Locating a Woman's Life: Naming the Past in a "Scattered" Land

For the self-conscious experience of place is inevitably a product and expression of the self whose experience it is, and therefore, unavoidably, the nature of that experience (its intentional thrust, its substantive content, its affective tones and colorings) is shaped at every turn by the personal and social biographies of those who sustain it.

—Keith Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places*

When I came here [Facazisse], I saw that my mother was already very ill. She was no longer speaking much. And later, when she arrived, my sister-in-law said, "Mama, Mama, it's Rosalina." And [my mother] said, "Eh, Buxeni." Because my other name, I'm called Buxeni. Mmm. And I went close to her. "Mama, Mama?" "Eh? Is that you, Buxeni?" "Eee, it's me, Mama." "All right, my child."

—Rosalina Malungana

Introduction

In chapter 1, I tried to make virtue of necessity in order to lay bare some of the dilemmas involved in writing women's histories in (and of) rural southern Mozambique. Faced in archives and libraries with so many images of the place where I wished to conduct my research, and diverted at every turn in initial fieldwork encounters from establishing "direct" access to women's understandings of Magude's past, when I sat down (much later) to write I adopted the metaphor of mapping to navigate the hall of evidentiary mirrors through which I had stumbled. This metaphor proved helpful on a number of levels. Read as texts, maps (graphic, written or oral) remind us of the constructed, claim-making quality of all "primary" sources. As representations of place, maps not only imbue a landscape with meaning—a practice anthropologist Keith Basso describes as "place-making"—but also, by embodying the interests and imaginations of their creators, bring "portions of the past... into being" and reveal acts of "inventing [history itself], of fashioning novel versions of 'what happened here,'" and, in the process, forging social traditions and personal and collective identities.

Simultaneously understood, then, as a way of representing pastness, maps illuminate how place is integral to the way "the past" is culturally constituted, to memory and the range of forms through which memories are made and expressed. Yet this spatialized cognition of history exists even where physical maps do not, through individuals' "sense of place"—in Basso's words again, how people "know their landscapes." In a non-map-making context such as Magude, "sense of place" is indeed a crucial form of mapping, because it conveys the subjective yet profoundly social relationship between identity, experience, and knowledge of geographic surroundings for people who may otherwise leave no cartographic remnants of their lives. Divulged consciously or unconsciously through colloquial references to place, conventions of place-naming, and (perhaps most importantly) spatialized portrayals of the self, an individual's "sense of place" offers a valuable window on the pasts of which his or her life is a part.

This chapter moves away from archives and libraries to explore the gendered relationship between self and place for women in Magude. This relationship is historical, in the sense that it is a product of the past, of lived experience, of "what has happened." Yet it is also historical because it is here, in a way, that women's historical memories—women's knowledge of the past—begin. No artefactual maps are available for outsiders to read or trace this relationship, not only because foreign map-makers have imposed their own (mis)readings of African spatial
identities on this area but because map-makers of all kinds—European and African, colonial and postcolonial—have tended to define women’s “place” here primarily in relation to men, as the mothers, sisters, daughters and wives of “traditional” patrilineages. The historiography of the region has been central to this problem, and the shattering impact of the Mozambican war on rural families seems to have made such gender prejudices especially grim. During my stay in Maputo, for example, I was often advised of the futility of my research plans. As one seasoned Portuguese-Mozambican archaeologist told me firmly, “Old people in the countryside no longer remember anything about the past. Their memories are completely deturpado [garbled] now, because of the war.” This pessimism was fairly typical of the urban, professional Mozambicans I met in the capital city. In the case of the archaeologist, it reflected his frustration with “peasants” who, he lamented, were no longer interested in buried artefacts, and were carelessly plowing through valuable remnants instead of collecting them for researchers as they had eagerly done after independence. But his explanation was also typical of other researchers in Maputo in claiming that the violent uprooting of rural communities from the land in which their histories were embedded had caused an irreversible corruption or even emptying of people’s memory, especially that sphere of memory where “historical” information had been stored.

Scholars working with oral literature in South Africa have similarly argued that forced dispossessions of various kinds have caused a general—and gendered—weakening of memory in agrarian communities. Isabel Hofmeyr’s study of one northern Transvaal chiefdom argues that the combination of 1930s “betterment” policies and apartheid-era removals “dislocated” and “marginalized” a male tradition of oral historical narration, but actually robbed women’s “fictional” storytelling of its “intellectual content” by separating it from the geographic and institutional context in which it was customarily performed. Hofmeyr’s argument resonates with other themes in southern African historiography, which depict rural women as playing a negligible role in the production of “historical” traditions to begin with, and as more dependent—for their identity as much as their survival—on lifeways rooted in the soil (and lineage-defined land) than men. This view was echoed in academic circles in postwar Maputo: if displaced “peasants” in general were no longer reliable sources for the past, rural women (especially older women) were the most dangerously befuddled of all, their memories full of nothing but “nonsense,” “confusion” and “lies.”

With these claims in mind, I wondered what I would find when I tried to interview women in Magude, given how long—and under what circumstances—they had been absent from their pre-war homes. I arrived in the district with a list of questions designed to elicit women’s own “mappings” of their past: questions about where they had lived and with whom, about the geography of friendship and travel, about paths traversed in the pursuit of work or in flight from threats to their welfare or their lives. But those cautionary words about women’s “forgetfulness” still haunted me: physically separated from the landscapes in which, as Hofmeyr puts it, their memories were “banked,” would women have lost their sense of self along with their place on the land, their ability to remember or coherently tell their own histories? As the remaining chapters of this book demonstrate, the women I met and worked with in Magude did not have vacant or “garbled” memories. On the contrary, their memories—and their willingness to speak at least some of what they remembered—were acute, forceful, and clear. But I did encounter another, unexpected problem related to place and women’s patterns of remembering. Once I had settled into daily life in Magude, I had to begin sketching out the parameters of my research: identifying the areas of the district I would visit, the questions I would ask, the people I would interview. Much has already been written about the challenges researchers face while trying to “choose” informants for oral history/ethnographic projects; some of this literature also acknowledges the many ways, overt and stealthy, that interviewees go about choosing themselves, lobbying or positioning themselves for inclusion in a project because it holds out the promise (real or imagined) of some kind of reward. But we rarely read of situations where a researcher must overcome not only obstacles of ethics or politics but riddles of geographic identity—when someone who is supposed to be somewhere is not (or never only) who or where one expects them to be.

This, in a nutshell, was the dilemma I encountered during my early months in Magude. It was a dilemma of location: I had, literally, to find a group of women to interview; but I also wanted to “locate” these women—spatially, chronologically—in the history of the area, and both tasks posed unanticipated challenges. These challenges were partly a consequence of the war. Because resettlement was such a slow process in Magude, with displaced families returning to
their pre-war homes in the countryside (their marhumbini) in tentative and protracted stages, most of the women I interviewed were still living in their war-time residence in or around Magude town, or in temporary shelters on the grounds of former communal villages near the sedes of the district's administrative posts, when I met and spoke with them in 1995-96. While some of these women were extremely anxious to go home, others were existing in a kind of residential limbo, torn between nostalgic longing for their former landscape and a pragmatic awareness that their survival—and a revised notion of home itself—would be most secure at a place where water and food aid were within reliable reach. To complicate matters further, village and household composition changed sometimes from one day to the next as women (and men) moved back and forth between town and countryside, Magude and Maputo, Mozambique and South Africa or Swaziland to seek work, fetch family or possessions, reopen fields, claim donativos, or visit still displaced loved ones. In these circumstances, part of the larger reality captured in Shangaan by the verb kuhangalakiwa (to be scattered), women typically had several places they thought of as home. This situation made it difficult not only to keep track of women's whereabouts, but to pin down the spatial and temporal coordinates of women's histories—where their homes were (and why), in which place(s) their memories were anchored, how their experiences were related to broader processes of change over time.

However, the war alone was not to blame, nor was the fluidity of the residential landscape the only confusing aspect of women's relationship to place in postwar Magude. More puzzling still, to me, was women's—especially older women's—apparent desire to obscure their location in history on a deeper, ontological level, a goal they pursued through the bewildering name-games they engaged in with one another. This name-play, which often left me wondering who was who as well as who was where, involved juggling a woman's many personal names, substituting generic kin terms for proper names, and inventing nicknames for relatives, friends and strangers. Women's playfulness with names was so pervasive that after a while I began to suspect it was related to patterns that had frustrated me in preliminary interviews: their vagueness or forgetfulness when it came to the names of Europeans, official place-names, even their own xivongo (clan name); yet their display of an avid, meticulous memory for other kinds of names, which had to be listed, exhaustively, before they continued the story they were telling. As I explain in the following section, it was only when women began to include me in their name-play that these strands of discourse began to come together. Yet the implications of what at first seemed casual banter were slower to emerge, and more slippery to grasp. Why did women so incessantly kutlanga (play) with their named identity? Was this “play” masking a more serious personal objective or social claim? Was there
binding memories: locating a woman's life

the longer i was in magude, and the more women i interviewed, the more visibly women's naming surfaced as an idiom for historical remembering as social action. women were playing with names, and in interviews telling stories about names, as a way of intervening in the present, of exercising semantic authority in and over situations where their right to exercise authority of any kind would otherwise have been in doubt. more specifically, though, women were using names to execute a very instrumental kind of historical mapping—a negotiation of identity and place at a moment of profound economic and political uncertainty. men used names self-consciously too, deploying clan and ethnic names especially to assert a distinct historical identity and to claim a specific place, socially and territorially, on the postwar landscape. women, on the other hand, treated names—ethnic, clan, and above all personal names—as vehicles of a rather selective memory, a way to recall feminine activities and accomplishments and thus implicitly challenge dominant (androcentric) narratives of the region's history. in this sense, remembering (or mis-remembering) names and their authorized meanings enabled women to voice not only alternative visions of the past but an alternative historical epistemology, in which the world of the past was built from feminine knowledge, affect, and experience.

secondly, women used personal names in particular as a form of history-telling, a way to use the past in the present to defend a construction of female identity that was innately ambiguous, stubbornly diverse, and infinitely adaptable. here, onomastic games were serious indeed, for they allowed women to claim membership in a range of communities—and places—extending far beyond those prescribed for them by patrilineage, church, and state. these gendered patterns in naming practices mirror the gendered character of historical knowledge in the area more broadly, where (as i argued in chapter one) mapping historical identity in terms of fixed social and spatial location has been a strategy masculine authorities have utilized for purposes of control. as subsequent chapters show, women's ability to supplement and maneuver around—if not resist—these forces has been a major factor determining the course and quality of their lives since at least the mid-nineteenth century, but never more so than since the end of the renamo war.

yet if names are centrally about the gender politics of located histories, they are also historical in themselves, and changes in naming suggest larger—though also more intimate—social changes that other forms of evidence may tell us nothing about. this chapter, then, surveys trends in women's naming practices in the magude area from as far back as women's memories allow, circa 1850, with three goals in mind: first, to introduce the women whose stories drive this book in more or less the way they made themselves known to me; second, to peel back the outer layer of women's relationship to the past, which is inseparable from their relationship to place and the gendered self this relationship reveals; and third, to demonstrate that women's casual but deliberate use of names-as-history to evade or subvert a pervasive form of masculine control attests to the enduring power (and "reliability") of a remembering feminine self even—in fact, especially—among the most vulnerable women in a "scattered" land.

placing names and naming places

one sunday morning, while sitting with a group of women in the shade of a frangipani tree amid the rubble of the makuvulan mission, across the river from antloka, i was asked to tell my xivongo (clan or family name) with the shangaan phrase commonly used for this purpose: u wa ka mani? (literally, you belong to whose place?). i had just returned from south africa, where my husband john had boarded a plane for home, and the women were using the occasion of my first church service without him in the four months since i had arrived in the district to re-position me, alone, within their social universe. when a local person is asked u wa ka mani?, "whose" refers to the male genealogical ancestor from whom his or her clan takes its name, either the original founder of the clan (e.g. mundlovu) or the leader of a breakaway lineage segment (e.g. mathye, a sub-clan of mundlovu). this genealogical identity has a territorial component as well, a sense of belonging to a specific place—the tiko (land, country) of that family—through membership in a
corporate group defined by its male progenitor and affiliation through patrilineal descent. Before this particular Sunday, very few people in Magude had asked me this question, although my husband’s family name (Collins) was well known wherever we went. I was referred to by women who knew me as Mamana Heidi or Heidinha; by children and adults who did not know me as Xilungwana (little white person); and by men who knew me (especially older men) as wa ka Collins. This last label was consistent with the habit, in casual conversation, of calling a married woman (who formally keeps her own xivongo) by her husband’s family name, a gesture of respect acknowledging her fulfillment of the social obligation to marry and the transfer of her place-identity from birth to affinal homestead according to the rules of virilocality.

Yet the fact that women more often addressed me by one of the other names—and, over time, by an even wider range of personal and kin terms—reflected the kaleidoscopic quality of women’s names that was causing me such confusion during my first months in the district. For one thing, the names by which women introduced themselves to me were usually different from the names other people used to address them, partly because in addition to having multiple personal names, women frequently called each other by generic kin terms or after the name of their father (e.g. N’waXimonyana, daughter of Ximonyana). For another thing, women were constantly making up new names for themselves and the people around them, as illustrated in the church women’s response to hearing my xivongo for the first time. After laughing for a while at its “ugly” sound, they decided that I should be re-named wa ka Khosa, because I was “staying in the tiko [land]” of the Khosa clan. My husband, on the other hand, they renamed wa ka Antioka, associating him not with a clan homeland but with the surrounding territorial community of the Swiss Mission church. For them, playing with sivongo exposed the gendered and gendering qualities of this name: if I should be identified by my ties to a group defined by kinship and our temporarily shared place on the land, my husband should be named through his fixed—though imaginary—connection to a local center of officially-sanctioned power. Collins and Gengenbach were promptly forgotten, and no woman ever asked me (as several men did) to tell the history of my clan. For women, a xivongo located the self in history rather differently, and signified how fundamentally the gender politics of naming were inseparable from the gender politics of remembering the past.

Ironically, the recurring eddies of debate about methodologies for women’s history in Africa—above all, about the production of women’s life histories through fieldwork and oral interviewing—have tended to bypass the question of how to define the self who is the subject of this research, an act that involves deciding how to identify that self by name and situate her life in an historical framework. Anthropologists have observed that in many African cultures traditional infant-naming practices accomplish both steps at once, by recording in a child’s name “events, objects, sentiments and emotions that are sociologically and psychologically real for [his/her] community,” thus mapping personhood in terms of attachment to a specific historical setting. But how does one write about individuals who know themselves, and are known by others, by more than one name? How does one locate them in history when their relationship to place is as ambivalent as the above example suggests, when cultural conventions fix social and spatial identity through the xivongo at the level of the corporate kin group, yet women (who are supposed to marry) move through life carrying two such names? And how does one understand the effects of war on the relationship between self and place when people-land relationships have been brutally disrupted, when concern over the effects of being “scattered” is matched by the life-or-death tension of resettlement, when where a person belongs (which, in local constructions of place, also means to or with whom) is one of the most pressing questions of the day?

Precisely because of the residential confusion of the war, I expected returnees to stake out the geography of their life in no uncertain terms, securing a place-identity in the present by telling carefully spatialized stories about their past. As Patrick Harries notes in his study of Mozambican migrant workers, men in southern Mozambique have long been using names to accomplish this objective, whether in the rural community of their birth or the industrial workplaces of South Africa. “At home,” Harries writes of the 1870s:

... men were situated in time and space through names that associated them with a clan, a chiefdom, and a specific place in life’s passage. Names were metaphors for the range of identities and social relations held simultaneously by the individual. . . . But the logic behind this system of ordering lost much of its power...
on the diamond fields. . . . The names taken by black workers [e.g. Jim, April, Bloody Fool] might have evoked derision amongst whites, but for the workers themselves their pattern of naming had an inherent logic and function, situating young men firmly within the turbulent world on the mines. 17

The men Harries describes were using names to expand a repertoire of "situational" identities, of diversely named personae moving back and forth between multiple geographic and social places. Yet the underlying concept of self for these men appears to have remained basically unitary and stable. In the tumultuous environment of late nineteenth-century Southern Mozambique, men could accumulate new names as they were exposed to new social contexts, but the identities they worked with were more additive than transformative, and their strategic self-refashioning through the adoption of new first names never seems to have threatened or altered the most fundamental identity of all—the patronymic derived from the clan into which they were born.

