

**Title of dissertation: Making a case for combating historical dissociation of the
'Bushmen' collection at the Iziko Museums of South Africa**

by

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ABSTRACT AND KEY TERMS

The study aims to make a case for coining and including historical dissociation as a risk to museum ethnographic collections. The research is based on a 2019 collaboration project between the Iziko Museums of South Africa and representatives of the Khomani San people, where a selection of objects from the ‘Bushmen’ collection were examined by the Khomani San. Iziko’s archival records, notes, and transcripts of the 2019 project highlighted differences between the museums’ recorded provenance and details of the objects and the Khomani San’s knowledge of those objects. The ‘Bushmen’ collection could thus be said to have been impacted by historical dissociation. The present case-study research proceeds by documenting and conducting visual examinations on a selection of the objects reviewed in 2019, along with follow-up interviews with the Iziko staff involved in the 2019 to understand how historical dissociation has impacted the conservation and curation of these indigenous objects and how the inclusion of source communities in caring for their objects can combat the threat of dissociation. The goal of this paper is to raise awareness of historical dissociation as a threat to collections and highlight the importance of revisiting older museum collections for possible historical dissociation, as this impacts the narratives presented to museum staff, visitors, and researchers. By recognising the indigenous knowledge and intangible significance of museum ethnographic collections, museums such as Iziko can create an equal and transparent relationship between themselves and indigenous communities while at the same time pursuing goals of diversity, inclusivity, and museum decolonisation.

Key terms: Iziko Museums of South Africa; Khomani San; heritage conservation; dissociation; museum decolonisation; indigenous knowledge systems; spiritual objects; ‘Bushmen’ dioramas

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

South African Museum – SAM

Iziko South African Museum - ISAM

Iziko Social History Centre – ISHC

Collections & Digitisations Department – C & D

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

Full names of student:Malikah Meyer.....

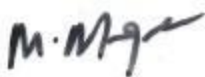
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SIGNATURE



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I dedicate this paper to every indigenous community that had their objects taken from them. May the day come when you can hold your history in your hands and tell your own stories.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction, background and context

Prior to enrolling for a masters in heritage conservation at the University of Pretoria, I completed my Honours in Curatorship at the Michaelis School of Fine Arts in 2019 in my home city, Cape Town. As a requirement for the degree, I needed to complete internship hours, which I opted to do at the Iziko Social History Centre (ISHC). Upon completing my initial internship, I was approached by my internship supervisors, Mr. Bradley Mottie¹ and Janene van Wyk², to work at ISHC as a conservation intern. This second internship in 2020, involved assisting in the Collections and Digitisation (C&D) department where I had my first encounter with the Khomani San people and the ‘Bushman’ ethnographic collections in 2020. The internship involved working on the ‘Bushman’ collection which had been deinstalled on 15 September 2017, when the Ethnographic Gallery was closed down. This was an enormous undertaking that included hundreds of ethnographic objects, amongst which were objects purchased and collected by Dorothea Bleek and Dr W.M. Borchers. My tasks included unpacking and packing museum objects, examining objects and writing condition reports, cleaning objects, assisting in housekeeping, conducting on-site visits, storing the collection at ISHC amongst other responsibilities given by the ISHC conservators.

During the process of unpacking, Ms. Van Wyk discussed the lessons learned during a collaboration project, held the previous year (2019) between Iziko Museums and the Khomani San leadership. It is during one of these sessions that Ms. Van Wyk pointing to the orange surface residue on jewellery that we were examining (including ostrich-eggshell bead waistbands, necklaces, bracelets, etc.) was not surface dirt as conservators initially documented, but rather red ochre rubbed on to beautify the pieces. Another example highlighted during the cleaning of a leather bag, concerned the dark, hardened spots on the leather first thought to be dirt was actually the result of the user intentionally rubbing sweat

¹ Bradley Mottie is a senior conservator in the Collections and Digitisation department at Iziko Social History Centre.

² Janene van Wyk is an assistant conservator in the Collections and Digitisation department at Iziko Social History Centre.

from their hands onto the surface to age the leather, so that even if the user forgot their age, the bag would not. This knowledge gained from the source community during the 2019 collaboration sessions- the functionality, creation, and meaning behind their objects- was often not noted in the ‘Bushmen’ collection’s catalogue cards or previous condition reports that I had consulted. This, she explained, is a common issue with the collections at Iziko Museums as well as other colonial museums that hold ethnographic collections. The objects’ provenance would have basic information such as object material and physical functionality, but the intangible function or significance of the object would not be noted. Iziko’s C&D department functioned on the information they had on hand as well as the limited knowledge they acquired regarding conserving and preserving objects. I thus discovered the term ‘dissociation’, and that an aspect of this agent of deterioration included incorrect or incomplete object data collection and the intangible loss that this could cause to objects. With a focus on older collections, especially ethnographic objects collected during colonialism and imperialism, I termed my research interest ‘historical’ dissociation.

I further learned that the 2019 collaboration sessions (discussed further in Chapter 4) were initially started in November 2017, when representatives of the Khomani San³ approached the Iziko Museums in Cape Town, proposing to hold an exhibition titled *Light in the Darkness*. The Khomani San were in the process of setting up a “creative collective”, and the motivation for the exhibition was conceptualised by the Khomani San as “a narrative that zooms in on the contemporary relevance of traditional Bushmen⁴ world views, unifying Bushmen communities on one hand, as well the wider global audience that is currently looking to indigenous culture as a tool to reconnecting to the natural world and to each other” (Bodenham, 2017: 1; Tichmann and Abrahams, 2021: 52). Although the exhibition proposal was rejected. HIPPO However, the Iziko Collections and Digitisation (C&D) department saw an opportunity to engage with the Khomani San and “bring in community narratives to Khomani collections” (Tichmann and Abrahams, 2021: 52).

Iziko Museums was on a mission to transform the way their collections were classified, break down the divisions caused by the Museums’ colonial and apartheid past, and build diversity in museum representation (Tichmann and Abrahams, 2021: 51). The plan to integrate the

³ Historically, the Khomani San were hunter-gatherers in the southern Kalahari desert in South Africa’s Western Cape Province (Grant, 2020). See also chapter 4.3. for further information.

⁴ Although the term ‘Bushmen’ is controversial, I have opted to use this term as it is preferred by the Khomani San. See also chapter 4.3.

European, Asian, and ethnographic collections under a common banner of social history collections could only work, when the museum archives were rewritten, as the documentation accompanying the archives only reflected the conditions of colonialism and apartheid under which these collections were acquired (Tichmann and Abrahams, 2021: 52). Additional narratives from source communities were thus essential for Iziko Museums moving into a new era of change and equal representation.

Four leading members of the Khomani Communal Property Association were transported to Cape Town by the Iziko Museums of South Africa. The four members included Chief Petrus Vaalbooi, the traditional leader of the Khomani San; Itzak Kruiper; Lydia Kruiper; and Annamarie Vaalbooi. This delegation would spend time engaging with the collection and in discussion with the staff of the Iziko collections. The Iziko C&D department held a preliminary meeting with the Khomani San representatives in December 2018 to discuss the aims and objectives of the workshop, which then ran from 4th to 8th February 2019 (Tichmann and Abrahams, 2021: 53). These sessions were recorded in video and notes, and the culmination of the project was the article written in the *Zeitschrift für Kulturwissenschaften* journal, titled “Challenges of Re-Writing the Iziko Ethnographic Collections Archives: Some Lessons from the Khomani San/Bushmen Engagement,” written by Paul Tichmann (then-Director, Collection & Digitisation Department) and Lynn Abrahams (Curator of Social History, Research, and Exhibitions Department).

This project is an example of including the voice and perspectives of originator communities as active stakeholders and participants in decolonising museum practice. Participation allowed for the reframing of narratives, power sharing, and authorship in how museums represent originator communities as people by highlighting the often-missing intangible significance of the objects removed from their original source communities (Onciul, 2015: 1).

The present research presents a follow-up of the Iziko project outlined above by reviewing the transcripts, museum catalogues, and a selection of the objects examined in 2019. It further aims to highlight the importance of revisiting ethnographic collections, particularly those that may have been acquired with insufficient data, while also keeping in mind that some of the known information may have likewise been misinterpreted. It became apparent during the 2019 collaboration sessions that there was indeed a disconnect between the information recorded by the Museum and the indigenous knowledge held by the community which raises critical issues regarding dissociation (dissociation refers to the loss of information associated with an object,

such as provenance and/or location information, without which the object loses significance or is lost).

The research motivates for the inclusion of this past biases under the banner of historical dissociation with the proposed title “Making a case for combating historical dissociation of the ‘Bushmen Collection’ at the Iziko Museums of South Africa”. As Iziko Museums of South Africa has done, there needs to be an acknowledgement by colonial museums that their collections will not be decolonised until their collection practices are questioned and adjusted to include source communities, as well as to protect the intangible spirit of objects as much as their tangible bodies.

1.2. Aims, objectives, and research questions

The research examines historical dissociation as a consequence of colonial methods of acquiring and conserving indigenous objects and Iziko Museums’ goal in correcting this issue. Further, the research makes an argument for the addition of *historical dissociation* as a sub-category of dissociation as a threat to the integrity of collections. Dissociation becomes especially important given the worldwide trend of decolonising museum collections (see Chapter 3.2). The research reviews Iziko’s 2019 collaboration sessions, re-examining the project’s archival records, transcripts, and the objects themselves. A total of 20 objects were selected from the Kalahari ethnographic collection stored at ISHC from these collaboration sessions. From those 20, six were selected for the present research (see Chapter 5). After examining and analysing the objects, studying the documentation from the collaboration sessions, and reading the follow-up article written by Tichmann and Abrahams, as mentioned above, the following questions can be raised in follow-up interviews with the Iziko staff:

- Can a case be made for coining/including historical dissociation as a risk to collections?
- How has historical dissociation impacted the cultural significance and meanings of objects in this collection and, in general, indigenous collections?
- Has the Iziko Museums’ methods of acquiring, restoring, and conserving indigenous objects changed or adapted since the collaboration sessions? Are there benefits to these collaboration projects for both Iziko and the participatory indigenous communities?

- How can a museum approach and handle objects that are culturally sensitive or have associated cultural protocols, such as those that can only be touched or used by certain members of a community?
- Can a museum and a museum collection become decolonised?
- Can collaboration workshops between museums and source communities help combat historical dissociation, and return the intangible significance that gets diminished or lost specifically associated with indigenous objects?

1.3. Theoretical framework and research methodology

Methodology refers to “a systematic way to solve a problem. It is a science of studying how research is to be carried out”; shortly, the ways by which researchers go about their work of describing, explaining, and predicting phenomena are called research methodology (Goundar, 2012: 9). Essentially, a research methodology is the blueprint of a research or study (Murthy and Bhojanna, 2009: 32).

1.3.1. Research approach

The research uses a mixed research methodology explained by Schoonenboom and Johnson (2017: 107) as being the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combines aspects of qualitative (e.g., one-on-one interviews, focus groups, ethnographic research, case study research, record keeping, and qualitative observation) and quantitative (e.g. correlational research design and experimental research design) research approaches for the “broad purpose of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration”.

The purpose of using mixed research methodology is to expand, contribute to answering the research questions, and heighten knowledge. Carrying out archival research on the records of the 2019 Iziko Museums-Khomani San collaboration project will be supplemented with interviews with the staff of the Iziko Museums to gain their experience of the process followed and potential lessons learned. The interviews question whether the collaboration has led to any changes being implemented in their working with the ethnographic collections. In addition, a selection of the objects reviewed and discussed during 2019 are used as primary evidence and sources of information due to the lack of written documentation I have found on their condition and the materials they are made of. These objects will thus be scientifically documented using

conservation photography, writing condition and object description reports, and analysing them using non-invasive analytical techniques such as ultra-violet (UV) lamps and x-ray fluorescence (XRF) spectroscopy.

1.3.2. Data collection and sampling strategy.

Purposeful sampling has been used in this case study. This sampling strategy is widely used in qualitative research for “the identification and selection of information-rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest”- simply, only using units of interest that will directly answer my hypothesis (Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan, and Hoagwood, 2015: 533). Six staff members from the Iziko Museums who partook in the 2019 collaboration sessions were selected for interviewing regarding the 2019 collaboration. The sample objects selected for the data collection were chosen from the ‘Bushmen’ collection examined by the Khomani San in 2019.

The methods used for data collection included archival research, photographic and object documentation, non-invasive analytical techniques on the selected objects, and interviews with participants. Archival research “involves searching for and extracting information and evidence from original archives. Archives are historical – non-current – documents, records and other sources relating to the activities and claims of individuals, entities or both. They exist both to preserve historic material of value and to make it available for future use” according to LexisNexis (2023). Archival research can also include digital texts, including electronic databases, emails, and web pages (Ventresca and Mohr, 2002: 805). During research, I looked at the provenances of the selected objects through their catalogue cards, stored in ISHC’s records room, as well as the conservation records and object movement records of the objects, where available.

I interviewed Iziko Museum staff via Zoom as I was unable to do so in person, although each participant, as former colleagues, was first approached in person and consent given in writing along with a letter of introduction so that the participants understood my goals for the interviews. The interviews were recorded on the Zoom app, transcribing each interview.

Object documentation and photography took place at ISHC under the supervision and guidance of senior conservator and my co-supervisor, Bradley Mottie. The six selected objects were taken out of their store rooms, where they were photographed using a Canon EOS 700D camera, as is standard at ISHC, under visible lighting. The camera stood on a tripod, and there

were two photograph soft boxes and a white infinity curve wall to ensure clear, well-lit photographs. The photographs were taken overall from all angles, with detailed shots of areas where degradation was present or former conservation was done. Good lighting and detailed shots accurately record “the condition of the object at that point in time. If the object deteriorates over time or is damaged later, the photos are useful in distinguishing the new damage from the old. Photographic documentation becomes part of the permanent record for an object”, as explained by the Australian Dress Register (2009: 1).

These photographs form part of the condition reports and object descriptions I did on each of the objects. Condition reports are standard in conservation and museums because they allow you to keep track of the condition of an object, whether it is moving in or out of storage, before or after an installation, or recording any damage done to it. This was followed up with non-invasive analytical techniques including inspection with an short wave ultra-violet (UV) lamp and x-ray fluorescence (XRF) spectroscopy. UV-reflected light is “UV light is a form of electromagnetic radiation, along with visible light, infrared, x-rays etc. UV light radiates at shorter wavelengths than visible light and cannot be seen by the human eye. However, when UV light is absorbed by certain materials, it is reflected back towards the eye as longer wavelength visible radiation, or visible light. This phenomenon is referred to as UV-induced visible fluorescence. Observation of this fluorescence can be used by conservators as a non-destructive analytical technique to aid in the examination of objects. The presence of fluorescence may assist with material identification, detecting insect damage or surface coatings, and uncovering areas of previous restoration” (Measday, 2017). This analytical technique was useful for the object file, where I recorded former conservation done and tried to detect any degradation and fluorescence that could not be seen under visible light. The objects, while under UV fluorescence, were photographed using a Samsung Galaxy A33 cell phone camera to document the result.

X-ray fluorescence (XRF) “is an analytical technique that can be used to determine the elemental composition of many kinds of materials. It is noninvasive and requires no or only minimal preparation of the material to be analysed. Because the technique itself is non-destructive, it lends itself ideally to the study of works of art and cultural heritage artifacts” states Bezur, Lee, Loubser, and Trentelman (2020: 17). This added value in confirming the elemental composition recorded of certain materials, such as metals and glass. I analysed inorganic materials using a Bruker Tracer 5i hand-held XRF spectrometer.

1.4. Outline of chapters

Chapter one introduces the research from inception to the identification of its aims, objects and research questions as well as the methodology followed.

Chapter two reviews the available literature in these sections, first looking at the origin of museums and specifically ethnographic collections before contextualising the history of the South African Museum and their ‘Bushmen’ collection, which later became Iziko Museums of South Africa. Secondly, the chapter discusses what museum documentation is, its importance and what happens when museum documentation is incomplete. Dissociation between the collection object and its information is introduced as a threat to collections with tangible consequences for museum conservation and curation. Lastly, the chapter examines museum decolonisation with a further look at decolonisation within South African institutions post-1994 elections.

Chapter four looks at my introduction to the ‘Bushmen’ collection along with the Iziko Museums and Khomani San 2019 collaboration project, with a breakdown of the 5-day workshops.

Chapter five is the first half of my case study, which focuses on the objects I selected from the ‘Bushmen’ collection examined by the Khomani San in 2019, with a focus on improving the documentation of the objects and making a case that these objects suffered from historical dissociation, and why this collaboration project was a start to combating this issue.

Chapter six concludes this research paper’s case study by looking at the post-2019 collaboration project follow-up interviews with the hope of answering the research questions posed in chapter one.

Chapter seven concludes the research with a summary of the chapters, contributions of the study, and limitations of the study. The chapter ends with suggestions for further research and my final remarks.

1.5. Conclusion

This chapter introduces the background and research issues of this research paper. The chapter provides a literature study on the present research available on the topics discussed, along with highlighting the missing gap in academia and conservation that I wish to discuss and base my main arguments around. The chapter also looks at the theoretical framework and methodology that have been used and provides a paper's chapter outline.

CHAPTER 2

LOOKING BACK TO MOVE FORWARD

The present chapter discusses a number of key points to give context to the case study described in chapters three to five. I first briefly look at the available literature on the origin of museums and ethnographic collections in general, then more specifically the origin of SAM in order to understand the context within which the case study is located. Next, the chapter reviews what is understood by museum documentation and its importance in maintaining good collections management practices and prevent dissociation as a threat to the well-being of collections. I then identify a gap in the literature dealing with dissociation and how historical dissociation influences efforts in the decolonisation of museums in South Africa.

2.1. The origin of museums and ethnographic collections

The purpose of museums acquiring artefacts from indigenous people pre- and during colonialism and imperialism was to showcase the pre-history⁵ of primarily non-European countries and to research the indigenous people's way of life. The concept of a museum did not exist until the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford University, was founded in 1683 (Impey and MacGregor, 2013: 78). Private collections of aristocrats and 'learned gentlemen' were described as "cabinets of curiosities"; their purpose was "keeping and sorting the products of Man and Nature, and in promoting understanding of their significance" (Impey and MacGregor, 2013: 78). This could, arguably, be seen as an early form of conservation, as these objects were cared for in the collections in a way that ensured they could be preserved.

The 17th century saw a real technical improvement in handling zoological specimens, and important centres of scientific research opened in Italy (Alexander, 1979: 42). Collectors started giving considerable thought to the classification and arrangement of their treasures. The Ashmolean Museum contained a chemistry laboratory in its basement, and the British Museum (the first great national museum in the world) held collections of antiquities, natural history, and ethnography (Alexander, 1979: 44). Research was a museum function, "an extension of

⁵ "Prehistory" is a term that was once commonly used to designate the long period of southern Africa's past before the beginnings of its documented history; the time before European colonial rule (Wright: [sp]).

collecting”; research ensured that the objects collected were accurately catalogued, and within natural history museums, this research contributed towards biological studies (Alexander, 1979: 10). Ethnological studies, which looked at the characteristics, differences and relationships of and between different peoples became popular in museums of anthropology and archaeology (Alexander, 1979: 10).

Western ethnographic museums assembled the majority of their collections during the colonial era; the period from 1870 to 1920 was not only a period of high imperialism but also the height of ethnographic collecting (Förster, 2008: 19). As Ter Keurs mentions in *Things of the Past? Museums and Ethnographic Objects*, the majority of the European ethnographic museums and the museums set up in the colonised countries were founded in the “colonial context and the manner within which the artefacts were acquired, collected or looted was closely related to colonialism” (1999: 67). “Collectionism” was termed by scholars as the phenomenon of travellers, missionaries, colonial administrators, scientists, and art dealers scrambling for non-Western art and artefacts (Förster, 2008: 19).

There were five ways of collecting in the colonial context: scientific expeditions, individual collecting activities, colonial expeditions (a major source of museum collections), military expeditions, and gifts, exchanges, and small-scale purchases from (non-professional) individuals (Ter Keurs, 1999: 67-72). The selection of artefacts to be acquired by ethnographic museums was primarily based on scientific and popular concepts and views about the respective cultures or about the differences and commonalities between “the West and the rest”; most of these concepts are outdated paradigms and deemed racist in today’s modern times (Förster, 2008: 20).

In the second half of the nineteenth century, European nationalism played a major part in the movement for expansion outside Europe. World Exhibitions and Colonial Expeditions were showcases for the economic opportunities the colonies offered and where people were exhibited (Ter Keurs, 1999: 70). These exhibitions and displays “[made] use of existing clichés – that is, to show the [indigenous] people in a way that corresponded to the [European] public’s expectations. Second, to generate authenticity, it has to connect these stereotypes to the public’s every day experience ... the audience could compare the known to the unknown. Finally, every show required an element that was unique ... they either needed to be recognized as very primitive and close to nature or to be well-suited to picturesque depiction” Dreesbach (2012: [sp]) aptly states in *Colonial Exhibitions, ‘Voelkerschauen’ and the Display of the ‘Other’*.

In the process of exhibiting ethnographic collections with the desire to become modern, urbanised and developed, European countries were complicit in creating the “noble savage”⁶ myth in order to provide “an inferior ‘Other’⁷ that can be set against a modern, civilized ‘Self’” (Yap, 2014: 2). Ethnographic museums in the 18th and 19th centuries, and even as recent as 60 years ago, depicted non-Western peoples in displays of “origin and naturalness”, these “exotic savages” against the “Civilized West” (Yap, 2014: 4).

2.2. The South African Museum

After a brief review of the origins of museums and ethnographic collections discussed above, I will look at the South African Museum and the so-called ‘Bushmen’ collection, parts of which were re-examined during the 2019 Iziko Khomani collaboration sessions and which I use as case study for my research.

2.2.1. History of SAM and their ‘Bushmen’ collection

The South African Museum (SAM), home of the ‘Bushmen’⁸ collection, opened in 1825 by proclamation of Lord Charles Somerset to “keep and preserve collections and curiosities” (Summers, 1975: 1). Parts of the existing collection predate 1825, but scientific collection began with the appointment of Dr (later Sir) Andrew Smith as the Museum’s first Director (Cluver, 1980: 51). SAM began as a “general museum housing and displaying natural history collections as well as ‘articles of human manufacture’ of both local and exotic origin”

⁶ French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) is still widely cited as the inventor of the “Noble Savage” and was the first to call for the development of an anthropological Science of Man. European ideas of the “savage” grew out of an imaginative fusion of classical mythology with the new descriptions that were beginning to be conceived by scientifically minded writers as “observations” of foreign peoples by Renaissance travel-ethnographic writers (Ellingson, 2001: 7).

⁷ The Other refers to the colonised subjects, which formed part of the Self/Other binary. The colonisers considered themselves to be the centre and dealt with the colonised as if they are the marginalised Other. The creation of the others and initiating the process of Othering was therefore essential for the imperial and colonising powers to assert their own power, will, and value.

⁸ *Bushmen* (also known as Khwe, Basarwa, or San) is an Anglicization of *boesman*, the Dutch and Afrikaner name for the San and Khoi people in Southern Africa. They reside in South Africa, and their territories span neighbouring Botswana and Namibia in the Kalahari Desert, and Angola, Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Lesotho. The Khoi and San people made up of dozens of ethnic groups) are one of the oldest groups of people on earth and are native to Southern Africa. They are considered the First People/Nation(s) of this land. There are still various opinions on the term ‘Bushmen’ as it was a pejorative term created by the Europeans to put individual nations of people with different cultures, traditions, and languages into a single group. The San people self-identify mostly within their individual ethnic groups, and opinions vary on whether they are ‘Bushman’ or ‘San’ people or not, as the name was given to them by the Khoi as a derogatory term, meaning “forager” due to being “nomadic, foraging people”.

(Davison, 1990: 152). The collections of the Museum were organised into the departments of Entomology, Marine Biology, Herpetology, Ornithology, Karoo Palaeontology, Cenozoic Palaeontology, Invertebrate Palaeontology, Archaeology, and Ethnology (Cluver, 1980: 52). The Museum lacked a full-time staff and received little official support or funding; because of this, the official foundation date is noted as 1855, which is seen as the Museum's "second reincarnation" (Mackenzie, 2009: 80). Beyond the issues with staff and funding, the Museum had not been open to all citizens and was rather for scholars and students, a sort of "private Society" (Summers, 1975: 16). Ordinary citizens had to gain permission to enter the Museum, and paid heavily for this entrance; it is not difficult to understand the reason for SAM suffering so heavily from 1838 to 1855 (Summers, 1975: 16).

The Museum's first home was in the Old Supreme Court building of Cape Town, in the complex of the former Slave Lodge⁹ (currently the Iziko Slave Lodge Museum), the same building then-shared by the Public Library (founded in 1818, presently the National Library of South Africa (NLSA)), (Summers, 1975: 8). The Museum and its collections moved several more times, especially between the 1830s to 1850s, with the Library and Museum moving to a new home in the Government Gardens in 1859 (where the Library remains). Once space ran out in the building to house both institutions, the Museum ended up on the opposite end of the Government Gardens in 1895, where it has remained to this day. "It was built in a style somewhat reminiscent of the transitional Gothic-Renaissance Antwerp Town Hall' and clearly represented the growing ambitions of both colony and city", Mackenzie states (2009: 88).

2.2.2. Casts and Othering

By the end of the 19th century, white identity was to be "expressed through observation of the 'Other'" Mackenzie continues (2009: 90). The 1897 Annual Report published the very first contribution from the Museum's anthropology department by its head, Louis Albert Péringuey¹⁰, Assistant Director (and former Acting Curator between 1886 and 1895).

⁹ "The Slave Lodge building gets its name from being constructed in 1679 by the VOC as housing for the people they enslaved. It was modified over time, and after post-British settlement of the Cape was transformed into government offices" (North, (n.d.): [sp]).

¹⁰ Péringuey joined the Museum during Trimen's regime. He was a Frenchman born in Bordeaux and arrived in Cape Town in 1879, teaching French at the South African College and at the Diocesan College (Rondebosch). Péringuey's first contact with the Museum came in June 1882, when he and his pupil, Robert Mark Lightfoot, found a rare beetle (*Platychile pallid*), and Trimen gave them each a gold sovereign. Since then, Péringuey assisted Trimen in arranging the Museum's beetles collections between 1882 and 1883. Péringuey's main interests lied in insects and archaeology.

Péringuey expressed the need for exact models of the indigenous races and groups within South Africa (Mackenzie, 2009: 90). The idea of creating models of indigenous people wasn't new at SAM. Edgar Leopold Layard (Curator from 1855-1872) began the Museum's fascination with anthropological figures (Mackenzie, 2009: 91). This interest was made global as well: Andrew Steedman, a Cape merchant and naturalist, exhibited Cape objects at the London Colosseum in 1833, which included eight modelled figures of the "four principal tribes" (Xhosa, Sotho, Khoi, and San), along with Charles Bell, who prepared the skins they were dressed in. These figures were later acquired by J. van Reenen and presented to the Museum, and although they disappeared and no photographic evidence remains, they began a tradition that continued into the 20th century. In 1905, the British Association for the Advancement of Science (BAAS) held its annual meetings in South Africa, and SAM was involved in the deliberations in Cape Town. Felix Luschan, a physical anthropologist and Director of the Museum für Völkerkunde¹¹ (Berlin), paid a visit to SAM and suggested to William Lutley Sclater (Director between 1896-1906) that casts should be made of the 'Bushmen' (Mackenzie, 2009: 91).

The idea [by Péringuey] seemed to gain immediate favour in the Museum. It was thought that the San were "doomed to disappear" (Mackenzie, 2009: 91); the First Nation people had been killed or marginalised by the white settlers since their first arrival in the 1600s. San people were viewed as the original inhabitants of the Cape and thus represented the country's pre-history and a sort of living archaeology that would offer insights on both the past and the present. White people, however, saw the San as nothing beyond being "advanced primates", which served as justification for subjecting the indigenous groups to the brutality they faced (Mackenzie: 2009: 91). Responding to Luschan, James Drury¹² started making casts from living subjects (a process that allegedly involved no pain) in 1907 under the directorship of Sclater's successor, Péringuey. In 1911, Drury made casts of 13 people, which he continued with until the 1920s, using individuals on the fringes of the Cape and, later, in South-West Africa. He also used prisoners and others held within the Cape, and in the end, created a total of more than 65 casts (Mackenzie, 2009: 91).

¹¹ Museum für Völkerkunde, or The Ethnological Museum, emerged from the Royal Kunstkammer in Berlin, Germany, in 1873. The Museum's collections contain around 500,000 ethnographic, archaeological, and cultural-historical objects from Africa, Asia, America, and Oceania.

¹² A Scottish taxidermist and modeller who moved to South Africa around 1902 (duPisani, 1980: 6).

The displays of the ‘Bushmen’ collection, in the form of these 13 casts and later dioramas¹³ were showcased side-by-side with the fossils, fish, and birds of the Museum, presenting the collection as specimens of scientific inquiry and curiosities (Davison, 2004: 185). Rall in *Across Time of Three South African San Exhibitions: Reflecting on Colonialism, Apartheid and Decolonisation* shares a similar belief as Mackenzie, in that race was dominant in how the ‘Bushmen’ collection and the bodies of San and Khoi people were represented, viewed, treated, curated, and exhibited (2018: 11). The materiality and physical presence of the casts and the San people’s material culture provided the public with perceived access to understanding the world and culture of the San, all through the lens of the Museum’s labels, exhibition notes, and object curation (Trofanenko, 2006: 309).

The first 1911 San exhibition showcased the physical characteristics of the San people by displaying the human casts either naked or near-naked, all which represented the First Nation people as biological specimens in racial terms; aligning with the scientific thinking of the time. The labelling in the exhibition described the San as an ‘interesting race’, and they were viewed as a different race of people entirely (Rall, 2018: 12). This was an environment created for indigenous people to be measured and studied in pursuit of race-based science, state Kotze and Ndlovu (2021: 5), a statement with which I agree. The identities of the San were essentialised, rendered ahistorical, and devoid of subjectivities and dynamism (Trofanenko, 2006: 309).

The 1911 exhibition was closed to the public in the late 1950s and replaced by the diorama in 1959 (Rall, 2018: 11). After the 1948 national elections, which the National Party won, political segregation and Apartheid was legally enacted and laws were introduced that legislated and separated the various race groups in designated areas. The then-Director of SAM, Mr. Alfred Walter Crompton (1956-1964) advocated for exhibiting the San casts in a reconstructed natural setting. Thirteen of the casts from the first exhibition were displayed in various positions, reconceptualised in a 19th-century hunter-gatherer encampment in the Karoo, intended to “evoke memories of a past way of life, bush craft and survival skills” (Rall, 2018: 13). The casts in the diorama were framed within a glass-fronted display case, which separated the Museum visitor from the casts, thereby creating a physical barrier and distance between themselves that makes it possible to envisage the San as ‘Other’ (Rall, 2018: 13).

¹³ ‘Diorama’ derives from the Greek word *dia* (meaning through) and *horama* (meaning view or vision) and was first created in the late 1800s. Dioramas are three-dimensional museum displays that show mounted animals in natural settings against the painted natural contexts of the animals they contain. However, dioramas were also extensively used in ethnographic museum displays.

2.2.3. The collection and the collectors

Péringuey had a great interest in physical anthropology¹⁴, leading to the collection of the plaster casts, the search for ‘Bushman’ skeletal remains, a general policy of collecting human skulls, and collecting the material culture of ‘Bushman’ (Summers, 1975: 119-120). Péringuey initiated a major concern with prehistory, partly from his experience picking up hand axes and other Palaeolithic objects when exploring vineyards during his viticultural (the cultivation of grapevines) duties in the Cape winelands (Mackenzie, 2009: 92). From 1911, he organised for Drury to conduct excavations at cave sites on the country’s south coast as well as in Cape Town (Mackenzie, 2009: 92). The ‘Bushmen’ collection in the department was made up of objects either purchased or collected by SAM from various communities of San and Khoi people. Objects in the ‘Bushmen’ collection and also used in the abovementioned exhibitions can be traced to figures like Dr. W. M. Borchers (anthropologist)¹⁵, Dorothea Bleek

¹⁴ Physical anthropology is the study of human beings’ biology, evolution, physical variation, and behaviour. SAM has a long history with this study; well before Péringuey arrived, in the 1860 Annual Report, there was a mention of a display of the osteological collection ““for the use of the students of comparative anatomy””. Layard’s Catalogue listed the skeletons and crania of humans, including ““Caucasian, Mongolian, Ethiopian or Negro”” and recounted the “racial ordering” that these indicated. The Museum has always been caught up in the trade of human remains, which was a global tradition in museums. “This was all part of the project to establish biological distinctions among the races and an obsession of contemporary anthropology” Mackenzie (2009: 93-94).

¹⁵ Little is known about Dr W. M. Borchers despite my extensive research. During an informal conversation with Jaco Boshoff, maritime archaeologist at ISHC, he mentioned that in one of his anthropology lectures as a student, his lecturer mentioned Dr Borchers as being a famous anthropologist in South Africa (J. Boshoff, 2023, personal communication, 20 February). The first mention I could find of W. M. Borchers was in African Explorer Magazine’s *Advanced Pre Ice Age Civilization Discovered in the Kalahari Desert*’s article, which follows the journey of Guillermo Farini (pseudonym of William Leonard Hunter), a Canadian, who reported on the “existence of a ruined city found in the Kalahari Desert in southern Africa” (2018: [sp]). Farini’s search sparked the interest of others in the 20th century, and “from 1932, twenty five expeditions were launched to find the Lost City. They crisscrossed the desert area in the direction of Farini. F.R. Paver and Dr W. M. Borchers headed out from Upington to search the desert sands, flying over the area in reconnaissance aircraft and subsequently suggesting a number of explanations” (2018: [sp]). There are several more articles written on Farini’s *Through the Kalahari Desert* book, and they all give the exact same statement about Borchers. I can thus only theorise that Borchers held an interest in indigenous people, and during his explorations in Upington, he collected San objects, which his daughter later donated to SAM. Some of the objects he collected included an ostrich-eggshell waistband and a pair of leather sandals, which were examined by the Khomani San leadership in 2019.

(anthropologist/researcher)¹⁶, Wilhelm Bleek (linguist) and Lucy Lloyd (author)¹⁷, with collecting and research starting in the 18th century. This paper examines the collection primarily purchased from Dorothea Bleek or collected by Dr. W. M. Borchers and subsequently donated to the Museum by his daughter.

It is important to mention that Ms. Bleek was not a trained museologist, and little is known about Borchers' research or whether he documented the provenances of his collected objects. This has impacted the Museum's documentation on the 'Bushmen' objects, including usage, the materials used in these objects, and their societal and spiritual functions. It is this lack of information and research compounded by the collection documentation practices of SAM mentioned below that directly spawned the historical dissociation of these objects.

2.2.4. Documenting the ethnographic collection

In 1933, the first full-time ethnologist in the department, Margaret Shaw, was appointed. The stripping away of the intangible importance and significance of the 'Bushmen' collection and other indigenous objects was especially prevalent after Shaw joined SAM. Shaw was hired by John Goodwin (then Honorary Curator of Ethnology and Archaeology), and she was immediately tasked with creating a separate register for the Museum's ethnographic collection that had been started by Goodwin; she was to devise a system to classify and catalogue ethnographic material. The aim was to bring scientific standards of documentation to the ethnographic collection (Davison, 1990: 154), guided by contemporary practice such as that of the Musée de l'Homme in Paris¹⁸ (Cedras, 2016:53). In the process, the boundaries between

¹⁶ Dorothea Bleek was the daughter of Wilhelm Bleek and Jemina Lloyd. Bleek was trained as a teacher at Berlin University and studied at the School of Oriental and African Languages in London, where her interest in African languages and culture developed, and she became a recognisable figure in the fields of anthropology and linguistics in Europe (Skotnes, 2007: 204). Bleek returned to South Africa in 1904 and worked as a teacher in Cradock until 1907. She had a long history of studying the San people, including getting training in translation and methods of research from Lucy Lloyd, her aunt. She travelled to the northern Cape in 1910 and 1911 (Prieska and Kenhardt, in particular), attempting to locate the descendants of those interviewed by Wilhelm Bleek and Lucy Lloyd decades earlier (Skotnes, 2007: 204). She was accompanied by staff of SAM, taking photographs and making plaster casts of !Xam descendants for museum display. It is likely that during this research expedition to the Kalahari, Ms. Bleek purchased the objects for SAM¹⁶. Ms. Bleek also took photographs "illustrating the way of life of her subjects, including their dress, artefacts and shelter, and also their anatomy" (Skotnes, 2007: 204).

¹⁷ Wilhelm Bleek and Lucy Lloyd are famous for creating the 19th century !Xam and! Kung texts, and contributing their research to SAM.

¹⁸ The Musée de l'Homme in Paris (inaugurated in 1938), initially opened as The Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro in 1882. The Museum preserved examples of cultures which were seen as vanishing due to colonisation and other societal changes. Its exhibits featured life-size reconstructions of people in their cultural environments, reflecting the evolutionist and ethnocentric ideas of the time that "people needed to experience a civilisation in order to understand the objects it produced". Saartjie Baartman's remains and full body cast was on display in the Musée de l'Homme until the 1970s.

ethnology and the disciplines of both cultural history and social anthropology were drawn more clearly. By focusing attention on material culture as a “study in itself”, artefacts were in effect distanced from both their historical and social contexts (Davison, 1990: 154). Shaw saw ‘social relations’ as not always being significant in understanding material culture and that while material culture is a “museum subject”, social anthropology and ‘primitive’ sociology are not (Davison, 1990: 155). At the time, the relationship between material culture and society in historical context was an issue of “relatively minor concern” (Davison, 1990: 155).

Shaw laid a blueprint for South African museum staff to follow when handling their ethnological material. In keeping with SAM’s policy from 1896, Shaw gave instruction on ethnological and allied subjects; for every public exhibit Shaw set up, there would be a regular series of weekly talks in the Ethnology Gallery, and these lasted from January 1937 until March 1938. Shaw contributed to the professional education of museum workers; being the only professional museum ethnologist in South Africa for 25 years, she was called on to advise other museums on their ethnological displays and train museum personnel on the collection and care of ethnological material. In the *South African Museums Association Bulletin*, Shaw published two papers describing the cataloguing and display of ethnological material titled "A System of Cataloguing Ethnographic Material" (1940) and “The New Ethnology Gallery at the South African Museum” (1941). Shaw was a huge influence since the 1930s and likely impacted how other Southern African museums treated their indigenous objects.

2.2.5. A new era

In 1964, the ‘cultural history’ sections of the Museum moved to the old Supreme Court building. When the South African Cultural History Museum (SACHM), later renamed the Iziko Slave Lodge Museum (ISLM), was conceptualized in the 1930s, the idea was to separate the growing ‘Cultural History’ (approximately 9000 antique and European objects) from the ‘Natural History’ (natural specimens and indigenous people’s) collections (Gibson, 2019: 154; Masters, 2018: 301). In natural history museums at that present time, it was shown that specimens were most successfully displayed in habitat groups, or dioramas, and in keeping the ethnographic objects and casts at SAM, it kept to the convention that Crompton advocated for, which was the creation of the dioramas (Davison, 1991: 158).

