

# REFLECTIONS FROM THE MARGINS

COMPLEXITIES, TRANSITIONS AND  
DEVELOPMENTAL CHALLENGES:  
THE CASE OF THE EASTERN CAPE  
PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA

Monde Makiwane, Ntombizonke A. Gumede & Wanga Zembe-Mkabile (Eds)

# Abbreviations & Acronyms

ACC	AmaDiba Crisis Committee
ANC	African National Congress
BCCMs	Black Charismatic Church Ministries
Coalition	The Eastern Cape Health Crisis Action Coalition
CYPR	couple year protection rate
DMR	Department of Mineral Resources
DPW	Department of Public Works
ECDoE	Eastern Cape Department of Education
ECDoH	Eastern Cape Department of Health
EMS	emergency medical services
EPWP	Expanded Public Works Programme
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
IQMS	integrated quality monitoring system
MMR	maternal mortality rate
MMRiF	maternal mortality ratio in-facility
MPRDA	Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act, 2002
NCDs	non-communicable diseases
NEETs	[young people who are] not in education, employment, or training
NHI	National Health Insurance
PGDP	Provincial Growth and Development Plan

SAIMD	South African Index of Multiple Deprivation
SDG	sustainable development goals
SRH	sexual and reproductive health
Stats SA	Statistics South Africa
TEM	Transworld Energy Minerals
WHO	World Health Organization

# 2

## Unpacking the Cultural Heritage of the amaMpondo in the Eastern Cape

*Mathias Alubafi Fubah*

### ZITYEBIL' IILWIMI ZETHU

*"Ek soek kos my vriend," atsh' omHlophe.*

*"Thath' uty' uhluth' uthi mpu mhlob' am."*

*"Re a le boga motho waka," atsh' umTswana.*

*"Siyezwa ke ntsizw' enye uma uphila."*

*"Ndi matshiloni," atsh' umVenda.*

*"Dumela ntate," atsh' umSuthu.*

*"Lotshani," atsh' umNdebele.*

*"Kuths' angize ntfofomatana," atsh' umSwati.*

*My culture your culture, one nation.*

*Sityebe sithe qhutsw' iziswana ziihwimi zethu.*

*lilwimi zethu ziingcibi zethu; bubuntu bethu.*

*Fund' ufundise ubuz' uMwenu wakungamva.*

*Ucalucalulo lwakuyimisa ngxi le nqwelo.*

*lhamb' ithe chuu ngcemb' okofud' oludala.*

Umbongo ngu-Mzoli Mavimbela

## **OUR LANGUAGES ARE RICH**

### **English translation**

"I ask for a food my friend," a White said.

"Take this and eat to the maximum, my friend."

"Thank you, my person," a Tswana said.

"I hear you my brother, if you are well."

"Greeting to you," a Venda said.

"Greeting to you too," a Sotho said.

"Be welcomed my friends," a Ndebele said.

"I feel like coming my sister," a Swati said.

*Ulwimi lwam, ulwimi lwakho, isizwe esinye.*

We are rich, with our languages.

Our languages are our guides; our humanity.

Learn, teach and ask your neighbour if confused.

Segregation will stop this vehicle,

It will go slowly like an old tortoise.

Mzoli Mavimbela

## Unpacking the Cultural Heritage of the amaMpondo in the Eastern Cape

### Introduction

'Cultural heritage' has become a catch phrase for most previously marginalised ethnic groups in South Africa because they view the promotion and preservation of their heritage in the new dispensation as signals of freedom and empowerment. Since 1994, there has been an explosion of efforts to promote and preserve cultural heritage resources, especially those of the previously disenfranchised black majority and ethnic groups such as the amaMpondo (believed to have mounted one of the most vigorous resistance movements against colonialism and apartheid) in the Eastern Cape. For these groups cultural heritage is presumed to:

signal empowerment: the valorisation and preservation of their cultural beliefs and values; the honouring of their heroes and contributions; the authentication of their neglected stories and memories; the official acknowledgement of their suffering and sacrifices.<sup>1</sup>

Cultural heritage, this chapter's focus, is defined as those attributes, behavioural patterns, lifestyles, social structures and norms literally passed on or inherited from one generation to another (Omekwu, cited in Nwaru, 2015). The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) defines 'cultural heritage' as a term that encompasses several main categories of heritage, including: tangible cultural heritage such as paintings, sculptures, coins, manuscripts, arts; immovable cultural heritage such as monuments, archaeological sites; underwater heritage such as shipwrecks, underwater ruins and cities; and intangible cultural heritage such as oral traditions, performing arts and rituals.<sup>2</sup>

One notable milestone in the presentation of cultural heritage as a sign of black majority empowerment in the new South Africa is the Freedom Park in Pretoria; conceptualised as an African design that would develop a new formula for material "commemorative practice made up of a blend of modern architectural ideas supplemented with a modern understanding of ancient indigenous African knowledge".<sup>3</sup> As Jonathan Noble<sup>4</sup> argues, in Freedom Park's conceptualisation, "ideological concerns took a determinate role and where the search for deeply authentic modes of symbolisation has wished to determine the very essence" of the project. Materially, Duane Jethro<sup>5</sup> notes that Freedom Park had to display a seamless link between form and content. Achieving this, Jethro continues:

became a pressing topic of early design meetings where officials and architects involved in conceptualisation, critically debated the relationship between substance and style, essence and appearance in the pursuit of a holistic, distinctively African commemorative aesthetic.<sup>6</sup>

