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CONTINUITIES AND CHANGES IN NDEBELE BEADWORK : C. 1883 TO THE PRESENT

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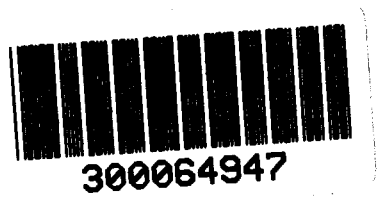
A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Arts, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, for the Degree of Master of Arts.

Johannesburg 1990.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DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation is my own work. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University.

Dkevy

31st day of March, 1990.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation is a study of Ndebele beadwork in terms of continuities and changes in types, styles and functions. In order to explore these concerns, it is relevant to consider the changing circumstances of the beadwork and, accordingly, both historical and contemporary contexts are discussed. To inform on these themes even further, secondary sources of photographic documentation are examined to provide additional, or to confirm existing information on the art.

The Introduction provides a critical analysis of the literature on the beadwork. This literature is discussed in a broad chronology, from the 1920s to the present, considering different socio-political contexts which have influenced the research. In addition to identifying the literature which is useful for an understanding of the beadwork, gaps in the information and methodological weaknesses are defined. These gaps provide pointers for issues and approaches which are adopted in the following chapters. In the course of the Introduction, it becomes apparent that most of the literature has been structured within ahistorical methodologies, resulting in many complex and subtle areas of change being ignored. The Introduction thus defines more open-ended methodologies which are employed in the dissertation. These involve approaching the beadwork from previously unexplored perspectives, including the use of photographic documentation as a potentially rich source of information; an exploration of the relationship between the beadwork and Ndebele history; and the effects of the contemporary commercial markets on the production and functions of the beadwork.

In Chapter One, a detailed analysis of photographic documentation of the Ndebele is made. This involves research on the earliest known documentation by Alfred Martin Duggan-Cronin, dating to 1923 and 1933. This body of work has not been investigated thoroughly in the existing literature, and

although highly problematic, it is seen to provide useful visual information on early beadwork. Furthermore, it invites comparison with examples of old and recently made beadwork seen in galleries, shops and private collections. The identification of the types of beadwork seen in these photographs is extended into a discussion of the social functions of these items. Existing knowledge relating to such functions, as found in the literature, is augmented and extended by information obtained through fieldwork and through studying many beadwork artefacts. In order to identify continuities and changes in the types and styles of the beadwork, more recent photographic documentation is analysed. Reference is made to the images of Constance Stuart Larrabee, who photographed the Ndebele in the 1940s, 1960s and 1980s. Unfortunately, her work proved to be inaccessible, and is thus highlighted as an important area for future research. More detailed visual comparisons are made between the work of Duggan-Cronin and that of Margaret Courtney-Clarke, who documented the Ndebele in the 1980s.

Having identified the main types of beadwork and their social functions, Chapter Two explores the possible origins of the beadwork, providing an historical context which explains why there may have been a need for this art to develop. Thus the oldest known beadwork is dated to the 1880s, relating to the aftermath of the defeat of the Ndebele by the Boers during the Mapoch War of 1883. The circumstances which are described help to explain why the beadwork probably became an important means for the women to express their social status within the group, and furthermore, how it came to communicate ethnic identity to outsiders. By extension, this chapter also raises issues relating to the historical role of women in Ndebele society.

An interpretation of the beadwork in an historical context helps to explain why, and how, the social functions of the art developed. This led to questioning to what extent these

functions are operative today, and concomitantly, the extent to which 'traditional' types continue to be produced.

Chapter Three therefore explores the beadwork in a contemporary context, focusing on the commercial market which has become a major motivation in the production of this art. The extent to which the market has determined changes in the types and styles of the beadwork is addressed, and some of the different kinds of markets, and the way they operate, are defined. Shifts in the women's roles, in the light of their participation in an economic sphere, are also considered.

This dissertation ends with a Conclusion, in which the main features of the research, as discussed in the previous sections, are summarised. Pertinent observations, resulting from this study of Ndebele beadwork, are highlighted. A number of questions are raised in considering the future of the beadwork, in terms of its production and functions, recognising that this art has always been, and will continue to be, characterised by continuities and changes.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I would sincerely like to thank my supervisor and friend, Sandra Klopper, for tirelessly guiding me with invaluable critical assistance and advice. Her encouragement, support and patience throughout my research and production of my dissertation are greatly appreciated.

During the course of my research (1986-1990), I was able to speak to many Ndebele women, both in rural and urban areas. It is not possible to name everyone, but I would like to thank all the women for their hospitality, patience and willingness to share their knowledge with me. In particular, the following women were of much assistance. They all contributed to my research in important ways:

Johanna Tobela
Catherine Mahlangu
The wife of Chief David Mabhogo
Fransina Ndimande
Maria Sibanyoni
Letty Mgoma
Emma Mahlangu
Sara Kabine
Lena Mtsweni
Johanna Skosana
Lettie Ndala
Sophie Mahlangu
Betty Mthombeni
Margaret Mahlangu
Sophie Matibela
Anna Mthimunye
Dora Mabena
Martha Motha
Lena Msiza
Sophie Mgidi
Ellen Tshabalala
Anna Mabena

Sophie Skosana
Maria Maposa
Emma Masanabo
Antjie Matibela
Sara Mahlangu
Anna Kabine
Letty Mahlangu
Lena Skosana
Mali Nduli
Fuduka Mahlangu.

Thanks to my interpretors, Mimi Ntuli, Malka Mabena and Steven Umlaw, who were indispensible for my research. Richard Ndala and his family also assisted in the Nebo area, and their hospitality is greatly appreciated.

I would like to thank the following people who have encouraged and advised me throughout my research:

June Hosford
Ann Wanliss
Rayda Becker
Elizabeth Schneider
Anitra Nettleton
Aubrey Elliott
Deborah James
David Goldblatt
Diana Mabudaphasi
Mark Hurwitz.

I would like to thank the McGregor Museum, Kimberley, for granting permission to reproduce the Duggan-Cronin photographs. In addition, Fiona Barbour was most helpful in providing me with access to the original photographs, records and beadwork collection in the McGregor Museum.

Sincere thanks to Bob Knoops and Hayley Berman for assistance with some of the photographs, to Michelle Jersky for assistance with proof reading, and especially to Joan Pepper for her wordprocessing skills in putting together the entire production. Her constant patience, good humour and willingness to help were greatly appreciated.

Thanks to the Human Science Research Council, the Standard Bank Group Foundation for African Art and the University of the Witwatersrand for the financial awards I received to assist me with my research.

Finally, many thanks to all friends and family for their encouragement and support.

INTRODUCTION

Ndebele beadwork has always had a popular appeal because of its use of bright colours and decorative patterns. It has been photographed and written about since the 1920s, but despite frequent descriptions of certain of its functions, many issues remain unaddressed. The search for defining meaning in, and the functions of, the beadwork must begin with an assessment of the literature relating to this art. This will clarify problems pertinent to the subject, as well as highlight alternative, or complementary approaches which may broaden our knowledge of the beadwork.

The literature on the material culture of the Ndebele consists of a relatively small body of writings. It includes works by authors from various academic backgrounds, such as Art History, Anthropology, Ethnology and Architecture, as well as authors who have an interest in the field, but who have not necessarily received any formal training in an established academic discipline. These factors are significant to acknowledge insofar as the same kind of information cannot always be expected, nor can the same criteria always be used to assess, for example, an academic thesis and a coffee-table type book.

The earliest known, written documentation on the Ndebele is a doctoral thesis by a Dutch Reformed theology student, H.C.M. Fourie. His book, entitled Amandebele van Fene Mahlangu en hun Religieus-Sociaal Leven, was published in 1921. It is not readily obtainable, and is inaccessible to scholars without a working knowledge of Dutch. However, in 1978, Kuper, Professor of Cultural Anthropology of Africa at Rijksuniversiteit, Leiden, published an article in English entitled "Fourie and the Southern Transvaal Ndebele", in which he summarised the content of Fourie's work.

He notes that "most surprisingly ... there is virtually nothing on the material culture of the Ndebele, which has so struck others by its verve and originality" (1978:108). According to Kuper, Fourie provided detailed descriptions of some ceremonies, such as the wedding rituals, but he only refers in passing to the appearance of the bride, noting that "dressed and adorned, (she) is escorted by supporters" (1978:115). Other very general references to adornment are cited in connection with the *wela*, male initiation. Fourie describes the rituals that occur after circumcision, during seclusion, as follows:

> "From the fourth day they smear their faces with white clay, and from the eighth day they smear their whole bodies; the clay is washed off every night. They are dressed in an *isidhwaba*, a black garment with a white border, made by their fathers, and wear caps of red hare skin ... (After two months) they return, singing, in new clothes"[1] (1978:118-119).

All that is apparently listed under a heading of "material culture" is that "they had their own forges. The Mashabango family was originally famous for iron-working, but later the Mahlangu and Masombukas (royals) also practised the craft" (1978:122). This reference may be of relevance for the beadwork, as panels made of metal rings were often attached to the women's back apron, the *isithimba* (fig.33), seen even in the oldest examples dating to the late nineteenth century.

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1. It is likely that the red, white and black colours have symbolic significance in the context of the *wela*. This colour triad is very common in ritual situations amongst various groups. For example, amongst the Zulu (and other groups), these colours are associated with the training and practise of diviners, and they are made visible in various ways, such as bodies being covered in red clay. (See A.I.Berglund, Zulu Thought Patterns and Symbolism 1976). With reference to the Ndembu of Zambia, Turner explored a range of symbolic meanings expressed in these colours (see The Forest of Symbols 1967). The specific meanings of red, white and black in relation to the Ndebele *wela* have not yet been established.

However, this is not mentioned by Fourie whose only other descriptions of material culture refer to musical instruments.

Fourie's apparent lack of awareness of Ndebele material culture is almost certainly because it seems that he did not do his own fieldwork, but "relied heavily on texts collected from informants" (1978:108). It is not clear who Fourie's "informants" were, but they appear to have included non-Ndebele people bringing him information while he was stationed in an urban area, possibly Pretoria. According to Kuper, Fourie probably did witness a few ceremonies first hand, but most of his descriptions were based on the reports of others, and "a great weight is given to the information of a white resident, C.M. du Plooy, a man of seventy-six who grew up amongst the Ndebele, spoke their language perfectly, and was in many respects treated as one of them" (1978:108). The apparent gaps and inconsistencies in Fourie's work were partly a result of the fact that, according to Kuper, "ethnography (for Fourie) was clearly a hobby, and the material was collected and written up while (he) was busy with other things" (1978:108).

These reasons may account for the conspicuous absence of reference to the beadwork, a tradition which certainly did exist at the time. Although dating of this art is highly problematic, there is evidence to suggest that it was already being produced during the late nineteenth century, if not earlier (see Chapters One and Two). The earliest extant items can be dated to at least the late 1800s, and the earliest known photographic documentation of the Ndebele, illustrating the use of beadwork, dates to the 1920s and 1930s. The majority of these images were taken by the photographer Alfred Martin Duggan-Cronin; his work will be referred to later in the Introduction and more fully in Chapter One.

A few other early photographs were taken by another researcher, N.J. Van Warmelo. Van Warmelo was a government ethnologist whose interest lay in the histories and linguistics of the indigenous cultural groups of southern Africa. His main work, which included a section on the Ndebele, was entitled A Preliminary Survey of the Bantu Tribes of South Africa (1935). In this publication, he dealt with issues including 'tribal' classification, geographical location, history and linguistics, but not with material culture. The presence of Ndebele beadwork is indicated in his Transvaal Ndebele Texts, published in 1930, based on fieldwork during the late 1920s. However, the focus of this work is on Ndebele History, Language, Texts and Vocabulary. The beadwork is not dealt with in any systematic way, partly because of Van Warmelo's interest in other issues. In addition, he himself admitted that his work on this group was limited because circumstances prevented him from undertaking more extensive research (1930:Preface).

Thus beadwork is only occasionaly mentioned in some of the texts where it was relevant to describe, for example, "Marriage and Courtship", and folklore, or what Van Warmelo calls "Fairy Tales". He published all of these texts in the vernacular, and in English translation. It seems that when known, vernacular names of beadwork are included, or general references are made to "beads" and "beadwork". For example, in the text entitled "Youthful Courtship", there is a description of how a girl will take "a necklace of beads or a doll, and give it to a young man she has fallen in love with" (1930:35). In a description of "Marriage", it is noted that at a certain stage, a bride puts an *isiyaya* on her head. Van Warmelo describes this in a footnote as "a mask of strung beads through which she can see but which conceals the features" (1930:41). One of the 'fairy tales' describes "The Girl who threw her kirtle into the river". The vernacular of kirtle, *ixabi, (lighabi)* is given, and is described by Van Warmelo as "a kind of kirtle made of strung

beads, worn by girls" (1930:57). The same story also mentions the *isithimba*, described in the text only as being made "for behind" (1930:56).

The captions for the photographs which illustrate women wearing beadwork are also brief, and not very informative - for example, "Ndebele Girl dressed for a special occassion", or "A Wedding Guest" (fig.2). As in the texts, vernacular names are included when known, as in "Bride wearing the *isiyaya*" (fig.3). One caption, referring to three images of women wearing mainly body and head rings, comments more directly on the beadwork, although details are not specific:

> "Small white and red beads[2] are used exclusively on a core of fine grass. Only the larger rings can be removed, the others are made on the body and are worn day and night" (1930:opp.42; fig.1 shows one of these images).

Van Warmelo's work on the Ndebele raises another important issue relating to the history and classification of the group, which is of relevance for the study of the beadwork. His main sources on the history of the Ndebele were Fourie, a 1905 Native Affairs Department publication called History of the Native Tribes of the Transvaal, and information obtained from informants during his own fieldwork. Van Warmelo acknowledged that there were problems in writing about the Ndebele because knowledge of their history was slight (1930:8).

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2. This early use of red and white echoes the colours appearing in the men's adornment during the *wela*, as described by Fourie. It is possible that the colours used in the early beadwork, which were mainly white with very simple designs in blues, reds or greens, may have also reflected some symbolic code. The style of the beadwork has become much more complex and colourful since then, although specific colour ranges make Ndebele beadwork distinct from the beadwork of other groups. Dominant Ndebele colour choices include white, black, dark blues, purple, reds and dark greens. However, it seems unlikely that these colours have symbolic meaning. Conversations with many Ndebele women (Fieldwork 1986-1990) have not revealed any systematic colour coding. It is possible that specific regional or individual meanings may apply, but these are difficult to establish.

His insistance, though, that information based on "tribal tradition" was unreliable "because individuals that really know the history of their people are rare" (1930:8), is highly questionable, as oral history is increasingly regarded as a valid and important source of information. It provides an interpretation of events from the point of view of the people themselves, and may therefore be a more accurate reflection and perception of events than some written histories. As Hamilton argues in her M.A. dissertation entitled Ideology, Oral Tradition and the Struggle for Power in the Early Zulu Kingdom (1985), oral traditions are

> "usually in daily currency in a society ... In non-literate societies, traditions are the arena in which different sets of ideas about the world confront one another, square up, and take cognizance of one another ... Traditions are active, and in certain senses, autonomous, mediating among the interests of several groups ... " (60).

But despite Van Warmelo's bias, he usefully recorded important versions of myths on the origins of the Ndebele, including some versions quoted in detail, both in the vernacular and in translation (see Appendix Two). These myths will be discussed in Chapter Two. What will emerge as significant is that at some historical point, the Ndebele, after a quarrel amongst brothers over the chieftainship, split into at least two sections under the brothers Manala and Ndzundza. This division is recognised as a historical reality, as these sub-groups are still identifiable today. At present, the Ndzundza form the majority; but despite the fact that most of the Manala seem to have assimilated with the Ndzundza, there remains a strong awareness of different identities, and different dialects are still sometimes spoken.

In terms of the beadwork, the Manala/Ndzundza history is of potential significance, albeit highly problematic. Van Warmelo's Transvaal Ndebele Texts was based on fieldtrips to Wallmannsthal, a mission station near Pretoria, and the Ndebele living in that area were Manala. Duggan-Cronin's

photographs of 1933 were also taken at Wallmannsthal, presumably also of Manala people. These facts provoke some pertinent questions: Were the Ndzundza also making and using beadwork during this time, that is the 1920s and 1930s? Did the beadwork originate with one group, to be passed on to the other? To what extent can stylistic and/or functional differences in Manala and Ndzundza beadwork be identified? Can such differences be traced chronologically, and what is the situation today in terms of Manala and Ndzundza beadwork? Were there, and are there today, any differences in function? These issues, which have not been addressed by researchers to date, will be discussed in Chapters One and Two.

Further ethnographic and anthropological information on the Ndebele appeared in The Bantu-Speaking Tribes of South Africa, edited by Schapera. This was published first in 1937, and was re-issued in 1959. An up-dated version, The Bantu-Speaking Peoples of South Africa, edited by Hammond-Tooke, was published in 1974.

In Schapera's publication, a section on the Ndebele was included as part of Van Warmelo's chapter entitled "Grouping and Ethnic History". This chapter dealt with a number of Nguni and Sotho groups. The information on the Ndebele was a summary of what had appeared in Van Warmelo's 1935 publications. An interesting observation made by him in Schapera's volume was that "the Southern group today comprises a single senior tribe, the Manala, and a junior tribe, the Ndzundza, which was broken up fifty years ago and is now represented by over half a dozen sections" (1937:53). The period to which Van Warmelo refers is the Mapoch War of the early 1880s, a battle between the Ndzundza and the Boers, during which the Ndzundza were heavily defeated. The consequences of the war may have had some implications for the development of the beadwork, including the possibility that the break-up of the Ndzundza may have resulted in regional variations in the style of the art. These issues

will be explored in Chapter Two. Besides Van Warmelo's section on the Ndebele, there are just a few brief mentions of this group in other chapters in Schapera's book, generally referring to, for example, a custom or a ritual ceremony. No mention is made of the art of the Ndebele.

It was only in 1974 that there was a shift in attitude towards recognising the material cultures of indigenous southern African groups. In Hammond-Tooke's up-dated version of Schapera's publication, Van Warmelo again provided notes on the Ndebele as part of his chapter entitled "The Classification of Cultural Groups"; this repeated the information that had appeared in the earlier publication. What is significant is that a separate chapter on "Material Culture" was now included, written by Margaret Shaw. This article covered many facets, including settlements, agriculture, clothing and pottery, as well as a sub-section on beadwork. The information, though, is generalised, with only occasional references to specific groups. No reference was made to Ndebele beadwork in particular. But Shaw did discuss the probability that beads have been available to the black groups in southern Africa through trade for many centuries, first from the Arabs, and, between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, from the Portuguese on the East Coast. She commented that beads "reached the Transvaal in greater quantities than they reached the Cape" (1974:121). Information on trade is significant for exploring the origins and dating of the beadwork, discussed in Chapter Two.

One of the first researchers to deal specifically with Ndebele material culture was Professor A.L. Meiring, then head of the School of Architecture, Pretoria University. He published the earliest written research on Ndebele art between 1931 and 1955. His articles included "Iets oor die Amandebele" (1931), "Kultuur van die Bantoe" (1949), "So bou die N'debele hul hutte" (1953), and "The Amandebele of Pretoria" (1955).

In all these articles, Meiring's focus was largely on the architecture and wall decoration. His interest was such that in 1953, he involved the Pretoria University's School of Architecture in an undertaking to record a particular Ndebele settlement which was being forced to resettle elsewhere (1953:224; 1955:28). He was also instumental in enlisting the aid of the Native Affairs Department to "find some good arable ground for (this group) in the Native Trust Area" (1955:28). Meiring does not indicate, however, why this settlement was forceably removed. A newspaper article of 1953 reported that "120 inhabitants of the village (had) ... been given notice by their European landlord", and they were "taken in lorries to Klipgat in the Native Reserve, 25 miles from Pretoria" (E.P.A. 1/9/53).

Recent research by James (1987) describes some of the reasons for evictions such as this one, which took place especially after the Nationalist government came into power in 1948. In the early 1950s, most Ndebele families were tenants on white farms. James claims that

> "in many cases, these people left the farms, not through choice or dissatisfaction at stringent conditions ... but as a result of eviction ... by their employer/landlords. These evictions occured because of major changes in the scale and capital-intensiveness of white agriculture, and because of related Government legislation enforcing the abolition of labour tenancy and 'squatting': institutions thought to be incompatible not only with modern agricultural methods but also with the ideology of *Apartheid*" (James 1987:41; ref. to Mare 1980:8-15).

Meiring's primary concern was to preserve a part of Ndebele material culture as manifest amongst the people of "this lovely settlement" (1955:27), who took such "painstaking care in the execution of the bold patterns of coloured decorations on the walls" (1955:28). On the basis of what he saw at this settlement, and at other homesteads, Meiring described the 'typical Ndebele lapa', its plan, construction and decoration (1953,1955).

In 1955, in "The Amandebele of Pretoria", Meiring briefly discusses the beadwork, indicating, though, that "a whole book could be ... written about the personal ornaments worn by the Ndebele women" (1955:34). Meiring recognised the limitations of his research, stating that "in this article I can only name the various articles of ornamentation and attempt a description of their material and manufacture" (1955:34). All he was able to do was to provide general descriptions of the beadwork, without any vernacular names, and no indication of function. For example, he describes the form of the beaded body rings, worn by the women, as follows:

> "A circlet of dry grass forms the core of the bands around which threaded beads are tightly and evenly wound ... " (1953:34).

The beadwork designs are described as following "that of the decoration of the hut walls, viz. a patterning in colour on a background of white ... these are of gay colours, but so well placed next to one another that the harmony is always perfect" (1955:34).

The form and patterning of an Ndebele 'skirt' is also described, with a vague suggestion that it serves some function:

> "(The 'skirt') is about 18" by 15" in size, and consists of a hard leather or stout double canvas sheet, over the front of which (a woman) embroiders a pattern in coloured beads so exquisite that it is obviously more than just another piece of adornment" (1955:35).[3]

He also assumed that the patterns on the beadwork and wall painting were ascribed meaning, but he was unable to identify any, as "what it is, the N'Debele cannot, or will not explain" (1955:35). The gaps in Meiring's information on

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3. This description refers to the *isiphephetu* apron, worn by young unmarried women (fig.31). See Chapter One for a full description of the style and function of this apron.

the beadwork were partly a result of the fact that his main concern was with the architecture and wall decoration. Furthermore, detailed information would not have been available to him from other sources. As indicated, early researchers such as Fourie and Van Warmelo had not concentrated on the material culture, and no one had as yet undertaken specific research on the beadwork. Like Van Warmelo's research, Meiring's work on this art is limited and is not particularly informative for details relating to possible stylistic variations, vernacular names and functions of the beadwork.

However, Meiring's attitude towards the Ndebele and their art is significant, because it was (and sometimes still is) an attitude shared by many others, despite the fact that it presents a limited and eurocentric view of the Ndebele.

Meiring noted that the Ndebele men "all wear European clothes (and) ... there is nothing to distinguish them from other Bantu males ... " (1955:34). This observation is frequently made by researchers, but whether or not this is only a twentieth century development is never explored. Why it is therefore only the women who wear beadwork on a daily basis is also an issue usually ignored. It is worth noting further that although most of the adornment is associated with women, a few items they wear have associations with men. In addition to these articles, there are a few items worn by the men themselves (see Appendix One). This seems to occur only on ritual occasions, whereas (at least until quite recently), women wore beadwork on a daily basis. These factors will be dealt with in Chapters Two and Three.

Meiring, however, was attracted to what were, in his terms, the most obviously striking feature in the appearance of the women:

> "The object which most distinguishes the N'Debele woman from others in the European view is her blanket, and what he then has in mind is the broadly striped and colourful blanket which he has seen and admired ... (1955:34).

Although Meiring does not mention these blankets as being

beaded, he illustrated such examples in his photographs.[4] What is pertinent in the above description is that the Ndebele woman's appeal to the outsider was linked to her bright and colourful appearance. In other words, the women were perceived as exotic. This impression is reinforced in the way Meiring describes the 'striking' Ndebele women and their art within a brief historical background which ignores some harsh realities. Here, Meiring refers to the 1883 Mapoch War between the Ndebele and the Boers, which resulted in the defeat and indenture of the Ndebele to white farmers. But he does not give any indication whatsoever of any of the hardships suffered by the Ndebele; instead he preserves his picturesque image of a people undisturbed by changing circumstances, people who after their defeat continued to lead "contented lives", and who "just picked up the threads as they had left them in their country of origin and transplanted all the old traditions and customs to their new life on the farms" (1955:27).

Not only does Meiring exhibit a lack of sensitivity and insight into the suffering and possible perceptions of the Ndebele themselves, but his simplistic interpretation of historical events does a disservice to the art as well. As will be seen in Chapter Two, an understanding of some of the functions of the beadwork is dependent on an awareness of the Ndebele people's experiences and responses to historical circumstances such as the Mapoch War.

Furthermore, Meiring bemoans the "circumstances" which created change for the Ndebele, but he does not discuss the details pertaining to their forced removal, nor does he seem to realize that there is an ironic contradiction in his attitude. As indicated, the group was forced to move for reasons beyond its control; Meiring was therefore part of

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4. See, for example, photographs reproduced in "The Amandebele of Pretoria", 1955:31,33.

"the same society that was engaged in wiping out local customs and traditional practises ... that was also avid to preserve them" (Nochlin 1983:127).

It is pertinent, at this point, to consider why a need to 'preserve the culture of the native' developed in South Africa during the first few decades of the twentieth century. The underlying motivations for this interest determined the attitudes of many researchers towards black groups, attitudes which were influenced by commonly-held perceptions of the time. Ethnographical research provides a focus for this interest.

Recent researchers have explored the traditions of ethnography and anthropology in South Africa within the context of the development of twentieth century political ideologies. For example, John Wright describes how, during the first decades of the twentieth century, and particularly during the post-World War I era, "a number of deep-seated changes were taking place in the structure of South African society" (1986:101). Amongst these was the increasing urbanisation of African workers. The government's response was to push them "back into the reserves, (where) a system of control ... through 'traditional' African authorities was to be resuscitated, with emphasis on ethnic and cultural separatism" (1986:102). As part of this development, a number of channels were created to support and justify government 'native' policy, channels which included a direct and close relationship between the state and academic institutions. Wright suggests that "it is no accident that in this period funds were made available for the establishment of the first departments of what would now be called African Studies at South African universities, at Cape Town in 1920, and at the University of the Witwatersrand in 1923, with a department of *volkekunde* at Stellenbosch in the late 1920s"

(1986:103).[5]

The establishment of additional channels for research included the founding, in 1921, of the Bantu Studies journal, concerned with investigating indigenous cultures (Wright 1986:103). In 1925, the Department of Native Affairs "set up its own ethnological section, with the aim of promoting scientific research into African ethnography and linguistics in order to obtain information, which, it was felt, 'was likely to prove of the greatest assistance in the smooth and harmonious administration of tribal affairs and in the prevention of friction'" (Wright 1986:104). In 1926, the government began to make funds available for academic research into African life, and set up an advisory committee on African Studies, whose members were drawn mainly from the universities (Wright 1986:104). Research into 'tribal' groups continued, culminating in widely recognised works such as Van Warmelo's A Preliminary Survey of the Bantu Tribes of South Africa (1935), and Schapera's The Bantu-Speaking Tribes of South Africa (1937).

The effect of this research was to create a particular notion of the 'natives'. A dominant image that emerged - through both the English anthropological and Afrikaans *volkekunde* disciplines - was that of discrete, isolated black groups. The sources for this impression were derived from British and European traditions. For example, many South African anthropologists were trained in the British tradition, and thus accepted the "bounded tribe" as the "primary unit" of study; in other words, "a group of people which was seen as occupying a specific territory under the political authority of a chief, as being more or less united by ties of kinship, culture and language" (Wright 1986:104).

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5. Sharp, in his article "The Roots and Development of *Volkekunde* in South Africa" (1981), shows that many of the academics involved in *volkekunde* were supporters of government ideologies, especially after the Nationalist Party came into power in 1948, and were frequently employed in government departments.

The 'separateness' of these groups was also an important principle for *volkekundiges*, many of whom were dependent on the German anthropological concept of "ethnos". This proposed that

> "mankind is divided into *volke* (nations, peoples), and that each *volk* has its own particular culture, which may change but which always remains authentic to the group in question ... An individual is born into a particular *volk*; its members are socialized into its attendant culture; therefore they acquire a *volkspersoonlikheid* (a *volk*-personality)" (Sharp 1981:19).

As a corrollary to these academic justifications of the 'intrinsic' separateness of different black groups, researchers sought to document and preserve indigenous cultures. Meiring's work can be understood in this context, where the 'natives' are regarded as distant and picturesque. Interpreted as precious remnants of disappearing ways of life, worth hunting down and preserving, "they are finally transformed into subjects of esthetic delectation ... " (Nochlin 1983:127).

These attitudes were also reflected in popular perceptions of black South African groups. The local press, for example, which reported on and supported Meiring's activities, reinforced the picturesque, 'bounded' and ultimately timeless image of the Ndebele. Thus their wall painting was described as being of "age-old designs" (Cape Times Weekly Magazine 21/6/1952). In another article, a report lyrically described how

> "for centuries, the N'Debele people ... have built their decorative homes, painting the patterns which glow in the brown setting of the Transvaal veld ... the scattered families keep closely to their ancient custom - a lovely relic of a colourful and indigenous culture" (Cape Argus 18/9/1954).

