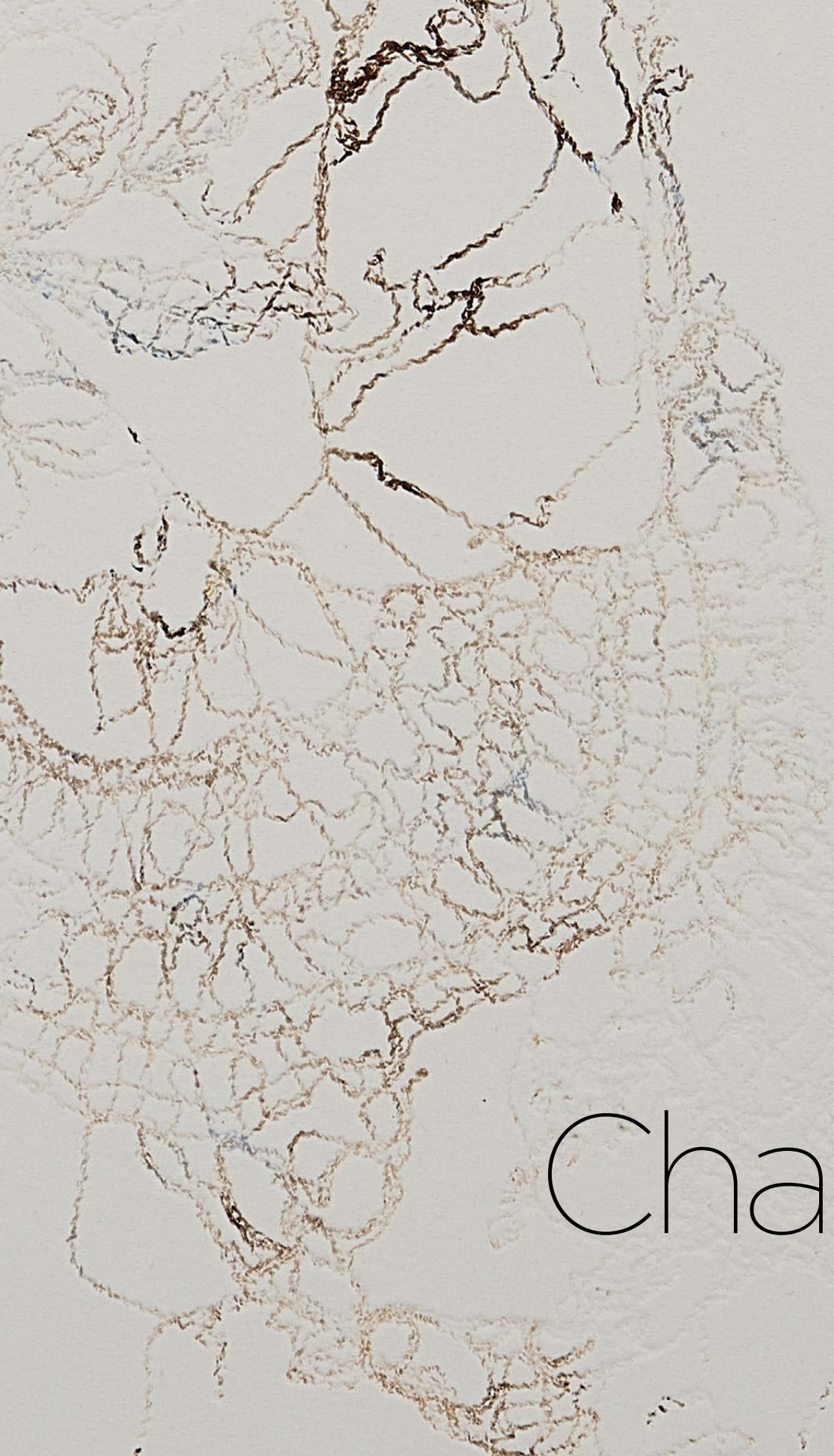

Chapter **08**

Fuze's Gourd: *Umuntu kafi aphele*[1]

Justine Wintjes

'Gourd beer vessel showing repair of fracture'

Housed in the collections of the KwaZulu-Natal Museum is an old beverage container made from the hard shell of a fruit (Figure 8.1). The object is subspherical, with a flattened underside and a round hole at the top where the fruit's point of attachment to the stalk would have been. It has a matt brown patina with dark patches and pale vertical streaks as if from a milky liquid spilt over the rim. At the time of donation, it had cracks that had been carefully repaired, pulled neatly closed by regular stitches of vegetal fibre (Figure 8.2). It clearly had a history of use. It has not, as far as I know, been exhibited in the museum or researched before.