Hence, Freedom Park's conceptual history, driven as it was "by the organic, developmental process of forming an African commemorative aesthetic, can therefore be read as the State's search for a visible, material expression of an African post-apartheid identity".<sup>7</sup>

So, as the ruling party, the African National Congress (ANC) government searched for a truly African post-apartheid identity in South Africa. Ethnic groups, such as the amaZulu, the amaXhosa, the amaNdebele, and the amaMpondo, had the added challenge of searching for their true cultural heritages or identities, especially given that their cultural values were greatly suppressed during the colonial and apartheid eras in South Africa. Most African postcolonial societies of the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s and 1990s experienced similar changes.<sup>8, 9, 10</sup> For example, Laragh Larsen notes that the symbolic restitution of the cultural landscape for the "expression of resistance and the inscription of new voices"<sup>11</sup> followed the lifting of colonial rule in Nairobi, Kenya. In neighbouring Zimbabwe, the removal of the statues of colonial authorities, such as Cecil John Rhodes, Alfred Beit and many others, followed independence, since they were offensive to Africans.<sup>12</sup> Independence also heralded the revival of the cultural beliefs and values of ethnic groups, such as the Shona and the Ndebele, which had been suppressed by the British or white minority rule. Similar observations were made at the end of colonial rule in West Africa, most notably in Mali.<sup>13, 14</sup> Given this trend and with a similar colonial history, the amaMpondo and other South African ethnic groups cannot be an exception.

Again, since 1994, the promotion and preservation of cultural heritage has become important for most previously marginalised ethnic groups because of its role as a tool for development. Still, a lot must be done for these ethnic groups that have a rich and diverse cultural heritage and strongly resisted colonialism and apartheid. The Eastern Cape region remains trapped in poverty, regardless of the supposedly huge benefits, such as income generated from heritage tourism-related activities resulting from the promotion and preservation of cultural heritage resources in post-apartheid South Africa. This chapter highlights challenges that the promotion and preservation of the amaMpondo's cultural heritage faced in the past and present. In doing so, the author will reveal their cultural heritage, as well as the post-apartheid government's efforts to better these resources. Steps to improve these efforts will be suggested.

## The amaMpondo and cultural heritage during the colonial and apartheid eras

The amaMpondo occupy a natural region on the South African shores of the Indian Ocean. Pondoland can be found in the coastal belt of the Eastern Cape Province. Its territory is the former Pondo Kingdom and the traditional region of the Mpondo people, a Xhosa ethnic group. Some commentators point out that the San and Khoi Khoi inhabited the region since ancient times in scattered nomadic groups. In about 500 A.D., the Mpondo people settled in the area because they found the mountain grassland suitable for cattle grazing. The amaMpondo are divided into two main groups: the AmampondoaseQaukeni which includes the Bizana, Lusikisiki and Flagstaff; and the AmampondoaseNyandeni which include the Libode and Ngqeleni. The division of the amaMpondo into two groups dates back to the mid-nineteenth century when their king, Mqikela, violated an agreement between his father, King Faku, and the then governor of the Cape, Sir Peregrine Maitland of the British government. The agreement had given the colonial masters, led by Sir Peregrine, access to free trade in Pondoland in return for Faku's kingship title and a stipend, but his son and successor, Mqikela, terminated it during his reign (Maragana, 2014).

In her classic book, *Reaction to Conquest: Effects of Contact with Europeans on the Pondo of South Africa*, Monica Hunter Wilson<sup>15</sup> examines the effects of European activities in the Cape during the seventeenth, eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Through contact with Europeans, many Africans developed an interest in, and even accepted, European culture. These so-called natives, or Bantu, were extremely influential in spreading European ideas to their communities. They were referred to by Europeans and the amaMpondo as 'dressed people', because they wore European clothing rather than traditional garments and blankets, or as 'school people' since they were assumed to have attended school.<sup>16</sup>

The activities of early missionaries fostered interest in European material culture. As Hunter Wilson<sup>17</sup> notes, early missionaries laid great emphasis on the wearing of European clothes, considering the setting aside of traditional dress a mark of conversion, and church adherents were not allowed to wear blankets. Not all those who wore European dress were churchgoers, nor were they people who had attended school. Some, having worked in town, retained European dress and, by extension, the cultural practices they had been exposed to, after returning to their communities. According to Hunter Wilson,<sup>18</sup> those amaMpondo who wore European dress were the readiest to accept



European ways, and they were a principal channel of contact and influences. What emerged from this scenario was a struggle between the dressed people and those wearing blankets, or the struggle between the European cultural heritage and the African cultural values that the amaMpondo represented.

