

The Business of Divining: A Study of Healing Specialists at Work in a
Culturally Plural Border Community of KwaZulu-Natal

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DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation is my own, unaided work. All references used have been acknowledged. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university.

ABSTRACT

This thesis is the result of virtually a year's research conducted in three adjacent villages in northern Zululand, in the district known as KwaNgwanase. This community is distinguished by being subject to historical Zulu conquest, to a continuing influx of migrants from neighbouring countries and to more recent social and economic transformation. It therefore exhibits a considerable degree of structural variation and cultural complexity, which in divining practice is registered as 'divinatory syncretism'. The theoretical stance adopted to make sense of this complex of variants is praxeological, with an emphasis on understanding divination from within, for which purpose the field method of participant observation is particularly suitable. Built upon close and prolonged interaction with some twenty diviners, the thesis examines divination from two interconnected perspectives; as a mystical performance, in which the inspired diviner endeavours to uncover the truth of a client's condition, and as a professional business in which the economic motive is paramount and in which the more successful competitors flourish as entrepreneurs. KwaNgwanase itself emerges as a workshop of experimentation in mystical and symbolic forms, while it begins to export its innovative techniques to a broader market.

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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is the result of close on a year's intensive field-research among diviners in northern KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. By way of introduction, it can be briefly characterised by three major areas of interest. In the first instance, it is a Holistic study of divination. The focus is not confined to any single aspect or dimension of divining, but covers the whole spectrum of the institution. Divining is understood to be a profession and the dissertation explores what might be termed the 'career path' of the typical diviner, from calling to possession, from training to initiation, from associational solidarity to competition for clients, from local to foreign forms of divination, from professional practice to expansion into business interests.

Secondly, the study of diviners is firmly anchored in its social context, a particular local community that displays many of the features of a heterogeneous multicultural society. This society may be described as marginal, in two senses. It exists in a remote impoverished rural area, but enjoys ready access to two major urban and industrial hubs, namely Durban and Johannesburg, where its inhabitants seek employment. In addition, it is situated on the border between national states of unequal economic and political strength, a powerful industrialised South Africa and a weakened Mozambique, scarcely recovered from the ravages of internal warfare. The community is, therefore, characterised by the uneasy accommodation of foreign immigrants with their suspect activities and influence. It is a community, then, that in several senses represents a society in transition.

Thirdly, the study is concerned with the relation between institution and context. There are two ways in which the divining institution is affected by its social context. As might be expected, it is subject to cultural borrowing, thus expanding the divining repertoire. The second effect is that divination is not a locally circumscribed activity; the influence of the local practitioner reaches out to attract urban clients and neophytes. While divination thus fits itself to the kind of

society in which it inheres, it is more difficult to assess the impact that divining has on society. However, it is possible to argue that, although divination is in general a conservative social force, in this community its ready assimilation of foreign spirits may point the way for the social and cultural integration of foreign immigrants.

The ethnographic setting for the study is the district of KwaNgwanase, situated in the northern coastal corridor of KwaZulu-Natal, which borders on Mozambique and Swaziland. Although assimilated into the 19th century Zulu Empire, KwaNgwanase is predominantly inhabited by the Tsonga-speaking Thembe-Thonga and, since then, considerable cultural fusion has occurred between Zulu and Thonga components of the population. This has been compounded in the second half of the 20th century by the arrival of Shangaan immigrants from Mozambique. Since the area has been quite densely settled, I concentrated my research on three villages and their immediate surroundings during my year's residence there.

While the area itself is socially and culturally complex, the main challenge was to bring some conceptual order to the confusing appearance of divination in KwaNgwanase. Over a century of close interaction between the Thonga and their Zulu overlords has produced a state of 'divinatory syncretism'. More recently, major economic and social changes and a marked increase in the membership of Christian congregations, particularly those of the Zionist type emphasising the agency of the Holy Spirit, has caused a melding of (at times conflicting) ideas about the spirit world and of associated ritual practices. This study adopts a theoretical approach, that is eclectic and praxeological to the description, clarification and, where possible, the interpretation of the complex phenomenon of divination in KwaNgwanase. The thrust of this approach is to emphasise close observation of what it is that diviners actually do, not only in consultations with clients, but in various other aspects of their lives. In particular, it serves to widen the theoretical focus beyond the current anthropological preoccupation with cognitive and psychological aspects of divining to introduce the perspective on divination as a profession, with all the practical, economic and social considerations that this involves.

Close and protracted association with three diviners and their novices and regular acquaintance with eighteen others, out of a local complement of some hundred diviners, provided me with a rich source of ethnographic data, most of which I have endeavoured to include in this thesis as supporting evidence in my exploration of religious dynamics. It became clear that KwaNgwanase was an extraordinary divinatory "workshop", that enjoyed a widespread reputation for particularly powerful divining and that, consequently, attracted a ready supply of fresh novices from far and near. Its distinctive repute undoubtedly derives from its border location and the syncretic development of its divining resources. Historically, KwaNgwanase has accumulated an amalgam of different divining patterns, now recognised generically as 'ngoma' possession, that incorporates Zulu-type 'ukuthwasa' possession, the technique of reading the 'bones' (amathambo), as well as elements of Thonga-style 'hakata' (tablet interpretation). Grafted on to this is the more recent Shangaan import of possession by a foreign spirit (ndawo). For the totality of this divining complex, I have adopted the term 'ngoma-ndawo alliance'. In addition, KwaNgwanase is subject to cross-border trade in medicines imported from Mozambique, the foreign character of which commends them to Zulu diviners as unusually powerful. Not surprisingly, therefore, KwaNgwanase is elsewhere regarded as a hub of divining prowess.

Contrary to received indigenous and scholarly wisdom that Zulu diviners are possessed by their collective lineage spirits, the "theology" of ngoma-ndawo is much more varied and complex. In the first place, the diviner is "possessed by" by one or more identified ancestral spirits. Secondly, it need not be a lineage ancestor, though the relationship remains one of descent. These departures are indications of Thongan influence, emanating from a society where, unlike the Zulu formation, lineages were shallow (if they existed at all) with a marked structural bilaterality in which ancestors belong to both sides of the family. Thirdly, the possessing ancestor is qualified by having been a practising diviner in his or her lifetime. Fourthly, the novice can exert some influence over the choice of possessing ancestor, though not over the receipt of the invasive ndawo foreign spirit. Another departure that is entertained in practice is that the 'foreign' ndawo spirit is as often as not related to the diviner by descent. Furthermore, around each emergent diviner is spun a complex

web of esoteric mystical connections, that sets up relations between the dead, between the living and the dead, and between the living. These relationships are spelt out in a kinship idiom that draws on the model of the family. At the centre of the web, the diviner, irrespective of gender, becomes 'wife' to the dangerous ndawo spirit who, whether male or female, becomes a domesticated 'husband' and thus 'son-in-law' to the diviner's ancestral spirits, with whom 'he' becomes reconciled and incorporated. As 'son-in-law', he is deemed to keep the somewhat errant descent spirits under control in their divining activities. At the same time, the diviner enters as a bride and becomes 'daughter-in-law' to the pre-existing 'family' (impande) of diviners represented by the 'father' diviner, i.e. who has trained him/her. While 'daughter-in-law' in one set of relationships, the same diviner converts to 'fatherhood' in relation to any 'daughters' (i.e. novices) that (s)he acquires, and all novices who train together under the same 'father' diviner relate to one another as 'sisters'. To complete the profile; on joining a particular impande (divining sodality), the diviner assumes the name and identity of the descent spirit (ngoma) that has primarily laid claim to her/him as successor in the divining profession. This network of kinship and quasi-kinship relationships, that knit practitioners and their spirit agents together, bears the weight of concluding that there exists a 'society of divining' (a society within society) that consists of an unknown number of rival 'families' or sodalities competing for custom. While the linkages within each sodality may span great distance, e.g. connecting Johannesburg and Durban to KwaNgwanase, they are governed by an ethos of solidarity and cooperation that is regularly expressed, both instrumentally and ritually, but particularly on the occasion of admitting a new diviner to the profession.

The phenomenon of spirit possession is central to the 'theological' syncretism of divination in KwaNgwanase, but it exhibits contrasting forms and different degrees of passivity on the part of the diviner. It is believed that the ngoma (descent spirit), with whom the diviner is identified, is an insider and resides within his/her body, expressing its presence by explosive emissions of breath. The trance-like condition of possession is induced by inhalation and drumming, a technique that is acquired by training. Yet, it is an observable fact that, while in this state, the

diviner is in full possession of his/her analytical and interpretative faculties. Who possesses whom is a debatable point. An importunate client will not await the spontaneous manifestation of spirit and, if the diviner is to remain in business, (s)he must produce possession on demand. It is also admitted that diviners run the risk of losing control of their ngoma spirits, by way of expressing a failure to win clients, and to offset this it is desirable to have an ndawo spirit to keep them in place. While ndawo possession also occurs in response to clients' requirements, the diviner behaves as an immobile and passive pure medium, a dumb instrument through which the spirit directly addresses the client. The symbolic manifestation of ndawo is in direct contrast to that of ngoma. Ndawo possession comes, not from within, but from outside the body. Ideally a foreign spirit, the ndawo before being enlisted as a divining agent has its habitual abode in cool water. Diviners characterise the onset of possession as a chilly breeze entering the hut, the coldness first registered on the feet and gradually moving up into the body. The diviner is seen to shiver uncontrollably all over, while otherwise remaining in a rigidly seated position. Drums are replaced by more subdued rattles to reproduce the sound of wind rippling through foliage and buildings. The salient point is that diviners in KwaNgwanase commonly acquire the capacity for entertaining both kinds of possession, though obviously they cannot be entered simultaneously. Some diviners have added to this repertoire possession by the Holy Spirit, by themselves becoming prophets in Zionist congregations.

Underpinning the 'theology' of divination, and all too often overlooked, is the commercial nature of divining. Divining is essentially a business in which practitioners vie with one another for fee-paying clients and, as such, it is a market-orientated profession. The competitive edge is all the keener, given the plurality of fresh recruits entering the market. Competition is strongest between different sodalities but, even within the same sodality, the ideology of cooperation scarcely obscures the fear of rivalry, every new recruit being seen as a potential rival. Every consultation constitutes an economic transaction for financial reward. This was forcefully borne in upon me early in my research when, during an interview, a diviner cannily went into possession to repeat the same information and demanded a R20

consultation fee. But the matter does not end there, for the economic motive suffuses all other activities associated with divining. It is not uncommon in a time of economic recession for new recruits, especially men, to calculately choose (despite the ideology of mystical calling) the profession for the financial benefits that may accrue, and these can be considerable. Many diviners have a constant and plentiful turnover of novices, referred to them by those they have already trained, from whom they garner and accumulate large sums of money in payment for the expertise they pass on, while unashamedly using these resident novices as a source of unpaid labour on their properties. Such accumulated wealth can be deployed to acquire land or commercial outlets and to diversify the range of economic interests into other entrepreneurial and business activities. Some are more successful than others in pursuing such acquisitions and enterprises. And, in a period of greater mobility and instant communication, a few economically astute diviners have successfully exploited the possibility of expanding their client base into the major cities, thus exploding the limitations of the local market, while touting a unique KwaNgwanase product.

The more detailed presentation of these findings in the body of the thesis follows a fairly logical sequence. Chapter one opens a review of the anthropological scholarship on divining and divination systems, that takes cognisance of theoretical and methodological shifts that have occurred in approaches to the subject, and leads to a justification for my own preference for the praxeological approach.

The second chapter outlines topographical and demographic features of the region in which the study is set, together with a social history of the human population. It also presents a social profile of the community of KwaNgwanase with particular attention given to the provisioning of health and well-being. Chapter three consists of the statutory report on fieldwork, with an emphasis on the methods of investigation that I employed as a participant observer. In chapter four, I begin to address divination with a survey of the beliefs and symbolic meanings that underpin its practice. Within the framework of belief obtaining in KwaNgwanase, I explore the means whereby new diviners are recruited. Thus, chapter five traces the path of the candidate diviner, from an intractable illness that is diagnosed as a mystical calling, to a period of seclusion at the homestead of a master-diviner for purposes of

purification and training, to a gruelling ritual initiation into diviner ranks. Here, I first introduce the combination of genealogical and foreign divining spirits, that is distinctive of the profession in Kwangwanase.

Impression management is central to the art of divination and nothing surpasses the impact on a client's credulity as a state of spirit possession elicited by the diviner. The nature of spirit possession is discussed in chapter six. By contrasting the state of 'calling' with that of the diviner in consultation, it becomes clear that possession is an acquired technique over which the diviner has control, though the latter element is not as marked in possession by a foreign spirit. Ancestral spirit possession is also deemed to be fragile, pointing to the need to have a foreign spirit to keep fickle ancestral spirits in place. While, in a sense, it is the manifestation of possession that makes the diviner to be a diviner, it also admits him/her to a fellowship of specialists. As chapter seven will show, the links binding members of such a sodality together, and drawing boundaries between sodalities, are expressed in the idiom of mystical descent and marriage and appeal to a 'family' metaphor.

Chapter eight takes the dissertation into the consultative arena, where diviners ply their trade. Here, two forms of spirit possession are contrasted in the context of their respective modes of consultation. By far, the greater attention is accorded to the more commonly practised indigenous form of bone-throwing. Through the liberal use of case material, the structure of each divining form is laid bare and carefully analysed, and the chapter ends with a discussion of the degree of syncretism that is achieved. The penultimate chapter nine focuses on the entrepreneurial activities of the more successful diviners and discusses how they circumvent the typical dilemma of the entrepreneur in his/her community. The dissertation ends, appropriately enough with a Conclusion.

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CHAPTER ONE

LITERATURE REVIEW: SHIFTING PARADIGM ON THE STUDY OF DIVINATION

The literature on divination, like the subject itself, is pregnant with intuition and fine hunches. The need is to substantiate some, and discard others, in the light of direct and closely documented observation (Werber, 1972:1439)

Evans-Pritchard's pioneering exposition of the use of oracles among the Azande (1937) marked a turning point in the anthropological study of divination. Earlier investigations, such as those by Callaway (1870), Bryant (1917), Henry Junod (1927) and H. P. Junod (1938) in South Africa, made a valuable contribution to the ethnographic record, but remained at the level of purely descriptive accounts. Evans-Prithard's powerful analytical approach plumbed the logic of Zande thinking that suffused the divinatory oracle and, in this way, suggested that divination was a pivotal institution in African societies. While the oracle (and the diviner) was consulted for the overt purpose of detecting witches, and thus opened the way for re-ordering social relations, a more penetrating insight was that it was an explanatory device that made sense of random misfortune in such a way as to enable people to actively cope with adversity.

Subsequently, numerous ethnographic analyses (Krige, 1974; Kriges, 1943; Hammond-Tooke, 1962, 1981; Middleton, 1964; Hunter, 1961; Gluckman, 1965, 1972), without focusing particularly on divination, have confirmed its pervasiveness as a witch-finding technique in Africa and as an agency promoting social conformity. Other anthropologists pursued different options, bypassing Evans-Pritchard's emphasis on explanation, and the psychological satisfaction to be derived from it, in favour of the more social benefits of divination. These studies focused mainly on two aspects of divination, namely, its employment as a decision-making mechanism and as a therapeutic instrument. It has been shown by Peters (1972) that divination can be used to drum up support for decisions being formed in another form or to convert a personal suspicion to a communal consensus. Park (1963) sees divination as giving the impress of legitimation to a decision to re-grade an individual's social status. Similarly, the

diviner's intervention may be drawn upon to articulate public opinion in a competitive debate (Colson, 1966; Lan, 1985), with the implication that divination can be accessed tactically to stigmatise a rival in a struggle for succession or ascendancy in the political arena. It is well known that diviners present themselves as healers and that, as often as not, they are consulted to get relief from some personal affliction or malady, hence their clients are often referred to as patients. In common with rituals of affliction, however, it is not only the physical or mental indisposition of the patient that is subjected to treatment. Most attention is given to mending the ruptured relations in which it is imbedded, and that are considered to give rise to it, in an effort to restore social equilibrium. The diviner is, therefore, a social therapist, acting through the physical body upon the social body, of which it is a microcosm (Turner, 1967:107; Douglas, 1970:70).

While all of these findings constituted real advances in anthropological knowledge, they were limited by the adoption of a singular perspective, that left gaps still to be explored. Virtually all such research was conducted within the then dominant theoretical paradigm of functionalism. All social institutions have their functions, to contribute to the stability of society as a whole (Radcliff-Brown, 1952:153-177) and divination was no exception. The properties of this perspective were, to view divination from an outside standpoint and after the fact, so to speak. It focused on the outcome of divination (the verdict and its aftermath), its impact on society, in short its social function. The role of divination is thus reduced to that of a mere "instrument for restoring or consolidating social order, tradition and convention" (Devisch, 1985:62). What is lacking from this perspective is inside knowledge of what actually transpires within divination, its inner dynamics. A processual analysis of divination as an activity is thus called for, as well as some understanding of divination as a transaction between freely interacting social agents pursuing self-interest. At the same time, it would be a gross misrepresentation to claim that none of those operating within the functionalist paradigm gave any attention whatever to what happens in the course of a divining séance. Rather, it is a question of skewed emphasis on a dominant concern with divination as a social instrument. Thus several anthropologists detected a recurring pattern in the diviner's discourse, a

gradual unscrambling of the general to reveal the particular (Fortes, 1966:419; Bascom, 1941; Lienhardt, 1961:68), though Werbner was to show this to be an oversimplification and that the opposite movement was just as likely or that the general could be used to mask or occlude a damaging fact (1972:1414). Colson (1966:228) was aware of some give and take between diviner and client; the diviner "will not suddenly redefine the situation in his own terms and demand that his clients accept his dictation. He can be used because those who consult him are prepared to carry out the decisions he helps them reach" (my emphasis). Park (1963:202) stresses the importance of "mutual resistance between diviners and clients in order to produce conviction". Placing himself as a client before a spirit medium, Beattie provided a full description and narrative of the ensuing séance, but weakly concluded that "whatever else the possession cult is ... it is, or may be, good theatre" (1967a:64).

In his study of the Zulu diviner, Fernandez (1967) may be credited with foreshadowing a fresh approach to the subject. He analysed his material in terms of the complementary opposition of backstage and front stage and of the traffic between them. In this theatrical metaphor, the diviner moved back and forth between the real interaction of structured social living and her own super-structural psycho-somatic state, rendered as the realm of spirit, and invited her clients to follow her (1967:12). Undoubtedly, the major impetus towards a new approach was that of Werbner, in his insistence on direct observation of diviners at work and on a detailed recording of the discourse of séance. The approach has been variously labeled by Werbner himself and others (Hirst and the contributors to Peek's volume among them) as semiotic, epistemological, dialogical and praxeological. Although I shall adopt 'praxeological' as a more general term, it should be noted that it more properly denotes a methodological direction, emphasising a focus on praxis, which in turn gives rise to analytical and theoretical perspectives indicated by the other labels. 'Praxeological' is therefore the term of choice because other terms, being derivative from it, are in that sense included in it.

Werbner's (1972) study of local diviners among the Kalanga of Zambia is an exemplar of its kind. Providing extensive data on two diviners and a full exposition of a séance held by each, in a social context with which Werbner himself was familiar, he

shows how the diviner constructs an argument from random configurations of four tablets thrown by the client, that yield sixteen possible combinations. Each combination has a generic abstract meaning known to the client, from which the diviner subtly extracts more specific meanings for an event, while suppressing others, by means of rhetorical devices, such as indirect reference, metaphor, allusion, imagery and the selective use of verse praises. In so far as the diviner is seen to employ language, that has a logic of its own, to wrest meaning from a situation, the thrust of Werbner's analysis is semiotic. And he notes that the search for meaning is ongoing and is not concluded in any single séance. Unlike their Zulu counterparts, however, these Kalanga diviners are all men and are not possessed by spirits.

Writing after the publication of Peek's volume, Hirst (1993) adopts a praxeological approach, but follows the example of Werbner by presenting a full exposition and close analysis of two consultations, each with a different diviner and set of clients. The research was conducted among the Cape Nguni (Xhosa) of South Africa. The procedure employed by these diviners is discursive and interrogative (the siyavuma - we agree-method) but, unlike Zulu-speaking exponents of the art, they have no additional recourse to an instrumental device. Following Peek and company, Hirst demonstrates how, in divination, the truth is socially constructed through the authorizing process of rhetoric. But he goes beyond this. Based upon his observation of how the diviner moves between an oracular mode (being the mouthpiece of ancestral spirits) and a confessional mode (speaking for the client, indeed assuming the client's identity), and perhaps mindful that he is writing in a journal with a medical readership, he argues plausibly though not convincingly from this latter form of transference that divination is an indigenous variant of Freudian Psycho-analysis. However, this forms but one strand of his conclusion that the diviner's art is a synthetic hybrid or combination of the bricoleur, mediator, trickster and psychoanalyst (1993:110).

Peek's timely volume (1991) is devoted to redressing a situation in which divination has been historically marginalized in anthropological literature, including the occasional rationalist mocking of divination as 'an act', 'a game', or 'gibberish' (1991:9). Noting that in Africa no aspect of life is left untouched by divination

(1991:3), he asserts that "a divination system is often the primary institutional means of articulating the epistemology of a people" (2). Hence, the divining session is to be positively viewed as a workshop for the production of knowledge and the generation of truth (4). To African people generally 'real' knowledge is occult, hidden, secret and privileged, yet they must have access to a sufficiency of such knowledge to complete their life-patterns and to give meaning to their travails, and frequently this knowledge is available to them only in divination (14). However, as Peek and both Devisch and Shaw among his contributors are at pains to point out, this occult knowledge cannot be accessed in divination without a strong element of logical reasoning, thus giving the lie to the supposed dichotomy between the 'sacred' and the 'profane'. All divination forms, despite their astounding variety throughout the continent, would appear to involve a non-normal state of enquiry (revelation) followed by 'rational' interpretation of revealed information (analysis). Both 'analytical' and 'revelatory' dimensions are present (12).

While Turner was aware of the logic in divination - the diviner "is as logical as Linnaeus himself" (1968:34) - he refuses to follow a consultation through, stage by stage (33), for the very good reason that his knowledge of divining was derived from his conversation with his diviner informant, Muchona, and that he never himself attended a divining session (Peek, 1991:9). He never witnessed a diviner in practice. This cannot be said of the essayists in Peek's volume. Following, Werbner, they have studied divining from within and have adopted a semiotic and semantic approach to it. This allows divination to stand on its own and not to be simply viewed as a representation of social structures, although social structures are unquestionably a part of it - "the social system exists through divination" (4). The praxeological stance of these writers enjoins focusing on the aesthetic aspects of divining, on semiotic patterning, dramaturgical features and transformational processes, particularly those affecting the client (10). In addition, it draws attention to the transcultural dimension of divining, registered in a growing tendency for clients to seek out 'foreign' diviners for consultation. In itself, this is but an acknowledgement of the fact, rarely alluded to, that, while scholarship is laying down new tracks, the practice of divination is undergoing change on the ground. Thus, in South Africa alone,

the 'whistling' or 'ventriloquist' divining technique has virtually disappeared (Hirst, 1993:97), while there is a marked modern tendency to incorporate 'foreign' elements into customary practice. Going beyond merely consulting 'foreign' diviners, an 'outgoing' tendency, this dissertation will reveal a corresponding 'incoming' pattern, whereby local diviners acquire foreign and Christian divining spirits, so that they effectively assume a plurality of divining mantles to be put on or off as the situation dictates. The point is that such cross-cultural transposition would only be uncovered by the close internal observation of diviners at work, that is espoused by the praxeological approach.

Devisch (1985) is the foremost exponent of the praxeological approach, for whom it is not a rigid theoretical orthodoxy but is broadly eclectic, building upon previous anthropological paradigms and those of other disciplines, such as semiology, symbolic interpretation, history, cultural studies, poetics and aesthetics, theatre and structural analysis. Devisch is particularly interested in applying this approach to divination. Divination systems are creative, open-ended and ever-changing institutions, which are well suited to an emic focus on diviner and client(s) collaborating in the construction of meaning or truth within the framework of the séance. Studies of divination, conducted from this perspective, have been used to explore a variety of interests, e.g. gender relations (Shaw, 1985), the construction of self-consciousness (Whyte, 1990), the recreation of the self in relation to others (Hirst, 1993), the historical background of divining phenomena (van Binsbergen, 1995), the multi-cultural and multi-ethnic context (Devisch, 1991). In the hands of these scholars, divination emerges as a creative process that produces 'efficacy or transformation. It is an interactive dramatic performance, in which autonomous individuals extract new meanings from a troubled social environment, so as to produce a licensed reconstruction of reality. From this statement, I select three interrelated fundamental features for further elaboration. The first is that divination is a dramatic performance. The second is that it exhibits a plot or a sequence, similar to that of Turner's 'social drama'. The third is the centrality of the actors or participants.

Without explicitly acknowledging it, praxeologists owe a considerable debt to Victor Turner. Turner had the exceptional gift of grasping the dramatic aspects of

everyday social life among the Ndembu, while equally appreciating the dramaturgical nature of ritual. Divining has all the appearance of a staged ritual. The stage is set on the floor of the divining hut and the participants must assume their prescribed positions on it, and dress up or dress down accordingly (Hirst, 1993:105). There is already dramatic tension in the encounter between diviner and client; how will the bones fall, what will they reveal, will the message accord with our desires as clients in search of the truth? The diviner is also on edge, for his/her artistry and reputation is once again on trial. Will(s)he produce from diverse fragments of knowledge a composite picture that wins over the client(s)? The drama is heightened if, as is more usually the case, the diviner is believed to be under the direct influence of the spirit world. Even from the emic point of view, the diviner is playing a part; stepping out of everyday roles such as mother or husband to assume that of mystical agent, artist and technician at various points in the performance. The dramatic impact is all the greater if, as happens, the diviner becomes a spirit medium, so that she cedes her identity, not only to that of her possessing spirit, but in succession to the spirits of living persons not physically present, and even to those of animals. Add to this diverse elements of stage craft, such as drumming, dancing, singing, aromatic smoke and the casting of lots, and there can be little doubt that the divining session is a drama unfolding. Nor is the consultation with clients the only form of ritual and dramatic performance in which diviners become engaged in the course of their lifetime.

Secondly, as Turner points out, the social dramas that emerge out of conflict in everyday community life may be analysed each as a social sequence of four distinct stages, namely, a breach of moral norms, crisis, redressive action followed by reintegration or recognition of schism (1957:92). Turner recognises that, at stage three, "the divinatory consultation is the central phase or episode in the total process" and refers to the 'cybernetic' function of divination as a mechanism of social redress (1967:361). Thus divination takes its place in a diachronic process of known events. However, if we adopt the praxeological perspective on what happens within divination, a different picture emerges. The diviner casts back to the past and looks to the future. (S)he recreates the past to mend or reconstruct the present situation so as to provide for the future. Because of the regression, analysis and projection

involved in this exercise, divination may be said to incapsulate a complete social drama in its plot. Selective and speculative dredging of the patient's private history, to give significance to half remembered events that are neither public nor witnessed, uncover a moral breach; the patient has been negligent regarding obligations to ancestors and/or has invited the unwelcome attentions of a witch, that has led to the present crisis in the form of illness or misfortune. By way of redressive action, the diviner advocates the holding of a ritual or the application of a healing or retaliatory medicine. This action may lead to a cementing or rupturing of brittle social relationships. But, object the praxeologists, this model of the divining process may be all very well for the homogeneous community that is based on a single tribal or lineage system; how would it work in the increasingly heterogeneous and multi-cultural societies of modern Africa, where no consensus on social norms nor on what constitutes a moral breach can be assumed, and where relationships are much more fluid and not tied to permanent bounded social groups, the unity and subdivision of which become paramount concerns?

Special attention will need to be paid to the role that the symbolic manipulations of divination play in clarifying and drawing attention to the diverse overlapping domains of life, the different mode of production, the different principles of social organization and the contradictions between these, as well as the widening in scope and complexity of the social life of Africans that has occurred since the advent of capitalism and the modern state (Devisch, 1985:77)

Thirdly, in praxeological terms, the divining process is actor-driven. Again, Turner has had a profound influence on the introduction of this emphasis, marked most noticeably in his social profiles of Sandombu (Turner, 1957) and of Muchona, himself a diviner of note (1967). In their different ways, both were socially handicapped and marginalized within Ndembu society. Equipped with different sets of resources, each engaged in a personal struggle to overcome their disadvantage and to achieve a position of prominence. Ultimately, Sandombu failed in his bids to become the headman of his village, while Muchona succeeded in achieving recognition as an eminent doctor-diviner. The point is that, in a departure from functionalism, Turner presented these men, not as passive cogs in a social system, but as individuals beset by their own personal difficulties, nursing burning ambitions, pursuing personal agendas, making

their own choices and reaching their own decisions, all in order to achieve goals set by reigning self-interest. As social actors, they operated within the constraints of communal norms, rules and values but their activities were explained as the product of enlightened self-interest. Turner recognized that people were central agents in their own tragedies and triumphs.

The praxeological take on this is that, while divination is a dramatic performance, it is the participants who produce the performance. Particular attention must, therefore, be accorded to the actions and utterances of all those engaged in it. Undoubtedly, the diviner is the principal actor in this performance, assuming the most prominent and perhaps dominant part in the proceedings. However, much the diviner is bent upon solving a puzzle to the benefit of the consultees, we cannot escape the presupposition that (s)he brings a degree of self-interest to bear on the process, and that this must exercise some influence on the outcome. At the very least, the diviner wants to give a good performance and to produce a version of the truth that is acceptable to the client(s). His/her very livelihood depends upon attracting and satisfying paying customers. (S)he cannot afford to estrange or alienate clients, by riding roughshod over them. Even in mediumistic divination, whereby the diviner can plausibly deny any personal agency and abrogate responsibility for the construction of the true reality, an element of self-interest cannot be excluded. The performance has to be compelling and win the assent of the client. While not as creatively involved as the diviner, the client and his/her support group are nevertheless actors in their own right. They come with their own agenda, having discussed the matter among themselves and will have formed their own, hypothetical truth, for which they seek validation from the diviner. By the frequency and intensity of their interventions, questions and responses, they can try to nudge the enquiry towards the resolution that they prefer. Even when their responses are token or rote, they can communicate with the diviner, and their participation is crucial to a successful divination. The focus on this kind of communication and interaction between actors in a performance has been labeled 'dialogical anthropology' by Julet-Rosset (1994:164), although Hirst (1993:107) takes the dialogical perspective to mean 'standing in for' another, i.e. the diviner takes on the identity of the client.

While, in this dissertation, I embrace the tenets of the praxeological method and view divination as a dramatic performance in which relatively free actors engage in the creative process of constructing meaningful reality and authentic truth, this is not an investigation of anything called a 'divination system', a la Peek. Rather, it is a study of a selection of diviners, and their trainees, at work in a rural community, taking into consideration their beliefs, practices and aspirations. Nor is it limited to understanding what unfolds in the course of consultations with clients. Diviners are not only engaged in the creation of meaning and truth. They are also preoccupied with the creation of new diviners and with the construction and maintenance of networks of association between diviners. And in quite a few cases, they are creating wealth. The focus of this dissertation is, therefore, broader in scope and follows the performance of diviners along a career path or business trajectory, from initial choice of profession, through apprenticeship and training, to licensed practitioner and beyond, most of this progression being dramatic in nature.

From long and close association with these diviners, I have come to think of them in a certain way and to place them within a conceptual framework. Hirst (1993:111) sees the Cape Nguni diviner as a synthetic hybrid artist, who combines the skills of bricoleur, mediator, trickster and psychoanalyst. To this list, he might have added from elsewhere (100) the entrepreneur. From Hirst's analysis, the diviner emerges as a 'jack of many trades'. While I see no reason to dispute these several characterizations of the diviner, I prefer to place the diviner's activities within the ambit of a singular dominant conceptualization. From the perspective of my research among Zulu-speaking diviners, I conceive the diviner to be primarily a broker—more specifically a knowledge broker, but secondarily and derivatively as an entrepreneur, in short an entrepreneurial broker. In what immediately follows, I concentrate on developing the analogy of the broker in relation to divining, leaving that of the entrepreneur for later consideration in a separate chapter.

The broker has been depicted as a 'middle-man' and as a 'fixer' (Perry, 1973:138; Paine, 1976:67), though a better term might be that of 'fitter', i.e. someone who seeks and fashions a fit between discrete systems of meaning or exchange. It is the existence of cognitive boundaries between irreconcilable systems that

enables the broker to operate in the disjunctions between them, that place individuals and groups "out of communication" (Paine, 1976:76-7). The broker enjoys access to both systems, can move freely between them, can establish linkages by opening channels between them (and equally closing them), and can render them mutually intelligible to one another. The systems in opposition have been termed variously, though their characterization remains constant. Thus, for Bernstein (1964), it is 'restricted' and 'elaborated' in application to linguistic communication. For Barth (1966), it is 'incorporation' and 'transaction' in reference to systems of social exchange. For my purposes, in relation to systems of knowledge and meaning, Paine's more general distinction between 'closed' and 'open-ended' is the preferred terminology (73). The closed system is characterized by an emphasis on group, social conformity, shared interests and common structure. In contrast, the individual, choice, divergent interests and strategy take precedence in the open-ended system. Paine (1976:79) stresses the broker's relatively open-system location as opposed to the client's relatively closed system location and suggests that the broker a) strives to retain his open system capabilities, while b) keeping his clients happy in their own closed system. As we shall see, the diviner-broker works in the reverse direction from a closed system to the client's open system.

Perry's (1973) case study of a village broker in Lesotho shows how the broker negotiates arrangements between a peasant community and the national administrative structures. While these 'worlds apart' are not exactly irreconcilable, the open system of central government is impermeable to peasants operating in a closed system of values and ideas. The broker, living among them, had prior experience of existing links with, and inside knowledge of, the administrative structures that left the peasant confused and frustrated. Situated in the disjunctures between local and national systems, the broker was ideally placed to offer his information and expertise, so as to facilitate communication between the peasant and the encapsulating system (138). While this broker required no payment for his services, Perry notes (148) that he gained considerably in status and power, and indirectly in economic rewards.

To portray the diviner in such terms, as a third party or middleman, when divination is ostensibly a transaction involving two parties only, might seem somewhat absurd. But when clients step over the threshold of the divining hut, they come to consult the spirit world, to hear what the ancestors have to say about their problems. The diviner is clearly the 'go-between' in a communication between living and dead, between spiritual and corporeal domains, between a sphere of occult knowledge and knowledge that is gained from everyday experience. The role of the diviner-broker is to reconcile such disparate kinds of knowledge, to make them not only compatible to one another, but mutually relevant to a particular event. Clearly, these fields of knowledge are not intrinsically incompatible or irreconcilable, but the point is that the occult knowledge lodged in the spirit world is impenetrable to the client, who may receive unsolicited information from ancestors (e.s. in dreams) but cannot initiate such communication without the help of a 'broker'. Whether the diviner does or does not actually have access to what the ancestors know is a question that need not detain us. As long as the client(s) credit(s) the diviner with having such access, the diviner is thereby qualified to act as knowledge-broker.

Moreover, the two ways of knowing that converge in divination correspond very closely to the closed and open systems depicted by Paine, following Bernstein and Barth. The occult knowledge attributed to ancestors has the character of a closed system, for ancestral concerns relate to common structure, community cohesion, shared values and groups conformity. The knowledge that clients carry into the consultation has to do with singular events, differences of opinion, self-interest and self-advancement. Of course, this is too stark a distinction. Nevertheless, the distinction holds between a domain of normative knowledge controlled by ancestors and the dimension of experiential knowledge derived from social living, the difference between ideals and practice.

That the diviner negotiates between these two realms, in order to construe meaning and construct a message, is all too clear from what a diviner confided to Hirst(1993). A diviner has two eyes. One, closed and inward-looking, records received images relating to the client's problem. The other openly studies the participant's body language and their reactions to his propositions (102). We could say that the

diviner has both 'insight' and 'outsight'; has the benefit of 'revealed' knowledge while accumulating clues about the client's state of mind and social circumstances. As a broker between two sets of knowledge, (s)he makes sense of the client's experience by showing how their behaviour and that of others have fallen short of the ideal. That the broker's inward eye is fastened on knowledge of the normative becomes all the clearer when the diviner has recourse to an instrumental medium. In such cases, the higher-level knowledge of the diviner, off-limits to the clients is materialised and codified as reigning norms, values, ideal relationships, as well as deviations therefrom, and the broker's expertise lies in decodifying their arrangement to explicate a set of particular real-life circumstances.

While this is central to the discussion of data in this dissertation, it leaves out of consideration the question of who becomes a broker and by what means. Who gains access to special expertise in the closed system of knowledge, that sets the diviner apart from others, and how this knowledge is acquired are questions that form a necessary part of our enquiry. Attention is, therefore, devoted to the aspects of selection, training, but above all, to the validation of the diviner's special knowledge by way of ritual endorsement. It is this ritual authorization that empowers the diviner to act as a broker. Finally, unlike Perry's village broker, the diviner-broker is in gainful employment. Successful brokerage undoubtedly leads to higher social status and to increments of power but, in the case of the diviner, it can also directly realize an accumulation of wealth, especially since diviners generally favour a simple life-style. Many diviners are free to become entrepreneurs by channeling the surplus rewards of brokerage into commerce and business ventures, or to give greater visibility to their achieved status in the community. Not all succeed in getting their feet on the entrepreneurial path, because diviner-brokers are handicapped in a way that did not apply to the Lesotho village broker. Rarely, if ever, is the diviner the only practitioner in his/her village or neighbourhood and some niches are quite overcrowded. Clients enjoy the luxury of choice and tend to exercise it in favour of some diviners and to the detriment of others in the vicinity. Consequently, divining is a highly competitive and risk-laden occupation, and this is a theme that will run through this dissertation.

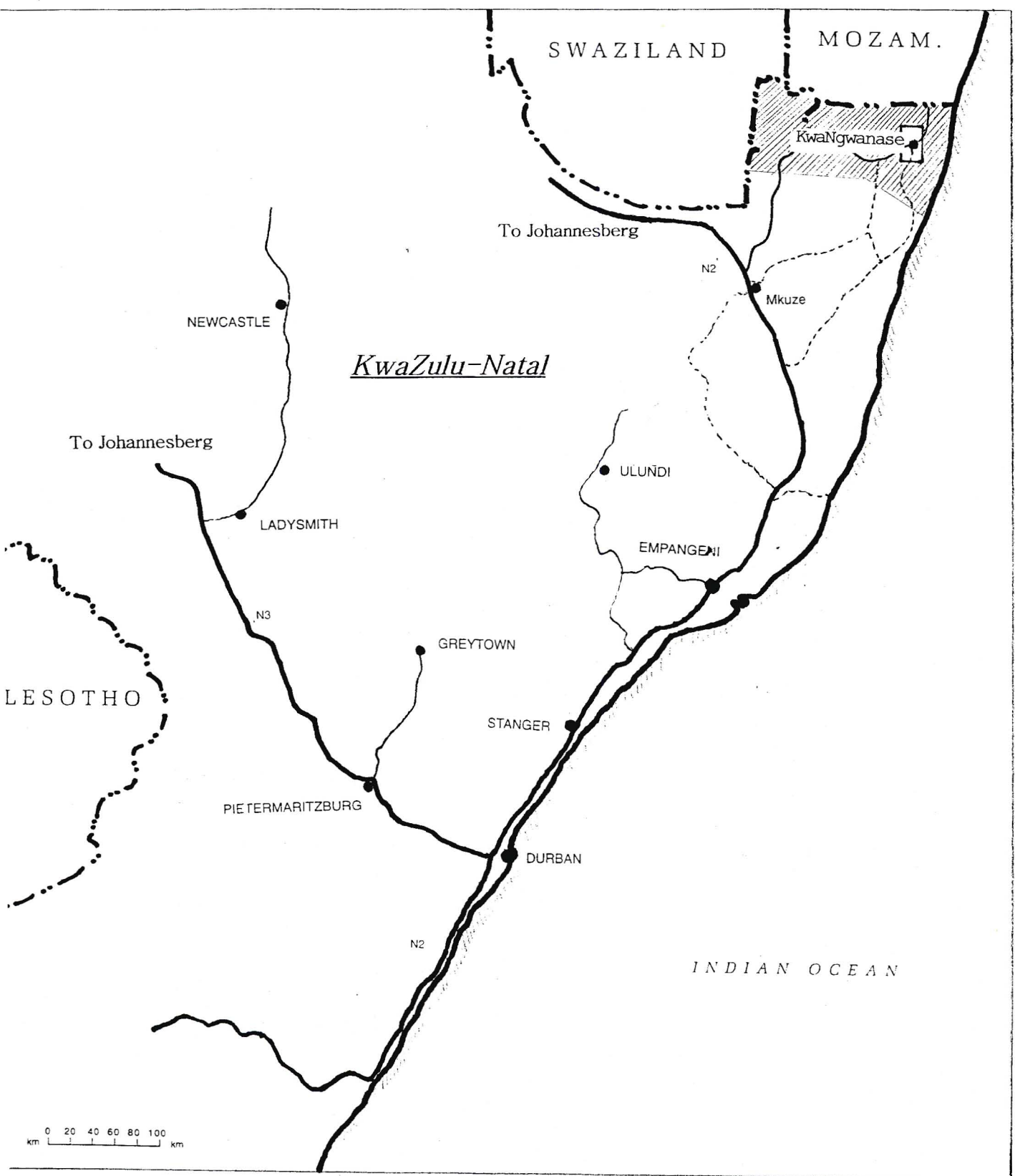
CHAPTER TWO

THE FIELD: COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL LIFE

1. Geography, History and Cultural Identity

Ingwavuma district is the most northerly coastal magisterial district in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. The territory of Ingwavuma covers approximately 4225km² and occupies the lowveld plains between the Indian Ocean and the Lebombo Mountains. The administrative boundary of Ingwavuma district stretches on the west from Lake Sibayi across the lowveld plain to the Pongola River, which creates a southern boundary from the neighbouring Ubombo magisterial district. The northern boundary coincides with the Mozambican border, while the western boundary is demarcated by the Lebombo Mountains. To the coast lies the Indian Ocean. Literally known as 'range of nose' or 'long range of mountains', the Lebombo mountains stand between Ingwavuma district and Swaziland. Then the Lebombo Mountains gently curve out towards the Indian Ocean and physically demarcate Ingwavuma from the rest of KwaZulu-Natal. Due to this physical demarcation, which causes geographical isolation, the people of Ingwavuma have developed their own cultural markers and shaped their own group identity.

In ecological terms, Ingwavuma is by no means an ideal place for human residence. The climate is unfavourable for both people and cattle. The summers are unbearably hot, often exceeding 40°C between December and February. This is also the time when deadly malaria epidemics occur fairly regularly. Pongolapoort (alternatively known as Jozini dam), lakes and swamps in Ingwavuma provide ideal places for malaria mosquito breeding. Although malaria epidemics are not an annual occurrence, they cause a serious threat for the people of Ingwavuma. Malaria epidemics severely attack cattle and this makes cattle herding extremely difficult (Krige, 1982:3). The climate in winter is mild. This season also has frequent rain which softens the soil, providing good conditions for ploughing. The annual average rainfall is about 500 to 700 mm p.a.



Map 1: The location of field area (KwaNgwanase)

and of this about 75% falls during the winter. Summer has infrequent rain that is quickly swallowed up by sandy soils and evaporated by the intense summer heat.

The land is generally infertile and acidic. Due to poor soil conditions, people are forced to live in environmentally demarcated areas. They cluster around riverbanks, swamp areas, forests, and coastal areas where the soil is relatively fertile. However, even in these fertile areas, agricultural and husbandry practices are generally difficult due to unpredictable rainfall and high temperatures. Nevertheless people have developed ecologically suitable crops and animal husbandry. Leslie's diary illustrated that in this area, "the soil seems to be pure sand.. yet it grows good crops of rice, beans,... yams, maize, kaffir corn... pigs and fowls... do pretty well..." (1875:244). Struthers also gave similar accounts in 1854: "The Natives (Thonga) here have no cattle... but they cultivate a great variety of grain-Maize, Mabele (Kaffir corn or sorghum), ...Rice... Cassava...watermelon" (1991:54). Some of these crops, particularly Cassava and watermelon, are known as 'cultural markers' (Harries, 1983:239-245) as these are unique to Ingwavuma. And all these ecological features, which will be more clear in following sections, have enabled Ingwavuma to maintain unique cultural and political entities for centuries, apart from the mainstream of Zulu culture.

Legends often provide good materials to trace the origin of a particular social group. Thonga legend tells us something about the history of Thonga migration. Some legends show how the first Thonga people emerged into Ingwavuma (Junod, 1927, vol.I:21ff).

The Ba-ka-Baloyi (an early ancestor of Thonga)... came down the valley of the Limpopo in very remote times: "It is the old, old road of Gwambe, the first man on earth who emerged from the reed (Junod, 1927, vol.I:22, my words in brackets)

This legend metaphorically reveals the historical route through which Thonga-speaking people migrated and thus creates a Thonga identity. Junod further records, "as regard the Tembe clan, it is said to have come down as far as Delagoa Bay from the Kalanga country by the Nkomati river on a floating island of papyrus, and to have crossed the Tembe river and settled to the south of the Bay" (Junod, 1927, vol.I:23).

The geographical features of Ingwavuma have cordoned the social and cultural life of the area from the rest of KwaZulu-Natal for centuries. Ingwavuma was historically known as AmaThongaland and the people of Ingwavuma were collectively known as the Thonga-speaking people. A literal meaning of Thonga is derived from "Orient" (-Ronga) in Thonga language and probably underwent phonetic change, R- into Th- in Zulu (Junod, 1927, vol.I:15). Some earlier travellers and missionaries commonly left historical records on this term (Fynn, 1986:35-50; Junod, 1927; Leslie, 1875). For instance, Bryant states:

The Zulu... applies it indiscriminately and generically to the Tembes, the Ntlwenges, the Nyembanes, in a word to every variety of east coast Bantu, people dwelling between himself and the Zambezi, and not belonging to the Soto or Nguni group - peoples, all of whom... Tongas! (1964:99)

Fynn also argues that the "natives of Delagoa and the surrounding country are called Amahlwenga by the Zulu, and differ from the latter in manners and language" (1986:46). Amathonga is therefore a term that is particularly assigned to those who live between the north shore of St. Lucia and southern reach of Delagoa Bay.

The term 'Thonga' gains some political implications often given to it by outsiders, particularly, by neighbouring super powers, adapted by missionaries and later officialised by colonial administrators. It was probably in the time of mfecane, during which Shaka Zulu shook the political stability of southern Africa and subjugated many neighbouring African societies. The Thonga began to be regarded as subject, thus inferior, to the conquering Zulu¹. Many chiefs in AmaThongaland paid tribute to the Zulu and were regarded as one of the subjugated groups (Webster, 1991:248). Probably for this reason, the geographical setting of AmaThongaland conveys a political and ideological perception that the Thonga are subordinate to the Zulu².

AmaThongaland was one of the major labour markets of Portuguese and British colonialists. Since the 18th century, massive numbers of voluntary and forced labourers left AmaThongaland to work in, Johannesburg, Transvaal and Natal as mining and sugarcane labourers³. These migrant labourers were exposed to foreign cultural elements, particularly the Zulu, who might have been favoured as labourers⁴. As the mining labourers returned to their homes, they brought with them foreign (Zulu) cultural elements and Westernisation. As most of the migrant labourers were male and Zuluised,

two distinctive cultural domains may have developed: Zuluised male and Thongan female. Even today, the discourse on dual identity (Zulu-Thonga identity) along gender lines can be heard among the local people.

The cultural importation and assimilation was a slow process, in which the KwaNgwanase people were gradually assimilated to the Zulu. Bryant states that "the consequences of this all-permeating Zulu-Nguni ascendancy was that the distinctive Tonga character of the Tembe people became considerably modified... assimilating itself even more and more to the Zulu type" (1964:104).

The extensive development of a Zulu identity might be at the root of politically oriented protest led by the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) during the early 1980s. The South African government agreed to hand some part of KwaZulul-Natal to Swaziland (Webster, 1991:248). Ingwavuma was part of this deal and fierce reaction followed when the IFP under Buthelezi rejected this deal (Buthelezi, 1982). The deal fell through as the Supreme Court of South Africa decided in favour of the IFP (National Survey, 1983:375-379). Zulu jingoism has developed since then as the IFP tried to consolidate its political power in Ingwavuma. Some evidence shows that, after the IFP became a political agency in KwaNgwanase, the people of KwaNgwanase had to be registered as Zulu. Otherwise, social and economic disadvantage followed (*ibid*). As we have seen, then, Zulu identity is the result of historical construction among the local people in changing social and political environments.

Geographic classification entails hierarchical order in reference to cultural, political and economic dimensions. Therefore, when people call those who live in Thongaland the 'AmaThonga', it signifies not only a geographical distinction (those who live in Thongaland), but more importantly a deeply ingrained cultural and political bias. For instance, umhlaba uyalingana (the land of unvarying flatness) has been used as an identical term for Thongaland. It might have been used as a mild form of degrading the people of Thongaland in the past. Therefore, the meaning of umhlaba uyalingana is not favoured among the local people. To the outsiders, particularly to the Zulu, umhlaba uyalingana was a marginal, unpleasant place to live, heavily infested with malaria and tsetse fly. The people of umhlaba uyalingana were outsiders⁵.

Marginalisation, in a secular context, particularly in political and economic terms, means being powerless, forgotten and subject to the centre. Well aware of this historical disadvantage, the people of Ingwavuma do not like, and actually avoid using, the term 'Thonga'. It is often taken to be insulting or derogatory to the people. A local informant told me, "now (outside) people know (that) we are Zulus. In the past, when I was still young, when (outside) people hear [sic] that I am from umhlaba uyalingana, they said, 'you are Thonga'. This makes me angry and I fight [sic] with them."

It is a widely held notion that Ingwavuma is a marginalised land both socially and geographically in South Africa and such historical and political marginalisation earmarks cultural inferiority.

The distinctive feature of language has long been accepted as a major index of ethnic identity. For instance, Zulu-speaking people, Xhosa-speaking people and Sotho-speaking people have been accorded separate ethnic identities. A rough linguistic map of African people seems to have existed even before the advent of Europeans.

While it is clear that the language spoken in Thongaland had not been classified as Zulu by missionaries and travellers in the 19th century, the official language in the area today is isiZulu. However, it does not mean that the spoken language in Ingwavuma is the standardised Zulu. In fact, the spoken Zulu in Ingwavuma differs from the rest of KwaZulu-Natal. Among my informants was a divining novice who comes from Durban. He was under divining training (becoming a diviner) and often complained to me that he could not fully understand the Zulu which the locals spoke⁶.

The homestead structure is built in a lineal pattern rather than in the circular form that is commonly found elsewhere in the region (Krige, 1982:31). Webster considers this a cultural distinction setting off the area from the rest of Zululand (1991:250). The household compound consists of a number of traditional huts, Western styled houses and gardens. Each homestead has both traditional huts (izindlu), built in the form of thatched roof supported by round shaped mud walls, and modern buildings, built of cement blocks and with corrugated iron roofs in an oblong style (locally called "four-cornered house"). This modern building is favoured by the local people, although the construction cost is much greater than for traditional huts. The

floor is plastered with cement and regularly smeared with a red wax in order to give a polished look.

Each homestead has a number of gardens surrounding it. Gardens are important to the people both for subsistence and commercial purposes. Various kinds of green vegetable (imifino), (sweet) potatoes, pumpkins, chillies, onions, tomatoes, amadumbe (Egyptian taro) and cassavas are planted, mainly by women⁷. Green vegetables, particularly spinach and pumpkin leaves, are crucial for the local people's dietary pattern which is otherwise deficient in green vegetables. Products from gardens are also a source of cash income for some local people, who hawk these products at the market place and on the street.

The cattle byre (isibayi) is generally absent from homesteads. As Felgate claims in Krige (1982:5), the absence of cattle byres is due to the harsh ecological conditions, the direst of which are the ubiquitous and malaria-bearing mosquito and tsetse fly. This might have been true in the past. There is, according to my field research, another practical reason for the lack of cattle. Traditionally, male members of a household are responsible for herding cattle. Therefore once an increasing number of male members began to be drawn out of their homes into migrant labour, cattle herding became difficult to sustain on a homestead basis. As a result, professional cattle herders have emerged. The fee charged by the professional cattle herder varies. Mrs. Busisiwe, the female head of my residence during fieldwork, employs a professional cattle herder to look after her cows. This cattle herder has agreed to take a calf or its equivalent cash value for a year's service. Besides cattle, chickens and goats are a popular husbandry among the people. These animals are of crucial importance, not only for consumption but, more importantly, they are the main ritual sacrificial victims in ancestral veneration. People generally do not kill goats or chickens except to hold a feast to make a ritual sacrifice.

Each homestead is structurally divided into two spaces: a sacred space for ancestors and a profane space for residents. Modern buildings are generally assigned to the everyday life of residents. Ancestral spirits are believed to prefer the traditional huts as their dwelling. In particular, among the number of huts, the great hut (indlunkhulu) has a crucial importance for ancestral veneration. In addition to the

great hut, each homestead has a sacred shrine called ikandelo somewhere in the house compound. This sacred shrine is often marked by a special tree. Generally it is located in the middle of the homestead or near the great hut. However, this is not a strict rule that must be followed. The trees in the sacred shrine represent ancestors. Most ritual ceremonies are held in one or other of these sacred places.

Some well-off households in KwaNgwanase have modernised kitchens and are equipped with fancy modern electric cooking facilities. But most homesteads have their 'kitchen' in the yard. The cooking place is generally located in a corner of the yard enclosed by bushwood. Prominent trees shade the 'kitchen' and provide protection from the rain.

2. Social and Economic Life of the KwaNgwanase

KwaNgwanase is the largest sub-district of Ingwavuma magisterial district. The district population is approximately eleven hundred thousand, but illegal immigrants may add about twenty percent to the total⁸. The exact number of households and population in my field areas is not known. However, it is possible to roughly estimate the population size in KwaNgwanase as 13 to 15 hundred thousand⁹.

Manguzi is a fast growing town and has a relatively dense population; houses are packed close together, sanitation is rather poorly developed; small shebeens and tuckshops are sprawled over the area. Manguzi is a gateway for the local people to contact the world outside, as it has the last bus terminal in the north-eastern part of KwaZulu-Natal. Also there is a taxi rank which serves local people travelling to Johannesburg, Durban, eMpangeni and many other places. In contrast to Manguzi, which is a commercial and industrial centre, Thandizwe and eNgozini remain purely residential areas. Houses are generally built in ecologically suitable places as Felgate observed earlier (Krige, 1982:28). Riverside sites provide permanent water sources and are favoured as much as bush areas, for bush provides good shade during the hot summer.

