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Creativity at the margins : the performances of an artist in the Venda region of South Africa

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2014-03-24
http://hdl.handle.net10539/14280

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classification of objects, and changed what could (or even should) be considered as 'art' and who could be considered as 'artist'. Generally, this reclassification was a racial and spatial one, of non-European and non-urban dwellers.

The corporate sponsorship of Tributaries was part of the efforts by international companies to legitimize their involvement in South Africa amidst calls for disinvestment as a protest against apartheid policies (Duncan 1994:35). BMW promoted art as part of its obligations to 'cultural upliftment in the black community' and used this promotion to justify their continued involvement in South Africa.[28]

As a reaction to apartheid's racial ideologies, to trends in the international and local art world that questioned the historical aesthetic category of 'art', and corporate needs to justify continued investment in apartheid South Africa, the metropolitan art-world extended its practice to include rural producers in the Venda region. This outreach redefined the meaning of objects produced in the Venda region and created a social and commercial opportunity for woodcarvers who lived there. These 'new artists' were not completely assimilated as western style artists by the art-world but maintained some element of the ethnographic associations previously imposed on object-making in the Venda region. Tributaries challenged old exclusive art categories and included marginalized producers but simultaneously reinscribed these producers with an ethnic identity. The conditions discussed above which created the need and motivation of the metropolitan art-world to open its practice and discourse to previously excluded practitioners, along with the meanings which the centre has at the local margin, are most important for understanding the commercialization of art in the Venda region.

VHO-MUDZUNGA BECOMES AN ARTIST

In the 1980s, Vho-Mudzunga was a driver at the Kohler packaging company. In around 1987, for reasons that remain unclear to me, Vho-Mudzunga felt insecure in his job. He saw himself as exposed in the labour market, because his only skill was driving. The printed brochures for his subsequent exhibitions claimed that Vho-Mudzunga was scared that he would lose his job because of international economic sanctions against South Africa, gaining momentum at the time. In my interview with him on this issue, Vho-Mudzunga denied that his insecurity stemmed from his fear of the effects of sanctions. He simply felt that driving was an "unimportant" skill.

In late 1987, or early 1988, Vho-Mudzunga began to make woodcarvings during his weekends. He recalled that, as a boy, he had sold some crafts at Siloam Hospital in Nzhelele. He was, therefore, confident that he could sell these carvings, and probably targeted t[illegible]nite office workers at Kohler as his customers. He brought his first works into the office - a spoon and chained hands - and a 'white' secretary at Kohler, a Mrs. Doogle, suggested he take the carvings to the FUBA gallery and made the initial contact for him. He went straight to the gallery and met the artist and curator David Koloane. It was through FUBA that Vho-Mudzunga entered the commercial art market and became an artist.

Vho-Mudzunga's entry into and establishment within the commercial art market through FUBA cannot be separated from the influence of Tributaries. As a result of this show, and the exposure it afforded to carvers from the Venda region in particular, the FUBA gallery encouraged the display of works from 'Venda artists'.[29] A particular section of the gallery was set aside for work from the Venda region. The curator of the gallery at the time, David Koloane, wanted to help promote rural art producers in the wake of the acceptance that Tributaries had afforded them in the Johannesburg art-world.

Koloane invited Vho-Mudzunga to bring in a few more pieces, which Koloane decided to display at a group show that opened on March 15, 1988. At this stage, according

to Koloane, Vho-Mudzunga was only making "functional objects." Koloane actively encouraged him to produce "figurative ırks" so that he could have a solo exhibition. Thus, with Koloane's influence, Vho-Mudzunga's second show was a solo exhibition which was held in April 1989. He was asked to make over forty pieces and produced walking sticks, spoons, plates, bowls and various 'hand and chain' artifacts as well as a few figurative pieces (including his first figurative sculpture depicting a shepherd), for the solo show. Thus, the FUBA initiatives, organized in the wake of Tributaries, were Vho-Mudzunga's first participation in commercial artistic endeavours.

Until 1988, Vho-Mudzunga claimed not to have carved anything since he was a teenager (in 1989 he was 55 years old). This was confirmed by various family members and friends who lived with him in Chiawelo, Soweto during this period who recalled how he would speak about the fact that he was a talented carver as a young boy and teenager. This, too, was confirmed by various people, including his school principal and his brother. Various family members recall Vho-Mudzunga moulding clay figures as a very young boy. Many remembered him with white clay marks smeared across his mouth or playing with clay toys which he had made. Sometimes, instead of going to school he would go to the river below Thononda where he knew he would find good clay. Vho-Mudzunga explained that he stopped using clay as it used to crack or crumble and he found this frustrating. He thus swopped over to wood. He began to carve cooking instruments and spoons and soon earned a reputation in school for outstanding achievement in woodcarving. His work was taken to local shows organized by state agricultural officers. He consistently took first or second place at these shows. Vho-Mudzunga would sometimes take this work down the mountain from Thononda to Siloam hospital which at that stage was a mission hospital. There he managed to sell some work to the Dutch doctors. He recalled how once, his brother took some of his work without his knowledge and sold it in Louis Trichardt.

When he reached the age of eighteen, his school principal suggested that he go to Pietersberg to learn carpentry. However, Vho-Mudzunga wanted to go to Johannesburg. He had visited his cousin Vho-David Netshidaulu there during school holidays and liked the city. Vho-Netshidaulu owned a shop in Chiawelo (then Albertonville). Vho-Mudzunga described the excitement with which boys would greet cars with the old TJ license plates from Johannesburg. They dreamed of being taken to Johannesburg to get a job. So, Vho-Mudzunga headed for Johannesburg instead of Pietersberg and carpentry. He claimed that he did not carve again until 1988. He also professed that he got "lost" in Johannesburg and it was his art which, eventually, saved him.

Vho-Mudzunga's return to carving and sale of his work coincided with the loss of his job. To him these were related events. His first show at FUBA brought success. He was impressed by the monetary reward which he received, as walking sticks for R95 each and other items sold quickly. He received a cheque for the sale of his work which almost equaled his monthly salary. He received about R800 after the gallery took their cut. His monthly wage at this time was around R900. The money was not the only reward however. His success and talent, was recognized by his company. Senior management (Human Resources) attended the night-time opening of the second show which was held at FUBA in April 1989. He also appeared in the in-house company newspaper. At this show, he earned about R1200. Suddenly, his status had changed. He was now an artist, not simply a driver.

But soon his new status and artistic practice brought conflict between himself and management. Towards the end of 1988, around October, he was 'encouraged' to take two months unpaid leave from the company, to work on his art. Vho-Mudzunga claimed the company was already trying to get rid of him at this time and the leave was part of their plan.

In May 1989, Vho-Mudzunga was retrenched from Kohler. The official letter claimed that his retrenchment was due to the "prevailing economic conditions" which made him "redundant". Strangely, he seems to have been the only victim at the time of this 'economic restructuring.' Vho-Mudzunga tells another story. He claimed that management were accusing him of using company vehicles and work time to promote his art. They accused him of going via galleries when he was given a task for the company. Vho-Mudzunga accused Kohler of "jealousy"[30] and that their concern was his success because he was now earning two salaries - their salary and money from his carvings[31]. His dismissal was challenged by the Steel, Engineeringand Allied Workers Union (SEAWU). Again Vho-Mudzunga appeared in the newspapers which reported this unfair dismissal case.[32] The SEAWU union did not manage to get Vho-Mudzunga reinstated.

Having lost his job, Vho-Mudzunga, aged 56 years old, looked for other employment as a driver in Johannesburg. When this failed, he apparently attempted to open a hair-cutting business with a friend. This did not work out either and eventually, at the beginning of 1990, he decided to return to Shanzha, Nzhelele in 'Venda.' He resolved to pursue his carving from there and rely on it as his major source of income because he "had no other option".

Vho-Mudzunga was a 'post-Tributaries' Venda artist. His exposure to a commercial art market occurred after the Tributaries show and the possibility of becoming a commercial artist was created by this exhibition and its after affects. As we saw above, this possibility resulted from a changing discourse around 'art' and representation that originated and was powerful in the metropole. It is interesting to speculate about the conjuncture of Vho-Mudzunga's carving 'renaissance' and the emergence of 'the Venda artist.' It is difficult to establish whether he began to carve because he perceived the new opportunities available in the metropole or 'Venda artists'. Clearly, he fitted the profile of the 'new artist' as indicated by Koloane's interest in him. In any respect, the new inclusive, post-Tributaries, art practice of the

metropole initially encouraged Vho-Mudzunga's craft-orientated production but led ultimately to a transformation in his work. The initial pieces, the manner of their production and the way he tried to sell them, conform only to an awareness of 'craft'. Bongi Dhlomo, the development officer for the Johannesburg Biennale, recalled the effect that seeing art and craft in a gallery setting had on Vho-Mudzunga. It was a revelation for him, she said, to see that people from "[his] area" were also making art.[33] David Koloane actively encouraged Vho-Mudzunga to move from "functional objects" to "figurative works". By late 1989, early 1990 Vho-Mudzunga's work conformed more closely with 'art practice' and was included in the permanent collections of the Johannesburg Art Gallery and the South African National Gallery. When he returned to Shanzha, he returned as an artist designated and incorporated by the metropole.

BACKTOSHANZHA:VHO-MUDZUNGA'SRETURN

Vho-Mudzunga's return to Shanzha highlights how the Art discourse was extended into the Venda region. Importantly, the metropole's categories of 'art' and 'artist' were not simply hegemonically imposed on the Venda region but were re-enacted there. The process of re-enactment at the margins exposed both the power and the vulnerability of the metropole's defining categories of art.

In reality, this would be the first time that Vho-Mudzunga would stay in Shanzha for any extended period. A friend of his remarked that before his return to live permanently in Shanzha in 1990, he was not well known, as he was a migrant worker whom one would see every now and again. Vho-Mudzunga had not grown up in Shanzha but moved there from Thononda in 1976. Sometimes Vho-Mudzunga would remark to me that he did not know the people of Shanzha well as he only moved there and was not "from" there.

When Vho-Mudzunga returned to live in Shanzha, villagers were aware that he was a retrenched worker and an up-coming 'artist' or woodcarver. My research assistant, Dan Mandavha, a young man in his late twenties, who was active in community and political work, became friendly with Vho-Mudzunga when Vho-Mudzunga returned from Johannesburg. He too was aware that Vho-Mudzunga was an artist and that he had been retrenched from his job. Dan was informed by "a Unionist" that a union member (Vho-Mudzunga) was coming to Shanzha. Dan wanted to lend support to 'the retrenched worker' and at the same time was curious to understand his artwork.

Dan explained to me that he was "fascinated" by what Vho-Mudzunga was doing with wood and the way in which Vho-Mudzunga would explain the images he "had added" to the carvings. Until this point, he said, he was not interested in "art, or the way these people (artists) saw things." But nonetheless he would often make a point of visiting Vho-Mudzunga at his home to see what it was he was working on. He found it stimulating to return a few days later and see how the wood had changed, because of what Vho-Mudzunga had done to it, and then to listen to Vho-Mudzunga's explanation of his work.

Furthermore, he was interested to see how art could be "prosperous" and how one could make a successful living from it. He wondered if it would be wise to advise other people to become artists and to encourage this practice. But he noted that the practice already existed in the region. Rather, an awareness of a particular idea of what 'art' was, was lacking: "We have a lot of artists in this area who do not know they are artists," he said.

In Dan's opinion, Vho-Mudzunga was different because he knew he was an artist. In Johannesburg, people at Kohler had made him aware of art and art shows. Secondly as a school pupil he had won district competitions and had become aware that he was a talented carver.

Clearly, part of Dan's agenda in befriending Vho-Mudzunga was to understand this new possibility which was open to producers of 'art' objects. He wanted to understand what art was and how it worked, in a communicative and financial sense. He was also partly interested in expanding the practice by making people aware that they were already artists. He wanted them to be included in the discourse and practice of 'art'.

THE ART MARKET AND VHO-MUDZUNGA: 1990-1996

In this section I examine Vho-Mudzunga's participation in the art-market after his return to Shanzha. During this time, he managed to realize urban art-market prices for many of his objects and especially for his drums. These prices (and the resulting income) often represented a 'new' value for 'old' objects. For example, a drum, a familiar object in the Venda region and one valued there because of its association with cultural and symbolic practices (see Chapter One), was re-valued by Vho-Mudzunga's sales in the commercial art market. The spread of art to the Venda region was concretely articulated in the increased earning capacity of objects. The financial revaluation of objects due to the 'penetration' of the art market had social affects as well. The process of this re-valuation is discussed in this section through Vho-Mudzunga's contacts with the metropolitan art-world and the objects he sold. I illustrate how becoming an artist indeed offered some financial reward. In addition white South African and overseas art dealers and other 'outside' visitors began to arrive in person at Vho-Mudzunga's home- the art-world now visited the Venda region - and this presence and access was an important part of the social revaluation of objects.

I choose to use large *ngoma* drums to trace a stylistic shift in Vho-Mudzunga's work as well as to estimate to an extent his earnings over the period under review. Not only is this information relatively recoverable compared to pertinent to other objects he

produced (and thus reliable) but it focuses on an important trend in his art-making over this period: by 1996 Vho-Mudzunga had all but ceased to produce "functional objects" for sale and concentrated on making bigger non-conventional *ngoma* drums, some of which were used in his performances.

In the Venda region, around the time and in the wake of the Tributaries show, a community and an organization of artists had began to develop. The Venda Development Corporation (VDC),[34] motivated by the contribution that crafts were making to the informal sector, agreed to set up a marketing outlet for craftspeople (Duncan 1994:46). The outlet, called Ditike was launched in 1985. Though the VDC's vision for Ditike was firmly within the 'craft' framework, some of its employees began to concentrate their time and effort on figurative art makers, many of whom were known to Ditike through the Tributaries exhibition (Duncan 1994:48). These employees were mostly 'white' and familiar with the practices of the metropolitan art market. One of them who was particularly active in this regard was Dave Roussouw who had worked on the Tributaries exhibition (Duncan 1994:48). Soon Ditike became a mediator between the artists and the urban centres, and Duncan argues that Ditike was a major factor in constructing the identity of a community of 'Venda artists'. But by 1990, due to a conflict of interests with the VDC, Ditike had been privatized and ceased to act effectively in organizing exhibitions in urban centres and marketing art works in other ways. So when Vho-Mudzunga returned to Shanzha, a community of artists existed without an effective local marketing organization for their work. Nonetheless, Vho-Mudzunga was not willing to co-operate with Ditike. Dave Roussouw recalled that he did not really want to deal with whites and was especially opposed to the VDC at this stage.

Initially then, Vho-Mudzunga used contacts which he had made in Johannesburg to promote his art and reach urban art markets. In fact 1990 was a successful exhibiting year for Vho-Mudzunga. He held three exhibitions: at the Zona Gallery in Norwood Johannesburg (in March), at The Thupelo Gallery in Newtown and at SEAWU

headquarters in Johannesburg City. Each exhibition resulted in at least one important sale. The South African National Gallery bought a piece for their permanent collection from the Zona exhibition, the Johannesburg Art Gallery bought a piece for their permanent exhibition from the Thupelo Gallery and he sold his first two *ngoma* drums at the SEAWU exhibition to Dr. Ron Carter, then Dean of Students at Wits University.

In March 1990, Peter Barnett, the owner of the Zona Gallery in Norwood, curated a show of Vho-Mudzunga's work. Barnett had probably met Vho-Mudzunga through the FUBA where Barnett himself had worked.[35] Most of the pieces were simply transferred from FUBA but Barnett also traveled to Shanzha to pick up additional work. As such he was probably the first dealer to go to Vho-Mudzunga's home. Dave Roussouw accompanied Barnett on this trip and this was the first time that Roussouw actually met Vho-Mudzunga.

The show was reportedly not a financial success and ultimately led to a conflict between Vho-Mudzunga and Peter Barnett.[36] However the National Art Gallery bought a figurative work by Vho-Mudzunga for R4,900 from the ZONA in early 1991.

Bongi Dhlomo joined the Thupelo Art Project as a coordinator in 1989 and started the Thupelo Art Gallery. Before this, in 1986, she had worked briefly for the Goodman Gallery. Her task for the Goodman was to introduce new black artists to the art market. As part of her job, she traveled during this time to the Venda region. When she started the Thupelo Gallery. she 'returned' to the black artists she had met. She offered Vho-Mudzunga an individual show at the Thupelo Gallery in 1990. There he exhibited a 'double-drum,' a small *murumba*, a sculpture of some boys with a wheelbarrow, a big bull, spoons and other items. His drum-piece entitled "woman double drum" was bought by the Johannesburg Art Gallery from Thupelo for R6,500.

The drum that was sold deviated from an ethnographic example and included a figurative image. This style of adding sculptural figures to a drum would become one of his trademarks. From this period in 1990 and 1991, there are a few examples of *mirumba* and "double drums"[37] with such embellishments (see for example the Johannesburg Art Gallery permanent collection). Certainly the re-conceptualization of a drum in some form, aesthetically or conceptually, would become an important marker of his work. He had not exhibited any *ngoma* drums at these shows. Thus, Vho-Mudzunga embellished other drum forms with figurative images before experimenting with the *ngoma* drum.

The first public sale of *ngoma* drums was as the 'SEAWU exhibition'. It was organized by the Union (SEAWU) after the encouragement of Dr. Ron Carter. Vho-Mudzunga claimed that his first project in 1990 was to make two *ngoma* drums. He realized that to rely solely on his carvings to make a living he needed to generate more money than selling "walking sticks" could provide. He carved two *ngoma* drums. Dr. Carter visited Vho-Mudzunga at his home in Shanzha and stayed with him in 1990,[38] after he had carved these drums. In the opinion of Dr. Ron Carter, Vho-Mudzunga was very concerned about his new dependence on art dealers and buyers from distant places. Carter believed that Vho-Mudzunga needed encouragement in this regard and that although he displayed great confidence in his ability to make art, he was less confident about his ability to sell it at its correct value.[39] Carter believed that Vho-Mudzunga was not very experienced or knowledgeable about the way the art world worked. It also appeared as if his contacts with Peter Barnett had left Vho-Mudzunga suspicious of art dealers and perhaps especially of 'white' buyers. Carter encouraged Vho-Mudzunga to hold an exhibition in Johannesburg of the *ngoma* drums he had carved. Dr. Carter undertook to buy the drums at the exhibition. The Union helped Vho-Mudzunga transport the drums and provided a space at their offices in Wanderers Street in Johannesburg for the exhibition. The exhibition actually followed a Union meeting at which the unfair dismissal case on Vho-Mudzunga's behalf was discussed. Dr. Carter attended the exhibition and bought the two drums which he sent

to Boston in the United States as part of the Mahlakasele collection. He paid between four and five thousand rand for each drum.[40]

Stylistically, these two *ngoma* compare in a general way to an ethnographic-type *ngoma* and were clearly modeled on it. They were both hemispherical in shape and had four handles in the familiar crossed over design. The panels separating the handles were left undecorated in both examples.[41] Vho-Mudzunga thus did not make a jump from the embellished forms of other drums which he was making at the time to an embellished *ngoma*. He began with a fairly 'conservative' *ngoma* form.

After 1990 the important South African buyer of Vho-Mudzunga's art was Trent Read. Read had begun to buy work from the Venda region in the period after Tributaries. In fact his wife, Brigitte, became interested in the Venda region before he did, sometime in 1986. She ran the Sanderling Gallery in Johannesburg and, in 1988, attempted to make contact with Vho-Mudzunga to exhibit there.[42] Nothing materialized from these efforts though. In 1990, Trent Read began to travel to the Venda region and dealt directly with the artists at their homes. He became aware of Vho-Mudzunga's work through Dave Roussouw and dealt with him from around 1991 until 1994. According to Read, his dealings with Vho-Mudzunga were sporadic. He would often visit Vho-Mudzunga towards the end of a long day which included trips to numerous other artists..

Neither Read (nor Roussouw) considered Vho-Mudzunga to be a quality carver. He purchased a number of figurative works from him, but claimed not to have sold the majority of them and still had most of them in storage at the time of our contact. Read was more interested in his drums and considered him an excellent drum maker. He made two major purchases from Vho-Mudzunga. The first was in 1992 when he bought a large drum for R8,000. The second was in 1994. He bought three drums and a number of figurative sculptures. One of the drums was a large *ngoma* which he sold to SA radio personality, Chris Prior for R15,000. The second was a double drum

which he still has in his possession. The third was a much smaller drum. He paid somewhere between R18.000 and R20,000 in total for all this work.[43]

Read would often finance works in progress. Sometimes, the assumptions underlying these payments were misunderstood and became a source of conflict and discontent between himself and other artists. Read considered these as downpayments on the work in progress. Some artists interpreted this money simply as a form of aid or encouragement to complete the work. This turned out to be a controversial method of doing business as some artists felt that they did not want to be "owned" by anyone. Read claimed his purchases or downpayments often did not make financial or business sense at the time. Instead he claimed his involvement with artists in the Venda region was a form of philanthropy [44], and his stock of unsold goods represented tied-up capital.

Read's relationship with Vho-Mudzunga eventually broke down when Vho-Mudzunga began to deal with other galleries with works which Read had financed. The final conflict arose over a certain drum for which Read believed he had a purchase agreement with Vho-Mudzunga. The drum was put on exhibition at the Tyrone Gallery in 1996. Read considered this unfair as, besides the agreement, he was ready to pay cash to the artists whereas other galleries would only take their work on consignment. After this, he informed Vho-Mudzunga that he would no longer deal in his work. In fact Read had not purchased anything from Vho-Mudzunga since 1994. Read remembered Vho-Mudzunga as a tough businessperson - "I would count my fingers when I left his home to make sure they were all still there."

In 1995, Vho-Mudzunga exhibited a large *ngoma* drum (hand and foot) at the inaugural Africus Biennale. The exhibition, entitled No limits - no frontiers was a regional exhibition of "artists from the Northern Transvaal region (Johannesburg Biennale Catalogue 1995:77)." The drum was apparently sold after the exhibition to a foreign buyer.[45]

In early 1996, Vho-Mudzunga had an exhibition of his works at the Gallery on Tyrone.[46] This was his first major show in Johannesburg since 1990. The gallery expressed interest in his work around the time of the Biennale. Bongi Dhlomo brought Vho-Mudzunga to the gallery and they arranged that Vho-Mudzunga would exhibit a range of work from sculptures to drums. Dhlomo opened the exhibition and, interestingly, Vho-Mudzunga organized "a little ceremony"[47] for the occasion. This seems to have been the first public enactment around his work that he undertook. The 'drama' was centred around a large *ngoma* drum which he exhibited.[48] Vho-Mudzunga's grandchild Vhengani, got inside the drum and then came out and presented Dhlomo with a small bull and a knife. Then Dhlomo announced Vho-Mudzunga's plans to hold a ceremony at his home in Shanzha in June 1996 involving a coffin-drum. The presentation was apparently symbolic of a bull being slaughtered for the planned occasion.[49] Vho-Mudzunga also organized some dancers who it seems belonged to a woman's *tshigomvhela* group.

Vho-Mudzunga exhibited some twelve pieces. The smaller pieces sold well to private buyers. His larger ones, however, did not sell, including his *ngoma* drum for which he asked R15,000. In total, Vho-Mudzunga earned about R5,000 from the show.

The owner of the gallery enjoyed a good relationship with him. She felt he was not as commercially driven as other artists and that the cultural significance of the work was still more important to him than commercial concerns. His work still fitted the western art concept of originality. She felt he had a "fair understanding" of the market value of his work. At the time, he was actively seeking overseas contacts.

Vho-Mudzunga's next big local sale of drums was only in 1996 to the Gertrude Posel Gallery. The files at the gallery show that a field trip was made to Vho-Mudzunga's home in 1994 by Fiona Rankin Smith. But the gallery only purchased his work in 1996. The Posel borrowed a *ngoma* drum from Vho-Mudzunga for the Siyawela

exhibition which went to England during the Africa 95 show, and was curated by Colin Richards. Vho-Mudzunga had conceptualized this drum as his coffin. Initially, he refused to sell the drum to the gallery. When the drum returned from England, the Posel prepared to send it back to the Northern Province. Vho-Mudzunga came into the gallery, requested that they not send it back and began to discuss selling it to them. During the negotiations, he bought another *ngoma* into the gallery and negotiated to sell both of them. The gallery agreed to purchase both drums for R20,000. (they had insured the one that went to England for R30,000). Later that year, sometime in October, the gallery bought a further drum from him, another *ngoma* for R5,000.[50] This was the drum that he exhibited at the Tyrone gallery early in 1996. It had not yet been sold by them and Vho-Mudzunga removed the drum from the Tyrone Gallery and sold it to the Posel.

Vho-Mudzunga had other contacts with overseas collectors at this time. Various people acted as conduits for visitors to the area. Gotfried Dederon, an anthropologist at the University of Venda, remembers taking about six overseas visitors to visit Vho-Mudzunga between 1993 and June 1997. The majority bought work from him but at what seemed to be very low prices. An 'elephant *mirumba*' for example was bought in 1994 for R700. Other buyers could have been put in touch with him through amongst others, Annette Keneally, Dave Roussouw or Avhashoni Mainganye. The number of visitors and the extent of their dealings with Vho-Mudzunga are not however retrievable.

By the end 1995 Vho-Mudzunga was mainly producing large *ngoma* drums. From August 1996 till March 1997, he produced no figurative work. All his carving energy went into the biggest drum carved by him up until that point, a massive 'aeroplane drum'. This drum was carved differently from a *ngoma* as its top and bottom followed the length of the tree. Technically, it resembled a giant *murumba*. The 'artistic years' back in Shanzha (until March 1997), were most radically characterized by his innovation and his embellishment of drums and especially the *ngoma* form.

Clearly since his sale to Dr. Ron Carter, he was aware of the monetary value of drums over most other forms of his carvings. But he was made equally aware of the need to provide 'figures' for the art-market. We saw how David Koloane encourage Vho-Mudzunga to make figurative work in order to become an artist and how quickly Vho-Mudzunga responded to this advice. Lastly he knew that "drums were not for ordinary people" and recognized their cultural value in the local Venda region. His contact with the art-world had produced a powerful hybrid drum at the local level, one which still articulated symbolically as *ngoma*, sold for thousands of rand and brought whites to his Shanzha residence.

In total Vho-Mudzunga had carved eight *ngoma* drums and the large 'aeroplane' drum for commercial sale: the two ethnographic imitations sold in 1990 to Dr. Carter for the Mahlakasele Collection; the drum bought by Trent Read in 1994 and sold to Chris Prior; the 'Arm and Leg' drum exhibited at the Africus Biennale in 1995 but carved a year or two before this date; the 'Lobola' drum sold to the Gertrude Posel in 1996; the first (unembellished) coffin drum exhibited at Siyawela; the drum exhibited at the Tyrone Gallery and sold to the Posel in 1996; the second coffin-drum in the possession of Mark Edwards (see below); the 'aeroplane' drum completed in December 1996.

It is extremely difficult to determine the amount of money Vho-Mudzunga earned between 1990 and 1996. In 1990 and 1991, Vho-Mudzunga definitely earned a minimum of R18,000. This amount was at least equaled in 1994. The drum he sold after the Biennale in 1995, conceivably earned R10,000[51] (He asked R11000 at the time). In 1996 he earned at least R25,000. Vho-Mudzunga thus reasonably earned at least R85,000 between 1990 and 1996. This represents an average yearly income of R13,200. His annual income at Kohler before his retrenchment was R1000/month. It would appear that he thus at least managed in the six years after his retrenchment to equal the income he received at Kohler through his artwork.

LOCAL 'ART' CONTEXT

Just as the inclusion of objects from the Venda region in metropolitan art galleries and exhibitions resulted in debate around art practices and the production of new categories of meaning in the metropole (e.g. Transitional Art), the resultant production of artists in the Venda region was met by interpretation of art practice at the local level. Vho-Mudzunga's return to Shanzha and thus to life at the margins of the metropolitan art-world structured his particular relationship with the art-world. The marginal status of the Venda region in general shaped how Vho-Mudzunga's relationship with the art-world was interpreted by local villagers and how it could be manipulated by Vho-Mudzunga himself.

The interpretations of Vho-Mudzunga's work by villagers were complex. There was no one predominant interpretation. The understandings depended largely on the individual and his or her life experiences and social orientation. This points to the fact that Vho-Mudzunga's practice was not bounded by one convention, but open to interpretation and misinterpretation. Some villagers, claimed to understand his work as 'art.' The example recorded above of Dan Mandavha's reaction to Vho-Mudzunga's return to Shanzha is one such example. In a further example, a primary school teacher in Shanzha told me in a casual conversation about Vho-Mudzunga's Funeral Performance:

> He [Vho-Mudzunga] has done something different. He is an artist. What he has done is new, something no-one else has done, something the other artists have not done. So I can analyse [his work] in the artistic way (sic)...it was funny but not wrong

In the same way, Lufuno Mulaudzi, the local LC councilor for Shanzha, understood Vho-Mudzunga's work as 'art.' At first though, when Vho-Mudzunga approached Mulaudzi for help with the Funeral Performance, Mulaudzi thought that perhaps "he was drunk." When he realized that Vho-Mudzunga was actually serious, he decided

to understand that Vho-Mudzunga was an "artist" and he was doing his performance as an artist. "Most people won't understand it," he thought. He himself understood that "the swimming and everything" is part of his art.[52]

Even these responses, which claimed to understand and value Vho-Mudzunga's work, constructed Vho-Mudzunga's art practice as different and out of the ordinary. Other interpretations of this difference were not as charitable. Vho-Mudzunga was acutely aware of more negative interpretations of his work. A few days before I left the field, we were talking about how people in the village perceived him. He remarked that he knew "they hate my art."

Many locals related Vho-Mudzunga's art to financial gain. One member of Vho-Mudzunga's extended household explained to me that prominent members of the Shanzha community did not support Vho-Mudzunga and therefore stayed away from his performances. These members were apparently jealous of Vho-Mudzunga because they associated his art with money. Another member of his extended household was anxious to work out just how much money Vho-Mudzunga was now earning through his art-work. She had been close to him at a time when he was not involved with the art world and wondered how she stood to benefit financially from renewed contact with him.

