

# **The Five Hundred Year Archive Project**

**Archive and Public Culture Research Initiative  
University of Cape Town  
[www.apc.uct.ac.za](http://www.apc.uct.ac.za)**

# Outline

- ❖ What is the FHYA Project?
- ❖ Why The Past Before Colonialism?
- ❖ Objectives of the FHYA
- ❖ What is the FHYA Exemplar?
- ❖ Challenges
- ❖ Potential of FHYA Model

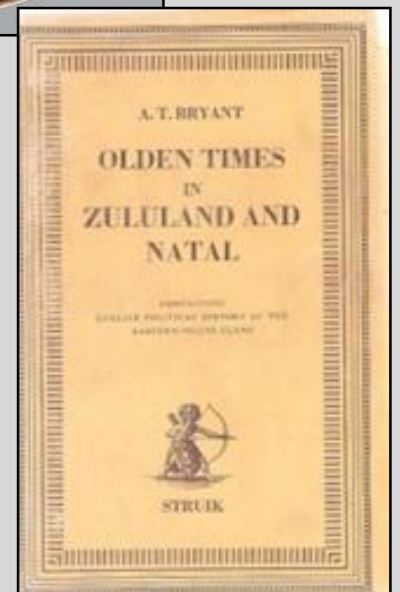
# Limited Scope

- ❖ Small region  
(initially southern  
Swaziland &  
KwaZulu-Natal)
- ❖ Limited time  
period (18th and  
19th centuries)



# Maximum Complexity

- ❖ **Diverse institutions** (archaeological repositories, libraries, art galleries, local and international) with their own practices and protocols
- ❖ **Diverse mediums** (sound recordings, texts, objects, botanical specimens, contemporary memory and practices)
- ❖ **Diverse contributors** (community and clan historians, professional historians, poets)



ARCHIVE  
& PUBLIC  
CULTURE

Research Initiative

# Why Past Before Colonialism: Under-researched & Archiveless?

## Dominance of the Written Record

- ❖ Resources exist in other non-textual forms
- ❖ Archival potential of material culture / oral recordings?

## Biased Knowledge Practices

- ❖ Our understanding of past before colonialism shaped by:
  - ❖ Colonial and apartheid eras
  - ❖ Materials about this past treated as 'timeless, tribal and traditional'
  - ❖ Generic classifications and misidentification

## Scattered Materials

- ❖ Materials dispersed across the globe

# Objectives of the FHYA

## Archival Possibilities

- ❖ Materials within & outside of archives
- ❖ Objects
- ❖ Sound recordings

## Create a Model

- ❖ Provide example that could be replicated nationally / regionally
- ❖ Enable enquiries into southern African past before colonialism

## Release and Reconvene Materials

- ❖ Release materials from tribal and traditional classifications by focussing on provenance
- ❖ Digitally reunite materials based on provenance

# Archival Possibilities

brass



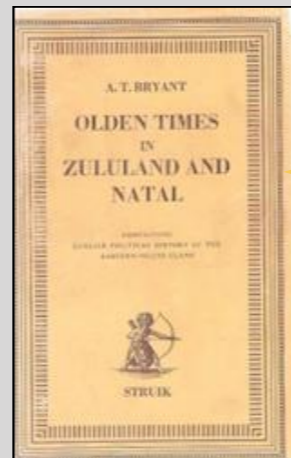
Objects from  
Ethnographic  
Collection  
(KZNM)



Archaeological  
Remains  
(KZNM)



Objects  
from JAG



Textual  
references from  
A.T. Bryant's  
Olden Times  
(1929)



