



THE SPECIFICALLY DECLARED BROSTER BEADWORK COLLECTION

“A collection from abaThembu, amaMpondo,
amaMpondomise, amaBomvana,
amaXhosa and amaXesibe”





nhc

National Heritage Council
SOUTH AFRICA

an agency of the
Department of Arts and Culture

Vision

To build a nation proud of its African heritage.

Mission

To transform, protect and promote heritage through the management of heritage knowledge for sustainable development.

Core Values

Ubuntu;

Integrity;

Professionalism;

Equity; and

Creativity

Preamble

The South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA) has a mandate, to identify, protect and promote heritage resources on behalf of the present and future generations of South Africans as prescribed in the National Heritage Resources Act, No. 25, 1999 (NHRA). According to the NHRA, it is also the responsibility of SAHRA to conserve and manage heritage resources (both sites and objects) associated with oral tradition or living heritage. One of the underpinnings of the Walter Sisulu University (WSU) academic architecture is the focus on community engagement in which the University actively contributes to national development through programmes with a focus on mutually beneficial community projects. The Joan Broster Beadwork Collection has afforded WSU an opportunity for collaboration between WSU and the surrounding communities from whom the collection originated.

SAHRA's Vision

A nation united through heritage

WSU's Vision

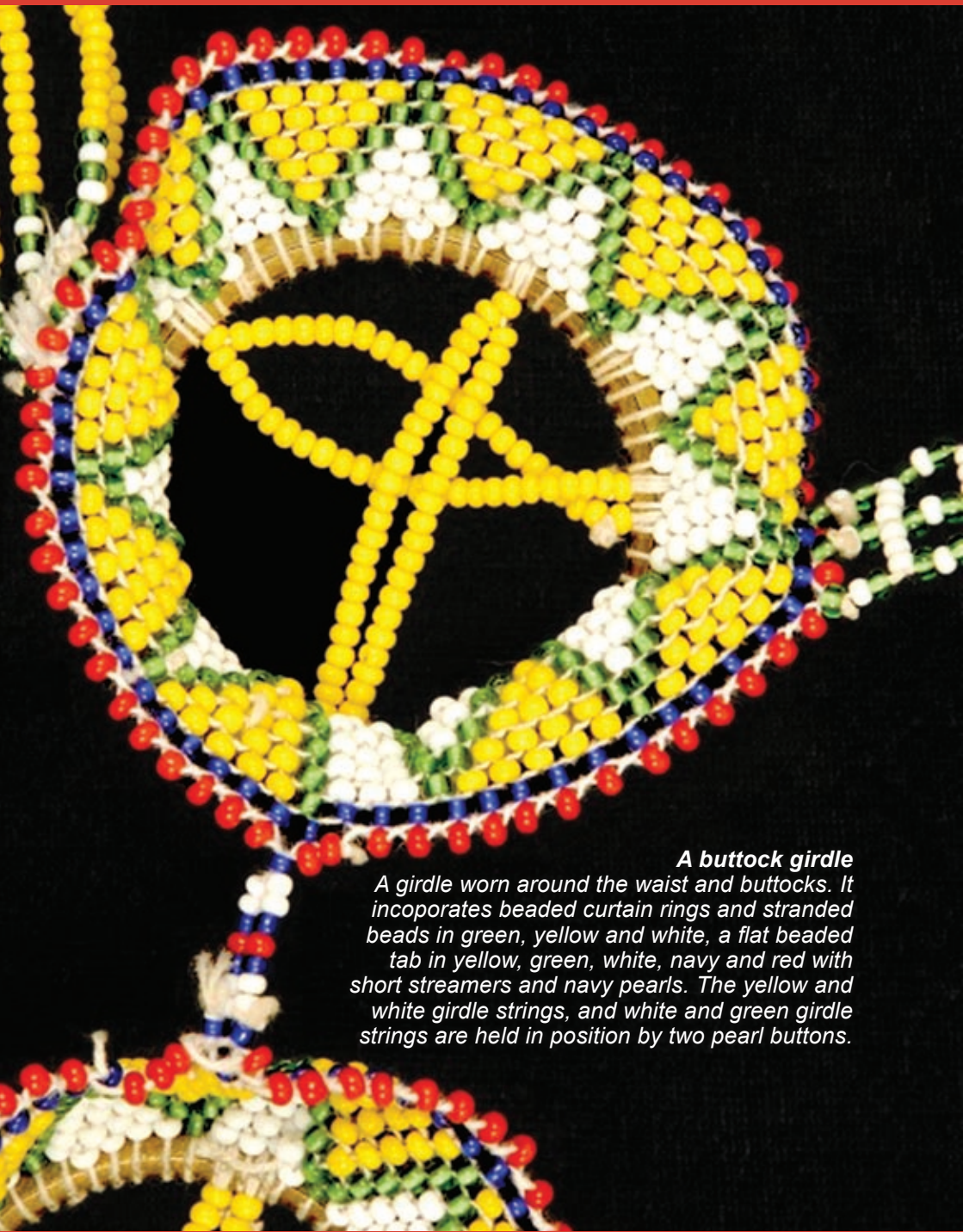
A leading African comprehensive university focusing on innovative, educational research and community partnership programmes that are responsive to local, regional, and national development priorities, while being cognisant of continental and international imperatives.