This family name, their xivongo, is also a "praise name" in that it stands for a laudatory epigram through which the clan publicly defines itself. In addition, though, every xivongo possesses a royal genealogy and a narrative explaining how and why the clan migrated from its homeland to the site—or typically sites, given high levels of segmentation—occupied by its descendants. Thus the xivongo provides, at least in theory, a sense of place that is at once originary and diasporic, anchoring the self in a spatialized social network defined both by "where we have come from" and "where we have been." Interestingly, the xivongo continued to denote a "spatially anchored" conception of self for men of all ages in the dishevelled residential conditions of postwar Magude. While elderly men expressed concern that youth no longer knew where the "land of their clan" was, and a few mission-educated men were busily writing down their clan histories on the assumption that they would otherwise be forgotten, I met many young men who had been buffeted all over the region by the war, and who were under immense pressure to support extended families, yet who would drop everything to tell me what they knew—or were trying to learn—about the territorial history of their clan. These young men, usually bearing their own array of European and African personal names, showed little interest in "playing" with their individual onomastic identity; for them, establishing an authoritative account, through their xivongo, of where their family historically belonged on the land was an issue of greater importance, even if they had no immediate plans to return there. Like their male elders, they clung to the belief that who they were was an essentially geographic question, and that its answer—for every clan member—was singular and absolute.

Other scholars and European commentators have investigated a category of name with spatial implications similar to the xivongo: so-called "tribal" or ethnic names, above all the term "Tsonga" (or "Thonga"). 19 Historians and anthropologists working in southern Mozambique, drawing largely on the observations of Swiss missionaries from the late 1800s, have been preoccupied with a narrow range of questions on this subject: When and where should we locate the origins of the "Tsonga" people, a group now unified (in theory) by a common language, culture, and territory? Why and how did this "people" emerge when it did? How might the Swiss Mission, migrant labor, Portuguese colonialism, and South African apartheid have helped to create a regional ethnic community where none, allegedly, had existed before—and did this ethnicity, "invented" or not, supplant or merely supplement prior/smaller-scale identities? How should we delimit "Tsonga" language, culture, and society at all when what Henri Berthoud called the "fruit salad" of clans and "dialect groups" that preceded it were themselves the product of migration, conquest, and intermarriage among peoples of diverse origin? 20 When the various names by which this group has been known (Gwamba, Kwapo, Tcheke, Amatonga, Knobnose, Tsonga/Thonga, Shangaan) have nearly always been labels (often pejorative) applied to them by someone else; and when the "Tsonga" population has been divided for over a century by an international border and radically different colonial histories? 21 Maps generated by various ethnographic projects—missionary, colonial, academic—that attempted to solve these vexing questions reflect both the empiricist groundings of Western cartography and the claims to situated identity that emerge so powerfully from men's talk about their xivongo, projected to a larger scale. Clan and tribe, in many of these writings, implicitly belong together; clans cluster to form "groups" which make up the "tribe" (even where the reality of the "tribe" is in doubt), with each "group" occupying a tract of land in "tribal" territory and associated with qualities essential and historical—customs and deeds, traditions and experiences—that adhere with geographic
Women tended to share neither men's concern with the place-specificities of clan names nor scholars' concern with the mapability of ethnic groups. Given ongoing academic interest in the Tsonga "puzzle," I intended from the outset to ask women about their ethnic identity, starting with a question that is best translated into Shangaan as "What race/kind [of person] are you [U muxaka munitj]?" But since questions about "race" often led to discussions about clan, and since women were conspicuously not participating in men's talk about swivongo, I decided to ask women questions about clan history as well—what they knew about the "origins" (ntumbuluko) of their clan, who their earliest clan ancestors were, and so forth. Women's answers to both sets of questions indicate just how uneasily their identities fit within the categories of Mozambican or southern African historiography—and how definitions of the self, and the relationship between self and place, are in this context so deeply gendered that we cannot subsume women's histories within an ordering of experience drawn from the lives of men. In the remainder of this section, I examine patterns in women's responses to questions about ethnic identity and origins, and then the very similar tendencies in what they had to say about clan. Both are relevant to the subject of personal names, the topic of the following section, in part because their sentiments about ethnicity and clan contain clues to the far greater value of personal names to women, and in part because women's attitudes toward the very labels others have assumed to be most meaningful to them beg an explanation just as compellingly as their onomastic games.

Significantly, none of the women we interviewed called herself "Tsonga." Many women used the term Shangaan ("MuChangana"), with which Tsonga is commonly interchanged, although even this answer was rarely straightforward. While roughly half of the women in the group identified themselves as Shangaan, the others answered in one of three ways: by restateing their clan name (e.g. Khosa, Ntimane); by identifying with a supra-clan label other than Shangaan (e.g. MuSotho, MuNgoni, MuChopi, Mabuyandile) and then adding that they were "MuChangana" as well; or by calling themselves by the name of one of the so-called "dialect groups" of the Tsonga (e.g. MuHlengwe, MuHlanganu, MuN'walingu). To an extent, this diversity was shaped by age as well as variations in women's interactions with colonial/capitalist society. Women who defined themselves primarily as something other than Shangaan tended to be the oldest members of the group, and/or to have had less exposure to education, wage work, urban residence, or mission Christianity. One possible interpretation of this pattern is that localized ethnic or familial identities survived as genealogical memories into the early years of colonial rule, but then were displaced or refashioned by broader constructions of ethnic community through integration into colonial society, in which African identities were organized—administratively and rhetorically—into "tribes" with fixed cultural and geographic referents. This interpretation would also explain the marked contrast between what my assistants and elderly women considered acceptable answers to "What race are you?": Aida (born 1962) and Ruti (born 1948), not only younger but more self-consciously "modern" (ntswha, wa swoswi) and "Europeanized" (wa xilungu) than the interviewees, were initially inclined to correct women who equated ethnicity with clan, and had to be reminded not to urge interviewees to call themselves Shangaan.

There was another pronounced trend in women's responses, however. Women who declared their Shangaan-ness over narrower designations tended also to have a more uncertain place-identity at the time of the interview (i.e. to be still in some stage of displacement), while women who named their "race" in a more localized way had a relatively unproblematic relationship to the place where they were living—to have resettled in, or never moved far from, a location where they felt secure. In other words, women's understanding of their ethnicity expressed a situational, strategic sense of the parameters of the landscape to which they could claim, with the greatest odds of succeeding, that they belonged. Valentina Chauke, for instance, a resident of Facazisse who was born circa 1905, responded "I hear that wa ka Chauke, I could be—I'm MuHlengwe," because her father's family came from "Hlengweni," north of the Limpopo River. Yet when asked to name the place she considered her true "home," Valentina smacked the ground where she sat and said firmly, "Right here, the place where I was born, the place I was shown . . . the place I grew up, the place where they showed me, 'live here.'" By "here," Valentina told us she meant "Khoseni," a "country" (tiko) that exists on neither colonial- nor postcolonial-era administrative maps but whose remembered territory—the area ruled by Khosa chiefs in precolonial times—encompasses all of the critical sites of Valentina's life story: her birthplace and childhood homes (Xisangwana,
Nyongane, Makuvulane); where she married (Timanguene); and the place she "was shown" when as a widow with two young daughters she moved to Facazisse, a place she chose—and where she feels doubly secure—because of her lifelong association with (and marriage into) the Swiss Mission church. Similarly, several women who had been born and/or married into the community where we interviewed them—marriage conferring a solid, normatively sanctioned place-identity anchored in the marital homestead (vukatini)—displayed little awareness of or interest in whether they might be "Shangaan," and did not hesitate to use older, more localized labels (labels that often marked them, by geographic origin, as outsiders) to link themselves to a collective ethnic past. How women who called themselves Shangaan explained this choice of ethnic label tells us even more about the gendered meaning of this category of naming. Scholarly definitions of Shangaan have focused on its political origin as a derivative of Soshangane, one of the surnames of Manukosi, the Nguni warlord who conquered southern Mozambique in the 1830s; or they have emphasized how the racialized labor politics of the South African gold and diamond mines contributed to the emergence of "Shangaan" identity among migrant workers from then-Portuguese East Africa. Yet whether women called themselves MuChangana alone or MuChangana along with something else, their ethnic self-identification rarely referred to politics or masculine experience. What they emphasized instead was, on the one hand, the relationship between ethnicity and women's autobiographical ties to place, and on the other hand the constitution of ethnic difference through practices associated with the domestic sphere and beautification of the female body. Asked why they called themselves Shangaan or what "being Shangaan" meant to them, most women (like Valentina) responded by naming their own place of birth—not, significantly, by tracing their "origins" back to a putative clan homeland. As the following quotes illustrate, this pattern held true whether Shangaan was considered an exclusive or secondary label:

Teasse Xivuri: "I'm MuChangana, of this land. . . . I don't know what it means. What I know is that I was born, and I'm MuChangana." 28

Albertina Uabisse: "I'm called MuN'walungu, but here I'm wa ka Facazisse. . . . I know that I'm called MuN'walungu because [my grandparents] came from N'walungwini, but me, I was born here. . . . Mmm, I'm MuChangana." 29

Fayassee Zimiva: "Zimiva, they come from over there, the land of the VaChopi. Those of the Zimiva family, they're VaChopi. [H: Are you MuChopi, then?] Mm-mm [no], I'm MuChangana. I can be MuChangana, because I was born here." 30

Women also frequently defined ethnicity in terms of diet. As Lucia Ntumbo asserted, echoing perhaps the best-known ethnic stereotype from the region, "I'm MuNgoni because I don't eat fish." 31 Valentine Chauke, after calling herself Muhlengwe, added, "Those VaHlengwe, they live by mawakwa"—a response that opened a long, detailed narrative about how her ancestors in Hiengweni used to gather and prepare this fruit because "that's how it was, in their country. It's the country of mawakwa." 32 More intriguing, perhaps, are the cases where women constructed ethnic belonging in terms of practices through which they decorated or refashioned their bodies. Sara Juma, whose paternal grandfather was a South Asian ("Banyan") trader and whom I often heard other women playfully address as "mulungu" because of her lighter skin, identified her "race" as "Maometana" (Muslim) and stressed that she was not Shangaan because she had neither been tattooed nor elongated her labia when she was a girl. 33

Questions about the origins of a woman's clan evoked similar responses, although some women spoke about clan history in greater depth. Most insisted at first that they didn't know anything about this subject, or else when asked about their clan homeland—where their ancestors originally came from, where their clan had been "created" (kutumbuluka)—they named the birthplace of their paternal or sometimes maternal grandparents instead. 34 When women knew other details about the history of their paternal ancestors, these details tended not to be the chiefs' names or migration routes that fill formal xivongo narratives, but stories about archetypal elements of feminine experience, about marriage and family relationships, and about ordinary people and everyday life in the clan's originary past. For example, women
who traced their clan origins to places that had suffered from intense Gaza raiding in the late
nineteenth century—Hlengweni, Musapa (the Nda region north of the Save River), Chopi
territory along the coast north of Xai Xai—recalled that their ancestors had "fled" their homeland
because of a "war" (nyimpi), but whose war, and why people were fighting, they usually could
not say. One woman in this group, Lise Nsumbane, made vague references to her clan
forebears having been "made to scatter" from their homeland in Hlengweni because
Nzungunyana wanted "the whole country" (tiko hinkwako); but her first response to the
question of her clan's origins was a much different and more animated story: Audio

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L: Mmm. The explanation for it, I don't know, I was just a child. . . .
A: Didn't your grandparents tell you? . . .
L: Eee. They say, those things, that xivongo—it's from long ago. . . . That
xivongo, those people in the beginning, the ancestors, they say, "Chuka
xikhakha! Chuka xikhakha!" They say, "Nsumbane!" . . .
H: What does that mean?
L: That's what the xivongo says. . . . It doesn't mean anything. Eeh! It's from
long ago! . . . They used it to say, [when someone said] "Let's go to the
meeting," they call you to the meeting. . . . Eeh. Well, he says, "They
can go, we're preparing skins for women's skirts." He doesn't go to the
meeting. So, they say, "He's a xikhakha!" [laughs] They were dressing
skins, our fathers. . . . Eee. They say, our ancestors, "Let's not go to the
meeting." He says, "Let's go, I'll find you there." They still don't go. He
says, "They're still dressing skins." . . . They didn't go. They say, "Let's not
go to the meeting." 38

Here, Lise narrates her clan history from the core of the Nsumbane praise, "chuka xikhakha,"
and unlike formal explanations of clan origins hers is an episode plucked from an apparently
unsituated past, with no explicit reference to historical location or time. Although her story of
men shuffling off pressure to attend a political gathering in order to make women's skirts adds
an interesting wrinkle to assumptions about the hegemony of chiefly government, Lise herself
attached less importance to this aspect of the narrative than to the memory of a specific form
of domestic material culture from "long ago."

Some women told another kind of story in which war and politics, if they entered at all, served
as backdrop to clan histories whose plots centered on land, valued for its agricultural potential
rather than as territory, and marriage, where union with local women rather than
chief-centered negotiation—kukondza, the act of submitting to a chief in exchange for
permission to settle—was the principal mechanism through which immigrating clan forebears
established themselves in a new home. Teasse Xivuri, for instance, could not explicate the
praise-term associated with her xivongo, but she remembered hearing that her clan originated in
"Ka Zulu," and that her paternal ancestors relocated to Mapulanguene because "that land
there is very beautiful, and they longed for it. . . . So [here she reverts to the singular,
referring to the supposed first Xivuri man in Mapulanguene], he leaves, he comes here, he
settles down . . . because that land was beautiful. So, he settles down. He meets a girl, he
marries her. So, his home, he never goes home again." 39 Albertina Ubisse recalled that her
clan forefathers left N'walungwini for the Facazisse area because

[t]he way of life here, it was very good, they could be happy here. . . . There in
the north, life was very hard, because there it was difficult to find water. Here,
they found water easily. And the women there, they were lovola'ed with hoes. . . .
Well, they say, "A wife lovola'ed with hoes? Why?" So, they came here. Hoes,
can you eat a hoe? Can you offer a sacrifice to your mother [i.e. to her spirit]
with a hoe? . . . They [ancestor spirits] like wine, and money, and cloth. Not
hoes! 40

The most elaborate example of this type of feminine clan history was told to me by Rosalina
Malungana, in a narrative whose sometimes perfunctory attitude toward temporal and spatial
detail is as conspicuous as the teller's recurring emphasis on the need for accuracy in the
recollected history through personal names:

R: The Malungana people, they began, they came from over there in Spelonken, Xipilongo. That is, in Shangaan, they say "Xipilongo." But there, the name of that place, it's Spelonken. 41 Mmm. And the grandfather of my father . . . his name is Nkavakava. Eee. That name, they even gave it to my brother, he too was Nkavakava! [chuckles] . . . And [Nkavakava] had a brother, who came with him here to this land, because of the war. They went on an adventure, they came here, in the time of Ngungunyana, with the war! 42 I don't know if they were soldiers for Ngungunyana, I don't know! [laughs] Mmm. But, what I know is that there were two brothers. There was that Nkavakava Malungana, and Mangeke. Mmm. And later, when the war was over, that Nkavakava settled here, in Guijá. Eee, Guijá, here. Canicado. And that Mangeke, he settled, eh, in N'walungwini, it's that place Xitivana, that other, other country there. But, it belonged to Guijá. That is, they didn't stay together. Each one stayed with his wife there. For example, one stayed here [draws in sand], the other stayed there—like, mmm [pauses], N'walungwini [to] Canicado, it's a bit of a distance. Like from here to, where, to there in Palmeira. Mmm. And [Mangeke] stayed there, he liked the girls there, he got married and he stayed there with his wife. Eee. . . . But it's the same place, Guijá because . . . that Guijá is big, isn't it? Eee. It had its own name, that place, it was Xitivana. Eee. . . . And that Nkavakava stayed in Guijá. Mmm. And when he got married there, he found a wife, and he settled there. And the two never returned again to Spelonken. They liked these lands here, to be here, with their wives. The others returned, when the war of Ngungunyana was over, they went back home. Because when they came here, they came with the war, they went as far as Beira, who knows where! Since Ngungunyana wanted that. [laughs] They say. Because I didn't see it! [laughs] I just listen while they're talking. Mmm.

And later, they stayed here, and here, the father of my father was born. . . . Mahambaedwa. Mahambaedwa Malungana. The father is Nkavakava, the father of Mahambaedwa is Nkavakava. . . .

