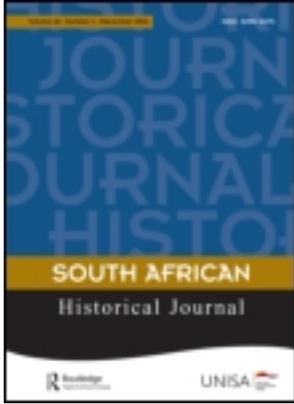


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### Archival Aspirations and Anxieties: Contemporary Preservation and Production of the Past in Umbumbulu, KwaZulu-Natal

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## Archival Aspirations and Anxieties: Contemporary Preservation and Production of the Past in Umbumbulu, KwaZulu-Natal

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### Abstract

This paper explores the contemporary preservation and production of the past in Umbumbulu, near Durban in KwaZulu-Natal. It examines the Ulwazi Programme, a web initiative run through the eThekweni Municipality that uses the existing library infrastructure, new digital technologies and municipal residents to create what its advocates term a collaborative, indigenous knowledge resource, in the form of a Wiki. The paper then investigates various other locations in Umbumbulu where the past is being dealt with and custody of the past is actively managed by, for example, local, non-professional historians and traditional leaders. In some instances, the work being done straddles the custodial and the productive, inviting a re-examination of notions of custodianship and the production of versions of history. While these practices are frequently thought of as separate, the ethnographic material reveals that in daily practice, the distinction between the two is unclear. The paper considers the resources that are mobilised as evidence in the present by different actors in Umbumbulu to substantiate claims about the past and reveals both archival aspirations and anxieties. There are those who aspire to a fixed record as a mechanism of preservation and acknowledgement, and others who have anxieties about such a configuration.

**Key words:** Custodianship; History production; Zuluness; Identity; KwaZulu-Natal; Archival aspirations and anxieties

This paper offers an ethnographic investigation of the contemporary preservation and production of the past in Umbumbulu, a peri-urban area to the south of Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.<sup>1</sup> As such, it is concerned with the work that the past is made to do by various actors in the present. It takes as its point of departure the Ulwazi Programme, a web initiative of the eThekweni Municipality to create what its advocates

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1. The paper is part of an ongoing PhD project entitled, 'The Contemporary Preservation and Production of the Past in Umbumbulu, KwaZulu-Natal'.

term a collaborative, online, indigenous knowledge resource in the form of a Wiki.<sup>2</sup> The paper then considers various other locations in Umbumbulu in which the past is being dealt with and where custody of the past is actively managed by local writers like Desmond Makhanya and Siyabonga Mkhize, as well as traditional leaders.<sup>3</sup> In some instances, the work being done concerning the past straddles both custodial and productive practices, inviting a re-evaluation, or at least a muddying, of distinctive notions of custodianship of *sources* and the production of a particular version of *history*. While historians and archivists frequently think of these practices as separate, the ethnographic material I have collected shows that they are intertwined in daily practice.

The paper sets out to do two things. Firstly, it considers the blurred distinction between *practices of custodianship*, often associated with the archive and the supposedly unmediated preservation and care of sources of historical information, and the *production of a version of history*, a more creative and productive endeavour. In light of the ethnography, the paper offers a theoretical intervention into how these practices might better be understood in the context of contemporary Umbumbulu, arguing that such blurring is an essential move in subaltern practices of asserting historical claims and materials. Secondly, the paper demonstrates how custodial and productive practices involved in the management of the past play out in everyday life in Umbumbulu and what the implications of this are in the wider context of identity politics in present-day KwaZulu-Natal. While the Zulu Royal House aims to maintain its historic monopoly and custodianship of generic 'Zulu' traditions and customs, a source of much of its power, the paper exposes smaller cultural movements calling for the recognition of pre-Zulu customs, traditions and identities, as well as work being done on the legacy of missionary activity in the region.<sup>4</sup> These activities serve to unpick established notions of Zuluness and offer insight into how questions around identity intersect with the mobilisation of the past in contemporary KwaZulu-Natal.

The paper further demonstrates how different actors in contemporary Umbumbulu actively engage with the past and treat it varyingly as fixed or fluid. These variations reveal what I have termed, at least provisionally, archival aspirations and anxieties. I argue that in his desire to publish a book, Desmond Makhanya aspires to establish a fixed record of the history of the Makhanya in Umbumbulu. Similarly, the Ulwazi Programme desires a formalised, fixed arrangement of publicly accessible materials that works as a mechanism of preservation. Conversely, I suggest that others, like traditional leaders in Umbumbulu, have anxieties and reservations about the fixedness of records or bodies of knowledge of the past. I note how clan historian and author, Siyabonga Mkhize's initial aspirations are replaced by reservations about entering a fixed version of Mkhize history into the public realm.

2. An open source webpage designed to enable contributions and modifications from multiple users.
3. I understand that terms like traditional leaders, traditional authorities and chiefs are contentious and are the focus of contemporary public debate. Bearing this in mind, I use the Zulu terms *inkosi* (chief) and *amakhosi* (chiefs) as well as the English terms chiefs and traditional leader/s as they are used by the various subjects of my study, including government officials, local custodians of the past, and incumbents of these positions.
4. In the paper, I use categories like tradition, custom and indigenous knowledge. I do not aim to define these categories but rather reflect their usage in different contexts in contemporary public discourse.

## Umbumbulu

An historical overview of this area reveals some of the dynamics of interaction between the different inhabitants of Umbumbulu and the ways the past has been utilised for political aims and to gain access to resources. Umbumbulu is a peri-urban zone located approximately 45 kilometres southwest of Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, on the northeast coast of South Africa, made up of 25 districts with nine traditional leaders administering their respective Traditional Authority Areas. The area that is today called Umbumbulu was on the periphery of the Zulu kingdom during the reign of its first king, Shaka, in the early nineteenth century. At that time, chiefdoms in these south-eastern regions were distanced from central Zulu power, referred to collectively and derogatorily by the Zulu elite as the *amaLala*, and were exploited economically and politically.<sup>5</sup> During the reigns of kings Shaka and Dingane, expansionism and conflict within the Zulu kingdom led many people to migrate into the wider Port Natal area (as Durban was then known). In 1840, when the migrating Makhanya clan arrived in what is now Umbumbulu, they found much of the area occupied by the *abaMbo* (Mkhize) people, also immigrants from the north.<sup>6</sup>

From 1846 onwards, this area and others to the south of the Thukela River were subject to colonial administration and reorganisation. In 1847, Theophilus Shepstone, the Diplomatic Agent to the Native Tribes, placed large numbers of refugees from the Zulu kingdom in ‘reserves’ in the new colony.<sup>7</sup> These reserves entailed the drawing of loose boundaries around clusters of people and were left largely undefined for many years. A number of the new inhabitants were not living under hereditary chiefs. Shepstone attached individuals and fragments of chiefdoms to existing chiefs and in some cases created artificial chiefdoms and installed his trusted African assistants in positions of authority.<sup>8</sup> In the Umbumbulu area, Shepstone installed chiefs from the Cele and Luthuli clans, which further diversified an already mixed area. That is not to say that these chiefs were complete outsiders and had no claim to chieftainship before Shepstone’s intervention. The Cele had previously established themselves on many parts of the south coast and held long-standing claims to chieftainship, as did the Luthuli to the area now known as the Bluff, closer to central Durban.<sup>9</sup> Shepstone employed a form of indirect rule that relied on historical research into ‘native’ society, local knowledge and political systems to develop an understanding of traditional authority and governance, and how these could be harnessed

5. C. Hamilton and J. Wright, ‘The Making of the Amalala: Ethnicity, Ideology and Domination in a Precolonial Context’, *South African Historical Journal*, 22 (1990), 3–23.
6. The terms ‘Mkhize’ and ‘abaMbo’ are used interchangeably. As Sithole writes, “‘Mkhize’ is used for the numerous Mkhize chieftaincies which emerged when the Mkhize reached southern Natal after fleeing from Dingane’s armies during the 1830s. “‘abaMbo’” is the *isithakazelo* (form of polite address) for the Mkhize’. ‘Embo’ is a locative and denotes the place of the *abaMbo* or Mkhize: J. Sithole, ‘Tale of Two Boundaries: Land Disputes and the *Izimpi Zemibango* in the Umlazi Location of the Pinetown District, 1920–1936’, *South African Historical Journal*, 37,1 (1997), 78–106.
7. D.H. Reader, *Zulu Tribe in Transition: The Makhanya of Southern Natal* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1968), 16, 23–28.
8. N. Etherington, “‘The Shepstone System’” in *The Colony of Natal and Beyond the Borders*, in A. Duminy and B. Guest, eds, *Natal and Zululand from Earliest Times to 1910* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press and Shuter & Shooter, 1989), 171–174.
9. A.T. Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal: Containing Earlier Political History of the Eastern-Nguni Clans* (London, New York, Toronto: Longmans Green, 1929), 500–503, 538–544.

to control African communities indirectly through the power of the chiefs.<sup>10</sup> The segregationist and later apartheid states, in turn, selectively reinforced certain aspects of tradition, custom and chiefly authority, and rejected others, in their efforts to organise and rule over the area.

