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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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169). A Xhosa dictionary, however, gives the term '*ubukhankata*' to mean 'guardianship' (Nabe et al. 1976: 111). This old *ikhankata* was chosen by virtue of her age, experience and knowledge of the steps involved. In Folokhwe, Nomfundo's FFBd, Nolele, took the role of directing female aspects of the rite. In Jotelo, the head *ikhankata* was Nontsikivana, the only sister of the *intonjane*'s father. Both were thus of the initiate's agnatic group.

The male leader was the initiate's father or, in his absence, an elder of her agnatic group. In Folokhwe, the male leader was Nothimba, Nomfundo's deceased father's brother. In Jotelo, the initiate's father, Nombindlele, took this role.

One or two girlfriends of the *intonjane* assisted the old *ikhankata* and supported the *intonjane* throughout her seclusion, cooking for her and seeing to her needs. These young girls were also called *amakhankata*.

In Folokhwe, the *intonjane* had two young *amakhankata* - Nombombose, of the Ngwevu clan, and Margie (clan unknown). In Jotelo, Naniswa, of the Gatyeni clan, came from Centani to spend the duration of the rite with her friend. The young *amakhankata* could be of any clan.

General participation refers to those persons who took part collectively in the event, listening, watching, responding, following or offering support (ibid: 132,

133). This would include the women of the agnatic group who encouraged the initiate through most of the rite with song; the men and women who attended *umngenandlini* and *umtshato*; and the boys and girls who supported the initiate through the long nights. Prior to *umtshato*, adult participants were all members of the agnatic cluster (Hammond-Tooke, 1985: 49). An open invitation was extended to all adults of the community to attend the wedding day, after which adult participation largely fell away.

Ndyamboti, in her role as both interpreter and informant, described these participants as being 'of the same clan', namely, the natal clan called Ngwevu. The same happened in Jotelo where the clan was Nyawuza. Use of the term 'clan' is deceptive, however, as it is a distant, abstract kinship concept useful, mostly, as an exogamy rule for marriage but, as Hammond-Tooke argues, delineating no forms of social grouping on the ground (ibid). Similarly, the term 'lineage' refers to a common genealogy (ibid) but is often too broad to reflect the on-the-ground reality. Perhaps, since *intonjane* was seen as a ritual which prepared young women for marriage, use of the term 'clan' was deliberate, articulating the exogamy rule in its appropriate context. In terms of the genealogies of participants, patterns of participation and clustering of groups, as revealed on video, Hammond-Tooke's 'agnatic cluster' or 'agnatic group' (ibid) is most accurately representative (and hence the term generally used here) of social relations found on the

ground.

Even though friends occasionally joined in if visiting, they were not regarded as 'belonging' in any appropriate manner and they were not be expected to demonstrate any sustained support for the initiate. For *umtshato*, the ritual climax, an open invitation was extended to men and women throughout the community.

Womenfolk of the agnatic cluster, whom Soga (1931:216) calls *aba-kapi* ('companions or those who accompany', from *ukukhapa* meaning 'to accompany'), gathered to support the initiate for about 15 to 20 minutes every dawn and dusk, until the end of *umtshato*. These woman arrived at the homestead to *tsholoza* (sing special women's initiation songs), walking in a small circle in the *inkundla* (courtyard) outside the cattlebyre or in procession between the byre and the seclusion hut.

In the evenings, young boys and girls from around the neighbourhood visited, spending the night keeping the *intonjane* and *amakhankata* company, having fun and, in some cases, enjoying limited sexual relations with each other.

Finally, there were those individuals who enjoyed a special relationship with the initiate. These included the initiate's parents, siblings, children and the spouses of the two initiates.

Ideally, the *intonjane's* father, as the patrilineal head of the homestead, hosted the ritual. If he could not fulfil the role, then another elder, closely related to the father (such as his brother), would take on the role in his place. The *intonjane*'s mother, Nosamsi, was the only person not of the natal clan who could participate on all feast days. The mother and the other women of that homestead had an everyday responsibility of seeing that there was food and refreshments for the initiate and her helpers. They shared this chore amongst themselves where possible.

The spouse of the initiate, as well as her children and in-laws could only attend the climax of the ritual, that is, the wedding day. The spouse could not eat any meat whatsoever, not even leftovers, for fear of pollution. If the initiate had a baby, it was allowed to remain with her and be nursed by her throughout the ritual.

In Folokhwe, Nomfundo's husband, Siklonongwana, was away at work, so his father attended the wedding day in his stead. Wagontsha's wife, Nofenitshala, also attended the wedding day.

The video footage lends itself well to revealing data on participants' roles through the analysis of patterns of movement and space utilisation. As suggested by the older ethnographies (MacLean, 1906; Soga, 1931; Kohler, 1933; Hunter, 1936) and, in preliminary interviews, by informants, this chapter focusses on data emerging about

women's activities. Interestingly, however, the flexible recording methodology leads to a body of data emerging from the footage revealing a second, more general sub-theme concerning the nature of men's participation, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Instigating the ritual

(no footage)

Soga (1931), presenting an ideal ritual scenario, says a girl would, by crying, notify her mother of the onset of her menses. The mother would inform the father, who would signal to the sons by sending them out to the field to gather the goats. The mother would address her daughter as *I-intonjane* (the *intonjane*) and not by her real name which, in her polluted state, could harm her and the speakers, and the girl would be placed in seclusion. The *intonjane*'s father would make a public announcement of the date of the ritual climax, *umtsnato* (the wedding day).

Hammond-Tooke says a Bhaca girl would cry to signal the onset of her first menstruation. 'For when you have that thing you must cry,' he quotes an informant as saying (1958: 18). An older girl would respond with '*uthombile*' meaning 'you have reached womanhood' (ibid: 18). He says that the crying, besides signalling the onset of bleeding, inevitably expressed a sadness at leaving behind childhood, as entering the adult world meant

taking on many different obligations and duties (ibid).

In Shixini, informants said there were a variety of factors which could motivate the initiation of an older, married woman. She might feel ill and be told that her ancestors were angry with her family's neglect of the rite; she might simply wish to be initiated and so may use the argument that it was not right that her children, almost grown, be initiated before their mother; she might request it if she felt her position and contribution within her husband's family needed to be recognised; her natal family might simply deem it affordable at that particular time; or they might feel their ancestors had been too long neglected and so choose this rite as appeasement.