Thus the existence of an old, static tradition was presupposed, by implication, one which existed in a society isolated from others. In creating this image, historical fac-

tors affecting the Ndebele were ignored, and even the obvious overlooked, such as the fact that the "colourful" wall decorations were only achieved after contact with the Europeans, when bright, store-bought paints became available.

Furthermore, no attempt was made to confront the harsh experiences of the Ndebele people themselves. For example, the central issue of land was not considered: the fact that the Ndebele lost all their land to the Boers after the Mapoch War of 1883; that their location on white farms during the 1940s and 1950s was a historical consequence of this war, as was the fact that they had no control over, or choice as to where they could live, and that their eviction left them with nowhere to go. The 'natives' were conceived as being content with their circumstances. The Pretoria News (14/8/1953) reported that "all the Mapochs, according to Professor Meiring, are eager to start the cultivation of their lands for the new planting season". The Cape Argus (18/9/1954) reported that "their colourful settlement was in danger of being demolished, but .... they have been safely installed on Native Trust Land".

The subsequent history of this particular settlement indicates, instead, that the group was disrupted by *apartheid* legislation yet again, a generation later. For a number of years, this settlement operated as the tourist village of Kwa Msiza. It became a place for outsiders, that is tourists, to come and observe the Ndebele in their 'traditional' habitat, and to buy their 'traditional' crafts. In the 1970s, this area of land was incorporated into the 'independent homeland' of Bophutatswana, and as such it was no longer acceptable for Ndebele people to live there. To all intents and purposes, this village 'disappeared'. But although it no longer operates as a tourist village, some Ndebele families do live there still.

Meiring does discuss aspects of Ndebele history, but his perception of this history is essentially eurocentric. As indicated, in one of his articles (1955) he refers to the 1883 Mapoch War, a seminal episode in Ndebele history. But his version of the aftermath of the battle between the Boers and the Ndebele is simplistic, and lacks insight into actual events.

After the war, the defeated Ndebele were indentured to work on white farms. According to Meiring,

> " ... the system worked very well on both sides; the farmers were sure of their labour force ... and the N'Debele enjoyed the security of a settled family life under the protection of the burgers and the laws of the land ... " (1955:27).

Contrary to Meiring's assertion, this war and its aftermath were far from such trouble-free experiences. Recent researchers such as Delius (1983,1987), Schneider (1987), and James (1987) have explored the war more thoroughly, with a view to highlighting the perceptions and experiences of the Ndebele rather than that of their conquerors.

A consideration of Ndebele history has not been a major concern in much of the literature on the beadwork, where authors have tended to look towards a typology of the art to the exclusion of its history, and of its changing functions. This approach is apparent in earlier and later publications, as well as in scholarly and popular writings. Although the beadwork is not always regarded as a static tradition, there is little attempt to confront the issues of changes in the beadwork fully. Some publications, such as those of Knight and Priebatsch (1977, 1978, 1983), Bruce (1976), and Levinsohn (1984) include references to Ndebele history, but this is usually provided as an introduction, or as background information; it is generally treated as an area distinct from, and therefore largely irrelevant to, a consideration of the artistic traditions.

The importance of exploring the relationship between Ndebele history, and the history and development of the beadwork, will be addressed in Chapter Two. What will emerge is that historically, at least, there appears to have developed a strong striving amongst the Ndebele people to achieve a sense of identity, and, importantly, this is manifest and reflected in their arts. This issue of the beadwork giving expression to an ethnic identity is a complex one. Initially, the acknowledgement of such a function seems to recall the negative associations of the term 'ethnicity' in the concepts of early anthropologists and *volkekundiges*, as discussed earlier. James points out that

> "in the South African context, the question of ethnicity is a morally-charged and difficult one ... because the enforcement of ethnic separation by the South African government has been seen to lie at the heart of *Apartheid's* worst atrocities" (1988:1).

Because of this, she notes,

> "scholars critical of state policy have tended to underemphasise these identities, and to stress instead uniting factors such as a common working-class identity. In recent years, however, a number of studies have singled out for analysis precisely this kind of strong group identification. While these works do acknowledge that the outer parameters within which strong ethnicity emerges have been set by state policy, they are equally concerned to examine the local-level processes through which it develops and is maintained. They also have in common an insistence that these group identities must be understood not in terms of primordial loyalties, but as affiliations established by specific, and recent, historical developments" (1988:1).

The beadwork, seen in the context of Ndebele history, can thus be interpreted as reflecting an ethnic solidarity that originated within the group itself, rather than being a construct simply imposed from without. This ethnicity needs to be recognised, as it is self-defined. Particularly in the South African context, the policies of *apartheid* have emphasised and imposed ethnic divisions, resulting in a

rejection of the concept of ethnicity. However, like James, Vail, in his Introduction to The Creation of Tribalism in South Africa (1989), argues that ethnicity is a more complex issue that is not only "primarily the result of a history of 'divide-and-rule' tactics which colonial governments cannily employed" (1989:3), and that it is more than "merely (a) cultural (ghost) lingering on into the present, (a) weakened (anomaly) from a fast receding past" (1989:1). He questions why ethnic consciousness has persisted in many black cultures throughout post-colonial Africa, and explores how

> "the creation of ethnicity as an ideological statement of popular appeal in the context of profound social, economic and political change in southern Africa was the result of the differential conjunction of various historical forces and phenomena" (1989:11).

Throughout his argument, the differences between imposed and self-defined ethnicities become apparent. In this light, Ndebele ethnicity can be regarded as a response to certain historical circumstances, as it fulfilled certain needs within the group. The creation of Ndebele art became part of these developments. This relationship between the growth of Ndebele ethnicity and Ndebele material culture will be explored in Chapter Two.

It is interesting that a researcher from the 1960's, Ode Weiss, was more aware than some later writers of the need to see the art against the background of the culture's history, "die hele kultuurkompleks" (1963:4). Her M.A. dissertation, Funksionele Kunsuitinge by die Amandzundza, was completed in 1963 at the University of Stellenbosch. Her work was the first major study on Ndebele material culture. In accordance with her own aims to undertake "'n wetenskaplike en volkekundige studie" (1963:1), it is far more comprehensive than Meiring's work. She provided a thorough historical background on the Ndebele, discussing the problems of different versions on the origins of the group. She briefly referred to the 1883 War as the catalyst resulting in the

dispersion of the group (1963:17). She was aware of the gap that existed in the available research on the Ndebele, and, as well as an exploration of Ndebele history, she provided a general but brief and uncritical survey of the literature. Her dissertation involved research on both the beadwork and the mural painting. This research is valuable in that Weiss was one of the first who attempted, and largely succeeded in, providing detailed information on these arts. This included the identification and description of various types of beadwork known to Weiss, their vernacular names, and explanations of some of their social functions.

Weiss drew on the works of Jacob and Stern (General Anthropology 1958) and Boas (General Anthropology 1939) to determine, in her terms, that the approach for the cultural anthropologist studying the art of non-literate people must be done on a scientific basis (1963:4). Referring to Jacobs and Stern, Weiss claimed that the anthropologist

> "poog om die oorsprong van die kuns en veranderinge wat mettertyd plaasvind, na te speur. Die inhoud of temas, die gedistileerde vorms, die sosiale rol of funksie en ander aspekte wat die kuns volledig sal uitbeeld, moet ook vasgestel word ... " (1963:4).

Weiss further called on these authors in recognising the need to take into account factors relating to the distribution of the art, materials, availability of tools, and technical problems which influence theme and style (1963:4).

Although her approach is clearly comprehensive, Weiss' anthropological model has limitations. She tended "to ask the questions 'how', 'where', 'when', and 'what', rather than the sociological one 'why'" (Sharp 1981:19). Subsequent researchers have also dealt with the former set of questions; while not irrelevant, their emphasis on these questions has resulted in repetitive information and a certain lack of depth in understanding the motivations for the making, and the functions of the beadwork. One of the con-

cerns of this dissertation is to attempt to answer the question 'why', and to explore internal and external factors which may have influenced the development of the beadwork.

Weiss was further restricted by her own insistence that her study be scientific, and that "die doel is nie om 'n kwalitatiewe uitspraak te gee nie" (1963:4). In the field of anthropology, (and this is of relevance for the study of African art as well), this apparently objective approach has been questioned, and is being replaced by more open-ended methodologies. For example, Sass, in a recent article called "Ferment in Anthropology" (1987), points out the "growing dissatisfaction" within the social sciences; a "sense that the time-honoured methods and assumptions, based largely on the natural sciences, are conceptually and morally bankrupt and need to be replaced by more sophisticated models" (1987:66).

Alternative approaches questioning traditional anthropological models have also been explored in a publication entitled The Politics of Anthropology: From Colonialism to Sexism Toward a View from Below, a collection of articles based on the IXth International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnographical Sciences (1973). The impetus behind this Congress was to explore aspects of the history and politics of anthropology, aspects which were previously ignored or neglected (1973:3). Like Sass, the researchers claim that the social sciences have "suffered considerably" (1973:3), and that "anthropology appears to be in need of liberating itself from certain Western biases" (1973: Preface, cover). The focus of these articles is more specific than Sass' call to draw on a wide range of models and experiences, as they challenge the notion that anthropology has nothing to do with politics. Huizer (1973:6) quotes Roger Keesing (1976:537), who claims that

> "it is being realised that not taking a political position, not making a moral commitment, is not neutral: it is making a commitment - to the support and continuation of the system of which one is a

> part and in which one is working anthropologically. If one does not 'notice' oppression because one is only a scientist and science does not concern itself with political issues, then one is being myopic and self-deluding about objectivity. Ultimately amorality is immorality".

It is apparent, then, that researchers of African art, drawing in part on recent anthropological models, do have alternative approaches to refer to, some of which will be used in this dissertation.

The literature on Ndebele beadwork, dating to the 1970s and 1980s, seldom provides fresh perspectives on this art. Although Weiss' work was apparently unknown to most of these writers, they adopt similar kinds of models, rather than looking to new ways of understanding the art, especially in terms of its changing contexts. The approaches adopted tend to be ahistorical. They therefore do not take cognizance of the effects on the beadwork of particular social, political and economic circumstances. Typologies of the forms and uses of the beadwork are usually given, again without seriously accomodating changes in the art, and the possible reasons thereof.

For example, Bruce, an ethnologist then affiliated with the Johannesburg Africana Museum, wrote an article entitled "The Arts and Crafts of the Transvaal Ndebele" in 1976. She provided a brief history of the Ndebele, and described the different types and social functions of the beadwork, with no vernacular names. She did acknowledge, though, that there were "imbalances" in her approach, that her article "was not intended as a systematic appraisal of (Ndebele) material culture", and that this culture was "worthy of more serious scholarship" (1976:149).

Knight and Priebatsch undertook research on Ndebele art during the 1970s and early 1980s, extending some of the information explored by Bruce. The results of this research were published in a number of articles: "Ndebele Dress and

Beadwork" (1977), "Traditional Ndebele Beadwork" (1978), and "Ndebele Figurative Art" (1979). In 1983, they held an exhibition of beadwork, accompanied by a catalogue entitled Ndebele Images. In all these publications, most of the information relates to providing typologies of the beadwork, and to describing some of its social functions. Although these authors do not seem to have been aware of Weiss' work, their approach is similar to hers. Knight and Priebatsch do provide historical information, especially in Ndebele Images, but, while useful, it does not confront the relationship between the art and historical circumstances. A single comment indicates this rather as a non-issue; in keeping with Meiring's attitude nearly thirty years earlier, Knight and Priebatsch simply state that "despite dispersal, the Mapochs managed to retain their customs" (1983:4).

During the 1980s, research on Ndebele material culture has generally remained repetitive and limiting. For example, Carey's publication, Beads and Beadwork of East and South Africa (1986), does not offer anything significantly new or different. Carey, an archaeologist who has been affiliated with the ethnographic departments of various London museums, includes a short section on Ndebele beadwork in her book which is part of a series published under the general title of Shire Ethnography, "intended for students of ethnography and the interested layman" (1986:cover). While this explains the limited scope of the publication, Carey does not attempt to throw any new light on the study of beadwork in south-east Africa.

One of the reasons for the repetitive information in the literature is that writers often draw on secondary sources. Bruce's bibliography, for example, includes early works by Fourie, Meiring, and Van Warmelo. Carey does not provide a comprehensive bibliography, but it is probable that she too drew on secondary sources and documented artefacts in British museums. She, like others, refers to some of the 'popular' publications, such as Tyrrell's Tribal Peoples of

Southern Africa (1968), Tyrrell and Jurgen's African Heritage (1983) and Levinsohn's Art and Craft of Southern Africa (1984). Some of the information these books provide is valid and useful. For example, in both books by Tyrrell (and Jurgens), various types of beadwork are discussed, and certain functions and associated rituals are described. Tyrrell's detailed illustrations are useful records of Ndebele adornment. Like much of the literature, however, these publications are largely descriptive and anecdotal. As will be seen, some of the information in Levinsohn's book is also useful, but it includes inaccuracies and limitations in the continued use of an historical framework. Consequently, over the last few decades, there has been a tendency to distill the existing information on the beadwork rather than to increase and challenge it.

Regardless of the limitations of Weiss' research, it is important to note that she, unlike later writers on the subject, raises many questions relevant to a consideration of the beadwork. One significant issue addressed in her dissertation concerns photographic documentation. In her Introduction, Weiss discusses problems relating to the lack of information on the Ndebele. She writes that "daar bestaan wel baie foto's en populêe geskrifte omtrent die Amandebele" (1963:1). However, she rejected this source material because

> "gewoonlik word hulle egter as 'n eienaardigheid en touriste-aantreklikheid uitgebeeld, sonder om die volkekundige waarde van hulle kunsuitinge te beklemtoon" (1963:1).

She also refers to photographic collections belonging to the South African Railways and Harbours, the Africana Museum, Johannesburg, and the Duggan-Cronin Museum, Kimberley, but claimed that "in werklikheid, is die meeste foto's vir die navorser van weinig nut" (1963:18). She was correct in pointing out that there are problems with much of this documentation, particularly in the lack of details relating to sources and dating. But a study of some of these

photographs is nevertheless highly revealing and informative. They reflect particular historical attitudes to the Ndebele and their art, which has largely determined the way they (the Ndebele) have been understood and researched. The photographs also provide visual documentation which is useful in establishing a chronology of the beadwork from the 1920s and 1930s, and in determining stylistic continuities and changes through comparison with later beadwork. One of the more significant collections is the work of Duggan-Cronin. Important issues and problems associated with these photographs will be discussed fully in Chapter One. This chapter will also explore more recent work such as the coffee-table publication of Margaret Courtney-Clarke, Ndebele: The Art of an African Tribe (1986).

Another important area to which Weiss is more sympathetic than later researchers is that of change in the arts, particularly in the context of what she, and others, call 'acculturation'. Many subsequent researchers consider changes resulting from contact with other groups (particularly with whites) as "unfortunate" and as a "degeneration of tradition" (Knight and Priebatsch 1983:24). The 'old' forms are regarded as 'pure'; the changes as corrupting.

Interestingly, Weiss had a more balanced view of these changes. Although far from fully explored, she was aware that these pointed to more complex interactions, not only between the Ndebele and whites but also between black groups:

> "Die Amandebele bewys dat akkulturasie nie net 'n proses van vandag of 'n aanraking met die Westerse kultuur is nie, maar ook 'n akkulturasie proses van inheemse groepe. Die proses in die verlede maklik geïgnoreer en akkulturasie word meestal gesien as aanraking van die Westerse lewenswyse met die primitiewe groepe" (1963:14).

She also noted a reciprocal trend, involving the appropriation of Ndebele style and images by white groups. Weiss recorded how Europeans were making use of Ndebele design and colour for decorating their own walls - "so is 'n Ndzundza vrou byvoorbeeld gekry om die skeidingsmuur tussen twee winkels in Capital Park Pretoria, te versier" (1963:116). A growing visibility and popularity of Ndebele art has developed in white markets since about 1985/6. There are many examples of Ndebele women being commissioned to paint doors and walls of the homes of white people; of a range of both black and white fine artists using and transforming Ndebele images in their art; of Ndebele designs being incorporated into 'Western' utilitarian objects. Some of these developments and interactions will be referred to in Chapter Three.

Cross-cultural borrowings and adaptations are important to recognise, indicating a complexity of process rather than an oversimplified notion of development which creates a dichotomy of 'old' equals 'pure', 'good' and 'rural'; 'new' equals 'corrupted', 'bad', and 'Westernized'. Weiss recognised this, by claiming that in many instances,

> "is dit nie net 'n proses van oorname nie, maar die vervorming en aanpassing by hulle eie kultuur. 'n Bepaalde voorwerp kan dus 'n hele verandering van waarde en funksie ondergaan" (1963:116).

The refusal of later researchers to confront the process of change in Ndebele beadwork is highlighted in Levinsohn's Art and Craft of Southern Africa:Treasures in Transition (1984).

Levinsohn claims to have undertaken, as did Duggan-Cronin fifty years earlier, to document the arts she saw disappearing because of acculturation. Interestingly, and somewhat disconcerting, she adopts an approach similar to that adopted by the photographer in the 1920s:

> "In the past decade, it has become increasingly and alarmingly apparent that these accessible, functional arts that reflect a lifestyle that is simple yet rich in its ultilization (sic) of nature's

materials as it reconciles the exigencies of environment, may well disappear into history undocumented ... " (1984:15).

This recalls the words of Duggan-Cronin, who wrote of the necessity to "preserve in pictorial record" the "primitive" lifestyles of the 'Natives', which was rapidly buckling under the "impact of civilization thrust upon it" (Humphreys 1961:74).

Levinsohn frequently writes both of the 'dying' art, and of the ongoing 'acculturated' arts. Yet in other ways, it seems that in her mind, the two form separate catagories:

> "Their cultural and value traditions in flux, (tribal artists) incorporate this dynamic (of acculturation) within their artistic expression, creating a visual panoply intriguing in its history at the same time that its evolution endangers the traditions themselves" (1984:135).

On the beadwork and wall painting in particular, she writes that "both forms possess significant cultural, ceremonial and decorative aspects that are now changing at a pace that endangers their continued existence" (1984:113). There is no apprehension that, in fact, the changes are helping the arts to survive and to grow; that the art has always been dynamic rather than static, and that change does not automatically imply loss of meaning, or degeneration of the art.

Klopper and Nettleton point out that

> "no real understanding of the dynamics of time-depth informs her discussion of arts 'in transition'. In order to study arts 'in transition', one must assume that they are changing in relation to what they used to be. Now this in itself makes or follows a common, but clearly erroneous, assumption in African Art studies, and that is that traditional societies are stagnant, synchronic in their perception of time and not ever in 'transition' until they clash with Western culture. Virtually all recent studies reject this notion altogether, yet Levinsohn does not even appear to have considered these issues ... " (1987:39).

Nevertheless, Levinsohn's information on Ndebele beadwork types still in use is generally accurate. But there are also some errors, and some interpretations which seem questionable. For example, the caption for her fig. 89 (1984:114) is inaccurate. Levinsohn identifies the "long strips" of beadwork (worn to hang down the sides of the women's faces) which "symbolize tears" as *siyaya*, when in fact they are known as *umlingakobe*. This error is repeated in the text (1984:116). Levinsohn apparently did not find it necessary to question the use of the same vernacular term for the wedding veil, which she also refers to correctly as *siyaya* (1984:120).

Levinsohn only occasionally footnotes her information, some of which seems to be derived from Peter Becker's Inland Tribes of Southern Africa (1979), Tyrrell's Tribal Peoples of Southern Africa (1968), and from "information obtained from guides and interpreters in the field" (1984:140). Yet some of the information seems idiosyncratic, and has been difficult to substantiate. For example, she explains the square holes sometimes placed across the width of a *nyoga* (bridal train) as indicating that the bride is not the first wife, and a flap woven at the end of the train is supposed to indicate that the bride is a virgin (1984:117). Now it is possible that this, and other interpretations given to other articles, are not invalid; they may have individual or regional or even historical meaning; but Levinsohn shows no caution in drawing such conclusions. Her information is presented as accurate and factual, with no indications of the problems associated with fieldwork, with obtaining information, such as conflicting interpretations.

Levinsohn's consideration of changes in style is also underdeveloped and confusing. She claims, for example, that "white beads predominate in the complete bridal costume" (1984:117), implying that this has always been so. Later, she contradicts this by stating that "designs vary as the older examples seem to be predominantly white and less pat-

terned than those of more recent creations" (1984:120). In addition to this, she argues very simplistically that "Westernization's effects are evident in newer designs which are geometric, often three-dimensional in effect, and include triangles, rectangles, parallelograms, diamonds, arcs and wavy lines, and may include alphabetic lettering which the people absorb from vehicle number plates or architectural studies" (1984:120). Here, as elsewhere, there is no understanding of the possible impetus for change that may have emerged within the group itself.

The consequent confusion, misinformation and out-dated approach to the study of southern African arts is disconcerting for a publication which emerges from a social context vastly different to that in which people like Meiring and Duggan-Cronin operated, a context in which researchers recognise change as a seminal feature of the arts. There is, in fact, some important literature on the subject of 'transitional' arts. Levinsohn refers to only one source, that of Graburn, but her reliance on his work is "not only parasitic but superficial" (Klopper and Nettleton 1987:46). Graburn, together with many other authors, including Richter (1980), Silver (1979) and Jules-Rosette (1984), provide stimulating thoughts and more complex methodologies for the study of 'changing arts', as well as recognising the validity of production for a commercial market.

This aspect, generally referred to as 'tourist art', is seldom explored in the literature on the Ndebele, and in many other studies on African art; it is usually dismissed as degenerative, as a prostitution of the 'real' thing. Again, it was Weiss who indicated that 'tourist' art is not necesarily a negative phenomenon:

> "Aanraking met die geldwese het 'n nuwe moontlikheid geopen, naamlik die verkoop van krale-artikels om 'n inkomste te verkry. Die kommersiele sy is dan verantwoordelik vir 'n hele nuwe vertakking in die kralewerk van die AmaNdzundza" (1963:117).

Chapter Three will explore the issues associated with the commercial markets for Ndebele beadwork, and how they are affecting the art.

CHAPTER ONE: PHOTOGRAPHIC DOCUMENTATION OF THE NDEBELE

Over the last few years, there have been shifts in the thinking about African art methodologies. Writers in the field have called for a consideration of, amongst other things, photography, in a more serious and complex way. In 1985, a special edition of African Arts was dedicated to photography in Africa, with the stated aim of making people "more conscious of how photographers shape the way we as outsiders approach and appreciate African arts" (Cole and Ross 28). Cole and Ross, in one of the articles in this edition, discuss some of the issues pertinent to photography and the study of African art. They point out that studies seldom address photography itself, its history and impact, or show the work of master photographers (1985:28). Furthermore, they claim that

> "field photography is not usually questioned or analysed, and more often than not appears to be an amateur form of data-gathering and record-keeping rather than an advanced technology or an art" (1985:28).

The authors suggest the need to explore the technologies, ethics, biases, interests and geographical purviews of photographers, as well as identifying and questioning the aspects of African art and life that have been featured or neglected by photographers (1985:28). Significantly, they also make a call to acknowledge and study photographic collections, both early and contemporary. They identify the need to survey, assemble and analyse nineteenth and early twentieth century photographic imagery, and for photographic resources in African nations to be carefully and systematically studied (1985:28).

They note that the "advent of photography as a viable portable medium and the serious study of African culture are nearly parallel developments" (1985:28). This is confirmed in the South African context, where the link is more than coincidental. The work of early twentieth century 'ethnographic' photographers in South Africa was partly encouraged by the same values which led to the interest in academic studies of the 'natives' - issues already discussed in the Introduction. As Cole and Ross correctly suggest, the history of photography is a "legitimate dimension of culture history and art history" (1985:28).

In the Ndebele context, photographic documentation provides visual information which helps to define the appearance of early and later beadwork in terms of form and style. By comparing and analysing early and more recent documentation, complemented by looking at actual beadwork articles, it is possible to determine at least some of the changes and continuities in the beadwork. It should be noted, though, that the available documentation makes it possible only to recreate conditions from the early 1920s, as there are no known photographic or illustrative sources which date back earlier. However, the beadwork depicted in the photographs may point to traditions that existed prior to the date on which the photographs were taken. Because of this, photography becomes a useful source to help establish the possible origins and dating of the beadwork, postulations which will be supported and extended in the exploration of Ndebele history in Chapter Two.

What also will emerge from a close analysis of the visual information, provided by photographs, will be a typology of the beadwork, which has, to some extent, been established by previous researchers. This chapter will, however, compile a more comprehensive typology, drawing on visual and written documentation, as well as looking at actual artefacts, attempting, where possible, to locate the beadwork in a chronological context.

In the process of this discussion, the social functions of the beadwork will be considered. It can be postulated that, since its origins, the different types of beadwork were linked to particular rituals that served to underline gender identity, age and marital status. The beadwork continues to serve these functions, despite the fact that commercial demands have led to the sale of beaded articles to collectors and tourists, especially since the 1970s. The social function of the beadwork forms a common thread in the information obtained by all researchers, from the 1950s to the present day. Ndebele women continue to describe these functions, as passed down from their mothers and grandmothers. This knowledge is still very much in evidence, even if the beadwork is not worn or made as frequently as in the past.[6] On another level, the identification and exploration of the social and historical contexts of photographic documentation will highlight the attitudes of documentors and researchers. These attitudes have frequently determined the nature of our knowledge of the beadwork, which is limited. The study of photographic collections - in terms of the visual information they provide, and in terms of the social contexts which they reflect - offers a broader, more expansive base for studying and understanding the beadwork.

It should be noted, though, that the use of photographic documentation as a source of information is not without its problems. There is a general lack of data accompanying the images, particularly glaring in early sources but also in later ones. This may partly account for the neglect of the study of photography in relation to African art in general.

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6. The reasons why knowledge about, if not the practise of wearing the beadwork, has continued to be passed down are pertinent to the issue of ethnicity. Group identities are forged and maintained through the transmission of such memories. The importance of ethnic identity for the Ndebele, and the reasons for its development, are explored in Chapter Two.

The frequently expressed but erroneous assumption that photographs are necessarily accurate must be questioned. This is not to say that photographs should be ignored, but

rather that they should be used with more caution.[7]

This chapter will explore two main photographic collections on the Ndebele - the early documentation of Alfred Martin Duggan-Cronin (1923 and 1933), and the recent work of Margaret Courtney-Clarke (1986). Another important photographer, Constance Stuart Larrabbee, photographed the Ndebele (amongst other subjects) between 1937-1949, 1960, and 1980 (personal correspondence, 1989). Most of her Ndebele photographs are inaccessible, but her work will be discussed as far as is possible.

The earliest known photographic documentation of the Ndebele is from the collection of the photographer Duggan-Cronin. There are also a few early photographs taken by Van Warmelo. These images appear in his Transvaal Ndebele Texts (1930), but Van Warmelo did not, as did Duggan-Cronin, purposefully set out to document this group photographically. Duggan-Cronin's photographs were based on two fieldtrips, in 1923 and in 1933; Van Warmelo's photographs were taken in late 1928.

Very few researchers have seriously considered Duggan-Cronin's Ndebele work as potentially rich and informative source material. In 1986, Carey, in her book Beads and Beadwork of East and South Africa, reproduced a Duggan-Cronin image with the following caption:

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7. Green, in his article entitled "On Foucault: disciplinary power and photography" (1985), suggests that the early use of photography in fields such as anthropology had a hidden agenda of "power/knowledge relations" (9), which lay beneath the accepted belief that photography reflects "empirical truth or evidence of the real" (9). The "knowledge" to which Green refers in such records has less to do with the camera discovering "pre-existent truths" (9) than with the "construction of new kinds of knowledge about the individual ... The employment of photography in the field(s) of anthropology ... draws together a whole series of discursive operations levelled at the body and organized along the axes of race, class or gender. Subject to the gaze of the camera the body became the object of the closest scrutiny, its surface continually examined for the signs of its innate physical, mental and moral inferiority" (9).

> "Photographed in 1923, this Southern Ndebele bride wears a beaded *linaga* cape, a *nyoga* strip and other beaded ornaments" (1986:33).

An earlier Knight and Priebatsch publication, Ndebele Images (1983), included a similar, but not identical photograph, the full caption reading as follows:

> "This photograph depicts an Ndebele bride at Potgietersrust (dated 1923). It is very interesting as it shows a young girl wearing a beaded *linaga* (a cape made from animal skins), a *nyoga* (or train) made of mainly white beads with simple abstract and geometric designs" (1983:24).

Also reproduced in this catalogue were two other photographs, acknowledged by the authors to have been taken in 1933, depicting women in various styles of dress. Both Carey, and Knight and Priebatsch, accurately attribute all these photographs to Duggan-Cronin, with the given dates being correct as well.