One incident related to me by Vho-Mudzunga, is indicative of local interpretations of his art practice. A man by the name of Vho-Sporo owned a large plot of land in Dopeni, near Shanzha, on which he had a mango orchard. In January 1995, Vho-Sporo showed Vho-Mudzunga a tree that was on his land and suggested that Vho-Mudzunga could make a door out of the wood. Vho-Mudzunga thought the wood was more suitable to making a drum. Vho-Sporo agreed to give him the wood and asked if Vho-Mudzunga would make him "a funny thing for [his] dining room" in return. But when Vho-Mudzunga came to take the wood, he had an altercation with Vho-Sporo over who should move the wood and how it should be moved. Vho-

Mudzunga and Vho-Sporo apparently swore at each other. (Sporo allegedly said something like 'you and your mother can't do anything to me.') Vho-Mudzunga left with the wood. Some time after this conflict, Vho-Mudzunga completed a sculpture - "a nice piece" - and decided to give it to Vho-Sporo as 'payment' for the wood. He wrapped it and took it over to Vho-Sporo's house. Vho-Mudzunga told Vho-Sporo that he had "a present" for him and gave him the piece. Vho-Sporo unwrapped it and according to Vho-Mudzunga, said: "I don't like this [piece]. You get a lot of money for your drums...I know white people come to you."

"Oh I see," replied Vho-Mudzunga, "Its money you want. How much?"

Sporo allegedly asked for two hundred rand. Vho-Mudzunga refused and claimed he subsequently sold that "piece" for five hundred rand.

Vho-Mudzunga made the following comments in relation to this story : "If people know you make money, they want money. Artworks don't always make money. You can wait a year without selling. Or you can sell one big piece which is nice. They think you make money everyday." Clearly Vho-Sporo associated Vho-Mudzunga's art with financial gain and this was a source of tension between the two men. Although, as I argued above, no general interpretation of 'art' existed at the local level, there was a general problem around art practice which required explanation: it was an unusual way to earn money.

The most coherent explanation given to me, about the suspicion which motivates much negative local hermeneutics around art practice, came from another artist,[53] ElikanaNemurunzini.[54] His account highlighted the issue of income and work. Vho-Nemurunzini explained how his neighbours misinterpreted what he does (I quote at length):

> A person who does not know that these are good works [points to a sculptural work in progress] will take it as if I am mad. This is a person who does not like my work. He may also take me as a *muloi* [witch] They assume that at night I will blow spirits into it and send it to kill someone. They assume that this person [Nemurunzini] has *zwidudwane*[55] and they take the sculptures as *zwidudwane*...Because I

> don't work and people see that I have a wife and nine children, and we have food and clothes, they assume that I sent my statues to steal money. But actually people buy these sculptures but people think I am a *muloi* (witch) and I throw bones (*u tungula*). They only know a black person who works and returns home earns money, but not through these things [points to sculptures]. Now sometimes I go to a show and win R10,000. If I return and slaughter an ox, people think that I sent my sculptures to steal money...Some people assume that I do not sleep at night and I *thangu* [use divining die] at night to show me how to make sculptures, (i.e. its a magical thing) but I just think of them [sculptures].

Nemurunzini's practice was interpreted by others as madness and his artistic knowledge was seen as supernatural and akin to divination (*thangu*). Some of his neighbours believed that the divination die told him how to make sculptures and that these sculptures were spirits which could kill people or steal money. It is clear from the above remarks that when art objects generated income an explanation was required. The ambiguity between what constituted a legitimate form of income generation (work), and the income generated from making sculptures (seen as **not** work?), drove the supernatural explanations given by some neighbours. The supernatural manipulation by artists of these sculptures (and in creating the sculptures) explains the artists' ability, through devious means, to make a living, despite the fact that they remain alone at home and do not leave to join others at 'work.'

The artist is thus not simply a maker of objects, but a supernaturally inspired and guided maker of objects which he can turn into spirits for his own purposes. Nemurunzini's alleged ability to use *thangu* was akin to the skills of a *nanga*. Indeed he stated: "People conclude that an artist is a *nanga*."

Vho-Mudzunga sympathized with the association between art and the supernatural (spirits) that I reported to him after my interview with Nemurunzini. He said he was aware that villagers thought he worked at night.[50] Night time is associated with the forbidden, the secretive and with witchcraft. He was aware that people had associated his art with *zwiduduwane*. He recalled how people on seeing his art would say "this is

zwidudwane, this is *matukwane*, have you ever seen a person make a drum like that?" His first wife, Vho-Tshinakaho, reportedly had overheard people, who were watching Vho-Mudzunga carve, saying that if one were to see the sculptures at night one might think that they were *zwidudwane*.

Matukwane are often referred to as 'zombies'. They are associated with *vhaloi* (witches), who 'enslave' dead people to work for them. Witches have the power to turn people into zombies and to use those zombies to do work for them. Successful farmers are often accused of owning *matukwane*. Farmers who work alone and away from the village are particularly prone to such accusations.[57] People who die without contracting an illness can be suspected of having being bewitched and used as *matukwane*. Part of the lore around *matukwane* is that if one dug up the grave of a *matukwane*, no corpse would be found, only a stone in its place.[58]

Vho-Ivy Mudzunga said that in the early 90s there had been rumours that the Mudzunga households (Vho-Mudzunga and his brother) had *matukwane* because of the abundance of fruit trees surrounding their stand. Their *matukwane* were allegedly bringing water from the mountains to irrigate their plot. When Vho-Mudzunga moved from Thononda to Shanzha he wanted to stay away from a crowded and over-populated area and thus chose his current stand which was in the last row before the mountains begin. He thus lived on the boundary of the village on the foot of the mountain. He also managed to acquire a large piece of property as he proposed to plant orchards on the land. Vho-Mudzunga's plot was indeed noticeable for the green fruit trees which surrounded it. He was an extraordinary water manager and had successfully harnessed two sources of water to irrigate his plot - municipal water and the water from the Golori River behind his house.

The association connecting Vho-Mudzunga, his art and *matukwane* was confirmed by some residents in the area but denied by others. A villager from Dopeni commented:

> An art man can make a doll. That doll can be used to kill someone, like magic. The man [who] makes the art can use [the art] with a traditional

> herb[59]...I did try to find out if [Mudzunga] can steal, but it seems he can only use then for hard work..[t]he artist can make *matukwane.*

Vho-Mudzunga was never openly accused in Shanzha at the *khoro* of practising witchcraft, nor did anyone refer to him as a *muloi* in my presence. However rumours around witches and witchcraft abounded in Shanzha especially in the early 1990s.[60] I could never establish for certain if there had been any rumours against Vho-Mudzunga at that time. According to a close friend of Vho-Mudzunga, he and his mother were known as people who 'probably knew about witchcraft'. Another young villager heard rumours that Vho-Mudzunga's mother was caught out practising witchcraft. She apparently 'went' to Johannesburg to practise witchcraft one night and had not managed to return home before the break of dawn and was thus found out (*o tshelwa*). Another prominent member of the Shanzha community thought he remembered that Vho-Mudzunga and his mother were once accused of witchcraft but stressed he was not sure and could not confirm this. In December 1996, Vho-Mudzunga accused his first wife Vho-Tshinakaho of using lightening against members of his household and removed her from his home. Lightening was widely regarded as a tool of a *muloi* (Stayt 1931:277; Ralushai 1996:20).

Vho-Mudzunga's mother, Vho-Munzhedzi had been a healer who specialized in the treatment of *tshifakole* or epilepsy. Because of her old age she was no longer a practising healer. According to Vho-Mudzunga, she was also very powerful in protecting one's home and person against lightening. She had prepared special 'medicine' which Vho-Mudzunga had placed in a bottle and attached to a lightening rod above the house. She had also sprinkled medicine around the perimeters of the house for protection against lightening. Vho-Munzhedzi had treated clients in Johannesburg on the two trips she had made there during her lifetime. Vho-Mudzunga himself had begun to heal some of these clients in Johannesburg on his trips to the city. He however had no clients at Shanzha during my fieldwork period.

I was told by villagers in Shanzha that the artist Jim Mugumu was burnt to death.[61] The story was told that Mugumu was making figurative works or "copies of people" in the village of Ha-Budeli. His art practice lead directly to witchcraft allegations owing to the suspicion that through these "copies of people" he could harm the real people depicted. This story was told to me to distinguish between the accusation towards Vho-Mugumu as an artist and the rumours about Vho-Mudzunga. In Vho-Mudzunga's case, according to this particular informant, his association with his mother's skills and knowledge created the suspicion of witchcraft. Despite this assertion, villagers also identified Vho-Mudzunga as different from another drum-maker in the village, Vho-Muthavhine, by virtue of the fact that Vho-Mudzunga was known to make figures or 'copies of humans' as well as drums[62]. Vho-Mudzunga could be vulnerable to allegation based in anxiety around mimesis.

These interpretations around Vho-Mudzunga and his artwork are echoed in Duncan (1996: 21) with reference to other artists. She notes that figurative sculptures are particularly "dangerous" and artists' experiences of local villagers interpretations of such sculptures "indicate that the transparency of the conventions of representational art cannot be taken for granted (Duncan 1996:30)." In fact their experiences show that "mimesis can be associated with the out of the ordinary, and even the supernatural (Duncan 1996:21)."[63] The artist Paul Tavhana recalled a visitor to his house who became angry because he felt Tavhana's art was "magic" (Duncan 1996:31). The work of the artist Albert Munyai was also associated with "zombies"[64] and he was taken to court as a result of allegations by his neighbours in this regard (Duncan 1996:30). Munyai's experience seems to resonate with Vho-Mudzunga's: Duncan (ibid.) quotes him as saying: "Many people thought I'm mad, you know"; "I know they [villagers] won't understand what I am doing."; "I don't usually like to be with other villagers, I'm usually alone." Munyai also mentioned that his neighbours were suspicious about the income he earned through art (ibid.).

Duncan identifies three "triggers" for witchcraft allegations against sculptors which occur because of their art practice[65]: 1) The violation of historically-entrenched conventions. 2) The fact that their work is produced for an audience far removed from their immediate environment. 3) Sculptors are seen to be profiting from their work.

A full-scale understanding of the factors leading to witchcraft accusations is beyond the scope of this study. However, I came across no evidence to support "trigger" number one as a witchcraft issue. If anything, a transgression of historically-entrenched conventions lead to an accusation of madness not witchcraft. This was true for Vho-Mudzunga's transformation of a drum into a coffin and Nemurunzini's depiction of the historically secretly guarded *murundu* practices.

"Triggers" two and three are not simply witchcraft related but to my mind pinpoint the axis around which the problem of difference generally is articulated concerning the recent phenomenon of the commercial artist. "Trigger three" should be modified slightly to allow for the unprecedented nature of this income. Duncan recognizes this when she states:

> The fact that the production of sculptures for sale is a relatively new and unknown means of generating income may also be a factor [in triggering witchcraft allegations] (1996:32).

Artists' status and income were rooted in the 'outside.' The possibility of being 'artist' was created at a distance from the Venda region in the powerful centres of Johannesburg and to some extent Cape Town. But in the Venda region, the practice and discourse of 'art' was both strong and vulnerable. Contextualized by local knowledge of an outside world, artists gained status through their access to the mythologies of those distant and powerful places and more concretely through generated income, exposure in newspapers and magazines, appearances on TV and visits by white people to their homes. In this sense 'art' was a strong practice. But on the other hand contextualized by another local knowledge and in the midst of the enactment of 'art' at the margins, artists became other things, closer to magician than

woodcarver, closer to deviousness than virtuosity. In this other sense then, art as a metropolitan discourse, was vulnerable.

'Art', as extended to the Venda region after 1985, had been interpreted within the web of local knowledges such that on his return to Shanzha, Vho-Mudzunga was faced with a different hermeneutics around his work than in the urban art institutions of Johannesburg. In 1993 Bongi Dhlomo, whom Vho-Mudzunga had met through the FUBA gallery in 1988, visited him in Shanzha. At that stage, she was employed by the Johannesburg Biennale committee as the Outreach and Development Project Co-ordinator. After the trip, she was left with the impression that, in the years after his return to Shanzha, Vho-Mudzunga was "a desperate man". During that visit she "could see a man struggling to be understood."[66] In Dhlomo's opinion he realized that the people who understood his work and what he was doing were not in 'Venda'. However, he did want people in Venda to understand him. He wanted people to understand that a job is not necessarily defined by going to Johannesburg but can be making art. Dhlomo felt at that stage he was wanting to reach different audiences at different levels.

VHO-MUDZUNGA'S '60TH BIRTHDAY PARTY'

In October 1994, Vho-Mudzunga held a sixtieth birthday party for himself at his home in Shanzha. He used the function to explain his art practice to the local community in an attempt to gain respectability, recognition and status as an artist. Vho-Mudzunga engaged with the local context in which his art practice was embedded - a context that both recognized his access to extra-local powers and cast suspicion on his activities. Vho-Mudzunga was not passive in the face of his 'predicament.' Instead of being the object of local hermeneutic practice, he reached out to fellow villagers and attempted to define art and artist, and ultimately his own identity, on his terms. Speakers at the event attempted to demonstrate how the art market generated

income and how highly regarded Vho-Mudzunga was in that market. Significantly, part of Vho-Mudzunga's self representation and outreach was to bring two 'outsiders' to Shanzha: his main South African buyer at the time, Trent Read, and Dave Roussouw, formerly of Ditike.

In the process, he converted the new value of his art objects into local cultural capital. Here we see for the first time an important cycle of investment. Vho-Mudzunga used the financial value of his art work (a *ngoma* drum) that functioned at the same time as a cultural object, to manipulate the distribution of cultural symbols of prestige and status in his favour.

The start of the celebrations was heralded by the entrance of the *tshikona* group from Mulaboni, the village of Vho-Mudzunga's birth. The Master of Ceremonies, Vho-Dan Mandavha introduced *makhadzi* Vho-Mulondo who welcomed the visitors. Vho-Netshiomvani, the retired school principal and treasurer of the Civic, then spoke about the aim of the day. The 'keynote' address was delivered by Dan Mandavha and later in the programme, Vho-Mudzunga himself spoke. In between the speeches three dance groups performed: the women's *tshigombela* from Tshivhilidulu, the *tshikona* group from Fondwe and, the main dance attraction, the *tshikona* from Mulaboni.

The presence of the *tshikona* and the *vhamusanda* from Mulaboni was very significant. Mulaboni was a village well known for its active cultural life. The headman, *vhamusanda* Budeli, maintained and patronized many different forms of dance groups. His *tshikona* was considered one of the best in the Venda region. However, in 1994, his *tshikona* group did not have a *ngoma* drum, an essential and central element for any *tshikona*. Certainly, to have a realistic chance for success in the annual, prestigious *tshikona* competition, they required a 'quality' *ngoma*. The dance group approached Vho-Mudzunga and requested the use of one of his *ngoma* drums for the competition. Vho-Mudzunga agreed and thus the *ngoma* used by

vhamusanda Budeli's *tshikona* in the 1994 competition was carved by Vho-Mudzunga.

The group won the competition and *vhamusanda* Budeli offered to buy the drum from Vho-Mudzunga. However, Budeli could not afford the price that Vho-Mudzunga requested and which Vho-Mudzunga was confident of receiving from the commercial art market. Vho-Budeli then requested Vho-Mudzunga to make him a different drum for R600. Vho-Mudzunga did not accept the 'commission,' making the excuse that he simply did not have the time. In fact, he was not tempted by the price offered.[67]

Instead, Vho-Mudzunga suggested that to show their appreciation for the use of his drum and to thank him for helping them win the competition, the Mulaboni *tshikona* should dance for him at his birthday party. Thus the presence of the Mulaboni *tshikona* at the celebration was in return for a favour. Vho-Mudzunga lent the *vhamusanda* a *ngoma* that the *vhamusanda* could not afford to own for himself. Vho-Mudzunga used his financial control over of a *ngoma* drum to gain cultural capital. 'Traditionally' only a *vhamusanda* should possess an *ngoma* especially the *ngoma* of his own *tshikona*. The financial capital received for *dzingoma* from Dr. Ron Carter in 1990 and from Trent Read in the same year (1994), was turned into cultural capital, as *vhamusanda* Budeli was made to pay with the cultural services of *tshikona*. This 'service' is a privilege normally reserved for an installed headman. Vho-Mudzunga's contact with the commercial art market had changed the financial value of his drums. He used this increased financial value to gain access to a symbol of cultural\traditional power - *tshikona*.

In format, the function was more formal than any of the performances which Vho-Mudzunga held in 1996 and 1997. There was no dramatic enactment around his art works. Instead, a round table was erected in the 'performance' area and figurative sculptures were displayed around the table,[68] while other small works were

continually added onto the table throughout the proceedings. Vho-Mudzunga, Vho-Mulondo and Vho-Dan Mandavha sat at the table during the programme. The table served as the focal point from which individuals spoke.

The function was not a birthday in the 'western' sense. It was not an **annual event** to celebrate the date of birth of a particular individual. This was a once-off celebration and explanation of Vho-Mudzunga's work constructed around his sixtieth 'birth-year'. As Dan Mandavha said t e:

> [The day] was not necessarily a birthday issue. Vho-Mudzunga was happy because he had worked and as an old man he was celebrating that indeed his art work was prospering. He wanted to draw attention to artists so they [the people who attended] would know that there is something in art. So this was a celebration of his achievement in art. It was also a way of educating other people about art and to say you must not look down on art, there is a lot you can get from it.

Vho-Netshiomvani reiterated this in his speech. He asked why people from Germany, Durban and Cape Town had come to see Vho-Mudzunga, and answered his own question that it was because of the works which Vho-Mudzunga has made. Netshiomvani concluded that therefore the function was a celebration of Vho-Mudzunga's work. The status conferred on Vho-Mudzunga by extra-local interest was immediately apparent.

But it was in Dan Mandavha's lengthy speech that the 'mission' of the day was made clear. As Dan said to me while we watched the video of the function together: "I was preaching." Dan's speech traced the history of Vho-Mudzunga's success in making and selling art. It began with a letter read out loud from Vho-Mudzunga's teacher and principal at Thononda Primary School, Mr. A.A. Dama, in which he testified to Vho-Mudzunga's great skill as a pupil in 'arts and crafts.'

Thereafter, Dan used newspaper cuttings to relate the history of Vho-Mudzunga's art career. The cuttings were all pasted into a large scrapbook, out of which Dan quoted throughout his speech. A constant underlying theme of the speech was the way the

art world in distant Johannesburg functioned and how Vho-Mudzunga was connected to it.

Dan related how Vho-Mudzunga, after holding successful art exhibitions in Johannesburg, was retrenched from Kohler. He showed the audience news cuttings from The Star that reported on Vho-Mudzunga's dismissal.[69] At the heart of this story was the fact that Vho-Mudzunga had lost his job because he had succeeded in selling his carvings. Dan commented to the audience: "Whites know too much about art and that's why they got jealous [and fired Vho-Mudzunga]."

Dan used another newspaper article to explain to the audience the process and prosperity of selling art. He demonstrated and explained that the art which Vho-Mudzunga made in Shanzha was sold in art galleries in Johannesburg. Again he held up a newspaper article and read aloud (and translated) that a drum which Vho-Mudzunga had carved was bought by Chris Prior for R15,000.[70] He continued that Vho-Mudzunga also sold art overseas. "Art is business," Dan declared.

Then, one of Vho-Mudzunga's drums[71] was brought before the 'speaking table.' Dan showed the audience photographs of Vho-Mudzunga's work and explained a little about them. For example, he held up a photograph of a wheel barrow and emphasised that the wheel could work even though it was made from wood. A second drum was brought forward.[72] Dan explained about this drum and how there were carvings inside the actual drum." I am trying to show you elders that Vho-Mudzunga is not an ordinary woodcarver, he is a serious wood carver," he said.

Vho-Mudzunga began his speech by recalling where and when he was born and when he moved to Shanzha. "I am informing people today that I am a woodcarver (*muvhadi*)," he said. The rest of his speech concentrated on death and burial. He proclaimed, perhaps for the first time in public, his desires for his own burial and reasons behind them. He insisted that he would not be buried on a weekend. He said

he refused to have a burial in a manner forced upon him by whites. If you are white and you die, he stated, you can get buried during the week. When he died he said he wanted to be buried at home, his grave is prepared. "We (Vhavenda) don't show off a corpse, we don't call people to see corpses. To celebrate like this brings bad luck to the child". He then went on to say:

> Some people are afraid of dying. There are witches, they are there. People fear buying cars or building houses, they said they would be bewitched, witchcraft is there. If you are afraid of doing your own thing you will not grow.

Unlike the other speakers Vho-Mudzunga seemed more preoccupied with death and burial than celebrating art. In fact, this preoccupation was largely an engagement with the interpretations of his art practice. He dismissed that his success was achieved through 'unnatural' means and asserted his right to do his "own thing."

Further cultural capital accrued when Trent Read[73] and Dave Roussouw arrived at the celebration. Whites had been present in two contradictory ways already in the function. In Vho-Mudzunga's speech they were represented as the cultural imperialists who imposed their burial systems on the Vhavenda. Likewise they were represented in Dan's speech as exploiters "who did not pay blacks but thanked them at the end of the week" and who in their knowledge of art were jealous of success like Vho-Mudzunga's and thus used their economic muscle to get rid of him. In a second sense, though, 'whites' were present in Vho-Netshiavani's speech as markers of achievement and prestige. In Dan's speech, whites were represented as the buyers of Vho-Mudzunga's art. They therefore recognized his talents in the exemplary way that the local audience was being encouraged to value Vho-Mudzunga's efforts. In this sense, they represented an example to be followed. Of course in this vein they were also the source of the publically-announced income that the art generated.

When Read and Roussouw (and their families) arrived Vho-Mudzunga approached Dave Roussouw with a request. He wanted Dave to announce that "important people"[74] had awarded Vho-Mudzunga a trip to Mozambique because of the stature

of the work he was doing. The hoax may have gone so far as to involve Dave handing an envelope over to Vho-Mudzunga which ostensibly contained an air ticket. Dave agreed and made this announcement. Vho-Mudzunga did make a trip to Mozambique after the performance but paid his own way and organized it himself.[75] Clearly, Vho-Mudzunga was acutely aware of the status which the arrival of the two whites could confer on him and he decided to take full advantage.

Furthermore, Trent Read's speech encapsulated the associations among being white, the art-world and the metropole with its defining power:

> My name is Trent Read and I sell art from Venda. Since the fall of apartheid, South African art is very important in the world...Samson Mudzunga is one of the best artists in Venda and South Africa...I say to you...that Samson in four or five years from now will be heard of not only in South Africa but in Germany, Holland, America. He is one of the most important artists in the world.[76]

Dan Mandavha's efforts were thus reinforced and confirmed not only by the presence of white art dealers at the function but by their words too. The influence of extra-local powers, most notably represented by the generic Tshivenda term for whites - *mukuwa* - and reflected in references to 'overseas,' was widely deployed by Vho-Mudzunga and noted by local villagers. I heard on more than one occasion that he was considered like a chief or an important person because of the presence of whites at his home. One informant, a resident of Shanzha, stated categorically, "People honour Vho-Mudzunga as a chief because of his work. Also because whites visit him, he is given honour." Then he mentioned my presence with him as an example.

POST-APARTHEID:TRADITION,CULTUREAND REPRESENTATION

In his speech at Vho-Mudzunga's birthday celebration, Trent Read noted the influence that the "fall of apartheid" had on the South African art market. The

Tributaries exhibition conceived a different South Africa from the racially and ethnically divided groups promulgated by apartheid ideology and practice. It included notions of difference within a national 'whole' whereas apartheid excluded and separated difference into entities. Democratic elections (national and regional in 1994 and local in 1995) represented to the political life of the South African state what Tributaries represented to the art-world - the reincorporation of excluded people, the reassessment of "neglected traditions", the formal dismantling of conceptual categories.

At the time of Vho-Mudzunga's birthday celebration, democratic local government structures were not yet in place. There was no government representation at the celebration. Instead, the persons with authority were the headmen of two villages who attended the celebration, including Budeli from Mulaboni. In 1996, the situation was different. Local elections had taken place and Shanzha was part of ward number seven of the Greater Nzhelele\Tshipise Rural Transitional Local Council (TLC).[77] The ward councilor was the ANC's Lufuno Mulaudzi, an anti-apartheid political activist since the mid 1980s and an insurance broker with Old Mutual in Thohoyandou. His uncle, a member of *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, the ANC's military wing, was friendly with Vho-Mudzunga when they both lived in Soweto. Vho-Mudzunga approached Mulaudzi for help with operationalizing his Funeral Performance. Mulaudzi attended the performance and made a speech there.

The reason that Mulaudzi attended the performance illustrates the change in the politico-cultural discourse in the Venda region after the 1994 transition. Mulaudzi was aware that 'art and crafts' had been used by the government of the former Venda homeland to promote its ethnic and political project. He knew of at least one artist who resisted showing his works at Venda shows for this reason. Furthermore, traditional practices were used b' la government and its allied cultural organizations[78] to entrenc' nda statehood and its nationalist government. Many activists s of events at which 'tradition was

performed'. If a bull had been slaughtered and *tshikona* was playing, inevitably the Venda National Party of Chief Mphephu was believed to be behind the event. The kind of event (the Funeral Performance) that Vho-Mudzunga wanted to stage could easily be interpreted within that framework and dismissed as part of the same corrupt traditional conservativism which underlied the strategies of the homeland government. Mulaudzi decided to attend the Funeral Performance to show that such frameworks had ceased to be relevant in the 'New South Africa' and to give credibility to Vho-Mudzunga's performance:

> I wanted people to know that things have changed and that no-one is forcing him (Vho-Mudzunga) to do it. So that villagers won't say, 'This is a rally for the national party and you are having meat because you want us to come.'

As we saw in previous chapters, Vho-Mudzunga made an intentional and clear association amongst himself, his art and 'Venda tradition.' Art and artist in the Venda region were often linked by local villagers with Vhavenda culture. Vho-Mudzunga's school principal wrote for his sixtieth birthday, that Vho-Mudzunga's artwork was "preserving culture." The reason for this association between art produced in the Venda region and a Vhavenda traditional culture, seems to arise from the type of work which was made. Craft objects relate easily to functional practices which in turn are linked to traditional ways of life. Thus wooden plates, wooden spoons or even walking sticks are easily associated with 'old' Vhavenda's implements. Most artists make such functional objects, as well as figurative works. The figurative art work produced in the Venda region is varied and defies simple categorization. Yet the works themselves sometimes depict or use images which allow 'tradition' and 'culture' to be ascribed to them. For example women are often signified in figurative sculptures through *mukunda* - the wire bracelets worn by married or initiated women around their ankles and forearms - or through the *u losha* posture. Both *mukunda* and *u losha* are recognizable features of Vhavenda culture and the sculptures imaging them can similarly be associated with tradition. Sculptures depicting people holding, carrying or using 'functional objects' can also be associated with tradition. For example a sculpture of a person with a *phaphana* or a woven basket carved in wood,

may be described as depicting tradition. Drums or sculptures depicting initiation practices are linked to tradition in a similar way.

After 1994, culture was liberated from the apartheid homeland agenda and put to work for a newly defined national, and importantly regional, agenda. Here Vho-Mudzunga's practice as an artist associated with tradition and culture, found a new discursive context and, as a result, he was presented with new opportunities and access to new modes of representation and self promotion.

Nationally, the political transition of 1994, opened a new legitimated cultural discourse. Culture was an important 'tool' in an attempt to image the new South African state differently and to separate the old white regime from the ANC-led government of National Unity. Importantly, culture could signify as non-western and non-white. The signs and symbols of an internationally recognized 'new' state attached themselves to formerly excluded cultural ideas and practices. Parliament was opened by an exuberant praise singer and not a sombre European procession. Cultural practices enjoyed a new national legitimacy and were powerful tools for signaling and marking South Africa's transition from white to black rule. In this context of transition, culture became the recognition of the survival of non-western lifestyles.

In the Venda region, since the death of the 'President of the Independent Homeland of Venda', Chief Mphephu, in 1988, calls had grown for the Venda homeland to be reincorporated into the rest of South Africa. After 1994, the transitional constitution and later, the adopted constitution, incorporated the Venda 'Independent' homeland into the Northern Province of the Republic of South Africa. The Venda homeland ceased to exist as a political entity. The area formerly designated as such was now linked to provincial and state structures of the reconstituted South African nation-state. The cultural implications of this were that 'Venda-ness' was no longer the defining ethnic logic of a contested 'independent state'. Instead, a separate identity became a possible basis to claim authentic South Africa-ness, an identity which had

been previously denied to Vhavenda on ethnic and racial lines. The demise of white rule, and the resulting discourse described above, signified the recognition of non-western identities as an acceptable claim on national South African citizenship and modernity. Perhaps the clearest example of this was the recognition of eleven official languages. As a Tshivenda speaker, one had the right to make claims on the resources and representations of the national state. The South African state and Vendaness were no longer separate. Rather Vendaness became a possible separate claim on the South African state.

Thus, amidst the unifying attempts of national reconciliation and the proliferation of the new national flag, particular people, in particular regions with particular practices re-surfaced in the representation of the South African state and in challenges to it. Through placing their culture in public forums they claimed victory over white rule and the hierarchy of values which favoured whiteness and Europe. They signaled the survival of the onslaught of apartheid. The valuation of 'white culture' over 'African culture'. But more importantly, claims on national resources or demands on the state could be framed and legitimized through an appeal to culture.[79]

After 1994, Vho-Mudzunga was thus able to access tradition, not as Venda government policy, but as regional culture which lay amongst the foundations of a new and transformed South African nation, and which signaled the renaissance of something authentically black African. Significantly, other stakeholders in the Venda region and in the country more broadly could turn to him to promote their claim on national resources and true national representation. The same 'tradition' or 'culture' which the Venda National Party 'abused,' proved after 1994 to be attractive to the TLC, the regional government's tourist department, local radio stations and the national television broadcaster. In post-apartheid South Africa, Vho-Mudzunga was a survivor and his preservation of 'culture' (which signified his survival) through art and performative practices highlighted him and made him worthy of attention and support. Art as cultural preservation enabled Vho-Mudzunga to key into both

renewed national images and renewed regional identity. He was sought out by purveyors of a new national image as both a national icon and as a particular regional phenomenon. He was in demand by promoters of a reconstructed region for his assertion of local autochthony in the face of national attention.

