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Boundaries of Beauty: Tattooing and Changing Landscapes of Women's Community

The Lenge and the Tsopi women have the story of their lives written on their own flesh.

— Dora Earthy, *Valenge Women: The Social and Economic Life of the Valenge Women of Portuguese Africa*

It's a whale of a tale, and it's all true,
I swear by my tattoo!

—Ned Land (Kirk Douglas), *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*

Boundaries of Beauty

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Introduction

As I noted in chapter 2, my early interviews with women were anything but smooth sailing. For reasons having to do principally with language and trust, it took some time both for me to convince older women that I was genuinely interested in history as they understood it and for women to believe that it was worth their time to talk to us about their knowledge of the past. On no subject was this tension more pronounced—or the rewards of overcoming it more extraordinary—than tattooing. ¹ Female scarification, documented in some detail as a "nubility custom" in early ethnographies, was a topic I hoped to explore in Magude, but I was so anxious not to do anything that might be construed as exoticizing the bodies of African women that I hesitated for a long time to ask interviewees about it.



However, after it became clear that my broad questions about women's "way of life long ago" were failing to elicit enthusiastic responses, I tried a more direct approach one afternoon when Juliana hobbled over to join Rosalina and me as we sat outside Rosalina's hut near the end of our third interview. Inspired by her larger audience, Rosalina began to reminisce about the maternal grandfather who had been one of "Ngungunyana's heroes" and to describe the special military headdresses and ocher-stiffened hairstyles that elite Nguni men and women used to wear. Seeing my chance, I commented that I had read in books that women long ago had also marked their skin. At that, Rosalina interrupted me excitedly to ask (in Portuguese) if I was referring to *tatuagens* (tattoos). When I said I was, she began to recount how her mother and maternal grandmother had indeed "gone around cutting their bellies" to "make them beautiful." Rosalina denied having done this herself—"Hah!," she scoffed, "I'm of now. . . ." But when Juliana (who knew little Portuguese) realized what we were discussing, she spoke up suddenly in Shangaan—"Tinhlanga [tattoos]? Tattoos? You're talking about tattoos?"—and then, with a self-conscious laugh, she promptly stole the spotlight from the warrior's granddaughter:

- J: They've died, but we cut them!
 R: [incredulous] You had them?
 J: [challenging] Me, you say?

R: Eeh.

J: Mmm. [Juliana pauses] I too, I did it. Here, and here, and here. [2](#)

In the lively exchange that followed, as Juliana struggled mightily to express herself in words I could understand, Rosalina was able to reassert her history-telling authority both by assuming the role of translator and by augmenting Juliana's stories with a deliberately more detailed account of how women had tattooed one another "long ago." Clearly surprised at my interest, Rosalina seemed just as eager as Juliana to speak on this subject. However, it was not until our sixth interview, more than five months later, that Rosalina mentioned tattoos again. This time it was to tell me that she had in fact had *tinhlanga* done, albeit under circumstances rather different from those experienced by other women her age (see below).

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Such untruthfulness—or, at least, wariness—on the question of tattooing was not peculiar to Rosalina. In our first interview with Valentina Chauke, three weeks after that revealing session with my neighbors, I asked whether she had done anything to "make herself beautiful" when she was a girl. Valentina's negative "Mm-mm!" was as firm as Rosalina's initial denial, and Valentina was not shaken even slightly when Aida pointed to the faint scars on the elderly woman's arms and demanded, "What are those?" "That wasn't me," Valentina retorted. "That was Ntete, the daughter of Nyanga. She brought these things back here from that prostitution of hers." "These things"—VALENTINA tattooed on her right forearm, CHAUKE on her left—were all she would admit to that day, despite Aida's persistent teasing of Valentina through the rest of the interview with the repetition of the question "You didn't cut *tinhlanga*?" [3](#)

It was Valentina's daughter Talita who betrayed her, when we went to interview Talita that same afternoon. Asked about "making herself beautiful" when she was young, Talita responded first, hesitantly, with "We were poor. I couldn't buy dresses." But when Aida prodded her by remarking, "No, she wants to know, maybe you cut *tinhlanga*, maybe you wrote something—," Talita shrieked with delight and laughed until tears rolled down her face. "Hee!! Hee!! Truly! I wrote on myself! I cut tattoos!" When we were saying our good-byes over two hours later, after what was certainly our most boisterous (and sexually explicit) interview to date, Talita commented that it was "not good to hide those things that were customs, long ago," a remark that prompted Aida to ask Talita about her mother's testimony that morning. Valentina, Talita assured us, had more tattoos than she had let on, and we should not be "afraid" to ask her about it again. [4](#)

Talita's determination that I should know about *tinhlanga* went considerably further than this, as Aida and I discovered over the next couple of days. During interviews with two of Talita's neighbors, Aldina Masangu and Lise Nsumbane, the subject of tattooing arose the moment the words "long ago" were out of my mouth. Not only that, but each woman promptly hoisted her skirt (a rare sight, since women are not traditionally supposed to bare their legs in public) to show us the decorative marks etched on her thighs. [5](#) My suspicion that someone was spreading the word in Facazisse was confirmed over the following weeks, as Aida, Rutu, and I suddenly began to receive visits from elderly women who said they too wanted to talk to the "little *mulungu*." One particularly assertive *xikoxana*, Katarina Matuka, demonstrated her qualifications in no uncertain terms one late July afternoon when she caught up with me on the footpath near her home. To my astonishment, before we had even exchanged greetings, Katarina yanked up her red turtleneck to display the array of scars on her stomach and chest. She chuckled mischievously as I stammered my compliments and (sure I had committed some terrible offense) thanked her awkwardly and hurried on my way. [6](#)

I later learned that Katarina was notorious for such exhibitions, but her behavior was not as

extraordinary as I then believed. With each woman we subsequently interviewed about tattooing, within Facazisse and then elsewhere in the district, Katarina's performance seemed less and less strange and my own inhibitions plainly out of place. More times than I can count, my simply saying the word *tinhlanga* was enough to send a woman into gales of laughter, and, more often than not, my request that an interviewee use pencil and paper to draw her tattoos was met with a snorting headshake and the removal or rearrangement of clothing to expose her tattoos instead. I had to politely decline Lucia Ntumbo's offer to pose half undressed while I photographed her tattoos, an act I was sure would offend Antioka church folk (who would certainly hear about it) and that I doubted I could justify even to myself.

There was something about body-marking, in other words, that either raised or dissolved boundaries of translation and of mistrust in women's willingness to share memories of past experience with me. Partly, I think, women were having fun with us, enjoying their ability to shock the *mulungu* with candid accounts of how and with what effects—sexual effects, above all—tattooing had been done. More importantly, though, once elderly women felt comfortable narrating their knowledge of long ago through, and as, stories about tattooing, they behaved as though we had crossed a watershed of some kind. Less taboo a topic than labia elongation, *z tinhlanga* were nonetheless even more powerful symbols of a history women understood as theirs alone—a gendered construction of a past they remembered and controlled themselves. As this chapter explains, their attitude stems to some extent from the transformation of female body-marking into a site of racialized struggle during the colonial period, when European (and European-trained African) missionaries and schoolteachers raised the stakes of women's tattooing by redefining it as an act of resistance against the "civilizing" influences of colonial culture. Yet long before *tinhlanga* became a gendered battleground between white and black ways, between *xilungu* and *xilandin*, women were "writing" on their bodies—as they had written on their clay pots—for reasons of their own. Signs, on the one hand, of women's efforts to negotiate the frontiers of their social universe and, on the other hand, of the informal networks of affiliation through which they had mediated normative, androcentric structures of community and authority, *tinhlanga* told histories that women could not, or would not, always voice.

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As in the song lyrics quoted at the head of this chapter, among the women I interviewed in Magude tattoos asserted the truth of remembered experience when the credibility of speech might have been in doubt, or where there were limits to what women were permitted to put into words. In a context where official notions of history, indigenous and foreign, claim authority over the past through disembodied ("objective") constructions of "what happened," truth-claims inscribed permanently on the body can be perceived as quite subversive. Where women's bodies in particular have served as a key terrain in masculine contests for political and cultural hegemony, the power of tattooed tales as feminine historical knowledge is especially dangerous, most of all when women's *tinhlanga* refuse to tell the stories expected of them—when under the pressures of intensifying economic hardship and social differentiation set in motion by imperialisms of various forms, tattoos have offered an idiom for women to claim ever wider grounds of community and identity for themselves. If this power felt tenuous in postwar Magude, with the much reduced incidence of tattooing since the onset of the Renamo war, few interviewees depicted its waning as more than a temporary setback. Indeed, the relish with which so many of them flaunted their faded tattoos suggests that the truths of their *tinhlanga* remain as real, and as necessary, as they were on that "long ago" day when the cuts were made.

Knobnoses, Totems, Ornamental Mutilations: Reading *Tinhlanga*

The earliest evidence of scarification from southeast Africa is recorded not in written documents but in clay, on the faces of the famous terracotta Lydenburg Heads, which were



unearthed by archaeologists in the eastern Transvaal in 1962. Dated to the early sixth century A.D. and tentatively associated with initiation ceremonies, the faces bear incised molded strips of clay running in a vertical line, from the upper mid-forehead to the tip of the nose, and in two horizontal lines from the outer corner of each eyebrow to each ear. ⁸ The first written reference to tattooing in southern Mozambique occurs in an account by William White, a British merchant who visited the busy international port of Delagoa Bay in 1798. Wedged between a long paragraph on hairdressing and a discussion of polygamy, we find the following brief comment on practices of body-marking among local men and women:

They are all tattooed, some down the middle of the forehead, and point of the chin...; and of their temples, of this shape **X** their bodies are so likewise, particularly on the chest, but none of them are exactly alike; those, however, of the same family, are tattooed very nearly in the same manner. ⁹

In the early nineteenth century, reports from European and African traders noted the appearance of travelers with scarred faces and chests, whom historians have identified as proto-"Tsonga," as far afield as the headwaters of the Limpopo River to the north and the area of the present-day Transkei to the south. ¹⁰ The correlation of particular



decorative markings with the people who would later be called Tsonga hardened from the 1840s on, when João Albasini was joined at his military stronghold in the northern Transvaal by refugees from east of the Lebombo hills who bore, on their noses and cheeks, lines of large keloid scars—described variously as knobs, lumps, warts, and buttons—which earned them the epithet Knobneuzen (Knobnose) from Boer residents of the Zoutpansberg. ¹¹

Around the same time, European writings from southern Mozambique began increasingly to include descriptions of "native" practices of body alteration and adornment, from scarification to teeth-filing, lip-piercing, eyebrow-shaving, hairstyling, jewelry, and dress. Reading tattoos in particular as a "marker of the primitive," ¹² imperial observers debated about the ways in which differences in dress and ornamentation among Africans—cloth versus skin, beads versus bone—reflected a "tribe's" position on the savagery-civilization continuum, and their writings implicitly ranked tribal groups according to imputed powers of cultural resilience. In these discussions, the "Tsonga" appear—principally by virtue of their scarification practices—to have infinitely plastic (hence, in imperial eyes, innately weak) cultural and political identities. According to Junod, the custom of decorating the face with keloid scars had "ancient" roots among the earliest inhabitants of the coastal lowlands south of the Save River. When, Junod reported, proto-Tsonga groups invaded the area in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, their subjects ridiculed the "flat noses" of their conquerors so relentlessly that the Tsonga were forced to adopt the practice themselves. ¹³ With the Nguni invasions of the early nineteenth century, facial scarification assumed heightened political significance when (again according to Junod) Zulu impis sent by Shaka in pursuit of the rebel leader Soshangane sought out Nguni targets between the Nkomati and Olifants Rivers by looking for men who had no "buttons on their face." While the mortal danger temporarily associated with smooth noses caused "many [Nguni soldiers] to submit to the operation," the trend apparently reversed itself the moment the threat had passed, and "knob" facial scars once again became, to the Nguni ruling class, a scorned sign of cultural inferiority among subject peoples. ¹⁴

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By the 1860s and 1870s, when St. Vincent Erskine and Frederick Elton were crisscrossing the lands between the Drakensberg Mountains and the coast, knobnose tattooing appeared to be on the way out, supplanted by the style of ear-piercing popular among the Nguni. ¹⁵

As Europeans saw it, this transformation in habits of body-marking signaled an irreversible cultural as well as political surrender, a wholesale acceptance of assimilation into the hegemonic social order of a conquering tribe. St. Vincent Erskine summed up the prevailing view when he wrote, after his first sighting of "Knob-nosed Caffres" northeast of Origstadt in 1868, that "These people, as a tribe, are extinct, having amalgamated with the tribes of Manjaje and Umzeila. . . . In a few years knob-noses will be as extinct as pig-tails." ¹⁶