Moreover, Europeans had strong feelings of superiority from their first contact with the black peoples of Southern Africa and, particularly in the Eastern Cape region. They came as a conquering race and the watchword of the Afrikaaners in matters regarding natives was “no equality in church or state”, and we may add “no equality in cultural values and their associated practice”. Hence, the predominance of European cultural heritage, as opposed to the black majority’s heritage, marked the colonial and apartheid eras in South Africa and by extension, Pondoland.<sup>19</sup>

Statues and monuments of the colonial and apartheid eras created the impression that these tangible symbols of European origin were the only acceptable symbols of heritage.<sup>20, 21, 22</sup> Notions of cultural heritage ignored and avoided the history of black South Africans, except as part of archaeological and natural history displays.<sup>23</sup> The South African Cultural History Museum in Pretoria, for example, exhibited Greek and Egyptian artefacts, European costumes and silver, as well as Japanese ceramics and costumes, to the neglect of South African artefacts. By doing this, the colonial and apartheid social actors conveyed the message that cultural heritage, art, history, and the construction of statues and monuments in honour of heroes and heroines came from Europe.<sup>24</sup> Colonial statues and monuments, such as the Voortrekker Monument, were presented as superior to those of the African population and, therefore, deserving of a place on the South African cultural landscape.<sup>25</sup>

Before the denigration of their culture, and to the present day, the amaMpondo were known for circumcision rituals, rites of passage to manhood for young boys. Circumcision is practised all over the world, especially in indigenous communities, where local priests conduct the rituals using what are considered crude methods. In Pondoland, these rituals were common during the reign of the two rulers, Faku and Mqikela, but were suspended during the war with their neighbours to the north in the late 1800s. The suspension of the circumcision rituals allowed them to concentrate on the war. After the war, the practice resurfaced during the reign of Marhelane and has continued since. Unlike under Faku and Mqikela, however, circumcision practices became undermined by commercialisation in the Eastern Cape and Pondoland. We will return to this point later:

Closely related to the circumcision ritual is the rite of passage into womanhood for young girls, called *intonjane*. This practice requires that young girls (especially those who have reached puberty) be kept secluded in a hut for seven days, with their faces

### Unpacking the Cultural Heritage of the amaMpondo in the Eastern Cape

and bodies smeared with red ochre. Inside the hut, traditional grass, called *inkxopho*, is scattered on the floor like a carpet for other girls to sit on while the initiates sit behind the *inkxopho*. Because it is a rite of passage, not everyone is allowed into the hut. For example, the mothers of the initiates and boys are not allowed in the hut during this ritual. Discussing the *intonjane* procedure, Mangwanya Thoko, a traditionalist from Lusikisiki, explains how three goats were slaughtered on the third day of the ritual. While their skins were used to make traditional bracelets, called *ingqwamba*, for the *intonjane*, elder women from the village sang and danced before the hut.<sup>26</sup>

Moreover, the art of the amaMpondo, such as beadwork and baskets, as well as circumcision and ancestral ritual sites, all constitute important aspects of their cultural heritage resources and serve as marks of their identity. Years of colonial wars, migration, and resistance hampered the practice of these rites. Some of these wars are discussed further on. AmaMpondo beadwork is associated with the organisation of their social life, which is understood as a series of distinct stages, invariably linked to ritual performance, through which each person passes during their life-path from birth to death.<sup>27</sup> Changes in behaviour, dress, and ornamentation, including beadwork, mark these passages. Stages of life in the cosmology of the amaMpondo, as in other ethnic groups (for instance the amaZulu, or abaThembu), are important because they give a sense of orderliness to the fluidity of the social structure, especially given that responsibilities, obligations, privileges and status are linked to each stage. The beadwork of the amaMpondo is important as it is linked to the features above. Indeed, beadwork communicates both the wearer's social status and wealth, for example, as is the case of the head of a homestead or traditional healer.<sup>28</sup> In addition, certain colours of beads and their size are closely correlated with the identity of various Nguni groups formerly considered as politically distinct, such as the amaZulu, amaXhosa, amaMfengu, amaMpondo, amaMpondomise, abaThembu, amaBhaca, amaXesibe and amaBomvana.

Like the amaXhosa, the amaMpondo were referred to as the 'red people' after the russet red blankets they wear and their red skins, which were dusted with local red clay. Boys and girls wore red blankets until marriage, after which they replaced them with blue ones.<sup>29</sup> Headdresses of beads on copper wires denoted adolescence but were worn only for ceremonial purposes. For the amaMpondo, dress was an essential aspect of their identity and provided them with a sense of belonging, but, again, during the colonial era this was hampered by Western religious practices. The amaMpondo communicate their oral traditions and values using their local language, which is also part of their cultural heritage resources. It was, and remains, a carrier of values and knowledge, very often used in the practice and transmission of intangible

