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Title: **Coins for Blood and Blood for Coins: Towards a Genealogy of Sacrifice in the Transvaal Lowveld, 1930-1993.**

by: **Isak A Niehaus**

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COINS FOR BLOOD AND BLOOD FOR COINS: TOWARDS A GENEALOGY OF SACRIFICE IN THE TRANSVAAL LOWVELD, 1930-1993

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In 1889 Tylor defined sacrifice as a form of gift-giving to spiritual beings (Tylor 1958:461). This definition has formed the conceptual framework for both classical and contemporary anthropological understandings of sacrifice. Subsequent theorists have viewed these gifts-to-gods as fundamentally different from gifts-to-people. Indeed, sacrifice has been seen as essential to the quest for morality, purity and salvation. The sacrificial gift, it has been contended, is offerred to establish communion with the sacred and to sacrilize the sacrificer (Robertson-Smith 1984, Hubert and Mauss 1964). Evans-Pritchard (1970) described Nuer sacrifices as aimed at ridding individuals from the dangerous state of nueer brought about by pathogenic contact with the Divinity. More recently, Gregory (1980) and Parry (1986) have viewed sacrifice as a 'pure gift' which is surrendered without the expectation of recall and return in this life. Parry (1986: 460-61) suggests that in salvation-orientated religions ultimate destiny is determined by supernatural reward. As such unreciprocated gifts mean liberation from the bondage of the profane world and create an image of the other world in this one.

Whilst these contributions yield general insight, there is an urgent need to refocus attention on the meanings of sacrifice in particular performative and narrative contexts (Hoskins 1993). Generalized and static formula often obscure intricate, diverse, and changing emic models of sacrifice.

This article investigates continuities and changes in concepts of sacrifice among Sotho and Tsonga-speakers of the Transvaal lowveld. It warns against the generalized formulation of sacrifice as a moralistic act and contemplates the possibility that sacrifice may well be motivated by more imediate and materialistic concerns. My analysis is based on fieldwork I have conducted, for intermittent periods over past four years, in the lowveld village of Green Valley. Green Valley has a population of approximately 20 000 people. It forms part of the Setlhare chiefdom and is situated in the Mapulaneng area of Lebowa.

My account is diachronic, but genealogical rather than historical. The aim is not to provide a comprehensive overview of process based on the chronology of events, but merely to highlight prominent cultural assumptions underlying the conceptions of sacrifice at different times [1]. Along with Cousins and Hussain (1984) I see the critical potential of the genelogical method as lying in its ability to trance symbolic connections between seemingly diverse phenomena. As such phenomena can be shown as not nearly as timeless and distinct as they appear. My analysis differs significantly from earlier functionalist and structuralist accounts of sacrifice in the lowveld (Junod 1966, Krige and Krige 1965, Monnig 1988, Hammond- Tooke 1981, de Heusch 1985). I do not merely focus on the performative aspects of offerings to the ancestors, but

incorporate reference to mythical and imagined sacrifices. As such I explore the wider meanings of sacrifice in cultural discourses. These discourses are located within changing local religious, socio-political and economic contexts.

Through time, I suggest, sacrifice has been emically conceived of as the exchange of blood and coins. The status of blood and coins as 'dominant symbols' and their convertability through sacrifice reflects upon the analogical association of body fluids and money. In Setswana madi, the indigenous term for 'blood', is also the word for money (Comaroff 1985:174). Such linguistic correspondence is absent in Northern Sotho. Madi refers exclusively to blood, and money is called tšhelete (derived from the Afrikaans geld). Yet a similarly rich condensation of overlapping meanings is apparent. As the ambiguous symbols of life and death blood and coins are very appropriate in the context of sacrifice. This is because sacrifice is believed to be a zero sum game. Only through the giving of life that new life can be attained. Life forces can be forged only through the shedding of life. Like buying and selling, sacrifice ballances the accounts of life and death.

Blood is perceived as both pure and impure. It is at once a life-giving substance and a symbol of death [2]. The perception that blood is synonamous with life itself stems from the recogition that no human or animal can live without blood. Moreover, blood is an important metaphor for procreation and descent. In conversational Northern Sotho the word madi also denotes semen [3]. As semen, pure and white male blood is passed down successive generations through sexual intercourse. The viscosity of blood and its motions within the body is thus perceived as central to the notion of health. However, blood also connotes images of heat, danger and slaughter. Illness is often expressed as 'hot' or 'black' blood (madi a go fiša or madi a mantšho). The unmoderated flow of hot blood is induced by sexual intercouse with impure women. The blood of women; polluted by menstruation, birth, abortion, or sexual liasons with other men; is seen as extremely contaminating [4]. Even general misfortune (bati) may be expressed as boiling blood (madi a go bela). Black blood is stagnant and does not circulate through the body.

Money is as ambiguous as blood. It embodies both moral and subversive qualities (Bloch and Parry 1989). Money sustains life. It is with money that commodities and the essentials of living are acquired. As bridewealth, money establishes marriage unions and legitimizes the affiliation of children to new domestic units. The public donation of coins at funerals, weddings and birthdays dramatizes generosity and concern. Yet money is viewed as dangerous when it is the basis of strife in local relations. This is evident in the meaning of money as a symbol in dreams. Whilst dreams of green R10 notes indicate fortune, bronze and silver coins foretell misfortune and death. I was told: 'Money is the cause of deaths. Even wars are caused by money'. Like blood, the circulation of money can be unregulated and uncontrolled. 'Here its passage is perceived as intense and destructive, bearing the polluted substance of persons unknown' (Comaroff 1985:174). Witches are believed to place muti (magical medicines) on money to kill its new owner or to cause her to become barren. For this reason diviners cool the money they receive by sprinkling ash on it. Prostitutes are thought to place 'hot' coins under their tongue during sexual intercourse. This causes men's genitals to develop sores.

Within the framework of this underlying symbolic structure, the nature of sacrifice in Green Valley have continuously changed. Sacrifices prevailing during an early period of subsistence agriculture have differred notably from those of subsequent years when villagers have relied upon migrant labour for their livelihood.

Until the late 1940s sacrifices were regularly made to genealogical ancestors (badimo) and to the ancestors of rainmakers and chiefs. Descendants offerred coins and also items such as cloth, beer, homes and domestic animals to their ancestors. These sacrifices were made in exchange for the prior gift of blood from paternal ancestors. They also aimed to ensure health, fertility and good fortune. During rainmaking the flow of sacrificial exchanges were reversed. Narratives describe how members of the Setlhare chiefdom offerred bodily fluids and blood to genealogically distant ancestors for rain as the source of wealth and fertility.

Early labour migrants from Green Valley, who worked on the Witwatersrand gold mines, said mine managers secretly offered silver coins to a mine snake. This was done to appease the snake, so it could prevent accidents and preserve the lives of workers.

Since the 1950s sacrifices were no longer aimed at procuring health and life. Sacrifice had become an illicit means to attain money and material wealth. Narratives describe how coin diggers, witches and ritual murderers offer human blood for coins. Men who dug for gold coins, allegedly buried in the lowveld during the Anglo-Boer war, were said to sprinkle childrens' blood on the soil to pacify the ghostly guardians of these coins. In their quest for wealth, witches are imagined keep a mamlambo snake. These witches are said to kill their children and kin in exchange for the silver coins it brings. More recently, local businessmen have been accused of ritual murder and blood sucking. The suspects allegedly use their victims' body parts and blood to attract customers to their stores; feed their snakes; or to sell it to government and pharmacies for cash. These myths of the sacrifice of blood for coins reflect on the destructive effects of the accumulation of money.

