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# Both sides of the camera: anthropology and video in the study of a Gcaleka women's rite called Intonjane.

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# CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

> The viewfinder of the camera, one could say, has the opposite function of the gunsight that a soldier levels at his enemy. The latter frames an image for annihilation; the former frames an image for preservation, thereby annihilating the surrounding multitude of images which could have been formed at that precise point in time and space
>
> (MacDougall, 1975: 117).

## Introduction

Anthropological filmmaking has gained currency, popularity, interest and funding as never before since Britain's Granada Television developed the controversial Disappearing World series for public consumption some 20 years ago. Schools of visual anthropology have since been created at various universities, and a lot written on the subject of ethnographic filmmaking. Yet, before and since this groundbreaking series, and despite considerable amounts of raw footage recorded, very little has been written on methodologies of utilising the unedited footage in research. This researcher discovered that almost nothing was to be had from inter-library and internet searches with regard to a structured methodological framework for such research.

Hockings states that the apparent lack of methodology for utilising footage in research is a serious problem for anthropology - particularly as extensive film archives exist, and are being developed, in several countries,

including Germany, France, America, Japan and Britain, amassing large amounts of footage supposedly for just such 'later research' (1988: 208).

In the light of the paucity of methodological information, a recording methodology was developed for this research primarily out of issues explored in ethnographic filmmaking (examples of sources include: MacDougall, Mead, Preloran and Rouch in Hockings, 1975; Young, 1988; Lydall, MacDougall, Nichols, Turton and Woodhead in Crawford and Simonsen, 1992; Nichols, 1991a; Crawford, MacDougall, Loizos, Turton, Vaughan and Wright in Crawford and Turton, 1992; Ginsberg, 1992; Turton, 1992a). The research method developed in this thesis also drew on the little material available on the practical application of video in anthropological research (Asch and Hockings in Hockings and Omori, 1988; Lomax, Mead, Prost and Sorenson in Hockings, 1975), while some material on ethical and methodological considerations was drawn from the visual medium of photography (Caldarola, 1985; Sontag, 1978).

As a starting point, Caldarola's conception of photography as an adjunctive methodology (1985) to be used in collaboration with conventional anthropology of the verbal tradition complements the notion proposed here of how video should be used in research. His contribution lies in his research framework and in his discussions on devising a recording strategy, which includes allocating a point of significance to the event

and defining boundaries for filming.

Caldarola (1985) recognises the need for the researcher to familiarise herself with the subject to be recorded and to familiarise the subject with the researcher and the technology; to devise ways of recording which will best serve anthropology; and, finally, to show the recordedings to participants for their enjoyment and information, and to facilitate the research.

**The familiarisation process**

In the gathering of what Caldarola broadly refers to as 'prior knowledge' (ibid: 34) (that is, prior to recording the event on videotape), the researcher acquaints herself with the ritual and familiarises at least the main ritual participants (the initiate and her natal family who would be hosting the ceremony) with the technology.

The first step is to consult published work on the ritual. The earliest literature available on *intonjane* was interesting, if outdated and sparse (MacLean, 1906; Soga, 1932; Hunter, 1936). Additional insight on women's initiation was gained particularly from Richards (1956) and Wilson (in La Fontaine, 1972). From this initial, limited understanding, I was able to begin interviewing female informants, with the help of an interpreter, on what form the ritual took and what it meant to them. Having already spent some time amongst these women (in 1988), questioning and filming them for prior research,

they were at ease and very helpful. My interpreter, Nonqubelo Ndyamboti, was also of enormous help.

Ndyamboti came from a neighbouring ward and so shared my hut for three or four days of each week, before returning to her children for the remainder. About the same age as me, she was a warm young woman, well-liked in the Folokwe community and comfortably conversant in English. She was quite justifiably proud of this and of her educational qualifications. She had several years of secondary education and had worked in tne city, a rare achievement, particularly for a woman. On falling pregnant, she returned to live with her mother at her natal homestead. Her deceased father was from the royal Tshawe clan. Educated, relatively affluent and deeply involved in local affairs, he was well respected. Her widowed mother owned and managed a local trading store. She and her late husband encouraged all of their children to study, and some of them pursued professional careers. Having undergone *intonjane* initiation herself, Ndyamboti inevitably also became an informant. Hence she filled many roles, as interpreter, companion, friend, informant, and sound operator, as she learned to wield the microphone alongside my camera.

The exercise of familiarising locals with the video technology began in 1988, almost 18 months prior to the recording of the *intonjane* rite, when I first started conducting research in the area. When in the field, I received many invitations to attend and film rituals and

ceremonies in the district. In my view, the camera rarely felt more intrusive than notetaking at rituals. Hockings concurs:

> If an ethnographer comes to be accepted by a community, it is along with his clothes, his looks, his questions, his opinions and his equipment. The camera is really not something that intrudes any further into the social situation than does the operator himself
>
> (1988: 214).

In fact, there seemed to be a significant degree of comfort with, or indifference to, the technology. This, I suspect, was for two reasons: firstly, at rituals, the participants' concentration was usually focused primarily on the rite and its appropriate performance, in order to ensure its efficacy and not to offend the ancestors in whose honour it was being performed; and, secondly, the footage could be recorded in a fairly unobtrusive fashion, with little intervention in the ritual's progress. Questions would be asked only when participants were freed from the ritual task at hand, or at a later stage when they could dedicate themselves to viewing and discussion.

My interpreter and I formed a visible pair, strongly identified with our equipment and, with time, somewhat taken for granted. That is not to say the equipment elicited no response. It always did, but it was a fairly consistent response as the expectation of appropriate performance which was crucial to ritual efficacy usually

took precedence over individual acts of amusement before the camera. Also, in my view, the recording and viewing methods employed contributed towards this consistency.

I deliberately established a pattern of showing footage on visits subsequent to when it was recorded. This facilitated having the speech translated. There was thus some delay between recording and viewing. This delayed-viewing technique served three necessary aims.