Figure 8.1.
Two views of a gourd beer vessel in the collections of the KwaZulu-Natal Museum, donated by 'Magema de Fuza' in 1904 (object no. 258), showing repaired fractures on one side. Photograph by Chiara Singh, 2021, for the Five Hundred Year Archive.

Figure 8.2.
A detail of the stitched repair on the object depicted in Figure 8.1. Photograph by Chiara Singh, 2021, for the Five Hundred Year Archive.

[1] Translating as, 'When a person dies, that is not the end of him', this was the title of a series of articles by Magema Magwaza Fuze that appeared in the newspaper *Ilanga lase Natal* between 1916 and 1922 (Mokoena 2011:42).

Figure 8.3.
Magema Magwaza Fuze. Photographer unrecorded, 1920, Campbell Collections of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, File 2 of the Fuze Papers, KCB1127.

The entry for this object in the museum accession register reads, 'Gourd beer vessel showing repair of fracture', from 'Maritzburg', donated by 'Magema de Fuza' in 1904 to the then Natal Government Museum.[2] The surname was written down in the accession register as 'de Fusa' by Frederick Fitzsimons[3] (Natal Museum 1904–12:9) and published as 'de Fuza' in the Annual Report (Natal Government Museum 1906:48). This donor was likely Magema Magwaza Fuze, the well-known *kholwa* intellectual (Figure 8.3).[4] The transcription of the surname as 'de Fusa'/'de Fuza' is a misspelling or modification that I cannot currently explain. Fuze's name underwent several transformations in his life (Mokoena 2011:280 (n.1); 2012:403), but I have not seen a similar form anywhere else. It could reflect an indirect link between Fuze and Fitzsimons—perhaps somebody brought the gourd to the museum on Fuze's behalf, or it came with documentation in which the name was not clearly written—but there is no further information in the museum that would shed light on the exact circumstances of the donation.

Figure 8.4.
The Natal Government Museum as it looked when it opened in 1904. Photographer unrecorded (Natal Government Museum 1906: frontispiece).

[2] The museum was renamed Natal Museum in 1910 and KwaZulu-Natal Museum in 2011. [3] Fitzsimons worked as curator for the Natal Society and its successor the Natal Government Museum from 1896 to 1906 (Guest 2006:11). [4] Hlonipha Mokoena (pers. comm. 2022) points out that 'Magema' is not a common name and agrees that it is likely that the donor was Fuze.

The museum opened as a fully-fledged museum in 1904 (Figures 8.4 and 8.5). Its predecessor, the Natal Society, had begun 'collecting materials of a museum' in 1851, which were housed initially in a small back room of the Society's library building in the centre of Pietermaritzburg (Guest 2006:2, 4). The Natal Society struggled to attract a regular source of funding to support the museum but developed its public profile by making the collections accessible in the form of displays and acknowledging donations in *The Natal Witness*; by the end of the nineteenth century its spaces were 'bursting at the seams' (Guest 2006:13). The idea of a dedicated building was approved in 1901 and built and occupied by 1903. This flurry of growth was tempered by ongoing challenges of funding, staffing and space (Guest 2006:14–15). It seems as though a formal accession register for the 'ethnology' collection was started only once the custom-built premises were occupied, and in the museum's first few years, a vast amount of work took place in a short period to catch up on the backlog.[5] Fitzsimons wrote more than 350 entries into the accession register over 1903–04, including approximately 100 representing acquisitions in 1904 alone. Other acquisitions made in 1904 comprise a motley set of objects acquired by purchase, donation or exchange and do not shed much contextual light on the gourd.

Fuze was a prominent member of a community of mission-educated African intellectuals known as the *amakholwa*, and he is famously the author of the first book published in Zulu by a native Zulu speaker, *Abantu Abamnyama Lapa Bavela Ngakona,* which appeared in the year he died (Fuze 1922, 1979, 2022a, 2022b). His biography sheds light on how a person originating within an oral culture adapted to living in a literate one, creatively melding elements from both contexts in a practice of bricolage (Mokoena 2011). Fuze was an avid writer of different kinds of texts, which form a significant source for understanding his life story as well as his legacy as an intellectual, even though his personal story remains something of an enigma (Mokoena 2012:403). By contrast, the object he donated to the museum has decidedly few words associated with it and nothing directly linkable to Fuze's voice. In Fuze's writings, I have not yet found any references to the donation, or beer gourds more generally, or to the museum. Although the source information is incomplete for many entries in the accession register, Fuze is one of the few named black contributors to the collections, certainly for this early period.[6] It is tempting to imagine that this item was personally meaningful to Fuze, a kind of individualisation