SAHRA's Mission

SAHRA's mission is to promote social cohesion in South Africa by:

- *Identifying, conserving and managing heritage resources in South Africa so that they can contribute to socio-economic development and nation building;*

Conserving the past, future and present for the South African Nation



A buttock girdle

A girdle worn around the waist and buttocks. It incorporates beaded curtain rings and stranded beads in green, yellow and white, a flat beaded tab in yellow, green, white, navy and red with short streamers and navy pearls. The yellow and white girdle strings, and white and green girdle strings are held in position by two pearl buttons.

- *Developing norms, standards and charters for the management of heritage resources in South Africa and codes of international best practices; and*
- *Contributing to skills and knowledge production and transformation in heritage resources management in South Africa and beyond.*

WSU's Mission Statement

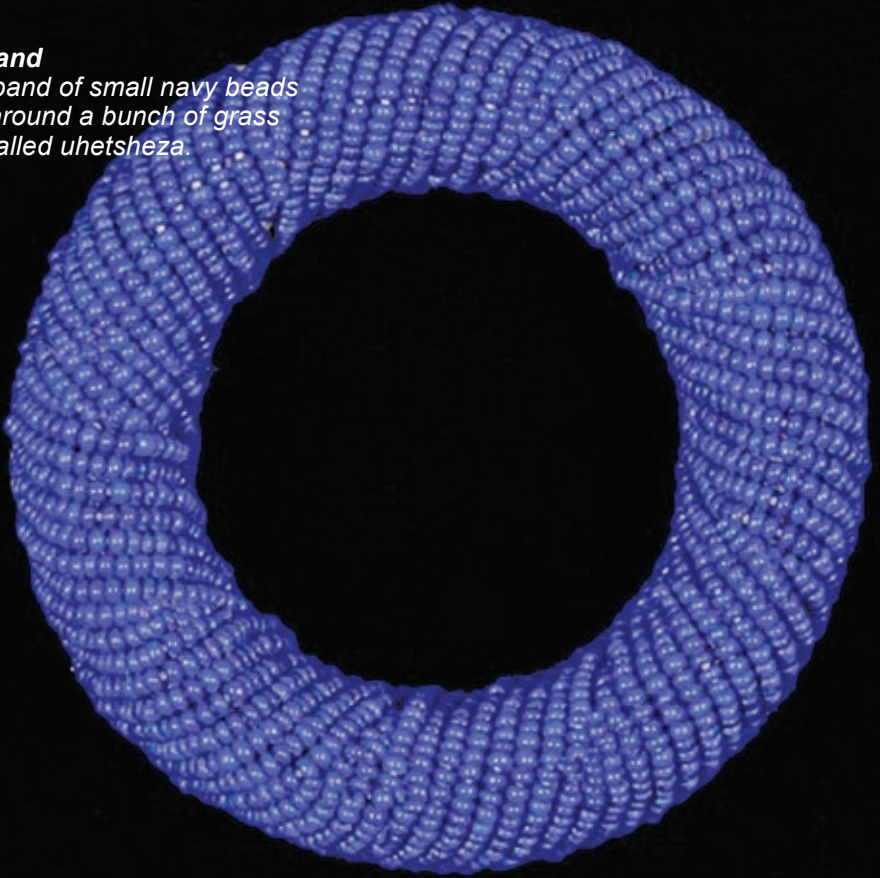
In pursuit of its vision as a developmental university, WSU will:

- Provide an educationally, vibrant and enabling environment that is conducive to the advancement of quality academic, moral, cultural and technological learner-centred education for holistic intellectual empowerment, growth and effective use of information;
- Provide and maintain the highest possible standards of innovative learning and teaching, applied, basic and community-based research and community partnerships in cooperation with development agencies, the public and private sectors;
- Provide affordable, appropriate, career-focused and professional programmes that address rural development and urban renewal with primary emphasis on science, technology and development studies;
- Create a new generation of highly-skilled graduates capable of understanding and addressing complex societal challenges, with critical scholarly and entrepreneurial attributes grounded on morally sound work ethics and responsible leadership.

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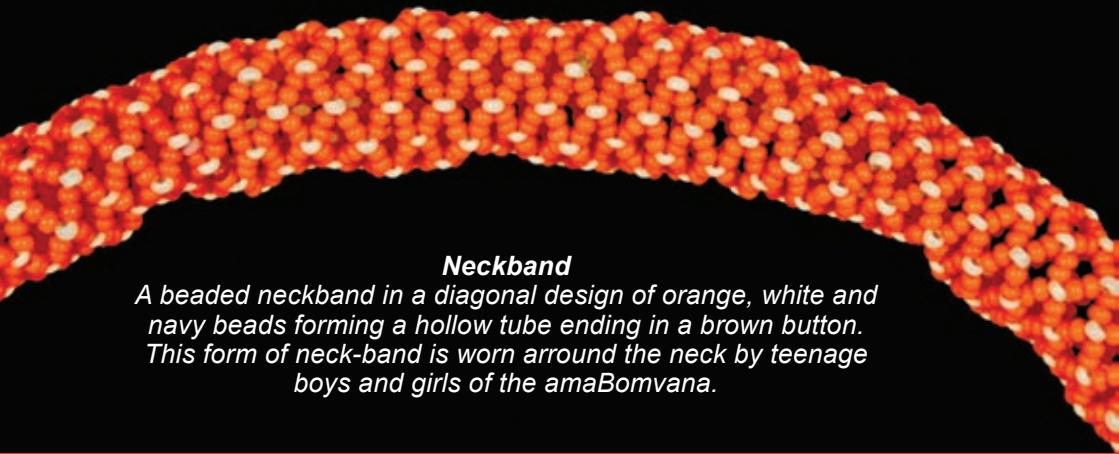
Wrist-band

A wrist-band of small navy beads woven around a bunch of grass stems called uhetsheza.



Neckband

A beaded neckband in a diagonal design of orange, white and navy beads forming a hollow tube ending in a brown button. This form of neck-band is worn around the neck by teenage boys and girls of the amaBomvana.



How the Broster Beadwork Collection came to be in Walter Sisulu University

The Collection was purchased from Joan Broster in December 1992, by the then University of Transkei (UNITRA), now Walter Sisulu University (WSU). The Collection, was collected mainly from the Qebe community of Engcobo between 1952 and 1966.

On 16 July 1990, Professor Russell Kaschula, a Research Associate working under Professor Wandile Kuse at the Bureau for African Research and Documentation at UNITRA, wrote to Mrs Broster (who lived in Gonubie, East London) to enquire about the Collection after it had been decided to try and acquire the Collection. Negotiations continued throughout 1990 and 1991, with personal visits made to Mrs Broster in Gonubie at a time when the Smithsonian Museum in Washington DC, as well as a Japanese company, had expressed interest in acquiring the Collection. (See Appendix A).

Professor Kaschula approached the then Vice-Chancellor of UNITRA, Professor Wiseman Nkuhlu, who was favourably disposed to raising the funds to acquire the Collection. After Professor Nkuhlu left, Acting Vice-Chancellor, Professor Dan Ncayiyana was able to raise the required money through the then Director of the UNITRA Foundation, Dr Haxton Scott.

