicle for the MRA for easy transportation from one place to the other in their consultations to solicit support to fight the removals.¹³¹

The Ciskei government, in its attempt to divide the people of Mgwali, had constituted what was called the Mgwali Planning Committee to prepare for the smooth relocation of people to Frankfort. This Planning Committee was made up of Ciskei civil servants who were pro-Ciskei government and supported forced removals. This committee made fabricated lies that the people of Mgwali do accept the conditions they have laid down to the Ciskei government for the

¹³¹ The information is recorded at Mgwali Museum; Interview with Tyhilelwa Bolana, 6 February, 2009; Wotshela, (2001), op.cit.

removals to take place. Faced with this kind of scenario, the MRA called a meeting to determine and ascertain how many people accepted the plans to move them to Frankfort. A spokesperson for the MRA, Mr. Kidwell Gija, argued that Mgwali Planning Committee consisted of Ciskei civil servants and thus was not recognized by the people of Mgwali. He put it thus: "We do not accept their conditions. We want to remain at Mgwali. We want a public meeting to determine how many residents want to cooperate with the planning committee".¹³²

As the above argument suggests, there were dissenters from within the community. One such dissent came from the unlikely and unsuspected quarter. Nolizwe Sandile, who was the regent for her young son, the present King of the AmaRharhabe, Maxhobay'akhawuleza Sandile, is alleged to have told those who were contemplating to take legal action to stop the removals, "to keep quiet and stay in their houses and not attend meetings called by the planning committee".¹³³ She alleged the removals were orders from the South African government which had to be obeyed. She also reminded the people that in principle they have agreed to the forced removals which she has communicated to the Chief Minister, Lennox Sebe. She told them that Mgwali was to be removed whether residents liked it or not. This coming from the Sandile ancestry is a bit ironic as Nolizwe was supposed to be in the forefront to fight for her people as King Sandile did to fight land dispossessions against the colonial forces.

From 1982, the *Daily Dispatch*, *Mercury* and *Herald* newspapers began to report consistently and critically on the Mgwali proposed relocation project. Such reports drew attention from outside and were also picked up by the opposition in parliament, the Progressive Federal Party. Its member E. Moorcroft, described the facilities in Frankfort as a 'disgrace' and the whole relocation scheme as

¹³² *Daily Dispatch*, 4 November 1982.

¹³³ *Daily Dispatch*, 30 October 1981.

'dangerous, foolish irresponsible and inhumane'.¹³⁴ This protest and condemnation of forced removals was taken further by the Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa. The Church which had earlier considered selling its property to the government, by the end of 1982, it joined in the condemnation of the proposed removal. The Reformed Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa, in its 59th General Assembly, the Church sought to investigate legal means to stop the removals and also seek international support to pressure the South African government to review its position. It argued on the proposed relocation thus:

From a historical perspective, the Mgwali community has been there long before the present rulers, and probably those before them were born. That fact proves beyond doubt that this community is deeply rooted at Mgwali and to force it to move is a gross interference with God's programme of his own creation. How long will this merciless tossing around of black communities go on? Why does it only happen to us? Is it because the Bantu must be put in his place?¹³⁵

Besides making the above assertions, the Church also played another significant part in that it accommodated political mobilization as any forms of public debate on the proposed relocation outside the supervision of the local planning committee were prohibited. Prayers and sermons were held to appeal for God's mercy against the removals. These sermons encouraged them to believe that the proposed relocation move was morally wrong and doomed to failure. Professor John McIntyre, moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in Edinburg, also registered their concern about the impending removal of Mgwali. He registered their concern with the South African Ambassador in London that there was no justification for disrupting the Mgwali community and compelling them to what they deemed to be an inferior place where there is no prospect of employment. He further invoked the name and memory of Soga when he put it that:

Soga, the first minister to be ordained in South Africa, built the church. Many of today's residents are members of our church and were educated in the local schools. Many of them live on our property. We are told that the total community which numbers 5 000, do not wish to leave. They have their roots in Mgwali, their parents and grandparents are buried

¹³⁴ *Eastern Province Herald*, 23 April 1982; Wotshela, (2001), op.cit.

¹³⁵ *Daily Dispatch*, 4 October 1982.

there and more than 150 of them actually have freehold right to the land.¹³⁶

What is of significance from the arguments advanced by both the Church of Scotland and Reformed Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa is that they saw the pending removals as immoral and unjustified. They invoked the rootedness of the people in Mgwali as their forefathers have lived and buried in Mgwali and that the present rulers who wanted the people of Mgwali were not yet born even their predecessors when the people of Mgwali lived there. The two Churches also mention the name of Soga as the first minister to be ordained in South Africa who built the Church in Mgwali. What is also significant about the role of the Church and missionaries in the struggle against the forced removals in Mgwali show the developmental and humanitarian role they played as against understanding them as colonial collaborators. It also showed that they can transcend their perceived roles as colonial collaborators.

The Mgwali area as a 'black spot' administered by Ciskei followed an agreement signed in December 1981 between the South African government and Ciskei. Coupled with inadequate administration, illegitimate tribal authorities and repression by the Ciskei authorities following the 1981 agreement caused the MRA to lodge a legal challenge to the agreement. According to the Border Rural Committee, in September 1985, the MRA won an out-of-court settlement declaring the 1981 agreement null and void. In June 1985 the government announced a reprieve for the seven thousand families and in July 1987, the government announced its abandonment of its plans to remove the communities. The struggle to resist the removal of the black spot communities in the Border Corridor had been won. The Church building in Mgwali is also the site from where the people of Mgwali fought and won their forced removal to Ciskei in the 1980s. Also the royal grant that was given to the Ngqika people enabled Mgwali Mission to resist the relocation.

¹³⁶ *Cape Times*, 18 April 1983.

What makes Mgwali unique is that it is one of the first rural communities in the history of South Africa to successfully resist the apartheid forced removals and it became an inspiration to other rural areas that also faced forced removals in the Border Region. Its struggle was an “extraordinary triumph of the rural people united in their cause to fight the unjust and ruthless Ciskei and racist South African government”.¹³⁷

In conclusion, then, the chapter has attempted to give a brief overview of Mgwali as a village, where it comes from and how it has evolved over the years, the quitrent system together with the attendant history of forced removals by the then apartheid regime and Ciskei homeland government in the last quarter of the twentieth century. As cultural villages are deemed to be the centres for the preservation, performance and display of certain African cultures and artifacts, the chapter has shown how unique Mgwali is as a rural community in the history of forced removals in South Africa. As such, it represents the possibility of a very different history and available past for the cultural village.

¹³⁷ Interview with Tyhilelwa Bolana, 6 February, 2009.

Chapter Four

The Cultural Village Performs

Mgwali Cultural Village (hereafter MCV) is part of the historic 'rural' village of Mgwali, located within the Amahlati Local Municipality and in the Amathole District Municipality in the Eastern Cape Province. The village itself has a long established history, the site originating in the 1820s and being more formally constituted as a village after 1857 when King Sandile granted Tiyo Soga missionary status, to establish the Mgwali Church of Scotland, alongside land grants. The struggles over land, resistance, and removals have been detailed above, and this detail of the history of Mgwali is significant for my overall argument in this dissertation.

Yet this history is not why tourists seem to visit Mgwali, I want to offer, in this chapter, a reading of a 'visit' to Mgwali, and the MCV. In other words, I want to attempt to describe what you read and see when you visit MCV. In essence, I argue, that in doing this, the history of Mgwali, even as selectively outlined in the previous chapter is not present. Let me try and explain why.

To get to Mgwali Cultural Village – and ideally you need to be traveling in a private vehicle as 'public' transport to get there is sporadic and unreliable – is clear and well signposted. The road and welcoming signs are relatively neutral, unlike many cultural villages where tourists and visitors are greeted by traditional art works, dancing tribes and bare-breasted young women (as applies to Khayalabantu and other cultural villages in the proximity). The absence of visuals on the Mgwali Cultural Village signboard is of interest as it leaves the visitor in suspense and guessing as to what to expect from the cultural village. The signboard is silent on that aspect. It only welcomes visitors to Mgwali.¹³⁸

¹³⁸ Observations made during my numerous visits to Mgwali Cultural Village.

Also sometimes called Mgwali Traditional Xhosa Village¹³⁹, though, it features prominently in practically every tour and route description in the Eastern Cape. The Amathole District Municipality official site locates Mgwali Cultural Village in the following manner:

The district is renowned for its historical heritage. ... Four new heritage routes have been established, named after Xhosa kings and heroes. These are Makana, Sandile, Maqoma and Phalo Routes. Over 350 heritage sites have been identified within the district which is dotted with remnants of forts, mission stations, places of historical significance and burial sites of Xhosa kings and struggle heroes. Steeped in history, the area will enthrall visitors with its legends of Xhosa kings and stories of early settlers. Explore the San paintings in the Cathcart region and see the world famous African art collection at Fort Hare University. Experience African traditions at the village of Mgwali and the artistic community at Hogsback¹⁴⁰

This construction of Mgwali as the location for the “authentic look at Xhosa life”¹⁴¹, and where you can have a “true Xhosa experience!!!”¹⁴², predominates government and tourist public discourse. This identification can also be found in earlier tourist routes, descriptions, such as the ‘Friendly N6’ and the ‘Amathole Mountain Escape’ and later the ‘Thunga Thunga route’ in 2001. These routes and related tour guides, advertisements, visitor packs, and brochures guiding the visit are certainly not bare or ‘silent’. Tourist brochures and internet sites, like Spiers Tours, Open Africa, Escape Route, Go2South Africa, South African Safaris, and the like, all present a somewhat different picture. Spiers Tours describes Mgwali Cultural Village and its Village Tour as featuring “traditional dancing, traditional food and crafts” and says

Mgwali Village is typical South Africa village [sic] the center of which is the “Market Place”. Join the bustle of villagers selling and swapping their goods. Buy local craft work and meet the artists and craftsmen. Take a ride in an ox-cart and browse through the museum. A Warm Welcome awaits you from the people of Mgwali. Your tour guide will walk you through the village and introduce you to people. Realise life in a thatched hut and cooking over an open fire. You will be invited into private homes where you will see the Xhosa beer made and be able to taste it. Try traditional food, bread and mngqusho cooked slowly over the fire. An unforgettable taste experience. Visit the sangoma’s; pipe-makers and sages. Enjoy the traditional singing and dancing of the young girls in their welcome.

¹³⁹ Heyns R. et al, ‘Introduction to Travel and Tourism’, *Module 3*, 2000, p.189.

¹⁴⁰ See www.amathole.gov.za/about-amathole, accessed on 23 November 2009

¹⁴¹ www.essentialtravelinfo.com/.../three_star.../index.html

¹⁴² wheretostayinsa.co.za/index.php?option=com_content...id

Ancient ceremonies still take place in Mgwali, traditional dress is still worn and old pipes are still being smoked.¹⁴³

This narrative – of Mgwali as a “typical South African village” - equally sets out the parameters of what this typical village is and looks like. It typically contains a vibrant market and has a craft-centre, which, together with the practices and experiences of ‘ancient’ and timeless traditions, encapsulated in the sangoma, the food, beer and the ‘three legged pot’, traditional dress, singing and dancing, and the slow journeys of the ox-wagon are regularly and routinely repeated as descriptive of Mgwali and its cultural village. Go2South Africa, for example, similarly describes Mgwali village as “typical South Africa village, the center of which is the ‘Market Place’ and practically repeats the Spiers Tours and then concludes “for a vibrant experience in rural Africa, visit Mgwali Village, where people live as they did ages ago, and where, if a tourist visits or not, life still goes on in the same way. You are treated with respect and given a warm welcome”.¹⁴⁴ Later on the same site, when describing how to get to Mgwali, this sense of ruralness and its location in ‘timeless Africa’ is conveyed in the following manner:

As you drive through fields and fields you think you are driving to nowhere, but as you crest the hill and look down on the five little Xhosa villages, the view is spectacular. The only thing that makes you realize that you are being welcomed as a tourist is the sign Mgwali Village, otherwise there is no outward sign of urban civilization. The tour guide meets you at the museum, and he provides a short history of the village. It is hot and dusty, as it is Africa, as you walk along the earth roads and see the people going along their daily lives. ... You experience real traditional Xhosa culture and mingle with the local people who are quite happy to chat.¹⁴⁵

‘Open Africa’ further describes Mgwali Village in these terms: “Local crafts, traditional garments and woven materials are produced here. Traditional food is also served and visitors can view a museum of photographs, historical art and crafts depicting local history and customs. An elder in the community (Mr. K. Gija) explains the traditions and ceremonies while taking visitors on an ox-cart

¹⁴³ See Spiers Tours, at spierstours.co.za/tours/cultural/mgwali-cultural-tours.htm, most recently accessed on 27/11/09

¹⁴⁴ See [www.go2SouthAfrica.com/Cultural-Tours/Cultural-Villages/ Mgwali Village/](http://www.go2SouthAfrica.com/Cultural-Tours/Cultural-Villages/Mgwali-Village/), accessed lastly on 26 November 2009

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

trip around the area to *Sangomas* (traditional healers), a pipe maker and numerous artisans making traditional Xhosa pottery and other goods. Also on view is an initiation hut used by young men during circumcision rites.”¹⁴⁶ Madiba Action, one of the Eastern Cape tourist media mouthpieces also adds that at Mgwali Cultural Village you can “enjoy authentic Xhosa rural tradition”¹⁴⁷ and South African Tourism, amongst others has very similar descriptions.¹⁴⁸ The ‘In the Footsteps of Mandela’ tour says

Today we visit Mgwali village near Stutterheim. This is an authentic experience where daily life continues as of old. Traditional ceremonies are regulated by real life and are not for tourist entertainment. We share a traditional meal with the villagers at their craft centre and then proceed on our journey into the heartland of Mandela country.¹⁴⁹

A few of the tourist sites (Escape Route and Travel Idea) and the more official tourist sites like Amahlathi Local municipality, the Amathole District Municipality, the Sandile Heritage Route (of the Amathole District Municipality and DEAT) and the Thunga Thunga route, as well as other government and state related development and heritage initiatives also describe Mgwali in these terms, but also identify (albeit very briefly) other aspects, particularly those of Tiyo Soga and mission history, and of its ‘uniqueness’ as one of the first recognized African villages, and alongside this, aspects of local economic development associated with craft.

Thus, Amahlathi Municipality emphasizes the craft components, talking about ‘groups of women which craft together’ and where ‘craft of high standard is selected for Grahamstown’, and that ‘they have participated in Edinburgh and Scotland Craft Exhibition’ and that ‘work was also selected for exhibition in China’.¹⁵⁰ Here, the connections between the village, craft, and its quality and

¹⁴⁶ See www.openafrica.org/participant/mgwali-cultural-village, last accessed on 26 November 2009

¹⁴⁷ See Madiba Action, October 2009, and www.madibaaction.co.za/Page.aspx, 12 December 2009, describing the Amathole region.

¹⁴⁸ South African Tourism, www.southafrica.net/sat/content/en/us/full-article, accessed 25 November 2009

¹⁴⁹ www.dtours.co.za/dtours/tours/etour.htm, last accessed 15 November 2009

¹⁵⁰ See Amahlathi Municipality, www.amahlathi.gov.za/index.php?option=com-content, last accessed 15 November 2009

local-global value is emphasized, and the fact that this is the link and point of relation to Mgwali Cultural Village demonstrates the local municipality's relation to, and understanding of the village and its importance in public terms. The site contains no reference to its history, or its cultural aspects at all.

More generally, though, the sites that mention these 'other' aspects generally do so in conjunction with the 'traditional' rural Xhosa cultural view. 'Travel Idea's' Eastern Cape Tour, for example, describes Mgwali Cultural Village as a "village that resisted forced removals during the Apartheid era" (and this all that is said and is the only site or brochure found that mentions the 'forced removals'), but then describes the activities of the tour as entailing the "performing arts", which is described as "we will be entertained here with traditional dancing with our guest being encouraged to take part in the dancing" and a "voluntourism" experience where the "guests will also be encouraged to get involved with certain projects in the village, e.g. craft making or working in the fields or assisting in cooking traditional food".¹⁵¹ When looked at more closely, this tour involves the following:

Day 1. Sightseeing: Meet guests at East London airport. Take a brief tour through East London City, then proceed to Mdantsane the second biggest township in the Southern Hemisphere [sic]. Here we will walk and meet township folk and experience township life. Food and Dining: We will then proceed to Mgwali cultural village and enjoy a traditional lunch, traditional dancing, stick fighting and story telling. Bed and Breakfast: We will stay overnight at Mgwali. Day 2. Sightseeing: have breakfast here and guests get involved in village projects, e.g. Crafts, cooking and field work ... get to know the area by walking around the village, and surrounding local area, accompanied by a guide ... the quite [sic] slow pace, and peacefulness of the area, will touch your soul ... Bed and Breakfast: We will stay overnight at Mgwali again, in this way you can really get a feel of your host family, and local village life.¹⁵²

The histories of struggle, forced removals, and resistance disappear into the timeless, slow pace of a traditional rural village with crafts, cooking and 'field work'! Relatedly 'Escape Route Tours' says "Mgwali mission is unique – the first mission station in the nineteenth century to be governed by a black man, the

¹⁵¹ See www.boomerater.com/travel, 23 November 2009

¹⁵² See www.boomerater.com/travel/vacation-package-628=stay-in-a-cultural-village-volun accessed on 23 November 2009

Reverend Tiyo Soga. The early buildings of the Mgwali Mission are the surviving structures of what was part of a group of famous black educational institutions on the continent. Ultimately Mgwali is significant as it remains a testimony to the life and work of Reverend Tiyo Soga. ... In Mgwali today there are two main attractions: the Church [and nothing more is said]; and Traditional Xhosa Culture [which is then described as including dance, song, dress, crafts, the Sangoma visit and traditional beer and also a visit to the museum]”.¹⁵³ The more official municipal sites really simply reinforce a view of Mgwali as a place to “experience African traditions” and do not say much else, although Soga (and the mission history) is sometimes also mentioned.¹⁵⁴

Two aspects of these tourist (and official) representations of Mgwali Cultural Village, then need to be outlined:

- (a) That the majority of representations - the dominant forms of representation - rely on ‘selling’ Mgwali as a cultural village in very conventional and culturally bound ways – as a rural, African village full of ancient and timeless traditions and practices
- (b) And that the mention of other histories – remain very much that – ‘other’ and largely silent and very marginal in their articulation and even visible presence in the ‘for tourist’ literature and imaginary

However, as will be argued more below, these representations are not just ‘invented’ or imagined by the tour operators and the tourist industry. In a very critical and determining sense they are shaped and formed by the actual experience – on the ground as it were – of the spatial, experiential and structuring of the tours by the cultural villages and its participants themselves and the actual ‘real experience’ of the visit in Mgwali cultural village itself. Before elaborating on this, though, it is important to point out that the self-depictions of the Mgwali Cultural Village vary, and that, depending on who ‘tells the story’, and who the

¹⁵³ www.escaperoute.co.za/index.pho, last accessed 25 November 2009

¹⁵⁴ www.amathole.gov.za/about-amathole, for example, most recently accessed on 28 November 2009

audience is, different versions can and are told. However, as with the tourist sets of representations, the dominant version tends to repeat the same elements as highlighted above, and therefore also be central for their production and reproduction.