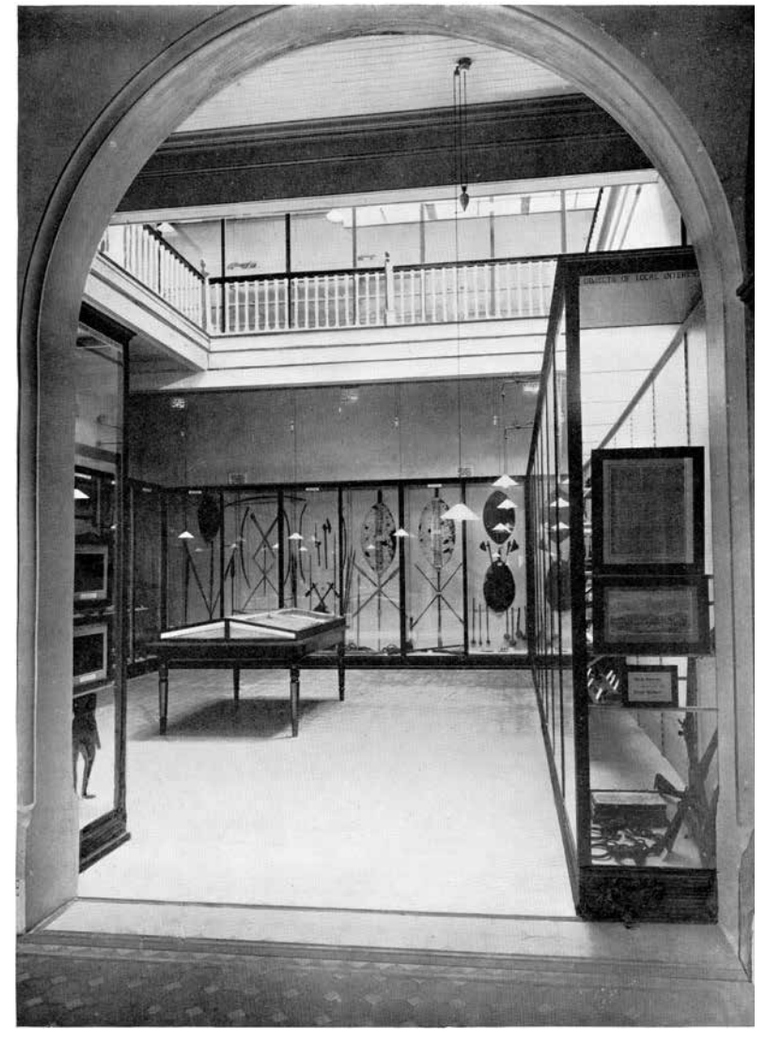

Figure 8.5.
The 'Ethnological Room' of the Natal Government Museum. Photographer unrecorded (Natal Government Museum 1906: illustration 6 (pp. 12–13)).

[5] Prior to 1904, donated items were appended to annual reports and published in *The Witness*, and before 1885 they were listed in the museum committee's minute book (Guest 2006:13).
[6] A decade later, in 1914, Jim Makanya of Pietermaritzburg presented a worked stone to the museum (object no. 1925/9 (originally 2323): 'Bushman Digging Stone—unfinished specimen'; Natal Museum 1912–96:13).

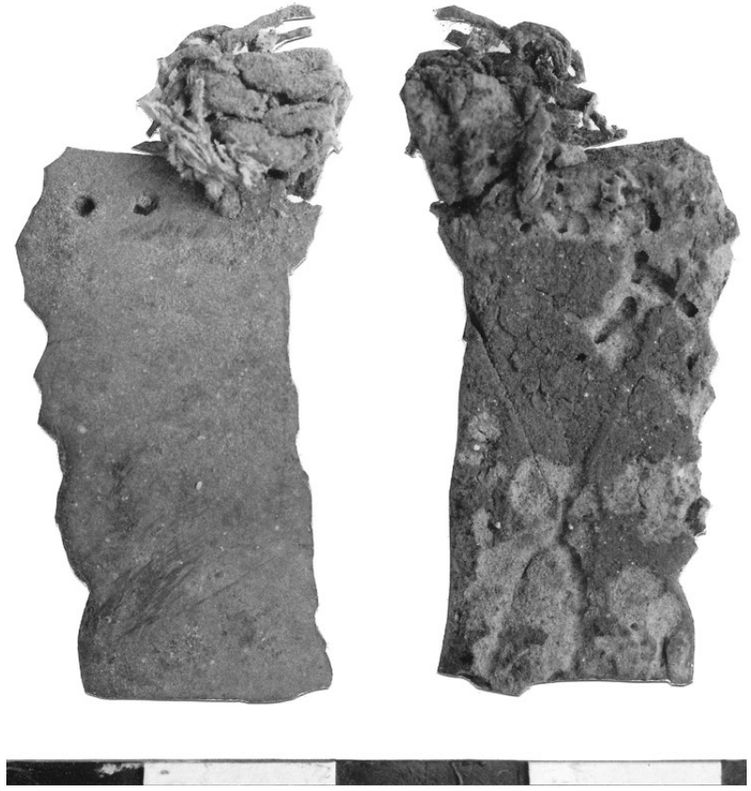

Figure 8.6.
Fragments of a gourd with twine recovered at Collingham Shelter (front and back), probably reflecting a repair (Mazel 1992:34 (figure 29)).