R: Nkavakava's father? Ah!! I couldn't know that! [laughs] No way! I couldn't know that. He stayed in Spelonken. . . . The whole family stayed there, in Spelonken. Even, the one who went there, to Xipilongo, to Spelonken, was that brother of my father, that missionary, Dane! He went! He went there, to know the family, that family of Malungana. . . . They even say that when he arrived there, they killed a cow, to celebrate. And they told him, if you go home, go to fetch your whole family, to come here. But he didn't do it, he was used to things [in Mozambique], he stayed here until he died. . . .

They say when he arrived there—because there could be other Malunganas, you know, there. Because there are many with the same surnames. Mmm. But when they begin . . . [to recite clan praises], there are different words, here inside the xivongo. And when [Dane] got there, he asked, "I'm wandering in search of the Malungana family. But at the beginning of this xivongo, it's Mbetsa. . . ." That was for finding those Malunganas, he said, "I'm Mbetsa, Malungana," because there could be another Malungana, although not of the same family. . . . He said that they cried a lot! When he said, "Ah, he went on an adventure, that one called Nkavakava. And after that, Nkavakava had a son, called Mahambaedwa." Meanwhile, there are other Mahambaedwas there! Mmm. They gave the name Mahambaedwa, there! He too, that Nkavakava, when he married here, he began to give his children the names of that place, in his home, where he came from. Mmm. . . . To not forget the names of his family there. Eee. . . . And later, ah, [Dane] said, many cried, they said "Yes, I know that one, he left in the time of the war of Ngungunyana, and never came back again." Mmm. . . . "When they left, those two, that Nkavakava, and Mangeke, they never came back again. But we heard it said that they are in the land of
Caniçado, Guijá, it's there where they settled." Later, when [Nkavakava] died, he stayed, that Mahambaedwa, the son, who is the father of our father. And he also died. Mmm. Even, [getting excited] if I go there . . . if I was still young. I would have looked for them the same way, to know where those other Malunganas are! For them to know me, that I'm their family, through Nkavakava. . . .

H: Do you know the name of Nkavakava's wife, the mother of Mahambaedwa?

R: Mm! No, nothing [trying to remember, whispering to herself]. Mm, nothing. Mahambaedwa—ah, now I remember. It's coming, the name. The wife of Nkavakava, it's *Nsengenyana*. Nsengenyana . . . the mother of Mahambaedwa. I don't know if he had more [wives], but there was that Nsengenyana, who was the mother of Mahambaedwa. . . .

[In a later interview, Rosalina remembered that Nsengenyana's clan name was Rikhotso, and that Nkavakava did have other wives:]

R: Nkavakava settles in Guijá. He marries Nsengenyana. She gives birth to Mahambaedwa. Mmm. Well, Mahambaedwa, he marries Nzungulwana, wa ka Nhlewana. N'waMahlotela, her father is Mahlotela, they say she is N'waMahlotela, at [our] home. But her own name, her birth name, is Nzungulwana. Because her namesake came here the other day, when I wasn't here. That daughter of my sister-in-law, they gave her that name of our grandmother, Nzungulwana. . . .

H: Do you know if Nkavakava had other wives besides Nsengenyana?

R: No, I never managed to learn that. [thinks a minute] No, wait. Nkavakava had Nsengenyana, he had—they even gave that name to Elena [Rosalina's brother's daughter]—he had *N'waXichiwana*. Eeh. There was *N'waXichiwana*, there was—[thinks a minute, mumbling to herself]. It will come. Yah. It's here. He has Nsengenyana, he has *N'waXichiwana*, he has *Xihalatana*. It's too bad, I can't remember their clan names. Eh, he also has Vuyazana. Nsengenyana, N'waXichiwana, Xihalatana, Vuyazana. Yah. . .

R: . . . To know something, it's when you ask. . . . When you're sitting with the mothers, there, in conversation, talking. And I too, I was always, I was really curious, you know! [laughs]

H: So, these things about the Malungana family, who told you these things?

R: It's my mother.

H: Your mother? About the Malungana family too?

R: Eee! Malungana, eeh! My mother told me everything, and I, I too wanted that so that I would also know her family. [laughs] I was a pain, you know! I'm at her foot, bothering Mama—it was good, it was good for me because now I know some things [emphatic]. Mmm. I even heard that Nkavakava . . . I heard that [he had] three [daughters]. The mothers, I don't know. I know that, there was [slows down, thinking], *Madinge*, there was *N'wakuwuwu*, there was *Monasse*. . . . The daughters of Nkavakava. The sisters of Mahambaedwa. . . . I even managed to know [the names of] her daughters, that *N'wakuwuwu*. Because, the daughters were Magayisa, and Matshwele, those daughters of *N'wakuwuwu*, who is the daughter of Nkavakava. Now, Monasse, even Madinge too, I've already forgotten their children. I've forgotten. . . . Eh, I know, now I remember. . .

"Now I remember"—in this recurring phrase, and the memories it evokes, Rosalina's account exemplifies women's tellings of clan history in a number of ways. Vague on matters of politics, warfare, and the territorialization of the landscape associated with these masculine domains of her ancestors' history, Rosalina was happy to glide past such details ("Who knows where!") in order not to lose her momentum. Yet her story always stopped abruptly when she felt it necessary to discuss ancestral kinfolk, particularly Malungana wives and daughters, even if it meant losing her narrative thread. Nkavakava and Mangeke's identity in relation to Nzungunyana, for instance, is less important to Rosalina than their relationship as brothers; and the specific names of the chieftaincies where the two men settled concern her less than the fact that they separated, found land that they "liked," married local women, and settled down to
father the children and grandchildren who make up her paternal family tree. Moreover, the temporal skips in this account, especially the back-and-forth movement between her great-grandfather’s migration story and the story of her uncle Dane’s journey to Spolenken, indicate that time is not the central axis around which Rosalina organizes her memories of her family’s past. Indeed, it seems that the events or episodes in Rosalina’s narrative of family history are linked not by chronological ordering but by relationships among people: recalling Nkavakava and Mangeke’s relatives who stayed in Spolenken, Rosalina remembers her uncle’s encounter with Malungana kin there; summoning up the names of Nkavakava’s daughters prompts her to list their children as well. This manner of connecting herself to history through kin names is also implicitly gendered, for while Rosalina portrays her uncle’s actual search to “know” their clan forefathers as something she too would do if she were a man, it matters more to her that she “knows” her paternal relatives by name, as her mother taught her.

Perhaps the most telling examples of women’s memories of clan history, however, are the exceptionally detailed xivongo narratives offered by the elderly daughters of two former colonial chiefs. The legitimacy of each of these chieftaincies has been challenged during the twentieth century, and it may be that the tenuousness of their family’s political authority is what prompted these women to give unusually loquacious responses to questions about the history of their clan. Yet while both had reasons to reproduce masculine xivongo traditions focused on ancestral migrations and chiefly genealogy, their narratives departed from official versions of clan history in noticeably gendered ways. The most locally well-known case involves Talita Mundlovu, daughter of Kwambate Mundlovu, who from 1934 to 1958 served as regulo of the chieftaincy that still bears his name in the current Posto Administrativo (PA) of Mapulanguene. Kwambate’s grandfather, Munyamana (Mathye) Mundlovu, was appointed by the Portuguese as the first regulo here in 1897, as a reward for having revealed the hiding place of Maguiguana Khosa—then en route to the Transvaal, running from Portuguese troops after the rebel army’s defeat at the battle of Maconte—of the colonial military commander Mousinho de Albuquerque. Before 1897, according to early Portuguese reports, the autochthonous population of this area (predominantly members of the Mukavele clan) had been governed for some time by a chief of the Rikhotso, this clan having immigrated along with the Khosa from the region of present-day Natal in the early eighteenth century. (The Mathye-Mundlovu are believed to have followed from the same starting-place at a later date.)

Their authority doubly compromised by their status as outsiders and their dependence on the Portuguese, the first Mundlovu chiefs faced bitter opposition from local Mukavele and Khosa families, a problem that interfered with Portuguese attempts to govern the area throughout the colonial period, and whose legacy of interfamilial tension persists to this day. As an elderly local man, Ernesto Mathye, reported to a Mozambican journalist in 1996, Maguiguana’s vengeful spirit returned to kill Munyamana, his successor Hodeya, and other members of the chief’s family (the exact cause of death is not specified, though it was probably some kind of illness). The alleged killings were only brought to a halt after Kwambate consulted a diviner (n’anga) and arranged the necessary antidote: the sacrifice of one cow, and the dedication of a young girl—Kwambate’s daughter, one of Talita’s sisters—to the spirit of the assassinated rebel. In 1923, after Portuguese officials learned of these ongoing battles, they decided to build a monument to commemorate Maguiguana at the site of his death. Every year since then, the Mundlovu chief has conducted a ceremony at this site to honor the slain soldier. In 1996, however, as the Mozambican government prepared to celebrate the 99th anniversary of Maguiguana’s death, tensions between the Mundlovu and Khosa families erupted once again in a dispute over which group should preside over the ceremony. Here, Talita herself enters the “official” story. Taking advantage of the media attention to publicly air another Mundlovu grievance related to Maguiguana—this one against the current Renamo government—Ernesto Mathye informed the journalist that his mother (Talita) had fallen ill because, according to a n’anga, Maguiguana was angry that five Frelimo soldiers, killed by Renamo during the war, were buried beside the rebel’s plot and neither the chefe de posto nor the provincial governor was doing anything to remove the bodies to a more acceptable location.
Talita's rendition of this story of the coming-to-power of the Mundlovu clan, on the other hand, highlights characters and conflicts that do not even appear in accounts such as the one offered, for public consumption, by her son. In her narrative, the pivotal events take place not between Maguiguana, local chiefs, and the Portuguese commander, but between Maguiguana, Munyamana, and the young women living in Munyamana's homestead, which was located close to the rebel's hiding place. According to her, Maguiguana drove Munyamana to betray him because he was a "bandit" (xikevengo), constantly trying to seduce Munyamana's daughters and wives when they delivered food to him or when in the evenings Maguiguana left the tree where he was concealed and visited Munyamana's in search of female company. Even Talita's account of her forefathers' efforts to overcome local resentment after 1897 emphasizes different details than official Portuguese or Mundlovu versions of the story, focusing on the journeys her grandfather Hodeya and, later, her father's counselor (his father-in-law) Xipembene Chauke took to "Vecha" ("Bvesha"), in order to pay homage to the VaKwena so they would "send rain" to Mapulanguene. Talita spoke at some length about how the Mundlovu chiefs gave tribute (kuluva) to the VaKwena during this period, her grandfather Hodeya during his regular trips to "the hills" (tinthaveni) to ask for rain and her more "Europeanized" father by sending Xipembene as his messenger. When Xipembene died, probably in the 1940s, Kwambate began to appeal for rain through local diviners instead—a shift that suggests that colonial control over African movement (and European configurations of political authority) may only have begun to solidify in Mapulanguene around this time. For Talita, in other words, political skirmishes and ceremonies to honor the spirits of dead Gaza soldiers or protect the lives of Mundlovu chiefs were less memorable than the measures taken by her forefathers to ensure that their land was fertile and that their subjects "lived well" (kuhanya), without which her family's hold on power would not be secure.

Lili Xivuri is less directly related to local government structures than Talita, but like Talita her version of clan history departs markedly from formal traditions. Born circa 1910, Lili is the daughter of Mulalela Xivuri, who from 1909 to 1926 served as one of three sub-chiefs (Port. cabo or chefe de terras; Sh. nganakana) of the regulo Xikwembu Xivuri. According to oral traditions recorded by Portuguese officials, the chieftaincy of Xikwembu is part of a larger area (roughly the western half of Magude district) within which chiefly ranking and jurisdiction have been disputed almost constantly since at least the 1850s. The Xivuri people, the traditions state, are of Sotho origin and migrated to their present location in Magude from "Vecha." Clan praises situate the Xivuri homeland more precisely at a place called Mbingádzi. Relying on the chiefly genealogy recited in these praises, scholars have tentatively dated the initial Xivuri migration around the turn of the eighteenth century. The founding Xivuri ancestors are said to have been hunters who were traveling in pursuit of an eland (mhofu) when, upon reaching the lands between the N'wanetzi and Massintono Rivers (an area then inhabited by a number of small, scattered clans), they managed both to kill their quarry and to liberate the local population from an oppressive chief whose crimes included mysteriously turning beer into blood. As a reward, the Xivuri were invited to occupy the land and become the new chiefs.
The genealogy of Xivuri rulers immediately after this migration varies across published versions of the tradition. However, all versions agree on the chain of events from the 1820s on that resulted in the political divisions the Portuguese incorporated into their administration after defeating Ngungunyana in 1895. Makote, the Xivuri chief at the time of the first Nguni incursions, lost many of his people to Nguni attacks and then became an Nguni vassal himself. During the Gaza succession war (1858-62), the Xivuri sided with Mzila against his brother Mawewe and had to flee with Mzila to the Transvaal to escape Mawewe’s armies. In their absence, the Xivuri land was occupied by chief Mechangana, an interloper from south of the Sabié River, until with the help of a neighboring chief the Xivuri (then under chief Xinyakanyaka) were reinstalled at their former site. After Xinyakanyaka’s death, tensions mounted between his two sons—successor Xichatana-Piko and younger brother Mamangana—until Ngungunyana divided the Xivuri land between the two men, granting the largest portion to Mamangana. With the murder of Maguiuana in 1897, Mamangana fled to the Transvaal along with many other loyal Nguni vassals from the Magude area, leaving his younger brother Xikwembu to reign in his place. Xikwembu, like Xichatana-Piko, subsequently affirmed his status as a vassal of the Portuguese, thereby bringing the two Xivuri regadados officially under the jurisdiction of the colonial “Uanetzi Military Command.”

Xichatana-Piko was succeeded in 1914 by his son Ximonyana, whose name is used to refer to this chieftaincy today, just as “Xikwembu” is still used for the area originally given to Mamangana. In the years before his death, though, Xichatana-Piko began to claim Xikwembu’s territory, at the same time as Mamangana (still in the Transvaal) began to send messages declaring his prior rights to his younger brother’s land. The legacy of this fraternal struggle over chiefly power was still plaguing local administration in late 1996, and revolved particularly around whether Xikwembu was an autonomous chiefdom or should still be considered subordinate to Ximonyana.

What is not clear from published versions of Xivuri history are the issues most relevant to Lili herself: how it happened that Xikwembu’s chieftaincy was subdivided among the supreme chief (hosi) and three subordinate chiefs (sing. nganakana), one of whose descendants was her father Mulalela; and how the balance of power and jurisdiction among these four authorities has fared during the colonial and postcolonial periods. These questions, rather than affairs at the highest levels of Xivuri, Gaza or colonial government, lie at the heart of the narrative Lili offered when we asked about her clan’s history. Although Lili’s version follows the broad outlines of the traditions summarized above, the characters and events she puts in the foreground indicate her political preoccupations as the oldest living descendant (at least, in Magude) of the Xikwembu chiefly line. On one level, Lili’s story serves as a political charter justifying her father’s—and today her nephew Julius’—right to chiefly status subordinate only to the hosi of Xikwembu. Her telling of clan history identifies four originary Xivuri siblings, including one sister who is the ancestor of the Ximonyana chiefs who have continued to claim primacy over all Xivuri land. Lili names three brothers—Massinge, Mahumana, Dzevula—as the founding ancestors, respectively, for the sub-chiefs Nhiuana and Thongana (the current name for the sub-chieftaincy formerly ruled by Lili’s father) and Xikwembu himself. However, her claim that Massinge and Mahumana were the first Xivuri arrivals from Vecha (or “Laute”) to the area she refers to as “ka Mudaka”—the ones who conquered the despotic chief, Machingele—may be intended to assert these younger siblings’ right to govern as equals of their elder brother and sister, a message she reinforces by reminding us that the four were uterine siblings, bound by the closest of family ties. Moreover, her dating of the subdivision of Xikwembu at the moment of the original Xivuri occupation of ka Mudaka stakes a firm foundational claim for her own lineage by erasing any role the Portuguese, Gaza rulers, or intervening Xivuri chiefs may have played in spuriously elevating it to power.