"Amalgamation" with respect to tattooing, however, was a visibly gendered process, as European sources from Erskine on carefully noted. Not only did "Tsonga" women generally decorate their skins more elaborately than did their menfolk (the women, according to Junod, being "more desirous still of personal adornment" ¹⁷). They also continued marking their bodies long after men had adopted Nguni, and then European, fashions of dress and ornamentation. Whereas the men encountered near Origstadt, for instance, had small knobs down their forehead to the tip of their nose, women wore additional markings across their cheekbones and along their upper lip. ¹⁸ When Frederick Elton traveled overland from the Oliphants River to Lourenço Marques in 1870, crossing the Nkomati and chief Magudzu's territory en route, he observed that "Nearly all of the [Amatonga] women disfigure themselves by tattooing a double line of warts across the forehead, joined by a curved line on either cheek, and occasionally a double or even triple row of lumps and stars across the upper part of the bosom, or an elaborate pattern on the abdomen." Only "some few [Amatonga] men," meanwhile, were still "adopt[ing] the peculiar ornament of 'knob-nuizen.'" ¹⁹

By the turn of the century, Junod could write that *Knobneusen* was no longer even an appropriate name for the Transvaal Tsonga because "pimple" tattooing had ceased to be practiced in that area, although the scarification of women's chests and "waists" was still widespread. ²⁰ By the early twentieth century, when Junod and Earthy were publishing their ethnographic studies of the Tsonga and Lenge, ²¹ ear-piercing appeared to be the only form of body-marking extant among men, while women across southern Mozambique were still tattooing themselves with "a bewildering variety" of incised and keloid scars on their shoulders, stomach, and abdomen. ²² Convinced that what they regarded as a primitive and degrading tribal practice was bound to vanish as women were exposed to civilization and the "evolution of costume," missionary ethnographers still had trouble explaining why women's tattoos did not neatly conform to ascribed clan or (putative) ethnic identities and why even in the 1920s and 1930s *new* female tattoo styles seemed to be emerging. Junod declared that, even if the practice lingered, the once "deep" ritual meanings of women's body-markings had "more or less disappeared," reducing them to little more than "ornamental mutilations" probably connected to adolescence or marriage. ²³ Earthy's more thorough quest to uncover a primal religious meaning for the tattoos of Lenge women led her to the similarly disappointing conclusion that, at most, they contained faint "vestiges of totemism" already weakened by the influence of plain-skinned European fashion. ²⁴

In their effort to document tribal custom before it disappeared, both Junod and Earthy left revealing clues to the complex significance of *tinhlanga* for women during the early decades of Portuguese colonial rule. Earthy's detailed descriptions of body-marking in particular recall, and shed gendered light on, William White's observations from circa 1800, especially the tension in White's account between his recognition of the uniqueness of every individual's set of tattoo marks and his belief—rooted, perhaps, in the only



categories he was able to imagine—that patterns in tattooing were best understood as "family" resemblances. Junod, for instance, contrasted the epigastric *tinhlanga* of two young women belonging to the Nkuna clan in Shiluvane (Transvaal) in 1900 with those of two young Tembe clanswomen from a rural village outside Lourenço Marques in 1926. Although the *tinhlanga* are not identical in either pair, they are sufficiently similar—and sufficiently different, as pairs, from one another—to convince Junod (like White, mapping indigenous social organization in the only way he knew) that women's tattoos varied "according to clans," discrepancies of time and place not even entering his discussion. [25](#)



Although Earthy similarly claimed to be able to "tell a Lenge or Tsopi woman at a glance" from her tattoos, [26](#) she was more attentive to the enormous diversity of women's body-marking and to the many ways in which *tinhlanga* defied classification along strictly ethnic, clan, or family lines. Earthy in her account presents a list of a truly "bewildering" range of tattoo types, designs, and meanings prevalent among Chopi and Lenge women in the 1920s: keloid and incised tattoos of various sizes; images symbolizing seashells, birds, insects, reptiles, plants, arrowheads, body fluids (saliva, tears), lunar and astral bodies, mortar and pestle, a "sacred wand" used in women's harvest ceremonies, and more abstract designs representing such social concerns as marital status, mourning, and protection from witchcraft.



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Moreover, the responses Earthy's informants gave when asked why they "disfigured" their bodies in this manner suggest an explanation quite different from what ethnographers may originally have had in mind. Most women, Earthy reported, told her they tattooed themselves to "do honour to their bodies, to make them beautiful"; to enhance marriage prospects; to demonstrate "physical courage and endurance"; and to avoid being ridiculed as a "fish" for having a smooth belly. One woman, though, answered more philosophically:

If we see any object which particularly pleases us, we go home and have it tatu-ed on our bodies—but if other people envy us, and want to make incisions like ours, we do not reveal where we have seen the object—for the spirit . . . of the thing remains with her who has made a representation of it on her body. [27](#)

It was this eloquent comment that led Earthy to characterize female body-marking as "the story of [women's] lives written on their own flesh." While not necessarily ruling out the possibility that *tinhlanga* were somehow related to ethnic or family associations, this reading of tattoos as site and sign of historical memory—another form of women's knowledge of the past—suggests that the relational meanings of women's *tinhlanga* are considerably more complex than foreign commentators have guessed and may tell us a good deal more about women's histories than simply the tribe or clan to which they belong.

Beauty and History: Tracking *Tinhlanga*

All told, I interviewed approximately forty women about tattoos, their own and in some instances those of their mothers or grandmothers. While the youngest members of this group were born in the mid-1930s, the majority were born before 1925. When the eldest among them (those born circa 1905-15) recalled *tinhlanga* they had seen on older women while they were growing up, they could provide a glimpse of female body-marking practices across the region as far back as the 1870s. [28](#) These practices include the physical act of "cutting tattoos"—my translation of the



Shangaan phrase *kutlhavela tinhlanga*, where the rather violent verb *kutlhavela* (from *kutlhava*, to stab or pierce) describes the cutting and/or piercing of the skin. ²⁹ Very few of the interviewees had ever cut tattoos for someone else, since for the most part women had had their tattoos done by individuals older than they and the incidence of tattooing in Magude had declined dramatically since the beginning of the Renamo war. Women's testimony about the individuals who gave them their *tinhlanga*, on the other hand, was often strikingly detailed, and in this section I also draw on these recollections to consider not only why girls and women sought to embellish their own skin but also why they were usually able to find someone to do it for them.

To an even greater extent than in the previous chapter, my methodology for exploring the historical meanings of women's tattoos combines oral history with the insights of feminist archaeologists, particularly those who have tried to tease out the less easily accessible byways of women's pasts from the tracks of social and spatial relationships embedded in feminine material culture. ³⁰ On the one hand, I asked women to talk about their experiences of tattooing—why they did it (or why they did not do it), what the process was like, what it meant for them personally, what the most important consequences of tattooing have been. On the other hand, I sketched and questioned women about the tattoos themselves. Most of the time women volunteered to show us their *tinhlanga*, but occasionally they preferred to draw them for us in the sand or (in a very few cases) with pencil and paper. I realize that there are drawbacks to this approach, that they or I might have got details of tattoo design slightly wrong because I was not always able to see the *tinhlanga* themselves. As I hope will become clear in the remainder of this chapter, however, exact renderings of the appearance of their tattoos was not what women most wanted or were able to remember in interviews. In this respect, the methodology I developed for tracking women's tattoos explores the interface of memory and material culture instead of trying to separate one mode of historical knowledge from the other.

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Significantly, while only a small number of interviewees could recall the specific Shangaan names for particular tattoo designs, every woman could narrate when, where, and with whom she had each tattoo cut, who cut it for her, with what materials and so forth. This pattern tells us a great deal about the historical meaning of *tinhlanga* to the women who bear them. But the tattoos themselves are not unimportant, and the historical tale they tell is the subject of the final section of this chapter. Taken together, women's stories about tattooing—and the tattooed stories written on their skin—offer a feminine vision of the past, a vision that is as much about gendered constructions of community and change as are the other forms of historical memory examined in this study. Unlike naming practices, life stories, and pottery, however, what women have done with their bodies in this region has rarely been dismissed as unimportant, whether by their menfolk or by European colonial actors. The transformation of *tinhlanga* into a terrain of struggle during the twentieth century intensified the emotive power of tattoo memories in postwar Magude, making them an unusually intimate window on histories of female friendship, sexuality, and everyday race and gender politics in the countryside.

Interviewees quickly troubled dominant ethnographic stereotypes of female tattooing. Oral testimony, and the tattoos themselves, show no strict correlation between ethnic or clan identity and body marks, either during interviewees' own lifetime or in the time of their mothers and grandmothers. While a few women remarked that only "those Chopi women" tattooed their legs, several interviewees who identified themselves as Shangaan had *tinhlanga* on their thighs. No one, moreover, gave ascribed social identity as the reason for her tattoos, and no two women who called themselves by the same ethnic name or who belonged to the same clan bore identical sets of *tinhlanga*. It would be tempting to accept the theory (implied by White and Junod) that women's tattoos were an inscription of consanguineal kinship intended as evidence—perhaps for husbands and affines—that wives' affective loyalties lay permanently with their

natal clan. ³¹ Women, however, explained the resemblances among their *tinhlanga* rather differently, and virtually never did they mention husbands (or men, or affines, at all) when identifying why they had particular tattoo designs.

Women's oral accounts similarly complicate assumptions that tattooing's central purpose was to transform nubile girls into sexually desirable wives. Even though many interviewees laughingly confided that tattoos "make your husband happy" because when a man "grabs" and strokes a woman's tattooed body his penis instantly "wakes up," they clearly linked heightened male sexual interest with women's own sexual satisfaction: *tinhlanga* not only induced a man to spend more time caressing his wife, they also helped to ensure that he "woke up" (when, for instance, his penis rested against her textured skin) for a second or third round of intercourse. ³² Perhaps more telling, many women had their first tattoos done long before puberty and went on accumulating them throughout adulthood, in some cases even after a failed marriage had convinced them they no longer "wanted men." ³³ While the desire to be attractive to men was certainly important, and other women who added to their *tinhlanga* later in life did so after they were widowed or divorced, partly in order to win another husband, women never portrayed their motivation for cutting tattoos as solely (or even primarily) to fulfill male sexual expectations. Indeed, women's raucous stories about husbands' gratitude and comically slavish attention to tattooed wives represent male enjoyment almost as an ancillary effect of *tinhlanga*; and women who were not tattooed at all, such as Cufassane Munisse, challenged us to deny that a man "needs more than that little hole" to "wake up" and enjoy intercourse. ³⁴

The emphasis in oral narratives on the *xihundla* (secrecy) surrounding the act of cutting tattoos also adds an interesting wrinkle to scholarly explanations of body-marking, in southern Mozambique and elsewhere in Africa, as simply one element of an organized series of initiation rites that adolescent girls underwent at the behest of, or under the strict supervision of, their female elders. ³⁵ According to interviewees, *tinhlanga* were always done *nhoveni* (in the bush) or *khwatini* (in the woods), so that no one—"especially men and children"—would "see all that blood." ³⁶ Groups of anywhere from two to ten girls would "invite one another" and make clandestine arrangements to visit the *mutlhaveli* (tattoo artist) the following day. Having prepared what they needed to take with them the previous night (e.g., a piece of old cloth to staunch the bleeding), they would set off together at dawn without telling anyone where they were going or why. Even though it was seldom possible for girls to hide their wounds when they returned home, the point was to conduct oneself with circumspection and decorum in the presence of elder women, even mothers and grandmothers. Valentina Chauke scolded me just for asking whether she informed her grandmother N'waXavela the day she had her *tinhlanga* done: "Hoh! Do you show those elders? You didn't talk about these things, even with your grandmothers. They know we're doing these things, but they don't say anything, and we don't say anything. We had respect!" ³⁷ Unlike labia elongation, which the majority of interviewees described as essential to becoming a woman of "value," no one remembered *tinhlanga* as something senior women compelled girls to do. Female elders may have advised daughters and granddaughters to get themselves tattooed, but, as Teasse Xivuri explained, "No one forced you. Our mothers said, 'You, if you don't want *tinhlanga*, you don't do it. If you want them, you'll do it too.'" ³⁸

This insistence on the discretionary character of tattooing in the context of intergenerational relations among women reverberated through accounts of how the *tinhlanga* economy functioned. While most interviewees had the majority of their tattoos cut by someone older than they, and a small number had been tattooed (as girls) by a *xikoxana* (old woman), more often than not the *mutlhaveli* was a slightly older girl or a woman of their mother's age (that is, someone separated from her clientele by no more than a full generation). And while roughly one-

third of the *tinhlanga* in the group were cut by a relative, the remainder were done by friends, neighbors, or strangers known only to girls by their tattooing reputation (e.g., for causing less pain, or producing cuts with less risk of infection). All women stressed that they went to the *mutlhaveli* of their choice, and a *mutlhaveli* who was especially skillful often had "lines of girls" requesting her services. ³⁹ Moreover, when there was no kinship involved, girls (or women) demonstrated their appreciation to the *mutlhaveli* by offering her a gift of some kind: a few hours of farm work, a pot of water, a little corn, a bead bracelet, or a safety pin to "wash her eyes" because she had had to look upon so much blood. ⁴⁰ In rare instances, money might be offered instead, but interviewees declared unanimously that even cash offerings were never a *hakelo* (payment).