“This division of material has been seen to mirror the deliberate polarisation between, on the one hand, the ‘natives’ as perpetual children of nature, wild and uncultivated, belonging to the

landscape, and at the other end of the spectrum, the (white) colonial historical past (aligned with ancient civilisations), imagined to be civilised or ‘cultured’” Masters states (2018: 31). Indigenous collections, and in turn, indigenous people in South Africa, were denied a history or culture of their own, all of which exasperated their exclusion from SACHM (Gibson, 2019: 154).

From the mid-1980s onward, the socio-political forces within a changing South Africa directly influenced decisions made by the Museum and other museums nationwide (Rall, 2018: 14). The new ANC-led government post-1994 elections set out to redefine and re-imagine the cultural heritage of the country, replacing the ‘Eurocentric’ vision held by the previous governments with one that embraced the diverse heritage of all the people in South Africa (Masters, 2018: 304). Libraries, archives, art galleries, and, of course, museums were all affected by the rewriting of heritage policies, and in 1998 legislation passed that reorganised the heritage institutions of South Africa. Certain institutions in Cape Town were merged to create the Southern Flagship Institution (renamed to Iziko¹⁹ Museums in 2001), matched by a similar process in Gauteng that produced the Northern Flagship Institution (now Ditsong Museums) (Masters, 2018: 305). The South African Museum fell under Iziko Museums and was renamed the Iziko South African Museum (ISAM).

In 1996, there was an “innovative attempt to raise critique” regarding museum classification and knowledge production in the form of Pippa Skotnes’ *Miscast: Negotiating the Presence of the Bushmen* exhibition installed at the South African National Gallery (Tichmann and Abrahams, 2021: 48). Skotnes attempted to critique the representation and dehumanisation of the ‘Bushmen’ in South African museums through a exhibition that included body casts, photographs, anthropological field notes, and museum accession notes. One gallery room was designed so that visitors could not avoid walking on images of the ‘Bushmen’ people, meant to signify SAM’s complicity with past oppression (Davison, 2004: 211). “The curator intended to make Western scientific practices inherited by museums visible and bring into question museum practices related to human remains and the representation of “other” cultures” Tichmann and Abrahams (2021: 48).

But as Davison (2004: 211) aptly asked, who was Skotnes implicating? What reactions did the curator expect from people of San and Khoi descent? What of her own position as the

¹⁹ *Iziko* is the isiXhosa word for ‘hearth’ and the name was chosen to represent the institution as both a hub of cultural activity, and a central place for gathering together South Africa’s diverse heritage.

exhibition's curator? The exhibition received a polarising response: it provoked a debate and dialogue on the representation of San material culture and human remains (Tichmann and Abrahams, 2021: 48-49). Some critics saw the exhibition as thought-provoking and endorsed and praised it (Sunday Independence, 1996: 23; Tichmann and Abrahams, 2021: 49). In many other reviews, Skotnes was heavily criticised and personal motives questions were raised; she was accused of “self-promotion, of being insensitive, and of appropriation and recolonization of history”, and angry Khoi and San descendants contested the curator's authority to represent their history, accusing SANG of perpetuating past colonial practices (Tichmann and Abrahams, 2021: 49; Davison 2004: 211-212). Severed heads, fragmented body parts, and naked torsos were not read metaphorically but as a literal form of violence. Khoi and San descendants claimed that the exhibition was aimed at white visitors and that they themselves did not need reminders of their painful past (Davison, 2004: 212). The exhibition ran from April to September 1996.

The San dioramas were closed to the public in 2001, and the *Qe – the power of rock art* exhibition was opened in 2003 (Rall, 2018: 11). This new exhibition was a focus on rock art, and in his opening speech, the former Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Valli Moosa, said: “The design of this re-installation of the San art is exceptional in that it exemplifies a mode of representation that reclaims the dignity that colonialism denied to previously marginalised communities; and this not by nostalgia but through contemporary means” (Rall, 2018: 15), which I agree with having spent time at SAM and seeing the exhibition myself. Objects from the ‘Bushmen’ collection were put on display along with the rock art. In post-1994 ISAM, there were new pasts coming into view through research, display, and collection; this rock art exhibition was meant to show a past not told through the previous two exhibitions (Rall, 2018: 15). These colonial-era collected rock art panels and material culture objects were ‘reframed’ through constructing a display that included the then absent indigenous voice, making use of material recorded from the San people in the 19th century Bleek and Lloyd manuscripts and quotes in *//Xam* in order to “enshrine the heritage of the San and to allow their indigenous voices to be heard” (Rall, 2018: 19).

After many years of discussion and deliberation, the Ethnographic Gallery at ISAM was de-installed on September 15, 2017, eliciting a range of responses from various Khoi and San groups (Tichmann and Abrahams, 2021: 50). While there were Khoi and San chiefs and descendants who saw the closure as “overdue”, several members of the public, including some Khoi and San descendants, complained about the closure. One thought was that the diorama

could “show the history of what colonialism did to the hunters and herders of the Cape”, while Khoi and San descendants saw the diorama as representing themselves and their history in the country (Tichmann and Abrahams, 2021: 212). A member of the Khoi-Boesman-Nguni Coalition²⁰ performed a cleansing ceremony in the space on August 7, 2017, in order to “pray for forgiveness, demonstrate repentance for the way in which the history and culture of black peoples has been portrayed, and to sanctify the space” (Tichmann and Abrahams, 2021: 50-51). The casts and material culture objects were packed up, with the casts being stored at ISAM and the objects stored at ISHC. The ‘Bushmen’ objects remain on display in the rock art exhibition at ISHC.

2.3. The importance of museum documentation

Documentation and management of museum collections has grown in importance over the last few decades. Museum documentation exists in an ecosystem of several guidelines, becoming more formalised in the late 1900’s. In *A Guide for Documentation Work for Museums in Developing Countries*, the authors summarize the importance of documenting museum collections: “Museums acquire objects and create collections because the objects convey a significant message or messages. These may be variously historical, religious, economic, technological, and so on. When an object is moved from its place of origin and its context, its significance is reduced and becomes more reliant on the documentation linked to it” (Avaro, 2010: 1). Documentation can be regarded as an important function within the museum, an act that ensures the information on an object is gathered, managed, and disseminated (Hernández, 2016: 86). An object-documentation in a museum is valuable as it provides information, concepts, and ideas that must be studied for a better understanding of the message the object intends to transmit and the function it has in its society. The more that is known about the relationship between the object and its maker, the more committed the museum can become to its conservation and transmission (Hernández, 2016: 88).

Once an object arrives at a museum, it becomes important to be able to identify it in a unique way and facilitate the management of every aspect of this new life. The value, safety, and accessibility of an object/collection depend on the quality of the documentation associated with

²⁰ The Khoi-Boesman-Nguni Coalition was formed in March 2017 to campaign for the return of human remains. Led by Chief Melvin Arendse of the Kei Korana, the Coalition brought together Khoi-, San- and Xhosa-speaking groups. The majority of people in the Northern and Western Cape provinces of South Africa speak Afrikaans and ‘Boesman’ is the Afrikaans translation of Bushmen.

it. Basic documentation is required for the “administrative” management of collections, as it enables the museum to quickly and effectively establish proof of ownership, locate a specific object, find out the total number of objects making up the collection, link information to an object, access information in an efficient way, understand the intangible (history, use, social, and religious value) importance of the object, present it in an exhibition, have a record of the acts of conservation/restoration an object has undergone, etc. Together, the documents containing all this information form a documentation system (Avaro, 2010: 2).

A museum’s documentation system is a set of elements that are related to each other and to the museum environment and that are organized in order to manage the objects in a collection (Avaro, 2010: 2). The system consists of giving every object an accession number, which identifies it in a unique way. The same accession number should never be given to another object; it is key to accessing all documents linked to the attached object. Secondly, the system has an accession register, where all objects in the collection are listed in chronological order of accession number, coinciding with their formal entry into the museum collection. This register is the “museum’s memory” (Avaro, 2010: 4-5). Thirdly, the system has the card catalogue, or catalogue, which has cards in it that are classified in ascending order of accession number, in the same order as the accession register. These catalogue cards show the locations of the object concerned and information written by the collection manager and archivist. Finally, the system has a location system, comprising of location code, a loans and object movement register (Avaro, 2010: 6-7).

This entire documentation system ensures the museum object can always be tied back to its associated documentation, and will be easier to locate and access, as mentioned above. Documentation is a constantly ongoing process, with new information added to the records: objects on exhibition, external loans, restoration/conservation work recorded, photographic documentation updated as museum standards change or camera technology improves, and the provenance of the object improved, amongst other updates.

The concept of collection management emerged in the 1960s, when accountability for collections became a strong incentive for museums to develop modern collection management practices (Grobler, 2005: xx)

During a discussion with Robert Waller²¹ and Jane Henderson²², Dr Waller mentioned that earlier museum documentation was meant to fit the purpose of their time; mostly, the colonial museum only required the name of the indigenous group, the collector, and the functional purpose of the object for display and categorisation purposes. However, as time and society moved on, so did museum documentation, especially with the move towards museum decolonisation (R. Waller, 2023, personal communications, 10 October). In the process of establishing accountability (the documentation systems we are familiar with, the adherence of policies on the accessioning, care, and disposal of objects in a museum collection), many museums encountered problems such as a lack of access to detailed information about the objects in collections, a proliferation of duplicate accession numbers, and inadequate location control (Grobler, 2005: xx). This is still an ongoing problem today as museums fight documentation backlogs, especially with a switch from analogue to digital record-keeping.

The global guidelines for museum documentation have changed over the decades, constantly updating as the rules and standards for documenting museum collections change. The International Committee for Documentation of the International Council of Museums (CIDOC) published the *International Guidelines for Museum Object Information: The CIDOC Information Categories* in 1995, created to describe the information categories that could be used when developing records about the objects in museum collections, with the *CIDOC Fact Sheets* no. 1 and 2 giving information museums required for museum documentation, from the moment the object enters the museum to labelling and marking the object(s). In 2007, a statement of principles was produced by the Documentation Committee of the International Council of Museums (ICOM [International Council of Museums]-CIDOC) as a guide for museums when developing their documentation and collection management policies; the principles included policy, staffing and systems, documentation standards, information access and user needs, information and procedures, and security, sustainability, and preservation. These principles worked hand-in-hand with ICOM's *Code of Ethics for Museums*. The *ICOM Code of Professional Ethics* was adapted unanimously by the 15th General Assembly of ICOM in Buenos Aires (Argentina) on November 4, 1986. It was amended by the 20th General Assembly in Barcelona (Spain) on July 6, 2001, retitled the *ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums*,

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²² Jane Henderson is a Professor of Conservation at the School of History, Archaeology and Religion at Cardiff University, and the Secretary General for the International Institute for Conservation.

and revised by the 21st General Assembly in Seoul (Republic of Korea) on October 8, 2004. “The Code of Ethics sets the minimum standards for professional practice and performance for museums and their staff. It is presented as a series of principles supported by guidelines for desirable professional practice. In some countries, certain minimum standards are defined by law or government regulation. In others, guidance on and assessment of minimum professional standards may be available in the form of ‘Accreditation’, ‘Registration’, or similar evaluative schemes” (ICOM, 2013: iv). These principles and guidelines ensure minimum standards and aim for best practice in vastly different museums, located in many different contexts across the world.

Museum objects were often donated or purchased from source communities by professional and non-professional researchers and museum professionals in equal measure, with the museum relying on their research, documents, sketches, and photographs to paint the object’s societal function and intangible significance in their source community. These researchers and museum professionals often did not have any formal documentation guidelines when conducting field work, especially not during the height of colonialism and imperialism. They were primarily on a mission to save/preserve the history of the indigenous people they researched. Prior to the formalization of museum documentation, museums relied heavily on the hand-written catalogue cards that kept records of their objects, where the information could range from only containing an image of the object with its accession number, physical description (“bag”, “bow and arrow”, for example), and loan movement to having a brief provenance provided by the purchaser or donator. There are, of course, examples of museums such as the South Kensington Museum and later the Pitt Rivers Museum in the United Kingdom documenting their collections in catalogues notebooks, or books as early as the 1800s, attempting to keep track of where objects were and what they were (Pitt-Rivers Museum, 2013: [sp]).

In the Iziko South African Museum (SAM), where the objects of the ‘Bushmen’ collection were kept and displayed, there is evidence of a documentation system created since the inception of the Museum in 1825. In Summers’ *A history of The South African Museum 1825-1975*, he mentions how Dr Andrew Smith, the first Superintendent of SAM in 1825, “was ahead of his time both in his [zoological] research and in his reporting ... He wrote one anthropological and 25 zoological papers as well as preparing two popular catalogues and a technical handbook” (1975: 11). Dr Smith set the precedent for the Museum’s documentation

system: the collections were meticulously preserved and carefully documented for scientific study (Summers, 1975: 11-12).

On June 17, 1829 the South African Institution was created for the “purpose of investigating the geography, natural history and resources of South Africa”, with Dr Smith becoming the Joint Secretary (Summers, 1975: 13). The Institution released yearly *Annual Reports*, where the collections in the Museum were mentioned in the *Annual Report of 1830*, containing minerals, conchology (the scientific study or collection of mollusc shells), insects, fish, turtles, lizards, snakes, birds, quadrupeds, and works of art (Summers, 1975: 14). These annual reports gave a broad overview of the Museum’s collections more frequently from 1855, when the Museum was re-established; Edward Layard, a civil engineer and architect, became SAM curator in 1855 and instigated a more meticulous reporting process (Gibson, 2019: 132). While the 1900 fire destroyed any catalogue records constructed by the SAM beforehand, the annual reports still give us insights into how the collections were ordered in this early period. Compared with mineral and zoological items, few ethnological objects entered the collection during these years. In his second report, Layard described dividing donations into two series: a “general” one, which was arranged chemically, and a “colonial” series. The latter included “weapons, native ornaments, and instruments,” all arranged by nation of origin (“Australian”, “Polynesian”, “Chinese”, “Bushmen” etc.) (Gibson, 2019: 132). The collection was later rearranged under Roland Trimen (Curator 1872-1895) into “Mammalia, Birds, Fishes, Reptiles, Minerals and Miscellaneous,” with fabricated items seemingly included in the last category (South African Museum 1872). Conscious decisions were being made about classification systems. By 1882, Trimen further subdivided the “Miscellaneous” category into “Work of Civilized Races,” which were Europe or Asiatic objects, and “Native Implements”, which were only items accessioned from South Africa (Gibson, 2019: 135). These earlier forms of museum collection documentation clearly showed the divide between natural history (within which ethnographic objects were included) and social history (primarily European objects) collections being made. This set the precedent for how the history, social and cultural significance, as well as the people these ethnographic objects came from, were treated and exhibited.

Ms. Dorothea Bleek was a non-professional researcher and collector who, as mentioned above, was on a mission to save the history of the indigenous people she researched. She did not follow any formal museological rules and guidelines, resulting in oftentimes minimalistic descriptions and note-taking. Although I do not see any malice in the act, it has resulted in the museum

having incomplete information, a point I argue is a condition inherent in colonial/imperial collections.

Presently, ISHC's Social History Collections department follows a *SH Collections Manual*, which defines *Object Collections* as "a material record of the cultural knowledge and behaviour of people, primarily from South Africa, but also from other parts of Africa and the rest of the world. The material comprises historical and contemporary objects, as well as material obtained through archaeological excavation" (2009: 3). The Social History collections are divided into accessioned objects, unregistered display material, including objects accepted into the collection but not accessioned, and unregistered ephemera, including printed matter (ephemeral objects whose long-term preservation cannot be guaranteed but that have culturally significant content). The documentation of these objects is managed by Collection Managers, while the physical preservation is undertaken by Conservators. The C&D department's *Collections Manual* gives a breakdown of ISHC's procedures regarding new acquisitions (whether purchased, including subscriptions; donations; field collecting; archaeological excavation; physical anthropology; bequests; and loan collections), registration procedures (permanent SH collections; loan collections; unregistered material; and library material), the database which Iziko works with, their de-accessioning process and policies, storage, retrieval procedures, exhibition procedures, loans (outgoing or incoming), access to collections, conservation, and loss of object(s) (2009: 1-2).

Nowadays, the move is towards digitizing museum records, and it is a constantly evolving process. Both Paul Tichmann and Lailah Hisham (ISHC collections manager) suggest that digitisation could be part of the museum decolonising process (Gibson, 2019: 167). Digitisation is something SAM and later Iziko Museums have worked toward since 1994/95; the Museum's annual reports stated that certain collections were completely accessioned on to a computer base to facilitate faster, more accurate searches of these reports, and over the years SAM reaffirmed this commitment towards digitisation, "based on an assumption that this would make knowledge more widely accessible" (Gibson, 2019: 167). Iziko Museums continued working towards this assumption in the 21st century, and in 2005, one of Iziko's strategic objectives was to "develop and extend computerised collections databases and made them available on the internet". By 2012/2013, Iziko adopted a more cautious approach to digitisation, focusing less on numbers (on how much is accessible) and more on adapting technology to suit the local context, suggesting an awareness that digitisation does not always facilitate access. Iziko did not question the nature of the information being digitised, but rather

the inconsistencies in metadata standards and an absence of guidelines for digitally capturing items (Gibson, 2019: 167-168).

Gibson aptly summarizes the digitising process SAM and ISHC have undergone:

“The [South African] museum did start capturing natural history items in an electronic database soon after 1990, but this is quite separate from the databases for the social history and art collections. Iziko is slowly transferring these latter catalogue records into the Logos Flow digital database, an electronic system that is, according to Lailah Hisham, Iziko’s social history collections manager, better suited to capturing artworks, an unsurprisingly situation since the database designer worked previously at the Iziko South African National Gallery (Hisham, pers. comm., September 29, 2016). Hisham and her team have recorded approximately 40,000 items in this database, but Iziko currently estimates that it must capture 2.26 million artefact records in digital form, something it recognises as “an enormous challenge,” since the institution’s long history means almost all of these were accessioned in a paper-based card system” (2009: 97)

In the context of African collections at large, ICOM created the *Handbook of Standards: Documenting African Collections*, in 1996. This handbook was a collaboration between professionals from various African museums and CIDOC to “fight against illicit traffic of cultural property” (Ghose, 1996: 3). In South Africa, SAMA [South African Museums Association] published the *Professional Standards and Transformation Indicator* document in 2006, serving as a guideline for South African museums to follow a general standard for collections management and serving the public, amongst other standards set.

All these guidelines and standards are created, globally and nationally, to properly document and look after museum objects, not just for the present and future generations but also for their intangible longevity.

2.4. Dissociation, or when documentation fails.

As mentioned in the previous section, museum documentation is an ecosystem that serves as the memory of museums. Cultural heritage objects age and deteriorate from the moment they are created, which is a natural response to environmental and internal forces. The change in the object(s) can be sudden, slow or gradual, and it could eventually result in partial or complete

physical loss of material loss, or chemical change within the object. Part of museum documentation of objects includes condition assessments and photographs, which allow museum staff to gauge the rate of deterioration and change in museum objects. Another aspect of conservation is to prevent damage or minimize the effects of deterioration by managing environmental risks. These environmental risks, called agents of deterioration, include fire, water, thieves and vandals, climate (temperate and humidity), pests (insects, vermin, and fungi), pollutants in the air, contaminants in contact with the objects, and materials on the object. The agents of deterioration are a conceptual framework developed by the Canadian Conservation Institution (CCI) to identify and prevent ten major causes of ‘acute and long-term damage’. Dissociation is one of the newer agents of deterioration that was added to that list (Science Museum of Minnesota, 2022: [sp]).

The CCI’s list of “Agents of Deterioration” defines dissociation as a result of “the natural tendency for ordered systems to fall apart over time. Maintenance processes and other barriers to change are required to prevent this disintegration. Dissociation results in the loss of objects, object-related data, or the ability to retrieve or associate objects and data” (Waller and Cato, 2019: [sp]). Dissociation can occur as a result of rare or catastrophic events, such as a disaster, or continual events or processes, such as improper collection management or conservation techniques (Watkin, 2013: [sp]). This agent of deterioration affects the legal, intellectual, and/or cultural aspects of an object, whereas the other agents of deterioration primarily affect the physical state of objects (Waller and Cato, 2019: [sp]).

“The general outcomes of dissociation from any cause are loss of objects, of whole collections, of their associated data, or of their values. "Loss" is used here to mean "becoming unable to retrieve on demand that which is wanted." In the case of data loss, objects or collections lose context and information-related values. In the case of inappropriate use, spiritual, ritual, and other cultural values are lost ... Indeed, no collection is perfectly documented and all collections will have an error rate in identification. However, when an error rate becomes unacceptable to users of the collection, then the entire collection, and not just the objects directly affected, will lose value. This magnification effect, where compromising a few objects and/or their data affects the value of many or all objects, is an insidious aspect of the agent dissociation” (Waller and Cato: [sp]).

Dissociation is an agent of deterioration that is detrimental to the intangible integrity of an object and, thus, the collection it belongs to. Known as the only ‘metaphysical’ agent of deterioration, the object’s deterioration arises when things become disconnected from the information that provided them with meaning, whether social, cultural, or political (Henderson, 2020: 203). Most articles written on dissociation as an agent of deterioration are directly based on the framework created by the CCI.

CHAPTER 3

DEFINING HISTORICAL DISSOCIATION AND DECOLONISATION IN MUSEUMS

3.1. Introducing historical dissociation

As mentioned in the introduction chapter of this dissertation, the aim of the research is to present an argument for considering the addition of *historical dissociation* as a sub-category of dissociation, which is one of the agents of deterioration which place collections at risk. The following sections thus unpacks the proposed term and motivates for the tangible consequences of its continued presence.

3.1.1. What is historical dissociation?

Dissociation refers to a disconnect or separation. In the museum and heritage sectors dissociation, refers specifically to the natural tendency of ordered systems to fall apart, leading to a disconnect between the museum object and its museum records or associated information. I argue for another dimension of dissociation, namely the dissociation between the object(s) that were collected and the associated source information that was either not collected, misinterpreted, or mis-noted during the collection and/or acquisition process. This I have coined the term ‘historical dissociation’, given the nature of how cultural material was collected, documented, and by whom, prior to entering the museum. I also use the term ‘historical’ because this form of dissociation, I argue, can be an on-going process resulting from a neglect to re-visit older collections (especially objects collected during colonial/imperial times) and failing to re-examine the initial research and museum documentation associated with them. This lack of re-examination and re-evaluation of old collections often means the collection processes and practices they undergo have not changed, even as museums have moved towards recognising dissociation as an agent of deterioration and presently attempting to combat it.

Museums are now more aware of the intangible significance that objects carry within and for their source communities, and that a disconnect between an object and its information can negatively impact that significance, whether in the community or the collection itself. This is why dissociation is recognised to be as detrimental as any tangible form of object damage, such

as fire or water, for example. Standardised and ethical museum documentation and acquisition methods, have become a common practice in museums nationally and internationally to ensure proper information gathering and collection practices and prevent the potential loss or damage of that information. With historical dissociation, the continuation of status quo in older collections' practices and processes means that the objects are stuck as being viewed in the colonial or imperial context they were acquired/looted in, causing damage to the very soul of these objects.

Older collections often face this historical dissociation as a consequence of being taken out of the originating communities without proper consultation. Further, the acquisition methodologies of the curator or researcher often resulted in its daily function, spiritual and historical significance being lost. In addition, incorrect handling, storage, or exhibition methods do result from this incorrect acquisition methods or research mis-information, which perpetuates a false narrative. Museums, especially during the colonial and imperial eras, defined the "unique character and significance" of an object based on the meaning researched by curators and researchers for that object and what place it has in the museum's system of values (rarity, condition, attribution, authenticity, etc.) (Clavir, 1996: 101-102). As Racette (2008: 15) aptly states, "those who have been in the backrooms of museum collections have seen the objects wrapped in white, muffled and covered, stored in boxes and drawers. Many of these objects have been separated from their stories.". Historical dissociation creates an information vacuum that would have specified how curators should use, name, and display (ethnographic) objects, as well as how conservators should care for the collections and look after them. Thus, historical dissociation can have ongoing tangible consequences and detrimental effects on objects in museums.

3.3.2. The influence of historical dissociation in museum practice including research, conservation and curation

As stated above, historical dissociation directly influences how a museum curates and conserves its collections. Historical dissociation can be especially damaging to sacred and culturally sensitive objects. These types of objects may have cultural restrictions, such as limitations on who may handle them (initiates, medicine keepers, etc.) or by one gender only (Clavir and Moses, 2018: [sp]). The concept of "culturally sensitive" embodied in sacred and holy objects must include any objects demanding special respect because of their significance within their cultural context. The object's association with a particular individual or group

invokes protocols recognized by the whole community, which is, again, a demonstration of respect” Clavir and Moses continues (2018: [sp]). The intangible significance that gets lost due to mis-noting, misinformation being recorded, or an object leaving its home during acquisition can create a loss of function for that object and misrepresent or erase an important aspect of the source community’s identity and the object’s overall purpose.

The diminishing of an object’s spirituality occurs depending on who handles the object, how it gets cleaned, unpacked and packed, where it gets stored, and the methods incurred in preserving or restoring its physical appearance. The mis-noting of information or generalisation (just labelling an object as a “brown leather bag” or “black mask”) in an object’s provenance can cause it to be inappropriately exhibited and/or labelled. In addition, this directly influences how the general public perceives an indigenous community; “a display’s most important role is as a tool for communicating with the public”, and since a museum controls the narrative, the information they present alongside objects will be seen as the universal truth (Nordstrand, 2004: 11). Incomplete or incorrectly collected object information can then, in turn, spread outside the museum through researchers and authors using the very same museum documentation for their own research on an object or collection.

Paul Tichmann, (Curator, then Director of C&D at ISHC from 2011-2023) gave an example of the intangible damage and consequent historical dissociation that was caused to their ethnographic collections (P. Tichmann, 2023, personal communication, 23 January). Laura Gibson, a then-PhD student at King’s College London, came to Iziko Museums as an intern between 2016 and 2017, where she did archival research on the Nguni collection of ISHC, charting the changing cataloguing and classifying practices the collection underwent (2019: 19).

Gibson photographed the collection and took her photographs to KwaZulu-Natal, where she consulted Zulu-speaking communities to gain their perspective on the objects in the Iziko Museums. One of the objects examined was a beer pot, which was noted down during collection merely as a beer pot, but in fact, Gibson was informed that it was a sacred vessel for someone dying, where it would be placed next to a fireplace as a link to the ancestors. The absence of this information in the museum records has caused the beer pot to be misclassified and lose its spiritual significance; it can be said to have suffered from historical dissociation (P. Tichmann, 2023, personal communication, 23 January). Indigenous collections lose their association with their original cultural meanings, and to correct the misinterpretation and

misclassification, collaborating with the originating communities of these older, colonial collections is vital (Hoeane, 2020: 19). Museums need to understand not only the narratives that are told by the museum's collections and documentation but also why and how other narratives are (still) excluded (Gibson, 2019: 236). Laura Gibson's PhD research where she identified descendants of producers of the Natal Nguni collection set a precedent both for Iziko's recognition of historical dissociation as a threat to collections, and subsequent attempts to combat historical dissociation by collaborating with indigenous communities.

3.3.3. The need for change and a gap in the literature

Historical dissociation has been recognised internationally, although it is not termed as such, rather correcting its effects appears under the umbrella of 'museum decolonisation'²³. Museums in Canada, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand have started collaborating and including indigenous people in looking after their indigenous collections and how their culture is represented (Clavir, 1996: 100). The 'postmodern "living" museum' now attempts to give priority to the originating culture's system of values (following cultural protocols for sacred or culturally sensitive objects, for example) (Clavir, 1996: 102). First Nations are filling the professional staff positions of museums, seen in institutions such as the National Museum of the American Indian and at older major institutions throughout North America and in New Zealand. The Canadian Museum of History (CMH) has created policy changes that include incorporating indigenous traditional care and other cultural protocols into museum storage and exhibition methods and the provision of specialised collections care training designed around the unique needs of indigenous interns (Moses, 2008: 23). Museum visitors now experience the "voices of living people belonging to an indigenous culture, not just voices from the past or from the academic knowledge of nonindigenous curators", Clavir states (1996: 100).

With the need for collaborating with indigenous communities becoming more recognised the respect for the sacred integrity of material culture should be an important guiding principle of conservation; the sacred integrity refers to the emotional and sacred integrity associations attached to the object (Augustine, 2008: 7). The original intention, usage, history, and evidence of the object's provenance should be respected and protected. "This respect for the integrity of the cultural property shall be based upon the study of the cultural property and on consultations with the owner and, when applicable, the originator", Augustine (2008: 7) states.

²³ Museum decolonisation is discussed further as the chapter continues.

The new directions museums are taking in including source communities in co-curation and caring for indigenous collections have created challenges to conventional conservation. These challenges, according to Clavir (1996: 101) include:

1. The methodology and scientific conclusions of museum conservation are the guiding practices of the institution. For example, in the American Southwest, creating culturally sensitive storage can mean allowing fresh air and natural light to reach certain objects.
2. Ethics in conservation: is it ethical for a conservator to adhere to their country's code of ethics to agree and put objects at physical risk in order to facilitate the preservation of intangible integrity or cultural significance? For example, at the University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology, the conservation staff helped formulate the agreement procedures for the loan of appropriate masks and blankets for ceremonial use.
3. The conservator's authority as the prime specialist in the storage, handling, and physical care of the museum's holdings. Source communities' cultural authority is increasingly shaping opinions on these matters.
4. The manner in which conservators work. Conservators in North America, unlike those in New Zealand, normally do not begin a conservation treatment by implementing the appropriate protocols and consulting the originating peoples, even for sacred or sensitive objects.

Another challenge to conservation I would present is the one of objects being living entities or having life potential, which accords with many indigenous conceptions of material culture embodying sentience; this means that these objects have a life cycle, which means that conservation disrupts the balance of life and death and "stigmatizes the archive as a macabre space" (Ouzman, 2006: 277). As Clavir (1996:101) states, an object's significance can rest in its whole conceptual framework, not just in its physical being. The four issues mentioned above affect the daily practice of conservators and the conceptual framework of conservation (which is, essentially, preserving the tangible body of the object). The challenges to museums test the underlying paradigms of conservation knowledge, particularly what the practitioner does and what is deemed important, legitimate, and reasonable within the practice (Clavir, 1996: 101). Historical dissociation is as damaging as the tangible agents of deterioration, and conservators are better able to combat this issue by working alongside source communities.

Beyond museum conservators, it also falls onto the collection management department to ensure older collections have proper documentation and to prevent future dissociation by being

thorough during the acquisition period of all incoming objects. I would argue that combating historical dissociation is the responsibility of the entire museum, including the executive team and curators; everyone who works in a museum is a custodian of every single object housed within the institution. It is the job of every custodian to ensure the tangible body and intangible spirit of a museum object are protected.

As described above, much has been written about the need to include indigenous voices and those of originator communities within the heritage discourse. This research emanates predominantly from Canada, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand. Canadian and American authors give a northern perspective and Australian and New Zealander authors give a southern perspective. This impacts how I write about decolonisation, dissociation, and historical dissociation. As I am writing from a southern African perspective, the narratives of oppression are different, as is the movement towards decolonising collections and involvement of the San, and other South African indigenous communities. The broader perspectives might be similar (wanting the voices of source communities heard), but the movements and methods towards achieving that goal will be different and unique for each country and their indigenous people.

There are few academic articles written on dissociation itself, and most focus on new instances of dissociation in collections, and avoiding dissociation during acquisition of new collections. The latter is important, as correctly documenting incoming objects ensures their cultural, social, and historical value is not lost, misinterpreted, or misconstrued. There is currently a gap, academically, between decolonising colonial collections by creating channels of communication with originating communities and combating dissociation as an ‘agent of dissociation’. And while dissociation occurs outside of old acquisition and conservation methods, the impact of those methods is as damaging as missing object information or dealing with an incomplete collection.

Both Watkin (2013: [sp]), and Waller and Cato (2019: [sp]), focus on the definition and effects of dissociation and how conservators can ensure that incoming collections in museums do not experience these effects. In *Agents of Deterioration: Dissociation*, Waller and Cato (2007: [sp]) mention that incorrect handling and caring for a sacred and culturally sensitive object can negatively affect its value. In *Agent of Deterioration #6- Dissociation*, Watkin (2013: [sp]) notes that dissociation could happen when the cultural value of an object is not understood. However, neither article on dissociation discusses the involvement of originator communities

of collections facing historical dissociation. This should be seen as an avenue for research and seeking solutions to this particular type of dissociation, especially when dealing with collections acquired in colonial or imperial times. When possible, the makers (or their descendants) should be consulted to review the known information on the collection objects and ensure the current catalogue data is correct. The current information the makers have is still vital to the restoration or general conservation of the objects, especially on an intangible level. Collaborations with indigenous communities, even decades or a century later, could fill in the blank spaces left after initial acquisition.

Of course, it could be possible to retain the cultural significance and meaning of objects in an indigenous community after a few decades, but perhaps not over a century, as the meaning given to an object could change over time, and present descendants could have little to no recollection of the original meaning and function.

“It is the cultural meanings attached to the object that are significant for First Nations. (Museum conservators preserve the physical object and its integrity as a source of knowledge). It is not surprising that preserving the “intangible” associated with material culture is of great concern to First Nations, whereas the conservators’ specialty is preservation of the tangible material”, Clavir (2002: 36), a pioneer researcher of decolonisation in museums (and thus dissociation), states in her work *Heritage Preservation: Museum Conservation and First Nations Perspectives*. Historical dissociation comes from this separation of the tangible and intangible aspects of indigenous (and all) museum artefacts. And while Clavir’s statement might be slightly outdated, since the intangible aspects of an object are being given more importance in conservation now, she is correct in stating that the primary job of a conservator still is looking after the physical body of that object.

Clavir provides the framework for why combating and preventing dissociation is important by already stating in her 1996 article *Reflections on Changes in Museums and the Conservation of Collections from Indigenous Peoples*, “An object’s significance can rest in its whole conceptual framework, not just its physical being” (101). As Henderson aptly states in *Beyond lifetimes; who do we exclude when keep things for the future?*, museum objects can have multiple and ever-changing meanings, and the intangible significance of an object’s cultural heritage does not rely solely within its tangible form (Henderson, 2020: 196). Conservators

work with material culture and cannot distance themselves from the people from whom these objects originate (Maranda, 2012: 182).

3.2. Decolonisation

3.2.1. Decolonisation in museums

According to Watts (2009: [sp]), “decolonisation refers to the process, often long, tortuous, and violent, by which colonies achieve their national aspirations for political independence from the colonial metropolitan power”. The global trend of decolonising the practice of acquisitions and conservation in museums came into practice in the 1990s. African museums, like many other institutions, were established during the colonial era to serve out the colonisers’ interests on the continent (Thondhlana, 2015: 15). “Museum institutions were primarily established to satisfy the colonialist’s impulse to survey, inventory and categorise objects together with people for purposes of governance and economic exploitation ... [these were] centres of research and scholarship to understand both the natural and cultural heritage in the colonies” (Thondhlana, 2015: 15). Museums, in short, were part of the imperial project, with collections and exhibitions initiated under colonial rule.

Until fairly recently, indigenous people and former colonial museums have had an unequal relationship; for centuries, museums stored and displayed material culture and, in some cases, peoples, and presented an “edited” version of history (Archuleta, 2011: 130). For many indigenous people around the world, museums can evoke strong emotional responses, from anger and sadness to joy, since ethnographic collections are directly connected to the traumas of colonial conquest and yet provide that direct link to pre-colonial life (Onciul, 2015: 26). Museum exhibitions set up with ethnographic objects presented this romanticised, and one could say exaggerated, traditional lifestyle that often bore no relationship to the source community, or how those indigenous people viewed their own history and culture (Clavir, 2002: 34). Former colonial museums presented half-told histories, and indigenous people were, as mentioned in previous chapters, part of the country’s bygone era, a pre-history that was primitive and uncivilised before the colonisers arrived (Archuleta, 2011: 130). For indigenous communities, the museum can be viewed as a culpable body of former colonial oppression that continues to harbour their cultural material beyond reach. However, museums can also be seen as invaluable resources that house materials that are important to the survival and revival of indigenous cultural practices. Museums can also be platforms for uplifting the voices of indigenous people, presenting a chance to re-examine their past and present (Onciul, 2015: 26).

According to the Museums Association (2020: [sp]), “Decolonisation is not simply the relocation of a statue or an object; it is a long-term process that seeks to recognise the integral role of empire in museums – from their creation to the present day. Decolonisation requires a reappraisal of our institutions and their history and an effort to address colonial structures and approaches to all areas of museum work”. Who should control the power to represent? Who has the authority to re-present the culture of others? These questions have invoked an authoritarian crisis within the field of museology (Onciul, 2015: 7). Decolonising should be about difficult conversations and reflections on the meaning of cultural and heritage institutions and who these institutions serve and represent (ICCRUM, 2019: [sp]). There should be an open and truthful dialogue with all members of communities and society at large. It is about sharing power and the authority questioned above (ICCRUM, 2019: [sp]).

There is also the question of heritage culture and what it means for museums versus source communities. Within Western culture and museums, ‘heritage’ is normally seen as being material (such as a cultural object) and viewed through an exhibition; within indigenous communities, however, ‘heritage’ is described culturally as something continuous and a ‘process’ rather than a ‘product’ (Clavir, 2002: 35). Museums have long spoken for and presented an image of the ‘Other’, and have come under pressure to allow ‘Others’ to speak for themselves, moving these communities from being mere passive voices regarding their own culture and history and bringing back that heritage culture they felt got lost (Onciul, 2015: 7).

The inadequacies and bias found in representing groups of indigenous people (and the research conducted on them) are unsurprising given that museum exhibitions were (and sometimes still are) made up of a collection that is meant to encompass the livelihood and tradition of entire communities or nations of people, often with objects only representing splinters of the ever-changing, complex, and nuanced histories and cultures of their source communities (Onciul, 2015: 7). Museums need to acknowledge the harm the loss of intangible knowledge and values has caused to indigenous communities, particularly with regards to spiritual artefacts whose agency and sacred attributes are disrupted or compromised when associated rules or taboos are broken. “Sacred object [...] often require special care that cannot be reduced to a list of ‘dos’ and ‘dents’ ” (Sadongei, 2004: 19). It became important to resist the hegemonic influence of Western museology and maintain indigenous processes and practices, especially regarding sacred or culturally sensitive objects (Onciul, 2015: 39).

3.2.2 Facilitating and creating change

Facilitating ‘self-representation’ by the originating communities and making them a part of arriving at negotiated museum decisions for collection care, storage, and display has become a vital component in decolonising the institution through communication between indigenous communities and museums (Clavir, 1996: 100). Allowing museum spaces to be more open to indigenous communities and allowing descendants of the original creators of objects in collections access to those objects can contribute to communities having a voice in how museums present their history. This gains importance when objects are identified for repatriation claims (the return of objects to the original owner/community). An example of this could be seen as early as the 1980’s at the University of British Columbia (U.B.C.) Museum of Anthropology, where the museum began having public programmes where indigenous people were speakers, gave performances, or did totem pole raisings (Clavir, Johnson, and Shane 1986: 80). Native carvers and artists were allowed to work on the Museum’s premises, and programmes were created for native high schoolers to work at the Museum and do interpretive work on collections (Clavir *et. al*, 1986: 80).