While the distinctive structure of homestead and village in KwaNgwanase has an ecological basis, it has mystical implications as well. People try by all means to live

a comfortable distance away from neighbours who are not agnatic relatives. This may be explained in terms of practical considerations, in order to secure enough space for gardening. However, the pervasive fear of witchcraft is reflected in the common pattern of homesteads outside of Manguzi. A good distance between houses and the openness of the homestead are seen as fundamental means of gaining protection from witchcraft. The general distance between homesteads varies from a few meters up to a fifty meters. Intervening between them are farmland or gardens. The explicit reason given to me for the scattered pattern of houses is that the local people are afraid of witchcraft. Felgate (Krieger, 1982:28) makes the same observation. Physical proximity is uncomfortable to them, particularly with strangers whom they are prone to suspect of being witches. The fear of witchcraft is additionally represented in the structure of the homestead. Most homesteads have no fences or gates. Although this means that one can enter the homestead from any convenient direction, the visitor must be cautious about using customarily unapproved entrances. Only the direct frontal approach is deemed to be appropriate. It is a suspect and insulting way of behaviour to the members of homestead to take any other route. The homestead owner does not like it, and does not allow it, because of witchcraft.

KwaNgwanase maintains a typical dual social and economic system as commonly observed in South African rural communities. It is naïve to insist that the people of KwaNgwanase still maintain the traditional way of social and economic life. While the local people preserve traditional and customary ways, at the same time, there are many significant indicators of growing commercialisation, westernisation and modernisation in their lifestyle.

KwaNgwanase maintains a distinguishable dual economic system: self-sustainable farming and a market oriented economic activity, but the boundary between them is not clear-cut. Most households possess some farmland and gardens on which they practise horticulture. The products from farms and gardens provide the main diet for the people. When local people plough, often several thousand square meters at a time, they need ox-traction. Mrs. Busisiwe has gardens of about five thousand square meters in size. Annually she had employed an ox-ploughing farmer to plough her farm and paid about R650. The work is slow and it normally takes some days to complete. But in 1988, Mrs.

Busisiwe was one of the few people who employed a tractor instead of ox-ploughing. She paid only R500 and the ploughing was done in a single day.

In the planting season, extra labour is required and, due to poverty, unemployment and commercialisation, many poor local people are employed in daily 'piece jobs'. The payment was R20 a day. But there was keen competition for the available jobs among the local poor, and foreign immigrants were willing to work for half the going rate.

Land is an essential economic resource for the people of KwaNgwanase and traditional regulations govern the land relationship (Junod, 1927, II:5-9). Ultimately land ownership belongs to the chief from the Tembe royal lineage, who subsequently releases sections of land to his headmen (izinduna). Therefore actual land transfers occur between local headmen and individual applicants. If an individual wants to possess a particular plot of land, (s)he must broach the matter with the local headman. The headman examines the location of the land, solicits opinion from adjoining landholders or neighbours, and then makes his decision. Customarily, once the individual is entitled to the use of land, it becomes a private property on the condition that it is not negotiable for cash transaction. But occasionally commercial transactions in land can occur with the local headman's tacit consent.

Rosalin, a female diviner in eNgezini, bought a piece of land (2,000 square meters) adjoining her farm from a neighbour. She paid R400 for this. The previous landowner, Mr. Msheli, did not alert the headman to the transaction. Rosalin, after purchasing the land, planted gum trees on it. Severe protests were registered by her neighbours, claiming "gum trees will eat up water" and therefore their crops will not get enough water. They wanted Rosalin to cut down the gum trees. Rosalin responded by taking the case to the local headman who was a close friend of hers. One day, the local headman accompanying Rosalin, her husband and local policemen (no complaining neighbours attended) visited the disputed site. His judgement was that "it is totally up to the owner of the land whatever she plants on that land. People cannot complain about it", to which the policemen agreed. After that they went to the tribal court to draw up a document for signature and that was the end of it.

This is obviously against local custom in KwaNgwanase, whereby selling and purchasing land is prohibited. But some people argue that, in these commercial transactions, it is not land that is being sold but immovable property, i.e. trees, building and crops, on the land. A local informant clearly stated that "land cannot be sold and purchased. But you can sell trees, buildings and any other valuable things on your land". Still others hold that even this offends against custom, that land cannot be involved in any way in a commercial transaction.

In fact, Rosalin's case is one of infrequent occurrence, for there are still plenty of uncultivated plots available for residence and farming. Local people simply clear out an area of bush and plant crops on it without having to inform the headman. It belongs to the people who reclaimed the wild bushland, provided that (s)he does not cross the boundary of another's farm.

Crops and fruits are commercialised as well. Maize and peanuts are the two staple crops in KwaNgwanase, planted twice a year (July and February) and stored in an ithala (granary) behind the house, mainly for household consumption. If the harvest is good and there is a bumper crop, the surplus can be sold, though 'A' grade peanuts only fetch R3 a kg at the market. Some natural fruits, such as mangoes and oranges, are sold. During the mango season, local people spend days on end harvesting mangoes, but Indian merchants only pay R5 per bucketfull of mangoes (about twenty of them). The sale of these agricultural products clearly does not meet the people's material needs, hence they must engage in the cash economy in other ways, e.g. hawking, paid employment and so on.

Manguzi has long served as a reservoir of migrant labourers for the mines and large sugarcane farms (Harris, 1959; Harries, 1983; Pevenne, 1995). Most grown men have one or more periods of experience as migrant labourers on the mines, as sugarcane labourers and as factory hands. But mainly due to South Africa's depressed economy, many of them have been retrenched and have returned home. The manager of a local recruiting agency told me that he had a long waiting list of labourers who want to go to Johannesburg for mining work, but there is no demand for their service.

Some local people have turned themselves into petit-entrepreneurs by conducting a self-employed business, such as running a tuckshop or a shebeen. But these businesses

are so numerous that they swamp the market and leave little scope for success. Some are fortunate to have saved money from migratory work, so that back home they manage to buy a bakkie (small truck) and use it as a means of business, or to operate locally and further afield as an unregistered 'pirate' taxi¹⁰.

People have become dependent on these illegal operators for local transport. Pirate taxi owners also sometimes undertake more serious illegal business which will provide them with a better income. The case of Mr. Mtembe (33) will illustrate many of the foregoing points. A tuckshop owner, he also has a bakkie, bought from his savings after several years working in Johannesburg. He uses his bakkie mainly for fetching and carrying goods for the tuckshop. For instance, to supply one of his customers' main demands, injemani¹¹ (a locally brewed beer from Mozambique), he goes to KwaPhuza (lit. the place of drink) where cross-border injemani trading between Mozambican suppliers and local clients is held every Wednesday and Saturday¹². Mtembu carries his own 25l containers and fills them with injemani. This injemani cannot be consumed in its raw state, for it is very strong, and Mtembu waters it down before selling it to his customers. He minimises his travel costs by taking passengers who also go to KwaPhuza for the same purpose. Mtembu charges passengers R4 for the round trip. During the day, he uses his bakkie as a local taxi¹³. For a trip to Manguzi, Mtembu charges R2 per passenger and R20 (called "special taxi") for a single passenger who wants to use the bakkie alone. This form of 'pirating' does help Mtembu to get a satisfactory income compared to some other locals. He does, however, conduct another dangerous taxi operation. Mtembu often goes out at night, close to the South African-Mozambican border. There he organises illegal immigrants from Mozambique and carries them into the thick bush near Manguzi. For the immigrants this is the safest way to get deep into South Africa. Another bakkie waits for these illegal passengers and offers them transportation wherever they want to go, mostly Johannesburg and Soweto, where they believe money awaits them. Mtembe would not give details about this business¹⁴ and he told me that he does not like it, for there is the constant risk of being picked up by soldiers and policemen¹⁵.

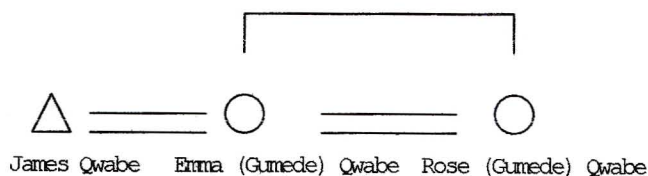
There has been significant growth in the market-oriented economy, especially in Manguzi, since the beginning of the 1980s. Jabulani, a local informant who grew up in

eNgozini, informed me that there was only one tuck shop in Manguzi prior to 1980. The nearest big town by then was KwaTembe and most of the local people found work in that town. KwaTembe is a Mozambican town but since the national border has been drawn between South Africa and Mozambique, it is no longer possible (or desirable) to go over there. Manguzi began to open up its market to the outside in the early 1980s when regular transportation became available and, by the middle of the 1980s, the introduction of the mini-taxi had transformed everything. As communication with the outside expanded, Manguzi has grown rapidly.

3. Outsiders and Local Identity

Patrilineality and patrilocality are both ideal and practical principles of family structure. The patrilineal principle stresses bonds between agnates, members of a corporate group who congregate particularly for the purpose of ancestral veneration and ritual performances. Agnation is also the principal line of inheritance. Ideally agnatic members need to live together or in close proximity. However, today when a man marries, he moves out of his agnatic cluster and establishes an independent homestead. But the new homestead is never far removed from the natal home, so that they can physically maintain their corporate identity.

Preferential marriage still operates in KwaNgwanase. For instance, cross-cousin marriage and marriage to wife's younger sister is the ideal form of preferential marriage (Krige, 1982:113-5; Junod, 1927, vol.I:253). I have a record of the occurrence of this marriage in Ekuthukuzeni.



Jabulani, a diviner informant, is eager to marry his wife's brother's daughter (sibali). He often mentioned, "I can marry my wife's brother's daughter. Actually my wife's brother is willing to do that." Parallel-cousin marriage between people of the

same surname is regarded as a breach of the incest taboo from which will follow a severe punishment from the ancestors. People of course can marry someone who shares the same surname, though the case is extremely rare and it requires a special ritual ceremony known as 'break the blood relationship' (Junod, 1927, volume I:254).

I have collected a total of 60 cases of marriage from 40 households in the field area. No fewer than 43 of the 60 marriages were between local partners, whilst only four local people (two female and two male) were married to Mozambican partners. There is only one Mozambican married couple in eNgezini. There were only four Swazis in my genealogy data and only one has found a local spouse. Therefore the marriage pattern in KwaNgwanase is predominantly in-marriage within the boundary of Ingwavuma district. But there is one thing must be mentioned about the practice of local marriage. The location of my field area, Manguzi, Thandizwe and eNgezini, is only 20km away from Mozambique. And it is no more than two decades since the concept of national boundary has been consolidated in local thinking. Before that there was fairly free movement and communication across the border: local people even had jobs in Mozambique. Shangaan-speaking people are, of course, quite different from the local people in social and cultural background. But Mozambicans who are living near the border are not strangers to the local people. Even today, although under heavy military monitoring, the local people enter into regular social contact and economic exchange with Mozambicans. Thus the people's ideas of locality may be more social in scope and not confined within state-decreed boundaries. It is therefore difficult to draw a firm line between 'in-marriage' and 'out-marriage', as some Mozambicans may be by now considered to be locals (cf. Webster, 1991).

Webster (1991) presents the local ethnographic situation as one in which identity is reconstructed by changing the surname. According to Webster's description, an informant's identity is determined by his/her political situation. One such informant, known as Mkhukhu, altered his surname from Tembe to MThembu. He knew that he was on the point of being ousted from a political office that by tradition was still vested in the Tembe-Thonga lineage group, and to which his former name gave him claim. His new name gave him a bona fide South African identity by means of which he could enter the migrant labour market (ibid:253). My collection of genealogies offers similar

examples of reshaping identity by altering the surname. Sakile, a tuckshop owner, revealed to me that his father's surname is Tembe (from Swaziland). But when stating his own identity, he stressed that he is Mthembu, not Tembe. The reason given to me for the surname change was that he was born in KwaNgwanase.

Daniel Mlambo (42) claims that he was born in KwaNgwanase. His grandfather, Matshuba Gumede, was also born in KwaNgwanase. His grandfather, however, migrated to Mozambique along with Ngwanase (eponymous founder of KwaNgwanase) and Mbiya (a local headman), and became an impi (a warrior) of the Shangaan leader Gungunyane. Daniel's father, also born in KwaNgwanase, had five sons and five daughters. Daniel is the eldest son among them. His parents, after producing ten children, emigrated to Mozambique. He was, however, brought up by his uncle (umzala, mother's brother?) whose surname is Mlambo. Daniel consequently discarded his surname (Gumede) in favour of his uncle's surname (Mlambo). The local people do not accept his genealogical history. They challenge as illogical the historical explanation that his grandfather was Gungunyane's impi. Gungunyane was the last of Shangaan chiefs in 1850s, and Ngwanase defected from Portuguese rule in 1890s and never returned. Neither do they accept that Daniel's birthplace was KwaNgwanase. However, according to Daniel's own explanation, his family did originate from KwaNgwanase, but later went to Mozambique to serve Gungunyane, while his parents also relocated to Mozambique. It left unexplained how Daniel's father was born and living in KwaNgwanase if his grandfather was in Mozambique. Furthermore, the local informants told me, by way of further evidence to the contrary, that his language is different from that of the people of KwaNgwanase. True or not, Daniel's recount is but one instance of a tendency for claiming or contesting local identity on the basis of manipulating genealogical reckoning and of fabricating personal history.

But since the early 1990s, foreign migrants cross the Mozambican border into South Africa in increasing numbers, either following the lure of a legendary city of gold (Johannesburg) or more pragmatically to gain access to bright South African cities. They leave their economically disrupted countries to look for a change of fortune in South Africa. Some of them settle down in KwaNgwanase, but the majority wish to push on to 'big cities'. They stay in KwaNgwanase temporarily, attempting to save enough money to get them to the large urban centres.

The living conditions of illegal immigrants are miserable. They are without money and sustenance and easily succumb to criminal activities. A couple of migrants I came across told me that they had walked and walked for months to get to South Africa. Not all are Shangaan speakers from Mozambique.

I met Frank George in Manguzi, an 18 year old who came from Dar-es-salam, Tanzania, where he had lived with his mother and sisters. The life of Dar-es-salam was, according to Frank, miserable. "Fuck-off Dar-es-salam" was his summation of his home city. He had no job, no education; hunger and starvation were part of everyday life. He was without hope in Dar-es-salam. He often heard of the glittering cities of South Africa and many people around him actually abandoned their homes and headed for South Africa with only a slender hope of making money. Frank one day joined such a group but he had barely enough money for the bus fare to Maputo, and was forced to continue the journey on foot. He spent a month at KwaTembe on the Mozambique side of the South African border. While there, he picked up some Zulu words and sentences and was able to save a little bit of money. Then four months after setting out from Dar-es-Salam, he crossed the border and arrived in Manguzi. He wanted to get a job (normally illegal migrants are privately employed as houseworkers) at Manguzi for a while and to save enough money to travel to Soweto, his ultimate destination.

Illegal immigrants normally take to the thick bush at night to avoid being caught by the police and army patrols. Illegal immigrants are greatly disliked by the local people, who regard them as unfair competitors for limited employment. The newcomers will work as housemaids or gardeners in Manguzi for as little as R150 a month. Should they save enough money for transportation, they will leave their jobs to go to any of the major cities, the most favoured places being Johannesburg, Soweto, eMpangeni and Durban. But here the exposure to arrest is greatly increased. They do not possess South African identity documents, they cannot reply to police questioning them in Zulu, and can be given away by their mark of immunisation (South Africans and Shangaans are said to have immunisation on different parts of the arm). If the suspect cannot meet two of these conditions, answering questions in isiZulu and displaying the proper mark of immunisation, producing the identity document will be of no avail.¹⁶

There seems to be clear ethnic distinctions drawn between KwaNgwanase residents and the mostly Shangaan immigrants from Mozambique. First of all, local people claim that Shangaan is incomprehensible to them and coin a term "kwerekwere" to indicate its unintelligible nature, its being a phonetic rendering of some Shangaan. The term "palampalam" is used similarly. "Don't speak 'palampalam'. Policeman will catch you" is a joking statement often addressed to illegal immigrants. Local people also attribute genetic differences to Shangaan (and other illegal immigrants) to underpin their ethnic identity. There might be a slight physical difference between the locals and immigrants, but it is not so marked. Nevertheless, some local people argue that the Shangaan person is black. Zakhele, a neighbour of mine, used to point his finger at a Shangaan and exclaim, "they (Shangaan) are black". I jokingly responded that "your skin is blacker than the Shangaan (Indeed he has darker skin colour than the Shangaan he pointed out)". But he fiercely insisted, "No. I am not black. They (Shangaan) are black."

This construction of alien imagery based on alleged genetic difference is soon developed into a cultural bias. "Shangaans and other foreign illegal immigrants are uncivilised" is another common stereotype among the local people. This lack of civilisation is considered to be intrinsic to the character of the illegal immigrant. "They are tshotshis (ruffians). They steal our food, our clothes and even our husbands." 'Stealing husbands' is a description particularly applied to relationships between local married men and unmarried female immigrants¹⁷. One local informant typified Shangaans as immoral thieves. She continued, "when they come, we accommodate them, feed them, and they run away with our food and clothes." Consequently, housebreaking and stealing are most often attributed to the depredations of such illegal immigrants.

This stigmatisation of illegal immigrants is further developed into their being depicted as mystically imbued anti-social agents. Illegal immigrants are labelled "witches". Local people are not reluctant to point out the houses of Shangaan immigrants and to stigmatise them as "witches". These illegal immigrants have no means of appealing against this stigma. They have no legal standing and are said to bribe local headmen to get a piece of land. For now, land pressure is not so high in

KwaNgwanase and hence no case of witch accusation has emerged out of a land dispute. But the issue of foreign illegal immigrants can erupt into accusations of witchcraft at any time once land becomes a scarce resource.

4. Health and Health Facilities

The people of KwaNgwanase have considerable interest on their health and wellbeing, and in many cases they link them to the realm of the supernatural. They clearly distinguish between physical affliction derived from inadequate dietary patterns and poor hygiene, and disability derived from mystical pollution caused by breaking of taboos, even accidental transgression. Social (or wilful) non-conformity (failure to maintain good relations) further triggers ancestral anger or leaves one open to witchcraft. The KwaNgwanase people do not entirely depend on mystical agents, such as diviners, and do not blindly pursue mystical resolutions for the prevention and restoration of health. Rather they make rational choices as to whether an affliction will best respond to treatment by a medically trained doctor or to the ministrations of a traditional healer.

The core medical institution in Manguzi is the Manguzi general hospital. The Manguzi hospital was established in the 1960s by missionaries, when it was known as the Manguzi Methodist Hospital. It was handed over to the provincial government in 1981, since when it has been sponsored by the KwaZulu-Natal government. Manguzi Hospital is a most influential medical institution, both socially and economically, in the lives of the local people. This hospital charges jobless local people a mere four rands for consultation and treatment (including a basic prescription). It can accommodate about one thousand patients in an emergency, for instance, during a malaria epidemic. The hospital also has some advanced medical facilities and deals in almost every dimension of health provision. It employs a number of health workers, each of whom is allocated a particular area of households. The health worker's mission is to inform people of the danger of chronic disease, AIDS, and common afflictions found in KwaNgwanase and of how to prevent them. The general response of the local people is apathy. Most are living

from hand to mouth, and the improvement of their economic conditions is their first priority.

The problem of this hospital, however, is that there are too few doctors¹⁸ and most of the medical facilities are outdated. High blood pressure (for the aged) and asthma (children) are common forms of sickness that the hospital can treat with some success. If the hospital is not capable of treating patients, it transfers them to more advanced hospitals in Durban at no extra charge. Local people are quite confident about some of the medical facilities, such as x-ray, to the extent that they explain clearly the problem of suffering.

The attitude of local people towards the Manguzi hospital, however, is not uniformly positive. Although it has some advanced medical facilities, the basic facilities are seriously limited. The shortage of medicine is particularly serious. Patients often have to wait for half a day to consult a doctor. It causes quite a disruption to their lives, for many locals live day by day, relying for their livelihood on hawking in market places. Thus, a visit to the hospital equals the loss of a day's income. Moreover, the indifference of doctors towards patients is a major complaint. Doctors are not permanently employed; they are on government contract and when they finish their term (normally two or three years) they move to other hospitals. It is difficult for a patient to establish any ongoing relationship with a doctor.

One day, I had occasion to visit the hospital with an old woman and her granddaughter, who was complaining of pain in the chest. We waited more than five hours and were quite exhausted. Finally we were granted a five-minute consultation and were prescribed Panado (a pain killer). I asked that old woman about the consultation. The old woman was a bit angry, "He said to me that my granddaughter has no problem and gave me panado only." Some other patients complained, "doctors never show seriousness to patients. The only medicine they give us is panado. We have waited for four or five hours for nothing. They say that there is no problem." Of course there may be a degree of exaggeration, for despite this problem, local people keep going to the hospital. Still they clearly have expectations that are not being met.

The Local Izinyanga Association is a traditional healers' association. Although the association is named after traditional herbalists (izinyanga) its membership

includes all other traditional healers, such as, diviners (izangoma) and prophets (amapropheti) and prayers (amathandizo). This organisation was founded in 1996 at the suggestion of the KwaZulu-Natal government. Currently, about sixty traditional healers are registered with this association.

The primary long-term aim of the association is to build traditional healers' hospitals. At present, traditional healers are practising their business on an individual basis. In the meantime, there is a lack of information exchange and no existing standardised curing procedures. The chairman of the Izinyanga association expects that his association will facilitate a fluid exchange of specific medical information among traditional healers. This 'scientification' of traditional treatment is the dominant immediate aim of the association, but it is likely to be a cloak for the achievement of bureaucratic control rather than 'scientific' openness. Another main purpose of this association is to bridge the gap between the Western hospital and traditional healers. To achieve this goal, the association and the staff of Manguzi hospital meet monthly to discuss medical co-operation. Traditional healers are to register with the Manguzi hospital within their specialised areas of healing and, if doctors should fail to heal a patient, they will send him/her to one of registered traditional healers. Alternatively, a patient may be referred in the other direction.

Some traditional healers are, however, sceptical about the Izinyanga association. I asked Isabel, a female diviner informant, about the Izinyanga association. She replied, "I have heard of it, but nobody (the staff of the association) came to inform us about this. I will not register with this association, for I don't want to reveal my way of treatment to other traditional healers." This informant apparently disagreed with the idea of sharing her specific knowledge about treatment with other traditional healers. Her statement is understandable if considered in terms of a business operation: divining practice is highly competitive among traditional healers and no one would like to share his/her unique prescription of herbal medicine with other diviners for nothing. Jabulani, a local diviner, rejected the izinyanga association as "Shangaan diviners' association" in order to get influence over the local people. Although the statement is based on groundless speculation, some

traditional healers hold the opinion that the Izinyanga association is only for a number of traditional healers, not for all.

Attitudes towards traditional healers, especially, diviners, vary from one person to the other. Some believe that diviners are fearsome and dangerous, for they are believed to possess mysterious supernatural powers. These people believe that greedy diviners can abuse their powers for selfish purposes or channel them into witchcraft. Greedy diviners can, for instance, lure away your ancestral spirits to fortify their own divining power. Some suspect diviners of being, solely interested in extracting money rather than being interested in the welfare of their patients. However, the majority of local people respect diviners for possessing extraordinary abilities of gaining access to ancestral spirits. Diviners are believed to be agents of ancestral spirits, who reveal themselves through izangoma's bodies. Nevertheless and despite such divided opinion, diviners and other traditional healers carry on the major portion of healing practice in KwaNgwanase.

5. Religion, Morality and Well-Being

The network of customary regulations is a fundamental social mechanism that governs the life of people in KwaNgwanase. These customary regulations are principally designed for maintaining social order, but another crucial role they have is to release sanctions upon those who violate them. Often mystical beings, as in other African societies, are agents for imposing these sanctions upon the people who break social order in KwaNgwanase. Hammond-Tooke (1974:324-35) has correctly stated that "Religious and moral systems ... lay down norms of behaviour and provide occasion for the symbolic expression of these norms - and sanctions to prevent their breach". There are, he continues, "other social mechanisms for coping with conflict situations... But these mechanisms are imperfect: the fundamental norms and values must be restated with a greater than human authority - and everywhere this authority is conceptualized as residing in supernatural or super-empirical beings". Hammond-Tooke's assertion stresses the importance of supernatural sanction as a prime means of social regulation among South African people. These supernatural sanctions are closely related to the concepts

of health and wellbeing, both individual and social. The KwaNgwanase people are keen to maintain social order and to keep disorder within bounds. To be in a situation 'out of order' is something dangerous and to be feared, and it must be fixed up before the matter gets out of hand.

In many cases, threats to normal health and social wellbeing come from disorder in relations between the living and supernatural powers. To the people of KwaNgwanase, preserving the traditional cosmological order is crucial to maintaining a healthy life for all. Many afflictions are originally derived from damaged relationships between ancestors and their progeny. Ancestors are essentially regarded as benefactors to their progeny, looking out for their descendants' well-being, prosperity and health. In response, ancestors demand regular offerings and a show of family unity. Being asked, "when do ancestors most get angry?", Jabulani answered me by saying, "it is when ancestors are forgotten. People have to do some services from time to time. There is no particular time, but they can offer something at any event. For instance, if you have a party, you can slaughter a chicken or a goat and say, 'thank you ancestors'. That's all. It is not difficult. Ancestors will be happy with that and they will protect you. Another time they (ancestors) get angry is when people (of the same family) argue with each other, brother to brother, father to children, husband to wife and so on. The noise from these quarrels make ancestors angry, for they want to see their sons and daughters live in harmony."

Witchcraft is one of the most prevalent, though not always openly acknowledged, causes of affliction in KwaNgwanase. The following is an example of a patient who had been suffering from witchcraft.

Mbongeni (34) is an unmarried man who finished school some years ago. Like many young men in Manguzi, he has no job. So I arranged with him to be my personal interpreter on an early exploratory visit to my field area in 1996. When I arrived to begin my fieldwork, however, I found that he was unable to help me. His left upper body was almost paralysed and he could hardly speak. He personally believed that he was 'bewitched'. Initially, he went to see a medical doctor, but the doctor failed to cure him. The doctor could not understand what was wrong with Mbongeni. But Mbongeni believed something was messing up his brain and he felt severe pains around his heart.

So he consulted an *isangoma* but the diviner did not satisfy him (the diviner told him that his ancestral spirits were angry). By the time I saw him, he was already planning to consult another diviner. About a week later, he came to see me and said, "now I am alright. Another diviner told me that somebody bewitched me. She gave me imithi (traditional herbal medicines) and after taking it I felt better and now I am perfect." His condition had visibly improved.

As people view the matters of health and misfortune in conjunction with the violation of social and cosmological order, they have recourse to various types of rituals to remedy these situations. The form and content of such rituals vary from simple and irregular beer offerings to the elaborated coming out ritual of a diviner candidate which lasts at least three full days. Rituals also vary from an exclusively private and secretive activity (only the afflicted person is engaged in this type of ritual) to more open and public occasions (a whole lineage group or community participates).

Misfortunes and health problems are often related to supernatural beings or to malevolent forces, such as witches and their familiars, or to the invasion of evil spirits. The greatest concern of the local people is to expel evil forces out of his/her proximity¹⁹ and to prevent its recurrence. For instance, there are three major rituals of expellation: ukugeza (washing out darkness), ukufutha (steaming out misfortune) and ukubethela (exorcising evil spirits)²⁰. All of these rituals are geared to the perennial fight against evil, particularly manifest in the alleged malevolence of witches and their familiars. First of all, the afflicted person places his misfortunes and health problem before a diviner. If the diviner reveals the problem to be caused by evil spirits, for instance, the patient is directed to perform a particular ritual according to his condition, the seriousness of the problem and the state of his financial situation.

If bears repeating that rituals are not the only means the afflicted person can resort to; the patient will try every other possible means, especially that which is much cheaper and more effective, to deal with misfortune and health problems. Rituals are virtually the last resort the afflicted person would go for, even though in the mind of the KwaNgwanase residents, misfortune and illness have not so much a biological

or environmental foundation but rather spring from the broken relationships within the social and supernatural spheres. Ultimately, people are pragmatists in their approach to health issues.

From the foregoing, it emerges that KwaNgwanase is a loosely organised, impoverished and cash-strapped community. While the presence of entrepreneurs has been noted, opportunities locally are fast drying up and existing niches are filled. For most residents, life is a grinding hand-to-mouth struggle for survival. In such a situation, health problems loom large and people oscillate between the relatively cost-effective but superficial services of the medical doctor and the costly but culturally more satisfying treatment provided by diviners. In addition, KwaNgwanase has been depicted as a culturally plural society in a sensitive border domain, in which the foreign immigrant is denigrated as a witch and as a source of social disorder. Not only does the consequent social strain, and the contest over identity, constitute work for the diviner, but the fact that foreigners are imbued with malicious mystical power has implications for the way in which diviners themselves tap into this power to establish ascendancy over their competitors.

CHAPTER THREE

FIELD RESEARCH AND METHODOLOGY

I first arrived in KwaNgwanase in July 1996 and, between then and February 1999, I conducted field research in the area for a total of twelve months, spread over three stages; 1) July to September, 1996 (3 months); 2) June to August, 1997 (3 months); 3) September 1988 to February 1999 (6 months). In the first period, I concentrated on getting to know the community and its social life. In the second period, while continuing to extend this experience, I conducted a pilot study of local diviners and their practices, and this was later followed by a more prolonged and intensive engagement in the daily life of selected diviners.

My choice of KwaNgwanase as a locus of fieldwork was quite fortuitous and opportunistic rather than planned. My focus on divination as a topic for study arose out of my broader interest in the anthropology of religion, but was greatly stimulated by the awareness that the study of divination had been relatively neglected in South Africa, witness the absence of any contemporary South African contribution to the subject in Peek's (1991) collection on African divination, highlighted all the more by the inexplicable inclusion of Callaway's 1871 publication on the Zulu diviner. While I was casting about for a suitable location in which to conduct the research, to which I could have reasonable social access and where I would be relatively safe from the political and criminal violence that erupts on occasion in parts of KwaZulu-Natal, I happened to mention my problem to a postgraduate colleague. She immediately recommended KwaNgwanase, her homeplace, as being apt for my purposes and virtually sealed my decision by saying that her mother, Mrs, Busisiwe, would almost certainly provide me with local accommodation.

That being settled, I turned my attention to literature on the field area. My supervisor recommended Junod's (1927) ethnography on Thonga-speaking people. I initially entertained reservations regarding the relevance of Junod to my needs, on the ground that his data recorded in the 19th century were passé and in any case did not

pertain to the Zulu-speaking population of the area. It was only much later, while conducting my pilot study, that I began to realise that his account of marriage arrangements, residential patterns, economic activities, the system of land tenure and methods of cultivation are still faithfully replicated by the people of my field area. More to the point, the belief system and religious practices described by Junod a century ago still hold sway in the contemporary situation. In particular, no other source provided richer detailed information regarding a foreign divining spirit that is a distinguishing characteristic of this area. I therefore acknowledge my indebtedness to Junod's ethnography. Later, my supervisor advised me to read Felgate (listed under Krige, ed. 1982) and Webster (1991), both of whom had done fieldwork in the region. Felgate provided useful information on ecological conditions and on kin-structure based on census data, while Webster concentrated on the manipulation of ethnic identities in a mixed population. Neither, however, attended to the religious dimension, much less to the activities of traditional healers, thus exposing a convenient gap in the ethnography of the region that I could explore. Nevertheless, their writing gave me a feel for the area and its people and made the transition to fieldwork so much easier to negotiate.

I was introduced to Mrs. Busisiwe by her daughter. We arrived in cold mid-winter but the warmth of Mrs. Busisiwe's welcome, a large, humorous and industrious woman, were more than compensated. Initially, I rented a room from Mrs. Busisiwe on the understanding that I would cater for my own needs, but I soon found this to be too isolating. Consequently, I prevailed upon her to allow me to eat with the family for a share in household expenses. While this arrangement served to break down barriers, a further advantage was that Mrs. Busisiwe was a chef at Manguzi hospital and I came to enjoy Zulu food during my research.

Nevertheless, my existence in the field area was far from idyllic. My place of residence was one of the few homesteads in the village to have electricity, tap-water and, by the end of 1999, a telephone. The great majority of households were much too poor to afford such amenities. These deprived families gained access to water by paying a monthly levy of R20 to a tap owner for the right to draw a daily allowance of 100 litres of tapwater. The quality of the tapwater, however, left a lot to be desired. It

had a dark yellowish appearance and, as often as not, it gave off a foul smell. It was certainly not suitable for drinking and, when ingested untreated, it may have accounted for periodic outbreak of cholera in the countryside. To make matters worse, the supply of this water, and also of electricity, was anything but reliable. It was not uncommon for households to be without water or electricity for two or three days a week. There were occasions, while I was in the field, when the supply of both water and electricity was interrupted for a whole week. A few homesteads had built tanks to store rain for drinking, but the less fortunate had to journey several kilometres to the river to fetch water, thus increasing the risk of cholera. Since this was the common lot of ordinary people, I uncomplainingly shared in their deprivations and, although my health was fortunately unaffected, I became accustomed to going without washing for several days at a time.

How to surmount the language barrier always poses a problem for the fieldworker. Despite a previous acquaintance with Swahili (as an undergraduate in Seoul), which shares some commonality of vocabulary and expression with Zulu, and despite having taken a course in Zulu language at the University of Natal, I did not enter the field with a competence in spoken Zulu. I therefore had to rely to a great extent on the services of a field assistant, both as companion and interpreter. The local, with whom I made the first arrangement, was unable to function at all. Upon my arrival in the field, I found that he had been struck down by a kind of paralysis, a state that he attributed to witchcraft. After some time, I recruited a young man, who turned out to be a very good field assistant, who had an excellent grasp of the nature of my work. Unfortunately, he was unable to continue after three months. Thereafter, I completed the research with the able assistance of a young unmarried mother, who had completed matric and who supported herself by selling beer from her home. I also made good use of a tape-recorder to capture what transpired during interviews and in the course of divining sessions. In all such cases, I was careful to acquire the participants' permission to do so and no objections were raised. Each evening, after fieldwork, we reviewed with greater deliberation the content of these tapes, so that I maintained a good sense of what was going on. This time-consuming activity became progressively less burdensome as prolonged research inevitably improved my grasp of spoken Zulu, though

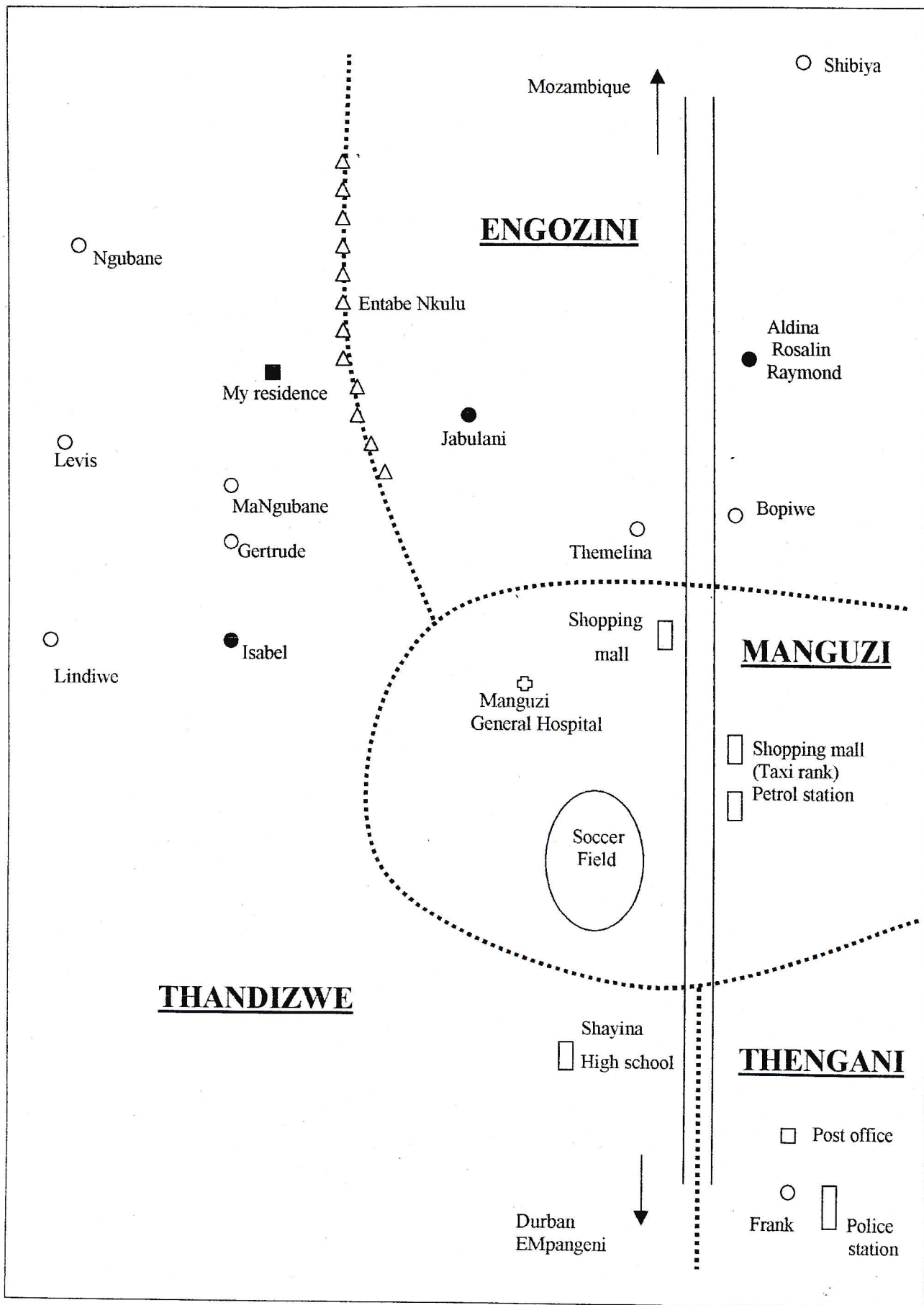
never to the point where I could fully follow it entirely unaided. Later still, upon my return from the field, these tapes were carefully translated and transcribed for greater accuracy. Adopting the time-honoured approach of participant observation, my first task was that of 'fitting in'. Initially, I anticipated great difficulty in transcending my status as a foreign national but, as luck would have it, this appeared to reinforce a perception that I was an 'innocent' anthropologist, whose interest in local affairs could not be politically tainted and whose presumed ignorance of all things Zulu elicited a willingness to tutor me. And the fact that I had acquired the rudiments of the language, not only facilitated my 'education', but made me all the more acceptable. All the better to fit in, I slowly learned how to conform to local norms and custom, often enough by trial and error. In my own culture, it is disrespectful to avoid eye contact with another person but when, interviewing an old female diviner, I crouched before her to establish eye contact, I was admonished by my assistant to sit in line with both of them. As a junior, I was behaving in an offensive manner towards my senior. Even something as commonplace as walking along a road or pathway can lead to a breach of custom, with perhaps more sinister implications. As my preference is to walk in the centre, I had to learn not to maintain my line so as to walk through an oncoming group of people, e.g. in the gap between male and female, as this could be taken to indicate a desire to drive a wedge into their social relations and might invite mystical reprisal.

While learning a new code of behaviour, I let it be known that I wished to conduct myself as a member of the community by joining in daily or routine activities. As a result, I was invited to participate in social activities and in mundane physical tasks, such as ploughing fields, planting crops, building houses, clearing gardens and sometimes travelling long distances on foot (I did not have a car of my own) to carry locally-brewed beer. In addition, despite my limited Zulu, I took every opportunity to engage in casual conversation with local people. Tuckshops in the village were ideal places for striking up conversations, as people tended to congregate there and beer drinking was a common daily occurrence in their vicinity. In this way, I gradually became privy to local gossip and it afforded me an insight into various social networks, while enriching my general knowledge of the local community. In this regard,

my landlady Mrs. Busisiwe was an invaluable, constantly available, sounding board, against which to test the accuracy of data gathered from other sources. She had come to the village of Ekuthukuzeni as a young girl and had resided there for most of her lifetime and she proved to be a most reliable informant on the social history of the community. It was also my practice, in the early stages of fieldwork, to wander about the village and into neighbouring villages in the company of a group of friends, with whom I often played soccer. They were neighbourhood mates of Mrs. Busisiwe's son and I was almost naturally grafted on to the group without thought or effort on my part. They showed me around, sponsored me, introduced me to people; they helped me to learn the topography of the area and to form a social map of the community. Unwittingly, they also alerted me to its fault lines by pointing out the dwellings of recent immigrants, whom they tended to stigmatise as witches. Later, this prompted me to collect genealogies from 56 homesteads which showed how, over the years, immigrants of Mozambican origin have consistently used marriage as a means of becoming integrated into the community.

During the four months of the pilot study, I thus became comfortable in the community and well acquainted with its norms and routines, its social tensions and cohesion. All of this was made relatively easy by the warmth and hospitality of the people themselves. In this period, I also began to establish contacts with the numerous diviners in the area. My first contact was entirely unsolicited and took me by surprise, as it followed close on the heels of my arrival. Since I was "the first umlungu (white person) to stay in our village", people were curious about my presence and resorted to one pretext or another to visit Mrs. Busisiwe in order to satisfy their curiosity. They did not address me directly but quizzed my landlady as to who I was and what my purposes were. Among these early visitors was a female diviner who lived nearby, who also left without speaking to me. But it was a good portent for my research as, later on, several diviners let it be known that they were eager to speak to me. I did not undertake this task in any systematic way by, for instance, first identifying all the diviners in the area of study and then pursuing a random sample of them. It was virtually impossible, in the time at my disposal, to interview the more than a hundred diviners in the KwaNgwanase area, so I limited myself to two villages and their

Map 2: Field areas and the location of diviner informants



surroundings, eKuthukuzeni and eNgozini, and held interviews with 26 diviners, including some novices in training. These diviners were largely selected for me, as I acted on information supplied by my male assistant or by my friendship group. From the interviews, I acquired detailed information on their personal histories, calling experience, training in divination, the character of their divining spirits, the art of reading the bones and other related topics. Their accounts of divining rituals were particularly valuable as, in the second phase of the research, I was unable to see all of these rituals for myself. Crosschecking the content of these interviews threw up discrepancies in their accounts which, in time, revealed the existence of different divining families or networks, each with its own ritual tradition.

After a respite from the field, which afforded me an opportunity to write up and analyse my material, and return to the field for a more prolonged period of intensive study. My purpose was to pursue in greater depth some of the questions arising from my primary data but, above all, to observe at first hand the diviner at work. To this end, I concentrated more particularly on the activities of three or four diviners, with whom I had established a special rapport. These were Isabel, in my own village, and Jabulani, Aldina and her mother Rosalin in the neighbouring village, eManguzi. I was able to spend several days and nights at a time at their homesteads and in their company, observing their interaction with clients and novices, witnessing their rituals and training methods, recording their transactions and consultations, and probing the provenance of their divining spirits. They willingly took me into their confidence and afforded me an insider's view of the divining art. I even accompanied Aldina on one of her trips to the city to service her burgeoning network of urban clients. At one point, she assured me that she would teach me the divining technique of throwing and interpreting the bones, and she offered to accept me as a novice to train me as a diviner in my own right. This was towards the end of my research, so I did not take her up on her offer. Besides, the expense that I would so incur was by then beyond my means, as I was carrying out my research without the support of a research grant and at my own expense.

The friendship and confidence that these diviners vested in me was regarded as being quite extraordinary by my assistant and my group of friends. They were of the

opinion that no African researcher could have gained access to divining knowledge and lore to the extent that I had. Paradoxically, my classification as an umlungu (white) proved to be, not a handicap, but a considerable advantage. Divining knowledge is privileged, exclusive to the divining family and its recruits, and is to be jealously withheld from those outside the fold. The fact, however, that I was a foreigner, and from distant parts, stood in my favour, as my diviner informants correctly calculated the unlikelihood of my using the knowledge imparted to me to set myself up in competition with them. While there are inherent limits to the researcher's capacity to transcend his/her outsider status, it is equally clear that there are situations in which that limitation can be counted as a positive boon to the research effort.

CHAPTER FOUR
DIVINERS, SPIRITS AND SYMBOLIC DEVICES

1. Diviners in Africa

Divination is a mystically-driven problem-solving mechanism and in which more than human agents are actively involved. Commonly found in human societies, in Africa alone it displays a considerable variety of pattern and practice. While some form of sorting device is commonly, though not necessarily, resorted to by African diviners, the choice varies from strings or chains of seeds, nuts, seashells, favoured in West Africa (Bascom, 1941; Bohannan, 1975; Peek, 1982), to animal mortality under the influence of poison (Evans-Pritchard, 1937; Middleton, 1969), the tracks left by living creatures (Beattie, 1967:220; Bourdillon, 1987:282; Zeitlyn, 1993), and a basket of miscellaneous objects, most usually animal bones, being the preference in Southern Africa (e.g. Turner, 1975; Simon, 1940). Similarly, although spirit inspiration is almost a given, it need not be rendered indirectly through a device, but can be voiced directly without any mechanical intervention (e.g. Beattie, 1966, 1967b). And different kinds of spirits may be drawn upon, ranging from lineage spirits, to foreign spirits and nature spirits (e.s. animals).

This great diversity has challenged scholars to place African diviners in some organised typology. Not that people on the ground are unable to do this to some extent for themselves. Thus in parts of each Africa, people rank diviners in a cultural classification from "Arab" diviner (top), to "Swahili" diviners, down to "Giriama" diviners (Parkin, 1991). There have been a number of more theoretical attempts to classify this multi-faceted phenomenon of divination in Africa, but I shall confine myself to an elaboration of that offered by Devisch (1985).

Devisch employs two crucial indicators for this purpose: the degree of spirit possession or involvement and the manipulation of divinatory techniques. Based on these

indicators, he categorises African divination into three patterns: interpretative, mediumistic and oracular-interpretative divination (53-54).

Interpretative (or mechanical) divination is characterised by the manipulation or interpretation of the divinatory apparatus. Spirit possession does not play a part in this pattern of divination. Interpretative divination requires the diviner's consciousness and the technique of manipulating the divining apparatus. Therefore, individual intelligence and clairvoyance are salient qualifications for interpretative divination. Diviners simply cast the divining apparatus and mechanically interpret them. Thus the divining apparatus "guide[s] ... [the diviner's] intuition and clairvoyance" (52). The principles of interpretative divination are the indigenous logic and rationality by which diviners construct divinatory themes during seances. Cleromancy (divining by lots as among the Tiv) and geomancy (divining by lines or figures) are typical forms of interpretative divination. Augury (the flight of birds and the trail of animals) and haruspicy (anatomic examination of a ritually killed animal, Beattie, 1967) also belong in this class.

Mediumistic divination is concerned with direct spirit possession of a diviner. Once a particular person is chosen by spirits, (s)he has to serve them throughout his/her lifetime. In reward for the service, spirits are said to empower a particular person with a mystical capacity to transcend normal experience and explicate esoteric events. Mystical experiences (dreaming, hallucination and spirit possession) are the initial conditions of becoming a mediumistic diviner. These esoteric experiences are technically mastered in the course of training. Divining objects are not employed in this kind of divination. Instead diviners act as mere mediums and the spirits directly engage in conversation with patients. Although the level of spiritual involvement varies (from direct possession to an indirect revelation), there is a common basis to mediumistic divination. Mediumistic divination stresses the importance of esoteric and direct communication between the spirits and the patients or clients. Diviners provide only the physical space in which spirits are temporarily embodied during the divinatory seance.

Oracular-interpretative divination is an eclectic style of divination, which is most commonly found in current African divination systems. Apparently, it has acquired

its major characteristics from interpretative and mediumistic divination. The main feature of oracular-interpretative divination is the combination of aspects of these, i.e. spirit possession and the use of a divining apparatus. Devisch states that, in oracular-interpretative divination, 'mediumistic phenomena or oracular mediums intervene but they do not manifest themselves in the body of the diviner and they are decoded by a specialist using more standardised divinatory repertoire or procedures' (*ibid*). Oracular-interpretative divination might be the result of cultural transformation in many African societies. The divining bone method, which is widespread across Southern Africa, is the typical case of oracular-interpretative divination, although as we shall see the diviner does corporeally express some manifestation of the presence of spirit.

2. Diviners and Divination in KwaNguni

Some diviners use a calabash in conducting the divining seance. But it is a rare divining practice and unfortunately I have not observed any of this type of divination. Daniel, also a renowned herbalist, is a diviner who uses a calabash as a divining apparatus. Daniel explained to me how he uses the calabash. He puts some questions concerning the patient to the calabash which is said to register a "yes" or "no" that is clear to Daniel and the clients alike. Johannes, an *ithwasa* (a novice), informed me of one case of calabash divination. In his own words: "I went to see an umlozi²¹ (whistle diviner) with my wife. As we entered the indumba (divining hut), we saw one calabash standing on the left side of the divining hut. The calabash suddenly fell over on its side but stood up again on its own! I was scared. My wife was also scared. The fear was so great that my wife wanted to go out. But I told my wife, 'wait. We will see what happens next.' The calabash fell down again. Then the whistle diviner entered the divining hut and told us, 'why don't you sit down. The calabash wants you to sit down.' So we sat on an icansi (reed mat). The whistle diviner took out a couple of ropes. One of them, he tied around his head, the other across the chest. Then he moved the

calabash in front of him. A whistling sound seemed to come out of the calabash. The whistle diviner interpreted the whistling sound for us."

Some diviners use watered umuthi (herbal medicine). It is called isibuko. Kapela, an old female diviner, says that her main divination is by isibuko. Kapela showed me two bottles containing liquid herbal medicine, which were white and brown in colour. The white one was new and the brown old. When clients come to ask for divination, she gives them three teaspoons of this herbal medicine, after which she prays to the ancestors and to god. She then leaves the client(s) alone in the divining hut, where they sit facing a brown paper or cloth on the opposite wall. Client(s) claim to be able to see and hear something on and from the brown wall covering. That something, Kapela insisted, comes from the clients' ancestors. In fact, it is a kind of hallucination induced by the herbal medicine. Sibongile, the wife of a diviner friend, informed me that once people drink this herbal medicine, (s)he feels something like dizziness. (S)he can experience some human-like objects, although they are not clearly outlined.

Whistle diviners (abalози) are also in evidence in KwaNgwanase. In such a divination the diviner remains "perfectly silent, the spirit itself doing the speaking" (Bryant, 1917:141). The divining spirit (ilozi) is believed to speak from the roof of the divining hut or from its innermost recess. The narrative of the spirit is so esoteric that clients hardly understand it. Therefore it is the whistle diviner's duty to interpret what the spirit communicates. Bryant suspects that the whistling sound is simply the diviner using ventriloquism. The diviner does not enter into spirit possession, however, so that this style of divination is similar to mediumistic divination, because the principal method of divination is direct discourse between spirits and patients, or at least this is the belief. These forms of divination, by calabash and by medicine, are rarely conducted in KwaNgwanase²².

The most common means of divination found in southern African society is 'bone throwing'²³. According to Bryant, the speculative origin of the amathambo (divining bones) method is Sotho (1917:142). The bone throwing method has two general types: hakata (or hakati, or ihakathi) and amathambo. According to ethnographic evidence, the hakata method was devised by Shona-speaking people (van Binsbergen, 1995; Gelfand,

1964; Bourdillon, 1987a; Bucher, 1980) and developed in neighbouring African societies (Krige and Krige, 1980)²⁴.

The bone throwing method is the second popular means of divination. A set of divining bones consists of thirty to forty bones, which will vary according to the preference of diviners. A bone may have a particular assigned meaning or multiple meanings. Dependant on its configuration and the particular situation, one particular meaning of a bone is highlighted in conjunction with those of other bones. Divining spirits may or may not be involved in the séance. But experienced diviners have enough skill and knowledge to read bones without the assistance of divining spirits.

3. The Ngoma Diviner

According to Bryant(1966:11-12), - nanga is a common linguistic root for a healer or a diviner among the Bantu-speaking people. Among Shona-speaking people, an nganga is a diviner-healer (Bucher, 1980; Gelfant, 1964; Bourdillon, 1976). However, in KwaNgwanase, the term (i)nyanga is exclusively assigned to the herbalist and the term (i)sangoma is exclusively reserved for the diviner. It is on these grounds that the local population clearly distinguishes between isangoma and inyanga.

An inyanga is a traditional herbalist with extensive and practical knowledge of indigenous herbal components and their uses. The inyanga diagnoses and treats patient's ailments with these herbal ingredients. Although the inyanga may prescribe some mystically charged medical components, such as a luck charm, the practice of the inyanga is predominantly empirical. The profession is inherited in the agnatic line by passing down a jealously guarded, accumulated, extensive body of empirical herbal knowledge.

An isangoma, on the contrary, is a spiritual medium. The healing source drawn upon by the isangoma is a supernatural power, particularly in the form of lineage ancestors who were diviners in their lifetime. However, in practice it is not easy to so precisely distinguish between isangoma and inyanga, since it is not uncommon for isangoma in South Africa to be in possession of herbal lore and to prescribe herbal applications for their patients in addition to mystical interpretation of the illness.

In the interests of clarity, therefore, it seems advisable to insist on a distinction of functions rather than of practitioners and to recognise that any particular practitioner may combine several functions. Thus, as functions, divining (mystical diagnosis) and doctoring (applying herbal remedies) are quite distinct. But where the exclusiveness of such specialisations is not maintained by some transcending authority, there is an inevitable tendency for them to transgress upon one another and for practitioners to package the complete process. Hence, herbalists provide a diagnosis and diviners provide therapy. In some extreme cases, an individual practitioner may combine the services of diviner, herbalist and Zionist prophet. However, the self-styled diviner has the edge over the herbalist in being able to provide a deeper, and hence more satisfying, level of diagnosis by mystical means than is within the capacity of the simple herbalist.

Since both traditional kinds of medical practitioner possess a common healing capacity based on traditional therapeutic sources, they are known locally as 'traditional healers'. But in local thinking the level of spiritual involvement is the crucial indicator of difference between isangoma and inyanga. The isangoma is known as a mystical agent who uses the power of occult forces, while the inyanga is simply able to manipulate the accumulated hereditary and empirical knowledge of herbal medicines.

4. The Ngoma-Ndawo Alliance

The diviners of KwaNgwanase share similar patterns and methodologies with some neighbouring African societies, particularly, with Sotho, Swazi, Shangaan and Shona diviners. The most influential diviners among them are of Shangaan origin. It is, however, unfortunate that no definitive ethnographic study of Shangaan diviners has been produced as yet, and I have had to support my own field observations with bits and pieces of information gleaned from more general ethnographies.