The rise of Zulu nationalism in the early decades of the twentieth century in opposition to segregation saw notions of ‘tradition’ being mobilised in the form of an overarching ‘Zulu’ identity centred on the Zulu monarchy.<sup>11</sup> The 1920s and 1930s were a period of considerable unrest in Umbumbulu, which stemmed from various instances of land shortages and disputes, Mkhize succession contests, as well as conflicts between residents of the then Umlazi Reserve (which is now Umbumbulu) and white farmers.<sup>12</sup> In the 1950s, Umbumbulu, other former colonial reserves south of the Thukela River, and the remnants of the old Zulu Kingdom were divided into Tribal and Regional Authorities and in 1970, a single Zulu Territorial Authority (the later Bantustan of KwaZulu) was established, into which Umbumbulu was incorporated.<sup>13</sup> From the 1970s, in the semi-autonomous Bantustan of KwaZulu, the Zulu nationalist organisation, Inkatha, was able to shape and utilise broad, ethnically-defined ideas about Zulu ‘tradition’ and identity that lent significant power to chiefs, as well as governance based on tradition and custom.<sup>14</sup> As part of KwaZulu, of which Mangosuthu Buthelezi, the leader of Inkatha, was also the Chief Minister, Umbumbulu was subject to Inkatha propaganda and a politicised, traditionalist notion of Zuluness promoted through, for example, Buthelezi’s speeches, textbooks in the KwaZulu school system, celebrations such as King Shaka Day and the use and manipulation of the Zulu past and linked cultural symbols.<sup>15</sup>

10. See C. Hamilton, *Terrific Majesty: The Powers of Shaka Zulu and the Limits of Historical Invention* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1998).
11. Cf. B. Carton, J. Laband and J. Sithole, eds, *Zulu Identities: Being Zulu, Past and Present* (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, London: Hurst and New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).
12. For a detailed discussion on this, see Sithole, ‘Tale of Two Boundaries’, J. Sithole, ‘Conflict and Collective Violence: Scarce Resources, Social Relations and the State in the Umzinto and the Umbumbulu Districts of Southern Natal during the 1930s’ (BA Hons thesis, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 1992), and J. Sithole, ‘Land, Officials, Chiefs and Commoners in the *izimpi zemibango* in the Umlazi Location of the Pinetown District in the Context of Natal’s Changing Political Economy, 1920 to 1936’ (MA thesis, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 1997).
13. P. Harries, ‘Imagery, Symbolism and Tradition in a South African Bantustan: Mangosuthu Buthelezi, Inkatha, and Zulu History’, *History and Theory*, 32, 4, Beiheft 32: History Making in Africa (1993), 110–113. A Bantustan (also known as black African homeland or simply homeland) was a territory set aside for black inhabitants of South Africa and South West Africa (now Namibia), as part of the policy of apartheid.
14. For a detailed discussion of the formation of the Inkatha and its manipulation and command of tradition and power, see G. Maré and G. Hamilton, *An Appetite for Power: Buthelezi’s Inkatha and the Politics of ‘Loyal Resistance’* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1987).
15. For more on the manipulation of Zulu history and cultural symbols for political ends, see Harries, ‘Imagery, Symbolism and Tradition’; D. Golan, ‘Inkatha and Its Use of the Zulu Past’, *History in Africa*, 18 (1991), 113–126; S. Klopper, ‘He Is My King, but He Is Also My Child: Inkatha, the African National Congress and the Struggle for Control over Zulu Cultural Symbols’, *Oxford Art Journal* 19, 1 (1996) 53–66; and G. Maré, *Brothers Born of Warrior Blood: Ethnicity and Politics in South Africa* (New Jersey: Zed Books, 1992).

In the mid-1980s, Umbumbulu was wracked by local disputes predominantly between Mkhize and Makhanya groupings but with a complex array of allegiances. While both of these groupings held historically ambiguous positions in relation to Zulu nationalist ideologies, supporting certain aspects at particular times, and distancing themselves from these on other occasions, their localised dispute was further cross-cut by the broader conflict between Inkatha and the ANC, which played itself out in Umbumbulu as in other peri-urban areas around Durban and beyond. Umbumbulu thus has a long history of complex relations with central Zulu authority, rooted in an early historical alienation from centralised Zulu power, and more recently as mobilised by Inkatha (renamed the Inkatha Freedom Party in 1990). It has been a site of ongoing contestations around Zulu identity and political power in which control of the past has often been mobilised as a resource for political ends.

In many respects, Umbumbulu has a history comparable to a number of the peri-urban areas and semi-rural areas that lie on the periphery of the city of Durban. In the early part of the century, the emergence of the 'Durban system' of African administration, a policy that acted as a forerunner to the apartheid state's model of urban regulation, sought to control black urbanisation by requiring permits to enter Durban's city centre.<sup>16</sup> Although labour migration continued, a boom in industry during the 1930s and 1940s led to the growth of a more permanent urban African population and the growth of informal settlements within and near the urban areas of Durban.<sup>17</sup> In the 1950s, with the establishment of the national Group Areas Act (1950), residential segregation in the city became increasingly entrenched, resulting in the forced removal of many non-white residents to townships that had been established on the city's outskirts.<sup>18</sup> The introduction of the Bantu Authorities Act in 1951 created the legal basis for the deportation of black Africans into designated 'homeland reserve areas' or Bantustans, which Mathis argues, 'provided what is widely perceived as the major shift towards an ethnic rather than a racial policy of control over the African population'.<sup>19</sup> This offered fertile ground for the proliferation of ethnically-defined organisations like Inkatha, as much a governmental and political institution as a Zulu one. Maylam estimates that between 1973 and 1988, the population of Durban more than trebled, with almost half this number living in

16. For a detailed account of the Durban system, see M.W. Swanson, 'The Durban System: Roots of Urban Apartheid in Colonial Natal', *African Studies*, 35 (1976), 159–176. The policy was not only concerned with race and European cultural hegemony but also about black labour, economic development and how to control these. For more on the economic aspects of the policy, see B. Freund 'City Hall and the Direction of Development', in B. Freund and V. Padayachee, eds, (*D*)urban Vortex: *South African City in Transition* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 2002), 11–41.
17. For more on the development of townships around Durban, see Torr, 'Lamontville: a history, 1930–60', 245–73; Swanson, 'The Joy of Proximity: The Rise of Clermont', 274–298 and Hughes, 'The City Closes In: The Incorporation of Inanda into Metropolitan Durban', 299–309, papers in P. Maylam and I. Edwards, eds, *The People's City African Life in Twentieth Century Durban* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1995).
18. See P. Maylam 'Introduction', in P. Maylam and I. Edwards, eds, *The People's City African Life in Twentieth Century Durban* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1995), for more detail on the segregation of Durban in the twentieth century.
19. S.M. Mathis, 'After Apartheid: Chiefly Authority and the Politics of Land, Community and Development' (PhD thesis, Emory University, Atlanta), 58. The Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act (1959) later allowed for the transformation of the reserves into fully-fledged independent Bantustans, divided along ethnic lines.

the KwaZulu Bantustan, in the outlying regions of greater Durban, and therefore under an authority that favoured tradition, custom and chiefly structures as a mode of governance.<sup>20</sup>

Since 1994, the beginning of the post-apartheid era, the position of traditional leaders has been ambiguous, as has their authority over tradition and custom. While a policy of cooperative governance between traditional leaders and the eThekweni Municipality in Durban was initiated in the early 2000s, there exists a struggle over authority in the former Bantustan areas that are now located within the municipal boundaries.<sup>21</sup> This is linked to contestation over the custodianship of adaptable bodies of tradition and custom, the stewards of which have been chiefs, acknowledged by both the colonial and apartheid governments, and which have historically determined access to resources for African inhabitants in what is now KwaZulu-Natal. In the post-apartheid context, the eThekweni Municipality has tried to define tradition and custom for a wider constituency through a variety of initiatives including the Ulwazi Programme. By doing so, it is positioning itself as a custodian of far-reaching and inclusive categories of historical materials including 'heritage' and 'indigenous knowledge', which subsume tradition and custom. The competition over political power and access to resources in the present therefore includes a struggle over the definition and custodianship of tradition, custom and other bodies of knowledge of the past.

### Custodianship and the production of history

Conventional historiography distinguishes between history *producers*, predominantly academic historians, but also community and other amateur historians, and *sources* of historical information, often contained in archives. Important interventions such as Cohen's 1994 study, *The Combing Of History*, makes us aware that much of what is viewed as 'sources' are often productions of versions of history in their own right. For Cohen, the production of history is an ongoing process in which meanings shift as histories are contested and re-interpreted, while some voices are silenced and others are privileged. An expanded conceptualisation of the 'multiple locations of historical knowledge'<sup>22</sup> in or pertaining to Umbumbulu allows us to consider various official and unofficial sites 'where different histories in a range of genres are produced, circulated and contested'.<sup>23</sup> Various (and at times conflicting) forms and versions of history are produced in a variety of ways in different social contexts and by a multiplicity of authors, and clear distinctions between sources of historical information and produced histories, and similarly, producers of history and custodians, are often blurred. The process of archiving has traditionally been imagined as one that collects records of the past for preservation in a neutral repository.

20. Maylam, 'Introduction', 24–25.

21. eThekweni is the Zulu name for Durban. eThekweni Municipality is the municipality that runs the city of Durban. For more on the process of cooperative governance in eThekweni see, J. Beall and M. Ngonyama, 'Indigenous Institutions, Traditional Leaders and Elite Coalitions for Development: The Case of Greater Durban, South Africa', *Crisis States Working Paper no. 55*, (London: London School of Economics), and J. Beall, 'Cultural Weapons: Traditions and Inventions in the Transition to Democratic Governance in Metropolitan Durban', *Urban Studies*, 43, 2 (2006), 457–473.