Other than Weiss' dismissive reference to Duggan-Cronin (see Introduction), the above examples are the only two known inclusions of his photographs in the literature on the beadwork.[8] One of the reasons for this apparent lack of awareness of the Ndebele photographs is a practical one; unlike his work on other groups, that on the Ndebele was never published. Knight and Priebatsch do acknowledge this, by stating that "the section dealing with the Southern Ndebele was not complete" (1983:24), but they do not explain why this was so. There are problems associated with the collection, which may have prevented publication of this group of

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8. Tyrrell, in her 1968 publication of Tribal Peoples of Southern Africa, refers to having seen "photographs on the walls of dwellings" (83), from which she made line drawings. She described the girls in the photographs as being "in full ceremonial dress, wearing beaded hoops in astounding, closely packed numbers, thinner than the modern rings - which vary in thickness from one area to another, and are sometimes very thick" (83). Comparisons between her two line drawings of two standing female figures (82) and Duggan-Cronin's 1933 photographs (especially fig.12) show strong similarities. The origins of the images seen by Tyrell are unknown, but given the similarities, Tyrrell was probably accurate in dating them to the 1930s.

images. A lack of funds may have prevailed, but beyond that, there are problems as to the identity of the people photographed in these two sets of images.

The full set of Ndebele photographs (together with those of all the other groups) are housed in the McGregor Museum, Kimberley, and are accessible for research purposes. Researchers have generally been unaware of, or have ignored the Ndebele photographs, and this partly reflects the ahistorical framework within which the beadwork has frequently been studied. Such an ahistorical approach tends not to take into account origins of the beadwork, nor does it attempt to establish a chronology of developments and changes. Consequently, early documentation has not been sought as a potentially rich source of information regarding early changes inthis art, as well as changing attitudes to it. At the same time, it is also important to identify the problems associated with photographic material as well as to consider the documentation within the social and historical contexts in order to understand the motivations behind the work.

Duggan-Cronin was born in Ireland in 1874, and he came to South Africa in 1897. After 1904, he began to photograph the workers at the De Beers Compounds in the Kimberley area, where he was employed as a compound guard, hospital dispenser and clerk. In 1919, the McGregor Museum, Kimberley, by now interested in his work, agreed to sponsor Duggan-Cronin on his first trips to photograph the 'Bushmen' and the 'Bechuana', for it was felt, in the words of the Museum curator at the time, Maria Wilman, that

> "greater scope for his talents would be attained by a friendly co-operation with the Museum Board and the native territories of South Africa in securing, while there was still yet time, a useful and comprehensive series of illustrations which would help to depict the lives of our already fast-changing Native tribes" (Dell 1987:2).

Further fieldwork and publications were financed by the Carnegie Corporation of America and the Union of South Africa Research Grant Board. Thus between 1919 and 1939, Duggan-Cronin travelled extensively throughout southern Africa, photographing a large number of 'tribal' groups. During the 1930s and 1940s, albums of his photographs were published under the general title of The Bantu-Speaking Tribes of Southern Africa. Each volume dealt with one, or a few, of the different groups, with introductions and explanatory notes to the photographs written by various anthropologists and ethnologists.

Before analysing the images, and identifying the problems associated with them, it is important to understand the social and historical contexts in which Duggan-Cronin worked, which are reflected in his attitude towards his subjects. The reasons for the growing interest in the 'natives' of South Africa during the first few decades of the twentieth century have been outlined in the Introduction. It is against this background that Duggan-Cronin's work must be seen. As discussed, it was during the 1920s that government-funded research into various 'tribal' groups was encouraged, and studies such as Van Warmelo's A Preliminary Survey of the Bantu Tribes of South Africa (1935) and Schapera's The Bantu-Speaking Tribes of South Africa (1937) were published. Duggan-Cronin, while not specifically acting out of political motivations, shared some of the general attitudes which prevailed at the time:

> "If my contribution towards the knowledge of Native tribes is appreciated, my object in life is accomplished and I am well repaid for my labours. That it may help toward a better understanding of the Native is my fervent wish" (Humphreys 1961:74).

Duggan-Cronin expressed his fascination with the 'native' and the need to preserve his culture in the following way:

> "Year by year the Natives were becoming more and more civlized and any delay in the work would mean that valuable records of Natives in their primitive state would be lost for all time" (Humphreys 1961:74).

After his 1934 trip to what was then Rhodesia, to photograph the Matabele, he wrote further that "there is practically nothing left for me to do here - it is already too late ... In the Union, tribal life is still more or less preserved, but in Rhodesia, civilization has killed my work" (Bensusan 1966:104).

The encouragement that Duggan-Cronin received was largely because his work was regarded as an attempt to "preserve in a pictorial record the outward presentment at least of life which had buckled under the impact of a civilization thrust upon it; to study the Native in his pristine glory, to capture his fine physique, his industry, his loves, hates and arts" (Humphreys 1961:72).

Other contemporary writers responded similarly to his work. For example, A.W. Hoernlé in reviewing the first of the 'Bantu Tribes' volumes during the 1930s, reported that

> "for one hundred years the White man has been in contact with the Bantu in South Africa. He has fought and subdued him; he has tried to Christianise him; he has employed him for manual labour and menial jobs. The one thing he has not done until quite recent years, has been to study the Bantu and record the salient features of their civilization now threatened by increasingly rapid disintegration in contact with White civilization ... The Native as a subject of human interest is now coming into its own ... and one man, quietly, patiently, year by year, has devoted all his spare time to getting the most perfect picture of the Natives skill in modern photography would allow him to get ... " (Humphreys 1961:74).

One of the first problems which becomes apparent when looking at Duggan-Cronin's Ndebele photographs is the fact that in general, the dress, adornment and architecture of the people photographed in 1923 are very different to those

photographed in 1933. To begin with, the accuracy of Duggan-Cronin's own labels must therefore be investigated in an attempt to identify who these groups of people were.

Duggan-Cronin called the people in his 1923 photographs "Ndebele", and he labelled the 1933 images as "Nguni Ndebele". It is not clear why he made this distinction. It suggests some awareness on his part that he was photographing different groups in 1923 and in 1933. However, these photographs were taken before any serious attempts were made by outside researchers to try and classify the indigenous groups of southern Africa, although Duggan-Cronin may have been aware of Bryant's 1928 publication, Olden Times in Zululand and Natal. Here, Bryant firmly established 'Nguni' as a generic term referring to all peoples originating from the eastern regions of South Africa (Wright 1986:100). Earlier usage of the term seems to have been more specific,[9] but by 1933, following the publication of Bryant's book, 'Nguni' had been adopted as a generic linguistic term. It was used by Van Warmelo as a term for classifying certain ethnic groups, but his work was only published in 1935. Therefore it cannot be ascertained to what extent Duggan-Cronin's application of the term 'Nguni' was fully informed by the work of Van Warmelo and others.

That there was confusion as to who the Ndebele people really were, may also be due to the scant and confusing knowledge on the historical origins of the group. It was only in 1935 that Van Warmelo attempted to give some clarity to this issue by pointing out that the Transvaal Ndebele originally consisted of two groups, the Northern and the Southern, both of whom shared a common Nguni descent (1935:84). He noted

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9. Wright argues that during the nineteenth century, "there appear to have been three regionally distinct meanings of Nguni. South of the Thukela, the term designated primarily the Xhosa peoples. North of the Thukela, in the Zulu kingdom, it designated the dominant Zulu clan and closely related clans, to the exclusion of the great majority of the clans that had been incorporated into the kingdom. Among the Sotho and the Thonga, the word designated the people of the Zulu kingdom as a whole" (1986:98).

that despite shared origins, the Northern and Southern groups were separate from each other, and that not much was known about the history of the 'tribes' belonging to the Northern group (1935:84). It was (and still is) the Southern group who "tenaciously clung to their Ndebele customs and language" (1935:84). Today, it is only this group to whom the term 'Ndebele' is applied, and with whom the beadwork discussed in this disseration is associated. According to Van Warmelo, the Northern group had assimilated with the surrounding (probably Sotho) people by the 1930s. But it is unlikely that Duggan-Cronin was working with a knowledge of the taxonomies which were being developed by anthropologists and ethnologists, and the photographer probably did not know who the people he photographed in 1923 really were.

Even less likely was Duggan-Cronin's knowledge of the differences between the two sub-groups within the Southern Ndebele, the Manala and the Ndzundza, which is of relevance to his 1933 photographs. It was noted in the Introduction that both Van Warmelo's Transvaal Ndebele Texts (1930) and Duggan-Cronin's 1933 photographs were based on a group of Manala Ndebele living in the district of Wallmansthal. As already indicated, this raises a number of questions regarding the form and styles of the beadwork at that time.

That the early photographs relate to people living on a mission station compounds the problems of this documentation. There is very little information available on Wallmannsthal, and it is not clear whether the people photographed were actually living at the station or in the surrounding area. It is also not possible to determine what kind of beadwork was being produced by women living beyond the station, nor whether the missionaries had any influence on the art being produced within their walls.

Most of these questions remain unresolved, but it is still possible to identify accurately most of the beadwork photographed as Ndebele in comparison with other documentation, written and visual, as well as with the many hundreds of items, old and new, belonging to Ndebele women, and seen in collections, museums and shops. The first part of this discussion is focused on the 1933 photographs; thereafter a few relevant images from the 1923 collection will be discussed.

Before identifying the types of beadwork that appear in these images, it should be noted that only women are represented. This raises a number of issues and problems. Duggan-Cronin did not, in his other work, including the 1923 photographs, focus only on women. There are many photographs of men, including chiefs, 'witchdoctors', and men involved in various activites. His selections may have been quite arbitrary, depending on whom he came across. This may account for the absence of men in the 1933 photographs; it is possible that many of the male members of this community were away working in areas such as close-by Pretoria.[10]

Alternatively, Duggan-Cronin may have chosen to photograph only the women. Their 'exotic' appearance, created by their beadwork, would have had more appeal, and would have been considered worth recording in terms of the photographer's aims of preserving aspects of the culture through his documentation.[11] Almost all the beadwork is worn by the

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10. The Ndebele continue to be caught up in the system of migrant labour. Today, it is still mainly the men who commute vast distances every day to work in the urban areas of Pretoria and Johannesburg. Their difficult lifestyle has been documented by Lelyveld (Move Your Shadow 1986), and by the photographer David Goldblatt (The Transported of KwaNdebele 1989).

11. In the archives of the Africana Library (Johannesburg), there is a small, undocumented photograph which suggests that during the 1930s, Ndebele men did not wear 'traditional' dress. The photograph shows a group of Ndebele men and women. The men are dressed in European clothes. The fact that the appearance of the women is very similar to the way the women appear in Duggan-Cronin's 1933 photographs, and that the group is

women, so this explanation has some validity. The reasons why the beadwork is associated mainly with the women will be explored in Chapter Two, in considering the role of women in Ndebele society, and the influence of historical factors on the development of the beadwork.

Before exploring the above themes, an attempt will be made to use the photographs to help determine continuities and changes in the appearance of the beadwork. The types of beadwork recorded by Duggan-Cronin in 1933 continue to be produced, with some stylistic changes being introduced over the years. Similarities and variations are revealed through comparisons with later documentation, and through looking at beaded articles that have been made in the past and present. As part of the process of identifying the different types of beadwork, the discussion will extend into defining the functions of the beadwork. The continuity of these functions is underlined by the fact that they have been recorded since the 1950s, and Ndebele women today continue to define the same roles for their beadwork, even if it is not worn as often as in the past.

The beadwork operates, on one level, as an index to the women's life-cycles. The different types of beadwork reflect the women's changing status from young children, through puberty, and into adulthood. Different beaded articles are thus worn at different stages of life.

Amongst some families, a simple strand of beads is tied around the body of a baby girl or boy, called *umucu*. Most common, is the *lighabi*, worn by young female children. (figs.4,29,30). The *lighabi* is a loin covering, consisting of a beaded band, from which beaded tassles hang. *Lighabi* of increasing size are worn as the girls grow up, until puberty. Little boys sometimes wear a similar covering called *ibhesha* (fig.28) but it is generally unbeaded, and is

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accompanied by a priest, suggests the possibility that this photograph was also taken at Wallmanstal.

made of the stiffer skin of a wild animal or goat, with strips cut out for tassles. Examples of this are seldom seen or documented. This is most probably because they have not been made or worn as consistently as the *lighabi*. But it is also possible that because of their relatively plain and 'unexotic' appearance, they have not been considered worthy of attention by most documentors and collectors. Furthermore, the fact that male adornment is not nearly as consistently worn nor as prolific as that of the women (see Appendix One), reflects the perceived role (by the men) of the women as custodians of Ndebele culture. This is enforced through their 'traditional' adornment. This issue is discussed in Chapters Two and Three.

When a young girl reaches puberty, she wears an *isiphephetu* (figs.5,6,31), which announces that she is of marriagable age. The *isiphephetu* is a beaded, rectangular-shaped apron, made by a mother for her daughter during the puberty stage of seclusion: The *umnyanyo* is the ritual for girls, which, unlike the boys' *wela*, is not collective but takes place within each girl's individual home.[12] It begins with the ritual slaughter of beasts and a feast for invited guests, whereafter the mother calls her daughter into seclusion for one to three months. During this time, the daughter is taught about the traditions relating to the women's role and duties in the group, and it seems she is also taught about beadwork and wall painting. What occurs between the mother and daughter is secret, and the women are reluctant to talk about this to outsiders. Through these rituals, the women's role as custodians of Ndebele culture is reinforced and

12. Initiation ceremonies for Ndebele men usually take place once a year, or less frequently, depending on the number of men in a particular district. Young men of about eighteen years of age are taken into seclusion for a period of approximately three months. The Ndebele refer to the *wela* as 'going into the mountains' (Aubrey Elloitt, personal communication 1990), symbolically indicating the importance of isolation for the ritual. The *wela* involves circumcision, and women are not allowed near the initiates during seclusion.

entrenched, especially as knowledge of the visible, material culture - the beadwork, and since the 1940s, the wall painting - is emphasised at this time.

At the end of this period, there is another ritual slaughter, more feasting, and the girl receives her *isiphephetu* as a sign of her womanhood. It seems that a girl may own more than one *isiphephetu*, wearing the best on festive occasions (Weiss 1963:46; Fieldwork 1986-1990). The *isiphephetu* is worn until a girl is betrothed, and when she leaves her home for that of her future husband's family. The *isiphephetu* is usually made of canvas, often with a kind of cardboard inserted to make it stiff. The front of this panel is decorated with beadwork designs, usually stitched onto the canvas (figs.5,6,31). In 1963, Weiss found this technique to be consistently used by all Ndebele women at that time, and this has continued to be so. It is also probable that the use of canvas for this apron pre-dates the 1960s, although it is difficult to determine when canvas was introduced. The *isiphephetu* is the only apron that is stiff, and informants have commented that a woman can only wear soft skin after she is married. It seems that the stiffness is important in preventing the girl's body from being defined, "so that (the apron) lies properly even when she sits down" (Fieldwork 1989). The form of the *isiphephetu*, then, preserves the woman's modesty. The need for the women to present a modest appearance may reflect a degree of control imposed by the men. In turn, this modesty ensures that the women fulfill their role of custodians of the 'past', in that the image they present is created through adherence to 'traditional' dress.

Informants (Fieldwork 1989) say that the material used for the *isiphephetu* is traditionally stiff. However, the examples depicted in Duggan-Cronin's photographs (figs.5,6) appear to be early versions made of soft skin, beaded with designs, made in the same rectangular form of later examples. Some informants have commented that in the past,

the hide of an ox or cow would have been used, as that is the firmest skin. Other than those seen in the photographs, no extant examples have been seen in collections. There is, however, a very interesting item in the collection of the University of the Witwatersrand, which may be an even earlier version of this apron (fig.32). It is more or less square, with leather ties, presumably to go around the waist. However, it differs from other examples in that it is not beaded on skin or canvas, but has been created out of a fabric of woven beads. Only white beads have been used, with no designs. This apron is part of a set of articles which apparently were all obtained from the same source;[13] all these articles are very old, seen in the use of very small, mainly white beads, with sparse designs. Old beadwork such as these pieces probably date to the late nineteenth century. The apron seems to be the only one of its kind that has so far been seen or found, and although it cannot be conclusively identified, it does most closely resemble the form of an *isiphephetu*.

Young unmarried women also wear an *isithimba*, a backskirt made out of a semi-circular piece of leather (fig.33). Although the images of these skirts in Duggan-Cronin's collection are not very clear, this backskirt can be seen in figs. 5,6 and 7. Together with the *isiphephetu*, the *isithimba* indicates that a girl is ready for marriage. It seems that the *isithimba* may also be worn after marriage, together with the appropriate aprons which indicate the women's changed status. Weiss describes the way the *isithimba* was made:

> "(Dit is) ... 'n bokvel wat met vet gesmeer is en deur haar pa gebrei word. Skaapvel is te sag. Die vel het 'n skopgraafvormige snit en word gedra met die ronde punt na onder" (1963:45).

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13. This set of items was sold to the Getrude Posel Gallery by art dealer Ian Ball, who claimed that he had in turn obtained all the pieces at the same time from the same source.

Informants today describe the same process, also referring to the use of goatskin rather than sheepskin, as the latter is too soft. The skin is sometimes beaded by the girl's mother. Usually, the top of the skirt is rolled over straw stuffing and is beaded. Horizontal beaded panels are generally attached across the top, and, especially in older examples, a band of small metal (brass) beads is also attached, called *nkosi* (fig.33). The use of brass may symbolize wealth. The *amabedja* is sometimes worn over the *isithimba* (fig.7). This article is a kind of heavy 'backskirt' made of a leather band, from which hang many long strands of beads (fig.34). It is not seen frequently in documentation and collections.[14] It is made by the girl's mother, and is worn for ceremonies and for dancing.

Duggan-Cronin also photographed the women wearing a number of beaded rings around their legs, arms, bodies and necks (figs.4-14). These rings are known as *isigolwane*, and are worn by both unmarried and married women. In addition, married women wear metal rings, known as *idzila*, around their necks, arms and legs (fig.21,28,51,64,65,68). The information on the different types of body rings, and their functions, is confusing and does not encourage a conclusive interpretation. As a result, there are a number of different ways of defining their origins, and the messages they were, and still are, intended to convey.

Variations in the beaded rings may reflect stylistic changes that have occured over the years, and/or they may have been intended to differentiate the Manala from the Ndzundza. Early versions, as seen in all the 1933 photographs, were

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14. As indicated, the *amabedja* was documented by Duggan-Cronin, and Weiss also referred to it, describing it as a "gordyn" of loose, white, beaded strings worn behind over the "bokvel" (*isithimba*) (1963:46, fig. ix). The reasons for the relative scarcity of documentation relating to this item may, in part, reflect its relative lack of commercial appeal to outsiders. Compared with other items, especially the aprons, the *amabedja* does not make use of lots of colour and pattern, and is not easy to display. In addition to this, the cost involved in making this item may be relevant, as it utilizes a large quantity of beads.

thin, narrow, and made mainly of white beads (figs.4-14). Similar rings are worn by the women in Van Warmelo's photographs (figs.1,2). Later examples became very much wider, and are beaded with coloured beads (figs.50,67,68). Usually, only one colour is used for one ring, although some examples have been seen which incorporate more than one colour, and maybe some designs (fig.23). The reasons for the changes in the form and style of the rings are not clear. The increasing availability of a wider range of colours in the beads may explain the colour changes, which are also reflected in other beaded items. Changing aesthetic tastes and personal preferences may also be contributing factors.

Some women have commented that the size of the rings came to refer to the wearer's relative wealth; those with more money could afford to make thicker rings. This style, though, has become commonplace, and much more pervasive than the thin versions, which reinforces the idea of a changing aesthetic. There are some references which suggest that the differences are not related to chronology, but rather that it was the Manala who made small and thin *isigolwane*, and the Ndzundza who made the thick versions (Weiss 1963:43). Some recent informants have confirmed this information (Letty Ndundza, Fieldwork 1988), but other Ndebele women have shown no knowledge of such distinctions. That the Manala made thin rings is illustrated in Duggan-Cronin's and Van Warmelo's photographs, but it cannot be deduced what the Ndzundza were making at the same time. It has also been suggested that the Manala do not wear metal rings, whereas the Ndzundza do (Weiss 1963:43). Duggan-Cronin's photographs seem to support this. Remembering that he photographed a Manala group, the married women depicted in the images wear beaded *isigolwane* rather than metal *idzila* (figs.10,11). Their married status is identified by the *isiphephetu* type of apron which they wear.

Interviews with Ndebele women over the last few years (1986-1990) have revealed the confusion on other possible differences between the beadwork of the Manala and Ndzundza. For example, Anna Mthimunye (Field interview 1987) claims there is no difference in the use of colours between these two groups, while other Ndzundza informants (for example, Sophie Mgidi, Martha Motha, Field interviews 1987) claim that the Manala prefer brighter colours, and that they do not use black. These statements are virtually impossible to prove or disprove by looking at the beadwork, as it is not possible to distinguish the Manala-made pieces from others. Furthermore, one finds a pervasive use of bright colours on numerous items, and most of the beadwork today is made by Ndzundza women. Other responses from the women to these issues have included the claim that the Manala do not make beadwork, or will make "if they know how" (Ellen Thabalala, Field interview 1987), or that the only difference between the Manala and the Ndzundza people is in their language, where different dialects are recognised.

Regardless of the size of the rings, the technique of making them has remained consistent since the 1920s. This involves the winding of a continuous string of beads around a circular straw or grass base.[15] Frequently, the base is constructed around the particular part of the body, and is then beaded. These rings can only be removed by being cut off. While the wearing of body rings is considered as a beauty asset, and sometimes as a sign of wealth, they clearly create much discomfort, and even become a health hazard, as illustrated in photographs appearing in a National Geographic article. An X-ray photograph, also published in this article (1986:274), shows the deformation of a woman's collarbones from the weight of heavy metal rings.

15. See, for example, photographs reproduced in Elliott's The Ndebele:Art and Culture, which demonstrate this technique (1989:20-21).

The *idzila* may be worn around the neck, arm and ankles, and are usually made of brass or copper. The rings are heated and bent to fit the wearer, and are sometimes engraved with simple designs. The number of *idzila* worn, besides being considered as a sign of beauty, also reflects the wealth and status of a woman's husband. More recently, some women have replaced the metal rings with shop-manufactured plastic strips which are available in metallic colours, indicating that the notion of "wealth" is now merely symbolic - the metal rings would literally and symbolically have been valuable. They are wound around the limbs to create the same effects as the *idzila*, but are obviously more comfortable (fig.22; see also Knight and Priebatsch 1983: fig. 34(b):19).

In addition to the beaded and metal rings, a wife from the royal family may have worn a small 'belt' or *ibhande* around her ankle, but this is no longer in practise, and it has proved difficult to establish how long ago this may have been worn.[16] The *ibhande* was made from the hide of an ox, with ties made from sheepskin. The wearing of the *ibhande* identified the woman as a wife of the king. It is interesting that although worn by the woman, this adornment associating her with an Ndebele male, was made of skin only, and was not beaded. It was described earlier on in this chapter that a young boy's *ibesha* is also made of skin which is sparsely beaded, if at all, as is the *poryana*, a breastplate worn by men of marriageable age, and by elderly men ((fig.53; see Appendix One). As will be discovered in the following discussion, the correlation between the use of skin and Ndebele men is further reflected in the preparation of certain aprons for the bride, which are presented during the wedding rituals. However, the exact implications of these relationships have not been established.

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16. The informant who described the *ibhande*, Fuduka Mahlangu, is of royal lineage, being the granddaughter of Nyabela, the Ndebele leader who was captured and subsequently killed after the 1883 Mapoch War.

A number of beaded items are associated with marriage. Two kinds of aprons announce a woman's married status. One of them, the *liphotho*, is worn by both women depicted in figs.10 and 11 in the Duggan-Cronin collection (see also figs.40,41,68). This is a beaded apron, on leather, with two side flaps at the bottom bordering a row of fringes. The two flaps have been described by informants as serving the function of covering the knees for modesty and as a sign of respect for her husband and his family, while the fringes are apparently for decoration.

The second apron is the *ijogolo*, a five-panelled apron, also beaded on skin (figs.38 and 39). Often, the central panel is longer, and either way, it is referred to as *umama*, described as the 'mother to the children', who in turn are symbolised by the side flaps. These flaps are also referred to as *amankonyane*, or calves, thus reinforcing the association with fertility and children. This differentiation between the various flaps is sometimes reinforced in the designs, where the middle flap will be decorated in a different way, while the designs on the side flaps will be similar or the same. This can be seen in old and new aprons (figs.37 and 38). The interpretation of the form of this apron in the context of fertility is consonant with the function of the *ijogolo* as a marriage apron. There is no *ijogolo* illustrated in any of Duggan-Cronin's photographs, but old examples have been seen, some of which may date back to the late nineteenth century (fig.38). The *ijogolo* is sometimes referred to as being worn on special occasions, which may explain its absence here. Both these aprons are made from goatskin, the explanation being that it is firmer than other hides.

The wedding preparations involve frequent visits, communications and negotiations that take place between the two families whose children are to be married. These negotiations establish, amongst other things, the betrothal and payment of *lobolo* (bride wealth). The preparation of the

beadwork associated with the married status of women is integrated with the rituals of the wedding. Van Warmelo recorded parts of the ceremonies in some detail, although with few references to the beadwork (1930:36-47). Information from subsequent research helps to fill in the gaps, but some confusion still remains as to the stages at which the beadwork is introduced. It is probable that there are variations within individual family practices. What is very interesting is the fact that even today, many women are still able to describe the wedding preparations in great detail, and in versions which relate closely to Van Warmelo's records. It has also been possible to elicit further information from Ndebele women (Field interviews 1986-1990), relating the ceremonies to the beadwork. This indicates that despite fears expressed by many researchers of traditions dying out, the knowledge of such traditions, if not always the practise, is very much alive.

The wedding rituals begin with the bridegroom fetching the bride, and taking her to his family's home. It seems that on this first visit, the bride approaches her in-laws completely covered with a blanket (fig.26); this, according to some informants, is bought for her by her future husband. The covering up of the woman indicates respect for her future family. The blanket is generally referred to as *irari*, but the term *ibidi* is sometimes used as well. *Ibidi* may refer to a beaded or unbeaded blanket, while *irari* appears to refer specifically to a beaded blanket (fig.48). The reasons for these distinctions are not always clear. The wearing of blankets is not restricted to wedding ceremonies, although it may be that an unbeaded version is worn before and during these ceremonies, and is only beaded once a woman is married. Unbeaded blankets, especially today, are worn everyday (figs.23,28,68), with the beaded examples probably being kept for special occasions. Some of Duggan-Cronin's photographs depict women wearing unbeaded blankets, (figs.4,13) while others show blankets with simple beaded borders (figs.10,11). Later examples, produced after the

1920s and 1930s, came to include more elaborate beaded panels and strips (*ngurara*), which are sewn on, sometimes covering the entire blanket (fig.49). The manner in which the unbeaded blankets were worn by the women in some of Duggan-Cronin's photographs is noteworthy, as this practice is no longer followed (figs.4,13). Their blankets are worn wrapped around their bodies, pinned over one shoulder, leaving their arms free. This style is also seen in a photograph taken by Van Warmelo (fig.1). It appears that at times, probably for everyday use, blankets may have been the women's only form of clothing. The women today wear their blankets as a cape thrown over their shoulders, worn over their beadwork or more usually, their European clothing (figs.28,68).

Fig.5 depicts a "bride and attendants". The 'bride' can be accurately identified by the beaded veil which covers her face, called an *isiyaya*. She also wears an unbeaded cape or *linaga*. A photograph appearing in Van Warmelo's Transvaal Ndebele Texts (1930) also illustrates a "Bride wearing the *isiyaya*" (fig.3), as well as a plain blanket on which a simple beaded 'ornament' is pinned. The *isiyaya* has the same function as the blanket covering the bride; it indicates *hlonipha* or respect for the man and his family. It is not clear exactly at which stage the veil is worn. Van Warmelo describes how on one of her last visits to her in-laws, prior to settling at their home, the woman puts on the *isiyaya* before approaching her future father-in-law (1930:41). Weiss claims that the *isiyaya* is worn only by women who have not yet had children (1963:47); this has been substantiated by recent informants (Fieldwork 1989, 1990), who confirm that traditionally, a woman who has had a child will cover her face with a blanket. Many women point out that today, the *isiyaya* is no longer made and a blanket will be worn in either situation.

Recent informants have identified the *isiyaya* as being made mainly of white beads, and examples of the 'veil' which I have seen confirm this (fig.36). However, the 'veils' depicted in both Duggan-Cronin's and Van Warmelo's photographs are made of two colours, one of which is white. Informants have been unable to explain this, but have em-

phasised the associations of white with purity.[17]

Once the woman has reached the man's home during her first visit, he sends his sisters back to her family to inform them of her whereabouts. She, meanwhile, is hidden inside her affinal home, as she is not supposed to be seen until the *lobolo* is paid. According to different versions, the place of seclusion is either in the actual home, or close by. Most informants refer to some kind of grass enclosure (Fieldwork 1989). This recalls a similar account by Van Warmelo, telling of how the bride, during one of the visits to her in-laws, is taken to *edongeni*, defined by the author as "the name of the place, wherever it may be, where the *umlobogazi* (that is, the bride), spends the day, usually in a veld, under some trees" (1935:39).

The growing relationship between the bride and her husband's family is reinforced during this period of seclusion, when, according to some informants, an older woman who has already married into the man's family physically adorns the bride with her unbeaded *ijogolo*.