Two major divining patterns emerge in KwaNgwanase. The bone throwing (known as ukubhula ngathambo)²⁵ does not follow the Shangaan and Shona patterns. Instead, the divining bones consist of thirty to forty individual bones, mainly extracted from sacrificed animals. Knuckle bones and joint bones are favoured for divining. This is a

quite common divining method among Southern Nguni, particularly among the Zulu and the Xhosa, and the Thonga. The ukubhula ngathambo method is much more complicated than hakata (use of tablets). Influenced by Shangaan diviners, some of the local diviners also cast hakata. But they never use it independently. To the local diviners, hakata is only a supportive set of divining bones.

The divining spirit involved in bone throwing divination is known as ngoma. The ngoma is a part of the general body of ancestral spirit known as amadlozi, but refers specifically to a class of professional divining spirits. For this reason, a bone throwing diviner is also called a mungoma in KwaNgwanase. An ngoma does not directly manifest itself during the séance. Rather it is said to be standing by or to whisper into the diviner's ears. Aldina, a well known female isangoma, described her experience during ngoma possession in the séance. "My divining spirit does not come out on ukubhula directly. It just stands by me. I can feel it. It whispers in my ears during divination. It is me who reads amathambo (divining bones). But sometimes I feel dizzy and my eyes become blurred, just like in a daze, during the seance. I do not remember anything about divination." Ngoma spirits express their will via the divining bones by determining the sides and directions in which divining bones fall. The diviner reads and interprets these messages on behalf of the divining spirits. Therefore the diviner's narrative is authoritative. No client is able to hear the ngoma spirit during the séance. Therefore, it is crucial to the diviner to read divining bones correctly. Divination by an ngoma diviner belongs to the type of oracular-interpretative divination. There are no divination systems in Zulu societies in which the ngoma spirit is revealed in order to communicate directly to clients during the séance.

The second type of divination is ukufemba. Ukufemba is quite common among Swazi diviners (Janzen, 1992). The salient feature of ukufemba is that it invariably relates to spirit possession, although the degree of spirit possession differs according to the context. Diviners in KwaNgwanase are classified with reference to responsible spirits into two groups: izangoma diviners and abandawo diviners²⁶. These two groups of diviners are distinguished from each other in several ways. Firstly, the guiding spirits are different. Izangoma diviners are said to be guided by a class of ancestors who are generally lineage ancestral spirits, both from agnatic and affinal groups.

Ndawo spirits are malevolent foreign spirits. However, in KwaNgwanase, some diviners claim that ndawo spirits are lineage ancestors, but most diviners agree that abandawo are indeed foreign spirits. However, once they are ritually accepted by the possessed, they are henceforth incorporated into the possessed's lineage structure as lineage ancestors.

The ndawo diviner represents the class of mediumistic divining. These diviners are directly possessed by spirits and are responsible for a particular type of divination, ukufemba. When they conduct ukufemba, they are called umfembi. The definition of ukufemba is not known. However, one of my diviner informants explained ukufemba as "divination through dialogue with ndawo". No divining apparatus is employed in the ukufemba seance. Spirits directly possess a medium (diviner) and communicate directly with clients. The power of ndawo is well manifested when it introduces multiple spirits during the ukufemba séance. An umfembi has the power to bring into play spirits of the dead, of the living, of animals and of witch familiars. Thus the power of ukufemba is that it brings the patient into direct communication with the source of affliction.

The local population regards ukufemba as a more powerful form of divination than bone throwing divination. The reason is that in ukufemba various spirits, such as, the dead, the living, animal and spirits, are directly involved in communication with patients through the possessed. Consequently, ukufemba is in high demand among both clients and diviners. The clients believe that ukufemba gives a direct revelation of the spirits and, therefore, the diagnosis is more clear and effective. For diviners, ukufemba is economically more profitable. Ukufemba is ten times more expensive than ukubhula. The basic charge of ukufemba is two hundred rands, while ukubhula ngathambo is about twenty rands. It is therefore understandable that diviners in KwaNgwanase should desire to have ndawo spirits in their repertoire. Acquiring the technique and knowledge of ukufemba is a necessary condition for becoming a powerful diviner, both spiritually and economically. The diviners of KwaNgwanase have therefore synthesised these two divining spirits, the locally based ngoma and the imported ndawo, and have produced a new pattern of divining, which I prefer to term the "Ngoma-Ndawo Alliance".

The patterns and styles of divining in KwaNgwanase are thus closer to those of Swaziland and Mozambique, even to Shona, than to other parts of South Africa. This is due to the historical and geographical position of KwaNgwanase. Bophiwe, a female isangoma, informed me that the method of divination in KwaNgwanase has an ethnic mark. She said, "Mozambiquan diviners prefer to throw (phonsa) divining bones, while Zulu diviners prefer to push (hlohla) divining bones away." But another diviner simply belittled Bophiwe's opinion by saying that the style is simply one of convenience. If a diviner has too many divining bones, (s)he is not able to contain them all in the hands. Therefore, the diviner prefers to lay them down on the divining mat and to scatter them by shoving them forward. On the contrary, if the diviner has just enough pieces of divining bones, (s)he can throw them with ease.

There are further distinctions between Zulu diviners and Mozambiquan and/or Swazi diviners. Gertrud, a female isangoma trained in Swaziland, states that the address form of Zulu diviners is "makhosi" (kings), however, in Mozambique and Swaziland, "thokoza" (blessing) is used for addressing diviners²⁷. Different styles of gida (divining dance) is another marker of difference between the Zulu diviner and the Mozambiquan. The Zulu diviner shuffles his/her legs back and forth, while barely lifting the feet from the ground. The Mozambiquan style is much more energetic. Diviners heavily stamp their feet on the ground and some young male diviners actually 'jump' in the air.

Janzen's study of the Thakoza²⁸ divining pattern (1992) in Swaziland provides a good comparative study to the ngoma-ndawo alliance of KwaNgwanase. He defines the difference between thakoza diviners and neighbouring Zulu 'tangoma' diviners. Tangoma diviners invariably use the pengula (bone throwing divination) method and are possessed only by their own lineage ancestors, whilst Thakoza diviners are possessed by a number of lineage and foreign spirits during the séance. Benguni (foreign spirits, notably the Zulu victims of Swazi wars), Manzawe (natural spirits), Tinzunzu (victims of drowning) and other foreign spirits, such as, Thonga and Shangaan spirits, are the main possessing spirits of Thakoza diviners (*ibid*:37-39). Thakoza diviners use pengula (by Benguni spirits) and femba (by Manzawe spirits).

The attire of Thakoza diviners also significantly differs from Zulu Tangoma diviners. Thakoza diviners are symbolised in red, while Tangoma diviners are represented by white colour. Thus Thakoza diviners wear "red orchided and oily dreadlocks" (Janzen, 1992:37) in contrast to the Tangoma diviners whose hair remain black with bead strings on it. Both groups of diviners mark drumming performance (ngoma) off as a main ritual practice. The most marked difference between Thakoza and Tangoma diviners is in the pattern of spirit possession. A number of foreign spirits are freely associated with Thakoza diviners, whilst Tangoma diviners keep to the lineage ancestors. In fact, the association with foreign spirits is not unique to Swaziland and KwaNgwanase. Among the Shona-speaking people, foreign spirits play a crucial role in the divining performance. Diviners, nganga, among the Shona-speaking people share similar characteristics with Shangaan and KwaNgwanase diviners. The nganga conducts two distinctive styles of divination. The nganga casts hakata and is also involved in spirit possession (Gelfand, 1964; Bourdillon, 1987; Lan, 1985; Bucher, 1980).

The divining style of KwaNgwanase is quite close to that of Thakoza and Nganga diviners; nevertheless, KwaNgwanase diviners retain some variables, which may distinguish them from Thakoza and Nganga diviners. First of all, to thakoza diviners, benguni spirits are foreign spirits, which in the main are tribal or lineage spirits among diviners in KwaNgwanase. Secondly, the ngoma-ndawo alliance uses three styles of divination: ukubhula ngathambo (bone throwing), hakati (divining tablets) and femba (direct communication). The hairstyle of the ngoma-ndawo alliance is eclectic between thakoza and tangoma. In the ngoma-ndawo alliance, the diviner simply attaches bead strings to the hair, which is the custom of the Swazi tangoma diviner. However, during the ukufemba séance, ngoma-ndawo diviners wear reddish dreadlocks. But the most significant difference between the KwaNgwanase thokoza style and the Swazi thakoza style is the absence of drum performance in the séance of ukufemba in KwaNgwanase. In fact, Janzen understands that thakoza diviners are simply a subcategory of the ngoma cult. In Swaziland, Janzen illustrates in full detail the beating of drums (ngoma) as occupying the central phase of the ukufemba séance. In KwaNgwanase, rattles are the only musical instruments in the séance of ukufemba.

As mentioned earlier, the isangoma diviner is an inclusive term for diviners. However there is a definitional problem with the isangoma diviner. For Janzen, isangoma is "one who (I-) does (sa)ngoma" (1992:291). Ngoma is not only a musical instrument but also, more significantly, a central healing medium, which is, as Bryant maintains, a common ritual performance across central and southern Africa (1917:142). Therefore ngoma might be classified as 'rituals of affliction' or 'drums of affliction' following Victor Turner (1968). Ngoma certainly occupies the central position in healing rituals and drums (ngoma) are necessary musical instruments for healing rituals in KwaNgwanase. The diviner stands at the centre of such rituals. By performing a divining dance, the diviner commands the ritual of affliction. This is the reason why Janzen categorises a thakoza diviner, who practises pengula and ukufemba, under the ngoma cult (1992) in that the performance of ngoma is the central practice for thakoza diviners.

I want to focus my attention however on the performance of ukufemba. According to Janzen, the practice of ukufemba is concerned with "the use of drum" (1995:150). In KwaNgwanase, ukufemba is in no way related to the use of drum (ngoma), the central musical instrument of ukufemba being a rattle. And diviners in KwaNgwanase clearly distinguish an umfembi from an isangoma. The umfembi is a diviner who does ukufemba. Therefore, the generic term isangoma is used merely for convenience and each divination has its specific name, ukufemba and ngoma. Among isangoma in KwaNgwanase, ukufemba is not primarily concerned with ngoma performance. Therefore Janzen's classification of the thakoza diviner under the ngoma cult does not apply in KwaNgwanase. I would rather include ngoma within the thokoza pattern or alternatively the ngoma-ndawo alliance, for the thokoza pattern always involves two kinds of divining spirit, ngoma and ndawo.

5. Divining Methods and Specialists

Divining practice is not a common topic of conversation in KwaNgwanase. Nevertheless the majority of the KwaNgwanase people have had at least one consulting experience of diviners. It is particularly true that when confronted by undesirable but

unaccountable events, people turn their attention to divination. However, divination offers only one mode of healing practice among others.

There are a number of divining methods practised in KwaNgwanase. One strong trend is that many diviners are partly Christianised in KwaNgwanase²⁹. They are not only Christianised but also invoke the power of Jesus to deal with their patients. Many diviners are at the same time prophets (abapropheti) or prayers (abathandazo) in Zionist Churches. Significantly, there is no charge for prophecy and praying.

A) The thandazo (prayer specialist)

A patient may come of his/her own accord or people may come on behalf of patients. They come with various kinds of problems. The ultimate aim of clients is to 'know' about affliction and misfortune: what is the cause of the problem they have and how to resolve these problems.

Aldina is both a renowned diviner and a prayer specialist. She often uses the power of God (or Jesus) to heal people. But she has no power of healing people by drawing on the holy spirit. I have observed Aldina praying for a female patient. The patient was a member of the Zionist church attended by Aldina. The praying ceremony was held at Aldina's divining hut. Aldina has a cross planted on the ground at the back of the hut. A huge blue cloth with a printed yellow cross was also hanging down from the ceiling in the middle of the divining hut. The patient is given a piece of white cloth with which (s)he either covers the lap or wears over the head and shoulders. Aldina wears the same kind of white robe in similar manner. No instrumental device is used by the prayer specialist. They sit facing each other and pray.

In two words, of the Son and of the holy spirit, our generous father is with us (Emangameni ababili elendodana nelikamoya ongwele). The angel of kindness open these gates and be our guard, remove the evil spirits (Baba olungile yibonathi ngelosi yomusa vula baba kulemasongo ube ngulinda ususe imoya emibi). Here is the son of your word in front of us (Nansi indodana yezwi lakho iphambi kwethu ngicela isizwe susa izibopho)... Holy Lord, creator of heaven and earth, please bless him. I curse the evil spirit and powers of Satan (Ngigalekisa baba umoya omubi, namandla ka sathane.)... I urge your supernatural powers to react where I did cover in my prayer (Lapho ngingafikanga khona ufinyelele ngawakho amandla).

She then interprets her prayer to the client.

As I have been praying I found that you are a worried person because your things go bad. It is your ancestors who cause this interruption. You must have red and white clothes and you must put them under your pillow. You must use the cloth as a blanket to sleep on. Get a goat and a white chicken to slaughter. Use the cloth when talking to and entreating your ancestors.

Clearly, prayer is here being used as a divining technique to invoke a Christian source of revelation, to give authority to her diagnosis and prescription.

B) Divination through an Ndawo (Ukufemba)

Ukufemba seems to be regionally confined to Swaziland, Southern Mozambique and the KwaNgwanase area. The study of ukufemba has not been elaborated much among anthropologists, although Junod earlier recorded the practice of this technique³⁰.

If a patient is supposed to be possessed by one of these shipoko (evil spirit), the exorcist will proceed with the femba in the following manner... The patient lies down in his hut... The magician touches one of his (patient) limbs with the hari (a magical ring), blows upon it, brings it close to his lips and draws in his breath. If nothing happens, he touches another limb, the arm, the side, the leg, the head, drawing in his breath each time, searching for the ghost. Suddenly he is seized by a fit, and falls down unconscious! The ghost has entered him, he has swallowed it. His attendants raise him up and take him outside the hut. They begin to ask him: "Who are you?" He tells them his name; he also informs them that he has been sent by so and so, a wizard. This wizard may be "an inhabitant of your village, someone with whom you eat porridge every day!" The shipoko continues his confession: "Yes! This man has sent me to kill the patient." (1927, II:488-489 (n))³¹

This illustration of ukufemba basically corresponds with my observations in KwaNgwanase and Janzen's illustration in Swaziland, although there are differences as will be seen in chapter 8 (5).

Ukufemba is an elaborate form of divination, which normally takes about two hours. The basic tactic of divination is that the diviner (umfembi) draws diverse spirits, i.e. the living, the dead and the animal, from the patient's body. These spirits are directly concerned with the patient's affliction and are generally close acquaintances of the patient.

The leading divining spirit of the ukufemba is the ndawo spirit. The nawo spirit is like a gate. It gives entry to the séance. It invites various spirits and exercises

control over them. Therefore the ndawo spirit is known as a master among divining spirits.

C) Bone throwing divination (Ukubhula ngathambo)

The patient may or may not be physically present. Relatives or friends might come to consult the diviner (isangoma) on behalf of the patient. They might be local people whose personal background the diviner knows fairly well. Or it might be a total stranger who comes from afar, e.g. from Durban or Johannesburg. When clients enter the diviner's homestead, they generally wait at the benches, which are normally placed under a large tree just by the gate. It is normally an initiate or one of the family members who first address the clients. The client explains the purpose of the visit (asking for ukubhula or imithi), but without revealing the nature of the problem, and soon after is led into the divining hut. My observation shows that the clients are invariably asked to sit inside to the left of the open door. This side is the only part of the divining hut on which daylight falls. Soon after the clients have placed themselves on reed mats, the diviner accompanied by one or more trainee assistants enters the divining hut. The diviner either sits to the side opposite the clients or at the rear of the divining hut (umsamo).

The consultation is spatially structured. The right hand side is traditionally regarded as the male's place. This means that the diviner during the divining seance takes on the male role, and the clients address the diviner (even if female) as "baba" (father). The rear of the divining hut (the umsamo) is the residential place of ancestors (amadlozi), but as the representative of the ancestral divining spirits, the diviner is qualified to occupy this space. Besides, these two places assigned to the diviner are cool: the open door creates shade behind it, and the deepest recess of the hut (umsamo) is also the coolest part. In mystical terms, coolness is a propitious condition. The ancestors, the umsamo, the diviner are cool, i.e. life-giving, sources of health and blessing. The patient (and representatives) is hot, sick and unhealthy, mystically infected.

Aldina explains, "A divining spirit likes to stay in a cool and dark place. Patients have to sit in a bright place, therefore their ancestors can freely come out from their bodies."

Clients also have to sit with their legs fully stretched out. No crossing of legs, a stance in fact not normally adopted by people in any case, is allowed. If one frequently crosses one's legs, the seance will fail, because by crossing the legs the patient blocks the way through which the ancestors come out, i.e. through the limbs, the extremities.

The diviner wears a printed loin cloth (ibhayi), upon which some of the big five in the animal kingdom, such as lion, tiger, and elephant, are typically imprinted. These are images of natural power but they are also iconic evocations of the mystical power that pervades the wild.

The trainee/assistant unfolds the divining mat (icansi, goat skin or reed mat) in the middle of the hut. Then (s)he burns incense (isibunge) to invoke the divining spirits. The diviner takes out imphepho (a sweet-smelling stick of umuthi) and chews a piece of it. This he spits out into the divining basket (isikwama) and then blows air into the basket. The trainee asks one of the clients to likewise blow air into the basket. Air, breath (umoya) represents life and ancestors as the source of life and, by blowing air into the basket, the diviner and clients' ancestors are symbolically mingled for the duration of the consultation.

The diviner asks the name and surname of the patient. Then (s)he praises the divining spirits, inviting them to conduct the consultation, and shakes the divining basket in the meantime. After the praising, the diviner opens the divining container and throws its contents (the 'bones') on to the divining mat.

The divining session is divided into three distinctive but serial phases. The initial phase of divination is comprised of short verses. The verses are quite broadly inclusive and varied, to cast the diagnostic net as widely as possible.

Isangoma: ezofunga phakathi kwekhaya, vuma
(we are going to make an oath in the house, agree)

Clients: siyavuma. (we agree)

Isangoma: bese sikhuluma ngezifuyo ezahlatshwa, vuma.

(then we speak with (sacrificial) animals and traditional beer, agree)

Clients: siyavuma. (we agree)

The mutual cooperation between the diviner and clients is a key element in this initial phase of divination. The diviner needs to diagnose the patient's problem correctly, but this is impossible to achieve without the voluntary cooperation of the patient/client. In fact, the participation of clients is so important that the client who fails in this role is often subject to blame. I frequently observed diviners correcting the attitude of clients during the séance. In one instance, the patient sat with her legs crossed and answered in a flat tone, hardly audible, "siyavuma". The diviner stopped the questioning and urged the client to participate more actively in the proceedings. This means that the client must provide clearly audible responses to the diviner's probings. The answer is given in a digital form. The diviner (and assistant) draws a rough picture by describing broad social relationships around the patient. The client answers in only one form: "Siyavuma" (We agree.) The diviner has to detect the truth or falsity of his diagnosis by the tone and emphasis of the client's response. If the diviner's description is close to the client's expectation, the client will answer in a vigorous tone, "SIYAVUMA!" Otherwise, the tone of the answer will drop into a flat unenthusiastic, "siyavuma". Detecting by this digital response, the diviner narrows down the abstract possibilities to the concrete reality.

The initial phase is a difficult and risky part of the consultation. An accurate diagnosis in the initial seance builds up the client's trust in the diviner. Therefore, by allowing his junior to begin the procedure at the initial stage, the diviner achieves two goals: first, it is a practical training for those under tutelage; secondly and more importantly, the diviner is protected from the risk of misdiagnosis and can deflect the blame for it on to the trainee.

After attaining a successful diagnosis, the diviner begins to dominate the session by interpreting the divining bones (amathambo). Here, the diviner more or less instructs the client. Exposing the complete problem to the client, the diviner weaves the symbolic meanings indicated by the elements of the divining apparatus together and constructs a logical narrative. The patient's wrongdoings are admitted and the possible remedy, particularly in the form of rituals, is proposed by the diviner.

The client is free to bring out additional problems. The diviner does not force the client to close down the séance, but will wait until the client expresses satisfaction with the consultation. The session will be complete when the client pays the consulting fee, normally twenty rands. The money is pushed under the divining mat, and the diviner throws a pinch of impepho ashes over the money. This is to purify the polluted money and to protect the diviner from any possible attack from witches through its medium. If payment is given and no more questions are asked, the diviner collects the divining bones and puts them back into the divining bag. The séance is finally over. It normally takes about forty minutes.

6. A Female Profession?

Female dominance of divining practices is prominently asserted by anthropologists in Southern Africa (Bryant, 1917; Hammond-Tooke, 1955, 1962; Lee, 1969; Ngubane, 1977). The reasons given by anthropologists for female dominance are either psychological or sociological. For instance, Bryant insists that "an umNgoma may be a man or a woman, a youth or a girl. As a matter of fact, the great majority (full 90 per cent) are married women" (1917:142). Hammond-Tooke suggests that the majority of diviners among Bhaca are women. "This is probably due to the fact that the profession necessitates a highly emotional, semi-hysterical state" (1962:245) and a strong-minded and intellectual woman may manipulate an "opportunity to raise herself above the common level of wife and motherhood and become a respected, wealthy and influential member of society" (*ibid*). Ngubane also maintains that "divination is a woman's thing" (1977:50) and "if a man becomes a diviner, he becomes a transvestite, and he is playing the role of a daughter rather than that of a son" (88). The principal logic of female domination of divination is this: in patrilineal and patriarchal African societies, gender hierarchy is a prominent social mechanism. Females are oppressed and are subject to males. Under these social conditions, the female has no formal path of achievement to enhance her social life and standing within her social network. Therefore she is prone to rely on mystical resolutions and spirit possession as a typical mechanism for

achieving this. These unfavourable customary rules and regulations straitjacket females and cause psychological hypertension, which is a prime indication of spirit possession.

There is no doubt that women's subjective social position in Zulu society causes tension and stress that could well find cultural expression in spirit possession. But it is hazardous to stereotype divination as a women's thing, for it not only rules out any other possibilities of explaining spirit possession but also excludes historical and regional variations. There are many other patrilineal and patriarchal African societies other than the Zulu in which the female's role is restricted and minimised. However, in some such societies, divinership is exclusively taken by (senior) males, or there is a gendered division of types of divinership (Shaw, 1985 and 1991). Even in Zulu society, Berglund stresses that divining is not the 'property' of either gender and anybody can claim to be a diviner (1976:136).

It seems to be obvious that a socially depressed person, like the female in Zulu society, is prone to take up divining. But the category of the depressed is determined by prevailing social conditions, which at one time might favour the preselection of women, but at another time might point to a more extensive category of the depressed, including men. In modern industrialised societies, such as South Africa, economic and/or political oppression can affect whole populations, not just one gender. Nieuwenhuisen (1974) provides interesting information that shows how the mantle of divinership has been historically determined by social and political factors. During the height of Zulu military power, there were two groups of people who gained exemption from being recruited for army service (amabutho): the disabled and diviners. He continues that in those times male diviners were not insignificant in number in comparison to female diviners. Later, economic conditions in South Africa, i.e. the introduction of a capitalist economic system and the creation of migratory labour, made it difficult for African men to practise as diviners, not only because white authorities did not allow migrant workers to perform divination in town (28), but also because in a period of economic boom paid employment is readily available and earnings are relatively high. The present economic slump, with a steep rise in unemployment, will have made divining once again an attractive proposition to marginalized men.

My survey in KwaNgwanase reveals that male diviners are almost as numerous as their female counterparts (11 to 15). It is, however, undeniable that the status of diviners is symbolically feminised. Diviners are regarded as "wives" or "daughters" to their divining spirits. Once the novice completes divining training (ukuthwasa) and become a fully-fledged diviner, (s)he achieves an independent identity, mungoma. Among diviners in KwaNgwanase, however, novices, males included, are regarded as "daughters" whilst teaching diviners are addressed as "baba" (father), even when female. This is a purely symbolic feminisation of the subordinate novice and the transvesticism that goes with it. The genderising of the diviner's role is taken further, because this 'daughter' can in turn become a 'father', and usually does, once (s)he enrolls initiates as his/her 'daughters' at a later stage of life. Peek is correct to assert that a diviner accommodates the features of 'both sexes' in one individual (1991:196). This androgynous state symbolises the ambiguous state of a diviner who does not belong to either gender but synthesises and transcends both. The symbolic attire of diviners is a further indication of this androgynous state: male diviners may dress in female attire, and female diviners may carry spears (umkhonto), a knobkerrie (iwisa) and shields which are symbolic markers of maleness.

7. Mystical and Symbolic Relationships

There are two types of ancestors: one is the generalised category of ancestors (amadlozi) and the other is the group of divining spirits (ngoma, ndawo, umlozi and so on). Some of the divining spirits are included in the category of ancestors. Divining spirits are allocative: these spirits were diviners themselves and chose their successors after death. Among Ndembu, the diviner is "possessed by the spirit of a diviner-ancestor" (Turner, 1975:215). This is also observed in KwaNgwanase. Diviners invariably inherited divining powers from deceased divining ancestors in their family or descent line.

Diviner spirits are again categorised into two groups. The first group is the lineage divining-spirits, who were diviners themselves. In South Africa, these lineage divining spirits are mostly known to be responsible for the calling of candidates. The

relationship between divining spirits and the descendant is approximate to the way of filling up a vacant professional position, except that it is arranged through mystical succession. However, ethnography shows that, in Central and Southern Africa, foreign and natural spirits are also responsible for a calling (Gelfand, 1964; Bucher, 1980). Most of these alien spirits are 'deprived' spirits. They have either "died away from home" (Bourdillon, 1987:282), or are the "spirit of a servant" (Bucher, 1980:69) who had been badly mistreated by a master, or a victim of the war. These desperate foreign spirits are not a phenomenon of Southern Africa only. In Central Africa, Simon notes that an esualali is a "spirit of a warrior of another tribe who died in the territory of the Ovimbundu" of Angola (1940:200). An unlucky person who passes the place where he died may be 'chosen' by this stranger spirit, which will cause illness until given a home. Likewise, there are Siambululu, Onganji and epupuangombe that are the spirits of suicides, or of persons who have died away from home and have not had a proper burial. These spirits wander around seeking a shelter, and are likely to choose any person they find in the open (Simon, *ibid*). Although it is not a common and dominant phenomenon, the spirit of any deceased person is sometimes held responsible for a calling (Bourdillon, 1987:282).

Conclusively, divining spirits are grouped into two general categories. The first category is that of descent spirits. Both patrilineal and matrilineal ancestors can be divining spirits. The second group is that of foreign and natural spirits³², which have no root in the possessed's family. But soon after these foreign spirits have possessed a particular person, they tend to move permanently into the person's lineage and to be absorbed into the category of descent spirit.

Diviners in KwaNguni are masters of symbolic implication, and weave their divining activities into a symbolic structure that links them, not only to the dead but also to the living. Divinership is an exclusive and secret profession. On a mystical level, the professional knowledge acquired by a diviner is attributed to a particular divining spirit. In practice, however, the divining knowledge is derived from a senior isangoma. Therefore the selection of a good teaching isangoma is a critical decision for a novice in this context.

In KwaNgwanase, diviners and novices constitute a peculiar kinship structure among themselves. It is called impande. The literal meaning of impande is a 'root' and this metaphorically implies the genealogy of a particular isangoma family. "Impande is like a family tree", Jabulani asserts, and, of course, he does not mean a biologically constructed family genealogy, i.e. people from the same root. Impande is rather built on a spiritual kin-relationship. It stands for the line of succession that is passed from trainer to trainee ('father' to 'daughter'). For example,

(1)	(2)
Majoy	Mapewa
Nyambose	
Manzana	
Tumbu	Mapewa
Dungamunze	Mangatu
Mahlalagodweni	Standar
Mapagethe	iZulu/lozalina
Vutsha	Rosalin
Nyoni	Aldina
Delani	Gugu

Neither of these two examples conveys all the linkages within an impande. Since it is unlikely that a diviner will recruit only one follower in his/her lifetime, there are manifold lines of succession or 'descent' within the structure that are not presented in these skeletal outlines. These are tree trunks without their branches and are sufficient for the most recent recruit, e.s. Johannes or Gugu, to trace his/her mystical genealogy in the profession. Thus, Johannes (though Delani is actually the name of his divining spirit by which he prefers to be known) knows that he was recruited by Nyoni, who was trained by Vutsha and so on. And he knows, by tracing these links, that he belongs to a particular association, of which Majoy was the root or founder.

Bernard states that impande serves "to denote the indigenous associations of diviner-mediums i.e. the collection of diviners one is connected to through training" (1998:9). Of course the 'line of succession' is established or constructed by each

living diviner by way of legitimating his or her claims to be a diviner. The impande, in this sense, will differ more or less from one diviner to the next unless they trained together. In the Majoy impande, for instance, Delani will be aware that Nyoni was not Vutsha's only novice and will readily recognise other 'descendants' of Vutsha as being part of his (Majoy) impande. In this sense then impande has the secondary meaning of denoting an indigenous association or sodality. While it represents a line of connections stretching back into the past, at the same time, it knits a number of living diviners together into a kind of hierarchical structure of seniors and juniors.

The structure of a sodality is spelt out in the idiom of fictive kinship. Vertical connections are translated as parent-child relationships, specifically father and daughter. While Nyoni is 'father' to Delani, he is also 'daughter' to Vutcha (as we shall see later, 'daughter-in-law' is a more precise rendering), thus effectively making Delani a 'grand-daughter' to Vutcha. Lateral connections are transposed into 'sister-sister' sibling relationships, i.e. 'daughters' of the same 'father'. At the same time, these who are 'sisters' to Nyoni become, by extension, 'fathers' to Delani. The point is that these structured relationships form a body of knowledge known only to diviners and of which ordinary people are quite unaware. The Majoy impande, as constructed by Nyoni, goes back to Majoy who was born in Mozambique. The divining techniques and knowledge handed down to Nyambose, Manzana, and on to Nyoni span nine generations depth with the initiation of Delani. The production of these successions covers a much shorter time than that of biological generations. Mapewa impande only consists of six generations; however, it is one of the strongest, most powerful, impandes in KwaNgwanase because of its labyrinthine branches. Aldina alone has produced countless diviners and some of them will break away from her impande while some are willing to remain.

The impande is of crucial importance to diviners. It does not merely bestow a group identity, but more importantly it forms a corporate group. A corporate group is identified by its common estate, in this case, a store of accumulated knowledge and expertise in which all members equally share. Between them they exchange much information on disease, medicine and other matters concerning divination and are unwilling to inform others outside the 'family.' This appropriation of a pool of

knowledge and techniques also explains the extreme reluctance of such diviners to register with the government-sponsored Association of Traditional Healers, mentioned in a previous chapter. Junior diviners who have been trained together are solemnly bound together by ties of cooperation and mutual support. For instance, if Nyoni has an important ritual function, such as Delani's finishing ceremony, he has to invite his sister diviners as well as his father diviners. While other diviners might be invited to the ceremony, they remain observers only. The major roles are taken by izangoma from the same impande.

8. The Elaboration of Symbolic Meanings

The set of divining bones (amathambo) is the essential divining device for diviners in KwaNgwanase. The set of divining bones is primarily collected from sacrificed animals and ritualised seashells, but often diviners purchase some cardinal divining bones from markets. In KwaNgwanase, I came across a number of traditional medicine sellers, who also sell some precious items of divining bones. I got to know one of them quite well, Mr. Khumalo from Mozambique, who makes regular visits to local diviners. His bag is always full of precious herbal medicines and divining bones that local diviners cannot get easily, such as, bones of lion, baboon, elephant, crocodile and other wild beasts. He is said to smuggle them in from Mozambique. These bones are expensive, and generally the price is not affordable to many local diviners. For instance, a piece of lion bone, which is a crucial piece of amathambo, costs more than R100. Some diviners purchase their divining bones at big herbal medicine markets in Johannesburg and Durban. Jabulani, a young and ambitious male diviner from eNgozini, purchased his set of divining bones from his father diviner in Soweto. The price given to me was R1,500 for the set.

However, the ideal and most powerful set of amathambo is said to be acquired in a mysterious way. It is given by divining power. Aldina provided an interesting illustration of this. A diviner goes to the sea and gets into the water, fully immersed, so that nobody can see her anymore. After several days or even months, she

emerges from the water in full diviner regalia and with divining bones in her hand. Aldina herself has had such a mystical experience of obtaining divining bones. "One day, I and father were sitting under the roof of a divining hut. Suddenly a dog appeared and approached us. It excreted in front of us and disappeared. It was curious. My father examined it carefully and found that it contained divining bones. My father told me that they were given by my ancestors. That is my divining bones, which I still use." This kind of divining bones, acquired or delivered in an esoteric manner, obtained by mystical means, is believed to be more powerful than the divining bones purchased in the market.

A) The Meaning of Amathambo³³

Amathambo are classified into three kinds; animal bones, seashells and non-bones. Animal bones are exclusively extracted from the knucklebones or joint bones of sacrificed animals. The sex of the animal tends to determine the characteristics of the bones. Generally astragalus (ankle) bones represent structured social elements: social status, such as, a king; kin-relation, e.g., ancestors; people living in a certain physical territory, i.e. a village. Junod states, "among the bones, some belong to domestic animals, goats and sheep, and consequently represent the people dwelling in the village." (1927, II:543). Astragalus represents not only living people but also ancestral spirits. These bones largely represent people and spirits from the same lineage. The size, colour and age of the bones relate to their gender and social status.

Wild animal bones generally represent malevolent spirits, such as, witches and familiars. For instance, a lion bone represents a witch, for the lion devours the flesh of an animal, just as the witch gorges on human flesh. Baboon bones typically delineate familiars, as baboons themselves are said to serve as familiars.

Seashells generally represent people and spirits. The size and colour of seashells denote the characteristics of the objects they stand for. For instance, bigger sizes and darker colours stand for old people. Smaller sizes and bright colours mean young people. A white colour indicates the female and a dark colour male. A prominent seashell among diviners in KwaNgwanase is a big oliva with purple dots on its

surface. It represents ndawo, for ndawo is a spirit of the sea (or water). It stands out from all others by its size. When a diviner holds the divining bones for casting, this oliva is the last one placed on top of the rest. Shells also represent some divining objects, such as, clothes and spears. These shells are easily collected. Diviners collect seashells on the shore of Kosi Bay, just fifteen kilometres away from Manguzi. A particular ritual is performed before the collection of seashells. Singing and dancing are the major performances of the ritual. Reporting to ancestors is also important, for without this ritual seashells cannot possess extraordinary divining power. These seashells are not put to use immediately after collection. Seashells should be medicated for some time before they are used in the divining séance.

Non-bones generally represent the condition and spatial structure of society and people, abstract concepts, such as, sickness, misfortune. These non-bones represent danger and luck. The influence of westernisation is apparent upon non-bones. Coins, plastic items, particular stones, pieces of branches are common components. Therefore, these non-bones lso stand for some western influences: school, hospital, police, car, gun, aeroplane and so many others.

Divining bones have a number of elementary characteristics according to their assigned meanings.

(1) Theme bones ... Theme bones mainly represent the patient(s) and those who are troubled. The theme bones in the séance are therefore not fixed in reference. These bones are rather changeable according to the problems posed by clients. For instance, if clients come with a particular affliction of a baby, the child will be represented by a theme bone. In the course of consultation, clients may ask another question about mother, father or anybody else. Then the theme bones will be switched from the baby to refer to those named in the particular questions. Theme bones thus reflect shifting foci of attention.

(2) Protective bones ... Invariably these bones represent lineage ancestors. Also there are some bones representing luck, good wishes and benefaction. These bones are not, however, always protective. For instance, there is bone called umkhonto (spear) which is protective if it points towards malevolent bones (thus protecting

theme bones from evil forces). It is, however, extremely dangerous if it points towards the theme bones.

(3) Malevolent bones ... The most common malevolent bone stands for a witch or a familiar.

(4) Assistant bones ... These bones construe relationships among the three types of bones already mentioned. Some psychological states, the state of sickness, hatred, happiness, jealousy, killing, grieving, away from, and many social and structural conditions and relations are expressed by these bones. Divining bones contain male and female, elder and younger, ancestors and progeny, evil forces and benevolent forces and so on.

The set of divining bones is basically a classification system. It separates one class from another and keeps positive and negative relationships apart. For instance, theme bones and benevolent bones (mostly ancestral spirits) are categorised as "we" and malevolent bones as "others". "We", bones try to maintain their distance from "other" bones: that is a basic cosmological regulation.

B) Configuration and exegesis of divining bones

An individual divining bone is meaningless until it exhibits a structural relation to other divining bones. Therefore a diviner gives weight to the total configuration of divining bones during the divining consultation. It is noticeable that each divining bone holds several meanings according to the position and direction in which it falls or points. Two pairs of binary opposition, as Junod (1927, especially, pp.539-572) observed, are employed to draw meaning from the configuration. One is a positive-negative polarity. A divining bone can come to rest either in a convex position (overturned) or in a concave (upright) position. The first carries a negative charge (-), the second is viewed positively (+). There is of course a third intermediate possibility that is not provided for in the binary system. It happens quite often that divining bones actually fall down on their sides, but no special significance is attached to this.

The convex position mechanically registers a positive meaning because it indicates a creature walking upright, hence lively and active. In fact, when a bone

falls in this position, it actually conveys an image of an animal standing on all fours. It, therefore, means active, healthy, lively, untroubled. On the contrary, the supine image of the concave position indicates negative meanings, such as, passivity, death, sickness, vulnerability, helplessness. However, this does not mean that a convex position is always favourable, i.e. positive is not the equivalent of favourable. Rather the qualitative meanings of divining bones is affected by their standard meanings. When a divining bone represents a person or an ancestral spirit, the convex position is favourable, for it signifies healthy or protective activity. On the contrary, if the divining bone designates a witch, its convex lie is bad and negative, for it indicates that the witch is active in malevolence.

The second binary pair of meanings has to do with the direction in which the bones point. A theme bone is always at the centre of a bone reading. The placement of the theme bone is not important. In any case, the theme bone being the centre of the configuration, the other bones are read in relation to it. Therefore, when a witch bone has its head towards the theme bone, it generally has a negative meaning (-) for the theme bone: i.e. it indicates sickness or declining health for the person it represents. If the witch bone points away from the theme bone, the meaning becomes positive (+): getting better, becoming full and increasing in power.

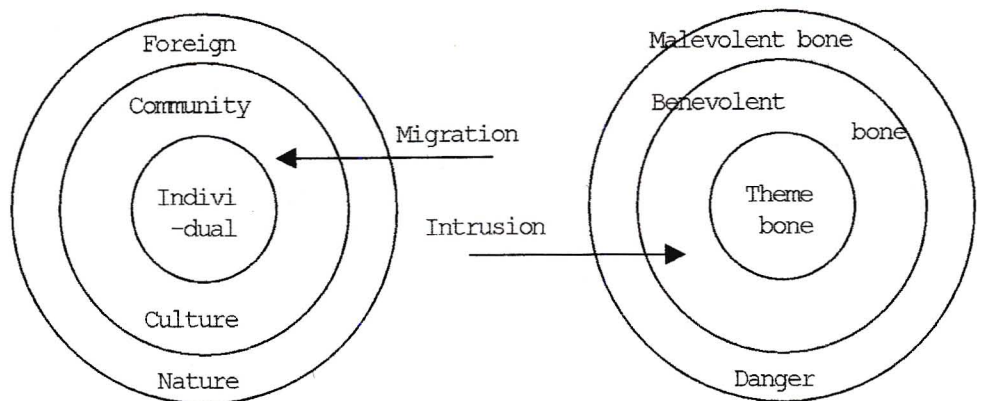
	←	→	
	Aligned (with them bone)	Deflected (from theme bone)	
Convex	+ + Benign active agent	+ - Benign influence dormant	
Concave	- + Malign influence dormant	- - Malign agent active	

The side on which bones fall generally expresses the 'condition' of bones, such as, sickness, health, dead and alive. The direction towards which they 'look' indicates the 'movement' or 'action' of the bones, such as, getting better, crying, speaking,

being angry and so on. Therefore, it can be seen that, in addition to its standard representative or substantive meaning, each bone can display any one of four possible qualitative meanings, emerging from the conjunction of its position and alignment. The following diagram illustrates this.

C) The configuration of amathambo and social structure

The divining set encompasses the range of social relationships in a community. As Junod declares, "It is a resume of their whole social order, of all their institutions, and the bones, when they fall, provide them with an instantaneous picture of all that may befall them" (Junod, 1927, II:571). In fact, it constitutes a symbolic map in miniature of the whole social and cosmological order.



Social relations of KwaNgwanase

Composition of divining bones

The social and cosmological configuration of KwaNgwanase has three layers: individual (theme bone), group or community (beneficent bones) and the extraneous world (the foreign and the wild). For purposes of consultation, an individual occupies the centre of the social structure and has a network of social relationships with other members of the community. The individual as a social member, however, is regulated by layers of normative constraints in the form of social values, rules, obligations and expectations. The individual member and the social body are mutually interdependent and are bound together within a shared cultural framework. In KwaNgwanase, this domain of culture is challenged from within and without. Temptation (ulaka) is cited as a core

feature that characterises the nature of a witch (umthakathi). At the same time, temptation is a weakness in the makeup of every human being. Therefore, every human being is a potential witch, and consequently any individual who poses a challenge to the existing social order and structure tends to be stigmatised as a witch. Such a person may be categorised as a witch from within. There are, however, witches from without and these tend to loom large in KwaNgwanase.

Illegal migrants who bring in foreign cultural elements with them are conceived to be a danger to local arrangements. Illegal immigrants are therefore readily depicted as being "witches", for they are conceived as being an intrusion that is threatening to the society. Suspecting them of witchcraft contains the wish to expose and eject them. These illegal immigrants are easy targets for being redefined as witches; they can have no recourse to legal redress, for the police and the courts are there to apprehend and expel them. While being structurally present, they are culturally (and often physically) rejected.

These real social relationships are reflected on the divining mat. The theme bone and beneficent bones (ancestors) stand against malevolent bones (most notably abathakathi). The intrusion of witches into the sphere of benevolent bones and the theme bone spells danger. The theme bone and benevolent bones are the source of resistance to witches, and this reflects the tense social relationship between the local society (the living and their ancestors) and illegal immigrants.

CHAPTER FIVE
BECOMING A DIVINER

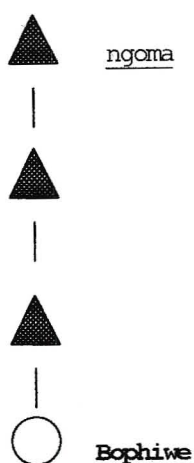
1. Ukuthwasa

The process of becoming a diviner is called ukuthwasa. The term is applied to the whole period of transformation, spanning recruitment and apprenticeship, but particularly to the final ritual performance that confers the status of an authorised diviner. Ukuthwasa is the preliminary condition to becoming a fully-fledged diviner, a cardinal marker that sets diviners apart as a group of distinctive traditional healers, and is a form of legitimisation of the divining profession. During ukuthwasa, a novice undergoes a series of ritual processes to master complex divining techniques and acquires practical knowledge of various afflictions, herbal medicines and appropriate remedies. It is only after the proper acquisition of these divining properties in the course of ukuthwasa that the novice is deemed to be qualified to practise as an authorised healer. Therefore, from a professional perspective, ukuthwasa is the only route an aspirant can travel in order to become an acknowledged diviner. The means of acquiring these divining skills and knowledge are set in both mystical and practical contexts.

The primary and most mystical event of the ukuthwasa process is a 'calling' from ancestors, or more accurately, from lineage divining spirits. The calling is the transmission of the divining profession from ancestors who were diviners in their lifetime to a particular member of their progeny. Some anthropologists unwittingly convey the idea that ancestors (amadlozi) in general are responsible for the 'calling'. For instance, diviners are those "possessing certain occult powers (popularly called simply an idlozi, or ancestral spirit)" (Bryant, 1917:95). Hammond-Tooke asserts that "initiation is prefaced by a definite 'call' from the ancestral shades" (1962:245). Krige states in similar vein that "the spirits simply possess anyone whom they wish to be a doctor" (Krige, 1974:299). And Lee regards the diviner as the "end result of possession by ancestral spirits" (1969:134). Ngubane also agrees with these

anthropologists by saying that "the diviner is principally possessed by the spirits of her own descent group" (1977:142).

Lineage ancestors are clearly responsible for the calling. However, these statements oversimplify the nature of the calling relationship. On the ground, the calling happens in a particular context. Only lineage ancestors who were izangoma in their lives are responsible and have the power of calling³⁴. My own field notes reveal that all twenty-six diviners, from whom I have collected divining genealogies, have been called by lineage ancestral spirits who were diviners during their lives. One example of such genealogies will at this point suffice by way of illustration.



Bophiwe, a female diviner, has an ngoma spirit. It is her great-grandfather who himself was a diviner. In the customary context, her father and grandfather have more influence over her daily life as her closest lineage ancestors. But in the context of divination, it is Bophiwe's great-grandfather who exercises dominant influence over Bophiwe. The claim that her more remote ancestor was a diviner can scarcely be challenged, if only because his life is probably beyond recollection among the living.

It seems that, at least in theory, ancestral spirits that have not been diviners cannot transmit divining properties to their progeny and cannot be the guardian spirits of diviners. It is only lineage ancestors who were themselves diviners who qualify to hand down the profession of divining. It is as if a particular living descendant within the lineage structure inherits a vacancy in the profession from a deceased diviner.

Ukuthwasa has often been understood in reference to chronic ailment, particularly mental disorder, and its relevance to social competence (Berglund, 1976; Burhmann, 1984; Guessler, 1976; Hammond-Tooke, 1955, 1962; Junod, 1927; Hunter, 1961; Krige, 1974; Janzen, 1992; Krige, 1943; Lee, 1969). Hunter argues that "it is certain that the preliminary to initiation ceremonies is always severe illness, and ukuthwasa (the performance of the initiation ceremony) is regarded as the only cure" (1961:320). Some psychologists and pathologists define ukuthwasa as a kind of mental and physical affliction which is common among the Zulu (particularly female members). Lee (1969) and Berglund (1976:122) describe the nature of ukuthwasa in terms of psychological and biopsychological approaches. Psychological anthropologists give it priority in the recovery of health (Lee, 1969; Burhmann, 1984).

Ukuthwasa is undeniably regarded as a process of healing. But the question of health in Nguni societies is causally related to the mystical and social milieu. In many cases, an individual's physical affliction is said to be caused by provoking a lineage ancestor. In this sense, it is a kind of punishment for the descendants' wrongdoing and breach of social regulations. Ukuthwasa, however, differs from this. Often the afflicted is an innocent person, or not a first-hand offender. (S)he is afflicted simply because divining spirits want her/him to be a diviner. It is under this understanding that the particular person requires special supernatural skills and knowledge. For this reason, some anthropologists describe ukuthwasa in terms of training (Berglund, 1976; Krige, 1974). Berglund however admits a twofold aim of ukuthwasa: the first is to remedy a personal health problem, which it is assumed has been initiated by divining spirits, and the second is to adopt selected people into the profession of divination. The illness is not a punishment for transgression meted out by an angry ancestor, but a painful reminder that a restless divining spirit needs a living replacement. It is a badge of election that singles out an individual for special service to the community. As (s)he surmounts his/her own illness by ukuthwasa, so ukuthwasa acquires him/her to heal the afflictions of others.

2. Understanding Ukuthwasa

Burmann is correct when she states that there is no physical affliction without psychological and sociological causes and there is also no mental affliction without some disturbance of somatic functions (1984:26). Therefore she focuses attention in the treatment on striking a balance between individual physiology and the environmental milieu (ibid:40ff). The significance of ukuthwasa is that it is not merely a ritual completion of a mystical calling and the healing of a mystical affliction, but it also serves social purposes.

The word - Thwasa has multiple meanings: 1) emerge for the first time, 2) become possessed by a spirit, 3) 'witch-doctor' during apprenticeship, 4) change (of season, moon, or personal state) (Doke Malcolm and Vilakazi, 1990:812). A common meaning can be extracted from the above definition: an emergence of a new status or condition. It is during ukuthwasa that a once ordinary person emerges as a mystically empowered professional.

A particular person who was once a stable social member is selected in a mystical way: by calling. The acceptance of calling requires a ritual segregation from society although the experience of the calling in itself has already set him/her apart from others. The period of ukuthwasa is therefore a period of transition. During this period, the novice (ithwasa) is expected to discard his/her previous social status, preparatory to entering into a specialised profession, thereby assuming the status of a diviner. In this sense, a sociological understanding of what happens in ukuthwasa will provide an alternative perspective to that of the mystical dimension of becoming a diviner.

Once divining spirits select a particular descendant, all the characteristics of the former diviners (now divining spirits) are handed down through a special procedure, Ukuthwasa. Becoming a diviner (isangoma) through ukuthwasa is therefore basically a way of confirming a personal privileged relationship between a person and a deceased relative. There is, however, another aspect of significance. The mystical link established between a divining spirit and a particular descendant shifts the level of consciousness from the personal to the social. The practice of divination is a public

undertaking as much as it is a personal realisation, for ukuthwasa transforms an individual into a social being as the protector of society (Krige, 1974:297).

In a sociological context, ukuthwasa is the rite of passage from one status to another. The novice enters upon ukuthwasa as a desperate and socially marginalised person. Ukuthwasa gives the novice the means of altering his/her consciousness in the context of mystical experiences and a mystically charged environment (Berglund, 1976:151). In this vein, van Gennep's influential paradigm for rites of passage (1960) is a useful frame of reference in analysing the major features of ukuthwasa.

3. The Process of Ukuthwasa

A) Calling (imbizo)

The preliminary condition leading to ukuthwasa is a mystical 'calling' received from divining spirits. Theoretically one cannot reject the calling. Once the divining spirits have placed their mark upon you, there is supposedly no way out. The calling normally comes with physical and mental affliction accompanied by mystical happenings: dreaming, hallucinating and wandering through the bush. These biological and phenomenological changes affect the social status of the afflicted. (S)he begins to retreat from social activities.

If the afflicted does not acknowledge the calling, the signs from the divining spirits become harsher. Either way, the called is compelled to consult diviners. Novice informants all told me that they had consulted at least one diviner to reach the conclusion that they were being called by divining spirits. Some tried by all means to avoid following such an onerous and unpleasant calling. They slaughtered goats and chickens to appease the divining spirits. These efforts to close out the ancestral spirits had but temporary success. They agreed that the one who has been called must undergo the process of ukuthwasa³⁵.

Those called invariably suffer mysterious affliction and misfortune, although the symptoms and their duration vary. However, the afflicted person most commonly complains about stabbing pain in the sides, headaches, a buzzing sound in the ears, swollen feet and arms, breathlessness and so on (Berglund, 1976:137). Black-out or

complete loss of consciousness is also common. Aldina, a female diviner, describes her experience: "while I was attending class in school, tears began streaming down my face, so much so that I could hardly read the blackboard." Mentally the afflicted becomes disoriented, often losing consciousness, becomes a house of dreams³⁶ by dreaming about particular animals and ancestors (Hammond-Tooke, 1962), goes wandering about in the bush and walks into rivers.

There is also a social dimension to the calling. The victim becomes preoccupied and self-centred and adopts asocial and anti-social forms of behaviour. The afflicted becomes asocial by retreating from normal relationships becomes aggressive and violent towards neighbours.

The ancestors also "indicate their calling through frequent sneezing, yawning, belching and hiccups" (Berglund, 1976:137). These abnormal forms of behaviour become habitualised and are meant to indicate the company of spirit (umoya, meaning both air and spirit). Frequent yawning, sneezing and belching are also technically learnt as well. One day I came across a senior novice teaching a junior novice "how to yawn properly" as a diviner. There is a common phonetic utterance, "yiyo, yiyo", which is regarded as typical of the sound made by a divining spirit.

The final decision of taking ukuthwasa may happen immediately or, as it is the more common pattern, may happen years later (even one or two decades). The affliction comes and goes: but at one moment, the affliction or misfortune is irresistible. The person has no way of escaping from the calling. It must be obeyed.

The prototype of physical affliction is not a necessary condition of the calling. Some diviners informed me that they never suffered any physical disability, yet they were definitely called by divining spirits.

[Jabulani's misfortune]

Jabulani was born in Johannesburg and he came to eNgezini with his mother in 1968. He did not like going to school and soon quit it. Instead, he spent his time herding cattle. His disposition seemed to be aggressive. He often engaged in physical fighting with other boys. Jabulani left home for Johannesburg in 1975. In Johannesburg, he worked as a house builder. Although he was an excellent worker (he stressed that), his work did not progress well. His aggressive personality often offended friends and he used to fight with them. He returned to eNgezini in 1990. But there was no

improvement in his life. He wandered around the village every day and often fought with people. Neighbours regarded him as a "madman".

In 1995, he dreamt for the first time about a mystical event. In his dream, he saw only an arm and a hand. The hand held imithi (traditional medicines). He did not realise what that dream meant. His aggressive assaults continued. One day, as he felt that he was tired of his life, he decided to hang himself (attempting suicide). He packed his luggage and pocketed some hundred rand³⁷. He wandered. He passed by many houses and he saw some diviners. But he unwittingly passed them. As he had nowhere to go, he suddenly asked somebody the whereabouts of a diviner. He did not know what he was intending to do. The people indicated back the way Jabulani had come and showed him a particular diviner's homestead. He went there and asked for amathambo (bone throwing divination). That diviner consulted amathambo and said, "you have been called." There was no second thought. He accepted it. He returned to his home and, accompanied with his mother and step-father, went to the diviner's homestead. They confirmed again that Jabulani had been called. Jabulani took ukuthwasa in 1995 and it took almost two years.

An interview with Tamy Wilson Sibiya is an interesting case to provide evidence that social and economic environments can urge a person to choose ukuthwasa. Sibiya was a healthy boy. He was born and grew up in Umlazi, a township near Durban.

Q: Is it your choice to be a diviner? Is it an alternative to the job you had?

A: It is not like that. It is not that I chose to be a diviner. I was forced to be a diviner. My ancestors wanted me to be a diviner. But first they wanted me to be educated. Because they did not interrupt my study until I completed the matric. After that they might be satisfied with my study. I know it because when I tried to register at university. I was being prevented by ancestors (financially) to register.

Q: When did you feel that you had been called for the first time?