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If both men and senior women play marginal roles in interviewees' recollections of why they wanted *tinhlanga*, intragenerational pressures loom large in oral accounts. Asked why they had themselves tattooed, women's most common first response was "to make myself beautiful" or "to beautify [*kuxongisa*] my body." Beauty, of course, is culturally and historically specific, constituted by standards held as normative or ideal by people with some sense of shared social location and identity. Women made explicit the relational content of tattooed beauty in Magude in the comment that usually followed close on the heels of this first response: "I saw what my fellow girls had, and me, I longed for it too." As we saw in chapter 3, by "fellow girls" (*vanhwanyana kulorhi* or *tintombi kulorhi*)—or, in explanations about adult tattooing, "fellow women"—women meant other females in their age group (*ntangha*), with divisions determined roughly by puberty, marriage, and number of children. ⁴¹ Female fellowship, however, was also contingent on shared geographic place. In women's recollections of their youth (circa 1910-40), the horizons of shared place were at the same time fairly limited and infinitely elastic, defined principally by the *ganga* (subdistrict) or *tiko* (in this context, chieftaincy) where they resided but also by the landscape they or their peers traversed through visiting and trade and had "seen with [their] eyes." As Aldina Masangu recalled, "It's because there's traveling. ⁴² Well, when you travel, you go and you arrive at a place, or maybe another person arrives there. And you see those people of that land, you'll know that, there they do such-and-such. We say, 'Heh! And me, I want these things! And me, I want them.'" ⁴³

The key site of spatial connection was at the river's edge, where girls and women living or visiting in the same area went to draw water, wash clothing, and bathe every day. Indeed, along with the bush and the forest, *combeni* (at the river) was a crucial locational setting in tattoo narratives, the place where fellow girls and women compared and judged the "beauty" of one another's *tinhlanga* and where tattoo-based feminine friendships were courted, negotiated, and sealed. As Albertina Tiwana explained, the cumulative pressure of these daily performances was enough to convince most girls that, however much they may have dreaded tattooing, the imperatives of friendship and the desire to belong to a cohort of fellows ultimately left them little choice:

- A: Mmm, I cut tattoos. Yee! I fear them, truly! . . . [Albertina explains how she had *tinhlanga* on her stomach cut first and then went back to the same woman later to have her abdomen done]
- H: Why did you go back the second time if you were afraid?
- A: [loud, plaintive] Don't I long for what my friends have?
- H: So all of your friends had their tattoos done by then?
- A: Mmm! When we're swimming around in the water, they show each other. "Eh, look at my tattoos!" "Eh, look at mine!" Well, me, I long for them. Well, when I see that that *mamana* [i.e., adult woman—literally, mother] is cutting tattoos again, shoo! I go. ⁴⁴

Desire to belong to communities of female *xinghana* (friendship)—communities whose boundaries were marked by shared standards of tattooed beauty—did not necessarily diminish when young women moved to their *vukatini* (marital home), usually some distance away from where they had grown up. Indeed, exogamy and virilocal residence norms made tattooing arguably even more important for a woman after marriage,



when peer pressure from fellow girls she had known probably since birth was replaced by the discomfort of newcomer status and the need to forge affective bonds beyond the precarious circle of her in-laws. Melina Xivuri, who was born circa 1910 in Xikwembu (Phadjane) and married into the remote border area of Muqakaze (northern Moamba district), reminisced about the power of *tinhlanga* to lay the groundwork of friendship between women with little in common besides gender and the accidental geography of marriage. Here too, the river was a crucial site for fostering such connections, but, as Melina suggests, so were the other gendered spaces where fellow women ordinarily encountered one another:

They'll see me, when I'm here at home. They'll see me, because long ago, truly, we didn't use clothes! . . . They see me, ah! These things made us happy. When you're at home, or maybe you're at the river, you look each other over. ⁴⁵ Maybe you're washing each other's backs, your fellow women. Eh-heh. "Heh! You, those tattoos of yours are really beautiful!" "Eh, friend! Indeed, where did you cut those tattoos? Me, I want them too!" ⁴⁶

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Melina stressed that the possession of identical tattoos—whether by coincidence or design—made one woman the *munghanu* (friend) of another but also something more. Such women would henceforth refer to one another as *chomi*, a specifically feminine term of endearment.

"Looking each other over," however, could also be a competitive or even hostile process, especially in circumstances where differences constructed around class, marital status, or ethnicity gave rise to tensions among girls or women. The flip side of longing to be as beautiful as one's fellows was that peer pressure, usually expressed as name-calling, could drive a girl or woman to the *mutlhaveli* even when friendship was not at stake. Most women described peer mockery whereby untattooed female bodies were compared to fish (echoing Earthy's informants from the 1920s), a taunt they explained in terms of either the white color of a fish's belly or the smoothness of unmarked skin, which made a woman's body slippery and harder for a man to grasp. That tattooing was perceived as an important constituent of gender identity is implied even more directly in some women's recollection that they were called men (sing. *nuna*) until they had acquired *tinhlanga*.

Yet here again, oral accounts make it clear that painfully inscribed standards of feminine beauty were targeted more at a female than male audience. The central feature of every interviewee's *tinhlanga* story was a graphic description of the suffering she had to endure throughout the tattooing process. In voices that ranged from melodramatic whisper to comic shriek, women narrated in great detail (and with uncannily evocative sound effects) how their skin was "stabbed" and "chopped," how their "blood ran everywhere," how they thought their "*marhumbu* [bowels] were coming out," how some girls had to be forcibly held down by their friends so that their squirming (or efforts to escape) would not spoil the scars. Olinda Ntimba explained that, because she was the first in her group to be tattooed, she "could not cry, because they'll laugh at you, your friends. When you're the first among them, all of them will stand and look at you when you're being cut. They'll watch you! They laugh at you, when you cry!" ⁴⁷ Girls who sat through the process stoically were considered "strong" or "steady" (*kutiya*) and "courageous" (*kutimisa*); women who did so repeatedly bore permanent proof that they had no fear. Essential to these stories is a curious inversion

of what scholars of southern Africa have claimed about local beliefs regarding the dangerous power of spilled female blood. In communities where menstrual blood allegedly endangers the health of men and cattle, where menstruating women are considered so "taboo" that they are denied not only sexual access to men but also physical contact with anything that might touch and so "pollute" them, ⁴⁸ Magude interviewees took almost defiant pride in their willingness to shed non-menstrual blood in what they gleefully described as alarming quantities. The prominence of bloody imagery in women's oral narratives suggests its centrality to the meaning of *tinhlanga*, and invites a closer look at the gendered symbolism of blood (*ngati*) in this context. ⁴⁹

According to Shangaan proverbs and stories, as well as ethnographic writings, non-menstrual blood possesses a number of contradictory powers. A metaphor for both the deepest obligations of kinship and the effort required to fulfill one's goals in life ("There is no tattoo without blood," that is, no achievement without struggle), blood is a positive force, a substance that guarantees personal well-being just as it heals illness, misfortune, or spirit possession when spilled through animal sacrifice or consumed as part of a ritual cure. Yet blood is also the most treacherous of the body's fluids: the loss of blood saps one's physical and moral strength (someone who is corrupt or cowardly is said to have "weak blood"); blood that has fallen on the ground must immediately be covered with sand because "wizards" might use it to make deadly "charms" (called *tingati*, the plural for blood); and life-sustaining liquids such as milk or beer can be made life-threatening by being magically transformed into blood. ⁵⁰ With these apparently contrary meanings in mind, women's panegyrics about voluntary blood loss take on complex importance. Being tattooed means giving up one's blood and allowing it to fall freely on the ground, which makes one vulnerable to supernatural, physical, and social threats of all kinds. However, blood shed to obtain *tinhlanga* brings valuable rewards: new bonds of kinship (a kind of "blood sisterhood"); proof of nerve and bravery; and, ironically, a kind of dually re-gendered prestige, for if tattooing contributes to the making of girls into women, it does so in part by mimicking the battlefield heroics of men. In other words, the experience of being tattooed was just as crucial to its social and historical meaning for women as the *tinhlanga* themselves. At the heart of the experience was a test, a trial by ordeal, taken and judged within a circle of female peers, to demonstrate that feminine identity (in body and character) was not a quality a girl was born with but one she had to achieve, actively and bravely, on her own.

Experienced and performed together, the cutting ordeal could also cement affective ties among female peers across lines of economic, social, or cultural difference. On the day she finally decided to tell me about her own tattoos, Rosalina Malungana, the Swiss Mission-educated woman who, as we saw in chapter 3, reminisced so romantically about her common-law marriage to a Portuguese truck driver, acknowledged one source of conflict in their relationship that stemmed from Rosalina's desire to befriend her new non-Christian and nonliterate neighbors in Chibuto:

H: So you never had *tinhlanga*?

R: [Rosalina pauses] Yes, I did. [laughs] Yee! I had them here on my belly, but eeh! Since, Heidi, I'm telling you, that man I was with, he was a *saint*, saint, saint, saint! Do you know what I did?

H: What?

R: There were—I had a friend, two friends. They were Muziosse [laughs] and Mafasse. Those [women] were really my friends. They even came [to my home] to talk to me, you know. And then one day, we were taking a bath in the Limpopo River, there at the Capelas. ⁵¹ And [Agosto] had gone to Lourenço Marques, to fetch merchandise for the shop. . . . I was taking a

bath there in the river, with them, all wrapped up in my *capulana*, like that. Well, they say, "Hee! Heh-heh! So you're just like that, all white, eeh?! With such a beautiful belly, for making tattoos! Why don't you do it?" Hee! "Heh! Go do it! Do you see us?" "Eee." "It's beautiful. Here, I made a *xinkwahlana* [small lizard], here I made an *njere* [cock's comb]. Mmm. You don't have to do it here, but, hah! Which do you want?" [laughs] Hee hee! Mmm. And then I said, "Yee! Hmm. Me. Eeh! A belly so beautiful! Eeh!" . . . I still had such big breasts! Beautiful ones. Eeh. Hmm! "And since he's gone to Lourenço Marques, when he returns, he'll see them when they're already a little healed." Then I said, "Heh! Who can do it for me?" And that Muziosse said, "Ah, I can do it. He won't see. Don't you sleep with a nightshirt? I say, "Ah, I don't sleep with a nightshirt. It's because sometimes he doesn't like it this way. He likes for me to sleep like this, nude, like him." "Ah! But you can say that, 'Ah, I don't want to,' you know." Eh! Hmm. I leave. I go over there with twenty [*escudos*]⁵²—mm, four *cheleni*. I gave that to them, to cut me, since she did it for money. Mmm. Then she began to put the design here, mmm—*xinkwahlana*—and she drew here [on Rosalina's abdomen] too, and here on the side. Then, she began to cut me. Me, I say, "Eee!" Since I too wanted it, you know! But blood was running everywhere! And then she took the charcoal—they grind that charcoal, you know. Then, she goes "ee"—they dab, dab, dab. Everywhere they dab it! ⁵³ Eee! All over my belly, so [those *tinhlanga*] will go tshwooo! [i.e., darken] Really hard. Eeh! They suited me! Now they've already disappeared. You can't see anything [laughs]. . . .

But later, when [Agosto] returned, heh! He went out looking for that woman, Muziosse!—to ask her why she did that. Because when—well, he left today. The following day I did *tinhlanga*. The third day, he wasn't there. The fourth, he returned—mmm—without my saying anything. And then, when we went to sleep, do you know what I did? [laughs] I put on panties. And I took my *capulana*, put it here, to cover that place up, so he would think I was menstruating.

H: But you weren't?

R: No! [laughing]

H: *Vovo!* [laughing]

R: No, I wasn't! I was just afraid that he would touch my belly. And then he would ask, "What's your problem?" Eeh. But then he ended up finding out. At night, we were sleeping. He began to touch me—"Ah! Let me, what's your problem?" "It's that, I'm menstruating." "Ah, yes?" "Yes." "When did it start?" "Yesterday." "It started yesterday?" "Yes." "Ah, all right." And he fell quiet. Well, he began to count the days! Because he knows that I, I go only three days. Well, on the fourth, he began to touch me. Then, when I did this [i.e., flinched], he said, "But what's this? You're fleeing with your belly! Why don't you want to come near me?" Eeh! Mmm. [Rosalina lowers her voice dramatically] And then I said, "Ah, it's because Muziosse, she cut *tinhlanga* for me." [Rosalina shouts] "Heeh?!? What?! *Tinhlanga*?! You?" "Mmm." "Muziosse?!" "Mmm." "Muziosse?!" "Mmm." "The wife of Mhona?" "Mmm." "You had a beautiful belly! Eesh! Rosalina! You ruined your belly, which was so beautiful, beautiful, beautiful, beautiful! But who told you to get *tinhlanga*? What do I want with *tinhlanga*?" Ah! I did it thinking that he, certainly, he would like it! Ah! But he went to sleep very angry! He didn't come near me.