The *ijogolo* reflects the importance of the relationship between the woman and her husband's family in other ways as well, and in fact, this apron can be seen to serve an important role in establishing these links. Weiss describes how the bride arrives at the man's place with an unbeaded *ijogolo* (1963:48), but most accounts indicate that she only receives the skin for this apron from the man's family during one of her visits to their home. Different informants claim that the skin is prepared either by the husband-to-be, or by his father (Fieldwork 1986-1990). It

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17. Interestingly, white also has associations of purity in other societies, such as the Ndembu of Zambia and the Zulu. Some women have compared the wearing of white by Western brides, with similar implications - that is, that the *isiyaya* reflects the chasteness of the virgin bride. However, the positive and negative associations with a virgin and non-virgin woman respectively may be evidence of a Western influence on the thinking of these informants.

seems that the *ijogolo* is worn unbeaded during the first few months of marriage. This may be intended to reflect the woman's modesty, considered as appropriate for a newly-married woman (Davison 1987:19). It may also underline her 'childlessness', indicating that perhaps she has to be pregnant before she is afforded the 'honour' of a beaded *ijogolo*. The function of this interaction between the woman and her in-laws seems to be reflected in one of the meanings ascribed to the two small side flaps often incorporated in the apron. As mentioned, these flaps are called *amankonyane*, or calves, and are said to communicate the reciprocal acceptance and affection between the father-in-law and the bride, as well as serving as an acknowledgement of her dependence on him.

The *ijogolo* is apparently beaded by the bride when she returns, for a period, to her own home, before the actual marriage. Thereafter, according to some informants, she leaves it with her maternal grandmother as a gift, a gesture of appreciation for helping to bring her up (Fieldwork 1986-1990). In other instances, the *ijogolo* is kept by the married woman to wear on special occasions. Sometimes, a second apron is given to the woman at a later stage, also by her new family, and this is beaded once she is already married.

Similarly, the woman receives the skin for her *liphoto* from her father-in-law during one of the preliminary visits to her affinal home. This apron is also beaded during a return visit to her own home, and is the apron that will then be worn everyday.

In fig.5, Duggan-Cronin photographed a 'bride' wearing a skin cape, known as the *linaga*. The *linaga* in this photograph is unbeaded, while a beaded example is depicted in a few photographs taken during his first trip in 1923 (figs.15-19). It is possible that the *linaga* preceeded, in time, the blanket in its role during the wedding ceremonies;

in fig.5, the cape, like a blanket, covers the body as the *isiyaya* covers the face, presenting an image of respect. The blanket, however, did not replace the *linaga* completely, as a woman would usually own both. Today, the owning, or at least everyday wearing, of a *linaga* is not common, other than an special occasions.

As with the aprons, the details relating to the making and beading of the *linaga* are not always clear. It is described by Bruce (1976:143) as being worn at the wedding, but is prepared from sheepskin, by the brides's father, about three months before the marriage. The reasons for this choice of skin seems to be practical, as sheepskin is soft and warm, appropriate qualities for a cape. The beadwork designs may vary from simple patterns to designs covering the entire cape, as well as beaded panels and strips which are attached to the cape (figs.44,45). This adornment is created by the bride, who may be assisted by her friends. Once married, it seems that, in the past, at least, the woman could ask her father-in-law to prepare skin for a second *linaga*.[18]

The *linaga* remains an important article of clothing for the women throughout their lives. It is worn on special occasions, and, when worn by an elderly woman, indicates her status as an older member of the community, and as a bearer of children, and consequently commands respect from her community. Women wear their *linagas* when their sons attend the *wela*, or initiation school. Their sons' graduation into manhood is also announced by the *umlingakobe*, long beaded strips which the mother wears attached to a beaded headband. Examples of this are seen in figs.10,11 (see also figs.

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18. It seems that a distinction is made between articles given to the bride by her own father, and by her husband's family. As discussed, the latter provides the goat skins for her *liphoto* and *ijogolo*, while her own father provides the sheepskin for her *linaga*. The distinction on the basis of different skins for different types of apparel may be significant, but it is not clear why this would be so. It also would not explain why the father-in-law could supply the sheepskin for a second cape, although this may reinforce the fact that the woman is now part of his family.

21,24). Translated as 'long tears', the *umlingakobe* are said to represent both the joy and sadness felt by the woman at her son's maturation.

The beadwork is thus linked with rituals which reflect changes in the women's status during their lives. Using the various sources of documentation, especially photography, it has been possible to build up a general, coherent 'picture' of the beadwork in relation to Ndebele women. However, problems and confusion surround the images of an Ndebele bride found amongst Duggan-Cronin's 1923 collection of photographs.

Amongst the 1923 photographs are four images of an "Ndebele Bride". Two of these were reproduced by Carey (fig.17) and Knight and Priebatsch (fig.19), as typical representations of this subject. It is interesting that the authors of both these studies, although reproducing only one or a few of Duggan-Cronin's photographs, have singled out images of the 'bride' as characteristic examples. These images may have been selected because they are relatively exotic. Furthermore, the presentation of these images with little or no background information creates a false impression that they are accurate and problem-free. However, these photographs do raise central problems and issues relating to the beadwork, to the people represented, and to Duggan-Cronin's working methods.

In comparing the two 1923 photographs reproduced by Carey, and Knight and Priebatsch, it is immediately apparent that the photographs are similar, but not identical; each one features a different woman, posing in a different environment (compare figs.17,19). Their beaded regalia, however, appears to be almost identical, except that the long beaded panel worn down the front of the models differs, and the Carey version does not hold a doll. Two additional photographs taken during the same 1923 trip (seen in the McGregor Museum, Kimberley) show a back view of one of the

'brides', and a back view of a 'bride' with two other women, all standing in a courtyard. There is very little original documentation on these photographs. Duggan-Cronin's own brief notes, written at the back of the original prints, read as follows:

1) Carey version - "Ndebele Bride Pogietersrust 1923", (fig.17; similar to fig.18).
2) Knight and Priebatsch version - "Ndebele Bride Potgietersrust 1923" (fig.19).
3) "Ndebele Bridal Mantle Potgietersrust 1923 (fig.16).
4) "Ndebele Brides and Attendants 1923" (fig. 15).

Despite these seemingly factual captions, questions are raised as to the identity of these women. As discussed earlier, it is unlikely that Duggan-Cronin was photographing Southern Transvaal Ndebele during his 1923 trip; these people were probably mixed Sotho groups. There are a number of non-Ndebele features in the 'bride' photographs to support this. For example, the very thin, metal rings worn by both women are not of the same style as the heavy, more solid metal *idzila* of the Ndebele, nor do they relate to the beaded *isigolwane*. The 'attendants' and 'bride' depicted in ph.1718 wear the same thin leg rings.

The 'attendants' (fig.15) also wear backskirts which are clearly different to the Ndebele *isithimba*, which, unlike these examples, are semi-circular and are beaded in a very different manner. Furthermore, neither the courtyard in which the 'brides' are photographed, nor the building in front of which they stand, are Ndebele in character. The adornment of the 'brides' is also incongruous in the context of the group of 1923 photographs in that most of the 'bridal' regalia can be identified as Southern Ndebele, unlike all the other adornment in these photographs.

The identification of the *linaga*, and its association with marriage and later, with a woman's elderly status, has been discussed. Another item specifically associated with the wedding ceremonies is seen in the 1923 photographs: the long beaded panel, *nyoga*, translated as 'snake'. Different versions of the *nyoga* are seen in the photographs, but the way in which they are shown worn down the front is very unusual (figs.17,18,19). The *nyoga* is usually worn to trail from the back, and many examples are so long that they literally drag across the ground. An old, undocumented photograph was found in the McGregor Museum illustrates this (fig.20; fig.37 shows a recently-made *nyoga*). It is not known whether or not this was taken by Duggan-Cronin, as it does not appear to be part of the set of 1923 or 1933 images. A *nyoga* worn down the front may once have been a traditional and maybe regional custom, but this is unlikely as no researchers or informants have described it in this way.

Much confusion surrounds the exact function of the *nyoga*. Informants readily provide the translation of 'snake' or 'slang', but are often unable or unwilling to explain why it is referred to as such. In many societies, the symbol of a snake evokes associations with fertility,[19] a meaning which seems to be applicable here, as the *nyoga* is worn in the context of marriage. More specifically, though, the association is confirmed by some versions of the wedding ceremonies. When the bride leaves her home for the last time, she apparently wears the *nyoga* as a sign of pride, and as a sign of commanding respect. At this stage, members of both families have gathered around, and she dances for the audience. The dance is apparently understood as a statement of her willingness and ability to bear many children for her husband (Fieldwork 1989).

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19. The snake, with its association of fertility, is often depicted or suggested in the art or dance of many black societies, for example, amongst the Venda, Shona and Kuba.

There is some confusion as to who makes the *nyoga*, whether more that one is made, and at what stage it is worn during the wedding ceremonies. An early description quoted by Weiss explains how the "slang" is made by the bride-to-be, and is given to her mother-in-law after the wedding, who will wear it to let others know that one of her sons has married (1963:49). If this is so, the *nyoga* strengthens the ties between the bride and her new family, first established through the gifts of skins for her aprons from her father-in-law. Some informants talk of two *nyogas*, with the second, sometimes shorter version being worn by the bride. The other *nyoga* is worn by one of the older women from the man's family. These informants claim that when the bride is first taken to her future husband's home, she is looked after by his sisters and by the wife of his older brother. It is this woman who accompanies the bride back to her house, and thereafter, the sister-in-law is given the *nyoga* as a gift of appreciation from the bride's family, for looking after their daughter. The sister-in-law wears the *nyoga* upon her return to the man's house, and thus she is distinguished as "the one who has accompanied the bride" (Fieldwork 1989). Variations on this assessment of the function of the *nyoga* refer to it being worn prior to the wedding ceremonies by the husband's sister, indicating that she is the one who will fetch the bride. (Sophie Mgidi, Field interview 1986).

Also associated with fertility is the Ndebele doll, called *umdwana*, often referred to today as "poppie". The 'brides' in two of the 1923 photographs (figs.18,19) holds an *umdwana*, which can be verified as an early Ndebele doll by its conical shape and use of mainly white heads. A similar doll is located in the McGregor Collection (fig.54). Originally, it seems that Ndebele dolls played a role in courtship practises and negotiations leading to marriage. There is no absolute clarity as to who would have made the dolls, and their exact use in the rituals, but it seems that 16-17 year old unmarried women would own a doll, made either

by themselves, their mother, an aunt or older sister (Dell 1990:33-4). The doll would presumably be retained after marriage to promote fertility; some informants suggest that once a woman has borne children, "the *umdwana* is perceived as having served its purpose, and may be given away" (Dell 1990:33).

Today, Ndebele dolls have become prolific and popular items in the commercial market, and it is unlikely that too many dolls are made for personal use in association with fertility. The commercial market has also determined the presence of an increasingly wide range and variety of styles in the making of the dolls. Early dolls were usually conical in shape, with beads strung around a grass core. A round head was added, and often there were no limbs, or thin stands of beads supporting beaded rings represented arms on either side of the body. Often, the core was entirely covered by larger beaded rings. This style doll has continued to be made (fig.56), although it is not frequently seen today, possibly because it utilises a large number of expensive beads. Further innovations in the style of the dolls are discussed in Chapter Three.

The most incongruous article worn by the 1923 'brides' is the headdress. Although it was made to be worn around the head (it has strips and an attached band for that purpose; fig.35), no item similar to this has been recorded in any known literature on the beadwork, nor seen in any collection. Carey does reproduce a small, diamond-shaped panel from the collection in the Museum of Mankind, London, which she labels as "a head covering as worn by the (Duggan-Cronin) bride" (1986:fig.26:34). However, this item is smaller, and resembles, rather, two similar panels which appear to have been loosely placed on the shoulders of the 'brides'.

In studying the actual headdress and the panels in the McGregor Collection, it was interesting to observe that they appeared to be of a different quality to the beadwork of the other 'bridal' items. The beads of the former group are slightly larger in size, and of similar shades of colours; the beads in the other items - the *linaga*, the *nyogas* - are consistently smaller, with a different range and shade of colours. These differences do not necessarily inauthenticate the headdress and panels as Ndebele, as it is possible that various items could have been made at different times, thus explaining discrepencies in the size and colour of the beads.

As a bridal headdress, however, this example is highly idiosyncratic. As discussed, the *isiyaya* is the traditional, commonly known and recognised covering for a bride's face. While it is not totally improbable that the diamond-shaped covering may have been used as a variant of the *isiyaya* at some stage, or in some place, this is unlikely as the pertinent feature of the *isiyaya* is that it conceals the face as a sign of respect for the woman's affinal family.

Thus some items in Duggan-Cronin's 1923 photographs are identifiable as Ndebele, even if not specifically associated with marriage; but the identification of others is questionable. While it is not possible to explain these inconsistencies fully, a knowledge of Duggan-Cronin's working methods, and a search into the McGregor Museum records, may help partially to explain what might have occured.

Despite the claim that Duggan-Cronin captured "... thousands of Natives in their real pristine glory - uninfluenced by Western civilization and happy in their primitive yet picturesque kraals" (Harris 1951:n.p.), it is known that he fequently travelled with various 'props' to enhance, in his terms, the appearance of his subjects. For example, he usually carried a leopard-skin cape which he regarded as suitable adornment for chiefs in all areas. It is also re-

corded that he had his own collection of "native curios such as beadwork, dresses, leatherwork, implements, and bows and arrows which (he) had collected on his travels" (Bensusan 1966:104).

There is much confusion in the early acquisition records of the McGregor Museum as to the provenance and purchase of the 'bridal' outfit. It seems that some of the items were purchased at some stage by Maria Wilman, then curator of the Museum (1908-1946). The original records and labels indicate that some of the pieces belonged to, or were purchased from, a certain C. Pijper, whose identity and possible association with Duggan-Cronin are unknown.[20] It is possible that the 'outfit' was originally part of Duggan-Cronin's own collection. Acquisition dates in the museum's records are conflicting, with dates of 1918, 1923 and 1946 being recorded. Most items were given the label of 'Ndebele', some with the addition of "Potgietersrust". If the set belonged to Duggan-Cronin, or if it was in the Museum collection by 1918 or 1923, it is very possible - indeed likely - that the photographer took it with him on his 1923 fieldtrip, and posed the women in it.

Since Duggan-Cronin, the Ndebele have been frequently photographed by professional and amateur photographers, indicating that the visual appeal of their brightly coloured and 'exotic' appearance has never diminished. Constance Stuart Larrabee is one of the professional photographers who has created a comprehensive record of the Ndebele.

Stuart Larrabee's motivations in photographing the Ndebele were quite different to those of Duggan-Cronin; first and foremost she considers herself a photographer who enjoys taking photographs (personal correspondence 1989). She has

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20. Van Warmelo, in a letter written to Fiona Barbour (1987), ethnologist at the McGregor Museum, recalls that Dr. Pijper was a Hollander "whom I knew at the time that he was in Pretoria, c.1934, where he pioneered a bacteriological lab. and service. I believe he may have practised as G.P. in Potgietersrus before that".

not consciously worked within any specific photographic tradition. Unlike Duggan-Cronin, she was involved in photography from an early age, and in the 1930s, she studied photography in London and Munich. She did share some of Duggan-Cronin's interests in "recording and exhibiting the vanishing tribal culture of South Africa" (personal correspondence 1989), but she has also commented that she did not have any specific intentions or aims in photographing the Ndebele. Instead, she took photographs "purely for the delight of it" (personal correspondence 1989). She has also commented that above all, the aesthetic result was important, and this is apparent in her images which display a far greater awareness of composition, lighting, and other formal elements, compared with Duggan-Cronin's photographs.

Stuart Larrabee has covered a wide range of subjects in her work, including photographs of other cultural groups in southern Africa, war images (she was South Africa's first woman war correspondent between 1944-45), and she has been involved in a variety of other projects since settling in the United States in 1950. She photographed the Ndebele over a number of years between 1937-49, 1960, and again in 1988. These photographs are thus an important source of documentation. They can help in identifying continuities and changes in the beadwork, as well as in providing records of the people and their art between the earlier period in which Duggan-Cronin worked, and the more recent period in which Margaret Courtney-Clarke has worked.

Unfortunately, it has not been possible to obtain copies of the majority of Stuart Larrabee's Ndebele photographs, other than the few which were published in Knight and Priebatsch's 1983 catalogue. Through personal correspondence (1989), the photographer has conceded that "the Ndebele is probably my best body of work"; she also mentioned that the contrast between the 1940s and 1980s was "incredible", but she did not

elaborate. Despite personal correspondence[21] with the photographer, it has not been feasible to have access to her work, which now remains an important area for future study.

In 1986, the Ndebele photographs of Margaret Courtney-Clarke were published in a glossy coffee-table type book. An assessment of these photographs is useful in furthering an understanding of the beadwork. Interesting issues are raised in a comparison of Courtney-Clarke's photographs with those of Duggan-Cronin. With a space of some fifty years between them, it is worthwhile to consider the differences and similarities in the approaches of the photographers, and, importantly, to analyse the changes and continuities in the beadwork that have been recorded over this period of time.

Both Duggan-Cronin and Courtney-Clarke were inspired to document the Ndebele because of an apparent belief that their 'traditions' were/are doomed to extinction. Courtney-Clarke was, however, concerned above all to document Ndebele material culture specifically, and she presumably chose to focus on this group to the exclusion of other southern African groups partly because of the growing popular interest in their art. In fact, her book emerged at the height of a resurgence of interest in Ndebele beadwork.

Although there are differences in their work, it is ironic that both photographers sought to document that which they perceived as being in danger of destruction. It is noted, fifty years later, that despite Duggan-Cronin's fears, there is still much to document. The material culture has continued to survive, to change, and to adapt. The dynamism of Ndebele culture is a fact that Duggan-Cronin and others have

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21. Stuart Larrabee was reluctant to provide me with access to her photographs, explaining that there "are too many and it would cost .... too much". The issue of copyright was also indicated as a problem. (Personal correspondence, 1989).

failed to recognise. There is some irony in Goldblatt's words which introduce Courtney-Clarke's book. He writes that she

> " ... honours the spirit of the remarkable women who make (the art). And it hints at what riches we might have in a society that would freely permit the flowering of talents. It is possible in the upheaval to which we seem doomed, that the gentle arts of the Ndebele will be lost. If that should happen, there is no need to say how precious this book will then have become" (1986:15).

Contrary to Goldblatt's assertion, and probably even because of political upheavals, Ndebele "traditions" have expanded since the 1930s. This is exemplified by a proliferation of styles in the beadwork, and by the emergence of a strong wall painting tradition in the 1940s. Furthermore, the growing market for Ndebele art amongst tourists and local collectors during the last two decades has clearly stimulated production as well.

The recognition of the context in which Ndebele art has been, and continues to be, created, is nevertheless significant. In this, it seems that Goldblatt evidently played an important role in shaping Courtney-Clarke's project. He states in his Foreword that he initially opposed the project because "critical though she was of the system of racial discrimination and oppression in this country, she knew little of what had been happening to the Ndebele" (1986:13). He made some pertinent points which are of relevence for studying the beadwork:

> "Margaret's proposal was to deal purely with Ndebele art, not with the socio-political context within which it was found. I questioned whether such an approach would be adequate in the circumstances. Perhaps we in South Africa are obsessed by *apartheid* and tend to look askance, particularly in the arts, at work that is not in some way relevent to our central concerns. Possibly I was succumbing to this attitude, but in view of the unspeakable things being done to the Ndebele, it seemed that something more was required than a

> pretty piece of coffee-table art. Irrelevance would be bad enough; irreverence would be unforgivable" (1986:14).

Goldblatt was satisfied that the final product was something more meaningful. With some added insight into the function of the art, Courtney-Clarke described her intentions as follows:

> "These photographs ... document the obsessive passion with which Ndebele women have sought to assert their identities, both as individuals and as a nation, despite their difficult socio-political and economic status" (1986:17).

Again, the irony should be noted in what Courtney-Clarke calls the "difficult socio-political and economic status" of the Ndebele women which has, in effect, provided a stimulus for continuing to produce their art.

Despite such problematic assumptions, Courtney-Clarke's book is useful because of the kind of information she provides - the nature of which differs from that of Duggan-Cronin. An important feature is the inclusion of substantial texts, and their relationship with the visual images. The photographs and the text complement each other, and the information they both provide is equally significant. RenèGardi, an influential and highly respected photographer of African cultures for many decades (he was born in 1909), commented on the necessity of this relationship:

> "Text and image, word and photograph, for me always belong together. One is meant to complement and explain the other. A purely formal approach will not do justice to my pictures, as they are always integrated into a larger documentary context. The picture's task is to illustrate, with the words providing a complement of description and explanation" (1985:68).

In recognition of such interaction, Courtney-Clarke provides a historical context for the art, both through Goldblatt's Foreword and through her own Introduction. This history raises relevant and contoversial issues of indenture,

resettlement camps, and the homeland situation. Against such backgrounds, the material culture can no longer be considered as static. Courtney-Clarke points out some of the complexities and contradictions that are experienced today, including the way women attend Catholic Mass dressed in their traditional beadwork. This is an example of "the African manner of absorbing, using and syncretizing outside beliefs without losing touch with traditional values" (Sieber and Walter 1987:120):[22]

> "The rhythm of life in the homeland is a mixture of the old and new. Every Thursday and Sunday at the Roman Catholic outstation, Isango le Zulu, in the camp of Mabhokho, named after the chief's ancestor, women gather to attend Mass, some dressed in brass and beaded hoops and blankets, some in Western clothes. Further down the road, other women who have abandoned their tribal dress in favour of white and blue uniforms walk toward the Zion Christian Church" (1986:19).

This information indicates that the contexts in which women wear their beadwork have expanded over the years, and are no longer necessarily confined to specific 'Ndebele' rituals. The wearing of beadwork to Church suggests that women are using the beadwork increasingly to foreground their ethnic identity as Ndebele, as opposed to wearing it specifically to reflect their social status, although that level of meaning would still apply.

The recognition of such changes highlights an important difference between Courtney-Clarke and Duggan-Cronin, in that the latter did not acknowledge change. He fixed 'the past' by excluding images of, for example, Western dress, while Courtney-Clarke's photographs and text demonstrate, and draw attention to, the complexities of the present, where 'traditional' and 'non-traditional' forms co-exist.

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22. The phenomenon of syncretism, of reconciling apparently contradictory forms or rituals without loss of, and in fact increasing, meaning, is common in various parts of Africa. For example, Silver, in African Art in the Cycle of Life (1987:120), refers to an Ewe diviner-priest from Ghana who incorporates Christian, Muslim and traditional Ewe features and artefacts in his rituals.

The captions to the photographs also reflect a respect for, and recognition of, the women as individuals, and as individual artists, through the identification of their names and locations. Some captions also provide information which may be relevant to an interpretation of the art, such as forced removals. For example, in the caption for a photograph representing the home of Pikinini and Sara Skosana, Courtney-Clarke describes how "the family has been living on the farm for 30 years but now fears the loss of salary and tenure that will be the result of a forced move to the homeland under government policy"(1986:47). The reference to such upheavals in the context of the art suggests that one of the functions of both the wall painting and the beadwork is to fulfill a need to seek group cohesion and identity through material culture.

While selection is obviously inevitable in any photographer's work, there is a degree of objectivity in Courtney-Clarke's images in that she has accepted, and included, situations which she witnessed, and which provide a context for the art. She also allows the beadwork to be presented as it has evolved, indicating, for example, stylistic changes, and mixtures of old and new forms. This is very useful for exploring and identifying the variations in the beadwork, and is illustrated in a number of examples. It should be pointed out, though, that it is likely that in some instances, the women may have dressed up for the photographer, something which regularly occurs in the field. Some images may not, therefore, reflect a 'true' everyday situation.[23] However, the images are important in reflecting what the women do own, and what they do, on ocassion, wear.

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23. For example, Courtney-Clarke must have set up the woman featured on the front cover of her book, as she was photographed painting part of the title of the book, "Ndebele", in large, bold letters.

Because there are so many photographs in Courtney-Clarke's book, they cannot all be considered in detail. Some examples which indicate continuities and changes in the beadwork have been selected for discussion.

Franzina Ndimanda (fig.21) was photographed wearing a combination of old and new styles. She wears a *linaga*, made out of the older style sheepskin, but instead of being decorated with a beaded panel, she has attached a European cloth around the upper section. She wears neck *idzila*, and a very large beaded *isigolwane* resting on her shoulders, being a combination of beads, black insulation tape and silver studs for additional design. She also wears a short version of the *umlingakobe*. All this beadwork appears to be relatively new, indicated by the larger size of the beads, and by the inclusion of some bright plastic beads as well as smaller glass beads.

Sara Mthimunye was photographed fully dressed in her beadwork regalia, shown painting her wall (fig.23). Her regalia consists of the older types of beadwork, including a blanket edged with beaded panels, and a beaded *liphotho*. She wears thick *isigolwane* around her ankles and resting on her shoulders. They too are decorated with studs, and her neck *isigolwane* is decorated with the actual face of a watch, indicating a willingness to include 'non-traditional' motifs on 'traditional' forms. Although it is not clear, it appears that the metal '*idzila*' around her neck and legs are of the plastic metal strip variety. In addition, she wears a crocheted hat, clearly a non-'traditional' form. In the photograph showing her painting a wall, she wears an undecorated blanket, typical of what Ndebele women wear every day.

The interior of Johanna Mahlangu's cooking hut shows a further combination of old and new (fig.22). She is depicted dressed in a beaded *irari*, beaded *liphoto*, neck and leg *isigolwane*, and beaded headband beneath a woolen cap. In addition, she wears what appear to be the metallic strip

'*idzila*' around her legs. She is photographed in front of her relatively 'modern' woodstove, with 'European' utensils and crockery. There are also other interiors showing a contrast between western objects and indigenous regalia.

Another juxtoposition between old and new is depicted in the images of Letty Ngoma, who was commissioned to paint the prefabricated market stalls in Waterval B, KwaNdebele. As Courtney-Clarke points out, "these stalls were built under the supervision of the KwaNdebele government as part of its program to encourage traditional mural painting" (1986:78). Interestingly, the woman is seen painting with an old-style chicken-feather paintbrush, rather than a commercially manufactured one (1986:78).

Courtney-Clarke captured a very unusual ceremonial headdress, worn by Maria Ntobela Mahlangu, from Mabhokho, KwaNdebele ((fig.25). This is made of a headband with long sides adorned with brightly coloured, store-bought feathers, reminiscent of an American Indian's 'warbonnet', which, as Courtney-Clarke suggests, could only have been seen in pictures. It is not clear whether Courtney-Clarke questioned the wearer on this headdress.

In focusing on specific groups of *liphoto* and *ijogolo* aprons, (1986:90-91) the photographer presents a range of images indicating changes in styles, though similarities in forms. For example, as she points out, one of the *ijogolos* is very old, indicated through the use of very small, white beads, and simple linear motifs, similar to fig.38. One example amongst the *liphotos* presents a more 'modern' style, consisting of the inclusion of lots of bright coloured beads and more dynamic, geometric patterns (similar to fig.43). The other examples reflect a range of styles between these two, varying in the amount of beads and colours employed. It should be noted here that the early and later styles cut across beadwork types, and are not restricted to one type or another.

A very interesting set of photographs shows a bride dressed in European, and Ndebele regalia (figs.26,27). The willingness of the women to accept these apparent contradictions, and the fact that the photographer has acknowledged them, contrast strongly with Duggan-Cronin's constructed image of his 1923 'bride'.

Courtney-Clarke shows Anna Ntuli "soon after her Western wedding in the morning" (fig.27), where she wore white dress and veil regalia . She was then photographed in the afternoon, "for which she puts on the customary sad expression of the bride and partly covers her face with an *agurara*, which she wears for the first time" (fig.26). This indicates that the practice of *hlonipha* is still a significant ritual. It is interesting to recall that one explanation for covering the face with a blanket rather than with the *isiyaya* is that the bride has already had a child; the bride photographed by Courtney-Clarke was obviously pregnant. Her wearing of a blanket for the 'traditional' ceremony may indicate that the *isiyaya* is still reserved for 'chaste' brides.

An interesting group of photographs shows further adaptations of Ndebele/indigenous forms, and the inclusion of European-derived forms of decoration. Courtney-Clarke points to the "profusion of ornaments, mirrors, plastic watches and whistles, butterflies and feathered darts" (fig.24), attached to headdresses and blankets. These are worn together with traditional-style *umlingakobe*, a range of *isigolwane*, blankets adorned with fabric panels, and apparently plastic '*idzila*'. A group of women thus adorned were photographed "dancing and singing songs of praise to their sons attending initiation" (1986:99).

It is thus apparent that a comparison between early beadwork documented in the 1920s and 1930s and more recent beadwork, documented in the 1980s, reveals interesting features of continuity and change. Continuity is highlighted in the

main types of beadwork which are still produced, including the children's *lighabi*, the young girl's *isiphephetu*, the married women's aprons, capes, blankets and body rings. Changes are indicated in the mixing of 'traditional; and new materials used to make these types of beadwork, in the diversity of colour ranges and designs, and the adoptions of 'non' Ndebele forms of clothing and decoration. It seems significant that together with a willingness to be innovative and to combine 'old' and 'new' features, there is a strong will of conservatism passed down through the generations in order to maintain the production of beadwork types which date to the last century. Their concomitant function of defining the social status of the women has clearly not lost its importance in a society that has always been subject to shifting social, economic and political circumstances.