But Lili’s narrative also departs from the “official story” in a number of significant ways. However out-of-the-ordinary her experiences and perspective may be as a member of a politically well-connected family, Lili’s memories of her clan’s origins are rich with information not present in published or male-narrated accounts, and are remarkably consistent with those of non-chiefly women in their thick interweaving of domestic and quotidian detail—and concerns typically associated with female responsibility for the day-to-day demands of community well-being—into a tale ostensibly centered on political conquest. Like Rosalina Malungana, she waves off questions asking her to specify time and place. Like Talita Kwambate, the moral center of her story is the ceaseless battle between “health” and “suffering,” and chiefs’ responsibility to safeguard the physical welfare of their subjects or risk
overthrow by more beneficently-inclined (or more powerful) outsiders. Like Lise Nsambane, she
sets a stage in which everyday household objects such as mats, baskets, pots, and awls figure
prominently, and organizes the central events of her narrative around verbs associated with the
homestead (*nyanga*) and feminine labor: drinking and cooking beer, building fires, plastering
the mud walls of thatch huts. Like Teasse Xivuri and Albertina Ubisse, Lili's story evokes land,
whether in the sense of "country" (*tiko*) or "soil" (*misava*), not merely as abstract political
territory but as a tangible entity whose properties for farming (or survival in general) are
uppermost in immigrants’ minds. This manner of conceptualizing the landscape was echoed in
Lili's response to my asking where she herself was born. Her answer, "*nthhaveni*" (locative for
*nthava*, a type of sandy, grey soil), could have referred to any number of places in Magude
district or indeed southern Mozambique, and is specific only in the sense that it divides the land
into parcels according to food-production potential. 60

However, it is where Lili’s telling of her clan history departs from those of other
women—notably, in the relative unimportance it attaches to marriage as a mechanism of
political legitimation and social bonding between immigrant paternal ancestors and the
autochthonous community where they settled—that we find the most useful clues to the
meanings of *xivongo* history for women. Here her account more or less conforms to dominant
versions of the Xivuri story in which the grateful subjects of Machingle offer the two brothers a
choice of land or "girls" as a reward for freeing them, and the heroes unhesitatingly—indeed,
jubilantly—choose the former. The centrality of this image in justifying the Xivuri takeover
along with the fact that Lili (again, unlike other women we interviewed) learned this story from
her father and uncles instead of her female elders may explain this unusual sidelong of
marriage in her *xivongo* story. Yet if Lili does not challenge or reformulate the official version of
her patrilineal past in such a way as to stress the importance of marriage (and, by implication,
women) in establishing Xivuri claims to place and power, when she recalls *female*
ancestors—on either side—the relationship between marriage, place and identity surges into
view.

When I asked about her mother’s background, for instance, Lili stated briefly (almost tersely)
that her mother’s name was Machun’wasse Macheke, that she was born in Musapa, and that
she was Muhlengwe. But Lili’s demeanor perceptibly changed in response to my next question
about how her mother and father happened to meet and marry. "They come," she pronounced
firmly, bending her frail upper body to trace a line in the sand and repeat a story she had
obviously told before. "In that time, they’re seizing people for Ngungunyana. Well, they flee
from that war, they draw up their clothes, they come here. They come and find each other
over there, in Mahumana. Mmm." By "they," Lili meant Machun’wasse’s siblings and their
mother, Dumakute Mbhumi, who were running (*kutsutuma*) along with other people to
escape Ngungunyana’s soldiers. Mulalela—a Gaza Nguni vassal, probably en route to or from a
raid or battle himself—“found them on the road,” took the refugees home, and eventually
married Machun’wasse. In her brief synopsis of her mother’s and grandmother’s refugee story,
which in form and content resembles the origin-and-migration plots of men’s *xivongo*
paragraphs, what is perhaps most surprising is Lili’s manner of recounting what appears to be a
phenomenon well-studied by southern Mozambique’s historians: the capture of indigenous
women from raided villages to serve as "slave wives" for Gaza soldiers in the later years of
Nguni rule. Scholarly accounts of "slave" (*nhloko*) marriage stress the exploited, oppressed,
and rightless status of such women and their children, who were sought to enlarge the Gaza
ruling class and to provide elite Nguni or acculturated "Tsonga" men with a means of
accumulating wealth and attracting followers. 63 Yet Lili did not call her mother a "slave,"
portraying her instead as a refugee whose own self-driven actions ("coming," "fleeing,
"drawing up [her] clothes") were responsible for Mulalela’s "finding" her on the road—an event
as fortunate for him, in Lili’s eyes, as it was for Lili’s mother. Nor did Lili ever paint her mother
as a victim of unpleasant marital circumstances. Machun’wasse’s narrativized "migration" from
Musapa ends happily in her resettlement in Mahumana and her marriage to Mulalela, and Lili’s
carefully shaped account of this event reflects her mother’s determination that it should be
remembered in precisely this way. 64

In this case, Lili’s apparent "exceptionalism" 65 among women due to her status can actually
help us to understand patterns in women’s responses to questions about family history even
when they insisted they knew nothing about the origins of their own lineage or clan. The
contrast on the one hand between Lili’s *xivongo* story and dominant versions of her clan’s
history, and on the other hand between Lili’s memories of her male and female ancestors,
suggests that as a genre, conventional xivongo narratives are less useful for remembering women's pasts than they are for remembering men's, that they cannot convey the truths of self and place most salient to feminine experience. We might go one step further, and argue that the xivongo-as-history, with its narrative gravity centered in the lives and identities of men, in fact obscures the elements of women's histories that women themselves are determined to remember—the ways they struggled to maintain a measure of autonomy and dignity in a world where they were so vulnerable, the strategies they pursued to save themselves and their children to avoid death or further loss. Machun'wasse's rendering of the events that brought her to the place where she would marry and live out her adult life, for instance, not only presents herself (and her mother) as historical actors whose initiative saves them from life-threatening circumstances, but legitimizes her place in Mahumana/Tlhongana in a way that elides (or even rejects) the possibility that she arrived there as a captive or lived there as a slave. In this sense, Machun'wasse's story is one of integration and even assimilation into her husband's culture, her status ultimately no different from any of the chief's other wives.

It is precisely this path that, according to historians, "slave wives" had to follow to ensure protection for themselves and their children. Yet significantly, Lili's pointed identification of her mother and grandmother as "Mutlengwe" seems to imply exactly the opposite. Perhaps, with their village under attack, and Dumakute's own husband absent or engaged (or lost) in battle, being "found" and taken in by Mulalela was the surest way for the refugees to avoid starvation or worse, but not necessarily a choice that required them to surrender their ethnic identity. Yet Dumakute and Machun'wasse may have had other reasons to preserve and pass on their sense of themselves as ethnically (and territorially) different from their new affines and neighbors, and to urge Lili to remember that kernel of their story. Testimony from other interviewees sheds light on this question. Women from all over Magude whose mothers, aunts or grandmothers married under similar circumstances during those terrible years of the late nineteenth century frequently made a point of stressing, simultaneously, the unproblematic nature of their foremothers' arrival and incorporation in a "foreign" community and these same women's continuing self-identification, through ethnic labelling and everyday practice, as natives of another place. Such social plasticity and ethnogeographic diversity is not found in, and cannot be conveyed through, xivongo narratives, hence most women's indifference to committing these narratives to memory, and Lili's change of register when asked about her maternal kin: as daughter of a chief, she is supposed to remember her clan's history and to respect the xivongo narrative tradition, but her recollection of her mother's experiences exposes the gendered limits of the xivongo form.

Like their mothers and grandmothers before them, interviewees clearly felt a need to assert bonds of matrilineal continuity through other kinds of family stories, ones that constructed genealogies explaining who they were and where they had come from in a way that enabled them to maintain "belonging," through women, in more than one place at a time. As the following passage from an exchange with Sara Juma illustrates, these stories were usually invoked as family origin-memories near the beginning of a first interview, in the context of my asking for the interviewee's parents' and grandparents' names: Audio  | Transcript

H: What is [your father's] name?
S: It's Ibraimo. Juma, Ibraimo. . . .
H: What is your mother's name?
S: My mother, she's Alysse. Wa ka Nthemo. . . .
H: Nthemo. I haven't heard this xivongo before.
R: Her surname? I don't know, in our area it doesn't exist. They're over on the other side—
S: Only on that other side, ka Bobi, Xinavana. . . . That was their land, ka Nthemo.
H: . . . What was your father's father's name?
S: My father's father, he's Ibraimo.
H: Do you know his xivongo?
S: Eee! His xivongo, I have no idea!
H: And he was born in Inhambane too?

S: He was born in Inhambane, eee. Mmm. The father of my father, he was a MuBanyana, from India. He was living there, they were living there, in Inhambane. Well, he courted my grandmother, the one who gave birth to my father over there in Inhambane. My grandmother who gave birth to my father, she's a MuNhambane. MuNhambane are everywhere there, in Inhambane. . . . My grandfather, then, he came to work in Inhambane. He had shops there in Inhambane. . . . My grandfather was born in India. Mmm. Because, they left from there, from India, they came to work here, just like you, senhora, are here, doing work. Well, when you arrive here, you find a husband and you have children, you're already, it's like you belong here. You no longer belong to your [home] land. That's how it is.

H: So, your father's father, he found a wife in Inhambane.

S: Mmm. Well, she accepted him, that woman. She gave birth to my father. Well, my father, he left from there, Inhambane, . . . He came here, he was the chief of the nurses . . . at the Magude hospital. He was [one of] the first nurses here . . .

H: What is the name of your mother's father? . . .

S: It's Nyangumbe. Wa ka Nthemo. He was born over there in ka Bobi, ka Nthemo . . .

H: What is your mother's name?

S: The mother of my mother, she's Nton'wasse. Wa ka Simango . . . She was born in Musapa . . . My grandfather, he found her through the war, when the men were all fighting the war. Well, he was running, with my grandmother, and all of those people in the war, those who wanted to kill them. Well, she begged him, "Nthemo! Are you leaving me here to die? You'll arrive at home, what will you say if you leave me, that they waited behind and killed me?" Well, he took her, my grandfather. He returned home with her, to his house. At his house, he didn't delay long, she became his wife right away.

H: Wow. Who told you this story?

S: It was my aunt, the sister of my mother. My mother knows it too.

H: In this story, did they say anything about how it was for her, your mother's mother, to live in a strange [i.e. unfamiliar] land, because Simango—isn't that an Ndau name?

S: Mmm . . . she was MuNdau. She even used to close—when she was angry with her husband, she closed her mouth . . . A padlock—there was a little padlock, that closed your mouth. When she was angry with her husband, she put it like this [demonstrates pinching her lips together], when she wasn't in a good mood that day, right away she took that thing, because things weren't going well . . .

H: In Shangaan, how do you say it?

S: Voboxa nomu . . . Yes, she goes and pierces her mouth, she puts a key in it. Mmm. . . . Yes, when she locks up her mouth, she's angry, she won't answer anyone. Mmm. 

H: Mmm. So her life was difficult, then?

S: It was very difficult, because she was, you know, a MuNdau, who don't, don't like to talk to anyone. Mmm. Even her food, when she eats, she grinds corn with, with that stone. Eh.

R: Not with a xihiso, not a xihiso . . . No, it's with a stone, a certain stone.

S: Stone against stone. Mmm.

H: When she went to live with her husband, she didn't change these customs?

S: She didn't change. Because her husband too, he was already used to that Shangaan way of life, which even he used here. Because even to sleep, his cushion wasn't the kind of cushion that we have now. There was a kind of
tree that they used, then they put a capulana there, to put the head [down] on that little piece of wood. It was very well made! ...

H: What's it called, in Shangaan?
S: In Shangaan, it's—[pauses to think] it's a xigarhu. . . . Because even my own grandfather, he didn't know underwear. He just used that thing, there was a thing that they made, then they used it to close up there [gestures to genitals]. To tie it up. [laughter]
H: What's this thing called?
R: It's a tinjovo. [S makes a sound indicating disagreement] It's not a tinjovo?
S: No. . . . This thing, mm! I forget, I forget, but I know it. . . . Well, it was their [underwear], those grandparents, that's what they used. Underwear, when you were one of those people long ago, you didn't use undershorts, undershorts back then were, that thing—[I forget, I forget, but I know it. . . . It's like a coconut, isn't it? [to R] A coconut, when you break it, it doesn't break in the middle. It breaks [a little off center], right? Then they put two strings there on the side, that way. And then, he wraps it around himself, wraps it like shorts. . . . Meanwhile, he just puts that little tube [i.e. penis] in there! [laughter] . . . Now, his wife just used a capulana. Up top, she didn't use anything. She just used beads, only beads, since she was a spirit medium. . . . That spirit that made me study to be a spirit medium, it's from my grandmother, from that grandmother, who gave birth to my mother. Nton'wasse, wa ka Simango.

I have quoted from this interview at length because it exemplifies so well, in its content and narrative ordering, both how women recall and tell history through names and the complex relationship between place and female historical identity. In a way similar to formal xivongo narratives, Sara defines where and whom she comes from through stories her memory attaches to her grandparents' names. Yet these stories, like other women's accounts of ethnic and clan naming, emphasize the mutability and multiplicity of place-belonging—and the centrality of marriage and reproduction in the process of moving from one place to another—instead of naturalizing territorial identity by fixing a single origin or dwelling place, as the xivongo does. Sara also, like the other women, represents boundaries of identity and community in terms of material culture and the habits of everyday life: dress, food preparation, ways of modifying female bodies. Perhaps more important, at several points in her testimony Sara makes it clear that the overarching plot of the history she tells is driven and sustained by the actions of women: her father's life begins only when his mother "accepts" the romantic overtures of the Indian merchant; her maternal grandmother persuades Nyangumbe to take her home with him (practically a marriage proposal in itself); Nton'wasse passes on stories of marital defiance and non-conformity to her daughters, who relay them to their daughters in turn; the spirits that inhabited Nton'wasse reappear in her granddaughter's body, obliging Sara to become a spirit medium despite her strong sense of herself as Muslim.

Besides weighing female agency in a way that both mirrors and subverts the androcentrism of formal clan histories, this manner of representing the ancestral sources of her life story establishes Sara's place in a matrilineal narrative of community and change—an historical version of what Ruth Behar calls a "feminine ontology," in which the world of the past is made primarily from women's knowledge, relationships, and experiences. That the parameters of this world extend far beyond the limits of a single clan, chiefdom, or "race," and that women play a critical role in mediating or dissolving the very boundaries that constitute this world, is apparent in Sara's deft weaving of an autobiographical origin story from the disparate strands of her parentage—Banyan, MuNhambane, MuNdau, MuShangaan, Muslim. Over and over, I heard that it was women who not only brokered such boundaries in the course of their life but were responsible for maintaining the intergenerational chain of transmission by handing these stories down to daughters and granddaughters. Women expressed the importance of this form of history-telling in one of two ways. Some made a point of praising their foremothers for their fulfilment of this duty, as when Lucia Ntumbo explained,
L: These things [of the past], our grandparents tell us.
H: Which grandparents? Grandfathers or grandmothers?
L: Our grandmothers. Yah!! The men, they never tell us, yah!! It's the women. Because all of these matters, we were born by whom, by whom, all the laws [milawu], we were given them by our grandmothers. Kokwana N'waGwidimira, it's she who told me.

Other women portrayed themselves as intellectually deprived if for some reason the chain had been broken before it reached them, as happened one day when my neighbor Juliana Kwinika joined Rosalina and I during an interview and, after hearing Rosalina reel off the names of her father's siblings, lamented, "Ah, you were really someone! Me, my mother, she died when I was still very small. . . . Well, what can you know then? Oh! You can't know anything."

Finally, women's attitudes toward the onomastic labels that are supposed to matter most to them also help to clarify why the women we interviewed talked about place itself the way they did. Following local conventions of place-naming, women divided the physical landscape into units delineated and named according to the person or entity using them at the time, whether an ethnic group, a clan, a chief, a commercial farmer, or even the state (e.g. postindependence state farms referred to as "ka Xitatari," "the state's place"). But beyond this shared tendency in colloquial speech, men's and women's habits of place-calling differed in significant ways. The men I interviewed took visible pride in their ability to chart their lives on a formally labelled topographical landscape. Whether they relied on Shangaan or European names, organizing the spaces of their past according to the domains of chiefs or ethnic groups, sites of noteworthy political events, or structures of capitalist production or colonial rule, men made a point of pinning down the geographic course of their life with as many official place-names as they could recall. Women, on the other hand, more often referred to the places in their past through locative terms for features of the physical landscape (e.g. combeni, by the river; khwatinini, in the woods; tinthaveni, in the hills), meaningful social spaces (e.g. masin'wini, in the field; ndyangwini, at home; vukatini, in the marital homestead), or people—usually individuals with no official political standing—known personally to them. This last point is important, for not only did women resist using formal names for places their "eyes [had] never seen"; they also deployed their catalog of imprecise and generic place-labels in ways that seemed deliberately intended to distance themselves from putatively "objective," disembodied systems developed by male elites, indigenous and foreign, to map the world around them—to refute the assumption that officially imposed place-names and boundaries could have anything to do with them.