Decolonisation is about museums becoming learning communities and necessitates there to be room created for multiple perspectives showing the different contexts that determine where we look at objects and themes (ICCRUM, 2019: [sp]). As Huff (2022: [sp]) accurately states, “It is crucial for genuine love, reciprocity, and care to be found within museums, not performative or guilt-driven platitudes that further contribute to the unequal power dynamics within museum spaces”. Museums cannot create superficial changes in order to publicly signal their commitment towards decolonisation but still continue colonial practices of excluding indigenous voices, leaving colonial-era exhibitions and object labelling unchanged, and prioritising Western conservation practices over those of the source community’s.

As Parsons, Beaumont, Bolt, and McLeod states in their *Myth and Medium- I’m Going to Tell You Another Story* article, there are several key elements when it comes to decolonising the museum and conservation practices and collaborating with indigenous communities:

1. The conservator, curator, and collections manager need to take the time to understand that they are handling and working with a different culture before starting a project.
2. The opinion of the people who made the object(s) and live in the landscape and culture should be given equal weight.

3. There should be time given to understanding the intention behind the words in communication and consultation about the object(s) and its care and curation. The use of language will not be the same for an indigenous person as it would be for a museum professional.
4. Understand the emotional wounds and generational trauma that may be opened by working with First Nation objects.
5. As a museum professional and a specialist, one should understand that indigenous people see connectivity on a different level. Do not be offended if the source community expects roles to be performed outside one's area of expertise or if factors one is not accustomed to get brought into discussions.
6. Finally, understand that an indigenous community is a partner, not a client. As a museum professional, be prepared to evolve one's way of thinking and learning, be flexible, and embrace change. The collaboration project will not be successful otherwise (2008: 45).

The museum decolonisation process needs to be sincere and done with the intent to bring about real institutional change, because if it is done with the intention of making the museum look modern and 'with the times', the false narration of indigenous people and the intangible loss of their objects will continue. Decolonisation will never be an easy process, and I have shown how museums can wish to show institutional change in the name of decolonisation, often without truly consulting those they wish to showcase, as in Skotnes' 'Miscast' exhibition at SANG. Reflection within museums on what is meant by 'decolonisation' and opening the doors to source communities is a step in the right direction towards bringing about real change. There is, of course, the issue of 'decolonisation' having a different definition depending on which museum professional, academic, or museum visitor gets asked and whether the source community of an ethnographic collection is available for consultation or firstly wishes to be consulted. This can be a hindrance to creating change and being able to conclusively state whether attempts at museum decolonisation have been successful in the past or present.

3.2.3. The South African perspective on museum decolonisation

Within the South African context, there was a movement post-1994 (the first democratic election after the end of apartheid) by the ANC leadership to solidify and unite the nation and recognise the country as a transformed nation (Schmidt, 2013: 293). Non-racialisation policies

were designed to dismantle the apartheid racial structures that organised the state, nations, and relationships between various individuals and groups. The Department of Arts and Culture played a vital role in this objective, as it was commissioned by the government to create institutions that denounced racism, celebrated resistance to apartheid, recognised the multiple ethnic and racial groups within the country, and promoted democracy and human rights (Schmidt, 2013: 293). An example of institutions that denounced racism and celebrated that resistance include the Iziko and Ditsong Museums mentioned in the previous chapter; these national museums were designed to serve heritage and culture (Schmidt, 2013: 294).

“Recent museology produces paradigms for curation and pedagogy that may reimagine rather than reproduce racial consciousness. Critical consciousness around representation and fluidity of identities and textual meaning have changed museology” Schmidt (2013: 292). In South Africa, this meant increasing the audience diversity of museums from only being predominantly white South Africans and rewriting the narrative of the museums, who gets represented, and how. In addition, since 1994, new museums have joined with transformed existing museums to produce collections of national museums. These museums differed significantly in their use of objects, educational spaces, and pedagogical intentions (Schmidt, 2013: 300). Two museums are dedicated to the lives of famous black leaders, namely the Nelson Mandela²⁴ Museum (in Mthatha and in Qunu) and the Chief Luthuli²⁵ Museum (in KwaDukuza). Although both museums display few items, they act as community and educational centres, emphasising the education of new leaders while using the legacies of these freedom fighters who helped create democratic South Africa (Schmidt, 2013: 300).

The Voortrekker Complex in Pietermaritzburg embodies the idea that “history lacks a single truth” (Schmidt, 2013: 300). The complex commemorates the bloody battle between the Voortrekkers and the Zulus, and the exhibition attempts to objectively depict the battle and philosophies that bred the conflict between the two groups.

The Robben Island Museum has few objects and formal exhibitions, with the island and its ‘spaces of oppression’ being accessible to tourists (Schmidt, 2013: 301). Visitors take a boat to the island and are given guided tours by former prisoners who share their stories as they walk through the spaces. The various old buildings on the island are shown along with the tales

²⁴ Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela (1918 – 2013) was a South African anti-Apartheid activist and politician who served as the first president of South Africa from 1994 to 1999. He was the country’s first black head of state and the first elected in a fully representative democratic election.

²⁵ Chief Albert John Luthuli (1898 – 1967) was a South African anti-Apartheid activist, traditional healer, and politician who served as the President-General of the ANC from 1952 until his death in 1967.

of their use, and the newer buildings contain common areas, a library, and dormitories for people to come together and develop curriculum and participate in leadership camps and other programmes that “support economic development and democracy” (Schmidt, 2013: 301).

The Nelson Mandela Museum, the Chief Luthuli Museum, the Voortrekker complex, and the Robben Island Museum are not easily recognisable in the traditional sense; they “disrupt the fixedness of representation and identity” often associated with museums by “devaluing objects, embracing pedagogy of experience, creating space for civic development, and encouraging reflection upon objectification and social structure ... In contrast to other museums, they are designed to decolonise South Africa, free the minds of people, and allow difference to sit peacefully” (Schmidt, 2013: 302). I see these museums as an opportunity for visitors to experience the histories and lives of people and to view historical sites that may not have been given a platform in colonial museums. If they were, it would have been in a single exhibition or gallery in the museum, not an entire building dedicated to highlighting an often-painful history and reflecting on how to prevent a repeat of it. These new museums are a celebration of how far South Africa has come from its colonial and apartheid past, and with how popular they are with tourists and locals (especially the Robben Island Museum and the Voortrekker complex), it means the narrative of pain and change can always continue.

Another good example is that of The Castle of Good Hope in Cape Town is managed by Iziko Museums of South Africa, and is the country’s oldest surviving colonial building, labelled “the personification of armed colonial conquest and apartheid oppression in southern Africa” (Gilfellan, Hendricks, and Sipoyo, 2019: 10). This fort (which I will refer to by its common name, ‘the Castle’) was constructed to protect the interests of the *Vereenigde Landsche Ge-Oktroyeerde Oostindische Compagnie*²⁶ (VOC) and keep the Khoi at bay. The Castle’s role and function changed over the centuries, alternating from VOC headquarters, a trading post, the seat of the country’s government, the Supreme Court, slave quarters, and a military base, to name a few. Today, it has been a museum/heritage/entertainment centre since the scale-down of the military in the late 1990s (Gilfellan *et al.*, 2019: 11). In October 2012, the Castle Control Board was ordered by Parliament to remove flags that denoted previous colonial epochs from the bastions of the building, which included the apartheid flag. This spurred on a decolonisation

²⁶ *Vereenigde Landsche Ge-Oktroyeerde Oostindische Compagnie*, or the Dutch East India Company, was a Dutch major corporation in business from 1602 until 1799.

project, with the Board stating that its objectives were to “build an internationally known and recognised cultural and heritage brand for *Ubuntu*²⁷ dialogue, nation building and human rights recognition ... optimise its tourism potential and accessibility to the public and; preserve and protect its cultural and military heritage by elevating it to UNESCO World Heritage Status” (Gilfellan *et al.*, 2019: 11-12).

This strategy meant that the Board discarded the Castle’s “archaic, 19th century concept ... as a museological complex” to become a more dynamic and inclusive ‘postmodernist’ one (Gilfellan *et al.*, 2019: 12). The Castle began a direct and robust engagement with Khoi and San descendants in the 2010s which was at the heart of the Board’s “decolonisation and Africanisation drive”; this engagement was known as the ‘Khoisan Mediation Program’ (Gilfellan *et al.*, 2019: 13). The Board strived towards inclusivity and nation-building, a ‘Khoisan revivalist²⁸’ drive that affected the practice and strategies of the Castle in various ways; this included the matters of “representation, absence, misrepresentation and miscasting of the invisible ‘other’ in the Castle narrative” (Gilfellan *et al.*, 2019: 13).

Several initiatives also came out of the 350th Commemorative Program of Action of the Castle of Good Hope, which included: the Krotoa²⁹ Memorial Bench; The Centre for Memory, Healing and Learning, built in the old Adam Tas Hall on Castle grounds, serves as a facility for military veterans, students, researchers, and other groups to engage in various topics. The project also included the installation of permanent statues of the 17th-century first Khoi freedom fighter, Nammaoa (Doman), and three warrior kings: Cesthwayo (amaZulu), Langalibalele (amaHlubi), and Sekhukhune (BaPedi), who were imprisoned at the Castle; and the National Schools Mural Campaign, a post-commemoration project where schools in South Africa created 100 murals depicting the history of the Castle, amongst other themes. The Castle embraced its “Africanity, indigeneity and propensity to affect societal change” (Gilfellan *et al.*, 2019: 16-17).

²⁷ *Ubuntu* is a Nguni Bantu term meaning “harmony”. It has its roots in humanist African philosophy, and Ubuntu is sometimes translated as “I am because we are/I am because you are”. The values of *ubuntu* philosophy include respect, sharing, caring, trust, and unselfishness.

²⁸ Richard Elphick (1985), in his work *Kraal and Castle: Khoikhoi and the Founding of White South Africa*, postulated that the indigenous communities of southern Africa were extinct by 1713. The Khoisan revivalist movement contests Elphick’s ‘extinction-theory’ and historians have refuted it.

²⁹ Krotoa was a Khoi woman who worked as a servant and interpreter in Jan Van Riebeeck’s household. She was fluent in Dutch, English, and Portuguese and was said to be ‘instrumental’ in working out the terms for ending the first Dutch-Khoi war in the Cape. A feature film, *Krotoa*, was released in 2017, which depicts her removal from her Khoi tribe to serve Van Riebeeck and his family.

3.2.4. The result of museum decolonisation

These various changes, forms of representation, and retellings of South Africa's past are important to decolonisation. There needs to be a value seen in cultural diversity and healing as a nation while still acknowledging the harm caused by the prejudice, conflicts, and institutional racism that tore the country apart (Schmahmann, 2013: 12). Monuments, memorials, and museums in South Africa can serve as objects or places that connect the past with the present in a tangible way (McGinn and De Kamper, 2019: 38). These objects and places form a vital part in the country's ritual of commemoration and remembrance, facilitating mourning and the overcoming of loss, especially where there are untold stories of freedom fighters, victims of Apartheid police detainment and detentions, and the lack of stories told about certain groups of people within South Africa, such as the depiction of slavery in the Cape at ISLM (McGinn and De Kamper, 2019: 38; Marschall, 2004: 82).

As Marschall (2004: 82) states, monuments, memorials, and museums “[constitutes] a public, visible, lasting recognition, [and] they affirm the group identity that is based on such trauma, help to overcome loss, and pave the way to reconciliation”. Museums should be vehicles of learning and relearning, products of social change, and ideal in setting the landscape for decolonial lessons (Benneyworth and Pinto, 2019: 6). No privilege should be given to one racial group or culture's story in museums, and if it is possible, the formerly silenced groups who were represented through the Eurocentric gaze of the colonial museum should be given their chance to raise their voices.

I do believe the national attempt at museum decolonisation has been successful to some extent. This is seen with the creation of new museums, the change in how groups and communities within South Africa are portrayed (examples being the San rock art exhibition replacing the dioramas at SAM, the District 6 Museum (Cape Town) showcasing the underrepresented history of Cape Coloureds and Cape Malay people, and the Robben Island Museum having former prisoners tell their own stories), and the recognition of painful and neglected events of the past. I believe museums (along with monuments and memorials) have become instrumental in contributing towards nation-building in terms of diverse groups of people visiting them more frequently (as seen by how popular the Iziko Museums are, for example) and having a wider range of staff in terms of race and gender, which was not seen during Apartheid. Decolonisation

should not only continue within the country's museums, but institutional change should be continually worked on to prevent an undoing of all the hard work given in decolonising collections, transforming exhibitions, and diversifying audiences. Iziko Museums, however, is also an example of how changes in museums in terms of celebrating diversity, engaging in difficult topics, and encouraging collaboration with various demographics do not equate to successful institutional change (Strydom 2017: 77). Iziko still has an issue with their continued hierarchy within the institution; there is no real communication between the Museum Council, top management, and staff members, which creates a problem in reaching a consensus when setting goals for all at the various Iziko Museum sites, which can hinder not only decolonisation but also the way in which collections are treated and exhibited. As Strydom (2017: 77) states, there needs to be a democratisation in the way Iziko (and other museums that face this similar issue) go about making decisions and implement a strategy for including the voices of employees at every level within the Museum. There is still a long road to travel in undoing and unlearning the colonial practices that created museums in the first place.

3.3. Conclusion

This chapter has given a condensed history of the South African Museum, the creation of the 'Bushmen' casts, the collection of material culture, and the making and eventual de-installation of the diorama. My research has highlighted the real influence museums had on the dehumanisation and misrepresentation of indigenous people, and the direct correlation between how the political climate in South Africa at any moment and the manner within which brown and black histories (and bodies) are viewed was interlinked. I also showed the complexities of how indigenous people's histories and present lives are presented, and how often their voices are not heard when there are attempts at representing and advocating for their pain. This brings me to the context for my argument and focussing on the two main topics in my research paper, namely historical dissociation and decolonisation. I have attempted to define and explain the meaning of historical dissociation, highlight the intangible dangers it poses to museum (especially ethnographic) objects, and explain why it should be added as another dimension of dissociation as an agent of deterioration. Secondly, I give a definition of museum decolonisation, why it is important to facilitate this change in colonial museums, especially the need to raise the voices of source communities regarding their objects, and a brief history of museum decolonisation in South Africa. I conclude with a few case studies at decolonisation

in colonial museums and memorials in South Africa and whether I think this attempt of decolonising museum institutions in the country has been successful or not.

The work Iziko Museums is currently doing to bring in the voices of indigenous people, as seen in the 2019 collaboration sessions, is essential for creating real change, whether in museum representation or decolonisation in general.

CHAPTER 4

THE 2019 IZIKO – KHOMANI COLLABORATION SESSIONS

The chapter focuses on the 2019 collaboration sessions between Iziko Museums' and the Khomani San as an example of decolonisation in practice at Iziko Museums. The information revealed during the 2019 project provides evidence of historical dissociation.

4.1. The lead-up to the collaboration sessions

As stated in my Chapter 1, the collaboration project was organised after the Ethnographic Gallery at ISAM was de-installed on September 15, 2017. Two months later, Iziko was approached by Khomani San representatives with their proposal to hold an exhibition titled *Light in the Darkness* in the space of the former Gallery. The exhibition was envisaged to be held in the Iziko South African Museum, specifically in the space that formerly served as the Ethnographic Gallery, though the space was referred to as the “Ethnological” or “Ethnology” Gallery by Summers in his 1975 book on the history of the South African Museum (Tichmann and Abrahams, 2021: 52). The proposal was rejected with Iziko management stating that a decision had been made to not have any exhibitions on Khoi and San people in the Gallery space, as there was no resolution yet regarding exhibiting human history in ISAM. According to Tichmann and Abrahams (2021: 52) Iziko management and the Khomani San were unable to agree on how to exhibit human history and natural history together. As part of its transformation of the museum, Iziko had just dismantled the ethnographic exhibition with its antiquated displays of San portrayed alongside nature, whilst the Khomani San representatives felt that the “dichotomy between natural history and human history was a Western construct and that, in the San worldview, humans and nature are one” (Tichmann and Abrahams, 2021: 52). So, although the exhibition proposal was rejected, to the disappointment to the Khomani San, the C&D department on the other hand saw an opportunity for engagement with the Khomani San regarding the Khomani collections and bringing in community narratives to the objects (Tichmann and Abrahams, 2021: 52). Chief Petrus Vaalbooi, Itzak Kruiper, Lydia Kruiper, and Anna Marie Vaalbooi were to be transported from Khomani to Cape Town with the idea that the four leading members of the Khomani San Communal Property Association

would engage with the Khomani collections and conduct discussions with the Iziko staff (Tichmann and Abrahams, 2021: 52). The Iziko staff were granted permission to record the proceedings via video recordings, and the Khomani San signed a Memorandum of Agreement.

The Iziko staff and the Khomani San briefly spoke about the rejection of the Khomani San's proposal in 2017 during the 5-day workshop, with Paul Tichmann expressing his personal disappointment in the idea being turned down (P. Tichmann, 2023, personal communication, 13 July). The two groups spoke about how human history and natural history can be portrayed together, a worry for Iziko Museums as they wished to move away from the dehumanisation the San and Khoi have faced at SAM. The Khomani San leadership responded with "You see a distinction, you see this division because you got a Western education [...] We've lived with nature, we've lived in balance for all of the years" (Vaalboois and Kruipers in P. Tichmann, 2023, personal communication, 13 July). In Iziko's efforts in decolonising their museums, they are also destroying and, in a sense, dishonouring the very notion of what it is to be San. Mr. Tichmann acknowledges this issue during our interview, when the former Director of C&D talks about how Iziko Museums still functions on a very particular belief system, often based on Western science, and other knowledge systems are dismissed. Mr. Tichmann continued with "And so there really should be this contestation brought in, because we always talk about museums as safe spaces for critical debate [...] there should be critical debate throughout—within museum documentation, the collections documentation, within the exhibitions" (2023, personal communication, 13 July). I agree with this statement, and I believe that the issue of decolonisation will never be resolved or start seeing a real fruition unless museums can change and adapt their own institutional system, especially if the goal is to create an equal relationship with the people whose objects they care for and exhibit.

The lead-up to the sessions did not happen without its issues: the Khoi-Boesman-Nguni HIPPO Coalition, mentioned in Chapter 2, accused Iziko Museums of "separating out the cultural history of the Khoisan, in a colonial fashion" and arguing that the Khoi and San have an inseparable history (Tichmann and Abrahams, 2021: 52). Iziko acknowledges that the Khoi and San peoples' histories were interconnected; however, the project was meant to look at objects from a specific geographic area where the Khomani San originate. This accusation left Iziko with the uncomfortable question of whether they were not "ethnicising" the analysis of indigenous communities' histories. Another issue was the inadequate and/or false recording of colonial archival information, posing further challenges in reconfiguring the archive (Tichmann and Abrahams, 2021: 52).

4.2. Who are the Khomani San? I'm certainly trying to find out.

As the objects and stories in the present research involve the Khomani Sa, I thought it apt to recount here what little information I could find concerning this particular San community.

The Khomani San reside in the southern Kalahari Desert, Northern Cape. They are of the former hunter-gatherers of Southern Africa and form a community of about 1500 people as of 2009 (Francis, Francis, and Akinola, 2016: 370). The Khomani San were a scattered people, with the apartheid government first restricting them to smaller areas within the Kalahari Gemsbok Park in 1931 before forcibly removing them from their ancestral lands in 1971 (Puckett, 2013: 201; Tichmann and Abrahams, 2021: 52). These forced removals dispersed the San people across the Northern Cape (Tichmann and Abrahams, 2021: 52). The clan has since been brought together again for the land restitution process in the 1990s, with the dispossessed San amalgamating under the name 'Khomani San' (Puckett, 2013: 201), a term not appearing to have been used by the majority of the South African San prior to this time. The name 'Khomani' is attributed to Dorothea Bleek when she visited the San in the Northern Cape in the early 1910s, when she divided the region's San according to geography, such as eastern 'N//n' and western 'Khomani'. During the land claim, the term 'Khomani San Communal Property Association' became "a construct of the best research available at the time, which the San accepted. It was a very handy political short cut but it is not very valid"; valid to their self-identity or not, however, the Restitution and Criminal Procedures (CPA) Acts created the requirement for a creation of a 'community' with shared rules and values, thus the name for the community was a logical step (Puckett, 2013: 201-202).

The most common names used by the Khomani San to self-identify themselves are 'San' or the 'Bushmen' (Francis *et al.*, 2016: 370). The Kruipers, the family of Itzak and Lydia Kruiper, identify as 'Bushmen' and speak Khoekhoegowab (a Nama language³⁰), and in their mother tongue, the term 'San' is a pejorative word, as explained in Chapter 2 (Glyn, 2013: x). The majority of the Khomani San identify as 'San', as do many groups of the First Nations in South Africa. Another common usage in the Northern Cape is 'coloured', which refers to people of a mixed group in the region; it was a term given to the San people by the apartheid government when they were removed from their lands and dispersed (Glyn, 2013: x; Puckett, 2013: 17).

³⁰ Nama (*Namagowab*), also known as Damara (*ǀNūkhoegowab*) and formerly as Hottentot, is the most widespread of the non-Bantu languages of Southern Africa that make heavy use of click consonants and therefore were formerly classified as Khoisan, a grouping now recognised as obsolete. It belongs to the Khoi language family and is spoken in Namibia, Botswana, and South Africa primarily by three ethnic groups: Namakhoen, ǀNūkhoen, and Hailomkhoen.

The apartheid discrimination against anyone identified as ‘Hottentot’³¹ or ‘Bushman’ led many San and Khoi people to self-identify as ‘coloured’, which is seen as contributing to the ‘disappearance’ of many ‘Khoisan’³² languages and cultures in South Africa, until the early 1990s, when there was a re-emergence of claims to San and Khoi identity (Puckett, 2013: 32).

The community does, in various degrees, engage in both traditional and modern lifestyles (Francis *et al.*, 2016: 375). The Khomani San retained most of their age-long traditional practices, with a slight compromise to modern living and engagement in some rudimentary processes of agricultural farming that are accepted within the First Nation. An example of this mixture of traditional and modernity is that craft-sellers do not wear clothing but rather skin-like short pants to cover their private areas while still engaging in commercial activities (such as selling their crafts and collecting money from tourists photographing them). The Khomani San have a strong sense of reluctance to fully engage in “intensive capital-driven and profit-maximizing capitalism”, while still finding satisfaction in economic engagement that reaffirms their identity and lifestyles rather than merely what is best economically (Francis *et al.*, 2016: 375). The San “construct their authenticity” around Western myths about them, enabling them to sell these myths to tourists in terms of selling crafts, discourses of indigeneity (politics), being owners of original knowledge, and tourism, amongst other things (Finlay, 2009: 346). However, there are members of the community who refuse to engage in selling crafts or performing their culture, refusing to dress up as a ‘bushman’ (Francis *et al.*, 2016: 375). The Khomani San also engage in small-scale farming, such as sheep farming, or tourist farms such as the Kruiper family’s Kagga Kamma tourist farm, which opened in the 1980s (Puckett, 2013: 202).

4.3. Engagement with Iziko Museums prior to 2019

Petrus Vaalbooi succeeded Dawid Kruiper as the Khomani’s traditional leader in the 1990s, and the earliest interaction he had with Iziko Museums was at the Khoisan Identities and Cultural Heritage Conference held at the South African Museum (SAM), July 12-16, 1997. The conference began with a parade through Government Avenue between the Houses of

³¹ ‘Hottentot’ is a racial term used historically to refer to a Khoi person. The term has also been used to refer to the non-Bantu-speaking indigenous population as a whole. It emerged from Dutch settlers of the Dutch Cape Colony.

³² ‘Khoisan’ is a catch-all term for the indigenous peoples of Southern Africa who do not speak one of the Bantu languages, combining the Khoekhoen or Khoi and the San peoples.

Parliament and the Botanical Gardens, moving towards SAM, where the casts were still being exhibited (Ross, 1997: 1). The academic sessions were interlaced with meetings in which cultural and heritage demands were aired, and with demands such as those of the San people from Botswana and Namibia for land and other rights (Ross, 1997: 2). A few years later, on 30 March 2001, delegates of the Khoi and San communities gathered together in Oudtshoorn for the first time in the First Nations' memory to deliberate over issues at a conference titled "Khoisan Diversity in National Unity" (Rassool, 2009: 106).

At the conference, the various Khoi and San groups, their leaders, researchers, and academics gathered to discuss how the First Nations (their people and leaders) would be "accommodated constitutionally" (Rassool, 2009: 106). The central issue, however, was taking further discussions on the next steps in the National Khoisan Legacy Project, developed to strive towards creating heritage resources significant to the 'Khoisan' people. On June 7, 2001, the 65th Annual Conference of the South African Museums Association was held in Port Elizabeth around the theme of museum ethics. Representatives of three key museums in South Africa (SAM amongst them) that held human remains collections, including those of Khoi and San people, gave a declaration of interest in their institutions, wishing to pursue discussions regarding repatriation (Rassool, 2009: 106).

These conferences are mentioned because they set a precedent for Iziko Museums and Khomani San's 2019 collaboration workshop. Since the late 20th century into the early 21st century, there has been an "emerging over the place of Khoisan history and culture and the appropriate terms and frameworks of their representation, in the domain of heritage and public culture after apartheid" Rassool (2009: 106-107). These tensions and contestations occurred amidst processes of old national museums transforming and decolonising museum collections, as well as attempts by the newly elected and ANC³³-led South African democratic government to spearhead official heritage projects, such as the Legacy Project programme, working towards the transformation of heritage. These movements were attempts to transcend colonial frameworks of ethnography and racial science and recover indigenous heritage and cultural tradition that had become distorted and misconstrued by colonialism and apartheid (Rassool, 2009: 109). The Social History Collections Department division of ISHC was itself created to put to rest the classificatory divisions between cultural history and ethnography (Rassool, 2009:

³³ The ANC, or African National Congress, is a social-democratic political party in South Africa. A liberation movement known for its opposition to apartheid, it has governed the country since 1994, when the first post-apartheid election installed Nelson Mandela as President of South Africa.

109). In my opinion, the 2019 collaboration project seemed like a natural move towards Iziko Museums achieving these above-mentioned goals.

4.4. Preparing for the 2019 sessions, logistics and selection of objects

The C&D department held a preliminary meeting with the Khomani San representatives in December 2018, discussing the aims and objectives of the project– which was to return lost voices to the social history collections and decolonise the museum archives- and agreeing on the logistics and a preliminary programme (Tichmann and Abrahams, 2021: 52). The 20 objects selected by the participating Iziko Museums staff for the representatives to engage with were collected or purchased from areas in the Northern Cape where the Khomani San lived. These are also objects the Khomani San still use presently; therefore, their information would be valuable in not only giving the objects a historical, social, and spiritual context but also in identifying their present function and importance in the community. My data collection process included object documentation, photography, and technical analysis of the six selected objects as I was only initially supplied with information on those 6 objects for my case study. The information recorded is based on Ms. Van Wyk’s notes and transcripts from the 5-day workshops held in 2019. Ms. Van Wyk documented the Khomani San representatives’ comments as they examined the objects and photographs they were given access to while noting down their personal stories, thoughts, and opinions on the collaboration project.

The 20 objects selected from the Social History Collections for this project included, as noted in the accession register included:

- meat gathers/bow and string/fire stick bag (accession number 1547a)
- glass beads (accession number 10081)
- two metal bangles (accession number SAM 1672)
- armband (accession number n/a)
- one ostrich eggshell beads waistband (accession number SAM 10088)
- pants for male (accession number SAMAE 10929)
- one pair of sandals (accession number 10078)
- firing sticks (accession number 35.110)
- four bundles of string (accession number 1670)
- throw stick (SAMAE 1549)
- one medicine bag (accession number 1545b)

- ostrich bone knife (accession number 10079)
- medicine whisk with buchu (accession number n/a)
- one medicine bag with motifs (accession number accession number 10085)
- metal knife (accession number 35.110)
- one Steenbok leather blanket, labelled as an “apron”/”Bush petticoat” on the catalogue card and object label, respectfully (accession number SAM 1547)
- one Springbok leather blanket (accession number SAMAE 1547)
- danskrale/dance rattles (accession number 10077)
- string (SAM 10076)
- assegai holder (accession number UCT 35.11/10075)

These 20 objects are all made of different kinds of materials representative of San cultural artefacts (leather, hide, metal, plant fibres and beads). They have different functions in the community, have various levels of deterioration to examine, and some have evidence of prior repairs and conservation. These range of functions the objects had in the community included hunting, gathering medicine plants, clothing, jewellery, as well as being used for ceremonial purposes. The Khomani San representatives also looked at the negative slides and photographs from the archival photographic collections, which were taken during the 20th century and included photographs from the Northern Cape and Nossob River, Botswana.

4.5. Brief review of the 5-day workshop

The Iziko Museums and Khomani San collaboration project ran from February 4th to February 8th, 2019, and the primary language used was Afrikaans as the Khomani San representatives did not feel confident conferring in English (Tichmann and Abrahams, 2021: 53). Below is a brief account of the proceedings and developments over those five days, primarily based on Paul Tichmann and Lynn Abraham’s journal article, *Challenges of Re-writing the Iziko Ethnographic Collections Archives: Some Lessons from the Khomani San/Bushmen Engagement*, as it is the only academic article written on the proceedings thus far. I also use Ms. Van Wyk’s transcripts and notes from the 5-day workshops, which hold direct quotes from the Vaalboois and Kruipers.

Day 1: 4 February 2019

Day one, Iziko staff and Khomani San revisited the project's aims and objectives and provided a general overview of the social history collections (Tichmann and Abrahams, 2021: 53). Chief Vaalbooi spoke about how uncomfortable and painful it was for him to see the drawings of rock art at ISAM named as Khoi-San drawings, and that this opportunity with Iziko Museums “creates a platform to build connections” (Vaalbooi in Van Wyk, 2019: 1). Chief Vaalbooi saw this collaboration as a chance for the Khomani San youth and future generations to know the Khomani collections are entrusted in the care of the Iziko Museums staff (Van Wyk, 2019: 1). During the day 1 discussions, Chief Vaalbooi also expressed concerns over the “dying of the Nxu³⁴ language”, making the argument that more attention was paid to the preservation of Nama language while Nxu speakers dwindled in numbers (Tichmann and Abrahams, 2021: 53). He mentioned that several governmental departments were approached with fruitless results and hoped that this collaboration would not only be a partnership and a way to cleanse the past but also promote the Nxu language and identity/ethnicity (Tichmann and Abrahams, 2021: 53; Van Wyk, 2019: 1).

Chief Vaalbooi also spoke of the various identities imposed on the First Nation such as ‘Bushmen’, Coloured³⁵, and San (Tichmann and Abrahams, 2021: 53). Itzak Kruiper also spoke up on this matter, mentioning his experiences in Namibia, where he moved after the forced removals. In Namibia, he received an identification card that classified him as San and said that the San people had “no voice to correct the wrong”; he hoped that these discussions would give them a “voice to express the wounds from the past” (Kruiper in Van Wyk, 2019: 1).

After this initial discussion, the representatives were shown the various Kalahari objects mentioned above for examination, discussing the memories the collection objects evoked (Tichmann and Abrahams, 2021: 53). The Kruipers and Vaalboois were also given access to the collection records and given a chance to comment on the information Iziko had on the objects. The Iziko staff were particularly interested in their comments regarding the objects of spiritual significance, such as a whisk that was used during the trance dance with the dance

³⁴ The Nxu (or N|uu) language is one of the languages spoken by the San people and is considered the original language of southern Africa. The language is considered by the United Nations to be “critically endangered” (Fihlani, 2017: [sp]).

³⁵ Coloured, a person of mixed European, and African or Asian ancestry, as officially defined by the apartheid government from 1950.

rattles tied around the ankles of the dancers. The San representatives explained how the shaman would use the whisk to sprinkle medicine over each dancer, granting them protection and strength “to access the spirit world and bring healing” (Tichmann and Abrahams, 2021: 53). During the trance dance, the dancers “can transform into a lion [or a] scorpion, and the brush with the buchu [medicine] will rescue [the dancer] to return to the human form again”; the buchu medicine is kept in tortoise shells, which the Khomani San also looked at (Vaalboois and Kruipers in Van Wyk, 2019: 3).

The Khomani San examined each object, giving them a traditional, historical or daily context that was not noted down during the initial research or found in the archival records (such as the catalogue cards). This information gained during the examination is valuable in giving added context to the tangible function and intangible significance of these objects to the Khomani San. The representatives also made comments on their cultural beliefs and the lives of the San, such as no part of an animal was wasted once it was hunted (Van Wyk, 2019: 2-3). I got a sense that what I learned through Ms. Van Wyk’s transcript notes was not seen in how the media and museums represent the Khomani San; and that they are more than just this mythical ‘people of the land’ or frozen in time as they were in the dioramas. I feel like these sessions show people who just want to be seen and heard, and we are shown the real, often unseen sides of their culture.

Day 2: 5 February 2019

Prior to continuing the examination of the remaining objects, day 2 started with reflections on the activities and events of the first day, with Chief Vaalbooi talking about how he felt a “high level of reconnecting with the objects, creating a sense of honour and respect”; he has gained an appreciation towards Iziko for both preserving the San’s heritage and the opportunity to work together on this project (Tichmann and Abrahams, 2021: 53; Vaalbooi in Van Wyk, 2019: 3). Itzak Kruiper spoke about his gratitude for the “support” Iziko Museums has shown in caring for his ancestors, by telling the Khomani San’s story and preserving their objects. Lydia Kruiper expressed her thankfulness to Iziko, as seeing the collection made her relive her childhood in the Kalahari. She was also grateful for the safekeeping and preservation by the museum professionals; she wishes her children could visit Iziko Museums and experience their culture and traditions. Anna Marie Vaalbooi shared her “great sense of happiness on the lessons learned though [she] never grew up [in that] way of living, in nature” (Vaalbooi in Van Wyk, 2019: 3). She spoke about how her father, Chief Vaalbooi, taught her son how to hunt and

thanked Iziko for their care in preserving their culture. Anna Marie Vaalbooi also mentioned a project she recently worked on making bags and how she never knew the meaning of the patterns (motifs) represented on the medicine bag as well as the materials the bags were made of (Van Wyk, 2019: 3-4).

One area of concern raised by Mr. Tichmann was concerning how Iziko should store those objects the Khomani San had identified as having spiritual significance and whether the objects should be kept separate from the others in the collections (Van Wyk, 2019: 4). Itzak Kruiper responded by stating that the objects should be “stored in contexts; it flows through us, and contact with these objects releases the spirits”; an example being the tortoise shell with buchu and the brush, as it is there to protect the dancers when the spirits take control over their bodies during trance dances (Kruiper in Van Wyk, 2019: 4). When the hunters go on hunts, they have a ‘medicine man’ with the group. It can thus be said that these objects hold a spiritual significance that could become lost or diminished if handled and stored incorrectly, or by the wrong person (Van Wyk, 2019: 4).

This collaboration session not only benefited Iziko Museums in gaining indigenous knowledge lost or never noted during acquisition periods but also served as an educational experience for the Khomani San and a chance to see their culture preserved at Iziko.

Day 3: 6 February 2019

The photographic collections relating to the San in the Northern Cape were examined on Day three (Tichmann and Abrahams, 2021: 53). The photographs brought excitement to the representatives as they started conversing to each other in Nxu, until the Iziko staff had to kindly request they translate their interaction into Afrikaans. In the Bleek and Lloyd photographic collection, the Khomani San recognised and identified relatives and other community members they had known. Lydia Kruiper pointed out her father, brothers, and other community members, all photographed during a healing ceremony and during hunts. Lydia provided background information about her family and other community members; all this information was noted down and added to museum records. Chief Vaalbooi was able to identify his mother, Elsie Vaalbooi, who had been fluent in Nxu and a member of the Khomani San Council of Elders; she had passed away in 2002. Chief Vaalbooi and his mother were involved in an initiative to root out surviving Nxu speaker in the Northern Cape.

The chief also pointed out that, contrary to how the San were portrayed in the images where they were asked to pose and dress in particular way for the photographer, his grandfather rode a horse, hunted with a gun, and farmed sheep (Tichmann and Abrahams, 2021: 53-54). This statement from Chief Vaalbooi strongly reminded me of a comment Mr. Tichmann made to me during a personal conversation at Iziko in January 2023. We were discussing the 2019 workshop, and the then-Director of C&D mentioned that the Khomani San told him it was common for ethnographers and researchers to stage these photographs, such as asking the San to hunt and pose with bows and arrows (P. Tichmann, 2023, personal communication, 23 January). This is unsurprising to me, as I learned in Visual Anthropology that ethnographers, researchers, and anthropologists would go into indigenous communities and photograph staged scenes, often wishing to portray an image of indigenous people that would suit a Eurocentric, Western narrative regarding their culture, traditions and lifestyle (Godby, 2010:55-56; Peffer, 2009:246). As Luuvas aptly states (2022: [sp]), colonisers used photography to demonstrate their differences from the colonised and “present their own modernity and sophistication” compared to that of indigenous people.

Day 4: 7 February 2019

Day 4 included a walk-through of the Rock Art Gallery, reflecting on the associated messages with the various rock art paintings (Tichmann and Abrahams, 2021: 54). A meeting was held with the Executive Director of Core Functions as Chief Vaalbooi expressed interest in assisting Iziko with resolving the question and issue around the restitution of human remains³⁶. There was a hope that the meeting would open up a possibility for collaboration. The Khomani San representatives volunteered to speak to other groups, such as the Khoi-Boesman-Nguni-Coalition, and create an interest in everyone coming together with the goal of reburying the human remains, as the group were deeply disturbed by the thought of their ancestors being stored in boxes in museums. The representative also wanted to involve the San Council in the

³⁶ The Iziko South African Museum holds the remains of 1200 individuals passed on from the Museum’s time as the South African Museum, of which 160 are reported to have been collected unethically. These remains were collected under the context of racist science, such as gaining examples of different “racial types” as part of a scientific process, linked to the development of false theories of race. The Museum has corroborated that 81 of the 160 unethical human remains were taken from Namibia, and a further 20 were likely taken from Namibia; none of the deceased’s names are known as they were collected as ‘specimens’ and classified under ethnic labels. Overall, the human remains were of First Nation people, including San, Nama, Griqua, and Nguni people.

deliberations, as they are, for all intents and purposes, given the responsibility of representing the interests of all the San groups in South Africa (Tichmann and Abrahams, 2021: 54).