A: It was when I was about eleven years old. I used to dream about spirits. In 1983, while I stayed at KwaMakhuta, one morning my mother called me while I was preparing to go to school. Mother said, "you must be a good Christian. Then you will be a good person. You will stay with many people. Then all problems you have will be vanished . . . I had some bad relationship with my friends. I consulted a diviner. The diviner told me that "your friends' do not like you". "I agree". "You have a problem with your girl friend." "Yes. Indeed" "You dream about big sea" "Yes. Indeed" (he said that he used to dream of a big snake or crayfish in the sea). "You dream about flying in the sky" "Yes. Indeed". The diviner told me that I was called by my (divining) ancestors and need a healing (ukuthwasa). Now it is about time to do a

job for the ancestors. But it is up to me. If I refuse (to do ukuthwasa), I am going to go mad. So I accept it.³⁸"

Tamy told me that he had been a gangster in Umlazi and was regularly engaged in gang fighting. He confessed to me that he became sick and tired of them and began looking for a new job.

These cases show that they have not suffered from physical affliction, but a series of misfortunes, particularly an economic setback in the form of unemployment and disaffection with their lifestyle, were the main reasons for undergoing ukuthwasa. Jabulani and Tami's stories might be considered as exceptional cases in contrast to the classical mode of calling. It is, however, undeniable that the economic reason is one of the strongest motives for undergoing ukuthwasa. Bhewula's case also bears this out.

Bhewula is a Zionist umpropheti (prophet) in Jozini, which is about 150 km away from Manguzi. In the last couple of years, many people came to him and asked about ukufemba (a form of divination), which he did not know about. Instead, he used to take them to Manguzi, where ukufemba is popular. He wondered why so many people came to ask him to do ukufemba, despite his lack of knowledge of the subject. So he finally went to Manguzi to consult an ukufemba diviner (umfembi). The diviner became possessed by Bhewula's maternal grandmother, and she spoke to him and said that she wanted him to be a diviner of this kind. She added that all those people who came to him to ask for ukubhula were sent by her to alert him to his calling. "You cannot work for people for nothing. I need money. I want to see people bring money to you." That was also a constant refrain of his grandmother when she appeared in his dreams.

B) Ukuthwasa training

One of the ultimate goals of undergoing ukuthwasa is to assimilate and accumulate the power of divining spirits. In other words, it is a struggle to establish and maintain control over divining spirits. In the beginning of ukuthwasa, the novice has no control over the divining spirits. On the contrary, (s)he is under their control. Indeed, the novice has no real knowledge of these spirits. (S)he may know their identity, but is lacking in knowledge regarding the specialised powers they possessed in their life-time.

There are many different patterns of divination in KwaNgwanase to be handed on to new recruits and different kinds of divining spirit are involved. However, these divining spirits can be classified into two groups. The first group consists of ngoma

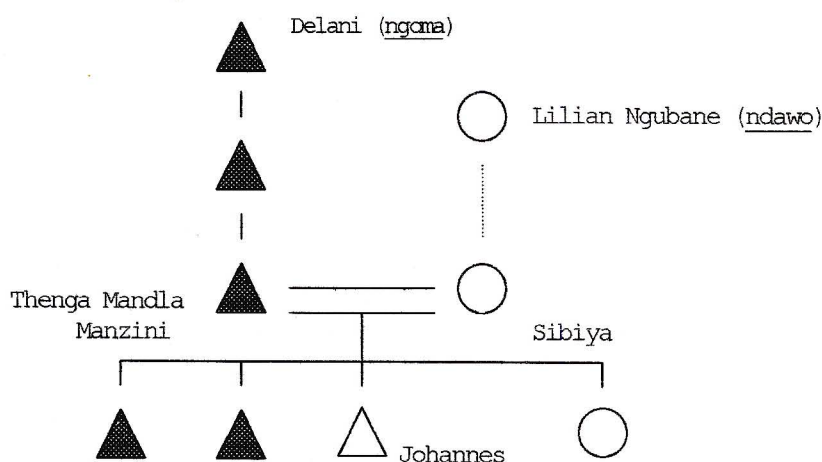
spirits, who are lineage spirits, and these are the major spirits most prominent during ukuthwasa. They are relatively easy to gain control over, for they are often remembered by and certainly known to the novice and his/her family members. The second category consists of ndawo spirits, who are essentially foreign spirits. These spirits are considered dangerous and more difficult to manage, for they are totally unknown to the novice. The general fashion among diviners in KwaNgwanase is to accommodate both kinds of divining spirit in one body. Out of this emerges a rather unique group of local diviners, who represent the meeting point of two very different styles of divining.

So far, no attempt is being made to merge their operations into a new divining synthesis although, as we shall see when the matter is treated at greater length, the spirits are strongly perceived to be related in a ranking order. For the moment, diviners engage these different kinds of spirit in separate séances. To the extent that these spirits uneasily cohabit in each diviner, I refer to this phenomenon as the 'ngoma-ndawo alliance'. It is the function of the training diviner to lead the novice towards becoming adept in exercising control over both types of divining spirit during ukuthwasa. However, the double endowment of the ngoma-ndawo alliance is achieved only during the finalising rituals of the training process. The more dangerous and volatile ndawo spirit is held back until the very end.

The duration and pattern of ukuthwasa varies according to the novice's ability to cope with it as well as the directing diviner's judgement of his/her progress. In KwaNgwanase, a tightly scheduled training programme is virtually non-existent. Ukuthwasa is punctuated by a series of rituals, and these rituals mark out distinctive phases, that give a structure to the process. Junod drew attention to the principal rites of ukuthwasa: ukusukuma (or drum performance); igobo (ablution rite); ukugida (dancing rites) and imfihlo (finding concealed object). For comparative purposes, I will draw upon Junod's account of the ukuthwasa process in conjunction with my own observation of its occurrence in two different divining 'schools' (impande) in eNgozini.

Johannes Manzini had undergone ukuthwasa for fifteen months between April, 1998 and June, 1999 under the guidance of Nyoni of the Majoy (the spirit name of Jabulani) divining school.

Johannes was born in George, 1964. His two brothers were killed in a motor accident, leaving him with a sister only. He left school at St.7 because of poverty and went to Johannesburg, to earn money, where he remained for seven years. On the death of his brothers he returned home to support the family, but things did not go well for him. His inability to find employment gave rise to family quarrels. In 1995 he consulted a diviner about his troubles and was advised to take ukuthwasa. As the diviner had predicted, he divorced his wife and remarried two years later (1997). Johannes consulted a second diviner who also advocated ukuthwasa. Yet another diviner confirmed this verdict, Johannes desperately wanted to know what exactly his ancestors required of him. So he went to Jabulani's homestead to request (a fourth) divination.



As a result, Jabulani together with his own father diviner (who had trained him) arrived at Johannes's homestead to perform ukufemba (ndawo divination), in the course of which Johannes's great-great-grandfather was rendered (mystically) present to berate him for not heeding his demands (the calling to become a diviner). The death of his brothers was entirely due to his non-compliance. He was to proceed immediately with ukuthwasa.

In April 1998, Johannes arrived at Jabulani's home to commence ukuthwasa. The reason Johannes chose Jabulani to be his guide and mentor was that he liked Jabulani's divining and dancing (gida) style. He paid R450 to begin the process and more at regular intervals, e.g. R100 when he first performed divining dance. Altogether, his ukuthwasa fees were R2000, with an additional R80 monthly outlay on food. At the outset, he had also to supply two chickens (male and female) by means of which he could report to his male and female ancestors.

Jabulani divided the process of ukuthwasa into distinct phases, each stage being highlighted by a ritual. The first of these rituals was the SACRIFICE OF THE CHICKENS.

The ritual is held inside a divining hut, where the novice is sprinkled and cleansed with the blood of the chickens, and then inhales the smoke from burning

incense (ibaso). The fundamental aim of this ritual is to appease the calling ancestors and, thereby, to expel umnyama (darkness, misfortune), from the novice.

The novice is asked to sit with limbs outstretched and chest pushed out to facilitate the entry of the afflicting spirits into the body. The novice is enveloped in a blanket. The diviner beats a drum until such time as the novice begins to tremble, a sign of spirit possession. This ritual is called 'ukushayela' (to beat) the drum for ancestors. 'Beating' is the first ritual in which the novice's divining spirit puts in an appearance. After 'beating', the novice remains calmly seated on the floor. (S)he is regarded as being still as an infant who is not able to stand up and walk around. The novice occasionally trembles as the diviner continues drumming and praising the ancestors.

This is followed by a ritual called ukuhlehla³⁹. The literal meaning of ukuhlehla is to "retire and withdraw", which obviously refers to the novice being about to retreat from all social activities and relations into a state of liminality. The duration of the period of 'retirement' varies, but normally it takes three to four months of preparation for ukusukuma⁴⁰ (to stir up divining spirits), for the novice is not self-supporting and must rely on the help of divining spirits. Normally 'stirring up' is accompanied with dance (gida). One or two days are required for the performance. The timing of 'stirring up' is unpredictable. Although the preferred time is midnight, the novice may shout out - a sign of possession - at any time.

'Stirring up' is followed by the stage of ubiza inkani, lasting six to eight months. At some point during this period, the novice's divining spirit can claim "it is enough now. I want to go back home". This means that the novice's divining spirits are satisfied with the novice's knowledge of medicine (the knowledge of which is crucial for divinership) and wants to be left alone.

The actual process of learning/training is from the beginning of 'retirement' to the end of ubiza inkani, 9 to 12 months. During this period, the apprentice accumulates extensive divining knowledge and skills, and (s)he needs great insight and clairvoyance to maximise these opportunities. The pedagogic relationship between teacher and student requires that the novice should carefully observe the diviner at work and follow his/her instruction.

Once ubiza inkani is called, the diviner finally begins the preparation for geda ukuthwasa (finishing ukuthwasa ceremony). It consists of some rituals, which will bring the divining spirits back to the scene and the novice will undergo a test. Once the novice has successfully completed divining training, (s)he is now allowed to attach gall bladder (inyongo) to the front or back of the head. This is the sequence followed in the Majoy divining school to which Jabulani belongs. We can now look at the latter stages of this process in more detail.

UKUSUKUMA is the gateway to the divining training. Its purpose is to arouse and to boost the power of the genealogically linked divining spirits (ngoma). Of the two types of divining spirits, ngoma and ndawo, ndawo is believed to be stronger than ngoma and always comes after ngoma⁴¹.

The period of 'stirring up' varies for each novice. It might take one day, a week or even months to arouse the ngoma spirit. Philip, a recently joined novice, was in the phase of 'stirring up'. He informed me that "I feel something like compressed air rising up and down in my body. But the air hardly comes out of my body. It is when the air comes out of my body, through my mouth; it is called "calling" (imbizo, literally, a calling together). The calling is performed in front of the senior diviner. The novice thus possessed by an ngoma spirit shouts out to the assembly, "thokoza" (be happy or be grateful). Then the ngoma spirit pronounces the family surname and reveals its own name. Then the novice is able to stand up (sukuma).

Before calling and 'stirring up', the novice is expected to remain in a divining hut inactive. In particular, dancing and singing are not allowed before calling and 'stirring up'. After 'stirring up', the novice gets into a state of hyper-action and is often said to 'jump up to the ceiling', yelling and dancing vigorously, often for an entire night. (S)he also speaks in a foreign tongue during 'stirring up'.

The IGOBO rite is basically a purifying ritual. Junod records this ritual among the Thonga-speaking people as a traditional baptism and purification (1927, II:489). He also asserts that the purpose is to show that the novice is entering upon a new life.

Igobo itself is a watery type of herbal medicine, a mixture of various herbs with the consistency of gravy. No boiling or cooking is restored to. While the contents differ slightly from diviner to diviner, its usage, however, remains the same. It is

usually kept ready-made in a bucket in the corner of the divining hut. Twice a day, Johannes took the igobo and beat it until a heavy froth covered the surface. In a regular ceremony, once at day break and again at sunset, Johannes drinks the froth only, so that he vomits (purifies himself). "In fact, this is the hardest thing", he said. "I have to wake up as early as three o'clock in the morning. The first thing is to beat igobo. I beat it while praising my divining spirit. It is beaten into froth. Then I sip froth and spit it into the four sides of the hut; east (mpumalanga) - west (ntshonalanga) - south (ningizimu) - north (nyakatho). This is for addressing the ancestors who are omnipresent (the four corners symbolically represent the world). After that I drink froth and phalaza (vomit)." In the morning rite, he faces the rising sun, and in the late afternoon, he looks towards the sunset. Sickness and weakness is 'removed' through this regular purging.

UMGIDI is also an everyday ritual performed in the Majoy division. Johannes performs ngoma gida (dance) everyday at six p.m. for about forty minutes. Divining dance is always accompanied by imfihlo (hiding and finding out).

At the dancing performed in Jabulani's divining hut, the only musical instruments used were two drums and Jabulani's family formed the audience. Johannes sat in the centre facing east. He held a wooden spear in his right hand and a knobkerrie (iwisa) in his left. Within a couple of minutes, he was possessed by Delani (his ngoma divining spirit). He had no ndawo spirit yet. His dance was typical of the "Thokoza" style that requires energetic jumping and stamping on the ground.

Songs expressing themes were sung in the course of the dancing.

Inkukhu ikhala ekuseni, inkukhu yavusa abalela.
Yiyo ya, yiyo ya, khale ekuseni. Yiyo ya, yiyo ya,
vusabalele

(A chicken cries in the morning, a chicken rises up while people are sleeping. Yiyo ya, yiyo ya. Cry in the morning. Yiyo ya, yiyo ya, rise up while people are sleeping)

and

Sabingelela Nkosi yami, sabingelela Nkosi yami. Yiyo ya
Sabingelela Nkosi yami, sabingelela Nkosi yami. Yiyo ya
 (I salute you my king (the divining spirit), I salute you my king, Yiyo ya. I salute you my king, I salute you my king, Yiyo ya.)

Johannes had an occasional break from the divining dance. Jabulani unrolled a reed mat (icansi) in front of him, and Johannes kneeled on it, facing him. Jabulani chanted, "Thokoza, Thokoza". A dialogue between novice and diviner was the dominant feature of the break. It is called "imfihlo" (hiding and finding out). Johannes had to find out what Jabulani had hidden: it could be either a tangible or an intangible object. It might be a real thing hidden somewhere. It might be an imaginable concept secreted in Jabulani's mind. Johannes proceeded by surmise: "there is something strange in this room (indumba)". Jabulani answered, "Yes. indeed.". "The thing which is strange is a living thing." "Yes. indeed". At one point, Johannes got stuck in the middle of his inquiry. He rose up to dance again, casting his eyes around the divining hut. Thereafter, he successfully narrowed down the hidden object and finally pointed out the living thing, i.e. myself. He approached me and led me to the middle of the divining hut. Jabulani led the audience in enthusiastic whistling and cheering, in acknowledgement of the novice's successful 'hiding and finding out'. Johannes had a final round of divining dance and then lay supine on the mat. He stretched out his legs and arms, twisting his head and neck. Soon the ngoma spirit released Johannes and left his body. Johannes performs this 'divining dance' and 'hiding and finding' daily from Monday to Friday until the final day of divining training.

C) Other training procedures and rules

Apart from the foregoing fixed and recurring ritual practices, other procedures do not have to follow a regular scheduled programme. The novice fills out the day by doing various tasks assigned to him: assisting his 'father' diviner in divination; collecting herbal medicines (imithi) from the bush; drying, chopping and pounding these herbs into powder. Accumulating the names and efficacy of such indigenous herbal components is not an unusual or particularly challenging task. It is a fairly normal ongoing activity in the community at large. I often observed villagers collecting herbs and roots of trees from forest and bush to prepare their own medicines, and most novices would have some prior experience and knowledge of this kind.

Although they complain bitterly about it (to me), novices also routinely undertake various domestic work: cutting grass, mending fences, herding goats,

collecting firewood, plastering the floor of the divining hut, building construction and so on. While they are paying guests of the training diviner, they tend to be treated as free labour in the upkeep of the homestead.

In the afternoon, if there is nothing else to be done, Jabulani practises divining bones (amathambo) by himself. From time to time, the diviner may visit the divining hut to check on his progress. When the diviner considers that he is ready, the novice is allowed to take charge of the opening session of an actual consultation. He begins with one or two statements only, but with experience he learns to take matters further. As his confidence in his own clairvoyance grows, so does his divining ability develop.

There is also a set of strict rules to be observed by the novices. This also varies somewhat from one divining division (impande) to another, but there are some taboos that are common to all. First of all, sexual activity is strictly prohibited; it pollutes the novice and is offensive to the divining spirits. During divining training, novices are not allowed to visit their homes, except in a case of emergency⁴². They may not eat anything slippery, such as pork, eggs and fish⁴³. They do not sit on chairs; they sit only on mats. They do not raise their voices, but remain always calm and obedient. Quarrelling is taboo. In short, novices are expected to be subordinate and compliant. Jabulani recalled the hardship of his own divining training. "There were a lot of problems. I was not allowed to eat eggs, peanuts, Rama (margarine), fish ... Many things you don't eat. You eat only bread. They (senior diviners) tell you must do this. Why? I don't know. You don't drink milk. You don't sit on a chair. You just sit down on the floor. Many things you don't do, until you finish (ukuthwasa)."

The appearance of the novice is distinctive in many respects. Unlike a fully-fledged diviner, the novice has to wear a red skirt and the imbamba (fibre belt), reddish dreadlocks, which symbolise his/her status. A number of bead strings, dominantly red and white in colour, are worn across the shoulder and under the opposite armpit. Once the novice graduates as a diviner, the pattern of dressing up is a matter of personal taste. But during divining training, the novice has no choice.

D) Shaya Ndawo

Shaya ndawo (beating up Ndawo) is the ritual revelation of the ndawo divining spirit. It is the final phase of formal training in the Majoy divining school. The ritual begins with the burning of incense, a common method of bringing divining spirits to the scene. Johannes knelt on the floor of the hut and faced eastwards. The burning ibaso was put in front of him and Jabulani covered both with a white cloth. Johannes inhaled the smoke for about two minutes. When Jabulani removed the white cloth, the pupils of Johannes' eyes were distended. He looked slightly shocked, but still remained in a quiet state. Johannes was kneeling upright. He was again completely confined under the white cloth flanked by Nyoni's daughter and two nephews. Rattling, drumming and singing followed.

Shikwimbu shanzuza ematini, shikwimbu shanzuza ematini⁴⁴

. . .
(Ndawo ancestor in water, ndawo in water . . .)

After three minutes, his body was seized with trembling. About four minutes later, the singing stopped and Nyoni's daughter pulled off the white cloth. Johannes' face was totally transformed, an indication that he was now possessed by the ndawo. Jabulani knelt down by his side, clearly a humble supplicant at this point. Jabulani wanted to know who this ndawo was that possessed his novice. The ndawo spoke through Johannes in a high-pitched but tired and scarcely audible voice. It was that of an old woman.

Nyoni: "Thokoza, who are you?"

Ndawo: (silence)

Nyoni: "Thokoza, thokoza, who are you?"

Ndawo: (silence)

Nyoni: "who are you?"

Ndawo: "Li..li..an, Lilian Ngubane"

Nyoni: "this ndawo's name is Lilian Ngubane (Jabulani's daughter jotted down the name on a notebook.). Lilian Ngubane, who are you?"

Ndawo: ". . . I am leaving. . ."

The ndawo never fully revealed her identity. She simply gave her name and left the scene⁴⁵. Instead she wanted to dance. Drumming began once again. This dance is known as "ukugida amadoloba" (the dance on the knees). The dance is a violent twisting bodily movement while the possessed is on his/her knees. During the dance, which lasted about ten minutes, the ndawo spirit, through its medium, swept the floor by hand and appeared

to be sniffing out something, movements that are characteristic of this kind of dancing.

In order to proceed to the 'coming-out' rituals, the novice has to claim inkani, by relaying a demand from the divining spirits, who now want to complete divining training. The claim often arises when the novice is in spirit possession. Dreams are also often the vehicle through which the divining spirits express their demand. Johannes had a series of dreams around the middle of February 1999. Somebody, whom Johannes failed to identify, was informing him in his dreams about divining training. It was, Johannes recalled, an old man's voice that he heard. The voice assured him that he should not worry about the time of ending divining training, that it would be soon. Eventually, he was told that it would be sometime in April. The dream was relayed to Jabulani, who agreed that this would be about the right time.

4. Ukuthwasa Rituals (Coming out rituals)⁴⁶

The major function of divining training is purification as a preparation for receiving and being filled with the 'divining spirit'. The successful trainee is finally imbued with the fullness of the divining spirit at the final protracted 'coming out' rituals (Ukuthwasa). To distinguish these completion rites from the preceding regimen of training (ukuthwasa), I use the same term, following local usage, but with a capital 'U' (Ukuthwasa).

Johannes's 'coming out' rituals were held at the homestead of his trainer, Jabulani. Once ritual satisfaction had been expressed regarding Johannes's readiness, and the time and place of coming out rituals settled by mutual agreement, certain preliminary arrangements had to be made by Jabulani. Being himself a diviner of fairly recent provenance, he had to consult and enlist the help of the diviner in Soweto, named Hloza, who had 'fathered' him just two years previously. Jabulani visited Hloza in Soweto for this purpose and ordered a new set of divining bones (amathambo) and a divining switch (ishova) for Johannes⁴⁷.

Secondly, since Jabulani had not been long in independent practice, he had not yet planted his pair of sacred trees to symbolise the power of his divining ancestors,

one in the ancestral abode (umsamo) within the divining hut and the other outside in the yard of the homestead. The sacred tree is literally a branch, in this case of the calpurnia shrub or marwa tree (umzilazembe), which has three or four prominent forks from the stem. Without the appropriate sacred tree, Jabulani could not initiate Johannes. The branch in the hut is to represent female ancestors, the one outside representing male ancestors, a reversal of the normal association of male ancestors with the inside and female with the outside. This gesture therefore signifies unification across the gender opposition. For the same reason, when the emerging diviner carries the sacred tree during the 'coming out' rites, (s)he holds it with crossed arms.

In the meantime, Johannes' family has to prepare and bear the cost for the event by providing beer and other drinks, food, animals for sacrifice, clothes for the ancestors and the transportation of guests. And they must arrange as large an attendance as possible in an impressive show of support for Johannes⁴⁸.

In KwaNgwanase, the 'coming out' rituals last for three days. The first day is for arousing the ancestral spirits. The second is exclusively for endowment by ngoma spirits and the third is set aside for the reception of ndawo spirits. Another thematic pattern can be detected beneath the surface of this overt sequence. There is a sense in which the combined ritual over three days is a more public and compressed ritualisation of the whole process of making a diviner from the raw material of an acutely afflicted individual. It can be seen to contain a re-enactment or reprise of all the stages of a rite of passage, from the setting apart of someone weakened by calling spirits, to the transitional period of purification and achievement of divining skill, to a state of proficiency and of full spiritual empowerment. These steps are not replicated in exact order or sequence, but they are nevertheless recalled or enacted, sometimes repeatedly, as in the course of divining training.

A) Retirement ritual (Ukuhlela)

This ritual (ukuhlela), its underlying meaning being that of withdrawal and retirement, is a thematic return to the ritual of entry upon 'coming out' rituals. It is repeated only in the Majoy divining school and omitted by the Mapewa divining

school. For the Majoy occasion, no less than twelve diviners (seven of them being female) of the Majoy divining school were assembled in Jabulani's divining hut at eight in the evening. Among them were four diviners who formed the supervisory team and assumed the leading roles in the ceremonies. As Johannes' instructor, it was Jabulani who would formally initiate him. But, since he was a diviner of short experience and perhaps uncertain of how to proceed in his first induction ritual, he required the backing of his own initiator, Hloza. They were assisted by two female diviners. The younger female diviner (FD 2) was a 'sister' diviner to Jabulani, that is, they had been in the same noviciate and underwent initiation together under Hloza. The senior of the two (FD 1), Vutcha by name, was the local diviner who first directed Jabulani to Soweto where he took instruction from Hloza. Jabulani respects her as highly as he does Hloza, and often seeks her advice when he encounters problems. She is 'sister' diviner to Hloza, as FD 2 is 'sister' to Jabulani.

Jabulani first spread out a red cloth (the ibayi worn by diviners) on the floor of the divining hut and placed all his bead accessories (necklaces and bracelets, even items adorning the wall) upon it. The other diviners followed suit, adding what was in their bags to what they were wearing. The heap of beadwork was carefully wrapped up in the cloth and placed behind the recently erected sacred branch in the rear of divining hut. Jabulani later informed me that this action symbolised the massing of divining power in support of the emerging diviner. Jabulani then mixed a red coloured medicine with an oily base (indumani) and smeared this sticky mixture all over the face, upper body and legs of Johannes. It will provide extra power to Johannes in the process of 'coming out' rituals as the colour of red symbolises 'struggle and power' to the novice.

Naked from the waist up and with his legs covered by a divining cloth, Johannes sat in the centre of the divining hut. He sat on crossed legs and a cloth covered them. A fully attired female diviner (FD 1) sat facing him. Each presented a mirror image to the other, a knobkerrie in his right and in her left hand, a spear in her right and in his left hand. Knobkerrie and spear are two important items of diviners. In a short while, signs of incipient spirit possession began to appear. The female diviner (FD 1) emitted a sharp screech followed by the rumbling moaning from Johannes. This was a

signal for the whole company to erupt into rhythmic song and drumming, as violent trembling took hold of the bodies of the two central participants and their heads snapped back and forth. Spectators from outside began to crowd into the hut. Sitting directly behind Johannes, I could see his body drenched in sweat. After about fifteen minutes of these convulsions, his partner broke off the divining dance (gida) for a short rest, during which she and Johannes stretched and flexed their legs. The dance resumed, punctuated by regular breaks. The partner was relieved by another female diviner (FD 2) and eventually by Jabulani himself, until some two and a half hours after its inception, the dancing was terminated by Jabulani's father diviner, Hloza, who at midnight instructed the drummers to stop.

The dancers were relieved of knobkerrie and shield and the spirits left them at rest. Johannes was enveloped in a blanket and the assembly dissolved to partake of tea and bread. All the diviners lay down in the hut to sleep, but Johannes had to remain propped up against the wall. Once his spirits had been aroused, they should not be allowed to depart.

In these events, the dominant themes of spirit arousal (to action) and of withdrawal (on the part of Johannes) were clearly displayed. Johannes had been temporarily drawn into the world of his divining spirits, by entering a more or less continuous state of trance. During the night he occupied a space apart from the other diviners, completely concealed in the blanket and sealed upright against the wall.

B) The Ngoma rite (Day two)

Preparations began at 8 a.m. and took two hours. While Johannes remained blanketed in the divining hut, most of the activity took place in the ikandelo (a ritual shrine in the courtyard marked out by stones, in the centre of which Jabulani had planted his second sacred tree, i.e. branch of marula tree, dedicated specifically to his ngoma divining spirit. (See diagram in appendix 2)

Hloza dug a rectangular vomiting pit within the edge of the arena. Jabulani fetched switches from the divining hut and draped them on the sacred tree. The female diviners who had partnered Johannes in the dancing brought frothing medicine (igobo), dishes and knives to the arena. Red and white divining cloths were hung on the fence

around the shrine. Hloza gathered the diviners together for a brief rehearsal. "The meaning of today's function", Jabulani explained to me, "is that Johannes comes into the Majoy family (impande) as a bride (umakoti)". Hloza conveyed the same meaning by jokingly saying: "today, Johannes is going to become my wife" (i.e. the only recognised way in which an outsider can become a member of a family or descent group). Fresh frothing medicine was prepared while Hloza and Jabulani retrieved their beads from the divining hut and put them on⁴⁹.

The ceremony began with drumming and singing. Johannes was led by his female partners of the night before from the hut to the arena, crawling on his hands and knees. He sat, legs outstretched and uncrossed, before the shrine with the morning sun on his face. Hloza assumed the leading role by pouring black powdered medicine into Johannes' mouth and by taking up a knife and symbolically stabbing him in the sides. Immediately, a goat was placed against his back, its forelegs over his shoulders, and was stabbed in the neck so that the blood spurted all over his body⁵⁰.

Johannes repeatedly drank frothing medicine (igobo) to induce puking where he stood, and this purification continued for a good ten minutes, each regurgitation being greeted by applause. In the meantime, the goat was skinned and certain parts designated for special purposes were cut out and set aside, namely, the gall bladder, pieces of still quivering ("living") flesh, and an ankle bone depending on the identity of the divining ngoma spirit. If the ngoma is on the paternal side, a right anklebone is to be worn on the right wrist. The opposite applies to a matrilateral spirit. At the conclusion of the internal purification, the initiand was externally washed by Jabulani with medicated water. He was once again covered with a blanket and was led back into the hut.

The presiding specialists prepared for the next phase. Hloza dissolved black and brown powders in a pot of water, to which he added the pieces of meat that had been palpitating when cut off, and instructed Jabulani on how to go about boiling the contents. Two male diviners brought the skin and gall bladder of the goat, contained in a dish, into the divining hut, and another entered with the roasted right foreleg (that had rested on Johannes' right shoulder during the slaughtering). A female diviner

(Vutcha) smeared the bottom of a basket with chime to render it leak-proof and placed it outside the hut.

Having smeared Johannes' body with the gall, Jabulani was instructed by the female diviner (Vutcha) to pour the contents of the cooking pot into the basket outside. Johannes, on his knees, began to eat from the basket and continued to do so as Vutcha slowly drew the basket towards the arena. The consumption of the flesh selected for its remaining signs of life is symbolic of the acquisition of active spiritual power. Its evident dynamism, reflecting an active spiritual agency (ngoma), is expected to give a boost to the intiant's divining power, a power that would shortly be put to the test. That this food is not meant to serve material, but spiritual, needs is confirmed by the fact that, on arrival in the arena, Johannes was again subjected to a prolonged period of purging⁵¹.

The afternoon was devoted to a test of Johannes' divining powers. This is called imfihlo (concealment trial), an exercise in which the diviner in-the-making is required to find hidden objects. For this purpose, Vutcha and Jabulani concealed two basins in different places, the one containing medicines, the other holding the goatskin and gall bladder. The major task is to identify the items. They might possibly be placed in the open for all to see, but their identity is hidden in the minds of Vutcha and Jabulani. Johannes, therefore, had to enter upon an interrogation of these two, or rather into a discourse with them, by reading their responses to assertions ranging from the general to the more particular. At the same time, he behaved as one possessed, either kneeling in front of the testers or standing up to dance, while being fully aware of his surroundings and casting his eyes about for the objects of his quest. He was also alive to cues from the audience (who were in the know), expressed in loud applause when he seemed to be on right track. Vutcha and Jabulani, on the contrary mocked his false leads and taunted him with the possibility of failure.

At the end of an extensive discourse, Johannes rose up and ran out of the homestead, followed by some of the audience. In the bush, he went to a tree, at the bottom of which he found the basin containing the goatskin and gall bladder. This, he brought back and presented to Hloza and Jabulani, while the audience showed their appreciation in loud applause and joyful dancing. He was told to look again. After a

second round of interrogation, he confidently strode out to the arena to return with the second basin. The audience was enraptured at his success. He had emerged from the concealment trial confirmed in his status as a diviner⁵².

The ngoma ceremony closed with the performance of the diviner dance (izangoma gida). Johannes emerged from the divining hut, clad in full diviner attire, and danced solo for about ten minutes. He was followed in succession by Jabulani's sister diviner, Jabulani, Vutcha, and, finally, by Hloza.

During this day's ceremonies, four major interrelated themes were articulated and developed, namely, sacrifice, purification, communion and confirmation of powers. That the sacrifice took place on the shoulders and back of the diviner-to-be and closely followed his own symbolic death (mock stabbing) not only indicates a strong connection between him and the victim, but that in a sense he was himself a sacrificial victim smeared in blood, the identification being further reinforced by his bloodsucking actions. His symbolic death expressed the loss of his previous identity and his dedication to the service of ancestral spirits in his new role of diviner. His body was then purged and purified of the remaining dross of his old existence in readiness for being joined to the world of spirit. The communion rite required him to consume, first those parts of the sacrificial goat that had displayed vestiges of life after death, i.e. the presence of spirit activity, and secondly the right foreleg that was identified with his specific divining spirit. The effect of these ritual actions was that he symbolically became one with, and was assimilated to, his ngoma guiding spirit. That Jabulani partly joined in this communion in a display of commensality was both recognition and a strengthening of the spiritual bond that had been forged between them during the period of seclusion and training and that would continue to define their future relationship. Finally, the change that had been ritually wrought in Jabulani had to be publicly authenticated. He must prove and confirm, in a test of his prowess, that this ngoma spirit has indeed given him the power to divine, to reveal what is hidden and to make transparent what is obscure. Only then may he show himself before all, in full regalia, as a legitimate diviner.

C) **The Ndawo rite (Day three)**

This ritual took place very early in the morning, after a thirty minute walk to the river (Mahlambane, the meaning of hlamba being 'to wash, swim, undergo purification'). The particular river is chosen for being a convenient distance from the homestead (See diagram in APPENDIX 3). Unlike Jabulani, who wore full ndawo attire, Johannes wore a white skirt with a blanket draped over him. The procession was led by Jabulani and Hloza; Vutcha and Jabulani's sister diviner carrying between them an ndawo basket (mutundu); the other diviners bearing their switches, spears, knobkerries and rattles.

At a section of the river in a small wooded valley, a space was already being cleared for the ceremony for about 3 meters along the bank. To the accompaniment of singing and rattling, Johannes put the blanket aside and stood at the water's edge facing east and the assembled company. Hloza and Jabulani threw white coins into the river, asking the ndawo spirits to favour Johannes on this special occasion. One after the other two red chickens (male and female) were killed and swung upside down over the head of Johannes so that their blood fell upon him. I was assured that ndawo spirits abhor goat flesh and even the smell of goat. They much prefer chicken's flesh, hence the two lifeless chickens were thrown into the river. Johannes then stepped into the water and was fully submerged for about one minute. Meanwhile, Hloza took brown powder and another oily medicine from the ndawo basket and mixed these with the chicken blood collected for this purpose and some beer (utshwala). Back on the riverbank once more, Johannes drank this medicinal potion, before Hloza began to administer caba, i.e. to make incisions on his body, on the forehead, tongue, joints, back and chest. These are the standard areas chosen for diviner incisions for it is believed that the divining spirits take up their abode in these openings, either to protect the diviner or to enhance his or her abilities. An incision on the tongue helps him to speak with greater authority and precision, while a cut on the eyebrow gives him more incisive insight.

The ceremony was over at 06:30. Johannes, his upper body clad in a white cloth and visibly trembling under the blanket, led the procession homeward. The whole group adjourned to the divining hut where Johannes became possessed by his ndawo divining

spirit and performed the dance of an ndawo diviner for about ten minutes. Whereupon Hloza publicly announced the successful completion of Johannes' 'coming out' rituals. He was now a fully-fledged diviner and accepted as a member of the Majoy sodality (impande). It remained for the new 'graduate' to be invested with his 'cap and gown' in a formal 'coming out' ritual. It began in front of the divining hut, with only Hloza, Jabulani, Vutcha and another male diviner in attendance. Here the gall bladder (inyongo) of the sacrificial goat was attached to the back of the new diviner's head as a symbol of legitimacy. The practice varies from one divining 'family' to another, but it is commonly worn at the front or at the back; worn to the side it would indicate failed 'coming out' rituals.

The party then moved to the ritual shrine (ikandelo) where three holes were cut in the middle of the goat skin, one for the head, the other for the arms. Johannes was invested with this ready-made garment or goatskin vest (iminkwamba). A final round of incisions (caba) brought these proceedings to a final conclusion.

Johannes was not yet free to set up practice as a diviner. For that, a formal ceremony of installation would have to be conducted at his own homestead⁵³.

The events of the ndawo rite follow a fairly logical and coherent progression from sacrifice, to immersion, to incision, to possession. Being in essence foreign spirits, the ndawo are associated primarily with the sea but also with river water. Rosalin's symbolic recreation is a poor compromise, from which her advanced years and limited mobility might excuse her. Why chickens should be the preferred sacrifice of such foreign spirits is not at all clear. Their being winged creatures providing white meat was never offered in explanation, although white is indubitably the colour medium of ndawo spirits, hence the white clothing worn by Johannes and the initial throwing of white coins by way of appeasement. Money too is part of the symbolic repertoire of the ndawo. Following sacrifice, the full immersion of the candidate is tantamount to a form of communion, an expression of being joined to the ndawo spirits in their distinctive element, while carrying the blood of sacrifice upon him. The incisions subsequently made upon his body are by way of creating openings which are explicitly understood to be filled with the incoming spirit and to be the outposts of its power. These actions culminate in a demonstration of full possession by the spirit. It seems strange,

however, that the Majoy branch does not take the process to the next logical step, as is the case in the Mapewe impande; that of subjecting these new-found ndawo powers to the test of solving a real problem, even a contrived one.

D) The Ceremony of inauguration

The ceremony of establishing the new diviner at his/her own homestead is termed ukubuyisa, literally 'to bring back', 'to return'. The term does not exclusively refer to the movement of the diviner as such. The other circumstance for which the term is more commonly employed is the final step in the making of an ancestor, at which point the deceased spirit must cease its waywardness, accept its role as structural ancestor and settle into its prepared abode in the homestead. There is a clear parallel to be drawn, therefore, between bringing back the ancestral spirit in this situation and introducing the divining spirits to the diviner's homestead. In both cases, this is ritually accomplished.

The inauguration ritual for Johannes had not occurred by the time I left the field. Not only was the expense beyond his means, but neither had his family been able to raise the money to settle his outstanding divining training fees. He was still bound to the service of his trainer and, until he was released from his obligation, he could not secure an independent status for himself. The account that I present here is of a performance that I only witnessed being done by Rosalin in the Mapewa division. It took place at the homestead of the new diviner, in this case Madondo, where he had already constructed a divining hut (indumba). The first exercise was to cleanse the homestead, but especially the divining hut, of evil spirits that had taken up residence there during Madondo's absence. A group of neighbouring diviners assembled with Madondo at the gate of the property, all dressed in their distinctive red robes and white shawls, and marched through into the divining hut to engage with the evil spirits. Each sniffed on the floor and then dashed out to mimic the act of vomiting over the boundary fence. In this symbolic representation, all the indwelling evil spirits were caught up and expelled from the premises. To positively protect the homestead against their possible return, Rosalin burned ibaso⁵⁴ outside the divining hut for Madondo to inhale the smoke. The process was repeated at each of the dwellings of the homestead. Rosalin mixed black

and white medicines outside the divining hut, the black symbolising the stopping of unwelcome spirits by the power of ancestral spirits expressed in white. The mixture was then strewn along the fence and across the main gate. The homestead was now mystically cleansed and secure.

An extended session of divining dancing followed, to the accompaniment of drumming, in front of the divining hut. This lasted about an hour and a half, by which time the light had faded and a fire had been lit. After a brief adjournment for supper, people returned to the dancing arena to witness a divination, not by Madondo but by Rosalin. Emerging from the divining hut on hands and knees, and dressed as an umfermbi (ndawo diviner), she stood in the centre of the arena and was possessed by her ndawo spirit. In the ensuing narrative, Madondo's ngoma ancestors, namely his paternal grandfather and grandmother, were introduced to voice their dissatisfaction with him and to castigate him for his neglect of them. The implication was that, because he had not offered them food (sacrifice), they had removed their protection from the homestead, thereby allowing evil spirits to have free play. They also warned Madondo about his ndawo spirit. Since ngoma and ndawo spirits cannot long cohabit in the same hut, his ancestors wanted him to provide a separate ndawo hut. They warned him that, should he fail in this provision, conflict might arise between the two sets of spirits and this would not be conducive to good divining. At the end of the séance, dancing and singing resumed into the early hours. I took the opportunity of putting my head down in one of the huts but was rudely awakened at one point by Madondo rushing in and out, apparently in a state of possession.

The ceremony continued next morning with the planting of two sacred trees, cut from the same marula tree, to represent Madondo's two ngoma spirits, i.e. his paternal grandparents. The female branch was planted in the unsamo (the inner recess of the divining hut, the male branch planted outside). The rite was designed to emphasise the unity of male and female ancestors. This was accentuated by the manner in which each sacred tree was handled by Madondo and his wife, his right hand above her right and, below that, his left above her left. In this position, their arms were crossed. As Rosalin explained it: "Madondo's right hand represents grandfather and his left is his

grandmother. As he crossed his hands, grandfather and grandmother were made harmonious".

Then incisions were made on Madondo's body in the usual places, but also on the heads and toes, the knees and elbows, and into these Rosalin rubbed a mixture of white, black and brown powders (she called it inyongo, literally gall) in what was clearly an action of empowerment. While Madondo sat with legs outstretched before the sacred tree outside the divining hut, two chickens were sacrificed in the approved manner above his head and naked torso, one a red male, the other a white female. Their extremities were cut off, head, legs and wings, those of the white hen being buried beneath the sacred tree in the hut and those of the red cock under the shrine outside. A goat was dispatched by having a spear thrust through its throat, after being placed on Madondo's back. The goatskin was taken outside to dry and the body fat was collected and preserved for the making of ibaso medicine.

Finally, some herbal medicines were boiled, and Madondo's wife washed his body with this medicated water. His divining apparatus, i.e. bones, switch and stick, were also dipped in the water in a ceremony called "cooking the bones", for they are no longer just bones but are mystically transformed by "cooking" into ancestral instruments. This ended the formal ritual and the remainder of the day was given over to celebratory dancing and singing.

It is not at all clear that all these activities constitute essential ingredients of the inauguration rite. The ndawo divination (ukufemba) may well have been an unscheduled attempt by Rosalin to put Madondo in his place and to publicly rebuke him for some unspecified act or default in the course of his training. The core of the returning ritual would then consist of home cleansing, a display of possession during a divining dance, the placing and spirit occupation of shrines, sacrifice and "cooking the bones". The goat was clearly a sacrifice for the ngoma spirits who took up residence at the shrines. The sacrifice of the chickens, being the preferred meat of ndawo spirits had more interesting implications, the body parts being laid to rest at each of the ngoma shrines. The significance of this conjunction was that it symbolically expressed the incorporation of foreign spirits into the descent group of the ngoma spirits.

5. Analysis of Ukuthwasa Rituals

The making of a diviner is more than a signal mystical conversion experience. It entails undergoing a ritual process which is itself the pinnacle of a more general purposive social process. Both are essential to the production of a diviner, both are human constructions and each displays its own inherent pattern and structure. Here I will attempt to set out the structure of the 'coming out' rituals before turning attention to that of the longer period of the reconstructive social process.

Despite sometimes arbitrary deviation from the pattern, such as Rosalin's improvised river and her impromptu interpretation of an ndawo séance, the shape of the ritual structure can be clearly discerned.

As we have seen, the second and third day of intensive ritual are dedicated to the activation of each of the two kinds of spirits (ngoma and ndawo) that together complete the spiritual armoury of the KwaNgwanase diviner. The first day lays the groundwork for this by sparking the new diviner's capacity for spirit possession. Here the candidate is surrounded and supported by his/her new-found family (impande) of diviners, into which he/she is to be received as a "bride", while the family of origin is in attendance to witness this transfer. The ritual proceeds by the pooling of the assembled mystical resources (beads) and the devolution of this massed power from the collective through successive pairs to the individual candidate, who must then remain apart to hoard what (s)he has received. The identity and nature of the spirit possession remains indeterminate, and this lends credence to the supposition that the candidate has been primed or charged (like a battery) with the spiritual force of the diviner family. It is a process in which the candidate is literally inspired by his/her family-to-be. The candidate is now ready to be intimately and formally filled with his/her own designated divining spirits.

The major difference between these two infusions is that one takes place in the ritual spaces of the homestead, the other is conducted at a river (though not in its entirety). The river, nature, the wild is the appropriate abode of foreign (ndawo)

spirits, who by definition do not belong to any known family or descent group. They are outsiders to the mystical economy of the home, that is supervised by ancestors (in this case by ngoma spirits among them). The ngoma spirits are family, hence considered close, familiar and benign. They are not disposed to harm their diviner, but they can slip away, leaving him/her exposed, hence they must be carefully cultivated. Inhabiting the uncultivated wild, beyond the ambit of cultural norms, ndawo spirits are seen as dangerous predators that indiscriminately attack and harm the unwary. Only those on whom they exercise a legitimate claim (as revealed in divination) may approach them, and even then the encounter is not without risk. In a sense, they must be seduced and pacified with the offer of a family and a home. Hence the movement in the second of the two rituals from homestead to river and back again, in order to fetch and domesticate these wayward foreign spirits.

Nevertheless, the two ceremonies follow a very similar procedure, the logic of which might be expressed as that of achieving ever closer familiarity, intimacy and unity with the spirit(s) concerned. Stripped down to essentials, the sequence is as follows:

Day 1 (ngoma): Sacrifice ---- Purification ---- Communion ---- Possession

Day 2 (ndawo): Sacrifice ---- Immersion ---- Incision ---- Possession

Attention has already been drawn to the common element in these sacrifices of the appropriate animals in each case, a commonality that sets them apart from other ancestral sacrifices. The candidate is in close proximity to the victim and is drenched in its outpouring blood. Clearly, this is a statement of identity between candidate and victim in an act of self-immolation. The candidate offers his/her life to the spirit. This is followed on the second day by rigorous purging to attain a state of inner mystical purity suitable for an indwelling divining spirit. This stage of purification is omitted from the following day's ritual. Going into the river may be literally cleansing, but there is no expulsion of any possible remnant of evil influence from the body. There is no need. After all, the body is already pure enough to have received the possession of the ngoma spirit(s). Rather, the immersion (complete and sustained) in

the river should be seen as a form of communing with ndawo spirits, much as eating the sacrificial meat in which the ngoma spirits are said to share is also a form of mystical communion. For reception of the ndawo spirit only, the candidate requires further treatment in the form of incisions. In this instance, not only do the cuts indicate spirit access but these openings are fortified with strong medicines. Perhaps it is because the ndawo spirit is considered to be extremely dangerous in its raw state that the candidate needs additional preparation. The culmination of the ritual on both days is a state of full intimacy with the respective spirit, exhibited in the outward signs of possession. The main difference here is that ngoma possession is put to the test, whereas the effectiveness of ndawo possession does not require any proof. I can only speculate on the reasons for this. It will be remembered that revelation of an ndawo divining spirit is rather sprung on the novice towards the end of training, in contrast to the dedicated cultivation of the ngoma spirit throughout the training period. Moreover, an ndawo divining performance (ukufemba) is much more demanding, requiring a degree of theatrical ability, mimicry and voice variation, in which the novice apparently receives little or no practice. Only skills that have been practised and acquired are put to the test.

The ukubuyisa (inauguration) ritual at a later date displays a different pattern with its own logic. Here the emphasis is on place (the homestead) rather than on person (new diviner). Almost literally, the ngoma spirits have to be 'planted' in the diviner's homestead. Curiously, the ndawo spirit is not catered for. However, Rosalin's unscheduled ukufemba revealed that it was the wish of the ngoma spirits themselves that the ndawo spirit should be accommodated in its own hut at a later stage. This would be done when the diviner could afford it, and I was unable to observe such an event.

The essential steps of the inauguration rite were, purification, installation, settlement and sacrifice, all pertaining to the location of spirits in definite space, i.e. hut, shrine and homestead. The homestead itself had to be thoroughly cleansed of accumulated evil presence. Secondly, the places designated for spirit occupation (shrines) were created and their outward symbols installed. What happened next literally caught me napping. While the possessed diviner rudely disturbed me from sleep, the significance of the occurrence escaped me at the time. He, and the spirits

possessing him, had not singled me out for harassment, but were dashing in and out of huts at random. The spirits were displaying a frenzied restlessness, as expression of homelessness that is a characteristic theme of all inauguration rituals, before finally settling down in their appointed places. The ritual is completed with a sacrifice, in which once again the diviner is identified with the victim of ngoma performance in an act of self-offering. This is but the first of numerous sacrifices that the diviner must provide to retain the assistance and support of his ngoma spirits in his work.

It is noticeable that each ceremonial set (the three-day ritual and the inauguration ritual) is rounded off with an act of diviner endowment, the first with a formal investiture with the regalia of office, the second with the release of the instruments (bones) of practice.

The ritual process just considered is the end phase of a broader social process that begins with the decision to answer the calling and to submit to the tutelage of a chosen diviner. It is essentially a transformative process and this transformation has multiple strands or dimensions to it. It is possible to distinguish several levels on which this transformation takes place before outlining the means whereby it is accomplished.

The first level of transition is from physical and psychological affliction to personal well-being to therapeutic specialist. The stricken person becomes an adept and a healer. Secondly, a raw recruit is processed into a 'fully cooked' (ritually empowered) diviner. Thirdly, there is a movement from an induced social disablement to a publicly endorsed professional proficiency. Fourthly, in what is probably the most crucial component of the change, the transformation proceeds from manifest control by spirit to a demonstrated control of spirit. From being the play-thing of calling spirits and suffering their impositions, the novice patiently learns how to control them, until as a diviner he can summon them at will to carry out his/her work.

These transformations are brought about in several complementary ways. Most obviously, they are achieved by removal from society into a protracted period of seclusion that is terminated by integration into an elite social corps. Secondly, they are achieved by discipline and training in techniques of disorientation and introspection. The third way is through observation and the accumulation of pragmatic

knowledge of medicines and procedures, and finally by the ritual endowment of mystical power that sets the seal upon the diviner's authenticity.

While the transformative process is wrought by these means, it is also traced or recorded symbolically by the use of colours, principally the black-red-white triad attended to by writers such as Breidenbach (1976), Ngubane (1977) and Turner (1967). The broad consensus from these sources is that black and white are at opposite poles of the symbolic spectrum. White represents life, goodness, purity and perfection, while black stands for death, evil and negation. Red is a transitional colour that is ambivalent, partaking of meanings associated either with black or white, but in addition signifying power and danger. I have not observed the use of black medicines in the rituals that I recorded, but I have on occasion noted the wearing by a black shawl of a novice. This was taken to indicate a state of being dead (to the world). In other words, black here signified the liminal state as a negation, cessation or suspension of normal social engagements. Red is the prevailing colour worn by novices throughout their training. Their transitional status is inscribed on their bodies by the wearing of a red skirt and the sporting of reddish dreadlocks. Red (and brown) medicines were quite often resorted to in the course of the 'coming out' rituals, for the explicit purpose of protecting them 'from danger', empowering and strengthening them in the transformative process. In KwaNgwanase, white is unambiguously the colour associated with ancestors and in this context, with ngoma divining spirits in particular. Hence, during consultations, diviners wear a bright white robe. As Aldina asserted: "white colour is the colour of ancestors. I wear it during divination (ukubhula), because it will help my ukubhula". At the same time, white is perversely associated with the foreignness of ndawo spirits, in the sense that glittering western things are taken to appeal to them (witness the throwing of nickel coins into the river). As to the use of white medicines, the perfect example is the frothy white mixture (igobo) that is regularly drunk to induce vomiting, so as to achieve a level of purification akin to that of the ancestors.

Ndawo are spirits of different colour. Being foreign strangers, they are not accommodated within the more broadly prevalent colour triad. Instead they are depicted by purple or violet. My informants assured me that this stood for their violent and

grudging nature, whereas the ngoma spirits and ancestors in general are unfailingly benevolent (white) towards their loving descendants, even when they beckon them with suffering to become their diviners. Ndawo spirits do not issue a calling, i.e. they have no direct legitimate claim on living individuals. Rather, they hold a grudge against one or other of the individual's ancestors, who are believed to have aggrieved them in the past. All of this is eventually revealed in the legend supplied by the tutoring diviner. They cannot exercise their claim to compensation against the dead upon the living until the diviner becomes one with his/her ngoma spirits. At this point, the diviner accedes to the claim by captivating the ndawo spirit and reconciling it with his ancestors. Once this merging of different spirits has been achieved, the ndawo spirit is no longer wild and dangerous, but becomes content and pliant in the diviner's homestead. This reconciliation is signified by the checked coloured cloth worn by the ndawo diviner (umfembi). The inzithi cloth combines purple and white, purple patches on a white background.

6. Summary

While much has been made, quite legitimately, of the processing of a raw recruit into a fully fledged diviner, I want to avoid the implication that the novice is like a lump of clay to be moulded, that (s)he submits passively to the impress of events without exercising any influence on the outcome. I have sufficient evidence to show that the elements of agency and choice are not suppressed by an inexorable process but are inextricably entwined with it. While the trainer has more obvious freedom of decision-making, the novice is not without resources for swaying a decision his/her way, resulting in a contentious interaction between the two, a low-key battle of wills to control the outcome. This tends to occur in the context of more crucial decisions, most notably in determining the identity of the calling spirits, and even of ndawo spirits. Here, the training diviner initially has the edge in being able to pluck revelation from spirit possession. But, as the novice grows in experience and confidence, (s)he can play the trump card of personal truth revealed in dreams. To

illustrate how this works, I briefly rehearse the case of Gugu, a female novice whom I interviewed twice during her training, with a three-month interval in between (See APPENDIX 4).

On the first occasion, she related the circumstances under which Aldina (who became her trainer) revealed to her that her calling came from her maternal great-grandmother, who paradoxically had reneged on her own calling and, after an abortive attempt to pass the burden to Gugu's mother's sister had settled on Gugu herself. At this point, Gugu professed no knowledge of who her ndawo spirit might be. Three months later, this account had been drastically changed. She had produced her own ndawo legend from her dreams. Her ndawo spirit had revealed itself as an unusually dark-skinned Sotho speaker, a traditional healer who had been killed by Gugu's maternal forebears for supposedly practising 'black magic'. His terrible revenge accounted for the death of five of her mother's siblings, but he now wished to negotiate reconciliation through Gugu. Again, on the basis of her dreams, Gugu had switched her calling spirit from the maternal side to her paternal grandfather. To understand this reversal, we need to appreciate Gugu's family situation. Because her parents were unmarried, she took her surname from her mother, yet she was counting on her father's financial support to see her through her apprenticeship. In her dream, her father's father told her that he was "frustrated with the name Nkosi (mother's surname). They must marry soon. Your father is responsible for everything until you come out (of divining training). He must build a hut for your (his) ancestor". Gugu used this dream to prevail on her father to make a down payment on lobolo, sufficient to allow her to change her name to Hlatswayo. Gugu's agency in each of these episodes is all too clear, and in the second case she had successfully negotiated a change of guiding spirit that was to her personal advantage.