Here again, it was women's vagueness about and resistance to official place names that pointed to the meaning of this discursive strategy. Lili Xivuri again provides a telling example in her identification of the birthplace of her paternal grandmother, Qondeya Mukavele, as "manghezeni"—"the place of English-speaking people." In this one word, Lili quietly made a number of challenging historical claims. Residents of Magude use manghezeni colloquially to refer to the strip of land stretching along the border with South Africa, extending slightly to the west and south of the Lebombs. Lili herself spent several years of her generally unhappy marriage living in an area she always referred to as "manghezeni," and locating Qondeya's origins in this place, rather than in one named for a colony or state, an African chief, a town or location, a river or some other more specific marker simultaneously highlighted Lili's enduring ties to her natal family, recalled a shared female experience of living as an outsider in one's marital home, bound the two women's lives through their common exposure to a group of whites (whites who were not, significantly, in possession of state power), and asserted a geographic continuity between Lili and her grandmother that transcended the generational and political boundaries differentiating their pasts. There is, paradoxically, a very located sense of feminine identity established when women narrate their relationship to place in this manner. If, on the one hand, women represent themselves as capable of belonging to many places in the course of their life, what grounds them in these places are the relationships—past and present—that connect them to one another, and the embodied, often mundane experiential knowledge of the landscapes in which these relational identities are based.

Names Out of Place? Mapping the Past through Personal Naming
What emerges, then, from women's memories of ethnic and clan origins is a powerful if subtle kind of narrative matriarchy—a genealogical web spun through names and naming stories that both supplements and contests the identities and communities available to women through the normative paths of patrilineal kinship. Women's practices of personal naming capture even more plainly the difficulties involved in "locating" a woman's life historically, and the complex ways in which women in Magude have claimed their own mappings of self- and placement within and against androcentric visions of their past. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, women in this area have at least two personal names (sing. vito): one they received at birth, and one they acquired later in life, typically at puberty. In addition, women routinely use kinship labels instead of proper names to refer to or address one another; in fact, some women who have lived as neighbors for many years have a hard time recalling each other's personal names, yet no trouble explaining why they use particular kinship terms for one another. Moreover, women do not restrict their use of kin names to people linked to them by ties of blood or marriage, for they also construct bonds of friendship or acquaintance in kinship terms. Such relationships are described as "vuxaka bya matinyo"—literally "kinship of the teeth," more aptly translated as "laughing kinship." Similar discursive affinities are also created through joking references to kinship based on potential connection through marriage: women married to different men might call one another "co-wife," referring to each other's husband as "ours"; a woman with a daughter might address a woman with a son as "maseve," the term used by parents whose children formally marry.

Although this practice is not restricted to women, women engage in it much more often and more vigorously than men, and are especially assertive in the creation of "laughing kinship" with visitors and strangers. According to interviewees, this behavior is due in part to the hardships imposed by virilocal marriage, and many women recalled their mothers and grandmothers teaching them that they would have to search for kinship (kulava vuxaka) when they moved to their marital home—a task that involved tracking down consanguineal relatives in the area and learning the names of local affines, but also fostering friendly ties with new neighbors in the context of daily work routines and social encounters. This extraordinarily elastic approach to kin-naming crossed social boundaries of all kinds, as reflected in the range of kin terms that were eventually applied to me: daughter, mother, aunt, grandmother, co-wife, daughter-in-law—even occasionally husband or father. Indeed, "namesake" (mavisweni) itself is a kinship category of considerable importance to women, manifested in what I initially perceived as an oddly high incidence of name duplication (or names sharing the same stem) everywhere I went in Magude, whether for European names such as Rosa (Rosalia, Rosalina) or local names such as Kondissa (Kondissana).

My initiation into women's personal-naming stories occurred with my neighbors Rosalina Malungana and Juliana Kwinika—two women introduced to me by their European names, yet who called themselves and were known publicly by other names, depending on the circumstances. Rosalina, for instance, in the interview quoted at the top of this chapter, informed me that she had a number of birth names that no one in Facazisse ever used, but these names figured in critical ways when she talked about events in other places in her past (see below). Juliana, on the other hand, was commonly addressed and referred to by her father's name (i.e. as N'waKuthotho, daughter of Kuthotho), but she was also known to a small group of women her age—like her, long-time residents of Facazisse—by her birth name, Xiyuta. The mention of this latter name never failed to send Juliana into fits of giggling, yet when I asked her where it came from, her manner immediately became very serious: "It's my mother, who names me. My mother, she names me, she says, 'She's Xiyuta, because here at home, they despise her [kunyenya]. They despise her, your mother.' Well, she names herself, she says, 'I'm Xiphukuphuku [fool], I'm Xiyuta.' It means to be despised, to be despised here at home." When I asked Juliana who still used what I newly understood to be a rather mirthless name, her mood swung back again as she told me, laughing, "Oh, not everyone! Only those who like it. . . My relatives in Guijá, they use it. And here, that Olinda, N'waXimonyana! She's happy [when she uses it]! She's happy, because my parents name me. Well, she's glad, when she sees me, she says, 'Xawani [Greetings], Xiyuta!'"

Birth names, in fact, yielded a wealth of stories from older women, illuminating female experiences, relationships, and multi-layered attachments to place sometimes as far back as the second half of the nineteenth century. In the time of interviewees' childhood, infant-naming served as a powerful moment for women's history-telling, because of women's responsibility
for every stage of the process of bringing children into the world. Whether as midwives, mothers, or female kin attending in the household or hospital at the event of a child’s birth, women possessed considerable authority when it came to selecting the name by which an infant—especially a daughter—would first be known to her birth-mother’s community. Interviewees received their birth names in one of three ways: from their mother or another woman (usually a midwife) who was present at the moment of their birth; from a diviner (n’anga) if they were colicky or cried too much, and their parents "consulted the divining bones" (kuhlaluva tinhola) to learn the cause of the baby’s distress; or from a woman (or, less often, a man) who was living in or visiting the household when the baby was born. In the first case, a baby girl might be named after the name-giver, most often the midwife positioned between the mother’s legs who delivered the infant and bathed her for the first time. Bestowing her name on the child—creating a namesake—established an enduring bond that complemented or stood in place of ties of blood or affinal kinship, since a midwife might be a female relative (usually an affine), a nsungukati from a neighboring homestead, or a female member of the staff of a mission or state hospital. Alternatively, the midwife or mother might name the child after one of her own female ancestors, in order to "wake up the dead ones, those of long ago" (kupfuxa vafi, lava khale). Or, as in Juliana’s case, the name-giver might choose a word or phrase reflecting what she considered the most salient characteristic of her life at the time of the child’s birth. These thematic names—like those of the older women for whom an infant might be named—were not gender-specific and often commemorated oppressive material circumstances or sources of interpersonal conflict, especially between the name-giver and her affines:

Naveta from kunaveta, to tempt, cause to desire something one cannot have, "because of poverty" 81
Misaveni "in the soil," because all previous children had died 82
Xikarhati from kukarhata, to bother, be annoying, because the name-giver (a neighbor who served as midwife) was "very difficult" 83
Mayalatshama "she refuses to stay," because the mother left her marital home to escape an abusive mother-in-law 84
Makungumuni "what kind of plans/plot [do they have against me]?"), because the mother, the first of three wives, "was always suffering" from the conspiratorial whispering of her co- wives 85

Junod called these birth names, given to female and male infants alike, "names of misery," describing them as "charms" meant to protect children in their vulnerable early years. 86 Women explained their purpose somewhat differently. Misse Xivuri, for instance, was given the name "Vavulayena"—"they say her"—at birth, because the name-giver believed she was blamed for everything that went wrong in her husband’s homestead:

If something difficult happens, when the husband doesn't want those problems, well, he points to one . . . of his wives, he says, "All of these things are the fault of that one." . . . So, [she says,] "They speak of me, vavula mina." . . . Well, she says, "I name this child, I say 'Vavulayena,' to lessen my bitterness [xivinta], to soothe my spirit [moya]." . . . It's because these things were in her heart. Well, there are many people here at her vukatini. When they see something, they say, "It's your fault." Even if she doesn't know anything about it. Maybe a child is growing thin, "S/he was made sick by you." Well. Well, I’m born, and she says, "It’s me, Vavulayena." She says, "Anything, anything, they give it to [i.e. blame] me." 87

In one respect, Misse’s explanation of her birth name simply confirms what one anthropologist has called the "diary-keeping function" of African personal names. 88 Misse was born circa 1938 in Xibuana, a sub-district of Kwambate regulado, into a large homestead consisting of three Xivuri brothers, their wives and children, and at least one elderly woman, the sister of Misse’s paternal grandmother. The woman who named Misse, Muhlavasse Valoi, was the wife of Misse’s father’s eldest brother, and had moved to her marital household from some distance away. At the time of Misse’s birth, Muhlavasse was the "great nhlangwana [adult woman/mother]" of the household, senior by age and length of marital residence, and thus
theoretically the most powerful of the Xivuri wives. As the wife of Misse's paternal uncle, she would have been considered one of Misse's "mothers" as well. Acting as midwife for the birth of her brother-in-law's child evidently gave Muhlavasse an opportunity to voice feelings of resentment over her treatment by her junior co-wives, many of whom came from nearby communities and in whose eyes Muhlavasse may always have seemed an outsider—an attribute that would have made her status as first among the generational cohort of women especially unpalatable. These experiential details are certainly preserved in Misse's birth name, and Muhlavasse's view of life in her vukatini will be remembered as long as there are women named Vavulayena in Misse's family to pass it on.

Yet the "diary"-like details of this story were not what Misse most wanted to communicate in our interview. What she recalled initially and most vividly was the pain of the "bitterness" suffered by her aunt, and the power of naming—and, through naming, the creation of a namesake bond with her niece—to cool the "burning" (kuhisa) in Muhlavasse's heart. Indeed, recounting this story appeared to serve a similar purpose for Misse herself, her empathetic and emotionally charged recital of the circumstances surrounding her birth name offering both relief from the burden of troubling memories and a thread of connection, through remembering her past, with us.

The importance of child-naming as an act of memory-telling, and a site where women could actively intervene in the making of feminine identities and communities, was again articulated most fully by Rosalina Malugiana. In our first interview, Rosalina called herself "Buxeni" in the course of telling the story of her mother's death, which occurred in Facazisse. When we sat down for our second session, I asked Rosalina the meaning of this name and how she came to have it: Audio | Transcript

This name [Buxeni], my aunt, my father's sister, had seven dead children. She got pregnant, she gave birth to a dead child, sometimes it was aborted, it came out before the day it was supposed to be born. Others died when they were one, one and a half years old. And she wasn't happy, going around this way. This name, it means that she was a chicken that lays rotten eggs. . . . And she said, "Here in this house, I'm like a chicken that lays rotten eggs. So my name, I'm Buxeni." It was she who said that—it's not the name her parents gave her, it was she who gave that name [to herself], because she was always so sad. Mmm, [because] "In this house, here at home, in the company of my husband, I'm not happy. I'm always this way, I'm always unhappy." . . .

And later when I was born, she gave me this name, because she's my father's sister. . . . She was older than my father. And later when I was born, she said, "Eh, all right, this child who was born, I'll give her the name Buxeni. . . . I'm giving her this name, but I'm not really happy about it. She might also give birth to dead children, like her aunt." Mmm. And later my grandmother, the mother of my father, she said, "Ah, you can't give up [i.e. not give] that name, give up naming her the name you're thinking of. Because you too, this name Buxeni, it wasn't I who gave it to you. It was you who decided, 'I'm Buxeni, I'm rotten, I'm rotten, like the chicken who doesn't have children.'" She said it that way, as a joke. So then, I stayed with the name Buxeni. But later [Buxeni] said, "It's not only this name that I'm giving you, from my not bearing children there, at my husband's home. All of my names, I'm giving you." Because she had three names. . . . They were, eeh, Buteyani, Buteyani. Mmm, she was Buteyani. And another, she was Xivoningi. Xivoningi is a mirror, because she was very pretty. Eeh. . . . And then, there was a name from Ngungunya. That is, in the time of Ngungunya, even in the race of Ngungunya, they had that name, Sogabamati. Sogabamati. This one they gave to a beautiful woman. Mati, Sogabamati, means that she's beautiful, like clear water. It's what they said, when they were joking, when they were happy to see a beautiful child. . . . So my aunt, she was Buxeni, that one who doesn't make children. She was Buteyani. She was Sogabamati. . . . Eeh!! She liked me, because I was her namesake. . . . It was she who gave me these names. Buxeni, Buteyani, and Xivoningi, and Sogabamati.
... There was another woman, ... who married a grandfather on my father's side [i.e., one of Rosalina's father's father's brothers]. Mmm. And later, she gave me another name, of hers. She said, "Well, even though she already has many names, of this house [laughter], from her aunt, I also am asking to give her mine. Even though I wasn't born here, I just married here, and came here, but I must give my name, because I also work here. I haven't had many children here, in your house. Therefore, I am asking to also give a name to this child."

Then, my grandmother, the mother of my father, then she said, "Ah, why not give it to her? You can give her your name, because you also belong here, to this house. . . . That one here, my daughter, she gave all her names, and you can too, if you want, you can give her your name." And then she gave me the name N'waMboana. . . . Later, there are some people who—especially in my mother's family, eeh! They really liked to call me N'waMboana, they liked to call me Xivonini, and Sogabamati. . . . Eeh. They really liked that, my mother's sisters, they called that name. 93

In this story of her birth names, Rosalina articulates a set of core themes that resonated through all interviews with women on this subject. Like the name-givers or namesakes of many interviewees, Buxeni and N'waMboana were both paternal kin for Rosalina: Buxeni in the influential role of father's elder sister (hahane), and N'waMboana as a kokwana (grandmother) brought into Rosalina's father's homestead through marriage to his paternal uncle. Since according to the norms of virilocal marriage, no married adult woman lives in the muti of her father's family (and indeed might live a long distance from her natal home), the creation of a namesake bond with a younger woman presents a way to strengthen existing ties of blood or affinal kinship, and to foster a lifelong relationship of mutual affection and assistance that will, necessarily, stretch across geographic space. The expectations of name-kinship include visiting, gift-exchange, and the sharing of intimate secrets and moral counsel. Rosalina, for example, made a point of visiting her aunt Buxeni regularly throughout her adult life, always with some kind of gift in hand; and her long narrative of her mavisweni's death—for which Rosalina could not be present—is saddened by remorse and replete with examples of how she tried to compensate for her absence by sending women friends as messengers back and forth between her residence in Lourenço Marques and the elder Buxeni's home in Moamba. 94 Another Facazisse resident of Rosalina's age, Talvina Khosa, was named at birth after one of her father's older sisters, a woman called Xigumanyana. When I asked Talvina what kind of relationship she had with her namesake, she said Xigumanyana was the woman who "gave [her] the laws of marriage"—a critical moment in a young woman's life when one nsungukati is chosen to instruct the bride-to-be in proper sexual behavior and the rules of conduct at her vukatini. 95

Birth names, then, performed a number of interrelated functions for interviewees. In the simplest sense, they bound an infant's identity to a constellation of women who for reasons of their own had a stake in the child's birth. They also gave mnemonic shape to key fragments of women's experience, preserving the name-giver's version of "what happened" at a particular moment in her life so that all who bore the name—and all who knew its story—would be forewarned in case they found themselves in a similar situation. For Rosalina's aunt Buxeni, the act of passing her name to her niece enabled her to voice—and, by voicing, commemorate and perhaps psychologically overcome—a part of her experience that had caused her great unhappiness at her marital home, thus both ensuring that her memory would live on (as lesson) in Rosalina and protecting her niece by naming the cause of her sorrow. 96 Buxeni's insistence on giving Rosalina her three birth names as well, with their flattering implications and claim to elite Nguni status, suggests an effort to recast her legacy in a positive light, much like N'waMboana's effort to assert her value against her structural weakness as an affine in the Malungana household by asking whether she could contribute a name to the baby girl. Implicit in the two cases is women's belief in the capacity of names to transfer personal qualities or to provide a role model for female descendants—to arm girls with history so they would be better equipped to ward off suffering (kuvaviseka, kułupeka) in adulthood.