Day 5: 8 February 2019

Day 5, the final day of the workshop, was spent with the Iziko staff conducting an oral history interview with the representatives, which was video recorded and is currently stored in the ISHC archives. The video recordings are available for research purposes but serve primarily as tangible proof of what the Khomani San representatives were doing in Cape Town during the 5-day workshop; thus copies of the video recordings were taken home with the representatives to show to the community (Tichmann and Abrahams, 2021: 54; P. Tichmann, 2023, personal communications, 13 July). This oral history interview was followed by a discussion on how to proceed forward. Iziko Museums had been deliberating on how to continue these collaboration projects with other San and Khoi groups, a concern also raised by the Khomani San. The Iziko staff, the Vaalboois, and Kruipers considered how the various issues broached during the 5-day sessions could be brought back to the wider community in the Kalahari, given the problem of distance. Other challenges for Iziko to consider were the lack of electricity and the high rate of illiteracy in the Kalahari (Tichmann and Abrahams, 2021: 54). Iziko thus also gave the representatives images of the object collections and copies of the photographic collections to take home to their community, and they also wrote up a report sent to the San Council for the community to receive feedback from the Iziko regarding the project.

4.6. Conclusion

Tichmann and Abrahams (2021: 54) conclude their article by recounting the collaboration project, and Iziko's goals moving forward in the following manner:

“We are hoping to build on this exploratory project and, together with the Khomani San group, reach out to other Khoisan groups so as to open the museum collections to communities and bring community narratives to these collections. One of our concerns is that while museums focus on the past history of the Khoi and San, there is little focus on the resurgence of San and Khoi identity and on how the past speaks to the present. There is a sense of frustration amongst the indigenous communities, as museums are perceived to have neglected their histories. There is little or no contemporary collecting taking place around the material culture of the San and

Khoi descendants. There is also a need for a dynamic oral history project that can trace the narratives that have been handed down through the generations”.

Iziko raises valid points as there is often a drive by museums towards correcting the mistakes of the past and decolonising their colonial collections, yet these institutions can forget that their objects’ source communities have evolved and have new, contemporary lifestyles and objects they are using. There needs to be a melding of the two that ensures that past false narratives are corrected, but present identity is not neglected. I also feel like oral history needs an elevation in importance that is often bestowed on physical material culture. The concern that oral history is unreliable due to changing, often edited, and incomplete narratives is valid in many ways, however, I feel those stories merely suggest a change and evolution in the culture, tradition, and lifestyle of the indigenous community.

Iziko Museums acknowledges that as they attempt to redress the museum archives, the institution should not only have consideration for the language and content of the archives but also the indigenous collections (Tichmann and Abrahams, 2021: 55). An example given is that they are aware of one object, a skin bag, that belonged to one of the San prisoners used in Drury’s casting project, mentioned in Chapter 2. This raises the question of how Iziko should treat this object, knowing the violence and racism so inherent in making these San body casts. And how much research was conducted in how these object collections were acquired? Iziko Museums know that research is needed on all the collectors who sold and donated collections to SAM in order to understand these past acquisition methods (Tichmann and Abrahams, 2021: 55).

To me, Iziko has shown a dedication, since its inception post-1994, to correcting the wrongs that SAM has done towards not only the Khomani San but also other indigenous groups, such as the Nguni in KwaZulu-Natal. There appears to be a real sincerity in wishing to redress their archives, bring European, Asian, and African indigenous objects together equally under the umbrella of social history collections, and create real, long-lasting relationships with source communities within the country. The flagship institution created a collaboration project that gave the Khomani San a chance to freely examine their objects and corresponding catalogue cards while sharing some of their indigenous knowledge regarding said objects. The Khomani San representatives could voice their opinions, share information, and talk about past and present injustices and traumas, where both groups were able to learn from one another.

Vaalbooi and Kruiper's statements really touched me, which is why I advocate for the creation and normalisation of these collaboration projects between museums and indigenous communities. I personally feel like many of these indigenous people might still feel silenced by formerly colonial museums or that the acts of colonialism and apartheid have not ended for them. Being able to sit on an equal footing with museum staff, give voice to the traumas inflicted on them, and share their indigenous knowledge could be a stepping stone towards healing some painful wounds.

CHAPTER 5

CASE STUDY OBJECTS

As mentioned in Chapter 1 all objects physically deteriorate as a natural ageing process, both due to the materials they are made of as well their interactions with the environment and the presence of potential sources of damage and deterioration, referred to as *Agents of deterioration*. Oftentimes, it is only through thorough documentation of the objects in text and image that gradual change and material loss become evident. Chapter 5 is thus focused on improving the documentation on the selected case study objects by presenting each of these in individual document files with known provenance, the comments made by the Khomani San representatives, visual examination and technical analysis conducted to add to the knowledge of the particular object, condition assessment, and final comments regarding how these objects may have suffered from historical dissociation.

During my condition analysis, the following condition assessment template is used (B. Mottie, 2023: [sp]; Mokotjo, 2021: 72).

Table 1- Condition assessment template

Condition	Good	Fair	Poor
	Some signs of wear but physically sound.	Minor damage, some losses/deterioration more aesthetic than physical	Wear, damage, deterioration and loss to a large proportion of the item
Treatment	Treatment needed except for regular monitoring	No treatment needed except for regular monitoring	No major treatment needed but should be closely monitored

5.1. A review of the selected case study objects

As mentioned in Chapter 4, the 2019 collaboration project looked at 20 objects from the Bushman collection. I selected six of these to research further. These included:

- one medicine bag (accession number SAM 1545b)
- one Steenbok leather blanket (accession number SAM 1547).
- the meat gather/bow and string/fire stick bag (accession number SAM 1547a)
- four bundles of string (accession number SAM 1670)
- two metal bangles (accession number SAM 1672)
- one medicine bag with motifs (accession number accession number SAM 10085)

The four bundles of string and two metal bangles are given the same accession numbers, respectfully, but I do note my total number of objects reviewed as 10 individually. In terms of materials used, the objects are made of both organic and inorganic materials, including hide, sinew, shell, glass, and metal. It is important to note the materiality of the objects, as this defines the inherent fragility of these objects to specific environmental conditions. Within ISHC, the objects are stored in the 4th floor storage room under the following conditions:

“The 4th Floor Storeroom is climate control, normally with a RH range of 50-55% and a Temperature range of 19 to 21 degrees Celsius, which is monitored daily (and corrected as soon as possible if a deviation occurs), and its status is detailed in a quarterly report since I started at the museum in 2011” (B. Mottie, 2023: [sp]). The objects are cared for by a team of conservators and collection managers at ISHC, and if there is an issue with pests, RH and temperature imbalance, a fire outbreak, or a flood, the team immediately steps in, isolates the objects that have been damaged or are in danger, and sorts out the issue as soon as possible.

Ideally, objects made from leather and hide should be stored in areas of 45-55% RH, as they can become brittle. Glass and metal objects in good condition can likewise be stored in the same 45-55% humidity range. However, for any active deterioration in the glass or oxidation in the metal, the humidity should be reduced to as low as 30% RH. Humidity reduction may slow the deterioration process and stabilise the glass and metal objects, but it will negatively affect the leather and cause hardening and brittleness.

5.1.1. Hide

Firstly, it is important to define what I mean when I mention hide in these object files:

Hide: Hide refers to the skin of an animal that has been removed from the body and treated to preserve it. Except for the two metal bangles, every other object has animal fur attached to it, whether in small patches or as a strap like the medicine bag (SAM 1545b) (Child, 2023: 3)

Semi-tanned: Semi-tanned hide is semi-durable and over time will hydrolyse (a chemical reaction where water breaks down the chemical bonds that exist in the skin) in wet conditions. The flesh gets processed and hide-treated to make it water-resistant. Semi-tanned objects are often semi-durable, as they only last a season for the wearer (Child, 2023: 3-5).

There are a number of conservation issues that these objects derived from animal skin face. They can become damaged through physical stresses on the objects during handling; in-house transport utilising no or poor support and inadequate storage within the museum results in distorted, flattened, structurally weakened, or torn hide or leather objects (Dignard and Mason, 2018: [sp]). Objects originally strong and made for everyday use may become weakened and more brittle, which requires gentler care. Hide can become weakened due to chemical degradation reactions (for example, red rot and black rot), large fluctuations in relative humidity (RH) and temperature conditions, water damage, pest activity, usage, abrasion, and wear. Hide is prone to stiffing if left unused for long periods of time, which is normal in museums since manipulation and use generally get avoided. Semi-tanned objects, as mentioned above, may shrink, stiffen, or stain when wetted and allowed to dry; the level of damage to the object depends on the skin's condition. Incorrect RH levels can cause an attack by mould on the object, and as an organic material, hide provides nutrients for many insects, such as dermestid beetles. Dust is obtrusive and abrasive, which can lead to an increased risk of pest infestation, and pollutants can cause or affect the oxidation (when a material gets attacked by oxygen) or hydrolysis of the objects. Visible light and ultraviolet (UV) radiation, heat, moisture, and the presence of metal ions can cause damage to the object, such as increasing the rates of oxidative or hydrolytic breakdown (Dignard and Mason, 2018: [sp]).

The biggest conservation danger to hide material objects is time. It is close to impossible for the object to remain in its original state forever, and as a conservator, one can only slow down the degradation by caring for it using the correct methods.

5.1.2. Glass and shell beads

I am uncertain when the glass beads were added to the four strings I examined for my case study, but it is possible that the beads were obtained through trade with Europeans and later added to the string by the San. There are also ostrich eggshell beads threaded on the string, which were most likely made and added by the San, as eggshell beads are an organic material and the colouring could be made from natural colourants.

Conservation issues include incorrect handling, which can loosen and fray the string and cause the beads (glass or eggshell) to become loose (Stone, 2010: [sp]). The string, or any material decorated with glass beads, should be stored in the dark, as the beads are generally light-sensitive. The surface of the string easily catches and holds dust particles, which can cause damaging abrasion to the glass and eggshell beads. Dust also provides nutrition for insects and mould and reacts to moisture to accelerate chemical degradation. Due to the string possibly being made of hair and animal sinew, it can become subjected to insect infestation, which could result in bead loss. Extremely low RH conditions suited to glass beads with glass disease may cause the sinew to shrink, become embrittled, and cause the beads to be pulled together tightly (Stone, 2010: [sp]).

5.1.3. Metal

I have two objects that contain metal, namely the two metal bangles made of copper alloy and round metal buttons on the Steenbok blanket. The metal bangles and buttons were likely obtained by the San from Europeans, most likely during trade. The metal buttons could have been added by the San as decorative or functional elements, as it would seem unlikely that they could have been added post-collection.

Incorrectly stored metal objects can start corroding. The corrosion processes are faster on metal surfaces contaminated by salts, volatile organic acids (such as from wooden storage cabinets), ammonia from cleaning fluids, or dust (Logan, 2007: [sp]). Stains and chemical weakening of the blanket's hide material could come into contact with the metal buttons, resulting in rusting or corrosion products, which in turn stains, attack or weakens the skin around them. The corrosion products of copper and its alloys are usually waxy and green (copper stearate) (Dignard and Mason, 2018: [sp]).

5.2 Examination and analysis

Prior to the data collection process, all the associated museum documentation was collected for the above-mentioned objects. Lailah Hisham, the Collections Manager at ISHC, gave permission to scan the catalogue cards of each object, while Janene Van Wyk assisted with the archival records search of the social history ethnographic collections to find any associated records on the object's documentation of movement, conservation records, and/or any other relevant information on the artefact under study. This, however, did not reveal any positive outcome that could be used. The lack of documentation found formed the basis of my research and the associated data to be collected, highlighting the issues of possible historical dissociation of the Kalahari, and 'Bushman' ethnographic collections faced in general. The only archival documentation sourced for the objects was from their catalogue cards, which generally only gave information on the collector or purchaser, year of museum acquisition, object name, object accession number, and on a few cards, records of the object's movement and conservation records.

The next phase involved the movement of objects from the 4th floor storeroom to the conservation laboratory within the Centre where each object was listed prior to being photographed individually at various angles using a Canon EOS 700D camera placed on a tripod. Two soft boxes with a white infinity curve were utilised to obtain clear, well-lit photographs with no shadow. The photographs were taken under visible lighting from different angles, including areas with visible degradation or where previous conservation interventions were performed.

Following photography, each object was measured and their object descriptions noted, given the absence of detailed descriptions in the respective museum records. None of the objects had condition records beyond a condition treatment record for the Steenbok record, hence the rationale to conduct physical, detailed assessments on each object, including their condition, damage degradation, and any previous conservation interventions undertaken.

The next phase involved a technical analysis of selected objects with the assistance of Jake Harding and Jaco Boshoff from the Iziko Museums' maritime archaeology department. The analysis was part of my condition assessment process, as I wished to write up a full object documentation on each object for both Iziko Museums and my case study, and that included technical analysis. X-ray fluorescence (XRF) and examination under ultra-violet (UV) light were the perfect analytical techniques because these could pick up staining, residues, and

material composition that the visible assessment was unable to. Inorganic materials such as glass and metal were analysed using a Bruker Tracer 5i hand-held XRF spectrometer. This was performed to determine a possible preparation technique and if any interventions were undertaken while at the Museum. Following the XRF analysis, a handheld UV light with wavelengths of 365nm to 254nm was employed to examine each object, especially those that indicated possible residues and visible staining. This method would indicate whether there was any residual evidence of its past usage by the Khomani San (ochre and medicinal plant residue, for example). These results were documented using a Samsung Galaxy A33 cellphone camera. Finally, the bundle of string was analysed using a Zeiss Discovery v8 microscope to verify the materials listed on its catalogue card.

5.3. Bush satchel/Medicine bag SAM 1545b



Figure 1- Front of SAM 1545b. Photo: Malukah Meyer, Iziko Museums.



Figure 2- Back of SAM 1545b. Photo: Malukah Meyer, Iziko Museums.

5.3.1. Measurements

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| -Height (from bottom of bag to top of strap): 360mm | -Length: 245mm |
| (from top of strap to bottom of longest tassel): 430mm | -Circumference (strap and bag): 930mm |
| (from top to bottom of bag, without strap or tassels): 240mm | -Width: 10mm |
| | -Length of strap: 230mm |

5.3.2. Recorded provenance

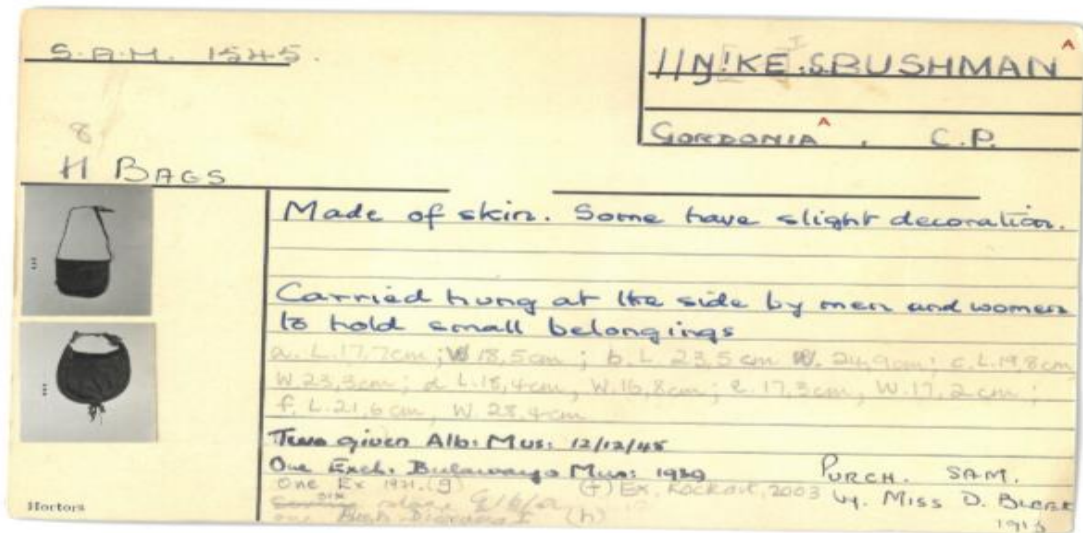


Figure 3- Front of SAM 1545b's catalogue card

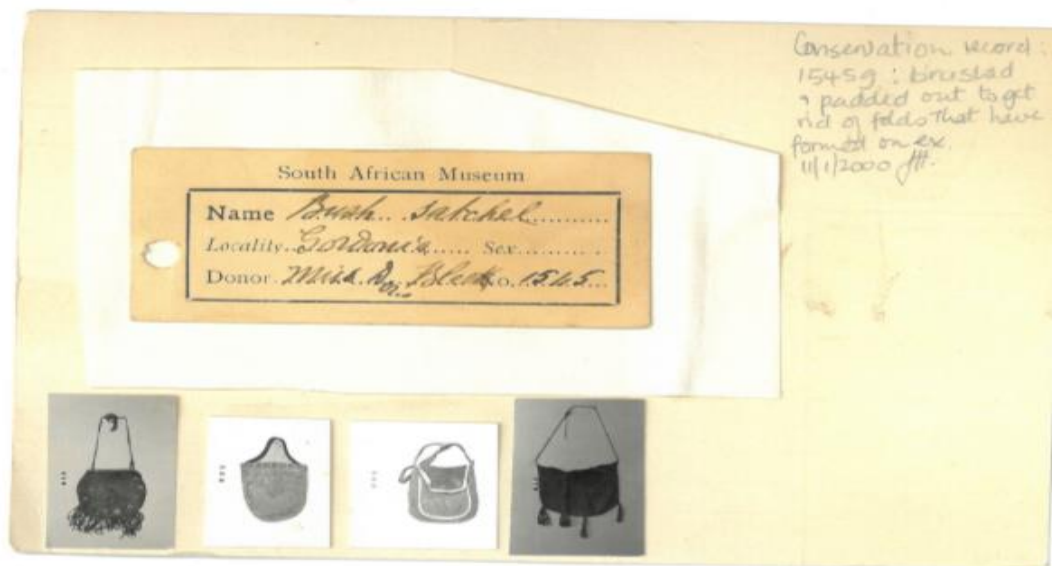


Figure 4- Back of SAM 1545b's catalogue card

Miss Dorothea Bleek purchased the object in Gordonia for the South African Museum, accessioned in 1913. The examined object is one of six satchels accessioned together. The catalogue describes satchel as being “made of skin... carried hung at the side by men and women to hold small belongings”. Measurements of bags are noted down for each satchel.

Two satchels were given away (“Two given Alb: Mus [Albany Museum]: 12/12/45”).

Various satchels were exchanged over the years:

“One Exch. Bulawayo Mus: 1939”

“One Ex. 1971 (g)”

“(f) Ex. Rock art, 2003”

“One Bush. Diorama I (h)”

5.3.3. Object description

The bag is medium-sized, made of an unknown brown animal skin that has become darkened and stiffened with age and sweat rubbed on it by the wearer(s), and possibly from museum storage. The skin of the animal has been dehaired for the creation of the bag, whereas the straps of the bag still contain the animal fur. The two pieces of animal skin that the bag is made of are unevenly cut, with the larger side being 230mm in length and the shorter side being 200mm in length not accounting for tassels, and have been stitched together using an unknown thread material. In general, the bag is discoloured, ranging from dark brown to a rusty orange colour at the bottom of the bag.

The strap is made of 4-5 strips of animal skin knotted together (approximately 40-70mm apart) at the top to form the strap. The strips are darkened with age and sweat, with light to medium brown fur still attached to the skin. The top knot of the strap has some fur loss, likely due to being the area where the wearer held the bag, whereas the other areas of fur are still well preserved. There are 9 tassels attached on the bottom, with varying lengths between 20-120mm. The interior of the bag is stiffened and darkened similarly to the exterior, most likely from use and ageing.

5.3.4. Object condition

The bag is in a fair and stable condition, showing minor damage and loss. The animal skin is hardened and stiffened, although this is not unusual for this type of object where the wearer would have rubbed their sweat on the skin, causing it to hydrolyse. The ends of the bag strap are brittle and frayed with loss of material. The entire bag is creased and has raised ridges and folds, either due to ageing or storage or exhibition methods. The raised ridges on the bag are particularly prominent around the stitching lines and have whitened patches that indicate light loss of material. There are thin crack lines forming around areas which that been stitched

together, most prominent near the top of the bag on both sides of the stitching. The lip or rim of the bag has thin cuts on the inner side of the rim where cut leather has been folded in, roughly 10mm in length and 40-70mm apart. There are six slits in total.



Figure 5- Top of satchel/medicine bag, showing whitened area on the top left side of the bag from the front, the creases and folds of the satchel/medicine bag, and the rigidity of the strap. Photo: Malukah Meyer, Iziko Museums.

210mm down the stitch line on the longer side, there is a loss of stitching, roughly 10mm in length, and it creates a small hole.



Figure 6- Arrow pointing towards small hole in satchel/bag. Photo: Malukah Meyer, Iziko Museums.

The tassels are all worn, brittle and has loss of material.



Figure 7- Tassels at bottom of satchel/medicine bag. Photo: Malukah Meyer, Iziko Museums.

The interior of the bag: Surface dirt or remnants of the content; brown dusty grain.

5.3.5. Analysis

The bag did not undergo XRF analysis as it is made purely of organic material, and the hide preparation would likely include vegetable tanning. Examination under UV light showed no visible fluorescence, even on the interior of the bag that has visible surface residues under normal lighting conditions. I did not do microscopy.

5.3.6. Khomani San 2019 comments

“SAM 1545b – Medicine Bag; Old bushman males/females bodies becomes weary and worn, [and] this you can see on the bag... Even if they forget their age the bag will tell, [with] all the sweat collected on the bag” (Kruipers and Vaalboois in Van Wyk, 2019: 2)

5.3.7. Final comments

This is one of the objects whose identity and meaning can change depending on what information one reads. It is a “Bush satchel”, according to the object’s official catalogue card, made of leather and used by men and women to store small things. There is also a history of the various bags’ movements noted down. The need to add “Bush” is strange to me, because why must it be differentiated from a satchel found anywhere else around the world or even in

another area of South Africa? Is it to distinguish the creations of the people being studied by someone like Ms. Dorothea Bleek, our purchaser, from the rest of the world she knows? Even the usage of the word “satchel” is Western terminology for a bag with a shoulder strap. It is a way for a European lady like Ms. Bleek to situate the objects she collected/purchased in the Kalahari in the world she’s familiar with. The function and design of a Western satchel does fit this object, so this do not create a case for “dissociation” as defined by the Canadian Conservation Institute.

However, when looking at the comments made by the Khomani San leadership, one realises the real function of the object was not recorded on the catalogue card. Although the “Bush satchel” holds small things for men and women, the function of the satchel is primarily to carry medicine. The satchel/medicine bag has an important societal and everyday function that is not recorded, and thus the meaning and importance of the object are diminished. It is also a loss of potential information collected on the medicine gathered and used by the community, as the inside of the bag could hold remnants of those herbs and plants (although nothing was found in this particular specimen). The Khomani San’s elderly also use the leather’s ageing to determine their age, as the bag holds years of sweat being wiped on its side, hardening and darkening over time, as revealed during the 2019 conversations. Not communicating with the source community or not noting down all the information given regarding the object’s function and usage at the time of collection causes this historical dissociation, which can only be rectified later if communities still have the knowledge of this past material culture.

5.4. Steenbok leather blanket SAM 1547



Figure 8- Front of SAM 1547. Photo: Malukah Meyer, Iziko Museums.



Figure 9- Back of SAM 1547. Photo: Malukah Meyer, Iziko Museums.

5.4.1. Measurements

Height

(from top centre to bottom centre): 500mm

(from top flap to bottom flap): 740mm

-Length (middle): 490mm

(top flaps): 730mm

(top below flaps): 560mm

(bottom above flaps): 340mm

(bottom flaps): 380mm

5.4.2. Recorded Provenance

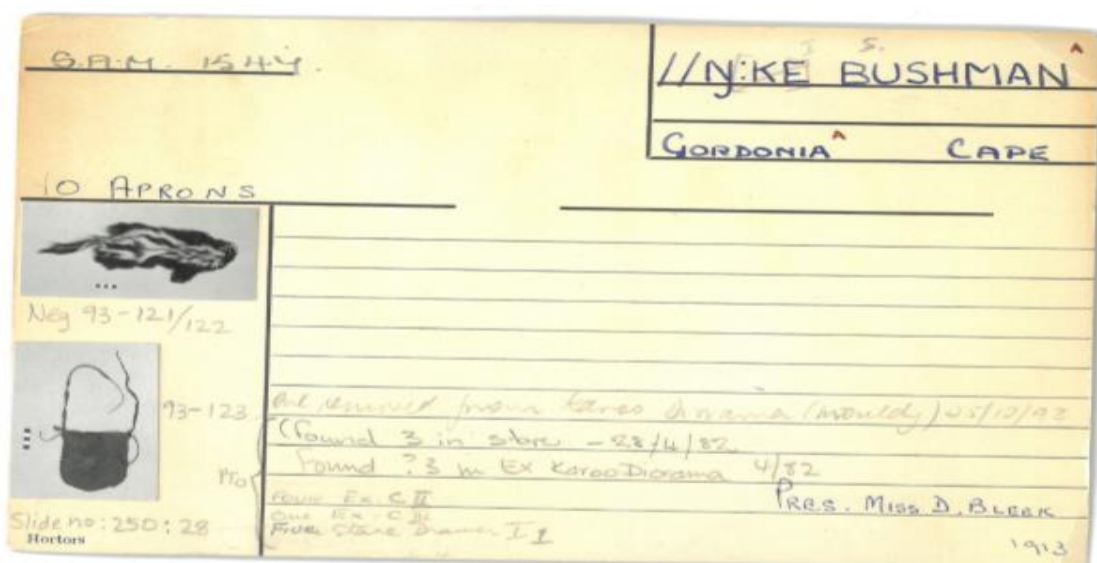


Figure 10- Front of SAM 1547's catalogue card



Figure 11- Back of SAM 1547's catalogue card

Miss Dorothea Bleek presented the object to the South African Museum, collected or purchased in Gordonia, and accessioned in 1913. The object is given different names on its catalogue card; it gets labelled as one of 10 aprons on the card, and on an accession label (as seen on the back of the catalogue card in the image above), it gets called a “Bush petticoat”. I am unsure whether Miss Bleek called it a “Bush petticoat” and the museum changed it to “apron”, or vice versa. There are 10 aprons/Bush petticoats given the same accession number, SAM 1547. The apron/Bush petticoat removed from “Karoo Diorama” in 25/10/93 for being mouldy [mould was likely detected that year] is the same object I am examining.

Further information noted down:

“Found 3 in store- 28/4/82”

“Found 3 in Ex-Karoo Diorama 4/82”

“Four Ex[change]: CIII”

“One Ex[change]: CIII”

“Five store drawer I”

5.4.3. Object description

Brown Steenbok³⁷ skin blanket with ties. The blanket has flaps on each corner, and it is cut to fit the shape of the wearer (wide at the top and narrows down to mould to the back/front of the wearer). The middle/back section is brown animal skin and has been dehaired; however, each corner flap and the edges below the upper flaps (where I presume the wearer's underarms would fit) have patches of Steenbok fur, light brown to cream. The areas with patches of orange indicate the ochre that was added as a protective layer, according to Khomani San leadership.

The flaps and middle area between longer (upper) flaps are darkened to black, and the skin colour is visible from the centre and below at shorter (lower) flaps. There are diffuse residue spots visible on the front of the blanket, in a dull white colour. There are three metal buttons, likely a copper alloy from how it was corroded, attached to the blanket- one in the centre and two below each other on the top left side from the front. I am uncertain who attached those metal buttons and when.

The back part of the blanket is a light brown colour with spots of brownish-orange and darkened areas. White spots are visible on the front and back of the skin. There are thin slits cut into the skin (ranging from 15 to 30mm in length) found on each flap. In addition, there are seven other holes found on the skin, most likely from previous buttons that are no longer attached.

5.4.4. Object condition

The object is in fair condition. There are darkened areas in the middle-centre between the topside/upper flaps that have been darkened by sweat from the wearer(s) and possible dirt from the earth- that area is slightly hardened and stiffened due to ageing and likely hydrolysis from the sweat.

The skin is still soft and supple, with light crinkling/creases on the edges. All patches with hair have areas of material loss.

³⁷ The steenbok (*Raphicerus campestris*) is a small antelope of southern and eastern Africa.



Figure 12- Top of blanket showing creasing/crinkle of edges, and darkened areas where sweat and possible earth got rubbed on. Diffuse residue spots, a dull white colour, is also visible. Photo: Malukah Meyer, Iziko Museums.

There are several areas with holes (beyond button holes), the largest being on the left side from the front (20x20mm). There is a long tear just below the long flap on the right side, starting from the edge and ending above a button (100mm in length). Two other tears are near the shorter/lower flap on the right, 35mm each. There are long scraping marks visible on the skin's surface on the front side, most likely the process of fur removal.



Figure 13- Visible scrape marks on the front of blanket. Photo: Malukah Meyer, Iziko Museums.



Figure 14- Tears and holes on blanket, indicated by arrows. Photo: Malikah Meyer, Iziko Museums.

There are fine cracks on the front and back, likely due to usage, function, and museum storage. The metal buttons are darkened on the front and back of the blanket and are powdery white and dark green due to corrosion. Likewise, the areas around the button holes are darkened as well; however, the other areas of the blanket remain unstained by the corrosion. The areas where sinew and fat dried on the skin on the back have darkened to a rusty orange-brown colour on the back of the blanket's bottom side and the flaps. The orange-brown colour could possibly be from the use of ochre as well.



Figure 15- Back of object, showing corroded buttons and discoloured skin. Photo: Malukah Meyer, Iziko Museums.

Previous conservation has been done on the blanket due to a mould infestation in 1993, and the diffuse residue spots visible on the skin are likely due to those mould spots and possible treatment. The green token on the left lower flap is an indication of former mould infestation.

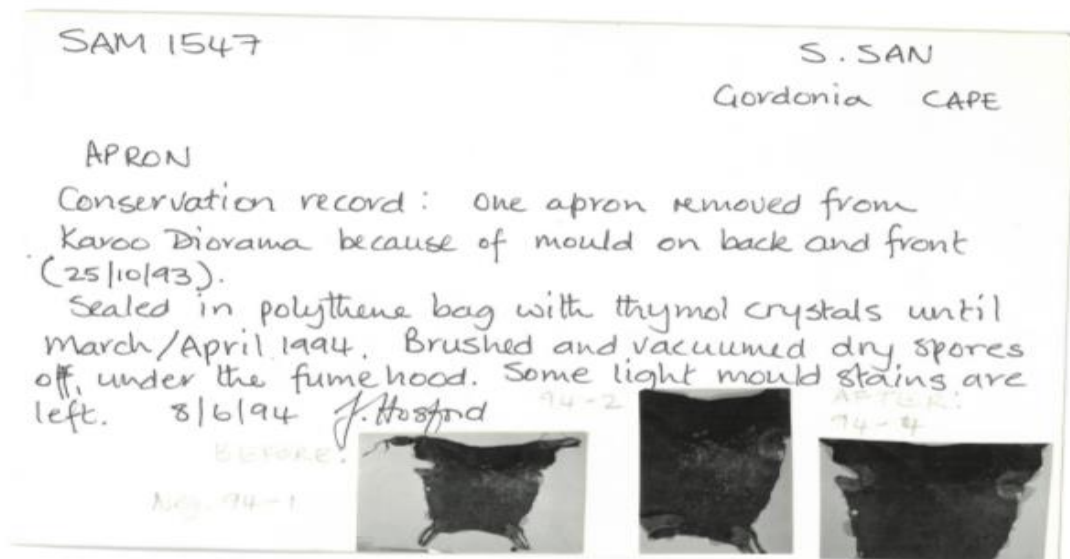


Figure 16- Conservation record on SAM 1547, written by then-conservator June Hosford

5.4.5. Analysis

To obtain more information, an examination was carried out under UV light. The sample was illuminated with a UV lamp, and a normal photo was taken using a Samsung 5G phone camera (48MP OIS primary quality), without any filters to see if any fluorescence could be observed.

Figure 17- Front of object under UV light with arrow pointing out area shown in second photo below. Photo: Malikah Meyer, Iziko Museums.

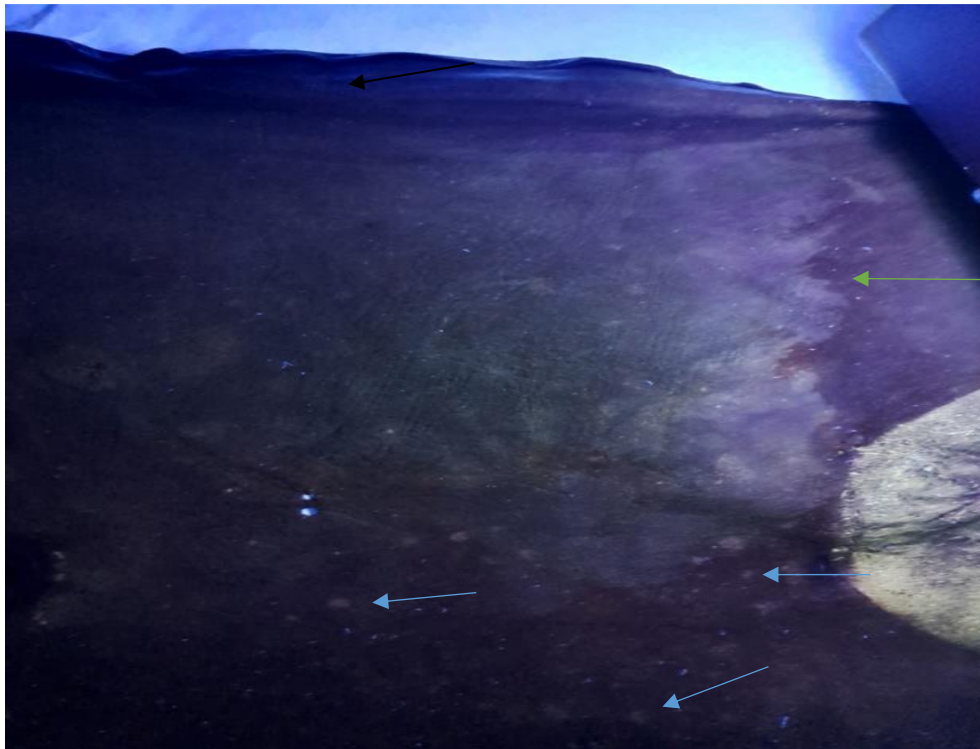


Figure 18- Top right side of object under UV light where tideline and diffuse residue spots are visible. Tideline pointed out with green arrow and some diffuse residue spots pointed out with blue arrows. Photo: Malikah Meyer, Iziko Museums.

White fluorescence on the front of the blanket indicates areas that likely had the previous mould infestation and were treated. The second image shows an unknown tidemark fluorescing on the top right side of the blanket. No liquid conservation treatment is recorded, so I am unsure where the tidemark originates from. The tidemark could possibly be from water spillage, oil, or adhesive. The diffuse residue spots are still visible under UV light, as pointed out by the blue arrows. I am unsure what the cause of them is, but I theorise that it is possibly from the previous mould infestation and the treatment it received for it.

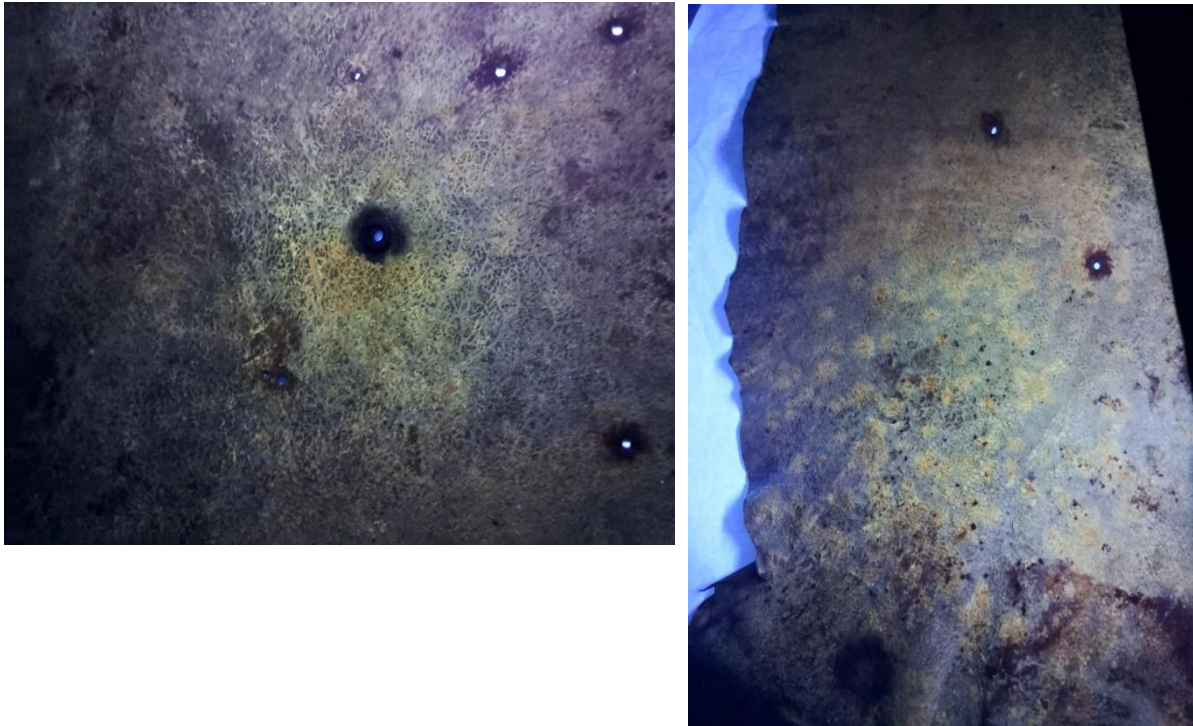


Figure 19- Back of blanket (center and bottom right corner) under UV light. Photo: Malukah Meyer, Iziko Museums.

The reverse side of the blanket has bright orange spots fluorescing, as indicated on the images above, seen in the middle and the bottom right corner. There are also orange spots spotted in certain areas on the front side of the blanket. I am uncertain what the cause of the orange spots is, though it could likely be spots of ochre that have been rubbed on the skin. Another theory is that the orange spots are areas of previous mould infestation that have still retained the rubbed on ochre, as the orange spots fluorescing on the blanket's reverse/back side mirror the areas of diffuse residue spots where the possible mould spots can be seen fluorescing.

5.4.6. Khomani San 2019 comments

“SAM 1547- Steenbok, Blanket with ties, Light Brown Wrap worn around the shoulder. Cover against the cold on the back area. When the fire are extremely hot. Your knees can burn; as the blood cannot circulate it creates a sore. Clean the skin and cover with ochre as a protective layer. The skins of the animal are soft between the legs, under arms and female breast, and breaks easily and are mended with sinew.” (Kruipers and Vaalboois in Van Wyk, 2019: 2).

5.4.7. Final comments

An object like this is, in my opinion, a good example of the consequences of historical dissociation has on an object. Paul Tichmann spoke about how previously the researchers and collectors would go into communities and collect objects without understanding their daily or spiritual significance. No matter their intent, there would remain that gap in knowledge once collected, because these majority white European researchers would already have their own specific viewpoint on certain objects, their names and functions. This viewpoint will not change, or not easily, when going into an indigenous community. This causes misinformation, misnoting, or missing information when documenting objects collected within museums.