The other area where personal motives may play a significant part is in the way in which individuals choose to respond to the calling itself. It is clear from virtually all the life histories of diviners known to me in KwaNgwanase that they had ignored or resisted the advice that their suffering constituted a calling and that they continued to cling to the semblance of normal social life for some indefinite period. What circumstance or consideration determines the crucial moment in which they eventually reach the decision to accept and follow the calling? Their suffering did not

suddenly become so unbearable that they could profess (as they do) that they could see no way of escape. It is more likely that, at least in part, their economic circumstances tilted the balance between escaping from the calling and escaping into the calling. Their affliction was simply a precondition that could be parlayed into a means of economically bettering themselves. The life-histories of Johannes (Delani) and Tamy certainly support this interpretation. For an initial capital outlay, one could buy access into a potentially lucrative alternative form of self-employment. And indeed the returns from the professional business of divining are far from insignificant. Moreover, once the business is successfully launched, there is nothing to prevent the diviner from diversifying and expanding by investing in other capital ventures. In rural Kwangwanase, the divining profession provides an ideal platform for entrepreneurial activity. In this vein, it is not too far-fetched to view divining itself as a form of entrepreneurial activity. The diviner, however, and perhaps more acutely than other entrepreneurs, is caught up in the toils of the entrepreneurial dilemma, i.e. how to balance the ideal of public service with the pursuit of self-interest. This is a matter that I will return to in the final chapter of the thesis.

CHAPTER SIX
THE NATURE OF SPIRIT POSSESSION

1. Introduction

In this chapter, I wish to examine spirit possession in the context of divining practice, to investigate the relationship between diviner and the divining spirit and, in particular, to explore the aspect of divining agency within this phenomenon.

There are numerous ways of explaining spirit possession, both from an emic and etic point of view. The folk-explanation, one that is current among diviners themselves, is that a divining spirit settles upon a diviner, taking over the body of the practitioner and acting through him/her. In short, the spirit possesses and controls the diviner. Yet, even here, there are distinctions to be drawn, depending upon whether the divining spirit is an ngoma or ndawo spirit. As will become clear, possession by ndawo spirit is deemed to be much more complete than that of ngoma spirit, in that the diviner becomes a pure medium whose consciousness is apparently suppressed under ndawo possession, while an ngoma spirit gives insight to, and informs, the diviner who consciously applies this revelation to the manipulation of a divining apparatus and of client responses. The diviner is either the passive instrument, or is receptive to the control, of the divining spirit.

The more scholarly accounts vary in their interpretation of spirit possession. Some employ a frankly psychological approach, interpreting possession to be no more than a particular expression of a form of mental disturbance (Buhmann, 1984:19ff; Lee, 1969:128-156). Others, such as Lewis, relate it to the broader social context and attribute it to some breakdown or disparity in the social order. Thus, Lewis (1966, 1970; Wilson, 1967) places spirit possession within the context of a 'war of gender' and understands possession by Zar spirits to be an effectively mystical tool, by means of which women collectively seek to redress their disadvantaged position within a social structure dominated by men. Much the same explanation is resorted to by van Niewenhuizen (1974:28-31) to account for the alleged preponderance of female diviners

in Zulu society. Yet others invoke a combination of psychological and social conditions to account for possession by seeing in it an expression of mental distress that emanates from an experience of severe strain imposed by the social order. There is in all of these explanations an unavoidable element of compulsion. Either the person's own inner constitution, or the alignment of outside forces beyond his/her control, impels him/her to recognise possession as an expression of, or an escape from, or at any rate a means of, dealing with an intolerable condition.

2. Calling and Spirit Possession, a Definition

A) Calling, a mystical event ascribed from above

Now, the previous statement may very well serve to make sense of the 'calling' to become a diviner. But is the 'calling' a form of possession; does it conform to what is meant by spirit possession? Virtually all writers on the subject take it for granted that the two are synonymous and fail to examine possession in its own right. For instance, Lee (1969) categorises the process of ukuthwasa as spirit possession, the symptoms of which correspond to the nature of calling. Krige also describes the symptoms of possession as 'causing him to dream constantly and [by] making him ill' (1974:302), the very symptoms that Berglund (1976:136-150) unerringly identifies as those of a 'calling'. This identification, though misleading, is not entirely without foundation. That the 'calling' tends to be rendered as spirit possession is based on a thread of commonality, on the common understanding that both phenomena entail mystical involvement with extra-corporeal human beings. However, it is my contention that this commonality between them is greatly outweighed by the numerous features that set them apart.

My approach, therefore, is to carefully contrast the 'calling' to spirit possession in order to highlight what is distinctive about the diviner 'undergoing possession' in the course of consultation. Callaway has provided the earliest summary of the classical pattern of 'calling' among the Zulu:

At first he is apparently robust; but in process of time
he begins to be delicate, not having any real disease, but

being very delicate. He begins to be particular about food, and abstains from some kinds... [H]e is continually complaining of pains in different parts of his body. And he tells them that he has dreamt that he was being carried away by a river. He dreams of many things, and his body is muddled and he becomes a house of dreams (1870:259-260)

Lee's more recent description (1969:140) corroborates this:

Physical symptoms which include avoidance of food and consequent emaciation, behavioural symptoms of fugue states, belching and yawning; and psychological events which include hallucinations and the dreaming of stereotyped dreams of rivers, snakes, etc.

My own research amply confirms that this pattern has scarcely changed, the case of Lindiwe, a female diviner in Thandizwe, being fairly typical of it. At the age of eleven, while at school, Lindiwe experienced bouts of dizziness and blurred eyesight, a condition that steadily worsened to the point where she had to quit school. Aged twelve and at home, she saw herself caught up in a great fire without being burnt and this experience was repeated a number of times. Thereafter, she began to suffer headaches and she felt something moving up and down within her chest. She was subject to nausea and vomiting. She began to retreat from all social relationships and avoided speaking to others. One day an old man appeared to her (she insists that it was not a dream) and she realised that he was an idlozi (ancestral spirit); he told her where she should go to receive ukuthwasa. Yet she allowed an interval of six or more years to pass before she followed his instructions, which took her to KwaNgwanase. Still unmarried at the age of 27, she has been a diviner for the past eight years. Raymond, a young male diviner in eNgezini, recalls a similar experience;

While I was in standard 2, I became sick. Initially I suffered from headache. My feet were heavily swollen. [At school] I couldn't read on the blackboard. I told my problem to my teacher and my parents. My parents reported to ancestors with a white cloth and traditional beer. But the condition didn't improve. I wanted to study and I went back to the school. The very first day of returning to school, I felt a terrible headache and soreness in my eyes.

From such literary and field sources it is possible to cull the distinctive features of the 'calling'.

(1) Individuals who were once normal and healthy become physically weak and mentally fragile. Their bodies become a bed of pain, pain that is variously localised in the head, in the eyes, on the shoulders, back and sides, and on feet and arms. This

cumulative suffering and discomfort amounts to physical disablement so that they are forced to abandon normal everyday activities. That attendance at school is often, nowadays, the first casualty of such physical degeneration, since school and education are the gateway to career paths that lead away from divining, is not so surprising.

(2) Individuals afflicted in this way gradually retreat from a normal social life, withdrawing from social relationships into a social void, becoming restless, sometimes aggressive and violent, and wandering aimlessly about. They become strange and asocial beings.

(3) The person who is called by divining spirits becomes a 'house of dreams'. Recurring dreams display common symbolic patterns: immersion in rivers or the sea, flying through the air, conversing with snakes, wandering in the bush and collecting herbs, journeying to a strange place later to be identified as the home of a senior diviner.

(4) Not everybody heeds the call, at least initially. Many delay and try to put it off, by ignoring, deflecting or bargaining their way out of it. The 'calling' is a burden that is generally not welcomed. Sibusiso, my one time interpreter, was emphatic that "people, particularly young guys like me, do not like ukuthwasa. We regard the calling as an outdated traditional belief and practice. It is boring". Cabangane, a young female informant, has a horror of taking ukuthwasa. "I don't like it. If I am doing ukuthwasa, I have to drink blood and do vomiting. It's disgusting. I can't do that". Others go in search of alternative escape routes. Nomasonto received the first intimations of a calling only after producing her second child in marriage. Consulting a doctor and subsequently visiting a clinic, followed by a period in hospital, all failed to diagnose her problem. Diagnosis and treatment by a traditional herbalist also failed to produce results. Eventually, a Zionist prophet told her "you have got an ancestor" and gave her a medicated stick to mystically fend off divining spirits. In many cases, this leads to Zionist incorporation as a healer but, since it did not solve Nomasonto's problem, she was finally directed to Aldina's homestead for ukuthwasa. There are also recognised traditional rituals designed to block the calling, an offering of traditional beer, some food and white cloth might be deemed sufficient to pacify the demanding spirit, or chickens or a goat may be sacrificed as an

additional inducement. In fact, Aldina herself admitted that she had employed such delaying tactics to defer her own calling. However, such placatory rituals may not always be evasive but could also be read as promissory notes for entering upon ukuthwasa at some later date, particularly when the person singled out is too young and immature to train as a diviner.

Now these distinctive features may well serve to make sense of calling. It will be quite apparent from the foregoing that the calling is not the equivalent of spirit possession. If, by possession, we mean the indwelling, or occupation of, the individual body by the spirit, then this is clearly absent from the repertoire of knowledge that we have about the 'calling'. There is no invasion or take-over, as such, of the afflicted person, though the data might bear the weight of claiming that such an invasion is attempted or, at least, intended. Visitations there are aplenty, in dreams and visions, but these are episodic manifestations of short duration, fleeting, transitory and well spaced out. They are no more than visits, comings and goings, on the part of spirits having a separate existence from those they have chosen. It would be more correct to say that the spirit is hounding, nagging and harassing the patient, laying siege to him/her from without, importuning them to be let in to establish an operational base within the living body. But 'getting in' is the long-term project of the spirit. The more immediate objective is to wound, and this again implies physical and social distance between victim and assailant. Moreover, the reaction of the victim is most often construed as holding off and keeping at bay an unwelcome intruder. It conjures up images of battling to beat off a hostile takeover bid in the boardroom or, in a naval idiom, to repel a boarding party. All the indications point to the fending off of external forces. So, no merging of spirit and patient takes place that might be categorised as possession.

B) Spirit possession: diviner's dominion to divining spirit

When we compare calling with the 'diviner-in-possession', facing an audience of paying clients and exhibiting all the authentic signs of being possessed by a guiding spirit, the contrast is startling. A diviner is physically fit and energetic, mentally well-adjusted and incisive, socially confident and self-assured in the company of

others. (S)he may still be subject to extravagant dreaming, but (s)he will have learned how to master such dreams and to read significance into them, so that, instead of producing confusion and anxiety, they are welcomed as a positive reinforcement of the divining role.

The diviner is at peace and in harmony with the divining spirit. Instead of a struggle and tug-war between them, there is communion. But the most significant difference lies within the nature of this communion, when it is periodically expressed in the form of spirit possession. In this context, the term "possession" is intrinsically ambiguous. Does it mean that the diviner is possessed by the spirit or that the diviner has possession of the spirit? If it carries both meanings, we must ask still another salient question: where lies the initiative and hence the control, with the spirit or with the diviner? The evidence would seem to point to control by the diviner, and comparison with the "calling" again helps to make this point.

Although the 'calling' does not qualify as possession, it is a condition in which the spirit makes the running, 'calls the shots' and makes all the moves. The helpless patient either accepts or responds to the goading of the spirit. Clearly, the chosen individual is continually at the mercy of the spirit; this is how calling is understood. In the case of possession, it is the diviner who holds the initiative and it is the spirit that responds when its services are required. The diviner possesses more than (s)he is possessed; the spirit is the diviner's possession to do his/her bidding. The timing of possession is curtailed to consultations which, generally, are neither scheduled nor pre-arranged. The diviner must be prepared to enter into trance without much in the way of prior notice, for the exigencies of patients, who may travel long distances, do not wait on the pleasure of the spirit. The professional demands of the divining office clearly dictate the manifestation of spirit possession and not the other way round. Clearly, the diviner is in full control of the divining spirit. Moreover, this state of affairs is what is aimed at in the course of divining training and its accomplishment is explicitly confirmed in the final rites of ukuthwasa (chapter 5. p.92ff-). In the divining idiom, the fledgling diviner has learned how to exercise control over his/her divining spirit and has demonstrated this to the satisfaction of a discerning audience. In more concrete terms, it means that the diviner has acquired

mastery over the technique of going into trance at will, and trance is the outward behavioural sign of possession. Again and again, my field observation of consultations have shown that without a doubt spirit possession is activated, executed and controlled by the diviner. It does not happen to the diviner; the diviner makes it happen. As Aldina once informed me, "amathwasa (novices) cannot easily bring forth their ancestral divining spirits. They even cannot see ancestral divining spirits who reside deeply inside them. What I do for them (in the process of divining training) is to help (teach) them (to) bring out their spirits more easily". Possession-trance is thus a technical skill that is acquired by practice under supervision, totally unlike the travails endured in the 'calling'.

As a technical device, possession trance is the most precious professional resource that the diviner can command. Without it, the divining consultation would be reduced to a purely human transaction, losing much of its force and mystique; the diviner would be like the emperor without his clothes. It is command of the possession state, which visibly communicates a control of the divining spirit, that more than anything else (e.g. the sifting of the bones) empowers the diviner in dealing with a client and gives him/her the ascendancy in the consultation. Only by this means is the client assured that the light of powerful supernatural insight is being focused on the hidden recesses of his problem. Only in this way can the client be convinced of the credibility of the diviner's verdict. Demonstrable possession is, therefore, the very foundation of the divining art. To control the consultation, the diviner must be seen to be in control of his/her divining spirit. In other words, the diviner cultivates divining spirits.

Granted that the diviner has a vested interest in exhibiting control over the divining spirit through continual mastery of the technique of possession trance, diviners are understandably concerned at the possibility of losing command of this prime resource. This anxiety is expressed in the belief that the divining spirit, particularly ngoma spirit, is not entirely docile but is 'prone to die out', i.e. to slip the leash of the diviner's control; ironic, when one considers the extremes to which the spirit is believed to have gone to in order to enter into close communal cooperation with the diviner. Recourse is had to this belief, if a diviner should fail

to attract clients. Logically, this can only be because clients find the diviner to be less than convincing, are no longer impressed by the adequacy of his/her possession performance, and that the diviner is therefore losing his/her grip upon the divining spirit. Explanations are, therefore, sought to account for the diviner's lack of control.

The first line of reasoning is that the Ukuthwasa ceremonies were improperly completed and the remedy therefore is to undergo the rites again. In fact, a diviner often takes a second divining training and not always with the same senior diviner, for the second explanation points to the deficiency of his/her training and his/her incompetence. Kahla, a man in his late fifties, having endured the tribulations of a 'calling', went back to his home place in Greytown to be trained as a 'whistling' diviner. But after completion of divining training, not a single client consulted him. He suspected the insufficiency of his parent diviner as the reason for this. Subsequently, he underwent retraining at Nongoma and, 'as a result', he acquired clients. Later, Kahla suffered a relapse, that is, the symptoms of 'calling', though differently registered, recurred. In a dream, his ancestors told him to 'go to eNgezini and get training there' (for the third time) and there the diagnosis of the consulting diviner (Aldina) was that his ancestors wished him to become an umndawo diviner. And this brings into play the third line of defense against loss of control over a divining spirit, which is to accommodate a ndawo spirit. "Without ndawo", stressed Jabulani, "ngoma is prone to run away, or even to die out". Whereas, Rosalin, a female diviner, confidently asserts "but ndawo never die out". It would seem, therefore, that ndawo spirits subordinate and keep a tight lid on ngoma divining spirits. Curiously, Kahla does not subscribe to this view. He complains that Aldina has failed to cure him by this method. His explanation is that "Aldina is not familiar with umlozi. That is why she failed to correct me".

This is a convenient point at which to make a slight digression on the subject of ndawo possession. While I have claimed that diviners are thought to be more in possession of their divining spirits than to be possessed by them, thus requires some modification. There are two parts to the claim; (1) possession is a learned technique and (2) in possession states, the diviner is in control of his/her divining spirit. The

first holds good for both ngoma and ndawo attributed possession, but not the second. When a ndawo diviner goes into trance during a consultation, all the indications are that (s)he is completely taken over by the ndawo spirit and is fully possessed by it. His/her personality is stifled and suppressed by the divining spirit, which communicates not with but through the diviner. The diviner becomes a pure medium for the words and voice of the spirit, and cannot him/herself recollect afterwards or speak about what has transpired without being independently informed of it. What is exhibited is spirit control of the diviner, in contrast to diviner control of an ngoma spirit, and in close correspondence to mhondoro mediums in Zimbabwe (Lan, 1985) and umbanda mediums in Rio de Janeiro (Goodman et al., 1974:196). Moreover, besides communicating in its own right, the ndawo spirit acts like a master of ceremonies, ushering in other spirits and giving them the floor in turn. In the séance, therefore, the ndawo divining spirit demonstrates control, not only over the diviner, but also over other spirits, ancestral or otherwise⁵⁵. This is entirely consonant with the claim that an ndawo spirit is there to stay and is powerful enough to keep a ngoma spirit in place.

While incompetent training diviners are adjudged to be the main culprits for a failure to win clients, then source of an enfeebled divining practice is deemed to lie in the competitiveness of the market place and in the mystical forces that are at play within it. It is axiomatic that diviners compete with one another for customers and it is a commonly held belief that a competitor will not be averse to stealing away one's divining spirit in order to boost his/her own divining trade. This may well account in part for a widespread reluctance among diviners to join modern associations of traditional healers, which uphold the virtue of sharing knowledge and techniques, but in many minds is almost tantamount to sharing divining spirits. Sharing of knowledge and techniques is presumed to operate within each divining sodality; skills are passed on to novices entering the sodality by its senior members. It is outside of and between sodalities that cut-throat competition and the rustling of divining spirits is believed to take place and it is usually well established and more powerful diviners who are accused of such unfair practice. However, it is not unknown for unsuccessful diviners, or even novices where divining training is not going well, to accuse their 'master' diviner of having stolen their divining spirits, thus defining themselves as

no longer belonging to that sodality and effectively severing their ties to it.

3. Possession as Transaction and Event

I have argued that possession is a critical device for empowering the diviner in his/her dealings with clients, but it is more than that. Many anthropologists perceive spirit possession in terms of a transaction between two parties, the spirit and the human medium. Basically, spirit possession is a "communication" (Firth, 1959:141) or "negotiation" (Boddy, 1994:407) between the spirits and the human host, or alternatively it is the expression of "standardized cultural meanings" (Crapanzano, 1977). Firth further stresses that "the actions and words of the medium must be translatable" (1959:141). Without the proper translation of spirit possession, the esoteric incident delivers a meaningless communication. To be effective, possession must produce social meanings and values. In this respect, spirit possession may be defried in Crapanzano's terms as an articulation. Crapanzano explains 'articulation' as:

The act of . . . constructing an event to render it meaningful. The act of articulation is more than a passive representation of the event; it is in essence the creation of an event. It separates the events from the flow of experience . . . gives the event structure . . . relates to other similarly constructed events, and evaluates the event along both idiosyncratic and (culturally) standardized lines. Once the experience is articulated, once it is rendered an event, it is cast within the world of meaning and may provide a basis for action (1977a:10).

Thus Boddy maintains that "spirit possession in Hofriyat is an idiom for the articulation of a certain range of experience" (1986:166). By articulating particular events out of the flow of experience, a possessed person is able to shape his/her own inexplicable experience the better to take further actions. In the course of articulating such experience, the number and status of possessing spirits can often be modified or replaced, i.e. during ukuthwasa. Ascendancy in possession may be shifted from one particular spirit to another, particularly oscillating between paternal and maternal ancestors.

Gugu's case⁵⁶ shows that the power of the ngoma divining spirit was transferred

from a group of maternal spirits to a group of paternal spirits. It is clear that the passage of possession to paternal spirits was a way of reconstituting the pattern of her kinship experience from identification with her maternal lineage to incorporation into her father's lineage. That this articulation provided the grounds for further action might be gauged from the fact that her father began to make lobola payments shortly after her paternal ancestors had demanded a change in her surname. Nor is Gugu's case an exception, when such articulation involves the waxing and waning of possessing spirits, as will become clear from the case-history of Isabel, who struggled to keep her possessing spirits under control.

About forty years of age, Isabel is one of many failed izangoma in KwaNgwanase, whose divining spirits are virtually closed and incommunicative, because nobody comes to consult them. Our first meeting was rather a strange affair. One afternoon, just a few days after my arrival in the area, I was chatting to Mrs. Busisiwe in her homestead, where I had found lodgings. In the middle of our conversation, a tall and slender woman entered, without any of the conventional politeness, and squatted in front of us. She greeted my landlady, then turned to me and greeted me in Zulu. When I responded in kind, she laughed and said "very good" (i.e. my Zulu). Whereupon, she immediately left. Mrs. Busisiwe informed me that her name was Isabel and that she was a diviner who lived nearby. Ten days later, I paid a call on Isabel. She lived in a poorly constructed homestead, with her pensioner husband and her children. We retired to her divining hut, an equally shabby construction, to conduct an interview.

Isabel had experienced illness from an early age that forced her to leave school. She now thinks her affliction was the onset of her 'calling', though nobody suspected this at the time (possibly because her major symptoms were swollen ears and feet). At any rate, she led a reasonably normal life, got married and bore two children. She then fell seriously ill, but still nobody associated this with a 'calling' until, after a visit from her mother, she had a dream of her mother's father, formerly a diviner. She followed his instruction to seek out a particular isangoma who, having cured her, took her under instruction and acquainted her with medicines and the art of divining. During this first interview she insisted that, although her father's sister (a deceased isangoma) also assisted her in divination, it was her mother's

father who was the dominant and decisive possessing spirit.

I met Isabel subsequently on several occasions and built a good rapport with her. She performed divining (ukubhula) for me and my personal impression was that she was quite skilled at the task. When I interviewed her again two years after our first encounter, it was to find that she was no longer performing divining. She claimed that her divining spirits had run away and abandoned her, as evidenced by the fact that no patients came to consult her. What she desperately required was to raise up a ndawo spirit, for possession by a ndawo is the best guarantee of retaining the fickle ngoma spirits. Unfortunately, she was unable to meet the expenses of another session of divining training to rouse her two known amandawo spirits, namely her mother's brother and her paternal grandfather's brother's wife. In the earlier interview, she had confided that her divining spirits had been stolen by her father diviner. But when I questioned Jabulani, a diviner friend, about this, he scornfully dismissed it. He told me that Isabel 'had done many bad things, including witchcraft, to other people', and that was why her divining spirits had deserted her. While being financially disbarred from undergoing a second divining training, Isabel claimed to have had a dream in which her ndawo instructed her to go to the sea to collect some herbal medicine along the shore. She would see what would happen after that.

The point, however, is that, although Isabel had not formally been invested with ndawo spirits, she was already anticipating such a possession, should it become affordable, by taking the measure of alternatives. In the interval between the two interviews, a shift in the identity of her ndawo spirits had taken place. Of the two previously designated ndawo spirits, that of the agnatic great-grandfather had been replaced by the spirit of her mother's brother. When I pointed out this shift to Isabel, she defended it by saying that she was not yet quite sure of her ndawo spirits, implying that the matter was not settled by any means and that further displacements might take place. She did not claim that her first choice was rather anomalous, in that an agnatic ancestor scarcely fits the character of a foreign ndawo spirit. Ideally, the identity of an ndawo spirit is much more negotiable than in Isabel's case, since its very foreignness makes the choice virtually limitless. What advantage might occur from choosing a known over an unknown (completely foreign) ndawo spirit, or from favouring

one known spirit over another (in Isabel's case), is not entirely clear. The known advantage of acquiring possession by an ndawo spirit is that of having a kind of spiritual bailiff to repossess her errant ngoma spirits and to act as their warder. The quest for ndawo possession, as well as the process of refining ndawo identity, indicates that an act of articulation is well under way. Once finalised, possession by one or more ndawo spirits will re-order and make sense of her experience of failure in her profession, will re-situate her as a practising diviner and will give her the impetus to make a fresh start. Possession is thus a purposive activity designed to give order, meaning and value to deranged or confusing experience. It is a way of articulating what is inchoate.

A couple of instances will serve to show the technical aspects of spirit possession. Cele in her 50s, being asked for an interview, demanded twenty rands for 'bringing out' her divining spirits to me. I placed money under the divining mat and she used spirit possession to frame the content of the interview - turning it into an authoritative account of her life that was placed beyond interrogation, beyond questioning - a statement, not an interview or exchange⁵⁷. Also while Gugu was explaining about yawning which was the signal of spirit possession, a senior novice sitting beside Gugu corrected her yawn. This shows that spirit possession is carefully learnt. Clearly, Cele and Gugu show, possession is a tap which can be turned on at will, a professional technique that was for hire.

So far, I have made two points so far about possession: (1) it is an acquired technique, (2) it is a communicative device that serves to articulate experience that is out of joint/out of place. To this we can now add that it is a professional resource. It is undeniable that, in the act of possession, the diviner may indeed move to a different plane of consciousness. But this is neither necessary to the objective of dazzling the client with a display of power nor is it altogether likely in the light of what has already been said. It has been shown that possession during consultations is a learned performance and that it is a willful, purposive activity aimed at reworking experience. It is essentially a piece of theatre, in which the diviner is the principal actor, even (but especially in ukufemba) playing many parts. To the extent that an actor can enter into the roles he performs, he might undergo some transformation of

consciousness, but we would not credit him with being 'possessed' by the characters he assumes. A good performance, or a convincing possession, is the key to everything else. A commanding performance is provided with both a mystical and an objective impress, such as, 'this diviner exhibits complete control over the divining spirits', 'this diviner attracts many clients'. Of course, the clientele is the real test and touchstone of success on every other level. Having many clients must mean that they are convinced of the authenticity of the possession which, in turn, can be translated into the mystical idiom of spirit control. An altered state of consciousness is not a necessary link in this chain.

To the extent that a diviner may experience some degree of cognitive dissociation from his/her surroundings, it is artificially provoked by such measures as fasting, herbal stimulants, both ingested and inhaled, insistent drumming, unrestrained movement, and, of course, candidates in training are instructed in the use of these techniques. There is a fair degree of deliberation and stage management in producing a state of possession on the part of a diviner. This is not to deny that spirit possession in other non-divining contexts can be more spontaneous and unrehearsed. But in the context of divination, at least, spirit possession is well learnt technique and this is articulated in the course of divining training.

4. Ngoma Spirits and Kin-structure

A) Kin classification of Ngoma divining spirits

I have interviewed twenty-six diviners and have collected information about their divining spirits. Among them, female diviners (15) outnumbered male diviners (11). There were no particular principles, such as, age, gender, ethnic identity and so on, in selecting diviner informants. They were randomly selected. The total number of divining spirits is eighty two (46 ngoma spirits and 36 ndawo spirits). This figure shows that each diviner has on average three divining spirits. As I have mentioned earlier, diviners in KwaNgwanase have two categories of divining spirits, ngoma and ndawo. The comparison and nature of these spirits will be dealt in the following chapter. In this chapter, my aim is to single out ngoma spirits in order to analyse

them (See Table-1).

Although diviners in KwaNgwanase specify divining spirits into nguni, umlozi, and indumba⁵⁸, they are collectively termed ngoma spirits. My survey casts some light on the nature of ngoma spirits and on the gender composition of divinership. Firstly, the gender composition of diviners may be controversial. Among anthropologists, there has been a kind of compromise about the gender of the divining profession. "Divination is a woman's thing" (Ngubane, 1977:142) or as Berglund notes, "in theory anybody can become a diviner, but in practice the overwhelming majority are women" (1976:136). My data also shows that female diviners outnumber male diviners (fifteen to eleven). However, it is too rigid and uncomfortable premise to argue that divination is an exclusively woman's business. It seems to me, according to my data, that the gender composition of divinership in KwaNgwanase is likely to be more balanced than the conventional concept of female dominance in divinership.

In fact, there is a continual change of the gender composition in the tradition of Zulu divinership. van Nieuwenhuijsen's study on diviners in Nyuswa land (1974) shows how the gender composition of Zulu diviners has been affected by the political situation in Zulu society. By quoting Stuart, van Nieuwenhuijsen suggests that when the Zulu kingdom was a mighty military power, the diviners were exempt from military services. At the time of Mpande's rule (1840-1872), however, it seems that too many men wanted to skulk away from compulsory military service by turning themselves into diviners. Mpande eventually collected them together to form a special regiment (28). Ritter (1978:369) states that there were only a few female diviners at work during Shaka's period. Later, under the apartheid regime, people who became diviners were no longer allowed to work for the whites, and "because labour outside the reserve has at present become an economic necessity, most men nowadays refuse to obey an ancestral call to become an isangoma" (van Nieuwenhuijsen, 1974:28).

The above episode suggests that Zulu divinership is not a possession of particular gender, rather it is a socially structured. Today, I cautiously suggest, Zulu male tend to move into the realm of divinership, once known as the field of female, in order to benefit themselves from it⁵⁹.

Also the rigidity of gender based premise, i.e. divination is female's

profession, soon confronts with a dilemma when an incompatible figure is presented of ngoma divining spirits. The number of male divining spirits (in paternal and maternal line) far exceeds female divining spirits (twenty-nine to seventeen). In spiritual realm of ngoma, male divining spirits outnumber female divining spirits. Male dominance is particularly prominent in the realm of paternal divining spirits, all twenty ngoma spirits, are male spirits. If divination is female's business and at least the majority of diviners are female, then how can this incompatible data, male divining spirits outnumber female divining spirits, be explained? Is this an exceptional phenomenon in KwaNgwanase? Or is there any structural transformation of gender ration among diviners? Unfortunately, there is no comparative data available, however, these two figures show that there are numerical and gender balance between paternal and maternal kin of ngoma spirits. It will be quite interesting if any other ngoma genealogy would be provided to compare with this figure. If accept the premise that divination is woman's thing, at least today in KwaNgwanase, the gravity of divination is on the gender shift: from female to male. Or, at least, fact explanation shows female dominance in the field of divining but spiritually male dominates the divining world.

The changing social structure and environment induce male into the world of divining profession. Of course, femaleness of diviner is at least symbolically expressed in the world of divinership, i.e. the novice is called a daughter to the senior isangoma, but in social reality, there seems to be a tendency of gender transformation.

B) Affinal dominance in Ngoma possession

Another significant figure of ngoma kinship is that affinal (matrilateral) spirits outnumber patrilineal ngoma spirits by 26 (56.5%) to 20 (43.4%). Is there any reason to expect more dead diviners outside rather than within one's patriline? Ngoma is indisputably a lineage divining spirit which may reflect the patrilineal social structure in KwaNgwanase. Nevertheless, in KwaNgwanase, the affinal dominance of ngoma spirit might be explained in terms of relatively strong position endorsed to matrilineal ancestors. Some might insist that it has something to do with the modern decline of the patrilineage in societies, which can no longer provide for all one's

Table 1: Ngoma spirits and kin relationship

Diviners			<u>Ngoma</u> spirits		
NAME	GENDER	AGE	PATERNAL	AFFINAL	NUMBER
GUGU	Female	26	FF	MMM	2
ALDINA	Female	32		FM	1
JABULANI	Male	38		MF	1
DELANI	Male	32	FFF		1
SIBIYA	Female	52	FF		1
THABILE	Female	62		MM, MMM	2
SOFINA	Female	50S	FFF		1
DANIEL	Male	42	FF	MM	2
NGUBANE	Male	50S		MM	1
ISABEL	Female	38		FZ, MF	2
KUNSI	Male	38	FF		1
RAYMOND	Male	19	FFF		1
ROSALIN	Female	60S	FF	MF, MM, MMF, MMM	5
ROSALINA	Female	70S	FF	FM	2
MANGUBANE	Female	60S	F	M, MM	3
GETRUDE	Female	50S		MF, MM	2
PHILIP	Male	38		MMB	1
LINDIWE	Female	27	FF, F		2
LEVAS	Male	57		MMM	1
THEMELINA	Female	63	F, FB, FB, FF, FFF	FM, MF	7
FRANK	Male	19	FF		1
MSIBI	Male	50S	FF		1
MZWANDEMINI	Male	28		FM	1
KAPELA	Female	?		MFF, MFFF	2
ELIZA	Female	50S		FM	1
BOPIWE	Female	49	FFF		1
			20	26	46

F (Father), B (Brother), H (Husband), M (Mother), Z (Sister), W (Wife)

needs. In the past and even today, father and brothers are used to away looking for employment while leaving all their duties behind at home. Hence the tendency other family members look other ways to survive and cast their safety – the importance of maternal relatives may rise against paternal relatives. If it is the transformation of social reality, why not similarly travel for divinatory power. I have already illustrated in the CHAPTER THREE that the patrilineal and patrilocal principle is weakened by most of male members are away or uneconomic, hence they contribute less than they used to. Under this changing social conditions, lineal descent may still play a cardinal role, particularly the principle of inheritance, but it no longer plays an elementary social principle.

Furthermore, the diagram shows that there is a tendency of female dominance among affinal ngoma spirit (63%). It is again against the general tendency of ngoma possession: a male divining spirit dominates in both patrilineal and matrilineal principle. How could it be explained? A structural-functionalism may provide conventional explanation on this. Childhood illness may recur more seriously when a woman is subjected to the strain of an exogamous marriage and has children of her own. Marriage may be a ripe recruiting ground for diviners. And when they cast about for a guiding spirit, i.e. identifying it, they choose someone in their own backgrounds who had been diviners for possibly similar reasons. As we can see from the table, there is a clear-cut contrast between male dominance in patrilineage and female dominance in matrilineage which might reflect an ideological context between patrilineal and matrilineal principle in KwaNgwanase. It may also reflect the changing trend of social structure and practice in KwaNgwanase.

van Nieuwenhuijsen's data shows a sharp contrast to my data (1974). Among thirty ngoma (amathongo) spirits Can Van Nieuwenhuijsen had collected, male spirits comprises of twenty (66.6%) and patrilineal spirits are nineteen (63.3%) (1974:10). Affinal spirits only consist of five (16.6%). What is the reason? Or what this figure signifies? It might be the because of social and cultural difference between Nyuswa land and KwaNgwanase. Nyuswa land is the one of places which maintain hardcore Zulu cultural heritages and strong Zulu norms and values: patriarchy. Patriliney and patrilocality are strong working principles. In contrast, KwaNgwanase, a margin of Zulu

cultural influence, tradition allows more affinal influence in the community and therefore more affinal divining spirits are also allowed to activate in the divining world.

There is another significance of the table. The number of divining spirits possessed by an individual diviner varies greatly. Is it an advantage to have multiple possession spirits? Is a diviner's mystical power drawn from more divining spirits? Some diviners might be led into thinking and even claiming this. For instance, Themelina, a female isangoma in eNgozini, has the greatest number of divining spirits: seven ngoma and two ndawo. She is quite well-managing diviner who successfully builds up her divining practice. However, Frank, a young male isangoma from Mozambique, has only a single ngoma spirit, but his powerful divining practice draws many local people to consult him. It is hard to compare who is more powerful diviner between Themelina and Frank. Both are quite powerful and draw many clients. Aldina, mostly known diviner, has only two divining spirits, one ngoma and one ndawo. Jabulani, prospering diviner, also has only two divining spirits. On the contrary, Isabel, whose divining spirits are actually dying out claims five divining spirits. And it would appear that clients and novices are more impressed by performance and results than with more claims of spiritual potency.

5. Summary

This chapter begins with a definitional problem of calling and spirit possession which has been naively ignored by anthropologists with unknown reasons. Calling is a mystically ridden revelation assigned from ancestral (divining) spirits. Calling entails a series of misfortunes and affliction, both physical and mystical level. Ideally, a person cannot stand against calling; only the way of easing these misfortunes and affliction are to accept the calling.

On the contrary, spirit possession is further linked with diviner's purposeful alteration of consciousness in order to carry on his/her divining practice. Therefore, divining spirits are said to be 'cultured' and 'artfully manipulated' by the diviner to

smooth his/her divining in the world of divining business.

The literature on spirit possession has changed direction from behavioural and psychological rationalisation of the possessed to increased attention to local contexts, personal experience, cultural logic and creativity. And whether central or peripheral, possession has been shown to be about morality, kinship, ethnicity, history, and social memory - the touchstone of social existence. If we focus on what the diviners do, rather than what they cannot, we find them working in the spiritual realm on behalf of 'themselves' (Boddy, 1994:416).

Spirit possession might, as psychological explanation asserts, be an indigenous pattern of 'altered state of consciousness'. For it is undeniable that, in the act of possession, the diviner may indeed move to a different plane of consciousness. But this is neither necessary to the objective of dazzling the client with a display of power nor is it altogether likely in the light of what has already been said. It has been shown that possession during consultations is a learned performance and that it is willful purposive activity aimed at reworking experience. It is essentially a piece of theatre, in which the diviner is a principal actor, even (but especially in ukufemba) playing many parts. To the extent that the actor can enter into the roles he performs, (s)he might undergo some transformation of consciousness, but we would not credit him with being 'possessed' by the characters he assumes. A good performance, a convincing possession, is the key to everything else. A commanding performance is provided with both a mystical and a subjective impress, such as, this diviner exhibits complete control over the divining spirits, this diviner attracts many clients. Of course, the clientele is the real test and touchstone of success on every other level. Having many clients must mean that they are convinced of the authenticity of the possession which, in turn, can be translated into the mystical idiom of spirit control. An altered state of consciousness is not a necessary link in this chain.

To the extent that a diviner may experience some degree of cognitive dissociation from his/her surroundings, it is artificially provoked by such measures as fasting, herbal stimulants both ingested and inhaled, insistent drumming, unrestrained movement, and, of course, candidates in training are instructed in the use of these techniques. There is a fair degree of deliberation and stage management in producing a

state of possession on the part of a diviner. This is not to deny that spirit possession in other non-divining context can be more spontaneous and unrehearsed. However, spirit possession is used calculatedly to articulate the patients' predicament by creating an evenly the séance. It separates a piece of experience for special attention that structures and frames it by subjecting it to mystical intervention and review. It renders meaning within the client's cultural understanding and leads the way to a satisfactory course of action. It lifts the patient's experience to the level of mystical agency and restructures it by subordinating it to unchallengeable esoteric knowledge. Possession on the part of the diviner is an inescapable part of healing, where healing is essentially the reformation of experience.

In sum, the state of possession is an acquired technique. Presumably this applies to all cases of diviners going into trance for consultation, i.e. both ngoma and ndawo forms of possession. They are deliberately initiated by a diviner when the need arises. Hence, the diviner possesses the spirit in that (s)he calls it up at will. The diviner is in control of the situation, i.e. the principal actor.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE MYSTICAL AFFINITY BETWEEN NGOMA AND NDAWO

As already stated in previous chapters, most of the diviners in KwaNgwanase try to combine ngoma and ndawo spirits in their spiritual armoury. Diviners themselves attest to the desirability of acquiring the ndawo spirit for its disciplinary function of keeping the ngoma spirits in place. Sufficient attention was devoted in the previous chapter to the ngoma spirit and its possession to allow us to concentrate here on the significance of the ndawo spirit and, even more pertinently, to explore the nature of the connection between the two kinds of divining spirit.

Anthropologists have noted the prominence of ndawo spirits among the neighbouring Thonga-speaking people (Junod, 1927; Harries, 1983, 1984) and reference is made to them in earlier ethnographic accounts of the Zulu (Sundkler, 1961; Lee, 1969; Ngubane, 1977) and Sotho (Hammond-Tooke, 1981). In all of these writings, amandawo (or their equivalent amandawe) are uniformly described as 'malevolent foreign spirits' that indiscriminately attack the unwary and unprotected, and for whom women are a favoured target. The earliest account of ndawo origins appears in Junod

As regards the Ba-Ndjao spirits they are sometimes called amandiki, and are said to have followed the Thonga and Ngoni soldiers of Gungunyana, who established themselves for some years at Mosapa, right in the middle of the Ndjao country, to the North of the Sabie, and who, later on, came down again from that mountainous region into the fertile plain of Bilene. On the other hand, when the war of 1894 to 1895 compelled the Northern Ba-Ronga, those from Mabota, Zihlahla and Nondwane to flee, they took with them, so the story goes, the gods who had possessed them, and "scattered" them so thoroughly in the countries of the North that (1927, II:480)

The general area of origin would therefore seem to be the basin of the Pongola river in Swaziland and Thongaland (Lee, 1969:130-131). As Junod points out (1927:480), the Ba-ndjao spirits were the "names of strangers, not of the people of the country, and they frequently attack Thongas who happen to be travelling in such countries and follow them in their further migrations", hence Ngubane's opinion that "amandawo seems to be a term related to the Ndjao people who live in Rhodesia" (1977:142f).

Regarding the incidence of ndawo among the Zulu, we are told that these spirits "are less indigenous to the Zulu than to neighbouring tribes" (Lee, 1969:133) and "quite recently ... appeared in Zululand" (Sundkler, 1961:23). Both Lee (130) and Ngubane (142f) identify amandawo with amandiki spirits, understandably enough since they both fall into the category of troublesome foreign spirit. In none of these sources, however, from Junod onwards, Lee being the sole exception, is there any reference to such spirits functioning as divining spirits, so we may assume this to be a fairly recent novel development.

Local diviners in KwaNgwanase introduce some refinements on the 'malevolent foreign spirit' theme, when describing ndawo. They specify the spirit as that of a deceased white person, whose place of origin is not known beyond saying that it came from overseas. Thus, according to Rosalin, "ndawo is a white spirit and it comes across the sea", and Jabulani stated that "ndawo is originally a foreign spirit who came across the sea with a white face and body". Frank, a young diviner from Mozambique, put it slightly differently: "ndawo is a foreign spirit. It has long hair." It is common knowledge among all the diviners of my acquaintance that ndawo is a white foreign spirit. The spiritual influence of the white foreigner is by no means unique to northern Zululand and Mozambique. Middleton noted among the Lugoara that divination is a power given to a person, usually a woman, under possession by Adro, who takes the "form of a tall white-skinned man" (1969:224). A second specification that carries local consensus is that ndawo is the spirit of a homicide or of a warrior whose life was cut short in battle. Thus Rosalin again: "ndawo is a person who was killed long ago as a warrior. It is a white spirit." And most diviners agree with Rosalin's explicit depiction of ndawo as the spirit of a slain Portuguese doldier serving in a colonial era. I do not strain the meaning by claiming that one strand of identity worn by ndawo is that of colonial enforcer, though at the same time a victim of violence. Stoller has elsewhere noted the spirit legacy of the colonial presence, by observing that Hauka spirits are conceptualised as white colonial officials, while their hosts have a local history and experience of colonial domination (1995:38-45).

Hloza, Jabulani's father diviner from Soweto and therefore an outsider to KwaNgwanase, registered a "black consciousness", revisionary dissent against the corpus

of local knowledge regarding the whiteness of ndawo. He reverses the dominant local description of ndawo as white victim of black killers, at least to some extent.

Ndawo is a black spirit. It is not a white spirit. There is a land (place) for ndawo people called Beira. Ndawo people are black and have short hair. It was during wars, many white people killed ndawo people. The dead ndawo with anger caught white soldiers who killed them. They remained inside the White soldiers' bodies until the possessed died. The soldiers' spirits wandered around after his death to substitute or transform ndawo spirit into somebody else. That is why people see ndawo spirit as a white. But ndawo is originally black people who lived in Beira and were killed by white soldiers during wars.

This brings us to a third local specification of ndawo, namely, that it is a vengeful spirit. The prototype of the slain colonial soldier fits into the general African conception of the dislocated wandering spirit. Cut off in the prime of life, far from home, with little possibility of resettlement in its home place by means of a proper funeral and family mourning, it becomes an unrequited vagabond spirit intent on indiscriminately harming those who cross its path. This equally applies to black migrant workers, whose whereabouts are unknown to their families when they die in the city, but in their case such 'lost souls' can be recovered and resettled by means of an ukubuyisa (to bring home) ritual. The displaced white soldier spirit is all the more dangerous, and equally all the more powerful, because it has no hope of return and is unconstrained by proper structural bonds. However, thwarted in its expectation of a return, the soldier spirit is driven by a more powerful mission of revenge. This places it in an African framework of understanding that the literature labels as the feud. A killing calls out for revenge or some form of redress; a life for a life or a form of equivalent compensation for the life that was violently taken. Diviners in KwaNgwanase believe that they have found a way of requiting the ndawo thirst for revenge, of capturing and domiciling it, of harnessing its exceptional malevolent power and converting it to the achievement of socially beneficial ends in a spectacular form of divination. It should be noted that Hloza's reinterpretation does not easily fit into this design of satisfying the ndawo's pursuit of revenge. If the ndawo was originally a black victim, its revenge would have been achieved by indwelling the white soldier and its satisfaction, thus achieved, would not cancel out the white spirits yearning for redress.

It will be clear from the foregoing that the character of ndawo differs considerably from that of ngoma and that, in many respects, they stand as opposites to one another. The most obvious of these oppositions is that the ngoma is a known kin-relative of the diviner, whereas the ndawo is a foreigner, utterly unknown to the diviner. Secondly, the ancestral spirit is a former diviner, unlike the foreign spirit who is a complete outsider to the profession. This may explain the belief that the ngoma passes on skills and techniques to the diviner-in-training and communicates with him/her in dreams, but no attention is given to the transmission of knowledge from the ndawo. Possession by the ngoma spirit is cumulative over time; possession by an ndawo spirit is instant and complete. Thirdly, ngoma spirits are African and black by definition. Ndawo spirits, on the other hand are believed to represent white colonists from over the sea, hence they are associated with water and with the bright shining surfaces of western technology. Fourthly, the ngoma belongs to the category of ancestral spirit that is central and pivotal to African religion; it is an established tenet of the community belief system. By contrast, the ndawo spirit is marginal and peripheral, suspended in a vacuum between nature and culture. Its marginality is the source of its fearsome illegitimate power (Kiernan, 1997:244). The ngoma spirit is secured within the legitimate social structure, while ndawo inhabits a realm of unstructure and disorder and, as Douglas (1978) has argued, the power inherent in the margins and emanating from disorder is considered to be more dangerous than that exercised by the legitimate order. The way in which these contrasting powers are exercised brings a fifth difference to light. Structurally anchored, the ngoma spirit acts in a socially responsible manner, upholding and promoting communal norms and values, detecting deviance and conflict, providing the means for healing and well-being. Structurally adrift, the ndawo in its raw state is profoundly anti-social and anarchic. It is indiscriminately invasive, devouring those whom it happens to possess and causing havoc around them. The ngoma can visit suffering on those it has chosen, only to draw attention to their obligations, but no more than to any ancestral spirit would a death be attributed to it. The ndawo is especially feared because it can kill, and kill without reason, in keeping with the death of its original owner which, in Rosalin's words, was "killed without reason in a war", an abnormal death. Gugu and

Jabulani make explicit this belief that ndawo "will kill some family members of the person it possesses". According to Rosalin, "if there is ndawo at home, people will die one by one. But if you do not check with an isangoma, you can simply say it is umthakathi (a witch). NO, it is not. It is ndawo." A sixth difference, though it may only be a variation on the foregoing, is that the ngoma spirit is benign and beneficent, whereas ndawo is restless and vengeful, seeking satisfaction and justice for a wrongful death and, ultimately, rest from its ceaseless wandering. It is this last quality that leaves ndawo open to appeasement by local diviners. There are further differences, descent against affinity and inferior to superior, which become manifest only when the ndawo spirit is drawn into the divinatory function, and these will be held over for later discussion. Suffice it to say that ngoma and ndawo stand in a relationship of complementary opposition and that this forms the basis of their emergent partnership in the divining profession.

The character of ndawo, as conveyed by diviners in kwaNgwanase, is multi-layered; a spirit that is foreign, white, structurally loose and vengeful. But this is essentially an ideal type only. In its actual "realisation", in the more explicit identification of ndawo spirits carried out by individual diviners, seldom do all the facets of its ideal characterisation come together. It can be a foreign vengeful spirit that is not white but black. Or it might not be a foreign spirit at all, but be a deceased kin-person who is not in the least vengeful and as often as not they are female rather than male. To understand these variations on the ideal, it is necessary first to consider how an ndawo spirit is acquired.

Ngubane regards the ndawo spirit among the Zulu as an alien evil spirit, not to be acquired but to be rejected. The possessed person undergoes a short period of treatment to "exorcise the alien spirit" and to have it "superseded by the good ancestral spirits." The possessed (woman) has "no intention of becoming a fully-fledged diviner for the rest of her life" (1977:143). Clearly, she is unaware of the alternative process of accommodating a ndawo spirit within the divining function. But Lee is fully aware of it and states unambiguously that "amandawo ... have powers of divination" that are "directed at curing some illness." Possession is followed by "initiation into the cult... as a curing agency" (1969:130-131). For Lee then, possession

precedes initiation as a diviner. However, diviners in KwaNgwanase hold to a different persuasion. They are of the opinion that no ordinary person or novice could safely accommodate an ndawo; only an already initiated ngoma diviner is capable of handling its formidable power and hence controlled ndawo possession takes place on the very last day of the Ukuthwasa ritual. Nevertheless, its identity is revealed some time earlier in the course of training. However, it does not declare itself to the initiate, to whom it is not known, unlike the ngoma spirit. It is always announced by the master diviner and it comes enveloped in a legend concerning its past. Isabel's tentative identification of her ndawo spirits, completely divorced from any initiation procedure, may be regarded as exceptional and born of her desperate situation. But our attempts to impose order on such a fluid competitive field of adjustment and innovation will always meet with exceptions. Certainly no novice during my period of fieldwork ever claimed to have an ndawo spirit, much less to know its identity, before this was revealed by the diviner who was coaching him/her. I once asked Kunzi, for example, if he knew of (had been allotted) an ndawo and, when he said "yes", I asked him for its name and its relationship to him. He was visibly stumped until Rosalin, his instructor, broke into the conversation to say "his ndawo is his great-grandmother" (on his mother's side, as it turned out). Johannes was not supplied with this kind of information in advance of the final day of Ukuthwasa, when under ndawo possession it was expected that it would reveal its identity, but the name was inaudible and again it was the father diviner, Jabulani, who filled the breach by announcing "this ndawo is Lillian." Nobody had a clue who this Lillian was and all were left in ignorance for the rest of the ceremony. It was several days later when Jabulani provided a "story" that situated Lillian in relation to Johannes.

It is the father diviner, then, who creates and constructs the legend that situates the ndawo in time and place and that spells out its connection to the candidate diviner. Legends are more or less elaborate, depending on the inventiveness of the narrator. And not all are modelled on the premise of the slain foreigner casting about for vengeance. The core of the model legend is simple enough. The candidate is told: 'one or more of your fore-fathers were responsible for the death of a white soldier in some long forgotten war', or 'they killed a Sotho herbalist out of envy and

stole his medicines.' In the idiom of the bloodfeud, they thus incurred a debt. The debt was never paid off and it has been passed down to the candidate. This ndawo is now laying claim to the candidate in satisfaction of the debt. The candidate can settle the debt by providing this wandering spirit with a home from which it can play a respectable and constructive role in society. But there a further gloss on the transaction. In terms of the blood-feud metaphor that is being invoked, the claim being staked is for a life, a life restored for a life destroyed. And in the conventions of the feud, one of the approved forms taken by this restitution is the giving of a wife, who will generate new life (Gluckman, 1955:1-26). Hence, the bond that is ritually established between diviner and ndawo, most intensely during possession, is conceptualised as a marriage in which, irrespective of the gender identity of spirit and host, the diviner is the bride and the ndawo is the husband (See APPENDIX 5). The diviner is thus caught up in a web of mystical relationships in which (s)he is cast as a woman. To 'her' ngoma ancestral spirits 'she' is a 'daughter'. 'She' is a 'daughter-in-law' to the seniors, and a 'sister' to 'her' peers, in the pseudo-descent groups of diviners that 'she' joins, and to 'her' ndawo spirit or spirits 'she' is a 'wife'. Being a 'mother' is the only female role that is left out of the equation and it might be stretching the metaphor too far to regard the client as a child. In any case, we have already shown that to novices 'she' becomes a 'father'. Only one element of this complex, that of a host being the 'bride' of a possessing spirit, has been recorded by anthropologists in some African societies, e.g. Lewis (1991:3) and Bastian (1997).

The mystical marriage between diviner and ndawo has further implications, notably the construction of an affinal alliance between ngoma and ndawo. The spirit husband has to be introduced to the 'bride's' ancestral spirits and, being by definition a homeless spirit, it is induced to settle in and cohabit with the ngoma ancestral spirits in the diviner's homestead, through for the sake of harmony they reside in separate huts. It is conceived as an uxorilocal marriage. The ritual enactment and the visible signs of the integration and alliance of ngoma with ndawo spirits does not complete our understanding of the relationship between them, for it is considered to be an unequal relationship. Normally, wife-receivers are regarded and treated as inferior to wife-givers, in which case ngoma ought to be the superiors of

Table 2: Divining spirits and kin-structure

Diviners			Ngoma		Nlawo		
NAME	GENDER	AGE	PATERNA L	AFFINAL	PATERNAL	AFFINAL	FOREIGN
Gugu	Female	26	FF	MMM			Male (Sotho)
Aldina	Female	32		FM			Male (Mozambique)
Jabulani	Male	38		MF			Female
Delani	Male	32	FFF			MMM	
Sibiya	Female	52	FF			MF, MM	
Thabile	Female	62		MM, MMM		FM	
Sofina	Female	50S	FFF		FFFF	FM, FEM	
Daniel	Male	42	FF	MM		FM	
Ngubane	Male	50S		MM	FZ	FEM	
Isabel	Female	38		FZ, MF		FFBW, MB, FM	
Kunsi	Male	38	FF			FFW	
Raymond	Male	19	FFF			FMB, MMFF	
Rosalin	Female	60S	FF	MF, MM, MMF, MMM		FMB	
Rosalina	Female	70S	FF	FM	FF	FM	
Mangubane	Female	60S	F	M, MM		FFW	
Getrude	Female	50S		MF, MM		FMMM	
Philip	Male	38		MMB			Male (Northern part of SA)
Lindiwe	Female	27	FF, F		FFF, F	MM	
Levas	Male	57		MMM	FF, FB		
Thanelina	Female	63	F, FB, FB, FF, FFF	FM, MF	FFFF	MMM	
Frank	Male	19	FF				
Msibi	Male	50S	FF			MZ	
Mzwandemini	Male	28		FM		?	
Kapela	Female	?		MFF, MFFF			Male (Portuguese)
Eliza	Female	50S		FM		MM	
Bopiwe	Female	49	FFF				FF's friend
Total (82)			20 (43.4%)	26 (56.5%)	8 (19.4%)	22 (64%)	6 (16.6%)

F (Father), B (Brother), H (Husband), M (Mother), Z (Sister), W (Wife)

ndawo. Yet diviners in KwaNgwanase hold to the exact opposite viewpoint. Ndawo spirits are highly regarded and are especially valued precisely because they lord it over ngoma spirits; they are more powerful than ngoma, they control them and keep them in their place. This reversal may be explained by reference to the unusual circumstances of an alliance that is the outcome of a supposed feud. The injured party (ndawo) is not a supplicant for a bride as in a normal marriage transaction and is not indebted to the wife-givers for the gift of a bride. He claims a wife as a matter of right and the exercise of that right leaves no outstanding debt. By demanding a bride, he asserts his superiority and control over the wife-givers. In this conception, the ndawo is manifestly dominant and the ngoma is the subordinate. But there is yet another way of looking at it. The ideal depiction of ndawo as the ghost of a fallen white soldier brings colonial relationships into the frame of meaning. The image invoked by the white soldier is that of the colonial enforcer, the real power behind the administrator and the ultimate deterrent against revolt by the subject people. Ironically, this relationship of foreign masters to local subjects is contained and placed upon the ngoma-ndawo alliance. That it is not speculation on my part, but is indeed a strand of meaning implied by the alliance and that serves to explain the common conviction that ndawo keeps ngoma in line, is supported by the fact that diviners in KwaNgwanase all confirm the ideal ndawo spirit as a white avenger, both in conversations with me and in the conduct of the finishing rituals.

