O T S E M B A K A

t h i s i s w h o w e a r e

CULTURAL LOSS, CHANGE AND RECUPERATION IN OVAMBOLAND

I N G A B R A S C H E

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CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORSHIP/ORIGINALITY

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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A thesis, like a relationship, is bigger than one person. Much bigger, in fact. Had I known in 1997 that my contract in Ovamboland would result in endeavouring to encapsulate the region's culture and complexities in writing, I may have decided to stay and watch Water Rats from the comfort of my lounge room! Instead I had the privilege of watching it in my lounge room in Oshikuku and observe this and numerous other cultural quirks which Ovamboland presented.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AVI	Australian Volunteers International
CCD	Community Cultural Development
CDP	Cultural Development Project
CoD	Congress of Democrats
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DRFN	Desert Research Foundation of Namibia
IGCSE	International General Certificate of Secondary Education
MBEC	Ministry of Basic Education and Culture (Namibia)
MSF	Medecins Sans Frontieres
NACOBTA	Namibian Community Based Tourism Association
NBC	Namibian Broadcasting Corporation
NCCED	North Central Community Enterprise Development Project
NCCI	North Central Cultural Initiative
NEPRU	Namibian Economic Policy Research Unit

NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NNF	Namibia Nature Foundation
NORAD	Norwegian Development Co-operation
NSHR	National Society for Human Rights
OXFAM	Oxford Committee for Famine Relief
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SWABC	South West African Broadcasting Corporation (pre-NBC)
SWAPO	South West African People's Organisation
TNCs	Trans-National Corporations
UNDP	United Nations Development Project
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Culture and Science Organisation
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VSO	Voluntary Services Overseas

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GLOSSARY

Aahongi	Christian missionaries
Aakelelipo yombepo ondjapuki	diviners / ancestral spirits
Boer	derogatory word for white South African
Cuca	Angolan beer
Efundula	female initiation ceremony
Ekipa	clasp/brooch worn with onyoka
Ezaleko lyonyoka	traditional baptism ceremony involving onyoka
Kalunga	God (pre-Christian and Christian God)
Kwasa kwasa	Zambian dance music
Mahangu	millet-based grain, staple of Ovambo diet
Mbushandjes	name-sake
Meal	pounded mahangu flour, used for oshifima
Meekulu/Kuku	old woman; Mrs; grandmother
Meme	woman; Mrs; mother; aunt
Ohungi	traditional story-telling evening
Omithigululwakalo	culture
Ongushu y'omithigululwakalo	our culture
Onyoka	ostrich/oyster shell necklace
Oshikundu	traditional beer
Oshifima	porridge made from mahangu
Oshindjendje	beads worn around waists of unmarried women

Oshilumbu	white person. Once derogatory, now descriptive
Oshicoca-cola	coca-cola
Otse mbaka	this is who we are
Ovakriste	Christians
Tate	man; Mr; father; uncle
Tatekulu	old man; Mr; grandfather

ABSTRACT

This thesis is an investigation into the terms of cultural change in north central Namibia. I am primarily concerned with issues of agency in the processes which result in cultural change, and look at both historical and contemporary agents of change in order to determine who and what impacts cultural dynamism, and what implications this has for a newly independent country within a globalised world. These issues are presented through the lenses of Identity, Power and Politics and Globalisation.

In this thesis, I posit that traditionally, Ovambo people have not been empowered in decisions regarding cultural change, which has resulted in a sense of cultural "loss". This sense exists within the context of culture being seen as strongly associated with the past – past practices, activities, traditions and customs, as well as early development theory which insisted that such things were indicative of a backward and primitive society at odds with the principles of modernisation. In order to progress, such practices were, with and without reticence, abandoned or changed. Contemporary Ovamboland, however, represents a dynamic cultural mélange of traditional and modern life, which co-exist whilst negotiating issues such as the impact of HIV/AIDS and neo-liberal style of post-independence democracy. Therefore, by investigating the cultural shortfall in traditional development theory, and using examples of different forms of cultural development, I suggest that when culture is seen as an important consideration of development, as well as supported as a field of development in its own right, cultural identity becomes clearer, and cultural futures are determined more democratically.