The Mgwali Cultural Village self-advertising, albeit developed by the Eastern Cape Tourism Board, provides one component in this argument. It states: “Experience real East Cape hospitality, mingle and exchange with the locals. True African culture, traditional food and entertainment! It all awaits you!”¹⁵⁵ Of course the Eastern Cape Tourism Board, under the banner of “9 routes, 9 million experiences in the Adventure Province’, is concerned with promoting tourism and can be held responsible as the voice of Mgwali, but its view of Mgwali as essentially where “African traditions in a village setting can be experienced” is endorsed, used and forms the central component of MCV’s self-promotion.¹⁵⁶

The official Mgwali Cultural Village Brochure reads almost exactly the same as those offered above, and it has clearly functioned as a touchstone for other tourist and tour accounts. Here, for the record, is its wording:

Mgwali. Experience true Xhosa Culture. Mgwali Village in the Eastern Cape. Mgwali Village is one of the oldest settlements in the Eastern Cape. A genuine South African village, the centre of which is the ‘Market Place’. Join the bustle of the villagers selling and swapping their goods. Buy local craft work and meet the artists and craftsmen. Take a ride in an ox-cart and browse through the museum. A Warm Welcome awaits you from the people of Mgwali. Your tour guide will walk you through the village and introduce you to people. Realise life in a thatched hut and cooking over an open fire. You will be invited into private homes where you will see the Xhosa beer made and be able to taste it. Try traditional food, bread and mngqusho cooked slowly over the fire. An unforgettable taste experience. Visit the Sangoma’s; pipe makers and sages. Enjoy the traditional singing and dancing of the young girls in their welcome. Ancient ceremonies will take place in Mgwali, traditional dress is still own and old pipes are still being smoked. The village is rich in photo opportunities, brilliant colours and breathtaking scenery. Take plenty of film. Facilities include back pack accommodation in which villagers invite tourists to remain in their homes as

¹⁵⁵ Mgwali Cultural Village Brochure.

¹⁵⁶ www.ecotorism.co.za, as one such site where this occurs, but also see the actual print brochure, generated by the EC Tourism Board, for Mgwali, March 2007.

paying guests. Local Bed and Breakfasts and accommodation in nearby Stutterheim.¹⁵⁷

In essence, then, the visit and the tour at Mgwali Cultural Village reproduce, or replicates the descriptions provided above.

The actual Cultural Village precinct at Mgwali is made up of the ADM funded modern brick dining hall, grass-thatched main museum building which appears as a traditional thatched modern brick, big rondavel, plastered and painted white. Alongside are smaller traditional rondavels which serve to further depict the so-called African 'traditional' life, and these serve as both a kitchen and dining hall in an "African setting" as part of the museum experience: which involves "sitting on the floor in a traditional rondavel [sic] to enjoy refreshment"¹⁵⁸ and as sites where the storyteller is located, and traditional dances and songs performed. In the precinct there is also a circular row of thatched market stalls, known as the market place. Both the local museum (which was given a 'facelift' recently by the ADM) and the market place were established in 1993. In the 'market place', when there are visitors, the various crafts people and 'artisans' are there, making pipes, pots, and traditional attire, amongst others.. Also attached to the precinct is an office where the administration of the cultural village is done, two sewing workshops made of bricks and thatched with zinc. Also in the precinct is an ox wagon and a post office.¹⁵⁹

There is also an open air cooking fire in the area. Attached to the precinct is also a replica of an initiation hut, and various forms of accommodation (traditional and more 'backpacker' style, although one still sleeps 'on a mat on the floor, traditional style'), and a 'modern ablution facility' as well as parking areas. The surrounding grounds are maintained by the Amahlati Local Municipality, and

¹⁵⁷ www.border.co.za/harrison/stutt/mgwali/org, who hosts the Mgwali site, most recently visited 23 January 2010.

¹⁵⁸ [www.go2SouthAfrica.com/Cultural-Tours/Cultural-Villages/ Mgwali Village/](http://www.go2SouthAfrica.com/Cultural-Tours/Cultural-Villages/Mgwali-Village/), accessed lastly on 26 November 2009.

¹⁵⁹ Observations made during visits to Mgwali on 17 November, 2005.

these also serve as part of precinct and the tour. The tour also involves moving out of this precinct, into the village, albeit in very managed ways. This takes place either on the ox-cart, or else when the tour guide “walks you through the village and introduces you to people”.¹⁶⁰ Here you will also visit a ‘sangoma’ and if there over the weekend, “you are welcome to go to the traditional ceremonies”.¹⁶¹

A typical tour would include the following. Visitors would arrive at around 11.00 am and would be met and introduced to their guide. The guides are mostly a few older men, who are seen to be the ‘sages’ of the village, and who are the local storytellers’. They are very open, friendly and do create the image of being precisely that – wise old men, the epitome of ancient tradition and wisdom, very knowledgeable about culture and tradition, and who know everyone and everything there is to know about the village. As the village elders, they quickly create the impression that what they show and tell will be the ‘real’ and necessary knowledge about the village, the past, and local African culture. These ‘guides’ also effectively serve to reproduce notions of this knowledge being located in the oral, as they are engaging storytellers, and tell their stories of Mgwali in a way that seems to transcend time – as knowledge that is both only available to the local people, but also of no time, crossing boundaries, generations and differences. The guide thus constantly talks about “we” and all the stories seem to be of both “the Xhosa” and all the people of Mgwali, past and present, locating them within both a generic Xhosa tradition, and placing Mgwali within this.¹⁶²

After meeting the guide, ‘guests’ are then welcomed and entertained with singing and dancing.

¹⁶⁰ [www.go2South Africa.com/Cultural-Tours/Cultural-Villages/ Mgwali Village/](http://www.go2SouthAfrica.com/Cultural-Tours/Cultural-Villages/Mgwali-Village/), accessed lastly on 26 November 2009.

¹⁶¹ Interview with Tokolo Ximbana, Mgwali Location, 11 August 2005.

¹⁶² Based on observations and interviews and around visits on August, November 2005, and February 2008.



Groups of from five to ten women, dressed in traditional attire and some with faces painted white and “dressed for the occasion”, perform a number of “catchy and moving songs”.¹⁶³ The dances appear to be very traditional, involving all the rhythms and phrasings, and all the songs are rendered in Xhosa, while the ornamental and patterned beaded dresses, shawls and attire also render the performance very traditional in appearance and ‘experience’. These are the songs they sing in the community when there are traditional beer gatherings and songs they sung when they were growing up at youth gatherings (called *umtshotsho*). However, the nature of the attire, its meanings, or the songs and their actual content are not elaborated at all, and this naturalizes the performance as ‘beyond description’ and as seemingly what would happen everyday here, not needing explanation or information for the visitors, (although the majority, when they do visit on the rare occasions a tour takes place are almost exclusively foreign).¹⁶⁴

The visitors then move to the ‘market place’ and interact with the ‘artisans’ and buy ‘local craft’ which is of an “international standard and repute”.¹⁶⁵ The craft on display is seen to be very traditional. In particular, locally made pipes, and especially traditionally sewn garments, ranging from traditional *imibhaco*, through to bed cushions and pillows. Ministers and officials from various government departments also buy their traditional wear from Mgwali, and this is also

¹⁶³ Based on comments of a few visitors to Mgwali. During the research, there were very few actual tours and visits to Mgwali, and thus, gaining access to visitors was very limited indeed.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Observations made at Mgwali on the tours and how the craft is marketed and sold. Visit of 11, 18 August and 18 November 2005

mentioned on the tour, as a selling point. When visitors are there, and the tours are in operation, the market place does seem to 'bustle', or at least to be operational, and the image created is of a thriving local craft production centre and market.¹⁶⁶ There are also sewing rooms, a workshop and a Post Office in the precinct, and these are all part of the modern brick structures which sit along the reconstructed and 'model' older traditional; style huts and thatch buildings.

After engaging with the 'market place', the tour moves to the museum and I want to spend a little more time here, as this seems to be the only place, apart from the visit to the church, and through a few comments of the guide, where a more ambiguous sense of Mgwali's past is visible in the actual tour. However, before doing so, I want to complete the description of the tour, because the museum visit is the only place on the tour where the emphasis on the African, Xhosa, traditional and rural components which predominate through the tour are interrupted.

After completing the museum visit, the tour moves out of the precinct and visits "the local Sangoma or Igqirha" where the narrative of the ancestral, the indigenous and the traditional – here in terms of spiritual and medicinal beliefs – is again emphasized. The Sangoma will have put on his/her traditional attire and dance for the tourists. After the dance, he/she describes for the tourists the attire which usually consists skins of animals, what each animal skin means, how she/he became a Sangoma, and descriptions of the job and what they are capable of doing and what the song means to her/him. As a custom and tradition, a gqirha has a 'package' for consultancy but s/he does not charge the tourists the whole amount. Each tourist will pay an amount of R20 which is called 'imvula mlomo'.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ An initial payment that a client pays to the sangoma for his services and is a form of contract between the two that the sangoma can start his services for his client. In modern and Western terms it would be equated with the services of an attorney and a client where the client pays an initial fee so that the attorney can commence his services for the client.

Thereafter, visitors “are given traditional beer - ‘Umqomboti’” – in a traditional hut setting. The traditional beer affords “an opportunity to show to the tourists how the drinking of traditional beer in an African society is conducted. The sitting is arranged according to age seniority”.¹⁶⁸ The sitting arrangement is gendered in that women sit on the right and men on the left when one enters the hut. It also shows to the tourists that “people do not detest each other as they drink from the same container irrespective of their social standing in society, which shows the African values of ‘ubuntu’”.¹⁶⁹

The tour concludes with a traditional lunch hosted in the dining room and as part of the ‘market place’. Much emphasis is placed on the ingredients of the lunch which includes samp, meat or chicken, pumpkin, potatoes which is served with homemade ginger beer and roast bread.¹⁷⁰ After lunch the visitors sign the visitors’ book and there is more traditional singing and dancing, which concludes the tour.

If one wishes to sleep over, this can be through the cultural village, in a ‘traditional’ backpacker style of sleeping quarter, where beds are on the ground; or in local villagers homes as part of the ‘village experience’ and arranged through the cultural village, where you ‘get to know the villagers better’. Bed and breakfasts are also an option and the most popular local village Bed and Breakfast is ‘Magaba’s Bed and Breakfast’ which is described as:

... neat and tidy as a pin ... located in the little village of Mgwali ... and a stone’s throw from the Cultural Village. Run by the community spirited Tyhilelwa, this lovely venue was awarded a special certification for cleanliness by the grading Council. To spend a night in this village will give the visitor an African experience of note. The B&B is built in a rondawel [sic] style but fitted with modern conveniences, including a TV. Evening meals will be prepared by Tyhilelwa in the separate cooking rondawel [sic] and a full English breakfast is served in the morning. Tyhilelwa is a fountain of knowledge of local history, traditions and culture which she joyfully imparts to her guests. With the MCV just around the corner, an interesting few hours can be spent learning of the Xhosa

¹⁶⁸ Interview with Tyhilelwa Bolana, Mgwali Location, 6 February 2009 and based on observations.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid. See also the various tour brochures which give these details. As one example, see the Escape Route Tours guide, at www.escaperoute.co.za, most recently accessed on 21 January 2010

ways, viewing the little museum and appreciating the local handicrafts such as beadwork, clothing wooden pipes and 'kieres'.¹⁷¹

THE MUSEUM

The museum itself consists of the large brick rondavel with thatched roof and attached rondavels, as outlined above. The walls are plastered with cement and painted white. Inside the museum there are a range of displays, ranging from displays of King Sandile, Tiyo Soga (present through a large picture of him and some detail of his life, and photographs of the nearby bell and church building¹⁷² and in the forced removal resistance narrative) to 'material culture' displays of 'traditional artifacts'. In essence, the displays, of which there are around 30 (of various forms, including boards, cabinets, photographs, object displays, etc) are equally divided between the largely illustrative, photographic and newspaper clipping 'modern' section, starting with Tiyo Soga and including the struggles around forced removals and relocations (which includes some 'memorabilia' like the material object T-shirt display), interspersed between and behind more traditional material culture and object displays in the foreground, but which also has illustrative, textual and photographic representations of various ceremonies, rituals and traditional objects interspersed with the resistance struggle representations primarily on the walls.

There are also pledges of solidarity with the people of Mgwali from the Church of Scotland and the people of Frankfurt from Germany on the walls. One can visit the museum at any time but it is always advisable to make enquiries to ascertain the availability of the person with keys to take you through the museum. This is so because despite there always being people present at the cultural village, the museum is not always open, but can be opened on request.

When one first enters the museum, then, it seems to refuse to be memorialized and mapped as a sequence and order of routes from just tribe to tribe, or simply

¹⁷¹ Magaba's B&B, on www.escaperoute.co.za, accessed 28 November 2009.

¹⁷² The actual structure of the church and bell is about one and half kilometer from the cultural village, what is inside the museum is only the display/photographs of the church and the bell.

as a place to “experience True Xhosa Culture” as the ‘official’ brochure heading would have it.¹⁷³ It does this through the way in which the displays are arranged in the museum. The displays at least in the main room - are not arranged in a sequence and order where the tourist and visitor is directed in a certain order from the beginning to the end of the displays. The visitor has a choice of where to start in looking at the displays; he/she is not restricted. Displays are not just of “traditional Xhosa culture”.¹⁷⁴

These approximately thirty displays can be divided into four components, although, as has just been indicated, these are not spatially, or even chronologically displayed. The first concerns the ‘Times and moments of Mgwali Village’: tracing the history of the village, and ‘King Sandile: The King that gave Tiyo Soga land to build a mission in Mgwali (and has two displays)’. The second set of displays (three of them) is that of Soga: ‘Reverend Tiyo Soga of Mgwali: A prominent Missionary of Mgwali’, which traces his achievements and work both in Mgwali and Scotland; ‘Legacy of Tiyo Soga at Mgwali’ where the church, bell and the hostel at the mission school, which are all linked to the legacy of Soga are highlighted; and the ‘church hymns’ that Soga composed and wrote during his lifetime.¹⁷⁵

The third component is made up of the various stages and episodes of Mgwali resistance to forced removals, which is outlined in more detail below. Although comprising of roughly half of all the displays, these are scattered amongst the other displays, and appear to have no visible narration and structure. They almost seem to be background – there because they have to be there, and jump between themes of struggle, the role of the church, the making of local heroes, the role of women and youth, and aspects of hope and overcoming the past.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷³ See above for discussion, but also located and ‘hosted’ on www.border.co.za/harrison/stutt/mgwali.htm, last accessed 15 January 2010

¹⁷⁴ Information derived and observed from the exhibits at Mgwali Museum during the visit of 6 February 2009.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

The final component and one which I argue is foregrounded, even if only made up of around ten displays, these are larger, more visible, and contain more original and authentic objects. Here, such themes as the 'traditional' blanket followed by a display of people at a traditional gathering is on display, but these other making up this component of the displays are also largely untitled, thereby assuming a timeless, self-explanatory and authentic nature. This applies to the display of a grinding stone with maize on it, the display of traditional sticks, a pounding stone display of reeds with a traditional hat made from animal skins. Interspersed between these object displays are visual photographic and text displays of an intonjane ceremony with young girls and older women, an initiate in his ibhoma, and displays of various types of amagqirha/sangoma with the kinds of work they do narrated.¹⁷⁷

As one part of this disruption of the over-whelmingly dominant traditional narrative, then, is the figure of Tiyo Soga. His history and the legacy of Tiyo Soga features at the Mgwali Museum within the cultural village. The Church structure and the bell that was imported from Scotland by Soga essentially become iconic in the museum, and the fact that they are reproduced in the museum, but also available to materially see just a kilometer away demonstrates this. The displays in the museum essentially invite three readings around this iconic 'mission' identification. These are (a) his status of 'firsts': as first black priest, as having gone to Scotland, as having married a white Scottish women, as having been among the first to engage in writing, transcription, translation, composing of hymns (which are transcribed word for word), etc; (b) through the mission station narratives and in his case, his association to histories of black Christianity and also to engaging African customs from within this and (c) related to the ways that his legacy is one 'linked to forced removals', and that "he confronted racism and never pretended that there were no race relations problems in South Africa and in areas like Scotland". As such, it is suggested in the displays that "the people of

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

Mgwali resolved to fight their forced removals because they were racially motivated. They were being moved away because of their skin colour and they could draw on the legacy of Soga to stand up to this”.¹⁷⁸

Having outlined these aspects, though, it needs to be made clear that Soga does not dominate in the museum and its representations, but there is enough, if one takes the time, to offer a potential counter-narrative to the traditional one.

However, as will be discussed in chapter five below, there are also significant politics of representation which are taking place between the cultural village and the Tiyo Soga Development Trust. For the purposes of the discussion here, though, this explains why the church and bell are encountered in the cultural village visit as photographs, as their actual material presence as the real building and bell remain distanced from inclusion in the cultural village visit, and also as a possible explanation for why he is not more present on the tour as a whole. However, the argument made below argues for a more internalized basis of explanation for exclusion, based on the ways that the cultural village enters, defines, produces and reproduces meanings of culture which largely exclude much of Soga from a ‘true Xhosa experience’ (and not least of which because he was ‘not a man’ and did not undergo initiation).

The poetic representation of Soga (outlined in (c) above), means that as he appears in the other key ‘modern’ museum exhibits – those to do with forced removals, relocations and resistance to apartheid and the Ciskei government during the Bantustans period – his presence as one of the first to deal with ‘race relations’ transfers as the interpretation given to these episodes.

We also see a ‘church’ connection made. Where Soga was is shown to have believed “that missionaries must not only speak to issues that were of immediate interest to them but also show that they can pronounce on other issues such as

¹⁷⁸ Observations made on various visits to the museum over the last few years, transcriptions from the displays, and through discussions with the museum developer, Vuyani Boo, amongst others.

politics and social injustice” and that Soga made such pronouncements.¹⁷⁹ This view is carried forward by the Churches in solidarity with the people of Mgwali in the 1980s when they were faced with the impending forced removals from their ancestral lands.¹⁸⁰



The connections between Soga and the more recent past is made effectively through the displays detailing the role and connection of the church to the struggles around forced removals and relocation in the 1980s. As the illustration above shows, this is largely achieved through posters of newspaper cuttings, through headings like “Pledging Solidarity with the Suffering People of Mgwali”, which refers to Scottish church support and also through linking this role to that of Soga.

The Mgwali Museum also celebrates the “group and communal memories of the suffering and removals” and this is captured in one of the inscriptions from the

¹⁷⁹ Ndletyana, M. (2008) ‘Tiyo Soga’. In *African Intellectuals in 19th and early 20th century South Africa*. Cape Town: HSRC Press.

¹⁸⁰ Information derived and observed from the exhibits at Mgwali Museum during the visit of 6 February 2009.

museum which reads thus: “Mgwali struggle against forced removals was an unprecedented success story of the rural people, united to fight against two ruthless governments, Ciskei and the racist South African government. However, this struggle was not without its casualties and victims but it was surely a painful experience that gave birth to local heroes and heroines whose lives and times should be commemorated”.¹⁸¹ The presence of these ‘memories’ (captured in quotes in the museum) does also bring into relief the more traditional dominant interpretations of culture and history that are everywhere else displayed and performed.