Formulas of 'communion', 'sacrilization' and 'salvation' do not illuminate these sacrifices. This is particularly evident in the case of sacrifices of the latter period which stand in stark contrast to the pious acts of religious observance. In Green Valley sacrifice can more fruitfully be viewed as attempt by individuals to manipulate cosmic forces for their personal benefit. Sacrifice form part of, what de Heusch (1985:214) has called, 'a metaphysical calculation of profit and loss'.

ANCESTORAL SACRIFICES, BLOOD AND RAIN

The Setlhare chiefdom was constituted after the Pulana chief Maripe and his followers defeated Swazi invaders at the battle of Mohololoholo in 1864 (Ziervogel 1954:195). As part of the Setlhare chiefdom Green Valley was scheduled for exclusive African occupation in terms of the 1913 Land Act. From this time until the late 1940s villagers were largely agriculturally self- sufficient. Annually households paid rent to agricultural officers for the right to reside, cultivate land, and let stock graze in Green Valley. The residential pattern was one of scattered homesteads. Fields were generally as large as households could cultivate and no stock limitations were imposed. Household survival

depended upon the cultivation of mealies, sorghum, millet, beans and mellons; and upon animal husbandry. Rural production fulfilled subsistence requirements and contributed towards rent. By selling one cow yearly households were able to pay for the grass and the dip of all other stock.

Agricultural yields depended upon the integrity of the household as a productive unit and upon good rain. During the 1930s larger households reportedly harvested up to 90 bags of mealies and 30 bags of sorghum and kept herds of over 150 cattle. Smaller, fragmented, households lacked productive capacity in cultivation and stock-keeping. They harvested less than 10 bags and kept fewer cattle. Variations in rainfall and pestilence also underlay the frailty of agriculture. During 1933, 1937, 1939 and 1941 mealie fields were decimated by drought, sefenefene (cutworms) and plaques of locusts. During 1939, which saw the worst of these droughts, maize surpluses were soon exhausted and people were forced to queue at the general dealer store in Acornhoek to buy rations. In a stampede by anxious buyers at the store a child was trampled to death.

For poorer households the impact of agricultural crisis was offset by labour migration. Migrants from Green Valley were initially employed by the Transvaal Gold Mining Company (TGMC) in Pilgrams's Rest. Migrants worked nine month contracts, travelled to Pilgram's Rest on foot, and earned no more than 50d per day (see Bonner and Shapiro 1993). To larger households labour migration was of secondary importance. Men from these households migrated as seldom as once every five years. Many became migrants solely to purchase clothes. Although men also attested contracts to work in the Witwatersrand mines in later years, migrant remittances had remained less important than agriculture.

Sacrifices prevailing during this period addressed the concerns for the integity of the family, unity of the chiefdom, and for favourable weather.

Dipheko: Sacrifices of the family (1930-1950)

The belief in the power of genealogical ancestors to effect the welfare of the living formed the basis of religious beliefs. The Ancestors are benevolent protectors who express continuous paternal concern for their descendants. However, when forgotten ancestors can withdraw their protective support and render their descendants vulnerable to witchcraft, misfortune, illness and death. Nazarene and Lutheran mission churches were established in Setlhare during the 1920s, but failed to attract many converts. Villagers often sent their children to mission schools, but very few attended church.

Blood symbolizes the genealogical relation between ancestors and descendants. It is believed one's body contains the actual blood of one's paternal ancestors. When referring to their grandchildren men use the phrase ke madi ya ka (this is my blood), whereas women will say ke madi a ngwana ka (this is my son's blood). Men saw male blood as pre-eminent in reproduction and described women's role as that of a mere container. Men likened reproduction to brick-making. Whilst the water, cement and sand comes from the man, the woman is the mould wherein the bricks are made. For

men menstruation attested to the inferiority of women's blood. 'The blood of a woman', I was told, 'only helps to mix the father's blood. Then it is discarded'. Severed relations with one's ancestors is manifested in hot or stagnant blood. Herbalists often aim to reconcile clients with their ancestors when treating disorders of blood. One herbalist calls out ancestral names to find out where the link has been severed when he consults the divination dice. He said clients cannot be healed unless the names of their real ancestors are called. He thus finds it difficult to treat illegitimate children [5].

Sacrifice was a crucial act of religious observance. It was mostly piacular and performed in situations of danger. The Kriges (1967:232) wrote: 'Above all the ancestors complain...by far the greatest proportion of religious rites are those performed in response to ancestoral complaints'. Likewise, residents of Green Valley said the ancestors constantly request loyalty and demand gifts. The ancestors directly reveal their wishes through dreams. People can also learn about these wishes from diviners. The divination dice may, for instance, indicate that misfortune is due to neglect of one's ancestors.

Ancestral sacrifices were called dipheko in Sotho and mhamba in Tsonga. Dipheko denotes anything prescribed by the ancestors. The word mhamba is also 'an overpowering conceptual category' (de Heusch 1985:66). Junod (1966:420) wrote that mhamba is 'any object, any act or person which is used to establish a link between ancestor-gods and their worshippers'. In Green Valley these terms designated objects acquired for the ancestors and the rituals of appeasement.

The ancestors can request any object which they used whilst they were alive. A woman recalled that her mother asked for bracelets which she was fond of wearing. Her father, who rode a bicycle and often carried a torch and an axe, demanded these shortly after he died. Objects old included headrests, saddles, walking sticks and sandles. The more standard requests were for cloth, dwellings and domestic animals. Ancestors commonly ask that ndumba (small rondawel-shaped, thatched-roof, homes) be built for them to dwell in [6]. The colour and sex of domestic animals were deemed important. Ancestors are known to be fond of white or spotted gray chickens and white goats. As elsewhere in Africa, the association of white with the ancestors possibly derives from the colour of semen and breast milk as life-giving fluids (Turner 1967). A person has to acquire a chicken or a goat of the opposite sex. Women acquire a he-goat or a cock, men a she-goat or hen. de Heusch explains this practice with reference to sexual complementarity. 'The symbolic conjunction of the sexes is essential to success in any field' (de Heusch 1985:71-2). These domestic animals were kept for the ancestors and were never slaughtered. In the case of natural death the animals should be replaced. Such acquisitions are informal and are not ritualized.

Households conducted dipheko rituals after members experienced misfortune, a new child was born, and the first crops of the new season were harvested. Sotho held the ritual in the centre of their yard where they sometimes built a shrine (gandzelo) from small wooden logs (Hammond-Tooke 1981:88). Shangaan households conducted the mhamba at the stem of a maroela tree. Here the tree symbolizes genealogical relations. The roots represent the ancestors and the branches the descendants. For daughters-in-law and illegitimate children, who were not descended from the household's ancestors, the dipheko was conducted outside the yard. For them reconciliation was sought at an

open, grassless, spot in the veld (sebatlabadimo), or at a dry tree stump. Rotten roots show the ancestor's inactivity and the withered branches indicate the descendant's predicament.

Ideally the rakgadi, as paternal aunt and beloveth daughter of the ancestors, officiated at the dipheko. Only in her absence could other elderly women officiate. The rakgadi would phasa (phahla in Tsonga: literally 'call') the ancestors. Household members had to remove their shoes, kneel and face southward. This was done because the ancestors walked bare footed and originated from the south. The officiant knelt, slowly clapped her hands to greet (lošа) the ancestors, and called out their names in order of seniority. This was followed by a short invocation, such as, 'Let there be life! Let there be no sickness and misfortune!' or merely; 'We ask your blessing!'. The officiant then sipped sorghum beer to which chicken blood was sometimes added. She spat the beer on all household members and poured a liabation of beer on the shrine or at the tree roots. This was done to cool and calm the ancestors. During dipheko rituals of chiefly household the children of chief Setlhare's twelve wives knelt in a long line. The chief's elder sister would call out: 'Here is Setlhare with all his children. Here is his big nation'.

