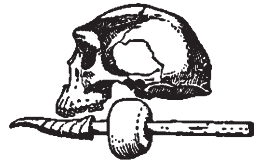


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Editorial

Seliyozilahla kunina: Appreciating the colourful skies as the sun sets

As I continue with my reflection, my focus in this editorial, as the sunset is even more eminent, is on South Africa's transition in 1994. In particular, it is about the expectations that were meant to address inequality that had prevailed in the previously divisive political period. This particular period was characterised by racial laws that relegated Africans to the periphery of the South African population.

Since the transition from the Apartheid era to the so-called democratic era, the transformation theme has become synonymous with the political redress needed in the country. Transformation is one of the most important aspects any society can go through, especially following a lengthy period of unequal access to basic human rights. A system of inequality must be corrected by another system of inequality. Failure to do so leads to continued existence of conditions that prevailed during the period when some were favoured over others. It is because of discomfort with this unavoidable reality of needing to have another period of inequality to address challenges of yesterday that transformation has failed. People have grown fears and anger against transformation. Transformation has caused so much tension in the country, with some calling it reverse racism. This is because transformation post-1994 is meant to favour Africans who occupied lower rank during the divisive Apartheid era. More worrying, however, has been the notion promoted to suit the interest of some, that transformation produces mediocrity. As a result of such ideological links between transformation and mediocrity, the former has become highly criticised in South Africa. No matter what the general views may be on transformation, it is through its successful implementation that we can address inequality in South Africa. While this is noted, it is true that transformation cannot happen in perpetuity. There must be a period by which its implementation should end. If its application was successful, it would mean that healthy competition across people of various races could take place without the historical challenges being relevant.

Transformation has always been a significant part of my ideological thinking, particularly from my days as an undergraduate student of archaeology at the University of the Witwatersrand. The motivation behind this ideological position was largely informed by my own student experiences, some of which I would never write about, about how Africans were lucrative tokens in the name of a transforming archaeological discipline. After many discussions with equally affected colleagues, I led initiatives that were aimed at launching meaningful changes in archaeology. However, looking back at the journey that has taken 12 years, I am very disappointed at the failure of the Transformation Charter. My own interpretation of this failure is founded on the viewpoint that transformation

in archaeology is not a widely supported position. However, in the name of being politically correct, it is an ideology that is publicly tolerated by those with the ability to bring about meaningful changes into the discipline. Noting my role, therefore, in helping to transform South African archaeology over the past 12 years, it is not surprising then that transformation formed one of the nine pillars that were guiding my term of office as the Editor-in-Chief of this prestigious journal (see Ndlovu 2016, 2017, 2019).

I have always argued that transformation is not about 'window dressing', where Africans are invited to the table, yet occupy obscure positions such that they cannot take part in the conversations. As African scholars, it is thus vital that we are not just bystanders watching others producing archaeological knowledge which we then consume. The current issue of the *South African Archaeological Bulletin* will, hopefully, go down in history as one of the most significant achievements by the discipline of archaeology in South Africa. This is because for the very first time in its history dating back to 1945, all the four research articles are authored by Africans. This achievement represents a practical implementation of the noble intentions that once defined the thinking of the previous Editor-in-Chief, Prof. Benjamin Smith. He previously argued that it had been his intentions to increase the number of publications from African scholars, particularly young emerging academics (see Smith 2014). Three of the four authors are PhD candidates at the University of Cambridge, University of the Witwatersrand, and the University of Cape Town. As young scholars, the *Bulletin* has given them a platform to showcase their scholarship. They will one day look back and see this journal as having given them a significant opportunity to share their academic ideas. The one other author works at the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania.

The first article by Bushozi, titled "A multiple-institution corporation's engagement of local communities in conservation management: the case of Olduvai Gorge, Ngorongoro Conservation Area (NCA), Tanzania", addresses the important element of proactively working with communities in our research practices. This research article adds further ideas to many other academic contributions that have argued for a reconsideration of how archaeologists engage local communities. The second article by Naidu is titled "A preliminary study using remote sensing and GIS to determine the extent of urban expansion of southern Johannesburg and its effect on Iron Age stone-walled structures". This research article is linked to another recent publication that appeared in the June 2019 issue of the *Bulletin*. Naidu's article, which is part of her PhD research, aims to quantitatively establish the impact on Iron Age stone-walled structures caused by the infrastructural

incursions into areas of southern Johannesburg. The two research articles by Bushozi and Naidu deal with the theme that was once shunned within academic circles. Heritage management has ‘come of age’ and is now widely accepted as part of the archaeology discipline, no longer mentioned in passing when commenting on the significance of preserving the rich cultural heritage of sites that should be kept in secret to protect their authenticity and integrity. These two articles fit within the existing framework whereby most of the articles published by Africans in the *Bulletin* have been on heritage management. While heritage management is important, its dominance by African scholars might have unintended interpretations (see Ndlovu 2009 for more discussion on this issue).