rare in museum collections of a supposedly 'anthropological' nature. Yet, it is still largely dissociated from what would have made it meaningful in its earlier context (see Seabela and De Harde's chapters). It is nevertheless possible to imagine what inspired his bequeathment of this object to the museum, based on elements of his biography and of the cultural context of gourds in early twentieth century Natal.

Gourds in the museum

The bottle gourd or calabash (*Lagenaria siceraria*) is a vine generally considered indigenous to Africa and apparently one of the oldest domesticated plants in the world. It produces fruits known as gourds or calabashes ranging in shape from bottle-like to sub-globose. The outer skins of these fruits dry into strong, hard shells that allow their use around the world as containers and acoustic resonators. Described as 'one of the most cross-culturally ubiquitous crops' with a 'pan-tropical distribution by the beginning of the Holocene' (Kistler et al. 2014:2937), the species has a rich and complex past as a domesticate. However, many questions remain regarding the specifics of this history. The bottle gourd/calabash has been argued to be a 'utility' species that, along with the dog, was domesticated long before other food crops or animals (Erickson et al. 2005), but transoceanic drift likely assisted its distribution (Kistler et al. 2014).

The KwaZulu-Natal Museum (KZNM) Anthropology Collection includes various gourd-based items from different parts of the world, including central African thumb pianos with gourd resonators, West African bowls, South American cups for yerba maté and a European gourd bottle pendant. The gourd-based items originating from what is now the province of KwaZulu-Natal include bottles and containers designed for holding substances of different kinds (such as beer, sour milk, ilala palm wine, fat, sap and medicine), as well as bowls, scoops and ladles. Small gourds were transformed into scent boxes and snuff boxes, some with stoppers. Many are decorated with beads, wirework or pyro-patterning. A few are entirely natural, unmodified, whole fruits that may have served as rattles or seed stores.

As with the broader field of material culture within the isiZulu context, the lexicon for objects made out of gourds/calabashes (*iselwa*, pl. *amaselwa*) is complex and reflects functional and conceptual distinctions and entanglements (Bryant 1905:204, 207, 767, 768; Krige 1962:397–98; Bosch & Griesel 2020:18–19). Among the museum's

specimens are two types that correspond with discrete spheres of food and drink. A generally bottle-shaped gourd container destined for milk, often with small holes underneath for running off the whey as the milk curdles, is an *igula*. A gourd container used for water, beer or fermented porridge (*amahewu*), but not for milk or food, and with a small opening not wider than one's thumb (Bryant 1905:767, 768) is an *isigubhu*. This term might be appropriate for other museum specimens of different sizes ranging from bottle-shaped to round, whose precise function is not recorded. Nowadays, *isigubhu* is a more general term for large containers (around 5 litres or more) used for storing liquids (Nothando Shabalala pers. comm. 2022). A gourd container for water or beer, whether large or small and regardless of shape, with an opening wider than one's thumb, is an *igobongo* (Bryant 1905:767, 768; Krige 1962:397), the term that seems most apt for Fuze's gourd.

Of all the undecorated gourd containers in the museum, it is the most spherical and the one that most closely resembles an *ukhamba* or ceramic beer pot, but without anything akin to the textured decoration this latter object type often carries.

Gourds in the past

The deep history of gourd use is difficult to investigate as most gourds tend to be lost to decomposition. A few remains have been recovered from archaeological contexts in KwaZulu-Natal, among them gourd-vessel fragments with notched lips from Late Iron Age layers at Mhlwazini Cave and Sibhudu Cave (Mazel 1990:117; KwaZulu-Natal Museum archaeological archive), and gourd fragments, including perforations and twine stitching, from Later Stone Age contexts at Driel and Collingham Shelters (Maggs & Ward 1980:52, 58; Mazel 1992:34 (figure 29), 2022:202; Figure 8.6). There is also a dearth of accurately provenanced historical gourds in museum collections. However, hints about the role of gourds can be gleaned from various documentary sources, and gourd containers are present in many early photographs (Whitelaw 2015:70; Figures 8.7 and 8.8).

