

# ***"Expropriation, Exploitation and Exhibitionism: The Quest for the Bhangazi Heritage Site in the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park".***

**YN Seleti**  
**Campbell Collections, university of Natal**

## **Introduction**

The Bhangazi community today is merely a conceptual memorisation of the past. The Bhangazi story fits into the epic of apartheid's social and physical engineering, which left thousands of people destitute and bereft of their ancestral homeland. The forced removals of the Bhangazi people dates back to the 1950s, however, it was in 1974 that the process was completed. The forced removal of the Bhangazi community is described as 'a destruction of a people'.<sup>1</sup> The claim of 'a destruction of a people' is not based on the loss of their livelihoods alone; it is based on the perception of the spiritual consequences of being separated from their ancestral graves, the home of the ancestors, left in Bhangazi. The desecration of the ancestors' graves through turning them into plantations of gum trees took away the resting place of the ancestors. Accordingly, without this spiritual link with the past, the people of Bhangazi are without their historical roots and hence without a past and a history. Some consequences of the drama of Bhangazi will be explored in this brief history but the full story will require more time to research and document. In fact, Dominy eloquently makes this point when he maintains that the documentation of human settlement and eviction in the Eastern St Lucia needs to be analysed and a body of oral history gathered, so that a full history, embracing all facets of the St Lucia system can be written.<sup>2</sup>

There is no community living in Bhangazi at present. But the people continue to refer to themselves as the people of Bhangazi. The memories of Bhangazi have in the past few years been made alive through a land claim that the community of Bhangazi launched with Land Commission set up by the new ANC-led government. The claim has met with limited success culminating in compensation for the loss of the land and

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<sup>1</sup> Interview on 18 March 2001 at Mfekayi with Yonah Seleti, Angela Impey and Makosi Zondi as interviewers, the interviewees were Mama Sithole (Mfekayi); Mr Mlambo (Mfekayi); Mr Fakazi Mhlangu (Dukuduku); Mr Jakonia Mhlangu (KwaShikishela); Mr Emphraim Mfeka (Emachakwini & Mfekayi); Mr Mbuyazi (KwaShikishela) and Mr SS Sithole (Emadwaleni).

<sup>2</sup> Dominy, *Environmental Impact Report* (1992), 14

an allocation of a piece of land in Bhangazi that will be used as a heritage site. It is important to note that the land claim has also resulted in a court case where a number of dissatisfied claimants are challenging the decision by the state. The fact that the matter is under the court proceedings made many informants to be cautious in what information was made available to the researchers. The government decision to hand out monetary compensation for the land claims is a clear indication that the Bhangazi community will not be restored to its former glory. This brief history is told from the people's memories of their lives in Bhangazi and what happened to them after the forced removals.

### **Geographical Location of Bhangazi**

According to this historical reconstruction the area referred to as Bhangazi stretched from the sea shore in the east, to the Mfolozi in the south, bounded by the St. Lucia Lake, estuary, Bhangazi Lake and the river flowing into the lake. The northern boundary is not very clear, referring to KwaSheleni and its environ. The geographical boundaries of Bhangazi are not very clearly spelt out owing to a number of reasons. To begin with, African conception of a boundary is associated with the occupation of the territory rather than the physical demarcation. According to historical accounts by elderly informants the tribal wards within the area of Bhangazi included the following: Invutshini, Embotsheni, Ebulaleni, KwanoDlebe, Eyibomvini, Emalubeni, and Kwasheleni. Mr Mlambo recollects that KwaSheleni was one of the outlining areas demarcating the boundary of Bhangazi. Bordering KwaSheleni were areas such as KwaNqondo, Embidleni, Emakhandeni and Enkokhweni. As indicated above the demarcation of the tribal wards referred to the people occupying the territory rather than to geographical features. The western side was marked by the sea and the southern side of Bhangazi bordered the area of Sokhulu. The physical feature that separated Bhangazi from Sokhulu was the Mfolozi River. Mr Mfeka's reconstruction of the western boundary of Bhangazi refers to the St. Lucia Lake and the river. Across the river the territory was under the control of inkosi Uzikhali.<sup>3</sup>

The oral testimony of the geographical boundaries is substantiated by documentary evidence such as government proclamations and reports of the Lands Commission

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<sup>3</sup> Tape 23. Dumisani Dube interviewing Ugogo Mbuyazi at KwaMazala March 2001.