The contemporary photographic records of the Ndebele, as produced by Courtney-Clarke, raise questions which are of relevance for future documentors of the art. Through her images, Courtney-Clarke has succeeded in communicating a dynamic rather that a static culture. However, her work does not necessarily address material culture in the context of some wider social, political and economic realities. For example, poor economic conditions in the rural and peri-urban areas have forced many women to sell their old and new personal beadwork, and many have been compelled to travel to the cities in order to sell their work. The impact of such developments on the production, and on the wearing of beadwork, should not be underestimated. These issues will be discussed fully in Chapter Three. Even if the images do not have the same glossy impact or commercial appeal as those reproduced in coffee-table type publications, they represent important circumstances which could be documented photographically.

CHAPTER TWO: NDEBELE HISTORY AND THE ORIGINS OF THE BEADWORK

It can be postulated that the social role played by the beadwork, as discussed in the previous chapter, may be one of its oldest functions. This function may have been coterminous with, if not the origins of the art, then with its re-emergence during the late nineteenth century. The substantiation of this assertion involves the consideration of a number of complex and inter-related factors, which include problems of dating, an understanding of Ndebele history, and the role of women in Ndebele society, past and present. By exploring these issues, it is possible to determine why there may have been a need for beadwork to exist during different historical periods, and how its presence and use may have met important needs amongst the people. From this, the various historical and contemporary roles of the beadwork can be more clearly defined.

There is a need to focus attention on issues relating to the dating and the history of the beadwork, and the history of the Ndebele people, as these factors are ultimately inseparable from one another. In the Introduction and in Chapter One, most of the literature on the beadwork has been criticised for placing too much emphasis on descriptive typologies, at the expense of exploring more complex issues relating to changing contexts and functions. The resultant ahistorical methodologies are limited, and ignore factors intrinsic to the broader social and ethnic implications of the beadwork. The need to move beyond this kind of framework is highlighted in both recent anthropological and African art historical studies.

Sass, in her article "Ferment in Anthropology" (1987), rejects a "commonplace of cultural anthropology" whereby "modern man has historical perspective", while "primitive man is governed by the mythic ... a sort of time-out-of-time" (1987:67). She relates that

> "younger anthropologists ... have suggested an array of new approaches for a 'science' long preoccupied with the timeless and the objective ... They tend to read extensively outside their field and have been influenced by recent developments in literary theory, philosophy, history and feminist studies. Some have found inspiration in surprising places, from adventure fiction to surrealist collages - places where mystery and human feeling, unpredictability and struggle, are given their due" (1987:66).

Echoing these moves to consider different approaches, African art historians such as Drewal investigate the critical re-appraisal which the theories and practices of African art research are undergoing (1988). Drewal also rejects the earlier ahistorical methodologies of anthropologists, especially in their construction of an "ethnographic present" (1988:72). He acknowledges and supports the formation of new models that "consider process and that take historical factors into account" (1988:72). He underlines the need for

> "situating art in its broader social and historical context and defining the artists' intentions with patrons and society in general in order to understand artists and art as creators and creations of culture" (1988:71).

Furthermore, he describes how

> "Africanists have attempted to unite text and context, art and society. A unified 'con-textual' approach uncovers the connectedness of things and thoughts. Texts and contexts are parts of a seamless network in which analysis proceeds in turn centifugally (outward from the form) and centripitally (inward from the surroundings). Both ways of working enlighten. They can encompass all spheres of experience (philosophy, literature, performance, music, economics, politics, history etc.) that may be appropriate for an analysis ... "(1988:71).

An inter-disciplinary and contextual approach in the study of Ndebele beadwork would highlight the importance of historical developments in the nineteenth century, and would begin to eliminate the perpetuation of certain stereotypical impressions. For example, although general stylistic changes in the beadwork - that is, in colour and design -

are often noted, one is still left with the impression of a timeless tradition,* ongoing within an isolated and unchanging society. The attitudes adopted by many researchers well fit the criticisms levelled against an exhibition entitled "Lost Magic Kingdoms and Six Paper Moons from Nahuatl", held at the Museum of Mankind, London, in 1985. The exhibition attempted to demonstrate the "'fruitful' inspiration drawn by western artists from tribal sources" (Coombes and Lloyd, 1986:540). Like many beadwork researchers, Paolozzi, the curator of the exhibition,

> "focused around objects and their designated and associated functions. As such they pose little threat to the established power structures of western colonialism, since they give no indication of self-determination on the part of those nations represented ... (they) never refer to social relations or living conditions except by remote association. The people represented here are as locked in a time-zone as their counterparts in any systematic evolutionary classification from the nineteenth or early twentieth century, and historical change is presented solely as a result of contact with the west rather than as something integral to these societes" (Coombes and Lloyd, 1986:542).

To begin to redress the situation, the problems of dating should be explored more thoroughly. *The beadwork as it is known today, even the oldest identifiable pieces, are said to date to the late nineteenth century.* For reasons which will be discussed later, this dating will be seen to have much validity. The nature of beadwork prior to this period - if in fact the tradition existed - can only be speculated upon, as there is no extant evidence of beaded artefacts before the late nineteenth century. It is possible that a very early, simplified form of beadwork may have existed, incorporating materials such as indigenous seeds. It should be noted, though, that trade between Europeans and blacks in southern Africa has a long history, and there may have been such contacts in the Transvaal as far back as the sixteenth century - hence European beads may have been available since

this time. However, very little is known about the Ndebele prior to the nineteenth century, regarding both their history and their way of life.

Many informants talk about the beadwork as a tradition deeply entrenched within the customs of the group, as a tradition which "came with the origins of the Ndebele, from the birth of mankind" (Letty Ngoma, Field interview 1989). However, this undoubtedly reflects the central importance attached to the beadwork and its functions within the group today, rather than referring to the actual origins of the art. This implies further that contemporary Ndebele women regard beadwork as integral to their self-definition as an ethnic group.

Further research, though, into Ndebele cosmology may reveal mythical origins relating to beaded adornment. Fourie (1921) apparently described some Ndebele religious beliefs, identifying a supreme God, Zimu or Mlimu, "who rages in the thunderstorm and when angry brings drought" (Kuper 1978:111). He is distinguished from the spirits or *abezimu*. Reference is made to Mlenza Munye, 'One leg', who is an intermediary between Zimu and the spirits. It was believed that he used to come regularly each year to announce certain demands. Interestingly, on one occasion he apparently ordered the people to wear pumpkin pips around their necks (Kuper 1978:111). No further explanations were given, but recently, one informant, Letty Ngoma, described how amongst some families, a newly born child is given a beaded necklace to be placed around the neck before the child is exposed to the outside for the first time. She described this as an age-old practise, but was not sure of its function, suggesting that it may be to ward off illness, or as a token of appreciation to the gods (Field interview 1989). Thus here may be some relationship between Ndebele myths and Ndebele adornment. An investigation into the former, which is beyond the scope of this dissertation, may also shed some light on the functions of the beadwork.

At this point, it is useful to explore the extant fragments of early Ndebele history, as they may provide information relating to the possible developments in the art.

The very early history of the Ndebele is vague and speculative. Of Nguni origin, the Ndebele are believed to have moved into the Transvaal as far back as the sixteenth century, but the socio-economic structure of the group during that time is difficult to define. One approach is to consider oral history as a source for revealing something of these early developments. As indicated in the Introduction, although oral history was once regarded as unreliable, researchers in many disciplines, including Art History, are now recognising the value of oral records, as they can provide at least some of the story. Used in conjunction with other approaches, a more complete picture emerges.

As Drewal points out, "historical and art-historical research in Africa ... are based largely on oral rather than written data. Western biases towards the permanence and supposed reliability of written documents tend to undervalue oral material in historical reconstructions" (1988:72). Drewal recognises that there are differences between written and oral sources, "both in the ways we use them and in the eras they give us access to" (1988:72), but he suggests that they share a similar role in reconstructing the past. In his terms, "both provide 'messages from the past to the present' that are essential for the writing of history. Both participate in the process of interpretation" (1988:72).

Oral versions of Ndebele history were first recorded by researchers such as Fourie in 1921 (30, in Kuper 1978), and by Van Warmelo in 1930 (13). The significant feature that emerges from these records is that at some historical point, the Ndebele were led by a certain Chief Musi or Msi. Some versions describe that he had five sons - Manala, Ndzundza,

Mathombeni, Dhlomo and M'Hwaduba or Masombuka (Van Warmelo 1930:8-9). The sons are said to have quarrelled over the chieftainship, resulting in the group being split into five sections, one under each brother. The subsequent history and development of three of these groups under M'Hwaduba/Masombuka, Mathombeni and Dhlomo, are not clear; if they existed, they appear to have assimilated with surrounding Sotho groups, and did not develop separate, Ndebele identities. The division of the Ndebele into Southern and Northern groups, as first defined by Van Warmelo, probably has its roots in these events, with the three 'lost' brothers and their followers making up the Northern groups.

The fates of the Manala and Ndzundza groups were different. An oral myth, transcribed by Van Warmelo (1930:60-3), tells only of the quarrel between these two brothers (see Appendix Two). This myth closely resembles the biblical tale of Isaac, Esau and Jacob, describing how Ndzundza tricked his father Msi, and took the chieftainship away from his brother Manala. At first, the biblical nature of this version, and the bias in presenting the Manala as the victims, appear to reflect the fact that Van Warmelo's fieldwork was restricted to a group of Manala living on a mission station. But Van Warmelo claims that the tradition he relates was transcribed by Fourie in "nearly the same words" (Fourie 1921:33, in Van Warmelo 1930:60). Furthermore, he points out that " ... of the present generation ... it is those who have most been in contact with missionaries, that do not know of the stratagem by which Ndzundza deceived his father" (1930:60). This version was apparently told to Van Warmelo by an informant "who was best acquainted with tribal tradition, but who knew nothing of Biblical history" (1930:60). Van Warmelo adds that "the same is said by Fourie of his informants, who were old men and complete heathens" (Fourie 1921, in Van Warmelo 1935:60). Also, he points to the fact that "the amaNala and the amaNdzundza have both got the same tale, though they have been separated for so many generations. If therefore

part of the tale is derived from foreign sources, it is by no means a recent importation among the Ndebele of the Transvaal" (1930:60).

These developments in Ndebele history, resulting in the creation of at least two known sub-groups, may be of relevance to the origins and development of the beadwork. The fragmentary evidence suggests that at some stage, the Manala may have existed as the more dominant, or at least equally strong group, and as the one which may first have developed the beadwork tradition. The nature of this evidence is questionable, however, and it raises highly problematic issues, some of which cannot be resolved. Nevertheless, these problems need to be identified.

It has been noted that some of the earliest research on the Ndebele, and the earliest photographic documentation, relate to the Manala group. In an article published in The Bantu-Speaking Tribes of South Africa (ed. Schapera 1937), Van Warmelo observed that "the Southern group (of the Ndebele) today comprises a single senior tribe, the Manala, and a junior tribe, the Ndzundza ... " (1937:53). Again, the implication of this statement, that historically the Manala may have been the oldest and strongest group, is not necessarily accurate. As will be discussed, the Ndzundza once constituted a formidable group. Their relative inconspicuousness in the 1930s was a result of historical circumstances which had diminished their strength and their numbers, rather than of their long-term junior status. Furthermore, the fact that early researchers and documentors focused on the Manala does not necessarily mean that it was because they were the only beadwork producers at the time. The Manala settlement of Wallmansthal was close to Pretoria, and the convenience of looking at a group living close to an urban area may have partly determined the direction of early studies.

But in support of the possible one-time dominance of the Manala, Weiss, in her 1963 dissertation, claimed that the beadwork did originate with this group (1963:43). Her information appears to have been based on comments by informants in the field, although she does not provide specific details, nor could her informants say precisely when the beadwork was first produced (1963:43). It is possible that some beadwork did develop amongst the Manala, given the fact that their geographical position placed them closer to trade routes, which in turn were closer to white urban settlements, in the later nineteenth century. But beads would also have been obtainable throughout the Transvaal from trading stores, which means the Ndzundza would also have had access to beads by the 1920s and 1930s, and probably even earlier.

The lack of documentation makes it difficult to determine when the Ndzundza began making beadwork. But as will be seen, historical factors suggest that Ndzundza beadwork may have been produced at least from the 1880s onwards, and possibly earlier. Even if this can be established, it is not easy to identify the extent to which Manala and Ndzundza beadwork may have differed, if at all.

Based on these fragments of evidence - that the Ndebele may have established themselves in the Transvaal as far back as the sixteenth or seventeeth century; that during, and since that time, beads may have been available from outside traders; and that oral history and myths generally connect the origins of the beadwork with those of the group itself - it seems possible that some form of beadwork may have been produced before the nineteenth century. However, it is not possible to determine whether the beadwork as we know it today - even the oldest extant pieces - are of the same forms and styles that may have been produced earlier, during times for which there is no physical evidence of the tradition. This lack of information also makes it impossible to talk of functions of very early beadwork. However, some questions relating to types, style and function can be

answered in relation to the extant beadwork, partly through exploring methods of dating and the available information on Ndebele history during the late nineteenth century.
Frequently, in the literature on the beadwork, there are references to the art dating to the late nineteenth century, but this is seldom substantiated. This dating is often discussed in relation to the identification of old pieces - that is, by noting features such as the use of mainly small, white beads, sparse, linear designs (figs.38,40), the use of skin, and sinew thread. However, these two issues do not necessarily go hand in hand - the physical or material evidence does not automatically date the beadwork to a particular time period. Frequently, old beadwork is taken apart by Ndebele women and the beads are re-used in more recently-made items. There is also some confusion relating to whether beadwork is buried or re-used when a woman dies,[24] which further compounds the dating issue. There are, nonetheless, other avenues which give more credibility and support to the relationship between material evidence and dating of the beadwork.

A fairly reliable way of establishing at least some broad chronological parameters is by questioning the women themselves. Many older informants are able to recall beadwork belonging to their mothers and/or grandmothers. On this basis, it is possible to date the beadwork at least to the second half of the nineteenth century, and more specifically, to the last few decades of that century.

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24. Conflicting information has been received on this issue. Some informants have suggested it was only in the past that the beadwork would have been buried with their owner, but that this practice is no longer observed. There have been some suggestions that the beadwork is not buried with the deceased woman but would be buried within the family's homestead for a period of time, perhaps a year, until the mourning period is over. Thereafter, the beadwork would be reclaimed and distributed to the deceased daughter/s. Today, if the beadwork does not get sold or re-used, it seems more common that it would be passed down to the female family members without any burial ceremonies in between.

Working on a similar principle, the photographic documentation can also be useful to help establish earlier dating. As indicated, the earliest images were taken during the 1920s and 1930s. It is reasonable to assume that at least some of the beadwork illustrated was not 'brand new'. There are also photographs of older, married women; one image shows women wearing the *umlingakobe* (fig.10), indicating that she had a son old enough to be undergoing initiation. The photographic evidence suggests that the beadwork of that period was part of a tradition in existence anytime between ten and forty years earlier - and maybe even before that. The style of early beadwork that is identified through the use of small white beads and sparse designs is confirmed by the same style evident in the early photographic documentation of Duggan-Cronin (figs.5,6,11).

With these approaches helping to establish the beadwork in the late nineteenth century, it is interesting to consider broader historical circumstances, and functions of the beadwork, which provide further evidence for this dating.

The so-called social functions of the beadwork were fully discussed in the previous chapter. The significance of these functions appear to have been foregrounded to a greater or lesser extent during particular historical periods. Especially today, for example, commercial demands seem to be more prevalent in stimulating production of the beadwork than in the past, when social factors obviously played an important role in the production of these artefacts. However, it is these social functions of the beadwork which form a strong, common thread in the information obtained by all researchers on the beadwork, from the late 1920s to the present day. Ndebele women continue to describe these functions, as passed down by their mothers and grandmothers. This knowledge is still very much in evidence. The beadwork as a reflection of the social status of the women is clearly understood by Ndebele women, both amongst the Ndzundza and Manala people.

Why there was a need for the beadwork to fulfill these functions can be discovered in Ndebele history of the late nineteenth century. This is not as obscure as the history of earlier periods, although specific information on the Manala group is scarce. Ndzundza history has been well documented by researchers such as Delius (1983, 1989), Schneider (1987) and James (1988).

During the first decades of the nineteenth century, it seems that the Manala and Ndzundza were living independantly in the eastern Transvaal, under chiefs Sibindi and Magodongo respectively (Schneider 1987:74). During the years of the *difaqane* (1821-1837), both groups joined forces against the raiding parties of Mzilikazi (Schneider 1987:74), and both chiefs were eventually killed. Thereafter, the Manala suffered more heavily than the Ndzunzda. According to Schneider (1987:75), Sibindi's people drifted around in the Transvaal, attaching themselves to different chiefdoms. By the late 1860s, they appear to have settled on Schoeman's farm, which later became the Wallmansthal Mission Station.

According to Delius, the Ndzundza "weathered these storms (of the *difaqane*) rather better" (1989:229), and in the 1830s and 1840s, they "re-emerged as a significant chiefdom under the leadership of Mabhogo Mahlangu and under the political umbrella of the Pedi paramount Sekwati" (1989:229). By the late 1860s and 1870s, the Ndzundza had evolved into a formidable group, with these decades being the "apogee of (their) power and prosperity" (1989:230-1). But in the early 1880s, a number of factors resulted in a build-up of tensions and power struggles between the Ndebele, the Pedi and the Boers.[25] This culminated in the Boers laying siege to the Ndzundza at their mountain stronghold of Namshaxelo, and the Ndebele people became completely isolated. After months of fighting and increasing

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25. See Scneider (1987) and Delius (1983,1989) for full descriptions of historical circumstances in the Transvaal during the 1880s.

starvation, the Ndzundza were finally defeated in July 1883. The Boer victors then imposed on the Ndzundza a system of indenture to white farmers. Delius describes the severe conditions which broke up Ndzundza families and dispersed the people:

> "At the end of a bitter and prolonged war individuals who had belonged to a powerful and independent chiefdom with rich resources found themselves divided and scattered across the breadth of the Transvaal. Their villages had been destroyed and their land had been alienated" (1989:235).

The response of the Ndebele to these conditions is significant, as Delius argues that

> " ... the image of the Ndzundza as utterly demoralized and defeated is belied by the evidence of the extent to which they both resisted and shaped the reality of indenture" (1989:239).

In keeping with Delius' conclusions, Davison suggests that

> " ... it is significant that in reaction to being divided socially and geographically, a stronger consciousness of identity developed and was expressed in the material culture" (1985:19).

Delius' research provides evidence for Davison's further claim that "it was *because* of dispersal that it became imperative both to retain customs and to develop new ways of expressing and defending their identity in alien surroundings" (1985:19). Delius does not specifically discuss Ndebele material culture, but his evidence strongly suggests that the beadwork may have formed part of attempts to reinforce a sense of group identity.

He points out that in 1885, "at least two imprisoned Ndzundza leaders escaped" (1989:240), subsequently establishing a political focus which "to some extent allowed chiefly ritual and judicial functions to be resumed" (1989:241). More significantly, he describes how the holding of male initiation *(wela)* and the formation of regiments were central in maintaining "a degree of social and cultural

cohesion" (1989:241), and that it "may be more than mere coincidence that male initiation was restarted in 1886, the year after the escapes of the Ndzundza royals" (1989:241). As indicated, most beadwork is worn by the women, reflecting their status, but some forms are associated with male initiation, such as the *umlingakobe*. One of the few occasions when men wear beads is on their return from initiation school (see Appendix One). Such expressions may have taken on very significant meaning during the post-Mapoch War period, visibly reinforcing the *wela*, and all it stood for, amongst the scattered Ndebele people.

Delius suggests further that "it is also probable that female initiation was continued, but as this was conducted within individual homes, it was less likely to attract attention and excite comments" (1989:241). He notes that "one of the crucial ways in which the Ndzundza fought back was through their attempts to regroup and to revive key social institutions like the homestead... " (1989:248). These two related factors - female initiation and concern with the home - would have been instrumental in reinforcing social traditions and values. Because the different types of beadwork communicate social identities, it is likely that the social meaning of the beadwork was of some importance during this time, and information associated with this meaning is likely to have been passed down through female initiation. So, given the historical factors of the late 1800s, it is possible that the beadwork was, at the least, re-introduced and extended after the Mapoch War, to fulfill "an increased need to express identity in dress when no longer living as a unified Ndebele community" (Davison 1985:19).

From these circumstances, it can be seen that the social functions of the beadwork extend into, and form part of, a broader search for ethnic identity. It should be noted, though, that historically, the ethnic implications of the beadwork were associated only with the Ndzundza Ndebele, to whom the above events applied. The Manala, settled in dif-

ferent areas, were not involved in the Mapoch War. Even if they were the initial beadwork producers as certain informants and researchers such as Weiss have suggested, the Manala did not continue with the tradition to the extent that the Ndzundza did. Schneider, writing on Ndebele wall decoration, also found that this tradition was much stronger amongst the Ndzundza (1987). It seems, then, that the 1883 War and its aftermath had significant implications in the development of Ndebele material culture, as an expression of ethnic identity, amongst the Ndzundza group.

An ethnic consciousness, actively reinforced by historical circumstances, and reflected in Ndebele material culture, is an important feature to recognise. As noted by Vail, in his Preface to The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa (1989), it is important to reconsider the notion that 'tribe' is "little more than a racist term with a myriad of negative connotations" (1989:x). He found, in his fieldwork in Malawi, that people "never hesitated to identify themselves as members of a particular 'tribe', and they did so with obvious pride" (1989:x). He draws the conclusion, which is applicable to the Ndebele, that "ethnicity remains a political reality" (1989:xi). On one level, it becomes a matter of terminology, where "if one disapproves of the phenomenon, 'it' is 'tribalism'; if one is less judgemental 'it' is 'ethnicity'" (1989:7). What is important, though, and this is explored in the various articles in The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa, is to invesitgate the roots of ethnicity in particular societies and contexts, with a stress on historical circumstances and social, economic and political changes which all contribute to establishing or creating ethnic consciousness (1989:7-11).

In the light of this model, the interpretation of the beadwork, in its historical context, makes sense. Vail's description of the message of ethnicity can be directly applied to the circumstances of the Ndebele in the late nineteenth century, and even following this period, for he

claims that "the emphases on past values, 'rediscovered' traditions, and chiefly authority ... were calculated to conserve a way of life that was in the process of being rapidly undermined by the forces of ... colonialism" (1989:14).

The defeat of the Ndzundza, then, created a much stronger, more conscious need to regroup, to grow, and to rebuild and maintain ethnic identity. The beadwork came to represent and reflect this distinctive Ndebele - and more specifically - Ndzundza identity. Because the Manala were never threatened in the same way, it can be argued, there was no need for their beadwork - and later, their wall painting - to serve such pivotal functions. This must explain, to a large extent, why 'Ndebele' art came to flourish amongst the Ndzundza but not amongst the Manala.

The importance of cultural symbols of ethnic identity for the Ndebele in the post-Mapoch War period is supported by an important function of Ndebele mural painting. Although the wall painting tradition only developed in the 1940s, the meaning of the mural art has also been closely associated with the ethnic consciousness that initially developed after the Mapoch War, and which seems to have filtered through the following decades into the twentieth century (Schneider 1987).

Schneider, who undertook extensive research on the wall decoration, maintains that the colours and patterns used to decorate the walls, which are similar to those used in the beadwork, do not embody a specific, simple symbolic code - as also appears to be the case with the beadwork. Rather than conclude that the mural art is purely decorative, she determined that its meaning and function operate as statements of ethnic identity, which in turn, was, and still is, a response to historical conditions. Despite the fact that the origins of the beadwork date much earlier than the wall painting, both art forms can be interpreted on the level of

"unambiguous statement(a) of ethnic identity" (Davison 1985:19). This is because the historical factors of both earlier and more recent times created similar conditions and needs which both art forms could fulfill.[26]

The subsequent history and settlement of the Ndebele has continued to create conditions which are of relevance for the beadwork. As indicated, unlike the Ndzundza, the Manala never regrouped as a strong entity after the *difaqane*, and they were not involved in the Mapoch War of 1883. Schneider (1987:76) refers to documented records of 1905 which numbered the Manala of Wallmannsthal and the surrounding areas at approxiamtely 4000 members, with approximately 2000 more living on white farms near Pretoria. By 1926, many settled on farms northeast of Rust de Winter. Since 1977, many

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26. The availability of store-bought paints in the 1940's certainly stimulated the wall painting at the time. The need for this practise had its roots in historical circumstances. Schneider traces the roots of the strong sense of ethnic identity felt by the Ndebele to the period of the Mapoch War, stating that "the memory of the injuries of the past, and the shared experiences of defeat, humiliation and despair, have combined to produce a feeling of cohesiveness, of belonging to the Ndzundza ... " (1987:219). As she points out, the Ndebele people's desires for unity were intensified by the fact that the 1913 Natives Land Act did not provide any ground for the Ndebele, because of "earlier confiscation of Ndebele land rights" (1987:210). Subsequent appeals in 1914 and 1917 by Ndebele leaders to Native Land Commissions for their land to be returned to them were turned down. It was only in the early 1970s that provision was made for the establishment of the Ndebele 'homeland' of KwaNdebele, which was welcomed by some Ndebele as final recognition and assertion of their rights. In addition, it is possible that the 1936 Native Trust and Land Act contributed to the Ndebele's sense of continued displacement in the 1930s and 1940s. As an amendment to the 1913 Act, the 1936 Act was to "make further provision as to the acquisition and occupation of land by natives..." (Statutes of the Union of South Africa:1936). It too does not appear to have set aside land for the Ndebele. Although it refers to the purchase of a number of farms in the Pretoria area on which Ndebele families may have been living, they were not the main farms which later were incorporarated into KwaNdebele. It is likely, then, that the Ndebele were once again subjected to living in areas under the control of either white or other black groups. Considering the history of Ndebele responses to domination, the continued lack of recognition afforded to them in the 1930s must have once again intensified their feelings of, and need for, ethnic cohesion. This may have been a significant factor in the development of their highly visible wall decoration in the 1940s.

Manala have been living near the Manala headquarters of Allemansdrift, as well as near Rust de Winter; as well as others living amongst Ndzundza groups.

Many Ndzundza families remained on white farms well into the twentieth century, even until today. Since the proclamation of an Ndebele 'homeland'in the 1970s, settlements outside the white farms have been created. These include rural and peri-urban settlements such as Kwa-Mapoch or Inkosini ('the place of the chief'), Mlombotini (Weltevreden), Magula (Waterval), Maphotla (Wolvekraal), Machiding (Klipplaatsdrift) and 'Ten Morgen' (Schneider 1987:59). There are also settlements in the areas of Dennilton and Groblersdal. In addition, a Ndzundza group live in the Nebo magisterial district in the Lebowa 'homeland'. They are under headman Jack Mahlangu, although not all Nebo Ndebele recognise his leadership; many regard Chief David Mabhogo, who resides at Inkosini, as their leader (Schneider 1987:63). The creation of the Ndebele 'homeland' led to serious conflicts and divided the loyalties of the people, resulting in violence and fears in the area which, over the last two years, has abated somewhat.

Of central relevance to the issue of ethnicity in both the beadwork and the mural art is the role played the Ndebele women. It has been noted that most of the beadwork is associated with the women, and they are also the producers of wall decoration. After the 1883 War, with Ndebele families scattered on white farms, it was often the women who were left at the homes while the men provided labour to the farmers. Since then, this has extended into the system of migrant labour, with most men, today, travelling from the rural areas in KwaNdebele to work in the urban centres of Pretoria and Johannesburg. The women thus came to play an important role in maintaining cultural values and practising traditions which the men may be unable to fulfill. But the issue of the position of women in Ndebele society is even more complex, for the women are under considerable pressure

from the men to maintain "tradition". Vail describes the effects of the absenteeism of migrant labourers, leading to women "becoming more important to the day-to-day survival of the family through their work on the land" (1989:14). However, to prevent the women from seeking independence and leaving the rural areas, "an emphasis on the need to control women and a stress on the protection of the integrity of the family came to be intrinsic to both ethnic ideologies and the actual institutional practices of indirect rule" (1989:15). By extension, the emphasis on home life, on women staying at home, has underlined their role as repositories of culture, with its roots in conditions created by historical circumstances.

The following chapter will explore the role of the women, and the function of the beadwork in the contemporary context. This discussion will explore to what extent women continue to fulfill their role as custodians of culture through their beadwork, and whether in fact the need for the beadwork to function in this way remains a pertinent issue in the light of additional factors, such as commercial demands.

CHAPTER THREE: NDEBELE BEADWORK AND THE COMMERCIAL MARKET

The continuation and expansion of Ndebele beadwork, particularly over the last decade, not only reflect statements of Ndebele ethnicity, but are also indicative of the additional influence of the commercial market. The growth of this market in many ways allows the women to fulfill their roles as custodians of Ndebele culture, albeit through an impetus from an outside source. As discussed in Chapter Two, the maintenance of cultural practises such as the beadwork was stimulated by historical circumstances, and the absenteeism of men from the homes due to the system of migrant labour. Ironically, the women's participation in the commercial markets not only encourages the continuation of the beadwork but it also provides varying degrees of economic independence for many Ndebele women. The markets provide economic opportunities for the women who face severe poverty in the 'homeland' of KwaNdebele and in the Nebo district, allowing them to supplement and in some cases, to replace the men's earnings. They have created situations whereby women venture beyond their homes in order to participate more successfully in the markets, although most of these women are still based at, or return to, rural or peri-urban settlements in KwaNdebele.