Yet, despite this prevailing orthodoxy regarding the conceptualisation of ndawo, time and again master diviners allocate to their novices an ndawo of quite different provenance. And these diviners admit that their own ndawo spirits, acquired via their own father diviners, are often oddly at variance with the approved model. The 'realisation' thus departs considerably from the entrenched conceptualisation. Of the thirty-six ndawo spirits identified in my survey (See Table-2), only six (a mere 16.6%) belong to the category of unambiguous foreigner. The other 83.4% are identified as deceased kin of the diviner or candidate diviner; sixty four percent (64%) are matrilineal and affinal relatives and an impressive 19.4% are recruited from the descent line of the diviner. This is a major discrepancy; that the ideal category of foreign spirit should have the lowest representation. Can the discrepancy be explained

away? Is there some sense in which matrilineal and descent-group kin, at the spirit level, can be regarded as foreigners?

It is easier to contemplate this possibility in the case of matrilineal kin, those connected to the diviner through past marriages. Given the rule of exogamous marriage, affines can safely be regarded as 'outsiders' to the descent groups, if not as outright foreigners. But further, given the culturally plural composition of the population of KwaNgonase, and the gradual assimilation of many Thonga-speaking migrants through inter-marriage, there are sufficient grounds for assuming that affinal connections set up in the past were indeed with foreigners, and thus that matrilineal spirits could qualify as foreign ndawo spirits. This line of reasoning would be strengthened, if ndawo affines were predominantly identified as genealogically remote kin, such that an incoming spouse could be safely conjectured to be foreign without much risk of contradiction. However, this subterfuge is not sustained by the data. A similar proportion of ngoama (74%) and ndawo (63%) is drawn from the first two ascending generations, at the parental and grand-parental level where they are likely to be known. The argument, therefore, remains plausible but not conclusive.

It is virtually impossible to regard own lineage ancestors as in any sense foreign, unless by exception one's whole line of forebears originated in Mozambique, as is the case with Aldina and Rosalin. However the issue here is primarily cultural rather than geographical foreignness. Rosalin provided an ingenious solution to this impasse, by explaining how deceased kin (both agnatic and matrilineal) can manifest themselves as ndawo spirits. She claims a FMB as her ndawo spirit. Although this was originally a foreigner, at some point in the distant past it had been appeased by her forebears (presumably by possessing a diviner) and had thus become incorporated with her ancestral kin. Thus an ndawo spirit is not necessarily a free-floating outsider when it enters a diviner, but having infiltrated the ranks of the genealogical ancestors two or more generations back, in the guise of a genealogical ancestor it is inherited by the diviner in much the same manner as an ngoma spirit. This secondary elaboration of Rosalin's enjoys some currency among other diviners. Nevertheless, while 'solving' one aspect of the problem, it sacrifices the power that the diviner attains

by harnessing the raw, foreign, vengeful potency of the essential ndawo and weakens the distinction between ngoma and ndawo.

The fact remains that, increasingly, there is a tendency to recruit both types of divining spirit from the same pool of agnatic and matrilineal ancestors. In some respects and for certain purposes, the same kind of ancestral spirit can be called upon to function either as an ngoma or as an ndawo divining force. This should not entirely surprise us. Religion or any other social institution reflects the kind of society in which it is inbedded. Following Webster (1991), it can be said that KwaNgwanase is a rich mix of Zulu and Thonga identities. Situationally, depending on where they see an advantage to lie, they may choose to assert their Zulu identity at one point and, at another, to stress their Thongan identity. Diviners are behaving no differently and are playing with different aspects of ancestorhood. Depending on their particular purpose in divining, practitioners in KwaNgwanase may recognise the 'insider' status of ancestral spirits (ngoma) or, alternatively, may emphasise their status as 'insider augmented by powerful outsider ally' (ndawo). In the course of time, we may expect to see a further rapprochement between ngoma and ndawo, in that a new ndawo diviner will be seen to succeed to the office of an ancestral diviner, previously credited with the taming of an unruly foreign spirit.

Furthermore, in KwaNgwanase, the distinction between agnates and matrilineal kin may be wearing thin and this can account for the tendency among diviners to draw indiscriminately upon agnatic and matrilineal ancestors in the selection of both ngoma and ndawo spirits. As Hammond-Tooke has pointed out:

"[t]hese 'pure' patrilineal descent groups of the Nguni were not found among Sotho, Venda and Tsonga. Although, among these peoples, the patrilineal principle was indeed fundamental, lineages were either absent or of very shallow depth, or the wider group also contained other, non-agnatic, kin, thus 'contaminating' an exclusively patrilineal recruitment" (1998:10).

The influx of Thongan immigrants into KwaNgwanase, bringing with them the looser conception of lineage organisation, has certainly contaminated, to some extent, the purity of the patrilineal descent structure so that it is no longer as rigidly adhered to as in other Zulu clusters. Moreover, the self-sufficient agrarian economy on which it rested has been transformed by modern influences, thus further eroding the

patrilineal principle. The result is that the distinction between agnatic and matrilineal kin is no longer as significant or relevant as it once was.

Whatever the provenance of an ndawo spirit, whether through filiation, alliance or a combination of both, once the spirit has possessed the diviner and has ritually settled in his/her separate divining hut, it joins the ngoma spirit(s) in the divining repertoire. From that point on, the complementary opposition inherent in the alliance is given additional expression. Their natural habitat is said to be very different. Like descent-group ancestors, ngoma is located in air and earth (underground), hence in the rafters and floor of the divining hut. Ndawo's natural element is water, specifically the river and the ocean, as ideally it is a foreigner who crossed the seas. In this vein, Lee reports that a scarcely different category of foreign spirit (amandiki) "came into Zululand after Dinuzulu's return from overseas" (1969:131). The second distinction that is ritually observed is to be seen in the kind of offerings that are rendered to these spirits, offerings of meat and drink. The ngoma spirit favours goat meat. "Imbuzi (goat) is ngoma's favourite animal. We slaughter a goat and hang it on the back wall of the divining hut overnight, so ngoma can lick on it", stated Aldina. The goat does not wander far from the homestead and is therefore classed as a domestic animal. Not so chickens. "Chickens are like birds. They can fly away or go skittering about in the bush. Ndawo likes chickens" (Aldina). In addition to the domestic-outside divide being expressed here, it must be borne in mind that ndawo is ideally a white spirit. Hence, Frank argues, "as whites like everything neat, spotless and clean, ndawo likes the flesh of chicken which has no bad smell and is white in colour." While also ngoma is honoured with home-brewed beer (utshwala), Jabulani prepares "Black Label, brandy and soft drinks" for his ndawo, refreshment from the world of white commerce. Ndawo is also beguiled by western items that glitter and shine, such as coins or the blade of a knife.

A third difference emerges from the manner of possessing the diviner, how it is said to be experienced. The ngoma spirit does not enter the diviner's body for each episode of possession. It is already there and need only be aroused. Ngoma possession is therefore an intrinsic phenomenon, proceeding from within and manifesting its active state by outward expulsion (explosion) of breath in yawning, belching, hiccupping. It

can also give rise to a frenetic form of dancing. Ndawo, on the other hand, comes each time from outside the body of the diviner and is first experienced like a cold breeze or a drop in temperature. I have observed a number of such occurrences. The diviner sits quietly in the hut facing out the open door. After a while she begins to shiver with cold. The shivering becomes more energetic, leading to convulsive movement, heavy breathing, occasional belching. Lee was led to describe this state as being like an epileptic seizure (1969:131). The possessed diviner never stands up or otherwise moves from the spot, until after about fifteen minutes, the activity subsides and the spirit leaves. As Aldina explained the experience, the spirit from the sea enters the body cool and inactive through the feet and makes its way into the head, becoming hot (a burning sensation) and active (registering some of the symptoms of ngoma possession). Nevertheless, a clear distinction is drawn between possession by an insider and by an outsider; the one spirit is in occupation of the diviner's body, the other "breezes in". And when the diviner dances under possession, the dance proper to the ngoma spirit is performed upright on the feet, while that of the ndawo spirit is performed kneeling.

When the diviner is dealing with a client, the kind of participation attributed to each kind of spirit is quite different. Although the interaction with clients will be pursued in greater detail in the following chapter, one or two points may be made briefly here. The ngoma spirit is never heard by the client. It is said to whisper to the diviner or silently to relay messages through the configurations of the bones. In contrast, the ndawo spirit cuts the diviner out of the communication and speaks directly to the client. Secondly, the mien and language of the ngoma diviner is consonant with showing respect to a senior (ancestor), whereas the ndawo diviner takes a back seat, which represents to expected submission of a wife to her husband. A further point of opposition between ngoma and ndawo has to do with the symbolic colour that is appropriate to each. The triad of colour, that has had ritual and healing significance for the Zulu, is white, red and black. And elsewhere in Africa (Turner, 1967:69-71), white is the colour of ancestors, the colour of light, life, health and wellbeing and all that is in the gift of the ancestors. The distinctive garment worn by an ndawo diviner is the inzithi cloth, the predominant colour of which is a dark rich purple. I was told that this was a combination of red and black (though in fact it is

intermediate between red and blue). At any rate, there is a strong element of red in it, the colour of the triad that conveys transition, power and danger, but here it is red subdued to indicate a transition accomplished and a danger that is past. Finally, the alliance is trenchantly expressed by the cohabitation of both kinds of spirit within the diviner's basket. Each has a distinctive piece of the diviner's ensemble that represents it alone. As expected there are some variations to be found but, generally, the ngoma spirit itself is represented by a prominent astragalus (ankle-bone) from a domesticated animal, while the ndawo spirit is symbolised by a large oliva shell taken from the sea-shore, a shell that has dark purple spots on its surface. What is of special interest here is that the ndawo spirit is inactively and instrumentally present in the divining symbolic apparatus of the ngoma diviner, the nearest approach to a synthesis that I have come across between two otherwise separate divining performances.

In conclusion, we may point to a number of purposes, or at least consequences, realised by this alliance between complementary opposites. It is firstly a way of legitimating the therapeutic use of a foreign spirit, by the attachment of a very potent mystical force. Secondly, it represents a form of assimilation of foreign influences at the symbolic level. It elaborates a cultural integration of the foreign with the indigenous, that is symptomatic of a process that is taking place on the ground. Thirdly, it upholds the principle of granting compensation for past offences, real or imaginary, the assuaging of guilt and the value of forgiveness, and it carries within it an oblique condemnation of conflict and war. Fourthly, it represents a form of reconciliation between indigenous Africans and their former colonial oppressors, between those who were formerly opposed as enemies but who can now cooperate to achieve socially constructive goals. Kwenda has drawn attention (1999) to a similar process at work when diviners treat Christian patients. There is an emerging tendency in diagnoses to claim that the patient's suffering is inflicted by his/her own Christian forebears, who are dissatisfied with their artificial religious estrangement from their non-Christian counterparts, both in life and, more significantly, in death. Therapy takes place by ritually reconciling and joining the estranged Christian ancestors to the body of African ancestors. In much the same fashion, the ngoma-ndawo alliance points the way

to overcome and repair the animosities of the past, and both developments in divining may be seen as prototypes for the more secular efforts of the Commission for Peace and Reconciliation in South Africa. Lastly, the cementing of the mystical alliance may be viewed as a means of maximising economic opportunities, by adding another string to the diviners bow, thereby increasing the range of susceptible clients, a point that will be developed in a later chapter.

CHAPTER EIGHT
THE DIVINER AT WORK

1. Introduction

We have seen how, in Ingwavuma, certain ordeals or persistent illness are taken to be indicative of a selection process, whereby candidates are called to be diviners by antecedent relatives in the profession. So identified, candidates are schooled in the skills and techniques of divining, the most crucial of which is the art of spirit possession. However, much the content of such training may differ from one diviner group (family) to another, the common goal is the combination and reconciliation of two different kinds of possessing spirit, ngoma and ndawo, as described in the previous chapter. But do the techniques work? However well-learnt the lessons in technique, will they translate into a genuine possession? Some uncertainty is conceded to surround this transition, at least in so far as it concerns possession by an ngoma spirit. So the candidate's technical proficiency, and the efficacy of the corresponding possession, is put to the test, the test of achieving tangible results. The search for hidden objects (imfihlo) serves this purpose and, if successful, allays initial uncertainty regarding the candidate's capacity to divine.

However, overcoming this hurdle only serves to introduce fresh uncertainty. Now that the fledgeling diviner is licensed to practise on his/her own, will (s)he be successful? Will the business thrive? Will it attract clients whose satisfaction will build the diviner's reputation and lead to an increased rate of consultation? This is the ultimate test facing the diviner, the wooing of clients as a source of income. Normal logic would dictate that nobody can become an overnight success, particularly in such a highly competitive business environment; that like the analogy of the acorn and the tree, small beginnings have to be carefully tended and nourished to eventually grow into something substantial. Clients are not a given and a reputation has to be earned, and the process takes time and requires patience (probably also a good measure of luck). In all likelihood, there are too many practising diviners in KwaNgwanase, for all of them to make an easy living from the local population. Yet such realistic

assessments of the conditions unfavourable to success are not easily reached by most diviners, and particularly not by those entering the profession.

In the mystical idiom of divining, a different logic prevails. In this discourse, the diviner's skills or personality has no bearing whatever on the success or failure of his/her practice. It is not the diviner who attracts paying customers. Rather, it is the possessing ngoma spirit that is credited with influencing would-be clients in trouble and with guiding them to the diviner's homestead. In this way of thinking, possession of a powerful ngoma spirit almost guarantees a plentiful supply of customers. As a consequence of this belief, it is not unusual for diviners, fresh out of training, to entertain unrealistic expectations of instant and even spectacular success. When the reality of the situation does not measure up to this expectation, the diviner is prompted to look for the reason on the mystical plane. Are there obstacles cluttering up the mystical field and arresting the free flow of the divining spirit's influence and, if so, can the condition be reversed by ritual means? Is there a possibility of strengthening the mystical field and giving a boost to one's mystical endowment? Ultimately, the diviner's dilemma may be expressed in the chronic fear that the divining spirit may be on the point of abandoning him/her and of escaping his/her control.

However much diviners may view the rate of client consultation as a barometer of the potency of their intrinsic spirit agents, the reverse also applies, in that clients tend to regard the satisfactory resolution of their problems as an index of the inherent power of the diviner. The proof of mystical competence is a satisfied client and, in a way, every consultation is a test of that competence. From remarks often made to me by ordinary people, it is clear that a fair measure of scepticism is harboured by the rural population regarding the powers of many, if not most, divining practitioners. It would follow that most clients approach their first consultation with a particular diviner, with a disposition of watchful scepticism rather than one of naïve credulity. It is up to the diviner to convince the client otherwise, to dispel the initial doubt and to replace it with trust and confidence in the diviner's ability. The management of the diviner-client relationship in the context of the séance is, therefore, critical in

achieving a desirable outcome for both parties. Each satisfied client redounds to the diviner's reputation and popularity.

There are a number of crucial determinants of a successful consultation, namely, performance, cooperation, truth and remedial action. The diviner's performance of entrancement is the initial and even the most lasting impact made upon the client, who must be persuaded, or shocked, into believing that (s)he is in the presence of a genuine spirit manifestation. The more dramatic the performance the better, and its impact is the greater when accompanied by a stunning delivery of a revelation of the patient's problem. A good performance should dazzle the client with a demonstration of extraordinary power and superior intelligence and it serves to redefine a mundane occasion as a mystical event. The more established diviners can rely on a supporting cast of assistants to enhance their performance. Secondly, the diviner must entice the client into voluntary cooperation and self-revelation. It would be an admission of incompetence to try to extract information by interrogating the patient, as medical doctors do. Instead, the diviner has to lead the patient into affirmations of the diviner's questing assertions. The trick is to find a path that the client is willing to follow and to gradually draw him/her into a more discursive form of exchange wherein, while confirming the diviner's leads, the client voluntarily or unwittingly adds to the diviner's store of knowledge and to a more comprehensive mutual understanding of the situation. Thirdly, the diviner must extract the truth from the situation by divining the definitive source of the problem. More correctly, (s)he constructs a version of events that is "the truth", i.e. it makes sense to the patient and addresses his/her concerns. If the client's interests are not served, and the diviner's verdict is carried into the community as an implausible version of what really happened, the diviner's aura of 'truthfulness' and credibility is damaged, or at least is not vindicated. Finally, the consultation should yield a course of remedial action that is acceptable to the client and that proves to be in some sense beneficial. Here, the diviner has the benefit of time, in the course of which the efficaciousness of the recommended action can be theoretically nullified by adverse influences beyond the diviner's control. Here, the diviner's competence is not as much on trial as it is in the performative and truth-making phases of the consultation.

These elements on which hinge the success or failure of the divining practice are more immediately apparent in the ukubhula form of divination, in which truth is negotiated between diviner and client and in which, consequently, the diviner must be particularly sensitive to the client's needs. They receive a somewhat different emphasis in the more confrontational style of ukufemba, in which ndawo spirits are engaged. The contrast between the two will be better appreciated by drawing on case material relating to each, beginning with the more interactional discourse of bone throwing divination (ukubhula), bearing in mind that most diviners in KwaNgwanase are equipped to conduct both types of séance.

2. Consulting the Bones (ukubhula amathambo)

Since the more established and successful diviners are most likely to have gained an appreciation of the importance of satisfying the client and allaying his/her anxieties within the compass of known mystical parameters and structural principles, and since furthermore it is these diviners who tend to attract neophytes to their homesteads to undergo training, it might be expected that a crash course in 'customer services' would form an essential part of such training. Far from this being the case, I detected no inclination on the part of instructing diviners to impart such skills to their novices, no attempt to coach them in how to empathise with patients and how to find the path that they are willing to follow. Instead the whole thrust of training is concentrated on throwing the bones, learning their meanings and interpreting the patterns that they form on the divining mat. There may be good reason for this skewed emphasis. As indicated earlier, the belief system credits the divining spirit, whose counsel is conveyed through the configuration of the divining bones, with all aspects of the diviner's success. The acquisition and deployment of purely human skills are discountenanced within the belief system. Furthermore, although each completed training adds a subordinate diviner or follower to the camp of the instructing diviner, there is also a sense in which it creates a potential competitor who may wean away clients. Why impart hard-won knowledge and skill that the recipient

can use to your disadvantage? Let them learn these things for themselves, if they are capable of it.

So, novices are left to their own devices in this regard, to pick up whatever they can from observing their tutor in action with his/her patients. And senior novices are given the opportunity to put what they learn into practise, when they are allowed to conduct the opening sequence of a consultation, consisting of a series of statements that elicit customised responses from the client(s). Such delegation of the opening exchanges to a novice carries certain advantages for the presiding diviner, at least in theory if not always in practice. The novice acts as a foil to the diviner. Without patting his/her reputation at risk, the diviner can assess from the sidelines the responses of the clients who, knowing that they are dealing with an untried initiate, may let their guard slip and reveal more than they intended. Any 'false trails' laid by the novice and getting a lukewarm reception from the client can be attributed to the fumbling inexperience of the initiate, while narrowing the range of possibilities to be pursued by the diviner in the search for a palatable 'truth'. Zionist prophets pursue the same technique to good effect while training their junior colleagues (Kiernan, 1990:61, 175).

What the novice learns from such limited experience is difficult to ascertain. Certainly no guidance is given and it would take a very mature and astute novice to feel his/her way into the mind of a patient in such circumstances. Instead, the novice typically tends to approach the case in very broad general terms, along the lines of the following example (each statement being punctuated by the clients' "we agree").

- Wake up. Get well so that we can see you. Get well. We can see you.
- We say agree, so we hear.
- You are not well physically.
- There is darkness (i.e. misfortune).
- Which looks like an animal.
- Which looks like a snake
- It looks like a white cloth (both snake and white cloth are symbols of ancestors)
- It looks like an animal
- It appears that your feet are stinging (i.e. an obvious fact).
- I see there is a small girl crying
- The old people (i.e. ancestors) take pity on their servant
- Asleep or awake, you don't feel well
- You are dreaming in the waters

- Even when you are seated, there is someone knocking at the door

If some of these references seem vague and obscure, it is because they have been lifted from a different context, from an earlier consultation conducted by the tutoring diviner for a patient diagnosed as resisting an ancestral 'calling'. The novice had memorised a passage from this consultation and had provided, remarkably, an almost verbatim rendition of it. This would seem to indicate that the most that can be attained by novices through their participation in actual consultations is a form of rote learning and mechanical reproduction. Any acquisition of insight into how a patient is thinking about his/her condition must be achieved through practice and experience as an accredited diviner, dependent upon individual disposition and personal acumen. While some diviners undoubtedly develop a capacity to establish an easy rapport with their clients so as to work out a mutually acceptable version of the 'truth', the assumption that most diviners operate with a special gift of being able to read the minds of patients must be held in question.

3. The Structure of the Consultation

In the course of my fieldwork, I attended a total of twenty three (23) bone throwing consultations, which enabled me to personally witness the activities of seven different diviners. Most frequently observed in action was Rosalin (8 consultations), followed by Jabulani (6) and Aldina (4). These were the diviners with whom I established greatest rapport and who, on the basis of the mutual trust that emerged between us, allowed me to make full verbatim recordings of some ten of these consultations towards the end of the fieldwork. On the basis of this evidence, it became clear to me that, although not rigidly structured, the process of consultation demonstrates a common three-stage pattern. I refer to these stages sequentially as, 1) empowerment, 2) revelation and 3) authentication.

The first stage of empowerment follows a set procedure, the objective of which is to empower both the diviner and her instruments with ancestral authority. After initially greeting the client, the diviner tries to establish his/her social background by conversationally enquiring as to home place, clan or lineage name, age, marital status and perhaps some other general circumstance as may occur to her. Of these, home place and name form the crucial elements of her opening intelligence, for they ostensibly equip her to identify, locate and invoke the client's ancestors to play their essential role in the divination. She then shakes the divining basket, while invoking by name her own divining spirit and the spirits of the client's ancestors. Opening the basket, she breathes into it and invites the client to do likewise. The term umoya encompasses air, breath and spirit, thus asserting the equivalence of breath and spirit. Hence, this action by client and diviner signifies the transmission of ancestral spirits into the divining basket. It is a symbolic statement of the mingling and fusion between two sets of spirit, and of communication between them, achieved through a ritual act of blending the life force of their living representatives. Finally, the diviner adds medicinal power to the container of divining bones by chewing a piece of imphepho (incense) and spitting into the baskets. The bones have now been ritually empowered for the consultation proper, which forms the second stage.

Whereas the empowering phase lasts ten minutes at most, the dispensing of revelation may take up to thirty minutes or more. The truth accredited to the presiding ancestors is revealed in the configuration of the bones thrown on the mat and is presented piecemeal to the client in a number of assertions to which he is expected to voice agreement. It is not unusual for a diviner to throw the bones twice in pursuit of further refinement of the truth, and indeed I have on occasion seen the bones cast three or four times in a single consultation. The first throw and reading of the bones may be entrusted to a novice, who would also be given the task of collecting the bones between throws and returning them to the basket. It should be noted that the diviner is already in a state of spirit possession before throwing the bones. In fact, (s)he goes quietly into possession mode during the empowerment stage, when shaking the basket and addressing the ancestors, and does so without benefit of drumming or dancing or any other form of excitation. Besides ancestral revelation delivered through possessed

diviner and empowered bones, there is a further form of revelation that contributes to the emerging truth and that is often overlooked, i.e. a degree of self-revelation on the part of the client. Invariably, by the second or third throwing, clients are induced to reveal more of themselves and of their predicament and, in this way, to collaborate with the diviner in producing a more satisfying diagnosis.

How the process of revelation is negotiated is best illustrated by describing and examining an actual case, that of "The Sick Infant". A woman came unaccompanied to consult Aldina (the diviner). The facts of the case, related to me afterwards, were not given to Aldina in advance of the consultation. She was a married woman in her thirties, whose only son (3 years old) was languishing at home complaining of stomach pain and being unable to keep any food down. After two weeks of this, she had taken him to the hospital but had come way without any clear idea of what ailed him. And so, she had come to Aldina's homestead to get a clear understanding of his condition, a distance of some 3 km from her village on the other side of Manguzi to that of Aldina.

In my account of the colloquy that followed the first throwing of the bones, I shall record the client's responses in brackets and the routine "we agree" with an (A) for agreement.

Among the MaThenza family, there is no life but sickness only. (A). Somebody who stays at home, a male, is sick. (A). A male is sick and does not eat food. He suffers from headache. Something has seized him on the shoulders, the back and the feet. (Yes, it is so.) ... The male baby is sick. He is still breastfed. Whenever she tries to feed him, his mother's breasts are painful because there is an evil spirit that feeds itself from her. If the woman is not cured, the baby will die. Agree. (A). A name is given to the baby. The ancestors complain that this baby was not reported to them. You must buy a white cloth and chickens. The name of the baby will be strengthened by taking your grandfather's name. And report the baby. This woman sleeps with an evil spirit, thus she normally quarrels with her husband. At night cats cry and the woman's ancestors afflict him. Thus, he is also unhealthy. Some are jealous and did not want you to marry. They wanted you to give birth at home like your sisters. You must thank your ancestors because they protect you. Are there any ancestral huts? (Yes. There are). A certain sacrifice should have been made. I don't know if you performed it. You must collect your child and do that sacrifice. Somebody who was a diviner died. Who has taken over to continue his activities? That person complains that nobody is attending to his activities. Get the white cloth, two chickens, and then report the baby.

Despite the density, complexity and occasional obscurantism of the diagnosis, its elements are clear enough. First of all, the child was ill because an evil spirit had invaded the woman and had stolen the child's sustenance. The unstated implication was that the mystical usurper was the emissary of a witch. Though no witch was identified, 'some people' were envious ('jealous') of her marriage and it was subtly hinted that these might be her unmarried sisters, who bore children at home, the parental home. Secondly, the child was ill because the woman had displeased her own ancestors by failing to observe the custom of ritually introducing a new-born child to them at her parental homestead, by way of reassurance that their side of the marriage contract was being honoured. In addition, her ancestors had punished her husband for his presumed complicity in her offence. While these formed the two major strands of the 'truth' of her situation, a third theme was slipped in 'in minor key' towards the end. There was a possibility, no more than that, that she was being headhunted by a deceased diviner of her ancestry who was actively seeking a successor. This was not entered by way of explaining her present predicament. It was no more than an idea being planted for future exploitation, should the need arise, i.e. should the measures prescribed fail to restore the child to health.

It is noticeable that the proposed remedy concentrated exclusively on the ancestral strand of the analysis. The woman was told to mend her relationship with her ancestors by presenting her child at her parents' home and identifying it by name with her paternal grandfather, by sacrificing two chickens there and donating a white (ancestral colour) cloth. She was given no advice whatever on how to rid herself of the debilitating suckling spirit of witchcraft origin that was starving her child. Was Aldina then remiss, or her divining deficient, in not addressing this source of the affliction? Only if vexed ancestors and envious witches are seen as separate causal factors. But this is not the case; they are closely interlinked. In the logic of the occult, you cannot have the one without the other. It is axiomatic that people are being continually bombarded by witchcraft or sorcery by disaffected others in their range of associates. It is equally axiomatic that protective ancestors are vigilant in deflecting such mystical attacks away from their progeny. If, however, ancestors are

aggrieved at being neglected, they will 'turn away' in anger, relax their protective cordon and thus allow witchcraft to reach its intended target. In this way of thinking, therefore, having an irate ancestor implies damage scored by a witch/sorcerer and, conversely, an illness induced by witchcraft presupposes a discontented ancestor. The two are intertwined strands of a single explanation. If the mother repairs her ancestral relationship in the manner prescribed, the protective mantle will be restored and the invasive spirit will be closed out. On the other hand, the affliction of her husband was attributed to his wife's (affinal) ancestors, who have no protective obligation towards him. They are, however, the guardians of the marriage contract and can directly punish him for non-observance of its clauses.

Unlike Aldina (as in this particular case), most diviners prefer to lead their diagnosis with a reference to ancestors. Neglect of ancestors is always a successful opening gambit and can hardly be questioned. A person would have to be a paragon of filial piety to disagree with it, whereas (s)he would be reluctant to meet the expense of an ancestral sacrifice unless or until forced by adverse circumstances to do so. Once that has been established, the door is open to explore the operation of witchcraft. This can be adumbrated by referring to the activity of an animal familiar or evil spirit (the distinction between them is not too clearly drawn) that is sent to execute the witch's intentions. That leaves the identity of the witch to be determined. The initial stab at this is extremely vague and impersonal, e.g. 'there is darkness (i.e. evil/misfortune) in your family' or 'she has an evil spirit.' Even a novice can come up with this, as we have seen. Progress can be made by subsequent throwings towards a less imprecise and more personal characterisation of the witch, often in conjunction with a pointed reference to an animal familiar. The following examples are from my case records.

"There is a woman who hates your family ... a cat cries." "You were bewitched by two women who live near you ... two cats cry. "At home you feel there is an animal walking on two feet ... he is a friend of your family." "The darkness ... it is from your family and from your uncle's family from which your mother comes." In subsequent amendments, 'a woman' may become 'a man and a woman', or 'people who are jealous' become 'your sisters.' Such shifts, occurring in a single case, may be seen in the

following section on authentication. Suffice it to say, at this point, that the divination never unambiguously yields an explicit individual identity. The diviner lacks the client's knowledge of his/her own circumstances and unless (s)he reveals this to the diviner, the diviner has to work with categories only, for the bones carry only categorical meanings of persons, animals and things. The divination can only point in certain general directions, such as family, kinship, neighbours, thus leaving the client to make a final discrimination on the basis of circumstantial evidence. It is not that the diviner balks at fingering an individual for fear of recrimination in action, legal or otherwise. The truth of the matter is that these diviners lack the capacity to go beyond the categorical.

The final state of divination is that of authentication. The purpose of the divination, as we have seen, is not for the diviner to uncover the witch in his/her individual identity. Rather, it is to construct a mutually agreeable version of what really happened and to give a human face, among the living and the dead, to personal suffering. Once this narrative has been completed, it requires the stamp of authenticity, by having the client consent to, accept and express satisfaction with the outcome. This is accomplished in several ways. The diviner puts the question (no longer under possession) and the client verbally expresses satisfaction. An additional token of consent is for the client to request umuthi (medicinal preparation). None of the diviners known to me would prescribe medicine unless explicitly asked to do so at the end of the consultation. It is the client's prerogative to express or withhold this kind of confidence in the diviner's diagnosis and expertise. Finally, the seal of satisfaction is given by placing money under the divining mat. This is the consultation fee only. There is no immediate charge for any medicines that might be supplied. Such payment is deferred and is conditional upon the medicine achieving its intended benefits.

Consent in any or all of these forms is in most cases readily forthcoming, but it is far from being a foregone conclusion and may on occasion be withheld, the following case of the vengeful father will serve to illustrate client dissatisfaction, among other things. I will reproduce only relevant excerpts from this consultation.

A man (Victor) accompanied by three of his sons arrived from Mtubatuba to consult Aldina but, in her absence, engaged Rosalin's services. His other son had been shot dead two weeks previously and his mission was to identify the killer and avenge the homicide. Rosalin began by diagnosing his trouble as 'a male who is sick' and 'misfortunes and conflicts.'

Even your ancestors stand from you and there is a harmful woman in your house. There is an evil spirit. Someone at home envies you your job. She wants to do something bad to you. All along she has been jealous of your money. There is a terrible evil spirit that is so dangerous because it kills a person without any sickness.

There is an animal of darkness and there is a man and woman who let darkness into your house. It is difficult to live and there is no happiness (there is truly no happiness indeed). There is a female person who died as a child (Yes. There is). Those who care for her never let her in, but she is within you and your luck is being closed. You must open your luck and let her into the house. What is her name? (Uthulisile). It is you, Thulisile, who is chasing out luck for your brother. Did you perform ritual for her? (No, we didn't). You must perform ritual for her. Even if I give you medicine, it won't work, because the darkness comes from her. Is there a boy and a girl that passed away? (The boy passed away recently). They are the ones who keep luck away from you ... and annoy the great ancestor. You must do the ritual (sacrifice) of a chicken and a goat. Is your father a polygamist? (No, only grandfather). You need a white chicken and a white cloth to restore your luck. If you don't have money (for these things), you should buy a lucky charm and pray "look at me, god. I am poor and there is nothing going well for me."

Ultimately, Rosalin pronounced that the death of the boy was caused by a thokolosh (a spirit sent by a witch in the form of a hairy dwarf).

Several points are worth noting about this consultation. First of all, the three sons displayed no interest in what was happening, leaving all the responses to be made by Victor alone. Not only was it unusual for sons to fail to support their father, but their general demeanour and body language scarcely concealed their scepticism of the mystical claims of a diviner to deal with this problem. To them, the death of their brother was not a mystical event, but a politically motivated physical attack requiring direct political retaliation. Secondly, the shifts of focus in the diviner's exposition can be clearly discerned. Her first diagnostic remark was that a son was ill, not dead. Then she pointed to the usual conjunction of offended ancestors and a malicious witch, in this case, an envious female in Victor's household. Later, she added a man as co-

conspirator. Then, in a major twist, she exposed a failure in ritual obligations towards a female child, whereby she had been excluded from the company of her ancestors. This disgruntled harmful spirit was joined by a boy child in similar circumstances, though Victor may have been led to see this as a reference to his murdered son. However, it soon became clear that the boy's spirit, along with that of the girl, was the alleged source of Victor's troubles and not a victim of aggression, whose death he wanted to redress. He was urged to provide sacrifices for these restless spirits but, in another shift, if he was unable to meet the expense of this he was advised to pray to God instead for relief. Although uncommon, it is not entirely exceptional to have a diviner asking a client to reach out to the Christian God. An increasing number of diviners are seeking to augment their spiritual base by drawing upon an amalgam of mystical sources. Not only do they combine different divining styles, but they also convert to Zionism to take up the role of Zionist prophet. Rosalin was such a diviner who boosted her divining power and hence her customer appeal by claiming to draw on ngoma, ndawo spirits and the Holy spirit. Her earlier mention of the 'great ancestor' was sufficiently ambiguous to include a veiled Zionist reference to God. Eventually, reverting to her earlier emphasis on witchcraft, she attributed the sickness of the boy, which had now been judged to be fatal, to a thokolosh (witch's familiar).

Thirdly, Rosalin unsurprisingly failed to win Victor's approval, much less that of his sons, for her verdict. They all knew that no witch's familiar toted a gun that fired real bullets. They were looking for a physical aggressor. Instead of accepting the verdict, Victor put the record straight. His son, an ANC supporter, was shot dead as he returned home from the garage where he worked. Victor was convinced that his son was a victim of the ongoing violent struggle that was being conducted in certain areas between supporters of the rival political parties, ANC and IFP. He would not be satisfied with less than vengeance. Having expressed his dissatisfaction, he then went on to request from Rosalin a medicine (umuthi) sufficiently strong to kill the man who had pulled the trigger. While the medicine was being prepared, it was considered prudent to ask me, the observer, to withdraw. As I was leaving, I noticed Rosalin's husband scratching some rust from the blade of a short knife into the medicine. A destructive medicine was being 'armed' with shavings from a weapon, the part clearly symbolising the whole. The

presumption was that the medicine could be directed or instructed to track down and kill the killer.

From this discussion of the procedural structure of the divining consultation, it becomes clear that the ultimate objective is to satisfy the client. To attain this end, divination is a fishing expedition. It is a form of experimentation in which a variety of possibilities are floated to see which will be engaged. Each throwing of the bones opens up a new vista, a fresh version of the truth, which may differ radically or only in degree from others. Not one single narrative, therefore, but several. So long as the client can strongly identify with one, or more, of these and finds that it clearly matches her concerns and her particular circumstances, she will accept it as the true version of what must have happened. In selecting the 'truthful' narrative, she will thereby dismiss and disregard the 'false' turnings in the consultation. It is significant that the diviner does not know, independently, whether or when she has produced the truth of the matter unless and until the client has pronounced himself satisfied. That Victor could not be satisfied had much to do with the limited repertoire of mystical influences in the field of reference of the diviner and that they are of local, dominantly domestic, scope only. The fact is that these forces are mystical and of restricted scope. There is nothing in the assemblage of bones and their meanings to encompass political infighting between parties of national scope or aspiration. While Rosalin is a very old lady and possibly not very informed of current political events, it is difficult to conceive that, given their training and their instrumental capacity, any of the diviners of my acquaintance would have done any better.

4. The Diviner as Patient

It is all too easily overlooked in studies of divination that diviners themselves must on occasion cross the floor and become patients. On the universally accepted principle that ideally no physician should attempt to heal himself and on the more local assumption that diviners believe in the efficacy of their art, it follows that they do not prescribe for their own maladies, but call upon the expertise of a fellow professional. What happens when one diviner consults another diviner? There has

to be a qualitative difference in the role of patient when played by a trained and experienced diviner. He or she is more knowledgeable than the common patient about what is happening and of what to expect. He or she will be more alert to the nuances of what the consultant is revealing. Above all, with this knowledge and insight, will the diviner as patient tend to take a more active part in the exchanges and, in this way, seek to influence the outcome to a greater degree? On the contrary, will he or she be more critical of the consultants performance and more highly to challenge the result of the consultation? Similarly, the consultant, faced with a patient who is more than a patient, may experience pressure to resist or succumb to manipulation and may, at the very least, be constrained from conducting a normal consultation. In short, there is a strong possibility that the boundary between patient and practitioner may be considerably blurred.

In practice, the possibility of this occurring is greatly diminished by the protocol governing the choice of consultant. A diviner would not consider approaching a junior or someone of equal standing in the profession for a consultation. It would always be a lightly reputable, more established and more experienced, diviner whose seniority would guarantee an measure of respect and deference on the part of the diviner-patient. Secondly, the diviner sought out for consultation would be of the same diviner family or sodality of the patient, thus eliminating potential friction between the two. Indeed, a senior diviner of a different sodality would also be reluctant to provide his/her services, in order to prevent disclosure of jealously-guarded techniques. Thirdly, wherever possible, the chosen consultant would be the father diviner, the person from whom one received guidance, training and qualification. In other words, one would trade on an established relationship of mutual trust and support and, since this would always be the consultation of choice, each subsequent consultation would serve to strengthen and build upon that relationship of interdependence. In a sense, therefore, the diviner as patient is but a continuation of the role of novice under tutelage. I was able to follow Jabulani through a series of such consultations with his father diviner.

Jabulani was scarcely two years out of training, yet he averaged three to four clients a week and had a novice under his instruction. By local standards, he was doing

reasonably well. But he was far from satisfied. He continually compared his lot unfavourably with that of Aldina, whose flourishing practice set the standard for the area. Jabulani was impatiently ambitious to reach Aldina's scale of success. Never mind that Aldina had the support of a family network, in which her mother (Rosalin) and her brothers were diviners, and her father a herbalist. In the esoteric logic of divination, that was of little consequence weighed against the power of their respective divining spirits to attract clients to Jabulani and Aldina. In "The Case of the Ambitious Diviner", Jabulani wanted to know why his own divining spirit (Nyoni by name) was not pulling his weight, so to speak. His own account of the first consultation about this follows.

When I went to see my father, she threw the bones. She told me: "There are no witches. You have problems with your dreams". I agreed. She continued; "The problem is your ancestor. Do you know the problem?" Nyoni does not know about my wife. He was not inside me (possession) when I married Sibongile. That is the problem. Nyoni is confused about my wife.

Therefore, I have to take my wife back to her family (her elder brother and sister-in-law will stand in for her dead parents). I have to inform Nyoni: "Here is your wife come back home". I have to tell Nyoni. After that, I will slaughter a goat and wear the *isipandla* (a thin wristlet of goat's skin). My daughter and son will place an *isipandla* on their arms. Now, Nyoni will recognise them as my children. Now, Nyoni can see that "Oh, this is my wife". After that everything will be alright.

Another problem concerns my father. I don't know my father (genitor). The problem is that my father just met my mother and, after my birth, he ran away. The problem is that I have many surnames. Some call me Khumalo (a stepfather); it is not my real surname. Others call me Ngomezulu (another stepfather). My father who bore me is Shabalala. Shabalala is crying about his child. I am Shabalala. When people call me Khumalo, Shabalala is complaining⁶⁰. I have to show Shabalala that I am going to build a (divining) hut for him. When I go back home, I have to tell him: "here, Shabalala, this is your house." So Shabalala is going to come inside and be together with Nyoni. You see, Nyoni is from my mother's side and Shabalala is my father. Next day, I am going to sacrifice to Nyoni and tell him: "Be together with Mthembu and Shabalala."

After that, my father diviner said: "I have not finished. I'm going to give you another problem because your wife has got a divining spirit. If you want to be a big diviner, your wife should have divining training." My wife's divining spirit is crying. Now I am happy because I saw all the problems.

It would seem that Jabulani significantly collaborated with the consultant diviner in laying bare at least some of his problems. He had to mend his relationship with his divining spirit (Nyoni), first of all by formally reporting his marriage. Because of the identification of divining spirit and diviner, Jabulani's wife (Sibongile) becomes Nyoni's wife as well. Secondly, he had to bring his father's spirit home to co-reside in harmony with Nyoni. The implication of Shabalala having a divining hut would seem to be that of giving Jabulani a second divining spirit, but this is not made explicit. Thirdly, Nyoni's powers would be augmented by the acquisition by Sibongile (Jabulani and Nyoni's wife) of her own divining spirit. These restorations and augmentation would make Jabulani a 'big diviner.' It should be added that the revelation concerning Sibongile's "calling" did not come out of the blue. For quite some time before, Jabulani lost no occasion of publicly announcing that his wife would one day undertake diviner training. Furthermore, the fact that his mother was a Zionist could also be used at some stage to give him access to yet another mystical resource. The gathering of all of these forces under his control might indeed transform him into a formidable diviner.

The prescribed rituals arising from the consultation were duly carried out, as I can personally attest from my attendance at them. Afterwards, Jabulani confided in me the number of clients coming to consult him had dramatically increased. But not sufficiently to satisfy his ambition. Moreover, his personal crisis had taken another turn. Three months later he went for another consultation, this time not to his father diviner in Johannesburg but to a female diviner some fifty kilometres away, who was a close friend of his 'grandfather' diviner. On this occasion he was accompanied by his wife, his mother and myself. Jabulani, and his mother, took an active part in the consultation.

Jabulani's first response to the consultant's probing was as follows:

J (Jabulani): Mngoma, I have learned from you indeed. I am not happy. It is true when you say that I am always angry, but that anger disappears sometimes. That there is no friendship between me and my wife is also true. I am working and healing people, that is true.

M (mother): Yes, you are right. There is anger most of the time but it is he who sees that there is a problem. When this thing starts, everyone wishes him to die or disappear.

C (Consultant): He is about to be killed (bewitched) by an old woman within the family. There is jealousy in his family. They wanted him to be mad and helpless at home, but ancestors protected him and made him a diviner. They were disappointed that he became helpful at home.

M : (weeping) When he was a child, he denied me as his mother. He said that I hated him and he was always angry about the family (circumstances). I came from Johannesburg with these children. Their father had left them. Now, I have no kin relations here at KwaNgwanase. He (Jabulani) wanted to kill himself.

I want to know who you are telling about. Maybe it is that woman I came down from Johannesburg with (i.e. her mother-in-law, when she married Khumalo, her second husband). I came with three boys and I noticed that she envied me because of them.

C: I am talking of the people you stayed with before (Khumalos). They planned bad things for your son, so that he would become a murderer and remain in jail all his life. But he was helped by his ancestor.

J: I hear you clearly now. I did not want to commit myself by saying 'yes' or 'no' without understanding, because I have suffered for a long time.

C: That old woman (step-grandmother) did not want to make a home for you and your mother. She wished to separate your mother from her children. She bewitched you with the powerful bone of a thokoloshe.

J: Most people feared me, but I became an isangoma and things improved.

C: It is nice that a killer died (i.e. Jabulani was no longer a potential murderer but a healer) and that what caused his madness was not his ancestor. They mixed his hair (Jabulani's) with thokoloshe bone. Did you try an inyanga to help you?

J: I tried Mafumbuka and Rasta, but they failed.

C: That is because they thought there was something wrong among the ancestors. The person who helps you must use parts of elephant, lion, tiger and of small animal (ipulo).

M: Sangoma, I do not want any person other than you. I want you to help my son.

C: There is no problem with me (doing that). But I just want two hundred rands now. When he is well, you will give me a cow. If you have no cow, I want one thousand two hundred rands.

J: Thank you, Mungoma. I believe that god will help and the devil is not as powerful as god. Thanks also to my idlozi (ancestor) for protecting me.

Unlike the previous consultation, in which Jabulani strongly influenced the construction of the truth concerning his modest client base, on this occasion he himself constituted the problem (I'm not happy with myself) and it was his mother who steered the consultation in the direction of her former mother-in-law as the source of the problem (the woman who accompanied me from Johannesburg). Clearly, Jabulani had experienced a very unsettled childhood, abandoned at a young age by his father and brought up as an unwelcome outsider in a family of affines. His pent-up resentment and bitterness periodically exploded into bouts of irrational anger, in which he became a danger to those around him. To some extent, his becoming a diviner had muted his destructive and self-destructive tendencies and channelled his energy into the service of others. But his resentment resurfaced in unrealistic ambition, while his family continued to bear the brunt of his outbursts of anger. He had ritually arranged a reconciliation with his father post mortem, but the revelation of his former affines as the true source of his anger and resentment (in his eyes his mother was not without guilt) re-fuelled rather than alleviated the problem, as he was intent on procuring medicines to use against them.

What becomes clear from a review of the three cases considered thus far (The Sick Infant, The Vengeful Father, The Ambitious Diviner) is that the extent of client participation in the consultation varies considerably from rote acceptance of the diviner's version by the child's mother, to Victor's rejection of a faulty and inadequate construct, to the strong guiding influence exercised by Jabulani or by his mother. The degree of client participation in the construction of the truth about a particular problem, from compliance to manipulation to rejection, will depend on the relative strength or weakness that the client brings to the confrontation with the diviner. Strength of character and strong motives, such as revenge, can play their part. So too can relative status and economic security. Above all, insider knowledge and familiarity with the diviner and the process of divination, can be a crucial factor that facilitates client input. Meaningful participation is, therefore, not a

given but rather an opportunity that perhaps only a minority of clients are in a position to take advantage of. The diviner needs all the help (s)he can get from the client in order to produce a palatable truth and is, therefore, willing to act upon any cues supplied by the client. This works best when the client is well known to the diviner as, for instance, when Jabulani consulted the diviner who had guided him through months of training.

5. The Séance of the Ndawo Spirit

Most of this chapter has been devoted to an examination of the divination process, in which the mystical source is an ngoma spirit (deceased diviner) and in which the instrumental medium is the throwing of bones. We turn now to consider the other kind of divination performed in KwaNgwanase (called ukufemba), in which the spiritual agent is an ndawo spirit without any recourse to an instrumental medium. Relatively less attention (spatially) is to be given to this second form of divination because I was unable to gain as much access to it as I enjoyed for ngoma divination (ukubhula). During my period of field work, I witnessed only three sessions of ukufemba as opposed to 23 performances of bone throwing divination (ukubhula). This is but a reflection of the fact that its performance (ukufemba) is a relatively infrequent occurrence.

The relatively high cost of ukufemba makes it too expensive for the poor of KwaNgwanase to be able to afford it. Of the three observed instances, two were requested by clients from outside the area, the third being for a diviner who was returning to it. Furthermore, although most local diviners are qualified to perform this service, by possession of an ndawo spirit, only two actually do so, i.e. Aldina on her travels and Rosalin at home. Hence, all three sessions that I witnessed were conducted by Rosalin. Apprentice diviners receive no schooling whatever in the practice of ukufemba and, apart from watching Rosalin at work, have no means of acquiring the special techniques involved. In fact, ukufemba demands a protracted, draining, highly dramatic virtuoso performance from the medium. The ngoma diviner reads the bones according to standardised rules. The ukufemba medium displays a level

of acting and impersonating skills that are beyond the temperament of most diviners, who are therefore understandably reluctant to risk failure in a first attempt. It is much more of an art than a transmitted skill.

This will become clear from the following case, which space does not permit me to reproduce in full. The "Case of the Errant Husband" began when a man, accompanied by a male companion, turned up at Rosalin's home one morning, while I was there, to request ukufemba. He was placed in the centre of the divining hut, wearing only his trousers rolled up to the knee, sitting upright, legs outstretched, palms resting upon his knees, and facing the entrance. Seated behind him, the home-assembled attendants sang to the rhythm of calabash rattles "ndiyophija muzi makukunhi ..." (I am going to heal all in the house). The medium, flanked by two female assistants (candidate diviners), knelt to the side in her femba regalia. In this case, Rosalin had three inzithi (violet cloths) bound around her chest, to indicate that she could be possessed by any of three ndawo spirits. She began to chew some incense and anointed herself with black and white medicine on the forehead, ears, neck and heels. She then inhaled the smoke of burning incense, placed just outside the threshold of the hut, whereupon she began to shiver and snort until she fell insensible to the ground. Brought to by her assistants, she began to speak with the measured deep-toned voice of an old man, clearly indicating that she was in the grip of an ndawo spirit.

The patient's condition was diagnosed as bodily pain spreading from his chest, caused by his wife and one of his kinsmen, who both wished him harm. "Why?", asked the patient. "Because you have another girlfriend." This had led him to withhold support from his own family. The patient's initial denials were overcome by the insistence of the ndawo spirit and he eventually admitted having a girlfriend. Dipping her switch in water, the medium scrubbed the patient's body with it and then began to sniff aggressively at his body, in so violent a manner that she had to be pulled away by her assistant. Again she fell on the floor and apparently passed out. When she was revived, she was possessed by a woman and was weeping. The woman's voice complained that the patient had neglected her (his wife apparently). She knew of his girlfriend, had become jealous and had placed a curse upon him.

This sequence was repeated several times in order to introduce additional complainants. The medium would go outside to inhale incense, return to scrub the patient and breathe in from his body another agent of affliction, whereupon she lost consciousness only to recover under a different persona. The first of these was a man, who would not reveal his name in response to the patient's enquiry, whereupon the patient and his companion nodded knowingly to one another. The unidentified man supported the wife's grievance. He was followed by a little girl (the patient's daughter), who stated "when I needed money and asked for it you refused." A succession of animals (witch familiars) were then manifested in the medium's behaviour, baboon, snakes, dog and cat. Each was in turn identified by the audience, e.g. "It is a baboon." That these were the sharp end of the patient's suffering was communicated by the assistant ostentatiously shielding him from their menacing intent mimed by the medium.

They, in turn, were replaced by two ancestral spirits. The patient's paternal grandfather accused him of failing in his duty to offer sacrifices to his ancestors. Because of this neglect, they had withdrawn their protection and he had been exposed to witchcraft. The patient protested that he could not have known his grandfather, who had passed away before he was born. That made no difference, he was sternly told. He was to build an ancestral hut, sacrifice a goat before beginning, another goat several days into the building operation and, when completed, sacrifice two chickens and provide clothing and traditional beer for his ancestors. He was to take igobo (emetic) for purification and wear the isipandla (strip of goat skin) on his wrist. Then his father's sister had her say. She had brought him up as a child, only to suffer his neglect now. She was wandering in the forest without a hut or clothes to wear, exposed to wet and cold. She demanded a hut from him.

Finally, the ndawo spirit returned to ask the patient if he was satisfied with the séance. He professed complete satisfaction and promised to provide an ancestral hut. In the unfolding of this drama, the spirits never identify themselves. It is technically up to the patient to recognise them, often prompted by those who accompany him/her. Failing that, the audience (i.e. camp followers of the medium) will do it for them, e.g. "Hayi, a child comes to see her mother." Of course, the patient may choose

not to follow this lead. The Errant Husband found Rosalin's performance so convincing that he allowed himself to be led on. But on another occasion, two female clients from Durban consistently rejected the cues supplied by the audience and persisted in challenging each spirit manifestation to reveal its identity. "Who are you?", they asked again and again. Obviously, if no relationship can be established or acknowledged between patient and spirit, the pronouncements emanating from the spirit world may be repudiated. The séance for the two women dragged on for more than five hours without any satisfactory outcome.

I do not presume to fully understand, much less to explain away, the clairvoyance exhibited by Rosalin in the case of 'The Errant Husband'. However, there may have been a number of visible pointers in the situation sufficient to give her a basis on which to build, in the absence of any foreknowledge of the patient's circumstances. The most pertinent of these was the manner in which the patient presented himself. He was dressed in the blue overalls that have become the signal uniform of the urban workplace but, in contrast to his companion, similarly attired, the patient's outfit was faded and worn. It could fairly safely be assumed that he had been in urban employment for quite some time, with the implication of prolonged absence from the rural homestead and, in the minds of country people, the almost inevitable consequence of succumbing to the wiles of 'loose' townswomen. The man was of an age at which it would be considered shameful to be unmarried, yet he was not accompanied by his wife, or even by a kinsman, but by a fellow migrant worker. This supplied slender but sufficient evidence on which to rest a supposition of the existence of domestic conflict. Adroitly putting the two possibilities together, an urban liaison and a resentful rural wife, Rosalin (under the influence of her ndawo spirit) pushed the patient hard until she had wrung from him an admission of guilt. At that point, the scene was set and she could draw upon her creative imagination to marshal a supporting cast to convince him of the error of his ways.