22. D.W. Cohen, *The Combing of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 4.

23. L. Witz and C. Rassool, 'Making Histories', *Kronos*, 34, 1 (2008), 10.

The production of history, on the other hand, is conceived of as a secondary process in which historians use archives and other records as sources in order to reconstruct, narrate or produce, a particular version of the past. As such, archives as formal institutions are often conceived of as stores of the past and their supposedly neutral custodians, archivists, are distinguished from historians, those who engage actively in the producing of history.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines a custodian as ‘one who has the custody of a thing or person; a guardian, keeper’ while the definition of a production is ‘a thing produced as a result of an action, process, or effort’.<sup>24</sup> A comparison of these terms suggests that while a custodian is a guardian or keeper of something already constituted (an inheritance), a production relates to something that is actively generated or created by the producer. This has resonance with the roots of archival practice in ideas about the ‘archon’, the one who keeps, or guards evidence but does not construct, mediate, engage or narrate it. The archon upholds the official, authorised record, resists calls to question or subvert the record, and is, in essence, a supposedly impartial gatekeeper.<sup>25</sup> In drawing attention to these aspects and the way in which the terms custodian, archivist and archon are generally understood, I am not endorsing the notion that custodians are neutral entities without agency. It is now widely accepted (in archival circles at least) that archivists are active shapers of social memory and that inheritances (of records or history) are not received neatly assembled but rather made and remade.<sup>26</sup> Any act of inclusion presumes or demands, an act of exclusion and any assembly results in dispersion and continued, different re-assembling.<sup>27</sup> Custodians are therefore interpreters, narrators and producers in their own right and not just recipients of an inheritance that must be preserved for future generations. Harris, who has done much to unravel the notion of archives as neutral repositories and archivists as impartial custodians, provides a simple yet effective example of the way in which archivists are simultaneously custodial and complicit in the construction of record, through their work of appraisal:

[the record] comes within the purview of the archival appraiser bearing many layers of intervention and interpretation. Take the example of a government file. It has many authors, formal and informal; annotators; and managers, who classify, cross-reference, mis-file, remove, lose, shred etc. The file, indeed any record, is a complex construction of process. And in appraisal we add another very substantial layer of construction.<sup>28</sup>

That said, it is nonetheless a feature of the archival profession that intervention in the record should be kept to a minimum. The ethnographic analysis (of the practices of producers and custodians of the past) that I present during the course of this paper leads me to suggest that the conventional historiographical distinction between the two concepts is, in fact, often muddled, or unclear. While productive tendencies are apparent in the way

24. From <http://www.oed.com/>, accessed 12 February 2012.

25. V. Harris, *Archives and Justice* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2007), 123.

26. V. Harris, ‘Redefining Archives in South Africa: Public Archives and Society in Transition, 1990–1996’, *Archivaria*, 42 (1996), 6–27.

27. C. Hamilton, V. Harris and S. Hatang, ‘Fashioning Legacy in South Africa: Power, Pasts, and the Promotion of Social Cohesion’, in P. Kearns, S. Kling and C. Wistman, eds, *Heritage, Regional Development and Social Cohesion* (Östersund, Sweden: Jamtli Förlag/Jamtli, 2011).

28. Harris, *Archives and Justice*, 102.

in which the past is managed in Umbumbulu, I find that, most obviously in the history produced by local writer, Siyabonga Mkhize, there is simultaneously a custodial inflection, one that he himself acknowledges. Therefore, while Harris argues that archives produce the past, it could similarly be argued that practices like that of Siyabonga Mkhize's production of history, archive the past.<sup>29</sup> I now discuss a variety of instances in which the past is being actively preserved (through claims to custodianship) and produced in Umbumbulu in order to fully explicate the close relationship between these conventionally distinctive concepts.

### The Ulwazi Programme

The Ulwazi Programme is a library project of the eThekweni Municipality. It is based on the idea that access to a digital knowledge resource of local relevance facilitates the growth of digital and information literacy skills and the preservation of 'local, indigenous knowledge'. The programme aims to address the needs of communities in the areas served by the eThekweni Municipal Library by facilitating the collaborative collection of local, contemporary histories and culture, the result of which is a digital resource of local indigenous knowledge.<sup>30</sup> The following section contextualises the Ulwazi Programme in terms of the broader political contexts and policy environments that have influenced its creation, and explores the programme's claims to custodianship.

The Ulwazi Programme model is based on community needs identified by the municipal library as well as various municipal, national and international policies. A consideration of the wider bureaucratic and political environments in which the programme was established and is now situated, as well as of the policies that have been used to develop it, reveals that there are other impulses behind its creation and other political forces that have contributed to its constitution. The Ulwazi Programme operates in a context of participatory post-apartheid heritage. As Shepherd writes, the 'two main current pieces of heritage legislation, the National Heritage Resources Act (NHRA) of 1999 and the National Heritage Council Act of 1999 . . . [place] an emphasis on public participation in heritage management'.<sup>31</sup> The Ulwazi Programme Leader explained that, given her position as an employee of the eThekweni Municipality, she was required to observe its Integrated Development Plan (IDP) when devising the Ulwazi Programme model. The Municipal Systems Act 132 of 2000 requires all municipalities in South Africa to develop IDPs, five-year strategic documents that direct all municipal activities and are reviewed annually in consultation with stakeholders and communities.<sup>32</sup> Municipal IDPs are informed by both national governmental policy and local circumstances. The plans are implemented at local

29. As I refer to different members of the Mkhize and Makhanya clans and their activities, for ease of understanding, I have chosen to use their first names and surnames.

30. The programme is run by the eThekweni Libraries and Heritage Department and is currently operational in outlying areas of the eThekweni Municipality, namely Umlazi, Inanda, Ntuzuma, KwaMashu and Umbumbulu.

31. N. Shepherd, 'Heritage', in N. Sheperd and S. Robins, eds, *New South African Keywords* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2008), 121.

32. eThekweni IDP Review 2005/2006, available at [http://www.durban.gov.za/Documents/City\\_Government/IDP\\_Policy/IDP\\_2005\\_06.pdf](http://www.durban.gov.za/Documents/City_Government/IDP_Policy/IDP_2005_06.pdf), accessed 10 February 2012.

government level and aim to address locally defined needs but must also follow the national policy.<sup>33</sup>

In order to be eligible to compete for limited municipal funding, projects must adhere to their municipality's IDP, which in turn relates to, and is governed by, the national policy. The eThekweni Municipality's IDP is an eight-part plan. Plan Five focuses on empowering citizens by 'enhancing skills, providing easily accessible information' and bridging the 'digital divide' by making Durban a 'Digitally Smart City'. Plan Six deals with cultural diversity and 'the promotion and conservation of heritage through local history projects and the use of gallery and museum spaces ...'.<sup>34</sup> The Programme Leader explains that through library surveys from various library-using communities,

we were made aware of the needs in the communities; their lack of digital literacy, their lack of empowerment, the lack of digital skills, their lack of knowledge of their own communities, the fact that their indigenous knowledge was getting lost at an alarming rate ...<sup>35</sup>

The Ulwazi Programme model is thus based on community needs as identified by the municipal library, as well as various national and international policies. It follows the eThekweni Municipality's IDP as well as the National Indigenous Knowledge Systems Office's (NIKSO) mandate for libraries, which encourages 'indigenous and local communities to actively record and share their contemporary history, culture and language' and emphasises the creative use of new technologies to 'support Indigenous and local community development'.<sup>36</sup> It is also informed by the Geneva Plan of Action, generated by the World Summit on the Information Society, which calls for free or affordable access to information and knowledge via community access points (such as a digital library service), the development of Information Communication Technology (ICT) skills and the empowerment of local communities to use ICTs. The plan further encourages the respect, preservation and promotion of cultural and linguistic diversity, and the generation of local content to suit the linguistic and cultural context of the users.<sup>37</sup>

The Ulwazi Programme uses the existing library infrastructure and Web 2.0 technologies to create what its advocates term a collaborative, online indigenous knowledge resource in the form of a Wiki. It selects 'fieldworkers' from the immediate communities served by the library who are then trained by library staff to collect digital audio and visual material (such as recorded oral histories, photographs of material culture, topography, etc.) in the areas in which they live. Library staff teach fieldworkers to add this content (which the programme deems 'local, indigenous knowledge') to the Ulwazi Wiki, using their local libraries and the programme's central office in Durban as submission points. The libraries also serve as Internet access points where members of the communities can browse the Ulwazi Wiki and

33. Interview with Deputy Head of eThekweni Libraries and Heritage, 30 October 2009.

34. eThekweni Municipality IDP Review 2009/2010, available at [http://www.durban.gov.za/Documents/City\\_Government/IDP\\_Policy/IDP\\_2009\\_10.pdf](http://www.durban.gov.za/Documents/City_Government/IDP_Policy/IDP_2009_10.pdf), accessed 20 February 2012.

35. Interview with Programme Leader, 08 October 2009.

36. Indigenous Knowledge Systems: Visions and goals for an Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) Policy for South Africa 33, available at <http://www.dst.gov.za/index.php/resource-center/strategies-and-reports/161-indigenous-knowledge-systems>, accessed 27 May 2012.

37. World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Documents (Presidential National Commission on the Information Society and Development Booklet), 42–44.

the Internet, and contribute to the Wiki if they have user accounts. The Ulwazi Programme is unique in that it is the first of its kind in South Africa to promote an apparently democratised collection policy and the use of Web 2.0 technologies and community participation.<sup>38</sup>

By creating a participatory initiative like the Ulwazi Programme that values individual contributions, encourages digital skills enhancement and facilitates access to information, the ANC-run eThekweni Municipality promotes the ideal of tech-savvy, informed citizens with all of the rights associated with a modern democracy, including the right to choose which political party runs municipal government.<sup>39</sup> This marks a significant departure from the handling matters of governance, tradition and custom that prevailed in previous eras. From about the mid-1970s onwards, Inkatha maintained power in the KwaZulu Bantustan (including Umbumbulu) through an emphasis on chiefly governance, and the manipulation and control of particular notions of tradition and custom. This in turn, generated subjects of chiefs with limited rights. From the above, we can surmise that while the Ulwazi Programme is concerned with the collection and dissemination of local knowledge, the project serves well the ANC's agenda in KwaZulu-Natal, offering a way of engaging in the arena of tradition and custom, long dominated by Inkatha and Inkatha-supporting chiefs.<sup>40</sup>

### *The Ulwazi Programme as custodian*

Interviews with the Programme Leader and the Head of the eThekweni Libraries and Heritage Department (ELHD) reveal that they consider the Ulwazi Programme to be a custodian of local knowledge, history and culture (subsumed under the titles 'heritage' and 'indigenous knowledge').<sup>41</sup> According to the Head of the ELHD:

We find that people don't own their heritage and that is a big challenge if you [Ulwazi/ELHD] are a custodian of heritage...[with Ulwazi] the communities are producing their own histories and making these available to us for future generations...<sup>42</sup>

The Head of the ELHD sees the Ulwazi Programme as a 'custodian of heritage', as a means to prevent the loss of heritage and history through preservation for future

38. In 2010, the Presidential National Commission on the Information Society and Development implemented a similar project on a national level, the now defunct National Digital Repository.