Participation in the markets has had a significant influence on the types of beaded articles being produced. As will be seen, a combination of market demands and impetus from the women themselves has not only led to innovations, but has also encouraged the continued production of 'traditional' items such as aprons and beaded blankets. At the same time, because many women may now produce only for the commercial market and not for themselves, social meanings associated with the beadwork may be in danger of disappearing. The extent to which this will happen, though, remains to be seen, as interviews with various women currently selling their work still reveals a knowledge of functions and meanings as described in the previous chapters. Furthermore, many women

seem to attach as much importance to the process of making the beadwork as to the wearing of it. Some women have commented that the beadwork will not die out because they enjoy making it, even if they do not wear it.

Thus the current situation regarding the increased production of Ndebele beadwork is complex, involving a combination of factors and circumstances. While this chapter will deal with continuities and changes as they relate to the commercial market, it is important to bear in mind that not all changes are a result of this commercialization. As discussed in the previous chapters, the beadwork has always been a dynamic art form, with developments taking place over the years within, and for, the group itself. At the same time, the commercial demand for Ndebele beadwork is not new, as women have been selling their art to a 'tourist' public since at least the 1950s, if not earlier. Over the last few years, the market has expanded considerably, the reasons for which will be discussed.

Before exploring the ways in which the commercial markets for Ndebele beadwork operate, it is necessary to consider attitudes of researchers towards the so-called 'tourist' arts. In the research by art historians over the last decade, there has been a shift from dismissing these arts as inferior, to recognising their value, and in doing so, to establishing methodological models for the study of these 'changing' arts.

In the past, and until quite recently, certain attitudes towards African art have prevented the recognition of changes that occur in this art. Provost, in a 1980 article entitled "The Valuation of Traditional Art: Special Problems in Connoiseurship", catagorically states that "an authentic piece must be produced for group use by an artist belonging to it or to a related group; the basic materials ... utilized in the creation of the piece must be indigenous to the region, and the object must function within the group in ac-

cordance with its tradition" (1980:141). Given such a narrow definition of "authentic" art, it is not surprising that for Provost, the inclusion of 'foreign' elements in African art poses a dilemma, as he asks "when do these 'foreign' images become 'domestic' or 'traditional'?" (1980:147).

The fact that he, and others, find it difficult to accomodate such changes highlights the extent to which African art studies are characterized by idealised misconceptions of what 'real' African art is. Jules-Rosette, in The Messages of Tourist Art: An African Semiotic System in Comparative Perspective (1984), points out the implicit contradiction in such attitudes, where

> "the contemporary arts, according to some critics ... can no longer be said to be either authentic or African ... (but) when schools of European artists, such as the cubists and the expressionists, borrow African formats and themes, they are said to be conducting an innovative experimentation with 'primitivism'. The new African artists, however, are seen as distorting authentic forms" (1984:16).

The lack of recognition given to change in African societies and their arts needs to be seriously challenged. According to Sasa, in the field of anthropology one of the key disciplines which has created and perpetuated the mythical image of 'primitive' societies as ahistorical, there is an awareness of the need to question "time-honoured methods and assumptions ... (which) ... are conceptually and morally bankrupt and need to be replaced by more sophisticated models" (1987:66).

The same sentiment is applicable to the field of African art history, particularly with reference to Ndebele beadwork. The "time-honoured methods and assumptions", such as those of Provost quoted earlier, have produced a body of literature on the beadwork which, as seen in the previous chapters, offers a limited perspective on this art form. The idea that African art must 'mean something' within a socio-religious context predominates in the writings on the bead-

work, creating an emphasis on overt, concrete and descriptive information - for example, identifying articles and their functions within what is considered the 'traditional' context.

The value of such information is indisputable, but there is also a need to move beyond this approach. Chapters One and Two explored the ways in which photographic documentation and history, areas largely ignored in the literature on the beadwork, provide insight into this art. Similarly, the widespread tendency to work and to remain within the model of 'traditional' art and 'traditional' functions means that recent changes in the beadwork, and the nature of its markets, are seldom considered to be of significance. Such single-mindedness has made it difficult to accomodate not necessarily a lack of meaning but meaning of a different kind.

It has also resulted in a general trend in the literature which sets up a 'then' and 'now' dichotomy; emphasis is usually placed on an undefined past, with present developments being dealt with in a very brief and descriptive way. It is in fact those areas ignored or inconclusively discussed which provide the clues for further investigation.

Silver suggests that "tourist arts are neither better nor worse than their traditional counterparts, simply different, and equally careful attention must be paid to the new functions they serve" (1979:91). From the earlier writings on the beadwork of the 1950s and 1960s, by researchers such as Meiring and Weiss, to the present day, mention is constantly made of 'acculturation' and its effects on the art, to 'tourist art', to 'modern' changes. The fact that these aspects of the beadwork have always been visible enough to warrant some mention, and have more recently come to represent an even stronger mainstream trend, makes it increasingly important to focus on such issues.

This suggestion is supported by the fact that there is a strong, if comparatively recent, trend in writings on African art to acknowledge and explore, in their own rights and on their own terms, what can be called the 'changing arts', and their concomitant commercial markets. Authors such as Richter (1980), Silver (1979), Ben-Amos (1977), Graburn (1976) and Jules-Rosette (1984) have extended our understanding of these arts in various non-Western communities. There is very little writing exploring similar attitudes towards the commercial arts in southern Africa. Preston-Whyte (1988) and Preston-Whyte and Thorpe (1989) have adopted a positive attitude to the influence of the commercial markets on Zulu beadwork, drawing on some of the above-mentioned researchers. But these articles are of limited use for an appraisal of the commercial Ndebele beadwork. Graburn (1976) and Jules-Rosette (1984) offer the most comprehensive investigations, Graburn being one of the first seriously to attempt to define and give meaning to the "arts of acculturation" (1976:5) in his book entitled Ethnic and Tourist Arts: Cultural Expressions from the Fourth World.

Graburn's research covers many geographical areas, including a section on Africa; he includes groups whom he considers as "Fourth World" in the sense of being "the collective name for all aboriginal or native peoples whose lands fall within the national boundaries and techno-bureaucratic administrations of countries of the First, Second and Third Worlds. As such, they are peoples without countries of their own, peoples who are usually in the minority and without the power to direct the course of their collective lives ... " (1976:1). The Ndebele people could be defined in these terms, and Graburn's description of the "study of the arts of the Fourth World" (1976:2) is also of relevance to the study of the beadwork:

> " ... The study of the arts of the Fourth World is different from the study of 'primitive' art, characteristic of most earlier anthropological writings, for it must take into account more than

> one symbolic and aesthetic system, and the fact that the arts may be produced by one group for consumption by another. The study of Fourth World arts is ... the study of *changing* arts - of emerging ethnicities, modifying identities, and commercial and colonial stimulii and repressive actions" (1976:2).

Graburn delineated a system of classification, dividing the arts into seven catagories: 1) Extinction 2) Traditional or Functional Fine Arts 3) Commercial Fine Arts 4) Souvenirs 5) Reintegrated Arts 6) Assimilated Fine Arts 7) Popular Arts. Although this taxonomy should not be seen as definitive, some of the catagories defined by Graburn will be seen to have some relevance for Ndebele beadwork.

The research of other authors focuses on Africa, and then on specific groups. Richter discusses the Kulebele of the Ivory Coast (1980), Silver the Ashanti of Ghana (1979), while Jules-Rosette offers a comparative study of mainly the carving and pottery from areas in Kenya, Zambia and the Ivory Coast (1984). In her book <u>The Messages of Tourist Art</u>, Jules-Rosette uses as her starting point a definition of four major market types, rather than Graburn's delineation of art types, although some of these are included as sub-catagories. The market types defined by Jules-Rosette are 1) the village market 2) the conventional urban market 3) the curio trade and 4) gallery trade or the popular art market.

The research of these authors is very useful in the way it explores the structures of the commercial markets and the arts sold through them. Jules-Rosette explores the "sociological and cultural significance of tourist art" (1984:Foreward vii), understanding it as a "unique form of communication between cultures" (1984:Preface xi). She analyses tourist art as a system of messages, a "process of communication involving image creators who attempt to represent aspects of their own cultures to meet the expectations of image consumers who treat art as an example of the exotic" (1984:1). Tourist art also carries messages which

communicate on the "processes of socio-economic change; it engenders, reflects, and embodies many of the social and cultural transitions that are taking place in contemporary African communities and in the societies of those who purchase the art" (1984:9).

Similarly, Silver, in his article on change in Ashanti art, focuses on "tourist art" as a communication system, suggesting that "messages expressed in secular modern forms complement the demands of a changing society just as effectively as traditional art once reinforced complex meanings inherent in political and religious rituals" (1979:191), and that "tourist arts, when viewed from the perspective of modernization, are important indices of social and cultural values" (1979:191).

Jules-Rosette acknowledges that "a single definition of tourist art and its 'objective' value" is impossible, and instead, "what emerges is a system of exchange in which tourist art objects acquire symbolic and economic value" (1984:10). She has drawn on semiotics to formulate a model to construct such meanings of tourist arts, hence her analysis of the arts as a multilevel system of messages. Ben-Amos also considers tourist art productions as "systems of communication" (1977:128), where communication is "a social process, within a context, in which signs are produced and transmitted, perceived, and treated as messages from which meaning can be inferred" (1977:128, ref. to Worth and Goss 1974:30). For her model, she draws on studies of pidgin and creole languages, establishing certain parallels which help to explain the functions of tourist art. The parallels she draws include the fact that historically, both tourist art and pidgin languages have not been considered as

> "creative adaptations, but degenerations; not systems in their own right but deviations from other systems. Their origins have been explained, not by historical and social forces but by inherent ignorance, indolence and inferiority" (1977:128, quote D. Hymes 1971:3).

Other similarities exist in the suggestion that "both tourist arts and pidgin languages arise in the primary stages of culture contact, and develop hand in hand in response to the same economic and social forces: expanding commerce, colonialism, and now, industrialization" (1977:128).

Although Jules-Rosette criticizes aspects of Ben-Amos' model for not clarifying the reasons for "adhering to or deviating from traditional formats" (1984:38), all of the above mentioned studies are useful for the study of Ndebele beadwork in the methodological and conceptual frameworks which they provide. Further, while the work of Preston-Whyte (1988) and Preston-Whyte and Thorpe (1989) tends to be descriptive and superficial, the typology suggested by Preston-Whyte (1988:64) may also be helpful in defining Ndebele commercial markets. Preston-Whyte divides the markets for Zulu beadwork into endogenous and exogenous types. Under exogenous markets, she lists jewellery and items of apparel which are also made for personal use. The exogenous market consists of curios, fashion items and objet d'art, including old-style beadwork apparel, supposedly once in use, modern copies of these items and bead and cloth sculpture. However, all of the above systems will be used only as a guide, as it is not always appropriate simply to transpose a model from one situation onto another. The context of Ndebele beadwork has its own particular character and problems, some of which will be seen to relate to issues discussed above; others will need definition on their own terms.

Jules-Rosette defines 'tourist art' as "primarily ... a form of contemporary art produced locally for consumption by outsiders" (1984:9). Her studies exclude the more 'traditional' arts, although she does acknowledge that those artists producing for the commercial markets may also continue to produce 'traditional' works. In reference to the beadwork, it is more useful to use the concept of 'the market' as a baseline, as Ndebele 'tourist art' is not

necessarily different from art produced for personal use. There is often an overlap between the 'old' and the 'new' items made available in different market situations, where the 'old' may be items made long ago, or recently, for personal use, or items imitating the style and form of older examples but made specifically for the commercial market. 'Tourist art', in Jules-Rosette's terms, becomes a subcatagory of a more encompassing group of beadwork. Alternatively, the concept of 'tourist art' in the Ndebele context has to include all beadwork that is made available in the commercial markets.

The definition of the consumer is equally problematic. Jules-Rosette's focus on 'tourist' in quite a literal sense creates problems in the South African context. For the countries she discusses, Jules-Rosette was able to set up a generalised dichotomy between the tourist defined specifically as a Western outsider who visits but does not live in Africa. In her terms, then, the "study of tourist art demonstrates a process of cultural mediation between Third World contexts and the international scene, or, more explicitly, between Africa and the West" (1984:9). In South Africa, the relationship of consumer as foreigner, and producer as local black, is only one of many dynamics operating and influencing the market for Ndebele beadwork. The presence of a large indigenous white population which is not made up of foreign tourists represents a strong consumer group. In some, but not all, contexts, the attraction of local whites (and foreign tourists) to the 'black' market indicates a perception of blacks as 'other', and hence as exotic and 'different'. This dichotomy in turn reflects the history of separate identities created by entrenched racial policies in South Africa. The situation is further compounded by the fact that in this country, the middlemen and dealers, and the organisation, control and manipulation of markets are largely in the hands of local whites, which will be seen to have important implications.

It is also important to consider aspects relating to the origins of the markets for Ndebele beadwork, their development and their popularity. These are issues which Jules-Rosette does not discuss, although she does acknowledge that "ideally, one should devote equal attention to both the origins and destinations of tourist art" (1984:10). She also maintains a certain critical distance by claiming that her book is "not a defense of nor an aesthetic comment on tourist art" (1984:1). However, the need to remain as objective as possible, especially when dealing with value-laden issues in the South African context, is debatable. Sass discusses the growing need for and recognition of approaches in anthropology to account for

> "inner experiences and individual actions, for unpredicatability and historical change ... (anthropologists) doubt that conventional anthropological methods can do justice to the kaleidoscopic nature of social reality, and believe that so-called value-free observations do not take into account wider political realities and moral ambiguities" (1987:66).

Such issues are relevant to Ndebele art in the South African context, and they open up an additional dimension in understanding factors in the development of the commercial markets.

The acknowledgement of this dimension creates further ambiguities. On the one hand, the fact that scholars are focusing on the changing arts and commercial markets implies a recognition of "a new cultural tradition in its own right" (Jules-Rosette 1984:4-5). With reference to the beadwork, recognition of change is imperative, as it has always been a feature of this art. Researchers such as Jules-Rosette give meaning to changing arts when they acknowledge that economic motives are important but that tourist art "cannot be evaluated exclusively in terms of its consumption" (1984:17). This is because "the artistic result is both a sign within the system and a medium of communication rather than an end in itself" (1984:xi). Furthermore, "both the

symbolic and socio-economic values of tourist art have separate meanings for art creators and consumers" (1984:17). For example, Ndebele women have frequently questioned me, with some incredulity, as to what white people do with their beadwork. It is difficult for some women to understand the practise of hanging a piece of beadwork on the wall, like a picture; for many, it is akin to, and as absurd as, a white woman displaying an item of her everyday clothing in a similar way. There is often more acceptance of the practise of displaying the new beadwork made specifically to sell, but less so of the old beadwork which the women strongly associate with social functions and everyday use.

For Jules-Rosette, then, tourist art may be analysed from three additional, distinct perspectives: 1) with reference to its sign value for image creators and consumers 2) on the basis of its symbolic exchange value in the communication between artists and their audiences and 3) in terms of its usage and market value (1984:17). Many of the messages which Jules-Rosette attached to the tourist art which she researched may be operative in Ndebele beadwork, in addition to the intrinsic role played by the historical origins of and motivations for, its commercialization. It is here that the ambivalence arises, as recognition of the validity and significance of the 'tourist' beadwork is tempered by equal recognition that the popularity of the beadwork and its markets also has to do with the *apartheid* ideology which has resulted in the exploitation and manipulation of blacks by whites. Both elements - the internal impetus from the Ndebele themselves, introducing innovations, participating in markets; and the external impetus, whereby the people and their art are manipulated to suit the needs of outsiders - represent the realities of the historical and contemporary situations.

The association of Ndebele art - both wall painting and beadwork - within a more organised commercial market dates back at least to the earlier 1950s (if not earlier), when

the first 'tourist village' of Kwa Msiza was constructed near Pretoria in 1953. The primary instigator behind this 'village' was Professor Meiring, who, as indicated in the Introduction, was then head of the School of Architecture at Pretoria University. He apparently was able to involve the Native Affairs Department, who "(found) some good arable land for (this group of Ndebele) .. in the Native Trust Area and supplied building material for a new settlement ..." (Meiring 1955:28).

The involvement of a government department meant that the tourist village was more than just a simple means of attracting visitors to view a 'traditional' cultural scene; it was also intended to support certain government ideologies. It did this by presenting the public with a supposedly homogenous ethnic group whose way of life and whose art displayed at Kwa Msiza were understood to be 'typical' of the group, thus in effect denying the people their more complex history and organisation, including changes, past and present. The message that such a tourist village communicates has little to do with the internal realities of the people themselves; for example, the style of the designs at Kwa Msiza was quite different to that depicted on Ndebele homesteads in the rural areas. There, the designs tended to be simpler and less colourful, while at Kwa Msiza a more complex, prolific style was presented as being 'typically' Ndebele.

By the 1970s, Kwa Msiza had ceased to function as a tourist village, as it was incorporated into the 'homeland' of Bophutatswana. But the need for such a symbol was - and still is - apparent, for, in 1971, "the Transvaal Provincial Museum Services allocated certain museum themes to local authorities with the intention of preserving the black man's culture" (Brochure, Botshabelo). Consequently, the Ndebele Tourist village of Botshabelo was built outside Middelburg. The village is situated on a large area of land which has been declared a national park, and which includes the

preservation of an old German mission station which once operated in the area. Here, visitors are encouraged to go and view 'life as it was', to see people dressed in 'traditional' clothing, living in a 'traditional' manner (figs.64,65). Several Ndebele families are employed to live at the village, and at the same time, they make and sell a range of beadwork articles. These include mainly items such as necklaces, beaded rings, belts, doilies and dolls (fig.66), and, to a lesser extent, 'traditional' aprons as worn by the women at various stages of their lives. On sale are also postcards depicting the women and the buildings. It seems that the women are provided with the beads and other materials needed to make the articles, but it is not clear who determines the prices, and how the women are paid.[27]

This ongoing 'commitment' to 'preserve the culture of the Ndebele' through tourist villages has influenced perceptions of who the Ndebele people are. They are frequently described as 'those people who paint their houses and wear beads around their necks', and the popular emphasis on "their wonderful sense of colour and design" (Blenck:n.d.:33) always has been and continues to be a feature to which consumers respond, and which has something to do with the commercial popularity of the beadwork.

There are, however, other factors involved in the commercialization of the beadwork. Private collectors and public museums have always been involved in collecting and display-

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27. The attraction and appeal of the Ndebele at Botshabelo is not limited to a local market. In 1989, one of the woman employed at Botshabelo, Esther Mahlangu, was invited to participate in the Magiciens de la Terre exhibition at the Pompidou Centre, Paris. The aim of this exhibition was to display art forms from non-European communities all over the world, with artists demonstrating their work to the public. Esther's participation involved the building and decorating of an Ndebele house. She appeared dressed in her full beaded regalia. There is again some irony in the fact that someone was chosen from a tourist village to represent 'typical' Ndebele style and culture, although it is noted that Esther Mahlangu maintains her own home in KwaNdebele which is decorated in Ndebele style.

ing beadwork, not necessarily as 'art' but because it is of ethnographic or anthropological interest. It was only in the late 1970s and 1980s that private commercial fine art galleries began promoting the beadwork as 'art', and this interest has intensified over the last few years. Factors involved in this development have resulted in contradictions and confusions, issues which ultimatley may have little to do with the producers at grass-roots level, who themselves may have no control over, and are alienated from, the marketing and distribution of their work in this sphere.

There is a need to consider both producers and consumers in this context, and the nature of the beadwork that is put up for sale. The following discussion will identify such beadwork, in an exploration of the kinds of markets in which the Ndebele women participate, either directly or indirectly.

In Johannesburg, the different attitudes of different gallery owners create ambiguous messages for the consumer seeking guidance as to what to buy, especially if he/she is buying for investment - which is, often, the market these galleries aim to reach. For example, galleries such as Totem-Meninghelli (Johannesburg) have always dealt exclusively with African (or non-Western) arts, so the inclusion of South African, African art would not seem out of place. In the past, the value attached to this art by some of these dealers was strictly determined by the old code which defined traditional, 'authentic' art as that made for personal use. However, partly because of a decline in production of personal items, and partly because of growing and changing market tastes, many dealers now include 'new' items, those made specifically to sell. These items may include both 'traditional' and innovative pieces.

Consumers aware of the above established definitions and values generally resist granting 'tourist' or 'acculturated' arts equal status. Yet some 'respectable' galleries have since communicated a different message: that these arts may

have some value in themselves. Private galleries, usually specilising in Western fine arts, and aiming at a higher income consumer group, have been involved in promoting and selling the beadwork, hence imparting to it, by association, a considerable degree of validity and respectability, especially as a viable economic commodity. However, some gallery owners are reluctant to give the beadwork equal status as 'art' in the 'fine arts' sense, for, despite its acquired respectability and economic viability, it may be " questionable whether much of it is either made and sold or bought as 'art'", as it is often kept "strictly separate from the 'high art' in their displays" (Nettleton 1988:303). Interestingly, there has been a shift in this attitude in recent years; for example, in 1986, the Linda Goodman Gallery exhibited Ndebele and other African art in a separate room originally reserved for black 'traditional' art. In 1989, the gallery exhibited Zulu art in the main gallery, indicating the acceptance of 'traditional' art in the arena of fine art. The separate gallery space now exhibits a mixture of fine and 'traditional' arts of both black and white artists. However, the acceptance of 'traditional' art in the arena of fine art is frequently determined by practical business reasons which underline the apparent concerns with preserving cultural traditions. Linda Givon, proprietor of the Goodman Gallery, admitted to Powell in an article which examined the local black art market, that "she had never taken African crafts at all seriously before a buyer from the American Chase Manhattan Bank started collecting them" (1989:25)

In the different markets, there is freqUently a range of works available, conforming with many aspects of Graburn's categories - the 'indigenous' or traditional forms such as older aprons, blankets, capes, dolls; 'commercial fine arts', such as aprons, capes made in the 'traditional' mode but with the intention to sell; and a range of 'souvenir'

type items, including dolls, beaded jewellery and toys which may bear little relation to the so-called 'traditional' arts.

A recent term which has been used to describe the arts made to sell, and especially those which combine old and new elements, is 'transitional' art. This term has been applied successfully in marketing strategies, and has played no small part in creating consumer acceptance of the less 'traditional' arts. Paradoxically, this is because the term 'transitional', implying development from an 'earlier', 'original' state to some future different but equally valid state, gives to these objects "a value and legitimacy that inhered in their supposed traditional base" (Nettleton 1988:302). The use of this term means that the consumer does not have to shift radically his/her understanding of what 'real' African art is, as the notion of the 'transitional' does not move far beyond known and established categories. But even though such marketing has made a large body of the beadwork commercially viable, there is still resistance to accepting articles which do not conform sufficiently to the 'traditional' base.

Usually, it is at the least, the use of beads which creates an appeal, and a belief in the item as an authentic Ndebele-made artefact. For example, a number of Ndebele aprons and capes made out of plastic and other fabrics have been documented, and to a limited extent, have appeared on the commercial market. The forms of these articles are the same as the beaded examples, and are clearly identifiable as *ijogolos*, *liphotos* (fig.41), and *linagas* (fig.46). There has been a limited commercial demand for the plastic and fabric versions because they are not made with beads, which are associated with the 'real' thing, but even this demand seems to have all but disappeared.

When questioned about such items, some Ndebele women have acknowledged that if short of money, they would be willing to make and use plastic apparel for themselves, but, showing an awareness of market demands, they would make beaded versions to sell. In this way, the women would still be able to maintain cultural practices (that is, the wearing of apparel to identify their social status), as well as to earn some money. It is this kind of grass-roots willingness and acceptance of change that needs to be recognised and balanced against the outsider's frequently purist definition of what Ndebele beadwork is. The making of plastic items can also be understood as motivated by necessity, and as such, are signs or symbols of Ndebele artistic process, because the high cost of beads has led to innovative ways of producing 'traditional' articles. These items have not lost their entrenched social functions, and are still retained for personal use. It is probable that if desired, concerted marketing could change the image of these articles, as well as lead to a recognition of their value as Ndebele artistic expressions. It would also counter attitudes such as those of Knight and Priebatsch, who wrote the following on the plastic apparel:

> "The most recent innovations ... (have) unfortunately ... eliminated the beauty and the art of the beadwork ... In the new forms ... the art and elegance have vanished ... This is a most unfortunate degeneration of tradition ... " (1983:).

Such an approach is blind to the fact that the same thought and planning often goes into the making of many plastic and fabric aprons and capes, as with the beaded versions. Similar aesthetic principles of symmetrical designs and careful colour and pattern usage are frequently employed (compare, for example, figs.45 and 46) indicating continuities of style despite the obvious changes.

The popularity of and demand for the beadwork in the predominantly white urban markets is also related to expedient and sometimes arbitrary factors which remove the

beadwork even further from the concepts and intentions of its Ndebele producers. The demand for the beadwork, especially more recently, is undoubtedly related to fashion. Jules-Rosette points out that "consumer fads alter market demands abruptly" (1984:197). She quotes an American retailer of African art, who highlights the arbitrary nature of the market by stating that "African art was very 'in' a few years ago. It's not 'in' now. I mean, it's a bit like fashion. It shouldn't be the same thing, but it is" (1984:27). The influence of external, indirectly related 'events' on the popularity of African arts is further illustrated by observations of another American buyer:

> "At one point, (African souvenirs) were selling really sound ... Then, of course, when the series Roots came out, sales just *zoomed*. They sent them soaring, and then, I'd say, the decline set in ... " (1984:197).

In Johannesburg, at least, the demand for Ndebele beadwork, and more generally, with Ndebele design, has certainly got something to do with contemporary fashions. For example, it has, over the last few years, become fashionable for whites to employ Ndebele women to decorate the walls or doors of their private homes and art gallaries in Ndebele style. A spin-off from the decoration of walls has been the decoration of masonite panels in the style of Ndebele wall decoration, commissioned by people willing to frame and display them in their homes. Interestingly, women such as Letty Ngoma, who has painted panels, still insist on using 'traditional' paintbrushes made of chicken feathers tied together.

Recent political events in South Africa have led to an emphasis on, and in some cases an apparent need to, value and develop an interest in what is local - and more specifically, what is local and indigenous or black. To these ends, "popular art and culture brokers reinterpret the functions of art objects for the consumer audience. Consumers in turn put the objects to their own decorative, social and

emblematic uses and generate a new range of meanings for the item" (Jules-Rosette 1984:27). So what might begin as a sincere attempt to inculcate local pride and group identity within one's own culture, can serve an entirely different purpose for the commercial consumer. This can be exemplified by the fact that Knight and Priebatsch's 1983 exhibition of Ndebele beadwork attracted limited public interest compared with the greatly increased visibility and availability of the beadwork in any number of different market situations over the last two to three years. This fairly recent phenomenon is also relevant in identifying current stategies by dealers who, interestingly, cater to different ends of the urban market. For example,the beadwork is successfully marketed in commercial outlets such as Helen de Leeuw, Hyde Park (Johannesburg), which is located in a high income consumer area. Here, the beadwork is popular both for its increasing investment value and for its value as a status symbol; in the current political and social climate in South Africa, indigenous cultural artefacts have come out "of the spare room closet and every chic interior just (has) to have its own piece of Africa" (Kibel 1990:70). The beadwork also reaches a successful market in shops such as Yeoville's African Magic (Johannesburg), which, in theory, at least, caters for a different, apparently lower income consumer group. In such an area, the attraction to the beadwork (and to other indigenous arts and crafts) may indicate desires to identify with local black groups, which in turn communicates liberal political viewpoints, rather than a concern with buying an item for its investment value. Ultimately though, in any number of commercial situations, the beadwork achieves a position of fashionable status, communicating different messages about the people who buy and display it.

The relationship between the various markets has become even more complex, with expansion into an export market, something which obviously has developed with the intervention and planning of the 'middlemen' or 'culture brokers'. This

market also depends extensively on what is fashionable at a given time, and then it may vary, depending on country of destination. In some contexts, the export market is a very positive development.

The Operation Hunger Organisation, for example, is an organised market outlet which does not fit into any particular category but which has considerable impact both locally and overseas. It too depends on, exploits and creates a popular market for the beadwork but to very different ends, as it is a non-profit organisation which raises funds to be channeled back into underpriviledged black communities. Although it deals with a range of local African arts and crafts, Ndebele beadwork at present represents a high percentage of its income. This is largely due to the issue of fashion and fads. Apparently, in 1980, when Operation Hunger was established, it dealt mainly with 'serious' collectors looking for 'authentic' pieces. Now, both 'authentic' and 'changing' or new articles are sold to a broad consumer group. The emphasis on Ndebele beadwork also has to do with Operation Hunger's marketing strategies, where new markets are sought, and new ideas introduced to expand the Organization's activities. According to Diana Mabudafhasi, Community Development Officer, 80% of the Organisation's beadwork is targeted for the export market, mainly to America. Here, jewellery, and to a lesser extent, dolls, represent the bulk of export items. To meet these demands, a large group of women make only such 'fashion' items for Operation Hunger, and are directed in terms of colour and design, depending on changing demands.