One display inscribed ‘Asiyi e-Ciskei’ demonstrates the “militancy and resoluteness the people had against the forced removals”¹⁸². This is depicted as a strong and progressive slogan of its kind under which the residents of Mgwali mobilized themselves. The story of forced removals and the struggles within and against it are registered in the museum as being “painful and sad” on the one hand, but also marked by “courage and resilience” that led people of Mgwali to “even topple the Ciskei government’s imposed chiefs and replace them with a progressive residents association called Mgwali Residents Association (MRA)”¹⁸³.

The exhibits go on to illustrate how it was MRA, militant youth and women of Mgwali that served as the “torch bearers of hope in times of challenges”¹⁸⁴. These were the forces that mobilized, organized and united the people of Mgwali into a strong force. These displays provide narratives and possible stories for telling very different kinds of histories – centred around collective suffering and struggle as a community facing ‘black spot’ forced removals. This is further reflected in the displays that situate the MRA as a central figure in the story. The

¹⁸¹ Inscription from the exhibition titled ‘Impumelelo yedabi Lethu’ seen and observed during my numerous visits to Mgwali and the cultural village.

¹⁸² Based on the exhibit titled ‘Asiyi e-Ciskei’ at Mgwali Museum on 6 February 2009 and the interpretation and analysis I make of the exhibit.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

cabinet with T-shirts, inscribed with “Mgwali Residents Association” at the back, and belonging to and worn by the activists and residents in their fight against the forced removals in Mgwali provides a key material reference point, and it is said that “the T-shirt is a stark reminder to the people of Mgwali and even to the visitors, of where Mgwali comes from and the processes and sufferings it has gone through”.¹⁸⁵



The display also potentially challenges the patriarchal notions of the struggle where men are always in the forefront. The struggles of women in the forced removals are acknowledged as the T-shirts also bear the inscription ‘Phambili Ngomzabalazo waMakhosikazi’ (Forward with Women’s Struggle). It does not seem far-fetched to counter-pose this image with that of the traditional dancing women encountered earlier on the tour, and to wonder where these two performances, stories and relationships to very differently commemorated pasts actually cohere, or indeed, whether they can?

¹⁸⁵ Interview with Vuyani Booi, Alice, 15 March 2009.

I argue that they do not, and that even if only taking the museum visit into account (never mind the rest of the tour), “traditional Xhosa culture” and the image of ‘intonjane’ predominate representationally, if not in terms of actual displays. As such I propose and argue that the actual poetics of representation promote a reading and an experience that literally foregrounds traditional African culture (spatially placed in front, and as in first sight when you enter the museum, and made of many apparently original and authentic material objects and images), as against the more backgrounded (on the walls behind the traditional material objects), dispersed and almost random placement of the Soga and resistance material.

Certainly, on the basis of the simple counting scale of the actual history, Soga, and its struggle components represented in the museum outnumber the ‘traditional’ displays, but their fairly arbitrary positioning and form and content of the displays – means that these can best be equated with idiosyncratic interruptions of the dominant museum experience and narrative. In effect, the displays do not provide much more than a marginal register that there was a series of historical struggles around land, ownership, forced removals, ‘black spots’, Ciskei Bantustan politics and popular political protest and resistance. The actual content and items displayed, if taken singularly, could, and perhaps in and of themselves do transcend the prevalent focus which is confined only to traditional culture, ethnicity and primitiveness. But, in the end, the much larger museum experience, never mind the entire tour experience, does not allow this to happen.

Because as one moves through the museum, and visits its attached huts, the “struggle” is forgotten, and the displays, captions, stories and explanations revert to, or more accurately they return to a catalogue and chronicle of timeless Xhosa traditions and cultural practices. Ancestral rituals, initiation which can be categorized into two types, that is male initiation through circumcision (ulwaluko) and female initiation called intonjane, imbeleko, intlombe (traditional ceremony of

sangoma) and others are illustrated, recalled and imaged. This, together with the reproduction of 'indigenous architecture of buildings' and other outside structures such as ubuhlanti (kraals), are all centrally displayed.

The remainder of this chapter seeks to illustrate this, through pointing to the ways these aspects are displayed, but also in providing accompanying texts and interpretations. The primary purpose is to illustrate further, how a timeless, bounded view of culture is both produced, and reproduced, which has significant consequences for the shape and form of the 'history' and heritage that is produced at Mgwali through its status, role and functioning as a cultural village.

For alongside these 'historic' displays are the much more prevalent one's that return us very clearly to the 'cultural', as it is understood and displayed in the museum.



Fig. 3

The above picture in fig. three further shows what is the inside of the Mgwali Cultural Village Museum. The museum, despite the displays discussed above, essentially serves as a display house to show the cultural, defined as 'traditional artifacts and practices'. The artifacts are strategically placed on the right-hand-side of the museum to maximize their visibility and draw the attention of the visitor to them first.¹⁸⁶ The first object (a bit obscured in the picture) is a basket, the second on the floor and the third on the small table are the same in different makes and sizes and are called isingqusho (pounding stones) and the last (fourth) object is the pot on a tripod stand (the three legged pot). The isingqusho is used to pound maize and turn it into umngqusho (which is equal to the commercially made samp). But these days there are few people who are making their own samp because many fields are now lying fallow and are dependent on buying the ready-made samp from the shops, but in communities where they are still growing extensively, people use the isingqusho to make their samp.

The isingqusho is made of stone and exhibition points out that "a person carving isingqusho has to be such a skillful person not an amateur. It then also shows that Africans had their technology to make things and their own unique way of surviving even before the Europeans and colonialists ventured into these shores".¹⁸⁷ However, although people in Mgwali no longer produce their own maize-meal and samp, the collections in the museum contain pounding and

¹⁸⁶ Behind the pot in the picture one could also see that electricity is used because of the electric plug that is visible behind the pot. One would then question the authenticity of all this if the cultural village is to preserve and depict African cultures but at the same time in the museum there are tiles and electricity. This then brings the argument advanced by Witz et al¹⁸⁶ commenting on the Eskom advert that was flighted by SABC television in 1998 depicting American tourists on a bus on a deserted countryside when suddenly they spotted a hut with painted murals that signified it as Ndebele into focus. They describe how the bus comes to a halt allowing the tourist to alight so as to get their piece of much-valued Ndebele culture. The tourists extol at the traditional authentic virtues of their purchases after bargaining the price of the pots they bought. The tourist depart with satisfaction at their unmistakably authentic purchase whereas the unsophisticated Ndebele woman in appearance disappear into the hut where there is an electrically powered industrialized assembly line manned by people who are in the know how. Together with other workers they laugh at the success of their accomplishment in making and selling tradition. Despite various means and endeavors to preserve and conserve what is thought to be African culture, that culture is subject to convention and invention and Mgwali Cultural Village is no exception to this as sometimes what is presented and performed at the CV is not what is actually lived at the local level. This shows the contradictions regarding the genuineness of representation owing to cultural dynamics.

¹⁸⁷ Drawn from exhibition and related discussion of meaning and information at the Mgwali Museum

grinding stones that were used in the past to make maize-meal and samp, but these days, people buy it at local shops and supermarkets from town. This can be attributed to the fact that “those who possessed the rare skills of carving these stones are either very old or have passed away”.¹⁸⁸



Fig. 4 (Shows various traditional household utensils “used in a homestead”).

In figure four various other items “used in African communities” are shown which are also inside the museum. There is ukhuko (traditional mat), on top of the ukhuko there is imizi, two different kinds of iingobozi (traditional dishes) serving the same purpose and another kind of traditional basket with lid, to store various other small items, and a small mat weaved from different colours of plastic, intluzo (sieve). On the outside of the ikhuko there is ilitye lokusila (grinding stone) with another round stone called imboko, also called a grinding stone and lastly isithebe which serves as a traditional tray.

In relation to this exhibition, the visitor is told that

the traditional mat/ukhuko made from a special type of grass which grows on very wet and muddy waters next to the river, serves a variety of purposes in a traditional African society. Before the Africans were ‘won over’ by the Europeans

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

and by Christianity, they used ukhuko as their only form of a bed and in some very remote parts of the Province some people still sleep on these traditional mats although the majority of the people are now using modern beds. Young initiates from the circumcision school, they will be ushered into the family kraal and will take their seats on the mat whilst the old and wise men of the village give words of wisdom and advice as to how they should conduct themselves in society as newly circumcised men and their responsibilities. For a month after graduation from the circumcision school, they are required by custom and tradition to sleep on the traditional mats before they can be allowed to sleep on modern beds. The traditional mat was used by women for sitting purposes before they had the luxury of modern chairs. Also when a homestead is to have a ritual, all the family members including children will sleep in one hut on the mats. Also a newly wed bride sits on the traditional mat behind the door in the house of her-in-laws. The bride's family also makes sure that when their daughter gets married and taken to her new home is presented with the traditional mat.¹⁸⁹

Initiation, even here, receives pride of place at the Mgwali Museum and is very important. Its importance is shown in visual displays and in the narratives that accompany them:

the fact that a boy who has not undergone the ritual of circumcision among the practicing communities is not wholly accepted by the society. That reverend Tiyo Soga was not circumcised proved to be a stumbling block for him where matters of culture were concerned as he was seen by the traditionalists not to have passed the test of manhood. When he was stationed at the Uniondale Mission in 1849, scholars were drawn out by their parents from the school. They believed that their children would die and that their girls would be unmarriageable and that boys would turn their backs on the customs of their fathers owing to the fact that they were taught by inkwenkwe (uncircumcised boy). Also in 1863, when he was preaching at Mgwali Mission, Soga was taunted by abakhwetha (young men at circumcision school) with the full support of their parents who were elders of the church.¹⁹⁰

The interpretation in the museum states that the “ritual of male circumcision (ulwaluko) is an important passage of rite from boyhood to manhood and if one is not circumcised is placed outside the cultural sphere of what Xhosas regard as a ‘true Xhosa man’ who has passed the test of manhood. It is a sacred and secret ritual performed by a traditional surgeon (ingcibi) over boys with the supervision

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ The narrative is drawn from *Christian Express*, ‘Tiyo Soga: a page of South African mission work’, 1 February, 1878; Williams, D. (1978) *Umfundisi: a biography of Tiyo Soga 1829-1871*, Lovedale: Lovedale Press; Khabela, G. (1996) *The struggle of the gods: a study in Christianity and the African culture*, Alice: Lovedale Press.

of elder men from the society”.¹⁹¹ Accompanying this, is an illustration of the debate around initiation, concerning its secrecy and sacredness, as against public engagement and scrutiny.¹⁹²

The interpretation continues:

During male initiation, the boys are secluded from the rest of the community and a lodge is built using sticks and grass to thatch it but these days, old sacks are used to thatch the lodge. In the olden days, the boys would go into circumcision school as a group and there will be a leader among them who is called ‘usosuthu’. It used to take a period of six months but changing circumstances have influenced the duration to be reduced to three weeks or a month as a maximum. Initiation is not only about circumcision because during this period of exclusion, the initiates are taught and told issues of responsibilities pertaining to their families and the entire community. They are also taught to respect elders and not indulge in stealing as men do not steal. Only men are allowed to visit the initiates at their hut. Despite challenges such as death and the sacredness of the ritual compromised, circumcision still remains a central and significant ritual among the practicing communities in Southern Africa.¹⁹³

According to Bolana, tourists who visit Mgwali and are “ignorant of the custom, are given insight to the importance of the ritual among African communities by a male though he does not give them intimate details about the ritual.”¹⁹⁴

At the Mgwali Museum within the Cultural Village, there are photographic exhibitions of female initiates inside the initiation hut during their time of exclusion and initiation. Female initiation (intonjane or ukuthomba) is depicted as significantly different from that undergone by men and this is highlighted and

¹⁹¹ Drawn from the inscription of the display of a male initiate at Mgwali Museum seen and observed during the visit of 6 February 2009.

¹⁹² The details related centre around the following: However, the ritual is no longer sacred and secret as was shown on national television even to communities that are not practicing it. The Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa (CONTRALESA), Provincial House of Traditional Leaders and National Heritage Council¹⁹² registered their displeasure and disgust at the SABC documentary series called ‘Umthunzi Wentaba’ which documented traditional circumcision. They based their argument on the fact that the series dishonoured and compromised a sacred cultural practice of Africans by exposing graphic details which have long been couched in secrecy. They argued further that it distorted the issue of circumcision with the result that their complaints forced the series to be dropped from SABC programmes. The Eastern Cape branch of the traditional leaders even demanded that SABC slaughter a cow to apologize to the ancestors for insulting an old age tradition and custom by stripping the tradition of its secrecy and sacredness.

¹⁹³ Interview with Wilkoko Singeni, Mgwali Location, 11 August 2005.

¹⁹⁴ Interview with Tyhilelwa Bolana, Mgwali Location, 16 November, 2005.

discussed in similar terms in the museum, and through its displays and narratives.

The term intonjane is given to the custom observed when a girl reaches the age of puberty. According to Soga¹⁹⁵, the term intonjane derives from uku-thomba where a girl starts to menstruate for the first time. Having this been noticed, the girl is ordered into seclusion for a certain period of time depending on the abilities of her family to provide for her needs. Usually the maximum period of exclusion is a month. A hut from within the family huts is chosen for the stay of the Intonjane and no one has access except those appointed to look after the needs of the Intonjane such as a female Ikhankatha otherwise known as 'Inkazana'¹⁹⁶ in the Intonjana ritual. The duty of Inkazana/Ikhankatha is to teach the initiate the traditional Xhosa practice of a responsible adult life and womanhood. She is given insight as to how she must conduct herself as a mature girl and woman and how she must treat her future husband and in laws.

The space and place of initiation is further emphasized, and the moral and cultural associations with bonded tradition celebrated: "The hut where the initiate stay is divided by a blanket or ikhuko hung across as a partition and the Intonjane will stay behind the partition unobserved except for her Ikhankatha. Grass is laid down on the floor of the house which serves as a carpet"¹⁹⁷

The description of the meaning of the exhibition in the museum continues:

After the first seven days of initiation, a goat is slaughtered and the whole front leg of the goat is given to the Intonjana. After twenty one days, a cow is slaughtered and the ritual is called 'Umtshato weNtonjane'.¹⁹⁸ It is a big celebration because the whole village will descend on the Intonjane's homestead for the festivities. There will be a lot of food and meat. Traditional beer such as mqombothi and brandy will be consumed in large quantities. Before the initiate can graduate, her head has to be shaved clean and smeared with imbola (red ochre). On the night before she graduates, all the grass used to cover the floor is collected and burnt to ashes at the nearest hill outside the village. This is symbolical of ridding all that is associated with young life entering to a new life of adulthood. The initiate is required to jump over the fire. Upon returning from the hill, the initiate has to polish the floor of the hut with cow dung. On graduation day her body is completely covered with a blanket with the exception of the eyes so that she can see. She is whisked away through the back so as to avoid any eye contact with the community. If the initiate is from a better-off family, a goat is

¹⁹⁵ Soga, J. H. (1931) *Life and Customs of AmaXhosa*. Lovedale: Lovedale Press.

¹⁹⁶ Inkazana is a mature married woman who in her own right had undergone the ritual of female initiation or Intonjana. She looks after the needs of Intonjana during her time of exclusion and teaches the female initiate about the responsibilities of adulthood as a woman to the society and to her future husband and in-laws.

¹⁹⁷ Interview with Tyhilelwa Bolana, 16 November, 2005.

¹⁹⁸ A ritual conducted after twenty one days for a female initiate where a beast is slaughtered.

again slaughtered and eaten by the community but if the family does not have the goat, it is not the problem as long as the initiate has undergone the core and due processes of female initiation. A bracelet is made from the goat's skin for the Intonjane to put on her neck. In modern day South Africa, the Intonjane ritual is equivalent of the twenty first birthday parties when someone has come of age and given a key signaling maturity.

Another central component in the displays at Mgwali museum concerns imbeleko. Imbeleko marks the arrival of a new born in a family in the African society. It is described as being performed when

a particular clan has a new baby and the child is accepted into the community of the living and the dead (ancestors). A goat is usually slaughtered and its blood symbolizes the union of the physical and the spiritual world. Some clans use sheep or a beast to perform the rites of imbeleko. Oral history tells that the skin of the goat was tanned and used as a blanket for the little child who has just been born. A Xhosa idiom out of imbeleko has been constructed that says "akulahlwa mbeleko ngakufelwa" meaning that 'you do not discard the imbeleko blanket because of death' ".¹⁹⁹

There are further depictions and explanations of 'culture' that are also visible, but they need not be repeated here. I do, though, want to also briefly finally illustrate the content of the narratives generated through the museum by looking at what the displays say about the ubuhlanti (or kraal), as this is often seen as central and significant in elaborating an apparent "African traditional set-up". As such, the museum confirms ubuhlanti in these stereotypical and conventional cultural ways and while it does not have an actual reconstructed kraal as the Khayalabantu Cultural Centre in Mooiplaas does, it has a number of central photographic images captions and this associated commentary:

used as place to keep livestock of the family. To show the cultural significance of ubuhlanti, even if a family does not have livestock to keep, they have ubuhlanti erected in the homestead because it also serves as an arena where many family rituals are held. Rituals that entail slaughtering of animals take place at the ubuhlanti, boys that are to undergo circumcision assembly at the kraal before their departure to the mountains and when they come back they will again assembly at the kraal. Where a family does not have a kraal and is about to have a family ritual, a temporary makeshift kraal will be erected so that they can continue with their ritual....²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁹ Interview with Vuyani Boo, Alice, 15 March 2009.

²⁰⁰ Ibid. The descriptions continue, saying "Ubuhlanti also serves as a venue for marriage proposals. If the son of family A is interested in marrying the daughter of family B, male relatives from family A called Oonozakuzaku²⁰⁰ (ambassadors/negotiators) will approach family B. When they get there, they will not go

In Mgwali Cultural Village and associated with the museum are the “traditional-thatched mud houses”. They are said to depict “the African way of life as it used to be” but also, in a sense, how it should continue. These huts have been reconstructed and are modernised and improved from the previous structures called oongquphantsi.²⁰¹

straight to the house but will proceed to the kraal and sit in front of it. The B family will be informed that there are visitors in the yard. Upon enquiring they will be informed that the son of family A is interested in marrying their daughter and that they are at the house to open lobola²⁰⁰ negotiations for their son. Once the two families agree to terms of the lobola payment, lobola will be paid in the form of cattle which will be kept at the kraal. However, these days lobola is paid in monetary terms which is equivalent to the price of a cattle and people these days have commercialized the lobola custom by charging unreasonable amounts of money from the prospective husband of their daughter citing expenses they have incurred in raising up and sending her to universities and so forth causing the custom to lose its essence. In the olden days, ubuhlanti was used as a burial place for the head of the family (husband) and the eldest son of the family. These days the practice is not very much prevalent owing to influences of modern burial methods and the commercialization of death because for some death of somebody means business for them. Lastly, ubuhlanti serves as a source of traditional indigenous manure for agricultural needs of the family as people were not using commercial fertilizers. It also serves as a source of fuel because families used dried cow dung to cook their meals. It provided families with fresh cow dung to polish their floors to look immaculate all the time”

²⁰¹ The hut unqquphantsi/oongquphantsi derives its name from the fact that it was of no good height and in most instances a person had to bend and kneel in order to enter the house. It can also mean something which is shorter. Ungquphantsi used to be one and the half metres in height with small windows the size of a fist. There were no panes and old rags and sacks were used to close the windows. Those kinds of huts are no longer in use with the exceptions of few locations of eQuthubeni and Esitholeni in the district of Engcobo. There you can still see a few pockets of those kinds of houses which are still in use in some homesteads. There was poor transmission of light from the outside into the room even during the day which forced the people to open doors wide even during cold days. During the night, a home-made lamp made of tin and old cloth inserted inside to serve as a wick called ufinyafuthi²⁰¹ would be used for lighting. This kind of lamp has poor light and it was difficult to see a person properly on the other side of the room, you only recognized him/her by the voice. I have the personal experience of this kind of light because when I grew up as a young boy at home, ufinyafuthi was used and the light was not that very good, it was poor.