39. See Plan Five of the eThekweni Municipality IDP Review 2009/2010, which promotes access to information and technologically competent citizens, available at [http://www.durban.gov.za/Documents/City\\_Government/IDP\\_Policy/IDP\\_2009\\_10.pdf](http://www.durban.gov.za/Documents/City_Government/IDP_Policy/IDP_2009_10.pdf).

40. For more detail on power struggles associated with co-operative governance in the eThekweni Municipality, see I. Palmay, 'Traditional Leaders in the eThekweni Metropolitan Region: Their Role in Crime Prevention And Safety Promotion', Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation and Midlands Women's Group (2004), available at <http://www.csvr.org.za/docs/urbansafety/traditionallleaders.pdf>, accessed 5 March 2012; S. Khan, B. Lootvoet and E.A. Mantzaris, 'The Clash between Traditional and Modern Systems of Governance in the Durban Metropolis – A Tale of Two Administrative Civilisations', *Alternation*, 13, 2 (2006), 174–197; Beall and Ngonyama, 'Indigenous Institutions, Traditional Leaders and Elite Coalitions'; and Beall, 'Cultural Weapons'.

41. The programme collects content under the three broad titles, 'History', 'Culture' and 'Environment'.

42. Interview with Head of the ELHD, 30 October 2009.

generations. Unsurprisingly, the Programme Leader, writing on the indigenous knowledge model she developed for the Ulwazi Programme, has a similar viewpoint:

The library focuses on custodianship of the information resource... Ordinary people from the community are actively involved in the development of content...<sup>43</sup>

Both the Programme Leader and the Head of the ELHD also expressed concerns over the loss of indigenous knowledge, heritage and local culture and the need for it to be preserved for future generations, as is demonstrated by the Programme Leader's comment:

We were made aware of... the fact that their indigenous knowledge was getting lost at an alarming rate due to urban migration etc. But also, we were seeing the falling apart of the older societal structures because of the lack of transferring this knowledge from the older to the younger generation.<sup>44</sup>

Similarly, the Head of the ELHD remarked:

I want to record as much of our oral histories as possible as KwaZulu-Natal has the highest prevalence of AIDS and not just in the 23–40 bracket but older people who are ill and we are losing quite a lot of our heritage. And you would know with any society, it is that ability to get heritage passed on... It helps morality, it is what keeps communities together, allows them to understand where they come from... nation-building...<sup>45</sup>

The Head of the ELHD and the Programme Leader explained that that in part, the programme is motivated by the understanding that the chains of transmission of cultural traditions, 'knowledge' and 'heritage' in the communities in which it functions have broken down due to factors like urban migration and death through AIDS. They see the onus on the Ulwazi Programme and the municipality to act as a custodian and preserver of broad and all-encompassing notions of indigenous knowledge and heritage, allowing participation and 'ownership' through supposedly democratising new social media. Yet interestingly, while the Ulwazi Programme sees its primary role as custodianship, what it has custody over is not in fact 'sources' but rather produced knowledge. The programme sets certain parameters as to what constitutes 'indigenous knowledge' but within this broad category it draws no concrete difference between *sources* and what the fieldworkers *produce* through a process of selection, using their own frames of reference.<sup>46</sup> While the programme sets out to record what it understands to be indigenous knowledge – predominantly Zulu folktales, material culture and oral histories – it does allow other subject matter to surface.

43. E. Greyling, 'Content Development in an Indigenous Digital Library: A Model for Community Participation', in P. Cunningham and M. Cunningham, eds, IST-Africa 2009 Conference Proceedings, available at <http://www.ist-africa.org/conference2009/default.asp?page=paper-repository>.

44. Interview with Programme Leader, 8 October 2009.

45. Interview with Head of the ELHD, 30 October 2009.

46. I address the Umbumbulu fieldworkers more fully in my doctoral thesis but here it suffices to say that insight into their frames of reference reveal that what they consider important in their lives (family, traditions, a close-knit community, respect for the knowledge of elders) is in line with the Ulwazi Programme's collection mandate and guidelines, and has resulted in the proliferation of 'traditional Zulu' content on the Ulwazi Wiki.

For example, a submission called ‘The Kraal’ deals with broader identity issues, the ‘pride of the Zulu’ and what it means to be ‘a real Zulu man’ while another called ‘Umbumbulu Magistrate’s Court’ details the history of law and order in Umbumbulu. However, at the same time, not all topics are accepted. For example, the ‘Zamazama Project’, a submission on a present-day, local feeding scheme, was deleted by the Programme Leader. Furthermore, one of the fieldworkers conducted an interview with a contractor working on the new Moses Mabhida Stadium, built in preparation for the 2010 Soccer World Cup. The Programme Leader felt that both these submissions were ‘modern stuff’ and therefore unsuitable for the Ulwazi Wiki. She suggested that the article on the Moses Mabhida Stadium feature in the ‘News’ or blog section of the Ulwazi website. These decisions indicate that there are controls in place and that which does not fit the programme’s notion of ‘indigenous knowledge’ – oriented to the past, the traditional and customary – is at risk of deletion.

Indeed, content collected by the fieldworkers that does not deal with traditional Zulu culture, as imagined and recognised by the Ulwazi Programme, is more the exception than the rule. However, the editing of fieldworkers’ submissions is discreet and infused with democratic idealism, which, intriguingly, allows for different types of ‘indigenous knowledge’ and excluded histories to surface apart from traditional Zulu culture.<sup>47</sup> Real social issues and their histories such as identity and the making and remaking of Zulu (in ‘The Kraal’) and the history of regional and political conflicts (in ‘Umbumbulu Magistrate’s Court’) surface, albeit obliquely, and are contained within an archive of ‘indigenous knowledge’. These examples illustrate the way in which a clear distinction between ‘sources’ (such as oral histories collected by fieldworkers) and produced knowledge (like the fieldworkers’ submissions), and between custodianship and the production of a particular history, is considerably blurred.

### Traditional leaders and custodianship

The Houses of Traditional Leaders have been given an important role in the post-1994 democratic dispensation as the effective custodians of African tradition and culture. – Boyane John Tshehla.<sup>48</sup>

Whereas the Ulwazi Programme and the municipality are mandated by government to engage in practices of custodianship, traditional leaders appeal to continuity through longstanding traditions, as well as policy and legislation, to substantiate their roles as custodians of custom. In KwaZulu-Natal in particular, the traditional leaders, or *amakhosi*, embody ‘traditional culture’ due to the emphasis placed on customary law and governance through chieftainship under colonial, indirect rule and subsequently under apartheid’s homeland policy. During apartheid, the ANC mainly steered clear of traditional matters

47. This is also discussed in more detail in my thesis and I provide only a summary here.

48. B. Tshehla, ‘Traditional Justice in Practice: A Limpopo Case Study’, ISS Monograph 115 (Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies, 2005), 10.

and cultural politics and as a result, the *amakhosi* have entered the post-apartheid era largely in control of tradition and custom.

In post-apartheid South Africa traditional leaders are recognised under the National Constitution of 1996 and are represented at national, provincial (in all six provinces that have traditional leaders) and municipal levels of government. While the Constitution formally recognised chieftaincy, the reach of the traditional leaders was largely confined to the realm of the customary. The 1998 White Paper on Local Government saw a consultative and developmental role in local government accorded to them but no direct role in the decision-making processes.<sup>49</sup> In 2003, the Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act (TLGFA) authorised the operation of ‘traditional councils’ alongside other local government structures.<sup>50</sup> Beall and Ngonyama argue that this significantly entrenched the authority of traditional leaders, particularly in conjunction with the Communal Land Rights Act (CLRA) of 2005 (the transfer of ownership of communal land in the former homelands from the state to communities), which gave a central role to ‘traditional councils’ in the allocation of this land, a central source of power to the *amakhosi*.<sup>51</sup> More recent legislation, the National House of Traditional Leaders Act (Act No. 22 of 2009) further consolidated the position of traditional leaders in relation to government. Whereas the Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act of 2003 allowed for the creation of local House of Traditional Leaders, the new Act paved the way for the establishment of the National House of Traditional Leaders. It outlined the powers and duties of the house and its role in ‘nation-building, stable communities, the preservation of culture and traditions’ and highlighted that ‘cooperative relations and partnerships with national government are to be established in the interests of development and service delivery’.<sup>52</sup>

### *Traditional leaders as custodians in Umbumbulu*

The greater Umbumbulu region comprises nine traditional authority areas predominantly inhabited by Luthulis, Maphumulos, Shozis, Celes and Hlengwas, as well as three Mkhize groupings (including Embo/Nkasa Isimahla and Embo Thimuni) and one Makhanya grouping (Sobonakhona). The Embo/Nkasa Isimahla, Embo Thimuni and Makhanya areas are administered by *amakhosi* Kusakusa Mkhize, LangalasEmbo Mkhize and Khetha Makhanya respectively. For a better understanding of the role of the *amakhosi* as custodians in Umbumbulu, it is necessary to consider the work of the eThekweni

49. ‘Section 211(1) of the Constitution recognises the “status and role of traditional leadership, according to customary law, subject to the Constitution”, while Section 211(2) confines them to the realm of custom, seeing them as dealing with “matters relating to traditional leadership, the role of traditional leadership, the role of traditional leaders, customary law and the customs of communities observing a system of customary law” (Republic of South Africa, 1996)’ (Beall and Ngonyama, ‘Indigenous Institutions’, 9–10).
50. A traditional council, composed of mostly unelected members including traditional leaders and their appointees, is established in an area that has been recognised by the Premier as a ‘traditional community’.
51. Beall and Ngonyama, ‘Indigenous Institutions’, 10, cf. S.M. Mathis, ‘The Politics of Land Reform: Tenure and Political Authority in Rural Kwazulu-Natal’, *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 7, 1 (2007) 99–120.
52. <http://www.info.gov.za/aboutgovt/tradlead.htm>, accessed 8 June 2012.