(1997). It is worth noting that St Lucia was one of the five reserves proclaimed in Zululand by the Zululand Government Notice No. 12, gazetted on 10 April 1895. According to Ellis, the boundaries of St Lucia Reserve No. 1 were defined as “the range of Hills and Lagoons bounded on the North and west by St Lucia Lake and the Umfolozi river and on the south from the point on the sea coast four miles South of St Cape St Lucia in a direct line to the Southernmost point of the Umfolozi river”.<sup>4</sup> The St Lucia Reserve was re-proclaimed with the same boundaries in 1897 with the Natal annexation of Zululand in 1897. The boundaries of the St Lucia Reserve were changed in 1928, 1939 and in 1944 for reasons to do with conservation of game and control of diseases nagana affecting game. What should become apparent is that the area had been brought under British Colonial control from 1895.

Frost's study indicated that the arrival of white settlers in the St Lucia region and the initiation of economic activities ranging from cattle farming, to commercial sugar farming and the pine plantation have contributed to the battering of the ecosystem.<sup>5</sup> However, it should be noted that the creation of the Natal Parks Board in 1947 introduced the enforcement of modern and scientific conservation measures. Despite the faltering economic policies and practices in the region leading to the deteriorating of plant and animal life, the deleterious activities continued until a public outcry culminated in the government appointment of the Kriel Commission in 1966. The recommendations of the commission included the idea of a consolidated conservation area and that afforestation be phased out and no new plantations on the Eastern Shores are to be established but the recommendations were not implemented. However, on 2 October 1986 the St Lucia system which included the Eastern Shores with extensive afforestation and existing mineral prospecting leases was designated a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention.<sup>6</sup>

### **Political Boundaries**

The political boundaries in Bhangazi are represented by the tribal wards mentioned above. These were Imvutshini, Embotsheni, Ebulaleni, KwanoDlebe, Eyibomvini, Emalubeni, and Kwasheleni. Mr Mlambo recalls that Kwasheleni was one of the

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<sup>4</sup> B. Ellis, “Game Conservation in Zululand, 1824 – 1947”, (Unpublished BA Honours thesis, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 1975), 22.

<sup>5</sup> Frost

<sup>6</sup> Dominy, *Environmental Impact Report* (1992), 14.

outlining areas demarcating the boundary of Bhangazi. Bordering KwaSheleni were areas such as KwaNqondo, Embidleni, Emakhandeni and Enkokhweni. The informants were not willing to discuss the induna or the inkosi that controlled this territory. However, it appears as if there were two clusters of tribal authorities. The first group may have comprised Imvutshini, embotsheni, Ebulaleni, KwanoDlebe, Esibomvini, Emaluveni, and Kwasheleni. Further research in determining the exact locations of these territories will be required. The second group included the following KwaNqondo, Embidleni, Emakhandeni and Enkokhweni.

### **Political Organisation**

Before the people were removed from Bhangazi, they lived under the leadership of an induna called Jojela. According to a surviving daughter Mrs Swezi living at Mfekayi, her father ruled differently. He did not load his leadership on the people by demanding tribute from them. He did not insist that before people begun to cultivate the land they would brew beer for the induna. He did not practice such traditions. Mbuyazi was another induna at the same level as Jojela. Inkosi Mkwanzani was the chief of the whole area.<sup>7</sup> Other leaders mentioned are Mayanda, Hlakuyana and Hlawukana and appeared to be subordinate to Jojela.<sup>8</sup> At a meeting held on 8 October 1992 the following list of 16 wards and corresponding leaders was reconstructed:

1.	Kolweni	Induna Jojela Thetwayo
2.	Wamakondeni	Induna Jojela Thetwayo
3.	Mbobela	Induna Jojela Thetwayo
4.	Izibinhlona	Induna Jojela Thetwayo
5.	Nqondo	Induna Jojela Thetwayo
6.	KwaSheleni	Induna Jojela Thetwayo
7.	Maluveni	Induna Majojela
8.	Esibomvini	Induna Majojela
9.	Nonhlemba	Induna Majojela
10.	Gubleni	Induna Majojela
11.	Mbojeni	Induna Majojela
12.	Wamkeli	Induna Majojela
13.	Hlosi	Induna F. Thetwayo
14.	Kwaseno	Induna B. Msweli
15.	Mkatana	Induna B. Msweli
16.	Kwanembe	Induna Giya Giya Ncube
17.		Induna Ndoda Ncube

<sup>7</sup> Tape 15, interview by Dumisani Dube with Mrs Dube, February 2001.