Only in times of severe and persistent misfortune did dipheko rituals involve the wider family. On such occassions all the households descended from a common paternal ancestor (usually the great grandfather) made a blood sacrifice at their ancestor's grave. All constituent households were expected to contribute maize meal and sorghum to the home of the eldest son (ramogôlo). Here the rakgadi brewed large quantities of beer. At sunrise family members assembled at the graveyard. One informant commented positively on the fact that all blood relatives would congregate. He said this enabled men to learn which women they were prohibited from marrying. Men cleaned the grave, lit a fire and slaughtered the prescribed sacrificial animal (usually a cow, ox or bull). The animal's blood was then spilt at the head of the grave, behind the thombstone. It was explained: 'You are not allowed to eat the blood. You have to let it flow. The blood is for the ancestors'. At the same time the senior rakgadi sprinkled sorghum beer on the grave and on all attendants. Following this, she recited the family praise poem and said a short invocation. Although she called the name of only one ancestor, it was believed that he would inform all other ancestors. The following words were cited to me as an example: 'Forgive us you down ones! Protect us from accidents! Let us grow!' Attendants then consumed the beer and meat at the graveside. All meat bones were left, unbroken, at the head of the grave. At home the remaining meat was consumed, drums were beaten and dances danced.

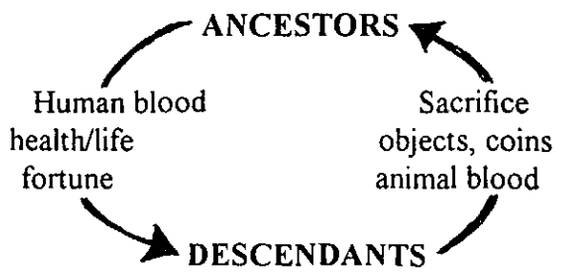
Coins featured prominently in all ancestral sacrifices. In Green Valley the relation between money and the ancestors were similar to the situation prevalent among the Korekore in Zimbabwe. Lan (1989:192) writes that although Korekore spirit-mediums avoided other Western commodities, they eagerly accept money. The money which is derived from the medium's practice is said to belong to the ancestors and cannot be used as personal wealth. Green Valley residents often acquired pennies and shillings for their ancestors. These were wrapped in white cloth and placed in a bowl inside the ndhumba. Coins were also placed on the ancestoral graves after the performance of the dipheko ritual. Although this practice was very common in the past, it was discontinued when communal graves were established. Elders feared that youngsters could steal the coins from the graves. The association between money and the

ancestors is also evident in the practice of football players who place bronze cents in their boots to prevent injuries. One player explained to me: 'We use the coins because the ancestors used it. We are people of the ancestors. We rely on them in all our deeds'.

Upon their return from the workplace, the rakgadi accompanied migrant workers to the gandzelo or the ndhumba. Here she would phasa to the ancestors and thank them for having protected the wage earner at work. The wage earner would then place a few coins in a bowl or on the ancestral graves. Unless this was done, it was believed, migrants could be predisposed to misfortune. Their earnings could be misused and they could unexpectedly be discharged from work. This rite was on a much smaller scale than the umsindleko ritual performed by Gcaleka migrants. Yet it dramatizes a similar concern. Migrant labour is interpreted in terms of the need to build a homestead and to fulfill one's obligations to the ancestors (McAllister 1980).

It is unclear whether the idea of 'communion' was central to ancestral sacrifices. These offerings certainly demonstrated loyalty and ensured that people stood in a proper relation to their ancestors. Yet they also affirmed the essential difference between people and spiritual beings.

Gifts were made with the explicit expectation of return. They were seen as a means of persuading the ancestors to relieve one from illness, infertility and misfortune. Numerous instances were cited of people who were healed after they appeased the ancestors through sacrifice. In one case a man's wife and children became seriously ill. When he refused to comply with a diviner's instruction that he acquire a pound of cloth, he too was struck down by illness. The illness abated when he purchased the cloth and placed it in the ndhumba. In fact these exchanges were seen as balanced in favour of descendants. They are illustrated in the diagram below:



Informants appreciated the significance of these gifts as symbolic reminders of the ancestor's prior gift of blood. A man said that offerings were primarily a means of communication. 'For me the communication is like a radio. There are no wires connecting the two, but the ancestors can receive the message.' The manipulative aspects of ancestral sacrifices is also evident in the phenomenon of substitution. Junod observed that Shangaan offerings seldom imply ostentatious expense and that the ancestors' share is always minimal. For instance, a fragment of an old skin can substitute for the prescribed offering of an ox (Junod 1966:414). Informants concurred with these observations. They said if the ancestors asked for a cow it was acceptable to

slaughter three chickens or a mere goat. I was told one merely had to tell the ancestors that you were unable to afford what they requested.

Sacrifices of the Polity: Warfare and Rainmaking (1930-1956)

In warfare and rainmaking the logic of ancestral sacrifices were reversed. Items of value were not exchanged for life. Blood and fat, the essence of life itself, was offerred for land and rain. Warfare and rainmaking were sacrifices of the polity. The earth and rain are not household property, but are sources of general prosperity. Gluckman comments on the mystical and secular value of the earth in Africa, when he writes:

> The earth, undivided, as the basis of society, thus comes to symbolize not individual prosperity, fertility and good fortune; but the general prosperity, fertility and good fortune on which individual life depends (Gluckman 1960:16).

Likewise, rain never falls on one plot. Rain is the essence of general well-being.

It is through warrior's blood, shed in battle, that Pulana chiefdoms claim ownership of the land they occupy. Chief Maripe and his subjects secured access to land in the lowveld by defeating Swazi invaders at the battle of Moholoholo. Elders were adamant that the South African government recognized chief Setlhare's right to the land because he and a number of his followers left for Europe to participate in the first World War. In local discourse land acquired through the shedding of human blood is inalienable. Ritchken notes that the Pulana delegation to the Uys Commission, investigating local border disputes in 1977, shunned documentary evidence as irrelevant. Instead, they referred to the history of Maripe. 'The claim to land was based on an ideology which asserted that ownership of land came only through conquest and the shedding of blood...the ideology linked land as the divine authority of the ancestors' (Ritchken 1992:23).

Rainmaking rituals had been conducted in Setlhare since the 19th century. The first rainmakers were Ngwa na Poto and her husband Mphau Sekgobela. Ngwa na Poto was a herbalist and a relative of the rain-queen Modjadji. Her father was reported to be a prominent Lobedu paramount chief. The couple arrived in Green Valley during a time of famine. After they successfully made rain, chief Maripe installed them as chiefly rainmakers. In Setlhare this position became hereditary. The couple were succeeded by their sons Makonti and Mmaphuele, and by their grandson Nkhubedu.

Elderly informants remembered the annual rainmaking rites organized by chiefs Setlhare (1908-1948) and Mabelane (1948- 1956). The chiefs summoned the rainmakers to the mošate (royal kraal) before the ploughing season commenced. Headmen then collected donations in cash, crops and livestock from all subjects for the rainmakers. Following this, delegates were sent to Modjadji- the famous Lobedu rain-queen (see Krige and Krige 1965). They pleaded with Modjadji for rain and to collect rain muti from her in a goat's horn. Upon their return they handed the muti to the rainmakers. At a secluded spot the rainmakers mixed the muti in a large earthen pot with ingredients kept in a hollow tree stump. At the mošate the rainmakers made

public invocations to the ancestors of the Setlhare chiefs and queen Modjadji. Sungs sung during rainmaking refer explicitly to the rain-queen:

Modjadji kgoši ya	Modjadji chief of women
mosadi we;	hear us;
pula a ene	let it rain
re je mototele marotse.	so we can ear squash and pumpkins.
Bo pampamo ke go	So her people can fall
wela madibeng.	into the water.
Go phapamala ke go	To float is to
tseba go thala, go thuntha.	know how to swim, to swim.