Fig. 1

The picture above depicts the inside of one of the huts with a woman sitting on usoze. When one enters the hut on the left side of it, one is struck by the man-made seat called usoze²⁰² and according to Bolana “it is reserved only for men and the left side of the hut is also reserved for men. No women in a Xhosa traditional society would make the mistake of sitting on the left side of the house even if she may be dead drunk. The women can only sit on the right side of the house”²⁰³. Miss Bolana and other women she is working with argue that it is “rare these days to find homesteads with the traditional chair usoze and the houses and homesteads in Mgwali are all replete with all the material trappings of modernity with fancy dining-room suites and couches”²⁰⁴. This then in a way foregrounds that what is presented at the museum and cultural village does not reflect what is presently done or practiced at the communal level, but rather a more generic reenactment and simulation of particular aspects of the way of a cultural group as it was at a particular point in time. This is what one may call an imagined past. There is a sense that the tourists and visitors only experience some of these performances through the ‘front stage’ in the form of cultural villages. The tourists do not venture into the ‘back stage’ where they will see the

²⁰² Derives its name from the fact it is made to stay there forever. It can only be removed using picks and spades and in the process it will be destroyed. It is reserved for men on the left side of the hut. When loosely translated the word soze means that it cannot be removed or undone or changed, you cannot even shift it, it will stay there forever.

²⁰³ Interview with Tyhilelwa Bolana, Mgwali Location, 16 November, 2005.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

practical lives of the people. Even the homesteads I visited during my fieldwork, their lifestyles are different to what is purported to be representing their life in the cultural village. They lead modern lifestyles because even their households are laden with expensive brands of modern furniture and electrical appliances.



Fig. 2

This picture is in the same hut as the one in fig. 1 but this one shows the centre of the hut with intsika (pillar), iselwa (calabash) and iziko (fire heart). If one looks closer at the outer edge of the photograph, one can also see the cow dung used to smear the floor of the hut and cow dung is still used up to the present day in the majority of homesteads. However, for the rest this is clearly not the same as contemporary houses in the village. The intsika/pillar was used as a support structure to support the roof of the house but these days the intsika is no longer used. This intsika was mainly used when the house was too big and it needed a support structure so that it could stand firm and withstand strong winds. Next to the pillar in the picture is iselwa which is used to store sour milk. The iselwa is put next to the fire place so that it can get some warmth to enable the milk inside the iselwa to turn into sour milk. In explaining the significance of this display, it was argued that

in a traditional African society milk is turned into sour milk using indigenous knowledge instead of modern technology. Sometimes the iselwa would be put outside in the sun on top of the cattle kraal so that it can ferment and will be taken back into the house in the evening.²⁰⁵

Some homesteads still use the iselwa because it is a home grown product but those who do not have them use plastic buckets to store their milk and sour milk. The third and last artifact in the picture is the fireplace and it is said that it “cannot be anywhere else even in the local homesteads, it has to be at the centre of the hut. Even if a homestead can have a modern stove using electricity or wood, that fire place at the centre would always be there”.²⁰⁶

Overall, then, the Mgwali museum and village constructs the “grass-thatched hut” and the interiors shown above, as being

central to the life and cultures of Africans and, in particular, the Xhosas. ... Even if a family is well endowed with a large modern house and with all its trappings, they make sure that a hut is constructed. When a family is to have a ritual or during a great sacrifice to the ancestors, sometimes to make amends, placate or receive blessings from the ancestors, all the relatives of the family will sleep in the rondavel including women, and traditional mats called ikhuko in singular and amakhuko in plural will be used for sleeping purposes. The women will sleep on the right side of the house whereas men will sleep on the left side of the house. During this time of the ritual there is a total mourning or reverence is paid to the ancestors by abstaining from any sexual activities so that the ritual or ceremony can be blessed by the ancestors. This hut also serves as storage for home made brew called umqomboti. When there is a traditional beer drinking in the homestead, the drinks will be served from the hut.²⁰⁷

This is the central narrative that the “tourists and visitors are taken down” through showing and recalling the “memory of what actually life was and lived in the African societies before the advent of colonialism in Africa which upon the arrival of the Europeans and colonialists labeled those forms of lives as barbaric and unChristian.”

²⁰⁵ Interview with Tyhilelwa Bolana and others, Mgwali Location, 18 November, 2005.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

According to Vuyani Booï who designed the displays at Mgwali Museum, and here referring to intonjane, he also provides a simultaneous reading of his underlying understanding and approach to the museum and its displays overall. He sees it “as a sacred and spiritual ceremony performed for young girls by elderly women of the society. The ‘intonjane’ is guided by another group of girls called ‘ijaka’”. He alleges that when girls come from intonjane, “they are forbidden from drinking milk and sour milk”.²⁰⁸ There is no talk of its history, changing form, contestations, or specificities, in comparison to when he talks about the struggle against forced removals (however interpretive that also is). And for him, it is these African traditions which were hidden by apartheid, and for which the struggle against forced removals is located, because that struggle was about ‘not moving’ and staying attached to the land where the community and its traditions are rooted.²⁰⁹

Relatedly, according to Mr. Qhomorhoshe, “the Intonjana ritual is an important tradition which is believed that if it is not done, the initiate’s adult life will be a difficult one, particularly so in her marriage – difficulties in conceiving or miscarriages being the problems. In such circumstances her husband will send her to her family home so that the ritual can be done for her because in traditional Xhosa society, marriage is about having children and if a woman cannot conceive, she will be a subject of spite by other women in the community”.²¹⁰ Again, these conceptions and their forms of power and knowledge are not opened to interrogation and interpretation, but simply asserted.

The two commentaries are quoted here in order to illustrate both how the designers and ‘curators’ responded to a conversation about the museum and its purposes and significance, as well as the sense in which the exhibition, and its defined sense of being ‘African’ and ‘cultural’ constructs a particular meaning and

²⁰⁸ Interview with Vuyani Booï, Alice, 15 March, 2009.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Interview, Manenana Qhomorhoshe, Khayalabantu Cultural Village, Mooiplaas, 23 May 2005.

understanding. Through display of particular Xhosa 'rituals' (here concerning initiation) and the calling of them as 'culture', this tends to then internalize debate around accuracy and form of practices, but at the same time, create a circulating and closed cultural sense of the past as timeless, essential, and of what African culture is. When designers and curators of the museums and cultural villages understand displays in these terms, the displays themselves, and the local museums and village sites, become the sites for making these forms and conceptions of culture public definitional.

The overall experience, then of visiting the Mgwali Cultural Village is perhaps best summarized in this blog response to a visit in October 2007 by Andrea and Jurgen from Germany:

Dear Peter,
We can not thank you enough for the "Wonderfull Experience" you gave us today. Your knowledge about the Eastern Cape you shared with us, introducing us to a truely [sic] Authentic Cultural Village "Mgwali", and having us invited to a "Sangoma Initiation" with the new witchdoctor was unbelievable. We felt uttely priveledged and honoured [sic]. Thank you so much Peter! Your support to the people of Mgwali is amazing, and a valuable contribution to Eastern Cape Tourism Development.
Keep up the excellent work!
God Bless you,
Andrea, & Jurgen ²¹¹

At the same time, though, Mgwali, the village, and its history and cultural heritage seem to have disappeared entirely. The next chapter will undertake the task of trying to find Mgwali in the historical record.

²¹¹ from <http://www.sa-venues.com/explore/afrikaunique/reviews.php> Part of Afrika Unique Exclusive Tours, accessed September 2009

Chapter Five

Evolution of Mgwali Cultural Village

Ironically, though, given the nature of visit and its dynamics covered in the previous chapter, Mgwali Cultural Village (MCV) owes its existence to the insertion of Mgwali into the rural, land related resistance politics of the 1980s. While the Cultural Village only hosted its first tourists in the beginning of August 2001, we need to go back to the early 1980s and to the mid-1990s to trace its evolution and emerging presence. In particular, the seeds of the MCV organizational structure, and the central people behind its development and responsible for defining its form and content can be traced back to the development of 'community self-help sewing projects' initiated in the early 1980s as part of the struggle around removals and relocations.

In particular, the idea of a sewing project must be traced back to the early 1980s, when the Grahamstown Rural Committee (GRC) initiated community work by organizing and empowering marginalized groups such as women to engage in self-help projects in resettled areas and those proposed for relocation. In Mgwali and Wartburg, through the assistance of GRC, a sewing project for women was established²¹². It must also be borne in mind that during this time, in the 1980s, Mgwali was waging its resistance campaign against forced removals and relocations. GRC came in hand to support and empower women through such sewing projects, while at the same time it also brought the proposed Mgwali relocation to the attention of the public.

These 'community sewing groups', in turn, developed and evolved, together with various 'outside interventions' into the Masincedane (Let us help each other) Sewing Project. One of the central figures involved recalls:

²¹² Wotshela, L. (2001) 'Homeland Consolidation, Resettlement and Local Politics in the Border and the Ciskei region of the Eastern Cape, South Africa, 1960 to 1996'. Doctoral Thesis, Oxford University, United Kingdom.

It was a project that was envisaged to include all women of Mgwali to create employment among them to alleviate poverty. It started before the new political dispensation in 1994 and the person in charge was the late Nontsokolo Bolana. It was funded by the Nongovernmental Organization called Operation Hunger which donated a lot of sewing machines to be used by the women. After the new political dispensation, there were some squabbles and controversies and some people became disillusioned and left the project. People who were influential politically took some of the sewing machines and gave them to projects in other areas and only two machines were left from those that were donated by Operation Hunger. After that, Stutterheim Development Foundation got involved and donated some and start-up capital to buy the required cloth for sewing.²¹³

Tyhilelwa Bolana, the long-time manager and chairperson of MCV, who was retrenched twice from the factory she was working for in Port Elizabeth, decided to head back to her home in Mgwali. On her arrival, she joined Masincedane Sewing Project where her late mother was also a member. She recalls that in “1993 Mgwali Market Place was constructed with funding from the Independent Development Trust and is where the Masincedane Sewing Project was based. The idea of the Market place was also to be a hive of activity during pension-payout days. People of Mgwali were afforded an opportunity to sell their products utilizing the stalls provided by the Market.” However, according to her, “the idea of the Market did not work out as it was planned” a consequence of which was its “abandonment”. In 1995 Mgwali Cultural Village was started in its place. She explained the idea behind the construction of MCV as follows:

The purpose of establishing the cultural village was to entertain tourists through cultural activities, give them insight into our history and culture and also use it as a source of employment for ourselves. What happens in this cultural village is that when there are tourists, the performers will do their traditional dances and songs, people display and sell their crafts, tourists see how traditional food is cooked on open fires and take them on village tours. It was not in any way influenced by others mushrooming all over the place. Ours was not influenced by monetary gain but by the love of our culture and want to preserve it through its enactment the cultural village.²¹⁴

Another colleague and key person in the cultural village and in Masincedane, Nolongile Kotobe, also elaborates thus:

First the idea was to develop the skills of the people of Mgwali and the

²¹³ Interview with Tyhilelwa Bolana, 17 October 2005.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

Stutterheim Development Foundation through funds it sourced from the Independent Development Trust, started training people in business skills. This later resulted in the formation of MCV in 1995. The purpose of its establishment was to market our beadwork and culture to the outside world when international tourists visit us and also to the local people so that their children can learn and know better about their culture. It was also a source of employment to generate income for ourselves so that we can put food on the table. I wanted to get sewing skills and was tired of being a housewife solely depended on my husband. I joined other women in sewing to earn an income. However, financial reward was a factor but the love and preservation of culture the compelling factor...²¹⁵

Another key figure, Nolulamile Kosani, postulates that the idea of the MCV was theirs but however, she also makes mention of “one Jonas²¹⁶ from East London who told them about tourists” and in 1995 Mgwali Cultural Village came into being.²¹⁷ For her, the purpose of the institution was to generate income through the CV by tourists from outside South Africa visiting it, but, like Kotobe above, says that while seeing “monetary reward as a factor behind it” although the “preservation side of culture” played a pivotal role.²¹⁸ She joined the MCV to earn an income and to “have a good time interacting with people from outside South African shores”.²¹⁹

Equally for Nophumzile Ntame, financial gain was the factor behind the construction of the MCV coupled with “the love and the preservation of their culture”.²²⁰ Being a crafter even before the erection of the MCV, she says the idea of the MCV “fascinated her to be part of the CV”. She outlines that she had been involved in the craft work for the past thirteen years and says that while being a crafter “that some visitors were interested in the idea of a CV and advised them to initiate one locally”.²²¹ She also argues that they wanted to

²¹⁵ Interview with Nolungile Kotobe, 17 October, 2005.

²¹⁶ As far as can be ascertained, this refers to Mncebisi Jonas, who is currently the Eastern Cape’s Minister for Economic Affairs, and was previously CEO of the Eastern Cape Development Corporation (ECDC), with a strong connection into liberation politics.

²¹⁷ Interview with Nolulamile Kosani, Mgwali, Stutterheim, 17 October, 2005.

²¹⁸ Ibid. I suspect that these qualifications to the centrality of ‘culture’ were significantly shaped by my own interest and intervention in terms of the questions and interpretations they thought I would approve of.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Interview with Nophumzile Ntame, Mgwali Location, 18 October 2005

²²¹ Ibid. The reference is to Jonas

create employment for themselves as women: “the MCV proper started in 1995 and the people involved in the running of the Cultural Village are the sewers, crafters under the chairmanship of Tyhilelwa Bolana. The idea of a CV was to develop local tourism and create employment”.²²²

Currently the MCV is constituted and who runs “the affairs of the village” are seven committee members, who are all women, and the majority of whom have both direct connections in to the 1980s struggles in Mgwali (and the Residents Association and Women’s components of it) and more recently to the community sewing and craft groups. The committee is made up of chairperson, deputy, secretary and deputy, and treasurer, together with two additional members. And equally divided between performers/dancers, sewers and crafters.²²³ Decisions are taken jointly by the committee. According to Tyhilelwa, their books are not audited but are “financially accountable to themselves”.²²⁴ She however mentions that when they got the funding to the tune of R500 000 from the Poverty Alleviation Fund (of the National Department of Arts and Culture), she furnished them with two financial reports as to how they had utilized the funds. In return, officials from the Department of Arts and Culture promised to “come down to Mgwali to audit the books” but up to date, no official has come to Mgwali.²²⁵

Usually the visits of tourists are arranged by tour operators that the MCV work with.²²⁶ The tourist operator then pays the money to the MCV. They charge R135 per tourist and this charge includes meals and money for performers. For example, if there are ten tourists, minus R35 for meals per tourist, the performers

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Interviews with Tyhilelwa Bolana, Mgwali Location, 6 February 2009; Telephonic interview with Tyhilelwa Bolana, 1 February, 2010

²²⁴ Ibid. What makes MCV seem financially accountable to themselves is that currently, if they get funding from donors or whoever, it does not come straight into their account. Instead it is channeled to the Amathole District Municipality (ADM) account for safekeeping. What they do is that if they want something done for the cultural village, they will ask for quotes from suppliers and submit them to ADM. The ADM would deal with the supplier financially.

²²⁵ Telephonic interview with Tyhilelwa Bolana, 1 February, 2010.

²²⁶ Sometimes the visits are not organized by tour operators but a tourist will come on his/her own to the village.

will get R1000 from that tour which is shared among the performers. When performers are invited to 'outside' departmental functions of government, they also share the money among themselves. The only money that goes into the account of the MCV is from catering and R5 they charge for entrance to the museum.²²⁷

In terms of 'staff', the MCV has, in addition to the committee, sixteen performers though they are not all present during tourists' visit for performances. Sometimes one or two have problems at home, for example.²²⁸ Then there is also the tour guide who guides the tourists, who gets paid R25.00 per tourist/ visitor, and there are a number of optional and rotating tour guides used.²²⁹

In August 2001, Mgwali Cultural Village was launched as a cultural experience as part of newly developed Thunga Thunga (a house with many doors) Route.²³⁰ The first foreign tourists to visit in early August consisted of a group of 10 Britons, drawn mainly from the student unions of various universities, on a 'socio-political tour' of South Africa.²³¹ The group, who were halfway through their 21 day tour when they went to Mgwali were "amazed at the rural surroundings in which they spent Tuesday night and even more amazed at what the area looked like when they awoke and went on a tour the next day", it was reported.²³² Reported anti-apartheid activist Cheryl Turner said "the previous ten days were spent in surroundings we could identify with as they were mostly urban ... [b]ut the rural experience of last night and today was something so different, it has been hard to relate to". She said that "both the poverty she saw and the friendliness of the people surprised her", but, she continued, "what was worrying was that tourism

²²⁷ Tyhilelwa Bolana, *ibid*, 1February 2010.

²²⁸ *Ibid*.

²²⁹ *Ibid*.

²³⁰ The Thunga Thunga Route is a project of the Stutterheim Business Advice Centre (an off-shoot of the Stutterheim Development Foundation). See www.theta.org.za/downloads/Thunga_Thunga_pilot.doc accessed 23 September 2009

²³¹ Daily Dispatch, 3 August 2001

²³² *Ibid*.

would spoil the traditional lifestyle of the people, despite their seeing tourism as the best way of capitalizing on the few resources they had.”²³³

Tour organiser, Pascuelle Melissen, from Holland, also found the ‘rural component [at Mgwali] memorable, and the sort of thing Dutch former anti-apartheid campaigners should experience’. What was this experience? The groups were “taken on a tour of the village that took in a newly-built school, where, in return for a welcoming song and dance routine from the pupils, they gave the children a quantity of stationery, sports equipment and coloured felt-tipped pens. They also visited a traditional pipe-maker [“who explained the art of Xhosa pipe-making”] and were so impressed by the wares that almost everyone – smoker or not – bought a pipe as a souvenir of the visit. The group were also taken to a sangoma who explained how she became a traditional healer – and then examined one of the group, diagnosing all three of the ailments which had been plaguing her since childhood. “She didn’t even look at me or touch me but she was able to work out what my medical problems were. It was quite spooky, but amazing nevertheless”, she said.²³⁴

The discussion of this tour experience illustrates the building blocks of the tour, which have become so firmly entrenched (as shown in Ch 3 above), but is also quoted here as means to connect the ways that these blocks emerge from a range of different influences.