## REFLECTIONS FROM THE MARGINS: COMPLEXITIES, TRANSITIONS AND DEVELOPMENTAL CHALLENGES

cultural heritage. It is important in the enactment and transmission of virtually all intangible heritage, particularly in oral traditions and expressions, songs, and most rituals. Through language, the amaMpondo often used specialised terms and expressions, which reveal the intrinsic depth of connection between mother tongue and their intangible cultural heritage. Unlike other South African ethnic languages, such as isiZulu and isiXhosa, isiMpondo language was never codified by the colonial masters. If anything, it was associated with primitiveness and, as a result, most amaMpondo tended to speak isiXhosa in order to associate themselves with civilisation or people who had gone to school.<sup>30, 31</sup>

Getting back to the commercialisation of cultural heritage resources, such as circumcision rituals in the Eastern Cape and Pondoland (alluded to earlier), the involvement of the amaMpondo in successive wars led to the creation of systems of power and patronage in Pondoland. This, in turn, eventually led to the failure of traditional elites to enforce traditional values and promote their cultural heritage resources. Some knowledge of the wars is necessary to understand the evolution of the cultural heritage of the amaMpondo.

AmamPondo legend holds that King Faku granted permission for the establishment of Wesleyan mission stations in the territory in around 1830. Decades later, Lieutenant Emil Nagel attempted to establish a German colony in the area, but failed.<sup>32</sup> Having witnessed the German failure in Pondoland, the British strategised and in 1886 segregated the kingdom of Xesibeland, traditionally a region of Pondoland. This action provoked the amaMpondo people who resisted the move by invading Xesibeland. Despite their resistance, Pondoland became a protectorate and was annexed to the Cape Colony in 1894, forcing the amaMpondo to accept British authority.

The apartheid regime's declaration and implementation of the Bantu Authorities Act, 1951, during the 1950s and 1960s also provoked the amaMpondo, leading to the Mpondo Revolt of 1960.<sup>33</sup> The Mpondo revolt was largely about the action taken by *iKongo* to reject local authorities and self-government of the Transkei, which had been imposed on them. The revolt was quickly quelled and the apartheid regime made Pondoland part of the Transkei homeland in 1963, thereby making the kingdom part of the nominally independent Bantustan in 1976. Following the Bantu Authorities Act, 1951, chiefs and their councillors were selected by the colonial government as tribal authorities, and the heads of these to regional authorities (normally headed by senior or paramount chiefs). These were, in turn, governed by a territorial authority, which normally comprised all chiefs and some of their councillors. By

## Unpacking the Cultural Heritage of the amaMpondo in the Eastern Cape

giving chiefs specific supervisory responsibilities and authority than they had formerly enjoyed under traditional forms of government, and with headmen – who previously fell under the white administrative system – brought under the tribal authorities, the chieftaincy gradually became included in the system of the apartheid state.<sup>34</sup>

At a gathering in Bizana, Saul Mabude, a member of the traditional elite, was asked to explain the Bantu Authorities Act to the population. When he refused, the amaMpondo took offence and destroyed most of his livestock and house. The response from the apartheid regime was harsh, leaving many people injured and some banned; forcing the amaMpondo to resort to secret meetings on mountain ridges and the formation of a movement called *Intaba* (mountain). The activities of *Intaba* attracted the attention of tribal authority spies and loyalists, again provoking the amaMpondo and resulting in tensions between the various factions. As the tensions grew, the government constituted a commission of enquiry, which was comprised of Bantu administrative officials, to investigate the matter.

The people were not satisfied with the outcomes of the enquiry, and mounted resistance against the tribal authorities who were also representatives of the apartheid regime. They reinforced their resistance by not paying taxes and boycotting purchase of white traders' goods. These actions forced the government to declare a state of emergency in November 1960. Following the imposition of a curfew, thousands of people were detained without being charged or tried. In 1961, thirty amaMpondo were sentenced to death for their participation in the revolt. These people were buried in Mamelodi, Pretoria, until 1994 when the Truth and Reconciliation Commission heard their case and ruled that the remains of twenty-three of the executed people be exhumed and returned to eMampondweni for reburial. The exhumed bodies were returned in line with the provisions of the National Heritage Resources Act 25 of 1999<sup>35</sup> on the handling of the remains of victims of conflict associated with South Africa's liberation struggle. Beyond this, and unlike other anti-colonial and anti-apartheid heroes and heroines whose cultural heritage resources have been commemorated and celebrated since 1994, little or nothing has been done in commemoration of the thirty amaMpondo sentenced to death. In August 2018, three of the remaining amaMpondo buried in Mamelodi were exhumed and returned to eMampondweni for proper burial by their families and friends.

Despite all the above, the former Transkei coastline remains a major attraction for the amaMpondo and the Eastern Cape as a whole because of its magnificent rock cliffs and spectacular views, which unfortunately have

not benefitted enough from the post-apartheid transformation agenda and development initiatives. These are resources which, if developed, could greatly transform and contribute to tourism in the region and create job opportunities for the locals.