Then, the next day, he said, "I'm taking my car. I'm going out to look for that Muziosse, because I know she's not at home during the day. She's in

her field, chasing away the birds that eat her millet." He took his car, he went after that Muziosse. I'd already, that morning, I'd already gone to the shop, [I told a woman there]—"Go tell Muziosse to watch out for Agosto! If he finds her, he'll really beat her!—because he's angry that she cut *tinhlanga* for me." And when [Muziosse] hears his car roaring, she runs and hides! And he, he goes straight to her field. He reaches it, he leaves his car, there in her field. He says, "Heh, *namu* Muziosse! ⁵⁴ Mmm?" [He calls to the other women there], "Heh, do you know where Muziosse is? Is she here?" They say, "We don't know!" He says, "Heh, you're hiding her! I want Muziosse, right here! I'm asking for her." They say, "Muziosse, she's not here." Eh! She runs, she goes and hides. He doesn't find her. Well, he returns home. He says, "Eh, I'll catch her! But now what will I do? I could hurt you, or not hurt you—what I want is what I want."

H: I don't understand, *vovo*.

R: He said thus, "I could hurt you, I don't care, because you're the one who wanted *tinhlanga*. Well, me, for me to leave you alone [i.e., not approach her for sex], as if you weren't my wife, no. I'll touch you, all the same, even if they hurt, because I too have to do what I want to do—as soon as your menstruation is finished." Then he found out that I was [lying]. Eeh. And that I wasn't sick. Ah! But then, since he was a good boy, he left me alone. He even said, "Ah! I wanted to beat that woman. I wanted to make a scandal, but it's not she who's guilty. You're the guilty one, who let her do that nonsense. I don't want it. I don't like that. It's you who shouldn't do it again—you're even capable of doing them on your legs! If that happens—I don't want to beat anyone, but I'll beat you all the same, if you go and ruin your legs too!" [laughs] Well, I didn't do it again. And he too, he left me alone. Ah! He was a saint, that man. ⁵⁵

Rosalina's representation of her motives for having herself tattooed—as, in her eyes, a married woman settling into life at her *vukatini*—is anything but straightforward. We cannot know with certainty, for example, to what extent her decision to be cut was voluntary and to what extent it was forced on her by friendly persuasion. We cannot know whether her motive was to win acceptance from her new female neighbors or to give her Portuguese husband a pleasant sexual surprise when he returned home. Probably her motives were mixed and her decision was neither purely voluntary nor forced. In that sense Rosalina's account is typical, as it emphasizes the multiple pressures and longings women articulated when remembering their decision to be tattooed. One thing that is clear from the above passage, though, is that Rosalina's *tinhlanga* narrative starts very deliberately from her riverside encounter with Mafasse and Muziosse, and it is their ambiguous commentary on her "belly"—its strange "white"-ness is what makes it beautiful for tattooing—that, in her memory, prompts her to accept Muziosse's offer. Rosalina was one of only two interviewees who identified whiteness—having the "belly of a *mulungu*"—as the taunt that spurred her to be cut, and in Rosalina's case her status as the *nsati* (wife) of a Portuguese man probably lent the women's teasing an additional racial cast. Rosalina herself gave no indication that tensions related to her interracial "marriage" played a role in the incident, highlighting as the principal factor in her decision her desire to be beautiful—in the eyes of her new female friends as much as in those of Agosto.



Yet while women's narratives accentuate the intragenerational community fostered by tattooing, intergenerational tattoo linkages were not absent from or irrelevant to their accounts. Most interviewees stated firmly that their *tinhlanga* were somehow different from those of their mothers and grandmothers, but specific notions of tattooed beauty could sometimes transcend generational lines, in part because older *vathaveli* exercised some

influence over *tinhlanga* fashions. Here too the critical variable in tattooing decisions seems consistently to have been common geographic *place*. Indeed, listening to women in postwar Magude recount *tinhlanga* stories, it was easy to get the impression that local feminine constructions of beauty have been infinitely impermeable and cavalierly unconcerned with differences of age, class, status, ethnicity, etc.—indeed, knowing no other bounds beyond gender and place. Rosalina, for instance, said that both her mother, Anina Tivane (Nguni, by clan), and one of her father's half-sisters, Tshamatiko Malungana, bore at least one of the same tattoos, the *xinkwahlana*— a design popular among women in that area in the 1920s and 1930s—that Muziosse cut for Rosalina in Chibuto. [56](#)

Perhaps more surprising is the elision of ethnic differences in women's selection of *tinhlanga* designs. Lucia Ntumbo, also Nguni, had most of her *tinhlanga* done by the elder sister of her maternal grandmother, an Ndau woman named Qimidzi Mandlaze, in whose household in Chaimite (southern Gaza province) Lucia spent most of her adolescence in the late 1920s and who cut tattoos for "lines of girls" from their predominantly Shangaan village. Qimidzi, according to Lucia, had a limited repertoire and always cut the same set of designs, some of which she bore on her own body but which were for the most part *tinhlanga* currently in fashion in Chaimite, and which Qimidzi had learned from other local *vatlhaveli* and had seen on women's bodies "at the river." According to Lucia, her own daughter also had tattoos, but "they're not the same, because she was born in Xitezeni [Phadjane] and she cut *tinhlanga* there." [57](#)



That tattooing was an expression of consciously created ties of female spatial identity is reflected in the geographic distribution of particular kinds of *tinhlanga*, such as the *makandu*, a pattern consisting of rows of triangles made from small, round, tightly clustered keloid scars. The four women in the group of interviewees who had this design all received it in western Magude, when they were either residing or visiting the area, and I did not find any women with *makandu* in the eastern part of the district. Rosalina portrayed *tinhlanga* fashion in even more broadly geographical terms when we began discussing keloid tattooing of women's lower abdomen and thighs:



That one, the ones who really have those, it's in Zavala, mmm. From Chibuto to here, it's only this one [i.e., epigastric scars]. Now, passing Chibuto, going to Zavala, Inharrime, Xitengele, these things go way over there. Mmm. They do that thing. But *really*, really big, truly! [58](#)

[One woman's tinhlanga story](#)

Of God, Race, and Flowerpots: Interpreting *Tinhlanga* in a Colonial Context

What, though, do the tattoos themselves mean? Women usually rebuffed my efforts to press them about the *nhlamuselo* (meaning) of their *tinhlanga*, insisting as Maria Xivuri did: "I don't know, I don't know. I hear that my friends—seeing friends, fellow girls, they cut [tattoos]. Well, you go, you're cut too. What they mean, these [tattoos], I don't know, I don't know anything." [59](#) Even when women knew the specific names of their tattoos, they often could not tell me why different designs were labeled in particular ways. As Talita Ubisse explained, "Only that *xikoxana* who cut them knows these things." [60](#) On their own, women's oral accounts might highlight female agency in choosing, copying, and disseminating tattoo fashion, yet the collective story they tell is a rather conservative and cautious one, set in secret feminine locations and affective relationships and claiming modestly little in the way of broader historical importance. Indeed, as narrations of

experience they sketch a social landscape of deceptively limited interest to historians—a tale of networks of female friendship but beyond that perhaps nothing more than another illustration of the harrowing lengths to which women have gone to make themselves pretty.

Recent scholarship from elsewhere in Africa sheds light on the range of discursive practices through which African bodies were remade, schooled, disciplined, commoditized, and dressed in the context of colonial power relations. Inspired by such social theorists as Gramsci, Foucault, Bourdieu, Merleau-Ponty, and more recently Judith Butler, much of this work has focused on the role of clothing in the (re)construction of colonial "social bodies"—the ways in which the corporeal bodies of African men and women have served as vehicles for the performance, appropriation, or resistance of colonial subjectivities through the clothes they wear. ⁶¹ As "signifier[s] of the social," dressed African bodies have been viewed as intrinsically political texts, embedded in yet also constitutive of hierarchies of racialized and gendered imperial power. ⁶²

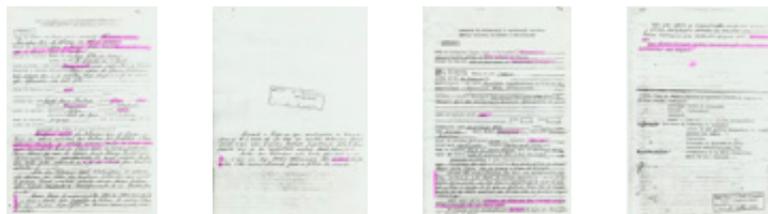
A conspicuous absence in this literature, with its emphasis on the contingent and "unstable surface" quality of the colonized body politic, is discussion of the cultural construction of African bodies *unclothed*—above all, the more permanent, indelible signs of social personhood that may be worn on the skin. ⁶³ Scholarly and popular writings on body-marking in other contexts advance the metaphors of canvas, envelope, surface, or screen to convey the relationship between skin as medium and skin as message, yet these metaphors are all premised, as Frances Mascia-Lees and Patricia Sharpe have pointed out, on a patently Western vision of the body as unitary and distinct, a preconstituted "ground onto which patterns of signification can be inscribed." ⁶⁴ In this work, the irreversibility of tattoos is seen to lend them special meaning as historical records of identity and events, mnemonic symbols registering everything from group membership and personal achievement to social misconduct and stigmatized status. Scholars' belief in the unique capacity of tattoos to communicate social personhood among dominated or marginal groups has inspired the study of tattoos in settings as diverse as the criminal underworld of nineteenth-century Germany, the marriage preparations of Moroccan women, and aboriginal communities in postcolonial North America. ⁶⁵ Here, oddly enough, the political position of their bearers seems to dissuade commentators from scrutinizing body-markings as text. The possibility that permanent alterations of the body's surface might represent more profoundly challenging claims about the constitution of self and society than do practices involving temporary forms of body alteration remains largely unexplored, especially in African historical scholarship.

In this section, I examine changes in female tattooing practice in the Magude area over time and argue that, while women may explain the meanings of *tinhlanga* solely in terms of beauty and friendship, the immutable marks with which they have embellished their skin tell a rather more complicated story. Definite historical patterns emerged when I compared the temporal and spatial distribution of *tinhlanga* styles among interviewees. On the one hand, certain kinds of *tinhlanga* showed a definite trajectory of decline. Keloid facial scars seem to have disappeared by the 1920s; a few of the oldest women recalled their mother or grandmothers wearing such scars, but no one in the group had them or remembers seeing them on any of her peers. Keloid scarification of women's shoulders and backs, mainly in the *makandu* design mentioned above, became increasingly less common after the 1930s, as did the most extreme form of cicatrization on the lower abdomen and pubic area, which in some cases produced scars over half an inch in diameter.

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Keloid tattoos—whose cutting women narrated in especially dramatic and gory detail—were made by lifting the skin with a *ndzovo* (fishhook), *xikaya* thorn, fingers, or safety pin and then slicing it (sometimes two or three times, to create a flap) with a razor blade or piece of broken glass. Ground charcoal or ash was mixed with *nhlampfurha* (castor oil) or *tsumane* (red ocher) and then rubbed into the wounds to darken the scars. ⁶⁶ A variation of the

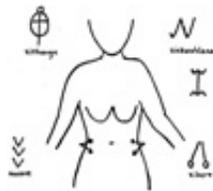
dorsal tattoo was recorded by one of the ARPAC survey teams in 1981, on a 48-year-old woman who had her *tinhlanga* cut in the mid-1940s. *Xikhoma nkata* (clutch/hold your darling), the name this woman gave to her then unusual tattoo (because it was for "your husband to caress" during sexual intercourse), makes one meaning of this design quite explicit. ⁶⁷ Hypogastric keloid tattoos, known as *vusankusi*, typically took the form of horizontal rows of decreasing numbers of round scars extending down from the navel, sometimes as far as the vagina itself. This type of tattoo was much more common among interviewees than was the *makandu* and was described by some Magude women as the most important *tinhlanga* of all. As Talita Ubisse explained (between hoots and gasps of tearful laughter), "Oh, your husband, he grabs and grabs, he feels happiness!" ⁶⁸ No one among the women I interviewed had received *vusankusi* after the mid-1950s.