Apparently, if a woman wanted to suggest to her natal family that they hold the ritual for her, she would return to her natal home where she would then abstain from drinking *amasi* (milk). A Xhosa woman can only freely drink the milk of her father's cattle, this being associated with incest taboos and clan exogamy (Pauw, 1975: 128). However, she is prohibited from drinking milk while ritually impure as this would endanger her father's cattle and, symbolically, her relationship with her patriarchal ancestors.

Implied in this compliance with the taboo on milk is her acceptance of the principle of patriarchal descent and its inherent value system (Pauw, 1975: 129). As

prosperity and harmony amongst families and kinship groups is closely linked to cattle, inheritance and the ancestor cult, the act of drinking milk indicates the well-being not just of the individual, but also of kin and community (Pauw, 1975; Ferguson, 1985; Kuper, 1982). Her abstaining from this milk, therefore, not only suggests ritual impurity which, as *intonjane* ideally celebrates first menstruation, would be appropriate, but would draw her family's attention. On enquiring about this abstinence, she would explain her position to supportive family members and enlist their help in exerting pressure on her father.

An indirect effect of this reliance on family members to lobby for her, and on a senior male of her natal home to host the ritual, is that the daughter has to remain on good terms with members of her natal family. Hence ritual can help to encourage good family feelings. An initiate would be wary of challenging the *status quo* as bad relations between daughter and father would be adequate excuse to refuse to hold the rite. This would encourage conformity by all women, but especially, in this case, by the dependent daughter.

If the girl's father was absent or deceased, a senior male of her natal family, such as her father's brother, would take over negotiations in his stead and plans would be set in motion to notify the members of the agnatic cluster of the ritual schedule and community members of the date of *umtshato*. Beasts and goats would be

organised for slaughter. The prospective initiate would go back to her husband until the due date when she would return to her natal home for the performing of the ceremony.

In the subward of Folokhwe, the initiate's mother said the rite was motivated by her daughter. Nomfundo raised the issue of being *intonjane* with her mother, Nosamsi, who broached the topic with her eldest son, Zuzile, while he was at home over Christmas from his work as a migrant labourer. Broster states that it is traditionally the mother's role to organise *intonjane* as she is the one to usually be told of her daughter's first menstruation (1976: 43).

Nosamsi's husband, the *intonjane*'s father, was deceased, leaving Zuzile as homestead head. Nosamsi said she felt it was important that her daughter's ritual not be neglected as she had three children and so it was important to assure her good health and fortune. Also, the homestead could afford the ritual just then. Zuzile agreed that it should be performed. After Christmas, she wrote to him at work, reminding him, and he said she should go ahead with the arrangements, although he would not be able to attend the ritual himself. At that stage and throughout the ritual, Nomfundo showed no signs of ill health and denied any marital problems. She jokingly said she would enjoy the respite from daily chores!

Nosamsi then contacted Nothimba, her deceased husband's

oldest living brother, to lead the male activities, such as speechmaking and ritual slaughter. She also contacted Nolele, her own father's brother's daughter, to ask her to be the *ikhankata* and lead the female activities. Zuzile approved the slaughter of one ox from their cattlebyre, as well as a goat. A sheep was donated by Nothimba.

At the outset, then, the linking of menstruation, milk, cattle, fertility and elder (particularly male) authority in the minds of the main ritual participants was explicit. While these elements were manipulated differently, each individual appeared to share an implicit acceptance of the conservative, patriarchal ideology and value system which generated them.

Constructing the seclusion hut

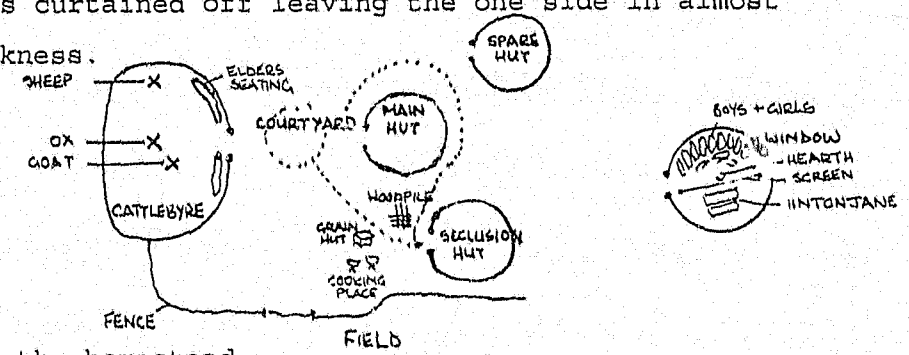
[See Appendix A: shots 1 - 27]

On the first day, preparations began early in the morning for *intonjane*'s seclusion. Neighbourhood members of the *intonjane*'s agnatic group as well as a few friends and children from surrounding homesteads began arriving. Together with members of *intonjane*'s natal homestead, they contributed their labour to prepare for the occasion.

In preparation for the ritual, natural materials were used in the building of the seclusion hut. Long grass

was cut and spread about the floor in one of the family huts designated to be the seclusion hut. Poles, reeds and branches were collected for a screen to be erected to divide the hut in half. Young men sharpened the poles with their axes [3] and staked these into the floor of the hut [6, 8]. Boys and women then packed the holes tightly with cow dung collected from the cattlebyre [8, 15]. The use of materials linked to cattle and the cattlebyre, Kuper suggests, carry with them properties of fertility and protection by the ancestors (1982: 20).

Meanwhile, young boys stacked firewood outside the hut [18, 19]. A screen was woven out of reeds [21], with branches [10-14] forming the crossbeams between the stakes. The window was covered with sacking to keep out as much light as possible and the walls were smeared with mud so that any lime or whitewash was covered and the room was considerably darkened. The screen was positioned from behind the door on the woman's side (that is, on the right of entering), across the room, dividing the room in half but leaving enough room to enter and exit on both sides. The entrance between the door and screen was curtained off leaving the one side in almost total darkness.



Layout of the homestead

In this seclusion hut, the *intonjane* would spend her time in a space which had been transformed into a metaphor for a womb (Berglund, 1976: 168). Broster says the term *I-Ntonjane* means 'chrysalis', referring to the larval stage of the stick insect when the caterpillar encases itself in a 'little grass mat', resting until the adult is ready to emerge (1976: 39). Turner has said of a similar seclusion amongst the Ndembu that being placed in this darkened room could be likened to 'death, to being in the womb, to invisibility' (1969: 95) and is typical of the state of liminality. Here, the initiate would relax, naked as a child, a blank slate on which would be inscribed 'the knowledge and wisdom of the group' (ibid: 103). Her every need attended to, she would lie quietly in the darkness, awaiting the time when she would re-emerge pure, plump and pale, metaphorically reborn. Of course, ideally, it would be hoped that her beautified appearance would help her find a husband.