Firstly, it meant that, without using double the fuel (the nearest filling station was an hour's drive away), the dual task of showing the footage and asking questions about it could be undertaken.

Secondly, it appeared to reduce the degree of 'mugging' (acting up, changing behaviour or dress) for the camera. Unlike photographs which can be carried around (Sontag, 1978) and referred to frequently, privately and at whim, viewings were sporadic and so were generally attended by all and sundry. In this context, inappropriate actions would be pointed out, amidst laughter and occasional rebuke. This proved to be rare, however, as, although 'mugging' on informal occasions was regarded with amusement, at ritual, appropriate respect and behaviour was essential to ritual efficacy and so individuals practised self-restraint with or without the presence of the camera. The recorded footage reveals that participants were aware of, comfortably acknowledged, and even occasionally jested about the camera, but it was

clearly not their primary focus of attention or interest. Hence, while 'mugging' occurred more obviously in an informal context, it appeared only infrequently at ritual.

And finally, the delayed-viewing technique was important in establishing a relationship of trust with informants. They agreed on my utilising video records of *intonjane* for research and teaching needs. In turn, I agreed to try to avoid singling out individuals' private conversations (which participants regarded as being no part of the ritual) for recording, unless advised otherwise. To be certain of not revealing any gossip or other potentially troublemaking behaviour or information to the community audience, the recorded speech would first be transcribed, so that I could turn the volume down on, or even avoid showing, compromising footage. Screenings of the footage offered the opportunity to return something to the community which had opened itself to study. In this way, a manner of working was established which generally protected participants. Secure in the knowledge that they could trust my discretion, they appeared to relax in front of the camera and not to worry about having to censor their conversations. Of course, that is not to say that I always knew if they had! But the footage is sufficiently revealing of their comfort (or discomfort) with the technology.

Of course, the dilemma remains that recorded footage and

transcriptions, taken away from the field, may be used in ways which nevertheless damage individual or community reputations. As Sontag (1978: 106) recognises, the meaning of an image, when used in a different context, may change significantly, ceasing to be 'about' the subject in the same direct or primary way (ibid: 133). The ramifications of this dilemma are discussed in the final chapter on the implications of video for research.

Hence, while the intrusion of the technology must be monitored, it is not necessarily reason in itself for rejecting the video research exercise, and it cannot be denied that the presence of a notetaking anthropologist also presents an intrusion at every occasion.

To return to the matter of familiarisation, when informed of an upcoming *intonjane* ritual, Ndyamboti and I made formal contact with the family to explain the research purpose and to ask permission to attend and film. Some of the family were already familiar with video as they had participated at circumcision rituals previously recorded and had attended the viewings. I took the equipment along, nevertheless, and filmed them briefly, letting them view the footage directly off the small monitor behind the eyepiece of the camera, while listening to the audio on an earpiece, so that they would fully understand the extent to which the camera could record picture and sound before deciding on whether to grant permission for the recording of their ritual.

At Folokwe, the initiate's mother and deceased husband's brother (who hosted the ritual), as well as the initiate herself and her twin brother (who, as custom would have it, accompanied her through stages of the ceremony) all consented to my participation and research with the clear understanding that they could refuse access to and public viewing of any part of the ritual they deemed private. The only uncertainty, expressed hesitantly by the male host, was whether I be allowed to enter the male domain of the cattlebyre or should film the activities from without. In the end, although never explicitly denied entry, I took his hesitancy to mean I should rather not enter unless expressly told otherwise, and stayed out. This limited choices of how to film activities in the cattlebyre, but never hampered the recording significantly. If anything, I believe it helped to minimise my intrusion on the event.

It was agreed that I would record the event, take the footage away for translation and transcription, and then return and set up two viewings. The first would be for those who had participated in the ritual. At this viewing, the natal family would appoint certain senior people, including Nothimba (Ngwevu clan), the male host of the ritual, and Nolele (Ngwevu clan), the leader of female activities, to answer questions. Obviously, I also planned to interview other informants after the viewing, who could privately confirm or contradict the opinions received from the appointed community panel. The second viewing would be held for anyone in the

community to watch, as entertainment as much as for research. Questions would also be asked on that occasion. Finally, the footage would be used for research and teaching purposes within the university.

## Defining boundaries for filming

> Observation itself is a process of a priori reasoning. Photography is merely an extension of observation, and both require exceptional selectivity based on the perceived significance of events
>
> Caldarola (1985:41).

Having spoken to informants in the field and done preliminary readings on the subject of *intonjane*, it was necessary to define a filming strategy which would enable the collection of data.

Asch and Asch (1988: 172) recognise that events are often too dispersed to even observe, let alone film, with many sequences of social interaction occurring simultaneously. As the researcher does not want to stop or intervene in the ritual and therefore cannot film (or observe) them all, she must select those sequences she hopes will illustrate key aspects of the ritual, revealing also relationships of the people involved.

The collection of raw footage therefore involves the researcher making a series of recording choices which are as often based on intuition and prior knowledge of the field as any claims to science. As will be discussed

later, the apparent scientific precision of camera sound and image, of film creating a trace of the world, is thus deceptive.

Central to identifying and recording the key aspects of any ritual is the defining of flexible boundaries framing a point of significance which allows the film-maker to 'approach an event without fully understanding it' (Caldarola, 1985: 34). In this way, recording, within the parameters of the point/boundary notation, is open-ended (ibid, 1985: 34). First, it was necessary to establish a point of significance for the ritual, then to define boundaries for recording which would allow the researcher to capture the key aspects, thereby accommodating an analysis of its meaning.

Guided primarily by literature and by informants, it seemed that the point of significance was, broadly, the support of a woman, primarily by other women, through a period of seclusion and the effecting of some sort of transition (through a celebration of the symbolic marking of her first menstruation and marriage) on her person and possibly on other participants. This interim interpretation was deliberately inconclusive as it recognised that a central paradox existed which the research aimed to explore; that although the rite followed a somewhat 'traditional' course in terms of form and content, the initiate was already an adult women, hence the 'traditional' definition of the rite as effecting a transition to adulthood was in certain

respects inappropriate and alternative understandings of the rite needed to be explored.