One man described these rites as 'a sort of phasa for the whole chiefdom'. He emphasized that the collections were not for the rainmakers themselves, but were gifts to their ancestors. Even early Christian converts attended the rainmaking rites. An elderly member of the Nazarene church said whilst others danced the Christians prayed to God for rain.

The next day virgin girls and boys assembled at the mošate. They were given rain muti and were led by the rainmakers to the Klaserie river where they had to sleep overnight. Early the next morning they entered the river and poured the muti into the water. The children also placed mmilo tree leaves, smeared with muti, on the outskirts of the village. Few elderly people doubted the efficacy of rainmaking. It reportedly rained within hours after the Sekgobela rainmakers promised the chief there would be rain. Such rain was never accompanied by thunder.

Although the ingredients of the rain muti remained a closely guarded secret, many informants speculated that it contained human fat and blood [7]. A common belief is that the muti was obtained by laying out the corpses of deceased people on a platform to decay. Receptacles were placed underneath to collect the body fluids. Some recalled that, as children, parents warned them not to venture too far from home. If they disobeyed they could be killed for rain. A teacher 'read somewhere' that rainmakers killed the sons of neighbouring chiefs to strengthen their muti. This, he said, is why great care was taken to guard a chief's sons. Another man's father told him the rain-queen sacrificed young girls. He also heard that at a secret gorge in the Namagadi mountains Shangaan rainmakers killed children, tossed their fat into the sky, and placed it into a huge earthen pot. The chief and old women then stirred the pot to make rain. An avid newspaper reader recalled seeing a photograph of an American rainmaker in the press during the 1960s. At the same time he read of American vampires who lived in evacuated buildings, pierced their victims with their long nails and sucked their blood. He believes that these stories were somehow connected.

Nobody could vouch that rain muti really contained human fat and blood. 'These are only stories', I was told. Ethnographic literature, nonetheless, conveys a similar idea. Junod (1966:403) notes that 'long ago' Shangaan people abandoned a young man, alive, in a sacred forest in instances of severe drought. The Kriges write that the Lobedu sometimes sacrificed a man to revitalize the rain medicine. They claim to have seen Modjadji's rain pots and report that its 'chief ingredient..is the skin of the deceased chief and of important councillors who are her close relatives' (Krige and Krige

1947:274). Monnig (1988:156) records Pedi informants as saying that their rain-pots contained, amongst other things, parts of a human child (Monnig 1988:156). Alternatively, de Heusch suggests human surrogates were sacrificed. During drought Shangaan and Lobedu chiefs sacrificed a black ram to their ancestors. This sheep symbolized the chief and his army. Amongst the Lobedu, he argues, the cooling of the earth by the black ram's chyme is a way of delaying ritual regicide (de Heusch 1985:107).

Narratives of warfare and rainmaking attest to blood's ambiguity. They capture its generative power, but also point to the dangerous potential of its uncontrolled circulation. Blood shed in battle justified land claims. The use of human blood and fat by chiefly rainmakers bestowed fertility upon the soil. Yet the blood shed in murder polluted the earth and caused drought. The illegitimate use of blood and fat by witches prevented rain. An elderly informant blamed the severe drought of 1992 on senseless killings. Unlike the killings by warriors at Moholoholo, he said, recent killings on the Witwatersrand and in the lowveld were motivated by pure hatred.

> If many people die it won't rain. Fighting and murder makes the soil burn. The soil will be fisa (hot)...If you murder somebody you will also die. Today there is no rain..The soil of Alexandra [in Johannesburg] and Brooklyn [in Mapulaneng] is red and dirty. It drank from the blood of black people.

In the past people blamed herbalists, who were envious of the chiefly rainmakers, for the failure of rainmaking. They allegedly placed sibeka muti in the veld to drive away the dark rain clouds. The drought of 1939 was blamed on a man from Phalaborwa. He confessed to being a rain stopper after he was threatened with death. He reportedly led his accusers to a secluded place and showed them his sibeka. At the spot a grass broom swung from a tree and the broken pieces of an earthen pot lay on the ground. All grass and shrubs around the circumference of the tree had dried up. During the 1940s another man was accused of having stolen the rain muti from Mmaphuele Sekgobela and of using it to stop the rain. He reportedly also nailed human skin to a rock and pinned a white cloth, smeared with human blood, to a tree.

The distinction between legitimate and illegitimate shedding of blood is intimately related to conceptions of the power of chiefs and the ancestors. Lan (1985:152) argues that, amongst the Korekore; 'The crimes of ordinary people pollute the earth. The crimes of chiefs purify it.' What matters is whether killing is carried out with the approval of the ancestors [8].

THE OWNER OF THE MINES AND THE SACRIFICES OF WHITES (1930-70)

Ideas of sacrifice were not only pertinent to Setlhare and labour- sending areas. Sacrifice formed an important part of the symbolic repertoire by means of which migrants accounted for their bewildering employment experiences. This was evident among the men who were employed, since the late 1930s, on the gold mines of the Witwatersrand (East Geduld, Grootvlei, Vlakfontein, City Deep, Crown and State Mine No. 4).

Whereas the Chamber of Mines had previously recruited mainly Mozambican workers, greater attention began to be focused on the Transvaal as a labour-supplying area. In 1936 22 260 African workers from the Transvaal were employed by the Native Recruiting Corporation (NRC) to work on the mines (Wilson 1972:6). In the lowveld NRC offices were established in Acornhoek and Bushbuckridge. Initially men worked four-month Assistant Volunteer Service contracts, but were entitled to attest nine-month contracts thereafter. Recruitment practices were very coercive. More than half of the worker's wages were subject to compulsory deferral. Workers were paid these at the NRC offices upon presenting a voucher stating that they had completed their contracts. Men who broke contracts forfeited their wages and risked imprisonment. On the mines men faced spartan and dangerous conditions. Older compounds did not have dining rooms nor beds. Men ate outside and slept on concrete bunks (Wilson 1972:10). Danger and death are prominent themes in the narratives of former underground mine workers (see Moodie 1983). They recounted many experiences of accidents or near accidents. Stories relay how boiling water filled mine shafts drowning the workers inside, and how hundreds of miners died in rock falls.

Former miners believed that a mystical, snakelike being, is the true owner of the earth's wealth. Miners called the mine snake mong wa mmaene (owner/boss of the mine). The snake is described as residing in the rivers deep underground, as half-human, half- animal and as capable of metamorphosis. In its primary form mong wa mmaene is an awesome snake, but it may appear as a man dressed in a beautiful suit. Mong wa mmaene is believed to be angered by the violation of the earth by mining companies. It expresses its warth by causing accidents to prevent miners from extracting gold ore. Mong wa mmaene can kill hundreds of workers by causing rock falls. It can also make shafts collapse, destroy rails, cut the underground lift to pieces, and send bursts of muddy water to flood the mine. Moreover, the snake is said to give rocks mbhawula (brazier) thereby causing them to burn and emit poisonous carbon monoxide gasses.