Vho-Mudzunga's regional status was indicated by Radio Thohoyandou's willingness to give him air time. One presenter at Radio Thohoyandou explained why he interviewed artists on his show and linked this to a 'cultural revival' of sorts:

> Here, in the Northern Province, people are re-visiting their culture and aspects of their tradition, from which they were divorced because of the political situation. Now there are other important things, not only [things] that are coming from the outside world, but also [things that are] internally [produced]. Art is part of people and their origin. Artists never stopped doing things [in the Venda region], but because indigenous culture was seen as of lower value, this affected the appreciation of art. Now we are attracting importance to our things.

He linked art directly to autochthony and in fact equated the autochthon and the artist. This form of autochthony expressed the recovery of what was thought to be lost or threatened. It was linked to 'cultural survival'.

Vho-Mudzunga's potential national status was indicated by the presence of a television crew at his home after his performance at Lake Fundudzi and the kinds of information they sought from him. The crew was filming for SABC's African Mysteries programme and interviewed Vho-Mudzunga about the Lake. Their contextualization of Vho-Mudzunga's residence in Shanzha and subsequent questions to Vho-Mudzunga, positioned him as a regional cultural survivor and consequently extended to him the possibility of being a national cultural icon. The insert was introduced in the driveway leading to Vho-Mudzunga's house by one of the presenters:

> In the words of Venda poet Rashaka Ratshitanga, many Venda people are becoming aware of the need to maintain their tradition. Let us go inside and meet a man who has been to **the other side**, but returned, here, to his roots.

Vho-Mudzunga's survival was spatially conceived. He had been to Johannesburg, the "other side." But he returned to "Venda" his place of origin, metaphorized in that most autochthonous of phrases, "to his roots". In the beginning of the interview, Vho-Mudzunga was asked "Why did you come back home?" He replied, "Our people forget our culture..." He was then asked "What has western influence done to African culture?"; "Why is it important to maintain an African identity?" and "How can Africans get back to their roots?" Vho-Mudzunga was approached as an **African** survivor, an emblem for the new South Africa.

This new search for culture became one basis for the official promotion of the region. Not long after hearing about Vho-Mudzunga's Funeral Performance over Radio Thohoyandou, the new regional government's Department of Tourism contacted him. The Department's mandate was to promote tourism in the region. Part of this project was to make local communities aware of the benefits of tourism and to educate people around how they could participate in and develop the tourist industry.

The Department found that they had to take culture into account in their work as "most tourists when they come [to the Soutpansberg region] they want to see (our) culture."[80] Cultural tourism was thus very important in the region and the Department actively encouraged people to "do culture" in an attempt to promote their region as a place to visit. This included, for example, the promotion of "cultural attire and pots."

Part of their work was also to encourage and promote artists (like they did for Vho-Mudzunga's Lake Performance - see Chapter 2). The artist was not only viewed as a tourist attraction but fitted easily into cultural tourism as his or her art work was associated with 'cultural work'. The support which the Department gave to Vho-Mudzunga was conceived by the Department as an extension of its Heritage Day programmes. Vho-Mudzunga's activities were deemed as a suitable way for a government department to mark a new national public holiday (Heritage Day). Lake

Fundudzi was considered by the Department as a "Heritage Site." Vho-Mudzunga's status as an artist, his 'cultural activities' and his plans to visit the "Heritage Site" of Lake Fundudzi assured him access to the resources of the regional government.

The Department's representatives admitted that their decision to help promote Vho-Mudzunga and the Lake Performance was two-sided. They reasoned that after the event they would be able to advertise Lake Fundudzi more effectively as the place "that somebody had gone to with a coffin-drum and done his thing."[81] Vho-Mudzunga was judged to have an important role in the region's promotion because of his cultural activities.

The TLC councilor, Mulaudzi, had a further agenda when he attended the Funeral Performance. He was now responsible for the development of the area. The TLC also viewed tourism as important in this regard. Mulaudzi had hopes for various projects, all geared towards tourism, that would fuel local development. In order for these projects to succeed the Nzhelele municipal area required broad exposure. Vho-Mudzunga's performance provided a rare moment when the TLC's future imagined clients, 'outsiders,' would be in the area. Mulaudzi wanted to use the performance to promote development in his area. Indeed, he spoke in English at the Funeral Performance and addressed the visitors who had come from outside the region.

Prior to 1994, Vho-Mudzunga had not gained access to government resources or support of any kind. Local government was in the hands of traditional authorities who also monopolized the access to local knowledge and tradition.

In the first week of March 1996, Swahombe/Zwanthesa,[82] the only television programme in Tshivenda, was flighted for the first time on national television. This was in keeping with the national broadcaster's task of becoming more representative of the New South Africa. The programme was designed very quickly, in two weeks, as an adult magazine programme, and was actually a dual language program in both

Tshivenda and Tsonga. The focus of Swahombe was "the lifestyle of Vendas and Tsongas."[83] Thus the only programme in Tshivenda was conceived as a cultural exposition of 'Vendaness' and not, for example, as a programme of international news accessible in Tshivenda. The producer, who is not Muvenda, took a three day trip to "Venda" and spoke to various "chiefs" in preparing the programme. Often the programme was event driven but the core idea was still to present a lifestyle - forms of dress, food and work for example.

Vho-Mudzunga's Funeral Performance was featured on Swahombe.[84] The producer decided to screen his event because "it was a unique work" and because the programme tries "to show behind the scenes and to tell people what is going on." Difference and distance were underlying principles in the conceptualization of Swahombe. The Executive Producer conceived of "Vendas" as "good at gardening, the places where they stay are always green and in their yards their are a lot of bananas, mangoes you name it..." Furthermore:

> Their lifestyle is quite interesting for a nice good documentary...If you go to Sibasa you will find women coming on their knees and crawling. Not that they are primitive but they just respect their culture very much...Venda are people who are very proud of their language and culture.[85]

Art fitted into this representation of "Vendas" as close to a particular cultural tradition and lifestyle. The executive producer believed that "art was an important part of an association with Venda because this is mostly what these people like and do":

> You go there and see people working, it is stunning, even their way of choosing wood. You ask about the wood and they are very good. It is an inborn thing they have.[86]

As a woodcarver, a maker of drums and other objects, Vho-Muzunga was representative of a 'natural' feature of Venda culture and lifestyles. He was an authentic Muvenda in a New South Africa, identified by the 'cultural objects' which he made.

CONCLUSION

The cultural meanings and social functions of an art-object and its producer allowed Vho-Mudzunga to gain access to the powers of the centre, autochthony and transgression. From 1985 the possible meaning of a woodcarving produced in the Venda region of South Africa underwent two major changes. Prior to 1985, a woodcarving was defined as a craft and consigned to ethnographic or tourist value. After 1985 and the Tributaries exhibition, the art-world of the metropolitan areas of South Africa conferred the status of art onto select woodcarvings from the Venda region and the status of artist onto the producer. As we saw this was not a complete transfer of meanings. After 1994, the pre-1985 cultural association was recuperated, but this time not as a sign of a separate 'Venda' polity. Rather 'the object' was released from Apartheid's *volkekunde* ideology and appropriated into a new nationalism, where 'Vendaness' changed from being a claim on separateness to a separate claim on national belonging through cultural practice. South Africa was no longer a white-ruled country but an African one. This change was symbolized and articulated by displays of 'African-nesss' in public or national forums.

The major effects on the producer of this work being defined as 'art' were that the object generated income, it provided access to metropolitan institutions of prestige, like art galleries and museums and led to the physical presence of 'whites' and overseas visitors at the homes of the artists in the distant Venda region. This access to the material and symbolic advantages of 'the centre' made Vho-Mudzunga appear and feel powerful at 'the margin.' Once again, this was both a material and symbolic power. Materially, he became a potential tourist attraction and attractor, enabling himself to be cast as a development agent of sorts. Symbolically, he relied on the presence of whites to entrench his importance and status. For example, in the last chapter we saw how he felt confident about confronting Netshiavha because "whites

and other foreigners" were coming to support him. Towards the end of my stay with Vho-Mudzunga, he planned to hold another event which he said would be organized only with outsiders. These people knew many things he said, more than the locals and even more than himself. He was referring to contacts he claimed to have with JCI and SAAA.

Vho-Mudzunga used the income that he gained by selling objects at art market prices to gain symbolic capital associated with autochthonous authority. Vho-Mudzunga framed his identity on autochthonous terms. He asserted a royal link to the house of Tshiavha and associated himself with their beliefs and practices. He was known to maintain a close relationship with his mother which was based in local knowledge and healing practices. He claimed to have intimate knowledge about Lake Fundudzi. He used his access to financial resources to embellish this disposition on his return to the Vendaregion.

This was clearly illustrated by the presence of the Mulaboni *tshikona* at his home for his 'birthday.' The *ngoma* drum could operate as a symbol of chiefly power in the Vhavenda chieftancies. The 'indigenous market' for woodcarvings therefore disallowed any other member of society from possessing an *ngoma* with exception of a *sangoma*. *Dzingoma* were not carved randomly but on commission basis. The creation of artists in the Venda region by the discursive, practical and financial outreach of the metropolitan art-world, allowed Vho-Mudzunga to 'possess' an *ngoma* at the expense of a *vhamusanda*. Vho-Mudzunga harnessed the financial power of the art-world (centre) and obligated the *vhamusanda* for helping him gain status through his triumphant *tshikona*. Vho-Mudzunga knew that no status accrued to a maker of drums for *vhamusanda*. If it did, he would have accepted the *vhamusanda's* subsequent commission. Instead, he accepted the *vhamusanda's tshikona*, for *tshikona* could also operate as a symbol of power and prestige in the Vhavendachieftancies.

After 1994, Vho-Mudzunga's access to autochthonous claims on power and legitimacy was embellished by virtue of his identity as an artist living and working in the Venda region. He had returned to his "roots" like someone "supposedly sprung from the ground he inhabits." This was an important change. His own efforts at defining and embellishing his autochthony were limited by inference and metaphor because ultimately he was not *vhamusanda*. The post-1994 national discourse legitimated and valued a cultural basis of identity and especially success. Art objects were closely related to the preservation of culture. Vho-Mudzunga was held up as a successful example of community development and cultural survival. He became a Venda icon. Television crews came to him to ask questions about Venda tradition and African identity. Anthropologists studied him as a means to understand life in the Venda region. Previously, questions of local knowledge, 'tradition' and identity had been monopolized by installed chiefs and *vhamusanda* or their 'staff.'

The consequences of his own positioning in the local community combined with local interpretations of art practices positioned him beyond various authorities and distanced him from the community. As an 'artist' he verged on being a *nanga* and thus came to seen by some members of the local community as a skilled in supernatural powers which allowed him to exist beyond the limits of the mundane. He was potentially beyond structured authority, limited only by his own beliefs. The power of transgression was graspable. Makarius (1974) writes the "magical act of transgression...has to be an individual act...As an individual act, denoting heroic exploit, it is at the centre of all mythologies." At the heart of this power is the ability to generate new mythologies, ones which can perhaps be used by the regional Tourist Department to publicize Lake Fundudzi. The initiative is with the transgressor:

> In magic based on violation of taboo, the individual sees himself placed in a new relationship with regard to nature instead of suggesting to natural forces what he expects of them, by relying on imitative acts, he

> wrests from them the power to coerce them into yielding to his wishes. (Makarius 1974:543)

At Lake Fundudzi, surrounded by a crowd ready to affirm his supernatural powers, a film crew to publicize a Venda artist, an anthropologist to analyze them, a drum to be taken the next day to Johannesburg to be sold in an art gallery, and *vhamusanda* Netshiavha the ritual guardian of the lake, Vho-Mudzunga stood ready to violate the taboo against swimming in the lake, in order to wrest the power of the Lake and its gods for himself. The relatively new status and role of artist, conveyed from the metropole made such an individual act, which was filled with so much potential power, a local possibility. In the following chapter, I take up the particular construction of lived experience at the margin of defining discourses and practices.

4

CREATIVITY AT THE MARGINS

"I will not be buried on a weekend because this [custom] was *made for you* Africans."
Ratshilumela Samson Mudzunga

Marginality

Vho-Mudzunga's performances were both planned and improvised. He outlined a programme or a set of ideas before the events, which structured the performances' content, but I was always unsure how the outlined "project" would in fact be operationalized. Whenever we discussed the drama that he planned for the performance at the Lake, there were always new elements that he wanted to include and previous ideas which he discarded. For example, he considered three different people for the "important role" of opening his drum at the Lake Performance. This was not simply a case of a "critical difference" (Drewal 1992) between planning and implementing, but a constant reorientation to his context - to new opportunities or to options which no longer presented themselves - as people and resources shifted in relation to him and his project.

In this constant improvisation, it appeared as if nothing was ever a fatal setback for Vho-Mudzunga. When something which had been planned or on which he had counted, failed to materialize, Vho-Mudzunga invariably found a way around it. The details of his undertaking shifted while the overall project remained more or less focused. We have seen how he approached numerous people and organizations and canvassed their support in a variety of ways: family members, members of other royal families (Budeli and Netshiheni), *tshikona* dancers, *dzinanga*, other 'Venda' artists, friends, local government, the local radio station. regional government, art

dealers, gallery curators, corporations (former employers), foreign tourists and the media (newspapers and television). At different times these 'resources' became more or less important to him and if one avenue closed to him he would pursue another. However, there remained a framework, an objective. Vho-Mudzunga would not gain access to other potential resources which wholly contradicted that objective. Thus he would never approach the church or a priest in assembling his performances.

Vho-Mudzunga's practice conformed to what Levi-Strauss (1962) termed *bricolage*. Levi-Strauss used the technical practice of an 'odd jobs man,' called a *bricoleur*, to describe a method of problem-solving and knowledge-makingwhich he contrasted to that of a scientist (an engineer). This method, *bricolage*, stands in an inverse relationship to scientific practice, and in an intellectual form, it is the basis of mythological thought.

He argued that scientific practice proceeded from "structure" to "event", from model (hypothesis/theory) to implementation, from concept to result. Scientific practice required specific tools to complete a defined project. In addition, science was always trying to break the boundaries of its own knowledge, to introduce new concepts into its set of conceptual tools with which it could affect the world (1962:19).

Bricolage, as the inverse of this practice, proceeds from "event" to "structure", from narrative to model, from story to outcome. The tools of a *bricoleur* do not define the project, nor is the *bricoleur* confined to one project by his set of tools. The *bricoleur* works with a limited, albeit "heterogeneous," set of materials to achieve her goal. Each element or material is limited by its history and intended function. Instead of collecting (new) elements to complete a project, the *bricoleur* recombines the "odds and ends" of previous events, that form his set of tools, and uses former ends as means (1969:19).

Whereas science is grounded in concepts, *bricolage* relies on signs as its tools. Signs associate percepts (images) and concepts with signifier and signified (1969:18). The bricoleur recombines her finite set of signs and recasts 'old' signifieds as 'new' signifiers to form her 'solution' or to make knowledge about the world.

Vho-Mudzunga's agency and his agency's template - the performances - conformed in many respects to *bricolage*. His 'tools' were signs - signifying images of drums, dancers, performers and audience- and his methodology suitably performative. He made use of what was locally available to him and reworked this repertoire. He claimed that his *ngoma* drum was the first to signify as coffin and that he was the first person to take *tshikona* dancers to the Lake. These are all novel ways to signify with old 'cultural leftovers'. Meanwhile the 'older' meanings generated by other configurations did not evaporate from these signs. His 'tools' were heterogeneous and diverse. Further, the structure or meaning of his performances was an interpretative endeavour following the event (and as such was never static or unified). He created a new personal mythology through original reworkings of old themes. As I demonstrate below he contextualized this reworking in relation to new problematics, especially around identity.

Not only were Vho-Mudzunga's performances clearly the recombination of available heterogeneous signs but they were also referred to as forms of knowledge. Vho-Mudzunga completed standard five before he left school to work in Johannesburg and thus did not have advanced schooling. The performances were said to display his knowledge which was juxtaposed with the knowledge of a school-educated person. For example, Vho-Makhomu exclaimed in his speech at the Lake:

> Samson is not educated but yet he has attracted some whites. His knowledge is greater than someone who has a BA. This which was made by his hands, attracts people from afar, by his own hands!

Vho-Mudzunga performed, not the practical knowledge of 'reason,' but 'mythological' or perhaps cultural knowledge, through *bricolage*. Not surprisingly then, his display of knowledge based itself in part in improvisation and enactment.

The extensive breadth of resources, the diverse relationships and symbols, which Vho-Mudzunga assembled, reworked and even discarded in creating his performances, were an example of *bricolage*. *Bricolage* provides a defining performative logic, a label for Vho-Mudzunga's method, and a way, perhaps, of understanding his performances as knowledge. What were the specific ends to which these resources were harnessed and the particular role of Vho-Mudzunga in a specific context? What was the relationship between the various signs in Vho-Mudzunga's 'tool box'?

One of his most powerful 'tools' was his access to extra-local forces. We have seen that Vho-Mudzunga was linked to contexts beyond the Venda region, whether in the art-world or national political transition, and that these links were an important element of his practice.

Bailey (1970) theorized the links between local-level villages and extra-local political entities. He explored the degree and strategies of integration of different political structures within a larger encompassing state structure. He set up three zones of political identification: the state, the constituency and the village. The village he described as encapsulated in the state. An encapsulated political structure, according to Bailey, is one which exists inside another larger and generally more resourceful political establishment. The chieftancies of the Vhavenda could be said to be encapsulated by the South African state.[1] Bailey investigated how the village and larger structures interacted with each other. A key figure, he concluded, in the communication between village and state was the "broker:"

> The broker is a person with special knowledge and special contacts who can help the villager to get in touch with or manipulate the Administration or who can perform the same service in the other direction for an official (1970:101).

Bailey was particularly concerned with political communication. "The broker" has also been mobilized in a cultural context to theorize cultural translation. Vail (1989) used the concept of a 'cultural broker' in his history of tribalism or ethnicity in southern Africa. He described the educated black elite, missionaries, historians and anthropologists as cultural brokers. He argued that they crafted, mediated and promoted particular ethnic identities through cultural interventions. They defined cultural symbols (especially the canonization of languages) for particular groups and promoted ethnic agendas. So, for example, the black elite, who were largely attached to mission schools, brokered ethnic identity using symbols created by missionaries (e.g. written language) to traditional leaders and 'the people' in general

Whereas Bailey's broker mediates between two different administrations - village and state - Vail's brokers mediate between different cultural identities - an old undeveloped (in Vail's thesis) group identity and a new invented ethnicity.

Vho-Mudzunga's links with the world outside the Venda region are sometimes cast as mediation. This position is generally ascribed to him by representatives from the 'outside' and is especially true in terms of his links to the art-world. At the Funeral Performance, Steven Sack, then with the Johannesburg Art Gallery, cast Vho-Mudzunga in the role of mediator and 'gatherer' of different groups when he thanked Vho-Mudzunga for "bringing us all together." He described how artists were the Venda region's link to the cities and how an exchange of ideas between the two locations was facilitated by them.

At the Johannesburg Biennale, Africus 95, Vho-Mudzunga was part of the No limits - no frontiers exhibition which featured artists from the "Northern Transvaal" region (now the Northern Province). Ironically, this was the only exhibition that took a regional boundary, as opposed to a national one, as its limit. The exhibition in which Vho-Mudzunga's work appeared was described in the following terms:

> Most of the work on this show depicts the artist's close relationship with nature. The spirit of the wood lives on in the sculptures, the soil

> out of which the wood grows becomes a vessel used in ceremonies, rituals and everyday life (Biennale Catalogue 1995:77).

The description evokes images of natural artists working in distant exotic places, in an organic process of art-making that is connected to the religious and mundane aspects of their lives - lives that, the regional delimitation of this exhibition indicates, are different from 'ours'.[2]

But at Vho-Mudzunga's more recent show in Johannesburg at Gallery on Tyrone, his work was appreciated and sought after as it still fitted the "western concept of originality."[3] At the same time however, Vho-Mudzunga was also praised for being primarily concerned about "cultural" expression rather than commercialism. Vho-Mudzunga's art was positioned in-between culture and aesthetic considerations. In the metropolitan art-worlds, his role as 'Venda artist' was constructed as mediation between these practices.

At the local level Vho-Mudzunga's art practice was in some respects a transfer of ideas from city to village. Vho-Mudzunga's return to Shanzha sparked the interest of some people who were intrigued by Vho-Mudzunga's success in Johannesburg as an artist. They were eager to understand what art entailed and to promote it if desirable (see Chapter Three). Vho-Mudzunga was cast here as a mediator of ideas and practices around 'art' from the city to the Shanzha area.

Bailey characterized the broker's relationship to other villagers as ambivalent. Villagers suspected the broker for his good contacts with extra-local authorities. They were not sure if he was one of them or not and indeed he could not be completely one of them as his brokering ability relied on outside contacts. His brokerage locateed him betwixt and between, in a liminal space. Indeed Bailey saw the broker as an agent of change. Imagining Vho-Mudzunga as broker and artist would locate him between village and state, rural and urban, conservatism and change. It would also posit that his work integrated separate worlds.

Although mediation was ascribed to him by the art-world, it is not an adequate and perhaps even accurate description of what he himself did. Perhaps his actions had moments of mediation attributed to them but the performances, or his relationships constructed around them, do not constitute mediation. In general he did not gain access to authority on the community's behalf. He did not generate new forms of ethnic identity.

Indeed after encountering him a number of times, one radio announcer on Radio Thohoyandou doubted her own impression of him. She had thought he was an 'agent of development', a self-made man, an example to the community who could facilitate community reconstruction. Then she asked him how many people he employed from the community to help with his art-work and he retorted that he would not employ any locals as they were all too jealous of his work. Another announcer had a similar impression. He expected Vho-Mudzunga's event at the Lake to produce "mystery" but after watching Vho-Mudzunga's video of the Lake Performance he concluded:

> Here is a man who is obsessed with first publicity and controversy. This is his agenda. This man will do anything to satisfy his obsession for publicity. He did nothing to satisfy [the expectations of] the people at the Lake.

Imagination lies at the heart of the explanations and analyses which place Vho-Mudzunga between categories, between spaces and times and which characterize his bricolage as mediation. All are predicated on a particular understanding of difference that assumes spatial and temporal separation between two oppositions. Mediation assumes a set of oppositions which are bridged, inverted, crossed, or reinvented. Underlying these oppositions - traditional\modern, social\liminal, permissable\prohibited, structure\invention - are separate ways of being that are held apart in space and time. The constituent parts of the opposition are imagined to be conceptually unified in and of themselves and also different from each other.

Thus although Bailey's concept of encapsulation is attractive as it recognizes the links between village and state, between the centre and the margin, he still characterizes the village, the local, as not integrated and relatively isolated from the state. Brokers are more important in such situations, he argued, when separation of village and state is more acute and when they constitute separate bounded worlds (1970:230). Thus individual brokerage is a symptom of separation and difference and an indicator of village parochialism. Brokers breach this separation and link isolated villages of cultural difference to extra-local authorities. In this framework, the state and the village do not affect each other but threaten each other's difference.

Analyses of mediation or cultural contact generally focus on a moment and space when the imagined separation of difference becomes untenable; when oppositions are brought into contact by an individual or an event. In South African ethnographies idealized oppositional categories of rural/urban, traditional/modern dominate discussions of contact (Mayer (1961), Comaroff (1985), James (1996)[4]). Contact as apparent 'forced' connection, or the inversion of some 'ideal' state, is often theorised as a temporary, performed and isolated phenomenon, confined to liminal ritual practices, liminoid spaces or extra-ordinary individuals (following Turner 1967, 1982).[5] Contradiction, paradox, ambiguity is held separate from everyday experience and bounded in special spaces, times, categories or people.

The initial debate around the definition of African popular arts illustrates this economy of difference and contact, in which categories of difference collapse to produce a category of ambiguity that exists by virtue of other stabilizing loci of difference which can be identified and help apart. The nature of the investigation into popular arts concerned itself foremost with defining what constituted popular art in the first instance (Barber 1987). The category was 'intuitive' but not self-evident. Barber (1987:11) noted that popular art was more generally defined in terms of what it was not. It was not traditional, and not elitist high art - not one nor the other. Traditional art located itself easily in the rural and associated 'naturally' with

traditional practices. Elite art located as easily in the urban areas and was oriented towards European standards. Barber recognized that to locate popular art between traditional and elite art presupposed a problematic tripartite categorization (traditional-popular-elite) based in Western assumptions. She resolved rather to class popular art with the 'unofficial' (after Bakhtin) - that which evaded canonical form and slid around between two official forms, in this case, traditional and elite. What emerged from Barber's discussion as popular art was thus a problematic, not a social fact, that resulted from a breakdown of canonized separations (traditional and elite). The popular was the new category that evolved out of the collapse of difference held apart. The slipperiness of the new category was pointed out by scholars who claimed the unofficial was an operating realm in traditional arenas of artistic production (e.g. Arnoldi 1987:79-83).

Connectedness is thus NOT conceived of as the condition of sociality but the creative exception. The rural is not in the urban; the modern not in the traditional, the traditional not in the present, the urban not in the past. The analytical problem of 'cultural contact' is thus often a result of a theoretical encounter with connectedness where categories of difference and separation break down and new categories need to be invented. Within this framework of difference, a new cultural phenomenon rises out of connectedness as a contamination, a palimpset, not one nor the other, a transitional art object, caught in the mediation of imagined constrained and definable difference.

Difference and separation are the logics which underlie the criticized anthropological relationship between researchers and their subject of research (Said 1978; Crapanzano 1980; Clifford 1988). This relationship constructs its own opposition between the anthropologist and the Other, reproduces difference and separation as the ways of talking about the world and constituting knowledge and theory (Asad 1973). Bhabha (1994) argued that the problem of the Other is not in its description, but in its location "as the closure of grand theories, the demand that, in analytical terms, it be always the

good object of knowledge, the docile body of difference." This location "reproduces a relation of domination and is the most serious indictment of the institutional powers of critical theory (Bhabha 1994:31)." For as with all oppositions one side is ranked above the other - progressing\underdeveloped, powerful\weak.

Anthropology not only locates the Other in theoretical writing but places the Other in the world. In anthropological practice the Other is most often located at a distance from 'the West', in isolated corners of the world, at the level of small local communities, where difference is preserved. Traditional anthropology's spatial orientation is towards the removed, the particular, the detail, the localized. These are the locations of different cultural practices. Vho-Mudzunga's work and performances have not escaped a primitivist discourse associated with these outlying areas. The catalogue to the Mahlakasela Collection juxtaposed Vho-Mudzunga's work with the work of other artists' apparently influenced by western standards:

> The meticulously crafted and skillfully shaped pieces rest solidly on many centuries of African art traditions, resisting input from outside influences.

Janet Smith, writing in The Star newspaper, titled the Lake Performance a "Sacred Ritual at the Waters of Lake Fundudzi." The article based Vho-Mudzunga's innovative performance in the repetitive time of ancient practices and the purity of places distanced from the metropole:

> Tshivenda is one of more than 1000 languages spoken on our magnificent continent, and with this melodious, gentle tongue come rituals dating back hundreds of years...Rural life can be impossibly hard, but Mudzunga feels the closeness to the rock, the water, the flesh of the land and, perhaps most importantly, the tree, in the wide open spaces. (The Star Tonight. 26 September 1996:2)

In both the Mahlakasela catalogue and Smith's article, Vho-Mudzunga was confined to an isolated and distant place different from and unconnected to the generic 'West.'

The questions: "How can we describe Vho-Mudzunga?" and "Towards what 'solution' was his *bricolage* working?" can easily be caught in this economy of difference if we doggedly pursue a comparison between him in the Venda region and a particular concept of an 'artist' created, promoted and powerful in the metropole. Instead what I have attempted to make clear is that 'art' and 'artist' became resources at Vho-Mudzunga's disposal, labels open to his appropriation (or imposed upon him) and were negotiated categories at a local and extra-local level. As such the categories carried multiple meanings. 'Art' and 'artist' became part of the social and economic resources at a local level and thus part of the reality and the socio-cultural conditions of living in the Venda region even if the discourses originated in the metropole.

Geertz (1995) asserts that this is the condition of all places, all locations - they "look towards" other places and are culturally constituted through much that did not originate there. This is especially true of places on the peripheries, at the edges, of larger more powerful entities or centres. Commenting on two places in which he worked extensively, Morocco and Indonesia, Geertz noted:

> Both countries and both towns within those countries are ingredients in forms of life geographically very much wider and historically very much deeper than those they themselves directly display...Their location at the outer edges of enormous cultural continents whose heartland's are elsewhere is something of which their peoples however caught up in parochial concerns and however suspicious of outside influences, have been continuously aware. They have always been outliers...and they have always had the cultural devices...to prevent them from forgetting it...The recognition that there is culturally, much in Indonesia and Pare, Morocco and Sefrou, that was not made in those places, that has not only its origins but its canonical setting somewhere else, is quickly come by. (my emphasis Geertz:1995:49-51)

The local is already a 'mediated' space. An engagement with local cultures, for residents as well as a visiting anthropologist, immediately requires an engagement with a local more broadly conceptualized in relation to other places.

The same call for contextualizing 'cultural contact' is made by Coombes (1994). She analyses 'cultural contact' through exhibitions of material objec and their representation as 'items of contact.' She concludes that:

> The context which needs to be made explicit in such displays is no longer solely the old functionalist call for 'mythic' and 'ritual' significance, or a reassessment of the validity of such practices for the canons of the western art establishment, but **the ways in which such cultural activities are often framed within a specific engagement with global politics and certainly with local demands** (my emphasis 1994:108).