With the point of significance established in a manner seemingly flexible enough to accommodate the paradoxical nature of the ritual, it was possible to set boundaries for filming in space and time. This established when and where to begin and finish recording. The ceremony seemed to focus on women's status and fortune, yet, like all ritual, it also involved the appeasement of ancestors which was traditionally controlled by men. Hence, I anticipated that both women and men would contribute, although women would play a more significant part in the proceedings. Important female participants identified in advance included the ritual leader, Nolele, her two young helpers, and, of course, the female initiate. Other female participants included the clanswomen who would sing *intonjane* songs every morning and evening and young girls who would spend every night with the initiate, supporting her through her period of seclusion. Male participation included the Nothimba, the ritual host, the initiate's twin, Wagontsha, and the young boys who would visit their girlfriends at the seclusion hut in the evenings.

It was anticipated that ritual duties would formally begin with a procession of women from the main hut to the seclusion hut, and would then center on three areas: daily, on the seclusion hut housing the female initiate and her twin, as well as on the courtyard (between the

main hut and the cattlebyre) where the women would circle and sing; and periodically, when a feast occured, on the male domain of the cattlebyre and again on the courtyard where the women would cook and generally congregate. The rite would finish with another female procession back to the main hut. These areas, that is, all of the homestead excluding the fields and garden, would therefore form the physical (or geographic) boundaries of recording. Altogether, then, these key figures and key geographical areas would form the spatial framework which would guide recording. Should the action move away from the homestead, exclude these figures, or should a new event be brought to notice, it would become necessary to reassess the boundaries in terms of the point of significance established.

The next step was to establish temporal boundaries for recording. The most important events were identified by informants as: the initiate's entry into seclusion, *umngeno*, marking the beginning of the rite of separation (Van Gennep, 1960); *umngenandlini*, the day of celebration of the symbolic ending of her menstruation and the end of the rite of separation; *umtshato*, the three days celebrating her symbolic marriage (which is the climax of the rite of transition); the two events leading to her coming out (which signal the end of the transition and her newly unpolluted state), called *ukutsiba intaba* and *umphindelo*; and, finally, *umphumo*, her coming out, when she leaves seclusion with a rite of re-incorporation. Of these, only *umngenandlini* and *umtshato* were feast days.

Recording would concentrate on all of these events, although it was recognised that it would be necessary, also, to attend, witness and film some of the women's and children's daily support of the initiate.

Filming would begin on the morning of the first day of the ritual, that is *umngeno*, the day the initiate would go into seclusion. Besides meeting the criteria in terms of point of significance, that day was given by the natal family as the starting point, and was the date they were most comfortable with.

The starting and stopping of each recorded shot - the act of actually recording - would be dictated by the events scheduled for that day, and by both the informants' and my own understanding of those events. Anything deemed significant by the participants would be recorded and, on the assumption that they might take much of their behaviour for granted, I planned also to film anything else which seemed significant. So recordings would rely on informants' advice as to when speeches began and ended, but I would also look out for changes in non-verbal behaviour and activity as markers of changing significance. Hence both speech and action would inform decisions of what to record. Data on activities prior to the first and last day would be collected through verbal interviews.

The methods of recording the rite were significantly affected by four elements. Firstly, I had never

witnessed a full *intonjane* rite prior to filming the rite at Folokhwe. Its secondary importance to circumcision and other male activities contributed to its infrequency and erratic timing. Secondly, the available literature on *intonjane* was somewhat outdated and could not be heavily relied upon. Thirdly, at the ritual itself, my sparse knowledge of Xhosa made it difficult to follow what was happening. And finally, the duration and frequency of video recording was severely constrained by the limited battery power available. This meant that advance preparation was essential to identify events prioritised by participants; and also that, while I wielded the camera, the direction it pointed and the duration it recorded was more frequently the decision of informants and my assistant. This was not nearly as problematic as it might seem. In fact, it meant that, ultimately, participants at the ritual contributed significantly to determining what was important to record. My understanding of the shape and focus of the ritual was informed by their guidance and explanations. In the final analysis, I would be illustrating several different perspectives of the imagined scripts of *intonjane* that we each carried around in our heads. This joint authorship of the footage complements Caldarola's perception of research as one in which

> the act of photographing is considered a communication event in which the photographer and the informant are mutual participants (1985: 41).

## Devising a recording strategy

Although Caldarola's guidelines offer some way forward with regard to the defining of filmic boundaries, he fails to explore the idiom of recording, or the styles and techniques available to the photographer (or video operator, in this case) suitable for research purposes. It is vital that the researcher pursue a recording methodology which will, just like the taking of field notes, accommodate the anthropologist's 'deepening immersion' (Rapport, 1961: 12) in the culture (as opposed to setting up a barrier to participation), and allow filmed action to reveal itself, as far as possible, for open and interactive analysis. The potential of video to accommodate this depends on the manner in which the medium is utilised and on the style of recording adopted by the anthropologist.

Documentation, like edited documentary, involves a point of view while purporting to be about the real. This viewpoint is represented initially through the manner of recording and later, in edited films, through the process of editing. Also, both documentary and documentation contain meanings which participants may wish to control (Morphy, 1994: 144). These shared issues are heavily debated by documentary filmmakers - hence the usefulness of consulting the literature on ethnographic filmmaking.

Certain recording styles allow more useful data to be revealed than others. Documentary, characterised by its

goal of understanding the 'real', lived experience of its subject, is a visual idiom most suitable for anthropological research. Yet documentary is 'notoriously difficult to define' (Vaughan, 1992: 101). Vaughan argues that documentary describes

> not a style or a method or a genre of film-making but a mode of response to film material: a mode of response founded upon the acknowledgement that every photograph is a portrait signed by its sitter. Stated at its simplest, the documentary response is one in which the image is perceived as signifying what it appears to record
>
> (ibid).