In order to demonstrate these ideas, I am drawing from a number of case studies in which I was professionally involved, as well as through interviews conducted in the field. By presenting the differing agendas of international engagement in development work as well as different types of cultural development projects, I will highlight the complexities of development theory in practice, particularly when capital is involved, and how these relate to the wider issues of cultural preservation versus cultural change.

MAP OF NAMIBIA

INTRODUCTION

From 1998 – 2000 I lived and worked in the north central region of Namibia, or "Ovamboland". During that time, I was involved in cultural development work in the region. In this thesis I investigate the issues associated with cultural change in north central Namibia, which are both regionally specific, and have wider application in post-colonial Africa and the developing world. In examining notions of cultural "loss"[1], as well as issues associated with change and recuperation, I argue that culture is an imperative consideration in development work, most notably the *terms* on which cultural change occurs. As part of my research involves critical evaluation of projects which I was involved in planning, implementing and assessing, I reflect on the philosophical issues of personal engagement, motivations, methodologies and cross-cultural exchange, as these cannot be divorced from the outcomes and the work itself.

My research concerns the processes associated with the cultural revitalisation of a community whose traditional and contemporary cultural practice and expression have been affected by external agents. In order to do this, I address some of the current theories and methodologies associated with the way a community moves from a situation of perceived cultural loss to recuperation, reflecting the practices and ideologies of both external and internal agents of cultural change.

To this end, my thesis is presented in a series of stages, outlined as follows:

Cultural "Loss" – This section addresses the physical, psychological and emotional sense of loss arising from the dislocation of traditional practices and beliefs in Ovambo culture. I consider the significance of the identified agents of cultural loss, as well as practices and beliefs themselves. The three main agents which have contributed to perceived cultural "loss" are colonialism (specifically the activities of missionaries),

[1] Although appearing to deny cultural dynamism, cultural "loss" refers to the emotional sense of loss which is felt with the discontinuation of certain cultural practices and traditions.

South African occupation (including apartheid and the subsequent Independence Struggle) and the socio-cultural effects of the globalisation process. The machinations of these agents are presented, as well as the actual effects such practices and activities have had on the Ovambo psyche, and why the resulting feelings and complex, multi-faceted identities associated with these historical and contemporary agents are articulated as loss or absence. In order to address the impact of such practices on the local community, the colonial context and imperialist mandate of modernisation is also presented as it served as a powerful justification for the eradication of traditional cultural practices. I address the association of culture with tradition and the implications of culture being seen as firmly rooted in the past, as this contributes to the sense of loss, absence, or dislocation felt by the Ovambo people, as well as the importance of nostalgic representations of identity.

This section addresses 3 main questions:

How/why was culture considered to be "lost"?

On whose terms were decisions regarding cultural "loss" made?

What were the effects of that "loss"?

Cultural Change – This section addresses the inevitability of change as well as the dynamic nature of culture, and the role of globalisation in this process is examined within the Ovambo context. The appropriation, commercialisation, indigenisation and commodification of culture is investigated. Current social and cultural issues which are confronting Ovamboland are presented, such as the issue of HIV/AIDS and its impact on daily life and practices of Ovambos. I also investigate issues surrounding the influx of Western popular culture, particularly through television, and the impact this has had on community life and identity consideration. This section addresses 3 main questions:

How/why has Ovamboland developed into the cultural pastiche it is today?

On whose terms are cultures appropriated, incorporated and/or lost?

What are the effects of this process of change?