As a way into exploring gourds in an isiZulu context in the past, I begin with the assumption that the inscription in the museum accession register of Fuze's gourd as a 'beer vessel' is accurate. The general shape of the vessel and the milky streaks on the outside appear to confirm this identification, as they are reminiscent of the residues that beer leaves behind when it foams up and overflows, an occurrence that is considered to be a good omen (Nothando Shabalala pers. comm. 2022). However, Fuze's gourd is entirely undecorated, which might seem surprising considering its purported use as a beer vessel. For reasons I explore below, if the gourd was an object of personal significance to Fuze, the donation might have made more sense if it were a gourd for *amasi* (sour or curdled milk). The metaphorical realms pertaining to *amasi* and beer (*utshwala*) are quite different. Ideally, containers used for one would never be used for the other and tended even to be kept in separate areas of the household (Raum 1973:126, 340, 380–81; Armstrong et al. 2008:544).

Amasi was customarily shared only by people related by descent due to associations between *amasi*, semen and the ancestors (Armstrong et al. 2008:544). The powerful association of gourds with men/*amasi*/ancestors contributed to a close personal identification between gourds and men, such that a man's *amasi* gourd was destroyed on his death, sometimes broken over his grave, because it can only have one owner. By contrast, the gourds of his wife can be retained for use after her death (Raum 1973:356). A king's calabash would come from carefully selected sources—'special varieties … cultivated by high ranking women'—and were laid to rest alongside the king, in the hands of one of the king's attendants who were buried with him (Kennedy 1993:242, 245).

Utshwala is a fermented beverage traditionally made from sorghum or millet, nourishing and mildly alcoholic. It forms a counterpoint to *amasi* because its consumption is fundamentally social and public, as it is shared among people that include non-kin, in other words, 'people with whom one cannot share sour milk, that is, potential partners in marriage' (Armstrong et al. 2008:544). It serves many purposes, being 'brewed for parties, to celebrate birth, marriage and other rites of passage, to honour the ancestors, to reward work parties, for reconciliation following disputes, and to dispense largesse' (Armstrong et al. 2008:516). Therefore, beer and its serving vessels 'participated' in important social processes such as marriage negotiations, providing these exchanges with a familiar sensory tactile element (Armstrong et al. 2008:545).

In more recent times, beer drinking and serving vessels have been made from ceramic (*izinkamba*), with elaborate textural decoration that adds another dimension to the tactility of drinking beer and serves to 'patrol' the tensions inherent in social relationships through appeals to 'proper' behaviour that offer respect to the head of the homestead. A

Figure 8.7.
A group of people preparing for a wedding feast, with an assortment of basketry, ceramic and gourd vessels. Photographer unrecorded, 1928, Campbell Collections of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Album D7 'Zulu customs book 1', D07-145.

Figure 8.8.
'Women carrying gourd vessels and baskets on their heads, Zululand'. The event depicted may have been a bridal party (*umthimba*). The round basket is an *isichumo*. Photographer: James Stuart, n.d. (late nineteenth/early twentieth century), Campbell Collections of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Album D10 'Zulu customs book 2', D10-127.

Figure 8.9.
'Gudu's Kraal at the Tugala [Thukela]/Women making beer' (1849, National Library of Australia, PIC Volume 505 #S4422) (Angas 1974:pl. 26) depicting different containers, including several large brewing vessels (*izimbiza*) and several smaller types, some possibly made out of gourds. Note also the fresh and whole gourds piled onto a table in the lower right-hand corner.

similar textured decoration is observable on other serving receptacles used in public contexts, such as meat platters. The rise in popularity during the twentieth century of these highly decorated *izinkamba*, also linked to their commercial success as collectable art objects, has obscured the earlier history of beer vessels. It seems as though before about 1850, beer containers were made primarily of basketry but also gourds (Testimony from Msimanga in Webb & Wright 1986:42; Gluckmann 1935:256; Raum 1973:151, 274; Jolles 2005:109–10), with ceramic being used for the large undecorated brewing vessels (Jolles 2005:109–10; Whitelaw 2020:173, 175; Figure 8.9). The transition to a ceramic medium would not have been a simple replacement of one material by another; it would have involved a complex rearrangement of a nexus of intertwined relationships, visible and invisible. As with other aspects of material culture, design shifts would have been shaped by the physical potential of different materials but also by shifts in conceptual or political emphasis and the entanglement of the one with the other.