In the community and the cultural village, it is constantly seen, or claimed to be based on concerns with culture and its preservation, as the bottom line. While this is questionable, as indicated above, the constant refrain to ‘love’ and ‘preserve culture’ does matter. More importantly, though, one of the visitor’s (Turner) quoted above, and her concern about the ways that ‘tourism would spoil traditional lifestyles’ resonates with these constant invocations and qualifications

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Ibid.

of the 'love of culture' that the performers have at the cultural village. In essence they operate as bases that the local, indigenous and belonging aspects will ensure that Xhosa culture' will not be de-centred or 'spoilt', even if material benefits, jobs and tourist derived income are also important. In addition, though, this sense of 'traditional lifestyles' being 'spoiled' by tourism relies on a very Eurocentric and basically colonial and Western view, where it assumes a whole range of dichotomies, locating African tradition in tribal, communal rural lifestyles that is timelessly centred and coherent, and therefore also unchanging and possessing a kind of pure essence. The irony though, is that the cultural village 'managers' and performers reproduce a similar view, in their claims of love of culture and its preservation, despite it being clear that participation is largely shaped by local poverty and material issues.

What is promoted, what is performed and what is experienced is seen to be not just 'staging' for tourists, then, but promoting and asserting rural African [and Xhosa] culture against tourist ignorance and exclusion. It is to 'educate' the ignorant western tourists, and has been seen, and continues to be seen as 'outside' of the usual tourist experience. The form given to the cultural village and tour, then, is seen to protect, and to propagate, and to promote African culture, and tours and visits help this to happen, not threaten it.

On the other hand, or perhaps what might be considered the flip side, this insertion of Mgwali Cultural Village into the Thunga Thunga Route indicates not only its relation to tourism, but also to development and the implications of this for defining and shaping the content of the cultural village. The Thunga Thunga Route is described in these terms:

The Thunga Thunga Route is a project of the Stutterheim Business Advice Centre (an off-shoot of the Stutterheim Development Foundation). The route stretches from the Fish River to the Kei River to the banks of the Umzimvubu River at Port St Johns. It includes the Double Drift Game Reserve; places of historical interest such as Lovedale College and the University of Fort Hare (where many of South Africa's leaders studied); and a number of important battle sites that shaped the history of South Africa. There are 19 towns participating in the route. It also includes a number of rock art and archaeological sites,

museums, cultural villages, fly-fishing and hiking trails, game-viewing etc. The route incorporates a number of rural villages with extremely high unemployment rates. [The unemployment in the Province is estimated at 65%]. The stated aim of the route is: “Through the promotion of rural tourism, to uplift the standard of living of the rural people by alleviating poverty, promoting empowerment, developing SMMEs and job-creation”²³⁵

These stated objectives listed at the end continued, emphasized and re-inforced a set of relationships and practices in the cultural village, which had their origin in seed funding granted by the Stutterheim Development Corporation (and the IDT) to the MCV, as well as its own internal evolution in its relationship to the also largely developmental sewing projects, outlined above. “Uplifting the standards of living of rural people”, poverty alleviation, job creation, and promoting empowerment all have particular resonances and shaping influences on the possibilities of and emphasis on what cultural villages do. And Mgwali is no exception.

What it offers, and expects is a “stable and efficient management authority”; “prospects for economic growth and job creation”; “effective service providers”; “private sector partnerships”; and “stable community governance”; amongst others. What this translates into, is a set of documents, reports, and funding requirements and proposals on the one hand, and the active attempt to constantly implement them on the other, while concentrating on things like “Access to business information”; “Training in technical and entrepreneurial skills”; “Identification of markets and linkages between small and big businesses” “Advice on accessing credit”; “Follow-up business advice services”; and “Assistance with accessing physical facilities”.²³⁶

But what does doing this actually mean for MCV. Well, in short, it means that these business models draw on market and stereotypical models of tourist expectations, and emphasize that job creation, poverty alleviation and the like is

²³⁵ See www.theta.org.za/downloads/Thunga_Thunga_pilot.doc accessed 23 September 2009

²³⁶ Apparent in looking through the various funding applications, minutes of meetings, and reports of the Mgwali Cultural Village, Accessed in 2009.

tied into creating a traditional Xhosa village. This is so because this is what both exists within the market, is the operating business model and form of 'information', is the vehicle through which local rural skills – already understood as being 'technically' traditional, backward and 'indigenous' - can be enhanced, developed and made into forms of empowerment and entrepreneurship and the means to link markets and small (the village) and big (the tour operators) businesses and the means to access credit, funding and so on, which is already determined in structures like development foundations, and local government IDP's, plans, and their models, concerned with jobs, poverty alleviation, and improvement, also determined in a rural development frame. [with things like household food security on the one side, and commercialisation of the other]

It is not the purpose of this dissertation to analyse these management and business practice models in any detail, or to comment on the management and financial viability of the cultural village – it has so few tourists anyway that this would be a fruitless and largely inconsequential exercise, but rather to suggest how these development discourses (and their managerial, market driven and business components) generate meanings and understandings, and scenarios of practice that in trying to undertake and implement them, they have major consequences for defining and shaping the actual tour and performances at the cultural village, and by extension, for focusing in on and actually defining the 'rural', 'culture', 'African' and 'Xhosa'.

Thus, while 'cultural preservation' remains visible, and is still regarded as vital to 'empowerment' through encouraging indigenous ownership, control and livelihood creation, 'culture' in these business, entrepreneurial development models is defined in relation to definitions that exist for defining business and development scenarios in poor rural communities. And these 'development' and business models clearly place Mgwali within the spheres of a still largely 'dual' economy marked by a backward traditional sector, concerned with food security, rural jobs, local initiatives (crafts), creating markets, and so on. In other words, a

very crudely divided and constructed economic model, which places Mgwali in the rural 'second economy', relies on the same notions of timeless and unchanging 'culture' and tradition as are those constructed for Africa by history, colonization, tourism, and the current 'neoliberal' world order.

In effect then, the processes and practices of managing the cultural village – entailing drawing up funding proposals, addressing job creation, providing for activities that can measure 'upliftment' (through income), developing a market (with an infrastructure of visits, food, accommodation, activities, signs, etc; developing brochures, advertising, interacting with tour operators, tour guides, and performances; reporting to funders, and to local government) and maintaining these activities so that they are promoting and developing or training skills (largely business and entrepreneurial, tied to crafts, like the sewing clubs, and for the tour itself ²³⁷) - all mean that two major related processes occur.

The first is that these technical 'developmental' and 'livelihood' 'activities' become determinant of much of the functioning and daily runnings of the cultural village, at the expense of more content related activities – of what is actually done, marketed, performed and acquired.²³⁸ And secondly, and perhaps more significantly, in this process, the content definitions that do cohere and are implicit to these technical developmental determinations both reproduce stereotypical and 'backward' traditional views of the 'deep rural' and its dynamics and 'culture', and simultaneously give these views added and deepened weight and resonance. This serves to provide additional selectivity, legitimacy and priority to already prevalent views of tradition and culture, not just in reproducing what tourists also seem to want (and therefore its added weight as well), but also to particular aspects of local cultural practices which are already defined as traditional and Xhosa from within.

²³⁷ Based on observations and interview with Tyhilelwa Bolana, Mgwali Location, 6 February 2009.

²³⁸ Based on observations and discussions about the actual functioning of the MCV during my interview with Bolana, 6 February 2009.

As just one index of these 'outside relationships', we can examine the funding of Mgwali Cultural Village. It enjoys significant financial and material support from the different tiers of government, from Development Agencies and from the Eastern Cape Tourism Board amongst others. The National Department of Arts and Culture, through its Poverty Alleviation Fund, made available R500 000 in 2004. This was used to augment the sewing machines, to furnish the office with office desks, chairs, to buy a computer with printer, fax and copier and also install a telephone and to cover other "unforeseen expenses".²³⁹ The money was also used to buy two tents, each with a hundred chairs and twenty tables, which are hired out to the community and the municipality for functions and funerals to earn some profit to keep them going. They used the rest of the money in a marketing exercise to reproduce their brochure and the funding is now exhausted.

The Provincial Department of Arts and Culture assists the personnel of the Mgwali Cultural Village to attend the yearly Grahamstown National Festival. It pays for their transport, accommodation and catering costs. It also pays for their stall so that they can display and market their wares and products to the festival goers. In relation to this provincial source of funding, the Office of the Premier in 2005 sponsored the trip of the cultural artists from MCV to attend and perform at the NEPAD Conference which was held in East London. On top of the transportation and accommodation costs, the cultural performers were paid R10 000 to share among themselves. In 2006, when the now suspended Chief Executive Officer of the South African Airways, Khaya Ngqula, got married, the same performers from MCV were also funded by the Office of the Premier to perform at his celebrated wedding. The Premier's Office sponsored their accommodation, catering and transportation costs and paid R1 000 to share among themselves. In 2002, the Provincial Arts and Culture Department sponsored the trip of the chairperson to Sweden to attend a cultural festival to showcase cultural products from MCV and the Eastern Cape.²⁴⁰

²³⁹ Interview with Bolana, 17 October 2009.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

The Amathole District Municipality (ADM) under its Heritage Unit has also sponsored and supported Mgwali Cultural Village. It sponsored the construction of the modern dining hall to the tune of R50 000.²⁴¹ The dining hall is also of assistance when they have their own functions and ceremonies at the cultural village. The ADM also supported a facelift for the museum, costing R200 000 and also sponsors a member of the cultural village to attend the annual 'Tourism Indabas' in Durban. It pays for the transportation and accommodation costs of the attendee and also markets the MCV through its various brochures and its website. MCV is strategically placed on the Sandile Heritage Route and as such ADM has put an information tourist board at MCV so as to give information to the tourists about the Sandile Route.²⁴²

The Amahlathi Local Municipality supports the MCV by maintaining the grounds and it also sponsors the transport costs and stalls for MCV to attend the annually held "craft manias" in Stutterheim to showcase their craft.²⁴³ The European Union, through the Amahlathi Tourism Association, in 2008, also provided funding amounting to R80 000 to furnish the dining hall and re-thatch the stalls and some huts that had been damaged by the disastrous winds of 2008. The MCV bought tables, chairs, a four-plate stove, a thirty-litre capacity microwave and a big double door fridge. They also bought some big modern pots to use to cook on the stove.

Lastly, the Eastern Cape Tourism Board helped the MCV to produce its brochure (detailed above). Through its website, ECTB also claims to help in marketing MCV and helps to "channel tourists to Mgwali as a tourist destination".²⁴⁴ It also

²⁴¹ Ibid, 6 February 2009.

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

helps to pay expenses of cultural activists and managers to attend exhibitions to market and display their wares to wider and diverse audiences.²⁴⁵

In all of the above, while it certainly makes the vulnerable and dependent nature of the Mgwali Cultural Village visible, and highlights the extremely limited financial position it occupies, these funding streams also indicate where government priorities, definitions and funding channels are located. In essence they go to building and providing resources (like dining rooms, tents, etc) that can also be used by the community, in some measure of maintenance, in providing for services, and in developing the craft and market components, which as I argued above become technical determinations and 'outcomes', while the actual form and nature of the content that is presented [and which is primarily traditional] is reproduced through the ways these technical interventions and forms of support themselves reproduce static, tribal and traditional conceptions of what the actual content of the Mgwali cultural village should be: namely traditional performances and beads, traditional wear and crafts, which are the most 'exportable' (when there are no tourists as well) and 'consumable'.

In conclusion, then, this section, focusing on the origins, organizational structure and development related components of the MCV has also noted a significant process in relation to the 'resistance' narrative. In effect, as resisters become crafters who become the 'leaders' of the cultural village, the 'self-help community sewing groups', initiated under the relationship between the Mgwali Residents Association and the Grahamstown Rural Committee, laid the basis for defining the cultural village from within the experience of resistance (and relatedly as the Residents Association morphed, at least for women, transformed into the

²⁴⁵ However, much as tourism is associated or linked to infrastructural development or its improvement owing to the expected hordes of tourists visiting destinations, Lunga feels that the landscape of Mgwali has not changed. Since the inception of the cultural village in Mgwali, there is no infrastructural development or any improvement whatsoever. The road is still the same bad gravel road with dongas which are difficult to navigate even during dry seasons which is worse during rainy seasons when roads would be slippery. There is no sanitation making the community to rely on pit-latrines. The electricity and water infrastructure obtaining in Mgwali, was installed prior the construction of the cultural village or the dawn of the new democratic political dispensation in 1994

Masinedane and other sewing and craft projects). The cultural village takes the shape it does, at least partly, because it is dominated by the women who acquired 'voice', as leaders and participants in the Residents Association and anti-removal politics of the 1980s.²⁴⁶ They then also see resistance internally transform and become self-help and community projects, and particularly sewing projects, once resistance is over and Mgwali as a located (not removed) community was secured and then apartheid and the Ciskei over-turned in the early 1990s. For them resistance "is over", except in the sense that it taught them how to mobilize "their culture and tradition" to achieve their aims.

At the same time, powerful regional 'rural NGOs like the GRC provided the particular locally understood and received model for translating resistance into development – through self-help around local skills (which was essentially reduced to combining 'domestic' (gendered) sewing, performing and cooking skills with the entry into particular rurally defined local 'craft' markets and traditions. The end result was that what had started as resistance to forced removals, ended up as a cultural village emphasizing culture and tradition. This is explained through the sense that once the land and presence of Mgwali was secured by the Residents Association from apartheid and white rule, Mgwali, now needed to secure its 'denied African culture' and develop, and where only certain aspects became 'useful' and possible for development (local skills, leadership, for e.g.), but where its 'black', collective and popular components reinforced cultural divides and resonances as now located in African indigenous culture'. Finally, this section then attempts to track the subsequent links between tourism, heritage, cultural villages and development which took place, and how local development also comes to rely on traditional and bound notions of 'culture', that also emphasizes the break with 'resistance', and correlates with traditions associated with craft, with the rural' and with the 'African' and indigenous as tribal – 'the Xhosa'.

²⁴⁶ Based on the interviews conducted with the MCV committee, and their own personal histories in the struggle.

In the next section, I want trace a process that has similar outcomes, but which deals with Tiyo Soga and the related heritage and development 'trust that emerges as a parallel process of heritage definition and management in Mgwali, which separates Soga from the cultural village.

Tiyo Soga Development Trust

Alongside the emergence of the MCV, it is important to track the emergence of a parallel 'heritage' structure in Mgwali, the Tiyo Soga Development Trust (hereafter TSDT). This is necessary for two main reasons:

- (a) the TSDT exists as a parallel structure in the village, and has come to largely manage the heritage of Tiyo Soga as separate from the activities of the cultural village. In the process though, the ways that TSDT define Soga and the mission in the village does not disrupt traditional ideas of indigeneity and community, or a very narrow inherited tradition from Soga, which is narrowed down into either 'development' which has nothing to do with Soga (except for the invocation of his name), or of Soga as part of a sanitized, fixed and stable authentic African inheritance.²⁴⁷
- (b) This has also meant that the actual histories and possible connections even between these TSDT constructed legacies of Soga and the cultural village are not just separate in management and organization in Mgwali, but actually divided (and literally excluded) from each other by a politics of competition and control over the legacy of Soga and the village, and this 'politics' largely excludes and silences Tiyo Soga from the overall tourist experience as well.

As has been argued in the introduction above, heritage initiatives are seen as major tourists' attractions and catalysts for development, poverty alleviation and the reduction of unemployment. It is against this background that people even at

²⁴⁷ The wording here, as are much of the ideas derive from Noeleen Murray's very significant paper, 'Mission Impossible? Revisiting the 'field' of cultural heritage production in the Eastern Cape', in *postamble*, 1 (2) 2005; 56-67, and especially pp 61-64.

community level are starting to exploit heritage for economic benefit of some kind. Also people at Mgwali are involved in the revival of Mgwali Mission Station to make it marketable to the outside world as a heritage site. In this marketing, they construct an argument which argues that their initiatives are synonymous with the development initiatives that were apparently “made by the late Reverend Tiyo Soga at Mgwali”. At the same time, the more general statement claims that the Tiyo Soga Development Trust was initiated in Mgwali to resuscitate and retrieve and preserve the legacy of Tiyo Soga (without qualification). These two views seem to run at odds to each other, and the imposition of Soga as forerunner of development seems to hold sway, even though the church and mission past seems to remain in contest with this view.

The ways that the TSDT has dealt with Soga and the mission experience from a cultural heritage and cultural tourism point of view, can largely be summarized in a few lines: they have attempted to obtain recognition for, and obtain funding to renovate the buildings deemed heritage worthy by the *Mission Settlements in South Africa Project*.²⁴⁸ In essence, the focus, via the Project report became internalized in the TSDT projects around two components:

- (a) the conservation of buildings, and their modernization and upgrade, particularly starting with the actual mission church building
- (b) the socio-economic development of mission communities, requiring the reorientation of development support structures

In order to trace what this actually meant, it is important to look at the TSDT a little more closely. It was founded in 1996 with twenty five members making up

²⁴⁸ This is clear from both documentation, and discussions with the TSDT. The Mission Settlements Project identified the Soga Mgwali Scottish Mission Church and various other buildings, including the school to be heritage worthy, based on a set of criteria related to architectural, historical and conservation worthy settlements, and that subsequent on the ruinous effects of apartheid and the struggle on their upkeep, Mgwali was suitable for conservation/development efforts. As Murray points out, this project emerged in 1991, a team of researchers was appointed by the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism in a project to evaluate the state of mission environments in South Africa since heritage practice has been the focus of much debate and a number of changes were taking place. Mgwali Mission was also the subject of that evaluation and was found to be worthy and suitable for conservation and development.

the committee to run its affairs. However the chairperson cannot specify what positions other members of the committee occupy.²⁴⁹ According to its chairman Mpucuko Maphukatha, though, “it is not economic driven ... its main objective is to preserve the ‘African culture’ and impart that wisdom to the younger generation”.²⁵⁰ The TSDT got funding in 1999 from Norwegian Development Agency (discussed further below) to renovate the site, start a skills development centre, computer training and business school. In 2003, TSDT was officially launched by the then Premier of the Eastern Cape, Nosimo Balindlela. It relies on Department of Arts and Culture to market it. They have a garden growing cabbages, pumpkins and potatoes which they sell. They also run a tuck-shop and its proceeds are equally distributed among the members, according to the chairperson.²⁵¹

The claim made by the chairman that the project is not economically driven is a bit problematic and ironic, however. Much as the claim of preservation of culture and heritage is at the core, the claim made by people responsible for community cultural projects at the local level that their objective is not about financial gain but about preservation, seems to be repeated and pervasive in their statements, or their words, but not in their deeds. Though heritage is thus also seen as an economic resource to be exploited by the TSDT to promote tourism, economic development and rural and urban regeneration, the economic dimensions seem to outweigh the heritage and cultural one’s which are really only paid lip-service to.