Dorothea Bleek is a white, European woman who most likely has that certain viewpoint. Ms. Bleek saw an object like the Steenbok leather blanket and contextualised it into her Western point of view. I theorise that it became a “Bush petticoat”, because it was shaped how she recognised a petticoat (an undergarment worn under a skirt or dress) to be, and it was worn by the indigenous people she was researching; thus, the “Bush” distinguished it from the European undergarment she’s familiar with. Ms. Bleek was trying to understand a different society, in my opinion, but still needed to familiarise their objects with things she’s familiar with. The “Bush” part of the name generalises it. Of course, these are just my theories, and I don’t wish to speak for a woman who collected these objects a century ago.

Due to the lack of subsequent information on the object, however, this could have caused the South African Museum to simply group the “petticoat” with other “aprons” they found due to their similar shapes as shown in the photographs on the catalogue card, giving them the same names and accession numbers. The lack of correctly labelling the object, generalising it with other objects as an “apron”, and firstly misnoting its function in society as a “petticoat”, I argue, is the basis for historical dissociation. Westernising indigenous objects to ease the understanding of their function causes a subsequent loss of the object’s true societal meaning, function, and identification. “Dissociation” deals with an object losing context and information that gives it meaning, and I believe historical dissociation should fall into this category. Objects collected during colonial/imperial times should be re-evaluated with a holistic approach by their source community, when possible, to give them their intangible (and often, true tangible) meaning.

5.5. Meat gatherers/bow and string/fire stick bag SAM 1547a



Figure 20- Front of SAM 1545a. Photo: Janene van Wyk, Iziko Museums.



Figure 21- Back of SAM 1545a. Photo: Janene van Wyk, Iziko Museums.

5.5.1. Measurements

- Height (top of closed flap to bottom): 330mm
- (top of open flap to bottom): 470mm
- (top of strap to bottom): 400mm
- Length: 600mm
- Width: 30mm
- Depth: 300mm
- Flap length: 350mm
- Flap height: 150mm
- Strap length: 600mm

5.5.2. Recorded provenance

Miss Dorothea Bleek purchased this bag in Gordonia for the South African Museum, accessioned in 1913. No other information is available on the object's catalogue card.

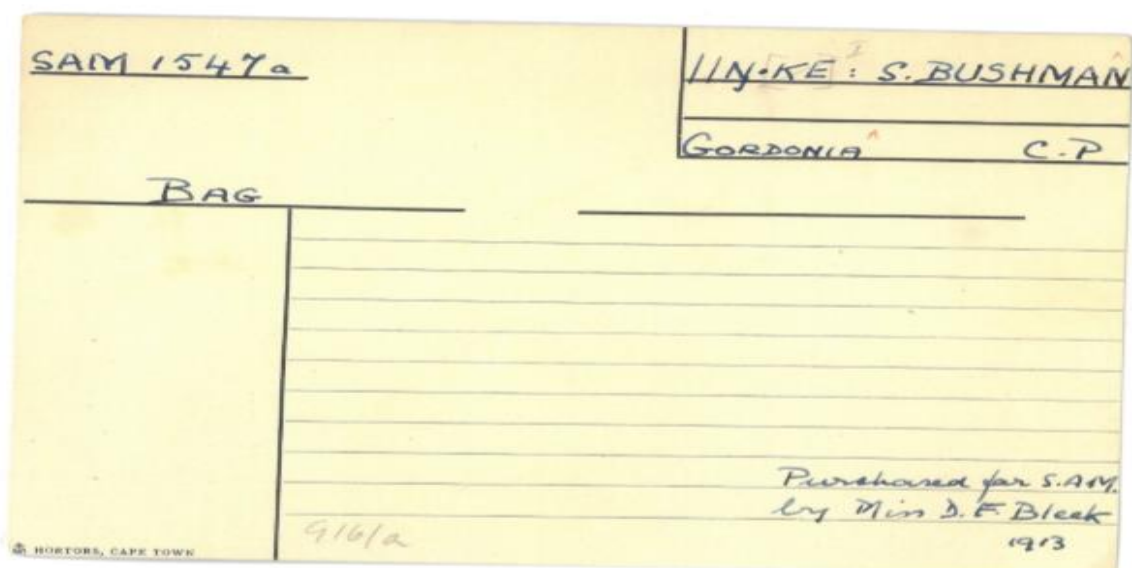


Figure 22- Front of SAM 1545a's catalogue card

5.5.3. Object description

This is a medium-sized, rectangular bag with a flap and two straps at the top of the bag to hold a bow and arrows, or fire sticks. The bag colour ranges from dark brown to black where there are darkened areas. The animal skin has been dehaired, but there are remnants of Springbok fur in patches on the bottom edges of the bag, white fur with the hide visible underneath. The rim of the bag has a patch of brown Springbok fur.

The entire bag is one piece of animal skin, except for the strips of skin tying the sides together and the bag strap. The left side of the bag from the front has a thin animal skin string connecting the edges together, acting like a thread. The right side has no string, leaving the two edges loose. There are holes for string attachments visible on both sides of the bag. The straps on the top of the bag are strips of animal skin as well, with 3-4 knots connecting the straps individually. The fold-over flap that closes the top of the bag is triangular in shape.

5.5.4. Object condition

The bag is in fair condition. The straps are worn and fraying, with both straps having several holes in them. The material connecting the sides of the straps in the front is hard, brittle, and inflexible, and I am unsure if the material is animal skin; this could be from previous repair or restoration.



Figure 23- Worn and frayed straps and visible holes in it, with connecting material between straps pointed out with arrow.
Photo: Malukah Meyer, Iziko Museums.

The entire bag is darkened, possibly due to usage, ageing, and storage conditions, and the areas where sweat was rubbed on are darkened to a shade of black, similar to sam SAM 1545b medicine bag. The animal skin is creased, with light folds and ridges, either from usage or exhibition/storage. There are light areas of abrasion on the entire bag, likely due to past usage, handling and movement, storage, and exhibition conditions. The area with Springbok hide has loss of material (hair), and the hide is hardened and darkened. There are white fleck marks on the animal skin, possibly from the fat tissue of the animal left after dehairing.



Figure 24- Bottom right corner of bag where loss of material and hardened skin is visible pointed out with black arrow, abrasion mark pointed out with orange arrow and creasing in animal skin pointed out with green arrow. Photo: Malikh Meyer, Iziko Museums.

There is a hole on right edge of flap (10x10mm), and there is a large hole visible on the centre of bag (18x35mm).



Figure 25- Creased, darkened animal skin and areas with holes, pointed out by black arrows, and light white flecks from possible fat tissue pointed out with orange arrows. Photo: Malikh Meyer, Iziko Museums.

The edges are worn and frayed, and two of the top holes, which are used to attach string on the left side from the front, are broken. The string attached to the two edges is lightly worn but in fair condition.



Figure 26- Right and left side edges of the object. Photo: Malikh Meyer, Iziko Museums.

There are three holes on the back of the bag, possibly from usage. There appears to be a surface coating on the interior of the bag, similar to the other bags; this could be from surface dirt due to storage or previous use.

5.5.5. Analysis

The sample was illuminated with a UV lamp with short wavelengths and a normal photo taken using a Samsung 5G phone camera (48MP OIS primary quality), without any filters, to see if any fluorescence could be observed.



Figure 27- Front of object under UV light. Photo: Malukah Meyer, Iziko Museums.

The front of the bag fluoresces a brownish-purple, normal for animal skin. The hair of the Springbok fluoresces white under the UV lamp.



Figure 28- Back of object under UV light fluorescence. Photo: Malikah Meyer, Iziko Museums.



Figure 29- Interior of bag under UV light fluorescence. Photo: Malikah Meyer, Iziko Museums.

The back and interior of the bag fluoresce a brownish-purple, but the centre areas fluoresce a light, orange-brown colour. I am unsure what the cause of this is, perhaps from dead mould spores or worn down from daily use and showing the underneath layer of animal skin.

5.5.6. Khomani San 2019 comments

“SAM1547a – Meat gatherers/bow and arrow/fire sticks bag, [made from] Springbok³⁸ leather. This was a hunter’s bag. It was previously restored; the [animal’s] legs are used as straps.” (Kruipers and Vaalboois in Van Wyk, 2019: 2).

5.5.7. Final comments

For this object, the empty catalogue card should be the only explanation I require when talking about dissociation and historical dissociation. Calling an object simply by its appearance when it has a function in its society that does not get noted down causes dissociation, especially historical. The bag is used for carrying the bow and arrow for hunting, to place the meat in; that is the reward of the hunter’s hard work in keeping the community fed, and the sticks that keep everyone warm and cooks/grills the food they eat. Simply labelling it as a “bag” without noting the usage shows the absence of information that cause dissociation. The unknown orange-brown colour that fluoresces under a UV lamp could be answered by corresponding with the source community and finding out the specific hunting gear etc. that got placed in the bag.

³⁸ The springbok or springbuck (*Antidorcas marsupialis*) is a medium-sized antelope found mainly in south and southwest Africa.

5.6. Four bundles of string SAM 1670



Figure 30- SAM 1670. Photo: Malikh Meyer, Iziko Museums.



Figure 31- One bundle of string unraveled. Photo: Malikh Meyer, Iziko Museums.

5.6.1. Measurements

Length: Roughly 4000mm

Circumference: String- 2mm

Bead diameter: 5mm

5.6.2. Recorded provenance

Miss Dorothea Bleek purchased these bangles/bundles of string in Gordonia (Northern Cape) for the South African Museum, accessioned in 1913. Described as a “fibre strand covered with tail hair of wildebeest or gemsbok. A few glass beads strung on it... Worn round wrist”.

One bangle/bundle of string exchanged: “Bulawayo Mus: 1939”

Two bangles/bundles of string exchanged: “1971 (1. And 2.)

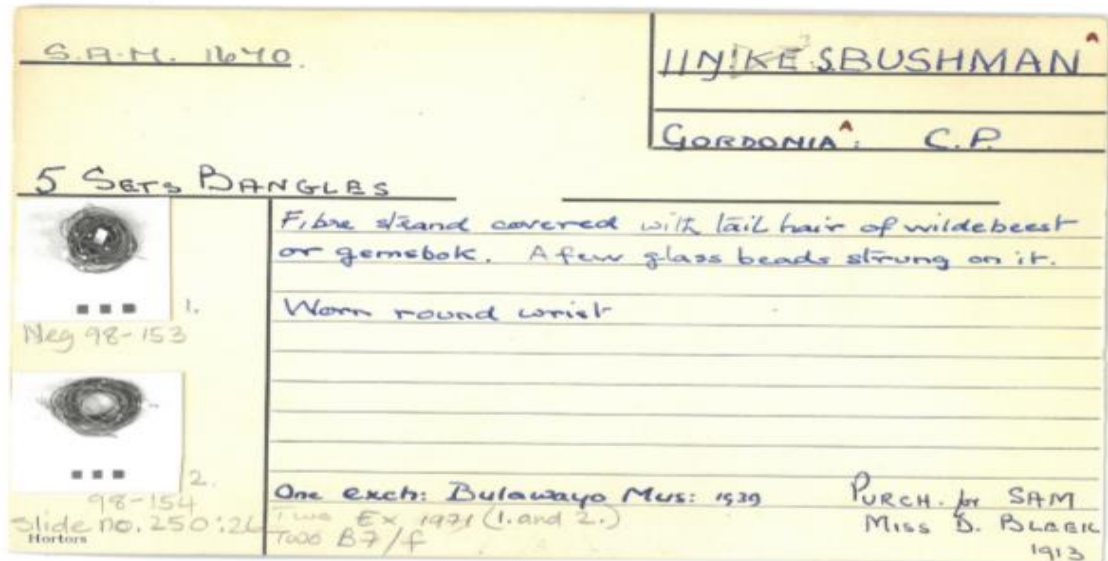


Figure 32- Front of SAM 1670's catalogue card



Figure 33- Back of SAM 1670's catalogue card

5.6.3. Object description

Possible dried-out strings of plant fibre or sinew have been wrapped with possible tail hairs of wildebeest³⁹ or gemsbok⁴⁰. Glass beads and ostrich eggshell beads are attached to it, ranging in colour and style. String/bracelet numbered (2) only has blue beads; string/bracelet numbered (1) has pink, red, blue, and white beads, and is the second image above of the stretched-out

³⁹ Wildebeest are antelopes of the genus *Connochaetes* and native to Eastern and Southern Africa.

⁴⁰ The gemsbok or South African oryx (*Oryx gazella*) is a large antelope in the genus *Oryx*. It is native to the extremely dry, arid regions of Southern Africa; notably, the Kalahari and Namib Desert.

string/bracelet. The other two strings/bracelets have white and pink beads. The distance of the beads varies on each string/bracelet. The string and possible tail hair are darkened with age and possibly from a chemical treatment done by the San to strengthen the strings due to how hardened and darkened the string and possible hair is.

Thin leather strings are attached to the ends of the string, most likely for ease of usage and to prevent the ends of the string from fraying. It is uncertain whether the strings were used for adornments, as they are described as bracelets on the catalogue card, or if they were used for traps and other manual uses, as described by the Khomani San leadership. By length and strength of string, it was likely used for traps and manual use.

5.6.4. Object condition

All four strings/bracelets are in fair condition, with only minor damage and some losses/deterioration. The plant fibre or sinew material has retained strength and flexibility and is able to be unrolled for measurement without stiffness or any loss of material. However, there are varying degrees of material loss in the possible tail hair, and the glass beads have surface dirt. The string/bracelet labelled (2) is in poorer condition than the rest, with the most possible tail hair loss. The strings/bracelets' attached leather strings is brittle and hard.

One of the white and pink decorated strings does not have a leather string attached to the ends, and the possible plant fibre or sinew strands are visibly fraying and curling. One end has a piece of blue fabric attached to it, which is faded and worn out on the edges, exposing the fibre visible in areas of loss.



Figure 34- Pink and white beaded string/bracelet with frayed ends. Photo: Malukah Meyer, Iziko Museums.

5.6.5. Analysis

Technical analysis techniques were executed on the object to obtain more information, more specifically UV light, microscopy and XRF analysis. I did non-invasive X-ray fluorescence (XRF) using a handheld spectrometer to analyse six target areas on a single string/bracelet, more specifically the string/bracelet labelled (1) as it had all the coloured beading and both glass and ostrich eggshell beads; this was done to confirm the material composition of the beads and determine the pigments used. I was greatly assisted by Mr. Harding and Maggi Loubser, expert in XRF spectroscopy. I did microscopy to determine the material composition of the string and possible tail hair, and I did UV light analysis to find out if there was any interesting fluorescence from the beading.

Firstly, the sample was illuminated with a UV lamp with short wavelengths and a normal photo taken using a Samsung 5G phone camera (48MP OIS primary quality), without any filters, to see if any fluorescence could be observed.



Figure 35- String/bracelet labelled (1) under visible light vs. UV light. Photo: Malukah Meyer, Iziko Museums.

The strings did not fluoresce under UV light, simply remaining a brownish-purple colour. As shown with the side-by-side comparison between the string/bangle labelled (1) in visible light vs. UV light, the red glass beads remain the darkest, turning into a blackened colour. The other coloured glass beads vary in different shades of purple, with the eggshell beads fluorescing in

lighter shades of purple than the glass beads. The white glass beads remain the lightest shade of purple, almost white.

Microscopy analysis

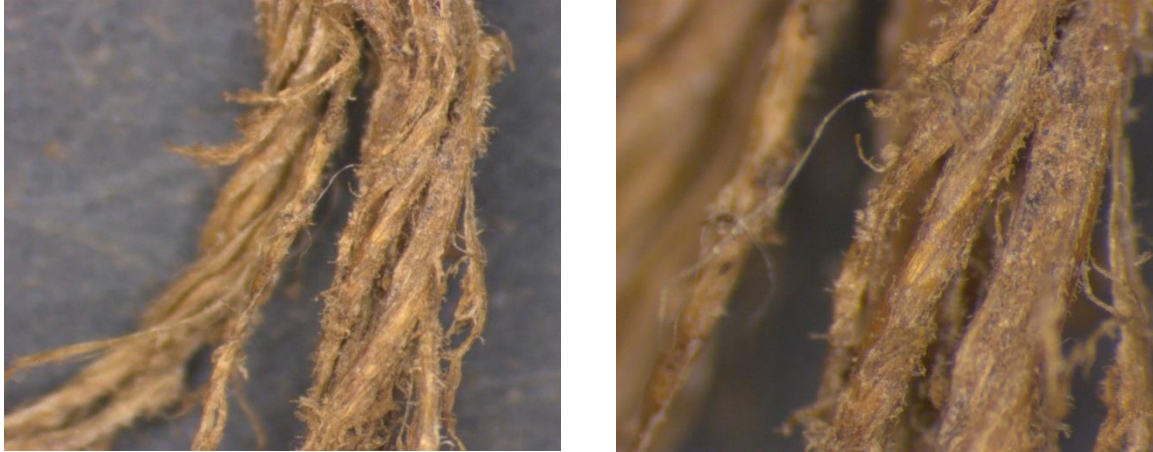


Figure 36- Microscopic image of string fibre



Figure 37- Microscope image of possible hair fibre

Under the Zeiss Discovery v8 microscope with 8x zoom, I analysed the string and possible hair tail of the bundle of string/bangle with Mr. Boshoff. The bundle used is the pink and white beaded string with the frayed ends. The catalogue card and Khomani San leadership indicated towards plant fibre as the material for the string (although it is unclear if the Khomani San meant plant fibre is used for a bow's string or for the string used as traps). However, Mr. Mottie, Ms. Van Wyk, and Mr. Boshoff strongly leaned towards the string being animal sinew. Therefore, I analysed the string and possible tail hair under 8x magnification, and with the assistance of Mr. Boshoff, results suggest the string to be animal sinew rather than plant fibre.

The possible tail hair could very well be hair, although Mr. Boshoff and I cannot be positive as the material has aged and the surface structure is obscured by years of ageing and possible treatment done on the object.

XRF analysis

XRF analysis was a complicated analysis to do as the string and beads are wound up, and the beads are so small it is almost impossible to get only a bead in the beam path, and when you do, a large part of the XRF image (9mmx10mm) is still empty as the beads are much smaller. XRF data proves the presence of silicone dioxide and potassium oxide in all the beads, in varying degrees, and aluminium oxide in all the beads except the red glass bead. This could be indicative of alumina silica glass with potassium as the network modifier in the glass-making process, but these elements are also found in the ostrich beads, which rather indicate sand from the desert environment from which the objects originate. To try and identify possible pigments, one would have to take the context into account. The glass beads were seemingly obtained by trade and can thus have European pigments in them, but the ostrich beads would be assumed to be local, and the pigments on them would probably be natural pigments.

A Bruker Tracer 5i handheld X-ray fluorescence spectrometer was used in the study to determine the presence of possible pigments. This handheld XRF spectrometer has a silicon drift detector (SDD) and was used with 15kV no filter, for light elements (CII and lighter on the Periodic table), 30kV with a TiAl filter for the transition metals, and 50kV with a Cu filter for heavy metals. Appropriate spectra from specific conditions were then selected for further analysis according to the elements found, which will be seen below in the table.

Annotated areas:

1. Red glass bead
2. Blue ostrich eggshell bead
3. Blue glass bead
4. Pink ostrich eggshell bead
5. Pink glass bead
6. White glass bead



Figure 38- Locations of XRF analyses. Photo: Malikhah Meyer, Iziko Museums.

Table 2- Area of SAM 1670 analysed by XRF spectroscopy

***Bold**- Heavy, normal- small/minor, *italics*- weak/traces

Area	Description	Elementals detected	Possible colourants
1	Red glass bead	Si, S, As, Pb, K, Fe, <i>Ti, Ni, Cu.</i>	Possibly red ocher, realgar, burnt sienna.
2	Blue ostrich eggshell bead	Si, S, K, Ca, Cu, Fe, <i>Pb, Ni, As, Ti.</i>	Possibly copper blues.
3	Blue glass bead	Si, Ca, Pb, S, K, Fe, <i>As, Ti, Cu, Ni.</i>	Possibly azurite, lapis lazuli, synthetic copper blues, blue verditer, Prussian blue.
4	Pink ostrich eggshell bead	Si, Pb, S, K, Fe, Ca, <i>As, Cu, Ni, Ti, P.</i>	Possibly red orcher.
5	Pink glass bead	Si, S, K, Ca, Ti, Fe, <i>Cu, P.</i>	Possibly red lake.
6	White glass bead	Si, Al, K, Ca, Fe, S, <i>Cu, Ni, Ti.</i>	Possibly gymsum.

Analyses of elements in pigments

1. Red glass bead

Silicone dioxide (SiO_2) is a main ingredient in glassmaking and potassium oxide (K_2O) gets used as a flux for glass to help melt the SiO_2 . Therefore, these elements were looked for to confirm they were glass, BUT these elements were found in all the beads, including the ostrich shell, so it is more likely that the SiO_2 , Al_2O_3 , K_2O and CaO observed in all samples originated from the environment, i.e. sand it was buried in. The colourants in the glass are likely red ocher, realgar, or burnt sienna due to the heavy presence of iron (Fe), arsenic (As), and sulphur (S).

2. Blue ostrich eggshell bead

There is the presence of silicone dioxide (SiO_2) with potassium oxide (K_2O), and calcium (Ca) present in the bead. Both ostrich shells did contain larger quantities of Ca, but some glass beads had Ca too, so the presence of Ca could not be used as definitive to confirm that it is ostrich egg shell beads (as observed visually). The colourants in the bead are likely a mixture of copper blue, as there is a heavy presence of copper (Cu), and that is likely to be found in the area where the Khomani San live.

3. Blue glass bead

Again, the presence of silicone dioxide (SiO_2) and potassium oxide (K_2O) could be indicative of glass beads as observed visually, but it is impossible to use the analytical data to confirm, as there was SiO_2 and K_2O found on the ostrich beads as well. The colourants in the glass are likely a mixture of azurite, as it is a natural carbonate of copper (Cu), or blue verditer with perhaps white lead (Pb) as an additive.

4. Pink ostrich eggshell bead

There is the presence of silicone dioxide (SiO_2) with potassium oxide (K_2O), and calcium (Ca) present in the bead. With the presence of iron (Fe), the pigment could be red ocher, maybe mixed with gypsum? CaSO_4 .

5. Pink glass bead

Silicone dioxide (SiO_2) is a main ingredient; therefore, it is highly possible that the bead is made of glass. Once again, SiO_2 could also be from the environment. Due to the presence of iron (Fe), the colourant could be red ocher.

6. White glass bead

Silicone dioxide (SiO₂) is present; therefore, it is highly possible that the bead is made of glass. The colourants in the glass bead are likely gypsum due to the presence of calcium (Ca), and sulphur (S).

5.6.6. Khomani San 2019 comments

“SAM 1670: Sun dries it out. The string are also used for traps. The plants green leaves are rolled and cut in strips, this is used for the string [unsure if this is meant for object or bow string]. Plant growing in Namibia called by the Boesman, Skoon ma se Tong, Sansevari. (Kruipers and Vaalboois in Van Wyk, 2019: 2)

5.6.7. Final comments

Like the “Bush petticoat”/apron/blanket issue with SAM 1547, there seems to be a Westernised definition given to this object. Most likely, Ms. Bleek would have seen a decorated string wrapped around an indigenous person’s wrist, most likely for ease of usage/travelling and recognised it as a bracelet, a type of dress ornament with which she would be familiar. Ms. Bleek most likely would not have been out with the hunters during hunts and would not have seen the string being used as a trap. Due to its strength and flexibility, and according to the Khomani San leadership, the string was used for traps. Searching for various sources on Khomani San and San people’s jewelry and decorative items they wore, no comparable bundle of string could be located.

For a European researcher like Ms. Bleek, it could have been easy to deduce it to a superficial function such as beautifying a person. There is likely no malice or ignorance meant by assuming the hunting string is a bangle, but the usage and function of objects get lost due to a European researcher using Western terminology to familiarise themselves with an object. The use of “(bush)” when labelling the object on an object label, again, could be a way to keep objects collected in a certain area and from one collector/researcher together, but to generalise the object to simply being “Bush”, takes away any individual significance it has. This object had a societal function, and an important role in the hunting tradition of the San. Its being given a different label and function takes away from that, and it is only gained back after bringing in the source community.

The counter argument suggests that it is highly unlikely that the San people would randomly add decorations to hunting gear, as it serves no obvious functional purpose in the catching of prey, so the question needs to be asked: were these to differentiate between different owners or perhaps the item was originally used as snares and subsequently repurposed as jewellery.

5.7. Two metal bangles SAM 1672



Figure 39- SAM 1672. Photo: Malukah Meyer, Iziko Museums.

5.7.3. Measurements

-Circumference: 300mm each

5.7.1. Recorded provenance

Miss Dorothea Bleek purchased these bangles in Gordonia for the South African Museum (SAM), accessioned in 1913. The two bangles were given the same accession number. According to the object's catalogue card, they are made "of brass wire". An added note is that Miss Bleek and/or SAM were "doubtful if made by Bushmen... Men said to wear one only, on right wrist. Women wear several, above wrist or elbow or below knee".

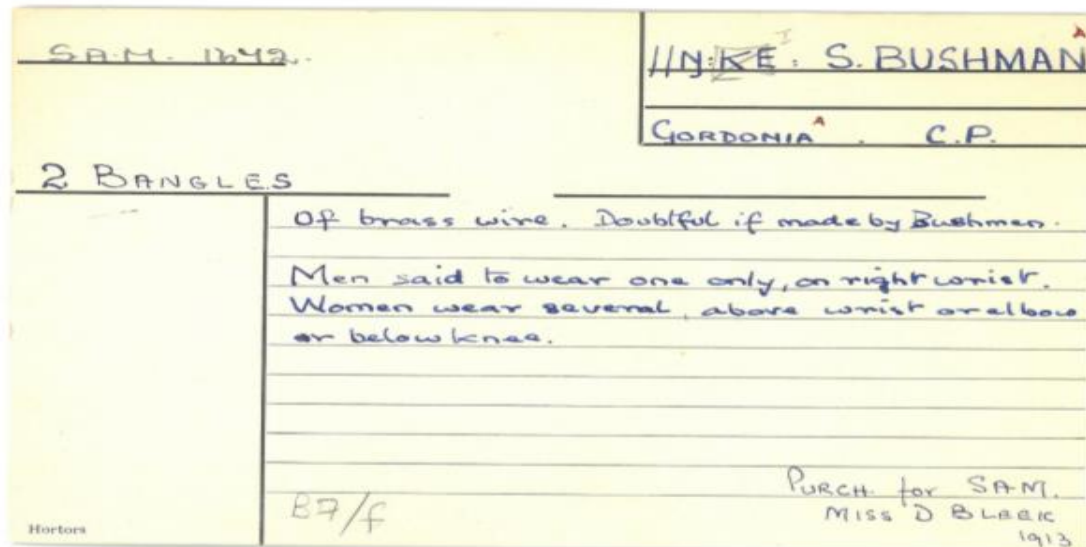


Figure 40- Front of SAM 1672's catalogue card

5.7.4. Object description

Bangles are likely made of copper alloy wire and are flexible. It is a brass colour, and the thin, long strip of metal seems to have been looped tightly together to form the shape of a bangle. It is uncertain whether the bangle is purely made of the looped metal or whether the metal has been looped or wrapped another material. With its flexibility, it would not be a rigid material underneath.

5.7.5. Object condition

The bangles are both in fair condition, however one bangle has traces of corrosion on it. Accession number (1672) is written on one armband/bangle in black khoki pen. It is likely that sweat transferred onto the bangles during usage and natural ageing has darkened the wire to its present dark gold/brass colour. The area near the written accession number, where the white label tag is attached, has a visible, non-active corrosive spot, blackened with a light green tinge.

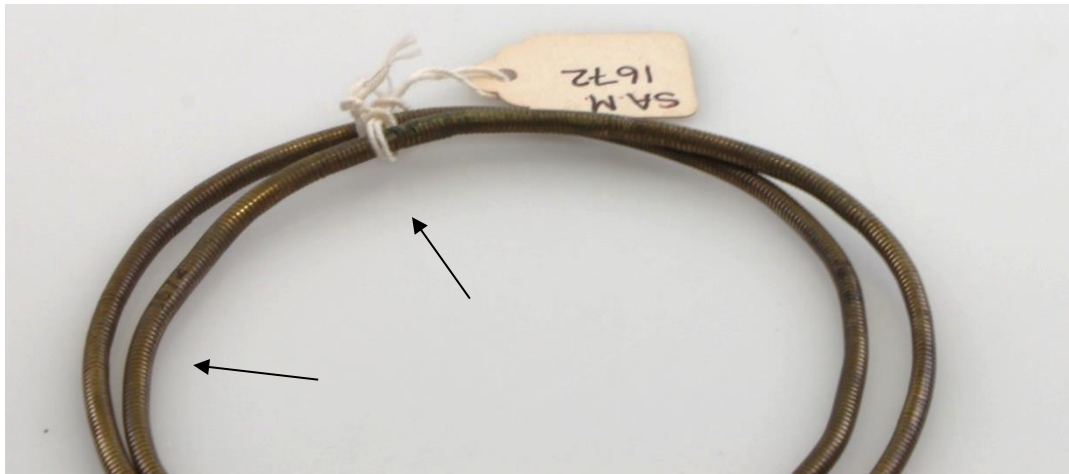


Figure 41- Arrows pointing out area next to white label tag where corrosion spot is visible and area where accession number was written directly onto one bangle. Photo: Malukah Meyer, Iziko Museums.

5.7.6. Analysis

Both bangles were analysed using the XRF spectrometer, which confirmed that they were made of a copper alloy. I also analysed it under UV lighting, but there was no reaction.

5.7.2. Khomani San 2019 comments

“SAM 1672- Necklace, Copper Wire metal, attachment. Plant fibre – smeared with honey wash, this will differ for all groups (Bushmen from the North and South). Initiation of the young girls when they reach puberty .The young girl are placed in a hut for 14 days and 1 month, this was the healing period. She would be beautified, fed, healed. When she returns the eyes of the young men will be on her. She will then wear the armband. (The metal is during the Apartheid years). Plants and leaves, were used as Sanitary towels (plant leaves that are very soft), Medicine as well as toys” (Kruipers and Vaalboois in Van Wyk, 2019: 1).

It is worth noting here that, according to Ms. Van Wyk, the Khomani San leadership would use the phrasing “Apartheid years” for any time period that included white people in South Africa and could thus refer to any time between the initial landing of westerners in the Cape until the present. It does not strictly mean the period of National Party rule (1948-1994). They also refer to any material not made within the community or received/purchased from white people as apartheid material (J. Van Wyk, personal communication, 28 February 2023). This does create difficulty in dating the object precisely, or when possibly the “Apartheid years” metal could have been procured in the community.

5.7.7. Final comments

There is a loss of intangible significance on the catalogue card, where the bangles are only noted as being worn by men and women. Further research or proper documentation could have ensured the information regarding the societal importance of the bangles was known. A girl coming of age is an important event, and these bangles act as societal markers to celebrate this important milestone.

Alas, there is information loss, especially on the significance of the object, perhaps how the bangle was acquired, and the process of giving girls bangles made of natural material to these metal bangles. This information could be gained by corresponding with the source community and perhaps opening a conversation on aspects of indigenous people's traditions and the evolution of adapting during "apartheid time" that is perhaps not previously researched.

5.8. Medicine bag with motifs SAM 10085



Figure 42- Front of SAM 10085. Photo: Malikah Meyer, Iziko Museums.



Figure 43- Front and back of SAM 10085. Photo: Malikah Meyer, Iziko Museums.

5.8.1. Measurements

-Height (from rim/lip to bottom): 280mm
(from top of strap to bottom of bag): 450mm
(from top of strap to bottom of tassels): 680mm

- Length: 300mm
- Width: 10mm
- Strap length: 460mm
- Circumference: 1270mm

5.8.2. Recorded provenance

Dr W. M. Borchers collected the bag in the north of Upington in the Kalahari during his travels in the 1930s, and his daughter presented it to the South African Museum, accessioned in 1971. Noted down at the bottom of the catalogue card is “loan sachm”, which is short for the South African Cultural History Museum, present-day Iziko Slave Lodge Museum. No date is given for the loan period.

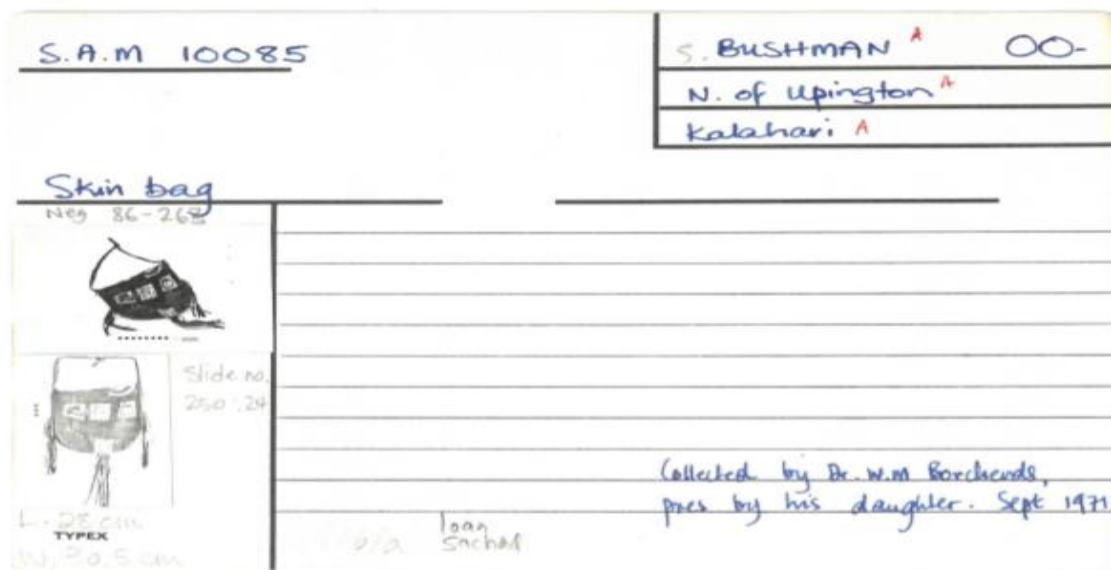


Figure 44- Front of SAM 10085's catalogue card

5.8.3. Object description

Medium-sized brown hide bag made from an unknown animal, with the straps made of similar material. The bag is brown with a mixture of medium brown and light brown motifs, as well as light brown and cream motifs. There are four motifs on the front and one motif on the back. According to the notes from the Khomani San leadership, the motifs depict medicine and food. The motifs are all roughly 70mm x 70mm in size. The motif on the back of the bag most likely depicts the sun, as it is semi-circular in shape. This motif on the back is placed on the left side of the rim (110mm x 60mm) and crosses over to the front right side of the rim (100mm x 40mm).

There are six tassels on either side of the bag and seven tassels at the base of the bag, with lengths ranging from 140-230mm. The tassels are made of the same hide material as the bag,

and they have been stitched onto the bag. The bag has a strap knotted on either side of the rim to attach to the bag, with a bigger knot at the centre of the strap, most likely to adjust the length of the strap for the wearer.

5.8.4. Object condition

The bag is in a fair and stable condition, as it does not face any surface damage that will make the material of the bag fall apart. There are heavy discolouration of shades of brown on the hide, likely from usage, exhibition, or storage.

Strap: The strap is worn, the edges of the strap are frayed and curled inwards, and there are areas of material loss in the form of abrasion marks, likely from usage, exhibition or storage.



Figure 45- Strap of the bag. Photo: Malukah Meyer, Iziko Museums.

The rim or lip of the bag is likewise worn, slightly curled, and frayed.

The body of the bag seems to have signs of possible previous repair, where four patches were stitched on. Two patches are stitched next to the sun motif (60x30mm on the back of the bag). All the patches are stitched on using white thread with a couch stitching pattern. The other two patches are located in the vicinity of the three motifs on the front of the bag; the first is located between the first and second motif (25x30mm), and the second patch is directly beneath the third motif (20x20mm). A different hide material than that of the original bag has been used for the patch work. The line of stitches on the patch near the sun motif on front shows signs of fraying, with a 10mm hole. There are no conservation notes or records left to indicate if the repair work was done by a SAM/Iziko Museums conservator; thus, I am theorising the holes were patched up by the object donor or possibly the San themselves.

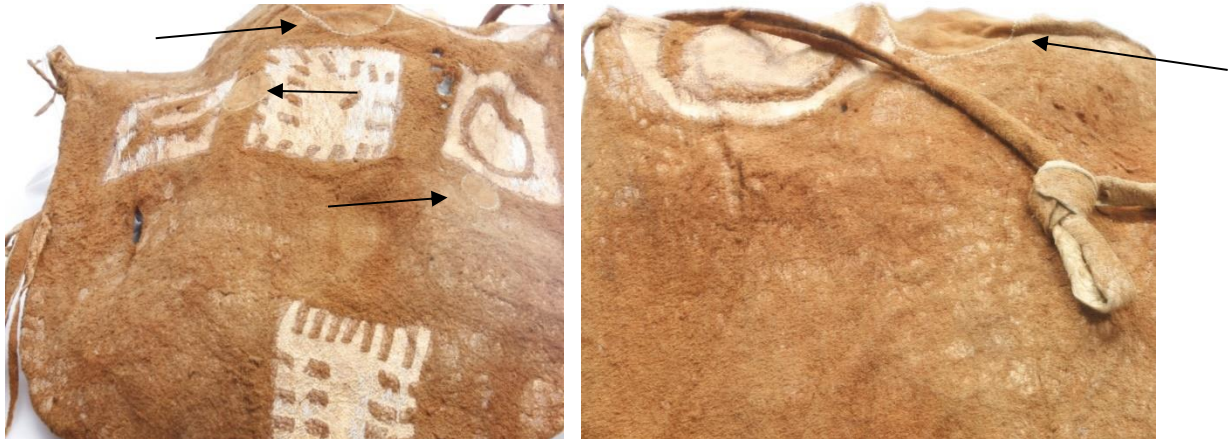


Figure 46- Areas with patches up holes on front and back of bag, pointed out with arrows. Photo: Malukah Meyer, Iziko Museums.

There are various cuts and holes on the front of the bag. There is a hole in the front motif, measuring 8mm x 8mm in size, and a long vertical cut is visible below the front motif, measuring 35mm x 8mm in size. Above the second motif, another hole is 5mm x 5mm in size, as well as three holes above one another next to the third motif, measuring 25mm x 55mm from the top edge of the uppermost hole to the bottom edge of the lowest hole. Additionally, there is another hole measuring 5mm x 8mm in size on the reverse/back side of the bag to the side of the sun motif.