Coombes called for the reconceptualization of cultural activities that take place in anthropology's traditional small-scale, localized context to incorporate the engagements that activities in such locations can make with outside forces. She argued for a reconceptualization of the local as connected to such processes and as sites of negotiation with them.

The Venda region was not isolated from outside forces. It was indeed *encompassed* by larger structures and open to their influences. This has probably always been the case. Although the Colonial (and Neo-Colonial) imagination typically tends to accept isolation as the condition of life in far off places, this is nothing more than an assumption, whilst some evidence suggests the contrary - even life in far-off places reveals connections with extra-local forces.[6] In pre-colonial eras, the possibility that inhabitants of the Venda region "faced towards" other centres of influence is more feasible than an assumption of pristine isolation and self-containment.

The modern Venda region, the Vhavenda chieftaincies, was connected to larger, more powerful polities and ext .ous cultural spheres of influence. Perhaps most notably, the region looked towards *Makuwane*, the city of white people, Johannesburg.[7] There was also undoubtedly a consciousness of a continent and a world beyond the cities of the state of South Africa. The nature of these connections was conditioned by the Venda region's existence at the edge of these worlds, in the far northern periphery of the South African state.[8] The relationship between *Makuwane* and the Venda region,

between centre and margin, as indicated by the exclusionary label conferred upon the city, was unequal. The Venda region was connected to the metropole in a way that defined possibilities in the region itself. The whole of Chapter Three could be read as an example of how the metropole imposed a particular discourse, that of 'art' onto the Vendaregion.

Subjects, who in their daily lives typically face powerful and defining discourses that emanate from outside their local contexts, and condition their day-to-day existence, construct their identities within the rubric of marginality. Here I closely follow the work of Anna Tsing (1993) in which she used the concept of *marginality* to analyse and write about the Meratus Dayaks of Kalimantan in Indonesia. By marginality I mean an identity formed at the *margins* - a location at a distance from a powerful centre that generates defining (and thus to an extent controlling and dominating) discourses. Communities at the margins are often communities in "Out-of-the-Way places." Such social groups are traditionally subjects of anthropological research, and thus typically subject to the problematic Othering discourse discussed above. The concept of marginality offers a theoretical vantage point from which to challenge this othering and to write ethnography differently. The connectedness of seemingly isolated people and places to centres of power are investigated. Such an approach allows the emphasis within an anthropological investigation to shift onto the processes by means of which people in out-of-the-way places are constructed as marginal. But perhaps most crucial, this approach highlights local subjects reactions and responses to marginality and their engagement at the margins with the conditions of identity.

This shifts the analytical focus from a centred culture - an analysis taking a particular culture as its 'centre' - to a local context, so connected to other "extra-local" social, cultural and economic influences, that they inform the deepest expressions of power, status, prestige and understandings of history at the local level. In this sense, Tsing situated her work in the study of "cultural heterogeneity and the trans-communal links

through which 'communities' are forged (1993:9)." Pratt (1992) conceived of a local "contact zone" in rather similar terms. She described the local in terms of "copresence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices" and not separateness. Pratt unfortunately viewed this zone as the coming together of previously separate and different cultures and confined this phenonmenon to the colonial period.[9] Nonetheless her characterization of this space is useful in terms of describing relations at the margins.

In this vein, Nettleton (1993) noted that the style of figures for *domba* initiation "responded to new situations." *Domba* perhaps more than any institution in the Venda region, constructed traditional authority, conveyed traditional knowledge and symbolized ethnic difference. Part of the *domba* process was the displaying of figurative sculptures called *matano*, that served to instruct initiates in cultural matters. Nettleton noted:

> ...the traditional Venda husband and the suspected seducer of his wife, figures used at *domba* are carved in the kind of suit every self-respecting white-collar worker aspires to, while the wife is represented in traditional clothing...(Nettleton 1988:303)

Ideas of power and respectability, originating in the cities or the west, thus became part of the most local of Vhavenda practices, the *domba*. The figure, which represented male power, was recast in the image of male power as experienced and idealized in the Venda region. This was not a corruption of culture or an intrusive contamination, but a reflection on images of power now assimilated and part of the local consciousness naturalized through *domba* as 'Vhavenda.'

The concept of marginality allows us to view connectedness as an essential and defining part of the local context thus subsuming it and not polarizing an analysis into different and separate places and times. Further, it identifies and emphasizes responses to this discursive condition, thus not stultifying people at the margins into passive recipients and hopeless victims, but rather identifies active agents engaging marginality, "protesting, reinterpreting and embellishing their exclusion...working to

define and redefine their situation (1993:5)" and not simply dominated by it. Marginality does not articulate difference; it is a set of conditions through which social identity and agency is formed. Difference is exposed as exclusion.

In a similar vein, Pratt coins the term "autoethnography" to describe the way "colonized subjects undertake to represent themselves in ways that *engage with* the colonizer's own terms (1992:7)."

> If ethnographic texts are a means by which Europeans represent to themselves their (usually subjugated) others, **autoethnographic texts are those the others construct in response to or in dialogue with those metropolitan representations** (my emphasis 1992:7).

This engagement is central to my thesis and a point to which I return below.

Tsing underlined how marginality is politically and culturally constructed, a process in which marginalized people's "perspectives are cast to the side or excluded" by powerful discourses emanating from political and cultural centres. She identifies certain characteristics of marginality that inform agency and identity that resonate with Vho-Mudzunga's practice.

Firstly, at the margins discourses from extra-local centers are both powerful and vulnerable:

> An out-of-the-way place is, by definition, a place where the instability of political meanings is easy to see. The authority of national policies is displaced through distance and the necessity of reenactment at the margins (Tsing 1993:27).

An engagement with extra-local authority has the potential then of both contacting that authority's power and displacing it further. The latter opens up the possibility of resistance.

Secondly, and following from the above paradox, relationships with these centres result in contradictions and contrasting perspectives. For example, Tsing raises the

attitude of local Meratus leaders to the state's role in community building (1993:8). They saw community building as a state project and constructed their own authority by stressing links to the state (contacting its power). On the other hand, the state considered the Meratus as "savages outside their reach (bid)." Such a contradiction resonates with the implications of state rule in rural areas of South Africa where traditional leaders still maintain authority. Thornton (1996) discusses the nature and differences of power held by 'traditional authorities' and democratic government in South Africa:

> [C]hiefs can not be integrated into the politics of Parliament because of the different grounds on which their authority rests. Chiefs still control access to land and control the initiation schools and 'tradition'. Thus any appeal to an African tradition and to autochthony depends upon the existence of chiefs. Any real practice of power in the modern sphere of parliamentary politics, however, must contradict and undermine the power of the chiefs (Thornton 1996:156).

State ideas of legitimacy contradict local autochthonous ones. Politics at the margins in post-1994 South Africa were conditioned by state-imposed ideas of legitimacy which largely excluded traditional leaders (or by autochthonous ideas which eluded state-imposed ideas). A man like Vho-Mudzunga who engaged both forms of power was enveloped by the contradictory relations of marginality. In keeping with ideas of marginality, state imposed ideas are strong, as they are backed by state authority. At the same time they are at their weakest where the alternative ideas of tradition are strongest. However democracy and tradition are not polarized into immutable opposites. Instead these two authorities:

> ...may function , relative to each other, as points of external reference, as alternative or ultimate courts of appeal. In any case, they offer the individual an escape or alternative recourse: the chief may defend one from the state bureaucracy, while the apparatuses of the bureaucratic state may also act as an escape from 'tradition' and the chief where necessary (Thornton 1996:155).

Both the state and 'tradition' are part of the margin. Access to extra-local knowledge becomes important in constructing authority. So just as Meratus leaders stressed links to the state, we have seen how Vho-Mudzunga stressed links to regional

government, white South Africans and overseas foreigners. We have also seen how when other locals represent him these links were emphasized.

Thirdly, what starts to become evident is a type of "dual perspective" characteristic of the margin. If the local is reconceived as heterogeneous and encompassed by larger forces, then the local demands of its agents "a consciousness of the Borderlands," a specific awareness of the "copresences" and "interlocked" viewpoints that inhabit the margins. One of Tsing's informants, Uma Adang, possessed and played with such a consciousness, whereby she was at the intersection of constructed boundaries, from where she viewed both sides, and the border, simultaneously. Uma Adang was an unusual female leader and teacher amongst the Meratus. Tsing described Uma Adang's location as follows:

> Uma Adang self-consciously offered a perspective from within the intersections of a number of dangerous and creative boundary zones: the boundary between pagan Dayak and Muslim Banjar, the boundary between women's roles and men's, the boundaries of state rule at the edge of 'the wild' (1993:20).

The margins contain "dangerous and **creative** boundary zones." Agency at the margins demands an engagement with plurality, with multiple perspectives. This not only demands of one to "sustain contradiction" but presents the opportunity to turn "ambivalence into something else," to engage in "the art of cultural blending."[10] Perhaps stereotypical ideas around urban areas fit this borderland description more easily than out-of-the-way places. Indeed Stuart Hall commented on the emergence of an urban black British culture: "[Blacks] have turned marginality into a creative art form..."[11] This is the anthropological challenge of marginality - to reconceptualize the local as a site of creative cultural responses, which cross borders and challenges the hegemonic assumptions which underlie discourses of the state or other powerful centres, but where authority is constructed in a way that also perpetuates centre-margin relationships.

Tsing analysed creative responses to marginality amongst the Meratus and recognized strategies of play and parody amongst their reactions. She found creative individuals, like Uma Adang or Induan Hiling,[12] leading new religious movements, or reconfiguring the practice of accepted ones. However, she did not confine these individuals and their creative performances to spaces contained by a society and integrated back into it through ritual activity. Rather, at the heart of these manoeuvers was an engagement with the conditions of marginality, the structural location at the periphery of the State. Some commentators, with similar approaches to cultural activity in the peripheries, have described the margin itself as a liminal space (Comaroff 1985; Lavie 1993).

Creativity at the margins, returns us to Vho-Mudzunga's creative performances in the Venda region of South Africa. Above, I described Vho-Mudzunga's performances as *bricolage*. Uma Adang's practice, at the edges of the Indonesian state, in the borderlands of her own location, was described by Tsing in a similar way: Tsing wrote how she "loved to hear [Uma Adang] tinker with new cosmologies, with the fragments of everything around her (1993:22)." The specific ends of Vho-Mudzunga's practice arise from an engagement with his own structural position at the edge of powerful centres in an outlying area. He was a man of the margins who "tinkered" with "fragments," symbolically engaged his structured exclusion at the periphery of the South African state and the world system, enlisted contradiction and ambivalence into a cultural blend and allegorized his life as a response to lived experience.

Such "autoethnography" appears to be a widespread phenomenon in peripheral zones connected to dominant centres (Pratt 1992:7) and moreover resonates with other studies of innovative symbolic responses in a South African context. Comaroff's analysis (1985) of Zionist churches on the South Africa-Botswana border zone, emphasised this location, at the periphery of the South African state, as the major structural factor in determining the form, content and work of Zionist ritual. She

located her project in a universal margin-centre structure. Zionism is a response from the peripheries in an idiom that constitutes a general phenomenon:

> Zionism is part of a second global culture, lying in the shadow of the first, whose distinct but similar symbolic orders are the imaginative constructions of the resistant periphery of world system (1985:255).

Comaroff argued that Zionism was a resistance to conditions that governed church members' lives and that were beyond their control. Everyday lived experience, "the consciousness of marginality was framed in terms of loss of 'original' integrity." In the face of the alienation experienced by wage labourers, "decentred in a landscape progressively dominated by industrial and commercial monopolies," Commaroff argued, Zionism attempted to address "estrangement by constructing a bounded community whose sociocultural logic appeared integrative, contained and controllable."

The symbolic mediation that this entailed aimed to influence consciousness, and as such constituted "subversive *bricolage.*" This *bricolage* involved the appropriation of signs from the very power which was being resisted, and thus to an extent "perpetuated" what it sought to change, as those signs carried with them the histories and meanings of previous configurations. These signs were thus incorporated into Zionist ritual "as the captured bearers of alien power (1985:197)." Likewise, Pratt argued that autoethnography "involves the partial collaboration with and appropriation of the idioms of the conqueror (1992:7)."

I argue that Vho-Mudzunga's performative responses were similarly framed in terms of "loss" and "estrangement" and in his engagement with the powers that were responsible for that dislocation, he collaborated as well as resisted. His objective was not, as Comaroff suggests in the case of Zionism, to integrate his world into a controlled and bounded universe. Quite the contrary: he reveled in the borderlands, exploiting the gaps and creative opportunities that ambiguity and contradiction presented him. But in the end, his performances were reconstitutive of a felt "loss,"

an experience of dislocation amidst the violent marginalization of apartheid South Africa that perhaps at times amounte 'o rupture. To this end, he re-worked his semiotic 'tool-kit' in his pe ormances in a way that creatively re-solved personal ambition born out of his lived experience.

The concept of marginality is thus particularly applicable to my study for two main reasons: Firstly, the Venda region, the locus of Vho-Mudzunga's performances, is an out-of-the-way place which has been constructed politically and culturally as marginal to the South African state and the world system.

Secondly, marginality conditioned the practice of Vho-Mudzunga. His performances were an engagement with his marginality, as a man from and living in the Venda region, and as an artist.

The Construction Of Marginality

THE VENDA REGION AND THE VENDA PEOPLE

I divide the construction of political and cultural marginality in the Venda region into two periods for the purposes of this discussion: The sepa ation of Tshivenda-speaking people from white designated areas and areas defined for other ethnic groups which occurred prior to 1994; and the post-1994 reincorporation of the Venda region into national non-racial structures. I am aware that the processes under discussion prior to 1994 can be further periodized and the nature of government policies and practices changed during this time. However there was a general trend from the nineteenth century to reserve land for the specific use of African populations. Only after 1994 did this policy officially end.

A separate, old and different Venda culture has found receptive ears in scholarly and popular imaginations. 'The Venda' were classified by SA government ethnographers,

as a different ethnic group, separate from the other three larger groupings: Nguni, Sotho and Tsonga. Despite their small numbers, estimated in 1904 to be around 120,000 and by 1989 to be around 500,000, they were considered "of paramount ethnological interest (Van Warmelo in Schapera 1962:44)." This interest went hand in hand with the Vhavenda's apparent isolation from outside influences due to their residence in the 'nooks and crannies' of the Soutpanzberg mountains: isolation preserved a Venda culture, free of outside influences and thus in a state of purity.

> The bulk of the Venda appear to have dwelt in the mountains of the Zoutpansberg from the earliest time, as they do today. [It] seems that in their secluded retreat they have been the guardians of much that is archaic, both in language and in culture. They were shielded from foreign influences by isolation. (Van Warmelo in Schapera 1962:63)

This image of isolation persisted through time in various forms of writing about the area in which Tshivenda-speakers reside. In 1971, Desmond wrote an account on African resettlement in the wake of the apartheid government's attempt to engineer ethnically pure homelands. Thus, acutely aware of state interventions in remote places and the contrived nature of ethnic separation, his attack on the idea of a Venda nation conjures similar images of isolation:

> The barrenness of their 'homeland' in the remotest corner of the Transvaal, one of the most inhospitable and underdeveloped parts of the whole country, makes nationhood even more of a fiction than in other cases (Desmond 1971:181).

In 1989, a time when the Venda government was coming under increasing political pressure for reincorporation into South Africa, the 'Republic of Venda' published a tourist brochure that mixed isolation with change:

> Just south of the Limpopo...lies one of the remaining jewels of Africa: relatively unspoilt by outside influences. This is the independent Republic of Venda - a land of legends with a character of its own, but also a land of contrasts where the ancient and the modern mingle (Republic of Venda 1989:1).

The most striking tool to define and reinforce difference in the case of the Vhavenda has been their distinct language. Tshivenda is generally recognized as an amalgam of

Sotho and Shona components. But it is not considered a dialect of one or the other, and thus its resemblences to either have been understood as a sign of origin and not relatedness (Van Warmelo 1989:6). Tshivenda is not widely spoken outside of home-languageusers and Vhavenda generally must speak other languages to communicate with non-Vhavenda South Africans. Thus although most South Africans speak a number of languages, Tshivenda is very seldom one of them.

The urban context in South Africa was therefore a site of an encounter with difference for Tshivenda speakers. This encounter was about perception, whereas other differences have been constructed through scholarship. The Group Areas Act separated residential zones in townships into ethnic units. Ethnic stereotyping was reinforced or encouraged. Language was a marker of identity. The dynamic linguistic urban environment did not accommodate Tshivenda-speakers. Their language was marked as difficult and different. Vhavenda were required to adopt other languagesin their urban interactions, suppressing their own home language. In this context, ethnic stereotypes surfaced. A widely-held impression of ethnic ranking in terms of status put 'the Venda' second last. Only Shangaans or Tsongas fell below them. I have heard belittling associations like "you are as ugly as a *Muvenda,*" that other Vhavenda confirmed, were not uncommon. Some informants asserted that Vhavenda were also known for their powerful magic and herbal remedies. This could be a further marker of marginal status. (The other widely held impression of Vhavenda was they were well-educated. Vhavenda became doctors, lawyers and prominent members of society.)

Social differences that separate the Vhavenda from other indigenous ethnic groups, noted and constructed by scholars, have revolved around politics and kinship. Within the Vhavenda chieftancies, political authority resided with the royal Singo clan, who migrated from an area in current day Zimbabwe and subjugated the various groups living in the Venda region in the eighteenth century. The society was thus divided into two classes, royalty and commoners, and was characterized by "sacred leadership

(Van Warmelo 1932: Huffman 1996)" whereby the chief was considered as a "living ancestor." The literature concentrates most of its ethnographic description on the royal classes. For example, Stayt (1931) only describes royal burials and not commoners' funerary practices. The second commonly noted unique political difference is the position of *makhadzi*. She is generally the sister of the chief's father and has great political and religious influence. The position is highlighted as one of the few structured positions of power for a woman in 'traditional' black societies in South Africa. Hammond-Tooke (1981:3) has observed a similar position amongst the Northern Sotho, but the *makhadzi* nonetheless remains characterized as a particular institution of the Vhavenda, the Northern Sotho version being understood as a Vhavenda influence (Hammond-Tooke 1993:75). Kinship studies have ascribed some peculiarities to the Vhavenda kinship system, proposing an especially unique unilinear descent system (Stayt 1931). These differences have however been challenged by Kuper (1981, 1979). The title of one of his publications though is indicative of the whole discursive positioning of the Vhavenda: "How Peculiar are the Venda?" he asked. He argued that in a regional context, where isolation is discounted, they were not that unusual.

Finally, the Vhavenda's historical connection to people in the north, outside of South Africa, has been re-asserted in an argument which places the Vhavenda in a regional cultural pattern, closely related to the historic Rozwi of Zimbabwe and thus different from other South African ethnic groups. What is striking about Huffman's argument in this regard are the continuities he sought between 'contemporary' Venda ethnography and spatial patterns in the archaeological record which date to centuries before the ethnography was collected. Perhaps even more remarkable, is that the argument models a Venda/Zimbabwe way of thinking, a cognitive structure, which organizes space and society:

> Besides a heuristic device, then, this reconstruction must be similar to what Zimbabwe people thought. It must be an explicit map that many knew about, otherwise it would not be possible to account for the recurrent pattern (1996:117).

Here finally the Venda are different because they think differently. We are asked to recognize a particular culture's particular way of thinking, and then to consider that it has not changed in an over-arching structural sense for hundreds of years. Huffman postulated a three-way logic that underlied and organized Venda/Zimbabwe cognitive structures and asserted that they find a "conscious reality (1996:118)" in social life. He used Stayt's ethnographic description of food distribution at a Vhavenda *musanda* to demonstrate such a reality (bid).

Ethnic categorization was the basis for the political exclusion of Tshivenda speakers in the same way as other ethnic groups were marginalized by the homeland system in South Africa. However, the particular felt and ascribed linguistic and cultural difference of a minority population perpetuated this marginalization with the demise of the homeland system.

The political and cultural construction of marginality before 1994

The Venda region was declared an 'independent' homeland in 1979. This independence was the final elaboration and expansion of division, separation and control imposed on the Venda region by the South African Government. Through the control of land and movement, the manipulation of ethnicity and the redefinition of citizenship rights, the South African state, in progressive stages and through successive governments, excluded black South Africans from defining the terms of their participation in the economy and politics of the country. The 'independent' homeland was the last stage in a process which excluded black citizens of South Africa from participating politically in their country of birth whilst ensuring their ongoing participation as labourers in the South African economy. The government pursued a policy of separate development, articulated in legislature and operationalized through influx controls and forced removals, which marginalized this area. The Venda region was a site of radical political and cultural exclusion, deprivation and domination.

The Afrikaner nationalist government which came into power in 1948 inherited a system of reserves. These reserves were tracts of land set aside for the ownership and cultivation by black African people. Most of them were declared in the nineteenth century and the 1913 Land Act restricted the ownership of land by blacks to these reserve areas (13% of the land for 87% of the people). In the nineteenth century, the Venda region was part of the Boer Republic of the Transvaal. Afrikaans farmers in the area were anxious about ceding land to blacks as agriculture was their main means of living. Thus a small amount of land was set aside as reserve land in the then Transvaal.

The Afrikaner Nationalist government's attitude towards these reserves changed in the early 1950s from 'an inherited pattern of African occupation' to a potential political solution to two major issues. Firstly, African urbanization threatened the government's goal of maintaining urban areas as white areas. Urban black Africans were at the forefront of opposition to racist nationalist policies and promoted a non-racial vision of South Africa. In the early 1950s the government restructured existent laws and radically restricted blacks' access to urban areas such that "[a]fter 1952 the urban areas, the centres of power and wealth, were by right for all but Africans (Platzky 1985:104)." The government also entrenched the migrant labour system, controlling where and how long workers were allowed into towns and enforcing Africans' ties to rural areas. The reserves thus became part of a solution for the towns. The reserves were envisioned as places to accommodate and maintain the black population which was accorded only limited access to the urban areas.

The maintenance of reserves (not the ignoring of them) proved a potential solution to a further problem. The government realized that coercion alone would not be sufficient to control African populations.[13] Alongside repression, they began to envisage and thus develop the reserves as areas where black Africans should seek their political rights. In 1951 the Bantu Authorities Act was passed. The powers of traditional leaders in the reserves were increased and bureaucratised. Tribal

Authorities were set up with salaried officials and limited responsibility for local governance: land allocation, welfare and pension systems and some development money. The reserves needed to be developed if they were to function effectively as political stabilizers. Towards this end, the Nationalist government adopted betterment planning in the reserves, in partial fulfillment of the recommendations of the Tomlinson Commission (1954).

Betterment was not simply an economic idea. It was based on western concepts of civilization and progress. Betterment schemes radically altered household and lifestyle spatial patterns. Residence, agriculture and cattle grazing areas were separated out. Households were relocated into neatly cut stands organized in rows, irrigation schemes were begun which allocated plots of land for cultivation and separate grazing areas established.

The Promotion of Bantu Self-Governance Act of 1959 marked a further political construction of these reserve areas into bantustans. Significantly, the act linked political groups to ethnicity. It divided the black African population into eight 'national units' of which 'Venda' was one and linked each group to a particular reserve territory. The tribal and territorial authorities established in 1951 in these areas were to be extended (gradually) and powers granted to them which would lead to self-government and even independence. The vision of separate development had come into its own and with it an ethnic ideology that would attempt to manipulate cultural heritages to its own ends. The Act declared:

> The Bantu People of the Union of South Africa do not constitute a homogenous people but form separate national units on the basis of language and culture.

Political representation was thus fragmented along ethnic lines. The position of Native Representative, the 'political voice' of black people of South Africa in its white parliament was thus scrapped, removing any official voice for black South Africans inside the centers of power and influence of what was entrenched as white

South Africa. Instead black leaders were coopted into rural ethnic bantustans. Traditional culture was also co-opted as the supporting rationale for these new national units and as a counter to non-racial opposition. 'Tradition' was an important tool in 'naturalising' and giving credibility to the bantustan idea. Tradition was thus a crucial element in justifying black exclusion. Ethnicity and exclusion became closely linked and forced removals in these areas began in earnest. Thus in South Africa, Tsing's assertion that "[the] cultural difference at the margins is a sign of exclusion from the center (1993:27)," takes on special significance.

The final act of "dispossession" and exclusion was the Bantu Homelands Citizenship Act. The Act excluded black Africans from holding South African citizenship. Instead they were expected to attain citizenship in their correct ethnic homeland. Legislation was passed the next year allowing the establishment of legislative assemblies in homeland areas. With the granting of independence to the Transkei in 1976, 'the Xhosa' became aliens in South Africa. The same fate awaited 'the Venda' in 1979.

Clearly, the establishment of an independent Venda homeland was an imposed exclusion by the South African state. However, the identity of the Venda region and Venda ethnicity was also embellished by these policies. The "life-president" of the "Republic of Venda" was "Paramount" Chief Mphephu. 'The Venda' remember an independent and unified polity under Thohoyandou in the 1700s with its capital at Dzata (Huffman and Hanisch 1987, Loubser 1990). Mphephu was the descendant of the eldest son of Thoho-ya-ndou. The recognition of Mphephu as paramount chief embellished and reinforced his historical claims to other forms of power. Powerful chiefs in the region, for example Chief Tshivhase, had to recognize Mphephu's seniority, and his own position as descendant of a younger son. Claims on autochthony were not only enhanced by the institutionalization of traditional leaders but by cultural association with a homeland.

The result of this exclusion was an altered landscape, scarred by ethnic removals, betterment schemes and migrancy. The effect of this marginalization, this constructed separateness which involved radical intervention, was not simply an articulation of exclusion and difference but an experience of rupture. The declaration of separate homelands for Vendas and Tsongas led to ethnic removals between the territories to ensure ethnic boundaries and to disrupted communities. In Shanzha itself, Tsongas were removed in an attempt to create an ethnically pure village. On a larger scale the implementation of regional and territorial authorities led to ethnic conflict between 'the Venda' and 'the Tsonga'[14] and the redivision of territory. Betterment schemes removed people from close proximity to graves and other landmarks, disrupting lived spatial patterns. A continual increase in population density led to the decline of agriculture. From being conceptually a subsidiser of migrant labour and internally self-sufficient, the homelands became dependent on subsidies or remittances from migrant workers or state pensions.

In 1970, 54.6% of all economically active residents of the Venda bantustan worked outside the Venda region. In 1989, male migrant labourers made up 60% of the labourers from the bantustan working in the formal sector of the economy. Over two decades, more than half the male population of the Venda region were migrant workers. The vast majority were employed on the Witwatersrand and Pretoria (over 60% in 1979). At the same time, those that remained in the Venda region faced unemployment or rapidly declining subsistence opportunities in agriculture. Non-market production in the "agriculture, hunting, forestry and fishing sector" dropped by two and half percent between 1975 and 1980. In 1989, only 32% of the potentially economically active population (people aged 15-64) were engaged in the formal economy. Moody (1984) noted that the dependency on a small group of male migrant workers was unusually high for the Venda region.

Most males spent decades in towns. Often I was shown 'badges of migrancy' - 30 year, long-term service certificates from companies like JCI , which hung on the walls

of ex-migrants' homes. Migrancy had massive disruptive effects on family structure and population patterns: The proportion of children to adults in the bantustans was high. Further the number of women compared to men was exceptionally high.

As evidence of this dislocation, Vho-Mudzunga told me stories of encounters with a distant, powerful and alienating center. He knew very little about his own father, but recalled with bemused exacerbation how his father would walk to Kimberley from the Venda region to work on the mines there. His brother confirmed that their father had worked in Kimberley (Vho-Mudzunga was unsure of this fact). He remembered his father had returned one day with a small diamond which he was told to look after. He did not know what happened to that diamond. Vho-Mudzunga told me about an uncle of his who worked in Johannesburg and had died recently. This uncle woke up one day in Johannesburg and could not suffer his life there any longer. He had received 'a message'[15] during the night to return for good to the Venda region. He got onto his bicycle the same morning and rode all the way back to 'Venda.' He arrived exhausted wearing only a shirt and short pants and dragginghis bicycle. These were the only possessions he had to show for his stay in Johannesburg. He never returned to Johannesburg and chose to remain in the 'safer' Venda homeland. Vho-Mudzunga told this story in an empathetic piteous tone and remarked at the end "It is a shame, that story...Ah, when I think of life in Jo'burg."

In 1966, Vho-Mudzunga stayed for a short period in Dube Hostel in Johannesburg. He was between jobs and was deciding to leave domestic work. He applied for a room at the hostel but left soon after taking it: "I couldn't manage and left after three weeks, " he commented to me. The disorder of the hostel bothered him with meat, cooking, underwear and blankets all mixed up.

The power of this center was so great that it could rename one. Vho-Mudzunga scornfully told me how his father's name was Jim, an arbitrary selection from Johns, Jims and Peters. He viewed his own 'given' name, Samson, with similar scorn

describing it as a "mistake" and used his birthname, Ratshilumela, as a way of reasserting an authentic and lost self. Vho-Mudzunga often expressed his hatred of Johannesburg and differentiated his present attitude from when he was a boy. Then, Johannesburg beckoned with the call of opportunity and excitement. Vho-Mudzunga often spoke favourably of his experiences as a domestic worker. He enjoyed working in his employers' gardens or learning how to lay tables. Now, reflecting back from his re-location in the Venda region, Johannesburg was the place where he had got "lost."

Vho-Mudzunga compared his efforts to secure a new young wife in the Venda region to the types of relationships he engaged in, in Johannesburg (see Chapter Two). There it did not matter who the woman was, from which family she came, what language she spoke (Vho-Mudzunga's third wife Dorcas, had Xhosa and Venda heritage) and whether he had to pay lobolo. Now, back in the Venda region, he was pursuing his newest wife in the correct manner. He was checking her origins and her suitability. He was communicating through the right channels and organizing a respectable Venda marriage. Again, the Venda region was represented as ethical, safe and respectable, as opposed to the dangers of Johannesburg.