Miners said the mining companies can only extract gold ore safely when management sacrificed to the snake. Informants insisted that mong wa mmaene has never been encountered by African miners and that, like a god (sedimo), it transcends ordinary human perception. Yet they presumed that management had intimate knowledge of the snake and its secrets. After new mine shafts were sunk managers reportedly met the snake at the undergound rivers and negotiated for a share of its treasure. From then on, managers periodically appeased mong wa mmaene with offers of coins. These sacrifices were conducted in total secrecy. Management entered the mine at midnight or on Christmas day when it was completely deserted. I was told: 'They never do these things publically. The children should never see what they are doing'. These parties allegedly comprised the general manager, geological surveyor, engineer, mine captains and two white women. They were dressed in white overalls, white gumboots and helmets. Underground, the white women undressed and scattered silver coins in the mine shafts. These coins were new and came directly from the mint. By the next day the coins would have disappeared. Informants recognized that the coins were of little value, but insisted that they were sufficient to appease the snake. The word go loba was used to denote these offerings. Roughly translated it means 'to pay allegiance' as

when subjects pay tribute to a chief, or when descendants acquire a goat for the ancestors. 'The sedimo only wants people to honour it'.

Management is described as constantly vigilant and on the lookout for signs that mong wa mmaene is restless and desires offerings. These signs are uncanny and may include the appearance, underground, of an ox, a hare, a dove, or a small boy. Powerful hot air, blowing from the mine, also indicates the appropriate time for sacrifices. For this reason, I was told, managers inspect the mine before work commences. When mine shafts are filled with muddy water, the water would only recede once management conducts the necessary offering.

Not only migrant mineworkers told stories of sacrifices to mythical snakes. A teacher said the coins white tourists thrown into the Blyde River potholes for luck were really offerings to a powerful water snake. Similar sacrifices were made at the mountain passes, tunnels and railway bridges. After many rock falls and motor vehicle accidents occurred at the Kowyn's pass, Transvaal Provincial Administration officials assembled there. After they roasted meat, their prophets communicated with the snake and gave it a drum of silver coins. Since then no futher rock falls occurred. A church leader mentioned that trains always stop at a rail bridge near Pietersburg and only proceed after the driver has scattered coins into the river.

The stories of mong wa mmaene resemble the well-known Bolivian myth that Tio- the devil- controls the fertility of the tin mines. Tio's image is carved in tin and set in mine entrances and llamas are sacrificed for him. When improperly compensated for his gifts of ore Tio claims miners' lives. Yet Tio enables miners, who enter into a secret pact with him, to enrich themselves. As this myth has been subject to intensive interpretation it can provide useful analytical comparisons.

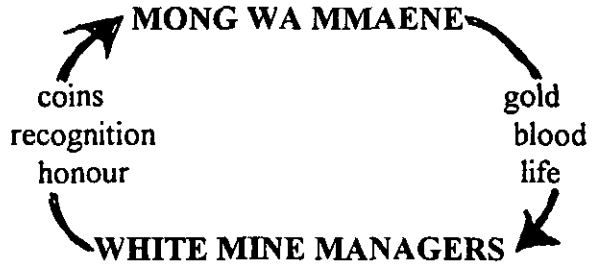
Taussig (1980) argues that the Bolivian myth is an indigenous reflection on the evils of proletarianization, commodification, and the power of the new capitalist economy. For him Tio symbolically mediates between the former peasant economy and capitalism. The peasant economy is characterized by production for use, renewal of nature's cycles, and uninterrupted reciprocity between peasants and supernatural sources of fertility. This is very different from capitalist exploitation of non-renewable resources in mining.

Taussig's account has been criticized for overemphasizing the role of capitalism in shaping this myth. Other Andean scholars insist that the supernatural dangers of mining stems from the broader cultural logic in which it is embedded, rather than commodification. Nash (1979) argues that this belief forms part of a pre-Columbian tradition in which Tio is a capricious figure who controls fortune. Harris (1989) notes that peasants also owe their riches to pacts with devils. Harris (1989) and Gose (1986) show that peasants ritually restore the fertility of fields and flocks in a similar manner as miners ensure the fertility of mines. The mine's minerals are also thought to grow. Sallnow (1989) views sacrifices at the mines as a variant of blood sacrifice in agricultural rituals. The Andes has long been incorporated into a market economy and there are no notions of supernatural danger in other occupations. Therefore, death at the hands of spirits does not comment on commodification per se. He rather sees minging's dangers in terms of the meaning of precious metals. These are supreme

commodities which should flow upward from local communities to the state. The individualistic appropriation of ore disrupts this flow.

Likewise, I would argue, the belief in mong wa mmaene cannot be explained as an intellectual response to capitalism. This myth has important continuities with rural beliefs. The mine snake has similar attributes to mmamokebe and nzonzo. These supernatural water snakes are common themes in lowveld folklore. Like mong wa mmaene they are the dangerous guardians of water- the basic source of wealth in agricultural areas. Mmamokebe is responsible for storms. Nzonzo abducts people and drags them underwater. If the necessary sacrifices are made to nzonzo its captives will emerge from the water as powerful healers. They will be fully equipped with divination bones, drums and herbs. Unlike the water snakes, who are feminine, the mine snake is masculine. The mythical sacrifices of whites also resemble ancestral rituals. The logic of these sacrifices are projected onto management's actions. In both types of sacrifice the officiants are women. White women offer coins to the snake, whilst the rakgadi officiates at ancestral rituals. The white costumes worn by managenment also resonates with the association of this colour with the ancestors. Moreover, former miners explicitly used the word phasa to describe the way whites appease the snake.

The flow of exchange in the sacrifices of whites, illustrated in the diagram below, is roughly similar to those of ancestral rituals.



In both rituals coins are offerred for blood and life. Informants stated that if the mine snake is not appeased it would prevent miners from extracting gold ore. Yet in their narratives the warth of mong wa mmaene is most evident in misfortune, disasters and the loss of life. 'The bosses make offers to prevent injuries', I was told. The sacrificial exchange is also clearly balanced in favour of humans.

There is little evidence of exploitative collaboration between management and the snake against African workers. Management's motives in making these sacrifices was often seen in terms of paternalistic concern for their workers. Some informants stated that mong wa mmaene is solely concerned in protecting its gold and does not segregate between black and white workers. Others thought that, since the snake only demands sacrifices from whites, it may well favour African workers. They mentioned that rock falls sometimes occurred because the company underpaid workers and thereby angered the snake. Other stories relay how mong wa mmaene abducts workers who are ill treated by management. The snake hypnotizes them and drags them off to abondoned mine shafts where it feeds them mud and water. When these workers eventually emerge a large amount, such as R50 000, will be etched on their chest and back. After they have recovered in hospital, management has to discharge the workers and pay

them the exact amount in cash. If this is not done the snake may destroy the entire mine. Such stories resonate with naratives of nzonzo who captures villagers and trains them as healers [9].

RELOCATION, CHRISTIANITY AND ILLICIT SACRIFICE

Against the backdrop of drastic social change since the 1940s the meaning of sacrifice was transformed. Population relocations and the implementation of agricultural 'betterment' destroyed the last remnants of subsistence farming. Villagers came to depend entirely upon money for their livelihood. Conversion to Christianity undermined the legitimacy of ancestoral rituals and brought an end to rainmaking. In this new context all forms of sacrifice were viewed as illicit. Coins were no longer offered for blood. Rather, it was blood that was sacrificed for coins.

In 1948 the Setlhare chiefdom was incorporated into the Bushbuckridge Trust Land. As such the area became the reception site for hundreds of displaced households. The flow of Africans onto Trust Land began with the afforestation of agricultural land toward the west. It was stimulated by legislative measures restricting the numbers of tenants and squatters on white-owned farms and by the mechanization of production operations on these farms (Harries 1989:104). These relocations placed great stress on agricultural resources. Moreover, in 1951 a major disease epizootic killed off large numbers of cattle. During the 1950s Bantu Authorities were introduced and the Setlhare chiefdom became a Tribal Authority under the surveillance of the Bushbuckridge magistrate. To accommodate incomming households agricultural officers implemented a 'betterment' scheme in Green Valley. In terms of the scheme to land was sud-divided into residential locations, arable fields and grazing camps. In 1955 three locations were established and fields were limited to a morgen in size. On these reduced fields few households could harvest more than six bags of mealies. In 1960 five additional locations were marked out and stock limitations of ten cattle per household were imposed. This scheme destroyed subsistence agriculture. All households lost the fields they had previously cultivated. These processes were entrenched when Green Valley was incorporated into Lebowa in 1973. Migrant labour had become indispensable to household survival. Men now worked 12 month contracts and mainly worked on the Witwatersrand and in Pretoria.