**Figure 2.1** Cross-section of Transkei Wild Coast (M.F. Alubafi, December 2019)

### **AmaMpondo cultural heritage after 1994**

The advent of majority rule in South Africa in 1994 ushered in a new era and an opportunity for the previously disenfranchised population and ethnic groups, including the amaMpondo, to promote their cultural heritage. Changes to how cultural heritage was promoted and preserved across South Africa began immediately after the 1994 elections that brought the ANC and black majority to power.<sup>36</sup> The preservation of cultural heritage was made possible by the establishment of the National Heritage Resources Act 25 of 1999.<sup>37</sup> According to the preamble of this Act, the aim was to promote good management of the national estate and to enable and encourage communities to nurture and conserve their legacy so that it could be bequeathed to future generations. This action was in recognition of the fact that heritage is unique, precious, and cannot be renewed. It defines our cultural identity and, therefore, lies at the heart of our spiritual well-being, and has the power to build our nation and communities. Moreover, it educates, it deepens our understanding of society and encourages us to empathise with the experience of others.<sup>38</sup>

### Unpacking the Cultural Heritage of the amaMpondo in the Eastern Cape

The new South African government of 1994 made social transformation a priority.<sup>39</sup> The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, for example, declared equal rights for all citizens. To the aforementioned, we may also add equal cultural representation since the cultural landscape and associated cultural heritage practices are platforms where national ideals, such as those enshrined in the Constitution, are given material form. The promotion and preservation of the cultural heritage resources of the state and local ethnic groups, such as the amaMpondo, became a space where the ANC had to persuade the population to support its policies.<sup>40</sup> Accordingly, on Heritage Day 1997, former president, Nelson Mandela, used the opportunity to criticise the cultural landscape as one which reflected colonial and apartheid points of view.<sup>41</sup> In line with the country's new Constitution, Mandela demanded a change of the old iconography. Indeed, he emphasised that cultural representation had to change to reflect the democratic ideals and experiences of the majority of the population, rather than focusing on a privileged few, as had been the case.<sup>42</sup> Early in 1992, the South African History Workshop in Johannesburg held the *Myths, Monuments, Museums: New Premises* conference to chart the future of cultural heritage resources in the country, and of ethnic groups such as those in Pondoland.<sup>43</sup> Debates at the conference centred on whether public sculptures set up during the long apartheid years to commemorate key moments and figures in the Afrikaner nationalist canon should be removed. Following the deliberations, it was decided that some heritage resources, such as the statue of Hendrik Verwoerd, "the man considered by many to be the major architect of apartheid be destroyed, while many of the symbolically laden such as the Voortrekker Monument and the Taalmonument" (Afrikaans language monument) outside Paarl in the Western Cape, should survive.<sup>44</sup> They also agreed that more attention be given to previously marginalised cultural heritage resources, especially those of the former Bantustan nations of which the amaMpondo was a part.

Since 1994, significant work and achievements have been made in the identification, documentation, and preservation of the cultural heritage resources of South Africa, at national, provincial, district, and community levels. Again, Freedom Park emerged as a national attempt to disrupt the cultural landscape which, until then, was dominated by predominantly colonial and apartheid cultural heritage resources, such as: the Voortrekker monument in Pretoria; Paul Kruger's statue in Pretoria; Queen Victoria's statue in Gqeberha; and related statues and monuments. According to the National Heritage Council, heritage, especially that of ethnic groups such as the amaZulu, amaXhosa, and amaNdebele, is now a major sector easily

harnessed by local communities in the struggle for job creation and social cohesion. To this end, the amaMpondo launched what has become known as the Pondo Culture and Heritage Festival in 2006.

### **The Pondo Culture and Heritage Festival**

The Pondo Culture and Heritage Festival was officially launched in 2006 in eMampondweni. The first event was meant to commemorate the life of the former, now deceased, leader, Nkosi Ntsikayezwe Sigcau (1947-1996). Besides being a traditional ruler of the amaMpondo, Sigcau was also an activist and stalwart of the ANC who made considerable contributions to the liberation struggle. Given that a focus area of the Department of Arts and Culture and the National Heritage Council is the commemoration of the lives of anti-colonial and anti-apartheid heroes and heroines, it was, and still is, typical for the life of an activist and a stalwart like Sigcau to be celebrated through an event such as the Pondo Culture and Heritage Festival. More importantly, the festival was created as a step towards promoting, marketing, developing and sharing the once so-called primitive culture and heritage of the amaMpondo<sup>45</sup> with the rest of South Africa, Africa and the world. Festivals of this nature are not unique to the amaMpondo. Across South Africa and the African continent, similar culture and heritage festivals are common, with the following notable examples:

- the Onkweni Royal Cultural Festival International in the Free State, to honour the people of the Free State;<sup>46</sup>
- the annual cultural and heritage festivals in most of the kingdoms of the western Grassfields, Cameroon, to honour the founding dynastic kings and queens of the region. The western Grassfields is the highland region of over seventy kingdoms in the North West Province of Cameroon administered by the British as part of British Southern Cameroon in the colonial era;<sup>47</sup>
- the Ibo Yam cultural festival in Nigeria, usually held at the beginning of each harvest season to thank the gods and ancestors of the land for a bountiful harvest. The Ibo are one of the largest ethnic groups in the South East of Nigeria;<sup>48</sup> and
- the cultural patrimony festivals in Mali.<sup>49</sup>