Cultural Recuperation – This section addresses the activities which are taking place and those who are responsible and accountable for work in this area. Recuperation in this section refers to the cultural processes and activities which compensate for, regain or recover that which was considered lost. I highlight the role of non-government

organisations (NGOs), government and the community in this process and associated issues. I present a series of case studies to illustrate recent examples of cultural development activities, with their aims and outcomes presented in the context of all the issues investigated previously. The context of decolonisation and nation-building and associated issues of accountability and responsibility is then presented and the role and importance of government in the process is also investigated. As the ideologies, national policies and priorities of prevailing authorities in Namibia have had considerable bearing on cultural practices in the Ovambo region, these are examined. The complexity of the concept and practice of "development" is investigated and the differing ideologies and motivations behind international volunteer sending organisations is presented in the context of general non-government activity which is taking place in Namibia. I explore the apparent absence of visual and performing arts-based cultural content in NGO work in Namibia, and the problematic differing agendas of donors and NGOs before looking at examples of cultural development projects with two very different aims. The difficulties involved in development work in culture, and dual mandates of heritage conservation and the promotion of modern democratic process are also presented as important issues which may account for the difficulties which prevent substantial NGO activity in the area of culture.

This section addresses 3 main questions:

How/why should culture be an area or consideration of development?

On whose terms are cultural development activities taking place?

What are the effects of cultural development activities/NGO activity?

In order to provide context and continuity throughout each chapter, I discuss the themes of "Loss", Change and Recuperation in sections of "identity"; "power and politics" and "globalisation".

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this thesis, I draw on modernisation/development theory in both its early stages, as well as more recent re-considerations of its application in the field. Theorists who are representative of ideas associated with varying forms of modernisation/development theory are used to illustrate the complexities within the themes of "Loss", Change and Recuperation. The principles of these theories are presented through practical applications and case studies in order to gauge their strengths and weaknesses in the field of cultural development.

Modernisation theory began as an economic blueprint, which determined that social development was only possible through economic development. Such development was closely linked with the ideas of progress, technology, individualism, rationalism, science and industrial production. Early modernisation theory which emphasised economic development, evolved into considerations of political structures and governance, and strongly pushed a Western-style liberal capitalist model of democracy. Modernisation theory required both industrialisation, as well as a significant change in ideology, particularly in developing countries. Modernisation theory has been challenged on a number of levels, most recently with the evolution of ecological critiques that investigate the environmental and ecological implications of development models. I will now outline a brief summary of the evolution of modernisation theory, before presenting significant issues associated with its application in Namibia, which I address in the body of this thesis.

In the 1950s, during the height of post-World War II reconstruction and the beginning of the decolonisation process, development was viewed as both essential and inevitable. "Optimism abounded in the wake of the stunning success of the Marshall Plan in Western Europe and Japan's ascent from the ashes of defeat." (Harrison 2000:2) Early development theorists such as Walt Rostow were primarily pre-occupied with development as relative to "modernity" and "progress". Rostow's *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (1961) outlines the steps which

countries must pass through in order to achieve the end point of development – the age of high mass consumption, defined by durable consumer goods and services. Rostow instructs traditional societies, which are "limited by the inaccessibility of modern science, its applications and its frame of mind" (1961:5) to prepare themselves for take-off through engaging with more modern, advanced societies.

> … the stage of preconditions arise not endogenously but from some external intrusion by more advanced societies. These invasions – literal or figurative – shocked the traditional society and began or hastened its undoing; but they also set in motion ideas and sentiments which initiated the process by which a modern alternative to the traditional society was constructed out of the old culture. (1961:6)

Such a theory resembles the justifications behind early imperial expansion and colonial exploitation. Contextually, with its strong emphasis on opposition to alternative social and political systems, particularly communism, it also stood as a justification for America's role in the Cold War and foreign policies involving military intervention, in countries such as Vietnam, Korea, South Africa, and Namibia[2].

Another major influence on early development theory was Point Four of U.S. President Truman's Innaugural Address in 1948, which outlined a new approach to dealing with the world's poor – assisting them to eventually help themselves. "Greater production is the key to prosperity and peace. And the key to greater production is a wider and more vigorous application of modern scientific and technical knowledge." (Truman 1948:114) This speech was also the first time the word "underdeveloped" was used to define the non-Western world, as those who did not stand in opposition to the developed West, but rather existed in an earlier form of modernity.