Since the 1940s returning migrants established numerous Zionist and Apostolic churches in Green Valley. By 1991 most village adults were nominally Christian. More than 3 000 were members of two congregations of the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) and more than 1 000 belonged to 14 Apostolic churches [10]. These churches were popular due to their African leadership, 'this worldly' orientation, and their emphasis upon healing. Despite their tollerance of traditions such as initiation, bridewealth, polygyny and the belief in witchcraft; these churches have strongly disapproved of sacrifice. A preacher said sacrifice was necessary only in the times of the Old Testament. This is because, in the ultimate sacrifice, Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins [11]. He referred to Romans 15: 8 and 9:

> But God demonstrates His love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from warth through Him.

To justify his claim that contemporary sacrifices are evil, he cited Corinthians 10:20:

> Rather that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowsip with demons.

Ministers have prohibited church members from sacrificing to their ancestors. In 1956 Sekganyane, a ZCC member, succeeded Mabalane as chief. Sekganyane discontinued rainmaking and organized prayer days for rain at the mosate instead. Christian mpogo (all night prayer) replaced dipheko rituals. Prophets may call on congregations to pray at the home of distressed members. During the mpogo members of the congregation sing hymns, sprinkle the family with holy water and pray for their health. Sometimes ministers ask attendants to pray loudly for the family to be reconciled with their ancestors. In the mornings families slaughter chickens or a goat and may even distribute beer to non- Christian family members. An informant explained: 'Others say this is for the ancestors, but they are wrong. It is only for the people to eat'.

Christian doctrine had a deep impact on ritual practice. A few elders resented the disappearance of rainmaking. Youngsters, however, described the Sekgobela rainmakers as frauds. They also doubted that the drought of 1992 resulted from the shedding of human blood. Despite the daily killings on the Witwatersrand and in Natal, I was told, it rained much more in these areas than in the lowveld. Some households have continued to phasa privately, but family dipheko had largely disappeared. During fieldwork the only family dipheko occurred in 1992, prior to the installation of chief Nkotobola. Members of the royal family slaughtered a cow at the chiefly graves near the Moholoholo mountain. Commoners said it was difficult to assemble all family members and too expensive to purchase the sacrificial animals.

The uses of money has been a central focus of Zionist and Apostolic moral concern. This is not unlike the way labour migration was previously subject to concerns with the ancestors and the household. Zionists approve of the honest acquisition of money and greatly value higher income and upward mobility (Kiernan 1988:457). Ideally money should be used to support one's dependants and surplus earnings circulated to the church and those in greatest need. Comaroff (1985) contends that in giving Tshidi Zionists invert money's usual role in capitalist society. Giving redirects the flow of coins to the impoverished and 'reverses the loss of self associated with wage labour' (Comaroff 1985:236). The Christian morality of money is veryy similar to the ideals exposed by some young Comrades. Whilst discussing the merits of Communism with an ANC activist, my field assistant drew direct paralells between Communism and Zionism. He said the slogan 'From everyone according to his ability, for everyone according to his need' accords with the church's teachings which require believers to share their money and posessions. Kiernan (1988:464) asserts that Zulu Zionists ritually transform money into an instrument serving its own organizational needs. Money builds preserves, emphasizes, and safeguard the boundaries of the Zionist order. The act of giving, he argues, expresses: an individual's dependence on the congregation; acknowledgement of the congregation's divinely approved powers; a

member's relative worth; the entitlement of ministers to office; and demonstrates a congregation's spiritual vitality. These values are dramatized during church collections- called mogau (grace). The coins collected at one ZCC congregation often weigh ten kilograms.

Money acquired in the absence of hard work is regarded as dangerous and destructive. The use of money for personal enrichment is, similarly, regarded as immoral. Most churches strictly prohibit the spending of money on liquor and tobacco. The greed for money is often seen as the cause of strife, murder and bloodshed. Many informants referred to Acts 1 which describes how Judas betrayed Jesus for 30 silver coins, purchased a field with his wages of inequity, but eventually committed suicide. His entrails gushed out over the field and it became known as Akel Dada, Field of Blood.

Myths which arose since the 1940s portray sacrifice as illicit. They reflect upon the destruction which results from the greed for money. These myths present a transformation of narratives about rainmaking. In the same way as human blood was sacrificed for rain, these myths portray sacrificers who offer blood to ghosts and snakes for money. Yet, unlike rain which is the source of general prosperity, the money obtained is put to purely selfish ends. This transformation is evident in the changing content of stories about mong wa mmaene. In recent stories managers do not offer coins to the mine snake to preserve the lives of their workers, but sacrifice worker's lives for gold. One informant said workers have to die before gold can be extracted from a new mine. Else only water will flow from the ground. Likewise, deaths at construction sites are interpreted as a sacrifice to ensure the strength of buildings. Men reportedly died during the building of the Mapulaneng College, the Zoeknog dam and the rail bridges at Klaserie and Hoedspruit. For this reason many parents warn their sons not to seek employment at construction sites.

Digging Kruger's Coins with Blood (1948-1980)

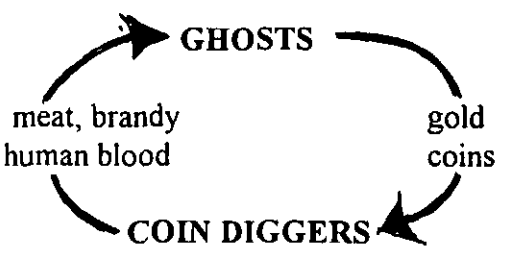
One sacrificial myth pertains to men's attempts to excavate treasure from the lowveld soil. It is a local variant of the well-known South African legend of the missing Kruger millions.

Reitz (1931), who served as a boer colonel during the Anglo- boer war of 1899-1902, provides an authoritative account of this legend. He writes that during the first year of the war the Transvaal govenment worked all the Witwatersrand gold mines for its own profit and sent the gold thus recovered to Pretoria. On the approach of British troops, President Kruger left Pretoria to set up a new capital in Machadodorp. Rumours spread that he had taken the gold with him. Boer soldiers believed that in Machadodorp long rows of covered trucks, guarded by armed sentries, were stacked with gold. As a British army approached Machadodorp, men transshipped boxes from the trucks onto mule wagons which they drove off into the dark. It was thought that this was gold taken for storage out of harms way. According to rumours some gold was cached in the lowveld, whilst the remaining gold followed Kruger to Delgoa Bay from where he set off for the Netherlands.

Informants eagerly spoke of the Kruger millions. They said thousands of Boer troops sought to transport the gold to Delgoa Bay by ox-drawn wagons. However, their attempt was unsuccessful. As the gold proved too heavy it was off loaded and buried along the way. The boer soldiers allegedly buried humans, horses and dogs with the millions. This was done so their ghosts (sepôkô) could protect the gold. The soldiers also drew maps to enable their survivors to locate the treasure. Indeed, it is believed that the soldiers passed through Green Valley and buried some gold nearby. Treasure is also thought to be concealed at the sites of deserted homes and graves. This is because in the past wealthy people buried their savings near their homes. Such treasure is believed to include pennies and shillings, but also boxes of diamonds and gold. This treasure too is guarded by ghosts of the deceased.