Overall, there is little information available to draw on for beer gourds. In written sources, gourds appear to be more frequently associated with milk than beer. It is clear that gourds formed part of the material culture of second-millennium farming communities in the region. They were in some instances decorated in the same way as ceramic vessels, the most common kind of decoration being lip notching. It is also possible that other kinds of decorative messaging enhanced the male associations of beer-serving vessels through accessories that have not been preserved.[7] For example, the strong identification of beer baskets (*izichumo*; Figure 8.8) with men, who were the makers of the tightly woven baskets used for food and drink, might persist in contemporary times in the practice of using small basketry covers for beer pots reserved for male consumption, and possibly by married men specifically (*izimbenge*; Armstrong et al. 2008:524; Whitelaw 2020:175). The example of this type of accessory points to the need for gourds to have extensions to render them more practical as vessels—their round bottom would often require some sort of net or cradle enabling a stable upright position, and different kinds of covers or plugs would be used to seal the opening to protect the contents (Raum 1973:274; Figure 8.8). But even without any accessories or enhancements, baskets and gourds used in a beer-drinking context in the past may have served to emphasise a paternal and agnatic presence through a different aesthetic expression, by means of male associations of the materials themselves (see also Whitelaw 2015:166, 2020:173, 175).

[7] The history of gourd ornamentation, design and accessorisation across all types of gourd-based containers in southern Africa deserves more attention. Gourds in other Bantu-speaking contexts were sometimes heavily decorated by engraving, carving, painting or dyeing, or supplemented with other materials (Berns & Hudson 1986; Holdsworth 2014), although the designs in southern Africa appear generally to have been less ornamented (Kennedy 1993:245).

The traces of a contemporary repair on Fuze's gourd reflect a habit of keeping gourds over long periods. The practice of repairing both gourds and pots is well established. It is a feature of second-millennium material culture: one of the finds from Collingham Shelter was a piece of a gourd with holes through which twine stitches were threaded, possibly representing a repair (Mazel 1992:34 (figure 29); Figure. 8.6).[8] Repair work would have been risky because making holes for the stitches could cause more damage and extend the fissures, and required skill as it needed to maintain the functionality of the vessel. As with beer baskets, the vegetal fibres would swell up with the liquid inside to become a watertight container. The stitches became a prominent aspect of the vessel's appearance, adding a textural basketry element.

The proverb '*mus'ukupa (*or *sipula) izintselwa njengabaTwa*', translated as 'you mustn't root out (and throw away) your gourds like Bushmen (who presumably did not value them, and yet they have been of such useful service to mankind)', and explained as meaning, 'you should not treat contemptuously or speak ill of your benefactor' (Bryant 1905:566; italics and parentheses in the original), also points to the re-use value placed on gourds, the idea of a gourd as a provider of support and sustenance, and the ways in which gourd-related practices were linked to collective identity.

Fuze's life

I now look at some elements of Fuze's biography to contextualise the donation of the gourd to the museum. Although Fuze was an important figure in the vanguard of black writing, the vision carried by him and his peers for a novel kind of indigenous literate community was never fully realised during their lifetimes. The emergent intellectual force they represented was 'stifled in its infancy' due to wider political factors such as the formation of a white state, and the unresolved dilemma they faced as simultaneously critical thinkers and colonised subjects (Mokoena 2011:18–19). There is, however, currently renewed interest in Fuze's life and career due to the scholarship of Hlonipha Mokoena (2011, 2012, 2022) and the recent republication of *Abantu Abamnyama* (Fuze 2022a, 2022b). Several digital curations published on Emandulo, the Five Hundred Year Archive's experimental platform, make materials related to Fuze available online and attempt to give further texture to his life (Figure 8.12). But again, many aspects remain enigmatic, so any biographical bearing on the museum donation remains speculative.

Fuze was born near Pietermaritzburg in the Colony of Natal *c.*1844 and spent much of his life in and around this town. He was educated at Ekukhanyeni, Bishop John William Colenso's mission school at Bishopstowe, to the east of Pietermaritzburg, from age 12 (as Colenso estimated him to be when he arrived in 1856; Mokoena 2012:403). There he trained as a printer and was subsequently appointed head printer in 1862 and placed in charge of Ekukhanyeni alongside William Ngidi while Colenso was in England over the following three years (Mokoena 2011:32).

As a prominent member of this dynamic and erudite community, Fuze was embroiled in understanding contemporary affairs characterised by 'the ever-constant intrusion of Zululand politics and Natal's colonial ambitions and intrigues' and entered into contact with the Zulu monarchy in 1859 (Mokoena 2011:32–33). It is impossible to account for all of his activities over the years, but he went on to experience first-hand several key events of his times, namely 'the arrest and deposition of the Zulu king Cetshwayo, the destruction of the Zulu kingdom in 1879, the exile of the Zulu prince Dinuzulu in 1890, and the Bhambatha rebellion in 1906'—which put him in a unique position to observe and comment on this period of colonialism in Natal and Zululand (Mokoena 2012:404). His continental and global outlook toward African history was influenced by his travels to the island of St. Helena to serve as a tutor to the exiled Dinuzulu in 1896. Having returned from exile in 1898 to the Zulu country, Dinuzulu summoned Fuze again in 1904. Fuze was about 60 years old at the time.