The type of tattoo that shows the greatest constancy over time during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries is the incised scarification of women's epigastric area or *khwirhi* (belly)—i.e., the front of a woman's torso between her breasts and her navel. All interviewees bore some version of the *nxurhana* (a geometric design consisting mostly of parallelograms and triangles) and/or the *xilova* (sets of parallel vertical and oblique lines). Both types were produced by drawing the pattern on the skin (with charcoal, a matchhead, or a pin) and then making small cuts (again, with broken glass or a razor blade) along the lines. These tattoos range from simple patterns, based on as few as four or five lines, to elaborate networks of geometric figures extending across the entire belly and wrapping around the torso on both sides. Because of the widespread occurrence of the *nxurhana* in eastern Gaza province in the 1920s, and because Chopi and Lenge women told her that it represented either the *ntete* grasshopper, the forelegs of a *khongoloti* (millipede), or a species of lizard, E. Dora Earthy concluded that this tattoo more than any other carried ancient "vestiges of totemism." ⁶⁹ None of the women I interviewed, however, indicated that the *nxurhana* had any meaning beyond its exceptionally intricate beauty.



In addition to their *nxurhana/xilova* tattoos, many interviewees also had one or more smaller designs incised on their belly or sides, and these *tinhlanga* were much more diverse. About one-quarter of the group, including women of various ages, social



backgrounds, and places of origin, had a tattoo they called *xinkwahlana*—a type of lizard, like the pattern Muziosse did for Rosalina—which had been cut for them between 1920 and 1950. Lídia Chavango, a woman in her eighties who grew up and married in the remote border area of northern Mapulanguene, recalled that some girls had "flowers" (singular, *xiluva*) or *mpon'wana*, a species of shrub, tattooed onto their sides. ⁷⁰ Two slightly younger women from Facazisse had a chevron pattern Earthy believed was an arrowhead or snake, and one of these also had a scar she identified as a *ximusana* (small wooden pestle). Several women between the ages of sixty and eighty-five who had grown up near one of southern Mozambique's colonial towns, on the other hand, bore a symbol they called *xikero* (scissors) on one or both sides, while Katarina Matuka, who was born circa 1910 and spent her childhood near the coastal heartland of the Gaza state, had on her side a tattoo representing the *xitlhangu* (oval shield) carried by Nguni warriors.

Between the 1920s and the 1940s, the exact date depending on the area, a dramatic shift occurred in tattooing practice: the introduction of a new method of producing scars using bunches of needles instead of sharp-edged cutting tools. While interviewees described this process with the verb *kutlhavela*, and recalled that *nsiti* (soot, ashes—i.e., ground charcoal) still served as coloring agents, needle-tattooing differs in several critical ways from keloid or incised scarification. Less painful, less bloody, and less likely to lead to infection, needle-tattooing also produces much less tactile—and more narrowly visual—transformations of the skin, and seems to have had no overtly sexual implication; at least, no interviewee mentioned male sexual interest when talking about these *tinhlanga*. This revolution in tattoo technology also led to important changes not only in *tinhlanga* aesthetics but in the social relations of female body-marking. Women remember that, by the mid-1920s near Magude town, and by the mid-1930s further out in the countryside, younger



and younger girls—even "children" (singular, *mutsongwana*)—were using needles and ash to give one another a new style of facial tattoo called *swibayana*, which consisted of clusters of round scars on the cheeks, forehead, and chin. Women who grew up in the environs of the Antioka mission station, including Valentina Chauke and Aldina Masangu, recall a fleeting yet popular tattooing fad among young girls throughout Facazisse and Makuvulane in the 1920s: having one's European first name written on the right forearm and one's clan name (or perhaps the name of "the boy you loved") written on the left.

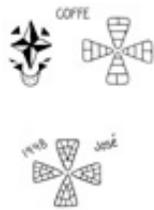


⁷¹ In the hands of older girls and women, needles were employed to create patterns that were more complex and intended to represent objects from the agrarian landscape. Amélia Marikele and Katarina Matuka, for instance, each had needle-cut depictions of the traditional *xikomu* (iron hoe) tattooed onto their cheekbones by a woman friend circa 1940.

By the 1940s, needle-tattooing had encouraged a much more radical departure in women's body-marking, especially in the villages ringing Magude town. Older girls and women began to acquire needle-cut *tinhlanga* on their chest, arms, and thighs. These designs were not only substantially more ornate than previous ones. They also consisted entirely of images representing objects of European origin, incorporated new *xilungu* materials (ink and shoe polish, for example) as coloring agents, and in almost every case were tattooed onto women by men. Migrant workers returned home from South Africa or Swaziland with notebooks full of *tinhlanga* styles popular among women in their place of employment.



These men offered their services to female kin and neighbors whose

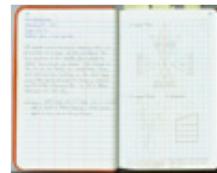


memories of this event stress the excitement of choosing, on the basis of what they understood "the girls had over there," from a wealth of new tattoo possibilities. ⁷² The most common male-cut tattoos among interviewees incorporated images of flowerpots, beveled diamonds and stars, and a crosslike design representing the trademark of the Blue Cross brand of condensed milk. Occasionally, the *mutlhaveli* would also include signs of his own *xilungu* identity: the name he used for work and tax purposes, and sometimes the year the tattoo was made. When I asked Albertina Tiwana whether a woman might encounter problems if she allowed a man who was not her husband to handle her body this way, her response was a phlegmatic "Mm-mm. We hear that those girls in Swaziland, they weren't afraid to bathe [in the river] with boys, so we weren't afraid [to show our legs to men] either." ⁷³

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To interpret these transformations in tattooing practice, we need to look at the social context in which *tinhlanga* styles waxed and waned and also at the changing social complexion of the tattooed population. At the same time as girls and women were inventing new methods and types of body-marking, they were also confronting new, sometimes violent pressures to cease decorating their bodies altogether. Lise Nsumbane, for example, was born circa 1910 less than three miles from the Swiss Mission station at Antioka and grew up in the household of her paternal aunt across the Nkomati River in Makuvulane. At the Swiss-run Makuvulane mission school, she remembers,

- L: Hoh, we hid these things, you know!—from the teacher. We hid them or he beat us, there at school. . . . When you, when your friends, they cut *tinhlanga*, he *beat* them. He says, "What's that? Say, are you cutting one another?" It's like those things, the *vusenga* [coiled wire bracelets worn on wrists and ankles]. Those things, they forbade them! You were beaten for them, truly.
- H: Why? What was wrong with these things?
- L: Ah, they say they're for heathens. ⁷⁴



Juliana Kwinika, born in 1914 outside Caniçado (Guijá) but orphaned as a child and raised by the Catholic São Jerónimo mission in Magude town, offered a similar explanation when I asked her why, unlike her friends, she went only once to the elderly woman who cut her tattoos:

Me, I abandon these things, because of school. Because when you go to school, and you've cut [tattoos], . . . you go "eee" [Juliana demonstrates moving gingerly because of pain]. When you enter the school, well, it hurts. You go [Juliana demonstrates covering wounds with extra cloth], so he won't know. Well, when the teacher, he sees you, yee!! Heesh!! He *beats* you. ⁷⁵

Like Lise Nsumbane, Valentina Chauke spent her childhood in Makuvulane but grew up in the lap of the mission community, in the homestead of her uncle Jakovo Chauke, a *muvangeli* (evangelist) for the Swiss, and next to the *nhlarhu* tree where worship services and classes were held. Valentina informed us that tattooing was not only "the work of heathens" but also a *xidyoho* (sin) and that it would "finish [i.e., use up] your blood." ⁷⁶ Church girls caught with *tinhlanga*, she and other women recalled, risked being reprimanded, publicly shamed, and sometimes beaten by male or female European mission personnel or by male African evangelists, layworkers, and teachers.

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Faced with the threat of corporal punishment and humiliation before *vakriste* (Christians), some girls decided that tattooing their body was not worth the risk, particularly when their marriage sights were set on a boy in the church. Tercina and Talita Ntimane, sisters from a coastal village in *ka* Ntimane (Manhiça) who married prominent church men in Facazisse and Makuvulane (respectively) in the early 1950s, seemed surprised when I asked them whether they had ever cut *tinhlanga*. Daughters of Swiss Mission converts whose homestead included the "heathen" wife of the girls' uncle, they never doubted that tattooing was forbidden, and they were afraid even to ask their uncle's wife about her abundant *tinhlanga*. [77](#)

Christian censure, though, was not the only reason some girls and women began to turn away from body-marking in the mid to late colonial period. Sara Juma, a *mestiça* spirit medium born in 1942 to an Indo-African father and his local wife in Magude town, identified her "race" as Muslim, and had the following to say when I asked her about her way of life while she was growing up:

S: I was different. I was—those Shangaan things, I didn't follow them well, because I didn't know anything Shangaan. Only, since I was born, I'm this way. Because I didn't want that . . . , well, there were these things, eh, cutting *tinhlanga*. I don't know what else. Now I, no— [laughs]. Even my mother didn't want that. I wasn't one of these people to go around doing *tinhlanga*. Mmm. My mother didn't want me to follow that *xilandin*[black] thing.

H: Why not?

S: Ah, it's my mother who didn't want it, because I wasn't . . . of that race, for me to run around, to know things that those people were doing. My sisters, those daughters of my [mother's] sister, *they* went, but I went to watch, what they were doing there! [Sara laughs] They went to do those *tinhlanga*, to cut them. . . . I went to watch, truly. They beat me! They always chased me away. When you don't go there to do it, they don't allow you to watch there. They *beat* me. They chased me away. And I went. Well, when I reach [home], I say, "I saw her! They're cutting each other!" [78](#)

As we see in this passage, for Sara *tinhlanga* represented an affront not to her God but to her race, and body-marking functioned for her as the principal metonymic difference separating her from the embellished bodies of her "black" mother and sisters. Sara attributes her view of *tinhlanga* to her mother, who grew up on the grounds of the São Jerónimo mission station around the same time that Juliana Kwinika was attending school there. Sara's mother's desire to instill non-Shangaan values in her mixed-race daughter—and to define Sara as *xilungu*, a status she was not entitled to in colonial law—was certainly reinforced by Sara's own participation in the Catholic primary school in the late 1940s.

Indeed, according to women's oral accounts, by the 1940s the place of female tattooing in mission Christianity's definitions of sin and heathenism had fully converged with Portuguese colonial discourses vaunting the benefits of assimilation while articulating the boundaries between colonizer and colonized, "civilized" and "native," in increasingly racialized terms. [79](#) In the aftermath of the 1928 *Indigenato* labor code—a bundle of laws designed to maximize state control over African labor by formalizing the distinction between (white) "citizens" and (nonwhite) "subjects"—*assimilado* status was regarded by most Africans, according to historian Jeanne Penvenne, as "the best of a bad deal." [80](#) Available only to Africans who were literate in Portuguese, had traded "tribal" for European culture, and were engaged in the colonial economy as artisans, traders, or skilled workers, assimilation promised all the rights enjoyed by Portuguese citizens, including exemption from forced labor. While these

opportunities were meaningless for the vast majority of Africans (by 1961, less than 1 percent was legally assimilated ⁸¹), it appears that the shadow of this legislation had fallen on Magude by mid-century, so that "white" was a condition to aspire to and "black" one to be discarded or despised. Thus for many interviewees who had had contact with mission schools in their youth, *tinhlanga* embodied all that "civilized" women were supposed to abandon. Whether for God or the myth of attainable whiteness, black female skins were to remain smooth and unmarked.

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This ideology helps to explain what seemed to me the odd reaction of Olinda Ntimba when she, Pastor Mbanza's wife, and I sat down together for our first interview. ⁸² Before I had even switched on the tape recorder, Olinda (who was born circa 1920 in Chobela, just east of Facazisse) began to apologize that because she had been "formed in the *xilandin* way" she was an "animal" who didn't "know anything"; and that, because her parents were "heathens," she did not "find *xilungu*"—by which, as later became clear, she meant specifically the church, and generically "civilization"—until she married a Christian man in Makuvulane. Although Olinda at first spoke matter-of-factly about her traditional childhood, she became visibly nervous when I asked her about *tinhlanga*, and only after repeated reassurances from the pastor's wife that it was permissible to share such information did Olinda begin to relax and talk calmly about her tattoos. At the end of the interview, Olinda admitted that she had been afraid to tell me about "those things of long ago," because "the church always says [they] should be forgotten, we should leave them, their time is passed." ⁸³



Yet even for women such as Olinda, the threat of a beating and the racial stigmatization of tattooing were rarely enough to dissuade them from having *tinhlanga* done. Despite mounting disincentives from not only church elders and schoolteachers but also the Banyan traders who vigorously promoted *xilungu* fashions from their shops, both in town and across the countryside, the majority of girls and women continued to beautify themselves with tattoos. Ironically, the very clothing that "civilization" required African schoolgirls and church girls to wear made it possible for them to conceal the *tinhlanga* that European dress was supposed to be replacing. As Lise Nsumbane reasoned, "They cut [tattoos], everyone. Even here, inside the church, all the girls cut [tattoos]. Because, even if they forbade these things, no one is going to undress your belly [to look for tattoos]." ⁸⁴

With a *muvangeli* for a guardian, Valentina Chauke did in fact experience such intimate monitoring, and she recalls her uncle Jakovo checking her belly every time she returned home from playing with her friends. This strict home surveillance doubled the likelihood that Valentina would be punished, since her schoolteachers and the Antioka church elders were indeed on the lookout for tattooing activity in most of the places she frequented that were away from home. Nonetheless, Valentina told us with a chuckle, "They forbade it, for us, but we cut [*tinhlanga*]! We did it by running away—we didn't tell them at home where we were going!" ⁸⁵ Valentina's tattooing story is especially significant because she and "all of [her] fellow girls" around Antioka received their *tinhlanga* (in the 1910s) from a girl named Ntete Khosa, daughter of one of the African pioneers of the Swiss evangelizing effort in Magude. ⁸⁶ The "doctor of *tinhlanga*," Ntete—according to Valentina—was a *nghwavavana* (prostitute) because she "ran around with men," left her husband, and never had children. Apparently indifferent to the regular beatings she got from her father, a girl who "liked to play" and "was always laughing," Ntete used to "go around and gather the girls," Christian or not, and offer to cut *tinhlanga* for them:

- V: She goes from homestead to homestead, gathering us together. She says, "We'll go have a meeting, on this day." We go, down to the Nkomati. All of us, we go to the Nkomati. We go and sit there. She arrives, with her sister,

she goes around talking, talking, so we'll accept. She'll start with the *vatate* [elder girls]. She cuts this one, she cuts this one. . . .