The Pondo Culture and Heritage Festival also seeks to advocate for cultural diplomacy, cultural tourism, and the promotion of the socio-economic, cultural, and rural development of the amaMpondo Kingdom. Dali Tambo echoes the notion of promoting cultural tourism through the commemoration of the lives of liberation heroes and heroines in his monumental project on statues and monuments in honour of anti-colonial and anti-apartheid heroes and heroines at the Groenkloof Nature Reserve in Pretoria. As Dali Tambo notes: "Heritage

## Unpacking the Cultural Heritage of the amaMpondo in the Eastern Cape

tourism is a massively growing aspect of international tourism, with the educated middle classes seeking otherness... Heritage is the show business of history...".<sup>50</sup> Suffice to say that the Pondo Culture and Heritage Festival is the show business of not only the amaMpondo, but also that of the Eastern Cape, South Africa, and the world. The main events at the festival include stick fighting, reed dances, music, horse parades, and the exhibition of other aspects of the rich and diverse artistic and cultural heritage resources of the amaMpondo.

The Pondo Culture and Heritage Festival is normally interspersed with the award of titles and gifts to meritorious sons and daughters of Pondoland. Notable contributions to South Africa and humanity at large, and to the development of culture and heritage of the amaMpondo are recognised and rewarded. These include:

- Mama Winnie Mandela, recipient of the first-ever King Sigcau Bravery and Lifetime Award during the 2017 festival, for her role in the liberation struggle and the sacrifices she made,<sup>51</sup> as well as her contribution towards nation-building, and the role she played for a better life for all in South Africa; and
- Mzikazi Nduna, Wits Professor and a member of the Gender-Based Violence Prevention Network for the Horn, East and Southern Africa, recipient of the 2018 Queen Mamjoli Award for the amazing role she played on issues around gender-based violence.<sup>52</sup>

Before these, other recipients included:

- Advocate Sonwabile Mancotywa (CEO of the National Heritage Council), recipient of the Nkosi Ntsikayezwe Sigcau Memorial Award;
- His Excellency Membathisi Mdladlana (former Minister of Labour and South Africa's former Ambassador to Canada);
- His Excellency Membathisi Mdladlana;
- Phathekile Holomisa (Deputy Minister of Labour); and
- Prince Sonwabile Ndamase (Madiba T-Shirts founder and CEO of Vukani Fashions).<sup>53</sup>

Awards are also made to local and international groups for traditional music, with recipients including the Kanyuthu Traditional Group and Casper the Golden Voice, both from the Republic of Botswana.



## **Promoting amaMpondo culture and heritage: Some challenges**

Despite the introduction of the Pondo Culture and Heritage Festival in post-apartheid South Africa, the kingdom is still disadvantaged in many ways. The festival is an annual event and the opportunities associated with it, such as job creation, in most cases offer only a temporal hand-to-mouth benefit. As a result, many young adults leave eMampondweni and the Eastern Cape for other provinces in search of opportunities. This out-migration suggests that the socio-cultural benefits of the new dispensation do not extend to eMampondweni and the Eastern Cape, as would have been expected. It is worth noting, again, that during the colonial and apartheid eras the Eastern Cape was set aside as a labour reserve for industrialised parts of the country, such as Gauteng and the Western Cape. As a result, grandparents and parents of some of the present-day young adults left the Eastern Cape for these regions. For the same scenario to continue twenty-four years after democracy suggests that the Eastern Cape and eMampondweni have been neglected. To this end, conditions for human capital improvement in the Eastern Cape and eMampondweni are unfavourable, and this also contributes to the fragmentation of families.

Moreover, young adults' vast outward migration also hinders the promotion and preservation of the cultural heritage resources of the amaMpondo in various ways. On the one hand, those who left the region during the colonial and apartheid-eras, and also the present, often returned with modern ideas, some useful and others destructive. One positive and useful aspect of returning migrants was their idea for the Pondo Culture and Heritage Festival, a flagship programme for the amaMpondo. Negatively, migrants returned with religious ideas, such as Pentecostal religious belief practices, which made local people see their culture as primitive and satanic. Therefore, it was worth replacing with Western religious beliefs and values, such as those of the Wesleyan Missionaries. On the other hand, the mere migration of young adults from the Mpondo Kingdom creates a vacuum for those who would have been socialised into traditional amaMpondo belief systems. The implication here is that most custodians of the traditional religious practices of the amaMpondo are dead or dying without handing down these values to their protégés. eMampondweni is additionally disadvantaged because not much was done about the amaMpondo heroes and heroines' legacies for their descendants, apart from their exhumation and the return of their remains. Other struggle heroes and heroines have been remembered and commemorated through the construction of statues and monuments in their honour, and the naming of buildings and other significant places. For example, the University of

## Unpacking the Cultural Heritage of the amaMpondo in the Eastern Cape

South Africa remembers Robert Sobukwe, a struggle icon, through naming a building after him. It would be a major symbol of recognition and appreciation of contribution if one of the Pondo 30 were remembered in a similar fashion.