<sup>8</sup> Tape 23. Dumisani Dube interviewing Ugogo Mbuyazi at KwaMazala March 2001.

At a meeting held on 8 October 1992 of Mpukunyoni Tribal Authority with Natal Provincial Authority (NPA) Chief Mkwanzazi claimed that the Eastern Shores area called Bhangazi belonged to his Great Grandfather and had people not been relocated from the area, it would still had been his. The minutes of the meeting quote the chief statement “I am the Nkosi following the chain from my Great Grandfather and all the people in the meeting confirmed it with applause”.<sup>10</sup> It is clear from the documentation in the Department of Land Affairs that the dispute over the legitimate representative of the people of Bhangazi between the Mbuyazi family and Nkosi Mkwanzazi predates the formal lodging of the land claim on 23 April 1993.<sup>11</sup> This dispute continues to this day, has not been resolved and is a matter that is before courts.

### **The Idyllic Livelihoods of Bhangazi**

The recurring theme in all the interviews is how the people romanticise the life in Bhangazi. A sample of the memories of Bhangazi will illustrate this point. Mr Mlambo made the following observation concerning life in Bhangazi:

What I can say about the lifestyle there is that we grew up with our father owning cattle, eating mass and eating fruits (wild fruits such as amhlaya, sigayae and umcaba). We grew all kinds of food such as mealies in our fields, we were fed like that, and we were not poor. Not even getting sick and there were no doctors as we were very healthy unlike today. We are so worried as we are getting so sick everywhere, having to consult doctors. During our times when we got sick we just went to the sea and drank the sea water and vomit and we would get fine there and then.<sup>12</sup>

Mr Sithole had a similar recollection of the stay in Bhangazi. The comments on the livelihood are worthy repeating here:

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<sup>9</sup> Minutes of the Meeting held on 8 October 1992 Mpukunyoni Tribal Authority with NPA, NPA Land Affairs Nov 20, 1992.

<sup>10</sup> Minutes of the Meeting held on 8 October 1992 Mpukunyoni Tribal Authority with NPA, NPA Land Affairs Nov 20, 1992.

<sup>11</sup> Memorandum from the Deputy Minister’s Office to the Minister, Land Affairs ref. CT 6/4/4/83 15 December 1994.

<sup>12</sup> Interview on 18 March 2001 at Mfekayi with Yonah Seleti, Angela Impey and Makosi Zondi as interviewers, the interviewees were Mama Sithole (Mfekayi); Mr Mlambo (Mfekayi); Mr Fakazi Mhlangu (Dukuduku); Mr Jakonia Mhlangu (KwaShikishela); Mr Emphraim Mfeka (Emachakwini & Mfekayi); Mr Mbuyazi (KwaShikishela) and Mr SS Sithole (Emadwaleni).

You know what, during our times in that land, there were no doctors but were healthy and not getting sick or dying, we had no shops but we had everything all kinds of food, were growing everything and keeping it safe and fresh, like mealies, we kept it underground ...and we ate wild fruits, there was no hunger, and there were a lot of animals that we could feed on. We also used to feed on some types of wild plants like umgude and umbhodlongo. We did not need doctors but if you were not feeling well, you go to the sea and drink the sea.<sup>13</sup>

The people of Bhangazi also looked at the sea as a source of food. Crayfish, all types of fish and also hippo meat were part of the diet. It is clear that the people who were forcefully removed from Bhangazi considered health issues to be important. It is equally important to note the assortment of food that they fed on in the area. It is not surprising that the claims of not getting sick and not needing a doctor are born out by the type of diet.