Between conversations about the ritual work, people gossiped and joked and a goat was killed and cooked to feed [16, 17, 22] the many workers who participated in constructing the seclusion hut.

Prior to the ritual beginning, then, the manipulation and utilisation of space and language links ideas about women, the womb, reproduction and rebirth. These notions are situated in the foreground of ritual consciousness, and enjoy powerful associations with cattle, men, fertility and patriarchy. Video usefully captures

speech, space and action, revealing how these themes recur, again and again, throughout the rite.

The ritual beginning: *umngeno* - 'going in'

[Shots 27 - 29]

Soga (1931) says that in the 1930's, the day on which the initiate entered seclusion was called *umngena ndlwini* (which he translates as 'occupation of the hut'). This was also the day of the first slaughter.

The Folokhwe ritual began with *umngeno* - the initiate going into seclusion ideally for her first menstruation. The first ritual slaughter, following several days later, was called *umngenandlini*, symbolically marking the end of the initiate's menses.

Nothimba opened the ritual proceedings with a short speech explaining the purpose of the rite - to protect the initiate from becoming ill so that she could have a healthy adult life. After Nothimba finished his speech, Nolele took over, speaking to the twin initiates inside the main hut.

> [Shot 27] Day 1: *umngeno*. The hut is very dark. Nolele says to the initiates:
>
> Nolele:
> 'Cover yourself with that short white blanket. I am going to cover this person with this blanket. It is for her, the first born twin.

Oh, hi-hi-hi-hi. Nobody should cover himself alone because you are twins, born on the same day... Our child, take any blanket you see... Now I want them both nicely bathed. No one is to be left behind. You should follow each other.'

Woman's voice:
'Are you going to carry both of them on your back?'

Nolele:
'Oh yes!'

Woman's voice:
'Oh my dear! Will you be alive after that?!'

Nolele:
'I suffer from chest troubles, that is the only snag! It is getting late. Let us go. Get on your feet, come to me, line up behind me. As you come out of the hut, cover your heads. Hold on to me. Get underneath the white blanket.'

[Shot 28] Nolele, outside the main hut, in the evening light:

'Nomfundo, cover your head. Line up behind me. Hold onto Nomfundo. Hold this lace.'

It is significant that the ritual teacher is not the initiate's mother. In Folokhwe, the person who took the symbolic role of mother and womb in this 're-birth, who talked of the initiate as our child, was a female elder of the agnatic clan. Her participation in a leadership role announces the female focus to the rite while it also suggests the transfer of the initiate from her natal home into the wider community of adult women. Her role is also symbolic of the parochial authority of the elders in

the social realm. This is reinforced by her honorary male status, as a post-menopausal woman. No longer able to conceive, an elder woman is regarded as fully socialised and hence able to cross the gender divide and participate in the community with the authority of men (Jean Comaroff, 1985). Only then are women entrusted with the authority of passing on custom. Through the leadership of the old *ikhankata*, therefore, the authority of the elders is reinstated symbolically over the female person.

The absence of light inside the hut meant that, while conversations were clearly audible, the video camera could not record any images satisfactorily [23-27] until everyone moved outside [28]. Even by observation, the busy activity and number of people in the hut made it difficult to tell what was happening. However, fixing those particular moments on tape proved to be a valuable test of the contribution video could make to the research process. On questioning Nolele at the viewing, showing her the sequence of activities surrounding and including the dark images, together with her own recorded words, she could easily identify and describe the confusing activities and explain the meaning behind her words.

Phrases like 'Nobody should cover himself alone' [27] and 'Are you going to carry them both on your back?' [27] were references, she said, to the fact that, as twins, the two initiates duplicated, symbolically, their arrival at birth. The male, being second-born, wrapped himself

in his own white blanket; the female, first-born, wrapped her white blanket around herself and her brother as if caring for him and leading him out of the womb; the *ikhankata* then wrapped her large, black blanket around all three of them [28], as if carrying them on her back. Enveloping them in a blanket - a symbolic womb - this was a re-enactment of the mother carrying her twins. The footage therefore proved useful not only in establishing the meaning of events, but also in encouraging an interactive research process.

The initiates were marked through both behaviour and dress, and by visual and spatial means. Before leaving the main hut, the *iintonjane* washed, symbolically cleansing themselves. They covered their face, arms and legs with red ochre make-up [25, 26], placed black kerchiefs on their heads to shield their faces, and wrapped their naked bodies in short white blankets [27]. Informants said that the initiate sometimes put on white make-up for her 'going in' [28], in Folokhwe, the twins wore red make-up for their entry into seclusion. The three colours of red, black and white recurred throughout the rite. These colours have powerful, multivocal, symbolic properties.

The Xhosa word *mhlope* means white, but it also stands for bright and clear, while the locative form *emhlotsheni* means in the light. In short, the colour white stands for good fortune, life, newness, cleanliness and purity (Pauw, 1975; Olivier, 1976; Ngubane, 1977). Pauw says

that, amongst the Xhosa, white is primarily a symbol of well-being and of harmonious social relations, and is associated with the ancestors and with enlightenment. Due to these associations, the colour white is used frequently in rituals of transition to counter the disruptive effects of the transitional condition (Pauw, 1975: 126-127). Hirst concurs, saying that white is closely linked with male and female initiates and novice diviners, all of whom wear white clay to indicate that they are 'set apart from routine social life in the care of the ancestors' (1990: 179).

Black *ubumnyana*, by contrast, represents darkness in Xhosa (Pauw, 1975; Olivier, 1976). Black signifies misfortune, danger and death, disruptive forces which endanger prosperity and harmony (Pauw, 1975: 127). The black of Nolele's blanket [28] was therefore suggestive of the initiates' vulnerable state of ritual impurity and of the danger this casts on the homestead's most prized productive and reproductive resources, women and cattle (Kuper, 1982; Ferguson, 1985). Pauw also argues that the colour black, when used in ritual, encourages appropriately sombre behaviour (ibid: 122). The footage reveals how, once under the blanket, the atmosphere at the rite takes a distinctly serious turn [27-28].