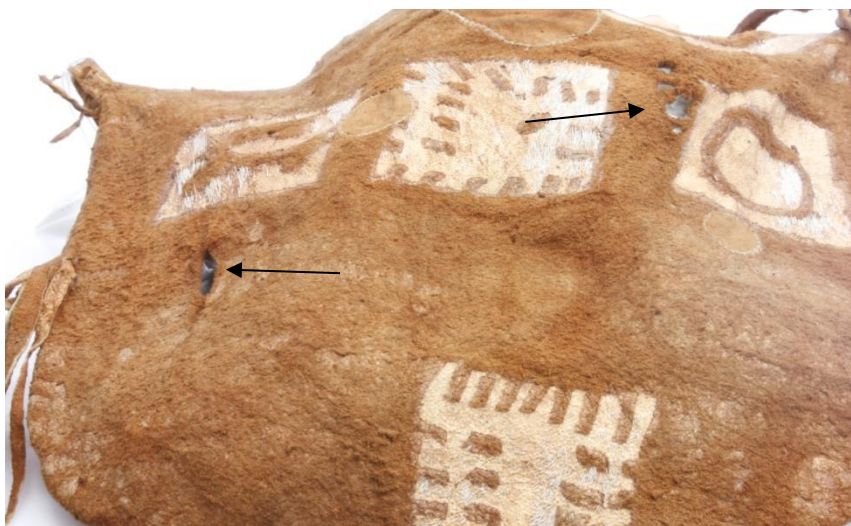


Figure 47- Front of bag with biggest holes pointed out with arrows. Photo: Malukah Meyer, Iziko Museums.

The front of the bag has heavy discoloration due to abrasion caused by usage or possible storage/exhibition methods. Abrasion weakens the material and leaves it vulnerable to tearing and holes. The tassels are in fair condition, with light abrasion. There is a light surface coating visible inside the bag, either from surface dirt or remnants of previously stored items.

3.8.5. Analysis

No XRF analysis was conducted on the bag as it is made of organic materials; therefore, no results would be shown. I placed the bag under UV lighting for any possible results on the residue inside the bag's interior, but no fluorescence could be observed.

5.8.6. Khomani San comments

“SAM 10085 - Medicine Bag with motifs; Created by young man for the female. The bag is created with motifs depicting medicine, food.” (Kruipers and Vaalboois in Van Wyk, 2019: 2).

5.8.7. Final comments

There is valuable information lost when looking at this medicine bag. It has motifs that depict important aspects of San people's lives, in the Kalahari or otherwise, which include medicine and food. The lack of information regarding the motifs on the catalogue card, or perhaps even not inquiring about it during the object's collection, relegates these motifs to a purely decorative function, negating their potential symbolic meanings. The act of a young man creating this bag for a young woman could also have a spiritual meaning, but that information is also lost. Of course, the bag being used for gathering/carrying medicine is also important to document, and the bag simply being labelled a “skin bag” lessens its role and value in and for the community. Once again, bringing in the source community is invaluable in finding these values and lost meanings held in the objects.

5.9. Conclusion

Chapter 5 interrogates the current available data on a selection of six objects examined by the Khomani San in 2019. This data includes the objects themselves as primary sources of information making use of examination under different light sources, including UV light, as well as examination under the microscope, documentary photography, and XRF analysis. These analyses revealed details of condition and use both by the community prior to acquisition and in the museum environment. This additional data generated was used to create more complete object files than was previously available. In addition, these files document the information documented on the original catalogue cards, including recorded provenance and associated information. This information was then supplemented with the Khomani San's shared indigenous knowledge. Examining the information available now, side-by-side, reveals

that, for the selected objects at least, the recorded information was incomplete and demonstrates that these collaborations are invaluable in gaining information on indigenous objects. As demonstrated, indigenous knowledge is often unwritten, mis-interpreted, or mis-noted in museum archival records, either during the research and collection period or the museum documentation process. Many of the objects examined hold significant cultural or everyday value that has been lost since their point of collection. The examination by the Khomani San during the collaboration project helped restore portions of that knowledge and understanding, thus giving the objects back their tangible and intangible significance. I mention tangible because there are objects such as the Steenbok blanket where there was a loss of societal and everyday function, which has since been gained again through the representatives' examination.

CHAPTER 6

2023 INTERVIEWS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter presents information obtained through interviews conducted in 2023 as a follow-up to the 2019 collaboration sessions and includes interviews with Iziko staff involved in the 2019 sessions. The purpose of the interviews was to answer the research questions outlined in Chapter 1: Can a case be made for coining or including historical dissociation as a risk to collections. My second question asks how historical dissociation has impacted the cultural significance and meanings of objects in the ‘Bushmen’ collection and, in general, indigenous collections; this question I answered in Chapter 5 and thus will not be further elaborated upon in this chapter. Then I look at whether there are any benefits to these collaboration projects for both Iziko Museums and the participatory indigenous communities. Also, have Iziko Museums’ methods of acquiring, restoring, and conserving indigenous objects changed or adapted since the 2019 collaboration sessions?

Additional questions I ask that developed during the research included: How can a museum approach and handle objects that are culturally sensitive or have associated cultural protocols, such as those that can only be touched or used by certain members of the community? Can a museum and a museum collection become decolonised? And finally, can collaboration workshops between museums and source communities help combat dissociation and return the intangible significance that gets diminished or lost specifically associated with indigenous objects?

6.1. Interview participants

These interviews represent the personal and professional opinions of the interviewees, who all differ in age, gender, race and ethnic identities, job descriptions, and years of experience in the heritage and museum industries, amongst others. Expressions and beliefs of object dissociation, historical dissociation, museum decolonisation, museum repatriation, ethnographic collections, and indigenous communities need to be understood in the context of the interviewees in this case study, rather than a universal statement applicable to these statements and (often sensitive) topics as a whole. As such, I thought it would be best to share some background information

on all 5 participants in the form of short biographies in order to better understand their opinions, whether professional or personal. It should be noted that every biography written below was shared directly by the interviewees, either through our interview or written out and emailed to me. Therefore, all the information shared below is noted as direct quotes. “Written-out interview” refers to my interviewees opting to receive their interviewer questionnaires via email and sending back their answers in a Word or PDF document; these served as my interview transcripts. “Video interview” refers to my interviewees getting interviewed via Zoom or Google Meets by me, and I wrote their interview answers out in transcripts. Each section of this chapter from this point onward will contain one research question and I will use my interviews to respectfully answer them. I will also use these interviews to disprove or strengthen an opinion or argument made in the previous chapter, wherever it might be applicable.

I interviewed three Iziko Museum staff who participated in the 2019 collaboration project: Janene van Wyk, Paul Tichmann, and Annelize Kotze. The two other staff members that I interviewed are senior Iziko staff members who have experience working closely with the Iziko Museums ethnographic collections: Bradley Mottie and Thando Ngcangisa. Mr. Mottie and Mr. Ngcangisa did not partake in the 2019 collaboration project. I am listing the interviewees in alphabetic order as I introduce their biographies:

Annelize Kotze (social history curator) – noted as AK: Annelize Kotze, video interview 08 August 2023.

Annelize Kotze is a Social History Curator at the Iziko Museums of South Africa who is currently doing her Masters in Archaeology at the University of Cape Town (UCT), focusing on cultural identity of Khoe, San and Coloured women in the Western and Northern Cape. She is a member of the A/Xarra Restorative Justice Forum in the Centre for African Studies (CAS), at UCT where she sits on the Language, Human Remains, and Women’s Commission. Currently she holds the title of President of the Commonwealth Association of Museums (CAM). She is a passionate advocate for decolonising museum spaces and allowing previously marginalised and silenced communities to have a voice in spaces where they were misrepresented. Community engagement with regards to repatriation of museum objects and especially the sensitivities regarding human remains, is a prominent part of her work. Annelize is classified as Coloured within South Africa.

Bradley Mottie (senior conservator) – noted as BM: Bradley Mottie, written-out interview, received 11 July 2023.

I am a black male individual, with more than 21 years' experience in the field of conservation. Most private Conservation Professionals in South Africa are white individuals, which is indicative of how these fields were restricted mainly to a selected ethnic group or race. Very little has really changed post-democracy in South Africa in this field. I grew in a small town in northern Kwa-Zulu Natal, South Africa, mainly surrounded by coal mining and the steel industry. As a result of this, I started working as an apprentice smelter and later an apprentice boilermaker, both part of the steel industry. However, I somehow had a greater passion and wanted to know more about the intrinsic characteristics of steel, and decided to pursue the above qualifications. Whilst pursuing a post-graduate degree (MSc in Materials Science) I acquired a job in the Western Cape Government, South Africa as Paper Conservator, which later evolved into Objects Conservator, with the main focus on metals and paper conservation. I am currently employed as Preventive Conservator with the main focus areas being on preventive care, condition reporting, interventive conservation, exhibitions, and the monitoring and reporting of the environmental conditions of the central storage area, however, I am also responsible for the development and the making of conservation oils and waxes for the treatment of furniture and metals. Another key area is the development and the implementation of an Integrated Pest Management Programme, as well as the specialised fumigation. My intellectual development has advanced to such a level that I can offer basic introductory courses on conservation with confidence, however I have always been driven by acquiring new knowledge and current conservation techniques, to the of benefit myself, Iziko Museums of South Africa and the country, South Africa.

Thando Ngcangisa (assistant collections manager) – noted as TN: Thando Ngcangisa, written-out interview, received 11 July 2023.

My name is Thanduhlanga (aka Thando) Ngcangisa. I am a Xhosa man from a place called Engcobo in the Eastern Cape (formerly known as Transkei). I have been working at Iziko for the last 17 years, started as a Museum Attendant, Collections Assistant and now an Assistant Collections Manager.

Paul Tichmann (former director of Iziko Museums' Collections and Digitisation department) – noted as PT: Paul Tichmann, video interview 13 July 2023.

My name is Paul Tichmann. I am 64 years old. Race, interesting one. Well, because under apartheid I am Coloured. In my student days I was actually part of the Black Consciousness movement, I agreed that Black was really [my race]. Before joining Iziko I worked in Provincial Museum Service, and I'm trying to remember what my position was. It was Assistant Director of Scientific Services, and so I was in charge of the researchers who would actually go out and do the research, and set up exhibitions at the different provincial museums. At the museums that were affiliated to the province. I joined Iziko in 2011; I was actually curator for the Bo-Kaap Museum and then became curator of the Slave Lodge, and at one stage was curator of Bo-Kaap and Slave Lodge. And then later on, Acting Head of the Iziko Social History collections, and then of course, Director for C&D. So my involvement had come from a research background.

Janene van Wyk (conservation assistant) – noted as JWV: Janene van Wyk, written-out interview, received 18 July 2023.

I am Janene Van Wyk born in Cape Town, identify as a South African, descendant of the first nation inhabitants. I despise the label I wear as coloured and see no colour, race or ethnicity in the sphere of humanity, however I see diversity. I started at the then Iziko Museums of Cape Town 2006/2007 as a museum attendant, subsequently an interest in caring for collections on open display. This interest allowed me to engage with the conservators on routine site visits. The Social History department advertised (2008) the post for Conservation Assistant and this opportunity into the field of conservation was afforded to me, I formerly was promoted to Assistant Conservator (16 years) in the present Collections and Digitisation Department, Iziko Museums of South Africa. I developed a keen interest in culture especially within the South African context, the struggle with identity as a South African citizen deriving at What is Culture? Is it how we as groups identify? How do we engage with the world around us? Our traditions and norms? As I am currently completing a Short Learning Programme with the University of South Africa the programme Cultural Policy Management. I conclude to recognize that South Africans within its diversity as a nation with the effect of colonialism and the legacy of apartheid has a shared culture/ borrowed and in some instance, custodians protect these traditions for the present as well as future generations.

Inclusion of the Khomani San voice

My sixth interviewee was a member of the Khomani San community, whom I made contact with through a staff member at Iziko Museums. The interviewee, who chose to remain anonymous, agreed to an interview regarding my current research; we conducted the interview, and I wrote this chapter, which included answers from their transcript, but later they ultimately requested to withdraw. I will not attempt to speak for the Khomani San, nor do I have the right to; speaking for others, especially academics and researchers acting as the mouthpiece for indigenous people, deserves the criticism it has faced over the last few decades. As Alcoff (1991, 6) states

“...there is a growing recognition that where one speaks from affects the meaning and truth of what one says, and thus that one cannot assume an ability to transcend one’s location. In other words, a speaker’s location (which I take here to refer to their social location, or social identity) has an epistemically significant impact on that speaker’s claims and can serve either to authorize or disauthorize one’s speech ... The practice of privileged’s persons speaking for or on behalf of less privileged persons has actually resulted (in many cases) in increasing or reinforcing oppression of the group spoken of”

Unfortunately, with my interviewee’s withdrawal, that indigenous voice does get lost. The best way forward would be to rely on my interviewees, especially Ms. Kotze, who has worked closely with the Khomani San and has kept a personal and professional relationship with the community post-2019 collaboration project, the 2019 collaboration project transcripts, which document Vaalboois and Kruipers’ examinations of their objects and the discussions over the 5-day workshop, and academic sources. This is no way, however, to be a replacement for the information and indigenous knowledge that were gained from personally having an interview with a member of the Khomani San.

All excerpts and opinions presented in this chapter from my interviews will be reproduced as closely as possible to the original interview transcripts in the form of indented quotes. Quotations from different interviewees will also be condensed into single paragraphs if applicable to the topic of discussion; these quotations will be indicated through the use of quotation marks, or I will paraphrase the quotes and add an in-text reference based on their individual transcripts.

6.2. Historical dissociation: A risk or not?

My first research question is the very subject of this research paper: Can a case be made for coining/including historical dissociation as a risk to collections? Although I feel that I have motivated for historical dissociation, I wanted to gain the perspective of my interviewees on this topic. Firstly, I intended to find out from the Iziko staff members what their understanding of historical dissociation was, specifically as an agent of deterioration. They all agreed that historical dissociation poses a threat to museum collections and places collections at risk like the other tangible agents of deterioration; from BM's lengthy experience as a conservator, he mentions how "history shows that collections accessioned during colonial periods have been improperly named and their usage misinterpreted and [the misformation] recorded so. If no corrective measures/interventions are undertaken this interpretation will remain so and its [the object's] true meaning and usage could be lost forever".

JVW states that historical dissociation influences the treatment methodology used on objects, and improper exhibition material can lead to incorrect context on certain subject matters (JVW, 2023: 3). Regarding treatment methodology, historical dissociation causes a loss of intangible significance of an object, so as a conservator, JVW could, for example, dust soil off the top of a bracelet without knowing the possible historical context that placed that soil there; and by "improper exhibition material", JVW meant that without historical or spiritual context given to objects, they could be exhibited with materials that cause surface or structural damage or diminish their intangibility (displaying an object on a floor that should not touch the ground, for example) (JVW, 2023, personal communication, 19 October 2023). For JVW, [historical] dissociation is "detrimental as one of the agents of deterioration, [and] having said that the significance of a cultural object could in many cases be undervalued [once it enters the museum], unlike the accurate intend or [initial] usage [the object had] to the cultural group".

For TN, "historical dissociation can be highly damaging as well as it causes the loss of one's self-knowledge and values from his/her indigenous background; once such a thing happens it is very difficult to undo or reverse the damage caused". As a curator AK gave a fresh perspective from that of the conservators/collection manager when I asked her about historical dissociation and whether it was detrimental or damaging as the other agents of dissociation. In other words, AK states that "if you don't know, you don't know"; simply, how would the museum staff know their act of simply touching or seeing an object of spiritual significance can be detrimental to the context of the object's creation if there is no proper museum documentation or provenance research done on the object (AK, 2023: 10).

I agree with all the responses obtained above: that historical dissociation is detrimental to the intangible (and often tangible) well-being of a museum object and should be given the same importance as the tangible agents of deterioration. However, if the conservator, collections manager, or curator did not know they were incorrectly handling, conserving, storing, or exhibiting the object(s), that dissociation cannot be prevented. And as AK follows up, that is why it is important to not only do academic research on objects but also to speak to the source communities where these objects are taken from (AK, 2023: 11).

I was also curious about whether the staff members thought historical dissociation was a preventative conservation or collections management issue. BM (senior conservator), JW (assistant conservator), AK (social history curator), and PT (former director of the C&D department) all agreed that historical dissociation is an issue that both museum departments have to deal with, as both departments are entrusted to the well-being of museum objects and should work together to ensure correct documentation and care of objects. TN (assistant collections manager), however, sees historical dissociation as a collection management issue rather than that of conservation. The roles each person plays within the museum could influence their answers above: Conservators deal closely with objects on an individual basis, where collections management does not always have the opportunity to. Cleaning as treatment forces the conservator to interact directly with an object, move it around, and look closely, so the conservator is in a better position to note details regarding materiality, wear, etc. Curators and museum department directors more regularly work with the various departments and thus will feel more positively about all departments working together to combat historical dissociation.

In this case, I agree with the former answer more than the latter: that historical dissociation should be the responsibility of both collections management and conservation, as well as curators, museum education, and the museum executive team. Everyone within the museum institution should contribute towards preventing dissociation of incoming objects and combating historical dissociation, whether that's conducting new research on the museum objects, redressing the museum archives by bringing in source communities, or exhibiting indigenous objects with newly acquired academic and/or indigenous knowledge.

PT's answer that both departments should work together to combat historical dissociation prompted me to ask him about this problem with hierarchy and lack of communication between museum departments, which filters down from the executives to the curators and conservators; did he think these issues could cause a hindrance to wanting to redress the archives, wanting to

bring in communities, or just combat historical dissociation? This is the answer he could provide me.

PT: Look, I think there are many challenges, so that's part of it [the issue with hierarchy]- certainly the communication. And I think sometimes when museums work on strategy, sometimes it's [strategy] not done in a way that everybody is kind of together, and there's a common understanding and a common goal. But the other thing is, of course, the lack of resources, the budget cuts, positions have been frozen, so we have fewer people expected to do more. You have this whole issue of compliance, where you're tied up in audits that roll on for sometimes almost 3 months, and we can't really focus on the core [issues, such as historical dissociation]. It's [the issues mentioned above] going to make it [combating historical dissociation] exceedingly difficult. I think, however, it [combating historical dissociation] needs to be built into the strategy so that one does not lose focus on it. And that, at best, for the moment, it's a matter of bringing in projects that can slowly drive it forward.

PT and I agree on this point: that despite the lack of budget or reaching a common goal within Iziko Museums, the most important thing is that these projects and opportunities for partnership do not stop, as the feedback and findings are valuable for both Iziko and the indigenous communities. If there are communities and independent researchers reaching out, a modicum of change can occur within the Museums and its collections.

In chapter 1, I gave an example of historical dissociation in the form of the Steenbok blanket (SAM 1547), one of my selected objects, which had been categorised as a “petticoat” and “apron” in its catalogue card upon collection. But when the Khomani San leadership examined it in 2019, it was called a blanket with a full description of how it was made along with its use in the community. The question I posed to my interviewees was regarding the impact historical dissociation has on the identity and use (in terms of research, exhibition, and conservation) of the object. JYW states that the “incorrect naming of an object if not corrected this history will continue to be told and researched in the wrong context”, which also influences how museum visitors view and interpret the object, “as well as the indigenous community will be unhappy and offended with the interpretation of cultural objects”. JYW also mentions that this historical

dissociation “also influences the treatment, storage, display methodology and handling of said object”, something I mention in Chapter 3. For PT, the Steenbok blanket “is a good example of how one can go astray, because it’s limited information so it continues to portray these [indigenous] communities as ‘backward’”. He mentions how when he was working for Provincial Museum Services⁴¹, he’d go to different museums and that the San and Khoi displays would always display the arrows and digging sticks, but nothing about the knowledge and science behind them, such as the poisons and methods of hunting used by the First Nations (PT, 2023: 7).

In exhibitions where there could be multi-layered narratives regarding the communities and their objects, the indigenous knowledge gets lost due to historical dissociation, and the object is simply a “digging stick” (PT, 2023: 7). “What do you learn out of it [this form of display]? Visitors come, they look at it [the objects with no indigenous information added], and it all just seems to be something from a very backward community. And I think what its [historical dissociation] has done as well, is that we’ve lost a lot of knowledge because of that [historical dissociation]. Because we’ve just failed to recognise the important indigenous knowledge, if I can call it that, that’s liked to all of these [indigenous] collections” PT concludes, and I certainly agree with his sentiment. The misrepresentation of indigenous communities in museums and the Westernisation of indigenous objects in catalogues and labels, such as calling this blanket a “petticoat”, does erase indigenous knowledge and sometimes the science behind objects and their intangible importance.

The problem of historical dissociation erasing indigenous knowledge and misinterpreting the lives of indigenous people was certainly a universal problem, and not unique to South African First Nation communities. As Racette states in *Caring for the Living, Not Embalming the Dead: Storied Objects and Precious Legacy in Museum Collections*, objects gain their meaning through “the acts of making, acquiring, using, and viewing. They have the power to evoke, connect, and trigger collective memories. However, objects encountered in museum exhibitions and collections have often been separated from their stories” (2008: 15). The artist’s identity, the community of origin, and the economic, creative, and practical functions of an object are often forgotten – replaced by “generic and tentative identities, becoming a source of

⁴¹ Provincial Museum Services, or the Department of Cultural Affairs and Sports (DCAS) Museum Services, offers various educational programmes to the public through partnerships with affiliated museums. DCAS provides support to affiliated museums through the payment of subsidies and grants and seconded officials to work at affiliated museums, and promotes social inclusion and active citizenship through the production of new permanent and travelling exhibitions about aspects of the Western Cape’s histories.

academic speculation” (Racette, 2008: 15). And again, community engagements thus become essential for re-examining and re-evaluating these indigenous collections that have half-stories, mis-information or completely blank catalogue cards.

AK gives another fresh perspective on historical dissociation where she mentions purposeful dissociation, wherein indigenous communities deliberately gave incorrect or incomplete information to researchers because they did not want to give up indigenous, often sacred knowledge, and since researchers and collectors did not take lying or half-truths into consideration, they often believed the indigenous person. AK believed that these source communities were not “*vaak* (sleepy/dense)” as the researchers believed them to be and were clever in making sure they had the upper hand when dealing with researchers; the researcher will keep coming back because they keep getting information, whether right or wrong (2023: 7). It was a new angle to historical dissociation that I never considered and certainly gives me much to think about.

I also had a question for PT as the former Director of C&D at Iziko Museums, namely, what damage does he think this historical dissociation of museum collections has done or continues to do to indigenous communities. As someone who’s worked closely with First Nation groups since working at Provincial Museum Services, I wanted to gain PT’s professional opinion. For PT, it [historical dissociation] kept the source communities frozen in time or showed them as a ‘backward’ people (PT, 2023: 9). “And so, their descendants miss out, and, in fact, I think our whole heritage misses out on that rich [indigenous] knowledge and the science behind some of those objects” PT continues. PT gave an example of Iziko’s costume collection, where ordinary Western pants and dresses could tell the whole story of the person who owned them, as they generally had more provenance and museum documentation. However, when looking at an item of costume⁴² from the Khoi, the San, a Zulu-speaking or Xhosa-speaking community, labels and museum records note “Maker-Unknown”; “so there is a very limited narrative there [in indigenous objects’ documentation] there, and it’s a skewed one, and it’s kind of a tribal or ethnic focus. So I think that’s one of the biggest problems [that indigenous communities face due to historical dissociation]”, PT states, to which I agree.

PT: And so, in a sense, it continues the violence of the past because it robs people of that knowledge. And when we talk about decolonisation, we don’t focus as much on the whole issue of ethnostemicide, of the way in which entire knowledges were

⁴² “Items of costume” refers to items of dress and attire.

destroyed, and so that's perpetuated. Those collections relate almost to a people who no longer exist, and yet you have descendants, and it doesn't speak to the violence of colonialism, it doesn't speak to the changes that came about- urbanisation and how did it impact, [and] those various items of material culture, you know, what changes would have happened [to it over time]. And that's why Oom Petrus [Vaalbooi]'s comment on this portrayal as dressed in animal skins and hunting with bows and arrows, whereas we have somebody who owns a horse, who owns a gun, and who keeps sheep [when discussing the staging of the photographs]... And so, it just becomes a very distorted knowledge where, for some communities, you've got entire stories and people are recognised, and for others, it's just very limited and its cast in very racial terms or very ethnic terms.

This answer from PT deeply impacted me because within the museum and heritage sector, we are tasked with looking after and displaying objects from indigenous communities, and there is little to no understanding of the consequences of incorrectly doing so or still creating a narrative that influences the current generations from that community. This is why historical dissociation should be seen as an issue for museum collections, because it impacts the object(s) and its people in equal amounts and has real consequences in the present for retaining certain impacted communities sense of marginalisation and alienation. This has been noted by Waller and Henderson: the misinterpretation and misinformation of a single object can impact an entire collection, creating a negative result for the objects, and value gets lost; this form of dissociation also impacts the people whose history, culture, and tradition get stripped from their objects (R. Waller and J. Henderson, 2023, personal communication, 10 October).

6.3. The impact of historical dissociation on conserving indigenous objects

Having answered how historical dissociation impacts cultural significance in Chapter 5, I now turn my attention to how historical dissociation affects the care and conservation of indigenous objects and what consequences historical dissociation has, especially in the museum documentation of indigenous objects, which could lead to issues in handling, storage, and exhibitions. To understand the importance of proper documentation processes for objects/collections at Iziko Museums, I asked BM about this documentation process. He responded by breaking down the current stages of documentation at Iziko Museums: conservators are involved with the initial assessment [and provenance research] of an object

(Condition Report) before entering the facility upon acquisition; the museum documents (Condition Report, security certificate, Loan Agreement and Motivation for Acquiring document⁴³) is accompanied with Object Movement to ensure that the entire route of the object is documented; the above-mentioned documentation process is applied to any incoming or outgoing loan and is also accompanied by a Facility Report⁴⁴ if it is an external loan, and conservation compiles the Facility Report if the object will be displayed; conservation also write Incident Reports on possible damage done to the object at a Museum site; finally, conservation is also involved in monitoring environmental conditions of collections in storage, to report and make appropriate changes where necessary compiled in a quarterly report (BM, 2023: 1)

This documentation process is important to understand because the issue with historical dissociation in indigenous collections is the scant, missing, or misleading information documented during research or the museum documentation process upon acquisition and entering the museum. As noted in Chapter 5, this translates into empty catalogue cards, objects being given westernised terminology that does not fit their function, the intangible significance of an object not being listed, or just a poor or lack of record-keeping of conservation interventions. What I wanted to know from BM was: did he think this colonial museum and conservation documentation of indigenous objects pose a threat to the collection, and what consequences does the absence of or incomplete documentation have on his job as a conservator?

BM: Not necessarily, because conservators always err on the side of caution and will do testing before any intervention to ensure that artefacts are not compromised. These days we employed freezing techniques with a reengineered freezer to mitigate against infestations thereby limiting any changes to original artefact [...] This general lack of documentation regarding conservation/restoration methods does somehow increase the time spent on a conservation intervention, because it may require extensive research and treatment analysis before any intervention can commence but the conservator will not compromise the artefact because the [conservation] profession is guided by a Code of Ethics.

⁴³ The Motivation for Acquiring document is filled out by the curator.

⁴⁴ A Facility Report assesses the institution viability in securing safe storage and exhibition of objects going out on loan. This report includes security, monitoring, storage and methods of exhibition. As well as a documentation of the material fabric of the building, climate and environmental control, CCTV cameras and security, and fire suppression of the exhibition space.

While historical dissociation does create a disadvantageous situation for the proper provenance of indigenous objects, it does not necessarily pose a hindrance to the conservation of objects. As BM states, a conservator will always conduct extensive research and treatment analysis on an object before moving forward with any treatment. However, while the well-being of the tangible body of an object is important and can be assured through proper conservation and care, what about the intangible? What if the treatment, while it would not compromise the object's body, could compromise a spiritual aspect attached to the object, especially one that is culturally sensitive? BM answers about materiality and the tangibility of a museum object, not the intangible; he does not answer the full question, and only a certain set of answers are questioned here. During an information discussion, I asked him and JVW about the care of objects with spiritual significance and how he handles that as a conservator. BM answered, in his professional opinion as a conservator, that as soon as an object enters a museum, it becomes an artefact and ceases its previous spiritual function. Thus, the materiality and tangible body of an object are given more focus; this is a sentiment JVW shared (B. Mottie and J. Van Wyk, 2023, personal communication, 18 October).

This opinion shared above by BM and JVW highlights Clavir's statement as seen in Chapter 3, "the challenges to museums [regarding the inclusion of source communities in conserving objects] test the underlying paradigms of conservation knowledge, particularly what the practitioner does, and what is deemed important, legitimate and reasonable within the practice (Clavir, 1996: 101)". Conservators are thus better able to combat historical dissociation and loss of meaning and value by working alongside source communities. There could still be defiling happening when conservators are working with indigenous objects, especially regarding their significance to a community. Ignoring or giving the intangibles a backseat can have consequences for the objects. So, if collaboration workshops help fill in the blank spaces left in an object's museum documentation and would help in collection management and curation, it is, in fact, required in conservation. The preservation of materiality should not surpass the need to preserve its intangible qualities. Historical dissociation poses a hindrance to conservation if one is trying to conserve an object in its totality, whether physical or not.

6.4. The benefits for both sides

The question I want answered in this chapter is simply whether there are benefits to these collaboration projects for both Iziko Museums and the participatory indigenous community.

What will Iziko Museums gain from allowing access to their collections, and why should source communities partake in a project like this in the first place?

PT: Right, so we [Iziko Museums] were approached by the group [the Khomani San], and at that stage Hugo Bodenham was the photographer, I think he was from the UK, and he was very much interested in the Khomani San narrative. He was acting as an advisor to them. He approached us together with Petrus Vaalbooi, who's the chief of the Khomani San, and it was Itzak Kruiper. And so we [Iziko Museums] had this discussion around their proposal, and I then took the proposal to our Core Functions committee meeting, and we discussed it actually at length.

There was concern because we'd actually had a stakeholder engagement; it was around the Slave Lodge, the Art Gallery, but also the Iziko South African Museum (ISAM), and in particular, the whole question of the Ethnographic Gallery. And the argument in that stakeholders meeting was that we shouldn't be displaying human history, the history of peoples, alongside natural history. There was quite a strong sentiment that this gave people the wrong perception- and also, just in terms of that history of colonialism, human remains, et cetera- it was not a good idea [the proposed exhibition]. So at that stage the committee, the Core Functions committee felt it wasn't a good idea [to have the proposed exhibition in the former Ethnographic Gallery].

And in fact, what they did was then to offer alternative spaces, and I thought that was a pity [the rejected proposal]. I could understand what had come out of that stakeholders engagement, but the fact was that there was still exhibitions in place relating to [the San], the Rock Art Gallery, for example. I felt this was an opportunity to- even with the exhibition proposal turned down- bring the [Khomani San] group to the Iziko Social History Centre and have the engagement [collaboration project] around the ['Bushmen'] collection. And so, we [the C&D department] put together [a] proposal around that [collaboration], and a motivation with budget that was approved by the Iziko Museums Executive. We could then begin the process of bringing the group through.

The overall aims and objectives of the project were to bring back those voices that PT felt had been lost to the social history collection and redress the ethnographic collections archives by

engaging the Khomani San with the ‘Bushmen’ collection and documenting their stories, past and present usage of objects, and histories with the objects (PT, 2023: 1-2).

When asked about the selection criteria for the objects examined in the 2019 project, PT said he focused, firstly, on objects collected within the Khomani San area and especially items with spiritual significance (PT, 2023: 5). “The whisk that was used before the [trance] dances. The tortoise shell that was used to hold the buchu and the preparations. Some items of costume. And the photographic collection. But then, what we also did further down the line, we also had a session where we took them through the entire Khoi-San collections, so that it was then not just restricted under the community [objects], and have a look and comment more broadly. And then also just some of the other African studies collections related to the Zulu-speaking, Xhosa-speaking communities” PT concluded. PT’s role in the 2019 collaboration workshop was to draw up a draft programme, give an overview and understanding of the way in which collection had taken place, hear what the expectations were of the group regarding the collaboration project, and conduct brief oral history interviews with the Kruipers and Vaalboois (PT, 2023: 3-4).

The other Iziko staff members were also brought into the 2019 project for various reasons: JVV was in charge of presenting the objects and their cultural significance to the representatives, how they are cared for in the context of a museum, and the handling of museum collections as the objects are no longer functional for the purpose they were produced for. AK’s job was to act as translator between the Khomani San and Iziko Museums, as the Khomani San spoke Afrikaans; her role also ensuring the San representatives were comfortable and not overwhelmed by the sessions, especially since most of them [the daily workshops] took place indoors; this was important as the Khomani San are people of nature and being indoors, especially in the storerooms and meeting rooms at Iziko Museums, would have become too much for them. Those breaks that Annelize could offer them were important to ensure the Khomani San remained comfortable (PT, 2023: 4-5; AK, 2023: 2).

AK also mentioned her experience travelling to the Northern Cape as she has continued her close relationship with the Khomani San post-2019:

AK: He’ll (Chief Vaalbooi) always see me as Iziko, but he calls me “*My kind* (my child)”. So I think we have transgressed a bit of that relationship, and even when he was here, I brought him to my house. I made *afval* (animal intestines such as tripe, liver, etc), I try and get some *lekker bok vleis, sukke dinge* (nice Springbok meat,

such things). So we try and make a home for each other on either side, but he hasn't come down much lately. When I go down [to the Northern Cape], I go down as a team of EVDO [Elsie Vaalbooi Development Organisation]. But they obviously know me as Iziko, so when I do talk, I will talk from a heritage perspective. But I can also talk from a researcher's point of view and advising on how not to do things, how not to allow researchers to just come in, especially as young people. *Oom* Petrus them are used to that being paid for a mirror for research information. And having the community tell their own stories and not for people, or wait for people to come and do oral history interviews when they can say "Here's a stick, we've already done the interviews". So it's more taking pride in their own history and heritage, and taking ownership thereof. And also helping us as museums, because I don't stand there as the ultimate authority. If I get it wrong, I want them to tell me I've got it wrong.

There are a number of benefits highlighted for both sides already; Iziko Museums continues to nurture a relationship with the Khomani San and keeps that relationship thriving, which will benefit the institution if they require the assistance of the Khomani San for future exhibitions and collaborations. For the Khomani San, this collaboration was an opportunity to take agency in re-examining their own objects and redressing the museum archives; they get to tell their own story and take pride in their history and heritage. The act of approaching Iziko Museums first with their initial exhibition proposal shows that they have agency, that they are active participants, and that the history of indigenous people being passive voices of their own culture and heritage would not keep happening. The continued relationship between AK and the Khomani San and her assistance in ensuring they have ownership of their own past and story is a benefit to both sides, and Iziko Museums ensures that the Khomani San always have access to their collection. During every visit by the Khomani San to Iziko Museums, whether by the leadership (figures such as Chief Vaalbooi and Itzak Kruiper, for example) or the youth, everything is arranged beforehand by Iziko, and entrance is free for whichever Iziko Museums site gets visited, according to AK (A. Kotze, 2023, personal communication, 20 October).

I asked the Iziko staff what they learned or what impacted them from the 2019 collaboration sessions, and I received different answers:

JVW: The session, while the group looked at photographs and negatives, it was them looking through a family album as they recognised family members. Certain

photographs they relived past traditions [...] The session was extremely informative, as the group identified the materials, animal skin as per the catalogue card to eland skin used to make some of these objects this information that was omitted/nondescriptive by the researcher on the catalogue card. I then understood the importance of community engagement in the identification of museum collections in the South African context and its past histories of colonialism and apartheid.

PT: There were actually several moments. I think the one was- you know, I was just thinking when you had the question about race- one of the things that the group mentioned was that they've never had an opportunity to really say for themselves to define their own identity. That it's always been an identity thrust on them. They said on one stage they were Bushman, and then they became Coloured, and now they are San, Khoisan, and so there was still the whole issue of how did all of this come about. So that was the one thing I thought that was interesting. And there was just some discussion around how they were termed, sort of them speaking to their elders, and there was this idea that San was the word used.

And then, also just really incisive, was the remark Oom Petrus made: he said "You know, the Bushman or the San are always portrayed as having dressed in loincloths and as these hunter-gatherers". And yet his grandfather rode a horse, had a rifle, and kept sheep, was a sheep farmer. And I thought, this is one of the issues we are dealing with, the fact that there are these collections that have come to represent the culture of an entire community, and that's the problem with ethnographic collections very often.

What was also interesting, I thought, was what I would term the collections of spiritual significance, or, one might say, the sacred collection. But it was also just really eye-opening to hear the stories around [and] about their use and how community members perceived them [spiritual significant objects] to have particular powers. And then, when it came to the photographic collection, there was actually a photograph of Petrus Vaalbooi's mother and other community members. The father and uncles of Lydia Kruiper, for example.

PT brought up an important issue here, and that is the issue of how ethnographic collections come to represent an entire community. Lonetree summarises this issue in her book, *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums*,

“...objects were presented and defined by Western scientific categories—anthropological categories of manufacture and use—and not by Indigenous categories of culture, worldview, and meaning. Native societies were often defined by functional technology: we are only what we made. Exhibitions also obscured the great historical, cultural, and linguistic diversity of tribal nations by dividing Native people into cultural groups, giving a sense that all tribes are the same or at least the same in one particular region. At a time when Indians were believed to be on the road to extinction, exhibit techniques showed no desire on the part of curators to make connections with living Indians or to address an object’s cultural relevance” (2012: 30).

I also speak about this issue of Othering indigenous people in museums, and particularly museum exhibitions, in my first 3 chapters of this research paper; colonial museums and World Exhibitions aimed to present these ‘noble savages’ and ‘primitive’ societies in order to justify the colonial project of Western countries and the inhumane treatment indigenous people faced. African and Native American objects were among the most wanted items and ended up in museum collections very soon after collecting/looting; ethnographic museums were, after all, an invention of the late 19th century and closely connected with the ideologies and technologies employed during the Western expansion into the colonies (Förster, 2008: 19).

AK: [The Khomani San’s visit to the] Rock Art Gallery was important, but, oh, the most important one [was] when we took them into the ancestral remains space. Yeah, that was a hectic one, because I think that was only my second or third time.

The Khomani San, and especially Chief Petrus Vaalbooi, are advocates for the repatriation of human remains from museum storage, whether at Iziko Museums or across the rest of the world, and this visit to the ancestral remains space was important for them. AK mentions the emotional trauma of this visit to the Khomani San and that the remains from the Kalahari would have been unearthed and taken when the Khomani San representatives were already grown (AK, 2023: 7). “It could have been somebody they knew”, AK concluded. And while this visit would have certainly traumatised the Khomani San, as AK states, this is another benefit for them; these visible ties to the people whose remains Iziko Museums stored served as another incentive for the repatriation process. It becomes easy to forget that these human remains in boxes are actually people who had loved ones and came from communities that want them back. Iziko Museums communicating and working alongside the very people who had ties to

the remains they store brings back the human aspect and forces them to confront the very question of why ISAM is still holding onto these human remains. As mentioned in Chapter 4, a meeting was even held at ISAM with the Khomani San representatives and the Executive Director of Core Functions, where Chief Vaalbooi expressed his interest in assisting Iziko with resolving the issue of repatriating human remains. Nothing has happened since 2019 regarding repatriation, but that door certainly has not closed completely, according to PT.