According to Mabudafhasi, at least nine hundred Ndebele women receive a regular income by supplying Operation Hunger with beadwork. The Organisation has a system whereby different groups of women, from various areas, provide different types of beadwork. One source of their beadwork for example, centres around a meeting place in the Nebo district, where, once a month on a pre-arranged date, large

numbers of Ndebele women gather to diaplay their work, mainly for Operation Hunger buyers, but at least two other dealers frequent this market (Field observation 1990). For most of these women, this is their only commercial outlet aa they do not travel to the urban centres of Johannesburg and Pretoria to sell their work. The establishment of this market has provided a much needed boost to the economic situation of the families involved. The majority of the beadwork produced is new, made especially to sell. There is very little 'curio' or souvenir-type objects such as belts and doilies, but mainly new copies of 'traditional' items, including aprons, capes, blankets, as well as dolls. Colour usages, predominantly the dark blues, black, white, green and reds, are those usually associated with the Ndebele. It seems that sometimes, the women are requested to bring certain types of beadwork on certain days, depending on Operation Hunger's needs. There does not appear to be much innovative work in terms of deviations from already entrenched styles, colours, and design motifs.

The reasons for this apparent 'conservatism' amongst women in the Nebo district may be manifold. It is possible that the influence of Operation Hunger directs the forms and styles of the beadwork that is produced in this particular area. Another, more complex factor, may have to do with underlying issues of ethnicity. James' 1987 study on ethnicity focused on the Pedi and Ndebele of Lebowa. Her observations were based on Pedi perceptions of the Ndebele as being conservative and traditional. She concluded that Ndebele conservatism could be ascribed partly to the fact that ethnic solidarity was a means for the Ndebele to maintain their identity while living as a minority group in a Pedi-ruled area. While the extent to which this can be applied to the production of beadwork in this area would need further research, it is possible that this may explain why Ndebele women in the Nebo district produce more 'traditional' type beadwork compared with Ndebele women from other areas.

Interestingly, these observations suggest a degree of regionalism in the styles of the beadwork sold in the commercial markets. This issue is not easy to define. There are indications to suggest that women from particular areas use specific designs and/or colours, but this does not appear to be systematic. It is very difficult to establish such differences, as so many common designs and colours can be seen in beadwork from different areas. The main types of beadwork - the aprons, capes, blankets etc. - are made and used in all areas. Schneider, in her study on the wall painting, was able to define regional styles used by Ndebele women on white farms, those living in areas of KwaNdebele, and the Ndebele of Nebo. It is possible that a similar regionalism informs the style of the beadwork from these areas, but this is much harder to explore. Unlike the wall painting, which cannot be moved around, beadwork that is sold can be found in any number of urban markets, galleries and private homes, both locally and overseas, and the regional sources of this beadwork are seldom properly documented.

It has been suggested by EsmēBerman (1974), that the plastic aprons also originated in a specific region, but this needs further research for clarification. In an article in Panorama (1974), she described women wearing "crown-like head-dresses embellished with small mirrors and glittering metallic beads ... " She continued to claim that

> "these women differ from the Ndebele women of Groblersdal and other villages around Pretoria, who have become familiar sights in their colourfully striped blankets and magnificently beaded aprons. The women in this region deck themselves in cloaks and aprons made of fabric (and plastic), which they decorate with intricately stitched and appliqued designs".

She does not, however, define the geographical area in which she saw this apparel. Today, many women from various areas, including Groblersdal, Dennilton and Lebowa have indicated knowledge of the plastic styles, even if they do not make them themselves.

Another example of a kind of regionalism in the commercial market is evidenced in the work made by groups of women who gather to display and sell their work on the side of the Fourways highway in Sandton. This informal market has developed rapidly over the last two years, beginning with a modest group, and growing to a large number of women who gather regularly to meet the demands of that particular location. The consumers for this market represents a wide range of people, frequently passersby who are attracted to the displays from the road. Dolls are the main commodity, while a few aprons are also displayed. Clearly, the emphasis on dolls is partly determined by the fact that they can be displayed in striking ways to attract a trade that is literally passing by. Dolls are also usually most popular with the wider range of buyers who support this market, most of whom would not be 'serious' collectors but people who may want to add a 'touch of Africa' to their homes.

Another feature of these dolls is their scale; they range in size from small to very large (fig.58), features which are noted in dolls sold at other markets as well. Graburn 1976:313-314) identifies gigantism as a stylistic trend amongst the commercial arts. His explanations for this trend are applicable to the Ndebele dolls, where size becomes a factor determining price. The large dolls would clearly be impractical for traditional purposes amongst the the Ndebele themselves, but from the purchasers' viewpoints, smaller objects are not often considered as 'major' works of art. Similarly, collectors frequently associate higher prices with 'authentic' art, so there is a dual attraction to large, expensive dolls.

Possibly because these consumers may not be as discerning as others in terms of their expectations of what a 'real' Ndebele doll should look like, most of the dolls produced for this market have a different appearance to those sold, for example, in the Nebo district. It is possible to identify a particular group of dolls bought at the Fourways market by their distinctive style: They are covered in fabrics, with relatively sparse beaded decoration. They have idiosyncratic hairstyles made of hessian fibres, with long strands and a 'knot' at the top of their heads. Plastic metallic strips are used to imitate brass body rings, and larger, cheaper plastic beads in 'non' Ndebele colours such as bright pinks and greens are incorporated. (fig.57).

Interestingly, these dolls are still made in the 'traditional' manner by creating a cone shape out of grasses and straw, which in other contexts would then be covered by beaded rings and not by fabric panels. Although the cone-shaped dolls, in varying sizes, are the most prolific at the Fourways market, similar type dolls are also available in other outlets.

In fact, it is apparent that Ndebele dolls have always been the most popular commercial product for many consumers, partly for reasons indicated above. Furthermore, the dolls may closely approximate figurative sculpture which, from the public's viewpoint, is much more acceptable for display in private homes. The recognisable appearance and concept of 'a doll' also makes these items more accessible to a general public.

Consequently, this category of beadwork exhibits the greatest degree of innovations relating to form, style and materials used. Because of the diversity, it is difficult to associate particular types or styles with specific locations and to provide a definitive typology, other than referring to the exceptional Fourways dolls. Most dolls produced for sale across a number of markets are female, but

occasionally, male dolls are made. These are uaually 'warrior' type figures, dressed appropriately in skin and holding shields and sticks (fig.61). The female dolls include more realistic figures with arms and legs, dressed in imitated versions of beaded regalia, blankets, and body rings (fig.55).

Other dolls are made using various materials, such as conical examples covered in hessian plastic; arms but no legs are attached, and beadwork is minimized (fig.59a and 59b). Yet another style of doll, which is not seen as frequently, is the calabash doll. Here, a stuffed and beaded head is attached to the cut-off top of a calabash, the body of which is covered with beaded decoration (figs.60a and 60b). These examples refer to just some of the dolls that have been seen; because they are so prolific, this category of Ndebele beadwork may warrant an independent study.[28]

The women at Fourways are from the Dennilton/Groblersdal area, but they seem to gather in smaller groups of families and/or friends, and hence work together to create a specific type and style of beadwork which meets the needs of this particular location.

The creation of the above described style seems more dependent on the location of the market than on the geographical origins of the women. Another informal market has been established over the last few years on the pavement outside the University of the Witwatersrand, created by different groups of women who also come from the Dennilton/Groblersdal area. While it is possible that regional styles exist, past or present, in this broad area, the beadwork on sale at the University is usually quite different to that seen at Four-

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28. Dell, in her Honours dissertation entitled Not either a conventional doll: Women and symbolic dolls in Southern Africa (1990), pointed out some of the issues and problems relating to dolls from different communities. Her work highlights the fact that research on southern African dolls produced by indigenous groups is a neglected area of study.

ways. There is not the same overall sense of stylistic similarity and consistency; in fact, the Witwatersrand University market is characterised by greater diversity of types of beadwork displayed. Items for sale have included older beadwork, new copies of older types of beadwork, jewellery, dolls and animals. There has been, amongst these groups, spurts of innovative work, moving away from 'traditional' types of beadwork to producing sometimes idiosyncratic and imaginative stuffed birds and animals[29] (figs.62,63). In addition, on a few occassions these women have displayed some interesting deviations from beaded articles. Such items include television sets of various sizes, made out of painted papier-mache with magazine pictures pasted on the 'screen'. Papier-machecouches, painted or covered with fabric, accompany the television sets, together with seated papier-machefigures, also 'dressed' in fabric clothes. Most of these items have been made by the women's sons as toys.

The wider range of articles available here may be determined in part by the consumers who support these women, who are mainly students, visitors to the University and the University galleries. These groups are possibly more adventurous buyers, mainly white liberals, expressing their own political position by supporting producers in the black art market.

A market category that overlaps with the gallery trade but which has a different emphasis is the urban curio or souvenir market. One such outlet which caters to foreign as

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29. Interestingly, this trend towards creating new subject matter and styles out of the conventional doll or toy has become a growing commercial Zulu industry in Natal. Referred to as "bead and cloth sculpture" (Preston-Whyte 1988; Preston-Whyte and Thorpe in Nettleton and Hammond-Tooke (eds.) 1989), these items are made by Zulu women mainly for the African Art Centre in Durban, and have become much sought-after items for local and overseas buyers. These 'sculptures' range from depictions of animals, birds, radios, to human figures and groups engaged in various activities, such as playing tennis. Similar innovations on this scale do not, as yet, seem to be as prolific nor as original amongst the Ndebele.

well as local tourists, and which is characterised strongly by souvenir-type products, is the market at the Pretoria Zoo. This location has been in existence for at least fifteen years, if not longer, and the women obtain permits from the Pretoria municipality in order to set up a stall. Today, permanent brick stalls exist from which the women display their work (fig.67). The Ndebele women commute from various regions, including the rural and peri-urban areas in KwaNdebele, as well as from the townships in the Pretoria district. Many of these women produce beadwork only to sell. The nature of this market has shifted even over the last two or three years. In 1986/7, Ndebele women and Ndebele beadwork were most visible; today (late 1989/1990), while beadwork is still being sold (mainly jewellery, dolls, belts etc.), there is a predominance of non-Ndebele goods, including Swazi jewellery, baskets and wood-carvings, being sold by non-Ndebele people.

Curio shops usually found in hotels and shopping centres are another souvenir market. The popularity of articles sold in these shops depends only up to a point on factors such as fashion, as described above. These outlets cater more specifically for foreign tourists, who bring with them generalised expectations of exotic Africa, and the 'curios' in these outlets fulfill such expectations. The tourists, in Jules-Rosette's words, "are caught in a quest for cultural authenticity and 'life as it was', while simultaneously accepting the possibility that cultural symbols can be converted into commercial commodities" (1984:4).

There is a range of Ndebele beadwork being sold through these outlets, amidst other African art objects, both local and from other African countries. The standard of the work varies, as does the nature of the beadwork - there are usually older and new 'traditional' articles being sold, as well as the inevitable beaded necklaces, bracelets, belts and dolls. Interestingly, the recent heightened popularity of Ndebele work ensures its current availability through

such outlets. Shops such as Indaba in Sandton City have long exploited the 'colourful' and 'exotic' character of Ndebele women and their art - for approximately the last ten years, at least two Ndebele women have been employed to sit in the shop, in 'traditional' dress, making beaded articles. The entrance to the shop is made 'appealing' by its low Ndebele-type wall decoration. Here, as elsewhere in Johannesburg, the Ndebele people have been selected to represent the 'African', the 'exotic', because of their 'colourful' art and 'curious' dress.

Intrinsic to most of the above networks is the role of the middlemen, usually white art dealers who either operate independently, supplying a range of outlets, or who own and supply their own shops, or who sell privately, direct to the public. To varying degrees they manipulate the market, and up to a point, influence changes that take place at the grass-roots level of production. If a dealer is aware of the popularity of certain items or styles, he will encourage the rural women - his source of supply - to make more of these articles, or to work in a particular style. Some dealers actually supply the women with the beads[30] and other basic materials, and their selection of, for example, colour, may also not be arbitrary but dependent on what is currently popular. There is no doubt that some rural women are subject to exploitation in the prices they are paid by the dealers. Some dealers claim to establish the value of articles according to their age and cost of materials, but even on this basis it is unlikely that the women are paid accordingly. The pricing factor in the urban markets is an arbitrary issue, as it is closely linked to the demand for, and popularity of, the beadwork - which, right now, is at a premium. Alienation between the producers and consumers is

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30. It is not possible to identify the exact practises of most buyers/dealers, but it is interesting to note that Operation Hunger sells beads at cost to women in the rural areas. The Organisation now imports the glass beads direct from France and Italy. All glass beads used in the past, and most of those sold today, come from Czechoslovakia.

most apparent here, because the rural women generally have little knowledge about the high pricea their work can fetch. This is changing, but while to both producers and dealers the beadwork ia a source of income, determining their income from the beadwork is ultimately way beyond the control of the producers.[31]

The commercial market for Ndebele beadwork does not only revolve around white outsiders. There are indications of an endogenous market, but the information on this is inconsistent and needs further research. However, many women have confirmed that sometimes, they make beadwork for other Ndebele women. The exact nature of these interactions is unclear, but it appears that a woman could commission another to make an item if she lacked the time and/or the skill, and she would pay for this. Unlike in the mainly white markets, where beadwork is bought for aesthetic display, an Ndebele woman will buy an item from another to wear, as a atatement of her social and ethnic identity. These commissions appear to occur in an informal, personal way, as Ndebele women will seldom buy items from markets set up to sell to outsiders. However, there are indications that the women may establish markets to cater specifically for their own community. For example, a group of women has been observed setting up a display of their beadwork outside a store in Marabastad, Pretoria (fig.68), which is a predominantly black trading area. One of the women indicated that they will sell to "whoever wishes to buy" (Informant, Fieldwork 1987).

An interesting development within the endogenous market is the small but apparently growing tendency to use 'ready-made' aprons as a base for beading. Here, the basic,

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31. Powell, in his article entitled "Guilt-edged exotica: The booming trade in black arts" (1989:25), identifies numerous examples of the over pricing of black arts in shops and galleries, the exploitation of ignorant consumers through misinformation regarding dating etc., and the exploitation of producers by dealers whose profit margins on the works they re-sell are immense.

'traditionnl' shape of an apron is made out of canvas (fig.42). So far, only the form of *liphotos* have been seen. It is not clear why other aprons have not been made in this wny, although the reasons may be practical - no aewing is involved in making the base; the borders are edged with a fnbric tape which is glued on. The straight edges of the *liphoto* may better lend itself to this technique. The middle tassles are mnde out of atring. Such unbeaded examples have been seen for sale at a trading store in Pretoria, which also sells the beads. In some rural areas, there nre a few Ndebele women who make these 'ready-mades', and sell them directly to other Ndebele women. The aprons that are subsequently made are sold commercially, as well as being worn by the women themselves (fig.43).

The future directions of the commercial market for Ndebele beadwork are difficult to assess. The markets will no doubt be characterised by as much diversity as is currently displayed, and changing social, politicsl and economic circumstances will continue to influence the production of the beadwork. Powell's conclusion to his investigation on the commercial markets is perhaps most pertinent here:

> "What is needed is a basic acceptance that things are changing, that rural traditions are dying, that collectors are basically custodians of relics, not thieves of culture.
>
> And instead of trying to control the dealers, we should be providing the sellers with better and more attractive alternatives which acknowledge their position in a changing South Africa" (1989:25).

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CONCLUSION

This dissertation has demonstrated that the tradition of Ndebele beadwork has been, and continues to be, a dynamic one. This research has challenged romantic visions of the beadwork which create an impression of a static art from a distant past. Such visions do not consider the relationship of the art to contact with outsiders. By extension, this dissertation has also challenged the notion that beadwork produced after contact with outsiders represents a degeneration of the art, and a threat to its existence. In the process of examining these issues, it became apparent that the types, styles and functions of the beadwork are characterised by features of continuity and diversity, depending on changing contexts.

A broad chronological study of the beadwork was thus provided in order to locate its possible origins, and to identify the aspects of continuity and change as they appear in the beadwork dating from its early development to the present day. In order to do this, the ahistorical methodology adopted frequently in the literature on the beadwork was rejected in favour of a more open-ended methodological approach. This demonstrated the value of considering the beadwork from different perspectives, drawing on various sources of information which together, contribute towards a richer understanding of the art.

The exploration of photographic documentation of the Ndebele established the value of this previously ignored source material. More specifically, it has given recognition to the early photography of Duggan-Cronin. The value of Stuart Larrabee's documentation was also indicated. As it could not be included in this dissertation, it is identified as an important collection for consideration in future research.

The analysis of visual information provided by early and recent photographs used in conjunction with studying beadwork artefacts, old and new, helped to establish a general chronology of types and styles of the beadwork over the last century. Having identified these features, it was important to define the functions of the art.

A major set of what were called the social functions was identified, relating to the life cycle of Ndebele women. Interviews with many of these women over a period of four years (1986-1990) supported much of the general information which is found in the literature. This indicated the seminal position these functions occupy in Ndebele society, past and present, as the knowledge relating to these functions has continued to be passed down through the generations. The women also provided additional information which either challenged or extended existing interpretations. If not always providing clear explanations, these interviews highlighted the problems of trying to provide a coherent framework for an art which is subject to changing circumstances, regional and personal differences, and varying degrees of knowledge amongst the women themselves.

Despite these problems, it was argued that the broad social functions of the beadwork are recognised by a cross-section of Ndebele people, and that they were probably entrenched in the group during the late nineteenth century. This proposition emerged from a detailed investigation into the origins of the beadwork. The probable links between the early art and Ndebele history were identified, demonstrating the importance of understanding this art against an historical background. Thus the circumstances of the defeat of the Ndebele after the 1883 Mapoch War were seen to provide a context which explained why there was a need for the beadwork to develop, and how it came to function amongst the dispersed people. An understanding of these historical events not only indicated the need for the early beadwork to reinforce the social status of the women, but it also

provided the context for the beadwork to communicate statements of Ndebele ethnicity for a group whose identity was severely threatened.

The extent to which the early types of beadwork have continued to be produced, and to which their concomitant social functions and expressions of ethnic identity continue to be relevant, were questioned within a contemporary context. These concerns were explored in relation to the commercial market, which was identified as a major influence in the continued production of the art.

The analysis of the markets revealed that a diversity of beadwork is available, some of which was initially made for personal use, as well as many items now made specifically to sell. The beadwork ranges from 'traditional' types, such as aprons, capes and blankets, to the more innovative types of dolls, animals and jewellery. The women incorporate a wide range of materials (including skins, canvas, fabrics, plastic and glass beads) and styles, which are not all reserved for their commercial items but which were seen to be used in their personal beadwork as well.

Interviews with many women involved in selling their beadwork revealed a strong knowledge of the associated social functions, even if the beadwork is no longer worn everyday. However, this aspect of the beadwork is certainly not foregrounded to the same extent as it would have been in the past, and as such, it is possible that the survival of knowledge relating to the making and functions of beadwork is potentially threatened.

Indeed, the future of the beadwork remains uncertain and difficult to predict. It has been a common and ongoing theme of writers over the last fifty years, to warn of the impending disappearance of the beadwork, yet this dissertation has shown that the art has not only survived but has at times flourished, despite such fears. However, the future

production of the art, and the way it may continue to function, are not assured. There remain many complex issues whose impact can only be assessed in the following years.

The majority of women interviewed, those owning and/or selling beadwork, were middle-aged to elderly, and they communicated mixed messages concerning their vision of the future of their art. While there is often a strong feeling that the beadwork will not disappear, and that it is important for their people to understand its messages, many women also acknowledge the reality that the younger women only occasionally make or wear beaded articles. Reasons given indicate a lack of interest, or a lack of time. So for future generations, the survival of the beadwork is, and will be, tested against changing social and economic values, and increasing participation in urban lifestyles.

A number of features of the commercial beadwork also pose as potential threats to the continuation of the art. Market demands have encouraged the making of items amongst some settlements or within smaller family groups, especially in the rural regions. However, there are also some areas, particularly amongst the poor urban or peri-urban settlements, where women are not involved in the markets, and the beadwork has become too expensive to produce for personal use. No clear-cut or consistent patterns in the varying degrees of regional production have yet been established.

Another potential problem which may inhibit the production of beadwork revolves around the erratic quality of the art. While quality can be a subjective criteria, there are many badly-made and poorly-conceived items being marketed. These sometimes originate from the 'encouragement' of some dealers who, wanting to capitalise on the current interest, exploit both the producers and buyers. Similarly, many women themselves, increasingly aware of the saleability of their beadwork, are producing quantities of poor quality articles. There is a danger that the market will be flooded with in-

ferior beadwork, which, selling at inflated prices, will reduce demands. Consequently, the beadwork from some areas could disappear as it is unlikely that the majority of women who make beadwork to sell could afford to continue making it exclusively for personal use.

Equally so, the commercial market can play a constructive role in the continued production of the beadwork. There is no doubt that demands for collecting the art are ensuring that the practice of making beadwork is very much alive. It may be that more organised self-help groups need to be established in order to encourage quality control and to assist with the marketing of the work in a successful way. This dissertation has proposed that shifts in attitudes towards recognising the value of more recently made beadwork are making it possible for the 'new' art to achieve its own status and desirability. Support for this art can encourage and ensure the survival and growth of the tradition, as well as provide economic assistance for the women themselves.

Interestingly, the commercial market also contributes, indirectly, to the 'traditional' function of the beadwork as communicator of ethnic identity. This does not originate so much from the outsiders' recognition of beadwork *in situ*, as from the increased visibility and publicity afforded to the art in a range of market situations and cross-cultural appropriations. These create a strong awareness of Ndebele identity.

From the viewpoint of the Ndebele people, the need to make such statements through their beadwork is not foregrounded to the same extent as it was during the late nineteenth century.

Indeed, the concept of ethnicity in South Africa remains controversial and problematic, with diverse opinions claiming or rejecting its validity. Current political developments, which are in constant flux, may undermine separate

cultural affiliations. However, given the historical experiences of the Ndebele, which entrenched a strong sense of unity amongst the group, it is possible that this sense will prevail. Many women today still refer to the way their beadwork assists outsiders in identifying Ndebele culture. However, what can only be speculated upon, is whether or not material culture will continue to be used to play a central role in expressing Ndebele identity for, and amongst, the people themselves.

APPENDIX ONE : MALE ADORNMENT

During the course of this dissertation, it has frequently been noted that the majority of beadwork is associated with Ndebele women. Over the years, researchers and observers have more often than not noted that the men appear in European clothing. In Chapter One, it was mentioned that the earliest photographic documentation of the Ndebele by Duggan-Cronin did not depict any men. In addition reference was made to a photograph in the Africana Museum (Johannesburg), probably taken in the 1930s, showing men dressed in European clothes, amongst women dressed in 'traditional' beaded apparal.

There are however, a few instances when men do wear some kind of adornment. As discussed in Chapter One, very young boys wear a skin loin covering, the *ibesha* (fig.28), which may or may not have been beaded. There is no other distinguishable clothing for boys before they reach the age for initiation. Elliott explains that "before circumcision, the Ndebele believe, a boy has not been united with his soul, and consequently, is not really human" (Elliott 1989:19). He apparently enjoys relative freedom in his choice of clothing, which "consists of anything he can find to wear" (Elloitt 1989:19). Similarly, after initiation, the young men are "expected to adopt a responsible attitude", once again reflected in simple and subdued attire (Elliott 1989:19).

The distinguishing adornment for young men is the *poryana* (fig.53), a 'breastplate' which hangs around the neck, designed so that it hangs down between the man's legs when he sits (Elliott 1989:19). The *poryana* is made of the skin of a genet or civet cat (Elliott 1989:19), or of goatskin (Field informants 1990), and it may or may not include strips of beaded decoration at the top. It seems that the *poryana* is made by the young man's father, and is probably worn after the initiation ceremonies. When the men return

from initiation, they are adorned with beaded headbands and a variety of beaded necklaces strung across their bodies. This beadwork is made for them by their mothers and girlfriends.

Once again, some distinction is made between adornment made by, and for, men and women. In Chapter One, it was noted that skins for a married woman's aprons are supplied by her husband or his father, while the beadwork is done by the woman. Informants have indicated a strong identification of beads with women, and it is understood that men admire the beauty of women adorned with beads. The beadwork thus forms an integral part of the perceived ideal image of Ndebele women by Ndebele men.

Why men do wear beads after initiation may have something to do with the association of beads with liminal states. Amongst the women, the beadwork identifies their cycle of life, their transition from one stage to another. The *wela* represents the most important period of transition for the men, as their status changes from boyhood to manhood, announcing their readiness for marriage and to assume adult responsibilities within the group. It is thus appropriate that beadwork forms part of this visible message that is conveyed upon their return. The making of this beadwork, though, is the domain of the women.

It is often reported that men no longer wear 'traditional' clothing, but it is unlikely that early, 'traditional' adornment for men ever developed to the same extent as did the women's beadwork in the 1880s. As with the women's adornment, it is not known what Ndebele men wore prior to the late nineteenth century. In Chapter Two, the aftermath of the 1883 Mapoch War was discussed, referring to the fact that the Ndebele were indentured on white farms. Under these conditions, there would probably not have been such a strong need for, nor use of, 'traditional' male clothing as the men had to work on the farms. With most women left be-

hind at their homes, there was a much stronger need for everyday adornment to identify their social status, to express their ethnic identity, and to contribute towards the maintenance of cultural practices. The *wela*, then and now, would represent the most significant ritual in the lives of the men, and it is often one of the few times when the men return home in order to undergo this important 'traditional' ceremony. It makes sense that some kind of 'traditional' adornment would be associated with this event.

The elderly status of Ndebele men is also a significant stage in their lives. It is appropriate, then, that some adornment be associated with this status, and the implicit respect it commands. Interestingly, it is again the *poryana* that is worn by the elderly men (fig.53). This item was recorded by Weiss (1963:73), to be worn by elderly men as a sign of honour. It is recalled that elderly Ndebele women wear their beaded *linagas*, and, on occasion the *umlingakobe* (see Chapter One). It may be of relevance that both the *poryana* and the *linaga* are received at the marriageable ages of both men and women, and are also worn at later stages of their lives.

The above overview suggests some ideas relating to Ndebele male adornment. Because the women's beadwork is so much more prolific and colourful, male adornment is generally ignored in the literature. It is an area in which further research is needed, as it clearly informs directly and indirectly on the roles of men and women in Ndebele society, past and present.

APPENDIX TWO : THE TALE OF MANALA AND NDZUNDZA

The following oral tradition, deacribing the history of Manala and Ndzundza, was related to Van Warmelo, who found that it resembled very closely the tale quoted in Fourie (Fourie 1921:33, in Van Warmelo 1930:60). The tradition quoted here is taken from Van Warmelo's Transvaal Ndebele Texts (1930:60-63).

> "Manala and Ndzundza separated in the neighborhood of Swartkoppies. At the time they were about to separate, their father Msi was already old, and he called Manala and said, 'To-morrow get up early and come to me, and I shall instruct you'. The mother of Ndzundza said to him, 'Get up early, because your father is dying, and he wants to hand over the chieftainship to Manala'. Then next morning Ndzundza was roused by his mother, who told him to go to his father. He went and knocked at the door, his father asked, 'Who are you?', he answered 'I am Ndzundza', he said, 'Go away', and he asked, 'Where is Manala?', he answered, 'He is not there'. 'Go away'.
>
> But he did not go away, he sat down at the door until it was day, and again knocked at the door, his father said, 'Who are you?', he replied, 'It is I, Manala'. Ndzundza deceived his father by having put skins with the hair on the outside on his hands, since Manala was hairy on the hands, so that his father thought it was he when he touched him, because he was blind.
>
> He said, 'O, there, take the chieftainship here', and he gave him the *namxali*. I have heard the old people say it was a bag with something inside that cried like a child. It was not an *itshwalo* (medicine for good luck).
>
> Then Manala came along and knocked at the door, and his father said, 'Who are you?'. 'I am Manala'. 'What did you oversleep yourself for? For I told you to get up early and come to me. Now Ndzundza has taken the chieftainship and gone away with it'. He then gave him medicine for luck in hunting. So Manala went away and collected the men, saying there was to be a royal hunt. They went out on the hunt and come to the open veld, and the Manala asked them, 'MaNdebele' who has untied the knot of my father?' referring to the chief-

tainship. The men said, 'How many are there of you?'. He said, 'It is he, Ndzundzu, who has untied the knot of my father, the excrement of his mother!'. And he said, 'Who is not of our people, seize him, destroy them and slay them'.

Then they began to fight, and those of Ndzundza fled and they drove them away. Then the ama-Nala returned and said, 'Chief, they are fled'. The chief said, 'Go and kill them', the amaNala not having any provisions for the road. So they took provisions and set out and came up with them further on, and they fought.

Then there came the people of Msiza, they fought with the amaNala and aided those of Ndzundza. They fought and fought, they went on and chased them, they came up to the *Bhalule* (Olifant) and found it in flood.

Now Ndzundza's people were tired and said, 'Alas, we are tired'. Then there spoke a woman, the mother of Msiza (the Maiza-mother) the lady of rank, the long-breasted woman, she said, 'The death in the water I am afraid of. Those there are your comrades, they will kill you, and you will kill for yourselves'. She said, 'Give me an otter skin', they gave her one and she put it on behind, she took another, folded it and kneeled on it, she closed her eyes and said, 'Seize them, seize your friends'. But now the chief said, 'No, there is nothing more valuable than a human being'. So now the chief took a girl, a sister of his, of Ndzundza's, called Mthise, and they sent her as a peace-offering that she should become the great wife of the chief (Manala). There the matter ended, and the amaNala returned home.