Professor Kaschula, together with Ms Janet Hayward, a lecturer in Anthropology at UNITRA, travelled to Gonubie where the Collection was purchased from Mrs Broster. The entire hand-over was filmed by the SABC and was screened as a news item. The beadwork was loaded into Professor Kaschula's bakkie and returned to UNITRA, Mthatha where they were initially housed



Mannequins displaying clothing and beadwork from the Broster Beadwork Collection

in the Bureau for African Research and Documentation. (See Appendix A).

Background to the Collection

Joan Broster's grandfather pioneered a trading business in the Engcobo district of the Transkei in 1875. Four Clarke generations lived among the Thembu before Joan Broster, as a young bride, moved to the village of Qebe in 1952, to run a family trading store. There she studied abaThembu traditions, and developed a passion for their beadwork. Mrs Broster collected and documented her extensive collection, particularly the local costumes and beadwork of the abaThembu, which demonstrated how minutely beadwork mapped social identity within this isiXhosa-speaking community.

She also used her contacts with the network of traders in the region, to collect beadwork from other isiXhosa-speaking groups, such as amaMpondo, amaMpondomise, amaBomvana, amaXhosa, and a refugee amaXesibe group that had settled among the abaThembu in the early 1800's, and adopted their customs and dress.

The amaXesibe were interesting in that they were staunch traditionalists and refused all offers of schooling and Christian religion. They adhered to their old traditional ways, which they expressed by the wearing of red ochre, revered by the ancestral spirits. Ochred clothing signified and depicted religious and cultural continuity in this community.

What the Collection is composed of?

Approximately two-thirds of the Collection, which numbers almost 3 000 pieces, is made up of Eastern Cape Xhosa beaded objects of adornment for the head, neck, body, arms and legs. Many of the arm ornaments,

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Bead collar

A loosely woven beaded collar with two bands of pink and one in turquoise blue, edged in white "amaso" beads.



Bead collar

A loosely woven beaded collar with two bands of pink and one in turquoise blue, edged in white "amaso" beads.



A wrist band

The wrist-band with a diagonal design of navy and white beading, forming a closed tube.

however, are of solid metal, or metal wire wound round a foundation, as well as bangles of plastic and rubber seals from the lids of bottles.

The rest of the Collection comprises clothing and accessories, such as skirts, headdresses and cloaks, and different kinds of cloth and skin bags. All the clothing and accessories are decorated with beadwork and/or pearl buttons.

Why is this Collection of National Significance?

The Broster Beadwork Collection comprises many objects that are significant in furthering the knowledge and understanding of the cultural heritage of the Southern Nguni peoples in the Eastern Cape (EC). As much of the traditional material culture has left the EC, and there are few similar collections left, even in museums, it is important, wherever possible, to preserve what is held by other institutions, for future generations of South Africans to research and enjoy.

The Collection depicts an important part of South African history and Heritage Objects that form part of the National Estate

Early isiXhosa-speaking people believed that glass beads washed up on shore, came from the ancestors. Later, and together with mother-of-pearl buttons, these materials were also seen as currency, and were very important for personal adornment, often at the expense of any wealth they might have had. Acquisition of beads & buttons for adornment purposes was another way of acknowledging the ancestors 'from whom abundance flowed'. Beads and buttons were second only to the currency value of iron and cattle in the early 1800s, when a woman's dress could cost twelve to twenty oxen.

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Spectacles

Spectacles covered in white beaded strips and tabs decorated with navy stars, chevrons and rivers, navy and blue lines, navy diamonds, 3 pearl buttons and six short streamers with pink wool pompoms. These spectacles contain no glass lenses and are worn by boys at the "Umtshotsho" dance.



Grass neck-band

Grass neck-bands, ornately woven with ripe grass stems of "msingizana" grass. These neck-bands are worn by teenage girls during the "umtshotsho" dance.



Historical accounts also tell us that isiXhosa-speaking peoples buried, or burned the clothes and belongings of their dead, and periods of mourning were marked by changes in appearance, practices that emphasize the spiritual significance of dress.

The value of beads in trade was well known, and in the mid-1700s one pound of beads, worth only a few pennies, was able to buy an ox. During the first half of the nineteenth century beads continued to be sought after and people went to great lengths to acquire beads and buttons for trade and adornment.