Moreover, indigenous leaders of the Eastern Cape and eMampondweni have been blamed for not doing enough to contribute to the promotion and preservation of the cultural heritage resources of the province and kingdom. According to an informant, the leaders of the Eastern Cape, including that of Pondoland, are somewhat voiceless on issues affecting the province in comparison to traditional leaders of other provinces, such as the Zulu King of KwaZulu-Natal. The experience that the informant shared is that anything that concerns the province of KwaZulu-Natal directly or indirectly concerns the Zulu King, and this manifests in collective action that the province has mounted over the years on issues affecting them. For example, the recent call for the expropriation of land without compensation was interpreted as an intervention in ancestral resources and, as a result, the entire Zulu nation and their king rose and threatened to break away from the Republic of South Africa if the government failed to listen to them. This singular action speaks to the extent to which the Zulu nation can go to promote and preserve their cultural heritage in comparison to the leaders and people of the Eastern Cape, who are still largely neglected 24 years after democracy was implemented.

Added to the above, because the amaXhosa in the Eastern Cape are considered more educated, civilised, and in better positions, when opportunities arise, they are directed to their regions rather than those of the amaMpondo.

### **Mpondo cultural heritage: The way forward**

There is evidence that the Mpondo Kingdom's cultural heritage resources have benefitted and is benefitting the people, and, therefore, deserve to be promoted and preserved. The promotion and preservation of the culture and heritage of the amaMpondo since 2006 has brought them closer to each other, serving as a link with collective origins and national identification to the Mpondo Kingdom, as well as the Eastern Cape and South Africa. While the use of culture and heritage to forge identities is not new in societies as diverse as those in South Africa, heritage initiatives in eMampondweni, such as the Pondo Culture and Heritage Festival, have become instruments for social justice and social cohesion.<sup>54</sup> This cohesion manifests in the different aspects of amaMpondo culture and heritage exhibited during the annual festivals (such as arts and crafts, dance, and music) and it is also implicit in the award of medals to deserving elites and dignitaries. Awards of this

## REFLECTIONS FROM THE MARGINS: COMPLEXITIES, TRANSITIONS AND DEVELOPMENTAL CHALLENGES

nature under the colonial and apartheid eras were typically made to their heroes and heroines, such as Cecil John Rhodes and Paul Kruger. These were awarded titles, and statues and monuments were erected in their honour. For similar commemorative practices to occur in a once-disadvantaged kingdom, like that of the amaMpondo, is laudable and worth recommending as a step towards ensuring the sustainability of their endeavours for the promotion and preservation of their cultural heritage.

The exhumation and repatriation of the corpses of some members of the Pondo 30 to the Eastern Cape for reburial is an indication that the ANC government has not forgotten about the role they played in the struggle, and, by extension, the cultural heritage of the amaMpondo. Initiatives such as the exhumation and reburial of struggle icons to eMampondweni and the Pondo Culture and Heritage Festival need to be carefully nurtured and promoted so that they can be sustainable and beneficial to the local population and the Eastern Cape as a whole. Introducing a new activity during the festival which focuses on the lives and legacies of the Pondo 30 could achieve this outcome. Similarly, statues and monuments could also be constructed in their honour as a step toward contributing to the promotion of cultural heritage tourism in eMampondweni. This action might help to reduce the high unemployment rate, one of the reasons why young adults are leaving eMampondweni and the Eastern Cape. In addition, isiMpondo needs to be codified and promoted by including it in the curriculum as one of the official languages. In this way, the issue of backwardness and illiteracy associated with the language would be addressed, and more amaMpondo would feel comfortable and empowered to use their home language, rather than isiXhosa.

Realising the projections above require that amaMpondo who have migrated out of the kingdom to work in the cities, continue to contribute to community development even if they are not ready to return and settle there permanently. Although some already contribute to the promotion and preservation of their cultural heritage resources through the activities of the Pondo Culture and Heritage Festival, a lot still needs to be done if the local community wants to encourage young men and women to remain and create opportunities, rather than continually moving to the cities in search of jobs. It will also require local leaders to be more forceful in searching for and attracting development to their communities.