Henceforward we began to take wives from one another. Thus Ndzundza, i.e. the chief of the Ndzundza section, ought to take a girl from the Nala tribe, in order that she may bear the future chief, and the amaNala ought to take their queen from the Ndzundza people. Nowadays they do not do so any more, the practice came to an end with the wife of Silamba, the mother of Buthi. For he took a princess and sent her to Ndzundza and she was married there. But then it was seen that the Ndzundza people did not make the Nala princess the great wife, they sent her back to us down here, being small (i.e. not a great wife), and before she had borne a prince, for the amaNdzundza said, 'If we make this princess a

great wife, she will take the people and cause them to go back to Manala, because she is a descendant of Manala'."

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CONTINUITIES AND CHANGES IN NDEBELE BEADWORK : C. 1883 TO THE PRESENT

DIANE LEVY

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Arts, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, for the Degree of Master of Arts.

Johannesburg 1990.

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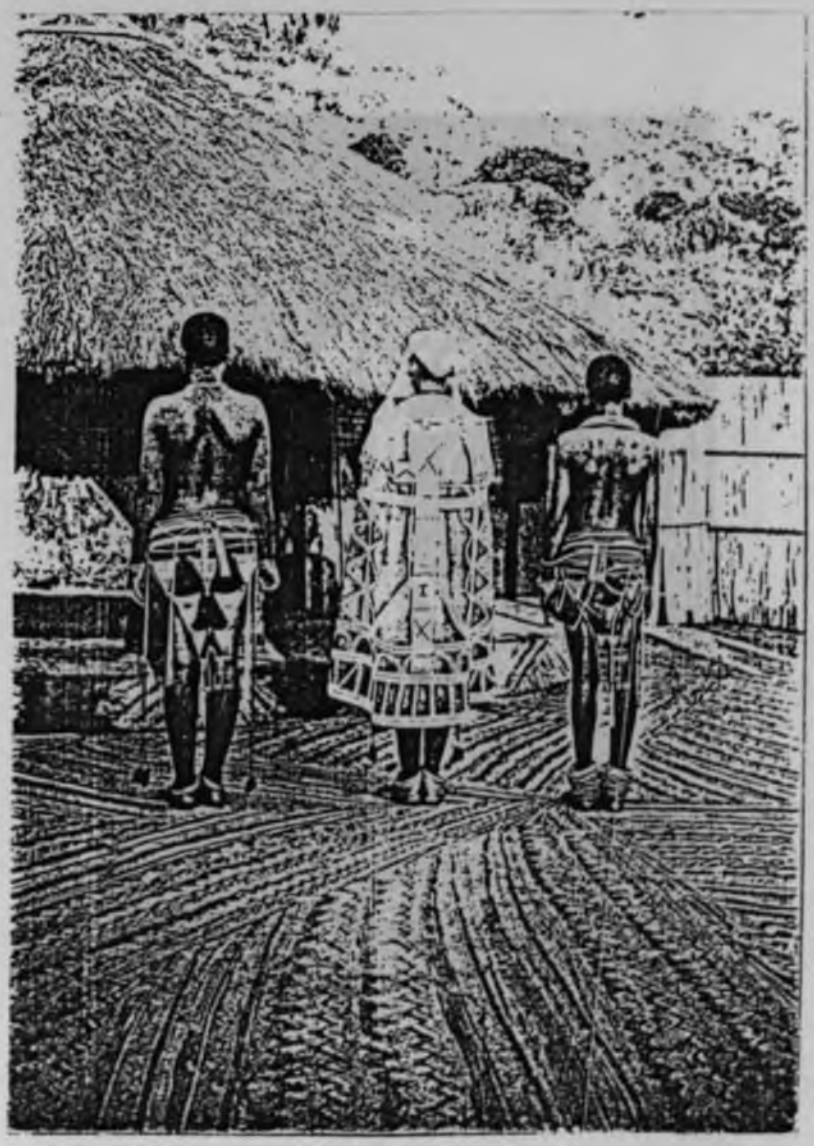

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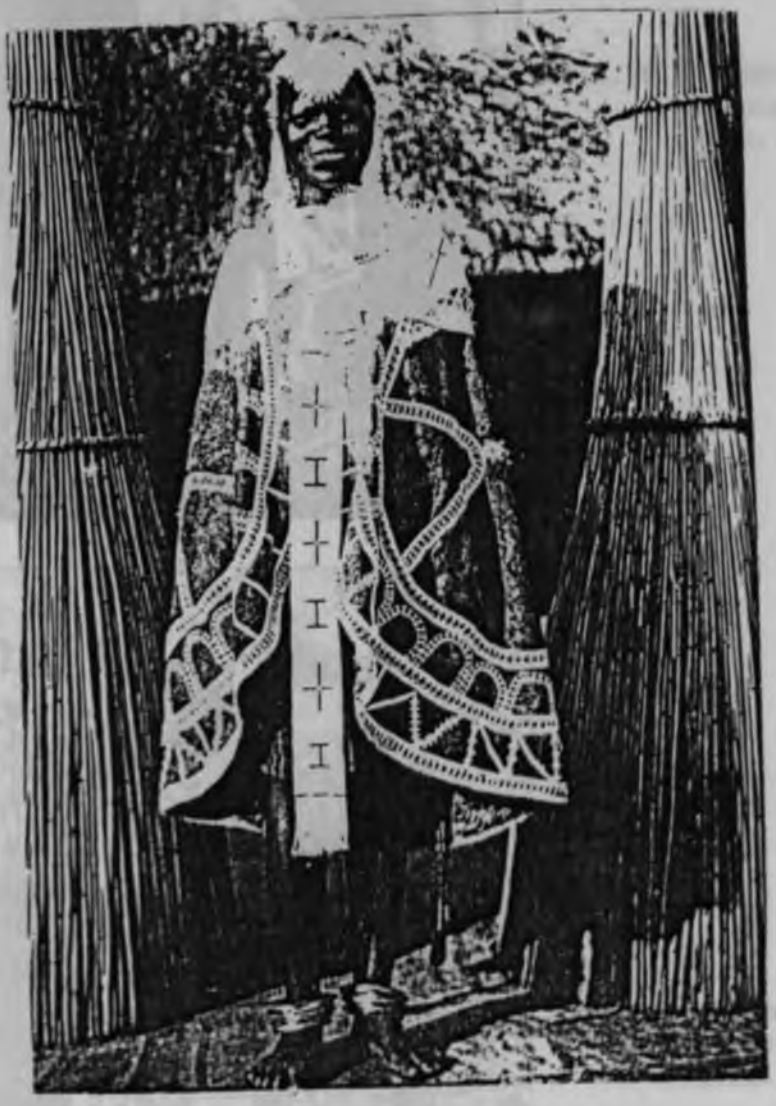

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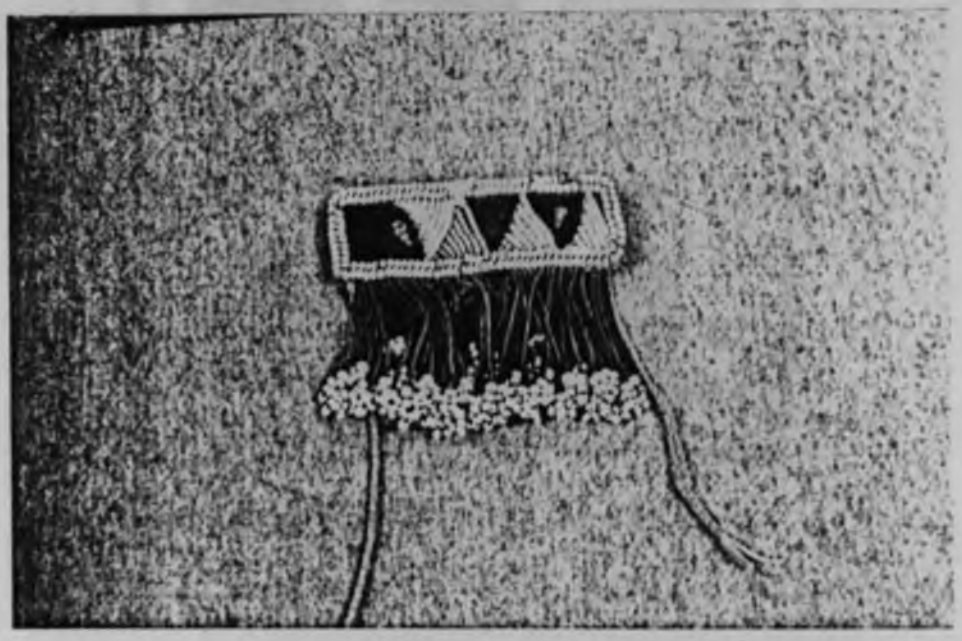

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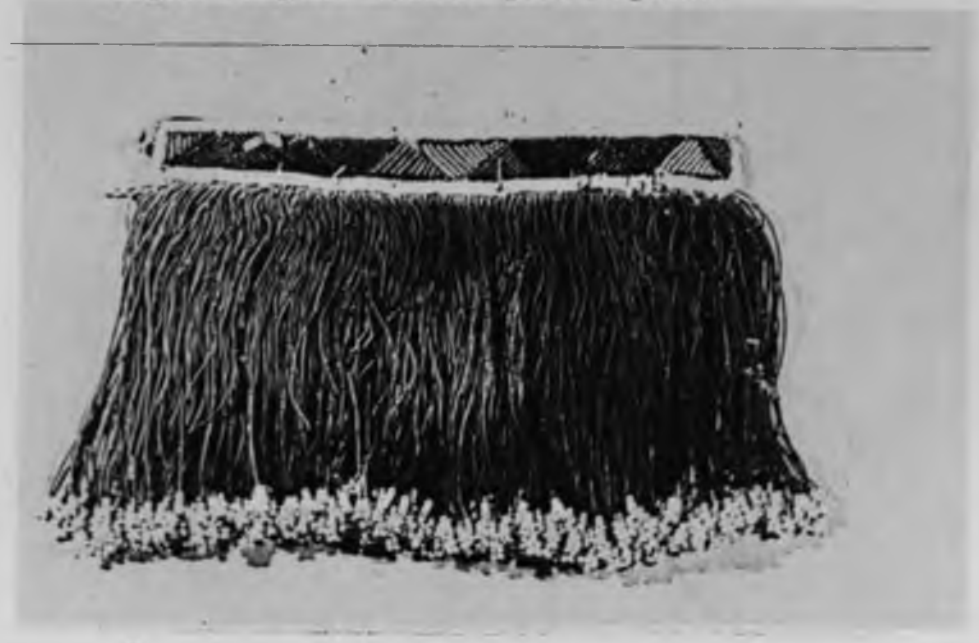

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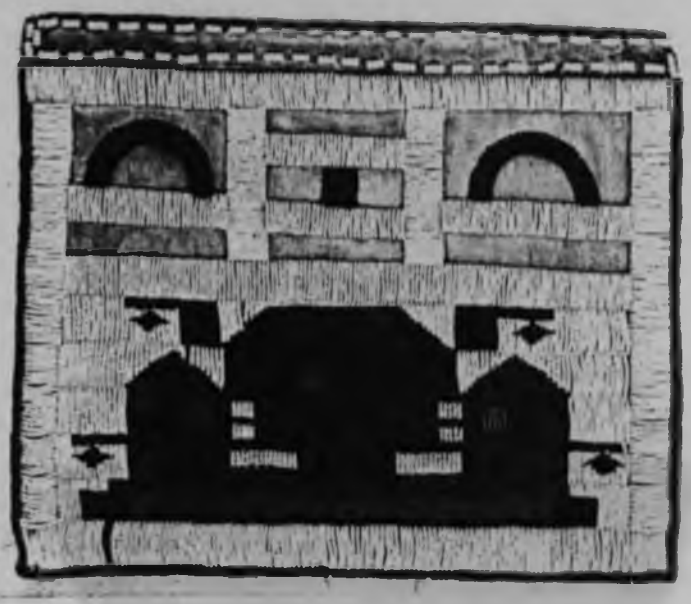

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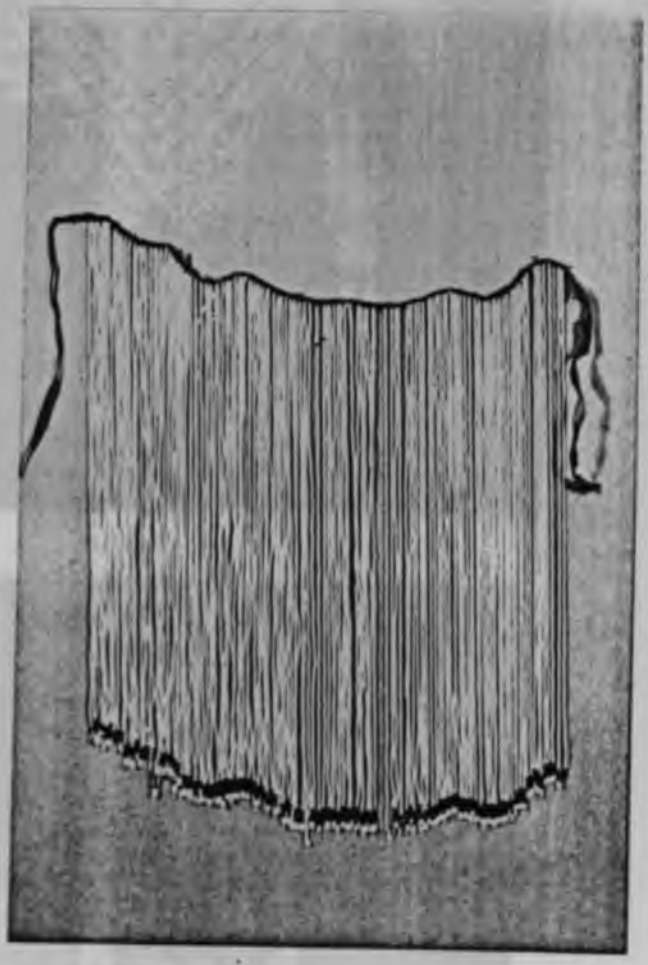

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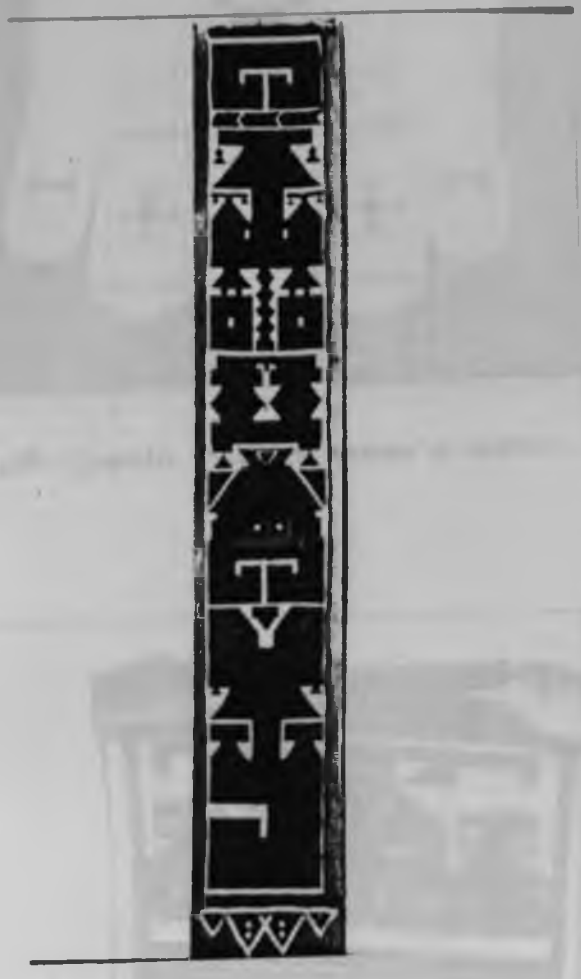

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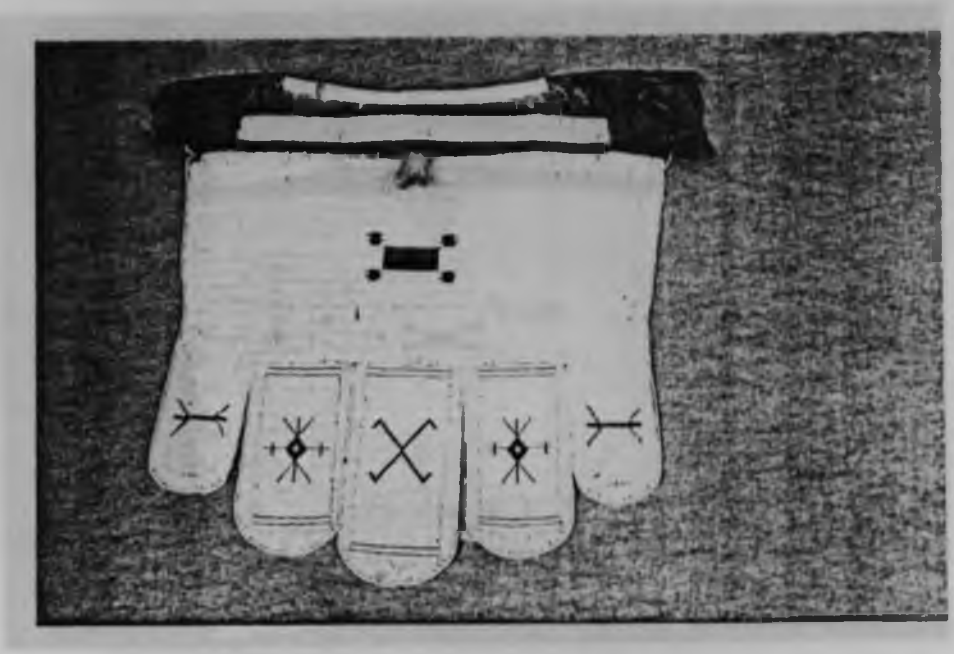

Fig.38 *Ijogolo* (Married woman's apron).



Fig.39 *Ijogolo* (Married woman's apron).



Fig.40 *Liphotho* (Married woman's apron).



Fig.41 *Liphotho* (Married woman's apron).



Fig.42 Unbeaded *liphotho*
(Married woman's apron).



Fig.43 *Liphothos* (Married women's aprons).



Fig.44 *Linaga* (Cape), c.1923.

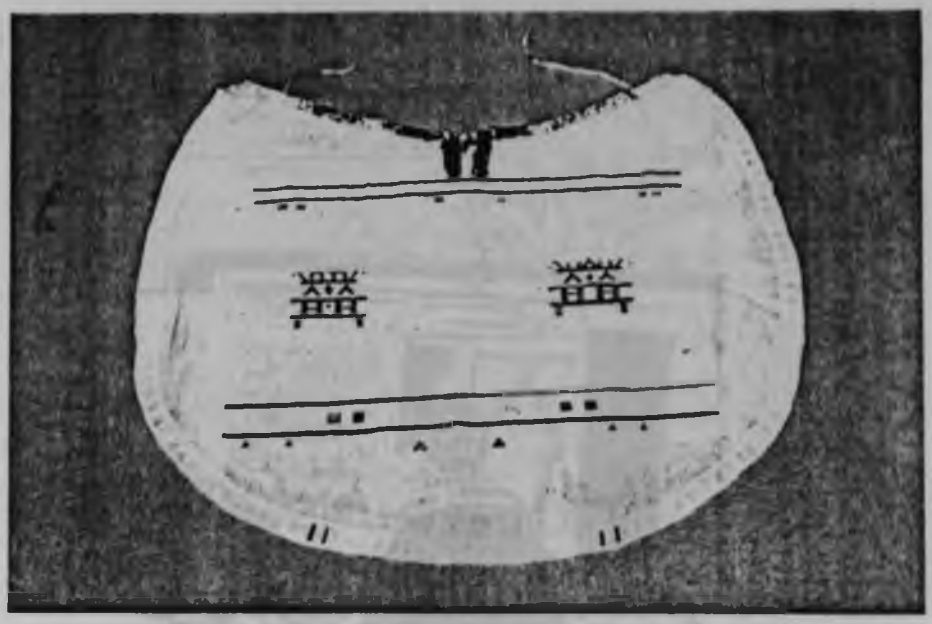

Fig.45 *Linaga* (Cape).

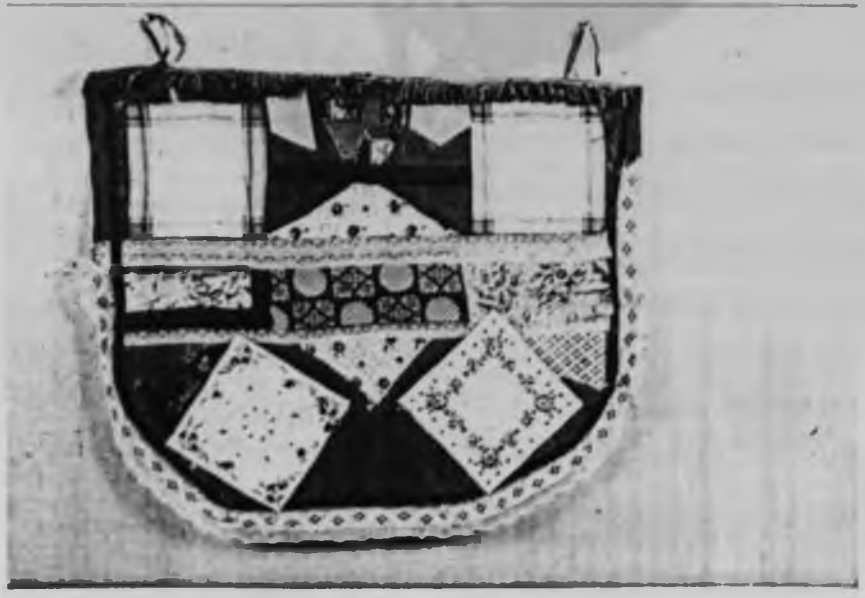

Fig.46 *Linaga* (Cape).



Fig.47 Ndebele woman, back view
Almasdrift B, KwaNdebele,
1988.



Fig.48 *Irari* (Beaded blanket).



Fig.49 *Irari* (Beaded blanket).



Fig.50 *Isigolwane* (Beaded arm rings).

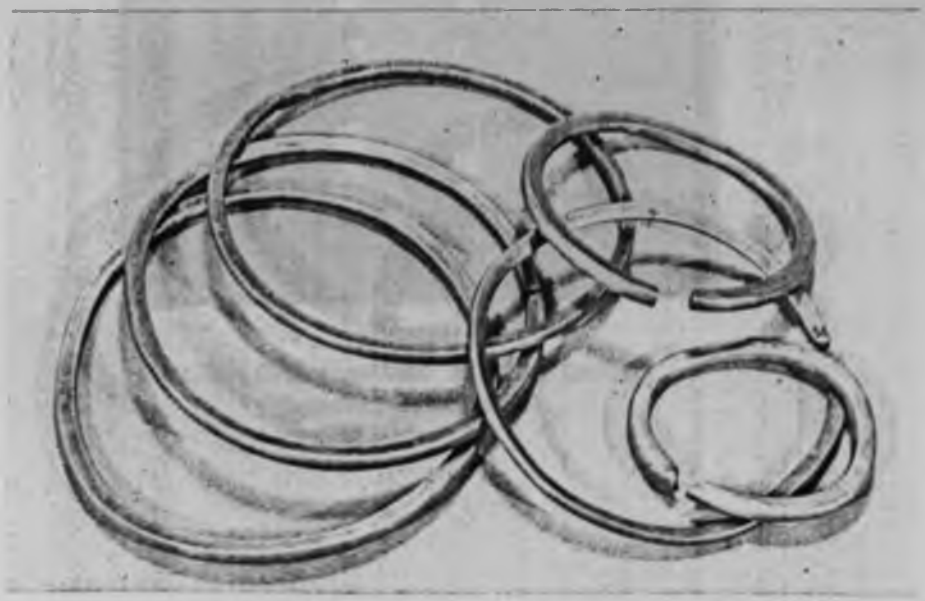

Fig.51 *Idzila* (Metal body rings).



Fig.52 *Umlingakobe* ('Long tears' - beaded headband).



Fig.53 Ndebele man wearing a *poryana*, Almasdrift B, KwaNdebele, 1988.



Fig.54 *Umdwana* (Doll).



Fig.55 *Umdwana* (Doll).



Fig.56 *Umdwana* (Doll).



Fig.57 *Umdwana* (Doll).



Fig.58 Ndebele market, Fourways,
Sandton, 1989.



Fig.59(a) *Umdwana* (Doll).
Fig.59(b) *Umdwana* (Doll).



Fig.60(a) *Umdwana* (Doll).
Fig.60(b) *Umdwana* (Doll).



Fig.61 *Umdwana* (Doll).



Fig.62 Beaded animal.

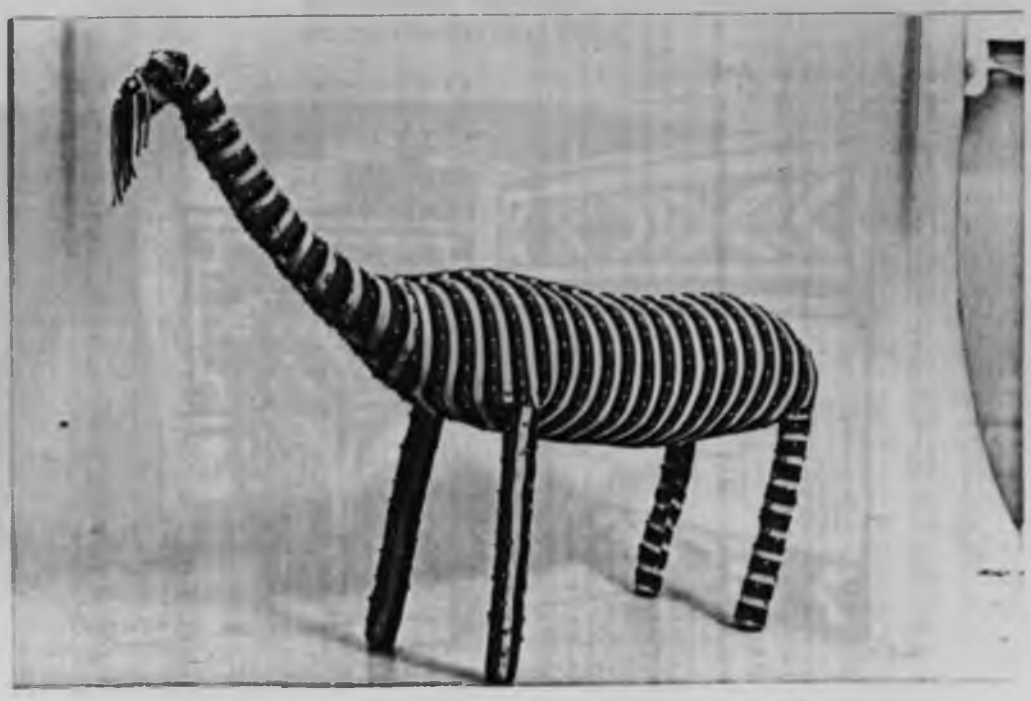

Fig.63 Beaded animal.



Fig.64 Ndebele woman,
Bothabelo Village,
Middelburg, c.1988.



Fig.65 Ndebele women and child,
Botshabelo Village, Middelburg,
1988.

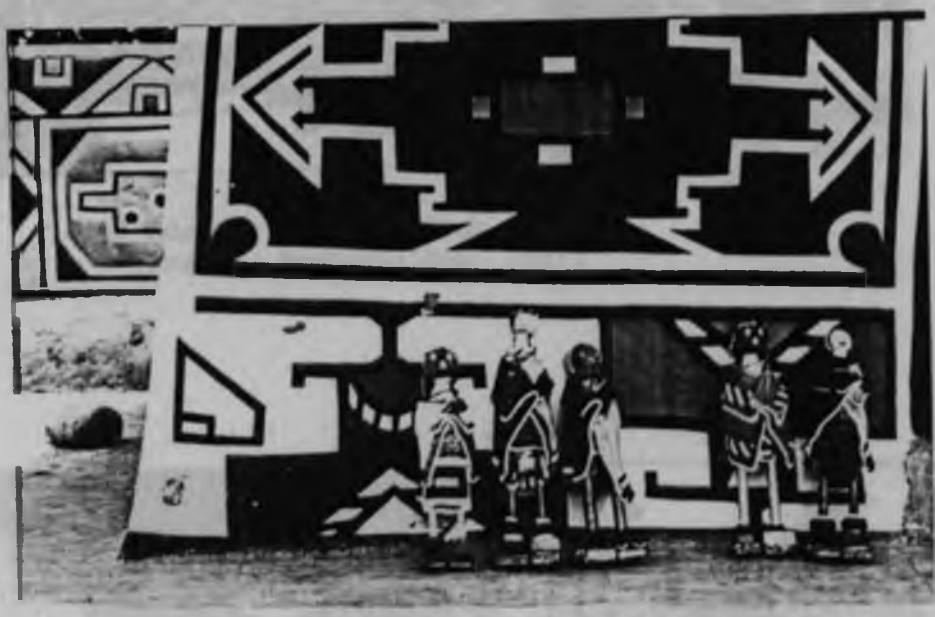

Fig.66 *Umdwana* (Dolls) for sale,
Botshabelo Village,
Middelburg, 1988.



Fig.67 Ndebele women selling arts and crafts, Pretoria Zoo, 1987.



Fig.68 Ndebele women selling beadwork, Marabastad, Pretoria, 1986.

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