Marta Mabunda made this notion explicit when she told the story of her extraordinarily brave paternal grandmother, Maqiviso—a "warrior," according to Marta, who "fought like a man": "Even the child who is born, and they name her that name, eh! She's trouble!" 97 Socially and spatially reaching over or around the men who formally define their place in the world, women
use first names to construct matrilineal chains of memory and identity grounded in networks of female kin—broadly defined—rather than in geographic space, their power not fixed in immovable points on the physical landscape but in the presence of people who share the knowledge that gives a name its meaning. Thus Rosalina is “Buxeni” (or any of her other birth or puberty names) principally in her recollections of experiences among her maternal relatives, wherever she may find them, and not in present-day Facazisse, where she has no immediate family and has been a part-time resident only since the early 1970s. Juliana, who married into Facazisse in the 1930s, is rarely addressed by her xilungu name; men call her N’waKuthotho, after her father, while most women call her “grandmother” or some other generic kin term. For a small group of local women her age, however, Juliana is “Xiyuta” or “Xiphukuphuku”—names that may have expressed “bitterness” for her mother, but that seemed to bring great—and mildly subversive—pleasure to her and the women who use them, consciously evoking their friend’s maternal heritage in the same way the other names denote her marital status or patrilineal descent. This circle of friends, whose assistance has been crucial to Juliana’s survival since the beginning of the war, were the “family” she found after her marriage into Facazisse, and their knowledge of her name-history was an important foundation for this kinship.

A similar kind of onomastic matrilineage is established through a practice Junod, around the turn of the century, described as the most frequent method of infant-naming among the Tsonga, and through which many of the eldest interviewees had received their birth name: consulting the divining bones to obtain the name of an ancestor so as to kupfuxa (wake up) that ancestor’s spirit in the person of the child. Junod makes no reference to gender in his discussion of this type of birth-naming, noting only that “the parents . . . go . . . to consult the bones. A name is proposed, and if the bones in falling do not give a favorable indication, another is tried till they feel sure that the die ‘has spoken.’”

Women, however, depicted this procedure as deeply gendered, with a mother’s ability to identify ancestors by name in response to questions from the diviner (n’anga) a vital factor in determining not only whether a sickly baby would survive but the health (physical and spiritual) of all her descendants:

[Marta has just finished telling the story of Maqiviso, and I ask whether she has told this story to her own children and grandchildren:]

M: Mmm. I told them. Because I will die, well, they’ll stay behind, and what will they do? . . . If I don’t tell them, they’ll remain, suffering. This ancestor so-and-so? She says, “Me, I don’t know him.” . . .

H: And do they like to hear, and to learn these things?

M: If they don’t listen, they will suffer. They want to consult the divining bones, they say, “There is an ancestor so-and-so,” she says, “I don’t know.” It’s necessary when she is asked by the tinhlolo. Well, they say, “This ancestor so-and-so, do you know him?” Well, when you don’t know, you say, “I don’t know,” well, won’t you suffer?

R: You suffer.

M: Hah! Me, I sure know them, I know them . . . [If they don’t know the names of ancestors], they won’t name the child. Because, they go “eee” [demonstrates throwing bones]. You want ancestors, to be named. "Who is your ancestor?" You say, "I don't know." Mmm. Ancestors, truly, there are lots of them . . . . Well, when you know, he says, "There is ancestor so-and-so," you know him. "Ancestor so-and-so," you know him, "ancestor so-and-so"—well, they say "Ah-heh! Name [the child] with the name of that ancestor." . . . To live, indeed, is to die. . . .

H: And did your mother tell you about these things about her way of life?

M: Mmm. She tells me. She tells me that, “At my home, there is so-and-so, there is so-and-so, there is so-and-so. My brothers and sisters, they are so-and-so, so-and-so.” Just now [my sister] gave birth to a child, she [the mother] died. I say, “I’ll go to the diviner.” They say, “Who is this ancestor? Who is this ancestor?” Well, they seize [the name of] my mother’s brother. And me, he’s sitting there with me, that baby. [The diviner] says, “That brother?” I know them. Mmm. I could forget those names from that other [father’s?] family. But truly, my mother’s family, s/he who was born there, I know them. Mmm.
Other women stressed not the gender of the parent who sought the help of the diviner, but the
dangerous power of the female ancestor whose need to be commemorated in the name of a
newborn child provoked chronic crying or ill-health in the infant until the ancestor was satisfied.
In households afflicted with more serious interpersonal problems, female ancestors wanted
more than simply to be "awakened" in the child's name. Talita Mundlovu, eldest daughter of
the unpopular Kwambate regulo, received the birth-name Nyankwame because, according to
the "bones," this "spirit" (zikwembu)—an ancestor on her father's side—was making her sick in
order to communicate that she wanted Talita's father to construct a small spirit-hut (ndhumba)
and offer a sacrifice (kupahla) there for her. 102 Another woman, Jane Mundlovu, born out of
wedlock because her mother was forbidden to marry the man she loved, similarly fell ill as a
baby and did not recover until her mother's parents consulted the tinhloko. There, they learned
the name of the maternal ancestor-spirit who wanted to "wake up" in Jane and be recognized
through her own kupahla ceremony. 103

Of all the women interviewed, only a handful told birth-naming stories that departed from the
above patterns. But these exceptions shed light on two important facets of the history of
women's naming practices in twentieth-century Magude: creeping European (xilungu) influence
on the names given to infant girls and the effects of this cultural change on the meaning of
birth-naming for women; and a related shift in the second category of female names, those
adopted by girls around the time of puberty or later. Women born in and around colonial urban
centers such as Magude town from circa 1910 on continued for the most part to receive African
birth names. However, the manner in which they received these names began to alter in ways
that showed some of the subtle gender effects of the Portuguese presence. Increasingly,
infants were more likely to be named by a man than a woman, and name-givers were more
likely to be unrelated to the infant. Moreover, the act of name-giving began to happen more
often in circumstances sufficiently removed from women's everyday experience that
narrating—or even remembering—this moment of identity-creation was difficult later in life.
Albertina Tiwana, for instance, was given her first birth name, N'waNchavo, by her paternal
grandmother, who helped Albertina's mother give birth and was "looking after" her
daughter-in-law (n'wengi) while Albertina's father was in South Africa. But Albertina received a
second infant name from a male employee at the colonial administrative office in Magude town
one day when her mother stopped in to see the "commander," Ximbangwana, with her new
baby on her back:  

The commander, he says, "You, mamana, that child, you had it with a white
man." Mama, she says, "Mm-mm [no], the mother is nthohe [light-skinned],
from her father. He's light-skinned. But I had her with a black man." Well, he
says, "Me too, I'm light-skinned." Well, he goes, and me, I live, when I was
small. . . . Well, I grow up, I don't know why I'm Ximbangwana. They say,
"[Your mother] goes to receive your father's wages. When he's in Joni. Well, he
leaves, he works, he goes. Well, your mother, she stays, she receives those
wages." [Ximbangwana], he sees me, he names me. 104

According to this account, an African colonial official with no ties to Albertina's family or to the
physical event of her birth claimed the right to name the baby girl solely by virtue of the shared
(spurious) privilege of lighter skin and his status as an accessory of the colonial state, the
person on whom Albertina's mother depended to receive her husband's remittances from South
Africa. The name Ximbangwana thus bound Albertina's childhood self simultaneously to "Joni"
and to the Portuguese government, a relationship she downplayed in the interview both by
stating "I don't know why I'm Ximbangwana" and by keeping her explanation for this name
uncharacteristically flat and brief.

A rather different though perhaps more dramatic example involves two sisters who grew up in
ka Ntmane (in Manhiça district, along the coast), and who married into Magude district a few
years apart. Tercina and Talita Ntmane, both born in the 1930s, received their birth names
from their father, a prominent member of the Swiss Mission church in Manhiça. When asked
about their birth names—Hlonipana and Nyankwame—neither woman had much to say beyond
"I was named by [kuthyiwa] my father." 105 Like Albertina towards the name Ximbangwana,
the two sisters were strangely indifferent to or detached from the history of their birth name, as
though the identity it established had very little to do with them. Indeed, their very brevity
(compared to the long, lively stories we heard from other women) and their use of the passive
form of kuthya (to name, give a name) set their birth-naming narratives strikingly apart from other interviewees, whose language consistently portrayed name-givers as active makers of feminine historical memory and identity through names.

This unusual emotional distance from their birth names, conveyed as clearly through narrative style as narrative content, is best explained in the context of changing patterns in a second category of personal names, which interviewees acquired at puberty—or, as many women put it, when they began to "develop breasts" (kuphuhla mawele). Junod wrote, in the early twentieth century, that birth names were "abandoned later on, generally at the circumcision school, or at the age of puberty, in the clans where the custom of circumcising has disappeared; boys and girls then choose new names." Though he believed that male circumcision had vanished from southern Mozambique a long time previously, Junod described continuing female "nubility" or initiation (khomba) rites practised among the "Northern clans," a group that would have included residents of the Magude area; it was in this context, he implies, that girls were continuing to adopt a second name. Yet Junod, like later scholars, devoted more attention to men's naming habits among the "VaThonga." In a separate appendix on "Thonga" names, Junod used the cases of two of his male informants to illustrate men's acquisition of new first names not only at puberty but with Christian baptism and entry to a new occupation, whether traditional (e.g. divination) or in the service of whites. Similarly, Patrick Harries emphasizes the individual and strategic, even opportunistic, nature of the act of taking on a European first name among Mozambican mine workers on the Rand, whether the origins of men's xilungu names were Biblical (e.g. Daniel, Elias), military (e.g. Captain), material (e.g. Spoon, Djass for "jacket"), or commercial (e.g. Sixpence, Shilling). According to these accounts, even the most popular names—Jim, Sam, Bob, Jack—appear to have been chosen with highly individualistic goals in mind: currying favor with superiors (earthly and divine), moving up the job ladder, impressing women with an "exotic" title, securing a place in a turbulent and often baffling new world.

Women could not have described their own self-naming experiences more differently, although this phenomenon too has changed in meaningful ways in the last century. The eldest interviewees, particularly women who had grown up with little or no contact with missionary or colonial schools, told animated and remarkably similar stories about how, as one among a group of girls of the same age ("fellow girls," tintombi or vanhwanya kulorhi), they decided one day that they "no longer wanted to be called by that childhood name," because that name "showed scorn" (kunyenya) and they needed a new, "beautiful" name to show "respect" (xichava) for the elevated status of "girlhood" (vuntombi). In explaining this event, all of the women stressed their active agency in redefining themselves: "I was not named by anyone," or "I named myself, me alone." However, even while emphasizing their autonomy these women represented this moment of their life in forcefully collective terms, something they accomplished as a cohort or community of friends relying on shared opinions about which names were sufficiently "beautiful" to adopt. As in Albertina Tiwana's account, this process required each girl to submit the name she liked to the others for approval, so that in their memories of this event it was also appropriate to claim, as every woman did with us, that "we named each other" or "we named ourselves:"

[I ask about Albertina's reference in a previous interview to another name, Injuassana]

A: Eh, that Injuassana. It's this way. It's the name of my girlhood, my xilandin name. . . . [B]ecause we were girls, we're playing together, this one she says her name, this one names herself, this one names herself. Well, me, they ask me, I say, "Me, I'm Injuassana." I name myself. . . . I don't abandon that name my parents gave me. Well, I name myself, the name Injuassana. For us to get along together, we girls. And they, they tell me, my grandmothers, the names. Mmm. They say, "You, what do you name yourself? [R joins in:] Your girlhood name?" Well, I say it, I say, "I'm Injuassana. . . ." Mmm. Well, we don't call each other by those names of our birth. Mmm. They show contempt, those names. They have no respect. Respect, because we call each other those names that we name ourselves. . . .

H: Why Injuassana, why did you choose this name?
Albertina's pluralizing of the names at the end of this passage hints at another dimension of meaning for women's puberty names. While birth names linked daughters' identities to previous generations of female kin, girls' puberty names at this time were consciously intended to foster social connections among peers, creating namesake bonds—based on the spatially common experience of girlhood—that would outlast their geographic dispersal after marriage. On the one hand, this resulted in much repetition of names (or of names derived from the same stem) among girls who grew up in the same area; one woman, for instance, recalls having to change her vuntombi name from Ana to Teasse because "in our house, there were five of us with the same name, Ana." On the other hand, the role of fashion in girls' selection of puberty names produced spatial and temporal onomastic patterns that reflect the filtering of new cultural influences into the consciousness of rural youth. Just as Rosalina's aunt Buxeni could boast that one of her birth names, acquired circa 1880, came from "Ngungunya's race," the vast majority of birth and puberty names among interviewees' mothers and grandmothers (born between circa 1850 and circa 1915) were either indigenous or Zulu/Nguni. Rosalina's mother was one of the few exceptions. Hlekwna Tivane was born and raised in an area Rosalina calls Mazimholopes, somewhere along the river of that name in present-day southern Gaza province. Between 1905 and 1910 Hlekwna married Rosalina's father, a Swiss Mission Christian and migrant worker named Jorge Malungana, and went to live with his family in the town of Caniçado, the administrative capital of Guijá district. It was in Caniçado, soon after her arrival, that Hlekwna changed her name to the Portuguese-derived Anina. At that time, girls in Magude district were still for the most part adopting African names when they reached puberty.

By the 1920s, however, the trend of choosing xilungu names—something men from puberty onward had been doing in Magude for at least thirty years—had begun to reach young women in the area. Lily Xivuri, born circa 1915 in the rural chieftaincy of Xikwembu, illustrates this moment of transition nicely. Named Impissane at birth, she took her first "girlhood" name, Nukwassane, from a young woman who was visiting her homestead to accompany another girl marrying into the Xivuri family, probably in the mid- to late 1920s. But a few years later, Impissane/Nukwassane took another name, Lili, when she began attending the mission school in Tlhomanga. Similarly, Teasse Xivuri, born circa 1925, appears to have been on the cusp of a wave of onomastic change in her natal village in Xibuana (Mapulanguene): by the time she reached puberty, in the late 1930s, the European name Ana had become very popular, while Teasse (like Favsasse, Hlupasse, etc., a name of possible Nguni origin) was falling sufficiently out of favor that she adopted it as an act of defiance, remembering proudly that "it [was] my name, mine alone."

Taken together, the timing and distribution of changes in women's puberty names clearly paralleled their varied exposure to colonial culture, urban society, and mission Christianity and schooling. Women from more remote parts of Magude district (e.g. Mapulanguene, Phadijane) who were born before 1930 mostly chose girlhood names such as Teasse, Cufassane, Unasse, and Nukwassane; women born (or, as in Lili's case, renamed) in these areas after 1930 tended to opt for xilungu names, either Portuguese-derived names such as Madeleina or Angelina, or English-derived names such as Lili, Jane or Misse (from Miss). On the other hand, virtually all interviewees who grew up in close proximity to an urban center such as Magude town, or who spent some time in a mission or state school, chose European names at puberty, whether they were born circa 1905 or in the mid-1940s. Yet even this cluster of names varies in interesting ways. Girls who attended a Catholic school renamed themselves Émilia, Maria, or Juliana da Fátima, while those schooled at Protestant mission stations were more likely to adopt names such as Albertina, Adelaida or Ruti. Whatever the xilungu name they chose, though, women's purpose—like their timing—for doing so differed markedly from men's. Interested neither in appearing "exotic" nor in onomastic markers of prestige, women after circa 1930 adopted xilungu puberty names for the same reason they had previously adopted African ones: to commemorate and reinforce a community of female friends, to elaborate their identity by adding a name that signified their membership in a peer network—"fellow girls" who for reasons of birth, residence or even visiting happened to be in the same place at the same time—to the chain of matrilineal kin acquired with their name at birth.
In this sense, it is worth noting that both indigenous and xilungu puberty names for girls, at least since the later 1800s, are gender-specific, yet beyond gender have no specific social content intended to warn, instruct, or provide a role model for their bearers. Their value resides not in the longitudinal, memory-based communities they reflect but in lateral, present- and future-oriented webs of association that rely on "laughter" and friendship rather than story to hold them together. The fact that, among interviewees, girls' xilungu names almost never ranged beyond proper European names to names conjugated from the working- or object-world of colonial culture (as men's puberty/adult names did) confirms, I would argue, a gender difference in the function of puberty-naming itself, even as this practice changed with the influence of colonization. Xilungu names, for women, were a way to anchor their bearers not in the physical, political or economic landscape of the colonial world but in the social landscape of the countryside, where—as the remaining chapters of this book demonstrate—girlhood friendships could provide vital affective ties and a model for building networks of "laughing kinship" in adulthood.