The coins of Kruger and other deceased is seen as polluted and dangerous [12]. An Apostolic prophet warned me never to take money from the ground as it could cause the death of my family members. Ghosts who guard the coins are said to frighten treasure seekers, drive them insane, and shift the coins underground. When diggers near the coins they will see cats, horses, lions and a burning fire. They may also hear voices and dogs barking. Whites, policemen and trains will emerge from the ground and chase them. One man reportedly dug for coins near Acornhoek, but was sacred. He fled leaving his spades, shovels and pick behind. An informant told me that, whilst he worked in Pretoria during the 1950s, he dug for coins with work mates. As they dug they were blinded by a huge sandstorm. Suddenly they felt dizzy and tired. Policemen then appeared, handcuffed them, and escourted them to a small building where they were told to sleep for the night. They next morning they found themselves lying in the veld. The police were a mere illusion. Because of this experience he abandoned digging for coins.

In Green Valley many men have braved these obstacles to dig for Kruger's coins. As in the offerings of mine managers to mong wa mmaene, coin diggers ritually pacify the ghosts. At the site men are said to roast meat, pour KWV brandy and scatter coins. Yet informants insisted that the ghosts can only be appeased with human blood. This is because the gold is preserved by the blood of those killed to guard it. By washing the coins in blood, fortune seekers ensured that the coins do not trouble them at home. In these sacrifices, illustrated below, greedy diggers exchange human blood for coins.



Villagers have been very suspicious of those who have dug in Green Valley's soil. The most well-known of these men was Moswang who came to Green Valley in 1948 after he was allegedly chased away from Phalaborwa on account of rain stopping. After a diviner showed Moswang where the coins lay buried, he recruited local men, formed a gang, and began digging. Moswang's gang always dug secretly, late at night. Once

Moswang told someone they sprinkled the blood of black chickens on the spot to prevent the money from shifting. People interpreted this statement as allegorical and rumours soon spread that he had killed a dark-skinned boy. Later the gang were suspected of abducting villagers in disguise as ZCC members. One evening they arrived at the home of a ZCC minister and requested him to pray for a sick person. The minister accompanied them to a deserted spot where they asked him to board a combi. However, the minister resisted and fled. Eventually Green Valley's forestry workers confronted Moswang's gang whilst they dug, apprehended them, and took them to the police station. Although the police released Moswang, chief Sekganyane expelled him from the Setlhare chiefdom.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s men have continued to dig for coins in Green Valley. A cattle herder showed me six large holes in a communal grazing camp. Some holes were deeper than five meters and at least ten meters in circumference. He recalled that four different groups had dug these holes in search of Kruger's coins and the treasure buried by a wealthy herbalist who lived in the area prior to the 'betterment' removals. The men dug at night and posted guards to prevent local residents from coming nearby. These diggers were greatly feared. They reportedly used herbs and blood from an unknown source to dig the coins. The mother of one digger told her neighbours that he asked her for blood from her finger. She was petrified and thought he wanted to sacrifice her for the money. According to the cattle herder the only successful diggers were those who used metal detectors. They apparently buried the money in the shade of a maroela tree. However, the money shifted underground and could never again be found.

Witchcraft, Wealth and the Mamlambo (1960-1993)

In Green Valley there has been a long tradition of blaming unmerited misfortune on witchcraft (see Niehaus 1993). Witches are seen as thoroughly evil people who are motivated by envy and greed to harm their kin and neighbours. Witches are imagined to practice their craft through the use of muti, poisons (tshefu) and animal familiars (dithuri). Despite these continuities, important changes have occurred in witchcraft beliefs. Prior to 'betterment' it was common to blame misfortunes affecting the entire community (pestilence among cattle, crop failure, drought and quarrels) on witchcraft. Witches were imagined to employ the lion, owl, baboon, lightning bird (tladi), snake and cat as familiars. Since the 1960s it has been solely the misfortunes of individuals and households, notably disease and untimely deaths, that have been blamed on witchcraft. Witches no longer use the lion, owl and cat, but have employed new familiars such as the tokolose and mamlambo.

The symbolic constitution of the mamlambo most clearly expresses people's greed for wealth. When witches lust after fortune they purchase a mamlambo from herbalists in Durban. This alludes to the Nguni origin of the mamlambo. Whilst studies on Sotho and Tsonga-speakers do not refer to the mamlambo, it is described in ethnographic literature on Nguni-speakers (see Hammond-Tooke 1974, Hunter 1979 and McAllister 1985). Hunter (1979:286-7) writes that Pondo men acquire this familiar at the gold fields in the form of a hide charm. Later it changes into a snake and then into a

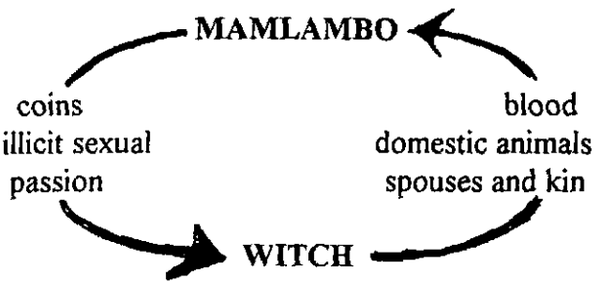
beautiful girl in European dress to whom the men make love. If migrants bring the mamlambo home their dependants may die.

Informants stated that both male and female witches could acquire the mamlambo. They obtain it in the form of a root, a twig, or as a fish-like creature in a bottle. The root or twig has peculiar qualities and glows at night. It is seemingly alive and cannot be cut. Once the mamlambo is brough home it grows into a large, slippery, hairy snake with eyes which shine like diamonds. Witches hide the snake in rivers or dams during daytime. At night, when they bring the mamlambo from its place of hiding, it changes into a white person woman to whom the witch makes love. The mamlambo also enriches witches. It may collect money for the witch, or merely predispose him or her to luck in financial matters.

The manifestations of the mamlambo as a snake and white lover symbolize the immorality of wealth. The association between snakes and sources of wealth has been alluded to. Mmamokebe and nzonzo live in water and mong wa mmaene is the owner of gold. To Christians snakes connote images of Satan. In a sermon of the Lutheran church the priest told members of the congregation that Satan assumed the form of a snake when he seduced Eve and Adam. He repeatedly warned that we should guard against 'the lies of the snake'. The image of the white lover is also meaningful. Whites may indeed be viewed as desirable lovers, but are seen as greedy and dangerous. Junod and Jaques (1935:78) list a well- known Tsonga proverb which states:

Mulungu a nga na saka,	White people have no kin
saka ra yena i mali.	Their kin is money.

The dangers of keeping a mamlambo clearly outweighed the hedonistic pleasures it brings. The mamlambo is described as posessive and greedy. Sexual intercourse with the mamlambo stands in stark contrasted to procreation. The mamlambo makes witches infertile and deprives them of offspring. It prevents single persons from marrying and chases the spouses of married people away from home. The mamlambo also requires constant sacrifices of chicken, beef and human blood. Should the witches fail to make these sacrifices the snake will kill their close relatives and even witches themselves. As in the case of coin diggers, these sacrificial exchanges are fundamentally inequivalent. They can be illustrated as follows:



Since the 1960s many people have been suspected of keeping the mamlambo. These have been those who are single and wealthy such as a taxi owner and a headman who owned many cattle. The suspects have also been people of whom many kin and

neighbours have died mysteriously. When two of his children died during 1966 a forestry worker accused his maternal grandfather of having murdered them to feed his mamlamobo. He described the old man as a nasty drunkard who often spoke nonsense about witchcraft. He also recalled having seen white people roaming around the old man's yard at night. The forestry worker consulted a witch- diviner who confirmed his suspicions. The diviner told him the witch had removed his children's intestines and sucked their blood for his snake. The forestry worker wanted to kill his maternal grandfather, but the chief persuaded him to accept cattle in compensation for these deaths.