H: Were there a lot of girls, the day you went?

V: Hah! We were overflowing. The girls of *ka mureri* [the missionary's place], heh! We were many. . . . I wasn't the only one who wanted them. It was all the girls. Mmm, it was the time. [87](#)

H: So it was also Ntete who cut your name on your arms?

V: Mmm, it was she. She does all the girls, everyone! She goes out, she tells us. She says, "Whoever wants to be cut, come to me. She who has already married [i.e., accepted a boy as her lover], she who has a boy, I'll write your name, and I'll write the name of this boy. I know how to do it." [88](#)

Such bold defiance of combined church and paternal orders—again, in response to urging from a "fellow girl"—was neither unique, unself-conscious, nor confined to the early years of colonial rule. Rosalina Malungana delayed being tattooed until after she was banished from the household of her uncle, the Swiss Mission pastor, because of the terrible thrashing he gave her when he learned she was "pulling *mitsingi*." But she remembered her female cousins going out secretly to be tattooed and claimed that even then she was skeptical about the church's position on *tinhlanga*:

Eh! They say, I don't know, they say it was a sin. "These things, they're for heathens. A Christian doesn't do these things, because she lives with God." Ah, but that's just politics. God, what does he know of these things? What he wants, God wants a person to have a good soul. What you do with your body, he doesn't care about that. [89](#)

Margarida Khosa and Talita Ubisse, born in the 1930s, portrayed the struggle over girls' body-marking in Magude's mission churches and schools in perhaps even starker terms than did women from their mothers' generation: "Oh, it was *taboo*, for your parents to know!" Margarida (daughter of a prominent Makuvulane Swiss Mission family) exclaimed. "It was forbidden, but I stole, truly!" [90](#) According to Valentina's daughter Talita, teachers at both Swiss- and Portuguese-run schools in the 1940s were still beating girls they caught coming to school with fresh tattoo scars, yet Talita—a third-generation Christian who completed primary school—actually has a fuller set of *tinhlanga* than does her mother and told us rather proudly that all three of her daughters, born between 1955 and 1963, had been tattooed as well.

How should we interpret the determination of women to go on cutting tattoos under these circumstances? Textual reproductions of oral testimony cannot convey even a part of the mock melodrama, humor, and relish with which Magude women recounted (in hushed voices and elaborate gestures) their efforts to hide fresh cuts and prevent cotton dresses from sticking to still bleeding wounds, in order not to be caught with *tinhlanga*. Even so, narratives of how European and African authority figures tried to stamp out female body-marking remain, for the most part, on the sidelines of oral accounts, funny anecdotes women tell to illustrate the limits of masculine control and to boast of their own ability to keep "the girls' secret," however painful it might have been. To regard women's tattooing narrowly in terms of an opposition between colonial male and African female would miss as much of the historical meaning of women's *tinhlanga* as do constructions that focus solely on men's sexual expectations or on intergenerational female hierarchies, particularly because they do not help us to explain why women's tattooing practice changed in this period—why, for example, there were girls like Ntete Khosa deciding to translate the literacy lessons of mission schools into a new *tinhlanga* style for *vahedeni* (heathens) and *vakriste* (Christians) alike, at a time when mission personnel were struggling to entrench this very division in rural society.

Far from the watchful eyes of the tattoo police in the thinly settled cattle country of western and northern Magude, most girls and women went on being tattooed throughout the 1940s and 1950s. Contrary to what we might expect, however, from mid-century on more women were rejecting *tinhlanga* in these areas than in communities closer to Magude town and other centers of commerce and settlement in the east and south of the district. Moreover, needle-tattooing did not make as significant an impact in these more remote areas. In fact, women's enthusiasm for the "*xilandin*" practice of body-marking—and, paradoxically, their incorporation of *xilungu* materials and methods—seems to have increased in proportion to their exposure to colonial influences. Nearer mission stations and towns, women were more likely to replace *tinhlanga* acquired through "suffering," blood loss, and "strength" (tattoos aimed, in part, to attract male sexual interest) with *tinhlanga* that were less physically risky, more technically sophisticated, and more "beautiful" in appearance than to the touch. The "ancient custom" of women's tattooing, in other words, became both more popular and more "modern," and less oriented to marriage, as the forces of Portuguese colonialism and mission Christianity stepped up their efforts to anchor their authority in the countryside. This simultaneous reversal and confirmation of European predictions about the "evolution" of African fashion was accomplished by girls and women who were fully aware that their bodies were not only a critical site for the construction of feminine community but also a key terrain in a colonial contest in which "fellowship" among rural women was more necessary than ever before.

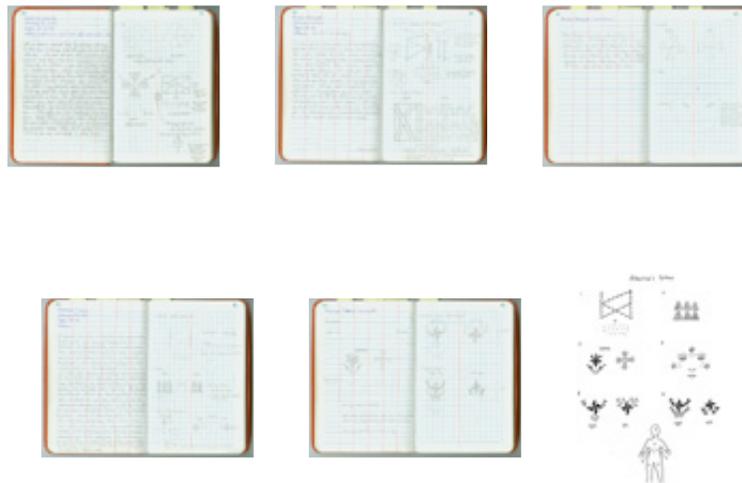
This awareness intensified as the twentieth century progressed, as male migrancy, taxation, forced cash-crop production, and ecological crises sapped the agrarian economy ⁹¹ and required women to extend affective networks across as wide an area as possible. As the Nguni shield on Katarina Matuka's side attests, women in southern Mozambique had long been using their skin to mediate the exclusionary claims of a dominant culture; but the power to decide how women would "make themselves beautiful" assumed much higher stakes under Portuguese rule. Tattooed beauty was no longer just about making friends, attracting husbands, or proving one's capacity for masculine valor. Under colonialism, it became both part of women's response to the ailing institution of rural marriage and an optic for defining what was "civilized" and what was not. Such definitions had consequences—for marital options, economic prospects, relations with Europeans—even among women who could never hope to qualify for "assimilated" / "civilized" status themselves. Yet precisely because the legal privileges of whiteness were beyond their reach, relinquishing "blackness" was not a desirable option either. Under these circumstances, *tinhlanga* offered a medium for women to conduct their own debate about the dividing line between "white" and "black" ways. Just as Ntete Khosa waged a personal campaign to translate the lessons of mission schooling into a new *tinhlanga* style, women of all ages used tattooing to appropriate elements of the changing world around them without sacrificing the most crucial features of the practice. A woman who had *tinhlanga*, then, was still "*xilandin*," and enjoyed the wide-ranging webs of female connection that tattooed "black"-ness entailed. Yet because her *tinhlanga* could include timeless images from the agrarian landscape and writing, flowerpots, and condensed milk, her body proclaimed—with a defiance she could not safely utter aloud—that she was "civilized" and "*xilungu*" too.

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Three women I knew in Facazisse illustrate this relationship between colonial history and female body-marking particularly well. Katarina Matuka, Amélia Marikele, and Albertina Tiwana had a considerably greater number of tattoos than did other interviewees. Their life histories reveal additional similarities: All three were born circa 1920 on the outskirts of one of southern Mozambique's colonial towns, all had some contact with mission churches and schools in their youth, and all had left their husband shortly after being married—Katarina because he spent too much time in South Africa, Amélia because he beat her, and Albertina (as we saw in chapter 3) because of witchcraft allegations from her senior co-wife when Albertina failed to become pregnant. For all three, abandoning their marital home involved a

series of moves across the colonial landscape as, driven by an "angry heart" as much as by the need for an independent livelihood, they patched together pieces of land, found bouts of casual wage work, traded, and entered short-term common-law marriages to men they met along the way. Amélia's journeys took her, on foot, to South Africa and Swaziland, where she completed her training as a spirit medium before returning to Facazisse and the Portuguese cattle-herder "husband" whom she shared there with another local woman and whose death in 1976 left her comfortably provided with livestock, coveted riverine fields, and a well-furnished cement home—though solitary living has posed tremendous difficulties for her since the end of the Renamo war. In 1995-96, Katarina was living with a daughter she had given to the Swiss Mission to foster in the 1940s, coping somewhat reluctantly with economic dependence, food scarcity, and her often bristly relationship with a daughter she only came to know as an adult. Albertina, less "lucky," as she puts it, than the others, was living on her own, organizing her survival through intricate networks of natal and fictive female kin.

The parallels in these women's experiences are charted on their bodies in an impressive number and variety of tattoos. Amélia, Katarina and Albertina all bear the more old-fashioned keloid *tinhlanga*, along with multiple incised *tinhlanga* in a range of designs, and several needle-pierced images on their chests, arms, and/or legs. The latter tattoos in particular signify each woman's survival-driven engagement with *xilungu* economy and culture during the intensification of Portuguese colonial rule from the 1930s on. ⁹² Yet they also testify to a profound shift in the character and purpose of women's forms of historical remembering in this period: from memories that highlight an informal yet powerful matrilineal continuity and time depth over several generations of women, to memories that emphasize more contemporaneous female networks that not only expand over far wider geographic landscapes but depend less and less on the authority and knowledge of elderly women.



By the late 1960s, *tinhlanga* were falling out of fashion in the Magude area. Interviewees explained that girls began to "abandon" tattooing because *xilungu* schooling and improved state medical services had convinced them that *tinhlanga* were dangerous to a woman's health. ⁹³ Frelimo's ideological campaigns after independence contributed to the devaluation of so-called "tribal" practices that were inconsistent with the Marxist-Leninist government's push for national unity and modernization; and the havoc of the civil war made tattooing an indulgence few could afford.

Yet in postwar Magude, the stirrings of a tattoo revival confirmed the vital role that body-marking has historically played for rural women. In 1996, when I interviewed Unasse Sitoi,

a former war captive in her seventies who was still living at the Renamo base camp at Ngungwe, she mentioned that she had begun tattooing younger female captives in the early 1990s as a way to obtain water, firewood, and help in her fields. However, when Mozambique's national elections in 1994 instilled a sense of stability even in this state-forsaken corner of the countryside, the girls of Ngungwe began walking back and forth across the South African border to visit relatives living in the refugee communities of the eastern Transvaal. When they came back, newly conscious of their status as members of transnationally scattered, donor-supported families—many of whom yearned to relocate permanently to South Africa—they told Unasse that "over there, the girls, they don't cut tattoos. And we, we won't cut *tinhlanga* now either." ⁹⁴

In Magude town in 1995-96, the situation was different. In the *deslocado* settlements where internally displaced women of all ages and points of origins were still crowded in ramshackle shelters, supporting children and aged parents and, often, unemployed husbands through backbreaking work in borrowed fields, survival depended to a great extent on one's ability to court and capitalize on extensive networks of friends and kin. Here, *tinhlanga* were staging a much-discussed comeback, and mothers had begun to watch their daughters for signs of "cutting" when they returned home after bathing or doing laundry in the Nkomati River. Conversations about tattooing here as in Ngungwe eerily echoed the reminiscences of women from across Magude district who "beautified" their bodies with *tinhlanga* during the colonial period. Future research may find that their repertoire of designs and instruments have changed with the reconfigured identities of the postwar world, but what stood out at the moment of *tinhlanga*'s resurgence in Magude was their enduring value as a means of female outreach and historical remembrance, an ineffable record of women's experience in a land still trying to recover from the "scars" of European rule.