Municipality's Amakhosi Support Office (ASO) and Victor Mkhize, who runs the office.<sup>53</sup> Victor Mkhize previously worked for CHESP (Community Higher Education Service Partnerships) and the Valley Trust, a local, politically non-aligned NGO that has been operational in the Traditional Authority Areas to the west of Durban over many decades. Following a joint project between the two organisations, aimed at developing *amakhosi* leadership styles (personal and organisational) and assisting the various eThekweni *amakhosi* in functioning as a collective, Victor Mkhize realised their need for administrative support and wrote a proposal to create the ASO.<sup>54</sup>

Victor Mkhize believes that the *amakhosi* are 'broadly custodians of tradition and culture' and describes the way in which they preserve traditional practices, customs and culturally-specific ways of doing things.<sup>55</sup> Like the Ulwazi Programme Leader and Head of the ELHD, he laments the disintegration of the social fabric of 'traditional communities' and their loss of cultural identity, and he promotes the idea of the younger generation adopting and accepting traditional concepts and ways of living to improve aspects of health, culture, religion and identity. He feels that the *amakhosi* and traditional ways of living 'can sustain traditional communities and the identity of generations to come', sentiments echoed by Makhanya and Mkhize chiefs in Umbumbulu, who both felt that their role was one of preserving traditional ways of living for the benefit of their constituencies.<sup>56</sup> *Inkosi* Makhanya feels that 'culture doesn't change' and that by preserving it and a particular way of living, the *amakhosi* help people to live properly.<sup>57</sup> Similarly, *Inkosi* Kusakusa believes that the *amakhosi* are 'looking after people in terms of tradition and customs' and 'keep traditions alive . . . we must keep culture alive to teach kids the right way of living'.<sup>58</sup>

53. While Victor Mkhize cannot speak for every traditional leader in the eThekweni Municipality, he explains that part of his mandate is to meet with traditional leaders, discuss their needs and represent them as a consolidated collective. As such, his comments are significant to my study in terms of understanding the roles the *amakhosi* are seen to play, from the perspective of the government and by the *amakhosi* themselves. He explains that the ASO functions to help the *amakhosi* realise their roles in the new dispensation, in an advisory capacity to facilitate interactions between the *amakhosi* and the municipality, and as administrative support to monitor and evaluate 'the work of *amakhosi* in line with the service delivery agenda of the municipality'. Interview with Victor Mkhize, 16 November 2010.
54. Interview with Victor Mkhize, 16 November 2010. In all likelihood this move was influenced the ANC's newly acquired (post-2000 elections) control of the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Government. Beall and Ngonyama write: 'Prior to 2000 the *amakhosi* had a route by which they could by-pass the Metro [municipality] and could get what they wanted from the IFP-dominated provincial government. After 2000, they were almost entirely dependent on the Metro apart from social development spending, which came under an IFP member of the Executive Committee of the provincial government' (Beall and Ngonyama, 'Indigenous Institutions', 19).
55. Interview with Victor Mkhize, 16 November 2010.
56. As an example, Victor Mkhize cites the *Umhlanga* or Reed Dance, an annual ceremony linked to the custom of age regiments, which, he says functions to combat promiscuity and encourage young girls preserve their virginity for marriage. This, he feels, has significance in terms of cultural traditions and health, the prevention of the spread of sexually-transmitted diseases.
57. Interviews with *Inkosi* Makhanya, 24 January 2011 and 1 April 2011. *Inkosi* Makhanya uses the terms *ukulondoloza indabuko* (to protect or keep safely traditional custom or origin) and to live *endleni emmandi* (in a nice way), G.R. Dent and C.L.S. Nyembezi, *Scholar's Zulu Dictionary* (Pietermaritzburg: Shuter & Shooter, 1999).
58. Interview with *Inkosi* Kusakusa, 20 January 2011.

As the basis for land allocation and chieftainship claims, amongst other things, tradition and custom have long been a source of power for the *amakhosi* and this continues in the present. It is important to note that tradition and custom are ‘loosely defined’ or fluid resources. Various scholars have written about and agree on the extent to which a fluidity that is not incorporated into formal modes of archiving play an important part in oral texts, succession practices and customary law, and chiefly power.<sup>59</sup> Whereas an ANC government project like the Ulwazi Programme aims for a more fixed configuration of materials relating to indigenous knowledge (a broad category that subsumes tradition and custom), the *amakhosi* are reluctant to fix in place, or define too clearly, a particular notion of tradition and custom. The *amakhosi*’s custodianship of tradition and custom is characterised by their ability to mould and adapt it.

### Custodianship of local histories

While the above is evidence of wider claims to custodianship in the Umbumbulu area, my research has also revealed a more localised struggle between (at least) two Mkhize factions over the ‘clan’ history and the rightful leader.<sup>60</sup> Clan historian Siyabonga Mkhize is from Zwelibomvu in the Nkasa/Isimahla Traditional Authority Area. His interest in Mkhize clan history was sparked when he worked as a producer on a community radio programme, researching Zulu clan histories. This led him to investigate the history of the Mkhizes (of which his knowledge is seemingly extensive) and to write a book on the history of the Mkhize or Embo people.<sup>61</sup> Siyabonga Mkhize previously worked as a researcher at the University of KwaZulu-Natal’s Killie Campbell Africana Library where he had access to numerous manuscripts and historical texts. He is also an *imbongi* or ‘praise poet’ of Kusakusa Mkhize, the *inkosi* of the Nkasa/Isimahla Traditional Authority Area.<sup>62</sup>

Siyabonga Mkhize is a custodian and a producer of history in various contexts, and at times, I would argue, both simultaneously. His particular interest is the Mkhize who settled in what is now Umbumbulu. When I first met with him at his house in Zwelibomvu, Umbumbulu, my initial urge was to name him an historian due to his production of a

59. See for example, C. Hamilton, ‘Living by Fluidity: Oral Histories, Material Custodies and the Politics of Archiving’, in C. Hamilton, V. Harris, *et al.*, eds, *Refiguring the Archive* (Cape Town: David Phillip, 2002), 209–229; I. Hofmeyr, *We Spend Our Years as a Tale that is Told: Oral Historical Narrative in a South African Chieftdom* (London: James Currey, 1994), and J.L. Comaroff, ‘Rules and Rulers: Political Processes in a Tswana Chieftdom’, *Man*, 13 (1978), 1–20.

60. I am aware of the complex genealogy of the term ‘clan’. I use it here not as an analytical concept or as a noun suggesting a social entity but to refer to an *isibongo* or surname, an adjective to describe the history of people sharing a common *isibongo* and who trace their descent to a common ancestor. I write the English word ‘clan’ as this is the term that the subjects of my study use to refer to a particular *isibongo*.

61. S. Mkhize, *Uhlanga Lwas’Embo: The History of the Embo People* (Durban: Just Done, 2007).

62. The Killie Campbell Library’s manuscripts collection is considered an important source on the early history of contact between the Nguni-speaking people of the KwaZulu-Natal region and the British colonists and a key resource on the pre-colonial history of KwaZulu-Natal. It was often used to strengthen and validate claims for traditional leadership submitted to the Commission on Traditional Leadership Disputes and Claims, also known as the Nhlapo Commission and houses collection such as the nineteenth century James Stuart Papers. The latter has been published in five volumes as C. de B Webb and J.B. Wright, eds, *The James Stuart Archive of Recorded Oral Evidence Relating to the History of the Zulu and Neighbouring Peoples*, 5 Vols. (Pietermaritzburg and Durban, 1976–2001).

particular Mkhize clan history in his book. However, as is described in the following exchange, I was alerted to his custodial tendencies and to the unclear distinction, in his practice, between custodianship and the production of history. He describes his historical work on the Mkhize through the analogy of a pot:

The pot, it's a broken *ukhamba* [clay pot]. Now I'm getting different pieces from different places. I am joining them together to get a shape how it used to look like. That's what I'm doing. Then those people who are educated will take from there, then they will do whatever ...

Grant McNulty: So you are making the resource, you're not doing the research?

Siyabonga Mkhize: What I'm doing, I'm doing the resource for the people that will be doing the research ...<sup>63</sup>

On the one hand, he claims to convene pieces of disparate information in order to constitute the whole and to preserve it for others' use, which suggests a custodial role. Yet, on the other, he claims to reconstitute the *ukhamba* into the shape it 'used to look like', a seemingly neutral re-assembly of the pot. I read this as a reconstruction of the past that is already inflected with his curatorial hand in the selection and production of a particular history of the Mkhize. The introduction to his book reiterates a custodial and preservatory inclination similar to that of the Ulwazi Programme:

I now see that the loss of this history with the passing from this world of old people who know old stories, I realised that it was worthwhile that I bring this history together.<sup>64</sup>

Yet, in his book he is also aware that the history he has produced is not neutral and may be a source of contention:

I only know that people do not all take the same direction like water, there are those who will be grateful for this history but also those who will be opposed to it.<sup>65</sup>

In the original Zulu, he uses a strong verb, *ukuhlaba*, which means to pierce, stab, kill or slaughter (the history he has written).

Siyabonga Mkhize claims to have gathered the historical information in his book by consulting with older people connected to the Mkhizes in a number of different areas in KwaZulu-Natal, and then validating it with the published James Stuart Archive, academic work and archival sources, predominantly from the Pietermaritzburg Archives and the Killie Campbell Collections, which he accessed during his time at the Killie Campbell Library. However, the book, written in Zulu and positioned as the history of the Embo people, relies heavily on oral traditions with few references to academic and archival texts and is, in a sense, an extension of Siyabonga Mkhize's role as *imbongi* in written form. This is no doubt a question of audience, with the book being pitched as a popular history

63. Interview with Siyabonga Mkhize, 3 December 2009.

64. S. Mkhize, *Uhlanga Lwas'Embo: The History of the Embo People* (Durban: Just Done, 2007), Isethulo/Introduction.

65. *Ibid.*

for Zulu-speaking readers. Although the bibliography includes four volumes of the James Stuart Archive, and various well-known texts on early Zulu chiefdoms, for example, Wright and Manson, *The Hlubi Chiefdom* (1983), A.T. Bryant's *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal* (1929) and Nathaniel Isaacs's *Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa* (1836),<sup>66</sup> there is no reference to these in the actual text. Siyabonga Mkhize uses *izibongo* (personal praises) to trace Kusakusa's lineage and to back up claims for his chieftainship, a role which features both custodial and creative aspects.<sup>67</sup> In performing as an *imbongi*, he draws on a long tradition of oral poetry, referencing earlier kings and royal ancestors, whose praises are often quoted or referred to in praises of the current *inkosi*.