As Nichols acknowledges, 'every representation, however fully imbued with documentary significance, remains a fabrication' (1991: 57). This false consciousness of documentary - purporting to be about the 'real' and the 'lived', yet remaining essentially an authored fiction - is served in varying degrees by different modes of representation.

Within the idiom of documentary, Nichols describes four modes of representation which conventionally stand out as 'the dominant organisational patterns around which most texts are structured' (1991: 32). These comprise the expository, observational, interactive and reflexive modes. The goal is to identify to what extent these modes are compatible with anthropological paradigms and will best serve anthropological enquiry, revealing not only data (as evidence) on the ritual in the participants' own voices, but also, self-reflexively, the

'politics of encounter... between one who wields a movie camera and one who does not' (Nichols, 1991: 56). In other words, a method is required which facilitates metacommentary, speaking to us about both the historical world and the process of representation itself, and which lends itself to storage.

If the researcher is to illuminate the political issues in research of hierarchy and control, of power and knowledge - the conscious or unconscious intentionality of the filmmaker, often disguised from the viewer's eye (Vaughan, 1992: 101) - it is imperative to explore the correlation between form and content with regard to the four documentary modes of representation.

The expository mode (for which Grierson and Flaherty are renowned) relies heavily on rhetorical rather than temporal or spatial continuity, substantiated by synchronous sound and illustrative images. In simple terms, the author's argument drives the text. Image and sound are selected by virtue of how well they illustrate the rhetorical text and the strength of evidence they bring to it. An impression of objectivity is emphasised by eliminating reference to the process by which knowledge is produced (Nichols, 1991) through a recording style which consciously rejects self-reflexivity. While the native voice is accommodated in interviews, this is usually subordinated to, and offered as evidence in favour of the argument, thereby apparently substantiating the filmmaker's authority. Footage recorded in the

expository mode alone therefore provides debatable evidence for research.

The argument-driven images, collected and edited for expository film, have an analogy in research. The researcher inevitably brings an imagined script to the ritual, consciously or unconsciously organised in terms of understandings derived from preliminary research. An uncritical recording might favour the expository mode to illustrate that understanding. Likewise, informants may guide the researcher's focus in terms of a normative idea, their own imagined script, of the event, also directing the recording of the footage in an unconsciously expository mode. The video researcher must understand the implications of each mode of representation so as to substantiate and moderate the expository recording, the imagined script, with other modes if a dense description of the event is to be achieved.

The observational mode (utilised so effectively by David MacDougall, Fred Wiseman and Melissa Llewelyn-Davies) stresses non-intervention and attempts to cede control over events that occur in front of the camera 'more than any other mode' (Nichols, 1991: 38). Operating voyeuristically, this mode uses synchronous sound and relatively long takes to observe everyday life, recording colours, shapes, and spatial relationships as well as the intonations, inflections and accents which give speech its meaning. This includes moments of what Nichols calls

dead or empty time 'where nothing of narrative significance occurs but where the rhythms of everyday life settle in and establish themselves' (1991: 40).

> If there is something to be gained from an affective form of learning, observational cinema provides a vital forum for such experience. Though still problematic in other ways, there are qualities here that no other mode of representation duplicates.
>
> (Nichols, 1991: 42)

The problems referred to relate to the apparently objective view of life which the observational mode purveys and which encourages the belief that 'this is exactly what life is like'. By adopting a fly-on-the-wall approach, 'the viewer experiences the text as a template of life as it is lived' (Nichols, 1991: 43), as unmediated reality (Turton, 1992b). Such an approach offers a sense of the actual pace of life, of the natural rhythms of language and of behaviour. Implicit in this approach, however, is commonly a denial of the presence of the author and of intrusion by the crew, thereby offering the viewer a sense of 'empathetic identification, poetic immersion or voyeuristic pleasure' (ibid: 44). Clearly, then, this mode of representation should not be used in isolation.

The interactive and the reflexive modes, unlike the expository and observational modes, engage in metacommentary, revealing aspects of both the historical world and the process of representation.

Dziga Vertov and Jean Rouch are perhaps the best known purveyors of the interactive mode of representation. Interactive documentary filmmakers actively seek 'images of testimony or verbal exchange and images of demonstration' (Nichols, 1991: 44) which can show or deny the validity of authorial or informant claims. The most common example of interaction is the interview. As Nichols states,

> in anthropology, the interview is the testimony of native informants who describe the workings of their culture to the one who will rewrite their accounts into the discourse of anthropological investigation.
> (ibid: 50).

Most often, the identity and background of the informant is secondary to the specialised knowledge s/he can provide. But the interview also testifies to a power relation. 'Hierarchy is maintained and served while information passes from one social agent to another' (ibid: 51). Different kinds of interviews invoke and sustain different degrees of power and, while some acknowledge this more readily than others, all are culpable. From the apparently unstructured conversation to the various forms of structured interview, the filmmaker's presence as an organising force is undeniably present. Thus, while the extent of the power relation might be masked, the filmmaker's presence and the process of production are revealed - sometimes so intrusively that it overwhelms the contribution of the informant.

Finally, the reflexive mode is revealing of how we talk about the historical world, explicitly drawing attention to the filmmaker's authoring role. 'Reflexive texts are self-conscious not only about form and style... but also about strategy, structure, conventions, expectations, and effects' (Nichols, 1991: 57). Using stylistic, deconstructive, interactive and literary devices, the filmmaker offers a metacommentary on method and procedure thereby drawing attention to hierarchical and power relations 'between the text and the world' (ibid: 69). In dramatizing the quest for evidence, the filmmaker reveals exactly how uncertain and contingent the research process, and the evidence itself, is.

> More than the sense of the filmmaker's presence in the historical world found in the interactive mode, the viewer experiences a sense of the text's presence in his or her interpretive field.
>
> (ibid: 65).

The representation of reality is therefore challenged by the explicit exposure of the reality of representation.

It is clear then, as Vaughan states, that the idioms of documentary are neither arbitrary nor trustworthy (1992: 104). They can assume an authority quite beyond their qualification which can result in an unconscious acceptance of the given view as the dominant reality, as a truthful, condoned representation of the native's point of view. Few people in the audience consciously recognise that the 'truth' revealed is not necessarily

about the subject. It can also be as much as about the film-maker's ideology, about his way of seeing.