I was discussing folktales - *lungano* - with some friends at Ditike when I was told the following "modern *lungano* about a real event:" Three Vhavenda went to Johannesburg but could not find accommodation and so ended up sleeping in the bush. They each knew only one phrase of Afrikaans. One knew "Vir n sent (For one cent)." Another knew "Ons drie (We three)" and the last one knew "Hoe gouer hoe beter (The quicker the better)." That night the police happened to be looking for three men in connection with a murder. They came across the men sleeping in the bush. The police asked them: So, who murdered that man. The first Muvenda replied, "Ons drie." Why, asked the police. The second Muvenda replied "Vir n sent." Why did you kill him like that? "Hoe gouer hoe beter," replied the last Muvenda. The three were arrested after 'confessing' to murder. The story "teaches us not to go to Jo'burg," I was told

The spectre of extra-local intervention in the Venda region did not go unnoticed in these stories either. Vho-Mudzunga's "hatred" for Johannesburg was matched by his hatred for "this homeland business." The plantation of the Tshivhase tea estate made for a striking view (for me) on the road from Sibasa to Nzhelele. Vho-Mudzunga could not suffer this relative beauty. He mourned the removal of people from their lands to make way for the plantation and for the way they had been crowded into the residential stands of Betterment villages. Often he would indicate to me where people used to live before they had been forced to move. His own childhood homestead in Thononda was one such example. Stories of supernatural intervention in some of these cases were common. I was told how whites would move large boulders with bull-dozers for development but the next day the boulders would be back in place. Or how these machines would simply breakdown in their attempts to uproot rocks and trees. I heard once how a tree began to bleed when it was being cleared and frightened off the whites who were working there.[16]

Racial and national exclusion, engineered through the apartheid government's separate development policies, not only constructed difference but resulted in ruptures of space, history and personhood. National policies of exclusion, 'naturalized' through ethnicity, meant deprivation and loss for ethnic populations. At the same time ethnic markers were embellished. The Venda region became a 'battle ground' of domination and disruption, but at the same time a kind of autochthonous haven.

Political and cultural construction of marginality: Post 1994:

Post-apartheid South Africa is clearly more inclusive of black South Africans, regardless of their ethnicity, than the former apartheid-governed society. Property rights, education facilities and other elements of the society, once exclusive to one racial group, have been opened to include all. Politically, after 1994, Vho-Mudzunga was a citizen of South Africa, with the same right to exercise his vote in the national

elections as any other citizen regardless of race. This signaled a new and important inclusiveness. With this new re-configuration of rights, different competitions for resources, based on re-defined grounds, began to surface.

The new South African nationalism, heralded through negotiations and democratic elections, although premised on non-racialism and universal suffrage, in many instances brought ethnic ranking and difference to the fore. Visibility and public recognition became synonymous with access to resources and a feeling of inclusion into the new South Africa. The official non-racial policy of the ANC could not suppress felt and ascribed ethnic identities which under apartheid had been excluded from national participation. Apartheid's vision, expressed through separate development, of a "plurality of minorities (Platzky 1985:113)" was replaced by 'new' African minorities who were unconvinced by non-racialism and did not feel substantially represented in a newly constituted multi-cultural 'Rainbow Nation'. Minority groups' claim on newly promised resources for reconstruction and development to be distributed by the new state felt weak by virtue of their national 'invisibility'. The Venda region was one such area where cultural difference, expressed most strongly through language, began to be expressed as a new exclusion from the new state.

I attended a meeting with Vho-Mudzunga that discussed the Northern Province's Department of Arts, Culture, Education and Sport's Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) project for the Venda region. The RDP project was the establishment of an 'arts centre' in Thohoyandou worth two million rand.[17] At the meeting a professor from the University of Venda announced his support and the University's support for the programme. He was anxious that the arts centre should promote local people and announced the introduction at the University of courses in Art Management and Musical Marketing to transfer necessary skills. His anxiety around local promotion was clearly expressed. He announced to the meeting that he had recently returned from addressing parliament. There he said he urged:

"Autonomy for provinces, not for Pretoria (central government)." He went on to explain:

> Venda is being cheated in the budget. We don't have any building as beautiful as that in Pretoria. We do not have any art centre as beautiful as the one in Cape Town. It is no good to put up an art centre here which is staffed by outsiders, who take the center away. We must train local people to staff the building. [The University of Venda] is going to train people in arts management and musical marketing. You don't see our musicians on television, they are lost.[18]

The metaphor of being lost was used in the context of the new South Africa and the Venda people. 'Lost' was equated with a lack of visibility in the television media. Similar sentiments were expressed in a demonstration in 1996 at the SABC-TV centre. A group of Vhavenda demonstrators protested the paucity of Tshivenda on the national broadcaster. At Vho-Mudzunga's performance at Lake Fundudzi, his relative Vho-Makhomu made similar remarks. He expressed the importance of maintaining Venda traditions and lamented the Vhavenda's poor collective self-image: "We do not appear on television because we are hideous to ourselves. But you will see Zulus, Tsongas, Sothos. Why are we Venda hiding? Why not come into the open like Samson has done?

In this speech the Vhavenda are not lost but simply hiding themselves whereas other ethnic groups are gaining exposure on television. Vho-Makhomu then admonished the younger generation to have respect for Venda traditions and to listen when elders tell them "laws" without complaining that they are bored. The threat to Vhavenda presence in the nation (and the world) implicit in not appearing on television echoed the threat of generational continuity. (Vho-Mudzunga himself once said to the tailor who prepared his 'performance outfit:' "I wonder why the Vhavenda are so scared of exposing themselves and their culture.")

Television was a measure of visibility and thus a mark of national representation and national presence. Television appearances represented a claim on centralized power or, more accurately, were the result of successful claims to power and national

priority. Following the conflict with *vhamusanda* Netshiavha at Lake Fundudzi, Vho-Mudzunga courted the support of the people of Tshiheni. He wanted their *tshigombela* dancers to participate in his next performance. The TV coverage will make us known, he said to a meeting of their *khoro*. Television and 'presence' were partners.

Clearly the above examples dispelled notions of non-racialism in the new South Africa and felt ethnicity underlied the basis of inclusion or exclusion in post-apartheid South Africa for those on the margins. For this was a new form of exclusion, a sense of not being included enough. The years prior to 1994 were characterized in the Venda region by political campaigns for the reincorporation of the Venda homeland into South Africa. This inclusion was heralded by the events from 1990 to 1994. Evidently, reincorporation was not inclusive enough. The Venda region remained marginalized in the new South Africa.

The lack of symbolic power through television was underscored by a lack of power and responsibility in local government. At the meeting discussed above I felt an overwhelming sense that 'the government' had come to town for an hour or so. The chief director of the department bombastically made his presence felt: he demanded letters from TLCs, recited how busy he was and how many engagements he had to attend after this one, he emphasised how high powered the RDP process was, that money was coming directly from Pretoria and pontificated on gender issues and women's rights. He proceeded to detail the structures and procedures through which this project had gone and would still go through. I found this 'presentation' extremely difficult to follow. His regional director arrived late, wielding two cellular phones and authority. The other 'participants' at the meeting, representatives of schools, artists, Ditike, members of cultural committees of various villagers, were discursively positioned as the disadvantaged and the deprived. This labeling was not empowering, but patronizing. Further the TLCs struggled to operate on their tiny budgets.[19] All expenditure was overseen by a District Council or Services Committee, a hangover

from apartheid indirect rule. In effect the TLCs governed by requisition. The official reason for this structure was an apparent "lack of capacity" on behalf of local members of TLCs. The insult did not go unnoticed. According to extra-local government, in the new South Africa, the elected leaders of the 'disadvantaged' and the 'deprived' lacked capacity to govern.

Vho-Mudzunga's political and cultural context was constantly shadowed by more powerful presences emanating from distant centres - influx control, name changes, betterment schemes, newly empowered government representatives. These powers could define, exclude and intervene in the framing of his life in disruptive ways and at the same time they could be the object of desire. This dualism, of engagement and perpetuation, is clear in another context - Vho-Mudzunga, the artist.

ART AND ARTISTS AT THE MARGIN

Duncan (1996) argues that since the 1980s the art-world has attempted to construct and develop a "nationally representative character" for itself through a number of curated exhibitions that "shared the general intention of constructing a culture - representative both racially and in terms of gender - which would compensate for the exclusion of the apartheid years (1996:23 my emphasis)." We have already seen in Chapter Three how artists from the Venda region were enlisted as p. . this reincorporation and re-definition. Whereas I focused largely on the extension of a generalized art discourse, Duncan emphasises one aspect of the discursive practice of the metropole's outreach - the assertion of the art-world as a domain of a new national representivity. She shows that this outreach presented artists with the opportunity to participate in a national project. But she argued they had little control over the terms of their participation. In fact a 'new' dependency was created between the artists in out-of-the-way Venda and dealers, galleries and museums. It was the latter institutions which defined the new national project and in the process alienated rural producers from the meanings and contexts of their artwork.

Duncan recognized that the establishment of 'Venda artists' in the urban and international art-world was the result of the South African art-world's reassessment and redefinition of its own practice to reflect a more representative nationalism and that this reassessment had important effects in the Venda region. She analysed the local against a backdrop of poverty and exclusion: whilst artists were given the rare opportunity of inclusion into a national process, the majority of the population, especially their neighbours, were excluded from such a project. This led to hostilities - accusations of witchcraft, jealousy, etc.- and the alienation of artists from their own communities. Duncan concluded that the metropole's outreach to artists was met by hostility in the Venda region.

In fact, I believe, the reaction to this outreach appeared to have been more nuanced than this. Although some interpretations of artistic practice were based in suspicion, and in some cases, were openly hostile, in other cases art practice was granted status and value. Further, the suspicion around 'art' appeared to arise from specific instances of perceived enrichment and not from the participation in (or exclusion from) the creation of a new national identity in a well articulated, clear and accepted nation-building plan. The latter was in fact a potential recourse to authority at the local level. However, despite these comments, Duncan's analysis clearly shows that the new status of 'artist conveyed onto some individuals connected them to extra-local processes, processes which articulated notions of inclusion and exclusion, indicative of marginalization. The art-world's outreach was to the margins.

As we saw in Chapter Three, this outreach only began in 1985. Previous to this, the Venda region was defined by the art-world purely as an ethnographic region or completely ignored. In a sense, this was a discourse of exclusion, in that it stressed distance and difference. It absented the art-world from the Venda region.. After 1985, the ethnological discourse, was partially replaced by an artistic one. The art-world became part of extra-local discourses which defined the terms of marginality *in* the

Venda region.[20] While on the one hand, the presence of the art-world in the Venda region highlighted the exclusion of a sector of the population from the powerful practices of the metropole, on the other hand, the art-world also represented an opportunity for some individuals to engage with and challenge their marginality - to be inscribed into the centre.

However, the relationship between the metropole and the artists was not an equal one and in most cases, artists became dependent on art dealers, art galleries and museums. The opportunity for 'reincorporation' was tempered by unequal power relations and by the distance of the Venda region from urban art centres - the Venda region was an out-of-the-way place. Vho-Mudzunga and an artist friend of his, were especially scathing about how certain dealers related to them. This arose especially when dealers made deposits on or financed a work in progress and then wanted to subtract these initial payments off a final agreed price. Vho-Mudzunga and his friend felt this method of dealing was disempowering and commented: "This makes us like his boy." Downpayment also made them feel insecure. In their opinion, it did not guarantee the final sale but already 'devalued' it.

The sentiments expressed to me by these two artists in the Venda region were echoed by other artists (Duncan 1996). Due to their lack of formal education, some artists expressed little confidence, and thus little faith, in their transactions with art-dealers. Communication was a problem to the extent that "some [felt] that they [were] engaging in a monologue rather than a dialogue (1996:38)."

The machinations of the metropole's art-world give the intermediary between artist and audience a degree of power to determine the meaning of objects. This general situation is exacerbated with regards rural art producers in the Venda region, leaving the producers the most disempowered and dependent (Duncan 1996). Duncan pinpoints the Venda region's geographical location as a factor in this regard:

> The artists under discussion are particularly vulnerable to dependency given their extreme distance from major centres: most rely on dealers

> coming to pick up their works and take them back for exhibition purposes (1996:33).

The dealers who do pick up such work have an exaggerated power over marketing the works given the distance between the market and the Venda region. It is difficult for artists to monitor the uses and abuses of their work once in the cities. As we saw in the last chapter, Vho-Mudzunga was very active in this regard, and attempted to influence the sales of his work through a variety of contacts which he made.[21] His position in this regard was rather weak and he was forced to compromise on prices twice during my fieldwork period. The one sale was a major compromise, where he accepted probably the lowest price ever for a *ngoma* drum since he began carving them.

In addition, his work was exhibited at least twice at different major exhibitions during this time. He was unaware that his work was being displayed in both cases. The first was the Common and Uncommon Ground: South African Art in Atlanta show. A picture of his double-drum in possession of the Johannesburg Art Gallery featured in an edition of Ebony magazine.[22] The second show was a retrospective of 10 years of collecting at the National Art Gallery in Cape Town. This was a display of the gallery's permanent collection which featured one of Vho-Mudzunga's pieces.[23]

Although Vho-Mudzunga kept newspaper cuttings and public records of his exposure, he did not use them as a form of control or monitor of the critical reception of his work. Rather they formed a record of his success where newspaper articles were in themselves a sign of achievement. Only articles which made personal references to him featured in his collection. He had no cut-outs of articles about art in general, nor about art from the Venda region.

Institutions like Ditike which set out to market Venda artists, allegedly contributed to dependency by taking too much responsibility for the marketing of objects, without transferring marketing skills (Duncan 1996:35-37). Ditike's demise left many artists

without an outlet for their work. The viability of art as 'work' was then dependent on a small range of galleries which supported artists from the region. The art market fluctuated and the popularity of artists from the Venda region waxed and waned. Vho-Mudzunga's larger pieces saturated the market rather quickly. Once he was represented in major permanent collections, the local South African market started to close for his more expensive works. He actively sought out overseas buyers who could buy these larger works.

This paradox, whereby artists were allowed access to the authority of the urban centre through art, but were vulnerable in their relationship with the metropole, is characteristic of the paradoxes of marginality. On the one hand as artists individuals had the rare opportunity to participate in the commercial market as entrepreneurs and accumulate both financial and symbolic benefits of this extra-local connection. On the other hand, they were vulnerable and dependent in the face of this relationship. This insecurity, together with a sense of disempowerment with regards relationships with dealers, was resisted by some artists whilst (at the same time) these contacts were pursued and embellished. Duncan proposed that the artists Paul Tavhanna and Albert Munyai produced art erratically and very slowly as a form of resistance to the art-world on which they were dependent.

Duncan does query the value of art to the producers beyond its market value. Vho-Mudzunga expressed this value as salvation. Whereas 'before' he claimed to have been lost in Johannesburg, 'now', through his art, he was saved. This, I believe, not only constituted a real relief from impending financial difficulty after losing his job in 1988, but a sense of coming home to an identity which bridged the ruptures and closed the gaps of a life at the margins of South Africa. Vho-Mudzunga would say of his dismissal from Kohler (the company that retrenched him) that sometimes when someone thinks "they are doing you no good" they are actually blessing you. This statement admitted to the 'added value' of his art work beyond merely making a

living. Not only could he survive on art, but it was a blessing, it brought additional positive ramifications for his life.

VHO-MUDZUNGA ON THE EDGE

By the time I arrived in Shanzha, Vho-Mudzunga lived on the periphery of the village beyond structured authority. This was due to the politics of Shanzha, the personal relationship between the headman's family and Vho-Mudzunga and Vho-Mudzunga's ambiguous role as an artist. The latter was dealt with in some detail in the last chapter. Vho-Mudzunga was ascribed the status of *nanga* and even potential *mudoi* by villagers due to his art practice.

The headmanship in Shanzha had been contested since 1990. While I was in Shanzha, the village awaited yet another decision of an inquiry into chieftancy. The intial conflict in 1990 was also sparked by a similar commission. That commission had deposed the headman. In his place, the Shavhani family, the ruling royal house in Shanzha, appointed the youngest possible claimant. Shanzha's succession dispute during my fieldwork was unprecedented. Two brothers of the same mother were contesting the title. This insinuated that one of the sons, in this case the younger, was accusing his own mother of 'sexual indiscretion.' His brother was not eligible, he claimed, as he came from a different father. The dispute was made public through the hearings of the inquiry. The Shavhani family's integrity suffered and its authority waned. Not only was the youngest in charge, but he had the audacity publicly to call his own mother's reputation into question.

Vho-Mudzunga's relationship with the Shavhani family had disintegrated in 1986. The headman at the time had an affair with one of Vho-Mudzunga's wives. She got pregnant and Vho-Mudzunga kicked her out of his household. While he was in Johannesburg, he received a lawyer's letter demanding that he pay alimony for the support of the child. The matter went to the Magistrate's court in Thohoyandou.

Vho-Mudzunga defeated the alimony demand there. Obviously since then he refused to acknowledge the headman's authority and compounded with the allegations around the succession, Vho-Mudzunga simply disregarded the Shavhani authority. Thinandavha, the youngest brother and headman at the time of my research, had never been to the Mudzunga homestead until I arrived in Shanzha. After an interview I conducted with the *vhamusanda*, he returned with me to Vho-Mudzunga's home. He had to follow me to the house as he did not know where it was. After his visit Vho-Mudzunga noted wryly that Thinandavha only called on him because of me and dismissed Thinandavha as a result. Vho-Mudzunga clearly knew that Shanzha was a divided village and the authority of the *musanda* was weak. A prominent member of the Shanzha Civic confirmed that Vho-Mudzunga's public activities would not have been unchallenged in Shanzha, if there had been a stronger headman in the village.

The history of the civic movement in Shanzha was not separable from the succession dispute briefly described above. The full details of this are beyond the scope of this chapter. Vho-Mudzunga was part of a particular Civic structure in Shanzha. He resigned in 1994. I could not establish the exact reasons for Vho-Mudzunga's resignation from the Civic, either from him or other informants. By 1994 Vho-Mudzunga was no longer involved in communal affairs. In fact he shunned such involvement, and repeatedly asserted that he was "sick" of it. In any case his personal history with the Shavhanis and the disarray of 'chiefly' authority in Shanzha meant that Vho-Mudzunga was beyond the reaches of their influence. The Civic did approach Vho-Mudzunga once after his resignation because some villagers were complaining that he was cutting trees down in the village. They tried to get Vho-Mudzunga to agree to collect wood in 'the bush.' In December 1996 Vho-Mudzunga cut down a massive tree in Tshivhilidulu, the village adjacent to Shanzha. He had the *vhamusanda* of Tshivhilidulu's permission to cut it down.

Marginality and Performance

I suggest that Vho-Mudzunga's performances should be seen in the context of marginality, not only in respect to the art-world but as a Muvenda living, back, in the Venda region of South Africa, and as an artist in that place. Out of the specific form of marginality described above, Vho-Mudzunga's performances attempted to address the dislocation and rupture of lived experience and at the same time aimed to enhance his own status and fulfill personal ambition. His performances were an engagement with marginality that both resisted peripheralization and embellished it. 'Art', his connection to the metropole, to white-ness, was the platform from which he engaged marginality, but his relationship to the art-world also perpetuated dependency. 'Culture' or tradition, his connection to the Venda region, was the platform from which he resisted the defining powers of the centre and thus carved out autonomy. If through his art he was no longer 'lost', through his performances he enacted what he had found.

To illustrate this argument I will revisit his first performance of June 29, 1996 - the Funeral Performance. My analysis this time will reposition death and burial not as a site of cohesive cultural knowledge, from which a Venda burial is recuperable and at the centre of analysis, but as a margin, a practice vulnerable to outside influences and thus a site of contested knowledge and creative practice. Burial practices in the Venda region have been subjected to outside discourses around death and practices around burials of immigrants, Christianity, the state and a capitalist economy. Each burial was a borderland, each funeral was an enactment of an ongoing negotiation of identity. No funeral was the same as the next. Each one was a hybrid, not of two originals, but of all that had gone before.

BURIAL IN THE VENDA REGION

THE PRE-COLONIAL AND MEMORIES OF DEATH

It would be easy to begin this discussion about changing burial practices with the obvious interventions and impositions of Christianity and the apartheid state. However I choose to highlight the pre-colonial period first. This is because it is likely that pre-colonial burial practices in the Venda region were both markers of difference and identity and susceptible to domination and intervention. Furthermore, the impression that burials became contested performances only as a result of colonial intervention could be misleading.

Unfortunately, a number of factors limit my ability to recover information about death and burial in the pre-colonial Venda region. The scope of this study for one is a severe restriction in this regard. Firstly, pre-colonial anthropology or history is a specialty and endeavour in its own right. I focused on collecting ethnography during my restricted period in the field. Secondly, information from living informants often constructed an idealized past vis-à-vis present day practices. Often the practices to which they referred were either still contemporary, or post-dated the arrival of missionaries. There was a real danger then of characterizing some non-christianized present-day practices as 'traditional' and projecting them into a disconnected past thus premising a false, non-critical or at least 'un-nuanced' continuity of burial practices.

However, and with this in mind, the various clans in the historical Vhavenda polity can be identified through their different burial practices and different royal burial sites. Ethnographers and historians concentrated on royal practices. They assumed that the Venda political structure of 'divine ruling classes' located cultural practice amongst the Vhavenda royalty. Commoners are rather absent from most Venda ethnography. Differences between the ruling royal house - the *Singo* - and subjugated royal houses, were, in many instances, recorded through their peculiar burial practices. Cremation

practices, for example, were particular to the royal house of the Vhatavhatsindi (*mitupo* of *ndou*). Within the Vhatavhatsindi, the senior royal house of Tshiavha, was differentiated from other Vhatavhatsindi royal families by their cremation practice at Lake Fundudzi and their consequent ritual relationship with the Lake. Historical differences - of origin and migration - and identity were expressed through burial practices (Stayt 1931:205; Loubser 1990).[24] Numerous migrations, wars and contact with neighbouring polities may well have changed burial practices, especially if these practices were important markers of difference and identity.

During the period of my fieldwork I encountered significant recollections and memories of 'old' burial practices often talked of as real Venda burials that have subsequently changed. The were stark differences in the memories of 'then' and 'now'. Whereas 'before' burials were seen as having been private family affairs, and death was largely a secret held most especially from children, 'today' burials were large and public affairs. 'Before' burials were performed very soon after the death - the next day, usually just after sunset or before sunrise - 'today' the deceased was only buried on the weekend - on a Saturday morning or in some cases a Sunday (taxi drivers), five to ten days after the death. Whereas 'before' the family of the deceased did not eat anything around the time of the burial, 'today' a cow was slaughtered and a feast was held for the large numbers of people attending the funeral. 'Before' the deceased was buried in a cow-skin or "a blanket," 'today' the deceased was buried in a coffin. Whereas 'before' the deceased was buried at home, in the homestead/residence, 'today' the deceased was buried in a cemetery.

This is not intended as an exhaustive list of the many perceived changes in burial practices. My interviews and queries at the funerals I attended produced many other differences. These though were often expressed as the difference between 'pagan' and Christian, or traditional and modern. The list above was repeatedly recalled as memory of, or as signs of, historical changes.

Once again, the 'before' list is not in any respects a pre-colonial, or pre-Christian 'list'. In fact many of these changes are fairly recent. Most obviously, the cemetery in Dopeni-Shanzha was only built in approximately 1963. Below I use Shanzha village, the village where Vho-Mudzunga resides, to discuss instances of change in burial practices.

CHRISTIANITY

Christianity had a very strong presence in Shanzha in the form of the Pentecostal Holiness Mission station (the Mission). The Mission was set up by American missionaries around 1922. The missionaries set up a church, a school and a clinic. The Mission disbanded in the early 1950s. The houses of the missionaries and the clinic had fallen into disuse while the original school building and a refurbished church were still in use. The church still functioned under the same name - the Pentecostal Holiness church - and was led by reverend Nefale who lived in Shanzha. There were three other churches in Dopeni-Shanzha which were off-shoots of the Pentecostal Holiness Mission church.[25] In Shanzha there was only one church, the Will of God, that did not originate from the mission.

During my fieldwork period, a Christian format formed the 'public face' of burials. There was a general pattern to the burial process. From the Wednesday before the funeral, Christian prayers were held at the home of the deceased, where different preachers would preach from the bible and lead the assembled people in prayer. A tent was erected at the house for this purpose. On the day of the funeral, a priest would preach at the home and then the coffin would proceed to the cemetery followed by people attending the funeral. At the graveside a priest would conduct the service and hymns were sung while the coffin descended into the grave (in great contradiction to the memory of sombre silent burials). Flowers were put on top of the grave once it had been covered in soil.

Behind this Christian performance however were many contestations and inventions, which despite the appearance of a hegemonic Christian code, or 'language,' threatened and challenged Christian belief. One reverend told me that these days some people just request a priest because it is a funeral, and not for any other reason. That is, a funeral required a priest's presence, but this in no way signaled an uncontentious Christian burial. Christianity had certainly been entrenched as a format or framework, but not necessarily on its own terms. In fact burials were dangerous places for priests and reverends. For the family of the deceased was still recognized as the ultimate authority in matters pertaining to the funeral. The unexpected and undesirable in terms of Christian practice and doctrine was never far off. Whilst I was in the field, the Lutheran Church decided to cease the ritual of throwing soil onto the grave, which was a widely practiced feature of burials. This practice was often justified to me by a quote from the bible and the recitation of "From dust to dust." Nonetheless the Lutheran Church noticed that family members and other participants used the soil throwing ritual as an opportunity to incorporate non-Christian doctrine into the burial. Anxiety was particularly high around the types of things they would say, often indicating that they believed the deceased to be with the ancestors. The practice was ended at Lutheran officiated burials.

Even though the presence of the Mission in Shanzha and the introduction of Christianity in general resulted by the mid-1990s in a Christian framing of burials, the genealogy of change should not be over-rated in favour of the Mission and the churches.

The Mission demarcated its own cemetery near the church and only buried converted Christians in it. Non-Christians were excluded. There are very few dates on graves in the Mission's cemetery which could indicate how many people were buried in this graveyard and in what time periods. But villagers suggested that the vast majority of people continued to bury their dead in their "yards" during the period that the

Mission was active. This was even true of the African Gospel Church members who broke away from the Mission church in the late 1940s.

The Mission did attempt to encourage their burial practices in other ways. According to some informants, the Mission started the practice of supplying food at religious ceremonies to encourage people to participate. It seems this practice was extended to funerals. The idea then of a funeral as a public or community function with food seems to have originated with the Mission. Once again however, the practice did not catch on in a popular sense until after the Mission had ceased to exist. In fact villagers only recall large public funerals with food as a general practices from the beginning of the 1970s. By 1977, youth protests in the Venda region highlighted funerals as a financial burden because of the large cost of feeding people.

The Mission also introduced coffins into burial practices. The coffins were simple wooden designs and were carpented in the village. It is again difficult to establish just how many people switched to burials with coffins. During my research period in the village it was maintained that many infants who die are still buried feet first without a coffin. The coffin, in all its varieties and eventually ending up with expensive caskets, became very popular with the commodification of funeral services in the 1980s.

Thus, although the Mission introduced a set of different resources around funerals, the real effect of the Mission on the burial practices in Shanzha was perhaps less dramatic than the contemporary general Christian framing of such practices would have one think.

The Mission certainly did not win the ideological battle which still raged on in Shanzha during the period of my fieldwork. Christianity views the cause of death as unknowable or in some instances as a result of sin. Further, a person's death was determined by God alone. Non-Christian views in the Venda region conceived of death quite differently: the causes of death could be unnatural and possibly as a result

of human action. A *nanga*, using *thangu*, could determine the cause of death and could recommend any actions (if needed) to assuage angry ancestors or take revenge from those responsible for the death. The church opposed both witchhunts which followed some deaths and the cosmological concepts of ancestors and magic. Therefore, the church opposed the role of the *nanga* in burials. The *nanga* was called in not only to determine cause of death but to determine a suitable space for the grave. Attempts to influence burial practices were based in cosmological difference and the church, in its interventions with death, challenged basic religious foundations of ancestral religion. Whilst Christian format may have largely overcome non-Christian burial formats, there remained constant uncertainty over the death beliefs of the community. A family which organized a Christian burial may later visit a *nanga* to determine cause of death and any necessary recourse. The church was constantly protecting its boundaries and limiting opportunity for uncertainty. A Lutheran reverend with whom I became friendly, made a point of going back to the house of the deceased to eat. There, on purpose, he would not wash his hands before partaking of the meal. In some communities, he stated, the belief that one should wash one's hands after a funeral, was associated with magical beliefs. As a reverend he needed to steer clear of any potential ambiguity in his own behaviour. Clearly, the Mission's ideological battle for the minds of the people (so often assumed to be a natural evolution from animism to modernity) had not gained hegemony

Practices were linked to belief in one important sense: a proper burial was required to satisfy the deceased and to pacify him or her. An improper burial would mean the deceased would not sleep well. The ramifications were possibly severe and included disease and even death for those responsible for the deceased's discomfort. Thus it was vital to ensure the proper burial of a deceased family member. In terms of ancestral practices of 'old' this required that the suitable grave site was found and the proper rites performed including *mbeu* or *o shotodza*, the ritual cooling of the grave. The 'resources' introduced by the church and their popularization through contact with the commodity market would change the notion of a proper burial.

THE STATE

The state and its projects of development had a profound effect on burials. As a result of the establishment of a Venda bantustan and the report of the Tomlinson Commission, betterment planning was instituted in the Venda region. The Dopeni Irrigation Scheme was part of the efforts of the Department of Agriculture in this regard. With the development of the scheme in 1962, people who lived near the Nzhelele River in the area were relocated to Dopeni. At the same time, stands were cut in Shanzha and Dopeni and villagers forced to move their residences to their assigned stand. Along with the stands, agricultural officers of the state also cut a cemetery to service Dopeni and Shanzha. The state's concept of development and developed people incorporated the western concept of a cemetery for the dead. A stable, developing and civilized village apparently required a cemetery. In the process of relocation and re-organization, many households left the graves of their deceased behind. The supervisor of the scheme, Vho-Ramoba, recalled that some villagers requested him not to disturb certain graves.