Conclusion

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Tattooing offered a medium through which the women of Magude could map the boundaries of their world in two ways. Surrounded by contradictory discourses of civilization and racial difference, confronted with the battery of practices—literacy, commoditized food, potted plants—through which colonialism attempted to enact and anchor its authority in the countryside, the majority of women who continued to cut *tinhlanga* after the 1930s did so fully aware that their bodies were a strategic terrain in the colonial contest. If Europeans and their male African agents were insisting that what African women did (or did not do) to their skin was a critical marker of civilization's progress, women in turn insisted, through their actions, not only that they could shrug off colonial definitions of feminine beauty but that they too could use their bodies to constitute racial identity, not through static notions of traditional culture but by constantly renegotiating the frontier between white and black ways. A woman who had tattoos was *xilandin* (African/rural), but that identity could simultaneously integrate elements of the agrarian world of "long ago" and the *xilungu* (European/urban) landscape of modernity, the world of "now" (*sweswi*).

Women's self-conscious use of their skin to mediate the exclusionary claims of a dominant culture was not restricted to their relations with Europeans. The symbol of the Nguni shield incised onto Katarina Matuka's side is eloquently emblematic of the general continuity of body-marking among autochthonous women throughout the period of Gaza rule and leading into the era of colonialism. Like Ntete Khosa's stubborn campaign to "write" *tinhlanga* on the arms of girls in the missionaries' backyard, like Albertina Tiwana's and Katarina Matuka's eagerness to be tattooed like the girls of "Joni" or "Swazi"—with signs of a language they did not know, from a place they had never been—this pattern suggests that tattooed skin may have been, for women, more about claiming identity than recording it, more an assertion of gendered social frontiers than a passive or unthinking reflection of them. In this respect,

perhaps the most significant truth conveyed by women's tattooed histories is that, in the context of colonialism's alienating forms and divisive effects (migrant labor, commercialization, Christianity, literacy, urban life), *tinhlanga* offered a potent idiom for women to imagine and construct ever wider grounds of common experience and community among themselves, ultimately transcending even the heavily weighted boundaries of colony and race.

Indeed, the fact that tattooing was deployed most creatively by precisely those girls and women whose personal behavior challenged norms of both colonial and traditional femininity testifies to the centrality of body-marking to debates—not always spoken—about the proper constitution of women's social bodies in the first place. In a context where women's forms of historical memory insist on subjective experience—"I saw it with my eyes"—as the only true basis for authoritative knowledge of the past, nothing could be more forcefully true than a claim worn permanently on the skin. And in an environment of deepening economic and social hardship for women, the power of *tinhlanga* to assert ties of female affiliation and thus potential support across lines not only of marriage, class, and ethnicity but of regional and national identity could profoundly affect the quality and course of a woman's life.

Notes:

Note 1: For the purpose of this study, I understand *tattoo* as it is defined in *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th ed.: "an indelible mark or figure fixed upon the body by insertion of pigment under the skin or by production of scars." [Back.](#)

Note 2: Interview with Rosalina Malungana, 3 June 1995, Facazisse. [Back.](#)

Note 3: Interview with Valentina Chauke, 27 June 1995, Facazisse. [Back.](#)

Note 4: Interview with Talita Ubisse, 27 June 1995, Facazisse. [Back.](#)

Note 5: Interview with Aldina Masangu, 28 June 1995, Facazisse; interview with Lise Nsumbane, 29 June 1995, Facazisse; Interview log 1 (28 June 1995), entry 020, and Interview log 1 (29 June 1995), entry 021. [Back.](#)

Note 6: Interview log 1 (18 July 1995), entry 032. [Back.](#)

Note 7: See chap. 3. [Back.](#)

Note 8: T. M. Evers, "Excavations at the Lydenburg Heads Site, Eastern Transvaal, South Africa," *South African Archaeological Bulletin* 37 (1982): 16-33. [Back.](#)

Note 9: William M. White, *Journal of a Voyage Performed in the Lion Extra Indiaman, from Madras to Colombo and Da Lagoa Bay . . . in the Year 1798: With Some Account of the Manners and Customs of the Inhabitants of Da Lagoa Bay and a Vocabulary of the Language* (London: John Stockdale, 1800), 27. [Back.](#)

Note 10: Alan K. Smith, "The Trade of Delagoa Bay as a Factor in Nguni Politics, 1750-1835," in *African Societies in Southern Africa*, ed. Leonard Thompson (New York: Praeger, 1969), 179; Alan K. Smith, *The Struggle for Control of Southern Mozambique, 1720-1835* (Ph.D. diss., UCLA, 1970), 327; Gerhard Liesegang, "Lourenço Marques antes de 1895: Aspectos da história dos estados vizinhos, da interacção entre a povoação e aqueles estados e do comércio na baía na povoação," *Arquivo* 2 (1987): 53. [Back.](#)

Note 11: The refugees were fleeing from Nguni warfare and forced conscription into

Soshangane's army. See Henri A. Junod, *La tribu et la langue Thonga* (Lausanne: Imprimerie Georges Bridel, 1896), 16; Transvaal Native Affairs Department, *Short History of the Native Tribes of the Transvaal* (Pretoria: Government Printing and Stationary Office, 1905), 59; William Hammond Tooke, "Notes on the East Coast Bantu of Eighty Years Ago," *South African Journal of Science* 8 (1911): 84; Henri A. Junod, "The Ba-Thonga of the Transvaal," *South African Journal of Science* 10 (1913): 222; Henri P. Junod, "The VaThonga," in *The Bantu Tribes of South Africa: Reproductions of Photographic Studies*, ed. A. M. Duggan-Cronin, vol. 4, *The VaThonga (The Thonga-Shangaan People)* (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell, 1935), 12-13. [Back.](#)

Note 12: Jane Caplan, "'Speaking Scars': The Tattoo in Popular Practice and Medico-Legal Debate in Nineteenth-Century Europe," *History Workshop Journal* 44 (1997): 107-42. Caplan argues that European fascination with tattooing in this period emerged along with, on the one hand, reevaluations of the body in European scientific, medical, and legal discourses and, on the other hand, imperial expansions, the intensification of the slave trade, and European contact with cultures in which "marked bodies" were common (and proudly exposed). "Lines drawn on the body," she writes, "mapped the boundary between the savage and the civilized, and potentially endorsed the cultural superiority of the Europeans" (112). [Back.](#)

Note 13: Henri A. Junod, *La tribu et la langue Thonga*, 16; Henri A. Junod, *The Life of a South African Tribe* (London: Macmillan, 1927), 1:178-79. [Back.](#)

Note 14: Henri A. Junod, *La tribu et la langue Thonga*, 17; H. A. Junod, *Life*, 1:179. [Back.](#)

Note 15: The displacement of keloid facial tattoos by ear-piercing has been described by some commentators as compulsory (e.g., Liesegang gives an example of a Chopi man whose ears were forcibly pierced by a Gaza soldier to make him a "Mabuyandlela") and by others as voluntary, motivated by the desire of a subjugated people to "resemble the masters of the country and not to be recognized as 'mathonga.'" See 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. Peires (Grahamstown: Institute of Social and Economic Research, Rhodes University, 1981); Henri A. Junod, *La tribu et la langue Thonga*, 17. [Back.](#)

Note 16: St. Vincent Erskine, "Journey of Exploration to the Mouth of the River Limpopo," *Journal of the Royal Geographic Society* 39 (1869): 238. See also Junod, *La tribu et la langue Thonga*, 179; Arthur Grandjean, "L'Invasion des Zoulou dans le Sud-Est Africain: Une page d'histoire inédite," *Bulletin de la Société Neuchateloise de Géographie* 11 (1899): 79-80. Erskine's accounts indicate that keloid facial tattooing continued somewhat longer among Chopi and Ndaou populations further north. See Erskine, "Third and Fourth Journeys in Gaza, or Southern Mozambique, 1873 to 1874, and 1874 to 1875," *JRGS* 48 (1878): 30. [Back.](#)

Note 17: Henri A. Junod, "The Ba-Thonga of the Transvaal," 222. [Back.](#)

Note 18: Erskine, "Journey of Exploration to the Mouth of the River Limpopo," 238. [Back.](#)

Note 19: Frederick Elton, "Journal of an Exploration of the Limpopo River," *JRGS* 42 (1872): 37. [Back.](#)

Note 20: Henri A. Junod, *La tribu et la langue Thonga*, 17; H. A. Junod, "The Ba-Thonga of the Transvaal," 222. [Back.](#)

Note 21: According to Earthy, the Lenge were a people of mixed Tsonga, Chopi, Nguni, and possibly Ndaou ancestry. However, at the time of her research, the majority were speaking Tsonga-Shangaan, and she proposes that the "VaLenge" be added as a seventh subgroup to Henri A. Junod's classification of the "Thonga." See E. Dora Earthy, *Valenge Women: The*

Social and Economic Life of the Valenge Women of Portuguese East Africa (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), chap. 1. [Back.](#)

Note 22: Henri A. Junod, *Life*, 1:178-81; Henri P. Junod, "The Va-Thonga," 15; Earthy, *Valenge Women*, 102-8; E. Dora Earthy, "On the Significance of the Body Markings of Some Natives of Portuguese East Africa," *South African Journal of Science* 21 (1924): 573-87. [Back.](#)

Note 23: Henri A. Junod, *Life*, 1:99; 2:181. For the view that the Junods (father and son) had of the "evolution of costume" among the Tsonga, see Henri P. Junod, "The Va-Thonga," 15, and plates 13, 24, 31, and 32; Henri A. Junod, *Life*, 1:178-81; 2:91-104. [Back.](#)

Note 24: Earthy, *Valenge Women*, 105-6; Earthy, "On the Significance of the Body Markings," 582-83. Portuguese anthropologists produced much more blatantly racist and evolutionist studies of African body-marking in Mozambique through the later colonial period, as in Manuel Simões Alberto, "Mutilações Étnicas entre os Negros de Moçambique," *Boletim da Sociedade de Estudos de Moçambique* 25, no. 90 (1955): 35-44; Manuel Simões Alberto, "Tatuagens e mutilações étnicas entre os negros de Moçambique," *Império* 3 (1951); Joaquim N. R. dos Santos, "Mutilações dentárias em pretos de Moçambique," *Sep. de Garcia de Orta* 10, no. 2 (1962). [Back.](#)

Note 25: Henri A. Junod, *Life*, 1:179, 181. [Back.](#)

Note 26: Earthy, "On the Significance of the Body Markings," 586. [Back.](#)

Note 27: Earthy, "On the Significance of the Body Markings," 577. [Back.](#)

Note 28: I also draw on a collection of 24 questionnaires on the subject of *tinhlanga*. They were conducted as part of the Campaign for Cultural Preservation and Valorization, sponsored by the Ministry of Culture in southern Gaza province in the early 1980s. Where I draw on this material, it is cited as *ARPAC survey*, with the name of the respondent and the date and location of the interview identified where possible. [Back.](#)

Note 29: *Kutlhavela* is also used to refer to the giving of injections and to the fighting that a man of "long ago" would wage with a *tlhari* (spear). [Back.](#)

Note 30: See especially Janet Spector, "Male/Female Task Differentiation Among the Hidatsa: Toward the Development of an Archaeological Approach to the Study of Gender," in *The Hidden Half*, ed. Patricia Albers and Beatrice Medicine (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1983); Janet Spector, *What This Awl Means: Feminist Archaeology at a Wahpeton Dakota Village* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1993). [Back.](#)

Note 31: This interpretation would be consistent with David Webster's argument about men's and women's "ethnic sub-cultures" among the Thonga of Kosi Bay (KwaZulu-Natal), and in particular with his depiction of the lifelong importance of natal kin to a woman's identity and material security in the context of extremely high rates of male labor migration. See David Webster, "Abafazi Bathonga Bafihlakala: Ethnicity and Gender in a KwaZulu Border Community," in Andrew D. Spiegel and Patrick A. McAllister, eds., *Tradition and Transition in Southern Africa* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 1991). [Back.](#)

Note 32: Interview with Talita Ubisse, 27 June 1995, Facazisse; interview with Melina Xivuri, 5 December 1995, Ngungwe/Muqakaze (Moamba district); interview with Juliana Kwinika, 17 November 1995, Facazisse. [Back.](#)

Note 33: Interview with Albertina Tiwana, 29 November 1995, Facazisse. [Back.](#)

Note 34: Interview with Cufassane Munisse, 3 November 1995, Matendeni (Magude town). [Back.](#)