Pauw argues that Xhosa ritual uses the colour black sparingly due to its signifying of disruptive forces (ibid: 127). Turner's research amongst the Ndembu concurs. He argues that 'it is difficult... to represent

black visibly without invoking its inauspicious power' (1966: 71). Yet the sparing use of black does not mean that it is absent from thought. Rather, the colour white is used in its place. White therefore holds a secondary meaning in ritual, symbolizing abnormality. These two meanings - of well-being, of the ancestors and of purity, on the one hand, and of abnormality on the other - symbolized in white are not necessarily contradictory. The pure, clean qualities of white are useful to counter the danger of abnormality (Pauw, 1975: 127).

The initiates' white blankets [27], representing the ancestors for whom this rite was being held, protected their fertility from the adverse affects of ritual impurity (Pauw, 1975: 126). White indicates that this is the beginning of a process which aimed at cleansing the female initiate of her polluted, menstrual state (Richards, 1956).

Red, Pauw argues, signifies a return to normality and an end to the transitional phase in rites such as initiation. The absence of red therefore indicates the existence of a dangerous or abnormal condition (ibid: 126).

A local explanation for the initiates use of red make-up on entering seclusion was that the brother had been through circumcision and was already an adult. The sister, having accompanied him through parts of his circumcision ritual wearing the same colour red, could

not now adorn herself with the usual white. Only when he left did she wear white. The colour white, then, served both to signify her abnormal, liminal condition - her white skin setting her apart from the black skins of other people (Olivier, 1976: 110) - while also countering the negative, disruptive forces of darkness which surrounded her (Pauw, 1975: 127).

When everyone was ready, Nolele led everyone out of the dark main hut into the evening light [28]. The twin initiates, their heads and faces shielded by the blanket, were led by Nolele in procession, followed by the young assistants (all wearing black scarves on their heads, as would a new bride), and finally women of the agnatic group. The mother of the *iintonjane* remained behind as she was not of the natal clan. The head *ikhankata* began singing, and the others joined in, as the procession filed off on a long winding route around the homestead to the seclusion hut.

With the exception of the ritual leader and her two young assistants, the procession comprised solely of agnatic kin. The *iintonjane* silently followed the head *ikhankata*, the blanket pulled up over their heads. They walked in the darkness of night, enshrouded in a black blanket, and kept from any light, to the black womb of their hut [29] (Pauw, 1975: 126-127). The initiate, in her impure state, could not be looked upon by the others (Hunter, 1934: 47). Naked under her blankets, she was like a child about to learn new things (Berglund, 1976:

149). She was beginning her role play of a new bride, part of her 'traditional' preparation for marriage. The men sat outside and watched the procession from a distance.

The women sang 'Hoyi-ho-hoyi-hoyi-haho. Here we enter. Yho, unmarried women, yho!' as they walked in procession towards the seclusion hut [28]. They continued with the same song standing outside the seclusion hut while the old *ikhankata* took the initiates inside, saw them settled, and then rejoined the women [29]. Proceeding towards the cattlebyre, they walked in a circle singing 'Women, the process [of *intonjane*] must go on' [29]. After singing for about 10 minutes, they strolled back to the main hut, visited for a while, then returned home. Only the two young assistants stayed behind to cook and care for the initiates.

Hunter (1934) calls the circular walk or dance *umgquzo* and the songs the *umgquzo* chants and says that any married woman was eligible to take part in the dance. Informants in Shixini called the singing *tsholoza* and claimed that, while visitors were welcome to join in, the dance and song gained its efficacy only through the participation of women of the agnatic group, and particularly those who had borne children. Clanswomen invoked the ancestors by walking in a circle, and even dancing, outside the cattlebyre, while they sang (Hunter, 1934: 169). Video footage of the whole ritual reveals that, through this repetitive, symbolic performance, the

central theme of female fertility, implicit with associations of cattle, ancestors and, hence, patriarchy, was kept to the fore.

Hunter argues that the songs may have had significance once, but no longer, whereas the dance is an essential part of the ritual, 'a way of calling upon the ancestors' (1934: 169). Certainly, the dance was used in this way, but the songs could not be disregarded. They enjoyed a variety of references and were rich with symbolic meaning. The two songs at *umngeno* announced to the community that something was happening in this homestead, that it was the beginning of an *intonjane* rite. Hence they established a ceremonial frame for the occasion. The songs publicly signalled the presence of an initiate who, in her role of woman-as-girl, had symbolically reached marriageable age. In singing that the 'process must go on', the women made a public commitment to support the initiate through the rite.

The singers repeated their lines, interspersing them with interwoven harmonies of non-sensical words, like 'yo-yo-yo' [29]. These words had no meaning, in and of themselves, but the weaving of soprano and alto harmonies, using the same words but in different rhythms in a call-and-response form, suggested the solidarity which unified them as women. This set the tone for the occasion, as one of harmony and co-operation. The music and words of song therefore represented an interplay of form and content.

The pervasive cyclical nature of the songs, travelling again and again between line and chorus, and the procession, moving back and forth between seclusion hut and cattlebyre complements the theme of fertility and reproduction. Mother and child, birth and death - all are part of an on-going cycle of nature. This cyclical pattern was repeated in the form and location of the circular dance, performed by the living, in front of the cattlebyre representing the dead. Repeated viewing of the video footage permits the viewer to discern the significant frequency of such cyclical patterns recurring, in both movement and song, amongst women.

It becomes clear that women play a strong role in this women's rite, actively initiating other women through song and symbolic action. In the use of language, spatial organisation and patterning, as revealed in video, a celebrating of solidarity, fertility, reproduction and ancestor worship, by female kin, in a particularly female manner, and in the women's domestic domain of the courtyard, establishes this rite as clearly concerned with women's issues. The implicit acceptance of a conservative, patriarchal framework, within which the rite is performed, suggests that perhaps women are using *intonjane* to articulate a social need for security over their reproductive capacity and over their children.

Umngenandlini: 'entering the hut'

[Shots 30 - 56]

Umngenandlini usually takes place about five to seven days after the initiate goes into seclusion, supposedly in time for her menstruation to have finished. *Umngenandlini* literally means 'entering the hut' - in other words, entering seclusion. From this moment on, the young girl begins her mental and social preparation for marriage. While the different steps of a marriage ritual are rehearsed, she adopts the characteristics and behaviour of a newly married bride.

Soga says that, shortly after seclusion, women would gather from all over for two days of dancing. The occasion was called *umngqungqo* or women's dance and would be marked by a second slaughter called *eyomgqongqo* (belonging to the women's dance) (1931). Nothing quite so elaborate took place in Folokhwe.