During 1992 a man informed the Green Valley Civic Association that Mr.KS, his nephew, wanted to kill him. When questioned by Civic Association members Mr.KS confessed that he had unwittingly acquired a mamlambo from a local herbalist. Mr.KS was concerned that at the age of 35 he was still single. He was eager to marry and asked the herbalist for moratiso (love potion). However, the herbalist gave him a twig. Soon thereafter Mr.KS was plagued by nightmares. Some evenings he dreamt a silver snake emanated from the twig and came towards him. In other dreams he saw silver coins streaming in his direction from the corner of the room. Once Mr.KS awoke in the early hours of the morning and found a blond woman seated on the bed next to him. She touched him and told him she wanted to make love to him. However, Mr.KS claimed he was unable to do so as he was posessed by the ancestors. A few days later the woman again appeared. This time she told Mr.KS she needed the blood of his kin. She asked him to point his finger at his uncle so that his uncle would die. When Mr.KS told his uncle about this, his uncle was furious and reported him to the Civic Association. Civic Association members consulted another herbalist and asked him to remove the amlambo from Mr.KS's home. To do so the herbalist cut an incision into a goat's anus and placed the twig inside. He then threw the goat into a dam to drown. As such the goat was offerred to the mamlambo as a substitute for human blood.

Bloodsucking and Murder for Money (1950-1993)

Stories about maimai (ritual murderers) have featured prominently in local discourses about evil. Although these accounts are not strictly of sacrifice, the logic of sacrifice makes such stories intelligible and castes them in a new perspective.

Ngwa Xinangana ('from the small leg') was the most notorious ritual murderer of the past. During 1950s he and a white garage owner from Hoedspruit suspiciously drove around Green Valley's streets at night in a car with only one headlight. The mere sight of their vehicle caused villagers to flee. When two local women disappeared people blamed Ngwa Xinangana and the white man of having killed them. There was a broad consensus among residents that the motives of these men differred from those of the coin diggers. It was suggested that they killed at random or sold the flesh and blood of their victims. A housewife said she heard: 'They wanted only blood. They tied their victims upside down and pierced them so that they could bleed through the nostrils.' After the disappearance of these women Ngwa Xinangana and the white man were never again seen.

Stories of maimai had become very common during the 1980s. Between 1979 and 1990 nine ritual murders were alleged to have occurred in Green Valley. Those suspected of these killings were prosperous local businessmen. After someone reportedly uncovered a corpse in the fridge of a local storeowner, many residents boycotted his store and taxis. People also became suspicious of a mortuary owner when they learnt that his employees removed corpses from the scenes of motor vehicle accidents before the police could arrive. He was accused of hiring thugs to kill people so that his business could flourish and was expelled from the neighbouring village where he resided. The drowing of a seven-year-old boy and the mysterious disappearance of a five- year-old child was also blamed on ritual murder. During 1982 a wealthy local resident was killed after his domestic assistant mysteriously died in her room. The woman's relatives of claimed that her tounge and vagina had been cut and held her employer responsible. Their suspicions were confirmed by a witch-diviner who consulted a mirror oracle. The next day her brother stabbed her employer to death.

The accusations of ritual murder in Green Valley are comparable to the murders which occurred in Lesotho during the 1940s and those of Swaziland in the 1980s. Jones (1951) writes that the diretlo murders of Lesotho contained no element of sacrifice. They were committed 'for the purely material objectives of cutting from the body strips of flesh..[and the] making of certain magical compounds usually called protective medicines' (p.12) [14]. Jones (1951) asserts that persons in positions of authority, such as chiefs and headmen, used the potent ingredient of human flesh to satisfy political ambition. Evans (1989) suggests that the Swaziland killings were motivated by attempts to maintain prestige and increase commercial profit.

Green Valley residents believed that local businessmen used to body parts of their victims to manufacture letsoalo muti. They reportedly placed this muti in their stores to protect it against robbery and to attract customers. To be effective, I was told, the parts were cut from the victim whilst they were still alive:

> You must be screaming. As they cut you they'll ask you questions and you have to respond. When they cut your ear they will say 'Ear! I want a shop!'. Then you have to say 'Yes the ear will give you a shop'. When they cut your eye, they'll say 'Eye! I want a taxi business!' Then you have to say 'Yes the eye will work for you and your taxi business'. Only this makes the muti work.

During the 1990s the rumours of maimai has undergone an important change. Recent stories have closely resembled the earlier accounts of Ngwa Xinangana, and indeed of sacrifice. On five occassions African businessmen and whites from Hoedspruit have been suspected of abducting women and youngsters in vehicles under the pretense of offering them a lift. Like Ngwa Xinangana, I was told, the suspects solely extracted blood from their victims. At a secluded place they allegedly drained the blood with a mysterious machine- a complex item of modern technology.

These rumours began on February 1992. A man gave three women a lift in his bakkie from the Hoedspruit air force base to Aconhoek. The following morning the, reportedly bloodless, corpse of one woman was found near Green Valley. In August Mrs. LD, who resides in Buffelshoek, visited her relatives in Green Valley. On a Sunday afternoon her sisters accompanied her to a local store from where she boarded

CONCLUSIONS

By examining changing conceptions of sacrifice in the lowveld village of Green Valley this article has had two aims. First, to focus on the emic construction of sacrifice as the exchange of blood and coins. Second, I have aimed to show that sacrifices are motivated by materialistic attempts to maximize personal benefit rather than the quest for moral purity. In conclusion I briefly consider the expressive aspects of sacrifice.

Ancestral sacrifices and rainmaking provide apt comment on the life worlds of villagers during the agricultural era. The offers of coins, blood and other items were not 'gifts without strings' (Gregory 1980). They were made with the explicit expectation of return and were accompanied by specific requests for health, life and rain. The prevalence of substitution in these offers indicates that such sacrificial exchanges were balanced in favour of people. These sacrifices were aimed at enhancing the health and well-being of individuals. Yet they also dramatized the importance of the social collectivities such as the household, family and chiefdom, upon which individual life depends.

In the modern era, which is characterized by the dependence of individuals upon wage-labour, stories of illegitimate sacrifices also have an important expressive quality. In certain repects these stories idealize labour as the prime source of value. Comaroff has argued that in the context of physically threatening working conditions the association of blood and money is particularly plausible. 'Indeed the Tshidi notion of money would seem to parallel closely Marx's formulation of a commodity that feeds off the subsistence of workers' (Comaroff 1985:175). The stories of the destructive and futile sacrifices of coin diggers, witches and ritual murderers comdemn those who seek to attain wealth and money by exploiting fellow villagers. These sacrifices achieve their significance in the framework of Christian theological formulations. Bloch and Parry point to the medieval church's unease about money as represented in the merchant's profit and the usurer's interest. This is explained with reference to the idea that material production is the source of value. It is unclear whether the money lender laboured. 'The merchant apparently created nothing while the usurer earned money even as he slept' (Bloch and Parry 1989:3).

NOTES

1. See Foucault (1987) for a discussion of the difference between genealogical and historical method.

2. See Turner (1972:79-81) and Singelenberg (1990:519) for comparative accounts of blood's ambiguous meaning.

3. Semen is also known as matonya and botonya bokoto. These words are secret knowledge taught to boys during initiation. They may not be heard by women and uninitiated children.

4. See Ingstad's (1990) analysis of the concept meila in the Tswana context.

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