The people of Bhangazi were farmers. They basically lived by farming. They tilled the soil planting all sorts of food crops. The subsistence farming in combination with the foraging of wild fruits kept people economically active. The people of Bhangazi were self-sufficient and thus did not hire their labour out for wages. There was no need to buy food by anybody in Bhangazi as all people could find food. According to Ugogo Mbuyazi they followed a systematic agricultural cycle. They started tilling the land and planting peanuts in August, which they harvested in December. At that time of the year they would plant mealies.<sup>14</sup>

The other economic activities apart from farming were fishing, hunting, salt making, and crafts. Another theme that comes out consistently in the interviews is the availability of game meat for human consumption. The Bhangazi forest had plenty of game and it was understood by the people that everyone had a right to hunt for game in the Bhangazi Forest. It did not belong to an individual. The interviewees agreed that the area did not have elephants and giraffes. The only animals they remember in their lifetime were impala, umzili, ingulbe, impunzi, insimangwane, intaka, umkhunge and inkawu.

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<sup>13</sup> Interview on 18 March 2001 at Mfekayi.

<sup>14</sup> Tape 23. Interview between Dumisani Dube and Ugogo Mbuyazi.

The people of Bhangazi were involved in other activities such as mining and the processing of seawater to obtain salt to be used for domestic purposes. The interviewees did not dwell on these activities and thus this may indicate distance from the activity over time. Probably it was a remembrance of something that had disappeared even by the time of their forced removals.

However, there was some talk about the crafts done by women. There was also mention of the making of musical instruments. Mr Mfeka remembered the kind of handwork done in Bhangazi;

You used to make amahluzo, isichumo made from ilala and amakhweyana made of isweya and nduku. These would be used to play traditional music. They also made umqangala or its substitute called bhelebane bought from white stores. We used to make a lot of such things.<sup>15</sup>

The materials for crafts were obtained from the ecology and it did not cost them anything. The special ecological circumstances of the area also meant the existence of resources which could not be obtained from any other place. There is no doubt skills in making of crafts were widespread. Craft making constituted an important activity for both men and women of the area.

### **Conservation of the Environment**

It was also revealed that hunting was regulated. There were indunas who were responsible for regulating hunting. Mr Mlambo informs us that young animals had to be protected and not killed. The logic was to protect the young animals until they were grown up and ready to procreate. The induna responsible would indicate when it was time for hunting. The same principles applied to the foraging for honey in the forests. Again an induna would have to check if it was okay to forage for honey. Mr Mlambo suggests that these criteria also applied to the foraging for wild fruits. He indicates that an induna would have to test it before giving a go ahead.

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<sup>15</sup> Interview on 18 March 2001 at Mfekayi

Another conservation method applied by the people of Bhangazi but also across the area was through the identification of people by a totem. A totem could be an object/anything in the environment associated the identity of the people over the centuries. Normally, there is supposed to exist some spiritual link between that totem and the existence of that particular group. It was a way of spelling out the close relationship between the physical environment and the people. The different groups of people would revere the totem in their daily lives. A totem was treated like an ancestor. In this case it was the responsibility of the group identified with the totem to conserve and protect the existence of that physical representation of a totem. A good example is that of the reverence of a hippo by some groups in Bhangazi. An example of this approach to conservation is that of the Mathenjwa clan who would not eat goats as they revere them as ancestors, similarly the Dlamini would not eat lamb.<sup>16</sup> Because it was their totem they were not to kill a hippo at all or later on eat its meat. There were therefore several control measures to ensure that wild life and other resources were regenerated for generations to come.

Although very little has been said about the conservation of fishing resources it is not far fetched to argue that the people of Bhangazi had measures in place. It is such an important theme that more research in this topic will need to be done so that the modern conservation methods used by the scientist should fit in this cultural body of knowledge.

The conservation knowledge of the natural environment was built into the informal education system. It is interesting to note that bedtime stories at night had a lot to do with animal stories with a moral lesson for the children. Mr Sithole sums up this story quite well:

Yah, we had such things, elders told stories to help in the child development to grow in a proper way about respecting animals, yes that was there for example the people of Mathenjwa could not eat goat, Dlamini, could not eat lamb. It was there that a certain animal could not be eaten by a certain group of people.<sup>17</sup>

However, it also important to note that a lot of people did not eat animals such as warthog (ngulube) because of religious reasons. It is equally important to note that the

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<sup>16</sup> Interview on 18 March 2001 at Mfekayi (Mr Sithole) see more examples in interview.