When the animals (a goat and a sheep) were ready for slaughter, the women began walking in a circle immediately outside the cattlebyre, singing initiation songs [30]. They stopped when the male host stood to open proceedings with a short speech in the cattlebyre. His words were directed at the ancestors as well as the living who were present [30]. He explained the purpose of the rite - to secure the initiate's health and success in life, and established his relationship with the

initiate and his role as the host. When he finished speaking, the women once again began singing and walking slowly in a circle outside the cattlebyre. The singing lasted longer than the ritual slaughter [32, 38, 41].

When the goat cried out [30], invoking the ancestors, the women sang, 'The girls of the royal house have gone into seclusion. Yo-yo-yo. You must agree' [31]. This referred to the ancestors' acknowledgement of the seclusion process and to the rite's success so far, and hence to the rejoicing.

As the goat was slaughtered, the tone changed to one of teasing as the women sang: 'The process [of *intonjane*] must go on. This homestead does not have cattle. Where is meat, *amankazana* [independent women]?' [32]. In fact, the homestead did have cattle, although one was not being slaughtered on that day. But the meaning of this song could also be metaphoric. Normatively, the initiate would not yet be married. With marriage and the payment of *lobolo*, the homestead would receive cattle. Hence they could also be referring, metaphorically, to the initiate's ideally pre-marital state at this point of the rite.

Video reveals the teasing, entertaining atmosphere, as the pace picks up reflecting the excitement of a successful slaughter. An informant said the teasing label, '*Isangongobala*' [38], was made up, disguising the name of a male participant at the rite, yet referring to

him as one who thinks he has everything. Then they teased a woman, also present at the rite, but in a manner which could not give offence. 'Nomtshetshe [woman's name], what time is it now? I am scared of you!' [41, 42]. The women then walked in procession to the seclusion hut where, standing outside the door, they sang 'The girls of the clan are asleep. We have not been sleeping for days' [42]. The implication was that the women of the clan (those who had borne children) had been at the initiate's hut each evening, singing and dancing, while the young girls had not shown as much support.

The *intonjane* songs had a slow, deliberate pace. Once the appropriate *intonjane* songs had been sung, livelier songs were added, thrown in to entertain and to keep the singing going. These were faster and pacier, with mixed rhythms.

The steady tone and pace of *intonjane* song and movement reflected the careful consideration of women supporting each other through trial, while the faster songs were said to represent the enjoyment, entertainment and celebration had by bringing kin together. None of the songs was allowed to be dull, even the slower *intonjane* songs, hence their teasing or, sometimes, complaining nature.

The simplicity of the repeated lines, as opposed to the long, complex, highly metaphoric speeches made by men, reflected common gender notions of women as less

sophisticated, less intellectual, more inclined to gossip, tease and complain. The footage supports these notions, revealing women's movement to be contained to domestic spaces (the *inkundla* or courtyard), in contrast to men's occupation of public, important spaces (the main hut or, particularly, the cattlebyre) when speechmaking. Yet the lines women sang also revealed women's capacity to challenge these notions. In song, they assimilated the mood or tensions of the day and reflect them back, in clever word plays and in a manner which allowed them critical comment yet without giving offence.

The context of the rite and the experiences of the women were disguised in the seemingly puzzling songs. As Kratz says, 'the ambiguities and uncertainties... create a space for multiple interpretations and views' (1994: 274). Most songs meant more than the few words they said, using devices of allusion and metaphor to contain their meanings.

Within the ritual framework, it was inappropriate and disrespectful to the ancestors actively to court trouble, yet this was also an arena for giving voice to tensions. Careful wording kept the critique within accepted parameters suggesting that their grievances were not real, but rather a symbolic airing of conflict designed to strengthen, rather than undermine, social relations.

In Folokhwe, the initiate's agnatic kin, who formed the body of participants at *umgenandlini*, were rewarded for

their participation and support with food. The alternating of work (singing) and compensation (food) was symbolic, at a ceremonial level, of one of the most important and valued of ideals, that of reciprocity.

The goat was ritually slaughtered [30], while the sheep was killed without any ceremony with the help of a few boys [31]. Informants said the goat was customarily supplied by a representative of the male side, and the sheep by the initiate's mother. In Folokhwe, Nothimba donated a sheep as the mother's contribution. Sheep have no ritual importance in Xhosa custom, but they are valued more than, for example, pigs. This is because sheep are regarded largely as men's property (unlike pigs which belonged to women). However, sheep are also the woman's beast in that they are usually donated by women (with their husband's permission) to increase the meat available at any ritual (Ferguson, 1985). This dual (male and female) responsibility meant that sheep were slaughtered by men in the cattlebyre (while pigs, on the other hand, would be killed outside), but without any ritual. In apportioning the meat, women received more mutton than goat's meat which, belonging to men and ritually killed in the cattlebyre, was the male priority.

Appropriate participation with regard to donating and slaughtering ritual animals, and apportioning the meat [44], signified an understanding of proper social relations and indicates a individual's sense of place and belonging in terms of gender, kin and community. Video

reveals that such activities occupied as much time and space as the more overtly ritualized narrative. This emphasis on correct behaviour suggests that an important aspect of the ritual was the reinforcing of social order.

It was important that the initiate and her twin knew and fulfilled their roles properly [45]. The *iintonjane* ate only of the ritually killed goat. As would a bride, the initiate and her brother ate a special portion of the goat from the right front leg, called *umngcamo*. The old *ikhankata* cooked this portion, saltless, in a pot. She skewered pieces of the meat on a stick and fed the *iintonjane*. These skewered pieces of *umngcamo* were called *intsonyama*, meaning 'the meat that comes from stabbing', which refers to the ritualised slaughter of the animal (Kuckertz, 1990: 242). Eating of this special cut of meat in this unusual manner is the means by which communication (McAllister, 1981: 6) or communion (Kuckertz, 1990: 252) with the ancestors takes place. These symbolic acts of reversal - eating unsalted meat without touching it - were acts of reverence for the ancestors (ibid: 249) and implied an acceptance of the patriarchal kinship system. Pre-menstrual young girls could not partake of this meat and the *intonjane*, in her polluted state, could not touch it or it was said she would contaminate it.

Once fed, the older women also partook of the unsalted *umngcamo* until it was finished, thereafter eating sheep which the young married women cooked with salt. Eating

of the foreleg was said to be a rehearsal for the wedding day - reinforcing the rite of passage from girlhood to womanhood, the transition from child to marriageable young woman.

Around early evening, once the food had been eaten, women of the agnatic group again sang initiation songs in front of the cattlebyre. Slowly, everyone finished up and went home.