The displacement of African by European names is obviously not unique to Magude or to Mozambique, although scholars have tended to interpret the meaning of this shift rather differently. Those studying naming trends in other parts of Africa have stressed the impact of Christianity, Islam and Western education on constructions of the self and identity through (re)naming. Research on this subject in southern Africa has focused on comparisons among ethnic/racial groups to determine how urbanization and increased cross-cultural interaction have transformed naming practices, with several authors positing a decline in the "uniqueness" and the "history-keeping function" of African names. This decline, they argue, results from "the redefinition of the social unit within which names are given"—that is, with the "nuclearization of the family" and "the broadening non-ethnic framework" of contemporary urban life. Under these circumstances, the argument goes, personal names are losing their "social meaning," their grounding in specific social settings and cultural contexts as well as their power to affect interpersonal relations within the narrow limits of the "traditional" homestead. Albertina Tiwana's account of how she acquired her European name, several years after she adopted the name Injuassana, might seem at first a perfect example of this argument:  

Transcript

This name, Albertina, I was named by a MuSwazi. I was staying at her house. . . Well, she says, "Eee! The name Injuassana, it's too much for me, to call you by that name. I'm going to give you a name." Well, she says, when she calls me, she says, "Albertina! I'm calling you. Say yes [i.e., accept the name]!"

Injuassana/Albertina had traveled a great distance in order to reach the Swazi woman's house—to central Moamba district, a long walk for a woman alone in the 1940s who had just left her vukatini "because of suffering" to look for work on her own (see chapter 3). Yet the space "Injuassana" crossed on her way to becoming "Albertina" was vast in another way, for not only did she exchange marriage, fertile fields, and her natal home for the position of paid domestic servant in an interracial household (the Swazi woman was living with a Muslim man of South Asian descent); she also left behind a community where, among "fellow girls," she had chosen her own name for a place where a new name was assigned to her by a woman she barely knew, and where her only role in the process was to "accept" it. Indeed, some women with a xilungu puberty name—like the few, mentioned above, who were named at birth by a man—expressed a similar passivity in their accounts, whether by saying "I was named" instead of "I named myself" or by foregrounding the role of the name-giver (usually their father or an elder sister, a school teacher, or a missionary) in their narrative of how they acquired this name. In many cases, when I asked these women how and why they came to have their xilungu name, the response was, again, flat and brief. The most common answer—"It is a school name"—ended right there, and no amount of urging could persuade women to discuss its meaning any further.

There is no question that women's acquisition of European names in Magude occurred in the context of their deepening involvement with structures of colonial power, especially mission churches and schools, from the 1920s onward. While the specific timing of their encounter with colonial society varied, the similar language and tone with which they recalled xilungu puberty names—and the stark contrast between this testimony and the spirited tales of "fellow girls" giving each other African puberty names—points to a qualitative shift in the history of women's
naming that suggests, in turn, a change in notions of the feminine self. But how are we to interpret this change and its meaning for women? For the vast majority of interviewees, it is difficult to argue that family nucleation or broadening inter-ethnic relations had redefined the "social unit" of name—giving to such an extent that names, increasingly Europeanized, were losing their social meaning by the 1920s. Subsequent chapters of this book plainly show that extended kin groups continued to be important to women in Magude through the colonial period and beyond, and few rural women in this area experienced "cross-cultural interaction" to the extent that Albertina Tiwana did during her years of "wandering" across the countryside. Jean and John Comaroff's view of missionaries' re-naming of Tswana converts as a kind of "linguistic colonialism"—"an evangelical refraction of the general tendency of imperialisms of all stripes to impose themselves by redesignating people and places"—is equally problematic for women in Magude, despite its resonance with the apparent decline of agency in women's accounts of how they got European names. As many women pointedly reminded me, and as I observed all over the district, accepting a xilungu name did not mean women were abandoning or no longer using their other names. If women had less in the way of a story tied to their xilungu name, it was partly because the value of this name rested less in its power to evoke place-specific friendships in the past, than in what women were able to do with it in an inescapably xilungu-ized present—the wider worlds it opened to them, the more versatile and open-ended identity it provided. I can think of no better evidence than my own experience in Magude: no matter how many names she had collected in the course of her life, every woman I met introduced herself to me by her xilungu name, tacitly asserting a trans-ethnic—and placeless—commonality between us. In this sense, xilungu names furnish for women precisely the opposite of what the xivongo secures for men: the ability to locate themselves in a wide range of communities and contexts, enhancing their leverage to define their "place" in history as a result.

Conclusion

This chapter explores how women's naming practices in Magude since the mid-nineteenth century trouble scholarly assumptions about the social and spatial coordinates of African women's pasts. Whether I sought to know women by ethnic, clan or personal name, I found that no single designation captured who they understood themselves to be, and that the meanings women attached to their names rarely conformed to normative definitions of the feminine self in a clan- and chieftdom-centered, patrilineal society. Interestingly, women attributed this discrepancy not to resistance against or devaluation of masculine standards, but to a failure of knowledge or memory on their part—perhaps a tacit admission that there were limits to what they could openly (and safely) "know" or "remember."

Yet their stories about how they acquired their names have profoundly challenging implications for historians, as we see when we pay attention to patterns and silences in women's memories of a very different category of name. Female interviewees were, once again, resolutely vague or "forgetful" when it came to the proper names of European officials or settlers, although they had little trouble recalling their nicknames in Shangaan. "Mavoya," from voya (fur or animal hair), for the Portuguese settler with hairy arms who worked with rolled-up sleeves; "N'waSwihenge," from a variety of corn distributed during a famine in the early 1920s, for the administrator presiding over Magude Circumscription at the time; "Fanyafanya," for a later administrator who wore the brass wire bracelets of this name; "Matandzayandhongwe," meaning locust eggs, for the administrator in office during a terrible locust epidemic in the mid-1930s—such nicknames preserve and pass on domesticated visions of colonial actors whose identities reside in how they looked or acted in the spheres of agrarian life ordinarily accessible to women, instead of in the xilungu names that symbolized these individuals' status as agents of colonial power. There is an obvious parallel between these name-memories and women's tendency to narrate ethnic identity and clan origins in terms of autobiographical ties to place, everyday material culture, and marriage and family relationships, for in both cases they place their own experience at the center of the processes through which cultural and social (even political) boundaries—and gendered constructions of the self—have been created, maintained, and transformed during the past two centuries, including such watershed events as Nguni conquest and European colonization. Even when they expressed pride in their ethnic or clan identity, or voiced resentment of the Portuguese, interviewees resisted the exclusiveness of these ascribed affiliations through infinitely elastic and inventive naming conventions of their own, tacitly refusing to be pinned to identities that limited the number and kind of communities...
to which they could claim to belong.

The possibilities of naming are not limitless: there are linguistic and social constraints on the field of names available to women, even for the kinship labels where their talents for name-play are displayed to greatest effect. Albertina Tiwana stopped using a name she thought "beautiful" when she arrived as a stranger in Moamba, because Injuassana was too "difficult" for her employer to pronounce; Rosalina Malungana could not be called by her father's name because she never formally married. But such constraints should not cause us to lose sight of what women's repertoire of naming practices has enabled them to accomplish. By declaring their many-namedness in interviews, by "forgetting" official names, by exhaustively listing female kinfolk while professing not to know the history of their xivongo, women were rejecting attempts—by clan and lineage authorities, Europeans, potentially me—to denominate and control their identities as singular historical subjects. Women's naming narratives articulate their subjective construction and negotiation of the very forms of power that commentators have presumed determine the shape and meaning of their lives. The onomastic history recounted by interviewees portrays a feminine self that is multiple, mobile, and always capable of transformation, an ontology that, in the words of geographers Steve Pile and Nigel Thrift, "release[s] the co-ordinates of subjectivity from static, uniform, transparent notions of place and being." Naming themselves and one another has been a means for women to define themselves and their place in history in strategically relational and mutable ways, or at least to engage in the struggle to control how their identities are constituted in particular social contexts. If academic historians take this struggle seriously, as the tenacity and consistency of women's naming memories suggest we should, we can no longer assume that the pasts of rural women in southern Mozambique (and perhaps Africa more broadly) can be contained within the confines of a single state, administrative unit, patrilineage, marital household, or family. Unlike dominant mappings of identity affirmed in xivongo narratives, which dictate singular, fixed, male-centered territorial and social identities, interviewees' stories about naming, as well as what they recalled of the diverse origins of mothers and grandmothers, bespoke a geographical breadth and plurality that rarely acknowledged the subordinating power of such boundaries, and that cast the feminine self—and its relationship to place—as amenable to constant redefinition in women's hands, not rooted in a single place on the landscape as masculine naming conventions claimed they should be. By organizing the landscapes of their past according to feminine spheres of knowledge, affect, and experience—and by representing themselves as attached to place primarily through fluid, female (and female-made) relationships—women defended their ability to locate themselves anywhere, at least as long as the gendered domains of agrarian life in which their experience was anchored remained available to them.

How, then, do historians "map" women's lives in Magude, or delineate a social or spatial unit of analysis that adequately captures women's experiences? Pile and Thrift, seeking to develop an alternative approach to cultural cartography that recognizes the fluidity, ambiguity, and multiplicity of any subject, suggest replacing the notion of mapping with that of "wayfinding," which they describe as "the process of visiting in turn all, or most, of the positions one takes to constitute the field . . . [covering] descriptively as much of the terrain as possible, exploring it on foot rather than looking down at it from an airplane." "Wayfinding" could mean many things, but for the purposes of this study I take it to mean following the paths of women's memories, paths that can lead—as the examples in this chapter illustrate—to the histories of female ancestors whose names connect the women of present-day Magude to the gendered topography of the past. Ironically, if we adopt this approach, "Magude" might not even figure in a feminine cartography of its own landscape, or it might materialize at particular moments in a woman's life and then fade away again, displaced by other spatial configurations.

It is precisely this historicity of place and identity that women's naming stories illuminate, perhaps more starkly than ever in postwar Magude. Just as a woman's name is context-specific, the naming stories women told me were situated in a present where women's geographic mobility was a major factor determining how they would fare in the aftermath of the war. The resettlement process was still agonizingly slow in Magude in the mid-1990s, but naming memories—not "garbled" at all—were serving the generation of interviewees rather well. They offered older women a way collectively to call up an agrarian past sustained by female relationships and labors, as a reminder that by working together and helping each other, women could make the land "wake up" (kupfu) again; and they enabled the most vulnerably displaced women of all—widows left alone by the war, and living far from their pre-war home—to claim a widely inclusive place-identity by calling themselves "Shangaan,"
downplaying clan or lineage loyalties (yet searching for women they could identify as kin), and marshalling all the namesakes they could find.

Unfortunately, the war itself, by "scattering" families and tearing women from their shared daily habits on the land, by crowding people into towns and refugee camps where the possession of many personal names became burdensome in a bureaucratized, "papers"-dependent culture, drastically undermined the conditions that would have encouraged younger women to continue the naming practices so vital to their foremothers. The vast majority of women I knew in Magude under the age of 40 had grown up knowing only one name, and a xilungu name at that. My 35 year-old assistant Aida, for instance, was made to confess during an interview with Valentina Chauke that she did not know—although Valentina did—that she had been given another name, Xivunisana, at birth. Never one to miss an opportunity to chasten a member of the "modern" generation for failing to uphold the "laws" of the past, Valentina spent several minutes berating Aida for surrendering her life to xilungu ways, and above all for neglecting to uphold her namesake bond to the woman, a midwife at the Magude hospital, who gave her her first name. Aida engages in other naming practices that older women hold dear, such as the assertion of kinship with namesakes—including me—to whom she can turn in times of need. But Aida's narrow reliance on her xilungu name for this purpose reveals an important shift in this form of female remembering more broadly, a shift that was also apparent in Rosalina Malungana's wistful comment, in her story of her clan name, that if she were a man, she would have traveled to "Xipilongo" like her uncle Dane to search for paternal kin. As the life stories in the following chapter attest, the parameters of interviewees' pasts—so creatively expansive in the times of their mothers and grandmothers, and in their own youth and early adulthood—have become increasingly circumscribed and inflexible in the latter half of the twentieth century. Fifty years ago, according to women's histories, an adult woman would not have hesitated to make the overland trek from southern Mozambique to South Africa. Nor would a young woman in Aida's position—unmarried, and looking after an aging mother as well as four children and an infant grandson—have forgotten for a moment the matrilineal community that embraced her on the day of her birth.

Notes:

Note 1: Keith Basso, Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language among the Western Apache (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), 5-7. Basso defines "place-making" as "an adventitious fleshing-out of historical material that culminates in a posited state of affairs," or (more succinctly) as "retrospective world-building"—i.e., the discursive reality created when people ask of a particular place, "What happened here? Who was involved? What was it like? Why should it matter?" Although he is dealing not with physical map-making but with the place-naming practices of the Western Apache, his comments about the relationship between "place-making" and history have been very helpful to me here. Indeed, Basso argues that "place-making" is "a universal tool of the historical imagination," not unique to the Apache who are the subject of his book (5). Back.


Note 3: Basso, 106 (emphasis in original). Back.


Note 6: Isabel Hofmeyr, "We Spend Our Years as a Tale That is Told:" Oral Historical Narrative in a South African Chieftdom (Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 1993). For another example from


Note 8: Hofmeyr, "We Spend Our Years," 160.


Note 10: Women's possession of multiple personal names has been noted in life histories and ethnographic studies from various parts of the African continent, occasionally accompanied by explanations of how and why women acquired the names they did (e.g. Jean Davison, Voices From Mutira: Lives of Rural Gikuyu Woman [Boulder, Colo.: L. Riener, 1989]; Marjorie Shostak, Nisa: The Life and Words of a !Kung Woman [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981]). To my knowledge, however, historians of Africa have not considered the theoretical implications of this practice, especially with regard to indigenous conceptions of the self and historical agency. That naming—particularly the use of multiple names—may be a powerful means for women to negotiate the fractured worlds of colonial/postcolonial society is evident in Kateryna Olijnyk Longley's discussion of Ruby Langford's autobiography Don't Take Your Love to Town (Victoria, 1988), in Longley, "AutoBiographical Storytelling by Australian Aboriginal Women," in Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson (eds.), De/Colonizing the Subject: The Politics of Gender in Women's Autobiography ( Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992).

Note 11: Cf. the work of anthropologist Ruth Behar, who (relying on Sherry Ortner's important review essay, "Theory in Anthropology Since the Sixties," Comparative Studies in Society and History 26, no. 1 [1984]: 126-66) critiques much of the scholarship on women's life histories for presenting women's lives in terms of "women's view" of societies "that have already been described from a 'holistic' (read male) typifying view." See Ruth Behar, "Rage and Redemption: Reading the Life Story of a Mexican Marketing Woman," Feminist Studies 16, no. 2 (1990), 225; also Behar, Translated Woman.


Note 13: Patriliny requires that children born to a couple who marry formally (i.e. with full bridewealth paid, or in an official civil or church ceremony) take the xivongo of their father. Children born out of wedlock, or to a couple whose marriage formally ends with the woman's family repaying bridewealth to the family of her husband, take their mother's xivongo. Christian missionaries encouraged women converts to adopt their husband's surname when they married, a practice that has still spread only among the most ardent church-goers in Magude.
Note 14: Field notes 3 (17 September 1995), 47.  Back.


Note 19: In present-day Mozambique, Tsonga is considered an umbrella category for three sub-groups—Shangaan, Ronga, and Tswana—each of which is officially recognized as a distinct language and ethnic identity. Shangaan, a term that is often used interchangeably with Tsonga, is the largest (numerically and geographically) of the three, and is conventionally mapped to include the inhabitants of all of Gaza and most of Maputo provinces. The area around Maputo city is identified as Ronga, and all of Inhambane province except the southern coastal area (predominantly Chopi) is identified as Tswana. Back.

Note 20: Henri Alexandre Junod, the Swiss missionary who is normally given the most credit (or blame) for "inventing" the Tsonga through his prolific writings on Tsonga culture and his efforts to systematize a common language for missionizing purposes, described the group's makeup as "the result of immigration from all points of the horizon" (Henri Alexandre Junod, "The Ba-Thonga of the Transvaal," South African Journal of Science 6 [1913]: 225). Back.


Note 22: For race, we used one of two words, muxaka and muhlovo. Both mean race, species, or kind, but according to Cuenod (Tsonga-English Dictionary [Braamfontein: Sasavona, 1967; repr., Morija, Lesotho: Morija Printing Works, 1991]) the latter term is of Zulu origin (Zulu dictionaries define a similar word, uhlobo, as type or kind). Women from western Magude, who have generally had more interaction with South Africa, recognized only muhlovo.
Note 23: Here, patterns in Magude recall Sandra Greene's observations, from a very different African context, about the strong interrelation of ethnicity, kinship/family and gender in changing notions of individual identity and the definition of social boundaries. See Sandra E. Greene, Gender, Ethnicity, and Social Change on the Upper Slave Coast: A History of the Anlo-Ewe (Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 1996). Greene's important critique of the literature on African ethnicities singles out the dominant work on ethnicity in patrilineal southern Africa, and suggests a corrective approach that is much needed in this highly politicized subfield. Back.