Note 35: Scarification is included in descriptions of initiation rituals in East Africa. See, e.g., Jean Davison, *Voices from Mutira: Change in the Lives of Rural Gikuyu Women, 1910-1995*, 2d ed. (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1996); Lynn M. Thomas, "'Ngaitana (I will circumcise myself)': The Gender and Generational Politics of the 1956 Ban on Clitoridectomy in Meru, Kenya," *Gender and History* 8, no. 3 (1996): 338-63. [Back.](#)

Note 36: Interview with Talita Ubisse, 27 June 1995, Facazisse. [Back.](#)

Note 37: Interview with Valentina Chauke, 30 December 1995, Facazisse. [Back.](#)

Note 38: Interview with Teasse Xivuri, 18 August 1995, Matendeni (Magude town). [Back.](#)

Note 39: Interview with Lucia Ntumbo, 22 September 1995, Nhiuana (Phadjane). [Back.](#)

Note 40: Interview with Melina Xivuri, 5 December 1995, Ngungwe/Muqaqaze (Moamba district). [Back.](#)

Note 41: There is no clear evidence that formal, quasi-institutionalized "age-sets" for girls (of the kind described by Davison for the Kikuyu, for instance) ever existed in southern Mozambique. On the basis of such adolescent practices (still popular) as labia elongation, Henri A. Junod speculated that female age-sets may have existed among the "Tsonga" in "former" times, but concluded that they had entirely disappeared by the late nineteenth century. See Henri A. Junod, *Life*, 1:178. [Back.](#)

Note 42: Aldina used the verb *kuendza*, which means to travel, but in the specific sense of going on a journey to visit someone, usually for a prolonged period. The noun *muendzi* refers to visitors or guests who stay at least overnight. *Mupfumba*, the other term for visitor, refers to a guest who will remain only for a short time. [Back.](#)

Note 43: Interview with Aldina Masangu, 28 June 1995, Facazisse. [Back.](#)

Note 44: Interview with Albertina Tiwana, 19 December 1995, Facazisse. [Back.](#)

Note 45: *Kunyangana*, the reciprocal form of *kunyanga*, to seek or choose carefully, examine, appraise, look with great pleasure at something or someone. [Back.](#)

Note 46: Interview with Melina Xivuri, 5 December 1995, Ngungwe/Muqaqaze (Moamba district). [Back.](#)

Note 47: Interview with Olinda Ntimba, 1 November 1995, Tsatsimbe (Makuvulane). [Back.](#)

Note 48: Henri A. Junod, *Life*, 1:184-85, 187; 2:47. [Back.](#)

Note 49: Significantly, *ngati* is used to refer to blood in general and to menstrual flow. [Back.](#)

Note 50: See Henri A. Junod, *Life*, 1:201, and 2:360, 416, 489, 512, and chapter 2, "Thonga Folklore"; Henri P. Junod, *The Wisdom of the Tsonga-Shangana People*, 3d ed., (Braamfontein: Sasavona, 1990), 194-95, 230-31, 282-83; and Cornelius T. D. Marivate, "Tsonga Folktales: Form, Content and Delivery," 2 vols. (M.A. thesis, University of South Africa, 1973). These beliefs were still widespread in postwar Magude. [Back.](#)

Note 51: I.e., near the *cantina* (shop) owned by Agosto's cousin Eduardo (see chap. 3). [Back.](#)

Note 52: One *cheleni* was worth five *escudos*, roughly US\$0.20. [Back.](#)

Note 53: I translate as "dab" the Shangaan verb *kutota*, which means to anoint, as with

oil. Muziosse mixes ground charcoal with *nhlampfurha* (castor oil) and rubs it over Rosalina's cuts to darken the scars. [Back.](#)

Note 54: *Namu* (sister-in-law). [Back.](#)

Note 55: Interview with Rosalina Malungana, 19 November 1995, Facazisse. [Back.](#)

Note 56: Interview with Rosalina Malungana, 16 November 1995, Facazisse. [Back.](#)

Note 57: Interview with Lucia Ntumbo, 22 September 1995, Nhiuana (Phadjane). [Back.](#)

Note 58: Interview with Rosalina Malungana, 19 November 1995, Facazisse. [Back.](#)

Note 59: Interview with Maria Xivuri, 16 October 1995, Matendeni (Magude town). [Back.](#)

Note 60: Interview with Talita Ubisse, 27 June 1995, Facazisse. [Back.](#)

Note 61: Michel Foucault's notion of "bio-power," as summarized in a passage from his *Discipline and Punish*, has been especially influential: "The body is also directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs" (*Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, tr. Alan Sheridan [New York: Vintage Books, 1979], 25). The more complex approach to "body politics" offered by Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990) is only beginning to be applied to research on Africa. Examples of historical approaches to "colonial bodies" in Africa include Timothy Burke, *Lifebuoys Men, Lux Women: Commodification, Consumption, and Cleanliness in Modern Zimbabwe* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1996); John and Jean Comaroff, "Bodily Reform as Historical Practice," in *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1992); Laura Fair, "Dressing Up: Clothing, Class, and Gender in Post-Abolition Zanzibar," *Journal of African History* 39 (1998): 63-94; Hildi Hendrickson, ed., *Clothing and Difference: Embodied Identities in Colonial and Post-colonial Africa* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1996); Nancy Rose Hunt, *A Colonial Lexicon of Birth Ritual, Medicalization, and Mobility in the Congo* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1999); Phyllis M. Martin, "Contesting Clothes in Colonial Brazzaville," *Journal of African History* 35 (1994): 401-26; Megan Vaughan, *Curing Their Ills: Colonial Power and African Illness* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991); Luise White, *Speaking With Vampires: Rumor and History in Colonial Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000). [Back.](#)

Note 62: Comaroff and Comaroff, "Bodily Reform as Historical Practice," 74. [Back.](#)

Note 63: The exception, for Africa, is work on female genital excision, particularly in Kenya. As it focuses principally, and more narrowly, on the gender, ethnic and national, and (more recently) generational politics of remaking women's bodies in terms of their sexuality, scholarship on this subject has an emphasis rather different from that of scholarship on colonial dress. See, e.g., Sondra Hale, "A Question of Subjects: The 'Female Circumcision' Controversy and the Politics of Knowledge," *Ufahamu* 22 (1994): 26-35; Susan Pedersen, "National Bodies, Unspeakable Acts: The Sexual Politics of Colonial Policy-Making," *Journal of Modern History* 63 (1991): 647-80; Thomas, "'Ngaitana (I will circumcise myself)"; Cora Ann Presley, *Kikuyu Women, the Mau Mau Rebellion, and Social Change in Kenya* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1992). For a nuanced study of the ritual and religious meanings of excision in the Sudan, see Janice Boddy, *Wombs and Alien Spirits: Women, Men, and the Zar in Northern Sudan* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989). [Back.](#)

Note 64: Frances E. Mascia-Lees and Patricia Sharpe, "The Marked and the Un(re)marked: Tattoo and Gender in Theory and Narrative," in *Tattoo, Torture, Mutilation, and Adornment: The Denaturalization of the Body in Culture and Text*, ed. Frances E. Mascia-Lees and Patricia Sharpe (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 147. [Back.](#)

Note 65: E.g., Caplan, "Speaking Scars"; M. Elaine Combs-Schilling, "Etching Patriarchal Rule: Ritual Dye, Erotic Potency, and the Moroccan Monarchy," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 1, no. 4 (1991): 658-81; Alfred Gell, *Wrapping in Images: Tattooing in Polynesia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993); W. C. Handy, *Tattooing in the Marquesas* (New York: Kraus Reprint, 1971); Margot Mifflin, *Bodies of Subversion: A Secret History of Women and Tattoo* (New York: Power House Cultural Entertainment, 1997); Susan Searight, *The Use and Function of Tattooing on Moroccan Women*, 3 vols. (New Haven: Human Relations Area Files, 1984); James A. Teit, *Tattooing and Face and Body Painting of the Thompson Indians, British Columbia*, Annual report of the Bureau of American Ethnology to the secretary of the Smithsonian Institution (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1930). For an African example more narrowly located in cultural anthropology, see James C. Faris, *Nuba Personal Art* (London: Duckworth, 1972). [Back.](#)

Note 66: Normally, one would return to the *mutlhaveli* at least once more to have the wounds recut, to ensure they would be sufficiently raised and dark. [Back.](#)

Note 67: ARPAC survey, Isabel Meque Machava, 26 July 1981, Bilene. [Back.](#)

Note 68: Interview with Talita Ubisse, 27 June 1995, Facazisse. [Back.](#)

Note 69: Earthy, "On the Significance of the Body-Markings," 581. [Back.](#)

Note 70: Interview with Lídia Chavango, 9 October 1995, Matendeni (Magude town). [Back.](#)

Note 71: Interview with Valentina Chauke, 28 February 1996, Facazisse; interview with Aldina Masangu, 28 June 1995, Facazisse. [Back.](#)

Note 72: Interview with Albertina Tiwana, 19 December 1995, Facazisse. [Back.](#)

Note 73: Interview with Albertina Tiwana, 19 December 1995, Facazisse. [Back.](#)

Note 74: Interview with Lise Nsumbane, 29 June 1995, Facazisse. [Back.](#)

Note 75: Interview with Juliana Kwinika, 30 June 1995, Facazisse. [Back.](#)

Note 76: Interview with Valentina Chauke, 30 February 1996, Facazisse. A male church elder told me that the Swiss Mission (and its successor, the Presbyterian Church of Mozambique) opposed scarification because "God doesn't want you to change the body He gave you." Interview with Sinai Mundlovu, 11 October 1996, Facazisse. [Back.](#)

Note 77: Interview with Talita Ntimane, 11 July 1995, Facazisse. [Back.](#)

Note 78: Interview with Sara Juma, 25 October 1995, Facazisse. [Back.](#)

Note 79: On race and assimilation in Portuguese colonial policy, see Richard J. Hammond, "Race Attitudes and Policies in Portuguese Africa in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," *Race* 9, no. 2 (1967): 205-16; Jeanne M. Penvenne, "'We Are All Portuguese!' Challenging the Political Economy of Assimilation, Lourenço Marques, 1870-1933," in *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa*, ed. Leroy Vail (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); Jeanne M. Penvenne, "João dos Santos Albasini (1876-1922): the Contradictions of Politics and Identity in Colonial Mozambique," *Journal of African History* 37, no. 3 (1996): 419-64. [Back.](#)

Note 80: Jeanne M. Penvenne, *African Workers and Colonial Racism: Mozambican Strategies and Struggles in Lourenço Marques, 1877-1962* (Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 1995), 467. [Back.](#)

Note 81: Allen Isaacman and Barbara Isaacman, *Mozambique: From Colonialism to Revolution, 1900-1982* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1983), 40. [Back.](#)

Note 82: At this time, I was still working with the wife of the Antioka pastor, along with Aida and Ruti. [Back.](#)

Note 83: Interview with Olinda Ntimba, 1 November 1995, Tsatsimbe (Makuvulane). [Back.](#)

Note 84: Interview with Lise Nsumbane, 29 June 1995, Facazisse. [Back.](#)

Note 85: Interview with Valentina Chauke, 30 December 1995, Facazisse. [Back.](#)

Note 86: Ntete was a daughter of Nyanga Khosa, who with his younger brother Daniel returned to Magude from Spelonken in the 1890s to help the Swiss get established and build their station in Chief Magudzu Khosa's territory. [Back.](#)

Note 87: I.e., it was the custom or habit of the time. [Back.](#)

Note 88: Interview with Valentina Chauke, 30 December 1995, Facazisse. [Back.](#)

Note 89: Interview with Rosalina Malungana, 19 November 1995, Facazisse. [Back.](#)

Note 90: Interview with Margarida Khosa, 5 July 1995, Tsatsimbe (Makuvulane). [Back.](#)

Note 91: See Sherilynn Young, "Fertility and Famine: Women's Agricultural History in Southern Mozambique," in Robin Palmer and Neil Parsons, eds., *The Roots of Rural Poverty in Central and Southern Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977). For female rural-to-urban migration, see Jeanne Penvenne, "Seeking the Factory for Women: Mozambican Urbanization in the Late Colonial Era," *Journal of Urban History* 23, no. 3 (1997): 342-79. [Back.](#)

Note 92: Interview with Albertina Tiwana, 19 December 1995, Facazisse; interviews with Amélia Marikele, 24 October 1995, 9 December 1995, 6 January 1996, Facazisse; interview with Katarina Matuka, 18 July 1995, Facazisse. [Back.](#)

Note 93: Interview with Talita Ubisse, 27 June 1995, Facazisse; interview with Lucia Ntumbo, 22 September 1995, Nhiuana (Phadjane). [Back.](#)

Note 94: Interview with Unasse Sitoi, 28 October 1995, Ngungwe (Muqakaze, Moamba district). [Back.](#)

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