<sup>17</sup> Interview on 18 March 2001 at Mfekayi



religious beliefs were not Christian beliefs alone, but in indigenous religious beliefs certain animals were not to be eaten.

### **Cultural Activities in Bhangazi**

The people of Bhangazi attested to a rich cultural life while they were living there. It is even noted that many people dressed up in traditional clothes for most of the times. They used to wear their *amabheshu*. The reason for wearing them for most of the times was that the animal skins used in making them were easily available and they did not need to buy them. An interesting disclosure from one of the informants was that under the *amabheshu* men wore traditional underwear called *umncedo*.

The people of Bhangazi had many opportunities to perform many rituals and rites that revolved around their lives. One of the most important ceremonies in Bhangazi was the rainmaking ceremony. The leaders went to the Ntabamlophe (white mountain) to pray for rain in drought years. The mountain was also called by another name, Mbizeni.<sup>18</sup> A ceremony at which men wore their traditional dress made from animal skins, female wore *isidaba*, and girls wore their traditional clothes. A black cow was taken to be slaughtered at the place. Traditional songs were sung by all who gathered. Mr Dube suggests that the cow that was slaughtered was given by Induna Mbuyazi.<sup>19</sup>

### **Resistance to Forced Removal**

According to Mr Dube the whites arrived in the place masquerading as if they were fishing in the area. The next time they came with their cars and asked us to sell our cows. They then attempted to stop us from visiting the sea. The government issued notices, sent people to inform the community that they must move from Bhangazi.<sup>20</sup>

The name of Jojela has come up often in the interviews. He was perceived as the person that put up the most resistance to the invasion of Bhangazi by white people. He is remembered to have been a master of magic and that he used his magic to frustrate white immigrants to the area. One informant claimed that Jojela's magic was a gift

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<sup>18</sup> Tape 14. Interview between Dumisani Dube and Baba Dube February 2001.

<sup>19</sup> Tape 14, Interview by Dumisani with Dube, February 2001.

<sup>20</sup> Tape 23. Dumisani Dube interviewing Ugogo Mbuyazi, March 2001.

from the ancestors. The legend has it that he turned into a bee and stung a white man who later died in hospital. As long as Jojela was alive the white invaders did not succeed in removing families from Bhangazi. It is claimed that Jojela ruled as induna over the following districts, Mfekayi, Ntabamhlophe, Mazala, Oqwakwini and Mangxengeni. However, the geographical of these places fall out of the first boundaries mentioned earlier.

Mbuyazi family was one of the dominant ones with their own land called Msani. Mbuyazi praise name was Mabhodla. He is also said to have believed in magic and that he knew Jojela. In fact Mbuyazi appointed Jojela as an induna of Bhangazi. After the death of Jojela Mthiyane acted as an induna but he was never formally appointed. Mthiyane helped with small cases or claims. Mthiyane acted because Jojela's son Mabhabdla had gone to Durban (Tape 26) Mthiyane was considered clever because of his education. He is said to have loved peace and contributed to a peaceful settlement. It is said that Mthiyane failed to alert the people of Bhangazi concerning the order from white people to move from the area.

The story told by mama Zikkhali suggests that the white people came to Mthiyane, Jojela's successor, whom they told that the people were not needed here. Mthiyane failed to call the people so that they could resist. Consequently, they began to move the families one by one. It is difficult to see how his education could have contributed to making it easy for the state to move the people from the area.