Most significantly, the mobility of households was now restricted by the small square residential stands. In terms of 'old' burial practices, the owner of a house was buried inside his sleeping quarters and the household would move a little distance from the 'grave' and construct a new home. The fixed and restricted residential stands of Betterment severely restricted the practice of burying in the homestead.

Until the implementation of betterment planning, with its restricted residence pattern and provisions for a cemetery, the Christian attempts to influence burial practices were limited. In fact, the Dopeni-Shanz[illegible] empty for a year after it was cut in around 1963. There was gen[illegible]us burying family members in the cemetery. Some villagers explained [illegible]iety over ancestral practices and beliefs. On the one hand, graves were a site of communication with ancestors. The

idea - that a grave would be far away from the house and the household - would restrict this practice. On the other hand, villagers may have been concerned about the reaction of the deceased\ancestor herself to being placed in a cemetery. There appeared to be concern about lumping the deceased with strangers in a cemetery and not keeping them within the safer confines of the homestead.

Although I encountered some disagreement about who was the first person to be buried in the cemetery, one story I heard in this regard is significant in that it captures the fluid context of burial practices of the time. A man (the uncle of my informant) went to fetch the body of his deceased aunt who had died at Siloam Hospital about five kilometers from Shanzha. The hospital at Siloam was a Dutch Reform mission hospital. In the mid 1960s the hospital had no mortuary and bodies were allowed to remain there only for a day. The man went to get the corpse in a horse and cart and by the time he returned back to Shanzha it was already getting dark. Her homestead was above Shanzha in the village of Ha-Manyuwa. It was clear that the corpse would not reach Ha-Manyuwa before sunset and the custom in the village at this time was that the corpse should be buried as soon as possible. Of course this was also a practical consideration, the corpse could not be left overnight. The family took a decision to bury in the cemetery. The burial was a small and only family attended. No children were present and no 'feast' was held afterwards.

At this time, after the cutting of the cemetery and four decades of institutionalised Christian influence, the first burial in the cemetery was motivated by local custom and practical considerations. Had the woman died at home the cemetery would have remained empty and she would have been buried at home. However she died some kilometres away at a Mission hospital. A combination of the penetration of western medical science, a Christian sense of philanthropy, state ideas of development and poor transport systems conspired to change the burial practice in this instance.

Health and Commodification

The story of the first burial in the Shanzha cemetery would have been different some years later once mortuaries had been established in Nzhelele valley. The first mortuary to service this area was in Louis Trichardt and was established in 1959. At that stage, the Zoutpansberg Begrafnisdienste, a business run by the Coetzee family, had only one vehicle and did not penetrate into the Venda region in an influential way. In the middle of 1969 a mortuary in Siloam Hospital was opened. It could accommodate six corpses at a time to begin with and this was later extended to nine. Until 1980 the area was serviced either by the Siloam mortuary or those further away in Louis Trichardt or perhaps Thohoyandou/ Shayandima. In 1980 Siloam Funeral Services opened its doors to business with a mortuary which could handle ten corpses. The business had begun as a retail outlet for coffins. Around the same time, SAFFAS bought out the Coetzee family and extended the operations dramatically. In 1982 Rabali Funeral services opened but used the mortuary in Louis Trichardt until 1988 when a mortuary was built in Rabali.

The development of mortuaries and the commodification of funeral services had a major impact on burial practices. It was now possible to keep the corpse for up to two weeks before a burial. Relatives who worked in the city as migrant labourers could be informed of a death in the family and arrangements could be made to keep the corpse in the mortuary so that they could attend the funeral. This allowed for a weekend funeral as workers could not get off work mid-week. Royal funerals, susceptible to similar issues around migrancy also conformed to the weekend timetable. But in order to signify difference, royalty buried on Friday nights instead of Saturday mornings. The return of migrants for the weekend contributed to the idea that food should be served after funerals. This was the most widely held explanation why food was served after funerals in the village.

By the 1980s death was an industry in the Venda region and large amounts of money were being spent and earned on funerals. Funerals were large, public and expensive. Savings were oriented towards preparation for death and the spiraling cost of funerals. Credit schemes, burial societies, insurance and different village level collections proliferated

At the Siloam Funeral Services the most expensive coffins in 1980 cost R300. In 1996 the most expensive coffin cost R1950, an increase of over five hundred percent. The business also sold wooden caskets for R3,000. The average sale on a coffin was about R1000. At the SAFFAS funeral services in Louis Trichardt, whose clientele was predominantly black, the best selling coffin was actually a casket that cost R6,800. The most popular tombstones ranged between R6,000 and R12,000. Generally tombstones started from around R1,500. The most expensive tombstone cost R50,000. Flowers ranged from R10 to R200. Funeral services became a profitable business. One such business in Sibasa, with a few employees, did a monthly turnover of R60,000.

The cheapest funeral (no tombstone, no flowers, no service) would thus still cost at least R1000 and the average funeral would cost over R3000. The real gross domestic product per capita per annum in the Venda region in 1989 was R761.[26] Funerals became one of the biggest, if not the biggest one-off expenditure in a person's life. Investment and savings were channeled towards cultural expenditure - funerals.

Funerals became linked with status that was judged on material expenditure at death. The idea of a 'proper burial' had changed in a material sense. Whereas the status of the deceased was once signaled by wrapping the corpse in the skin of his cow, now an expensive casket did the same social work. A 'respectable death' required the right coffin and enough food. Amongst other elements of a proper burial, the coffin became the most obvious bearer and symbol of status.

Political protests (in 1977 and 1990) lead by the youths targeted burials because of their expense. In 1990, as a result of a protest in Dopeni, new forms of village burial collections were instituted. Established churches discussed the rising expenditure on funerals and resolved to try and counter the trend.

Negotiation and Boundaries

From the early sixties until the early eighties - in a space of just 20 years - great changes in burial practices had taken place in the Venda region. At the same time continuities were evident. Amidst Christianisation, enforced spatial reorganization and the commodification and commercialization of burials, practices - which came to be memories of the old or traditional - still found their place in funerals. Each funeral was an uncertain event. The tension between practice and belief - Christian and ancestral, independent church and established church, rich and poor, royal and commoner - was negotiated in each ritual. The result of imposed discourses was not a hegemonic burial system but a multiplicity of beliefs and practices that meant that burials were borderlands and not performances of local or imposed hegemony. Funerals constructed and reflected a cultural debate, a struggle for communal and individual status and identity. As Vho-Mudzunga said to me:

> Today [funerals] are all mixed up. That's why I say we Africans do not know where we are.

Funerals were sites of innovation that fitted insecurely into frameworks that tried to order them. During my fieldwork period, a 'new' practice surfaced at funerals. The printed programmes, handed out before the funeral, were collected as the grave was filled with soil, and thrown into the grave. I could find no uniform reason for this practice or how it originated. My research assistant saw it for the first time on television during the funeral of Chris Hani (1993). A Lutheran reverend admitted to being surprised by, and suspicious of, the innovation. He seemed to think that it stemmed from a general discomfort with 'death paraphernalia.' One observer believed

that the problem arose if there was a picture of the deceased on the programme and this suggested similar concerns with death and magic. Nonetheless this innovation pointed to the fluid and fluctuating nature of funeral performances in the Venda region.

THE FUNERAL PERFORMANCE

Vho-Mudzunga's Funeral Performance was based in and contributed to the fluidity of burial practices in the Venda region. His performance was a contribution to a debate. In this debate, the coffin was central. The coffin stood for an imposed practice that came to incorporate the commodity market, the tool of a western materialism that both corrupted African practices and conditioned experiences of migrancy. Further the coffin was part of a widely-recognized status competition that played itself out at death, a status competition that was expensive and represented a maligned expenditure that the deceased could not enjoy. In a sense, through the spiraling expenditure on coffins, the 'West' continued to impose itself on life in the Venda region. What struck many villagers was the seeming illogic of 'the expensive coffin' in a poor community and the trend was often characterized as foolish or naive. The perception of "foolishness", certainly in Vho-Mudzunga's case, increased the frustration over the practice.

It is this history of change, articulated by the penetration and 'illogic' of the coffin into burial practices in the Venda region, that gave expression to Vho-Mudzunga's sense of loss and focused his performative endeavour on recuperation and reconstruction. In what becomes a remarkable allegory, Vho-Mudzunga reconfigured a 'past' emblem of status, a drum, to comment on a 'modern' status emblem, a coffin. In a second transformation, he proclaimed his own work, the drum, as the most suitable bearer of his corpse, because through his own practice he had 'killed' so many trees. In this way, he reclaimed an imposed market-driven commodity (the coffin)

with the work of his own hands (the drum). At the same time he confronted one reason for his personal marginalization within his community - the fact that he cuts down trees.

What becomes clear when we re-visit the Funeral Performance in the context of an out-of-the-way place, is how Vho-Mudzunga's old Venda burial allegorizes the past to present a cogent and quite remarkable intervention into the present. The present was not simply any moment, but came two years after transition, at a time when the affects of forty years of apartheid and the beginnings of a promised 'salvation' could be viewed. This is the greater context of 'the Vho-Mudzunga show'.

FRAMEWORKS OF UNDERSTANDING

In this re-analysis of the Funeral Performance, instead of centralizing the drama and its symbolic content, I will discuss how Vho-Mudzunga and other participants framed the performance as a whole. How did they ascribe meaning to the performance? What did it mean for them? The speeches which followed the drama go a long way in answering these questions and expose interpretive contexts. Significantly, the terms of the relationships and motivations of the speakers were constructed in terms already encountered in the discussion around marginality. I use some of these speeches to re-frame the performance.

Mudzunga framed his Venda burial, not as a neutral recuperation of the past (like a tourist show) but as a direct statement of resistance and reconstruction. What he reconstructed as a Venda burial did not simply reference off a continued practice of the past, remembered through generations. Rather it was identifiable by what it proclaimed not to be. Vho-Mudzunga's enacted burial was supposed to signify as NOT a Christian burial, and as NOT a contemporary burial with expensive coffins and slaughtered bull. The performance was meaningful in what it chose not to be as

much as how it chose to be different. And it chose to be different by being 'authentically Venda.'

Vho-Mudzunga's performance was framed by two direct lived experiences: the experience of being powerless in Johannesburg and a consciousness of imposed burial practices at the local level. The former he expressed through the racialized experience of death in Johannesburg. He related how when he worked in Johannesburg, only whites were allowed to attend funerals whenever they chose, even if this was during the week. Black workers however were never allowed to leave work during the week to attend a funeral. They could leave early on Friday's and take unpaid leave. Only once during his time in Johannesburg did he remember attending a funeral during the week. The chairperson of JCI passed away and the whole firm was given the day off so that they could attend the funeral. As a result (and according to Vho-Mudzunga), funerals in out-of-the-way places came to be held on weekends when workers could return from the towns. Thus he proclaimed in his speech at the Funeral Performance:

> I will not be buried on a weekend, on a Saturday or a Sunday. Because this [custom] was *made for you* Africans. (my emphasis).

This statement was a repeat of the declarations he made at his 'birthday party' where he declared he would not be buried on a weekend in a manner forced upon him by whites. Vho-Mudzunga ended his speech at the Funeral Performance with a mimetic call-response *Phazi Tshikuwa phasi* - down with Europeanism. He also attacked the spatial impositions of the state, expressed in burials, by insisting that he would be buried at home:

> I will be buried just over that side [gestures to some trees in his stand]. I won't go to the cemetery where there are a lot of people. I will be under those trees that I have planted.

He then attacked the burial practices which had evolved in Shanzha village and its surrounds, for being materialistic and corrupt:

> I won't go and fetch chairs from the school [for my burial].[27] I will do it exactly as I have done it today. I am happy because there are a lot of people here and there are no chairs. If I die nothing must be

> slaughtered, no cow, no beast. We cannot kill two things at once. Because if we slaughter a cow it is to rejoice on someone's death...There are many of us here today who would never not go to a funeral because they want food, because they really want food. Now I will not do that. Nobody will collect funds when I die, today we have collected at the entrance.

At his 'birthday party' he added an injunction against large crowds attending funerals. He said that the Vhavenda do not call people to see a corpse. This is actually bad luck. He engaged with interpretations of his work, especially community discomfort, with the fact that he cuts down trees. Here he made a gesture of conciliation, and, at the same time, he attacked jealousy of success amongst the villagers:

> Because I am a carver (*muvhadi*) I am saying today that this drum will be my coffin. I have troubled many trees. A lot of people have complained when I cut down trees. Others are still having heartaches because of these things, because some people don't like it when others are progressing, they will only pretend they like it when actually they are not happy.

These sentiments were directly addressed by the artist Richard Mangoma in his speech. Vho-Mudzunga had requested him to speak as an artist about the sensitive issue of trees. Mangoma attempted to convince the audience (in a non-translated speech) that the tree had been put to good use and that Vho-Mudzunga had a gift and was not simply wasting wood. Again, the practice of art was being translated and explained to an audience whose discourse around wood and wooden objects was quite differen. from an art discourse originating from the metropole.

The presence of outsiders who came to value the drum and Vho-Mudzunga's work strengthened Vho-Mudzunga and Vho-Mangoma's position even though they were the cultural targets of resistance vis-à-vis burial practices. These outsiders framed much of the interpretation of the other speeches, and through them the performance was placed in a larger context often as a dialogue between the Venda region and the metropole or the world. The unequal relationship between the metropole and the

margin was evident in many speeches. The ward councilor, Lufuno Mulaudzi's speech was particularly instructive in this regard.

Vho-Mulaudzi chose to speak in English and the MC translated his words back into Tshivenda. He wanted to address the English speakers, the outsiders. He began by locating the Funeral Performance in a diversity of cultures which constituted South Africa. As such the performance was both a marker of difference, of Vendaness, and inclusion, South Africaness. But what became clear in his speech was that this inclusion was dependent on extra-local forces which recognized the value of the region and helped to develop it. Mulaudzi started his speech by thanking "all our visitors from abroad from the US, India, the United Kingdom and all other places. I would also like to thank people from the art gallery in Johannesburg." Mulaudzi then described the region as lacking resources. However, the region had unexploited resources and he described Vho-Mudzunga as "one of our unexploited resources." Local people however were unaware of the value that Vho-Mudzunga's work possessed and he claimed:

> In the past people just knew of Mr. Mudzunga as a sculptor but his works were praised and congratulated abroad and in Johannesburg but the people around [here] did not have a chance to look and comment.

Vho-Mulaudzi recognized a certain disjuncture between art in Johannesburg and art in the Venda region. To an extent, the unexploited resources were misrecognized by locals: artists were creations of the "praise" and congratulations from "abroad" and "Johannesburg". This disjuncture turned on the power of the metropole to define AND the weakness of the metropolitan discourse of art in the far-off Venda region. Mulaudzi thus turned to those who have made Vho-Mudzunga into a resource for the region, and appealed to them for help:

> [For] those who came from abroad and from the city of Gold - Johannesburg[28] - I would like to appeal to you...that you go and tell the whole world that in Greater Nzhelele we have unexploited resources which range from artists to tourist attractions.

Vho-Mulaudzi thus stressed the dependency of the region on outsiders who had the power to inform "the world". He ended by casting Vho-Mudzunga in the role of cultural educator and preserver, and claimed that most people did not know about traditional burials the way Vho-Mudzunga "opened [them up]." He asserted culture as both resource and identity:

> When I started I said South Africa has a diversity of cultures. So what was displayed here is a traditional funeral in accordance with Muvenda culture. It is an honour for all of us and a reminder to the grandchildren and great-grandchildren and all of us who came from abroad...We should remember our culture. One philosopher said: 'A nation without culture is not a nation.'

The context in which this speech located Vho-Mudzunga's cultural display was the region's lack of resources and its dependency on powerful outsiders. Vho-Mulaudzi recognized that even Vho-Mudzunga, the artist, was an outside creation. The region struggled to define its own resources - it was subject to the defining discourses promulgated by others. But within this condition, Vho-Mudzunga's turn to culture, signaled a form of autonomy and ability to be a "nation" on one's own terms. Vho-Mulaudzi, through Vho-Mudzunga, made a strong appeal for the inclusion of the Venda region. "Put us on the map," he once said to me.

Vho-Netshiomvani, the MC, surprised Steven Sack and the other 'outsiders' by calling for an impromptu speech. Vho-Netshiomvani identified all visitors as one group, despite the fact that a number of disparate groups were present. All the 'outsiders' were not familiar with each other; there were individuals from India, the United States, the United Kingdom and other people from Johannesburg who did not know one another. Nonetheless Vho-Netshiomvani called up a 'representative': "We have our visitors here, our friends, our white persons (sic), they have chosen one person to represent the whole group..."

Steven Sack, at the time employed at the Johannesburg Art Gallery, reproduced in his speech the other half of the dialogue pursued by councilor Mulaudzi. His speech

revealed the other side of the dependency relationship framed by Mulaudzi - the power to define and include. Sack began immediately with culture, and linked his presence and the presence of his 'group' to the beauty and inspiration of "the culture of Venda and the Northern Province." He made an immediate spatial association between the Venda region and 'culture.' At the same time he stressed his own vantage point - his was the 'view' from Johannesburg. Sack went on to explain the link between the Venda region and Johannesburg:

> We know about Venda because of the carvers, the artists who bring their work to the city, that's how we know this place [Venda region, Shanzha]. So the artists and carvers and musicians are a very important link between you and us in the city.

Whereas 'art' became known in Venda only through the metropolitan art-world, Venda was only known, or thought of (by Sack at least), through its contacts with the city. Art had an existence outside of Venda but in a sense the Venda region's existence, or the terms of its existence, depended on its relationship, mediated by artists, with the city (or powers of the centre). This clearly defined the centrality of the city and amplified the metropole's power of inclusion and exclusion, represented in this instance by the art-world. Of course the knowledge that Vhavenda people had of the city was not dependent on the mediation of artists, but Venda's inclusion into the metropole in part was. What this statement does indicate is how 'art' 'discovered' Venda and how the metropole's knowledge about Venda was narrow and limited in this sense. It must be remembered that the profile of Venda and knowledge about the region in the cities was most prominent and visible because of the art-world's outreach in the mid 1980s. Vhavenda migrants who had been in urban areas for most of this century, were so excluded from metropolitan institutions, that they did not even constitute a presence. But in fact any urbanite who wished to encounter Vhavenda speakers and 'Venda' need only wander into Tshiawelo, Soweto. This has been true at least since the 1950s when Tshiawelo was established.

Sack's "link" between the city and Venda was thus instituted and defined by the art-world, and through this link Venda, as region and culture, was constructed not

necessarily on its terms. For Sack, Vho-Mudzunga's performance was about knowing Venda and constituted another chapter in Venda artists' contribution to a rural-urban South African dialogue. But difference was again central to the meaning of the dialogue. The Venda region was interesting because of its culture that was different from and separate from the city. In this sense the performance was framed as cultural preservation:

> It is also good to see that there are so many people here in Venda for whom the work, the culture is still alive. Because we thought that their traditions were dying out and people were not remembering the traditions of the Venda people.

Why should Sack have any interest in the preservation of Venda culture? The dialogue between urban and rural was only 'safe' and meaningful when Venda preserved its own heritage and its traditions were easily juxtaposed to the city's modernity. Whereas Vho-Mudzunga or Vho-Mulaudzi could signal survival, reconstruction and identity by mobilizing 'tradition,' what exactly did Sack mean by encouraging the preservation of 'Venda' culture and tradition? Perhaps it would not be unfair to suggest from the above quotation, that Sack's use of these terms located the Venda region and its inhabitants at a distance from the metropole and separate from it, where the Venda region could signify as a "docile body of difference (Bhabha 1994:31)." There was no notion of resistance or dependency in Sacks use of the terms but rather of cultural diversity as defined by Bhabha (1994:34). Sack signified a depoliticised multiplicity of cultures with artists mediating BETWEEN two different locations: "They bring ideas to us, they bring ideas from us to you and we have this communication," Sack commented. This masked the control that art galleries and metropolitan institutions had over this interaction and the power relationship inherent between metropole and margin.

Sack did however, inevitably, signify his own value simply through his presence. This belied the metropole's apparent absence in an encultured Venda region. Sack had emphasised the important role the artists played in linking the metropole to the rural. However, at the local level, real importance was attached to the role of artist not for

mediation but for access. Artists had access to the metropole from which the vast majority of Vhavenda were marginalized. The local audience interpreted Sack's physical presence in Shanzha and his praise for Vho-Mudzunga as a symbol of Vho-Mudzunga's authority and value. Ideas about the metropole, present in the Venda region, conditioned Sack's intervention, betraying notions of separateness and mediation. This also underlies the rating of the metropole over the margin. Sack concluded:

> And finally I thank you Samson Mudzunga for doing this wonderful work and bringing us all together.

Vho-Mudzunga's value and authority was thus enhanced and promoted by the metropole's clear and resonating recognition of (and perhaps even submission to) his work.

Finally, let us recall the 'mysterious' insider/outsider Vho-Siphugu, whom we encountered in Chapter Two. She was the only woman who spoke at each of Vho-Mudzunga's performances. Her speech at the Funeral Performance represented the resistance trope. She too located herself in Johannesburg. She, too, commented around the presence of white people, but in a slightly different way as she kept the function and her presence on her own terms and mocked the whites:

> I'm certain that those white people who are looking at me don't understand what I'm saying...Hey, you, don't worry yourself about interpreting. These people must learn our languagejust as we learnt theirs...I too would like to thank the people who are from Johannesburg, which is quite far away, and these white people **who followed me to this place.** (my emphasis)

After making a few comments about the drum and death she ended with belligerence:

> We Vhavenda are not a poor nation. We Vhavenda are very rich. We lived in secrecy (*ro dzumbama*) and this was worsened by oppression. Today we have progressed (*ro bvela phanda*). We would like to show people that we have the power (*maanda*). We do have our secrets that we never made public. **I thank Vho-Mudzunga for exposing us so that people can see us.**

For Vho-Siphugu, her own contribution and Vho-Mudzunga's performance were an act of opposition and revelation - the making of presence and the making of one's 'self' present to oneself. In this sense the performance was recuperative. In this vein the whites were simply there to bear witness to the 'coming out', in the same way as they were at Lake Fundudzi.

Engaging Marginality

Death in the Venda region is a history of "perspectives cast aside" and other perspectives imposed. Burials in Shanzha are zones of contestation of identity as imposed concepts of being and value are enacted at the margins and intermingle with local knowledges. This is a metaphorical arena for the experiences of the margins. For Vho-Mudzunga, control over 'who gets to go to what funeral', was contiguous with who gets control. Through performing an authentic Venda burial he attempted to wrest back control over more than just death. He fought against impositions that conditioned his life at the margins of power, powers that enticed him into wage labour, changed his name, controlled his movement, imposed its ideas, altered his landscape, corrupted his life and intimate relations, discouraged his carvings and ultimately rejected him through retrenchment when, at last, he was becoming successful and well-known.

But ultimately, his structural relationship to the centre created the conditions of his response, not only the conditions to which to respond. His status and attraction to local villagers derived in part from Vho-Mudzunga's rapprochement with 'the conqueror', symbolic of power and authority at the margin. I was often asked in the village if Vho-Mudzunga was working with me - a collaboration. What he opposed he perpetuated. The other part of his attraction derived from his stated and performed alternative - a powerful tradition, capable of drawing whites, resplendent with mystery and authenticity. But of course this authenticity was itself a response to copresences and interlocked viewpoints, and tradition was an attempt to assert the

weaker viewpoint in relation to the outside centre. But this weaker point of view, was the one supposedly independent of the centre, authentic in its localness, sprung forth from the land. Vho-Mudzunga clearly occupied spaces of contradiction, perhaps displaying a dual perspective, a consciousness of the borderland. Vho-Mudzunga could see the boundary between white privilege and black cooption, power and powerlessness. He could see the dangerous border between self expression and coercion, between Venda identity and a South African national identity, between agents of Africa and agents of the West. From this borderland, he creatively pursued the opportunities of ambiguity and contradiction.

The framing of the performance through the above speeches emphasised marginality. Vho-Mudzunga explained that his burial was to be different as it resisted imposed ideas of burial practices and reconciled him with antagonistic interpretations of his art-work at the local level (by using his carving as a coffin). Vho-Mulaudzi and Steven Sack framed the performance in relationships of dependency. For Vho-Mulaudzi, the performance signaled an attempt to be reincorporated into the national culture and economy, an attempt which recognized the exclusion of the region. He appealed to extra-local forces to promote his region. For him, culture in the Venda region had been excluded and underexposed. For Sack, the performance located the Venda region at the margins, away from the metropole. It was a form of mediation between different and separate worlds. Death at the margins was a symbol of difference from the centre, not an effect of it, one which did not identify the relations of dominance and thus reproduced them. Vho-Siphugu recognized the performance as resistance and triumph over oppression (imposition) and clearly located the event within relations of domination and resistance. For her, the performance was a testimony to the power of the Vhavenda people and she cast Vho-Mudzunga as the bearer of that power, the cultural survivor-hero.

The content of the performance is not simply a replication but a reaction. As a reaction, the performance demonstrated that discourses do not gain total hegemony.

They do not determine identities but define a boundary, a margin, borders of negotiation. Vho-Mudzunga's Funeral Performance was an engagement with marginality that took the form of both resistance and embellishment.

Not only did he oppose imposition but he also inverted, for a moment, his dependency relationship with the metropolitan art-world. He brought curators and dealers to his home in Shanzha on a pre-arranged specific day. He did not attempt to sell any art, but engaged the dealers and curators on his terms for his purposes. In his invitation, he called this an exhibition, thus completing the inversion. He brought the gallery and its patrons to Shanzha village.

So death served Vho-Mudzunga as a form of resistance and identity. He opposed contemporary burial practices by asserting his own 'traditional' Tshiavha rituals. Writing around resistance to colonialism Bhabha observed:

> The transmutation and translations of indigenous traditions in their opposition to colonial authority demonstrate how the desire of the signifier, the indeterminacy of intertextuality, can be deeply engaged in the post-colonial struggle against dominant relations of power and knowledge.(Bhabha1994:33)

Here ethnicity and tradition are opened up as powerful tools for the engagement of marginality and the imposed attempts to fix categorically the terms of identity at the margins. Whereas the exclusions of apartheid were fought by non-racialism as a counterpoint to ethnic marginalization, such arguments at the margins of post-apartheid South Africa do not address the conditions of the continued marginalization of the Venda region in a 'new' South Africa. They ignore the powerful influence of the centre at the margin, whether that centre is the apartheid state or the ANC-dominated government, and the centre's vulnerability to resistance at the margins. The 'New South Africa' claims an inclusive cultural diversity, which hides the continued marginalization, economically and culturally of out-of-the-way places. Tradition resists incorporation and feels like definition on one's own terms. Culture and tradition embellish marginality to appropriate an independent sense of identity

and status. At the margins, despite state attempts at manipulation, tradition can be used to claim a uniqueness that shakes free from inclusive impositions of state or religion and at the same time resists dominant relationships. For agents who need to oppose and reconstruct, culture resists and rebuilds, undermining dominant worldviews and addressing historic dislocations by promoting local knowledge.

In concluding this section, the work of Faye Ginsburg on "Indigenous Media" produced by Australian Aboriginals is relevant. She attempts to understand the effects of media produced by Aborigines (videos, radio-stations etc.) - perhaps another form of "autoethnography." Even though she concludes that these media are mediating devices, she notes that they are important in *intra*-community communication and the formation of identity. I believe her insights are crucial to my project and I quote at length:

> Work being produced by minorities about themselves, I suggest, is also concerned with mediating across boundaries, but rather than space and cultural difference they are directed more to the mediation of ruptures of time and history-to heal disruptions in cultural knowledge, historical memory, and identity between generations due to tragic but familiar litany of assaults - taking of lands, political violence, introduced diseases, expansion of capitalist interests and tourism, and unemployment coupled with loss of traditional bases of subsistence...[A]lmost always the initial activities engaged in with the camera are simultaneously assertive and conservative of identity...[They] are not about recreating a preexistent and untroubled cultural identity "out there." Rather, they are about the *processes* of identity construction...In Aboriginal media, the work is not simply an assertion of existing identity, but also a means of cultural intervention that refracts and recombines elements from both the dominant and minority societies. (Ginsburg 1992: 368-69)

Vho-Mudzunga, 'the performer,' joins Ginsburg's Aboriginal video makers (1992), Pratt's autoethnographers (1992), Tsing's collaborators (1993) and perhaps even Lavies' "allegorical types" (1993) who collaborate and resist, deconstruct and reconstruct, offer symbolically mediated solutions to cultural conundrums and personal experiences of loss, invent and reinvent histories and pasts with which to come to terms with the present, and offer alternative knowledges and viewpoints all

creatively concocted from within the contradictory, connected and generally subjugated peripheries of nations and of the world.

Vho-Mudzunga - Not the Good Object of Knowledge

Finally, if Vho-Mudzunga was engaging the terms and power relationships which construct marginality, how did he deal with me, an anthropologist who set out to unravel the meanings of his performances? This final section then is about Vho-Mudzunga's engagement with me and his refusal to be the perfect Other, the passive object of knowledge. Instead he demanded the same rights of me as I was given in his community. At the same time he was equally aware of the status I conveyed onto him and the advantages to be gained from my involvement in his cultural project.

Vho-Mudzunga and I never became friends and our relationship ended in an exchange of letters from his lawyer to myself which advised me not to contact him at all. From the beginning of the project I was aware that possible misunderstandings could result from my relationship with Vho-Mudzunga. This was especially true after an exploratory trip that I made to the Venda region to meet Vho-Mudzunga. He referred to this thesis as a book and I got the impression he understood my work to be general publication in book form. In this regard I took him to the William Cullen library at Wits University to show him the theses to attempt to avoid misunderstandings. I gave him a letter outlining that we agreed that I would stay at his home until the 28th of September (the date of the Lake Performance) whereafter we would re-negotiate my arrangements.