The benefits to Iziko and the ‘Bushmen’ collections are plainly visible; the museum records are improved, notes on materiality and manufacture of the objects are supplemented with new information, and people in photographs were identified and named. The benefits to the community are no less important: recognising their family members in photographs they may or may not have had copies of, knowing that these people are now named and not simply forgotten faces, and receiving copies of these photographs to take home. The Khomani San are being given an opportunity to be heard and see the museum affect changes, and all give concrete examples of benefits.

6.5. Changes at Iziko post-2019 collaboration project

With the above-mentioned discussion on benefits to the communities and the institution, my attention turns to how Iziko Museums’ methods of acquiring, restoring, and conserving indigenous objects have changed or adapted since the 2019 collaboration sessions. Since I interviewed Iziko staff members from different departments, I would gain a wider range of answers; I wanted to gain wide perspectives on whether change has occurred throughout the entire C&D department post-2019 collaboration project. It is important to know whether there has been a recognition in Iziko of possible changes that needed to occur regarding how they looked after and displayed their indigenous collections, or whether such changes needed to happen in the first place. That importance stems from the fact that Iziko Museums is attempting to decolonise and redress their museum archives and exhibitions, and if no changes have occurred post-2019 collaboration project (and even with the collaboration project they had with Laura Gibson and the Nguni collection), then Iziko’s decolonisation project needs to be questioned.

BM mentioned that he has made no real changes in the conservation of indigenous objects, as he explained that the originator communities consulted were very happy with the conservation methods, treatment, storage, and handling employed by the Iziko conservation team (BM,

2023: 5). As mentioned in Chapter 4, the Khomani San held gratitude to Iziko Museums and the C&D staff for showing care to their ancestors, preserving the Khomani San's heritage, safekeeping, and preserving their objects (Vaalboois and Kruipers in Van Wyk, 2019: 3). The Khomani San representatives raised no objection to how the conservators were caring for their objects, and thus BM felt his treatment and preservation methodology presently required no change.

JVW understood the importance of community engagement more as she learned a lot through the collaboration project and that elevating indigenous voices in museums was vital; museums should not erase the notes on the catalogue cards and other museum documentation, but rather add indigenous knowledge and information to the objects' database (JVW, 2023: 2). JVW also believed more than ever that there should be a correction to the past labelling of museums and heritage institutions' indigenous collections and the use or addition of the language and definitions used by the indigenous people regarding their objects.

PT believes that these collaboration projects have created a recognition of the importance of consultations at Iziko Museums; there used to be a higher value in consulting academics, but now there are a higher number of exhibitions where community members are involved, are giving their input, giving their criticisms, and playing a fairly active role (PT, 2023: 12). PT also states that collaboration sessions with indigenous communities have made individual staff members more careful in how they treat collections that potentially hold spiritual significance, and when there are requests from external researchers to access these collections, that the same respect is given by them for these collections. That respect that is demanded by the Iziko staff from external researchers comes from the fact that "sacred integrity is important when this information is obvious, i.e. whenever an object belonging to Indigenous cultures is handled by others who are not of that culture, the sacred integrity is first and foremost" (Augustine, 2008: 7). To put it in a simpler way, "any object that comes to us as cultural property, handlers and caretakers should care for like expensive, brittle, and delicate Chinese porcelain" Augustine (2008: 7) concludes.

Regarding collection and acquisition these days, PT says that there is far more consideration for what the narrative behind the object(s) is, how much information there is, and not just randomly bringing in objects (PT, 2023: 12). TN mirrors PT's answer by stating that collaboration sessions with indigenous communities have improved how the indigenous collections get cared for and handled, not only in the placement/storage of these objects but

also in the respect and dedication given to them by the rest of the Iziko staff (TN, 2023: 2). As a curator, AK says that she was taught in museology that you need to consult and that she has learned a lot from her first exhibition in 2018; what is known in academia is not always known in the general public, which gave her a new perspective on curating an exhibition (AK, 2023: 7). For AK, visiting the ancestral remains with Chief Vaalbooi and the other representatives and witnessing the emotional trauma they went through seeing their peers made a big difference for her, and she gained a new sense of urgency to raise awareness of the repatriation of objects and ancestral remains through museum exhibitions (AK, 2023: 7).

Iziko does not remain in a stagnant state regarding their museum policies and practices, an essential step in combating historical dissociation and preventing future dissociation. This is visible in the creation of Iziko's C&D department as a result of Iziko Museums recognition of the professionalisation of Collections Management and Conservation beyond technical skills (BM, 2023: 6). Likewise, policies and guidelines are reviewed and updated every 3-5 years, including amendments to the Conservation/Collections Procedural Manual to incorporate any issues of handling or conserving museum objects (BM, 2023: 4; JVW, 2023: 2).

6.6. Approaching culturally sensitive objects at ISHC

I have mentioned culturally sensitive and significant objects across my research paper, and the next research question I posed was: how can a museum approach and handle objects that are culturally sensitive or have associated cultural protocols, such as those that can only be touched or used by certain members of a community? The transfer of indigenous knowledge involves listening to the stories and legends of the makers and learning their skills (Augustine, 2008: 3). All cultural material should be treated with respect, no matter whom it belongs to or what context the object was used in; however, culturally sensitive objects carry additional protocols related to the gender of the handler or maker and daily, seasonal, and annual cycles that dictate when and how the objects can be handled or stored (Augustine, 2008: 3). The Canadian Association for Conservation of Cultural Property published a *Code of Ethics and Guidance for Practice* in 2000 (CAC/CAPC 2000) that discusses the handling of culturally sensitive objects; “in the document, it is stated, under general obligations, to include respect for sacred integrity as an important principle guiding the practice of conservation”, Augustine (2008: 6) states. The most important role of the conservator is preserving and restoring, as is deemed appropriate, cultural material for present and future generations (Augustine, 2008: 7).

According to the Khomani San, certain objects, such as the whisk and dance rattles mentioned in Chapter 4, are more sensitive than others; these objects were used during ceremonial dances and played an important part in the procedures. Another object mentioned was the bangles a girl would wear once she became a woman. When dealing with such important spiritually significant objects, certain protocols should be kept in mind, prompting PT to ask the San representatives how they should store the spiritual objects, to which the Itzak Kruiper responded that the objects should be stored in their context, once again further elaborated upon in Chapter 4.

As mentioned previously by BM and in Chapter 4, the Khomani San could see (during the 5-day workshop in 2019) that their objects, whether mundane or spiritually significant, were being taken care of for the prosperity of future generations; within the Kalahari itself, these objects were still being used, so preserving them at Iziko meant future generations would be able to see them (B. Mottie, 2023, personal communication, 19 October; J. Van Wyk, 2023, personal communication, 19 October).

Another possible example of a culturally sensitive object that experienced historical dissociation is a whisk from the ‘Bushmen’ collection currently on display at ISAM; on its display label, it is labelled as a ‘fly whisk’, whereas it was possibly a whisk used by a shaman to bring dancers out of their trance dancers, according to Itzak Kruiper, who saw the object during the walkthrough in 2019. I did not include this object in my research conducted in Chapter 5, as it had not been examined by the Khomani San since it was on display at the time. I asked AK and PT about the whisk and their thoughts on this possible historical dissociation and the active dissociation still going on. This could be a perfect example of historical dissociation occurring at an instance in time but still having its effects, especially as the whisk still presently on display with an alleged incorrect label and visitors see it daily.

It had been AK who brought my attention to this whisk while I was assisting the conservation team with setting up the *The Evolution of Indigenous Art* exhibition at ISAM in the Rock Art Gallery. The exhibition was curated by AK and Lukretia Booysen⁴⁵ along with Glynn Alard⁴⁶, with most of the artwork selected from Ms. Booysen’s gallery at Koena Art Institute. During the installation of the artwork, which were all contemporary artworks of indigenous artists

⁴⁵ Lukretia Booysen is a curator and Director of Koena Art Institute, which is an organisation that celebrates and preserves Kho and San heritage and identity, representing artists of Khoena heritage from across South Africa. Artworks and events reflect the narrative through the eyes of the Khoena people, indigenous to the Southern Region of Africa.

⁴⁶ Glynn Alard is the Natural History Educator at Iziko Museums.

displayed alongside the rock art at ISAM, AK mentioned the possible incorrect label still being used for the fly whisk, Itzak mentioned that the whisk looked similar to the whisks used by shamans during trance dance ceremonies. However, he did not mention wanting it removed from the display.

But to AK, her perspective on the fly whisk might have changed as time passed and she conducted more research on the whisk:

AK: In this one paper I was reading today, [Patricia] Davison actually does talk about the fly whisk, and I'm thinking the more I'm reading it in academic papers and looking at our labels, I'm starting to doubt what was told to me via this discussion [with Itzak Kruiper]. Because if academics say so and the museum cards and everything else say so, how much do you take into consideration what someone else had explained? Because the thing is, is that when I see something that it not on someone, I will interpret like an apron (the Steenbok blanket), you know.

I do see value in what AK is saying because often labelling and categorising an object comes down to how it gets interpreted and through what lens it gets viewed. So the whisk could have been a fly whisk for the researcher or the person who donated it, but to Itzak Kruiper, it looks like the whisk used by shamans for trance dances. This brings me to another important point, which could be a pitfall for conducting a research interview like this: as a researcher, I cannot take my interviewer's words as the only truth, and this is also true for oral history. As Augustine reiterates, "we can't take oral tradition on face value, thinking that one individual knows it. By that, I mean not everyone agrees on the traditional knowledge concerning their heritage, as today we see so many blends of traditions" (2008: 5). Simply said, engaging in critical thinking and conducting research to substantiate my viewpoints is important. There are gaps and issues in having oral interviews and stories as a source, as they represent one side of the story, and I acknowledge this.

Everything is not black and white all the time, especially when we remember that the interpretation of an object can change or alter depending on the generation viewing it. AK summarises my thoughts on this.

AK: It can evolve depending on who looks at it, their understanding of it, and whether the interpretation of it in the catalogue card- when it was given- was given truthfully. Because if it's in the catalogue card, we understand it like you were saying that, "Okay, fine, the white person could have gotten it wrong". But there is also that

thing of they could have gotten incorrect information. But it's always going to differ; nothing is ever going to be 100% unless you actually physically go to someone who is actually wearing it now. So yeah, it's possible.

I asked AK why she thought the label of the whisk has not been changed despite it being given a new function and context by an indigenous person, and she stated that the label is not the most important thing, and she stated that the whisk and its possible incorrect labelling and identification are a teaching device she uses (AK, 2023: 11).

AK: What I do like about having it there is that it is an example of "We got it wrong, we don't know everything". That is how I interpreted it, that is how I speak to it in the exhibition context: as much as we have a responsibility as a museum and as curators to give correctly researched information and labels, that if we got it wrong, do you take it away and no one will ever know that we got it wrong? So for me, keeping it in that space is a reminder of the fact that we need to do proper research, and we need to be honest with our visitors, whoever is willing to listen that, "Look this is an example", and it gives someone else also an opportunity to... You never know, a freaking first-year conservation student can come now and say, "Look I'm from this community and this is what we used it for, and you're not allowed to exhibit it or you haven't taken care of it properly even as a conservator. So I want it back, my community can take care of it rather". So up until we have someone, especially for that object, coming to say it must come down, I use it as "We're only human. We also get it wrong".

The whisk can possibly still be in a state tainted by past dissociation because, although the whisk's true identity and past usage are not completely known as of yet, it is still being viewed by visitors, and thus any chance there is of the label being incorrect means that past, uncorrected dissociation causes current and ongoing misinforming of visitors. However, the whisk is also a teaching and awareness tool for AK and Iziko; AK uses it as an example of what should not be done. My main concern is: what happens if she is not there to explain this whisk and the context it holds in the exhibition? Dissociation would then go unchecked, and false information could be spread outside once the visitor leaves.

Another concern is why Iziko had not changed the label or looked into conducting further research on the whisk if a member of the Khomani San gave it a different function and context. PT was given the same question regarding the whisk and why it remains on display despite the

incorrect labelling, and to him, it was a problem with communication between the museum departments. PT also sees a need for critical evaluation, and he does not really see that happening; it concerns him because the Iziko staff are so busy that there is never real focus or enough time spent focusing on the quality of the job. He goes on to say that even from a practical level, if someone puts up an exhibition, there should be another person who actually goes through it with a fine-tooth comb and picks up all of those mistakes.

I certainly see both of these answers being correct regarding how to handle an ethnographic object still having suffered historical dissociation, because it can be a matter of interpretation depending on which generation or person views the object, and it can be a matter of there not being enough evaluation or quality control being done regarding exhibitions and documentation. This can be a problem for recognising historical dissociation as a threat to museum collections and combating this issue and the wider museum decolonisation effort.

In general, there is an ethical and respectful approach to how Iziko Museums handles and cares for their culturally sensitive ethnographic objects. However, there are pitfalls to working beyond your culture, and in the absence of cultural protocols in the museum records, despite any respectful approach to the objects, harm could be done inadvertently by well-intentioned individuals. As Henderson aptly states in *The dress and the power of redress*,

“Conservators must be very clear what respect looks like. Respect requires us to draw up ethical principles that have a validity across cultures and peoples. It requires us to understand the meaning of objects and to know this can change and originate from many people. Respect requires us to learn and attend to expert knowledge about the intangible and tangible aspects of a thing. Respect requires listening and sharing; it requires humility and revision. When we make statements about how conservation should be done, we must start from a baseline of considering whose voices are being heard” (2022: 58-59).

Looking at the handling and care of culturally sensitive objects from a conservator’s point of view, I wanted to know how JYW handles and conserves culturally sensitive objects. She answered by stating that Iziko conservators are guided by ethical practices aligned with *ICOM’s Code of Ethics for Museums*, which I mentioned in Chapter 1, and Iziko Museums’ *Conservation Policy*, which holds the guiding principles of conservation and procedures for best conservation practice (Mottie, February, and Van Wyk, 2019: 2). The *Conservation Policy*

is in accordance with the “established ethics as stated in the International Council of Museums (ICOM) *Code of Professional Ethics*, Barcelona 2001; and the South African Museum Association’s (SAMA) *Professional Standards and Transformation Indicators*, 2006” Mottie *et al.* states (2019: 3). JVW is trained as a preventative conservator, and she always practices minimal or non-invasive intervention: relating to surface residues and content, JVW does no removal of these if not for the purpose of research and practices minimal handling and proper storage methodology to ensure this process is effective (minimal intervention), and non-invasive means non-destructive (JVW, 2023: 2).

Regarding the approach and handling of an object that is culturally sensitive or has associated cultural protocols such as only being touched or used by certain members of a community, JVW states that this information can be absent from the museum documentation, and so, she approaches all objects with equal respect and ethical standards. This is indeed potentially problematic, as ‘equal respect’ is not a broad thing, and her very job of handling and preserving culturally sensitive objects could damage them as a woman, a non-member of a culture, etc. A form of respect for the object could be the act of understanding an indigenous community’s request or tradition of “restrict[ing] access to and use of materials that describe and present esoteric, ceremonial, or religious knowledge that is significant to the community” as Beaulieu (2007: [sp]) states on the *Protocols for Native American Archival Materials* website.

As the assistant collections manager of the social history unit at ISHC, I wanted to gain TN’s perspective on this topic. Similar to JVW, I wanted to know how he approaches and handles an object that is known to be culturally sensitive or has associated cultural protocols. According to TN, there are different approaches on how to handle them, and in some cases, who can handle them amongst the Iziko staff. TN goes on to state that there are even instances whereby they consult with the group/person associated with such culturally sensitive objects to somehow give the staff a better understanding of how they should handle and treat these objects.

There is a constant discourse and debate that has been going on in the heritage and museum sectors regarding decolonisation and repatriation, what kinds of collections should remain in museums, and which objects should return to their source and originator communities. Museums have long moved away from being cabinets of curiosities and places for young gentlemen to study nature, science, and the Other, and now look after ethnographic collections with the (often) sincere task of preserving them for present and future generations.

There is a desire to forego the object-based presentations that focus on the functions and uses of objects according to ethnographic categories and, instead, exhibit the “stronger connections to the connections that pieces have to contemporary [source] communities” Lonetree (2012: 37). Lonetree goes on to quote scholar Trudy Nicks, “Museums now accept that many contemporary indigenous groups see objects as living entities ... [and] the significance of objects is no longer restricted to past contexts of manufacture, use, and collecting, but now takes into account the demonstrated meanings they may have for indigenous communities in the present and for the future” (2012, 37), which I reiterate throughout this research paper.

Regarding the conservation of indigenous objects, Henderson writes in her *Beyond lifetimes: who do we exclude when we keep things for the future* journal article that conservation is not neutral:

“Other studies of conservation decision-making confirm that whilst conservators are generally prepared to consult source/originating communities to establish definitions of value and to shape arrangements for storage or display, the profession offers a fairly strict hierarchy of technocracy when it comes to input into decisions about treatments. The evidence suggests that conservators tend to privilege the input of those whose expertise we recognise. Whilst we might allow a broader range of stakeholders to help us frame significance statements, in the event of a conflict it is all too easy to fall back on traditional roles and symbols of power. Sanchita Balachandran commented that conservation has tended to avoid engagement with contemporary issues, hiding behind the ‘safety of our benches’ and using technical assessments to avoid facing more complex social assessments” (2020: 200).

While the process of conservation may feel “intrinsically neutral”, as stated above with JVW, just the act of caring for and holding an object and attempting to preserve it ‘as is’ can be “politicised by context ... Even when the concept of keeping as a benefit is agreed in principle by all stakeholders, the act of retention can symbolise a political act of acquisition” (Henderson, 2020: 201). Unfortunately, due to the withdrawal of my interviewee from the Khomani San, I could not answer some important questions I had, such as the opinion the source community held on Iziko Museums housing culturally sensitive objects and what their opinion was on the handling and care of these objects from people outside their community. That loss of the indigenous voice is once again felt in this section.

6.7. Decolonisation

My next research question I asked is regarding museum decolonisation; what does museum decolonisation mean to each of my interviewees, and can a museum collection become decolonised?

What becomes important in the decolonisation process, according to JW, is the renaming/classification process of the existing collections: this will be the start of reclaiming the meaning and purpose of indigenous culturally significant and mundane objects (JW, 2023: 4). By doing this, JW sees decolonisation in practice as removing layers of injustice done to museum collections, utilising the past through gaining indigenous knowledge from source communities, and adding the new narrative told from these collaboration projects to build the identity of the museum collections (JW, 2023: 4). JW wishes there to be continuity in the preservation of cultural heritage for the future (JW, 2023: 4).

I certainly agree with JW on this point; the decolonising project should include the redressing of museum archives and using indigenous knowledge procured from collaboration projects to give indigenous objects their proper names and purposes. I do not believe past naming and reclassification should be completely erased, and neither do I think JW is asking for that to happen, but rather to add indigenous knowledge to museum documentation, exhibition labels, and provenances. The purpose will be to “generate the critical awareness that is necessary to heal from historical unresolved grief on all the levels and in all the ways it continues to harm Native people today” Lonetree (2023: 23) states. Decolonisation should not be about erasing past grievances and pain, but rather acknowledging and redressing it.

Regarding museum collections becoming decolonised, JW strongly agrees that the decolonisation of museum collections should occur with the current collection at the same time as for new acquisitions, and when the new objects enter the collection, this transformation (of decolonisation) can only occur if it is inclusive of all departments such as research, collection, and conservation (JW, 2023; 4). This multi-disciplinary approach is necessary since part of recognising indigenous voices is having curators co-curate exhibitions with the source communities; it is involving source communities in the research of their objects; it is ensuring that indigenous objects are conserved and cared for in a manner that respects their intangible and mundane function as much as possible.

For BM, museum decolonisation is not simply the relocation of a statue or an object; it is a long-term process that seeks to recognise the integral role of empire in museums, from their

creation to the present day (BM, 2023: 6). By ‘relocation’, BM means the removal of statues or objects that do not fit the current political climate of a country; for example, the removal of the Rhodes Memorial during the University of Cape Town’s Rhodes Must Fall movement in 2015 did not undo anything that happened in the past and does not solve anything (B. Mottie, 2023, personal communication, 19 October). “Decolonisation requires a reappraisal of our institutions and their history and an effort to address colonial structures and approaches to all areas of museum work” BM states. The senior conservator states that Iziko Museums is taking on this important work of decolonising museum collections to try to make its museums reflect the diversity and voices of the people of South Africa within their collections and around them. The museum collections can be decolonised, but it will require a lot of funding and research (BM, 2023: 6). BM does not believe there are short cuts for decolonisation and the process will be a lengthy one, but if the institution exhibits these changes in the form of exhibitions, the tide will slowly change, making the institution more inclusive for all South Africans; inclusivity meaning diversity of material culture, language spoken, museum guests and a diversity of museum staff in terms of gender and race.

TN sees museum decolonisation as a process that museums undergo to expand the perspectives they portray beyond those of the dominant cultural group, particularly Western white colonisers; hence, he strongly suggests and supports the inclusion or incorporation of interpretation and documentation with those who were colonised (TN, 2023: 2). “I think the way [towards museum decolonisation] should be paved by those who are directly or indirectly involved with colonising the collection- meaning the processes of repatriation should happen and not just be talked about. The academics/curators should also better contextualise the collections in exhibitions and be in constant consultation or even involving the people from the colonised groups to partake. We need to accept that we cannot tell their stories without them!!!!” TN concludes, bringing back the need for a multi-disciplinary approach to decolonising museums and their collections; there needs to be a redressing and re-contextualisation of information regarding indigenous collections with the indigenous knowledge shared by source communities, and source communities should be part of the curating and researching of their own objects.

PT: It means bringing in community voices, on the one hand, of the collections. Bringing in the forgotten histories, the overlooked histories- more overlooked than forgotten. Then confronting the flaws and the skewed histories that have come out of that colonial and apartheid past. And we had a discussion in one of our forums

where some of my colleagues were saying “You know, you’re talking about oral histories but these are not reliable, basing things on people’s memories”. And my response was “But what do you think the archives are?”. Look, people have written things and very often written from memory, but because it’s written you accept it as truth. So it’s also then about bringing in that knowledge, those narratives. I think the oral histories, I think there should be a far greater focus on oral histories in the Iziko Museums. Talk to the curators, you’ll find that there are some who have worked [with oral history] but, I think, for quite a few of them it would be something quite new. Which is really strange in a sense, because it is an important part of our history, and in particular if you are serious about bringing in the indigenous knowledge or community knowledge, oral history is an important part of that.

And so it is about re-writing those archives as well, because if you go and look at the documentation relating to some of the collection, you still find language that is actually insulting to people, and that needs to be placed within a context. So, I think it’s linked to social justice as well, to broader issues and a recognition of the violence that is associated with some of the collections, but also an acknowledgement of the way which some of that collecting was done. The whole racial mission, race mission behind the collecting. You were talking about how people who are not part of the cultures would be the ones putting forward the knowledge, and sometimes that was part of the whole colonising mission. Not to say people were intentionally... but they bought into it, and that’s also the big problem. In fact, I remember when we had the discussion with Oom Petrus and the group around why their proposal was turned down, and we spoke about how do you portray human history together with this natural history. And their response was “You see a distinction, you see this division because you got a Western education”. They were saying “We’ve lived with nature, we’ve lived in balance for all of the years”. And the whole problem I think is that the interpretations come very much from a particular knowledge system, and other knowledge systems are dismissed. And so there really should be this contestation brought in, because we always talk about museums as safe spaces for critical debate, and it shouldn’t only be when it comes to museum education events. There should be critical debate throughout- within that museum documentation, the collections documentation, within the exhibitions.

PT thinks that museum collections can become decolonised, such as through exhibitions that portray a holistic narrative, and not just have the voice of the museum professional as authority. Other voices need to be heard as well, especially of those being portrayed. For AK museum decolonisation means empty shelves, and more specifically, empty boxes free of ancestral/human remains and burial goods (AK, 2023: 13). AK is a strong advocate for the repatriation of human remains and returning them to their communities; she studied archaeology and has been part of numerous projects that deals with returning indigenous human remains back to South Africa from abroad. For AK, decolonising a space means having exhibitions like *Evolution of Indigenous Art* and having people, especially the youth, see themselves in museum objects and want to research themselves and their own identities (AK, 2023: 13). It is allowing people to have more say and for museums to relinquish the ultimate authority because the museum does not know everything. AK does believe that museum collections can become decolonised and believes that she can decolonise by trying to exhibit objects that will create a conversation- a difficult one about decolonising (AK, 2023: 14).

I had another additional question for my interviewees, and that was the sincerity of Iziko Museums' endeavour to decolonise their museums and collections and whether they were conducting these collaboration sessions with indigenous communities for the actual purpose of redressing their archives or gain positive publicity and attention. Firstly, I wanted to hear PT's answer to this question, especially as a former Head of Department and a long-time Iziko employee:

PT: I think there is a sincerity, yes. I can tell you because I have had, in the position of Director, the opportunity to be in council meetings, senior management meetings, Core Function meetings. And so I think we've had some really interesting people in council who've been quite clear about those issues and very supportive of how to make those changes, and certainly [also] at the strategic level. But I think the big problem is you can have it as strategy, but it's a big step between having the strategy on paper and implementation. And I think there's still a lot of challenges there, because it's about budget, and about staffing. But it's also I think- to a certain extent- some of the staff, and they've said openly they find it difficult to now have to work in a different way. And so there's need for a lot more strategizing. And in fact, I think it's quite important that exhibitions take place in a different way, because I think there are still exhibitions that are very much at the level of the individuals; it's

the curator who decides, and I think you lose... It does mean working in a different way means a whole lot of things. It can be a challenge in terms of the time, because that means you got to call meetings, work as a team, as a whole lot of dynamics. But I think there needs to be a greater move in that direction.

So I do think there is a sincerity, there isn't a lack of will, and there is certainly a lot of staff within the museum are very much aware, and some of the staff are activist. Others are quite... would want to stay away from anything that brings about activism, but in some sense you need that balance. There are people who are very much still that the collections are the main thing, and sometimes I would get a sense that the collections are more important than the people. And for me, I've always knew it's always been both, because the collections are about the people.

It is indeed easy to make ideas and projects regarding decolonisation look good on paper, but the implementation is usually the most difficult part. PT is correct in that the conservation of heritage is about the people they belong to. However, as seen with the rejection of the Khomani San's initial exhibition proposal and the hierarchal issues Iziko Museums faces, museums tend to serve their own agenda first; "museums choose certain exhibits and programs and not others, selecting those that will, as one important consequence, tantalize visitors to pay to come in, or show their political masters or Board of Governors that they're doing the right thing" Clavir (2008: 29) states, which I agree with. Museums and their employees function on two fundamental principles: 1) that collections are vital to the understanding of heritage and therefore form the primary focus of museum work; and 2) that this work is a "moral good every community should respect and desire"- these principles represent a notion of "culture that infuses technical procedures with moral imperatives" (Clavir, 2008: 29).

As someone who has continued a close relationship with the Khomani San over the years, I wanted to know from AK whether she believes that Iziko Museums wants to foster and build real relationships with these indigenous communities, whether it be the Khomani San or other groups (AK, 2023: 6). AK believes that Iziko Museums is being sincere in that regard and that while other museums are reluctant to make changes when given the opportunity, Iziko is not; for example, the British Museum in England that says no to repatriation and any efforts to make a real change (AK, 2023: 6). "...As the museum we have to remain Switzerland. We [Iziko Museums] need to at least- we have to be honest [with the indigenous community] and say we

will create the space for difficult conversations to happen, but we can't solve everything. And most of the time our hands are cut off, and we are basically- not held hostage- but we also have to adhere to rule and regulations of the government. We need to tell them that, and that's all [for complete honesty and transparency]" AK states.

That neutrality that AK wishes for at Iziko Museums might not be possible, as there is no real neutrality in heritage, especially when it comes to decolonisation. As Henderson states in *Inconvenient questions and the questions of neutrality*:

“The move to decolonise collections has rightly called on organisations to address past failings, and this redress must include the option of restitution. Restitution means that the professional staff, including conservators, will have no agency over the care of a returned thing. This need not negate all past work to care for collections: informed conservation can offer the most thoughtful support to the next step, sometimes intended to extend the lifetime, sometimes to extend the life experience. Reburial, censorship and even destruction may all, in some contexts, represent the most life-enhancing path for the material records of our past. Accepting that extending the lifetime of a record may only be one of the decision-making criteria, and not the dominant one, allows us to examine what other criteria should be factored into our decisions” (2022: 5-6).

Can the decolonisation movement truly be neutral if the very act of working alongside indigenous communities means a possible future where repatriation is the norm and, in the near or distant future, we will have empty exhibitions and storage shelves? The return of objects to their source communities and the loss of power that the museum could have over the preservation, exhibition, and ownership of these objects will always make decolonisation a non-neutral experience.

Iziko Museums is willing to engage further with community members, allowing for a more participatory approach to revisiting the collections and let them guide the museum staff through the collections, telling the staff how they felt, what they thought, whether the labels were right or wrong, and whether certain objects could be put on display or not. If Iziko Museums did not have interactions with communities like that, AK doesn't believe they would know certain things (AK, 2023: 5-6).

As long as there is sincerity and a real love for their collection and a desire for change, I believe that decolonisation is possible. I think Iziko Museums is striving towards real change, and

while the process might be long, hard, and often stilted at times, I believe that a more inclusive museum is possible. I want Iziko Museums to one day live up to the new definition of a museum that the Extraordinary General Assembly of ICOM approved on August 24, 2022:

“A museum is a not-for-profit, permanent institution in the service of society that researches, collects, conserves, interprets and exhibits tangible and intangible heritage. Open to the public, accessible and inclusive, museums foster diversity and sustainability. They operate and communicate ethically, professionally and with the participation of communities, offering varied experiences for education, enjoyment, reflection and knowledge sharing.” (2023: [sp]).

This new definition of a museum is also aligned with some of the changes made in the role of museums, such as recognising the importance of inclusivity for all, community participation, and sustainability (ICOM, 2023: [sp]). This definition and changes made to the role and responsibility are where I wish the future of Iziko Museums and other South African museums to head. As long as the voices of the source communities never get silenced, anything is possible.

Considering all of the above, what does decolonisation as a conservator mean to me? I think Balanchandran states it best:

“It means recognizing that we are stewards of collections through historical and political circumstance; that our authority can be both utilized for the cause of equality, but also abused. It also means that while we may be authorized to physically conserve collections, they and the histories and stories they represent also belong to the people who claim them. Instead, our work has to support and make possible the right of people to tell, sing and perform their own narratives of their own cultural heritage” (2016: [sp])

Conservation in the present and future can no longer just be about objects and preserving the tangible body. Conservation also has to be about the people whose lives are inscribed on them; we are holding a people’s history, culture, and tradition in our hands, and we should never forget the privilege and responsibility of that (Balanchandran, 2016: [sp]). Decolonising the museum means decolonising the mind.

6.8. Does any of this help?

My final research question I hope to answer is perhaps my most crucial one thus far, and that is, can collaboration workshops between colonial museums and source communities help combat historical dissociation and return the intangible significance that gets diminished or lost in indigenous objects? Do the Iziko staff think the information given by the descendants is reliable in reflecting the significance and value of objects collected so long ago? JVW states that collaboration workshops give agency to the indigenous community and value to the tangible and intangible culture of their objects. JVW concludes by saying that information supplied by the descendants adds value to the museum records and allows for greater understanding of these objects, which are in turn digitised for greater access (JVW, 2023: 4).

AK: Yes. I mean with the images of *oom* Petrus' mother he didn't know how old she really was until he saw the photo of her. So it absolutely is, because the thing is *oom* Petrus' sister- how old is she now, I think she's younger than him I think he's the oldest- but there were certain things she spoke about which wasn't for Iziko which was for my own research, which she hadn't remembered in years. And up until that time that I came and I had that conversation with her, she had never thought about it. So as much as it's important for us to have had that knowledge before it goes away, it's important for them also to talk about it, to remind them of things. So we will start talking about the fly whisk then we will go onto something else, and something else. And the important thing is that- and this is what we have to do as government institutions- we are limited. We are limited with time and we are limited with resources; so I can have a 2-day workshop with *oom* Petrus them but on day 3 as we were driving back to the Kalahari, I get the most important information because we were sitting in that car and *dis geselsie* (its conversation/chatting). We're not sitting in a room under the building, and every time when they want to go out and smoke, they must get out and be there for 10-15 minutes and then come back into a space. So you have to think about the types of information you want, not to limit it and also to- and this is the most important thing- put them in a space where they are comfortable. Because you must know *daai mense voel- spesifiek nou oom Petrus hulle- hulle is natuur mense* (these people feel- especially uncle Petrus them- they are people of nature). And we put them in that education space downstairs, they're surrounded by walls and stuff and even inside when we went to the Savannah space it is still not something that's normal, I want to say. It's good, because they gave us

advice on which animals must be displayed with who, and how they work in nature but we do need to take those things into consideration. So it's time and resources and making them feel comfortable. Absolutely.

The Iziko staff I spoke with understood that much time has passed since the objects were originally collected, that Iziko might be dealing with a collection that has been collected at least 3-4 generations ago, and that the information supplied by communities may be diluted, elaborated on, and not reflective of past practices so long ago. TN in particular recognises that Iziko cannot rely solely on the information shared as being the best, but it is a start, and if the descendants are regarded as the generation with such information, then Iziko Museums has no choice but to evaluate what they can get from them (TN, 2023: 2).

I think there is a positive gain from these projects regarding the documentation, conservation, and curation of these ethnographic collections post-examination by their source communities. It is especially helpful when descendants and communities are brought in that still use these museum objects within their communities, and even though the objects are now used in contemporary times, their core function and significance rarely change or become altered too much. TN's caution is, however, warranted since the modern interpretation of an object could be different from that of its original function, and not every source community will be like the Khomani San, where they examined objects that are still being used and made in the Kalahari. Are the younger generation gaining the same indigenous knowledge from their elders as the previous generation might have received from those who came before them? This issue of oral history and interpretation could be seen in Zuni, New Mexico, where the A:shiwí A:wán Museum and Heritage Center was established in 1991. This institution is dedicated to engaging the young generations of the Zuni people⁴⁷ in important aspects of their cultural heritage (Isaac, 2009: 303). "The guardianship of knowledge in Zuni is partitioned among clans and religious societies and is taught on a need-to-know basis in order to ensure the transfer of associated responsibilities" Isaac continues (2009: 303). Like the Khomani San and many other indigenous groups, oral tradition is utilised by Zuni people as a tool for transmitting knowledge, and in this process, instructors have full control over the context in which knowledge is transmitted as well as how the knowledge gets used (Isaac, 2009: 309).

⁴⁷ The Zuni people are believed to be the descendants of the Ancient Pueblo Peoples who lived in the deserts of New Mexico, Arizona, Southern Colorado and Utah for centuries.

It is also viewed as crucial for students to learn the nature of the instructive frameworks in which the oral tradition is performed, as this is the structure within which knowledge is embedded and given meaning. In effect, traditional narratives are not merely about the content of the stories and prayers — they also perform at a metaphorical level, in which the instructive framework conveys social protocols and responsibilities portrayed in the stories. In Zuni today, however, there is apprehension that youngsters may not be getting the opportunity to learn about and use as much of their traditional culture and history as earlier generations had done. This is credited to the fact that wage-earning jobs and schools have widened the gaps between generations.” (Isaac, 2009: 309).

As generations pass, contemporary lifestyles and those outside the community can alter the way oral tradition and indigenous knowledge get passed between the elders and the youth. Thus, the modern interpretation of indigenous objects could be different, as stated above. And bringing it back to not taking oral tradition at face value, the views of a few members of a community do not equate to those of everyone else.

Objects can become historically dissociated just by being taken out of their communities, and giving them the original context they were created for can help in how they are conserved and curated, especially with the indigenous knowledge shared by the source communities, but the spiritual damage might never be undone. For example, a tortoise shell used by a shaman during religious ceremonies could be taken out of the community, and through the act of being removed from its community and touched and seen by people not meant to do so, it loses the spiritual significance it once possessed. During an informal talk with AK, I asked her about her thoughts on culturally sensitive objects and whether she thought they could gain their spiritual significance back once the source community shared the object(s) original context and function. AK stated that these objects should have never left their communities in the first place; however, she also cautions that not every group or person within a community views spiritually significant objects in the same way, and it depends on who gets spoken to and what the object was used for (A. Kotze, 2023, personal communication, 19 October). The Khomani San representatives in 2019 still viewed the whisk, the tortoise shell that held buchu, and the dance rattles they examined as spiritually significant, for example (J. Van Wyk, 2023, personal communication, 19 October). However, I wonder what their thoughts would be on the fly whisk still on display at SAM, which could potentially be a shaman’s whisk; would that object’s spiritual significance still be in tact?

Through a similar collaboration project involving community members, the object may regain the full meaning and interpretation it once possessed for the community; however, its spiritual agency might be lost forever. This highlights the importance of the continued involvement of the originator communities in museum work, as what happens when the community is gone or no longer remembers or has the affinity to care for their objects, leaving the museum as the only place that can care for these? This is a nuanced, complex topic that will not have a singular solution.

6.9. The future

With the above discussion in mind, I turn my attention to the future and what lies ahead for these collaboration projects at Iziko Museums. Both AK and JVW state they would like to participate in participatory projects in the future, engaging with a more diverse group of South African indigenous communities (AK, 2023: 15; JVW, 2023: 4). To me, this shows how beneficial the interaction was for the Iziko staff as heritage professionals; they learned a lot from the indigenous knowledge, systems, and practices that can be applied to promote and preserve the country's diverse cultural heritage to help increase interest in Iziko and its diverse collections. AK states that she plans on continuing to work with the Khomani San and the people in the Northern Cape in the future; since so many of Iziko's objects are from the Northern Cape, AK cannot see herself not working with those communities, even after she finishes working at Iziko (AK, 2023: 15).

I asked the two conservators where they saw the future of conservation and conserving indigenous collections at Iziko Museums. For JVW, the future of conservation at an institution such as Iziko Museums should first acknowledge the conservation profession as a scarce skill; according to the conservation assistant, there are no succession plans for the future of the conservation team in the C&D department, and this will have an impact on the preservation of all their collections, including indigenous collections (JVW, 2023: 4). BM remains positive, given the new breed of South African conservation graduates and intellectuals currently being developed that will accurately document and interrogate any artefact that could or may have been acquired in order to remediate past dissociation (BM, 2023: 6). I agree with both conservators on their opinions; the field of conservation still has a long way to go in southern Africa before being given the same importance and consideration as on other

continents. However, with the creation of university programmes like the University of Pretoria’s Heritage and Cultural Sciences: Heritage Conservation⁴⁸ Master’s programme, I do see hope for the future.

6.10. Conclusion

This chapter focused on the interviews with Iziko staff, reflecting on their experiences of the 2019 collaboration sessions and since. The chapter is set out so that each section responds to one of the initial research questions, extracting the answers directly from my interviewees, supplemented by my own opinions and thoughts. Based on these, there is definitely a case to be made for historical dissociation as an agent of deterioration and a subset of deterioration. At Iziko Museums, combating historical dissociation has been successfully reversed by collaborating with indigenous communities.