The white people organised lorries and they approached each household and took them away to new place. It was not well organised at all and we see friends or relatives could be removed together.<sup>21</sup> People were not ready and they left most of their domestic animals behind. They also left their field, their ancestral graves. Mr Mfeka describes the drama as follows:

...there was no notification from the government, but the truck will just stand there and be told to pack and get into the truck, not even knowing where you were going, with no time to pack your things and to be taken on the streets and we had to look for some where to stay from the

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<sup>21</sup> Tape 26. Dumisani Dube interviewing mama Zikkhali at Zikhali, March 2001.

neighbouring chiefs. We had to take our cattle through the lake and crocodiles ate some of them and the few that survived also died.<sup>22</sup> The people in Mpukunyoni who witnessed the manner in which the Bhangazi people were removed nicknamed “gankla”, a male buck, as the trucks that brought there were dropping them anywhere anyhow, leaving their things and everything behind, even the donkeys they used for ploughing.<sup>23</sup>

Mr Dube has his own story about why they were removed from Bhangazi. He mentions that they put up resistance to the removal. The government began to raise the stakes by asking that everyone should have five heads of cattle in his kraal. He reiterated the community’s position in this way, “No it was not our will to be removed from that place but were compelled to move. The whites came and told us to sell all our cows and remain with five cows.”<sup>24</sup> A government official named as Nyamazane, is remembered and was said to have been clever in devising all these ways of weighing down the people of Bhangazi. The whites according to Mr Dube surrounded the area with a fence and that restricted the movement of the people at Bhangazi. They were stopped from hunting and fetching firewood in the forest.

The perception of the people of Bhangazi is that the white people removed them from the area because they claimed that they wanted to develop the area. (Tape 26) The community understood that they were being sacrificed for the interests of the white businesses. There is no evidence from the people interviewed to suggest that arguments for conservation were used in forcing them from the area.

### **Impact of Forced Dispersion on Bhangazi People**

One of the difficult issues to comprehend is how the forced removal of the Bhangazi community has continued to undermine their identity as a people. At the political level, they lost control of their own destiny and became a dependent people. The indunas and their people were forced to subject themselves to the authority of the indunas in charge of the areas they were forced to settle. This meant the loss of all political power for these indunas. They have no jurisdiction over any of the cultural festivals, nor could they play any other political role in the new area. The political identity of Bhangazi

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<sup>22</sup> Interview on 18 March 2001 at Mfekayi.

<sup>23</sup> Interview on 18 March 2001 at Mfekayi.

<sup>24</sup> Tape 15, Dumisani interview Mr dube

could not translate into an entity that can locate in the political arena of the area. Although the people have continued to identify themselves used these old identity of Bhangazi, the shifting boundaries, have emptied them of all political capital. It is of little surprise that the Bhangazi leaders lodged a land claim so that their territory could be restored and their political identify revived. However, the land awarded is not sufficient for resettlement of the people of Bhangazi.

Mr Sithole recalled that although the leadership of Bhangazi at the top was the same, as they were within the same jurisdiction, the people did not accept them. They were hostile because they were seen as taking up the land, which belonged to people of Mpukunyoni. It was also noted that the indunas in the new areas allocated land to them without much discretion and that this could have led to the tensions between the ruled.<sup>25</sup>

Mr Dube of Nyalazi claimed that the whites had killed them through the act of removing them from Bhangazi. (Tape 14) In the new place they have to depend on money to buy the daily food requirements while at Bhangazi they fetched from the environment. Even firewood is hard to be found in Nyalazi, it has to be bought, but this was not the case at Bhangazi. At Bhangazi they cultivated sweet potatoes, amadumbe and at Nyalazi they have to buy all that.

### **Health**

Mr Mbuyazi when asked what the difference was between kwaShikishela and Bhangazi, responded by indicating that “there is a huge difference, we are sick, we never feel well since we came here’.<sup>26</sup> Granny (ugogo) Mbuyazi of Mazala also made the same observation concerning health as she states, “life here is not good, we will not be happy until we die.”<sup>27</sup> The people interviewed all suggest a decline in the health of the community. They often talked how people in the community were sick and needing a doctor. The health of the people situation in the area where they were dispersed was greatly affected by the environment and also the resources available such as food. The change from that of Bhangazi also led to a dietary deficit for the people who could not depend on wild fruits and game to supplement their food. The Bhangazi leadership

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<sup>25</sup> Interview on 18 March 2001 at Mfekayi.

<sup>26</sup> Tape 16. Interview at KwaShikishela by Dumisani Dube and Mr Mbuyazi and Mr Mhlanga.

