

The Five Hundred Year Archive Project

**Archive and Public Culture Research Initiative
University of Cape Town
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

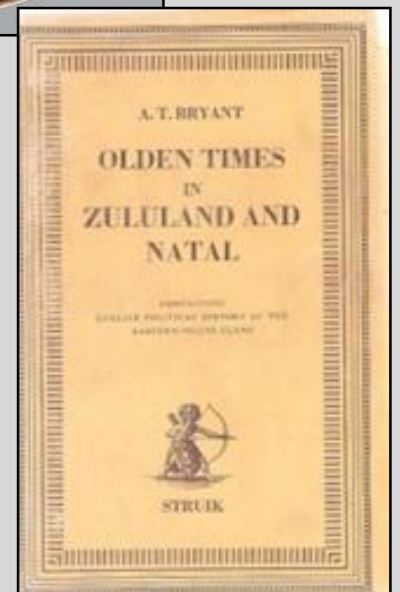
Limited Scope

- ❖ 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



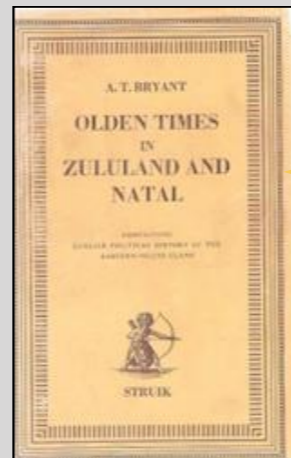
Objects from
Ethnographic
Collection
(KZNM)



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'

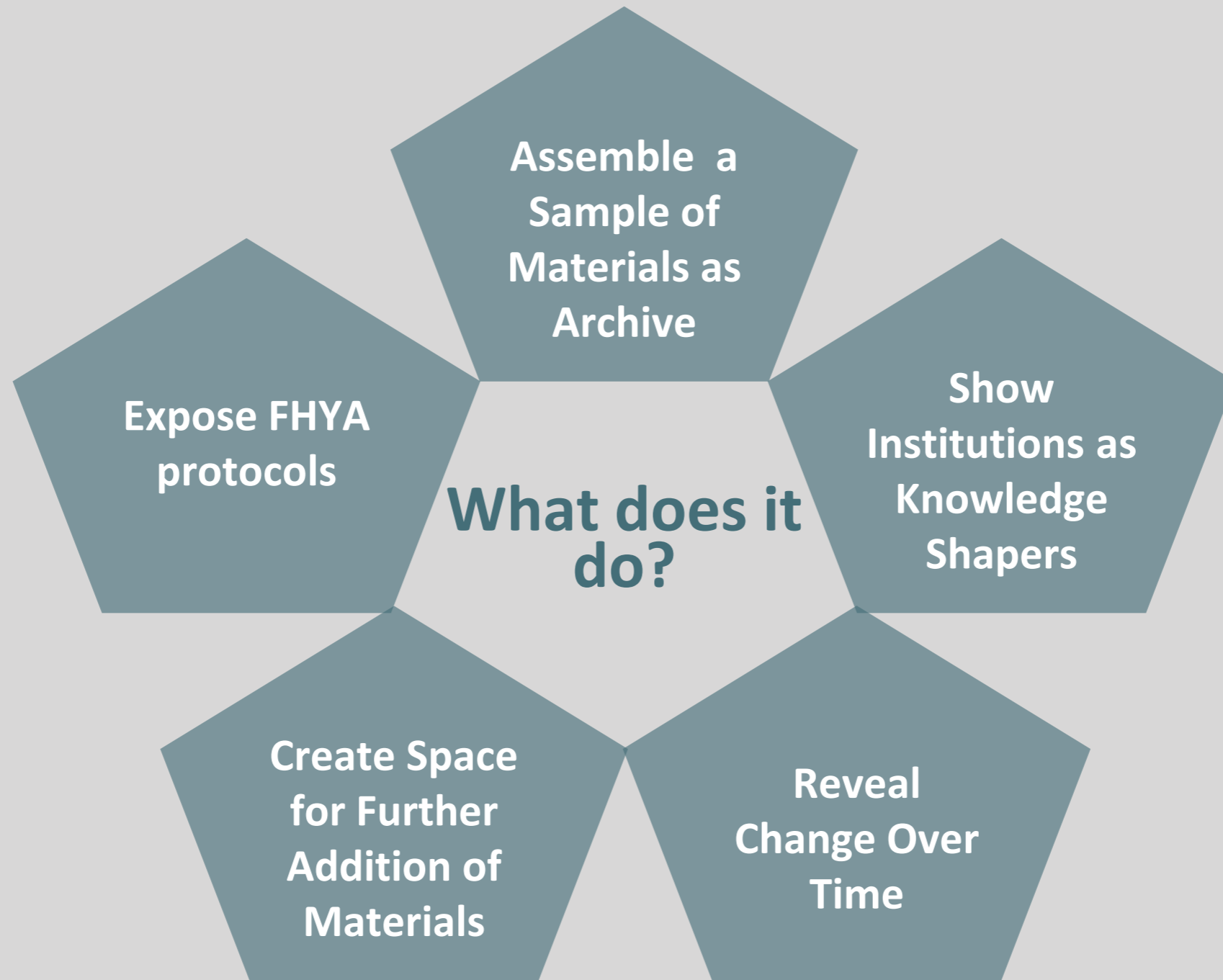


JL-A-23+24



- ❖ 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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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**