> A visual field can be the source for more than one set of empirical statements... The danger exists of assuming that only one set is obvious and natural and that the visible furnishes absolute proof rather than confirmatory evidence in the form of facts that are themselves constituted by the theory in question. Similarly, the danger exists of thinking that a film transparently discloses the real rather than producing, through a set of discourses, a particular reality
>
> (Nichols, 1981: 263).

However, if carefully and critically utilised, realist recording conventions offer greater potential for research and show more compatibility with anthropological paradigms than conventional dramatised methods of medium utilization. The latter emphasizes dramatic shooting techniques, the use of professional actors, and continuity of storyline, action and character serving a preconceived script. Filming in a conventional creative manner obscures behaviour and is, Caldarola argues, 'inappropriate for anthropological inquiry' (1985: 33) as the camera serves to cut the anthropologist off from the participants and their 'reality'. It has the dangerous potential of serving as a form of visual imperialism, colonising the mind through the use of 'selective imagery that acts as a representation of a dominant ideology' (Kuehnast, 1992: 184).

That is not to say, however, that documentary filmmaking

is devoid of such devices. On the contrary, just as fiction often adopts documentary idiom for its apparent realism and authority, so documentary film quite often deliberately exploits creative devices for their persuasive effect. Grierson, in fact, explicitly defined documentary as the 'creative interpretation o. actuality' (in Singer, 1992: 264). Perhaps most famous s Flaherty who used the lived experiences of local people to reconstruct his idea of what their life was like before it was tainted by his arrival and influence. That is to say, his documentary method relied on a preconceived script which stylised the 'reality' with which it worked, using conventional dramatic techniques.

Yet, the careful and critical utilisation of documentary techniques for the recording of footage as data can provide a means of challenging and contradicting the conventions of film-making and of exposing the selection and construction process, and so undermining the goal of unmediated 'reality'.

The ultimate aim is not at telling or producing a story through dramatic technique as much as showing something, allowing the inherent story to unfold and tell itself before the camera (Young, 1975: 69). Content is therefore often slow and unremarkable, fragmented, or repetitive. This breaks with conventional production norms. Marcorelle describes the goal as one in which 'your own ingenuity becomes less important than the fact of how interesting the subject is' (i.. Young, 1975: 53).

To this end, the observational recording style is useful for allowing ethnography to take precedence over cinematography. Long, unbroken camera takes capture the pace of life. The variety of shots, ranging from close-ups for detail to wider panoramic-type shots for context but with a preference for full shots incorporating whole bodies, shows interaction between participants without losing much detail. Hence the goal is seamless action within a longer take - the 'uncut shot, the long camera take, supported by the actual location sound and little more than a few times and dates' (Loizos, 1991: 54) - useful raw data for building up an understanding of the subject.

Yet the observational style does not allow for interrogation, a classic ethnographic method where the anthropologist actively pursues information. Hence, the interactive and reflexive modes are also a necessary part of the recording methodology. Interviews and other reflexive devices counter the apparent realism of the observational style and the imagined script unconsciously directing the researcher and the subject. These two modes offer a means of actively pursuing information and, by bringing the encounter of the researcher and the subject to the fore, of exposing the constructed, uncertain and often idealised nature of knowledge.

Caldarola argues (1985) that, rather than assuming a traditional role of omniscient observer, the film-maker's

active participation in the event introduces a new concept of the anthropologist as social interactant. This is particularly true for video where the researcher can interview participants on camera immediately a sequence is completed, trying to elicit an understanding of the events. Hence participants are not distracted from the task at hand, yet information regarding their actions can be gathered while their performance is still fresh in their minds.

The notion of the anthropologist as social interactant is complemented by a documentary idiom in which anthropology takes precedence over cinematography. Where the conventions of a completely still frame and a carefully composed shot are recognised as secondary to the matter of capturing appropriate data, the researcher can relax away from the eyepiece and view the event at a comfortable distance, through the viewfinder's monitor (the mini-screen behind the eye-cushion) rather than through the eyepiece itself. Although picture composition and stability suffers, sometimes severely, this method does away with the potential problem of tunnel vision, which limits the researcher's mobility and peripheral vision, by allowing the researcher to film and manoeuvre comfortably whether standing, with the camera on the shoulder, or seated with the camera resting like a notebook on the lap.

Although at the expense of a still frame, the choice of separating the eye from the viewfinder frees the

researcher to a significant degree, securing enough head and body mobility to both watch the event through the camera lens, to converse with informants, and to keep an eye on peripheral activities - all the while recording what is ahead of the camera. This is particularly useful when the researcher is unsure of the structure and order of the event and the activity is dispersed across a fairly wide geographical area. The important thing is that the camera operator is relaxed and confident with the camera, and content with images useful for research purposes only. Otherwise, as Asch and Asch point out, 'they tend to place themselves in a filming mode, adopting new behaviour that makes everyone feel uneasy' (1988: 173).

To record footage of broadcast quality, without a clear understanding of the subject matter and language, requires more filming experience and a larger crew than the average researcher enjoys, as well as a dedication to picture composition at the expense of the sometimes rapid mobility and peripheral vision necessary to try to comprehend the full event. In the hands of the researcher, therefore, the camera becomes only a rough notebook for recording behaviour. The very roughness of the recording serves the research process by acting reflexively to override any apparent 'realism', reminding the viewer of the presence of the researcher and the subjective nature of the recording choices.

As discussed earlier, the decision of what footage to

record was broadly a product of three factors, viz. the understanding brought about by preliminary research, direction by local participants, and following the action (speech and behaviour) as it happened.

The process should not be misconstrued as an interpretation of the behaviour, but rather a result of the necessary organisation of the environment, a structuring of the activities as a means to collecting as much data as possible, as sensitively as possible. The footage gathered would provide, much like scribbled notes, a descriptive representation of 'reality'. As for photography, therefore, the video research method

> is designed to include in the process of research individuals from both sides of the camera
>
> (Caldarola, 1985: 41).