On the other hand, statements and press releases from government officials mean that the TSDT continues to insist that without doubt all new monuments and memorials (and they wish to create an ‘Tiyo Soga [Mission] Museum’ separate from the Mgwali Cultural Museum) will attract a large number of tourists which will herald infrastructural development, employment creation and poverty

²⁴⁹ Interview with Mpucuko Maphukatha, Mgwali Location, 19 June 2005.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Interview with Mpucuko Maphukatha, Mgwali location, 19 June 2005.

alleviation to the benefit and advantage of the previously disadvantaged community of Mgwali.²⁵²

The TSDT got its initial and substantial funding from the Norwegian Foundation for Development. The aim of the funding according to the chairman was “to use the funding for the preservation of Mgwali institution and bring it back to its former glory and status as it used to be during its inception as people from various walks of life descended and converged there to study”.²⁵³ Maphukatha argues further that in 1996, a memorandum of understanding and agreement was entered into between TSDT and Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism and the Department of Sport, Recreation, Arts and Culture at provincial level where the TSDT was given a grant from the national level with the aim of implementing a heritage tourism development project. Its aim, he says “was to empower and capacitate the local community in developing life skills that would sustain them beyond donor funding”.²⁵⁴ He continues:

No wonder why the project was named after Tiyo Soga. The idea behind the development project was to resuscitate the development spirit of the late Rev. Tiyo Soga that with the education he acquired, he would initiate development programmes for human economic development and sustainability in Mgwali. Much as Tiyo loved the British culture, its institutions and trappings of life and the benefits afforded by enlightenment, he wanted to reproduce that enlightenment amongst his own countrymen.²⁵⁵

In line with the above, the TSDT has managed to establish computer classes to equip local people in computer literacy and out of that initiative, twenty three local people have been “accredited with computer certificates”. Apart from the computer skills, the project has established good relations with the Uluntu Skills Development Centre in King William’s Town under the management of Mazomba. Through the Centre local people have been trained in animal husbandry and agronomy and in total forty people have benefited. At the time of

²⁵² See TSDT related interviews with ... and also their documentation, consulted on ... This point is made more generically by Marschall, S. (2005) ‘Making Money with Memories: The Fusion of Heritage, Tourism and Identity Formation in South Africa’. *Historia* (50) 1 May, pp. 103-122.

²⁵³ Interview with Mpucuko Maphukatha, 19 June 2005.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

the interview according to the chairperson of the TSDT, thirty other people were to undergo training in agronomy with the promise that the government will provide some “incentives in the form of stipends for the duration of the seven months for which they would be undergoing that training. When the training comes to an end it was hoped that the land used for the training would be theirs for good to exploit for economic survival”.²⁵⁶

As such, these project activities of the TSDT serve to illustrate and amplify the arguments made about the relationships between development, heritage and culture. Soga here is turned into a ‘rural developmentalist’ and his complex history (as sketched to in Ch 2) silenced while the concern to preserve his ‘African culture’ translated into development and empowerment needs. Heritage in the post-apartheid South Africa as it plays itself out in relation to the TSDT reflects how it is exploited for economic survival and poverty alleviation as it is touted as a solution to all the ills associated with poverty, while funding follows more conventional and heritage and preservation directed routes.

In terms of funding, the TSDT has been getting its financial support from non-governmental organizations and government statutory bodies. For example, in 2001, it received the Eighth Annual Restoration Award from Sanlam in conjunction with SAHRA and the Simon van der Stel Foundation worth a sum of R150 000 for the restoration of the church and dilapidated school buildings.²⁵⁷ That amount is nothing compared to the amount of work that still needs to be done there however and Murray notes that this amount “... must surely only have covered some basic maintenance and as such can it really be called striation, when the rest of the buildings at Mgwali are still in a state of near ruin?’. She continues: “As a gesture to the local community and its ‘life’, it seems that while welcome, the Sanlam Awards are more symbolic of big business’ need to show a contribution to a previously disadvantaged society rather than any meaningful or

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ Elias, L. ‘R150 000 awarded to Mgwali Mission’. www.dispatch.co.za. Accessed on 19 May 2007.

sustained involvement”.²⁵⁸ The present legal status of Mgwali Mission is that of a Provincial Heritage Site which was declared as such by the provincial office of SAHRA in 2003. However, as Murray also notes, the Mission Project has largely ‘disappeared’ and slipped off the regional agenda, failed to capture the attention as a high profile project, not been prioritized as an integrated conservation/development vision and ‘got lost’ in administrative, consultancy and bureaucratic inefficiencies.²⁵⁹

The only projects of note, apart from this ‘maintenance award’ and the actual situating of TSDT ‘offices’ in the Soga mission school/ college are ‘developmental’. It has a computer centre for training the local community members in computer, management and business skills. The Development Trust also serves as a tourist attraction to tourists and has chalets to accommodate tourists. The Mgwali connection/link that Soga developed in his lifetime with Scotland is continued. Though tourists from various places visit the institution, those who frequently visit are tourists from Scotland. Even the great-grand children of the late Reverend Tiyo Soga, Carole Gallagher together with her husband, visited the place in 2005 to “learn and hear about the life stories of their great-grand father”.²⁶⁰

However, all is not secure with the TSDT. On the one hand, relations with Mgwali Cultural Village are described most commonly as ‘political’. Tyhilelwa Bolana acknowledges these tensions between Tiyo Soga Development Project and MCV that might have marginalized Soga from the cultural village experience, but suggests that they are no longer there.²⁶¹ She further argues that if there are tourists about to visit MCV and who would want to see the Church and its interior, “they arrange with the person who is tasked with safe-keeping of the Church keys and do not encounter any problems with that”. However the tensions are

²⁵⁸ Murray, op cit, p.63.

²⁵⁹ Ibid, p.61

²⁶⁰ Interview with Carole Gallagher, Mgwali Location, 14 November 2005.

²⁶¹ Telephonic interview with Bolana, 1 February 2010.

still there: for example if a tourist, visiting the MCV “gets lost” and goes to Tiyo Soga Development Project, s/he will not be given directions to MCV. Instead they will usurp her/him as their tourist because they are jealous of tourists visiting MCV.²⁶²

Relatedly, Loyiso Simon who is a Heritage Officer in the Amahlathi Municipality, argued then that “the municipality does not have any good relations with Tiyo Soga Development Project which may hamper its development”.²⁶³ Simon stated that this tension “is informed by the fact that the TSDP is working in isolation and does not involve or invite the municipality in their activities”.²⁶⁴ One such example, witnessed during my various fieldwork visits in Mgwali. Was when the Tiyo Soga Development Project (TSDP) hosted the great granddaughter of Soga, Carole Gallagher in November 2005. The local municipality, that is Amahlathi Local municipality and the Amathole District Municipality were not invited to the occasion. They only heard about it through radio and newspapers.²⁶⁵

Much as the Tiyo Soga Development Project has potential and can use the great name of Tiyo Soga to market the project to attract tourists and funding, if the problems persist and they do not resolve their problems and contradictions with the local and district municipality, it will take years to achieve its intended objectives. The complexities of community struggles affected the development of TSDP. Despite a ten year period, it remains a project still struggling to find its

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ Interview with Loyiso Simon, Amahlathi Municipal Offices, Stutterheim, 16 February, 2006

²⁶⁴ Ibid. One other problem is that, after the research done by Border Rural Committee (BRC) on land claims in Mgwali, the Amathole District Municipality came up with a plan to take people who were evicted from farms closer to services which are in Mgwali. Its intentions were to divide Mgwali and allot plots to accommodate the evictees from farms. It planned to buy some land for the people who were evicted from the surrounding Bolo and Lujilo farms. However, a conflict ensued between the landowners who are also involved in the Church of Mgwali as congregants with the District Municipality. Earlier an agreement was entered into with the church to release some church land leaving only church buildings and Tiyo Soga’s house. The trust was not at its best between the TSDP and Municipality, more so with the landowners who also have some immense influence over the church. Some people had no problems with the release of land to the people but some who are influential had problems which hampered further development of Mgwali. Until such time that these problems and tensions are solved, argues Simon, the municipality will not force or involve itself in their activities.

²⁶⁵ Interview with Loyiso Simon, *ibid*; Observations made during the ceremony TSDT had in November 2005 and there were no officials invited both from Amahlathi and Amathole Municipalities.

feet. Issues of sustainability are yet to be achieved and at the same time power struggles within the project, and between it and the cultural village and local and provincial government continue to impede any progress.

More importantly, though, for the argument here, is that Noeleen Murray has recently commented on the 'present impossibility of restoring mission space'. She argues that this is not just, or even mainly because of lack of finance, resources, or government support, or inefficiencies and bureaucratic constraints. Rather she argues that these efforts at heritage are caught in a conservation/development 'trap' produced by the 'traditional methods used in heritage practice' (the 'field') and the ways that "agencies operate with regard to heritage projects and in particular in the context of the Eastern Cape where processes and opportunities for development remain indecipherable".²⁶⁶

In many respects, following Murray, the TSDT experience demonstrates both the actual real dynamics of this 'impossibility' and a related developmental 'indecipherability' in relation to heritage. The Mission church and buildings remain 'in ruin', are not restored, and despite attempts to market Mgwali on mission tour routes, these are largely unsuccessful. In this space, the TSDT has resorted to 'development' axis, legitimized by the *Mission Project Report*, attempting to provide skills, jobs, poverty alleviation and the like. But alongside this, the 'legacy of Tiyo Soga' has also slid back into what Murray calls the 'inherited tradition' of heritage in the TSDT, defined in relation to a re-emerging 'colonial field as a renewed site of prospect'. She relates this to the ways that in inherited tradition "... there is always the underlying sense that representations of history and culture are authentic and fixed to stable sanitized inheritances, more often than not static in their representation" and that these are infused with 'African' culture and imagery', romantic tracings of roots, and revisioning natural beauty, cultural uniqueness, political heritage and historical significance together on the ground

²⁶⁶ Murray, op cit. p.65.

made by the colonial field.²⁶⁷ Soga enters this inheritance and field as signified of 'African culture and wisdom', as the originator and thus having the roots to Mgwali, and with 'developmental spirit' and as providing a legacy of 'African enlightenment' once he recognized his 'African inheritance' over his British one's. Soga, then, through the TSDT becomes an authentic, sanitized, static African figure, "mobilized in this emerging new market [of Cultural Industries] and this framed against developmental discourses that are conceptualized around 'human needs' and are without historical context".²⁶⁸

And the interventions of the TSDT are largely indecipherable as heritage – but rather simply developmental under Soga's names, and 'without historical context', albeit mobilized by notions of mission preservation and legacy, or even African customs (but which essentially means a few coats of paint and minimal restoration, or providing lodgings/accommodation in the mission school) or 'enlightenment', which is re-translated as equitable with current notions of development (computer skills, agronomy projects, likened to Soga's imparting of mission education, Christianity, English, and new land holding systems).

Finally, though, this also enables me to argue that, while the 'politics' between TSDT and the MCV are important in explaining one aspect of why Soga largely disappears from the 'experiences' and tour organized by the MCV, what is much more important is the understanding that he is present, but invisibly so, in what, drawing on Murray, we might call the transfer of 'the Soga of the colonial field', constituted largely by the TSDT, but reproduced and extended by the MCV as

²⁶⁷ Ibid. This may be stretching what Murray argues in a particular direction, but I would argue does not mis-represent her argument.

²⁶⁸ Murray, op cit, p62; 64. I am able to argue this, in addition, because, as I argued in Ch3 above, and as Murray points powerfully out, the missions are spaces of hybrid identity, and that these landscapes, like at Mgwali, "can be read through other histories to those being presented in tourist and heritage discourses – through personal legacies, stories of dispossession and cultural transformation. And through colonial interactions, the 1976 riots and subsequent Bantu Education Policies and under Ciskei government, which resulted in the destruction of the landscape, deinstitutionalization and underdevelopment". She also points out that they were neither entirely urban nor rural, despite their current characterization as almost uniformly the latter, sites of refuge for Mfengu people and so on, and as such, they are spaces of hybrid identity and sites that disrupt traditional ideas of indigeneity and community."

the 'colonial field in which Soga is invisible', but is implicit there and located in expressions of 'Xhosa culture'. It is to these expressions and to that of the MCV and the 'community' that the final chapter turns.

Chapter Six

Cultural Dynamics and Contradictions at Mgwali Cultural Village

This final chapter shifts focus to looking more closely at the ways that 'culture' and 'heritage' are mobilized, used and understood in the Mgwali Cultural Village and in relation to the 'community' within which it is located. As such it is concerned with trying to understand the meanings attached to 'culture' and 'heritage' and to aspects related to authenticity, representation and display outlined in the first two chapters of the dissertation.

As has already been argued, during the apartheid era in South Africa, traditional African cultures were mostly hidden from the public gaze except for museum displays and governmentally supervised presentations. Since the demise of apartheid, the 'cultural village' as a platform to showcase and display "authentic" tribal life has become increasingly popular, and almost representative of showing 'tribal life' in public space. While a number of arguments suggest that the twin components of tourist requirements, expectation and its related commercialization and tourist structured consumption on the one hand, and developmental need and rural and 'village poverty' on the other drive the construction, functioning and meaning of cultural villages on the other, this chapter argues that these views are too simplistic.

Rather, it is suggested here, that the construction and reconstruction of views of authentic tribal life in these villages, if Mgwali Cultural Village is anything to go by, are also rooted in the ways that 'Africa' and particular understandings of culture, heritage and development are not only deployed, but simultaneously also 'lived' as the 'truth' of 'African culture' in various ways. In the process, other ways of understanding 'culture', and its relationships to pasts and to presents, and thus to history and heritage are silenced, and 'culture' is once again reduced to static, bounded and old ethnographic 'volkekunde' notions of authentic timeless Xhosa tribe, custom and ritual as indigenous, previously marginal, and equally necessary for recuperation and display. Witz et al, relatedly suggest that in

discovering and presenting their culture and heritage that had been “hidden and obscured from the public gaze ... the act of bringing out the past of ‘old traditions’ and historic sites to the open for the tourist gaze, is seen as a grand celebration of Africa’s heritage at last freed from cultural bondage”.²⁶⁹ As such, this is also what is described within and amongst ‘the community of Mgwali’ and not just for the tourist or visitor as ‘indigenous knowledge’, as the ‘hidden history’ of apartheid, and as what is ‘African’ and in this case, ‘Xhosa’. The activities and actions of the cultural village, then, it is argued, operate at a local public history level, as a form of localized ‘cultural museum’ to enable, consolidate, and reproduce these views.²⁷⁰

Finally, in relation to this view of the rooted expressions of culture and heritage located in the MCV, the chapter also seeks to argue, that it is the connections made between these ‘realities’ and the categories of resistance and development, and not simply as a throw back to apartheid and what Hughes has called “the reemergence of tribal thinking”,²⁷¹ that are as much responsible for these articulations as are tourist consumption and ‘staged poverty alleviation’ scenarios and explanations.

Relatedly, in the severely economically depressed rural areas, the form of the cultural village is one of the few ‘models’ that are seen to connect the local and global, and through tourism, to root the global in the local. As such, they also become, or seem to become, ‘globally public’ and operate as disproportionately important sites for community and public representation and ‘visibility’. Where present, they constitute and become the site of the new South Africa – connected, economic, interactive and bringing the foreign into the village as the only place for the many unskilled rural people in those areas to reach this status and acquire this ‘representivity’ outside of the polling booth and the political party.

²⁶⁹ Witz, L., Rassool, C. and Minkley, G. (2001) ‘Repackaging the past for South African tourism’. *Daedalus*, 130 (1), pp. 277-296.

²⁷⁰ Ibid, where they suggest that cultural villages have become a genre of cultural museum.

²⁷¹ Hughes, H. (2007) ‘Rainbow, renaissance, tribes and townships: tourism and heritage in South Africa since 1994. In Sakhela, B. et al (Eds) *The State of the Nation*. Cape Town: HSRC Press.

Looked at from the vantage point of the state, though, these apparent connections fold into the language and requirements of the developmental state. As such, cultural villages are promoted by various levels of government and local authorities from the side of development - as potential creators of employment and poverty alleviation.

As such, and not unexpectedly, concerns with working in the cultural village, and deriving income from it, shape both the performers involvement, and their perceptions of it in various ways. The responses I got to discussing issues of 'benefit' from the performers were varying, but all argue that "owing to the presence of a cultural village in their midst, they are benefiting".²⁷² Nosingile Waleni who became part of the cultural village in 2000 argues that "though it was the love of culture, monetary reward was also a factor driving her to join it". As a housewife, the money she accumulates from the performances "usually goes into buying household necessities that are needed like sugar and grain to feed her chicken". With her income she has also managed to buy herself "a pricey item" which she previously did not have, "a table", which she thinks if she was not a performer she would not be in a position to possess.²⁷³

Drawing out from this one example, but a view shared by many of the performers, a clear sense that people do aspire for material possessions and that these desires and motivations, rather than those concerned with preserving old customs influences the nature of both participation in the village and the willingness or commitment of the performers to influencing and shaping the content that is presented and performed in the cultural village. At one level, then, the re-enactment of culture and the staging of 'authentic Xhosa experiences' and the like are shaped then, by concerns for economic survival. However, Waleni also seems to have achieved self-fulfillment as a performer. This is gleaned when she states that:

²⁷² Interview, Nosingile Waleni, Mgwali Location, 16 August 2005.

²⁷³ Ibid.

I have been exposed by traveling and seen places and people which I would not be in a position to see if I was not a performer at the Cultural Village. For the first time in my life I appeared on television during NEPAD Conference in East London in July 2005 when we were performing there.²⁷⁴

From the above statement, concerns with self-satisfaction and exposure to a wider audience, through the appearance on television, also means there are benefits of recognition that are seen to attach to participating in the cultural village. (For survival, the performers are not solely dependent on tourists' visits, as from time to time they are invited by government departments to perform at their functions and are "generously rewarded financially".²⁷⁵)

Waleni feels proud, fulfilled and content as a performer at the cultural village. Her views on this matter, is shared by a number of other women who are the key participants and performers. Critically, part of this 'pride' then translates into the cultural side of their participation. Waleni feels strongly that she is "contributing to the revival, development and enhancement of her culture because even young children are taking notice of their culture because, after the activities at the cultural village, children will recite and perform in front of their parents and siblings what they have seen at the cultural village".²⁷⁶ She sees cultural villages as centres worthy of preservation and says they are "centres of learning and entertainment".²⁷⁷

Another performer, Nosinothi Bloom started performing at the cultural village at its inception in 1995 without any monetary expectations. When she received money, "it came as a surprise".²⁷⁸ Like Waleni, Bloom uses the money she accumulates from performances to purchase household items she requires at a given time, like electricity coupons, paraffin and candles. The money helps her to augment her old-age grant as she is a "housewife" and a grandmother occupied

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ Interview, Nosinothi Bloom, Mgwali Location, 16 August 2005.

with her household chores. She also feels, though that performing at the cultural village “enhances one’s culture in that through being constantly performed and displayed to a variety of audiences, they are taking culture to a higher level and enhancing it”.²⁷⁹

Nonkonzo Sifingo, also a performer at the cultural village, also sees it in a positive light because of the benefits, which according to her, it both affords her and for the way it enhances ‘culture’. As a “housewife” who is not working, through performances at the village she can have the much needed cash to take care of the household requirements as a woman. She uses the money to buy necessities like sugar and paraffin. She maintains that her life has been changed in that she has managed to buy herself some electrical appliances like an iron and a kettle which she did not have before she became a performer.²⁸⁰ She has also managed to buy herself a tea-set and says she can “look back with some pride at something she has done with the money” she has accumulated through her performances. She feels satisfied and content because besides financial benefits, she gets exposure and gets to know different kinds of people and places. She also says, that through working at the cultural village she now “sees them as entities worth to be preserved as it is where people can learn something about their culture and other people’s cultures and traditions”.²⁸¹

The members of the community share the sentiments echoed by the performers. For example, Lunga Nojilana is of the opinion that the lives of the people have changed, albeit in a small way.²⁸² He makes mention of himself as somebody who is benefiting. As an unemployed young man, he does cleaning work for the cultural village from time to time, whereupon he is rewarded financially. He says the “wider community also benefit by selling their products to tourists and other South Africans visiting the cultural village. The tourists visit their homesteads and

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Interview, Nonkonzo Sifingo, Mgwali Location, 18 August 2005.