Similarly to *umngeno*, themes of female solidarity amongst agnatic kin, of fertility, reproduction and ancestor worship were the focus of this event. However, additionally, video reveals, in the patterns of labour division and spatial organisation, a sense of social order emerging, implicitly, as a secondary theme to women's issues. Women's teasing, revealed in the songs, did not appear to demonstrate any serious challenge to the patriarchal framework of the rite.

Boys and girls: supporting the initiate through the nights

[Shots 111 - 114]

From the second night to the end of the initiate's seclusion, uncircumcised boys and young girls (pre-menstrual and otherwise) began arriving at dusk to visit or spend the night, keeping the *iintonjane* company. After a couple of nights of enjoying their company, the

male twin left his sister alone in seclusion. He would return, he said, for each of the main events.

When they arrived at dusk, the young girls and the two young *amakhankata* sang light party songs, with much laughter, in a circle outside the cattlebyre [111]. Although mimicking the elder women, their actions had a lively, lighthearted flavour and served to announce their arrival at the homestead. Watched by the boys, they giggled and ran and skipped, trying to keep warm in the evening cold. 'Mgandela doesn't have cattle. The young man suits me. He has no cattle. Stop him! Stop him! No cattle. Look at him' [111], they teased and mocked, showing an awareness of the status the possession of cattle confers on men (Ferguson, 1985: 658). As *intonjane* is ideally a rehearsal for marriage, this song of a young man not owning the means to pay bridewealth is particularly ironic.

Then 'Take your sticks. We want *amanuka* [sour porridge]' [111]. Notions of authority, obedience and reverence are revealed in their use of the phrase 'take your sticks' and the word '*amanuka*', in preference to the word '*amarhewu*' (sour porridge). 'Take your sticks' apparently refers to divination and the presence of the ancestors. Using the word *amanuka*, informants said, was an act of *hlonipha* or respect by avoiding the sound 'rh' of amarhewu. Broster, writing on the Tembu, says that *hlonipha* is common at *intonjane* as a means of showing respect to the ancestral spirits (1976: 39).

Their next song, 'We haven't slaughtered anything' [111], apparently referred to the rite being primarily for adults, hence the youths' exclusion from participation in formal aspects of the rite or from expecting to eat ritual meat. Then '*Isangongobala*, men are being misused by independent women' [111] mimicked the lewd songs which, as will be shown, older women enjoyed singing. 'We saw you. Ke? We saw you by [the sign of] your handkerchiefs. We raped you on a Sunday. We saw you, we saw you, we saw you' [111] reflects an awareness of sexuality and the abuse of sexual power.

Their participation was a rehearsal, through mimicking their elders, of the role they would one day play. The complexity of a woman's role, of the relations and abuse of power, authority and hierarchy, was revealed in their songs. Learning and singing the songs was part of a long-term, on-going initiation into what it meant to be female, into the dynamics of gender relations which taught women their place in the hierarchy of things. These young girls were learning their gender identity through the experience of doing. The video footage, recording sound and movement simultaneously and in context, reveals the affective dimension of this learning experience.

Literally, their singing was a way of notifying the homestead of their arrival each evening, and of their support for the initiate. The songs, sung lightly outside the cattlebyre, were a reminder that the

initiate's ordeal continued, and was supported and recognised by the women.

The boys waited in the seclusion hut for the girls to finish and then joined them on the other side of the screen from the *intonjane*. In ones and twos, the girls visited *intonjane*, chatting quietly with her. On their own side, they cooked and ate, singing songs [113], telling jokes, teasing, flirting and generally enjoying themselves. Boys visited especially when they knew their girlfriends or other girls they were attracted to would be spending the night.

The two uninitiated *amakhankata* were responsible for chaperoning the boys and girls through each night and for reporting any misbehaviour to Nolele, as well as looking after the needs of the initiate. The fact that the initiate's young assistants were not of the natal clan was not insignificant as it indicated the need for a forum to educate all young, uninitiated children about sexually acceptable behaviour. The exogamy rule of marrying outside the clan was given force amongst these children who learnt the rules of responsible sexual behaviour. Again, then, the ritual could be seen to fulfil the role of underpinning notions of appropriate social behaviour.

The environment of the young girls and boys within the seclusion hut was ripe with symbolism. The walls of the hut were blackened with mud which darkened the interior.

Dim light from a small fire offered a faint, flickering glow - to dark to record anything but voices.

The hut was shrouded in the darkness of night. The blackened walls and darkened room symbolized the dangerous, liminal state of the initiate (Pauw, 1975; Olivier, 1976). As a symbol of abnormality and disharmony (ibid), Turner's argument that black connotes the socially undesirable qualities of illicit love, as well as privacy and secrecy may be appropriate in this darkened environment where boys and girls learn about and experiment with sexual mores (1967: 80).

Footage taken of the interior of the hut during the day reveals crude, phallic, stickfigure sketches in white chalk decorating the black walls of the hut on the children's side [35]. Sketches of large women being penetrated by the extended penis of small men were prolific [35]. A different drawing, of a neat register (called *isikolo* or 'school' after a school register) [35], stood alongside these sexual figures. Also drawn in white chalk, it reflected the names of the older girls present and indicated nightly visitations by their boyfriends.

The brightness of the white stick figures against the black wall suggested the openness and unconcealed, social nature of this sanctioned exercise (Pauw, 1975: 128; Ngubane, 1977: 119). This is in direct contrast to the dark passions of such socially undesirable behaviour as

penetrative sex, which are usually concealed and kept private and which might only be performed illicitly, outside in the dark of night.

The early ethnographer, MacLean, writes

> it is customary for all girls who have arrived at the age of puberty to choose paramours, and if they refuse to do so - which is seldom the case - men are selected for them by the elder women, and with whom they are forced to cohabit as long as the festival lasts. These poor creatures are degraded and polluted at the very threshold of womanhood, and every spark of virtuous feeling annihilated (1906: 104-105).

While it is obvious that MacLean takes a strong ethnocentric view, it is also clear that sexual activity has for a very long time been a definite feature of the ritual.

Historically, Soga writes, a chief and his attendants visiting an *intonjane* ceremony could order the young girls to be collected together and 'compel them to submit to the desires of their temporary husbands' (1931: 222). Girls could refuse to comply if they were unwilling. Those who agreed were examined by chaperons afterwards. If the girl was found to have had sex, the partner was heavily fined. This custom, called *upondlo*, was not popular, but tolerated, as the wishes of the old-time chiefs were regarded as sacred. It was abolished later on by Chief Ngqika and subsequently died out.