Vho-Mudzunga meanwhile was aware how I was positioned as a white person in his local context. He would comment that certain prominent persons only spoke to me,

or treated me in certain ways, because I was a white person. He knew people talked about him because a white man was staying at his home. He sometimes opposed this privileging. At the government offices in Louis Trichardt a man walked in and called me 'sir'. Vho-Mudzunga reprimanded him for giving me a title because of my skin colour. The man turned out to be a chief in the western part of the Vhavenda chietancies. Yet Vho-Mudzunga also used my presence to motivate for government support for his performance at the Lake. In his characteristic contradictory style, Vho-Mudzunga both used access to and resisted my 'whiteness'.

As it turned out, we returned together to Johannesburg after the performance at the Lake with the drum. Once there he thought he was to stay with me at my house in Johannesburg. I however dropped him in town to stay with his family in the townships. We saw each once again other on a pre-arranged day at Wits University. After that I received a letter at the Anthropology Department in which he withdrew his support and cooperation with my MA. This moment of self-assertion was phrased in the following 'traditional' manner:

> ...I [have] had endless sleepless nights because at the time I welcomed you into my home, I had not asked permission from my ancestors. My forefathers have now told me, that I made a very big mistake in keeping you in my house.
>
> Therefore there can be no more cooperation from my side with your Masters degree.

I returned to Shanzha shaken and upset, but Vho-Mudzunga had not come back from Johannesburg. Once he arrived, my research assistant and Vho-Mudzunga's friend (Dan Mandavha) began to talk with Vho-Mudzunga in the hope of settling our dispute. As I suspected, Vho-Mudzunga was insulted and hurt that he had not stayed with me in Johannesburg. I was accused of racism and Vho-Mudzunga even mentioned that some people in Johannesburg had said that this was quite typical of 'the Jews'. Together Dan and I met with Vho-Mudzunga. I apologized and he voiced his anger. Finally he said he was going to beat me with a stick and asked if I could stand it. Not quite knowing what to expect I said I thought I could. He said he was

fining me R400. After the conflict at the Lake, the government representatives believed that Vho-Mudzunga's apology to *vhamusanda* Netshiavha would entail a fine to be paid by Vho-Mudzunga. Fining, it seems, was a standard form of enforcing chiefly authority. Once I had paid, all would be forgiven and not talked of again. We both pledged to voice any future problems before conflict arose, either directly or through Dan. I was allowed to come back to stay in Vho-Mudzunga's household.

Our relationship was more distant but held up well until I left the field again. On the one hand I had not become his close friend but on the other hand our relationship was not full of tension. When I returned three months later, there was more distance between us. I chose not to stay with Vho-Mudzunga and he did not insist that I did. At the end of this shorter stay, he once again summonsed me into his 'office' and with his friend and the *mukhoma* of the village section, broke off his cooperation with me. This time I was unclear why he chose to end his participation and he would not elaborate. He said he would send me a letter.

I duly received a letter which was conciliatory in tone and did not include substantiations that referred to 'tradition'. He suggested it was in both our best interests to sort out our conflict. I was leaving the country for a month and wrote back to him expressing my willingness to sort out our difficulties. I had this letter translated into Tshivenda and posted to him.

When I returned from abroad, a lawyer's letter awaited me. The letter made no reference to our past correspondence. Instead it demanded R20,000 from me in fulfillment of an agreement I had allegedly made with Vho-Mudzunga, whereby I supposedly agreed to pay him for participating in the research project and for board and lodging type expenses. The letter included a deadline after which if payment had not been made, a court order would be issued against me and the Department of Anthropology would be informed of the action. I maintained that no such agreement was ever discussed. The Department of Social Anthropology sent a letter to Vho-

Mudzunga's lawyer explaining the nature of anthropological research practice and suggesting a misunderstanding had taken place. Additional advice and intervention was sought through the University of Witwatersrand's connection with the University of Venda. The lawyer convinced Vho-Mudzunga not to pursue the matter and advised me not to contact Vho-Mudzunga in any way. He informed the Wits Social Anthropology Department that Vho-Mudzunga still anticipated receiving a copy of my thesis as per our initial arrangement.

Clearly Vho-Mudzunga was not passive in our relationship. The cause of the second conflict is still unknown to me. In the first instance I violated expectations of reciprocity. By doing so I believe I reinforced racial stereotypes and Vho-Mudzunga's marginality. As his friends in Johannesburg commented, I was stupid, I should have offered him the best room in the house and then he would have given me a lot of information. I, on the other hand, tried to bound the relationship within a 'professional fieldwork' situation, attempting, I suppose, to maintain Vho-Mudzunga at a distance as a good object of knowledge. Vho-Mudzunga's engagement with me disallowed this. When I returned to his home, I gave him an invitation from my father to attend a Friday night dinner at our home and spend the weekend. He never accepted the invitation.

EPILOGUE

The day before I was due to leave the Venda region, Vho-Denga and I drove to a house in Tshilapfene in my car. There we fetched a twenty-four year old woman and brought her back to Vho-Mudzunga's home in Shanzha to be his new wife. Over the past few months, I had become familiar with this house in Tshilapfene, as Vho-Mudzunga and I had visited there a number of times on our various trips to meet the Philiyamavu *tshikona* dancers. Upon my arrival in Shanzha many months earlier, Vho-Mudzunga told me that he was arranging a marriage for himself. Now, before my departure, I transported his 'new wife' to Shanzha, where she would remain in his home. This was the closing collaboration of my scheduled field trip.

I returned to the Venda region three months later because Vho-Mudzunga decided to stage another function. After the Lake Performance, he visited Johannesburg and returned from the city with plans to stage another performance. Whilst in Johannesburg, he "got" the date for the event. This additional 'unscheduled' performance was prompted, it seems, by his failure to bathe in Fundudzi during the Lake Performance. He encountered people in Johannesburg who asked him why he had not completed his challenge.

Three months after I had 'delivered' the 'new wife,' I received a printed invitation signed by Vho-Mudzunga to attend "a traditional Venda wedding ceremony" in Shanzha. I returned for the ceremony. Much had changed since I left Shanzha, yet what I saw on my return confirmed the way I had been thinking about Vho-Mudzunga's previous performances.

The changes that had occurred served to confirm Vho-Mudzunga's self-reliance and ability to tap into the numerous resources and opportunities that presented themselves to him. The most obvious change was in his household. Of the people

who made up his household when I lived there, only he and his mother, Vho-Munzhedzi remained. His senior wife Vho-Tshinakaho and her grandchild Vhengani, had left, after witchcraft accusations were made against Vho-Tshinakaho. It was alleged that Vho-Tshinakaho was "using lightening" against the 'new wife'. The accusations were prompted by the 'new wife' and voiced by Vho-Mudzunga. This conflict with Vho-Tshinakaho caused a rift between Vho-Mudzunga and the women of his brother's household. Vho-Mudzunga erected a fence between the properties that was only removed a day before I returned to Shanzha. In addition, Vho-Mudzunga had reconciled with his second wife and she now lived in his house at Shanzha with her eldest daughter.

The other changes concerned the performance. Many of the people who helped Vho-Mudzunga organize the two previous events were not involved in the planning or implementation of this next event. Dan Mandavha, Vho-Netshiomvani and Vho-Makhomu, all central figures in the previous functions, did not play a role in the 'Marriage Performance'. Vho-Mudzunga was angry with Vho-Makhomu after the Lake Performance because during the conflict there, he seemed to side with *vhamusanda* Netshiavha. Vho-Netshiomvani was not sure why he was not involved in the function and it seemed Mandavha had distanced himself from Vho-Mudzunga. Instead, Vho-Mudzunga relied heavily on one of the *tshikona* dancers who had not previously helped him.

A third development involved Vho-Mudzunga's relationship with the village of Tshiheni. Vho-Mudzunga had struck an 'alliance' with Tshiheni. The *tshigombela* dancers from that village were to "accept the bride" at the wedding ceremony. Vho-Mudzunga had sought this 'alliance' after his conflict with *vhamusanda* Netshiavha. He met with the *vhamusanda* of Tshiheni and with the *khoro* at Tshiheni.[2] Both the *vhamusanda* of Tshiheni and the *khoro* were concerned about the fact that *vhamusanda* Netshiavha had acted on their territory when he blocked the road to Lake Fundudzi. They planned to send him a letter demanding that he refrain from acting on

land he did not control. At a meeting with the *khoro* at Tshiheni, Vho-Mudzunga, Dan Mandiwha and the artist Richard Mangoma convinced the members that they should participate in Vho-Mudzunga's performance. They argued that Tshiheni would be exposed and promoted through television coverage of the event and that Lake Fundudzi would become well known and draw tourists. This would lead to development. The *khoro* agreed to participate after being assured that Vho-Mudzunga was not earning a lot of money from the performances and were duly convinced that a successful performance at Fundudzi would make Tshiheni "known" to outsiders. Once Vho-Mudzunga had convinced the *khoro* of his intentions and garnered their support it was clear that he had used his access to extra-local resources to cement a local alliance that gave him a stronger position vis-a-vis *vhamusanda* Netshiavha. The *tshigombela* dancers from Tshiheni performed at Vho-Mudzunga's house and later at the Lake.

The first thing that Vho-Mudzunga showed me when I arrived back at his house was the new drum he had carved for the occasion. He felled the tree, from which he had carved the drum during my previous stay in Shansha. We had talked then about the drum he planned to carve. Vho-Mudzunga wanted to make "the biggest drum in the world," that would be taken all over the world. Vho-Mudzunga challenged anyone who had problems with the fact that he had cut down a large tree, to confront him at his home.[3] He "aimed" the drum towards the art-world and intended to display it at the up-coming Johannesburg Biennale. While he conceived the form his drum would take, he also imagined its distanced destinations - the far-off places of power that the drum would reach. Almost as an embodiment of his desires and a materialization of the authority that extra-local connections (especially the art-world) gave him, Vho-Mudzunga carved the drum in the shape of an airplane.

Unlike the drum-coffin, this drum was intended by Vho-Mudzunga to signify as a drum only and was remarkable because of its size. The way it fitted into the performance was more contrived than the role of the previous drum in the other

performances. In fact, this performance of 'a Venda wedding' did not require the drum at all. The drum simply fitted into a style or idiom that by now had become particular to him - Vho-Mudzunga staged performances with drums. At the Marriage Performance, the drum was unveiled to the audience and wheeled into the performance area. Vho-Mudzunga's new wife appeared out of the drum.

The drum was however a curiosity and major attraction and at the performance, like the coffin-drum, it functioned as an *ngoma* drum.[4] Prominent visitors who attended the function including councilor Mulaudzi, were taken to see the drum before it was revealed to the public. Everyone who saw it marveled at its size. After it was brought into the open, the Philiyamavu *tshikona* dancers used it as a bass drum.

The drum, once again, functioned as symbol of access, innovation and tradition. Around it the connectedness of the local to the extra-local was articulated. The drum, as art-object, commodity and *ngoma* was Vho-Mudzunga's platform for engaging with the metropole, accessing local cultural capital and building personal status around innovative creations.

A few days before the ceremony, four German tourists arrived to visit Vho-Mudzunga. He promptly guided them on a sight-seeing trip to Tshatshingo. Tshatshingo was one of the nature sites identified as part of that imagined polity - the Land of Legends. The tourists were invited to attend his performance and were given a lot of attention in the various speeches and commentaries that were made throughout the proceedings. There were a few other 'outsiders' present: myself, an artist from Giyani, a lecturer from the University of Venda and an artist from Johannesburg. But the Germans as foreign visitors brought particular prestige and were mobilized by Vho-Mudzunga to reflect such status onto himself. After all, they embodied that imagined destination to which the drum was directed - the rest of the world.

performance area (Figure 2). There, the *tshigombela* from Tshiheni greeted the wife's entourage and "accepted the bride." But, the entourage refused to move into the house until bribed to enter. The *mukwasha* gave the leader of the entourage small change and *mukunda* bracelets to persuade them to proceed. This bribery was enacted a number of times until the *mukwasha* and the entourage entered Vho-Mudzunga's home, away from the crowd.

The drama was performed by people who 'played' themselves and others who acted a role. The *mukwasha* was Vho-Mudzunga's companion Vho-Frieda and his brother's wife, Vho-Matamela. Both were associated with the Mudzunga household. The leader of the wife's entourage however was also one of Vho-Mudzunga's wives. The rest of the entourage was made up of the real 'new' wife and some 'genuine' relatives who came from Tshilapfene especially for the ceremony. As the *mukwasha* offered bribes, a member of the audience came forward and donated some bribe money. Later, the MC made a call for gifts to be given on the occasion of the marriage. Some guests had brought gifts along, others made monetary donations. Vho-Mudzunga himself was absent at this time, pretending to be away from home as was the custom. Before the drama I was told that the 'new wife' had disappeared to the river with Vho-Siphugu to prepare for the function. Again, the performance sat ambiguously between play and reality.

Nonetheless, the drama, and the tradition on which it was based, was again a platform for protest and reconstruction. Vho-Siphugu, once again, was belligerent in the face of 'outsiders'. She swept aside attempts to translate her speech, this time remarking in English that the visitors should learn to speak Tshivenda. She was also at the forefront of a fascinating word-play with regards the names of the 'new wife'. She referred to the 'new wife' as *mia Phili*, the mother of Phili and unveiled her as a secret that had been planned for a long time. In this way, she identified Phili as the son of Vho-Mudzunga. On the tail of the new drum, Vho-Mudzunga inscribed his name and the word *mavu*. *Mavu* was another way of referring to a chief or *vhamusanda*. If

Phili was the son of Vho-Mudzunga, then Phili ya mavu, literally translated as Phili of the chief, would indicate that Phili was the son of a chief and that chief was Vho-Mudzunga. Vho-Mudzunga was a patron of the Philiyamavu *tshikona* and in a way, when they played for him, he was the owner of the *tshikona*, the chief of the day.

It was evident that Vho-Mudzunga viewed this relationship, this marriage as a re-rooting of himself in the proper and respectful way of engaging in relations, as opposed to his other relationships in Johannesburg that were callous, corrupted by western influence and unconnected to tradition. Thus the marriage was a real effort at reconstituting his personhood in the image of an ideal relationship, rooted in the Venda region. In a sense one can see the marriage as a completion of the death-rebirth cycle - his death and rebirth was completed through a ritual of social reincorporation.

After the drama (and a meal), Vho-Mudzunga decided to proceed to Lake Fundudzi. The aim of the trip was unclear. This time, the drum did not come to the Lake. It was too large and although initially Vho-Mudzunga wanted to tow the drum there, he decided against this. Rather, he said to me it must stay at home, like in a museum. He seemed simply to want to make a point.

Since the conflict at the Lake Performance, Vho-Mudzunga's relationship with *vhamusanda* Netshiavha had not improved. It had in fact worsened. Vho-Mudzunga was interviewed on Radio Thohoyandou and (allegedly) accused the *vhamusanda* of jealousy. He had not made any rapprochement with the family elders as apparently agreed at the Lake.

The *vhamusanda* was waiting at the Lake again. This time he used only a 'bakkie' to block the road. When Vho-Mudzunga arrived, he and another man from Soweto simply 'bounced' the *vhamusanda*'s vehicle out the way, as the *vhamusanda* looked on helplessly from the side of the road. At the Lake, Vho-Mudzunga repeated his

'trick' and drank water from the Lake out of a *phaphana*. Vho-Siphugu, repeated that the new wife was called *mia Phili*.

Notably, the *tshikona* dancers did not join the journey to the Lake. Indeed the *tshikona* was unimpressive at this performance. Comparatively few dancers arrived and they performed without the girls (*vhatanuni*). They also arrived late. When asked to perform, the dancers complained of being tired, and when they did dance, they lacked vitality. Some members of the audience thought they had come for the food only. The *tshikona* stayed behind when the 'party' left for the Lake. They reminded those that did go that the last time the *tshikona* went to the Lake, their truck got stuck, and they were left at Fundudzi alone. They seemed to share Netshiavha's view that this was an omen.

Vhamusanda Netshiavha reportedly made a number of attempts to prevent Vho-Mudzunga from returning to the Lake. He raised the matter at the Tshivhase Territorial Council and was especially concerned to prevent the *tshikona* from going to the Lake. He made a personal visit to the *tshikona* and urged them not to take part in the proceedings. On these two accounts he seemed to have some success in dampening the enthusiasm of the *tshikona* for the performance. His third attempt to foil Vho-Mudzunga's plans (however) failed. Vho-Mudzunga reported that Netshiavha went to the magistrate court in Thohoyandou and requested that the court intercede to stop Vho-Mudzunga from going to the Lake. Apparently, the magistrate replied that theoretically this was a possible intervention, but in this case it would not be possible, because Vho-Mudzunga was an "artist".

Vho-Mudzunga's 'dramas' were social actions, engagements with: history weaved into allegory, with his own life, his local community, the art-world, and the State and the terms on which they all constructed and affected one another. As Bhabha

(1994:2) stated: "Terms of cultural engagement, whether antagonistic or affiliative, are produced performatively."[7]

What remains is one final act of placement. Vho-Mudzunga's innovative cultural performances, with their appeal to tradition, opposition to imposition, perpetuation of the relations of marginality, all of which attempt to address dislocation, were situated within a post-apartheid moment.

> The social articulation of difference from a minority perspective, is a complex, on-going, negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities **that emerge in moments of historical transformation.** (My emphasis, Bhabha 1994:2.)

This articulation of difference from the periphery is often "resourced by tradition (Bhabha ibid.)." But as we have seen tradition does not exhaust the signification process - at the margin other temporalities intrude when the past is restaged resulting in 'confounding' cultural idioms. This tradition is thus emergent and the heir to a particular project of community construction: differences constructed through tradition are the signs of a project "that takes you 'beyond' yourself in order to return, **in a spirit of revision and reconstruction,** to the political *conditions* of the present." (My emphasis. Italics in the original. ibid:3)

Those political conditions, that shaped and were shaped by the cultural engagements, clearly demonstrated the connections between the local periphery and extra-local authorisations. The connection was not one of simple domination but of mutual construction so that the 'local culture' "may be contingent to modernity, discontinuous or in contention with it, resistant to its oppressive assimilationist technologies; but [it] also deploy[s] the cultural hybridity of [its] borderline condition to 'translate', and therefore reinscribe, the social imaginary of both metropolis and modernity" (Bhabha 1994:6).

And this brings us to the creativity (agency) of Vho-Mudzunga himself, who operated in the heterogeneous border-space of the margin; who like a migrant worked in the

interstices of a range of discourses and practices. Bhabha argued that it is precisely from an intervention (the performances) in such a space that creativity emerges: "[I]t is the space of intervention emerging in the cultural interstices that introduces creative invention into existence (1994:8)."

Vho-Mudzunga's performances were part of a new "space of intervention" that emerged in a post-apartheid moment. They revisited apartheid as **history** and attempted to re-dress its dislocative disruptions; but they also addressed an unfolding history of marginality in the face of a new 'African' nationalism. From this post-apartheid stance, both engagements were used tradition in "a spirit of revision and reconstruction".

ENDNOTES

Notes to the Introduction

[1] How to refer to the subject of my study was a debatable point. In the art-world, he was known as Samson Mudzunga. In the Venda region, where I spent the majority of time with him, he was generally known as Vho-Mudzunga. The Tshivenda prefix *Vho* used in front of a name indicates politeness - or "polite usage (Van Warmelo 1989)." I referred to him as Vho-Mudzunga while I stayed with him in the field. In line with other villagers of my age I also referredto other adults using the *Vho* prefix. I choose to continue to refer to him as Vho-Mudzunga in this thesis, in keeping with the suitable title that I used to address him or speak of him in the Venda region. I maintain this usage for other adults whom I encountered in the field.

[2] The *ngoma* drum is one of two widely-recognized drums associated with the Venda ethnic group. It enjoys special status and significance which are important to this study. These notions are fully developed in the body of the thesis.

[3] This concept is drawn from Spivak (1987:109).

[4] These concepts of "copresences" and "interlocked viewpoints" are drawn from Pratt (1992:7).

[5] The precise development of a *Vhavenda* linguistic identity is the subject of current historical debate. It remains unresolved whether *Tshivenda* developed autochthonously or was imposed by migrations from the north. The latter position would date the development of the language approximately 100 years later than the former. The language has both Sotho and Shona influences as well as some Tsonga derivatives. See Van Warmelo (1989).

[6] Vho-Tshinakaho had three sons who all lived in Johannesburg.

[7] Maemu and Adziambei spent the week at school and returned for weekends.

Notes to Chapter 1: Play Death in the Northern Province

[1] Both these quotes come from the written announcement and invitation to the performance, dated 10 May 1996 and signed Samson Mudzunga.

[2] As I have detailed in my methodology section, I was not present at the performance. The ethnographic details come from video sources and subsequent interviews which I conducted.

[3] Of the four churches in Shanzha, three are descendants of the original mission church, the Pentecostal Holiness Mission Church. The Holy Evangelical Church is the newest. It split from the African Gospel Church in the early 1990s. The latter was formed in the late 1940s when it split from the mission church.

[4] For quotations in this section describing the Funeral Performance, italics refer to lines which were spoken in English. The plain print has been translated from Tshivenda. This is consistent only for this section describing the Funeral Performance.

[5] She was asked to repeat this by the MC as the crowd was noisy. Her second rendition went:

> This seed that you see me pouring over here is part of the men of Venda; it is our family customary practice that when a person has died, we pour a seed for him...We are done.

[6] Most public events, like birthdays, funerals, or baby-naming functions (*u hvisa mvana*) were structured into a programme which was printed and handed to participants. Programmes were a feature at all the funerals which I attended in and around Shanzha village.

[7] The letter was written by Bongi Dhlomo of the Africus Institute for Contemporary Art in Newtown Johannesburg. She also assisted him with contacts to various press and television people. The invitation was sent to a number of organizations including Johannesburg Consolidated Industries (JCI) where Vho-Mudzunga had worked and to the Johannesburg Art Gallery. The SABC was also informed. Vho-Mudzunga indicated to me that this letter was not given to people who lived in his own village or local region. However, before the Funeral Performance, he was interviewed twice on Radio Thohoyandou and on both occasions he publicized the event. Other people, I assume, were informed by word of mouth.

[8] Van Warmelo translated *Vhutambo* as ceremony, function, festivity or celebration (1989:471).

[9] This emerged in discussions with Vho-Samson Mudzunga and Vho-Wilson Mudzunga.

[10] These names are given in the pedagogical exchanges called *milayo* which are used in *domba* to convey cultural knowledge and regulations. Nettleton relies to a large extent in this regard on the data collected by Blacking (1969b).

Notes to Chapter 1 cont...

[11] Some of these names are also found in royal court speech recorded by Van Warmelo (1971).
[12] This is with a noted exception of the body of the drum which is referred to as *ndilwana dza vhakololo* -the wooden plate of nobles (Blacking 1969b). Blacking's apparent incongruous recording is explained by Nettleton as a reference to a container and metaphorically, to a womb. The human imagery, likewise, associated the drum with infancy, fertility or the womb.
[13] Nettleton makes the argument for *hakata* and extends it to *thangu*.
[14] Coffins were introduced to Shanzha in the 1920s by Pentecostal missionaries. They were only popularized decades later and became the predominant form for burial only in the 1970s. See Chapter Four for details.
[15] The meaning and value of objects from the Venda region is discussed fully in Chapter Three.
[16] Stayt (1931:320) differentiates between *tshikona* and *mathanngwa*. He asserts that the latter is associated with merriment and collective enjoyment and the former with more serious occasions. The dance at the Funeral Performance was repeatedly termed *tshikona* and I came across no other reference to the dance.
[17] Vhatavhatsindi were a group of chiefs who migrated into the region and subjugated the local population. They were in turn subjugated by the migrating Singo chiefs, who still controlled the chieftancies at the time of this research. The exact dating of these migrations is a matter of historical debate.
[18] There was very little that was unusual about the detail of the 'burial' he displayed. The performed 'burial' rites were well known and widely practiced in the Venda region. It was not necessary to show these rites as a 'rehearsal.' He also had a coffin, in which he actually planned to be buried Thus his 'burial' was in any case, not an accurate display of how he was to be buried when he died.

Notes to Chapter 2: Intrigue at Lake Fundudzi

[1] From the written invitation to the function.
[2] From the written invitation to the function.
[3] "Sacred ritual at the waters of Lake Fundudzi." The Star Tonight Section. 26 September 1996. p2
[4] As part of the apartheid government's separate development policy, development programmes were instituted in areas designated as homelands. These programmes were called Betterment and involved the whole-scale reorganization of residential, agricultural and pastoral arrangements of local communities. See De Wet (1995).
[5] *Khotsi munene* refers to ego's father's younger brother. In this case though, it is used to signify a distant relation in the patriline.
[6] The history of the Vhavenda chiefdoms is the subject of debate. Three different historical groups are generally identified in Vhavenda history. This generalization blurs many other distinct groups which form part of the various Vhavenda chiefdoms but is nonetheless a useful organizing model. The three groups are: the autochthonous Bangona, identified as the "original inhabitants"; the first migration from the north of the Vhatavhatsindi who subjugated the Bangona; and finally the migration of the Singo a hundred years later who subjugated the Vhatavhatsindi and are generally regarded as the founders of a Vhavenda polity in the late 17th century. See Loubser (1990) for an overview of this debate.
[7] The eldest son of the chief's senior wife (*dzekiso*) should succeed the chief.
[8] The origin of his surname, Mudzunga, (as opposed to Netshiavha) is debated within the family. A member of the family indicated to me that Mudzunga was actually a first name adopted by Samson as a surname. The real surname was Mushohe. Vho-Mudzunga countered that this person did not know what he was talking about.
[9] There is some contradiction in the ethnogaphic literature around who exactly performed *thevhula*. Van Warmelo (1932:153) claimed that only royal lineages performed the rite while Stayt (1931:256) wrote of commoner rites.
[10] *Ndou*, meaning elephant, referred to the *mutupo* or sib associated with Vhatavhatsindi.
[11] *Zwipo* is a burial place of royal ancestors who have died before the period of living memory. The *zwipo* functions as the ritual site of communication for the clan whose ancestors are associated with that sight. A particular part of Fundudzi, on the northern side, is the *zwipo* associated with the ancestors of Tshiavha. The *zwipo* constitutes sacred space.
[12] *Zwiponi* was different from *tshiendeulu* and they are often confused. Royalty were no longer buried at *zwiponi* whereas the *tshiendeulu* was the functioning burial place of royalty. So for example at Tshiavha deceased royalty were buried in a 'royal graveyard' called *tshiendeulu*. The *zwipo* as indicated above was at the Lake itself and was not the burial area, and was associated with distant

Notes to Chapter 2 cont...

ancestors. In general religious activities were performed by senior family members at the *zwipo* not *tshiendeulu*.

[13] Mudzunga informed me that Nemaungani had recently died. He was unsure who would take over his priestly role.

[14] The marriage agreement was not made at the Lake Performance, nor did the prospective wife attend the performance. In my final week in the field, along with Vho-Denga, Vho-Wilson Mudzunga's wife, I fetched Vho-Mudzunga's 'new wife,' Ntanganedzeni Milliscent Netshaphasha, from Tshilapfene and 'delivered' her to Vho-Mudzunga's home in Shanzha. I was instructed that I was to do this before I left for Johannesburg. The instructions came from Vho-Tshinakaho, the *nanga*, in the presence of Vho-Mudzunga. When I tried to ask why I was the suitable person, I was told simply that is what I must do. Ntandanedzeni became his fourth wife and continued to live with Vho-Mudzunga in Shanzha as his wife On the 8 March 1997, Vho-Mudzunga staged the final part of a 'Venda wedding ceremony' at his home in Shanzha. He had carved a new drum for this occasion. (See Epilogue.)

[15] The Northern Province's Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, was divided into four administrative regions: Bushveld; Capricorn; Soutpanzberg; Valley of Olifants.

[16] Interview with government representatives.

[17] In the end the material support which Vho-Mudzunga did receive from Vho-Netshidaulu did not satisfy him but rather angered him. He apparently expected a better, more substantial supply from his relative.

[18] Vho-Mudzunga used the word *vivho*. Van Warmelo (1989) translates this as "jealousy of a rival or equal; jealous action, as of co-wives. He also used *muno* which Van Warmelo (ibid) translates as "going behind your back."

[19] I had also received a phone call from another producer who was working on a programme for the SABC. The programme was a religious magazine production. The producer wanted to know whether the performance was a 'real religious event.' I explained what I thought might occur at the Lake, and she later decided not to send a crew as it did not sound "religious enough." She asked if I knew of any other "Venda religious ceremonies" which would take place soon.

[20] The girls were: Vhengani, who was the child of Vho-Tshinakaho's eldest son (and thus Vho-Mudzunga's granddaughter); Adziambei, Vho-Ivy's daughter; Vhavhalelo, Vho Matamela's granddaughter; Tshenwanyi, Vho-Mushiane's (Vho-Mudzunga's neighbour) granddaughter.

[21] Vho-Mudzunga had previously (The Funeral Performance) made his plans to dramatize a traditional practice very clear and central to his motivation. Although in his written announcement for the Lake Performance he invoked tradition as a motivation for his actions, he never made an explicit connection to burial practices or to the continuation of anything he began at the Funeral Performance. Further during his interview on Radio Thohoyandou prior to the event, he made no allusion to the cremation or burial practices of the Tshiavha people. He preferred to explain his planned ceremony with a personally inspired rationale:

> **Announcer:** What made you think of going to perform this ceremony at Tshiavha?
> **Mudzunga:** These things simply come to me. I even dream about them.