At the weekly Fort Wiltshire fair (1824 – 30), beads and buttons were the universal standard of trade with isiXhosa-speaking people, but values varied with the changes in fashion. However, by the 1850's beads were no longer used to indicate high status.

Between 1932 and 1955 the world's major bead manufacturer exported to South Africa about half of all the beads sold to Africa, which used more beads than any other continent. Even when beads were readily available in the 1950s and 1960s, they were still expensive, yet highly desirable.

Joan Broster noted in 1967, that the abaThembu were reluctant to sell beadwork, and although she collected many thousands of pieces during her fourteen-year sojourn in Qebe, more than half were acquired from owners who sold because of economic need.

What does the declaration of the Broster Beadwork Collection entail?

The Collection is a “Specifically Declared Collection” in terms of the Gazette Notice signed by the Minister of Arts and Culture,

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Back row: 3rd from the right: Interim Vice Chancellor & Principal of WSU Profesor Khaya Mfenyana and staff.

Front row, from the right: SAHRA's delegation led by the project manager Ms Regina Isaacs, from 2nd the left, in one of the early steering committee meetings on the BBC project.



Front row from left to right: Chief Gcinindawo Zibhene (Qebe) with Ms Vuyiswa Lusu (WSU) and Ms Nolitha Ngcai (SAHRA) on one of many visits to the Qebe-Engcobo community in 2013



Mrs Nowinothi Geledwana (left) and Mrs Nomatyongwana Hesewu (right), (both from Qunu) with whom WSU engaged during the process of identifying the BBC Collection

Honourable Minister Nathi Mthethwa on 19 June 2015 and is currently housed at Walter Sisulu University, Nelson Mandela Drive in Mthatha. This unique and significant Collection associated with the amaQebe, amaMpondo, amaMpondomise, amaBomvana, amaXhosa, and the amaXesibe is protected and may not be destroyed, damaged, disfigured, altered, dispersed or exported without a permit from SAHRA.

Leading to the Declaration process:

In preparation for the declaration of the Broster Beadwork Collection, the WSU coordinator of the BBC Project, Mrs Vuyiswa Lusu and SAHRA's Declaration Officer, Ms Nolitha Ngcai, visited the Qebe community early in 2013, to discuss the declaration process, and how it would unfold, with the involvement of the Qebe community and other affected parties as well as terms for collaboration.

The 11th July 2013 marked the beginning of a series of consultation meetings between interested and affected parties together with WSU and SAHRA. Chief Gcinindawo Zibhene attended as representative of the people of the Qebe community, who were involved in the building up of the Collection.

The involvement of the Nelson Mandela Museum in the project saw active participation by the women from the surrounding rural areas. With their background and knowledge of the beadwork, they could work together with WSU librarians in identifying the names and description of the different pieces in the Collection.

The SAHRA delegation, led by the Heritage Objects Manager, Ms Regina Isaacs, and WSU, led by Professor Khaya Mfenyana, met the abaThembu of Qebe community, led by Nkosi Gcinindawo Zibhene at the Mthatha Health



Collar necklace

A beaded collar necklace in a traditional design of banded navy, turquoise, white and black lines decorated with nine pearl buttons in a vertical line design. The collar is edged in cotton with an ornate fringe of round white pearls.



Arm band

A flat, beaded armlet decorated with a rivers and stars design, and ornately fringed with turquoise, red and black pearls with pearl buttons and long streamers ending with pink wool pompoms worn by traditional healers.

Resource Centre. This was the start of a consultative process with all affected parties, after which the declaration of the Collection followed. This process of public meetings was to ensure that the original communities that participated in the making of the beadwork were part of the declaration process.

The second consultative meeting was held on the 14th August 2013 at Bisho and was attended by WSU, SAHRA and members of the Eastern Cape House of Traditional Leaders, led by Chief Ngangomhlaba Matanzima, the abaThembu Chief.

Conserving the Collection for future Generations

One of the requirements for declaration is to develop a Conservation Management Plan (CMP) which would be a guiding document to assist in the ongoing conservation and care of the Broster Beadwork Collection.