## Unpacking the Cultural Heritage of the amaMpondo in the Eastern Cape

### Endnotes

- 1 Marschall, S. 2006. Commemorating Struggle Heroes: Constructing a Genealogy for the New South Africa. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 12(2):176-193. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527250500496136>
- 2 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). 1972. Convention on the Protection of Cultural Heritage.
- 3 Jethro, D. 2013. An African Story of Creation: Heritage Formation at Freedom Park, South Africa. *Material Religion*, 9(3):370-393. <https://doi.org/10.2752/175183413X13730330869077>
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Ibid., p. 380.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Coombs, A. 2003. *History after Apartheid: Visual Culture and Public Memory in a Democratic South Africa*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822384922>
- 9 Larsen, L. 2013. Politics and Public Monuments in Nairobi, Kenya. *OpenDemocracy*, 18 April. <https://bit.ly/2SAGclK> (Accessed 1 November 2018).
- 10 Mbembe, A. 2015. *Decolonising Knowledge and the Question of the Archive*. Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand.
- 11 Larsen, L. 2013. Politics and Public Monuments in Nairobi, Kenya.
- 12 Samwanda, B. 2013. Postcolonial Monuments and Public Sculpture in Zimbabwe. Unpublished PhD dissertation. Cape Town: Rhodes University.
- 13 Arnoldi, J. 1999. Overcoming a Colonial Legacy: The New National Museum in Mali, 1996 to the Present. *Museum Anthropology*, 22(3):28-40. <https://doi.org/10.1525/mua.1999.22.3.28>
- 14 Arnoldi, J. 2003. Symbolically Inscribing the City: Public Sculpture in Mali, 1995 to 2002. *African Arts Journal*, 36(2):56-65. <https://doi.org/10.1162/afar.2003.36.2.56>
- 15 Hunter Wilson, M. 1979. *Reaction to Conquest: Effects of Contact with Europeans on the Pondo of South Africa*. London: David Philip in association with Rex Collings.
- 16 Ibid.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Kayster, A. 2010. *Transformation in South African Museums*. Unpublished paper. Graaff Reinet Museum. pp. 1-13.
- 20 Coombs, A. 2003. *History after Apartheid: Visual Culture and Public Memory in a Democratic South Africa*.
- 21 Kayster, A. 2010. *Transformation in South African Museums*.

REFLECTIONS FROM THE MARGINS: COMPLEXITIES, TRANSITIONS AND DEVELOPMENTAL CHALLENGES

- 22 Marschall, S. 2006. Commemorating Struggle Heroes: Constructing a Genealogy for the New South Africa.
- 23 Kayster, A. 2010. Transformation in South African Museums.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Crooke, E. Dealing with the Past: Museums and Heritage in Northern Ireland and Cape Town. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 11(2):131-142.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13527250500070329>
- 26 Mhlelude, F. 2014. The Culture and Heritage of the AmaMpondo Tribe. *SABC News Online*, 18 September. <https://bit.ly/3fpNeZB> (Accessed 1 October 2019).
- 27 Carey, M. 1991. *Beads and Beadwork of West and Central Africa*. Princes Risborough, UK: Shire Publications.
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 Mhlelude, F. 2014. The Culture and Heritage of the AmaMpondo Tribe.
- 30 Makiwane, M. 2018. Personal communication, March. Pretoria.
- 31 Makiwane, M. 2019. Personal communication, 5 February. Pretoria.
- 32 Mhlelude, F. 2014. The Culture and Heritage of the AmaMpondo Tribe.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Hammond-Tooke. 1974. The Cape Nguni Witch Familiar as a Mediatory Construct. *Man: New Series*, 9(1):128-136. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2800041>
- 35 Republic of South Africa. 1999. *National Heritage Resources Act 25 of 1999*. Pretoria: Government Printer.
- 36 Marschall, S. 2006. Commemorating Struggle Heroes: Constructing a Genealogy for the New South Africa.
- 37 Republic of South Africa. 1999. *National Heritage Resources Act 25 of 1999*.
- 38 Ibid.
- 39 Alubafi, M.F. 2018. The Shifting Image of Black Women's Hair in Tswane (Pretoria), South Africa. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 4(1):147184. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2018.1471184>
- 40 Kayster, A. 2010. *Transformation in South African Museums*.
- 41 Ibid.
- 42 Ibid.
- 43 Coombs, A. 2003. *History after Apartheid: Visual Culture and Public Memory in a Democratic South Africa*.
- 44 Ibid.
- 45 Bongiwe, A. 2019, Personal communication, 11 June, Mthatha.
- 46 Ramotekoa, M. 2017. Zulu Prince Hosts Cultural Festival in Free State. *Bloemfontein Courant*, 11 January. <https://bit.ly/3yFrH6T>
- 47 Alubafi, M.F. 2014. *The Art of the Bamui Kingdom, Cameroon*. England: CSP.

### Unpacking the Cultural Heritage of the amaMpondo in the Eastern Cape

- 48 Ujumadu, V., Nkwopara, C., Okonkwo, N. & Agbo, D. 2017. New Yam: A Phenomenal Festival in Iboland. *Vanguard Media*, August 23. <https://bit.ly/3bZY7iy>
- 49 Arnoldi, J. 2014. Cultural Patrimony and Heritage Management in Mali: The Old Towns of Djenne and the Sanke Mon festival. *Africa Today*, 61(1):47-67. <https://doi.org/10.2979/africatoday.61.1.47>
- 50 Gamedze, T. 2015. Heritage for sale: Bronze casting and the colonial imagination. *Artthrob*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3bYPRPX> (Accessed 20 November 2018).
- 51 Diplomatic Society. 2017. *Mpondo Culture and Heritage Festival 2017*. <https://bit.ly/3fnKls7>
- 52 Ibid.
- 53 Ibid.
- 54 Holtorf, C. 2011. The Changing Contribution of Cultural Heritage to Society. *Museum International*, April 19. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0033.2012.01758.x>