<sup>27</sup> Tape 23. Dumisani Dube, interview with Ugogo Mbuyazi at kwaMazala March 2001.

complained that when they were forcefully moved they had no money to buy food. This clearly shows that

### **Culture**

It was the view of the leaders interviewed that culture required a community and the people of Bhangazi ceased to be a community. The forced removals and the scattering of the people throughout the territory of Mpukunyoni made it difficult for the people from Bhangazi to practice their culture. It was further observed that there were few older people to teach young people about the culture. Mfeka also noted that the Bhangazi would find it difficult to offer tourists any cultural products. The ritual and ceremonies did not continue to be practiced.<sup>28</sup> The tendency was to join in the cultural activities of the communities they have joined as they were in the majority. In this way cultural uniqueness of the Bhangazi people.

One of the major complaints was that back in Bhangazi the graves had been desecrated. In order to visit their land of their ancestors the Bhangazi people they had to ask for permission from the Nature Conservation Department. The permission by the Department of Nature Conservation is regulated so rigidly that they do not give sufficient time for the visits. It was the opinion of Mr Mfeka that they did not have freedom to get there any time to perform their rituals. To be able to achieve all these they needed to sleep over in the area. They hope that they will be able to obtain permission from the government to spend more time visiting the graves of their ancestors.

Another problem that had arisen from the dispersion of the people was that they had no graveyards for the people of Bhangazi. This was so because they were scattered all over the territory of Mpukunyoni. Again Mr Mfeka represents the feelings of others in the following statement:

We did not have a special place for graves (cemetery) so our graves are all over, so when the government decides to plant the forest, they just plough on top of the graves, and when you come back later to visit the grave, you can not even point to where it was.<sup>29</sup>

### **Economic Activities**

Mr Dube comments on his stay in Oqwakwini after the forced removals:

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<sup>28</sup> Interview on 18 March 2001 at Mfekayi.

<sup>29</sup> Interview on 18 March 2001 at Mfekayi.

No, we are just staying here because we were removed from our place. There is nothing that makes me happy in this place because even if you try to cultivate your food, it never grows because there is a lot of drought. The life of this place wont be the same as the life at Bhangazi.<sup>30</sup>

This was a widespread feeling in the interviews from both women and men. The dispersed people attempted to till the land as they had done in Bhangazi. There were a number of factors that were different. To begin with, the amount of rainfall was less in the new territories. This affected the number of crops they could grow. Initially people were not allowed to plant sugar nor gum trees so as to make a living. With crops not growing as well as they did in Bhangazi, and the cattle not surviving well in the new area, the people had little alternatives but to begin to sell their labour through employment. However, the most prevalent practice was roadside vending. The selling of agricultural products along the main roads has spread in a ridiculous manner whereby you see a chain of women selling the same. The street selling is done largely by women and the money raised goes to support their families. To make the situation ugly, it was noted that the products that are sold by the roadside are not grown by the people in Mpukunyoni, they buy the products from wholesalers.

Another way in which the people responded to the new challenges of the money economy was through the migrant labour system. Fortunately, the era of forced removals from Bhangazi coincided with the expansion of the mining sector. Therefore, the mining sector was able to absorb several people from Mpukunyoni, the new home for the people of Bhangazi. As long as the mining sector was doing well the migrant workers continued to be meaningfully employed. When the mining sector slumped and many mines closed down, many of the Bhangazi people were retrenched and came back home.

An innovative way of responding to the high levels of unemployment in the region came through sugar cane growing by Africans. Sugar cane growing commenced in 1985-86. Growing cane by African had been prohibited. However, in 1985 African grown sugar cane could be bought by the mill. The sugar mill operated on a quota system and before 1985 Africans were not allocated a quota. Mr Sithole one of the

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<sup>30</sup> Tape 15, Dumisani at Oqwakwini with Mr Dube February 2001.

people interviewed was in the group of the first Africans to plant sugar cane. He claims that his employer, a white man, took to the sugar mill and explained to him how he can participate in the sugar cane growing business.<sup>31</sup> In the 1990s when the mining companies shed of a lot of workers through retrenchments, the returning migrant workers also took up sugar cane growing. Another important benefit of sugarcane growing underscored by Mr Mfeka was the creation of jobs for other people within Mpukunyoni.<sup>32</sup> Africans not only participated in the new economy but also created jobs and this helped ameliorate the living standards for many people.