SAHRA appointed Ms June Hosford to develop a CMP informing the WSU unequivocally how this cultural treasure must best be managed. A firm foundation towards its implementation was laid through the signing of the “Memorandum of Understanding” (MOU) by SAHRA, WSU and East London Museum (ELM) on 4th March 2014.

In terms of the MOU the WSU is the management authority and custodian of the Collection.

ELM will assist with training and support of staff appointed by WSU to care for and manage the Collection and SAHRA must play an overseeing role in accordance with the provisions of the NHRA. The MOU stipulates an agreement by the three parties to facilitate the best possible integrated and co-operative partnership

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APPENDIX A:
Articles that appeared in the Daily
Dispatch Newspaper



A University of Transkei anthropology lecturer, Miss Janet Haywood, models several items from the Joan Broster Khosa beadwork collection which has been bought by the university for an undisclosed amount. Report page 3

Picture GARY HOLBY

University buys bead collection

Daily Dispatch Correspondent

UMTATA — The University of Transkei (Unitra) has bought the invaluable Joan Broster Khosa beadwork collection for an undisclosed amount. The collection had been valued earlier at R300 000.

An ecstatic senior researcher in Unitra's Bureau for African Research and Documentation (BARD), Dr Russel Kaschula, confirmed the buy but said he could not disclose the sum paid for the collection.

Dr Kaschula said: "The changing socio-economic and political scenario in South Africa is also having its effect on the peoples, cultures and traditions of the region. It is important to preserve this culture and tradition wherever possible."

Dr Kaschula said the Washington, DC-based Smithsonian Museum, the largest in the world, had expressed interest in collaborative research concerning the material.



MRS BROSTER

Mrs Broster was born at Qebe in the Engcobo district where her family owned a trading post since 1875.

She was educated at the Diocesan College for Girls in Grahamstown and at Rhodes University where she obtained a science degree and a teaching diploma. She then entered the teaching profession, but resigned to serve with the South African Military Nursing Service. After that she joined Fort Hare University.

She and her husband left Johannesburg in 1950 to take over the trading post at Qebe and her main interest was to research the culture and customs of the amaXhosa.

Her research resulted in the publication of four books.

Daily Dispatch Reporter
EAST LONDON — A valuable Xhosa beadwork collection was in danger of leaving the country before it was bought by the University of Transkei for an undisclosed amount, it was learnt yesterday.

A Unitra academic, Dr Russel Kaschula, who spent three years trying to acquire the collection, which includes some 2 000 pieces of traditional beadwork, said a Japanese company had expressed interest in it.

"But they said they wanted to break it up.

16/12/92
Japanese wanted to buy bead collection

Much of the beadwork in this collection is no longer made and can't be found anywhere else.

"The important thing for us was to acquire the beadwork. A lot of African cultural artefacts have left the continent. This is a national treasure which must be preserved at all costs."

The Washington DC-based Smithsonian Institute had agreed the collection should remain in South Africa

where collaborative research could be undertaken.

The Joan Broster collection, which includes pieces dating back to the 1870s, has been valued at R200 000 but the university has declined to say how much it paid.

Mrs Broster, who lives in Gombise, first indicated she was willing to sell the collection in 1990.

Dr Kaschula said it was unfortunate that

media attention was focusing on the amount the university had paid.

"Personally I think it is wrong to put a value on culture," he said.

He also gave up his fundraising drive after major corporations indicated they were not interested in providing financial help.

The amount was finally raised through a loan from the Unitra Foundation, while the ANC's cultural department said it would donate R50 000.

"Beads tell a lot about the way people live. They have tremendous spiritual significance."

Unitra buys valued bead collection

UMTATA — The University of Transkei (Unitra) has bought the invaluable Joan Broster Khosa beadwork collection for an undisclosed amount. The collection had been valued earlier at R300 000.

An ecstatic senior researcher in Unitra's Bureau for African Research and Documentation (BARD), Dr Russel Kaschula, confirmed the buy and said the director of BARD, Prof Wandile Kuse, would fetch the world-renowned collection from its Gombise home on Monday.

Dr Kaschula said he could not disclose the sum paid for the collection and paid tribute to "visionaries" such as the Acting Principal Prof Dan Nkomo, and the Director of the Unitra Foundation Dr Haxton Scott, who raised the money for the purchase.