Hence, not only the cameraperson, but the participants and also the audience control the image as, conventionally, footage is selected and composed with both narrative and audience expectation in mind. As with photography, the 'viewer can shape the image by creating the demand for the photograph and thus determining the acceptable content' (Scherer, 1992: 35). It was therefore important to determine who will view the footage prior to beginning the fieldwork.

The audience of this research footage was primarily myself and the participants. Once the footage has been

archived, it also becomes available to colleagues and other scholars. As the footage is for research purposes, it will be used only in its original state as record and will not have to undergo an editing metamorphosis into language (Vaughan, 1992: 99). The recorded footage will offer a visual representation of the ritual narrative in chronological order as defined and enacted by the ritual participants.

Once the footage was collected, the task, then, became one of transcribing, translating, analysing, interpreting and writing it up.

Transcription, translation and viewing of the footage

After recording the ritual, an English translation of the audio and description of the visuals were transcribed into written text. The transcription facilitated an analysis of the dialogue, an overview of the ritual, as well as comparison between sequences and events - all essential components of performative analysis - and served as a referencing tool to locate particular moments in the video. The video was continuously referred to in order to analyse the speech context and other non-verbal information.

For research purposes, the recorded footage was listed shot by shot (see Appendix A). To simplify the referencing system, each shot was given a shot number. A shot is that duration of continuous action from the

moment the camera begins recording to when recording stops. The transcription reflects the type of camera shot, its location, participants, duration, and a basic description of the action together with the translated dialogue for each shot.

The transcription served as a useful tool for identifying problematic areas of research. With a referencing system of shot numbers, any part of the ritual was accessible and the researcher was able to show the identical reference point and use identical questions for any number of informants. In showing the footage to the participants, stopping and starting, and looking at the ritual frame by frame if necessary, areas of misunderstanding opened up and could be clarified on the spot. Each shot could be analysed individually or as part of a sequence of action, of a full day's activities, or in the context of the ritual as a whole.

In a reciprocal manner, participants and the researcher continually shared information, back and forth. The method of collecting information was standardised and the data more readily controlled and less subject to the vagaries of memory. This was particularly important as the researcher and the participant could be said to have a identical or shared memory of the event. It is a dilemma of anthropology that the researcher who seeks to understand a particular action has to describe succinctly, from memory and notes, that particular act which occurred at one point in a long and involved

ritual. The informant, on the other hand, might be hard-pressed to recognise and separate out retrospectively that piece of behaviour from the ebb and flow of ritual action, and to place and explain it. Having a fixed, shared image (the recorded frame of data) as a reference point for all parties facilitated the question and answer process. The feedback process went some way towards opening the data to the subject and encouraging interactive research - something often absent in conventional anthropology.

In terms of the research process, therefore, the informants co-authored the enacted 'social drama' (Turner, 1974), to some extent including the anthropologist. As advisors directing the focus of the video researcher's camera, the informants also shared responsibility, to a certain extent, for the recorded text. And then, too, the informants and the anthropologist were both the subject and audience of the filmed text - appearing both visually and audially in the footage, as well as viewing the footage together in the research process. The anthropologist and informants therefore co-authored the various texts, albeit unequally, in an interactive research process.

A dilemma for anthropology, however, is the fact that, when the ritual, captured in footage, is divorced from its original context, its meaning may change (Sontag 1978). When the *intonjane* footage was shown to participants after the rite had finished, it acquired an

explicit entertainment and amusement value rarely visible during the initiation. When footage is thus removed altogether from the field and into the classroom or the archive, even with informants' consent, some level of accountability towards the community must be built into the terms of research use. This applies to data acquired through both notetaking and video.

Ideally, a copy of the footage, together with the final thesis or ethnography, should be returned to the community - and more particularly to the ritual hosts. In the case of this research, the lack of electricity and technology, and the poverty which makes the acquisition of both highly unlikely in the near future, as well as the dusty environs which will quickly destroy the tape quality, means the footage will probably be lost before its owners have the means to view it.

The nature of VHS video tape is such that, in good conditions, it usually has a shelf life of approximately five to seven years. In the rural conditions of Shixini, the tape will probably be rendered unwatchable within two to three years if it is not carefully stored away. This is no reason, however, for not returning it, together with a copy of the research, as it is, after all, their ritual. In this way, the research and the footage, besides becoming an academic document, can also remain a local document - a document through which the anthropologist is accountable to the community by opening up the research for scrutiny.

Of course, the archival copy of the footage will also only be available as long as the tape quality lasts. However, within an university environment, such footage can nowadays be transferred to other, more longlasting formats, like CD Rom. Ideally, the university's responsibility to the research participants should include the contracted assurance that copies of these formats always be available to community members appointed by the host family when their footage is rendered useless. This would ensure access to the recording at a later time when they may have the resources to watch the footage, and it would encourage continued accountability in future research.

## Performative analysis

The method of performative analysis used in this research was adapted from the microanalytical method devised by Kratz (1994) for her study of Okiek ritual. Kratz studies cultural changes over some time. This research, by way of contrast, attempts to understand transformation within one rite in order to make sense of the central paradox of that rite. Kratz's method, adapted to suit this purpose, is nevertheless particularly appropriate for the problems addressed here.

It would be naive to believe that any research can exist independently of the socio-political context in which it is situated. Nevertheless, the primary focus of this research is to test video as a research tool and not,

like Kratz, to explore cultural change over time. Thus this study is limited to an exploration of the footage itself in order to try to understand the ritual purpose beyond its paradoxical nature, and how performance reveals social relations. Hence, this research is clearly weighted towards contemporary, local considerations. The footage reveals difficulties in understanding when only one rite is recorded, and this is discussed in the final chapter.