### **Bhangazi Heritage Site**

The Bhangazi community have tried to recover their lost land through making a land claim through the government sponsored Land Commission.<sup>33</sup> The result of this land claim was that several people received monetary compensation of R30, 000 per individuals was paid. This settlement also included an allocation of a small piece of land of 5 acres in Bhangazi. The allocated land was identified, as old cattle deep where the people of Bhangazi in the 1950s were required to deep their cattle for the disinfecting of cattle. Indeed this was used as evidence to prove that the area indeed belonged to the people. It is very site with the cattle deep that the people of Bhangazi would like to build as a heritage site to commemorate their history.

There are many plans afoot for the land such as building a museum at the site. The vision for the area is best represented by Mr Mfeka, the chairman of the Bhangazi Land Claims Committee:

It was in our mind, we talked as a committee that the heritage site should give the picture of how we used to live and everything about the people of Bhangazi, so that when we go there and the next generation, there would be something giving the whole story of how people used to live their lives...Because when we thought of this we came into agreement that we have to keep all the history of Bhangazi so that the future generation and others should get to know [how we used to live]. If we were to decide and the government and the Parks Board were to allow us to demonstrate the lives we used to live there at Bhangazi, when talking about fishing, crafts making, women's work we would make a video to show to the visitors to

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<sup>31</sup> Interview on 18 March 2001 at Mfekayi.

<sup>32</sup> Interview on 18 March 2001 at Mfekayi.

<sup>33</sup> The documents submitted by the Bhangazi community were prepared by lawyers and they need to be located and examined to complete the story in more detail.

the site and our children. They should actually see how we used to live by watching the video accompanied by a narrator explaining aspects of it for clarity and understanding.<sup>34</sup>

The intension is clear that the heritage site will serve as a living heritage that will provide a remembrance of the lifestyle of yesteryears. It is also hope that it could become a milking cow for the people for the people of Bhangazi. More importantly, it could serve as new source of identify formation for the people of Bhangazi. It will help them perform rituals to their ancestors, as it will stand in as a proxy cemetery for all. Since the community has the problem of not identifying the graves of their ancestors, all people can have something to which they could relate. This will invent new performances of traditions.

The committee would like to make the heritage site to function as a centre for the performance of the rituals by community. Mr Mfeka again indicates the vision for the heritage site in regard to this role:

In our plan we do have that, a place which we plan to build some huts and houses so that if people want to go there for rituals and ancestral ceremonies, they can use them to prepare traditional beers and cook there, sleep there when conducting those ceremonies, it was our request that the government provides for that.<sup>35</sup>

### **Cultural tourism in Bhangazi**

With more strategic thinking the planned heritage site could answer the community's yearning to fulfil their obligations to the ancestors. The intension to make an income-generating site also raises a few interesting questions about pecuniary interest and those of maintaining tradition. Is this a move towards commoditification of rituals through the heritage site? To what extent would the violation of the traditions go in order to generate money considered useful to improve the quality of life for the people of Bhangazi. From the Lubombo Spatial Initiative perspective, wouldn't this project be worthwhile supporting as it combines both the objectives of preserving a peoples culture through documentation and the generating of self-sustaining economic activities that would provide employment in the area. The token allocation of land for the

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<sup>34</sup> Interview on 18 March 2001 at Mfekayi.

<sup>35</sup> Interview on 18 March 2001 at Mfekayi.



preservation of memories of the past could possibly provide new space for the re-invention of the Bhangazi sense of community and being a people.

The final issue that need to be raised concerning the Bhangazi Heritage Site is its relationship to the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park World heritage site. The business and politics of world heritage sites are complex issues that in the long term culminate in ceding the authority over the world heritage site to an international body. The tension between the Bhangazi Heritage site seeking to mobilise resources for the invention of an identity destroyed by apartheid and the restoration of the community and the appropriation of the jurisdiction by the global protocols that sees the preservation of bio-diversity as an end in itself. Should the global needs of preserving this wetland exclude the restoration of a people's heritage and lifestyle destroyed by the wanton displacement by apartheid and conservation experts. Would the tourists needs and interests be placed above the survival of a community?