Izithakazelo  
sound clip  
contributed by  
member of clan  
concerned

# 'Male & Female Figures, Tsonga/ North Nguni, Natal'



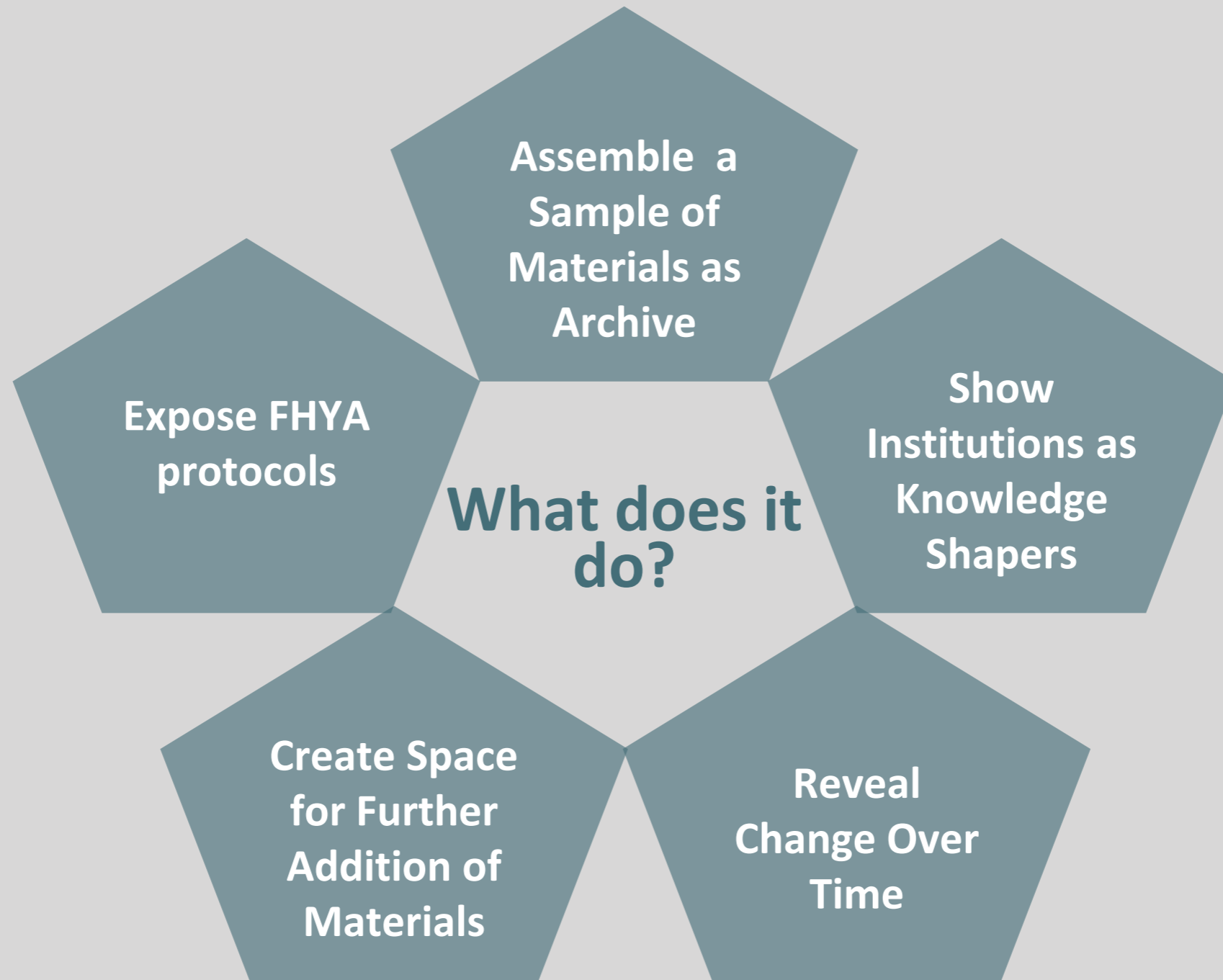
JL-A-23+24



- ❖ Liberate materials by recovering information about **PROVENANCE**:
  - ❖ Person who created item
  - ❖ Under which conditions & for what purpose
- ❖ Reveal collection, classification and preservation processes
- ❖ Show that material has been subject to change over time



# FHYA Exemplar - What?



# FHYA Exemplar - How?



# Locates Items



- ❖ Item in Johannesburg Art Gallery
- ❖ Item generally not thought of as historical or archival material

‘Male & Female Figures, Tsonga/ North Nguni, Natal’?

# Shows Current Classification

Notes area	
General note	Attributions and conjectures  [Source - Brenthurst Catalogue card at JAG in 2015: Brenthurst description: Male Figure, Tsonga/North Nguni, Natal; Female Figure, Tsonga/North Nguni, Natal]

# Deconstructs Classification

## General note

### Attributions and conjectures

[Source - Nessa Leibhammer for FHYA in 2015: Comments on classification:  
In his A Preliminary Survey of the Bantu Tribes of South Africa, Union of  
South Africa, Department of Native Affairs, Ethnological Publications, Vol. 5,  
Pretoria, Government Printer, (1935): 7, 70-83 national government  
ethnologist Nicholas Van Warmelo sets out the term "Nguni" as follows:

#### NGUNI

##### Cape Nguni

Xhosa

Thembu

Bomvana

Mpondomise

Mpondo

##### Immigrant Cape Nguni

Fingo

Hlubi

Bhaca

Xesibe

##### Natal Nguni

Zulu and others (not differentiated)

##### Swazi

Ngwane (Natal Emigrants)

Khandzambili

Transvaal Swazi

Hence he did not use the term "North Nguni". Van Warmelo grouped  
people living both north and south of the Thukela, under one umbrella  
term, "Natal Nguni", based on linguistic affinity. This was adapted by the  
ethnology curator, Margaret Shaw in her 1958 "System of Cataloguing

# Restores Provenance

## Material contributed by members of the public

Members of the public can contribute additional material, by typing in the box below or by adding a file. The FHYA does not vet or arrange this material and cannot guarantee its accuracy. The FHYA reserves the right to remove anything deemed to be racist, homophobic, sexist or otherwise offensive.

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Add File

Submit contribution



Tue 14 Mar 2017 - 06:47 by [Amateur Historian](#)

These two figures are stylistically identical to two figures in the British Museum, collected by Theophilus Shepstone. They were made by a carver, Mhlophekazi, who worked for Shepstone from 1859 to 1897. Originally from the Swazi kingdom, Mhlophekazi was said to have been the son of the king of Swaziland and an ambassador from his father to the British. On his death in 1897 he received obituaries in the Natal Witness, October 26 1897, Times of Natal and the Natal Mercury.

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# Allows for Additional Info



## File Management

Additional Resources



### Resource Details



Author / Producer	Amateur Historian
Title	Mhlophekazi Images
Description	Images of Mhlophekazi
File Name	Mhlo.png

# Challenges

## Digitisation in Southern Africa

- ❖ Issues with DISA
- ❖ Weakness of policy
- ❖ Lack of funding and capacity

## Institutions

- ❖ Anxieties about Digitisation
- ❖ Security of Physical Collection
- ❖ Intellectual Property

## Development

- ❖ Software
- ❖ Materials



# Potential of FHYA Model

- ❖ **Strengthen Understanding** of archival potential of *non-textual materials* (such as physical objects and sound recordings)
- ❖ **Connect Related Materials** that are separately housed across institutions and include non-institutional materials
- ❖ **Generate Inter-Institutional Dialogue** and knowledge-sharing
- ❖ **Stimulate interest in:**
  - ❖ Institutions' collections through increased access and public engagement
  - ❖ Past before colonialism as subject of research and study
- ❖ **Facilitate In-Depth Research**