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² Interview, Lunga Nojilana, Mgwali Location, 11 August, 2005.

take rounds chatting to the locals and if one is lucky enough, the tourists will leave him or her with some few rands”.²⁸³

In my discussion with the chairperson and manager of the cultural village, Tyhilelwa Bolana²⁸⁴ about the caption in their brochure, she was at pains to explain what they mean by ‘true African culture’. She makes mention of rituals that are practiced in the community like ‘imbeleko’, ‘ukuzila’, ‘ukukhapha’ and other rituals “where the tourists have an opportunity to experience at first hand for themselves how these rituals and ceremonies are performed. If there are such rituals when tourists are visiting, they are taken on a tour to those households that are performing those rituals”.²⁸⁵ She argues that those ceremonies are not pre-arranged to coincide with the arrival of tourists but that it is a coincidence that when tourists come, there are such ceremonies in the community. If there are no such rituals, the tourists are taken on a visit to a sangoma. She argues though, that if the above rituals are not “being performed to show to the tourists”, they show this “true African culture” through performances and displays at the cultural village and that these are “as true”.²⁸⁶

She also regards the performances by the cultural activists at the cultural village as African in that, in singing their songs during their performances, their rhymes and rhythms are original. They are not

guided by a professor or music teacher who will make some modifications to their style and rhythm, but theirs is inborn and natural. These are the songs they sing in the community when there are traditional beer gatherings and songs they sing when they were growing up at youth gatherings (called umtshotsho).²⁸⁷

In a sense this claim to an intimate knowledge of the songs and dances, then, is translated as being “inborn and natural”, and also spontaneous and ‘true’ to what would be sung in the community, then and now.

²⁸³ Ibid.

²⁸⁴ Interview with Tyhilelwa Bolana, Mgwali Location, 6 February, 2009.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.



However, on closer inspection, they are clearly not – but rather very selective and constructed, chosen around particular tourist imagined determinants. The chairperson chooses for the cultural activists what songs to sing for the tourists. The reason behind choosing which songs and dances the performers must perform, she argues,

is that sometimes the song is dull which will not spark any interest from the tourists. The songs must be fast and energetic, which arouses the enthusiasm of the tourists which results in them joining the dance crew. ... The interest of the tourists start with the entertainment which then is passed to the crafts and garments. The quality of performances persuades them to buy crafts and clothing items when they visit the stalls and leave generous tips.²⁸⁸

She argues, however, that the songs retain their ‘original’ meaning and usually the songs that are sung go like this: “‘Dumzela xa ungena emzini wam’ [which means that you cannot just enter someone’s house without knocking which would mean disrespect if you enter without knocking and respect if you knock in the African society]; Umntu osengxakini makajonge empumalanga, [meaning that a person who is in trouble or faced with problem must look to the East as it is where hope is said to be lying connected to how houses are constructed in societies, they face the easterly direction where the sun rises bringing a new day and hope] and ‘Ngokuya wawulamba wawungagezi kangaka, ngoku uyahlutha uyabagezela abantu’ [which loosely translated means that when ‘you were faced with poverty you were humble but now that you are better off, you look down upon people with disdain’].

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

The selection of these songs, then, while appearing “fast and energetic” for the tourists, and perhaps helping to persuade them to buy many crafts from the ‘market place’, is also not translated and their meanings are simply taken to be traditional ‘happy’ and ‘joyful’ songs, rooted in communal experience and showing timeless harmony and community togetherness.²⁸⁹ However, as the words illustrate, they are neither timeless, nor communal, but deeply shaped and formed by the current experiences of poverty, disrespect, frustration and hopelessness, and of internal ‘class’ differences, leading to ‘disdain’ and fragmentation, and of the search for alternatives.

As such, they could be read as an index of re-mobilising tradition of respect, hope, humility and belonging, but these are not the traditions that they are seen to exemplify. Rather more to the point, though, is that while they could serve to reflect internally fragmenting and possible resolutions of these histories and tensions in Mgwali, they are represented as simply vibrant, and energetic ‘welcoming songs’ to the tourists, and connected into stereotypical and exotic, bounded notions and traditions. Here, they are made to simply register connections to the sense that ‘Xhosa people’ wear traditional dress, dance, and sing, and operate to register entry into this timeless oral based and performative ‘culture’ that is, to use MCV’s chairperson’s (Ms Bolana’s) terms, ‘inborn and natural’.²⁹⁰ (Put differently, it could be educational and informative in the sense that it reminds people that they must not forget their roots and background when they have achieved success, but it does not construct these senses in the public space of the cultural village).

The form and content of the songs are also further problematised through the fact that the majority of the people in Mgwali are Christians. This means that

²⁸⁹ Interviews with tourists, where their overwhelming impression was that the songs were uplifting, happy and full of the vibrancy and simplicity of ‘Xhosa folk’ and their ‘simple’ ‘old’ ways of life, showing their deep sense of community, Mgwali Cultural Village, Mgwali, 25 July 2007.

²⁹⁰ Ibid, quoted above.

tensions between Christianity and indigenous customs and traditions are also visible in the community. People attend Church and still practice their 'customs' and the resulting 'hybridization' between them as meant that, amongst many other aspects, that tradition is by no means timeless, inborn and natural in Mgwali. This cross-influence can also be seen in traditional beer-drinking gatherings in the community where hymns that are sung in the church have been appropriated and modified for their purposes.²⁹¹ Songs such as 'Yona and the sinking ship' and 'Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden', and many others found in the Bible, are sung in traditional beer gatherings in the community and at the cultural village for visitors.²⁹² Ms Bolana, (chairperson of the cultural village), says that at home she is a 'true Christian' and therefore "at her home [she] is not practicing these African customs", but that this did not stop her from "promoting African traditions and cultures at the cultural village, as Soga was a Christian but at the same time an advocate for the promotion, advancement and preservation of African norms and values".²⁹³

To what extent might we call this a frontstage and a backstage, following MacCannell? In some respects it does resemble these categorizations – the songs and dances performed at Mgwali registering one set of meanings for tourists, while the actual content and forms of the songs performed reflecting a more complex and nuanced set of decisions, meanings and relationships to both the performers, and to members of the community. Before exploring this further, though, I want to also examine the ways that the 'market place' also potentially reflects on these divisions.

There are many stalls for people to display their craft and wares when there are tourists visiting Mgwali Cultural Village. Originally constructed to also operate as

²⁹¹ Even people who do not attend Church, it shows that they are not immune from Christian influences and by extension European and modern cultural influences.

²⁹² Interview with Tyhilelwa Bolana, Mgwali Location, 6 February 2009 and observations made during visits.

²⁹³ Ibid. It is worth noting here, how the language of heritage finds its way into here commentary and explanations, through such terms as preservation, and norms and values, and so on.

a 'local market' on days like 'pension day', the 'market place' has now become only functional when tourists visit. On these days, only 'traditional craft' is on sale, and as such, it can be read as the 'frontstage of craft'.

However, the unfortunate part is that there are not many tourists and so the stalls remain almost constantly empty (except when the village has visitors), and no longer even function on pension day. The craft people and particularly especially two groups of women who sew traditional garments do so inside the workshops. Other craft production practices, like pipe making seem to be largely moribund.



However, at the sewing workshops, a variety of traditional garments are on display for visitors to see.



Fig. 9(a)



Fig. 9(b)

These two pictures are of one of these sewing projects, the Savuka Sewing Project whose local advert board is seen in fig. 9(a).²⁹⁴ It advertises not just traditional wear like the imibhaco, but also school uniforms, 'mans wear' and also women's clothing which are functional and everyday, and sewn for sale to the local communities. These clothes are designed or produced for tourists. Fig. 9(b) shows the items they are selling displayed for any interested person to buy. The items seen range from traditional imibhaco worn by women with modern appeal, traditional made suites for men and waistcoats, uniforms, bed cushions, pillows and school uniforms. The women can be seen in the picture busy at their modern electrical machines doing what "they know and love best for their survival".²⁹⁵

Noluntu Ntame, who owns Savuka Sewing Project together with her husband, started out as a weaver, weaving cloth and selling it at the 'market place'. When the MCV came into being she stopped weaving and formed Savuka Sewing Project. She is assisted in the project by her assistant, Noluntu Madolwana. She used the money she accumulated whilst she was still weaving to purchase two electric sewing machines. The business is thriving and sustainable because it is not solely dependent on the purchases made by tourists and visitors as they do not frequent the area throughout the year. For example, according to Ntame, "throughout 2005 and 2006 there were no tourists who visited the Cultural Village and there have not been many since then".²⁹⁶ Rather, it is people from within and from nearby farms who make purchases and also "mostly officials from Sport, Recreation and Arts from the Province buy their traditional wear" from the sewing project. At the same time, the Savuka Sewing Project and the crafters from the Cultural Village more generally "are always invited at government functions to perform and display their crafts and sewn materials".²⁹⁷

²⁹⁴ Photographs taken by myself on 17 November 2005 at Mgwali Cultural Village in Mgwali.

²⁹⁵ Interview with Nolungile Ntame, Mgwali Location, 18 October 2005.

²⁹⁶ Ibid. and this was confirmed by other interviews as well, and by own experiences researching there.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

Another project within the MCV is Masincedane Sewing Project. It was a project that “was envisaged to include all women of Mgwali to create employment among them to alleviate poverty”.²⁹⁸ As has already been mentioned it started before the new political dispensation in 1994 and the person in charge was the late Nontsokolo Bolana, who was also chairperson of the MCV as well. It was funded Operation Hunger which donated a lot of sewing machines to be used by the women.

However, later in the 1990s, there were “some squabbles and controversies and some people became disillusioned and left the project. People who were influential politically took some of the sewing machines and gave them to projects in other areas and only two machines were left from those that were donated by Operation Hunger”.²⁹⁹ After that, Stutterheim Development Foundation got involved and donated some sewing machines and start-up capital to buy the required cloth for sewing. The people now in charge of this project are Nolungile Kotobe and Nolulamile Kosani together with their assistants, NomaXhosa Nguba and Xoliswa Stofile. They also sew traditional garments and their target market is tourists, though they cannot be dependent on tourists for their economic survival, because of the scarcity of tourist visits. As with the Savuka Sewing Project, people who make most of the purchases are local people from the community and surrounding area, and government officials from the Department of Sport, Recreation, Arts and Culture.³⁰⁰

Both these two sewing projects attend the Grahamstown National Arts Festival to display their products to festival goers.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Interviews with Bolana and Ntame, Mgwali Location, 17 and 18 October 2005.

³⁰⁰ Ibid.



Fig. 10 (a)



Fig. 10(b)

The picture in figure 10 (a) shows Nolulamile Kosani busy at her work. If one looks closely on the table, there is a logbook which each and every person who enters their project has to sign. This makes it easy for them to ascertain as to how many people have visited their workshop over a month or a year. Also the purchases made by the visitors are registered in the logbook. It shows that the major source of income is derived from local sales, although the occasional tourist sale usually generates higher prices for fewer items sold.³⁰¹ Figure 10(b) shows one of the assistants in the project, Xoliswa Stofile making final touches to the garment she has sewn. On her right one can see the kinds of garments they are sewing displayed on the rack. These include a variety of traditional dresses with a modern touch.

These garments can be described as hybrid as they both draw from tradition and modern styles and cuts and are designed in such a way as to allow for them to be worn for any occasion or social gathering. They also make modern inflected traditional shawls and traditional-looking purses which can be used for storing tobacco, or cosmetics. It can also be used by women to carry their cosmetics. These items of clothing, then, while retaining what are seen as 'traditional' colours, beading and 'trims', do not conform to tradition when it comes to cut, design, and to the arrangements of the decorative aspects, which are all determined by associations of colour and design, particularly of beads. However,

³⁰¹ Photographs taken on 17 November 2005 and the information from the logbook confirm these transactions.

while these garments have a market amongst the Province's government officials and 'leaders', worn as a sign of their 'African-ess' and their association to indigenous Xhosa culture; they are also sold to tourists as truly African traditional garments, when clearly they are 'staged', or perhaps more accurately produced as re-imagined and reconstituted traditional attire. As such their traditional value is determined more by the reproduction and association of a set of colours (orange, cream, blue's, German print cloth, etc) with beads and trimmings randomly, aesthetically and most commonly arranged and determined by the volumes and content of stock available, then by any traditional significance, or customary or ritual determination.

It is also worth noting that one form of cloth, German print cloth, which was also called "kaffir cloth"³⁰² by the traders and material industry for many years, as an index and symbol of its association to "redness" or traditional African clothing and society, was actually material that was designed, imported and sold in South Africa and the Eastern Cape from Holland. In this sense, the social life of things³⁰³, like material, needs to also be looked at, in terms of their apparent traditional and Xhosa basis. What became traditional was initially 'foreign', and the processes of its localization and its acquisition as traditional and African (or Xhosa) status is historical and social, as is any aspect of what becomes heralded as the traditional, or the 'true culture'.

These same questions apply to the 'traditional meals produced, supposedly cooked over an 'open fire' (where as in fact, most are cooked on stoves and particularly some dishes on paraffin stoves as well) and consisting of foods that people apparently eat everyday. This range of 'traditional food' is also problematic in similar kinds of ways, in that it defines food for Africans in tribal, traditional and primitive terms. People eat the foods they do – samp, mfino, pumpkin and potatoes, for example, not just because 'culture' tells them to do

³⁰² A racist term as an index of its association with 'Red' or traditional African clothing.

³⁰³ See A. Appadurai, *The Social Life of Things*, for a discussion of these ideas associated with material objects and their social lives.

and have always done so, but because these foodstuffs are able to be and have grown in terms of environmental and material determinations of poverty and household need.³⁰⁴

Taking the argument above further, the question then that needs to be asked is: How true or to what extent is that 'true African culture' is true? To what extent is the so-called 'traditional food', traditional? Does the cooking of it on an open fire make it traditional? Or are the ingredients used to make/cook it that which make it traditional? The term 'true African culture' is problematic in that it closes out other influences that may have contributed to its evolution. It inserts them within the paradigm of primitiveness and tribalism that they were a closed and isolated society, not influenced by colonial culture, missionary and Christian values, by modernity and capitalism, by forms of racism, or western forms of education (as it did to their revered and celebrated icon Rev. Tiyo Soga who they claim his legacy as having influenced them). For example, the so-called 'traditional' food served to the tourists, which in many instances would also include samp, is the end-product of networks of maize production and diffusion originating in the Americas. That it is now constituted as the traditional foodstuff has as much to do with 'consuming geographies' of colonization, poverty, famine, and class, as it does with any constructions of it as 'indigenous' and traditional because of histories of taste and custom.³⁰⁵

I want to return, though, to the 'traditional performances in the form of dance and music', which are one of the main focal attractions of the cultural village, as visiting tourists are seen to be "most interested in seeing the Africans stomping their feet when dancing"³⁰⁶ in order to draw out the discussion further. As has already been argued the performances that are rendered at Mgwali Cultural

³⁰⁴ This kind of interpretation pertaining to food when it comes to Africans perpetuates the simplistic interpretation and analysis of UNESCO where heritage in Africa and Asia is often envisaged through forms of traditional and popular folk cultures that include languages, music, dance, rituals, food and folklore.

³⁰⁵ Crais, C. (1992). *The making of the Colonial Order: White Supremacy and Black Resistance in the Eastern Cape, 1770-1865*. Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press.

³⁰⁶ Interview with Bolana, Mgwali Location, 6 February, 2009.

Village are those that the people in charge of the CV think that will mostly appeal to the wishes and fantasies and imaginations of the tourists and in many respects their gaze and 'expectations reproduce the colonial gaze (as has been argued above).³⁰⁷ This means that the dances and performances done at the CV are modified and repackaged ones, not the actual ceremonial, ritual and customary dances done at the local village level. But they are performed as if 'genuine' and the tourists cannot draw this differentiation. Hobsbawm and Ranger argue that the 'invented traditions' of African societies whether by Europeans or Africans themselves in response to the European invention of their traditions, changed the past but nevertheless became realities through which the colonial encounter was expressed.³⁰⁸ The recent debate and critique of the idea of 'inventing tradition' has been reformulated to thinking the process through the term re-imagining, because as Hamilton has argued, the traditions and social practices were there in the first place, but were 'remade' and re-imagined', and thus not solely 'invented' as if from nothing.³⁰⁹

The performers and performances at the cultural village can be equated to this process of re-imagining of tradition, where, as the performances are refashioned and repackaged, they also, through the actual public space and presence of the cultural village and its activities, are re-imagined not just for tourist consumption, but locally. Thus, the meanings and practices ascribed to 'true African culture' and tradition in the cultural village, derive from existing practices, are re-imagined, but also, in turn, become important for re-imagining and re-defining

³⁰⁷ The tourists gaze upon landscapes and townscapes which are unfamiliar to them with curiosity thus detaching them from the everyday experience and they are looked upon because they are out of the ordinary. The people are then lingering over such a gaze which then results in that gaze being objectified and captured through photographs, models and postcards thus enabling the gaze to be constantly reproduced and recaptured. Africans are then in their acts of performances and dance rituals at the cultural village remain the object of the colonialist gaze.

³⁰⁸ Hobsbawm, E. & Ranger, T. (1983) *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

³⁰⁹ Hamilton, C. (1997) 'Restructuring within the Zulu Royal House. Clan Splitting and the Consolidation of Royal Power and Resources under Shaka' in McAllister, P. (ed.) *Culture and Commonplace*. Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press. For example, she argues that under the rule of Shaka traditions were reimagined through the process of 'ukudabula'. The process involved the constituting of additional 'izibongo', permitting intermarriages between people with the same clan names which were not the tradition previously.

African tradition and culture in the wider village and more widely than this (because of the role of cultural villages in a broader, more far reaching set of public discourses and meanings produced through heritage and tourism). Let me try and build this argument below.

Urry argues that the gaze is constituted through signs and that tourism involves particular 'collections of signs'³¹⁰ and in this case Mgwali Cultural Village also becomes a 'collection of signs' related to African culture and tradition. Therefore, using Urry's logic, what the tourists see when they see African people performing their traditional dances, engage their traditional dress, and eat traditional food cooked on open fires, these are all signs which enable a racialised gaze upon bound and 'timeless indigenous society and its people'. On the other hand, the performers relate and constitute these same signs because of heritage and tourist discourses that define African culture and tradition as being constituted around ritual, folklore, oral performance, song, indigenous craft, etc. As far as people in Mgwali are concerned, cultural villages show and perform African culture, and this is made up of the signs of performance, dress, craft, oral traditions, rituals and ancient beliefs and practices, including 'witchcraft' and 'sangoma's healing.