Note 24: Scholars do not quite agree on the meaning of this term. Mabuyandlela literally means "those who open the road." Some authors claim this name was given to people of indigenous origin in southern Mozambique who became acculturated Nguni by adopting aspects of Gaza culture, either by choice or by force; Liesegang, for example, reports that a Chopi man had his ears pierced (against his will) by a Gaza soldier to make him a Mabuyandlela. Others, including Henri Alexandre Junod, say that this term refers exclusively to those "Tsonga" men who learned and became skilled at Nguni military tactics, and were put on the frontlines of Gaza armies. Many mabuyandlela men occupied high positions within the Gaza administration and army. The Portuguese referred to such individuals as "vatalizado." See Harries, Work, Culture, and Identity, 3-4; Henri A. Junod, Life, 1:34, 450; Gerhard Liesegang, "Notes on the Internal Structure of the Gaza Kingdom of Southern Mozambique 1840-1895," in Before and After Shaka: Papers in Nguni History, ed. J. B. Peires (Grahamstown: Institute of Social and Economic Research, Rhodes University, 1981). Jaques, in his published version of Khosa clan tradition, explains that "Mabulundlela" were men from southern Mozambique whom the Nguni warlord Manukosi utilized as vanguard troops after conquering the area during the mfecane (Jaques, Swivongo swa Machangana, 30). Back.


Note 32: Interview with Valentina Chauke, 27 June 1995, Facazisse. Makwakwa (also known as "monkey oranges," a species of the genus Strychnos) are an indigenous tree-fruit found throughout the sandy lowlands of southern Mozambique. They have particular dietary importance as a famine food in the arid zones of western Gaza province and northern Magude. Makwakwa are not eaten raw but dried, pounded into a flour called nfuma, and stored for consumption during the winter season or in times of hunger. Back.

Note 33: Interview with Sara Juma, 25 October 1995, Magude town. On tattooing, see Chapter 5. On girls' efforts to lengthen their labia after puberty, see Chapter 3. Back.

Note 34: The word for ancestor in Shangaan is a squaring of the word for grandparent: kokwana-wa-kokwana. Sometimes kokwana alone is used, in which case it is unclear whether people are referring to a grandparent or to a forebear in the more distant past. To clarify our question, we used the longer phrase along with qualifiers such as "very long ago" or "in the beginning." Even so, the vast majority of female interviewees responded by naming their own grandparent or grandparents. Men, on the other hand, were much more likely to state the
name of an originary clan ancestor. Back.


Note 36: Timhakeni, i.e. the place where problems (timhaka) are discussed, probably at the chief's residence. Back.

Note 37: Kuchuka xikhakha. Kuchuka means to dress skin, rub to make soft and supple; xikhakha, according to Cuenod, is the soft cow-hide skirt of Nguni women. Whether these skirts were Nguni rather than indigenous in origin is difficult to establish. Swiss Mission photographs and writings from the turn of the century are contradictory on the subject of changes in women's dress with exposure to Gaza, Swazi, Pedi, Zulu, and European fashions in southern Mozambique and the Transvaal. Some European observers described skirts made from animal skins as an "ancient" style predating women's use of imported cloth, while others interpret the use of skins as a sign of Gaza influence dating only to the mid-nineteenth century. Lise did not comment on the meaning of xikhakha beyond telling us that it referred to animal skin; she did not seem concerned whether the Nsumbane clan were of Nguni origin, or why her male ancestors would have been making a style of skirt associated with the Nguni. Back.


Note 41: The area of the northern Transvaal between the Klein Letaba and Olifants Rivers, east of the escarpment that divides the highveld from the lowveld. Back.

Note 42: In a later interview, Rosalina said that Nkavakava and Mangeke were "soldiers, accompanying Ngunyubuntu. They traveled around, killing people, taking things—just like Matswanga [Renamo] was doing. Mmm. Killing people, taking their things, taking pretty girls." (Interview with Rosalina Malungana, 28 January 1996, Facazisse). Back.

Note 43: Later in the interview, Rosalina returned to this subject and declared "If I were a man, I would go there to look for my family!" Back.


**Note 48:** Fonseca, "Monografia do Tribo Cossa," 5-9; Pimental, "4.a Circumscripção," 105-18; Smith, "The Peoples of Southern Mozambique," 575. Back.

**Note 49:** E.g., Portuguese correspondence from the Vanetzi post (Mapulanguene) in the 1890s regularly alludes to tensions between chiefs and their subjects, and particularly to chief Munyamana's inability to round up labor for the Portuguese *comandante* stationed there. As the following quotation hints, these tensions were exacerbated by a number of other factors (including a two-year drought) until colonial administration (such as it was) reached a virtual standstill: "... the lands of this *comando* are completely disorganized because their true chiefs and residents have emigrated for various reasons. With difficulty, I obtained [a sense of] the organization of *regulados*, which should not be considered firm given how little respect and deference to orders the natives display towards their chiefs. Add to this the grave circumstance of there not being anyone on the land. No one wants to be chief in such circumstances ..." (José Carragdeo de Souza Caldas Andrade, letter to Governor of Gaza Military District, 17 November 1900, Doc. 93, Fundo do Século XIX, GDMG, AHM). Back.


**Note 51:** Ernesto Mathye's rendering of the Magiguana story conforms fairly closely to dominant versions of this event, both those recorded in the late 1890s-early 1900s and those told in the mid 1990s by local men considered knowledgeable about the region's history. There are, however, some interesting variations even within the official story. One young male resident of Mapulanguene told me that the first Mundlovu chief (whom he mistakenly identified as "Kwambate") was appointed *réguło* before, not after, Magiguana's assassination. According to this man, in the mid-1890s "Kwambate" was serving as a member of the "police" force for a female chief named N'waNgacene, and one of his regular duties was to travel to Chibuto to deliver tribute to the Portuguese administration there. The Portuguese were trying to gather the names of all chiefs in power in the territory they claimed to control, but N'waNgacene refused to comply, saying "I can't give my name. This here is my land. Why do I have to go around writing, writing? No way, this won't do." "Kwambate," according to this version of the story, happily accepted the Portuguese invitation to give his name instead, and thus displaced N'waNgacene to become *réguło* of the colonial chiefancy that today bears his name. Thus he was already in power when Portuguese forces arrived in pursuit of Magiguana, his betrayal of the rebel an act required of him (narratively) as an agent of the colonial state (interview with Sr. Gouveia, 18 January 1996, Mapulanguene sede). Back.

**Note 52:** Another way of referring to Spelonken. Back.

**Note 53:** A people known as the VaKwena are believed to have migrated from the area of present-day Botswana into the northern Transvaal between the mid-seventeenth and early eighteenth century, and to have become incorporated into the Lovedu, whose powerful queen Mujai (c.1850-94) was considered southern Africa's greatest rain-maker. See Eileen Jensen Kriige and Jacob Daniel Kriige, *The Realm of the Rain Queen: A Study of the Pattern of Lovedu Society* (London: Oxford University Press, 1943) Back.

**Note 54:** Interview with Talita Mundlovu, 1 January 1996, Kwambate (Mapulanguene). Back.

**Note 55:** Later Mapulanguene PA. After independence, Xikwembo was redefined as a locality within the new PA of Phadjane. Back.


**Note 57:** According to Lili's nephew Julius Xivuri, Xikwembo left his home to live with ex-chief Mamangana in the Transvaal during the years (c. 1900-1905) when several chiefs in Magude were allegedly organizing a revolt against the Portuguese. When Portuguese officials at the Vanetzi post ordered *régulos* to report the number of *tinganakana* under their authority, three sons of Xikwembo's brother went to South Africa to bring Xikwembo home. These brothers
were then officially appointed as colonial chefs de terras.  

**Note 58:** The role of so-called "traditional authorities" in the postcolonial (especially postwar) government was a hotly debated topic among everyone from politicians to academics to local officials, chiefs and spirit mediums, and ordinary Mozambicans. While their responsibilities and powers in national law were vaguely defined and weak at best, they continued to enjoy considerable de facto influence—in local politics, crime and punishment, family conflicts, land tenure and agriculture, and religious life—in rural communities in the mid 1990s. For discussion of this subject, see Harry G. West and Scott Kloeck-Jensen, "Betwixt and Between: 'Traditional Authority' and Democratic Decentralization in Post-War Mozambique," African Affairs 98, no. 393 (1998): 455-84; and Harry G. West, "Traditional Authorities and the Mozambican Transition to Democratic Governance," in Lyn Graybill and Kenneth W. Thompson (eds.), Africa's Second Wave of Freedom: Development, Democracy and Rights (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1998).  

**Note 59:** The third colonial sub-chief under Xikwembe, Daniel or Xikon'wana, is not mentioned in any of the traditions I have seen or heard. After independence, Daniel/Xikon'wana was re-zoned and transferred from Xikwembe to neighboring Mahele PA. According to then-Phadjane chefe de posto Sr. Nunus, there were discussions about returning it to Phadjane if and when the district was reorganized again (interview with Sr. Nunus, 14 July 1995, Phadjane).  

**Note 60:** When pressed for particulars, Lili stated that she was born in "ka Mulalela," i.e. the "place" of her father, the chieftaincy now known as Tlhongana. Interview with Lili Xivuri, 4 November 1995, Tlhongana (Phadjane).  

**Note 61:** **Kukwinya,** to draw up, e.g. trouser legs or nguvu before wading through water.  

**Note 62:** Interview with Lili Xivuri, 24 September 1995, Tlhongana (Phadjane). "Mahumane" here refers to Tlhongana, the portion of Xikwembe administered by Lili's father, and the jurisdiction where Lili was living at the time. She means that they met in another part of Tlhongana.  


**Note 64:** Interview with Lili Xivuri, 24 September 1995, Tlhongana (Phadjane). Cf. Wright, Strategies of Slaves and Women.  

**Note 65:** Susan Geiger, in "What's So Feminist About Women's Oral History?" Journal of Women's History 2, no. 1 (1990): 169-82, addresses this issue in her critique of the concept of "representativeness" as a presumptive basis for evaluating the "truth" content of women's oral testimony.  

**Note 66:** E.g. Harries, "Slavery, Social Incorporation, and Surplus Extraction," 32-33.  

**Note 67:** **Kukombela,** which can mean to ask for, beg, or demand. The ambiguity of this verb makes it especially useful for women, who can mask what are in effect forceful claims in beseeching terms.  

**Note 68:** E. Dora Earthy, writing in the 1920s, observed that certain groups of Ndau women in northern Gaza province were still piercing their lips in this manner. E. Dora Earthy, "On the Significance of the Body Markings of Some Natives of Portuguese East Africa," South African Journal of Science 21 (1924): 578.  

**Note 69:** Tinjovo are strips of animal skins or tails tied to a belt of some kind and worn by men to cover their genitals, evidently a fashion adopted from the Zulu (Henri Alexndre Junod, Life, 1:94-96).  

**Note 70:** Probably a xifado, a "penis cap" usually made from the shell of a small calabash (Henri A. Junod, Life, 1:516).
Note 71: *Kuthwasa*, referring to the long process of being cured of spirit possession and trained to work as a *nyamusoro*. Sara was speaking Portuguese at this point, and she translated *kuthwasa* as *tirar curso* (to take a course). Back.


Note 73: Cf. Behar, "Rage and Redemption." Back.


Note 76: From *ndyangu*, which refers both to "family" and to the open space within the traditional village or homestead (*muti*). However, as symbolically connected with everyday female activities such as cooking and women's storytelling, the *ndyangu* is considered a feminine space where women and girls spend much of their time, while men and boys congregate in a more separate "court" or corner of the homestead known as the *bandla* (see Henri A. Junod, *Life*, 1:310-14). This description of rural domestic arrangements is based on observations from the late 1800s, and physical household organization has of course changed in many ways since that time with the influence of migrant labor, Christianity, European architectural styles, and most dramatically the war. But even in the mid-1990s many Magude families were trying to rebuild their homesteads along these lines, and the remembered purpose and importance of dividing domestic space along gender lines continued to be a factor in this process. Back.

Note 77: Nineteenth-century European written accounts from this area note a similar phenomenon, as in D. Fernandes das Neves, *A Hunting Expedition to the Transvaal*, tr. M. Monteiro (London: George Bell and Sons, 1879), 33-34. Back.

Note 78: Women called me by these terms, not always jokingly, when thanking me for helping them in some way. Back.


Note 80: Elderly (post-menopausal) woman known for her expert authority and knowledge of the "old ways." Back.


Note 84: Interview with Elena Khosa, 29 December 1995, Matendeni (Magude town). Shangaan pronouns are not gender-specific; I use "she" here and below because interviewees confirmed they were referring to women. Back.


Note 90: Sing. *Nkati kulobyе*. Because these women were married to uterine brothers, they were each the presumptive wife of all three Xivuri men: if one of the brothers died, his wives would be inherited by one of the other two. The women thus considered one another "co-wife." Back.

Note 91: In an appendix titled "Thonga Names, Nicknames, and Surnames," Henri A. Junod notes that Chopi girls who were slaves of prominent African women in Lourenço Marques (and
sometimes sold as concubines) took similar names for themselves—e.g. Bamusonda (Zulu), "they hate her"—to "express their bitterness" (Henri A. Junod, Life, 1:491). Back.

**Note 92:** From the noun *buxa*, a fowl that eats its own eggs. Back.

**Note 93:** Interview with Rosalina Malungana, 28 May 1995, Facazisse. Back.

**Note 94:** Interview with Rosalina Malungana, 28 May 1995, Facazisse. Back.

**Note 95:** Interview with Talvina Khosa, 4 July 1995, Facazisse. Back.

**Note 96:** Buxeni did finally have a child who survived to adulthood (see Chapter 3). Back.

**Note 97:** Interview with Marta Mabunda, 22 March 1996, Ngungwe/Muqakaze (Moamba district). Back.


**Note 99:** I use *she* here because Marta made it clear later in the discussion that she was referring to women supplying ancestors' names in the *tinhlolo* ceremony. For the sake of clarity, I use *he/him* to refer to the infant (and ancestors whose names are being sought for him). Back.

**Note 100:** *Kuhanya i kufa*, a common saying meaning that life or living [*kuhanya*] is a challenge. Back.

**Note 101:** Interview with Marta Mabunda, 22 March 1996, Ngungwe (Muqakaze, Moamba district). Back.

**Note 102:** Interview with Talita Mundlovu, 1 January 1996, Kwambate (Mapulanguene). For more on the elaborate range of sacramental offerings still in use in the early 1900s, see Henri A. Junod, Life, 1:390-403 (especially 395-98, on "family sacrifices" made in case of illness). Back.

**Note 103:** Interview with Jane Mundlovu, 31 August 1995, Matendeni (Magude town). Back.

**Note 104:** Interview with Albertina Tiwana, 29 November 1995, Facazisse. Back.


**Note 106:** Henri A. Junod, Life, 1:40, 176-78. Back.


**Note 108:** E.g., interviews with Talita Mundlovu, 1 January 1996, Kwambate (Mapulanguene); Albertina Tiwana, 14 August 1995, Facazisse. Back.

**Note 109:** Interviews with Cufassane Munisse, 3 November 1995, Matendeni (Magude town); Favasse Zimiya, 20 October 1995, Tsatsimbe (Makuvulane). Back.

**Note 110:** Interview with Albertina Tiwana, 14 October 1995, Facazisse. Back.

**Note 111:** Interview with Teasse Xivuri, 18 August 1995, Matendeni (Magude town). Back.

**Note 112:** Interview with Rosalina Malungana, 25 June 1995, Facazisse. Back.

**Note 113:** Swiss Mission reports and records from Antioka in the 1890s refer to African evangelists named Samuel, Jonas, Elias, etc. Back.

**Note 114:** The practice of girlfriends accompanying a bride to her *vukatini*, and staying for several days before and after the wedding ceremony to help the mother-in-law, is known as *kukorhoka*. Back.


Note 119: Xikola (school) can mean either a mission church or a school; since formal education was introduced to this area by missionaries, older men and women tend to think of Christian worship and European education as the same thing, “school.” Back.


Note 121: The assignation of vernacular nicknames to Europeans was not peculiar to women, or to Magude. A Ronga-Portuguese dictionary from the early twentieth century contains a list of local nicknames for white residents of Lourenço Marques. See Ernesto Torre do Valle's Dicionários Shironga-Portuguez e Portuguez-Shironga (Lourenço Marques: Imprensa Nacional, 1906). Back.