Cope maintains that the core elements of *izibongo* are formulaic and unchanging, a record of historical events (although he questions their accuracy due to the nature of praising) available for the *imbongi* to draw upon during his performance. From this we can suggest that they constitute a form of archive, a preserved record of past events and people. If we accept this, we can further assume that the *imbongi* is a custodian of this archive, a specialist with unique access but also a preserver of a form of oral tradition and history. Cope goes on to explain that although *izibongo* feature both praise and criticism, 'the purpose of the poem is to praise its subject as favourably as possible' and that 'unfavourable qualities tend to be overlooked, for the praise-poem is biased towards praise'.<sup>68</sup> This points towards the selective and productive aspects of praise poetry, in which the *imbongi* shapes perceptions of the present-day *inkosi*, deciding which aspects of his history and character should be included or left out. Similarly, Turner, writing nearly 30 years after Cope, on the dynamic and transformational nature of praising in contemporary Zulu society, argues for 'the fluidity of this form of oral tradition which is able to change its focus in order to accommodate the changing needs of the people'.<sup>69</sup> In a 1991 study, Gunner and Gwala write, 'praise poetry is a genre that has been and still is extremely open to appropriation by those who had or wished to have access to political power and influence'.<sup>70</sup> These latter points raise the question of production. While historical events and people are referenced and repeated in core formulae, one could argue that this form of oral poetry also lends itself to selective representation, political motives and the production of a particular history, and reveals another way, in the case of Siyabonga Mkhize, in which the lines between custodianship and history production are repeatedly crossed.

66. J. Wright and A. Manson, *The Hlubi chiefdom in Zululand-Natal: a history* (Ladysmith: Ladysmith Historical Society, 1983); A.T. Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal: containing earlier political history of the Eastern-Nguni clans* (London, New York, Toronto: Longmans Green, 1929); N. Isaacs, *Travels and adventures in eastern Africa, descriptive of the Zoolus, their manners, customs, etc. with a sketch of Natal* (London: E. Churton, 1836).
67. *Izibongo* are 'a form of oral poetry which outlines the feats, character, physical and personality features of the person or thing about whom or which they are composed.', S. Turner, 'The Dynamic and Transformational Nature of Praising in Contemporary Zulu Society', *South African Journal of African Languages*, 17, 2 (1997).
68. T. Cope, ed, *Izibongo: Zulu Praise-Poems, Collected by James Stuart, Translated by Daniel Malcolm* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 25–30.
69. Turner, 'The Dynamic and Transformational Nature'.
70. E. Gunner and M. Gwala, *Musho! Zulu Popular Praises* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1991), 7.

Siyabonga Mkhize's version of the history of the Mkhizes in Umbumbulu is hotly contested by Victor Mkhize of the municipality's Amakhosi Support Office. He is of a different lineage and feels that Siyabonga Mkhize's research and book are biased in favour of the Nkasa/Isimahla line. He too, has a seemingly deep knowledge of the history of the Mkhize. As sources of historical knowledge he cites texts from the Killie Campbell Library, his aged father, his cousin (an Mkhize *inkosi* of the Ilanga line) and a researcher from the University of KwaZulu-Natal (who is investigating the origins of the Mkhize from Swaziland), all of whom are conceivably sources of historical information or history producers in their own rights. In the future, Victor Mkhize says he plans to write a revised and less biased history of the Mkhizes to contest that of Siyabonga Mkhize's.

In order to better understand the terms of the debate, it is useful to briefly consider what Victor Mkhize opposes in the historical account that Siyabonga Mkhize has produced. The primary inconsistency he finds is Siyabonga Mkhize's focus on the Nkasa/Isimahla line as the principal royal house and his neglect of the others, in particular the Thimuni line, which Victor Mkhize intimates could be the correct royal lineage.<sup>71</sup> He explains,

If you talk Isimahla, you are talking: Kusakusa [current leader] – Zwelinjani – Nkasa – Tilongo – Ngunezi. When Ngunezi's first wife, MaMxopo [Thimuni line] from Ixopo side, didn't give birth to a boy child [heir], the Embo community looked for another wife. One from Swaziland, MaMswati, came and gave birth to Tilongo [Nkasa-Isimahla line]. MaMxopo then gave birth to Skhukhukhu [Thimuni line and first born son of first wife] three to five years later...<sup>72</sup>

With this explanation, I believe Victor Mkhize is pointing to the fact that although Skhukhukhu was born after Tilongo, he was born of the first wife (MaMxopo) and is therefore the rightful heir. The argument forms part of a long-standing and ongoing succession dispute over the Mkhize chieftaincy.<sup>73</sup>

### ***Amakholwa histories***

In Sobonakhona, the Makhanya Traditional Authority Area of Umbumbulu, Desmond Makhanya has produced a very different type of history to that of Siyabonga Mkhize. Desmond Makhanya was born near Adam's Mission in the Sobonakhona Traditional Authority. He went to school at Adam's Mission, later worked at the mission hospital and then went to agricultural college in Eastern Cape. For the last 28 years of his working life he was a supervisor at a mill in Umkomaas. Desmond Makhanya explained that the history of the Makhanyas in Umbumbulu, and in particular those of the Makhubalo (his great grandfather) and Nembula lines, is very much intertwined with the colonial history of the area; the arrival of American Board missionaries, the establishment of Adams Mission and the later development of Adams College. His son is the current fundraiser for the school and Desmond Makhanya serves as a self-appointed college historian. He has written about

71. Siyabonga Mkhize's book mainly focuses on the lineage of the Nkasa/Isimahla line.

72. Interview with Victor Mkhize, 6 August 2010.

73. Sithole also asserts that Skhukhukhu was recognised as the heir to the Mkhize chiefship. Sithole, 'Land, Officials, Chiefs and Commoners', 51. For a detailed discussion on claims for Mkhize chieftaincy in Umbumbulu, see 'Land, officials, chiefs and commoners', 47–55.

various aspects of the college's history and published them on the college website, and has also written an unpublished manuscript. As sources, Desmond Makhanya cites his personal experiences, the history that his mother (who attended Adam's Mission in the early 1900s) and grandmother told him, and although he makes no reference to them in his manuscript, materials from the Killie Campbell Library to substantiate his collected oral histories. Desmond Makhanya's manuscript offers details of the history of certain periods of Adam's College, its cultural and sporting activities, its former principals and its famous alumni. He hopes to get it published with the help of Dr Vukile Khumalo, an historian from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, who, for the past few years, has led a project on the history of mission stations in the former colony of Natal. Desmond Makhanya's manuscript is a largely unedited document that includes repeated sections. In many instances it is without a narrative and functions more as an inventory, simply recording the names and activities of people related to Adams College at various times in its history, in particular, the names and achievements of Desmond Makhanya's immediate and extended family. The manuscript is not easy to categorise. In some parts, it features accounts that could be termed a production of history but in others, it functions more as a collection of records. Similarly, Desmond Makhanya's endeavours are also difficult to categorise. While his actions are productive in that he has created a personal history of Adams College in the form of his manuscript, they are also custodial. He is the custodian, guardian, or keeper, of a unique set of personal records (in the form of his writings) of people, places and activities related to the college's history that he wishes to insert into a broader regional history and preserve for future generations.

Desmond Makhanya feels that the manuscript he has written is very much an *ikhohwa* (pl. *amakhohwa*, lit. believer/s) story, that of the mission-educated elite, many of whom were educated at Adams Mission, who emerged as leaders in the 1920s and 1930s and contributed to the formation of organisations like the *Inkatha kaZulu*, the Zulu National Congress, and the African National Congress.<sup>74</sup> He has also written the biographies of prominent Makhanyas such as Sibusisiwe Makhanya (the first Zulu woman to train as a social worker in America in the 1920s), Charlotte Maxeke (his great aunt), a political and religious activist who founded the Bantu Women's League, which later became part of the ANC Women's League, and Kate Makhanya (his grandmother), who was instrumental in the formation of the Bantu Women's Society in Durban and worked as an assistant and interpreter to Dr James McCord, a humanitarian missionary doctor.<sup>75</sup> While Desmond Makhanya has produced a particularly localised history, largely focused on his family's history, he too, has custodial tendencies and wants to preserve his *ikhohwa* past for future generations.

### Archival aspirations and anxieties

The above examples of custodial and historical activity offer details of various locations for the preservation and production of versions of the past in Umbumbulu. They show the

74. A prime example is Anton Lembede, the elected president at the founding of the ANC Youth League in 1944.

75. I have tried to access these documents but Desmond Makhanya claims that he does not know where they are. I also contacted Dr Vukile Khumalo at the University of KwaZulu-Natal who had Desmond Makhanya's manuscript on Adams College but he said he did not have copies of these biographies.

resources that are marshalled as evidence to validate particular claims, as well as the ways in which the materials are made available to the public. I provisionally characterise these as instances of archival aspirations and anxieties. There are those who seek or aspire to a fixed record in the form of a book or repository as a form of potential validation of their claims, and those who are wary of this formulation. The following section provides an analysis of the various actors described above and their archival aspirations and anxieties.

In the case of the Ulwazi Programme and Desmond Makhanya, there exist aspirations for an explicitly fixed configuration of materials and a concrete written record. On the one hand, this opens up the possibility for validation as an official, authorised record, yet on the other, also results in a record made available for others to interpret or critique. Desmond Makhanya and the Ulwazi Programme consider this kind of fixity desirable. The Ulwazi Programme sees itself as collecting knowledge about the past (filed under heritage and indigenous knowledge), and acting as a custodian and preserver thereof. It actively desires the public to utilise the resources contained within its repository. Similarly, Desmond Makhanya has archival aspirations. He wishes for the history of Adams College to be preserved and for his *ikholwa* heritage to be acknowledged in concrete and authoritative terms through the production of a book, a cultural artefact that is seen to have fixity and longevity.

