

**TRIBING AND UNTRIBING THE ARCHIVE: IDENTITY AND THE MATERIAL RECORD IN SOUTHERN KWAZULU-NATAL IN THE LATE INDEPENDENT AND COLONIAL PERIODS**

**Volume 1 and Volume 2**

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CAROLYN Hamilton is an esteemed and erudite scholar and an historian of the pre-colonial and pre-industrial history of South Africa. Nessa Liebhammer was the Johannesburg Art Gallery curator of the 'traditional Collection of Southern African Art' and has made a significant contribution to the discourse as to how black South Africans have been represented in museums and galleries by white South Africans. These expert editors apply their own experience and perspectives to reconstitute our ideas about the past and review previous terminology and language, crossing boundaries by going beyond the notion of 'tribe'.

Both books are published in slip-cased volumes and consist of twenty-one carefully selected essays. These contributions are from a multidisciplinary group of scholars and the editors include images of the books that have shaped the archive. There is also an acknowledgement of the valuable contribution made by the late Jeff Guy. The images of the most relevant books in the archive resemble bookends on a library shelf which remind us of the knowledge they contain. This is juxtaposed with the notion expounded in all the essays that we should re-examine and reinterpret the archive to foster an understanding of our past that is meaningful in contemporary society. These books are

about the process by which the notion of 'tribe' came into being in the nineteenth century and how a great deal of literature and evidence was inserted into the structure of the historical narrative of communities in order to secure their place in colonial relationships. It is an interrogation of the notion of 'tribe' and makes a significant impact on the literature and discourse for future scholars. The essays challenge the reader to think about the notion of 'tribe' and how an archive was perceived during various historical periods.

Volume 1 is divided into two sections: 'Mortified, Marooned, Mobilised' and 'Layered Landscapes, Segregated Spaces'. The images in the book are of a high quality as the editors realised that these can be a means of storing the narrative. The visual component of the volume thereby complements the text and encourages the reader to think further about the way we interpret historiography. It encourages us to dialogue with the notion of 'tribe' and how some communities were not allowed to remember their past. The way language was used when Stuart and other interlocutors were recording information has a different meaning now and may no longer be used in the same way. As language and ideas evolve we need to develop new methodologies and new ways of thinking about these concepts. Carolyn Hamilton explains

that 'Colonialism sewed things up in a certain way. We need to unpick this and rethink the way that language can be excavated and meaning inferred from these excavations'. Certain concepts get deposited in the archive taxonomies: 'Tribes' could have a deep European root and African history is a product of the colonial period. This shapes our own thinking about pre-colonial history and we need to re-think the notion of 'tribes' and 'archives'. Through dialogue and conversation we can unearth the vocabulary of the pre-colonial writers and interlocutors and re-examine how Shepstone and others created the notion of 'tribe'. Fixed statements in history need to be interrogated and conversations about these concepts are important to scholars so that a new body of literature can be generated.

These two volumes reveal that an archive is not static and meaning must be created from all of the relevant components whether they take the form of text or objects. Readers of the volumes can engage with the visual imagery and the text in terms of contemporary debates about race, politics, identity and colonialism. The books thus serve a specific purpose in that although they are geographically specific to the region of KwaZulu-Natal the heterogeneous ideas they generate can have a broader impact on historiography and the remote past which is not unchanging. 'By looking through a de-colonial lens the archive is unsettled' states Carolyn Hamilton. This can then stimulate more conversations so that these concepts can be further discussed.

Volume 2 also consists of two parts with the first five essays under the title of 'Significant (Mis)identifications'. The second part consists of four essays in a section titled 'Archival Biogra-

phies'. All of the essays in this volume are pertinent to how material objects and visual imagery is presented to the viewer. They encourage us to revisit the way museum collections have been arranged, labelled, stored and exhibited and in some cases commodified for tourism. There is an Epilogue by Mbongiseni Buthelezi who concludes that 'part of the ongoing project of decolonising society involves reclaiming pasts previously denied to those who were colonised and represented as having no history.' Buthelezi also states that 'redress is an attempt to rebalance the society by dismantling the racialised hierarchies that existed at the end of apartheid in 1994.'

This collection of essays certainly will have wide appeal to historians, anthropologists, archaeologists, scholars, teachers, archivists and museum curators. They are particularly pertinent to the conversation about 'tribes', decolonising a 'tribe' and how archives are powerful tools for those who want to engage with what is stored in them. These volumes invite us to revisit the discourse about how people's histories are collected, recorded, arranged, exhibited and stored and to interrogate the narratives that have been created by this process. They call for a revision of static meanings and a new identity that links pre-colonial discourse with contemporary political and historical discourse. They are an engaging read supported by beautiful illustrations, maps and photographs which capture the essence of what the creation of meaning making is all about. These volumes should find a place on all scholarly bookshelves as they make one think carefully about the power relations which operate in society at any one time.

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