Nowadays, informants explained that an additional role of the old *ikhankata* (and of old women generally) was to teach the young girls about *metsha*. To *metsha* is to have sex without penetration. *Ukumetsha* used to be a feature of youth movements (McAllister, 1994: 35) but, since their decline, it seems as if *intonjane*, which has also featured *ukumetsha* for some time (Hunter, 1934), has taken over as a forum for children's socialisation. This teaching sexual control also features in the writing of Cohen and Odhiambo who state of the Luo that

> *Pim* [old women] taught the girls to offer persistent boyfriends an experience of lovemaking, but without penetration, through the skilful use of the thighs while making love
>
> (1989: 93).

Old Xhosa women would tell the young girls to 'play on your thighs and not in your [father's] cattle' (*dlala ematangeni ungadlali ngekomo*). Krige says the same of the Zulu,

> the private parts of a girl are often referred to as 'father's cattle' in reference to the bride price he [her father] will secure for her
>
> (1968: 177).

Literally, this means a girl should take the penis tightly between her upper thighs but not touch it with her hands or let it enter her. There can be few stronger, more explicit links between women and cattle than these words. Kuper argues that a girl's private parts are referred to as 'her father's cattle' (1982: 20)

in reference to the brideprice he will one day secure for her. He also argues that women and cattle are seen as alike in many ways: they both give birth in the tenth month, and they both bring wealth to the homestead through conception, hence fertility is an important theme linking women and cattle (ibid). References to both show, quite categorically, the immense value placed on these two most important resources of any household. Both (including their offspring) are, of course, controlled by, or fall under the authority of, men. The language the women use in telling young girls how to indulge in foreplay without penetration, teaches responsible sexual behaviour, but is perhaps more importantly a metaphor for social control, for the perpetuation of a patriarchal ideology.

Hunter says her informants told her emphatically that 'the presence and *ukumetsha* of the young people is in no way helpful to the *Intonjane*' and that there is 'no sex teaching of any kind' (1934: 174). While it certainly seems that the *intonjane* herself gains no benefit from this behaviour, it appears as if the youth benefit from the ritual as a forum for sex education. The participation of young girls and boys at the *intonjane* ritual is clearly exploited by adults as a sex education opportunity. Mayer and Mayer are quoted by Van der Vliet as stating that ''private love' (a stock phrase) is vigorously discouraged' (in Hammond-Tooke 1974: 237) by youth organisations, hence it seems as if they used to fulfil an educational function. However, the general

demise of youth organisations or youth groups in Shixini region in which Folokhwe is located, means that initiation ceremonies, in their stead, seem to have become a vital forum for socialisation and education (McAllister, 1994).

The interesting combination of the openness and ambiguity of this sexual forum was symbolized by a large, female figure drawn next to the door, known as Nombayana. Her placement, size, gender and prominence signified her importance as a guardian of female sexuality. No girl could leave the hut for any sexual assignation without openly signalling her intent by asking permission of the old *ikhankata* through the medium of Nombayana. Nombayana symbolized, to all the boys and girls, the authority of women over their sexuality, and the authority of the elders (personified by the controlling figure of Nolele) over the social and sexual behaviour of community members.

The large figure of Nombayana had a smaller male figure drawn alongside, its long penis penetrating her. No-one could translate or explain the word Nombayana, except to say that it always took the female form. If a girl wanted to ablute, she could quickly go outside without asking permission. Boys could come and go from the hut at leisure. However, if a girl's boyfriend was spending the night, she could only leave the hut to join him outside if permission was obtained. This was done in a special manner.

A boy, wanting to *metsha* with his girlfriend, would have to ask the old *ikhankata*'s permission. She could grant or withhold such permission. That night, the girlfriend would walk up to Nombayana and say out aloud: '*Ndiyacela* Nombayana' ('I am asking [to go outside], Nombayana'). The young girl would be requesting permission of the young *amakhankata*, via Nombayana, to leave the hut in order to spend some time alone outside, in the dark, with her boyfriend. The *amakhankata* would then give or withhold permission, depending on earlier advice from the old *ikhankata* based on the girl's general attitude and reputation, and whether her boyfriend had, earlier, asked permission. If permission had been denied, or no permission asked, it was withheld later on to the girl. If the girl disobeyed, or went outside without asking permission, she would be reported and punished by her parents [114]. She would have to bring gifts in apology to the *amakhankata*.

Within this context, the register was clearly understandable. Every evening, the names of the girls and boys present for the night were shouted out from the doorway - loud enough for anyone in the vicinity to hear - by the *amakhankata*, who linked names of couples while teasing others and revealing their romantic interests [114].

> [Shot 114] At night, while the boys wait outside, the *amakhankata* shout:
>
> 'Who is going to be asked about her lover? It

> is Bongiwe. Why? Her lover must be known. What do they say? You lover? Sinqu says her lover is Boyi. Nosiseko's is KK. Boniswa's is Maphothwana. Oh no, Themba, don't make such a noise. Why don't you behave yourselves? *In what?* So you behave well? Matolo says it's Nomatu. Matolo's is Nomampumlo. Nomaculo's is Meko. Nomatolo says that child is too talkative... He-he-he. Matolo says he has no lover but his four testicles!'

This process was called *igunya*, which translates as 'authority' (Nabe et al, 1976). The word expressed the authority of the elders, who check up on the youth, and was a constant reminder of the responsible behaviour expected of the boys and girls. The older girls' names (or symbols representing their names) were listed on the register and a mark noted next to each name for the number of times a girl's boyfriend spent the night [35]. The register was used to keep a record in case of sexual promiscuity and possible pregnancy. An informant said old women would sometimes make surprise visits to spot-check the accuracy of the register. This process was also called *igunya*.

These various methods of checking on and constraining a girl's sexual activity suggest the importance of *intonjane* as a forum for socialisation and social control, of reinforcing the conservative values of the community through the authority of elder women. As the incidence of promiscuity and pregnancy in Shixini is soaring (McAllister, 1994: 35), this opportunity for

reinforcing the community's social fabric must be of importance to ritual participants. Sexual relations were said to be regulated quite strictly, with clear rules of behaviour and punishment for transgression (Van der Vliet, in Hammond-Tooke 1974: 236-237). The register and the figure of Nombayana were some of these devices of control.