Whether the donation of the gourd happened before or after Fuze's second assignment with Dinuzulu, it is tempting to imagine that it might have been inspired in some way by the prospect or experience of visiting Zululand in that year. However, the 'Maritzburg' locality indicated in the accession register suggests that the gourd was local (the 'source' usually refers to the origin of the item rather than the donor).

Fuze on gourds

The only mention of 'gourds' that I have found in Fuze's writing is about the 'first fruits' ceremony (*umkhosi*), which was an agricultural celebration and ritual of fertility: 'When the king tastes the first fruits [*ukweshama*],[9] the medicine men set out to procure the wild gourd [*uselwa*] from other places, together with the medicines required for the ceremony' (Fuze 1922:160, 2022:99; bracketed insertion in the

[8] Other examples of gourds with contemporary repairs from Africa were recently featured in an online post published by the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge (Carreau 2022; Figure 8.10 and Figure 8.11). [9] The spelling should be *'ukweshwama'*. An alternative name for this festival is *Umkhosi Woselwa* ('festival of the calabash') (Nothando Shabalala pers. comm. 2022).

Figure 8.10.
Repaired gourd from Kenya, stitched with plant fibre, collected by Louis Leakey, Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge (MAA 1950.562). Photograph by Lucie Carreau, 2022.

Figure 8.11.
Detail of the repaired gourd depicted in Figure 8.10. Photograph by Lucie Carreau, 2022.

original). Other testimonies describe the gourd as being crushed or smashed against the shields of nearby warriors as part of the ceremony (Testimony of Ndukwana in Webb & Wright 1986:270–71; Gluckmann, 1938:28; Raum 1973:538 (n.79)).

Steve Kotze has argued that the earlier portrayals of first fruits ceremonies reveal a greater emphasis on the 'hoecultural' aspects of cultivation—the domain of women's work—and later depictions portray more of 'a national celebration of male-dominated militarism focused on the monarchy in the person of the Zulu king' (Kotze 2018:13). Fuze's account seems to illustrate the latter tendency, with its emphasis on a ritual performance by the king involving a gourd. There is a question about what 'gourd' denotes in this context, as the term can be used as a more generic term for cucurbits or melons, of which there are several useful species, both wild and cultivated. Gourds referred to in accounts of the *umkhosi* are generally thought to have been representatives of the wild melon (*Lagenaria sphaerica*), known as *iselwa-lamkhosi* (Kennedy 1993:239–40), meaning 'the King's gourd' (Gluckmann 1938:27). The small, bitter, 'wild' early-season gourd mentioned in Fuze's account of the *umkhosi* seems to contrast with the full-bodied, late-season non-bitter fruit that his beer gourd was made from. A bitter, wild gourd may have represented foreignness, or an external danger or threat to the realm, hence its smashing. But although contrasting in this way with the kind of gourd used as food containers, the wild gourd seems nonetheless to have formed part of a more general sphere of associations between chiefs and royalty and gourds of different kinds.

For this reason, it would be interesting to look further into the similarities, connections and differences, both pragmatic and metaphorical, between wild, bitter gourds and the sweet, domesticated variety: the fruits of the bottle gourd are generally not considered edible, but young, tender fruits can be eaten although considered an emergency food by some; as with many other cucurbits, the leaves are eaten as a vegetable, relish or herb (Van Wyk & Gericke 2007:46). The frequent use of bottle gourds as containers entangles them in the world of food and drink in other ways, and for them to be useable as food containers they need to be of a non-bitter, edible type.

Umuntu kafi aphele

Towards the end of his life, in his seventies, Fuze wrote about his ideas on what happens after the death of the human body, including

a series of articles titled, 'Umuntu kafi apele'[10] ('When a person dies, that is not the end of him') published in *Ilanga lase Natal* between 1916 and 1922 (Mokoena 2011:42).[11] In these articles Fuze presented an original eschatological theory that can be characterised as a kind of immortalism (Mokoena 2011:253). His eschatology demonstrated that he was familiar with Zulu cultural practices concerning death but was not simply a syncretism of indigenous and Christian beliefs (Mokoena 2011:263). Throughout his writings, he wove together in complex ways elements from biblical scriptures with traditional Zulu expression, as illustrated in a passage that refers to a beer vessel:

> We mourn greatly, even though our mourning will not help anything. That saying [word] of ours is great when we say we are dead, we have died the death of clay-pot beer that had not been served [decanted]. We trust the One Above, who has prepared for us all like his Son has said (Fuze, 1915, translated in Mokoena, 2011:259; bracketed insertions in the translation).