Significantly, neither Desmond Makhanya's nor Siyabonga Mkhize's work features directly on the Ulwazi Wiki website, although there are three references to the latter's book as a source.<sup>76</sup> The way in which the Ulwazi Programme defines indigenous knowledge, tradition and custom is determined and limited by the policy environment in which it was constituted. This is an environment that calls for consensus on the meaning of these terms and has led to the proliferation of 'traditional Zulu' content on the Ulwazi Wiki. What surfaces is that the Ulwazi Programme provides an inhospitable online environment for Siyabonga Mkhize's claims for one line as the primary Mkhize lineage, which have a direct bearing on identity politics both within the Mkhize clan and in the wider context of KwaZulu-Natal. Nevertheless, Siyabonga Mkhize has an online presence in the form a Facebook group, as the *Uhlanga Lwasembo* Foundation, 'a non governmental organisation which its main objective is to collect, promote and preserve the cultural heritage of *abaMbo*' and on the Archival Platform, where he has written an article that has stimulated significant response.<sup>77</sup> Desmond Makhanya has virtually no online presence, although in my discussions with him I made him aware of the Ulwazi Programme. While this might be understandable for a man in his 70s, the biography of another local man of the same age group, Reginald Myeza, who taught at Adams College and was the principal of a school in Umbumbulu, has been recorded on the Ulwazi Wiki, and with reference to prominent *amakholwa* of the time and broader political changes during the twentieth century. Importantly, Desmond Makhanya desires the publication of a book – the printed text was historically an important instrument in informing and rallying *amakholwa* communities against an increasingly suppressive

76. The articles that reference *Uhlanga Lwas'Embo* deal with the history of the Embo people (in effect, a summary of the book), the history of the Mabhida surname and Mkhize *izibongo*.

77. See [www.facebook.com/pages/Uhlanga-Lwasembo-Foundation/112801565471047](http://www.facebook.com/pages/Uhlanga-Lwasembo-Foundation/112801565471047) and [www.archivalplatform.org/blog/entry/finding\\_our/](http://www.archivalplatform.org/blog/entry/finding_our/), accessed 10 May 2012.

South African state.<sup>78</sup> For Desmond Makhanya, the book resonates both as a concretised record and in reference to the intellectual history of *amakholwa* in Natal for whom the printing press and written word were so important in fighting their cause.

The *amakhosi* are wary of this type of fixity and the effect it could have on the fluidity of traditions and customs, which have long determined their power. From the beginning of the colonial era, throughout the Shepstone system of native administration and the apartheid system of Bantustans, access to resources for African inhabitants of the present-day KwaZulu-Natal region has been determined through reference to loosely defined bodies of tradition and custom, the custodians of which have been chiefs, recognised by the colonial and later apartheid governments. In the present, custodianship of these bodies of knowledge is a contested source of power between traditional leaders and local government. With the transition to democracy and the ascendancy of the ANC government, notions of tradition and custom have been reconfigured within a broader legislative and policy environment as opposed to functioning predominantly within the realm of the Bantustan, in this case, Kwazulu. There exists a tension between different modes of governance, on the one hand, the new modern democracy, which emphasises citizens with individual rights and responsibilities, and on the other, chiefly governance based on the traditional and customary, which conceives of people as chiefly subjects.<sup>79</sup> What was previously held separately as the domain of the 'tribal subject' (custom and tradition) now intersects with the domain of the democratic citizen (legislation, government records and archives), which has resulted in current official systems of record-keeping investing in the notion of 'indigenous knowledge', a classification that subsumes both tradition and custom.<sup>80</sup>

The ethnographic data suggests that the *amakhosi* have anxieties about the potential effects of formalised local government on their power, and the ways in which it impinges on their control and use of loosely defined traditions and customs. *Inkosi* Kusakusa Mkhize explained,

the power of *amakhosi* comes from tradition . . . the power of the *amakhosi* is now controlled by the government. Our authority has decreased. In the past if someone did something wrong, you would fine him a cow. These days, I am not allowed to fine more than R500.<sup>81</sup>

78. See H. Mokoena, *Magama Fuze: The Making of a Kholwa Intellectual* (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2011).

79. Cooperative governance between traditional leaders and local government in postapartheid South Africa has proven difficult particularly where the boundaries of wards and chiefdoms do not coincide, and consultation between municipal councilors and *amakhosi* has to take place across a range of different traditional authorities and wards. See Palmary, 'Traditional Leaders in the eThekweni Metropolitan Region'.

80. This investment is evident in the work of Ulwazi Programme where a focus on the collection of indigenous knowledge has resulted in the accumulation of 'traditional' and 'customary' materials. The programme's model draws heavily on the National Policy for Indigenous Knowledge Systems where the overarching classification of indigenous knowledge incorporates, among other aspects, customary practices, traditional medicines, and engaging 'traditional leadership in the development process of IK'. Indigenous knowledge 'holders' are found in communities that are described as 'local', 'indigenous' and 'traditional'. Indigenous Knowledge Systems: Visions and goals for an Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) Policy for South Africa, 13, 19, 23, available at <http://www.dst.gov.za/index.php/resource-center/strategies-and-reports/161-indigenous-knowledge-systems>, accessed 4 June 2012.

81. Interview with *Inkosi* Kusakusa Mkhize, 20 January 2011.

*Inkosi Khetha Makhanya* made clear that when trying local court cases (*amacala*) and disputes at the Makhanya Traditional Authority office in Umbumbulu, he did not employ tradition. In his opinion, customary law is now part of the South Africa legal system and in this context he acts as a member of the government and not in his traditional capacity.<sup>82</sup> He added that ‘the *amakhosi* did everything in the past’,<sup>83</sup> ‘in traditional life, before the municipality, the *amakhosi* were fulfilling role of the municipality in helping people ... the *amakhosi* did things in a different way’.<sup>84</sup> Through initiatives like the Ulwazi Programme, the local ANC government seeks to define tradition and custom for a broader constituency and to position itself as a custodian of far-reaching and inclusive categories like ‘heritage’ and ‘indigenous knowledge’, which subsume tradition and custom. However, by their birthrights the *amakhosi* maintain an elite position as the determiners of tradition and custom. *Amakhosi* from Umbumbulu explain that the *inkosi* is not appointed but ‘born into his authority’.<sup>85</sup> His role is created by the *amadlozi* or ancestors and conferred to him ‘through the blood line’.<sup>86</sup> While the balance of power has shifted to the ANC, the *amakhosi* realise that an important body of knowledge they still command or embody, is tradition and custom, not only as an institution and through the cultural knowledge they transmit from generation to generation but also as direct, living descendants of long lineages with direct access to the ancestors.<sup>87</sup>

The case of Siyabonga Mkhize reveals both archival aspirations and anxieties. In 2007, he wrote a book detailing a selective history of the Mkhize that favours the Nkasa/Isimahla line as royalty and the current *inkosi*, Kusakusa, as the rightful heir. With his book, Siyabonga Mkhize aspired to enter certain material into the record – a version of the history of the Mkhize people and claims for the principal royal house.<sup>88</sup> However, there is contestation surrounding his work, which has led to him withdrawing his book from circulation. I contacted the book’s publisher, a small and local publishing house that aims to make accessible the stories and histories of everyday South Africans through small print runs. He explained that a limited run of approximately 50 books was printed for the official launch, following which Siyabonga Mkhize suddenly and inexplicably decided that no further copies were to be printed. According to the publisher, the author cited vague contractual disagreements as grounds for the discontinuation of the printing. I conducted a variety of searches online to try and buy the book and although it was listed on a number of websites, it was always out of stock.<sup>89</sup> The limited circulation of Siyabonga Mkhize’s

82. Interview with Inkosi Makhanya, 1 April 2011.

83. *Ibid.*

84. Interview with Inkosi Makhanya, 24 January 2011.

85. *Ibid.*

86. Interview with Inkosi Mkhize, 20 January 2011.

87. The well-being of the clan is dependent on the happiness of the ancestors, in particular those of the *amakhosi*. As such, the *amakhosi* continue to play an important spiritual role that carries weight in peoples’ everyday lives. Interview with Inkosi Mkhize (19 June 2011) in which he explains that the *inkosi*’s ancestors can cause chaos in, or friction between the people of, the clan if they are unhappy.

88. I gathered from discussions with librarians at the Killie Campbell Library that Siyabonga Mkhize was uncomfortable with, and had reservations about, some of the versions of Mkhize history that were already recorded, including those in the Killie Campbell essay competition. In the early to mid twentieth century, Killie Campbell and her father ran essay competitions for local Zulu and Sotho speakers to record their family histories.

89. I eventually found a copy at the University of Cape Town Library.

book seems to speak of power struggles, both internally amongst the Mkhizes, and with likely implications for the position of the current Premier of KwaZulu-Natal, Zweli Mkhize, and most probably in relation to external forces like the Zulu Royal Family. In summary, Siyabonga Mkhize's book is an intervention into a long-standing, and as yet, unresolved, chiefly succession debate between the Nkasa and Thimuni lineages around which, Victor Mkhize explains, there is ongoing intra-Mkhize debate in which Zweli Mkhize, the Premier, is involved.<sup>90</sup>

The Mkhize debate is also part of wider calls for recognition of the pre-Zulu traditions, customs and identities of emerging clan movements, which the Premier has acknowledged. The Premier wants to make a long-lasting contribution to the province and leave a legacy of multidisciplinary history and heritage-related knowledge production. The Premier's Heritage Unit is involved in projects that include research into the role and impact of missionaries in Natal, as well as local histories and the smaller clans that have been subsumed under the general label 'Zulu'. While on the political front, Zweli Mkhize still pays homage to the Zulu king and the notion of a unified Zulu nation, this has implications for the Zulu King and the Zulu Royal family, whose power is largely derived from a traditional and unified notion of Zuluness.<sup>91</sup>

Questions of Zuluness and Zulu identity have generated considerable debate with significant academic output. While a comprehensive overview of these arguments is beyond the scope of this paper, it suffices to say that a traditional and homogenous notion of Zuluness has been used at various times throughout the twentieth century, by a complicated mix of Zulu royalists, white segregationists, the early twentieth-century black petite bourgeoisie, the apartheid government, KwaZulu Bantustan authorities and Inkatha, for political ends and to unite and constrain various constituencies under the generic title 'Zulu'.<sup>92</sup> Inkatha's politicised notion of Zuluness contributed significantly to widespread violence in KwaZulu in the 1980s, mainly between members of Inkatha and the ANC. Umbumbulu was no exception and in the mid-1980s it was wracked by local conflicts with varying and complicated loyalties (but chiefly between Mkhize and Makhanya groupings), which then mutated into broader violence at political party level. Inkatha (later as the Inkatha Freedom Party) power has subsequently waned and contemporary research into

90. Interview with Victor Mkhize, 15 June 2011. For more on the history of the succession debate, see Sithole, 'Tale of Two Boundaries' and 'Land, Officials, Chiefs and Commoners'.