Dr Kaschula said: "The changing socio-economic and political scenario in South Africa also having its effect on the peoples, cultures and traditions of the region. It is important to preserve this culture and tradition wherever possible. The onus is on the people of South Africa to document this culture before it is lost forever in our quest towards a new society."

The collection provided valuable research opportunities for scholars interested in Xhosa culture. Each item of beadwork had meaning and depicted cultural facts such as love or marriage. The collection would prove invaluable to historians, art students, anthropologists and anyone interested in the life and customs of the amaXhosa people.

Dr Kaschula said the Washington, DC-based Smithsonian Museum, the largest in the world, had expressed interest in collaborative research concerning the material.

"The Smithsonian also deems it fitting that the collection should be housed by Unitra which is situated in the region inhabited predominantly by Xhosa people, who have established themselves in a leading role in the formation of a new South Africa," he said.

The collection would be displayed permanently at Unitra when not on loan to authorised exhibitors.

"This would make a most impressive statement about the scholarly value and aesthetic importance of this extensive beadwork collection," Dr Kaschula said.

The collection was intact, comprehensive and had excellent documentation.

It would have been a tragedy if the collection had been broken up to be sold as an auction or in pieces to private collectors and museums. Its visual and scholarly value rests in its comprehensive scope and wealth of information that Mrs Broster has collected over the years. That much of her collections has been published in her books enhances the collection further."

Mrs Broster was born at Qebe in the Engcobo district where her family owned a trading post since 1875.

She was educated at the Diocesan College for Girls in Grahamstown and at Rhodes University where she obtained a science degree and a teaching diploma. She then entered the teaching profession, but resigned to serve with the South African Military Nursing Service. After that she joined Fort Hare University.

She and her husband left Johannesburg in 1950 to take over the trading post at Qebe and her main interest was to research the culture and customs of the amaXhosa.

Her research resulted in the publication of four books, including the Red Hasket Valley which provides a fascinating account of 37 years spent living and working among the people in the Engcobo district. She also published a book on Xhosa diviners as well as another publication on the Tembu where she discusses beadwork, songs and dance.

Her works have become extremely important because traditional culture of the indigenous peoples was jeopardised by the relentless spread of European civilisation. Western modes of dress, philosophy, religion and lifestyles were rapidly taking over from the old tribal way of life. The migrant labour system also aggravated the situation and much of the lore and customs that had been passed down from time immemorial was already lost in favour of the myths of Western civilisation.

The spirit of Christianity also put dangerous practice and identity based on sacrificial magic and the worship of ancestors, under siege, while on the socio-political front, the National Party's apartheid policy was being championed by the next Prime Minister, Hendrik Verwoerd. The system destroyed the fabric of tribal life and many traditions and customs were lost.

to manage the Broster Beadwork Collection for future generations.

WSU has delivered on her obligation to provide suitable facilities to store the Collection according to best practice outlined in the CMP. In line with this requirement WSU has ceded the Busters building adjacent to the Sasol Library to be the storage facility for the BBC. The Architects and WSU Facilities Management have acquired and installed a climate control system with temperature control and dehumidification. Three deep drawer units of eleven drawers each and three shallow drawer units of twenty-two drawers each have been custom built to store the beadwork and beaded clothing. Security has been installed and consists of an intruder alarm which is connected internally, with a 24-hour call centre operated by the external service provider. There is a fire detection system, consisting of smoke detectors, a fire alarm, and dry powder fire extinguishers. Part of the refurbishment includes a workroom, with wet and dry facilities, and two offices.

WSU custodianship of this Collection is inherent for a university that services the most rural and remote communities of South Africa in the Eastern Cape. The BBC project has since seen the important engagement between the University and rural, traditional communities of the Eastern Cape and will undoubtedly facilitate research in indigenous knowledge systems thereby benefitting both the scientific research agenda and the communities from where this knowledge originated. The benefits for development of our communities are significant. It is also envisaged that postgraduate research in the form of MA and PhD research (based on the Collection), would serve to further intellectualise the project and to create awareness around the importance of preserving our heritage.

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A tin can for smoking

The tin can is covered entirely in beads and decorated with pearl buttons and cerise pink wool pompoms.



an agency of the
Department of Arts and Culture

ENQUIRIES

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