When analysing ritual, Kratz uses the term 'orchestration' as a metaphor for the combination of ceremonial structure, performance and communicative resources, all working to accomplish cultural transformation. 'Ceremonial orchestration' thus refers to transformation through a build-up of dramatic tension, emotional engagement and verbal and non-verbal communicative resources in performance (Kratz, 1994: 10, 11). Emotional and dramatic tension derive out of familiar and meaningful ceremonial patterns which, re-created and experienced, satisfy general expectations of what initiation is.

> ...Dramatic tensions build and recede during performances; they are sometimes inherent in the ceremonial structure. At times, emotional tension concentrates at moments when cultural expectations can be violated... It is also especially felt when the general structure of ritual events is particularized or personalized in performance
>
> (Kratz, 1994: 10).

According to Kratz, it is within a culturally understood communicative framework that ritual transformation is accomplished. To understand the cultural implications of a ritual by dissecting its structure and ceremonial orchestration, it is therefore necessary to break down the framework into channels of verbal and non-verbal communication. It is through the communicative framework comprising verbal and non-verbal channels, then, that this research approaches its performative analysis.

The verbal channels of communication include ritual speech and song. Spoken and sung words, transcribed, are analysed for narrative structure and development, thematic patterns and concentrations, and poetic structures and devices. However, the pragmatic and rhetorical aspects of verbal communication cannot fully be understood when isolated from non-verbal components of emotion, symbolism, costume, spatial and temporal location, ritual roles and ritual materials. It is through the manipulation of both verbal and non-verbal resources that ritual texture changes continually. Video is particularly useful for capturing both verbal and non-verbal components simultaneously and thereby their fusion. No observer can possibly collect the same density of information without having to watch the ritual over and over again, or write an ethnography without conflating the information from the different ceremonies. A performative analysis of one ceremony is in fact impossible without video.

Verbal components inform every kind of participation, shaping experience at every stage. Speech and song draw on, re-create, and sometimes challenge, cultural assumptions about social roles, gender and cultural identity. Through the medium of ritual speech, blessings, encouragement, thanks, seclusion lessons, emotional displays and harangues all have a place in recreating cultural assumptions or articulating alternatives to them. Likewise, song is indispensable to initiation, permeating the ritual and weaving together the ceremonial structure and process. Songs can be both encouraging and provoking, evoking feelings, thoughts and memories and fostering a sense of sociability. The combination of sound, rhythm, interaction, theme and poetics is a powerful emotional force.

> It matters who wears costumes, holds objects, moves through different places, gives gifts to whom, consumes food, speaks, or sings
> (Kratz, 1994: 131).

It is necessary to look at patterns of ritual roles, to uncover a 'sociology of ceremonial participation' as the people involved in initiation are central to every analysis. Patterns of participation contribute to creating the emotional climate needed to ensure the efficacy of the rite.

The informal dialogues which often surround and allude to significant symbolic acts should be analysed at the same time as the action as sometimes valuable information or

clues to areas of questioning, can be obtained. The tone of these words and the words themselves sometimes contradict the actions which follow, becoming powerful tools for undermining authority and re-appropriating identity. In dealing with communication, the dialogue and the action which it surrounds will be integrated, as separating these would be an analytical exercise of little value.

In order to appreciate the gender divide and the control and contestation of social and personal terrain at *intonjane*, both verbal and non-verbal, or symbolic, communication must be carefully analysed.

Comaroff (1975) and Gunner (1986) emphasize the importance of looking at individualistic strategies employed when speakers invoke cultural patterns of speaking. The context of the situation and the performative aspect of the utterance must be examined together with the words and the themes to understand the potency of the speech and its ability to affect, powerfully, the perception of the listeners (Austin 1962). Performances include assumptions about the nature of gender, of identity and of authority. Particular attention must be paid to the symbolic content of speeches as words are a powerful tool for the appropriation of the female person. The play of authority may not be explicitly articulated yet

articulated words are impregnated with assumed

> and unarticulated qualities... a poetic work is a powerful condenser of unarticulated social evaluations - each word is saturated with them.
>
> (Volosinov, in Kratz, 1994: 163).

The power of symbols lies is their ability to rouse, channel and domesticate emotion, as well as to express and reinforce morality and social organisation (Turner 1967). Cultural knowledge and experience is evoked through use of particular objects, actions and materials, which serves to set ritual within a larger world of society, history and values.

The recording of words, actions and symbols together, in the simultaneous medium of video, is therefore an important and helpful guide for directing attention to and for understanding, in its fullest sense, various ritual roles and meanings. The ambiguous, elusive and complex nature of symbols and the abstract notions to which they refer are well-served by video which allows their multivocal, multi-layered properties to be read in the context of word and action (Turner, 1967).

Kratz states that, if we wish to understand the experience and efficacy of ritual, we need to analyze the three key processes of performance which participants undergo: semiotic movement, contextual re-creation, and, finally, experiential and emotional engagement (1994: 16).

Kratz shows that, among the Okiek, semiotic movement involves creating 'significant movement over the course of initiation ceremonies through coordinated changes in several series of related signs' (Kratz, 1994: 39). For example, through changes in location, time, costume, emotion, mode of verbal participation, ritual objects, and so on, girls begin to move towards cultural definition as women. The changing signs are symbolic of the changing status of the initiate, as her 'social skin is stripped' and replaced by another (ibid: 326). Semiotic movement refers, on the one hand therefore, to transformation itself, specifically within the individual rite and, on the other, to a broader notion of movement through life, as some signs recur in all life-cycle ceremonies. In conventional analyses, this is akin to Ngubane's understanding of certain symbols, such as the colour red, acting as transition and transformation devices (1977: 126). In my analysis, I will be taking note of Kratz's notion of semiotic movement and its possible contribution to understanding *intonjane*.

Likewise, contextual re-creation which, Kratz says of the Okiek, refers to cultural assumptions about age, gender and cultural identity which form a backdrop and context to transformation. Providing a continuity of cultural tradition, this process often re-creates, perpetuates and affirms, and also questions, the sociopolitical organisation based on those understandings (Kratz, 1994: 39). When ritual is cast as 'tradition', these assumptions become naturalized through the ritual

process.