91. This is evident in a recent speech where he stated 'For 40 years now Isilo [an appellation for the Zulu King] has given us leadership, support and guidance as a symbol of our unity, a custodian of our culture and an important pillar in the building of our nation' ('State of the Province Address' by Dr Zweli Mkhize, Premier of KwaZulu-Natal, 22 February 2011, available at <http://www.polity.org.za/article/kzn-mkhize-state-of-the-province-address-by-the-premier-pietermaritzburg-22022011-2011-02-22>, accessed 5 March 2012).

92. See Harries, 'Imagery, Symbolism and Tradition'; Marks, 'The Ambiguities of Dependence'; Maré, 'Brothers Born of Warrior Blood'; S. Klopper, 'He Is My King, but He Is Also My Child'; N. Cope, *To bind the nation: Solomon kaDinuzulu and Zulu nationalism: 1913–1933* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1993); D. Golan, 'Inkatha and Its Use of the Zulu Past'; C. Campbell, G. Maré and C. Walker, 'Evidence for an Ethnic Identity in the Life Histories of Zulu-Speaking Durban Township Residents', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 21, 2 (1995), 287–301.

Zuluness continues to unpick the homogeneity of a politicised Zulu identity.<sup>93</sup> Emergent cultural movements also point to the growth of opposition to the idea of a unified Zulu nation and the emergence of calls for recognition of pre-Zulu clans and identities.<sup>94</sup> However, identity politics in contemporary KwaZulu-Natal is a fraught affair and direct challenges to established notions of Zuluness are not without consequence. For example, in Ixopo, in southern KwaZulu-Natal, Melizwe Dlamini has called for the recognition of the Nhangwini as a kingdom in its own right, and contested the results of the Nhlapo Commission, which acknowledged the Zulu Kingdom as the sole monarchy in the province.<sup>95</sup> The ongoing contestation around Dlamini's claims have stimulated significant debate on Zulu radio stations like *Igagasi* and *Ukhozi FM*,<sup>96</sup> a vociferous backlash against him in the province's main Zulu paper, *Isolezwe*, as well as attacks on him.<sup>97</sup>

### Conclusion

In post-apartheid KwaZulu-Natal, the production of the past and custodianship of tradition, custom and other bodies of knowledge of the past, are at the heart of local politics and the source of contestation in various contexts, revealing both archival aspirations and anxieties. Municipal borders have been restructured and the eThekweni Municipality and *amakhosi* now function in competing roles. Claims to custodianship of indigenous knowledge and heritage (on the part of the municipality), and tradition and custom (by the *amakhosi*) are mobilised in attempts to consolidate power within the area.<sup>98</sup> The balance of power has shifted to the ANC and the *amakhosi* realise that an important

93. See for example, Carton, Laband and Sithole's *Zulu Identities*, which offers multidisciplinary perspectives on a variety of aspects of historical and contemporary forms of Zuluness, including the foundations of Zuluness, Shaka's legacy, gender, twentieth century Zulu nationalism as well as music, dress, material culture and further postulations on the future of Zuluness.
94. See for example, Mbongiseni Buthelezi's doctoral work on the oral artistic forms of the Ndwandwe, members of one of the most important kingdoms in south-east Africa at the beginning of the nineteenth century who are reviving and popularising the memory of the violent incorporation of the Ndwandwe into the Zulu kingdom in the 1820s, in part through adapting the meanings of Ndwandwe symbols such as the *izithakazelo* (kinship group praises), *izibongo* (personal praises) of the founding figures of the Ndwandwe kingdom and the Ndwandwe *ihubo* (kinship group 'anthem'). M. Buthelezi, *Sifuna umlando wethu* (We are Looking for our History): Oral Literature and the Meanings of the Past in Post-Apartheid South Africa' (PhD thesis, University of Columbia, New York, 2012). Members of the Qwabe have also joined forces to create a cultural organisation ([http://www.archivalplatform.org/blog/entry/the\\_qwabe/](http://www.archivalplatform.org/blog/entry/the_qwabe/), accessed 10 November 2011) and there are also smaller parties in their infancy such as the Ndimas, Mchunus, Macingwanas and Thembus, who are intimating that they too, want recognition of their pre-Zulu traditions, customs and identities (interviews with M. Cele, 17 January 2011, and J. Sithole, 7 April 2011).
95. The Nhlapo Commission, also known as the Commission on Traditional Leadership Disputes and Claims, was appointed by former President Thabo Mbeki to hear disputes over the legitimacy of traditional groups and claims for traditional leadership.
96. Personal communication, M. Cele, 6 April 2011.
97. An article detailing the attack on Dlamini includes a headline that (in English) reads, 'Dlamini fears for his life . . .', available at <http://www.iol.co.za/kuhlabelwe-isigodlo-senkosi-yasenhlangwini-1.1069414>, accessed 7 March 2012.
98. The Ulwazi Programme is not politically ambitious in that it wants to consolidate power itself but rather, in responding to municipal and other policies, which do seek to consolidate power, it furthers these agendas.

body of knowledge they still command or embody, is tradition and custom, not only as an institution and through the cultural knowledge they transmit from generation to generation but also as direct, living descendants of long lineages with direct access to the ancestors.<sup>99</sup> This is a body of knowledge about the past that the ANC government is beginning to gain access to and officialise through projects like the Ulwazi Wiki.

Contemporary practices involved in the management of the past in Umbumbulu show a blurring between the seemingly distinct activities of exerting custodianship over materials pertinent to the past, and the production of authoritative histories. This is perhaps most obvious in the case of the activities of Siyabonga Mkhize. His activities expose intra-Mkhize disputation and a major contestation between the Zulu Royal House, which seeks to maintain its historic monopoly and custodianship of generic 'Zulu' traditions and customs, and smaller cultural movements, calling for the recognition of pre-Zulu customs, traditions and identities. His claim for recognition of a certain lineage and a particular pre-Zulu Mkhize clan history poses a risk not only to other branches of the Mkhize but in conjunction with those of other clans like the Ndwandwe, Qwabe and Nhlangwini, a direct threat to the authenticity and power of the Zulu King as a custodian and symbol of a unified Zulu nation. As such, his initial desires for acknowledgment through a fixed record in the form of his book have given way to its retraction and growing anxieties.

The issues at stake around the preservation and production of the past are not confined to tradition and custom. Desmond Makhanya has devoted his energies to the preservation of an *ikhohwa* heritage.<sup>100</sup> Relatively little has been written about Adams College and the many prominent *amakhohwa* intellectuals who attended the school. Desmond Makhanya seeks recognition for a neglected archive, for his version of the intertwined histories of the Makhanyas (and in particular his lineage, the Makhubalos) and Adams College to enter the record. He also plays a custodial role and like Siyabonga Mkhize and the Ulwazi Programme, is looking to preserve the past for future generations.

The Ulwazi Programme is overtly custodial but implicitly productive. It is confident in its archival aspirations. It is constrained by broad categories (indigenous knowledge and heritage) and takes an uncritical stance towards generic notions of Zuluness. Yet, searches for commonly used collective nouns like clan, tribe and *isizwe* (a Zulu term which ranges in meaning from clan to ethnic grouping to nation) reveal histories of the Luthulis, Celes, Qadis, Mkhizes, as well as various mission stations in and around Umbumbulu. The Ulwazi Programme desires to collect 'indigenous knowledge' and provides the infrastructure to do so. Yet, this desire to collect knowledge is not confined to the collection of sources for preservation, as is the norm of an archive or repository, for example, the Killie Campbell Library, discussed above. In its collection policy, the Ulwazi Programme draws no clear distinction between knowledge production and sources, in effect no clear distinction between the productive and custodial. It simultaneously preserves and produces

99. The well-being of the clan is dependent on the happiness of the ancestors and as such the *amakhosi* continue to play an important spiritual role that carries weight in peoples' everyday lives. Interview with *Inkosi* Mkhize (19 June 2011) in which he explains that the *inkosi's* ancestors can cause chaos in, or friction between the people of, the clan if they are unhappy.

100. That is not to say that the Makhanyas are not invested in clan politics. Their young chief (Desmond Makhanya's non-paternal grandson) is a strong proponent of tradition, custom and traditional ways of living for the benefit of his constituencies.

a particular type of history and that which enters the Ulwazi Programme, enters, like any record, as the product of a complex process of construction and selection.

Rather than stewards of materials or authors of definitive and synthesised histories, the subjects of this ethnography might better be described as curators of the past. The dictionary definition of 'curate' refers to two related but distinct actions. The first is 'to look after and preserve', a custodial tendency, a preservatory impulse. The second, more active, practice is to 'select, organise and present' – the practice of exhibition.<sup>101</sup> The activities of the Ulwazi Programme, Siyabonga Mkhize, Desmond Makhanya and the Premier's projects all offer clear signs of curation. In each case, they aim to 'look after and preserve' historical material. Yet, at the same time, certain aspects of the material are selected for active presentation while others are not, and the gathered material is organised and presented in a particular way to achieve specific aims. Curation emerges as an important site of activity in shaping the present and the future of Umbumbulu and KwaZulu-Natal at large, and as a tactic for the mobilisation of subaltern historical claims and materials.

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101. <http://www.oed.com/>, accessed 07 May 2012.