Nxumalo’s article, titled “Integrating geoarchaeological approaches and rainfall modelling as a proxy for hydrological changes in the Shashe–Limpopo Basin, South Africa”, provides a significant deviation from heritage management. In his article, Mkhathshwa’s research assesses the impact made by hydrological changes on the demise of Mapungubwe in the Shashe–Limpopo basin. The rise and demise of Mapungubwe has long been linked to significant climate changes such as increased rainfall that would have supported intensive agropastoral activities and demographic growth, later declining due to the onset of drier conditions. His important contribution in the discussions around the decline of Southern Africa’s earliest civilised state is that beyond rainfall patterns, there were many factors (cultural and environmental) that caused the decline of Mapungubwe. The fourth research article is co-authored by Lupuwana and her supervisor, Prof. Simon Hall. Titled “Women, houses, and liminality: A study on the representations of women in the 19th century rock engravings at Grootfontein farm, Northern Cape, South Africa”, the article deals with the engravings of ‘women in houses’ to argue that there is a significant relationship between 19th century rock art and KhoeSan beliefs. In particular, the discussion focuses on the girls’ puberty rites during which the seclusion of the ‘hokmeisie’ is a core theme.

In addition to these four research articles, two of the three Field and Technical reports have African authors. These are Chikumbirike and Reynard. The former co-authored an article, titled “Wood for charcoal: Identifying tree species from archaeo-metallurgical sites at Chigaramboni, southeastern Zimbabwe”, with her PhD supervisors, Prof. Marion Bamford and Prof. Amanda Esterhysen. The other Field and Technical report, titled “Revisiting Klasies River: A report on the large mammal remains from the Deacon excavations of Klasies River main site, South Africa”, is co-authored by Reynard, together with van Pletzen-Vos, the late Brink, and Wurz.

The theme of transformation is not only limited to the research articles and Field and technical reports, but is also extended to the discussion forum contribution made by Vilakazi. Her discussion forum article, titled “‘Humble’ knowledge in the Palaeosciences: Isn’t it time to decolonise”, deals with the argument of whether the time to unmask the true discoverers of palaeosciences material has not arrived. This article addresses the theme of decolonisation which has attracted much interest since the protests that engulfed the majority of South African institutions of higher education in 2015. As per my approach to discussion forums since I was appointed the Editor-in-Chief, I wanted to have respondents to Mphephethwa’s manuscript. However, this has not been possible. At the core of my failure to secure a responding contribution is the theme of Mphephethwa’s article. There seem to be

politically correct but inaudible voices from some quarters calling for transformation. These voices seem not to be willing to publicly engage in discussions on this theme. This says a lot about why the Transformation Charter for archaeology has dismally failed in my view.

Having been able to provide a publication platform and much needed support to a number of emerging scholars in this and prior issues, I am deeply satisfied of my contribution to the discipline. Transformation is important to me. I can still recall how it felt like not having confidence in myself to publish anything. Knowing that experience, I had considered it my calling during my tenure as the Editor-in-Chief to ensure that I provide the same support I was given by a selected few. It was through such mentoring support that I published my first few research articles, and was able to source much inspiration and confidence from these. As it became evident to me, these mentors had to dedicate large amounts of their time to help me ‘go over the line’ and get published. I thus have had to dedicate large amounts of time to assist younger scholars, especially those who published their research articles in this issue (see also previous *Bulletin* issues: December 2016, June 2017, June 2019, Special Issue). Only someone highly interested and motivated by transformation will be able to spend that much time for no financial gain or even a mention in the acknowledgements section.

Beyond aiming to increase articles published by African scholars in the *Bulletin*, I have similarly approached a number of Africans to review submitted manuscripts. My aim was simply to expand the network of voices that are reflected in published articles in the *Bulletin*. I specifically wanted to focus on emerging scholars to provide them with opportunities to share their ideas, and also gain much needed confidence to increase their publications too. My approach here was further enhanced by the experience I had when I received my first invitation to review an article. I felt proud to have made a meaningful contribution for which the author sincerely thanked me after incorporating my own recommendations that had been provided as part of the review.

As I conclude, I congratulate Dr Natalie Swanepoel for her successful application for the position I am currently occupying. I truly wish her well during her tenure. She is the fifth Editor-in-Chief since the signing of the Memorandum of Agreement between ASAPA and SAAS. Let her run her own race too, and continue to shape the journal in the best way she sees necessary in the same way those before her have done. My own race is nearing its own end.

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