Finally, experiential and emotional engagement which, Kratz says, refers to the strong emotional experiences of the ceremony and, more specifically, to the 'culturally specific emotional economy', that is the individually understood expression of sentiment (1994: 40). Emotionally evocative signs, dramatic orchestration, staging and timing fall into this category, as do the combination of signs, patterns of participation, and the personalisation of performances. Kratz shows how Okiek ritual is personalised through the emotional experience, and collectivised through the shared character and emotion of ritual experience (ibid: 326). All three of these processes involve multiple media.

The latter process is particularly important for its ability to reveal contradictions and tensions in the cultural understandings and experience of gender, economy, power and authority. Microanalysis of communication channels in performance reveals how people accommodate contradictions in structure, in language, in the chaotic uncertainties of ritual performance, in the ways events unfold.

> Of course, the three are inseparable in experience, and are distinguished analytically only to clarify the cultural processes through which people shape, understand, and experience their lives
>
> (Kratz, 1994: 40).

These three processes - re-creating, reflecting, reaffirming, as well as contesting and questioning the actions, language, emotions, assumptions and experiences of the actors - inform every aspect of Okiek ritual, and *together* serve to bring about some desired form of cultural transformation.

But what kind of transformation is desired, and what kind is effected at *intonjane*? Is initiation the sole purpose of the rite, or are there other agendas being served? The microanalysis of verbal and non-verbal communication through the medium of performance brings us some way towards answering these questions.

The next chapter undertakes a performance analysis of women's activities at *intonjane*, moving back and forth, between event and channel, between description and analysis as, ultimately, all are needed to build up an understanding of the transformative power shored up in the significant detail of ceremonies.

This performative approach, relying on close analysis of footage and transcription, also reveals, however, that male roles have a significance unanticipated from the literature or from informants' descriptions of the rite. Hence the fourth chapter undertakes a performance analysis of men's activities, and concludes with a discussion of the meaning of *intonjane*.

# CHAPTER 3: *INTONJANE* - A WOMENS' RITUAL

## Introduction

People in Folokhwe described a particular, idealized structure as informing the procedure of the *intonjane* ritual, while finer details were manipulated to suit participants. The ritual therefore had its own unique character within a fairly predictable general framework. Certain days of the ritual were given special names and involved particular ritual steps:

*Umngeno*..... lit: 'going in'
- going into seclusion

*Umngenandlini*..... lit: 'entering the hut'
- ritual goat slaughter
- additional sheep slaughtered

*Umtshato*..... lit: 'wedding day'
(lasts 3 days)
- the ritual climax
- ritual ox slaughter
- *holomani*, the girls' event

*Ukutsiba intaba*..... lit: 'to jump over the mountain'
- burning a grass tuft
- burying the skewer

*Umphindelo*..... lit: 'return into seclusion'
- burning the grass
- leaving seclusion for a day
- drinking *amasi* (sour milk)

*Umphumo*..... lit: 'going out' (over two days)
- burning the screen
- leaving seclusion.

In Folokhwe the preliminary data on ritual roles and on the instigation of the *intonjane* rite was gathered through conventional, notetaking research methods. Once the ritual started, however, data was gathered primarily by recording footage of all of these events, except *ukutsiba intaba* and *umphindelo*. Each recorded shot was then listed in an Appendix as an index to the precise location of the activity in the footage. Shots are referenced in the chapter by setting the shot number in square brackets, eg. [3]. The two events not recorded were researched, using conventional notetaking methods and audio recording, at a second rite a year later.

**Who participated in *intonjane*?**

Soga says that, other than at *umtshato*, participants were restricted to women of the initiate's paternal kin - her sisters, 'paternal aunts' and 'paternal grand-aunts' (1931: 217). Her brother could also visit her, but her mother and father were strictly forbidden, as were the females on her mother's and grandmother's side. On the

other hand, Wilson says that the initiate's 'mother, her co-wives, sisters and intimate neighbours of about the same age as herself' (1979: 167) would join in the ritual dancing every day, and would be restricted only from eating that special part of meat reserved for the initiate and the women of her father's lineage.

To understand the roles of participants in the Folokhwe and Jotelo rituals, it was useful to apply Kratz's breakdown of ritual participation into three modes - representative roles, general participation and special relations (1994).

Representative roles were fulfilled by the initiate (whose seclusion was the focus of the rite), the ritual leaders who led and supervised, and their assistants who provided support and labour throughout the rite. These roles lasted only for the duration of the event.

Throughout the rite, no mention was made of an initiate's name and she was simply referred to as '*intonjane*'. The term '*intonjane*' was therefore used to refer both to the initiation process and to the initiate (Broster, 1976: 39). The initiate was the only participant to be involved in every single day although her activity was limited mostly to resting, eating and sleeping.

At the Folokhwe rite, the *intonjane*, Nomfundo, had a twin brother, Wagontsha (both Ngwevu clan). Both were referred to as *iintonjane*, although the transformation

process was aimed at the female initiate alone. As the initiation of twins is quite rare, this recording is of unique archival value as well as of research interest.

Hammond-Tooke (1958: 18) says of the Bhaca (a non-Xhosa descent group inhabiting the Willowvale administrative area together with the Gcaleka) that twin girls must be initiated together, but says nothing of when they are of the opposite sex. Cook notes that

> when the twins are of opposite sex, the boy observes no restrictions at the time of his sister's *intonyane*, nor does he take any part in the ceremonies
>
> (1927: 518).

Every informant in Folokhwe was adamant that a boy must accompany his twin sister through her life crisis rituals, just as she must do the same for his. Wagontsha accompanied Nomfundo through some, but not all, of the *intonjane* rite. At the time, both were 27 years old and married. Nomfundo had four children and Wagontsha one.

In Jotelo, the *intonjane*'s name was Nonasile although she preferred being called Bobby. Bobby's clan was Nyawuza. She was 31, married, with three children. Unlike the twins, Bobby was initiated alone.

An old, post-menopausal woman directed the women's activities. She was called the *ikhankata* (pl. *amakhankata*), which Hunter translates as 'nurse' (1979:

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