6. Contrasting Forms of Divination

It will be clear from the separate treatment of ngoma and ndawo divining that they have a great deal in common in that they both draw upon the same basic repertoire of causative agents, namely, affronted ancestors and ill-disposed witches or sorcerers, and presuppose a tacit connection between their operations. But beyond that, there are significant differences of emphasis and substance between the ngoma consultation and the ukufemba séance. The difference of emphasis emerges in the relationship between the patient and his/her purported mystical assailant. The ukufemba proceedings completely invert the relationship between wicked witch and hapless victim that holds sway in the ngoma narrative. Instead of being regarded as a victim for whom retaliation is a desirable recourse, the patient is recast as a moral miscreant requiring a reformation or of a conversion to normative rectitude. He is arraigned before his accusers and pressure is exerted upon him to mend his ways. And instead of an anonymous antagonist, the witch or sorcerer is transformed into an injured party, who justifiably strikes back under provocation; not so much a gratuitously malicious person as someone who has been sinned against. The assailant is cast as a figure deserving sympathy and understanding, whereas in the case of the patient, a presumption of guilt replaces a presumption of innocence.

The second difference derives from the contrast between diviner and medium, that makes ukufemba an entirely different kind of event from a ngoma consultation; a difference of substance, therefore. Bone throwing divination (ukubhula) is not unlike a session with tarot cards. The procedure is to read certain signs from a random arrangement of images, to enter into a meaningful discourse provoked by these signs and, from it, to weave a narrative that will satisfy the client's search for the truth concerning his/her condition and prospects. Essentially, divination is an experimentation and negotiation between two interested, but often unequal, parties (diviner and patient), by means of the manipulation of a limited store of referents, to reach some mutually acceptable accommodation. Ukufemba, on the other hand, is more of a confrontation than a form of negotiation. It is played out as a dramatic confrontation between the patient and his tormentors, turned accusers. Instead of a

narrative being constructed about these relationships, the relationships are rendered present and vividly enacted to produce a kind of virtual reality. From one point of view, it can be seen as a theatrical performance, in which the self-effacing medium assumes a succession of different roles and identities. She must exhibit the dramaturgical flair of an actress and mimic of some merit although, in indigenous thinking, she is not doing anything at all but is totally unconscious of the impersonations. She passively undergoes. Hence, at another level, the medium is but the tractable vehicle of spirit (ndawo) activity. It is the ndawo spirit that opens and closes the séance and introduces, or calls into being, the spirits of other relevant agents in the patient's melodrama. From this perspective, the model of the courtroom may be more appropriate than that of the theatre. In this legal metaphor, the ndawo spirit appears to act in the role of counsel for the prosecution who, having stated the case against the accused (patient), proceeds to present a series of witnesses to attest to his misconduct. But which ever the model resorted to, theatre or courtroom, the salient difference between bone throwing divination and ukufemba remains unchanged. The diviner constructs a story about an event in the patient's life. The medium creates a tableau of the event itself.

7. Summary

It is clear that, apart from the healing services of medical doctors and Zionist prophets, two forms of indigenous divination co-exist in KwaNgwanase. It is equally clear that both bone throwing divination and ukufemba, and even Zionist prophetic intervention, can on different occasions be provided by the same healing specialist. Does this point to some degree of religious syncretism among divinatory practitioners? The proposition may be upheld in one sense, but not in another. Certainly, some synthesis between the two systems has been achieved in the domain of belief concerning ancestors and spirits. It is believed that ndawo (foreign) spirits can be incorporated into, or grafted on to, existing genealogical structures of agnatic ancestors by way of the affinal connection, and we have seen how local

diviners are at pains to ritually and spatially accommodate ndawo spirits at their homesteads, integrating them with family ancestors and expressing the wish that they should cohabit in harmony. A further strand of integration and synthesis at this level is the professed belief that ndawo spirits are required to exercise dominance and control over curiously more fickle ngoma divining spirits. As one diviner puts it: "Ndawo is the master of masters in the divining world." Moreover, if the foreign ndawo is accepted as an affine, the identification of ndawo and affine may be taken a step further to the point where a dead affine may qualify as an ndawo spirit. If so, this would account for the apparent aberration, on the part of many diviners, of citing deceased relatives by marriage among their ndawo spirits. This would take the transition of foreign (spirit) to affine to its ultimate conclusion, by founding it upon an actual marriage. In which case, the synthesis would be an accomplished fact, rather than a matter to be ritually negotiated. Yet, however much evidence there is of syncretism occurring at the cognitive level of belief, there is no indication of any synthesis emerging at the level of practice, where diviners ply their trade. Nor can there be, if our analysis of bone throwing divination and ukufemba as very different and contrasting forms of procedure is correct. While we have witnessed some elements of Zionist prophetism, though not very marked, finding their way into ngoma divining (bone throwing divination), any such fusion with features of ukufemba would be difficult to contemplate.

In any case, one family, namely Aldina and her mother Rosalin, retains a monopoly of the practice of ukufemba and it is very much in their interests to maintain its distinctiveness. Virtually all other diviners in the area have the spiritual capacity to function as ndawo mediums but none put it into practice. Rosalin and her daughter are immigrants from Mozambique who introduced this mediumistic type of divining into a Zulu-speaking community. Such immigrants have tended to stress features of integration with the local population or distinguishing features, depending on which favoured them the most in particular situations. Aldina and Rosalin emphasise their Zuluness by becoming ngoma diviners, but it is to their advantage to be able to assert command over a more spectacularly powerful mode of "non-Zulu" divining and to create a demand for it among local practitioners. Moreover, they have

devised an ingenious way of integrating the two on the level of belief, by constructing legends of a conflicting past giving rise to mystical feuds between killed foreigner and Zulu killer. As with the settlement of recorded feuds in central Africa, in which a wife is given in compensation for the loss of a life, the solution to the fictional feud is the mystical marriage between diviner and vengeful ndawo spirit. By this convention, foreign ndawo spirits are firmly affiliated to ancestral ngoma divining spirits.

However, it is a major socio-economic advantage to Rosalin and Aldina to keep the practice of ukufemba to themselves as their distinctive specialisation. While showing others how an ndawo spirit can be acquired, they withhold information on how it might be activated for the conduct of a séance. Without any guidance in the matter, neither tutelage nor training, no practice of trial and error under supervision as with bone throwing divination, others are too uncertain about how to go about it to even attempt it. In the meantime, Aldina goes on her travels to Durban, Johannesburg and points in between, advertising the potency of ukufemba and referring clients back to her mother at home. As long as this remains the basis of their unchallenged reputation of being the most powerful and wealthiest divining family in the area, no process of hybridisation will occur between bone throwing divination and ukufemba.

CHAPTER NINE
THE DIVINER AS ENTREPRENEUR

1. Introduction

A comparison between the vocation of diviner and that of entrepreneur seems to be an uncompromising subject. Initially, they seem to be less comparable than antithetical. For, according to conventional definitions, there is an ideological discrepancy between being a diviner and being an entrepreneur. The diviner is known as a religious professional who operates divination and rituals in mystically charged environments, serving the communal good and providing benefits to all comers. As ancestors are essentially benevolent to their descendants and wish to preserve communal harmony, the diviner, the mouthpiece of ancestors, must also strive for communal unity. When (s)he fails to serve this good purpose, the diviner is often accused of being a witch. The diviner therefore presents him/herself as a social benefactor. On the contrary, the concept of entrepreneur, a concept developed in mercantile and industrial societies, is that of a self-oriented and economic individual. The ultimate goal of the entrepreneur is to accumulate maximum benefits for personal gratification. Unlike the diviner, the entrepreneur is generally free from communal regulations and restraints. At times, the community itself serves as a vital resource in entrepreneurial ventures. In terms of these contrasting perceptions, then, the diviner and the entrepreneur would seem to have nothing in common.

This discrepancy is rooted in a biased scholarly conception of African societies. African societies are most often viewed as 'collective' entities in which members are encased in social norms and afforded little freedom of action. Social members are expected to play assigned roles within the social structure. Furthermore, African societies are traditionally viewed as 'closed communities' which regulate the movement and mode of behaviour of individuals throughout their lives. The presumption of such prescriptive and restrictive control leaves little room for entertaining

entrepreneurial tendencies in everyday social relationships and particularly in the economic sphere of activity. In this conception of a homogeneous community, diviners no less than others must orient their activities to the attainment of collective goals.

Another discrepancy between diviner and entrepreneur can be focused on their natures of role-playing. A diviner, as religious professional, is generally featured as a magician whose performance is duly restricted within a non-rational and mystical mode. On the contrary, the industrial entrepreneur is a beacon of rational and frugal activity. This definitional discrepancy is rooted in a biased scholarly conception of African societies. As Weber (1976) argues, capitalism is a unique product of the West which is based on historically developed rationalism and frugality; the merits of Protestantism. The West is well ordered, systemised and mechanised. The other part of the world is the antithesis of the West.

Regulated by various rules and sanctions of a homogeneous community, the diviner no less than others is highly expected to attain collective goals (a social benefactor). A greedy diviner is always condemned by the local people and often categorised as a "witch". As the nature of the witch is always negatively projected, the greedy diviner is rejected (a swindler). In fact, the diviner has a dual character, a social benefactor and a 'swindler' (self-serving). This question is what Keith Hart tackled when he dealt with Frafra entrepreneurs in Ghana (1975). Hart argues that an "individual entrepreneur, if he is to retain effective links with his community, has to maintain a balance in his career between private accumulation and community consumption" (1975:9).

Western-oriented intellectual dualism sees the diviner and the entrepreneur as the representatives of an opposition between non-rational and rational modes of behaviours. For instance, entrepreneurship is a rational and calculating activity, whilst divinership is a mystically generated non-rational mode of practice. This western biased dualistic mode of thought and practice has been criticised by many anthropologists (e.g. Levi-Strauss, 1976; Peek, 1991) and it cannot be denied that there is an indigenous mode of logic developed in non-Western societies, which is parallel to the logic of Western societies. The aim of this chapter is to explore the rationality of the diviner's behaviour and divining practice its own contexts. In fact

it combines the rational and non-rationality, as indeed much of so called economic rationality tends to do.

The study of diviners has been largely confined to the domain of religious activities, although some political and juridical implications have been attempted. Some other crucial aspects of divinership, notably the economic, have been ruled out of scholarly attention. Even multi-disciplinary approaches, i.e. praxeological approaches, have failed so far to scrutinise the economic meaning of divining practice. Therefore, the role of diviners has been projected upon the religious field and far removed from engagement in economic activities. On the other hand, entrepreneurial activity is treated as being confined to the domain of economic relationships. But the narrow identification of diviner with religion and entrepreneur with economics can no longer be sustained.

The advent of colonialism followed by industrialism and modernisation has meant that religious practices, in Africa and elsewhere, have become incorporated into the economic sphere, and that ritual knowledge and practices have been largely commodified (Boyd, 1985; Comaroff, 1998; Gregory, 1980). Capitalism is a meta-discourse which embraces all spheres of African life.

This chapter has a number of aims to pursue. The first is to examine the entrepreneurial nature of divining in KwaNgwanase. A principal theme in this chapter is that the diviner is an indigenous entrepreneur. This is not to deny that the principal role of religious agents is to mediate between two realms of worlds, the living and the dead. But I want to show that the diviner is a rational being who tries to strike a balance between personal accumulation and communal service.

The second is to examine the relationship of mutual reliance that exists among diviners. The profession of divination in KwaNgwanase is competitive: it is a competition among diviners themselves, between diviners and other traditional and religious healers, and between diviners and medical doctors. To survive in this competition, a diviner forms or enters into an alliance with some fellow diviners in opposition to yet others similarly arranged in their own alliances.

Thirdly, I will examine the way in which the diviner consciously utilise the divining niche and its special resources, i.e. divining spirits, traditional medicines

and divining techniques. Particularly, the utilisation of divining spirits by diviners is striking: it strongly provides evidence that most diviners in KwaNgwanase are in business. My field materials will enrich the entrepreneurial aspects of divining.

2. The Rational Diviner

A) Mystical assignment and rational choice of father (senior) diviner

The relationship between novices and father-diviners (instructing diviners) is said to be mystical in origin. The choice of the instructing diviner is not credited to the novice, but is imposed on him/her by divining spirits and communicated in a mystical medium. The following case will demonstrate how this is understood.

Mzwandemini is a male novice. His divining training under Rosalin follows a mystical instruction from his divining spirit. "I dreamt of a particular divining hut (diviner's hut) that I had never seen before. My maternal grandmother came in my dreams and showed me the divining hut. It was while I was working in Johannesburg. When I came back to my home from Johannesburg, I tried to find out the divining hut I had seen before in my dreams. I took a taxi. The taxi driver took me to eNgozini. He dropped me in a place I didn't know. I walked and walked. I didn't know where to go. But all of a sudden I saw the very divining hut I had seen in the dream. I walked over to the divining hut." That divining hut belonged to Rosalin, his instructing diviner. Mzwandemini stressed that he had no prior knowledge of Rosalin and her homestead, or even of eNgozini. He just took a taxi as his divining spirit had instructed and happened upon the same divining hut which his divining spirit had shown him.

The illustration accentuates the absence of a personal choice. The father (senior) diviner is assigned by divining spirits. No resistance or deviation is allowed in the face of this prescription. The novice has no predilection for a particular father (senior) diviner and blindly follows the divining spirits' instruction. This is the strongly held emic standpoint, given by Mziwandemini's own account which is probably a well-refined story to impress others: to show he has a mystical calling, a bona fide to become a diviner.

However, the novice has a rational mind and is able to consider the economic aspects of the situation given to him/her in which to choose a father (senior) diviner. In reality, the novice often consults several diviners before (s)he finally choose one of them as the father diviner. For instance, Johannes consulted at least four different diviners before coming to Jabulani's homestead in eNgozini. He clearly stated, "I decided to come to Jabulani, because I like his divining style and his gida (divining dance)". Obviously he had foreknowledge of Jabulani and had evaluated his technique vis-à-vis others. The novice normally pays more than three thousand rands for divining training. This is a huge investment considering the local economic standard. Furthermore, the novice and his/her family have to spend an extra thousand rands to prepare the coming-out ceremony, to buy divining bones (amathambo), a divining switch (ishova) and other divining apparatus. And the novice and family have to provide a cow and a number of goats and chickens for the occasion.

A total investment of some R5000 for undergoing divining training gives reason enough for exercising some discretion in carefully selecting a father diviner. Therefore it may be naïve to accept the story that the novice blindly pursues the instruction of divining spirits given in dreams to find the father diviner. Rather, it is prudent to carefully check the capacity of known diviners in the field. As with western physician's news of who's who, the story of diviners is widely circulating and the novice and family are alert to this folk-knowledge. No novice would go to a diviner whose power is inactive or otherwise impaired. No divining spirit will instruct a descendant to go to such a diviner.

In fact, I have shown in previous chapters that the choice of divining spirits is also within the grasp of the novice. Logically speaking, all local people have a number of divining spirits in the structure of their family genealogies, either paternal kin or maternal kin. And in fact the choice is wide open to the novice. Gugu's changing of her divining spirit from maternal ancestor to paternal ancestor⁶¹ is thus possible, given the omnipresence of divining spirits in her family tree. And Gugu is by no means exceptional. Tracing diviner's genealogies, most of them have number of divining spirits (ancestors who were diviners in their life time) in both the patrilineal and matrilineal structure.

The novice will likely prefer to join a 'big name' diviner, who may have a dozen novices as evidence of a powerful reputation. Also, thriving diviners are more beneficial to novices, for they offer them more extensive experience of the divining séance and more of an opportunity to observe patients in consultations. Exposed to a larger clientele, an intelligent trainee may quickly pattern and classify the patients and their problems. Therefore, the initial choice of a father (senior) diviner is a crucial first step for a future career and in most cases presupposes deliberation, assessment and the exercise of rational judgement.

From the father diviner's perspective, if (s)he has a sound capacity for recruiting novices, the shorter the duration of divining training the better for economic purposes. The training diviner needs to process and replace trainees as quickly as possible in order to maximise profits from divining training income. My observation shows that the average duration of divining training is about one year⁶². Aldina and Rosalin, successful mother and daughter diviners in eNgozini, had four female novices, Gugu, MaNgubane, Nomasonto, an unidentified novice, and one male novice, Manzini, in July, 1977. Four of them apart from Gugu were almost at the end of divining training. When I visited them in June, 1998, four novices was left and there was new recruitment of four male novices, Kungsi, Mzwandemini, Bhewula, Philip, and one female novice, Thabile. Each novice pays about three thousand rands for raising up ngoma and ndawo spirits. Therefore, in 1997-1998, Aldina and Rosalin gained 30,000 rands tax free⁶³. Still, novices have to give Aldina and Rosalin some further income. Towards the end of divining training, the novice has to buy some basic requirements for divining practice, i.e. divining bones, switch and some divining clothes. The purchase of divining apparatus often causes some tension between Rosalin and the novices. Philip, who completed his divining training in September of 1999, accused Rosalin of "ripping him off". He argued that Rosalin charged him more money for divining bones (R1,500) and switch (R1,000) than his colleague novice, Mzwandemini, who paid less than half of that price. "She (Rosalin) knew that I am a Zulu and I have money. So she cheated me". This incident shows that Aldina and Rosalin make some profit from selling divining apparatus to novices. A fledgling diviner becomes an informant to the father diviner. If the father diviner has many inter-regional novices, it is easier to build a

divining network. Aldina utilises this network more skilfully than other diviners: whenever she travels for divination, she stays at one of her novices' homes.

B) Becoming a diviner, self-chosen business

Although taking divining training is still feared and refused by most of the people, there are always challengers to take divination up as a real vocation. Philip is the best example of this challenge. Philip is a male novice, in his early forties, who has an ambitious dream to become a great diviner. When I first met him in October of 1998, he was Aldina's new novice. He was squatting beside Aldina in her divining hut while she was reading divining bones. After bone throwing divination (ukubhula ngathambo), Aldina introduced him to me. He was good in English and showed interest in the purpose of my study. We soon got close to each other. The following is a narrative given by Philip about his calling (15th September, 1998).

I am from Mtwalume which is the South Coast (of Durban). I couldn't come right with money even though I was working. Let me say, I'm now forty-four years old. I found that the way of those younger than me, they finish school, and they started working, they got cars, and beautiful houses. I've got none of these. Then somebody in 1989 said I must go to another herbalist who can help me solve the problem, which is the down by Kosi Bay. I went there; I couldn't get any help. It carried on. I was suffering until last year (1997). In the meanwhile, I was losing my cattle. Cows were dying out one by one, goats were too. Sometimes I simply lost cows and goats without particular reasons. Then last year, I happened to see a bus driver, Mr. Dlamini (he drives a bus from Durban to Manguzi). He said, 'there's somebody in Manguzi by the name of Aldina. She can solve your problems'. On one weekend, I came down with Mr. Dlamini to see Aldina only to find she was in Durban. Then I went back to Durban. Mr. Dlamini said me, I must phone Mr. Khumalo (he also is a bus driver). He would know the whereabouts of Aldina. Then I phoned Mr. Khumalo and found that Aldina left Durban for Manguzi. Then I explained to Khumalo why I'm looking for Aldina. Then Khumalo said, 'look. She'll be back in Durban next week. Then you must take Aldina to your house where she was going to femba.

The following week I went to Clement to see Aldina. She threw bones and she told me that somebody in my family wanted me to be a diviner. I said I don't remember anyone in my family. She said, 'No. It doesn't mean your relatives. Anyone even somebody not related to your family can want you to be a diviner.' Then I said, 'we can arrange the day, so I can take Aldina to my farm (Mtwalume).' We went to the farm, then she started her process (femba). The first man was my grandfather. I had never seen my grandfather. I asked, 'who're you?' Said the grandfather, 'where's my son?'... Meaning my father. I said, 'he's fast asleep.' Somebody went

to wake him up. Then he asked me about my elder sister. I told him that she's coming.

Then my grandfather said, 'Look. I'm happy. I've got everything. You've slaughtered cows and goats for asking.' I said, 'can you give me please money?' Then he said, 'No. There'll be a man at the end of the ferba. Then we'll speak to you.' I asked, 'who's that man?' He said, 'You'll ask him.'

Then it was my mother. She said the very same thing. She can't help me financially. Then it carried on until the last man. The last man told me that his name is Mavunduru. I said, 'how can you come here?' He said, 'your great-great-great grandfather killed me. And took all my herbal medicine with him'. That's why, from the day he was killed, he has stayed at my home. 'Because I couldn't go back home without herbal medicine', that man said. 'Now you have no alternative. Because I am staying in your family now, I want you to take it. You're going to take it over.' I said, 'Yes.' Then I said, 'Can you please give me money?' He said, 'I'll give you money. When the time is all right.' I'm the one who has done all these dirty things (killing cattle)'. My cows were dying. My goats... everyday. Sometimes cows will just disappear. We even never find bones of them. Then this man claims to be responsible for that. Then I said, 'OK I'll do it.' That was the first time that I agree to take the job of a diviner⁶⁴.

At the time, I was still working. I carried on working, working until April this year. I used to get my salary through the Bank. I went to the bank, I drew money. I bought groceries for my family. Then my money will disappear. Just like that. April, May and June. Then in the middle of July, Aldina came to Durban. Then she throws bones. She said, 'No. This man said that it's late. You must go and take his job'. Then I realise that I've got nothing. Then I went to see another diviner in Point Road. She came from Mozambique. (I asked Phillip that whether that diviner and Aldina knew each other. He said that he doesn't think so. That Mozambican diviner was introduced by his friend working at the same place.⁶⁵) She told me the very same thing. 'Look. There's nothing I'll tell you. You had somebody three days ago. That person told you everything. That is true what that person said.' Then I decided to resign from my work. And I'm now here.⁶⁶"

When he resigned from his post, he had some obstructions from his girl friend and the boss in his department⁶⁷. They said that Phillip's mad. He said to his boss (umlungu), "Look. You'll see whether I'm mad or not after one year."

"I realised that I'm coming here and then I wouldn't have any income. I'm going to stay here roughly one year. I have no income. I decided to take my money from the city police and buy a minibus. So I'll have an income. I'm not being paid because I'm here. My sister's managing that taxi... Yes. I married. Oh... I've been married several times. I married in 1978. I divorced. I married again in 1982. In 1987, that wife passed away. And I married again in 1990. From the first wife, I've got one daughter. From the second wife, I got three, oh, one died with her mother. My second wife died while she was issuing the last baby. Then with the 1990 marriage, I've got two boys and a girl. But on the other hand, with my girl friend now, I also got three kids.

...My financial problem came in 1980s. [The money just disappears.] I went to see a diviner in Mkhuze named Ngomane. But he couldn't help me. I don't have any physical problem, expect losing my wife. That's all.

I began to dream especially after I met Aldina. In dreams, somebody used to show me what's going on at my farm. Or I was told what I am going to do which before that never happened to me. They were mostly my ancestors. Some of them I knew. Like my mother. Some of them, I never see them but heard of them. Then secondly, this guy who wants me take me up his job. I never see him. But I've seen him in my dream. I know how he looks like.

Because of my financial problems. Whoever somebody told me there's someone good in this, I used to tell my father, "I'm going there to get help." Until this time, somebody told me about Aldina. Then when Aldina came to my house and started fenba, that is the way the umndawo started talking to me. Generations between the umndawo and me, no one could have picked that umndawo, until I came to Aldina and Aldina picked him up. So I end up. He wanted to pass his job over, but there was no diviner picking, knowing about this umndawo until I'm here."

Philip has not suffered from any physical affliction: an exceptional calling from divining spirits. However, Philip is not the only exception. I obtained interview information from a number of diviners and novices which show that they have not suffered any calling affliction. Philip's prime concern was to be a famous diviner and make considerable money out of the practice of divination. "After I finish divining training", Philip ambitiously proclaims, "I will go over to Mozambique and in that place I will learn more about the power of ndawo. I also would like to go overseas to learn the technique of diviners in other countries⁶⁸".

To Philip, and maybe many other novices, the choice of the divining profession is far from being a mystical matter. Rather, an entrepreneurial investment is obviously related to the choice. From the beginning, his calling was exceptional. He got to know about his instructing diviner from a bus driver. It was obvious that Philip was fascinated with Aldina's divining skill, as he later admitted to me. He was especially astonished with Aldina's fenba, which was fairly new to him. His boss and family objected to his taking divining training and even accused him of being "mad". But he responded with "you'll see later". This is a strong commitment, a commitment which kicks off his prosperous job once he enjoyed and depart for a new career.

C) Diviner and prophet, taking an alternative profession

Some scholars in African religious studies have noted some interesting role connections between the diviner and the Zionist prophet (Kiernan, 1992; Sundkler, 1961; West, 1975). While Sundkler and West admit that there are epistemological similarities between these two healing patterns, i.e. an afflictive calling, the pursuit of witches, leadership of a group, sacred songs, water rituals, white symbolism, compatibility of powers, family links, and female dominance (Sundkler, 1961:109; West, 1975:191ff), Kiernan focuses more on the difference of sociological roles between them. To Sundkler and West, the diviner and the prophet are a 'mirror image' of each other, although each party may deny it. Kiernan, however, approaches from same different angle to show the sociological difference between them. The diviner tends to maintain the status quo by reinstating individuals and by restoring them to their social relationships, and the Zionist prophet is more like a rustler who picks up individuals who have strayed from their social relationships (1992:241).

It is not my intention here to argue the similarity and difference between the diviner and the prophet's appearances and social roles. Rather my intention in this chapter is to point out one more phenomenon which relates the diviner and the prophet. One interesting phenomenon in divining practice in KwaNgwanase is that some diviners practise prophecy and some prophets conduct divination. This is no surprise if we understand that the diviner and the prophet share a functional commonality, i.e. healing with the help of mystical forces.

Prophecy by a diviner was briefly dealt with by Fernandez (1967). He argues that recent social change urges the change of diviner's function. Industrialised and cash-oriented economic system, the Zulu people have more interest on future events, i.e., predicting the result of horse racing, lottery and gambling, etc. Facing with the demanding increase of prophecy in everyday life of the people, the diviner had to come to meet people's wishes by undertaking prophecy. Then how about the prophet turns into a diviner? What is the reason and gain of the prophet by doing this? No scholarly research seems to satisfy this question. I am going to try to solve this question out by presenting two cases of prophets turn into diviners:

Kunsi, 38 years old male novice, was a Zionist prophet. He was stout and healthy lad. Last year (1998), he had a dream on which his grandfather came to see him and used to say, "I want you to work for people who can pay you." He believed in himself possessing a healing power and used it to cure his church congregates but without any formal charge. Since the first dream about his grandfather, he used to visit Kunsi on dream and demand the same thing, "work for people who can pay you." Kunsi regarded this as a calling to become a diviner. Therefore, following grandfather's instruction, he came to Rosalin's homestead for divining training. Kunsi had coming out divining training in October and spent well over R4,000 for the ceremony, both ngoma and ndawo. However, his rather poor performance of ngoma ceremony did not satisfy his father (senior) diviner and cost further R2,000 for another round of ceremony a month later.

Bhewula was a middle-aged prophet in Jozini before he came to Rosalin's impande. For couple of years, many people (patients) asked him to do ukufemba for them, but he had no knowledge of it and, therefore, could not help them. Instead, he used to take his patients to Manguzi where ukufemba practice is popular and famous. After helping some people, he began to wonder why so many people came to ask him to do ukufemba, despite his lack of knowledge about ukufemba. So he came to Manguzi to consult an femba diviner (umfembi) October or November last year. The femba diviner was possessed by Bhewula's maternal grandmother, and she appeared to him and said that she wanted him to be a diviner umndawo. Bhewula's grandmother wanted him to make money by doing ukufemba. She added that those people who came to ask him about ukufemba were actually people who she had sent. Compare to Kunsi, Bhewula completed his divining training economically. He only performed ndawo ceremony (There seemed to be a negotiation between Bhewula and a father (senior) diviner, Rosalin, about this) which cost about R2,000 only.

Kunsi and Bhewula are now installed as diviners and it is no surprise to do so. West once convincingly remarked, "if prophets had commanded the required financial resources, they would have become diviners" (1975:185). This is a very relevant statement to show why Kunsi and Bhewula determined themselves (or as instructed by their ancestors) to be a diviner and undertook divining training. Although they both would deny it, it might be convincingly said that they wanted to be diviners, being fascinated by highly valued divining techniques, particularly,

ukufemba. Unlike prophecy, ukufemba will guarantee them high income. Kungsi and Bhowula did not suffer any divining affliction before divining training: they were both healthy and stout men. Even Bhowula's case is an exceptional: he had no frequent dreams about ancestors. His grandmother only paid to visit him on the séance of ukufemba. Bhowula might be most welcomed by Rosalin. He himself came to Rosalin's place and asked about the possibility of becoming diviner. No diviner would reject him. But Bhowula had done divining training in cleaver way: less than six months and only ukufemba with minimum cost. Therefore, he invested minimum capital, about R2,000, and created maximum result, become an femba diviner in very short term.

Conversely, the aim of the diviner turns into the prophet is not only aimed to meet people's demand for future, but it is quite rational choice: one for opening up divining network to the church fellows and the other to incorporate the power of Jesus into divining practice. The latter has already been applied by many diviners in KwaNgwanase. There is no evidence to show that the power of Jesus involves directly in the divining séance, however, some simply place the Bible in an divining hut. Other deliberately prays for Jesus before opening up the divining séance. But more possibility is on the first reason: to expand divining network by becoming a member (not only a member, but also a leader) of an independent church.

Philip, Kungsi and Bhowula commonly show that the choice of divination is based on self-interest pursuing more profitable way of profession. They all share a basic qualification of entrepreneur: an innovative mind and risk taking. They eventually engaged in divining training during which they mastered divining skills and turn mystical raw resources (calling spirits) into phantom capital (divining spirits).

However, once a novice becomes an established diviner, it is the only the phase game begins. There is a high competition among traditional healers, including diviners, traditional herbalists and other healing agents (prophets of independent churches). It is a game of survival or dead. To survive, a diviner needs a support from other diviners. Therefore, particular group of diviners (often an instructing diviner and novices) constructs a divining association, so called impande.

3. Exploiting Divining Niche

A) Impande⁶⁹, a mystical sodality of diviners

The impande (a mystical genealogy of a diviners) to which the fledgling diviner is admitted, particularly if it is a strong divining school, is a safe launching pad for securing his/her business take-off. If the newly established diviner builds a tight and mutually supportive network around him/her based on the divining family, (s)he will more easily manage the divining business. The reciprocal relationship between the newly established diviner and the father (senior) diviner on the one hand, and between 'sister' diviners on the other is established only after the completion of divining training. Anyone who attempts to cut the tie with the divining family and sever loyalty to the father (senior) diviner should therefore expect himself/herself to be thrown back on his/her own slim resources and to make little headway.

By placing novice's divining spirits into the father (senior) diviner's family, the novice is able to secure his/her place in the network of diviners (therefore can expect a support from father (senior) diviner and sister diviners). Conversely, the novice must show royalty to the father (senior) diviner in order to benefit from him/her. Often diviners of the same divining family join together to undertake a particular function: coming-out divining training ceremony of a father (senior) diviner's new novice is the most favoured occasion. At divining training ceremony, senior diviners congratulate and build acknowledgement with him/her. If novices come from all different places, there is much rapport and co-operation than competition. Otherwise, there may be a potential tension among them. Even the father (senior) diviner is a potential competitor to the pledging diviner. Therefore, there is a potential co-operation in competition.

The comparison between a social family (umndeni) and a divining family (impande) would shed interesting aspects. There are more differences than commonalties between these two associations. The social family bases on at first based on a blood relationship. Reproduction is a key element of recruiting membership. Of course, in traditional societies, a stranger was often adapted into a particular family and

enjoyed the right and duty of the family. However, It was rather an exception than a rule. On the contrary, divining family is more based on contract. It primarily founded on the principle of transaction between the diviner and the novice. The relationship may last until both parties have still some interest on each other. Otherwise, it tends to be de-structured. This is to say that divining family is more fragile and one can easily breaks off from the divining family. To secure the structure of divining family, the father diviner need to recruit as many novices as possible, which will secure the network of divining family.

B) Patron-clientship, exploiting soft resources and resistance

However, in reality, the relationship between father (senior) diviners and novices is best described and understood as a patron-client relationship. During training, novices pay labour tribute to their father (senior) diviner. Novices under divining training take on multiple tasks, besides getting a professional training. The condition of trainees is often described as harsh and miserable to bear, in fact an ordeal, similar in harshness to that undergone in the regime of the initiation schools. First of all, novices undertake various forms domestic work. The burden falls particularly heavily on female initiates, who have to engage in agricultural activities, cleaning father (senior) diviner's clothes, preparing food, fetching water and etc. Often novices are ill-treated by father (senior) diviner and family members. Jabulani had this to say about his divining training: "They (father (senior) diviner and his wife) treated me like a paper bag. They often asked me to do something which had nothing to do with divining training". However, no protest is allowed! Therefore complaints are always voiced behind the instructor's back. Delani similarly chatted under Jabulani's tutelage saying "He treats me like a son" (meaning is given no freedom and is completely subordinate). When he began divining training, Delani refused to call Jabulani "father (senior)" and was reluctant to do his bidding in matters not directly related to the process. Jabulani, frustrated with Delani's attitude, informed Delani's mother that he would not teach his son, if he continued to show defiance. Of course, Delani's attitude was immediately transformed by this threat and he soon mended his behaviour.

Philip was another novice unhappy with his father (senior) diviner, Rosalin and her husband. He often accused them abusing of novices. Phillip has a car when he comes for divining training. Rosalin and her husband expect and demand the use of that car anytime they need it. Of course, for some months, Philip has to drive all the way. But after some months, Philip begins to feel that it is not the way. Philip said, "they (Rosalin and her husband) don't pay even a cent for that (driving). They even don't think of it". Philip said that he does not going to take it anymore. "If they want to do shopping they should go on foot", he grumbles.

Philip is also unhappy with Rosalin and her husband about their irresponsibility for the hospitalisation of Thabile, another senior novice of Rosalin. Thabile had been hospitalised for a week. She was in a taxi with Rosalin, which was hired by the later. The taxi collided into another car while they were visiting in a neighbouring village; her knees were hurt but the treatment she received at the local hospital was poor and unsatisfactory in their eyes. The problem occurred during Thabile's divining training in the following week during which Rosalin's husband then applied caba (incisions) on Thabile's hurt, but the incision became badly infected. Soon her knee was swollen. Rosalin's husband tried to correct it, but the condition only worsened. She finally went to the hospital and was hospitalised. Philip took her to the hospital and saw a doctor cut the infected part releasing a lot of water. While Thabile remained hospitalised, Philip told me that Rosalin and her husband had not visited her. "They don't seem to want to visit her", Philip said to me. When Philip and one other novice visited Thabile, she gave Philip her sister's telephone number and asked to phone her sister. But before Philip could phone, the other novice told the story to Rosalin and her husband. Rosalin's husband called Philip and said, "you are not call her sister".

Philip told me; "Gogo (Rosalin) and her husband are full of shit." Rosalin's husband one day told Philip that he must remove Thabile from the hospital. Philip refused to do so. He described the situation as follows: "he (Rosalin's husband) told me that I have to go to the hospital and take Thabile out of there. But I refused it because I'm not responsible for that. I told him, 'Look. If I go to the hospital and take Thabile out, I have to sign on the paper. But if something went wrong to Thabile afterwards, it's me who is responsible for that, because I sign on the paper. I can't

do that. If you want her out of the hospital, you go and sign on the paper. And then you take her out of the hospital". This amounted to a rebellion, admittedly on a small scale.

Normally novices cannot do anything against their father diviners's wishes. The alternative to submitting to maltreatment is to run away from father diviner's home. Jabulani once rejected his father (senior) diviner. He was sent for training to Soweto. But his father (senior) diviner felt too old to teach him and him to one of his junior diviners, Hloza, elsewhere in Soweto. But Jabulani stayed there no more than a couple of months before returning to father (senior) diviner. Jabulani told me that he could not tolerate the maltreatment of Hloza. "Hloza asked me gida (divining dance) and when I couldn't do that, he blamed me, 'do you want to do divining training here?' But I was a new novice. How could he expect me to gida? Even his wife was cruel to me. I used to have his meal on the floor, behind kitchen door. Fully aware of this, Hloza's wife used to push the door hard and hit me. I simply could not bear this maltreatment any longer. So one day I just packed up my luggage and left Hloza's house." But Philip and Jabulani's cases recounted to me are exceptional. Contrary, my observation shows that no novice saying "no" to the father (senior) diviner.

Novices are not well treated in Aldina and Rosalin's homesteads where Philip was training and I think the situation is almost the same elsewhere. The regime is particularly harsh and demanding, particularly on females. They are treated just like domestic workers and agricultural labourers: the difference being that they pay huge sum of money for this 'privilege'. In fact they do not learn much of the divining craft from father diviners. Philip told me that he did not learn anything from Rosalin. It was rather his divining spirits who would come in his dream and teach him everything about divinership. Novices are expected to do whatever their father diviners asks of them, and it would seem that they are there as much to maintain the household economy of their instructor as to develop their divining skills. Novices are to the senior diviner to employ cheap labour, labours who pay high fees for the transfer of skills which they may poorly receive or may not receive. After all, novices are a source of soft income to the instructing diviner as well as a source of free labour.

Patron-client relationship is primarily based on mutual interests: patron protects his clients and in return clients show royalty to the patron. If one party fails to fulfil this duty, the relationship will be broken. Although the diviner - the novice is a patron-client relationship, it differs its context from Barthian transactional paradigm. The novice is being short charged on the rewards. During divining training, the novice shows full royalty to the diviner, but the return is generally poor. Therefore, divining training is a one-sided deal, i.e. economic exploration of the father (senior) diviner, milking the expectation of the novice's reward. It is rather a weak patron-client relationship, for the client cannot easily break away from the patron. It happens, of course, but often with a great expense. Furthermore, the patron (a senior diviner) strengthens his/her position by creating a mystical kin-relationship which is charged by divining spirits, not human beings. Therefore, once problems have been taken to the senior diviner and it is identified as calling (or divining affliction), the afflict becomes an novice and enters into a diviner network, as the afflict is taken on by a senior diviner. (Janzen, 1995:146).

C) Divining spirits and other divining technologies

Divining spirits are exclusive and prime resources to diviners. No other diviners have power or capacity to deal with these divining spirits: even other sort of traditional healers have no such authorities. As Kungsi and Bhewula's case show, on other diviners who wishes to possess divining spirits must learn them through the initiation ceremony. Enjoying the monopoly of divining spirits, therefore, the competition is among them. Diviners tend to compete each other to boost their divining powers by many means, especially, by developing the capacity of control over divining spirits. As a capital is crucial means to the entrepreneur, so does divining spirit to the diviner, i.e. divining spirits are phantom capitals which are invisible and mystically operates, and they construct unique features of divining spirits.

First of all, the number of divining power hardly influences over and determines the power of diviners. For instance, a renowned diviner, Aldina, has only elementary number of divining spirit, one ngoma and one ndawo, but she is the one of powerful diviners in KwaNgwanase. Isabel, on the contrary, has total four divining spirits, two

ngoma and two ndawo respectively, but she is known as a just "diviner by name". Jabulani, one of confident diviner I ever met, told me that each diviner has a two master (leading) divining spirit. That is ndawo. Although ngoma is a lineage divining spirit, it is under the guidance of ndawo. Kahla, a whistle diviner, told me that "ngoma is like a child of ndawo. If a diviner has no ndawo spirit, then ngoma spirit will disappear soon. You need ndawo spirit in order to keep ngoma." In the similar vein, Isabel, during my field research, tried to invite ndawo spirits into her divining realm, for she knew her ngoma spirits were already run away. She needed to ndawo spirit(s) to reinstall ngoma spirits. Jabulani argues that no diviner needs more than two divining spirits, one ngoma and one ndawo. More than these, "they are simply decoration to show off to people".

There is a quite interesting concept about divining spirits which can be analogous to the concept of economic commodity. It is now safe to say that divining spirits are resources to the diviner. The divining spirit as resource contains very important and interesting aspects of the divining practice. As a resource, a divining spirit can be stolen, restored, purchased and sold out. A diviner does not welcome other diviner to come to the homestead. The reason is rather simple. The visiting diviner may harm the host diviner's divining spirits or even steal them. The transaction of divining spirit is a common practice in KwaNgwanase. Of course, the typical case is ndawo spirit. This foreign spirit has no root in local community and this remains as a prime divining resource. In divining world, this is a luxury resource to be utilised. This is a free capital floating all over the place. The experienced diviner catches it, mystifies it and put it into the novice's genealogy and of course the novice should pay a great amount of money for it.

D) Modern technology and diviners

The development of modern technology, i.e. electronic-communication, newspaper and advanced transportation, has apparently influenced over the practice of diviners in some ways. Janzen elsewhere (1995) makes this point clear. The release of the Associated Press in September of 1992 shows that "the most frequent users of the new South African caller-charge telephone system - TIM Service ... were the clients of

diviner" (1995:2). It is no surprise to the diviner seizes this advanced opportunity of utilising the new technology to enhance his/her divining business. People confront on everyday newspaper advertisement of divining business. Diviners have a quicker means of transportation as the transportation is developed and move swiftly compare than the past diviners. It seems curious to compare the diviner, a seemingly last string of tradition in African communities, and modern technology, nevertheless, it is not deniable to say that the diviner is the one of greatest benefactors of it.

When I met Aldina in 1999, after about a year break, her appearance has changed a bit. The most significant change was that she promptly boastfully hanged a cellular phone on the belt. It was working! (I have heard a joke that some local people carry no charged cellular phones to pump up). A frequent ringing of the cellular phone made our discourse difficult. I have quickly learnt that most of the cases were from her clients. Aldina consulted her diary and made an appointment. In few years time since I first put my step on the field area, number of diviners and traditional herbalists who use this modern technology is in increase.

The development of public transportation is another major reason of some diviners expanding their divining markets out world. KwaNgwanase is unknown to outside prior to 1980s. This area was influenced by Mozambican civil war during 1970s and 80s. Local people confirmed that it would be easier to go to Maputo than Johannesburg. Besides number of dreadful restrictive regulations imposed by apartheid regime practically hampered the free movement of African population, particularly urban areas. Therefore in those days the expansion of diviners was restricted and confined within a local market. The ethic of capitalism, mass consumption and cash oriented economy, is introduced and money becomes an emblem of economic exchange. The boundary of divination becomes unlimited.

4. Co-operation in Competition in the Realm of Divining

A successful diviner tends to have a strong divining network and further try to strength it. The divining network is important to the diviner, for it is a major line

through which (s)he draws clients from diverse areas. To be successful in the realm of divining practice, the diviner might need to possess some outstanding personalities, i.e., charisma, clairvoyance, generosity and altruism. Nevertheless, these personal qualities are not the only elements of contributing to build up the divining network. The diviner also elaborates on other social resources in order to maintain the divining network. Two main resources, novices and clients, are seemingly to be utilised for diviner's networking. Once ritually incorporated into a divining world, a novice socially remains as a tout to the senior diviner. A general rule is that a newly established diviner must keep a regular contact with the senior diviner and remains as a tout to the senior diviner. More novices the senior diviner has, more opportunity the diviner is given to build up a strong divining network.

Here I am going to present two diviners, one prosperous diviner of eNgozini and the other miserable diviner of Thandizwe. Their contrasting cases reveal how social networking is crucial for maintaining divining business.

A) A Successful story: Aldina

Aldina is a young and unmarried female diviner. She is a Shangaan diviner, but since in the early 1980s she moved into South Africa, and now she holds a South African citizenship. She is one of thriving diviners in KwaNgwanase. Local people know of Aldina, although they actually do not know who she is. If you ask any taxi driver in Manguzi about Aldina's homestead, he would pick you up right to Aldina's homestead. But unfortunately clients may not find her out at her homestead, for she spends more than half a month outside KwaNgwanase. Her divining markets are mainly some cities in KwaZulu-Natal: Mpangeni, Durban, New Castle and Greytown. Aldina's main divining performance is ukufemba. I have not observed a single séance of ukufemba performed by Aldina, for she seldom perform ukufemba at home. Aldina's mother, Rosalin, is also specialised in ukufemba and at home she is in charge of ukufemba.

My first account of Aldina was in July, 1996. She was well-established diviner by then. Even my interpreter, Sibusiso who was indifference to diviners, knew well of her (In fact, it was Sibusiso who led me to Aldina). She was small but had charisma to rule over novices and clients. Aldina was famous for ukufemba, although her ukubhula is

no less famous than ukufemba. She is also a Zionist prophet. Unfortunately, no detailed information was available when and how she began to gain fame in KwaNgwanase, but, if considering the limited social movement of the Black in the past, under Apartheid regime, in urban areas, she might have difficulties to expand her divining business before 1990. She told me that her divining power is derived from her divining spirit, one ngoma and one ndawo spirit. This is the way of expanding Aldina her divining business. Once people are being cured, they would recommend anybody suffer from similar problem to Aldina. This explanation is, however, not enough to figure out that how Aldina becomes so famous and successful diviner. Most of Aldina's novices confirm that they were shown to Aldina's homestead by 'somebody'. This suggests that Aldina may have 'tout' and utilise them as informants. Bus drivers between Durban and Manguzi, information given by Philip, are typical of tout for Aldina. Mr. Khumalo, in fact, seems to know the detailed schedule of Aldina. So he actually arranged Aldina to go to Philip's homestead and perform ukufemba. She was reluctant to give more details on her business. Whenever I asked further deep questions about her business, she simply laughs away.

Aldina's another major informants are her novices. She has many novices from some places of KwaZulu-Natal, mainly, in Greytown, New Castle, Durban and Pietermaritzburg. They create a firm network over KwaZulu-Natal. Aldina's novices are like evangelists of new divining techniques, i.e. ukufemba. Aldina normally spends two to three weeks a month in those places. Demands are high. Once a client gets impression from Aldina's performance, the client becomes another informant to publicise Aldina's divining capacity.

Along with Aldina's personal entrepreneurial mind, she also knows how to deal with her environments. And patients who wish to consult Aldina always found an alternative one, a very skilful diviner and mother of Aldina, Rosalin, at Aldina's homestead, although Aldina is absent. Aldina's family is the house of traditional healers. Her father is a traditional herbalist and mother is a diviner, famous for ukufemba. Two of her mother's brother is a diviner in Johannesburg. Aldina's two brothers are diviners as well. And Aldina's grandmother (maternal) is a diviner.

Aldina's business mind has launched some entrepreneurial projects. She has a tuckshop, which initially provide breads and milk to patients who stay at Aldina's homestead for treatment. But as the tuckshop was the only one around Aldina's homestead, neighbours also rely their everyday foodstuffs at Aldina's tuckshop. In 1998, Aldina's mother separated from Aldina, moving next to Aldina's homestead. In new house compound, Aldina's mother also opened up a tuckshop. In this tuckshop, Aldina's mother began to brew ritual beer. The purpose is as Aldina once recommended to her clients, "you can also buy ritual beer, if you are in difficulty of finding out a proper time for brewing beer." Aldina's is planning to marry to a businessman from Mpangeni. Her boyfriend is currently building a tourist guesthouse at Manguzi. Also Aldina's mother purchased a piece of land on which she planted gum trees for commercial purpose. Recently Aldina got to acquaintance with a man who has been divorced. He was from Mpangeni and run a small business in there. Aldina's boyfriend was expanding his business in Manguzi. He was constructing a small guesthouse on the roadside which will, Aldina said, attract tourists coming this area.

B) Isabel's struggle over divining business

Isabel is a destitute diviner. I can say that she does not perform divination at all. In more accurate terms, no clients come to consult her. She was my neighbour and I quite often peep into her homestead. But each time, I had not observed a single client to come to her. Even she agreed on this. One of her statement struck me was, "I have no clients. My ngoma ran away." She has a piece of small farm. I am not sure that this piece of land will support her family. Her husband is a pensioner and a breadwinner. His pension, five hundred rand, is the only income to Isabel's homestead.

The first encounter with Isabel was in 1996 and when I returned to my field area in 1998, she was in more desperate situation. She was looking for another divining training. This time, she wished to rise up ndawo spirit⁷⁰. But until I leave the field area in early 1999, Isabel's wish was in dismay. Here is an illustration I have observed last year.

Since I returned to the field area in 1999, I have made very close contact with one young diviner, Jabulani, and paid everyday visit to him. One sunny day in

September, I went to Jabulani's homestead early in the morning, as a part of my routine of the day. Jabulani and Delani were pounding medical herbs into powder under the shade of tree. After greeting each other, we were talking about routine. Jabulani asked me to accompany him to go to Manguzi and I agreed to him. Jabulani retreated to his house to change his clothes. I was enjoying cool shade for the moment and then I saw Isabel approached to Jabulani's homestead. At about a month ago, Jabulani told me about a mystical encounter with Isabel. It was during we talking about who's who of diviners in the area. "I remember her", Jabulani recalled about Isabel, "A tall mungoma. I dreamt on her one day. On the dream, I stabbed (gwaze) her with a knife. It was Nyoni (Jabulani's divining spirit)'s wish. Nyoni was punishing her bad magical performance, bewitching people. The following day, Isabel came to my place and complained 'you stabbed me last night. I am in great pain. So I need herbal medicine from you to heal the pain.'" Jabulani refused it, as he told me, because it was a punishment for her wrongdoing. I do not exactly know what in fact Isabel has committed wrong things.

What was Isabel's purpose to come to Jabulani's homestead again? Jabulani already had firmly refused to help her. Delani, who sat beside with me, looked also puzzled with Isabel's appearance. In fact, a diviner in KwaNgwanase seldom visits another diviner unless they belong to the same divining family, for the diviner is generally suspicious against another diviner. Isabel, also looked stunned when she saw me (she may not expect me to present at Jabulani's homestead). But Isabel approached towards us and greeted. I felt a bit uncomfortable with Isabel's groaning face. Isabel sat on an a reed mat (icansi) which was laid down on the ground beside my chair. She talked to Delani that she wanted to see Jabulani. Delani immediately retreated to Jabulani's house to deliver Isabel's message. I briefly greeted to Isabel and she responded. She told me, "I have nothing. I am doing nothing. Things are not going all right to me. I need umndawo." This was not the first time to hear that she needed umndawo spirit. I asked her, "so you want to do divining training for umndawo?" Isabel replied, "Yes. I need help from Jabulani. I need my umndawo spirit. Jabulani can help me. But the problem is that I have no money (for divining training). (So) I don't know Jabulani can help me."

Couple of minutes later, Delani came out of the house. He informed Isabel that Jabulani would see her, but only couple of minutes, for he had to go out to see somebody. Even Jabulani did not come out immediately. About five minutes later, Jabulani came out of the house, not looking at Isabel, and strode towards us. As he came to us, he sat on a chair and for the first time he stared at Isabel. They exchanged polite greetings each other. Isabel explained to Jabulani about the reason of her visiting. She also needed to have some traditional medicine but she had no money. The conversation was short lived. Jabulani unconditionally refused, "No. If you have a problem, you can ask help from your father (senior) diviner. Not me. When I have a problem, I ask help from my divining family. I go to see my father (senior) diviner and she always gives me help." And then Jabulani stood up and asked me to go. I asked Jabulani on the way to Cabangane that why he gave the cold shoulder to Isabel. "I told you before", he replied, "She came to check me. If I gave her medicine, she would use it to kill me. Then I am going to (be) finished. No way. Why she is not go to see her father diviner." That was the end of conversation about Isabel. Later, when Jabulani and I back to his home, Delani told me that Isabel wept after we left. She wept for couple of minutes and then left.

Some days later, I visited Isabel's homestead. She was with her husband and brother-in-law. They were drinking, and Isabel looked tipsy. I asked Isabel, "why don't you go to seek help from your father (senior) diviner?" She did not answer to my question, but I knew that she neither is able to go to ask help from her father (senior) diviner, nor is not intend to do so. It is actually, according to Isabel, her father (senior) diviner, who deprived of Isabel's divining spirits. Isabel blamed her father (senior) diviner that he stolen Isabel's divining spirits during divining training. She is like an empty bottle without divining spirits.

Towards the end of field research and during occasional visits to KwaNgwanase, I have not observed Isabel improving her divining condition. And with her poor economic condition, I do not expect she can have another chance of divining training. Poor diviners have every aspects of disadvantages in competition. Bad reputation, lack of access to market, poor economic condition blocks to renovate divining resources and

etc. Poor diviners become poorer, while the rich one fortifies his wealth by various means.

5. Diviners, Entrepreneurs or Swindlers

An entrepreneur is, in the tradition of anthropology, defined as a rational agent who pursues profits by making a decision under uncertain social conditions which often turns out to be innovative to community (Barth, 1972:7-8; Hart, 1976:5). Theoretically, entrepreneurship is purely an individual activity, nevertheless, this purely theoretical definition of entrepreneurship immediately confronts with a puzzle when considering social environments the entrepreneur engages in. It is the central interest of Hart who sees entrepreneurship as a matter of balancing in between individual accumulation and communal welfare (1976) particularly in a small and more co-operative society. According to Hart, studying Frafra people in Ghana, an individual entrepreneur may be an ascetic, hard worker and innovative investor enough to accumulate material profits. In this context, entrepreneurship stresses an individual achievement. Nevertheless, the entrepreneur always confronts with various regulations, i.e. kin obligation, neighbouring and community as a whole. This means that the entrepreneur, although an individual achievement is crucial, is not free from communal relationships: the entrepreneur is expected to contribute to the community somehow. Thus the entrepreneur remains as a social benefactor in the community. If the entrepreneur fails to satisfy this service, (s)he will be accused as a swindler. One might try to run away from these sanctions to where less sanctions will be imposed upon (ibid:4).

But this is not an ideal solution, for the entrepreneur, as a solid social member, has to build and maintain any level of social relationship anywhere: although the entrepreneur is a hard working people, he inevitably utilises or manipulates social milieu some degree or another. Barth correctly describes it by saying that there is a "differences between actors pursuing entrepreneurial activity, and the incumbents of traditional statuses who act in accordance with institutionalized patterns" (Barth, 1972:7). Therefore, Barth continues, entrepreneur career is a "process, as a chain of

transactions between the entrepreneur and his (social) environment" (ibid:7). The dilemma of the entrepreneur lies on this point that he is the being who should take a balance between his personal achievement and contribution to the community.

In fact, both diviners and entrepreneurs have negative and positive nature to a community. They alike pursue maximal benefits from social environments, i.e. community, however, they have to presume a kind of contribution to the community at the same time. Rosalin has built a school building with two classrooms for local children in 1997. She invested seven thousand rand for building and the local government has provided all the school facilities and teachers. By providing school building, she might claim that she has contributed to the local community. But her son, Simon, informed me that she is waiting for a government payment. Simon told me that her mother spent seven thousand rand for two classrooms. But the local government will pay her back fourteen thousand rand for the school building (seven thousand rand for each room). Therefore, even contributing to the local community by providing the school building, she did not lose her investment: she got reputation from the local people and she got material rewards, double pay back.