Nombayana is not mentioned in any of the literature on Xhosa woman's initiation. Krige (1968: 179) relates the importance, in puberty rituals among the Zulu, of a deity known as *Inkosazana* or Nomkhubulwana. She describes Nomkhubulwana variously as 'a young maiden deity', 'the daughter of Umvelinqange, the Creator', and 'daughter of the earth' (ibid: 179). Berglund (1976: 71) calls Nomkhubulwana a 'fertility deity'. Krige argues that she is a personification of nature closely associated with rain 'which is conceived as fertilizing her to produce the plenty of summer' (1968: 179). Nomkhubulwana is conceived of as a virgin girl. 'She can be propitiated only by women, more especially virgins' (ibid: 179). She protects people against pestilence and fever.

> There is a strong moral element in the relationship of the community with Inkosazana. The ills that have been mentioned are believed to be the result of defilement, especially sexual defilement
> (Krige 1968: 180).

Informants could not explain who Nombayana was or who she represented. Yet she seems to fulfil, quite clearly, a

role of controlling and protecting young girls against sexual defilement. The teaching of sexual mores, within a carefully controlled environment, was vital to the maintenance of viable homestead life. At *intonjane*, authority relations were reinforced over the social and sexual behaviour of youth, thereby operating as a crucial forum for reinforcing the social fabric of the community.

On the initiate's side of the screen, the walls were mostly black, empty of all such phallic drawings. The initiate, in this dark room, is in a state of symbolic death by virtue of her withdrawal from society (Pauw, 1975: 123; Ngubane, 1977: 126). Only one large register, empty of names, marked her walls, symbolic of the asexual state she assumed in the liminal stage, and expressive of the fact that she had not received any sexual attentions while in seclusion.

Despite the darkness of the hut precluding the recording of images, the video clearly reveals, in terms of conversation and atmosphere recorded on this night and footage captured earlier, the bawdiness of behaviour and drawings. This contrasts severely with the initiate's demure, submissive behaviour in the dark, quiet 'womb' in which she sat out her rite of passage. While all around her were loud and crudely sexual, the initiate acted out supposedly ideal behaviour. This was a significant part of the ordeal she must undergo - maintaining the restrained, controlled behaviour of an adult even in such a sexually explosive environment. This reversal of

behaviour by the initiate is a common feature of ritual, in accordance with her liminal status (Turner, 1967).

Umtshato: the 'wedding day'

[Shots 57 - 110]

According to Soga (1931), on the tenth day a 'marriage animal', called *eyokutshata*, would be killed. The women would again dance, after which a men's dance, lasting two to six days, would take place.

When this research took place in 1989, *umtshato* covered a three-day period and had no men's dance. It was the climax of the whole ritual. Local explanations of 'custom' or 'the *intonjane* is getting married' were given for it being called the 'wedding day'.

Day One

[Shots 57 - 94]

In early afternoon, once family, kin and neighbours had gathered, women of the agnatic group began singing outside the cattlebyre in the women's domestic space called the *inkundla*. In the extended duration and increased intensity of singing at *umtshato*, video makes palpable the drama of climax on this day. Singing began [57, 58] prior to Nothimba making a speech, stopped for its duration [60], and started again immediately after he

concluded [60-82]. Nothimba explained the ritual purpose of invoking good health upon the initiate, pointed out the ox to be slaughtered and clarified his role in the slaughtering of the beast [60]. The excitement built as, to a background of song, responses to Nothimba's speech were delivered [60]. Other elders commended his hosting of the ritual and thanked him for explaining both his role and the ritual purpose.

Finally, the ox was brought down [60]. At *umtshato*, unlike at *umngenandlini*, the atmosphere was fraught with tension. This is revealed in the video footage by the accelerated pace of men's and women's activities, by the passion and volume of their voices and the tension in their body language. The women's excited, rhythmic singing was a potent contributor to building a heady excitement. The men's concentration and directed focus moved the rite inexorably towards its religious crux when the ox was stabbed. As the ox cried, the women's walking became dancing and the words and rhythms took on a jubilant, celebratory tone. Kratz suggests that this kind of song is

> celebration; referential meaning becomes inadequate and almost irrelevant. Even song is inadequate for women, who punctuate it with joyous ululation
>
> (1994: 264).

As meat was not a common part of the diet, the slaughter of the beast added impetus to the excitement and became

the focus of women's attention. 'Where is the meat?' [69, 79], they sang, and 'We want *injeke*' (that part of the stomach eaten only by women) [64], highlighting women's rights in a show of solidarity, and reminding men that this was a women's celebration. Video reveals how, working co-operatively, women can focus attention on particular aspects of the rite through a song's lyrics and by raising the emotional tone at that moment.

In song, the women mocked men, asking 'How are we going to see it?' [68]. 'It' referred to a man's penis, which they compared to a woman's apron. Laughing merrily, they sang and danced, while one women clowned around, flapping her skirt in imitation of a limp penis while also drawing attention to the private parts under her skirt. In the lively atmosphere of words and movement, recorded on video, a comic, mocking tone is revealed amongst women, putting down men in a manner at which they could only laugh. Douglas argues that the joke is a natural symbol of subversion of dominance (1970: 81). But the crude songs also represent another phase in the rite for the initiate.

Krige (1968: 177) suggests that the obscene nature of some of the Zulu women's songs sung on ritual occasions relates directly to the function of the ceremony as public recognition of the girl's sexual maturity and readiness for marriage and procreation. It is possible that, within the ideal context of *intonjane*, lewd Xhosa songs serve a similar function. Only within the frame of

marriage could women express their sexuality without restraint, hence the singing of such songs at this point in the ritual was a metaphor for the initiate's sexual maturity and marriageability. Of course, as the footage clearly reveals, these words provoked as much laughter and ribaldry when the initiate as a mature women with nearly grown children as it would when referring to a young girl.

Krige (ibid: 178) suggests that the references to sex and reproduction also operate as a form of sex education, especially for a young girl. It not only sanctions an arena of sexual language and behaviour which was previously taboo, but it also teaches her the appropriate contexts in which such language and behaviour may be used, correctly and without penalisation.

Van der Vliet (in Hammond-Tooke, 1974: 236) adds that these same obscene songs are also used to ridicule any girl who falls pregnant before marriage. The contrast between the lewd songs and the empty register chalked on the initiate's wall, signifying her sexual abstinence, suggested her compliance with these sexual mores imposed by older women. Through symbols, songs and behaviour, then, a strict social framework for regulating sexual relations was established. Only within the frame of marriage could women express their sexuality without restraint, hence the singing of such songs at this point in the ritual was a metaphor for the initiate's sexual maturity and marriageability. The video footage thus

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