Hlonipha Mokoena points out that the verb—*thunga* ('to decant or serve') is difficult to translate and can also be understood to mean 'to sew', so an alternative translation could be 'We have died the death of the clay pot that cannot be sewn' (2011:311 (n. 11)). The Zulu word for 'clay-pot' in Fuze's original text is *imbiza*, which is a type of large ceramic brewing vessel (Figure 8.9). The alternative translation points to the practice of repairing pots and to the strong personification of pots, which are analogous to people, a repaired pot being thinkable as symbolic of an extension of life.

In the epilogue to *Abantu Abamnyama*, published in the year Fuze died, he wrote:

> Concerning my own deliberations, gentlemen, I now suggest that we immediately prepare for the benefit of our future generations a record of events to show them where they came from. A grasshopper when it is fertilised at the end of a year and when it feels that it is about to die, digs a hole in the ground and lays its eggs there and covers them with soil, and then settles on a twig to wither and die. After a time the eggs hatch out, and its children emerge as grasshoppers just like it. We should remember that on death we do not come to an end, but by our progeny we renew ourselves to continue indefinitely, and so arise anew as if we were beginning at the beginning. Remember the old proverb, 'A skin cradle is not thrown away because of a death.' I am concerned to preserve. It will be a good thing if even in the future our children gain knowledge about their past, rather than remain ignorant and stupid like the *siphumamangati* eagle (2022b:155).

These elements—the persistent presence of gourds in a range of cultural contexts alongside an apparent decline of their use as beer-serving vessels, the apparent close association between gourds and male personhood and authority, and Fuze's concern to leave something of himself after death, something that might serve as a record for future generations—help to sketch a broader context for the donation to the Natal Government Museum. It adds further context to a suggestion I published previously on this beer gourd, which was, in a sense, the seed of this chapter:

> In choosing to place this object into the museum's care, the donor [Fuze] was making a contribution to what was by then already a substantial repository of material culture relevant to the history of the KwaZulu-Natal region. Gourds were potent symbols of personal identity for men in particular, and this gourd may have been Fuze's own beer vessel, which he bequeathed to the museum—a contribution to the archive of something personally meaningful (Wintjes 2021:280–81).

Indeed, Fuze's donation seems to reaffirm the fundamental role gourds played as vessels and the significance of such items at the intersection of the personal and the historical. The presence of the gourd in the museum today speaks to the possibility of weaving together Fuze's story with the gourd's story to form a kind of 'individualised and imagined moment' (Ntombela 2016:88; see also De Harde's chapter). Yet what the specific significance of this gourd was to Fuze, why the choice of a beer gourd rather than some other kind of object, and what exactly motivated him to make a donation remains elusive, as well as Fuze's understanding of the purpose of the museum, and museum collections more generally, in relation to personal objects of utility, belonging and identity. As a writer and thinker on issues of

[10] The current orthography is 'Umuntu kafi aphele'. [11] A selection of articles from this series is available on the Emandulo website of the Five Hundred Year Archive (http://emandulo.apc.uct.ac.za/metadata/Fuze/4508/4558/index.html).

Figure 8.12.
Screenshots from a digital curation about Magema Magwaza Fuze on the Five Hundred Year Archive's Emandulo website, 2022.

amazwi (words), text, language and translation, one wonders about Fuze's ideas on the changing context of lived material culture that the gourd so powerfully evokes. Examined in the context of Fuze's life and his ideas surrounding death, the gourd takes on additional affective layers of meaning, further complicating and enhancing its presence in the museum.

The gesture of donation seems paradoxical, similar to how Hlonipha Mokoena describes the writing of *amakholwa* generally: 'both backward- and forward-looking, expressive of both pre-colonial as well as of colonial or modern African society', arising out of a 'predicament of being entangled in the tension between pre-colonial and modern, colonial forces' (2011:23–24). Fuze likely saw the museum as an institution of modernity and education, aiming to preserve something of older ways of being in the world in the context of dramatic societal changes. His gesture of placing the gourd into the museum's care might be regarded as conscious (auto-)ethnography, self-realisation as a historian contributing to the archive, and a creative act of bricolage, melding detachment with bequeathal. The gourd, with its stitched repair, holding it together in a strange afterlife, evokes Fuze's career as a writer and intellectual: a deferred yet resilient and provocative force.

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