Rosalin gave a good example again. It was one day toward the first term of my field research. I was learning about divining bones at Rosalin's divining hut. Towards the end of teaching, one of novices came to Rosalin to inform that "a man came to see her". Rosalin looked like waiting for him. She hurriedly stood up and asked me to accompany with her. I glad to do that because what would be going to happen. We walked toward a single building which was roughly built in bricks nearby Rosalin's homestead. The single building was divided into two rooms. The man examined carefully the building, window frame, the condition of floor and bricks and so on. Then he looked satisfied with the building. He promised to report back soon. After the man left us, I asked Rosalin about the man and the reason the man examine the building. Rosalin informed that she had built a school, and she reported it to the educational department of Ingwavuma district that she would like to donate the building. The man was an inspector dispatched by the department to check over the school. I was quite impressed at the moment. Rosalin was a renowned diviner in the area, although some neighbours did

not like her. She made a good income out of her divining practice, and she would like to return some of it in the form of social donation, i.e. a school building.

One day last year, when I engaged in another session of field research, I chatted with Simon, Rosalin's son. We talked to each other about this and that without any particular topic and I turn the topic about how South African administrative process is badly organised. He totally agreed with me, to my surprise, by saying that, "my mother hasn't got any money from educational department yet. They are too slow". I asked "what money? Does your mother lend money to educational department?" Then he reminded me about the school building which I had completely forgot since the day of inspection. Simon gave me interesting information: "Well. My mother built a school with two classrooms.

The educational department should pay R7,000 each classroom." Which means that Rosalin has to receive R14,000 from the educational department once it accepted Rosalin's building as a school. It was interesting. So I asked Simon how much did Rosalin cost to build a school. The response was a fairly economic 'R3,000'. Indeed, the donation was a business, very profitable business. Rosalin could earn communal recognition that she has donated a school building for local children. But she still made well good profit out of donation. In doing so, Rosalin catches two goals, social contribution and personal profit.

6. Summary

We have seen that the diviner in KwaNgwanase is an indigenous entrepreneur. At look, the sole function of diviner seems to engage in a various mystical tasks in conjunction with supernatural beings. And this function often stereotypes the diviner as a mystical agent to serve various unexplainable phenomena in the community. In particular, the process of becoming a diviner has been invariably described from a mystical point of view, a fact-explanation from the diviner. Initially, a person is called by a divining spirit with various mystical symptoms, i.e. misfortune and affliction, and the divining spirit would make frequent visitation. Then (s)he goes

into initiation process in order to pursue the divining spirit's instruction, i.e. the place and the time of initiation. And the descendancy of divining profession is often understood as the succession of vacant divining profession regardless the possessed's will. General impression of this fact-explanation, so far accepted without any critical overview, is that divining profession is a mystically embedded therefore irrational activity.

But on a close look, it is not difficult to observe that the divining activity is rational enough to make sense and produce a meaning. We have seen this by the diviner utilising mystical environments, i.e. divining spirits, by turning them up into phantom capitals. Even a conventional fact-explanation of becoming a diviner is in other sense a well-planned personal adventure looking for a viability to embark a new business.

Most of calling comes in early childhood, compels the person drops off from the school, which is crucial element to him/her relies on divining business later in his/her life. But final acceptance of initiation generally comes after grown-up. In the mean time, the person might venture all the other means to live up. Nevertheless, no education provides less chance to secure a job. And finally, the person might resort on divining business. In this sense, the person who is believed to be called does not blindly follow mystical instruction.

Therefore, a number of similarities can be drawn from the entrepreneur and the diviner. First of all, they both pursue benefits out of their environments. The content of benefits is not necessarily material rewards, such as, cash, but it also includes intangible social products, such as, prestige, social status, political supports and etc. Secondly, they commonly utilise social and cultural milieu to maximise benefits. This includes not only material resources, i.e. capital, but also, intangible social prestige, social status and political royalty. Thirdly, they are communal brokers, who have contributed to the development of community. For this reason, they are different from swindlers. The last point is extremely important so long as the diviner is a member of community. (S)he has to produce a positive meaning to the community. The individual diviner, if (s)he is to retain effective links with his/her community, "has to maintain a balance in his career between private accumulation and community

consumption" (Hart, 1976:9). Whether a diviner remains as a social benefactor or a swindler remains in how the diviner balances in between these two poles of economic activities.

Taking divining profession is to realise a personal oppression, i.e. physical affliction and social tensions, and the will to act against it. Thus an individual takes interpretation and action toward misfortune, and subsequently seeks to articulate the situation in order to produce benevolent social meanings. One of articulation has been stressed in this chapter is to culture capricious divining spirits into more technical terms by enculturating them. Enculturating divining spirits is a crucial means to a diviner to manage his/her divining profession. Ngoma-ndawo alliance becomes a phantom capital.

CONCLUSION

Giving an activity a name, such as divination, does not immediately categorise it as a single univocal thing. In sociological terms, divination is simultaneously many things, a multi-dimensional manifold activity serving several sociological purposes, most of which have been addressed in this thesis. While it is possible, and desirable, to consider divination from such different perspectives, what we are dealing with are nevertheless varied facets of a whole, each of which interacts and interpenetrates others, feeding off them and supporting them at the same time.

First and foremost, divination is a form of mystical empowerment. It plucks individuals out of the mainstream of social life, marks them out for special treatment and processes them into vessels of ancestral authority. A patient in the presence of a practising diviner, implicitly knows that (s)he is confronting a person of extraordinary power and vision, and not a mere professional, however well-trained, otherwise she would not be there. There are two aspects to this empowerment. There is the mystical endowment itself, the personal identification with one or more ancestral spirits, and there is the social transformation that accompanies it. Each of these changes is accomplished by the ritual process of Ukuthwasa.

The diviner is empowered by being 'possessed by' or 'in possession of' an ngoma ancestral spirit or spirits. The ngoma is not just any ancestor, but one who in life had been a practising diviner and who continues to function through the chosen successor. And since that ngoma spirit was in turn the voice of a previous ngoma, in theory a long chain of divining power and experience is being relayed to the living practitioner. In this respect, each diviner is but the spearhead of a long tradition spanning time immemorial. In self-belief, (s)he is a mystical heavyweight. The guiding spirit, it is believed, takes possession of the diviner and controls his/her actions and utterances. Yet there is sufficient evidence to show that, in practice, it is the diviner who exercises control over, and is in possession of, the divining ngoma spirit, and this in several ways. Far from being grabbed by an unrelenting ancestor, the

neophyte diviner frequently designates the spirit of his/her choice; the manipulation of the divining device is less inspired by an ngoma spirit and is sedulously acquired by human training; and the diviner calls the divining spirit into service at will. There are grounds, therefore, for claiming that the rhetoric of empowerment is but a convention, the purpose of which is to augment the authority of the diviner's verdict. Again, in conceding that their control over ngoma spirits is frail at best, and that the divining spirits can for no good reason abandon their host, diviners implicitly admit that they do exercise such control and seek ways of making it less transitory. Paradoxically, the appropriation of a foreign ndawo spirit is credited with tying down the wayward ngoma spirits.

Secondly, in being ritually empowered, the diviner also undergoes radical social transformation. The diviner acquires a new identity, particularly marked by a change of name, no longer that of pre-ukuthwasa existence, e.g. Johannes, but that of the guiding divining spirit, e.g., Delani. (in much the same way as monks and nuns acquired the name of a long deceased saint). In addition, the emergent diviner is incorporated into a new family circle of diviners, acknowledging his tutor-diviner as his 'father', though more correctly his father-in-law since he is deemed to enter the family as a bride, a daughter-in-law. In KwaNgwanase, the process is capped by the acquisition of a foreign husband in a mystical marriage to an ndawo spirit, who completely dominates his spiritual affines, the ngoma spirits. Moreover, by the fact of her official accreditation as a diviner, (s)he automatically assumes a higher social standing in his/her community. His/her professional attire marks her out as a person of special rank, worthy of respect for his/her extraordinary power, his/her superior knowledge and acquired skills, and towards whom others adopt an attitude bordering on awe, though this can at times be tinged with a degree of scepticism.

Empowerment and accreditation introduce the second major dimension of divination, namely its functions. In general, the function of divination is to provide therapy to individuals in distress. Many diviners are said to combine divination with herbal treatments or natural cures, and thus to encroach on the function of the inyanga (a traditional herbalist). I could find no evidence of this in my observations of the training given to diviners; no specialised knowledge of herbal remedies was imparted to

novices by their supervisor, and we know from other sources that such lore is closely guarded and passed from one generation to the next within traditional herbalist families. Rather, the diviners that I knew acted in consort with traditional herbalists; for instance, Rosalin's husband was a reputable herbalist and many diviners and their apprentices could count herbalists among their kin, living or deceased. Nevertheless, there is a heavy emphasis placed during the apprenticeship on the preparation of medicines (imithi), but the acquisition of this knowledge is not for the attainment of natural healing, but rather equips the diviner to provide spiritual or mystical relief to the sufferer. These medicines are designed to achieve mystical cleansing, protection or retaliation. Though the latter is never recommended by the diviner, it is readily provided at the specific request of the patient. In any case, the provision of medicine is regarded as an ancillary extra and costed as such.

The main burden of therapy falls, therefore, not on the medicines, but on the knowledge imparted to the patient. The patient requires a 'reading' of his/her condition and its origins, that is beyond the means of all but the ancestrally empowered. By way of explanation, the diviner is expected to narrate a version of what really happened, a truth that is at once authentic because it has the force of ancestral revelation and is at the same time appropriate to the patient's situation. The first cannot be questioned, but the second can, at least in the context of ngoma divination. In the ndawo séance, the patient is cast as an aggressor, dramatically confronted in person by his accusers, his misdeeds laid bare and denounced, and he is left with no space for manoeuvre or commentary. On the contrary, in the ngoma consultation, the truth gradually emerges by distillation or refinement from successive throwings of the bones and a process of interrogation, the direction of which can be influenced by the patient's responses. It would seem then that the diviner brokers an agreement between revealed knowledge, of which (s)he is the repository, and the patient's own mundane knowledge of her predicament. It must follow then that the patient is an active participant in the negotiation of the truth.

This, however, is not necessarily the case. My experience has shown me that there are degrees of compliance or resistance exhibited by patients. In most cases, there is a power imbalance between patient and diviner, so that the ordinary supplicant

is too timid and overawed by the situation to attempt to steer the diviner in one direction or another, though (s)he may come to harbour misgivings about the explanation much later. Clients seldom deal with the diviner from a position of strength and are at a disadvantage regarding using the opportunity for meaningful participation, that is inherent in the divining process. Only clients of substance or social standing, men more than women, or those with prior knowledge or experience of the divining role, have the capacity to press the consulting diviner towards the fashioning of a truth that they themselves have pre-determined, e.g. the designation of an enemy.

The provision of therapy borders upon the third dimension of divination, that of public service. One can scarcely dispute the claim, commonly made by the diviners of KwaNgwanase, that they are imbued with a service ethic; that in giving meaning to the problems of individuals, they are indeed rendering an invaluable public service. But is there any sense in which they are contributing to the stability or upliftment or cultural enlightenment of the community as a whole? This is a question that also has implications for the fourth dimension, as we shall see. It is part of the remit of diviners to act, on behalf of the ancestral spirits, as the guardians of the communal morality and, to this end, they convey in their consultations the desirability of conformity to cultural norms and values. Examples of such norms and values that diviners in this study tend to uphold are the honouring of ancestors, the rendering of sacrifice, the obligations of kinship, the stability of marriage and the support of the family. By implication, they also condemn the social damage resulting from the prevalence of anti-social tendencies expressed in envy, jealousy and rivalry. In all of these ways, they act as a conservative force for the preservation of a shared culture. More problematic is their supply of retaliatory medicines on request which, from one point of view, might be seen as an endorsement of sorcery. However, from a different point of view, it can equally be seen as upholding a cultural insistence on justice. Once a social malefactor has been sufficiently identified by means of a respected cultural procedure, i.e. divination, is it not legitimate to seek redress by hitting back at him/her? At the level of mystical engagement, vengeance is justifiable as the only available recourse, while in more objective empirical terms no real harm results

from it. It simply reassures the patient that justice has been achieved and the balance of right and wrong restored.

Granted that these rural diviners do perform a service to their community, by reaffirming and conserving moral and cultural standards, are they no more than defenders of the status quo and resistant to social and cultural change? KwaNgwanase is a border community with a long history of cross-border traffic and cultural intermingling between a dominant Zulu-speaking population and foreign migrants, who are mainly Shangaans and to a much lesser extent Swazis. Some of these migrants are birds of passage, destined to move on in search of a better life style, but many of them view KwaNgwanase as a place of refuge in which they hope to settle. In either case, they are marginalized in the community and invidious distinctions are constantly drawn between hosts and foreigners, insiders and outsiders, law-abiding citizens and anti-social elements. The host community uniformly regards these foreign implants as inferior scavengers, despises and criminalises them, but at the same time fears their superior mystical powers employed in sorcery, not least because of the unfamiliar and potent medicines (imithi) that they are assumed to have imported with them.

It can be argued that divination in KwaNgwanase flies in the face of communal trends and sets the pace in cultural assimilation. In this respect, diviners seem to emerge as the agents of acculturation. The mystical alliance, that is ritually reiterated between ngoma and ndawo divining spirits, holds up a model, in which the fearsome foreigner belatedly marries into the diviner lineage group, cohabits with the lineage ancestors, receives their deference and respect and, in the course of time, is deemed itself to become a lineage ancestor. Yet in this relationship, the outsider is considered to be of superior force and status. In this model, the template of assimilation is inter-marriage, the normal means of incorporating foreigners into the local community, as is amply demonstrated by the numerous genealogies that I have collected in KwaNgwanase. Local diviners are regarded as being all the more formidable for having wedded indigenous and foreign powers, all the more so in those few cases of having succeeded in adding the Holy Spirit of European Christianity (Zionist) to their mystical repertoire. These diviners would seem, therefore, to be blazing a trail in upholding the desirability of cultural assimilation.

Where diviners lead, the community must surely follow. No so. However progressive the divining model appears to be, it scarcely serves as an educational resource to lead the community towards greater cultural equanimity, for the simple reason that very few local people are ever exposed to it. It has very limited impact, therefore, upon the local community. There are several reasons for this. With few exceptions, the local people settle for ngoma consultations only and thus never encounter the diviner in his/her ndawo guise. They continue to invest the foreign with superior mystical power, but never experience the purging and therapeutic deployment of that power. Being so much more expensive, the ndawo séance is beyond the means of the majority and is effectively out of their reach. Moreover, it is seldom performed in the community and then only by one of two diviners in the same family who actually practise it. For reasons that can only be speculated, all other diviners, equipped with the mystical alliance, keep it locked in their cupboards as it is were and never put it on public display. A combination of lack of provision and lack of demand means that any lessons that might be drawn from the model are not diffused in the countryside but are largely restricted to divining circles. Diviners, on the whole, are not enlightened educators. It would seem that the model enjoys greater popularity and exposure among more distant urban populations, where it is more affordable. Whether the message of cultural interbreeding finds more fertile ground there is beyond the compass of this enquiry.

Quite at variance with the ethic of public service professed by diviners is the further dimension to be considered, that of self-interest. While divining is primarily regarded as a vocation, it is also inescapably a business occupation. Arguably, these two aspects are mutually supportive. The purpose and fulfilment of the 'call' is to minister to a plentiful clientele of people in distress, to do good on the widest possible scale. Doing good, however, is not the same as altruism. In this case, it has its price and is ultimately a profitable activity. There is evidence in this dissertation that at least some of these who respond to the call are motivated less by a religious conviction, arising from chronic illness, than by a rational economic calculation of the material rewards. Payment for a consultation is, in terms of prevailing rural incomes, substantial and a fee is added for dispensing medicine.

Apprentice diviners pay handsomely, and are a source of free labour, in return for professional knowledge, skills and accreditation. With only one exception, all the diviners in this study admitted to being comfortably well-off and several of them, those with flourishing 'schools' of aspirant diviners from far afield, had accumulated sufficient wealth for capital investment and economic diversification. In short, these last were running commercial enterprises, devoting almost as much time to the management of their economic assets as to the business of divining. They can certainly be classed as local entrepreneurs, acquiring extra land for cultivation, setting up trading outlets and, in one case, establishing a modest motel for transient truckers. However, unlike the typical entrepreneur, they were not burdened with any expectation that they should plough back some of their profits into the community. Their self interest was not adulterated by any need to 'buy' the goodwill of the community in which they resided, since they would argue with some justification that they already serviced the needs of the community by divination. They might also have argued that payment for their services was an offering to ancestors and, as such, a sacrifice with no further obligation of a return, but this was never asserted.

Foremost among these diviner-entrepreneurs was Aldina, whose economic base rested upon her reputation of being the leading exponent of ukufemba, divination by ndawo spirit. She and her mother were the only local diviners to put this technique into practice, in conjunction with ngoma divination, but nowadays Aldina spends a great deal of her time providing her specialised services for city clients, her correspondingly augmented earnings being the envy of her local competitors. Each of these diviners acquire the mystical combination of lineage and foreign spirit, in the belief that it adds strings to the bow, that it confers upon them an advantage in the competition for clients. But the arena of competition is shifting - has shifted - and is no longer centred on KwaNgwanase, on the stay-at-homes, but is to be found increasingly in the urban populace, particularly among rural-urban migrants.

The ngoma-ndawo alliance, so desirable among diviners, is not a prototype, that sets the standard for cultural change in the local community. Rather it is modelled upon and provides a mirror-image of what is happening on the local terrain of a border region, i.e. gradual cultural assimilation at however slow a pace. It is a divinatory

recipe and resource that is homespun within KwaNgwanase, but that sells well beyond its boundaries, and as such proves to be a profitable export for its successful exponents. For the moment, Aldina is blazing the trail, while others, e.g. Jabulani, lie frustrated in her wake, with neither the competence to employ their ndawo derived powers nor the entrepreneurial acumen to read the market possibilities. It is no longer a situation of vying for a larger slice of a limited good. In game-theory terminology, it has moved from a zero-sum to a positive-sum situation, of which Aldina alone has the capacity to take advantage.

Paradoxically, in her self-seeking exploitation of the lucrative pickings of an expanded market, Aldina is doing her fellow diviners a service. The more she succeeds in exhibiting her divining prowess abroad, the more she directs attention to KwaNgwanase as a locus of extraordinary mystical power. As a result, there is a steady flow of aspirant neophytes into the area, seeking instruction in its esoteric lore, to the benefit of many of her rivals. Almost single-handedly, she has established KwaNgwanase as a thriving workshop of innovative divining practice.

NOTES

¹ Henry Fynn, once a consultant for Shaka, left a negative impression of the Thonga. He described the Thonga: "compare(d) with the Zulus, they are a stupid, ignorant people" (1985:48). Fynn, who had a strong attachment to the Zulu, may have expressed the Zulu's general attitudes towards Thonga.

² Nevertheless, the influence was not so strong as to convert the overall Thonga identity into the Zulu one. The people had enjoyed more freedom and autonomy than other subjects in the Zulu empire.

³ Excellent historical illustration and analysis of Mozambican migratory labourers are given by Harries (1982; 1994) and Pevenne (1995).

⁴ As the majority of migrant labourers were male, the Zulu emphasis on masculine cultural elements might have been attractive to them.

⁵ There is, however, another version or interpretation of umhlaba uyalingana. Zakhele, a young KwaNgwanase, interprets the meaning of umhlaba uyalingana as 'the centre for everywhere'. According to him, the distance from here to Maputo, Johannesburg and Durban is exactly the same. Therefore it is the land of sameness. Although this interpretation does not have any support, and even other local informants laugh when they hear that interpretation, it is an interesting inversion.

⁶ Ngubane (1991) classifies this spoken Zulu as one of several Zulu dialects. He lists three major Zulu dialects, Tembe, Ngwavuma and Gonde, found in Ingwavuma (Ibid:2ff). These three dialects are all together termed "nyakatho" (the northern dialect) which is strongly distinguished from the standard Zulu.

⁷ These vegetables and plants are grown throughout the year. And some of them, particularly pumpkin, amadumbe and cassava, are regarded as crucial for tiding people over the hungry season between July and September.

⁸ Drawn from personal communication with the director of Manguzi Community Programme in 1997.

⁹ Manguzi general hospital employs health workers for advertising the danger of AIDS, Tuberculosis and other epidemic diseases. In eNgozini township alone, four health workers are employed. Six health workers are working in Thandizwe and four in Manguzi. These health workers are said to take care of 150 households respectively. Therefore the total households in three wards are approximately 2,100. Based on my observation each household has the average number of 6 or 7 family members. Hence, the estimated population of three wards will be 12,600-14,700.

¹⁰ The taxi industry is about to come under state regulations, instead of the degree of self-regulation. Local taxi owners organised an association which regulates taxi operation. A member has to pay a R3,000 deposit to the association and is allowed access to a taxi rank. Otherwise, a person is not 'allowed' to run a private taxi.

¹¹ Injemani is sap extraction from the leaves of the date palm. Date palm is abundant all over southern Mozambique and it is easy to extract the sap. One just needs to slit the leaf and to arrange a reed in such a way that sap drips along it into a bottle.

¹² I have been in KwaPhuza once with Mr. Mtembu. It is about 20 km from Manguzi, but it takes about one hour to get there, driving all the way through bush and sandy hills. Two lines of barbed wire run through the centre of KwaPhuza market. Most clients pass through a gate on the South African side to negotiate with Mozambican suppliers on the other side of the fence under the watchful eye of heavily armed South African Defence Force patrols. Normally a 25 litre container of injemani sap is sold at R30, but when the market is winding down (at about five o'clock), the price goes down. Suppliers seem to have their own clients. Injemani is the main trading stuff, but many other things, such as Pao (Portuguese style bread), peanuts, clothes, wild animal meats, commercial beer and fried fish, are to be had.

¹³ Although 'pirate' taxis are illegal, Mtembu pays a refundable deposit of R3,000 to a 'pirate' taxi association in return for which he is able to use the taxi rank without harassment.

¹⁴ Zakile, my neighbour informant, gave me more information about this. He has a friend who runs a 'pirate' taxi that he used to transport illegal immigrants to Johannesburg.

¹⁵ On one occasion, Mtembu informed me, he and other bakkie owners were found by patrolling soldiers. Mtembu and the others had to lock their cars and run away. The soldiers immobilised the vehicles by shooting out the tyres.

¹⁶ Fake IDs are available to illegal immigrants. I have a Shangaan informant who showed me his new South African ID one-day. I asked how he got it and he answered that "it is easy. You pay R150 and somebody gives you South African citizenship". On the new ID, his Mozambican name and surname had disappeared and a South African name and surname (Mthembu) were registered.

¹⁷ No incidents of this actually came to my attention.

¹⁸ There were only six doctors in 1998 taking care of patients. All these medical doctors are, however, working as contracted doctors for two to three years. Therefore, most doctors do not seem to have much knowledge of the local community. There is also a regular supplement to the medical staff in the presence of medical students.

¹⁹ The evil intrusion is expressed in terms of various bodily affliction and unbearable misfortune.

²⁰ The full textual analysis and interpretation will be dealt with in the following chapter.

²¹ Umlozi (the spirit) is supposed to whistle on behalf of ancestors. Whistling is regarded as a voice of ancestors in the divining séance.

²² Callaway (1970:323-336) further mentions stick divination (ukubhula yezinithi). Stick divination is probably the oldest type of divination. Patients are given sticks with which they strike the ground or an animal hide to respond to the diviner's questions. If patients agree with a diviner, they strike fiercely on the ground; if not, they strike gently signifying that the diviner's response is not correct (Berglund, 1976:186-187). The original meaning of Zulu divination, ukubhula (to beat), might be derived from this practice. In addition, there is isanusi whose main duty is to detect witches. The divinatory method of an isanusi is to "smell out" (Krige, 1985:299) witches. This is regarded as having been the principal divination of the past. This type of divination is, however, hardly ever practised in KwaNgwanase today. Junod also recorded six different kinds of divination among the Thonga-speaking people of Delagoa Bay and the adjoining areas (1927, vol.II:537ff). Among them two distinctive types of divination, hakata and ukubhula, are still practised in KwaNgwanase.

²³ The Zulu term is ukubhula ngathambo (i.e. to throw the bones).

²⁴ The name of hakata is not used in the same way among Southern African societies. For instance, to Thonga-speaking people, hakata (or ihakathi) is the name given to the stone of a fruit, known as mungome, growing in the desert (Junod, 1927, vol.II:539). Gelfand's ethnography shows that mungome and hakata are different styles of divining apparatus among Shona-speaking people in Zimbabwe. Mungome is comprised of three mungome seeds which are halved for use. Hakata consists of four pieces of wooden or ivory tablets. In KwaNgwanase, however, these two distinctive divining sets are both employed as ihakathi.

²⁵ Ukubhula ngathambo is shortened into, ukubhula or more simply -bhula, among the KwaNgwanase.

²⁶ The analytical comparison between ngoma and ndawo will be elaborated in the following chapters.

²⁷ Janzen classifies them as "thokoza" style, which is common in Swaziland (1992)

²⁸ It is known as Thokoza in KwaNgwanase.

²⁹ They are mostly the members of Zionist churches in KwaNgwanase. Other churches do not accept the status of diviners nor do all Zionists. In particular another powerful African Independent Church, the Nazareth Baptist Church (Shembe Church), does not accept the role and function of the diviner.

³⁰ Cf. Janzen for a fuller more detailed account of ukufemba in Swaziland (1992:45ff).

³¹ See also Janzen (1995) for another example of ukufemba in Swaziland.

³² Foreign spirit possession is common in Northeast Africa, particularly in Ethiopia and Sudan (Lewis, 1967; Boddy, 1989). The white spirits of colonial times are among the major spirits who possess the local people in West Africa (Stoller, 1995).

³³ For more detailed illustration of amathambo, see appendix I.

³⁴ I am going to categorise this group of ancestors as "divining spirits" which can be distinguished from lineage ancestors in general.

³⁵ Most of the afflicted are not, however, willing to take ukuthwasa for various reasons. Some simply fear of divining spirits. Other feels disgusting on blood-shed ukuthwasa rituals. Others regard divination as traditional and out-dated. Particularly, young people do not like it for the last reason.

³⁶ The afflict's dream is important. Divining spirits often visit the afflict on dreams and gives the manual instruction of what the afflict must to do. The afflict also often dreams about swimming in the sea or river with a big snake; flying in the sky; wanders around a strange places. These are all symbolic indication to the afflict of taking ukuthwasa.

³⁷ This does not match with a previous sentence. He thought that he would hang himself. But he packed his luggage and some money. He did not give the reason of it.

³⁸ Tamy showed an extraordinary personality during his short stay at Rosalin (a renowned female diviner in eNgozini)'s homestead. He definitely failed to harmonise with Rosalin and her husband, two chief figures on commanding novices. Tamy was a habitual drunkard and often engaged in verbal assaults with Rosalin. He felt Rosalin's homestead couple of days after the interview. He told me that he was going to report to his family about ukuthwasa. But he never come back.

³⁹ A literal meaning of ukuhlehla is to "retire and withdraw", which probably signifies the novice being retired from social activities and relations and retreats to divining training. Ideally it takes for three to four months. During this period, the novice is not expected to do anything, but waiting for 'stirring up'.

⁴⁰ In fact, the novice undertakes various domestic works at the father diviner's homestead. The period of 'retirement' is rather symbolic than empirical.

⁴¹ The time when ndawo spirit comes out is not fixed. It varies according to novices and divining schools. In case of Mapewa divining school, ndawo emerges even before the novice formally takes divining training. On the contrary, in Majoy divining school, ndawo spirit conceals until the very last moment of divining training.

⁴² I know one novice from Durban whose behaviours are all against these rules. He visits his home in Durban every month. He sits on a chair, smoking and eats meal with a senior diviner. He enjoys a great deal of self-authority. He even refuses some instruction from senior diviners.

⁴³ Fish is avoided as well because of its bad smell.

⁴⁴ This song is sung in Shangaan. "Shikwimbu shanzuza" is known as the alternative name of ndawo spirit in Shangaan. Water is a favourite place of ndawo spirit.

⁴⁵ Delani's mother later told Ndawo's identity. Lilian Ngubane is a great-grandmother of Delani. She did not, however, make clear about ndawo, whether she is paternal GGM or maternal GGM. Strange thing is that Delani's surname is Manzini and his mother's surname is Sibiya. There is nobody at Delani's lineage who has a surname, Ngubane.

⁴⁶ Two observations were made for coming out rituals. One is from Delani of Majoy divining school and the other was Kungsi Ndlovu of Mapewa divining school. The origins of these two divining schools are from Mozambique. Therefore these two divining schools have more similarities than differences, however, some details show variety of divining ritual. My main illustration derived from Delani's ceremony. Kungsi Ndlovu's case is put in footnotes when it is necessary to be introduced.

⁴⁷ In the Majoy division (impande), the out-coming diviner must foot the bill for these items, about R1500 for the bone set and about R500 for the switch. The Mapewa divining school charges only for the switch.

⁴⁸ The cost of mounting such support is formidable, especially in terms of slender family resources. Johannes has no income, apart from a monthly pension of R359 for the company that had previously employed him and his mother's pension was R500. Clearly, they would have to rely on financial input from other kins.

⁴⁹ At this point in the Mapewe service, Rosalin led the diviners and novices to five divining huts to inform her divining spirits of the initiation of Kungsi and Thabile.

⁵⁰ Rosalin's method was to transfix the goat's neck with a spear and to swing it about until dead, while praising the divining spirits. Kungsi was not splattered with the goat's blood, having already been drenched in the blood of two decapitated chickens, but he did suck its bleeding neck, being washed with medicated water on each occasion.

⁵¹ The Mapewa division (impande) deploy the meat in a somewhat different fashion, dividing the palpitating flesh into two lots. One portion is destined to be consumed in the manner described above. The other is placed in a pot with other herb medicines set on the fire to burn and its smoke is inhaled by other novices through hollow reeds to help them to cultivate their spirits.

⁵² Kungsi's concealment trial was not so successful and caused some controversy. After more than an hour of fruitless discourse, Kungsi was none the wiser about the object of his search or its whereabouts; Rosalin eventually showed him that it was concealed under his brother's armpit. She nevertheless pronounced his concealment trial to be successful. Despite the applause that greeted this, most of the attendants were of the opinion that he had failed the test. Controversy arose, when Rosalin subsequently announced a second 'coming out' ritual for Kungsi, on the grounds that he had another ngoma spirit to be introduce. It is well known that one ceremony is sufficient to endow a new diviner with several ngoma spirits. I was told that Kungsi succeeded at the second attempt.

⁵³ The Mapewa procedure is somewhat different. While Rosalin prefers to hold the ritual by the sea or at a river, she allows herself to symbolically create these conditions at her homestead, by digging a large hole before dark and filling it with tap water overnight. Kungsi underwent two full immersion in this water, once before being splattered with the blood of a single chicken and once afterwards. From these, he crawled on hands and knees to the homestead boundary (gate) where he went through the motions of vomiting, indicating the expulsion of evil spirits. Back at the hole, he suffered the approved incisions, and then waited in the divining hut while other initiate took her turn. When he was brought out again, he was possessed by his ndawo spirit and performed a brief ukufenba divination in which his powers were put to the test, the audience egging him on alternately with mockery and encouragement. Having succeeded in his quest, his 'coming out' rituals was brought to a close.

⁵⁴ Ibaso is a ball-shaped medicine, made from animal fat and various herbs, that is used not only to induce possession but also to hold evil spirits at bay.

⁵⁵ Nevertheless, even an ndawo possessed medium shows normative patterns during divining. These patterns, needless to say, are technically acquired in the course of divining training.

⁵⁶ See chapter five for the detail of the transformation of Gugu's divining spirits.

⁵⁷ My personal assistant's impression was that Cele was a "crook", only looking for money.

⁵⁸ It is a rare divining spirit. Only one isangoma informed me that she has an indumba spirit. The indumba is the spirit of a person who had not completed ukuthwasa properly. But it is said to have a divining power. Mangubane, in her 60s, claims that her great grandfather was an indumba. However, in this chapter, I categorise all these divining spirits under ngoma, as local diviners do not specify among them.

⁵⁹ This will be dealt more fully in the last chapter of the dissertation.

⁶⁰ One day, I was walking about with Jabulani, when some children playing in the bush began to chant 'Khumalo. Khumalo'. Jabulani was visibly upset and shouted back: "I'm going to tell the police that you come from Mozambique. I knew you come from Mozambique." The children shut up and ran away.

⁶¹ See Chapter Seven for the detail.

⁶² The duration is set between the formal acceptance of an novice and the completion of the divining training ceremony. The novice often stays long periods after divining training. This is due to the outstanding balance of divining training payment, which the family of the novice has still to pay. The novice has to remain at the father (senior) diviner's homestead, until the family pays the balance of divining training fees.

⁶³ The novice can pay for divining training with two cows which is equivalent to 3,000 rand. But I have not heard of anybody paid in cows. Novices still have to pay of all expenditure for coming out divining training ceremony which normally costs more than several thousands rand.

⁶⁴. After Aldina's femba, he claims that the number of his cattle continuously increases.

⁶⁵. His friend told him that there is a diviner from Mozambique. "I must go and try there. See whether Aldina has been told me is matching with that diviner. And I found that that lady, before even he can say that, it matched. She said that I've been to somebody (Aldina) and what Aldina said was correct."

⁶⁶. Philip's career. He completed matric in 1973. He joined at SAP training college in 1975 for six month. Then he went to down to Umlazi. He was there for two years. Then he was transferred to Umbilo SAP. He resigned SAP in 1979. He joined Durban City Police which is traffic department. He's worked in there for 18 years until this year.

⁶⁷. His salary was around R5,000 but after tax and all kinds of deduction, he got around R1,500.

⁶⁸ He said that he is quite interested in Chinese traditional medicines and Chinese diviners.

⁶⁹ The word impande is difficult to interpret. Literally, it means the "root of tree". But in divining context, the meaning varies in different situations. Here in this chapter, impande generally signifies a 'category' such as divining family, divining genealogy and divining school.

⁷⁰ See Chapter Five for the detailed illustration of Isabel's Ndawo possession.

APPENDIX 1: The classification of divining bones (Amathambo)

I. Aldina's divining bones (Information collected on 14th/March/1997)

1. Astragalus bones

- 1) A big and a dark coloured astragalus bone from a sacrificed goat . . . umngoma kaAldina (Aldina's ngoma spirit)
- 2) A big and a dark coloured astragalus bone from a sacrificed goat . . . ugedla (a kind of inyanga, an herb healer).

From 3) to 6) are middle size and grey coloured astragalus bones from sacrificed goats.

- 3) indoda ishonelewe unkoskazi . . . a man whose wife is died.
- 4) Umama osheyashona indoda . . . A mother whose husband is died.
- 5) Umama osheyashona . . . A mother who passed away.
- 6) Indoda esheyashona . . . A man who passed away.
- 7) A middle size and a dark coloured astragalus from a sacrificed goat . . . (umngoma) an isangoma (represents either a male or a female according to divining contexts).
- 8) A middle size and a grey coloured astragalus from a sacrificed goat . . . (indoda ehalala nonpaphi) . . . A man who can stay anywhere.
- 9) A middle size and a grey coloured astragalus from a sacrificed goat . . . (Ugedla ashona) . . . A kind of an inyanga who passed away.
- 10) A small size and a dark coloured astragalus from a sacrificed goat . . . (itshothsi) . . . a gangster.
- 11) ? (Iqolo lomuntu wesifazane) . . . The small back of a female.
- 12) ? (Iqolo lomuntu wesinisa) . . . The small back of a male.
- 13) Umndawo . . . Aldina's umndawo.

2. Wild animal bones

- 1) A piece of a lion bone (isilwane) . . . an animal of any kind.
- 2) A piece of a lion bone (isilwane) . . . A familiar (animal) of umthakathi (a witch)

3. Seashells

- 1) A big oliva which as dark purple spots on convex side (ihlona) . . . umndawo or a indumba.
- 2) An oliva with brown colour (umndawo umkhulu) . . . a big male ndawo spirit.
- 3) An oliva in small size and bright grey colour (ndawo isifazana) . . . a female ndawo.
- 4) A small and white cypraes (inyoka) . . . a snake.
- 5) An oliva with a bright grey colour (umndawo wesifazana umkhulu/inyamkwabe) . . . An old female ancestor (ndawo).
- 6) An oliva with a dark brown colour (Idlozi elimndawo elafelemanzini/umfana isishimane) . . . An ancestor (ndaow) who is staying in water/a man without a girl.
- 7) A brown cypraes (umfana isishimane ophilayo) . . . A man without a girl/a living people.
- 8) A white cypraes (ukhokho ugadikhaya) . . . An oldest female idlozi of the patient.

- 9) A bright white oliva (indwangu emhlophe) . . . A white cloth.
- 10) A white oliva (umngane umfana engasekho) . . . A boy who is not present.
- 11) A piece of white seashell (intombi engasekho) . . . A girl who is not present.
- 12) ? (imbiza) . . . calling.
- 13) A piece of white seashell (inkhuku) . . . a chicken.
- 14) A piece of tortoise shell (ufudu yendoda) . . . a male.
- 15) A piece of tortoise shell (ufudu wesifazana) . . . a female.
- 16) A piece of tortoise shell (Inkhosi) . . . a chief/king.

4. Non-bones

- 1) A black stone (umnyama) . . . darkness/misfortune.
- 2) A reddish seed (igazi/indwangevuma) . . . blood/red.
- 3) A dark stone (indwangemnyama) . . . A black cloth.
- 4) A calabash shaped stone (umuthi) . . . Medicine.
- 5) A piece of white tile (indlu yesitini) . . . A block house.
- 6) A small piece of tile (indwange ipalo) . . . A kind of cloth.
- 7) A white and small stone (indwange enhlope) . . . a white cloth.
- 8) A piece of V-shaped wood with white sport on one side (inhlanhla) . . . luck

II. Getsrude's classification of amathambo (Information collected on 06th/October/1998)

[Getsrude is conducting divination in Mpangeni. But she was born in Ekuthukuweni and trained as a isangoma in Swaziland.]

1. Astragalus bones

- 1) A big astragalus bone (about 5x2 cm), which is taken from a sacrificed cow. The bone has a string of white beads tied around the bone . . . umngoma and umndawo.
 - 2-3) Two pieces of a big and dark coloured astragalus bones from a sacrificed goat . . . an old man/woman
 - 4) A middle size (about 3x1.5 Cm) and a white coloured astragalus bone from a sacrificed goat . . . a young lady
 - 5) A small size (about 2x1.5. cm) and a white coloured astragalus bone from a sacrificed goat . . . a boy
 - 6) A middle size and a dark coloured astragalus bone from a sacrificed goat . . . a young man.
 - 7) A big and a dark coloured astragalus bone from a sacrificed goat . . . an old man (mainly grandfather).
 - 8) A middle size and a dark coloured astragalus bone from a sacrificed goat . . . a young man.
 - 9) A middle size and a white coloured astragalus bone from a sacrificed goat . . . a wife.
- From 10) to 15) are middle size and grey coloured astragalus bones with some shapes on their backs**
- 10) A single line (artificial) on back . . . this is a kind of sickness.
 - 11) A 'X' shape on back . . . curse
 - 12) A horizontal line (artificial) on the middle . . . a stabbed wound.
 - 13) A horizontal line (artificial) on the bottom . . . iqolo (a pain on the small of back)

- 14) A vertical crack (natural) on the back . . . ikhanda (headache) and a problem on a spinal cord.
 15) A vertical line (artificial) line on the back . . . a kidney problem.

2. Seashells

- 1) A big seashell (oliva) with white and yellow lines on convex side . . . ndiki spirit.
 2) A big seashell (oliva) with white and yellow lines on convex side . . . ndawo spirit
 3) A big seashell (oliva) with yellow spots . . . umlozi.
 4-8) Small cypraes with white colour . . . young ladies.
 9-21) Various shape and small seashells . . . men and ladies.
 22) A broken piece of a seashell (in flat shape) . . . ancestor's demand.

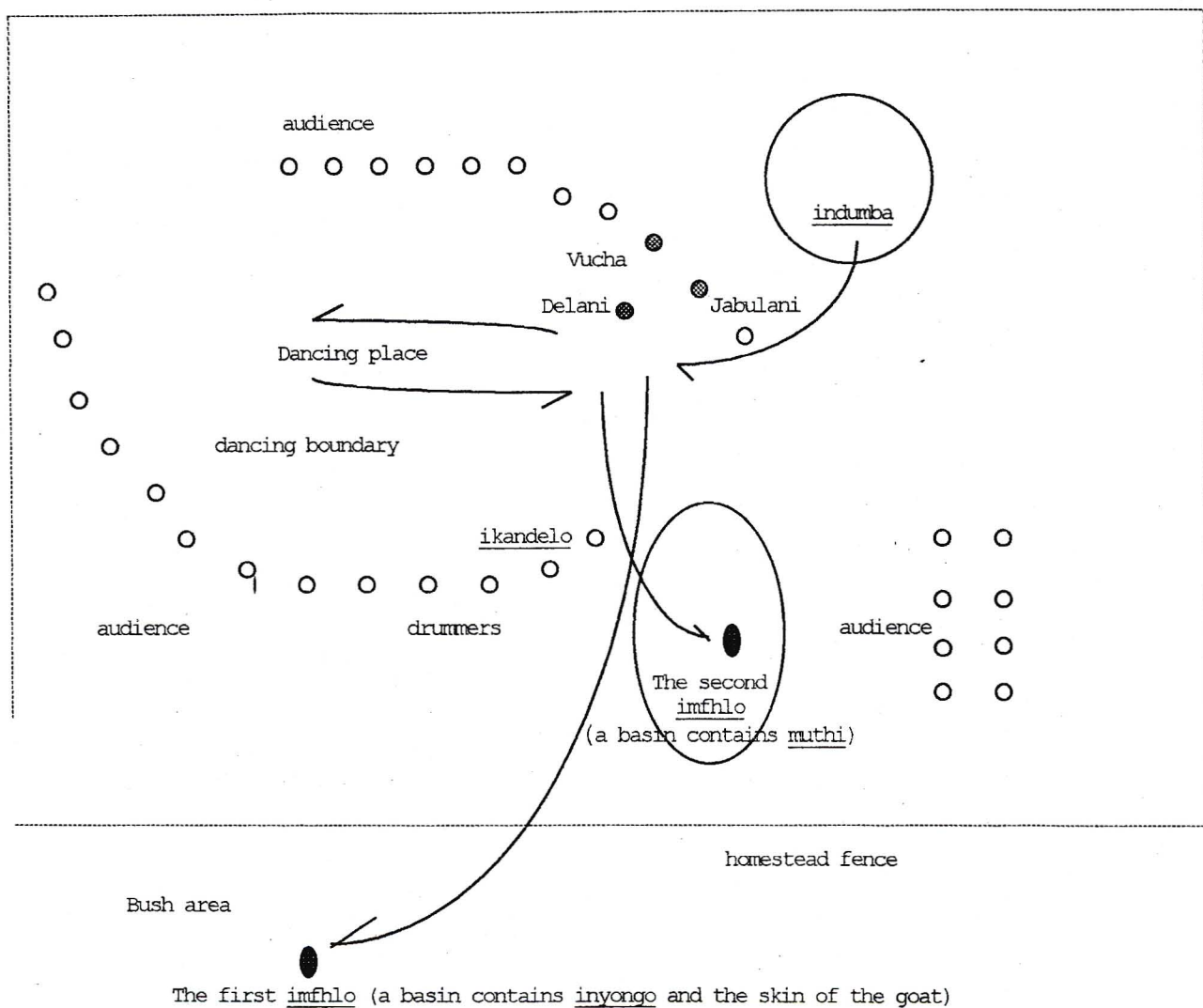
3. Wild animal bones

- 1) A piece of an elephant's tusk . . . toothache

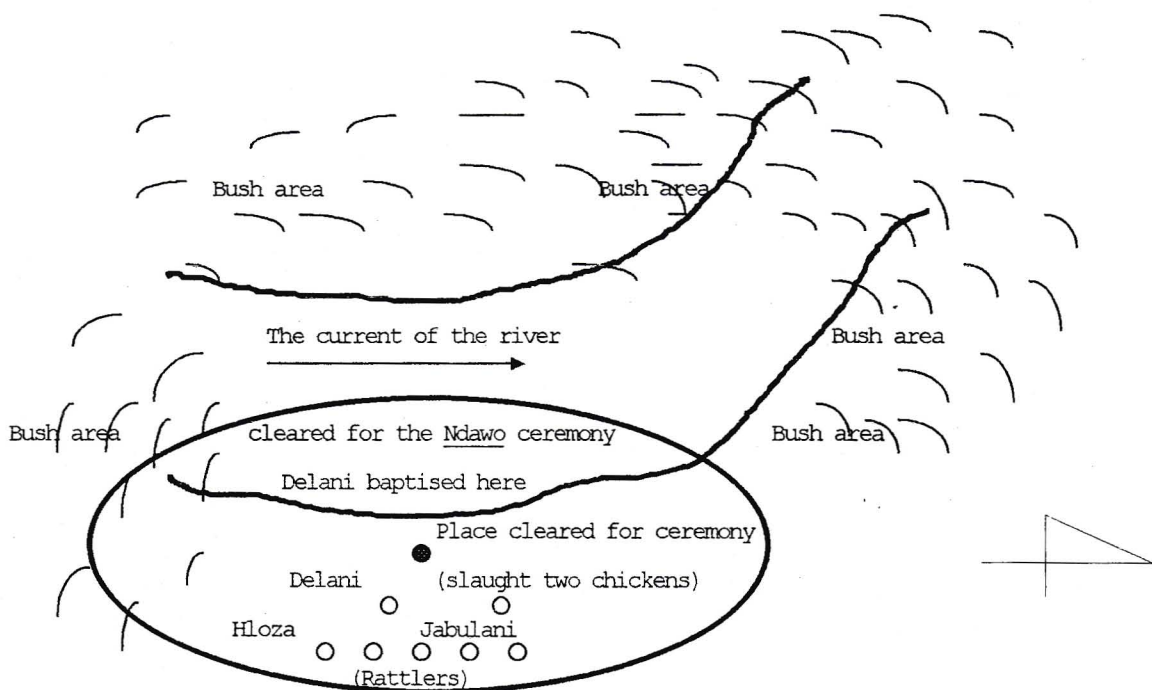
4. Non-bones

- 1) A tip of a bullet . . . A gun
 2) A white coin . . . An affliction which runs up and down in a stomach.
 3) A dice . . . win or loss
 4) A piece of a tablet with Chinese scripts on it . . . a stroke (ikhanda)
 5) A piece of a tiger stone . . . money.
 6) A pink coloured stone . . . Luck
 7) coins . . . money.
 8) A piece of an iron in folk shaped . . . imoto (a car).
 9) A plastic item . . . the possibility of having cows, goats and other domestic animals.

APPENDIX 2: Imfihlo ceremony (12th/June/1999)

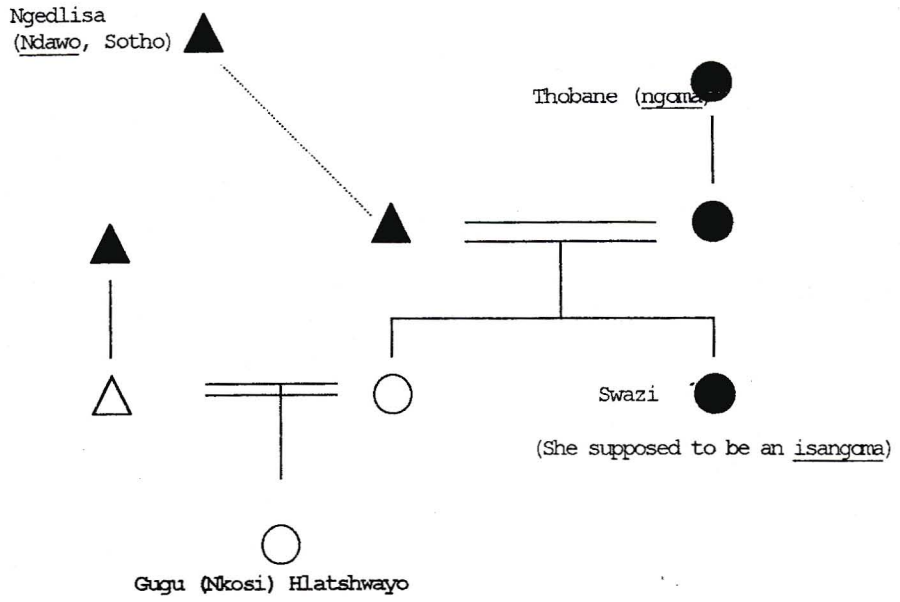


APPENDIX 3: Ndawo ceremony (13th/June/1999)

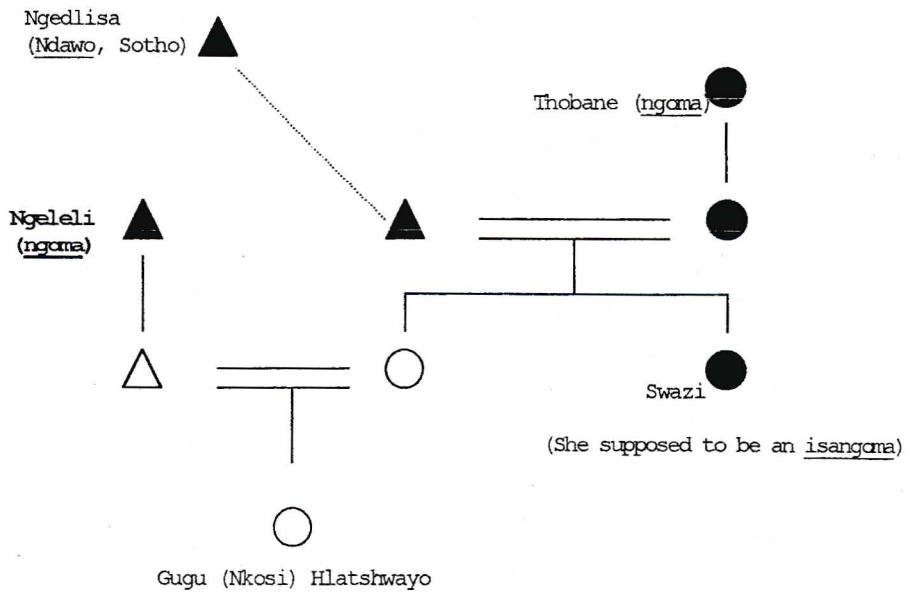


APPENDIX 4: Modification of Gugu's divining spirit

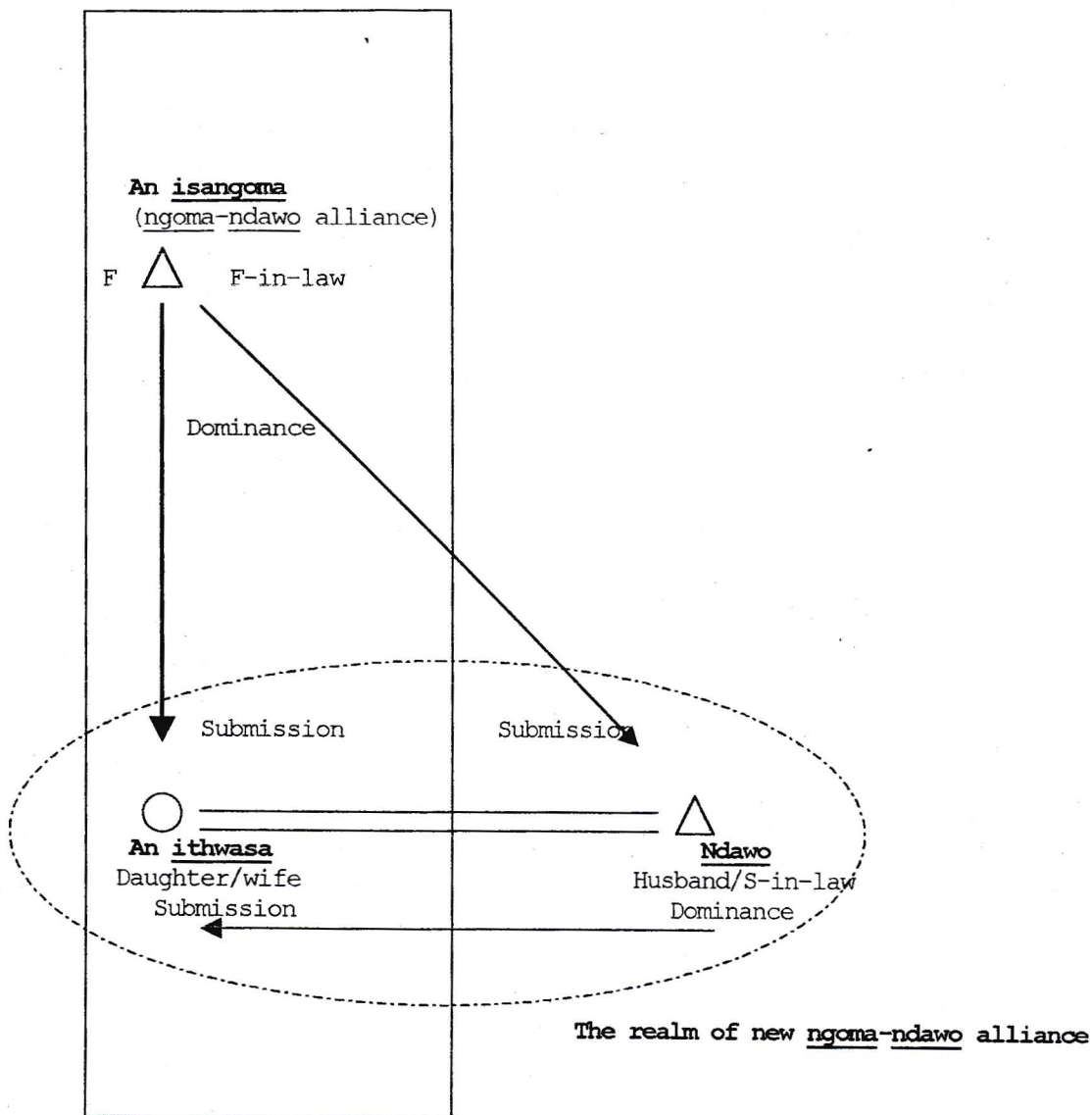
The first interview with Gugu (13th/March/1998)



The Second Interview with Gugu (22th/August/1999)



APPENDIX 5: Divining lineage and sodality



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