Vho-Mudzunga never referred to the ceremony at Lake as symbolizing the Tshiavha tradition of cremation in any of our conversations or interviews. In fact at one stage before the event he distanced the death metaphor from his drum. He had just finnished re-covering the drum for the performance when he turned to me and said that the drum was now no longer a coffin. Presumably then, when inside the drum, he was no longer a corpse (or skeleton?). Finally, the motivation of those attending the performances is revealing. Certainly, people in Shanzha prior to the Marriage Performance of March 8 were interested in seeing a traditional wedding and thus thought of attending the performance, as many had not witnessed one in their lives. People often referred to the drum as coffin and to burial when speaking about the Funeral Performance. However many of those who went to the Lake and those who asked me about what happened there after the event, made no reference to death or cremation. Rather, they were intrigued by the possible consequences of a live man swimming/bathing in the Lake. It was this act, unconnected to a traditional and known form of ceremony or performance, which was their focus. And it was this act which brought danger and talk of death. When death entered the framing of this event, it usually came with the dangers associated with Lake Fundudzi and not centered around the drum.

The death metaphor was not completely removed from the drum though and many people still associated the drum with a coffin. In the radio interview the interviewer asked if Vho-Mudzunga was still going to be buried in his drum. He revealed that he had made a coffin in which he would be

Notes to Chapter 2 cont...

buried, and that he was tempted to sell the drum. Members of the *tshikona* group, who visited Vho-Mudzunga to plan the 'drama' of the Lake Performance, said to me that when Vho-Mudzunga is in the drum we will call him the 'late.' This though is more a carry over of meaning from the Funeral Performance than a reflection of the re-worked context of the drum in the performance at the Lake.

Vho-Mudzunga may have conceived of the performance at the Lake within the 'moment' of his Funeral Performance and thus there may be a conceptual link between cremation practice at Lake Fundudzi and the performance there. But certainly in its actualization and articulation the 'ritual connection' was not strongly expressed.

[22] Meeting with *vhamusanda* Netshiavha, 03/11/96, Tshiavha.

[23] Here we see structure at work, not as an overarching invisible non-agentive 'big brother', but as the very real actions of *vhamusanda* Netshiavha. Netshiava 'performed structure', threatening Vho-Mudzunga that the power of the Lake would overcome him. The Lake remained powerful and symbolic that day because Netshiavha acted for it and not because of a powerful meaning which 'somehow' was attached to the Lake.

[24] See Makarius (1974).

Notes to Chapter 3: The Flow of a Tributary

[1] See for example Berger (1972).

[2] Rankin (1995) notes that the exclusion of black artist from art institutions in the first few decades of this century was part of a broader undervaluation of art from South Africa generally. Purchases by galleries of foreign art far out-numbered purchases of South African art. Afrikaners were particularly concerned about their exclusion.

[3] She makes provision for only one possible exception - the late Nelson Mukhuba whom she does not describe as an artist but as producing objects from "individual inspiration source that have nothing to do with traditional practices."(Netteleton 1984:191)

[4] For details about the material culture and figurative woodcarving in the Venda region asscociated with an 'indigenous market', see Nettleton (1984:189).

[5]See Duncan, J. (1994) "Factors Affecting the Positive Reception of Artworks..."This is one of the few works which deals with the commercialization of art in the Venda region since 1985. I thus draw on it quite extensively in this chapter.

[6] *Mulombo* was the name of a widespread religious practice which involved a form of spirit possession.

[7]Arguing against imagined notions of authenticity based in both the ethnographic postulate of 'pure' societies and the tastes of western collectors or consumers, Kasfir writes:

> ...[T]here is no point in time prior to which we could speak of the ascendancy of "traditional culture" and after which we could speak of its decline (1992:43).

[8] See Duncan (1994:17-22) for more detail and especially p26 endnote 26.

[9] I became aware of the status and location of these objects through a personal communication with Anitra Nettleton, June 1997.

[10] This may not be an exhaustive or complete inventory. I obtained this list in discussions with museum curators and especially with Dr. Anitra Nettleton. I believe that it reliably reflects the categorization and institutionalization of objects produced in the Venda region in the period under discussion.

[11] Marcus and Myers 1995:5; Clifford 1988.

[12] See Kasfir (1992:41).

[13] See Clifford (1988) especially Chapter 10; Kasfir (1992).

[14] See Clifford (1988:198-200).

[15] See Rosen (1993) for an example of Art History's practice in South Africa.

[16] See Kasfir (1992:44). Here the author argues that this anonymity is an important part of the contruction of Primitivism and the Other.

[17] I do not mean to separate out the discourses of art and culture in a western context. There is an important relationship between the developments of both discourses and the 'work' they do. See for example Clifford's art-culture system (1988:224) and more recently Marcus and Myers (1995).

[18] It is to these competitions which Paul Tavhana, quoted in Duncan (1996) refered when he said "They say Venda is winning, but we can't see how." Paul made similar remarks to me when I spoke with him at his home in November 1996. In that discussion he referred to the 'arts and crafts' competitions at the Rand Show that the Venda homeland apparently won. He was isolated and

Notes to Chapter 3 cont...

ignored by the Venda Development Corporation and those taking work to the shows (the "They" above). They would not pick up his work but then report back that they had won at these competitions.

[19] See for example J.B.M. Hertzog, quoted in Nettleton (1988:30), who asserted that the Native is "without art and without science."

[20] The history of collecting art in South Africa is marked by other discursive re-orientations. For example, Carman showed how the acquisition policies of the Johannesburg Art Gallery changed to accommodate Afrikaans speakers and South African artists (Carman 1988).

[21] The question if he did this successfully is debatable - see Duncan (1994:34) and further on in this chapter.

[22] For details of the organizations involved in a 'post-Tributaries' incorporation of artists from the Venda region see Duncan (1994), Chapter 2.

[23] Another separate label 'Township Art' was used to denote art created by urban blacks. See Gavin Younge (1988) Art of the South African Townships. My concern here though is foremost with the efforts and debates around the incorporation of rural artists from the Venda region.

[24] See Nettleton (1988) for an overview and critique of the concept. Much of what follows below is informed by this reference.

[25] Anitra Nettleton first pointed this anomaly out to me.

[26] On 'Venda artists,' see also Duncan (1994:79). See also Rosen (1993) for the role of Art History in essentializing ethnic identities of black artists.

[27] For debates as a result of "Primitivism" see Clifford (1988) chapter 9; and around "Magiciens..." see Poppi (1991).

[28] Interestingly Vho-Mudzunga claimed in the late 80s that he turned to art to make a living as he was concerned that he might lose his job through sanctions. Later he denied this was the reason.

[29] Interview with Bongi Dhlomo, February 1997.

[30] See The Star newspaper 27 June 1989, "Dismissed Driver Claims Jealousy."

[31] Interestingly, he always earned two salaries. He supplemented his income from JCI and Kohler by cutting hair on the old Potchefstroom Road on weekends..

[32] "Dismissed Driver Claims Jealousy" The Star. 27 June 1989.

[33] Interview with Bongi Dhlomo, February 1997.

[34] The Venda Development Corporation was the development agency of the Venda homeland government.

[35] One of Vho-Mudzunga's wives, Dorcas, was apparently friendly with Barnett's wife and spent a lot of time at their home. In fact it appears as if Vho-Mudzunga stayed at Barnett's house after he was retrenched from Kohler. It is not clear which relationship occurred first.

[36] Telephonic interview with Dave Roussouw, June 1997; David Koloane confirmed that this relationship had broken down in a telephonic interview with him in August 1997.

[37] The origin of Vho-Mudzunga's double drums is unclear but similar double drums are typically used by members of Independent African churches like the Zionist Christian Church (ZCC). However, Vho-Mudzunga is a staunch opponent of Christianity and especially sceptical of the ZCC.

[38] Carter could not remember the month of his visit but recalled that it was after Vho-Mudzunga had fallen out with another dealer, most probably Peter Barnett.

[39] Carter compared him to Avhashoni Mainganye in this respect. Avhashoni Mainganye was an artist from the Venda Region. He was a graduate of Rorke's Drift Arts and Crafts school and had wide exposure to the local and international art market. His work was part of the Tributaries exhibition. He had travelled overseas to Germany and studied in France. He served as Dr Carter's guide and advisor during the assembling of the Mahlakasela Collection.

[40] As opposed to other sales in that year, Vho-Mudzunga received cash directly from the buyer. Interview Dr Ronald Carter, Wits University, 30/06/97.

[41] Although these were the first *dzingoma* which were sold, they were not the first which he had made. His first attempt was a rather small *ngoma* drum also in the style of the ethnological drum described in previous chapters. It was not a well-worked piece and rather imitated an ethnological *ngoma* than replicated one, as the examples which were sold to Dr. Carter did as well. This style may represent Vho-Mudzunga's early work which was more 'craft' related. Vho-Mudzunga was sentimentally attached to the first *ngoma* which he carved and had not sold it yet during my fieldwork period. It remained in his home.

[42] During my telephonic conversation with Trent Read, Brigitte Read mentioned to Trent that she had noticed Vho-Mudzunga's work at The Neglected Tradition exhibition at the Johannesburg Art Gallery

Notes to Chapter 3 cont...

in 1988. Vho-Mudzunga was not part of the The Neglected Traditions exhibition however and she may have seen his works in the same year at the FUBA.

[43] These figures are estimates which Read supplied to me in two contacts I had with him. The first was a meeting at the Everard Read Gallery in October 1996 and the second a telephonic conversation in June 1997.

[44] Interview with Trent Read, Johanneburg October 1996; see also Duncan (1994:82).

[45] Gotfried Dederen, from the University of Venda, believed that the drum was sold to a foreign buyer. I could not confirm this.

[46] This was a three-person show including Mudzunga, Johannes Maswanganyi and Mogano.

[47] Nicole Donald of Tyrone Gallery, interview 09/07/97.

[48] Vho-Mudzunga exhibited a figure of a *tshikona* dancer at this exhibition which he positioned next to the drum. He told Nicole Donald the history around the drum and the Mulaboni *tshikona* (see below).

[49] Conversation with Bongi Dhlomo, July 1997.

[50] Around this time Vho-Mudzunga was looking for R5,000 to finance his performance of September 28th, 1996.

[51] Vho-Mudzunga asked R11,000 for the drum at the time of the Biennale but did not sell it during the show (pers.comm. Kathy Coates, August 1997).

[52] Interview with Lufuno Mulaudzi, 11/11/96, Mphephu Resort Nzhelele.

[53] I was already aware that some villagers thought Vho-Mudzunga was crazy (*penga* or *madavhadavha*). One informant remarked: "Samson is different. People think maybe something is wrong with him. They think he is mental or having a problem because he is very [moody]." I approached Richard Mangoma who managed Ditike and asked if he had heard other artists labelled as crazy. He recalled that many visitors who saw Elikana Nemurunzini's circumcision piece had remarked that this man must be crazy. I thus approached Vho-Nemurunzini.

[54] Elikana Nemurunzini's life history is remarkably similar to Vho-Mudzunga's. He began making clay toys as a young boy and eventually switched to carving. He went to Johannesburg as a migrant labourer and got work on a mine. He claimed that while working at the mine he made some wood carvings, one of which he sold to a white employee. He alleged that this caused conflict at work and he eventually left his job and returned to his home in Tshivhuyuni Village in the Venda region. One day in 1990, he 'discovered' Ditike and began to carve again to sell through its shop. His first piece sold there for R50. He was asking R10,000 for his circumcision piece at the time of the interview. He explained that he carved the *murundu* (circumcision school) piece because he "liked [*murundu*] very much because [he] went there." But today "this *ngoma* (ritual) is no longer working and it has lost its dignity." His wife had also subsequently begun to carve wood.

[55] *Zwidudwane* in this case refers to a form of spirit being. Some literature associates *zwidudwane* with water spirits and in particular with Lake Fundudzi. In the case of the latter, the spirits are reported to have a particular characteristic form, one eye, one arm, one leg and are even associated with the *vhadzimu* (ancestors) of Tshiavha or the original inhabitants the Bangona. However, 'Venda ethnography' fails to categorize all the types of spirits that are said to inhabit the region. Invariably a 'miscellaneous spirit' category is included in sections which discuss religion (e.g. Stayt 1931:238). In this quote, Nemurunzini, uses *zwidudwane* to indicate that his neighbours believe his sculptures are supernatural beings, spirits with which he as artist imbues them.

[56] Vho-Mudzunga said the villagers were of the opinion that at "**night** I am doing this and this, at **night** I am working." (My emphasis).

[57] Interview with Agricultural Officer of Dopeni Irrigation Scheme.

[58] Interview with elderly woman villager in Shanzha, 01/12/96.

[59] Significantly, this discussion was initiated around the type of relationship I had with Vho-Mudzunga. The informant's comments about traditional herbs were preceded by comments about his mother's skills as a healer. He linked the ability of the herbs to heal, to the ability of herbs to aid "dolls" made by artists to kill. Just as we saw in the above case with Vho-Nemurunzini, the association of *nanga* and artist can be a close one.

[60] This was part of a region wide phenomenon. See for example Ralushai, V. 1996. "Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Witchcraft Violence and Ritual Murders."

[61] The death of Mugumu has been recorded in the literature on artists from the Venda region. See Dell (1989); Nettleton (1992).

[62] This information comes from an informal qualitative household survey which I did in Shanzha in November 1996.

[63] This is of course not a new anthropological insight. Tylor's theory of magic and the association of ideas ([1871] 1903), works with the concepts of "copy" and "contact" which he argued lay at the heart

Notes to Chapter 3 cont...

of magical practices "Copy" is of course understandable in a sculptural sense and perhaps closest to the type of mimesis referred to by Duncan.

[64] Duncan does not give the Tshivenda word but I assume that zombies are the same as *matukwane.*

[65] Duncan's (1996) understanding of witchcraft is drawn from locations removed from the political realities of the Venda region and the application of literature from these places to the Venda region should be more carefully pursued. She references Niehaus (1993) and Stadler (1996) who worked in the Green Valley village in the Lowveld. This area is politically, geographicallly, historically and culturally removed from the Venda region. Thus, although there may be similarities, there are major differences. For example Duncan takes the year 1985 to be an important period in the cycle of witchcraft allegations. The Venda region did not experience the same political upheavals in that year. It was only as late as 1990 that comrades were organized and gained confidence and power in the Venda region. This period as discussed above was indeed characterized by witchcraft accusations and witch hunts.

[66] Interview B. Dhlomo, February 1997.

[67] Conversation with Vho-Mudzunga, November 1996.

[68] These were all figurative wood carvings and included: a person adorned with clothing (suit and tie) holding a telephone; an unadorned girl and boy pair, a lady with *phaphana* on her head and adorned with a *mwenda* and two walking sticks.

[69] The Star newspaper, 27/7/1989.

[70] The Star newspaper, 25/03/1990. (I sourced this article in Vho-Mudzunga's 'scrapbook.' Later I could not re-confirm this date.)

[71] This drum, with two figures an ox and an axe carved out of it, was acquired 1996 by the Gertrude Posel Gallery.

[72] This drum was exhibited in early 1996 at the Gallery on Tyrone and was bought by the Gertrude Posel Gallery later that year.

[73] Read himself had had an idea for a celebration in this region to mark the 1994 democratic elections. He thought to organize a display of fireworks at the home of an artist in the Venda region and was discussing this idea with Vho-Mudzunga. The idea did not materialize and later Read heard that Vho-Mudzunga was holding a function in any case for his 60th birthday. (Interview with Read, Johannesburg, October 1996.)

[74] Telephonic interview with Dave Roussouw, June 1997.

[75] Vho-Mudzunga had spent time in Mozambique before. He was in Maputo sometime in 1975. He claimed to have known ANC members in exile there, but would not explain his own purposes for visiting Maputo. His son with his wife Dorcas, who was born around this time was named Samora, in apparent reference to Samora Machel, the leader of the newly-independent Mozambique state. One of his photograph albums contained a photograph of himself in Maputo in front of a statue of Machel.

[76] This statement does not perhaps accurately reflect Read's opinion of Vho-Mudzunga's art, and probably came out of the exhuberance of the function and with Read's own admission at the end of a long day after a few beers! None the less it was appropriate to the moment.

[77] This TLC was part of administrative region three of the Northern Province of South Africa.

[78] For example Mulaudzi mentioned "Inkatha-type" cultural organizations sponsored by the apartheid state in the former homelands of Gazankulu, Lebowa and Venda. The organization in the Venda homeland was called *Madango nga u pfana* and was started in 1984. It was comprised of women, priest and youth wings. Mulaudzi claimed that often people from these wings became government informants.

[79] A clear example was the cultural manoeuvers that were associated with the land claims of various Griqua groups. See Waldman, L. forthcoming.

[80] Interview representatives, Department of Tourism and the Environment. Louis Trichardt, 24/10/96.

[81] ibid.

[82] "Beautiful Things" in Tsonga/Tshivenda.

[83] Interview with Joe Mabuya, Executive Producer of Swahombe/Zwanthesa Johannesburg, May 1996.

[84] In March 1997, Swahombe/Zwanthesa was the top-rated programme on SABC's channel two.

[85] In October 1996, a group of Vhavenda protesters demonstrated at the SABC because Tshivenda was officially given only 30 minutes a week air time. One of their complaints, was that they had to share that 30 minutes with Tsonga speakers and within the Tshivenda sections some of the footage showed white people or other non-Tshivenda speaking people. After relating this to me, Mr Mabuya (see footnote above) commented that "Venda people are very proud of their language and culture."

[86] Interview with Joe Mabuya, Executive Producer of Swahombe/Zwanthesa Johannesburg, May 1996.

Notes to Chapter 4: Creativity at the Margins

[1] I do not intend to give the impression that the Vhavenda chieftancies were bounded by the South African state only. They were at the edges of a world system and 'looked' beyond the state to the continent and indeed the world.
[2] This does not correspond to the image of Vho-Mudzunga as a migrant worker who lived in urban area for thirty years and was, in fact, a recent returnee to the Venda region. Further, the piece that Vho-Mudzunga exhibited was a large *ngoma* drum, which diverted markedly from an ethnological type. It was embellished with a male and female figure on one side and a hand and foot motif on the other. It was never used in any ceremony whatsoever.
[3] Interview with gallery owner and curator.
[4] James's article recognizes the binarism and contends its rigidity with specific reference to history and performance. This is an approach and position with which my arguments in this section are sympathetic.
[5] In fact, when contact is taken as the condition of study, as with studies of colonialism, liminality becomes a major concept for describing all of cultural space and time. See Bhabha (1994).
[6] For example, the so-called Kalahari Debate has raged around the alleged isolation of the Bushmen. Wilmsen has argued for their cultural connectedness and not their isolation. See Wilmsen (1989).
[7] Other languages usually refer to Johannesburg in terms of its association with gold mines. For example Egoli in isiZulu and Gauteng in Sotho-Tswana.
[8] Under the former apartheid government this region was known as the Far Northern Transvaal.
[9] The term also allows for another area or zone where pristine separation still persists.
[10] Rosaldo (1989:216).
[11] In Henry Louis Gates Jnr. "Black and British." Mail and Guardian., Aug 1 to 7, 1997: pg 17.
[12] See also Lavie et al. 1993.
[13] This was the period of organized urban black opposition to pass laws and the defiance campaign organized by the ANC. This opposition was met by violent repression by the South African state.
[14] See: Desmond, C. (1971:183); Surplus People Project (1985:125-27).
[15] Vho-Mudzunga's words were "he got a dream or something like that."
[16] In this case the young man who told me about the tree expressed an interest in going to visit it himself.
[17] This was one of three RDP projects in arts and culture in the Northern Province. The two others were designated for 'Gazankulu' and 'Lebowa,' regions formerly defined as homelands under apartheid's separate development policy. Gazankulu had proposed a Sports and Arts centre in Giyani, whilst Lebowa wanted a library at Jane Furse.
[18] This may not be an exact quote as I noted his words as he spoke. I am confident though that it accurately reflects what was expressed.
[19] For example, the Greater Nzhelele/Tshipise TLC was allocated R1 million per annum. They spent their entire year's budget on buying road equipment. No funds were left for water, electricity, sewerage or any other municipal service. Each councilor earned R672 per month salary. The ward councilor for Shanzha needed to subsidize his income with a permanent job in Thohoyandou.
[20] I in no way mean to imply that identity formation in the Venda region was a deterministic process defined only by outside forces. On the contrary, ideas of autochthony and resistance to imposed discourses are central to my understanding of identity formation in the Venda region.
[21] Vho-Mudzunga traveled to Johannesburg quite regularly. Other artists, for example Paul Tavhanna, disliked Johannesburg and have only ventured there on a handful of occasions.
[22] My Tshivenda tutor showed me the magazine and I gave it to Vho-Mudzunga. He once showed the magazine to some of the Phiiiyamavu *tshikona* dancers and seemed to imply that if they worked with him they might get similar exposure.
[23] These were both exhibitions that made claims on national representation. Vho-Mudzunga was unaware of them. The imaging of national representivity was taking place far away from the Venda region.
[24] Professor Victor Ralushai, formerly of the University of Venda, made me aware of these differences that are also listed in his doctoral thesis. His thesis was unfortunately unavailable to me. Prof. Ralushai's own copy had been stolen a few months before our meeting.
[25] In the late 1940s, the local community split with the Mission church over racial prejudices with regards promotions in the church, and formed the African Gospel Church. This church group split in the 1982 after an ethnic dispute about church leaders. The African Gospel Church was led from KwaZulu-Natal and supplied the church only with Zulu priests. A group left that church and formed the Holy Evangelical Church. A further split with the Gospel church ensued, allegedly over finances.

Notes to Chapter 4 cont...

and Reverend Sundays Rituals at Mbokoyo Church in Dzanani. The two churches, the Dzanani and Hofmeyer, the two Mbokoyo churches and the Holy Evangelical Church had their origin in the original mission station.

[xxiii] SAIRR: Countries, Statistical Abstracts 1990, Development Bank of South Africa.

[xxiv] On weekends, plastic chairs were collected from the secondary school and used for the celebrations/events or funerals that took place in the village.

[xxv] Whereas other languages in South Africa refer to Johannesburg as the place of gold, they associate Lydi in relation to Venda to Sweden. Tshivenda refers to Johannesburg as Makhanzwa, the place of whites. This description which excludes Tshivenda from the elite is in contrast to the prestige of the Venda region's marginalization.

Notes to the Epilogue

[i] The Wilson Mudzunga's second wife.

[ii] These meetings revealed a host of incompatible issues around the Mudzunga's properties. Unfortunately, I have no space to delve into the details here. I will instead share short remarks. The *vhamusanda* requested that the Mudzunga carve a drum for him which he agreed to do, but he warned the headman that he was not sure when he could make delivery. At the *khoro* a debate started about the nature of the performance and its purpose. How was it traditional? How was it development? The Mudzunga and his party explained about the connection of art to culture, about selected and tradition. One speaker juxtaposed tradition to tourism and asked if the proposition of tourism was more or less important than the preservation of tradition. Suspicion arose that the Mudzunga was making a lot of money from these performances but yet did not want to pay the dancers. The Mudzunga's practices were caught in a dialectic between preservation (conservation) and development (progress). Its principles fed the suspicion. Another speaker asked: 'What I want to know is, do you people get commission from that man who is with you [me]? What we want to know is: Is there no hidden agenda on your side?'"

[iii] The Mudzunga had the permission of *vhamusanda* Netshivhilidulu from the village of Tshivhilidulu, on whose territory the tree was situated, to cut down the tree. According to the Mudzunga, the shade from the tree prevented mango trees from growing there. The mango trees belonged to the *vhamusanda*.

[iv] As I noted in Chapter Three, this drum did not strictly conform to the shape of an ingoma. Rather, it resembled a very large mukhulo. Nonetheless, it was a base drum and functioned as a ingoma during the *tshikhuani* dance at the performance.

[v] From the written invitation to the function.

[vi] Van Wulmeke (1948):

> Section IV. Arrival at husband's place, brides feld there
>
> 481. When the bridal party reaches the village, the *lunkwadu* leaves them in a sheltered spot and goes in to tell the womenfolk so that they can meet the party in the *khuro*. Sometimes it is the girls who are woken up to help in the visitors.
>
> 488. In the *khuro* there is a seat for the bride and her party (three to six in number) by the village. Seat[s] have to be given by those who come to meet them and even then they walk with dragging feet, halting every now and then, and whenever her companions (or helpers) with presents it, when they again slowly proceed a bit and halt again, until finally they enter In side the village they refuse to enter their hut until again given something. (Then inside they remain standing and again will not sit down until [illegible] can be regarded as a contradictory The first part of the introduction of Phiphidi's location till minus (1971) can be regarded as a contradictory or ambiguity, consciousness and creativity. I use it extensively here to draw out my own conclusions.

APPEN .X1

GLOSSARY

domba	-ritual of initiation undergone prior to marriage, mainly bygirls, held at intervals of some years in the villages of chiefs and headmen.
dzingoma	-see *ngoma*; rituals\rites performed at the headman or chief's village including circumcision; the objects associated with these rituals that are kept at *musanda*.
hakata	-Shonadiviningdice.
halwa	-beer made from maize flour often brewed for ritual purposes, like for *tevhula*.
khoro	-entrance to *vhamusanda*'s or *khosi*'s homestead (*musanda*) that was used as a public gathering area and for hearing cases; public enclosure of a homestead.
khosi	-chief.
khotsi munene	-father's younger brother or any other distant relative in the patriline younger than one's father.
losha	-to greet humbly. There are a variety of *losha* positions that involve putting the palms of ones hands together whilst sitting, kneeling or lying on the ground.
mabundu	-a light non-intoxicating drink made from meal.
mahosi	-plural of *khosi*.
makunda-(pl: *lukunda)*	-wire bracelets worn by married women.
malugwane	-the leader of a *tshikona*.
matukwane	-zombie, spirit of deceased person trapped by a *nanga* or *muloi* and kept by him\her to do their work.
murumba (pl:*mirumba)*	-mortar shaped drum, unlike *dzingoma* they are not associated with particular status or meaning.

musuma	-the tree *Diospyros Mespiliformis Hochst* known colloquially in Afrikaans as 'jakkalsbessie.'
mutupo (pl:*mitupo)*	-name of totem-like group in this sense mainly associated now with food taboos or used simply as surname.
mukhoma	-the person in charge of a section of a village that was under the jurisdiction of a headman; 'sub-headman' in charge of the smallest territorial unit.
mukololo	-the child of a reigning chief or headman or his brothers; used to identify a person related to royalty.
mulayo (pl: milayo)	-pedagogical aphorisms used to teach initiates in initiation rituals.
murundu	-male circumcision school.
musanda	-chief or headman's homestead, the political centre of a village or chiefdom.
Muvenda (pl:*Vhavenda*)	-a person identified as part of the Venda ethnic group.
muvhada	-woodcarver.
nanga	-healer;diviner.
nanga	-horn used in *tshikona.*
ngoma- (pl:*dzingoma)*	-large hemispherical drum beaten on important occasion as in *domba, tshikona* or in war. Is an object of prestige associated with the royal courts.
nwenda- (pl:*minwenda)*	-women's garment consisting of two pieces of striped cloth, one worn around the waist and the other over one shoulder and under the other arm. This is often considered as a traditional form of dress for women.
phaphana	-a calabash used for drinking.
phasa madi	-to squirt water from one's mouth or from a calabash as an act of propitiation to ancestors.
skokiaan	-beer.

tevhula	-ritual performed around the harvest of first fruits; harvest festival.
thangu	-diviningdice.
tshiawelo	-commemorative shrine of stones or twigs where a corpse was rested on the ground on its way to be buried. People who go by a *tshiawelo* place twigs or stones on it as they pass as a sign of respect.
tshigombela	-dance of women going round and round in a circle with drums in the centre. Of lesser prestige than *tshikona*.
tshikona	-musical and dance performance of reed-flute ensemble accompanied by *ngoma* and *mirumba* drums and closely associated with celebrations and the chieftancy.
tshitanga	-cooking hut
Tshivenda	-the Vendalanguage
vhamusanda	-headman
vhuhosi	-the institution of the chieftancy.
zwifho	-ritual site of communion with ancestors usually associated with old non- functioning burial sites; a sacred space protected by taboo and all manner of strange and dangerousoccurances.

APPENDIX 2:

QUESTIONNAIRE USED FOR CROWD SURVEY AT THE LAKE PERFORMANCE (28.09.1996)

DZINA(arali vha tshi funa) : .....

MBEU : .....

VHA OZULA NGAFHI?: .....

VHA SHUMA NGAFHI? : .....

VHA SHUMA MINI? : .....

MINWAHA YAVHO : .....

Vho zwi pfa hani nga ha uyu mushumo [kha vha nange]

1. Vho-Mudzunga vho nthamba.
2. Vho-Mudzunga vho mmbudza nga hazwo
3. Ndi shaka la Vho-Mudzunga
4. Ndo pfa Vho-Mudzunga vha tshi khou amba kha radio
5. Ndo Vhudzwa nga khonani yanga
6. Ndo zwi pfa musi ndi Johannesburg

Vha vhona zwi na khombo naa uri Vho-Mudzunga vha bambele Fundudzi [EE] [HAI]

Vha vhona zwi tshi ofhisa naa (khombo) uri Vho-Mudzunga vha dzhene ngomu ngomani yavho [EE] [HAI]

Ndi ngani vhone Vho da fhano Fundudzi namusi? .....

NAME : (optional):..... SEX: M/F...

WHERE DO YOU LIVE?:.....

WHERE DO YOU WORK : .....

WHAT WORK DO YOU DO?:.....

WHAT IS YOUR AGE?: .....

How did you hear about this event? [tick one]

1. Mr Mudzunga gave me an invitation
2. Mr Mudzunga told me about it
3. I am a relative of Mr Mudzunga
4. I heard Mr Mudzunga talking on the radio
5. I was told by a friend about it
6. I heard about when I was in Johannesburg

Is it dangerous for Mr Mudzunga to swim in Lake Fundudzi? [Y] [N]

Is it dangerous for Mr Mudzunga to get inside his drum [Y] [N]

Why did you come to lake Fundudzi today? .....

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Author Kaplan O M
Name of thesis Creativity At The Margins: The Performances Of An Artist In The Venda Region Of South Africa Kaplan O M 1998

PUBLISHER:
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg
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