Although the withdrawal of my 6th interviewee, a member of the Khomani San, leaves a gap in the voices and opinions expressed, I do feel that the vast knowledge of the Iziko staff, their passion for re-dressing Iziko’s museum archives, and in particular the close relations Ms. Kotze has with the Khomani San people, have somewhat filled this gap and included their voice, particularly as the archival records of the 2019 sessions were so complete. I hope that the 2019 sessions will be the first of many interactions with the Khomani San people and other First Nation groups, as I have clearly demonstrated their invaluable contribution to continuing the work of decolonising South Africa’s ethnographic collections.

⁴⁸ “Heritage Conservation is a new programme at the University of Pretoria, and the first of its kind in sub-Saharan Africa, launched in 2019. “The programme includes 1) a background in chemistry and material science; in order to 2) attend to the preventive care of collections, and 3) sufficient practical experience in order to carry out ‘first aid’ treatments to stabilise a variety of objects and material types, whilst 4) being able to advocate for conservation effectively and communicate with custodians as to the necessity for selected treatments (or against treatments) in line with ethical guidelines, often accepting that decision-making may be a challenging and negotiated process” (McGinn, 2021: 202).

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

7.1. A shift in self-belief

I grew up believing that museums were temples of knowledge, there to protect history by looking after artefacts from ancient cultures and educating every generation that entered them. I wanted to work in a museum and later conserve objects because I wished to be part of that important group of people who held the past in their hands and made sure it remained protected. Once I learned that there were collections at Iziko Museums with incomplete or incorrect research conducted and source communities whose objects were conserved, documented, and exhibited incorrectly due to that research, it was a shock to my entire belief system. I had to re-evaluate everything I knew about museums and what the true meaning of preserving the past was, and that meant educating myself on the intangible spirit of an object. Up until the 2020 conservation internship, I gave primary importance to preserving the physical body of an object, as it served as a tangible part of its source community's cultural heritage. I was unaware of the spiritual damage that was caused by touching an object only meant for a specific gender or religion, conducting a cleaning practice that could remove residue or material added for spiritual or cultural purposes, and incorrectly storing an object. My goal of protecting the past could not be successful if there was no acknowledgement or respect given to the spirits of objects.

Iziko Museums of South Africa's mission of adding the voices of indigenous people to their museum practices became my own. The Khomani San and Iziko Museums collaboration project is the basis of this research paper, as it provided me with the first stepping stone into becoming a conservator who protects the intangible significance of objects and not just the physical. This research paper attempts to utilise the Khomani San's indigenous knowledge of their objects (documented during the 2019 sessions) as an example of why fostering a relationship with and consulting source communities is vital to combating historical dissociation. Museums with colonial collections will not realise their goal of decolonisation or achieve that goal of changing their unsavoury past with indigenous people, not unless those very people are involved in changing the narrative that museums have weaved about their culture and history.

7.2. Summary of chapters

Chapter 1 introduced the background, context, and rationale for the research, summarising the Iziko Museums and Khomani San 2019 collaboration project, which serves as the basis of the present case study. The research aimed to make an argument for the addition of *historical dissociation* as a sub-category of dissociation, a known threat to the integrity of collections.

Through a review of available literature, I have explained in Chapter 2 how collections, particularly those so-called ethnographic collections, sought to collect and understand ‘the Other’ and salvage cultural material from what was thought to be heritage at risk from westernisation, itself a product of colonial and imperial thinking of the time. I also discuss the context of my case study, namely the South African Museum and their ‘Bushmen’ collection. This chapter focuses on the Othering of indigenous people, the San exhibitions at SAM since 1911, and who were the collectors of the ‘Bushmen’ collection examined by the Khomani San in 2019. The chapter further reviews the formalisation of collections and the creation of museum documentation as a formal system in museums, but also outlines what happens when documentation systems fail or documentation is incomplete.

Chapter 3 presents the argument of the present research, namely the influence historical dissociation has on the conservation and curation of collections, and that a way to correct this is through the involvement of source communities in the care and depiction of their objects. Combatting historical dissociation is examined against the global trend of museum decolonisation, primarily how former colonial museums are facilitating and creating change in the self-representation of source communities within their institutions. This section argues the need for an equal footing between the museum and source communities, what museum decolonisation looks like in the South African context with case study examples, and whether this attempt at museum decolonisation has been successful or not.

In Chapter 4, I give a condensed history of the Khomani San, their engagements with Iziko Museums prior to 2019, and the creation and lead-up to the 2019 collaboration project. The chapter outlines briefly the activities and discussion of the 5-day workshops and Iziko’s goals moving forward. This chapter allows the indigenous voice to be heard, gives context to the present research, and outlines the selection criteria for the objects discussed in Chapter 5 and the discussions held.

Chapters 5 and 6 contain the data collected for the present research and the ‘evidence’ on which I base my argument. The former contains the objects I selected, re-examined, and documented,

while the latter presents biographies of each of the interviewees as well as excerpts from their interview transcripts, which I discuss and engage with.

In the present concluding chapter, I discuss the contributions of the research, its limitations, and avenues for future research, as well as some concluding remarks.

7.3. Contribution of the study

The goal of the research was to advocate for a focus on the intangible aspect of museum conservation, a career wherein the tangible body of an object often has primary importance, and highlight that by decoupling tangible and intangible, significance is lost. I have clearly demonstrated the need for revisiting collections, particularly older and indigenous collections of cultural material, as standards for museum documentation have changed over time and older collection records may be incomplete or descriptions mis-interpreted. Opening up channels of communication with indigenous communities creates an opportunity to examine the object, gives information regarding its societal, religious, and/daily function, and gives museums/researchers a chance to correct wrongs regarding past information documented and view the objects in a new light. Combating the issue of historical dissociation is thus a critical element to guard against in combatting dissociation as an agent of deterioration.

By having a side-by-side comparison of the information held by Iziko with that of the Khomani San representatives, I could show that there was incomplete or missing information in the museum records, which gives a deeper understanding of the materiality of artefacts, but also allows me to substantiate the following arguments made throughout this research paper:

1. Historical dissociation should be included in dissociation, since dissociation as an agent of deterioration tends to focus on primarily preventing incoming museum objects from becoming dissociated through proper museum documentation and acquisition methods. This means that colonial collections do not often get the same attention, and with the addition of historical dissociation, there will be a greater focus given to re-examining, re-evaluating, and re-dressing both colonial collections and their museum archival documentation.
2. Collaboration workshops between former colonial museums and source communities can create and foster a relationship that will mutually benefit both parties: the museum

will gain indigenous knowledge previously lost or undocumented during the research and acquisition period of the collections, and the source community will get to have a transparent and more equal relationship with the museum, one that helps return a voice to the indigenous community previously lost, and further their efforts in gaining agency over their own heritage and history. Source communities gain an opportunity to learn more about their own pasts through these examinations, and the museum forms a life-long partnership that can continue to involve the descendants in future exhibitions, museum education, and further outreach programmes within the communities.

3. Museums and their collections can become decolonised if museums attempt to do it with a real sincerity in wanting change, knowing that they cannot erase the past but rather redress the museum archives and heal a painful past, and finally to create change within the museum that will change and improve the institution itself. Conservation and collections management can only combat historical dissociation when the departments work together, and while there is acknowledgement that hierarchal issues within museum institutions are indeed a problem, that does not mean there cannot be transparency and cooperation within the departments. A multi-disciplinary approach is required if historical dissociation, inclusivity, and decolonisation within the museum institution are possible.

7.3. Limitations of the study

There are, of course, limitations to any research, particularly when working with heritage and communities. Firstly, source communities and their descendants may not be accessible, or limited knowledge on the objects was passed down or was lost altogether. This hinders combating historical dissociation within a colonial collection since indigenous knowledge is vital when filling in the blank spaces of object documentation, especially provenance, functionality, and spiritual significance. Not every case can be like the Khomani San, where the objects they examined are still being used within the community.

Additionally, the function and significance of objects may change over time, and what was held in high esteem in the past may now be irrelevant. Can these objects then be viewed in a contemporary light? Museums are mostly still seen in a suspicious or painful light by descendants of indigenous communities, so would they want to partake in a collaboration project in the first place?

Interestingly, the possibility of purposeful dissociation was introduced. If the source community intentionally shared incorrect or incomplete information with the researcher/collector during the acquisition period, would the descendants rectify that information or continue giving information that further dissociates the museum objects? Purposeful dissociation still results in historical dissociation since the objects have incorrect museum documentation, but if this research paper is based on gaining correct indigenous knowledge from source communities, then this kind of dissociation creates a hindrance to that. And beyond this purposeful dissociation, there are diverse ethnic groups, cultures, traditions, and opinions on the usage and functionality of objects within a single indigenous community, so how would the museum know which group brought in for a collaboration project was sharing the correct information about the object as it was used at that time?

Finally, the biggest limitation I faced was one inherent to working with informants and interviews. The withdrawal of my sixth interviewee after our interview was sorely felt as information could not be used. It was especially evident when discussing the handling and care of culturally sensitive objects and what the opinions of the interviewee would have been regarding this topic. Without the voice of community members from the Khomani San, there is a visible absence of the indigenous voice in a paper about the inclusion of indigenous people in the re-dressing, re-examination, and re-writing of their objects in museums. Thankfully, the original transcripts from the 2019 collaboration project were available and added substance to my Chapter 5, but that silent voice is quite loud in my Chapter 6.

7.4. Suggestions for further research

My research paper only looked at a small selection of objects examined during the 2019 collaboration project, so there should be further visual examinations and museum documentation conducted on the rest of the objects viewed and commented on by the Khomani San representatives. Further collaboration projects should be conducted on the rest of the 'Bushmen', African studies, and ethnographic collections at Iziko Museums; these indigenous objects belong to source communities that might have an interest in collaborating with Iziko and in examining their objects.

Iziko Museums should also conduct follow-up workshops with the indigenous groups who have previously collaborated with them, namely the Zulu-speaking people from KwaZulu-Natal who worked with Laura Gibson and the Khomani San representatives. Beyond keeping

them involved in future exhibition and educational programmes, they could continue having access to the collections and examine the rest of the objects if possible. These collaboration projects should not be a ‘one and done’ endeavour for Iziko and the source community. However, I do acknowledge that getting funding and travelling might be difficult for these follow-up workshops.

Finally, other South African museums should follow Iziko’s example and bring in source communities to examine their indigenous collections. As this research paper has shown, a relationship between a former colonial museum and a source community can be mutually beneficial for both groups, and if and when possible, both sides should work to combat the dissociation these indigenous objects suffer from. It is important to not only try to rectify and heal a painful past but also to ensure these ethnographic collections receive the attention, re-examination, and re-evaluation they deserve.

Another topic for further research is another possible strand of dissociation brought up by Ms. Kotze, which is purposeful dissociation. The indigenous community keeping their sense of agency, and being active participants in how their culture and tradition are viewed and history is written by sharing half-truths or false information with researchers and curators, is a fascinating and honestly refreshing idea that would be an amazing topic of research.

7.5. Final remarks

It is intended that this research paper advocate for more South African museums to build valuable relationships and partnerships with source communities and bring forth possibly an unvoiced indigenous narrative or lost intangible spirit back to their collections. There is a need for constant accountability to be held for the national, and often global, narratives that former colonial museums created regarding local cultures and communities. The decolonisation process can only occur if the formerly colonised get a say in the narratives told regarding their objects. The process of change will not be easy, as there are issues such as museum bureaucracy that can stagnate funding and progress of these projects and source communities who could possibly not want to partake in discussions and workshops with museums in the first place. However, as long as there is a desire for change and that “genuine love, reciprocity and care” can be found within South African museums, combating historical dissociation is possible (Huff, 2022: [sp]).

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION TO IZIKO MUSEUMS



School of the Arts
Tangible Heritage Conservation

12 June 2023

Att: Dr Paul Tichmann, Director Digitisation and Collections, IZIKO Museums of South Africa

Re: Letter of introduction

Dear Mr Tichman,

My name is Malikah Meyer, I am a master's student at the University of Pretoria in the program M(Soc)Sci Tangible Heritage Conservation. I would herewith like to invite you to participate in a Masters mini dissertation provisionally titled *Making a case for combating historical dissociation of the 'Bushmen Collection' at the Iziko Museums of South Africa*. The research aims to review the Iziko Museums 2019 Khomani San collaborative workshops as a practice of museum decolonisation to combat historical dissociation.

As part of my research I would like to request permission to access the objects related to the 2019 research project carried out under your leadership, as well as the records of the research project. I wish to document and photograph the following artefacts examined by the Khomani San:

- meat gathers/bow and string/fire stick bag (accession number 1547a)
- two metal bangles (accession number SAM 1672)
- one ostrich eggshell beads waistband (accession number SAM 10088)
- one pair of sandals (accession number 10078)
- four bundles of string (accession number 1670)
- one medicine bag (accession number 1545b)
- one medicine bag with motifs (accession number accession number 10085)
- and one Steenbok leather blanket, labelled as an "apron"/"Bush petticoat" on the catalogue card and object label, respectfully (accession number 1547).

I would like to look at how the artefacts were previously incorrectly labelled (either by physical function, historical, social or spiritual value) and how the collaboration session has rectified the dissociation caused.

Van Woer House
University of Pretoria, Private Bag X20
Hatfield 0028, South Africa
Tel +27 839530587
Email: isabelle.mcginr@up.ac.za
www.up.ac.za

Faculty of Humanities
Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe
Lefapha la Bomotheo



School of the Arts
Tangible Heritage Conservation

I would also like to interview members of Iziko staff that were involved with the project including yourself (Paul Tichmann, Director, Digitisation and Collections), Janene van Wyk (Conservation Assistant), Lailah Hisham (Collections Manager) and Annelize Kotze (Curator). I would also like to interview senior ISHC staff member Thando Ngcangisa (Assistant collection Manager), and Bradley Mottie (Senior Conservator).

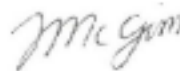
The session participants are selected for this case study because they are all from different departments of Iziko Museums- this will give a broad perspective on their participation in the sessions, what their experiences was, and what they learned from the sessions. One-on-one semi-structured interviews will be carried out online over zoom and recorded with the participants' consent. Although all staff involved will be consulted, participation remains voluntary and each participant will be contacted individually to request permission. Sample guiding questions are available in page 2 of this document.

Any questions you may have about this study can be directed to Malika Meyer at 072 859 9880 or malikah_meyer@yahoo.com, or the dissertation supervisor Isabelle McGinn at 0839530587 or Isabelle.mcginn@up.ac.za

Regards



Malika Meyer
(student)



Dr Isabelle McGinn
(supervisor)

APPENDIX B: LETTER OF PERMISSION FROM P. TICHMANN



13 January 2023

Ms Malikh Meyer
School of the Arts Tangible Heritage Conservation
University of Pretoria

Dear Malikh,

Re: Request for research access to Iziko Social History Centre collections and staff

I am pleased to inform you that your request to access the Khomani San collections at the Iziko Social History Centre, and to interview staff members who participated in the programme with the Khomani San leadership, has been approved. The Iziko Museums' Curator for Maritime Archaeology, Mr Jaco Boshoff has informed me that he is happy to allow you use of his equipment for the purposes of your study.

We look forward to receiving a copy of your mini dissertation and wish you success in your studies.

Yours sincerely,



Paul Tichmann
Director: Collections and Digitisation Department
Iziko Museums of South Africa
PO Box 61, Cape Town 8001, South Africa
ph. +27 021 4677215
email: ptichmann@iziko.org.za

APPENDIX C: BLANK LETTER OF INTRODUCTION TO PARTICIPANT



School of the Arts
Tangible Heritage Conservation

12 June 2023

Re: Letter of introduction

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Malikh Meyer, I am a master's student at the University of Pretoria in the program M(Soc)Sci Tangible Heritage Conservation. I would herewith like to invite you to participate in a Masters mini dissertation provisionally titled *Making a case for combating historical dissociation of the 'Bushmen Collection' at the Iziko Museums of South Africa*. The research aims to review the Iziko Museums 2019 Khomani San collaborative workshops as a practice of museum decolonisation to combat historical dissociation.

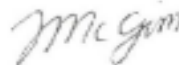
As a member of Iziko staff who participated in the 2019 collaborative workshop, I would like to invite you to participate in one-on-one interviews to give a broad perspective on your participation in the sessions, what your experience was, and what you learned from the sessions. The semi-structured interviews will be carried out online over zoom and recorded with your consent. Sample guiding questions are available in page 2 of this document. The consent form to be completed and signed will accompany this letter as a separate document. Participation is voluntary and you may decline at any point.

Any questions you may have about this study can be directed to Malikh Meyer at 072 859 9880 or malikh_meyer@yahoo.com, or the dissertation supervisor Isabelle McGinn at 0839530587 or Isabelle.mcgin@up.ac.za

Regards



Malikh Meyer
(student)



Dr Isabelle McGinn
(supervisor)

Sample of Questions for Iziko Staff
Semi-structured interview questions

1. What is your professional opinion as a senior conservator regarding historical dissociation as an agent of deterioration?
2. Do you feel that historical dissociation can place collection items at risk just like the other tangible agents of deterioration?
3. Should historical dissociation be given more or less importance, since the job of a conservator is primarily to protect and preserve the tangible body of an object.
4. Why do you think conservators focus mainly on avoiding incoming collections from becoming disassociated?
5. Why do you think articles on dissociation does not include opening avenues of communication with indigenous communities regarding colonial collections?
6. Would you say that Iziko collections are at risk of historical dissociation?
7. What has been Iziko's past and present attempts at combating historical dissociation?
 - Do you think these attempts have and are working?
8. What has been the biggest change in how Iziko Museums handles, stores, or exhibits their indigenous collections over the years?
9. What do you think is the biggest disadvantage when looking at the general lack of documentation found on conservation/restoration methods used on indigenous objects, especially before the Iziko flagship was established?
10. What changes have you made in how you handle and conserve indigenous objects, especially those that are culturally sensitive?
11. How do you handle an object that can only be touched or used by certain members of a community?
12. Have these collaboration sessions and outreach programmes with originator communities changed your perspective on how to handle indigenous collections, and communicating with source communities?
13. What does decolonisation in museums mean to you?
14. Do you think a museum collection can become decolonised?
15. If no, what are the challenges you perceive? If yes, do you have any ideas how to go about this?
16. Where do you see the future of conservation and conserving indigenous collections going in South Africa?

APPENDIX D: SIGNED PARTICIPATION AND CONSENT FORM:

ANNELIZE KOTZE



School of the Arts
Tangible Heritage Conservation

Interview Consent Form

We are requesting your permission to audio/video record our interview as part of this study. If you agree to be recorded, we will use the recording to take notes, transcribe the full text, and possibly select quotes to be used during the final presentation and publication of research findings as part of the completion of a Masters mini-dissertation.

In addition, we would like your permission to store the digital copy of your audio recording for use by other researchers affiliated with Tangible Heritage Conservation at the University of Pretoria's School of the Arts, should we need to review past data collected for future relevant studies.

This recording is optional. You may choose to give permission for one or both uses of the recording, or you may decide not to participate in the recording at all. Your decision will not affect your ability to contribute to the research as you may select to be interviewed and the interview not recorded.

If you agree to participate and be recorded, we will keep the recordings on a password protected cloud drive that is only accessible when permission is granted by the administrator. To protect your confidentiality, we will code all recordings in line with what the participant has given permission to use as an identifier—real name, self-selected pseudonym, or a randomly assigned number for those who wish to remain anonymous to the researchers of the study.

Please select whichever applies:

I agree to be recorded I DO NOT agree to be recorded

I wish to (circle applicable and insert details where necessary):

- a. Use my real name:
- b. Use the following pseudonym:
- c. Remain anonymous

I agree that my audio recording may be taken as part of the research for the mini-dissertation research entitled: *Making a case for combating historical dissociation of the 'Bushmen Collection' at the Iziko Museums of South Africa.*



School of the Arts
Tangible Heritage Conservation

Statement of voluntary consent:

When signing this form, I am agreeing to voluntarily participate in the research titled *Making a case for combating historical dissociation of the 'Bushmen Collection' at the Iziko Museums of South Africa* by Malika Meyer. I have had a chance to read this consent form, and it was explained to me in a language which I understand. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have received satisfactory answers. I understand that participation is voluntary, unremunerated and that I can choose to opt out, or withdraw at a later stage even if I initially opted in. By signing this form I also agree that data generated during the research process will be kept at the School of the Arts, at the University of Pretoria for 15 years and can be accessed by requesting permission from the researcher or the dissertation supervisor. I also take note that by signing this form I agree that the data and research may be used for the dissertation, publication, conference presentations and use by third parties at a later stage.

Opting in (Circle which is appropriate): YES/NO

Signature of participant: *[Signature]*
Print name: *Annabiz Kabe*
Capacity: *Researcher*
Date: *29/11/23*
Place: *Cape Town*

By signing below, I indicate that the participant has read and, to the best of my knowledge, understands the details contained in this document and has been given a copy.

Signature of researcher: *M. Meyer*
Print name: *MALIKAH MEYER*
Date: *23/11/23*
Place: *Cape Town*



School of the Arts
Tangible Heritage Conservation

Quotes from my audio recording may (circle applicable):

- a. be used in a public conference presentation
- b. be used in a final research report where my real name may be used
- c. be used in a final research report where a pseudonym is used to ensure confidentiality
- d. not be used in a public conference presentation
- e. not be used in the final research report

You have the choice of how long we may keep your recordings (circle applicable)

- a. My audio recording may be kept permanently for research, educational or training purposes.
- b. My audio recording must be destroyed after completion of the study.


I understand that my consent for this part of the study is optional, and I am free to refuse this request and still participate in the study. I understand that I may request at any time during the research that my audio recording be destroyed and the research staff will honour my request promptly. My signature below indicates my consent for the use of these recordings.

 29/9/23 Signature of Participant Date

By signing below, I indicate that the participant has read and, to the best of my knowledge, understands the details contained in this document and has been given a copy.

Signature of researcher: 
Print name: MALUKAH MEYER
Date: 23/10/23
Place: Cape Town

Any questions you may have about this study can be directed to Malukah Meyer at 072 859 9880 or malukah_meyer@yahoo.com, or the dissertation supervisor Isabelle McGinn at 0839530587 or isabelle.mcginn@up.ac.za


Malukah Meyer
(student)


Dr Isabelle McGinn
(supervisor)

APPENDIX E: SIGNED PARTICIPATION AND CONSENT FORM: BRADLEY MOTTIE



School of the Arts
Tangible Heritage Conservation

Interview Consent Form

We are requesting your permission to audio/video record our interview as part of this study. If you agree to be recorded, we will use the recording to take notes, transcribe the full text, and possibly select quotes to be used during the final presentation and publication of research findings as part of the completion of a Masters mini-dissertation.

In addition, we would like your permission to store the digital copy of your audio recording for use by other researchers affiliated with Tangible Heritage Conservation at the University of Pretoria's School of the Arts, should we need to review past data collected for future relevant studies.

This recording is optional. You may choose to give permission for one or both uses of the recording, or you may decide not to participate in the recording at all. Your decision will not affect your ability to contribute to the research as you may select to be interviewed and the interview not recorded.

If you agree to participate and be recorded, we will keep the recordings on a password protected cloud drive that is only accessible when permission is granted by the administrator. To protect your confidentiality, we will code all recordings in line with what the participant has given permission to use as an identifier—real name, self-selected pseudonym, or a randomly assigned number for those who wish to remain anonymous to the researchers of the study.

Please select whichever applies:

I agree to be recorded I DO NOT agree to be recorded

I wish to (circle applicable and insert details where necessary):

- a. Use my real name:
- b. Use the following pseudonym: BRADLEY R MOTTIE
- c. Remain anonymous

I agree that my audio recording may be taken as part of the research for the mini-dissertation research entitled: *Making a case for combating historical dissociation of the 'Bushmen Collection' at the Iziko Museums of South Africa.*



School of the Arts
Tangible Heritage Conservation

Statement of voluntary consent:

When signing this form, I am agreeing to voluntarily participate in the research titled *Making a case for combating historical dissociation of the 'Bushman Collection' at the Iziko Museums of South Africa* by Malika Meyer. I have had a chance to read this consent form, and it was explained to me in a language which I understand. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have received satisfactory answers. I understand that participation is voluntary, unremunerated and that I can choose to opt out, or withdraw at a later stage even if I initially opted in. By signing this form I also agree that data generated during the research process will be kept at the School of the Arts, at the University of Pretoria for 15 years and can be accessed by requesting permission from the researcher or the dissertation supervisor. I also take note that by signing this form I agree that the data and research may be used for the dissertation, publication, conference presentations and use by third parties at a later stage.

Opting in (Circle which is appropriate): YES/NO
Signature of participant: *B. R. Mottie*
Print name: BRADLEY R MOTTIE
Capacity: CONSERVATOR
Date: 04 JULY 2023
Place: CAPE TOWN, IZIKO MUSEUMS OF SOUTH AFRICA

By signing below, I indicate that the participant has read and, to the best of my knowledge, understands the details contained in this document and has been given a copy.

Signature of researcher: *M. Meyer*
Print name: MALIKAH MEYER
Date: 23/07/23
Place: Cape Town



School of the Arts
Tangible Heritage Conservation

Quotes from my audio recording may (circle applicable):

- a. be used in a public conference presentation
- b. be used in a final research report where my real name may be used
- c. be used in a final research report where a pseudonym is used to ensure confidentiality
- d. not be used in a public conference presentation
- e. not be used in the final research report

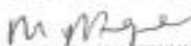
You have the choice of how long we may keep your recordings (circle applicable)

- a. My audio recording may be kept permanently for research, educational or training purposes.
- b. My audio recording must be destroyed after completion of the study.

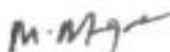
I understand that my consent for this part of the study is optional, and I am free to refuse this request and still participate in the study. I understand that I may request at any time during the research that my audio recording be destroyed and the research staff will honour my request promptly. My signature below indicates my consent for the use of these recordings.

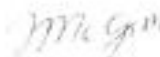
 Signature of Participant Date 04 JULY 2023

By signing below, I indicate that the participant has read and, to the best of my knowledge, understands the details contained in this document and has been given a copy.

Signature of researcher: 
Print name: MALIKAH MEYER
Date: 23/07/23
Place: at Cape Town

Any questions you may have about this study can be directed to Malika Meyer at 072 859 9880 or malikah_meyer@yahoo.com, or the dissertation supervisor Isabelle McGinn at 0839530587 or Isabelle.mcgin@up.ac.za


Malika Meyer
(student)


Dr Isabelle McGinn
(supervisor)

APPENDIX F: SIGNED PARTICIPATION AND CONSENT FORM: THANDO NGCANGISA



School of the Arts
Tangible Heritage Conservation

Interview Consent Form

We are requesting your permission to audio/video record our interview as part of this study. If you agree to be recorded, we will use the recording to take notes, transcribe the full text, and possibly select quotes to be used during the final presentation and publication of research findings as part of the completion of a Masters mini-dissertation.

In addition, we would like your permission to store the digital copy of your audio recording for use by other researchers affiliated with Tangible Heritage Conservation at the University of Pretoria's School of the Arts, should we need to review past data collected for future relevant studies.

This recording is optional. You may choose to give permission for one or both uses of the recording, or you may decide not to participate in the recording at all. Your decision will not affect your ability to contribute to the research as you may select to be interviewed and the interview not recorded.

If you agree to participate and be recorded, we will keep the recordings on a password protected cloud drive that is only accessible when permission is granted by the administrator. To protect your confidentiality, we will code all recordings in line with what the participant has given permission to use as an identifier—real name, self-selected pseudonym, or a randomly assigned number for those who wish to remain anonymous to the researchers of the study.

Please select whichever applies:

I agree to be recorded I DO NOT agree to be recorded

I wish to (circle applicable and insert details where necessary):

- a. Use my real name:
- b. Use the following pseudonym:
- c. Remain anonymous

I agree that my audio recording may be taken as part of the research for the mini-dissertation research entitled: *Making a case for combating historical dissociation of the 'Bushmen Collection' at the Iziko Museums of South Africa.*



School of the Arts
Tangible Heritage Conservation

Statement of voluntary consent:

When signing this form, I am agreeing to voluntarily participate in the research titled *Making a case for combating historical dissociation of the 'Bushman Collection' at the Iziko Museums of South Africa* by Malika Meyer. I have had a chance to read this consent form, and it was explained to me in a language which I understand. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have received satisfactory answers. I understand that participation is voluntary, unremunerated and that I can choose to opt out, or withdraw at a later stage even if I initially opted in. By signing this form I also agree that data generated during the research process will be kept at the School of the Arts, at the University of Pretoria for 15 years and can be accessed by requesting permission from the researcher or the dissertation supervisor. I also take note that by signing this form I agree that the data and research may be used for the dissertation, publication, conference presentations and use by third parties at a later stage.

Opting in (Circle which is appropriate) YES/NO

Signature of participant: *[Handwritten Signature]*
Print name: *Thando Mchunye*
Capacity: *ASSISTANT COLLECTIONS MANAGER*
Date: *12 JULY 2023*
Place: *Cape Town*

By signing below, I indicate that the participant has read and, to the best of my knowledge, understands the details contained in this document and has been given a copy.

Signature of researcher: *[Handwritten Signature]*
Print name: *MALIKAH MEYER*
Date: *23/07/23*
Place: *CAPE TOWN*



School of the Arts
Tangible Heritage Conservation


Quotes from my audio recording may (circle applicable):

- a. be used in a public conference presentation
- b. be used in a final research report where my real name may be used
- c. be used in a final research report where a pseudonym is used to ensure confidentiality
- d. not be used in a public conference presentation
- e. not be used in the final research report

You have the choice of how long we may keep your recordings (circle applicable)

- a. My audio recording may be kept permanently for research, educational or training purposes.
- b. My audio recording must be destroyed after completion of the study.

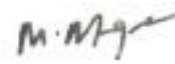
I understand that my consent for this part of the study is optional, and I am free to refuse this request and still participate in the study. I understand that I may request at any time during the research that my audio recording be destroyed and the research staff will honour my request promptly. My signature below indicates my consent for the use of these recordings.

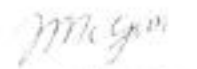
 12 July 2023 Signature of Participant Date

By signing below, I indicate that the participant has read and, to the best of my knowledge, understands the details contained in this document and has been given a copy.

Signature of researcher: 
Print name: MALIKAH MEYER
Date: 23/10/23
Place: M. Cafe Town


Any questions you may have about this study can be directed to Malikh Meyer at 072 859 9880 or malikh_meyer@yahoo.com, or the dissertation supervisor Isabelle McGinn at 0839530587 or isabelle.mcgin@up.ac.za


Malikh Meyer
(student)


Dr Isabelle McGinn
(supervisor)

APPENDIX G: SIGNED PARTICIPATION AND CONSENT FORM:

PAUL TICHMANN



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

School of the Arts
Tangible Heritage Conservation

Interview Consent Form

We are requesting your permission to audio/video record our interview as part of this study. If you agree to be recorded, we will use the recording to take notes, transcribe the full text, and possibly select quotes to be used during the final presentation and publication of research findings as part of the completion of a Masters mini-dissertation.

In addition, we would like your permission to store the digital copy of your audio recording for use by other researchers affiliated with Tangible Heritage Conservation at the University of Pretoria's School of the Arts, should we need to review past data collected for future relevant studies.

This recording is optional. You may choose to give permission for one or both uses of the recording, or you may decide not to participate in the recording at all. Your decision will not affect your ability to contribute to the research as you may select to be interviewed and the interview not recorded.

If you agree to participate and be recorded, we will keep the recordings on a password protected cloud drive that is only accessible when permission is granted by the administrator. To protect your confidentiality, we will code all recordings in line with what the participant has given permission to use as an identifier—real name, self-selected pseudonym, or a randomly assigned number for those who wish to remain anonymous to the researchers of the study.

Please select whichever applies:

I agree to be recorded I DO NOT agree to be recorded

I wish to (circle applicable and insert details where necessary):

a. Use my real name:

b. Use the following pseudonym:

c. Remain anonymous

I agree that my audio recording may be taken as part of the research for the mini-dissertation research entitled: *Making a case for combating historical dissociation of the 'Bushmen Collection' at the Iziko Museums of South Africa.*

Van Wouw House
University of Pretoria, Private Bag 201
Hatfield 0028, South Africa
Tel: +27 839530567
Email: isabelle.mcgrath@up.ac.za
www.up.ac.za

Faculty of Humanities
Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe
Lefapha la Bomotho



School of the Arts
Tangible Heritage Conservation

Statement of voluntary consent:

When signing this form, I am agreeing to voluntarily participate in the research titled *Making a case for combating historical dissociation of the "Bushmen Collection" at the Iziko Museums of South Africa* by Malkah Meyer. I have had a chance to read this consent form, and it was explained to me in a language which I understand. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have received satisfactory answers. I understand that participation is voluntary, unremunerated and that I can choose to opt out, or withdraw at a later stage even if I initially opted in. By signing this form I also agree that data generated during the research process will be kept at the School of the Arts, at the University of Pretoria for 15 years and can be accessed by requesting permission from the researcher or the dissertation supervisor. I also take note that by signing this form I agree that the data and research may be used for the dissertation, publication, conference presentations and use by third parties at a later stage.

Opting in (Circle which is appropriate) YES NO

Signature of participant:

Print name: PAUL TICHMANN

Capacity:

Date: 14 JULY 2023

Place: CAPE TOWN

By signing below, I indicate that the participant has read and, to the best of my knowledge, understands the details contained in this document and has been given a copy.

Signature of researcher:

Print name: MALKAH MEYER

Date: 23/07/23

Place: Cape Town



School of the Arts
Tangible Heritage Conservation

Quotes from my audio recording may (circle applicable):

- a. be used in a public conference presentation
- b. be used in a final research report where my real name may be used
- c. be used in a final research report where a pseudonym is used to ensure confidentiality
- d. not be used in a public conference presentation
- e. not be used in the final research report

You have the choice of how long we may keep your recordings (circle applicable)

- a. My audio recording may be kept permanently for research, educational or training purposes.
- b. My audio recording must be destroyed after completion of the study.

I understand that my consent for this part of the study is optional, and I am free to refuse this request and still participate in the study. I understand that I may request at any time during the research that my audio recording be destroyed and the research staff will honour my request promptly. My signature below indicates my consent for the use of these recordings.

Malikah Meyer 14 JULY 2023 Signature of Participant Date

By signing below, I indicate that the participant has read and, to the best of my knowledge, understands the details contained in this document and has been given a copy.

Signature of researcher: M Meyer
Print name: M. ALIKAH MEYER
Date: 23/07/23
Place: Cape Town

Any questions you may have about this study can be directed to Malikah Meyer at 072 859 9880 or malikah_meyer@yahoo.com, or the dissertation supervisor Isabelle McGinn at 0839530587 or Isabelle.mcginn@up.ac.za

M Meyer
Malikah Meyer
(student)

Isabelle McGinn
Dr Isabelle McGinn
(supervisor)

Van Wouw House
University of Pretoria, Private Bag X20
Hatfield 0028, South Africa
Tel: +27 839530587
Email: isabelle.mcginn@up.ac.za
www.up.ac.za

Faculty of Humanities
Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe
Lefapha la Bomoth

APPENDIX H: SIGNED PARTICIPATION AND CONSENT FORM:

JANENE VAN WYK



School of the Arts
Tangible Heritage Conservation

Interview Consent Form

We are requesting your permission to audio/video record our interview as part of this study. If you agree to be recorded, we will use the recording to take notes, transcribe the full text, and possibly select quotes to be used during the final presentation and publication of research findings as part of the completion of a Masters mini-dissertation.

In addition, we would like your permission to store the digital copy of your audio recording for use by other researchers affiliated with Tangible Heritage Conservation at the University of Pretoria's School of the Arts, should we need to review past data collected for future relevant studies.

This recording is optional. You may choose to give permission for one or both uses of the recording, or you may decide not to participate in the recording at all. Your decision will not affect your ability to contribute to the research as you may select to be interviewed and the interview not recorded.

If you agree to participate and be recorded, we will keep the recordings on a password protected cloud drive that is only accessible when permission is granted by the administrator. To protect your confidentiality, we will code all recordings in line with what the participant has given permission to use as an identifier—real name, self-selected pseudonym, or a randomly assigned number for those who wish to remain anonymous to the researchers of the study.

Please select whichever applies:

I agree to be recorded I DO NOT agree to be recorded

I wish to (circle applicable and insert details where necessary):

- a. Use my real name: JANENE VAN WYK
b. Use the following pseudonym: _____
c. Remain anonymous _____

I agree that my audio recording may be taken as part of the research for the mini-dissertation research entitled: *Making a case for combating historical dissociation of the 'Bushmen Collection' at the Iziko Museums of South Africa.*



School of the Arts
Tangible Heritage Conservation

Statement of voluntary consent:

When signing this form, I am agreeing to voluntarily participate in the research titled *Making a case for combating historical dissociation of the 'Bushmen Collection' at the Iziko Museums of South Africa* by Malika Meyer. I have had a chance to read this consent form, and it was explained to me in a language which I understand. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have received satisfactory answers. I understand that participation is voluntary, unremunerated and that I can choose to opt out, or withdraw at a later stage even if I initially opted in. By signing this form I also agree that data generated during the research process will be kept at the School of the Arts, at the University of Pretoria for 15 years and can be accessed by requesting permission from the researcher or the dissertation supervisor. I also take note that by signing this form I agree that the data and research may be used for the dissertation, publication, conference presentations and use by third parties at a later stage.

Opting in (Circle which is appropriate): YES/NO YES NO

Signature of participant: _____

Print name: JANENE VAN WYK

Capacity: ASSISTANT CONSERVATOR

Date: 30/06/2023

Place: CAPE TOWN

By signing below, I indicate that the participant has read and, to the best of my knowledge, understands the details contained in this document and has been given a copy.

Signature of researcher: M. Meyer

Print name: MALIKAH MEYER

Date: 23/06/23

Place: Cape Town



School of the Arts
Tangible Heritage Conservation

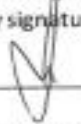
Quotes from my audio recording may (circle applicable):

- a. be used in a public conference presentation
- b. be used in a final research report where my real name may be used
- c. be used in a final research report where a pseudonym is used to ensure confidentiality
- d. not be used in a public conference presentation
- e. not be used in the final research report


You have the choice of how long we may keep your recordings (circle applicable)

- a. My audio recording may be kept permanently for research, educational or training purposes.
- b. My audio recording must be destroyed after completion of the study.


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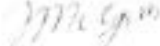
 30/06/2023 _____ Signature of Participant Date

By signing below, I indicate that the participant has read and, to the best of my knowledge, understands the details contained in this document and has been given a copy.

Signature of researcher: 
Print name: MALIKAH MEYER
Date: 23/10/23
Place: Cape Town

Any questions you may have about this study can be directed to Malikah Meyer at 072 859 9880 or malikah_meyer@yahoo.com, or the dissertation supervisor Isabelle McGinn at 0839530587 or Isabelle.mcginn@up.ac.za


Malikah Meyer
(student)


Dr Isabelle McGinn
(supervisor)