In addition, drawing from Harrison, it is also the argument of this chapter that the African body dressed and performing in certain ways, itself becomes a sign of traditional African society. This visible body as sign is 'contained' in representations of timeless tradition.³¹¹ Performers have to be constantly present at the village to dress, sing and render their rituals and performances for the tourists, when demanded upon. This is the scenario because the tourists are the paying customers and the performers the employees. The performances have to

³¹⁰ Urry, J. (1990) *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies*, London: Sage Publications. He makes mention of people kissing in Paris and what the tourists will be getting from that gaze is 'timeless romantic Paris' and if they see a small village in England, what they gaze upon is the 'real olde England'.

³¹¹ Harrison, J. (1997) 'Museums as Agencies of Neocolonialism in a Postmodern World'. *Journal of Studies in Cultures, Organizations and Societies*, Vol. 3, pp. 41-65.

be performed at any time there are tourists visiting, and do not comply with the times and spaces of these rituals in everyday society. Customs and rituals that are 'sacred and sacrosanct to the African community' and its people have to be performed and displayed at any time for tourist consumption thus also depreciating their value, in that these 'cultural products' have to be constantly repackaged to meet the schedules and expectations, and requirements of the tourists. This is all apparent at Mgwali as is demonstrated above (see ch3 in particular).

Ooi, amongst others has argued that for tourists to attach any inherent value or appreciate the local product, cognitive resources and information have to be given so as to enable them to fully indulge and appreciate the products. This certainly does not happen in any detail at Mgwali, with the guide and the visit being centered and performed as if what the tourist sees and experiences takes place every day, and requires no explanation, translation, or 'cognitive' engagement. Rather, at Mgwali, what Ooi has termed the 'decentring of cultures' takes place as Ms Bolana, the chairperson, or Ncamiso Kotobe, a tour guide, and the other MCV mediators select, accentuate and aestheticize local cultural performances and products to capture the imagination of tourists in an appealing and alluring manner.³¹²

At the same time, as is exemplified by Andrea and Jurgen in the tourist blog quoted above, and by other visitors interviewed³¹³ the tourists believe that what they are seeing and consuming is genuine, even in the context of an understanding that it is commercialized and touristic. Ooi calls this process the 're-centring of culture' and that is what takes place, not just as a tourist experience, but in the village as a whole and beyond the cultural village. While

³¹² Ooi, C. (2002) *Cultural tourism and tourism cultures: the business of mediating experiences in Copenhagen and Singapore*. Denmark: Copenhagen Business School Press.

³¹³ As has been pointed out, actual tours to Mgwali are irregular and few and far between, and as a result, actual interviews with tourist were difficult, but also limited in volume. Of visitors interviewed, the overwhelming majority where 'foreign' and shared the view of it as a 'true African and Xhosa experience', as claimed in the brochures.

there is a recognition that the dance performances done, for example, are staged, as is the 'market place', and the meal, or even the visit to the sangoma, the majority of participants working in the cultural village also argue that these are reflections of their lived experiences. Nonkonzo Sifingo, for example, understands 'culture' to mean the lived cultures they are practicing in their local communities and which, in the cultural village, are done in the form of displays and performances. She argues that what is happening at the cultural village is a reflection of her lived culture, "although in the location the rituals and performances are done on special occasions under special circumstances and strict rules which have to be adhered to unlike in the cultural village where the rituals and the dance rituals are done anytime of the year when there are tourists and would like to see those performances".³¹⁴

For Sifingo and others, apart from issues of 'occasion', the main point they make is that what is performed in the cultural village experience is that they are "not elaborate and intricate, they are just simple dances". The re-centring of this more simplified sense of culture, means, though, that a more crystallized and focused, and also less contested view is produced in the cultural village and in people's own understandings. In essence a still more narrow and selective stereotype, but one that is seen to still remain 'true Xhosa culture', as far as the performers and members of the cultural village are concerned, can be seen to be produced.

Thus, even though the tourists "do not have the opportunity to see rituals like 'umngqungqo', 'ibhasi' (dance-party of married man) or 'umtshilo wabakhwetha (initiates' dance)" and other rituals, for the performers at MCV this does not detract from the authenticity and truth of the cultural village experience. Thus, Nozinzile Wotshela, also a performer at the cultural village echoes the same sentiments echoed by Nonkonzo Sifingo albeit in a slightly different way. She understands culture to mean "the way of living and doing things in the traditional". She does however acknowledge "that some modern and foreign influences have

³¹⁴ Interview with Nonkonzo Sifingo, Mgwali Location, 18 October, 2005.

crept in and things have changed”, but that at the cultural village their traditional dances, the way they dress in African traditional way and the beads they put on accurately “reflects on the past heritage”.³¹⁵ She argues further that “at the community level, we wear our traditional attire on special occasions when there is a traditional ceremony in the location and pay homage to the hosts” and that it is this same attire that is worn and shown in the cultural village.³¹⁶

While she says that they do not wear the traditional attire on a daily basis whereas “in the cultural village, anytime there are tourists, they are expected to parade and dance wearing their traditional attire” and also acknowledges that at the cultural village the rituals and dance performances are “not done in their entirety” (a sentiment also strongly shared by other performers) but that they do get the essence, the ‘main points’ of this culture.³¹⁷ So, for many of the performers, then, while they select “what they think will appeal to tourists” or “what they are comfortable at doing on a particular day”, and also acknowledge further that the time the tourists spend with them is “not enough and cannot therefore in such a short space of time to have learnt more about the local cultures and traditions”, they always receive what is essential to know – the things like dress and song, the huts and family space and custom, food, a visit to the ‘sangoma’ and the important rituals like male (ulwaluko) and female (Intonjane) initiation, imbeleko, ubuhlanti (kraal) and the things like usoze (seats), intsika (pillar) and iziko (fireplace).³¹⁸ Interestingly, and very importantly, none mention either Tiyo Soga or the ‘culture of resistance as key aspects relating to this true culture experienced in the cultural village in Mgwali.³¹⁹

Nomute Krakra, born, grew up and married in Mgwali and has lived their all her life, and who took part in the 1980s resistance understands culture as “meaning

³¹⁵ Interview with Nozinzile Wotshela, Mgwali Location, 16 October 2005.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

³¹⁷ Interview with performers at Mgwali, 15, 16 and 17 October 2005.

³¹⁸ These are the list of key aspects identified, ‘experienced’ and learnt through the visit, for the tourist, according to the prevalent view amongst the performers and members of the MCV, Interviews with performers, 15, 16 and 17 October 2005.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

many things, for example the way we do things in society and how women, men and children are expected to behave in a certain way in the society". It also entails the "practicing of our culture like female initiation, male initiation and imbeleko (equivalent of a birthday party)".³²⁰ She sees culture at the cultural village as a reflection of cultural values in society like the traditional music and dance, pipe-making and weaving which according to her "are the things they do in the village". Song and dance is performed anytime tourists are around whilst in the community they are done on special occasions, but they are the same, as far as she is concerned. However in the village the "songs can be sung even during the time of sorrow or happiness, or when they have a casual traditional drinking gathering. When the revelers start to get into the mood of drinking, they will start composing songs and sing for the joy of it", like what happens at the cultural village.³²¹

During my fieldwork I also interviewed a number of people from Mgwali who are not directly involved with the Cultural Village.³²² The overwhelming majority of the people interviewed in this context stated that they "feel" like they are part of the cultural village, even if they do not directly work or visit, or participate in its activities. In essence, they say that the cultural village has not changed the village at all, in terms of presence there, except to bring opportunities and to "make our culture more visible and acknowledged", as one person put it.³²³

They all seem to be "singing from the same hymn book " as they see it (the CV) in a positive light and that it plays a pivotal role in enhancing and reviving their traditional cultural ways. Many also say that Mgwali has had many influences like

³²⁰ Interview with Nomute Krakra, Mgwali location, 19 October, 2005.

³²¹ Ibid. Besides performing, Nomute weaves traditional mats, izithebe, traditional dresses and dolls to sell. She attends Grahamstown National Arts Festival yearly to market and sell her products to the throngs of festival-goers descending on Grahamstown every year though she did not attend this year's festival.

³²² I conducted around 30 interviews (half in August 2005 and the other half in August 2009) with non-participants' in the village. This was done to get diverse views and from a wide spectrum. The majority of the local people I had the opportunity and privilege to interview, was a mixture of elders, middle-aged and youth.

³²³ Interview with various local residents at Mgwali location, 13 August 2009.

Missionary and Christian influences, and then also apartheid and Ciskei government influences, which has “broken down these traditional ways” over the years, and so they need to be both revived and protected and the cultural village is helping to do this.³²⁴ Some also feel that they have been made more aware of the “diverse cultures of the African” and are “now in a position to know the diverse cultures of different clans within the Xhosa communities”.³²⁵

Many also argue that it had afforded the community “much needed employment opportunities which are very scarce albeit on a temporary basis”.³²⁶ Diko also says

I see benefits of the cultural village spreading to the wider community because when there are tourists, locals benefit by selling their wares and crafts at the market. Some are given gifts by tourists like washing powder, bar soap, T-shirts, sweets and playing balls for kids.³²⁷

Zoleka Gontshi also says that the MCV goes “a long way in changing the lives of the locals even if one is not benefiting directly”. She argues that their “parents and the community sell their traditional crafts and the like, to tourists at a good bargain to supplement the little they have. ... It also inculcates [in her] a sense of the importance of culture”. The cultural exchange between the community and the tourists benefit the local people “... cultural and financially owing to the exchange of cultural wares and money between them and the tourists”.³²⁸

Lunga Nojilana, an unemployed middle-aged man, a resident of Mgwali, born and raised there, explains his situation that:

The construction of the cultural village has changed the lives of the people within the community including mine. School children from the local schools are made more aware of their culture and to value it at a tender age owing to the cultural activities happening at the cultural village. I have also been made more aware of the complex and intricate culture of the African people I had no

³²⁴ Interviews, op cit.

³²⁵ Ibid.

³²⁶ Ibid.

³²⁷ Interview with Thabile Diko, Mgwali Location, 11 August, 2005.

³²⁸ Interview with Zanele Gontshi, Mgwali location, 11 August 2005.

knowledge of before the construction of the cultural village.³²⁹

Many interviewees, though, were primarily concerned with the amount of time tourists spend in the cultural village: “They either spend one or two hours which is not enough for them to make any meaningful grasp of the culture of the locals except to capture them in photographs ... they must either spend more hours or the whole day” is how interviewer put it.³³⁰

Thabile Diko, a young man, argues that the cultural village has developed his cultural knowledge and enthusiasm. He sees what is depicted and displayed at the cultural village through performances and narration as a reflection of what happens at community level and is proud of that. He however acknowledges that “they are not done with the same meaning and intricate detail as it would be in real life village situation. They are also not done at the right time and place though they capture the essence of our culture”.³³¹

What is ironic and a bit puzzling from all the interviews I conducted with the local villagers who are not directly involved with the cultural village, is the absence or silence about the resistance removals, and the story of Tiyo Soga, who is the central figure in the history of Mgwali. These figures and historical events, for them, it seems, as much as for the cultural village and its own definitions and performances, are disappearing under the heritage of an ‘inherited tradition’ where representations of history and culture are authentic ‘Xhosa’, fixed to stable sanitised generic ‘cultural’ ritual and custom inheritances and static in their location of these traditions as unchangingly African and indigenous, rooted in a timeless but pre-colonial past.

Finally then, even if visitors and tourists, or even local people from the community, only get a glimpse of ‘traditional culture’ through narration and short performances and dances in the cultural village, these glimpses are re-translated

³²⁹ Interview with Lunga Nojilana, Mgwali Location, 11 August 2005.

³³⁰ Ibid.

³³¹ Ibid.

back into the community as the foundation blocks of defining 'culture' more generally. It is these traditional, authentic and timeless rituals and customs, crafts and performances which re-centre and determine local definitions of what is meant by 'culture'. In short, it, in turn re-tribalizes culture in the name of indigenous and African definitions, but where, ironically, the invisible defining features are those of the colonial field.

In effect, what this also means is that the 'histories of dispute' (as Murray calls them); the resistance songs, the t-shirts, the legacies of the residents association, the hybrid engagements of Soga and African Christianity and alternative modernities and 'enlightenments' are both removed from, or not seen or remembered or engaged as 'culture', or related to 'being Xhosa' (whatever that might mean) or 'being African'. 'Culture', defined in and through the cultural village, and increasingly reproduced at village level, and reinforced in and through development projects and heritage interventions 'inherits' a tradition that re-inserts 'the Xhosa tribe' and its timeless rituals and customs as authentically indigenous and African.

Chapter seven

Conclusion

This dissertation has attempted an in-depth study of the Mgwali Cultural Village. As was suggested in the Introduction, the Mgwali Cultural Village seemed to promise much: as a community owned and managed cultural village located in the village of Mgwali which has rich and detailed local histories of origin, encounters with racial and religious modernity, resistance and dispute. Aspects of these narratives, concentrating on the histories and legacies of Tiyo Soga, African Christianity and the mission as a space of hybrid identities, following Noeleen Murray, on the one hand, and the components that feature in a layered history of resistance to removals and relocation in terms of apartheid and Ciskei Bantustan politics on the other, are explored as significant local histories detailing this promise. It was expected, then, that Mgwali Cultural Village would be different. Different in the sense that the community and its histories would itself 'dispute' the conventional understandings and practices depicted for the majority of cultural villages (and outlined in Chapter Two), but also different in the sense that it might offer an opposing understanding of the possibilities of cultural villages in the post-apartheid heritage and tourist landscape.

However, as is argued here, these expectations were not met, and the MCV can be seen to conform to many of the characteristics that are seen to be held for cultural villages more generally. Chapters Four to Six, in particular, demonstrate how the MCV, despite certain 'interruptions' containing aspects of the histories of dispute (as located in part of the Mgwali Museum and described in Chapter 4) actually ends up emphasizing a view of the past and of culture and heritage that is authentic, timeless and traditional. As such, as Witz et al, Murray and Hughes, amongst many others, have argued, this has meant that MCV underscores a "celebration of the return to 'tribal thinking'" or of a view that can be seen as one which 'retribalizes' the past and which, thorough the MCV authenticates a

traditional custom-bound Xhosa indigeneity as indigenous and African.³³² This also finds Eastern Cape in agreement with Minkley's recent arguments about the ways that particular historical racial and racialised tribal constructions of tradition are mobilized and defined within heritage discourses as indigenous and African³³³, or with Murray's arguments about how the 'colonial field' has been 'renewed as a site of prospect' by heritage and development, serving to fit comfortably within the dominant idea of heritage as 'inherited tradition' where "representations of history and culture are authentic and fixed to stable sanitized inheritances, more often than not static in their representations".³³⁴

As importantly then, this "authentic Xhosa experience" and tradition, as the MCV describes and explains it (and which is discussed in Chapter Four), is what comes to be defined as 'African culture'. In fact, it is argued in the dissertation overall, that if the MCV is anything to go by, and if this study can be generalized, it is that this is the real work that cultural villages do in relation to heritage. They ground and make public and representational (through the poetics and politics of representation as discussed in the Introduction) this particular definition of 'African' and 'indigenous culture' that becomes increasingly 'universalized' and accepted. As such, this definition of African culture then becomes the 'inherited tradition' of the real Xhosa experience, not just for tourists, but for people in their communities as well.

Chapters Five and Six attempt, in particular, to demonstrate what this actually means in Mgwali. Drawing on various discussions, the chapters argue that representations of pasts are variously reduced to these inherited traditions that are timeless, authentic, and bound, and that alongside these, 'histories of dispute' are silenced and excluded.

³³² Hughes, H. (2007) 'Rainbow, renaissance, tribes and townships: tourism and heritage in South Africa since 1994. In Sakhela B. et al (Eds) *The State of the Nation*. Cape Town: HSRC Press.

³³³ See Minkley, G. 'A fragile inheritor', *Kronos*, 34, November 2008, pp16-40.

³³⁴ Murray, N. 'Mission Impossible? Revisiting the 'field' of cultural heritage production in the Eastern Cape'. *Postamble*, 1 (2), 2005.

However, the dissertation attempts to argue that these silences and exclusions are not simply or only determined by either tourist industry and consumption explanations (albeit that they are shown to be important), or by local economic need models, which emphasize a front-stage/back-stage scenario of 'staging authenticity (and discussed in the Introduction and Chapter One) and manipulating tradition to satisfy tourist demand and local employment and economic needs.

Rather, the dissertation tries to show that the dynamics that determine the form and content of the MCV in relation to 'culture' and performance as being located in this authentic and traditional 'Xhosa experience' definition and use is tied into local intersecting relations and realities. In particular, the ways that resistance, self-help and development (as explored in Chapter Five) intersect with the origins, setting up, evolution and operating basis of the MCV, means that they shape and influence how 'culture' comes to be defined in these narrow and exclusionary terms. The further intersections with and into tourist and heritage discourses are also examined and the conclusions reached are that the emergence of a local MCV defined inherited tradition and authenticated Xhosa experience is the result of these local real and connected community intersections. It is therefore problematic to see the outcome as reflecting processes of 'de-centring and re-centring of culture' determined by economic need and interests, lying somewhere 'outside' the community, or as being 'staged' while the real true 'culture' (perhaps assumed to consist of histories of dispute because of the resistance narrative) of the community and supposedly much more vital sense of the pasts, history and struggle is held elsewhere, to be drawn on when really needed and required.

The inherited tradition of 'culture', rather, is what 'culture' has come to mean in Mgwali, and the MCV has been instrumental in constituting, and then sustaining, deepening and extending these conceptions into real and lived terms. From my own point of view, this is deeply troubling, because a very narrow, bound and

problematic understanding attaches to this, which has considerable elements and components which are the result of colonial, apartheid, tribal and racialised ways of imagined being in the world. And it is a short step from this, to understanding how the MCV reduces the 'heritage of resistance to colonialism and apartheid' into the 'progress thesis' of an African [Xhosa] 'inherited tradition' much more strongly, visibly and consistently, setting it out as Ashworth (referred to in the Introduction) suggests in constructing an "inevitable sequence of improvement to arrive at the 'completed present'."³³⁵ It is chronologically simple, easy to comprehend and avoids complications and easily falls into a dominant national history that is now re-inserting African – even if formed and based as indigenous and traditional – as the route to an improved present of prosperity. The fact that African traditions are now being preserved and that one can have a "true Xhosa experience", and that customs and rituals are African, and show 'real African culture, are tied to both its inherited tradition on the one hand and its 'use' in building prosperity, creating jobs, raising standards of living, transferring skills and so on, on the other. The bad, when apartheid silenced this 'culture' and oppressed and exploited people is now left behind, to now being in the completed present, where this 'culture' is now present, inheritable and connected to development and empowerment and thus 'enlightenment' and being both African and developed.

Finally, at a more historical and public history level, what the dissertation also attempts to demonstrate is that this 'inherited tradition' and definition of authentic Xhosa 'African culture' is neither simply 'inherited', or the only or necessary 'tradition', or unquestionably African or singly indigenous and Xhosa. Rather these meanings are the consequence of a series of intersecting historically, socially and politically constructed meanings, knowledges, representations and associations.

³³⁵ Ashworth, G. (2004) 'Tourism and the Heritage of South African apartheid for entertainment'. In T. Singh (ed) *Tourism seeks new Horizons*. Basingstoke.

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