[2] The South African Defence Force which was actively engaged in the Independence Struggle in Namibia, had the support of the American Government, in order to fight communism.

> Conceptually, the 'development'/'underdevelopment' contrast introduced the idea of a continuity of substance, so that now the two terms of the binomial differed only relatively. 'Underdevelopment' was not the opposite of development, only its incomplete or (to stay with biological metaphors) its 'embryonic' form; an acceleration of growth was thus the only logical way of bridging the gap. (Rist 1997:74)

Francis Fukuyama's endism theory drastically articulated the ideological change necessary for the success of modernisation theory as the triumph of the West, and Western ideas and socio-political systems.

From early on, these theories have been challenged. Gunder Frank (1966) suggested that the "underdevelopment" theory actually assisted the process of neo-liberal capitalism and supported the agendas of large multi-national corporations. Reflexive modernisation theory, most often articulated by Beck (1997), suggests that blanket policies were not appropriate and the application of such theories in different, culturally complex contexts would cause significant problems to the success of development. Ecological modernisation theory, supported by Moll and Sonnenfeld (2000) insisted that environmental considerations be part of modernisation processes, and suggested that environmental crises relate to a design flaw in industrialisation. More recently, Esteva (1997), Hoogvelt (1997) and Sachs (1997) have directly questioned the concept of development as having any real meaning, by defining development as a construct. Each of these theories, however, still required a Western style democratic system in which to operate, suggesting that political and ideological modernisation was necessary. Feminist critiques, by authors such as Esther Boserup, Maria Mies, Martha Nussbaum and Trinh T. Minh-ha have focused on the impacts of modernisation on women both in the West and in the developing world. Such theorists address the socio-cultural implications of the modernisation process through the consideration of post-colonial feminist identities, ecology, as well as economic and social empowerment.

Although the economic, socio-political, ideological and environmental outcomes of the process of modernisation have been addressed, the cultural fallout of such a process has largely been overlooked, except in regard to gender considerations. Despite both industrial and ideological modernisation theory indicating structural changes in how society operates, and those structural changes including cultural change, the costs of this cultural change are often not considered in development practices, either as an aspect of intervention, or as a form of development in its own right. The issue of culture in relation to the impacts of globalisation and the proliferation of Western popular culture has been investigated by theorists such as Appadurai (1993), Appiah (1995), Latouche (1996), Jameson (1998) and Cowen (2002). There has also been much writing on the importance of grass-roots community development as being key to NGO work by authors such as Constantino-David (1995). However the absence of discourse on the cultural impact of modernisation theory in development models, has resulted in a lack of engagement with the importance of identity and cultural capital in determining social futures.

Early modernisation theorists saw culture as a barrier to progress, and progress defined by high levels of production and consumption. This Western liberal and later neo-liberal concept of development and mode of thinking is very much in line with the agents of cultural "loss" outlined in the next section, as the colonial administration and early missionaries, saw traditional practices and beliefs as standing in the way of progress and enlightenment. Notions of progress were reduced to linear journeys towards economic production and measurable capitalist outcomes. Such theories define growth by Western standards and the priorities of economic prosperity, taking the perspective that only with the unlimited economic growth of industrial production can societies reach a state of maturation and happiness. The economic agendas in terms of free trade agreements and large loans required to facilitate such "growth" are obvious enough, however such agendas can also serve to reinforce colonialist mentalities of hegemony, power and superiority which, I argue, hinder one's access to the tools of cultural empowerment and identification. Such tools are seen to be very much tied to traditional customs, beliefs and practices. This is true of most cultures and particularly in Ovamboland, where "culture" is largely seen as practices and activities of the past. Yet these same features of Ovambo

life are viewed by the authors of early development theory as the enemy of progress. Through the definition of "underdevelopment" as being a lack or a symptom of "backwardness" rather than the result of historical circumstances, and by treating the "underdeveloped" simply as poor without seeking the reasons for their destitution,

> 'development policy' made of growth and aid (conceived in technocratic, quantitative terms) [is] the only possible answer. (Rist 1997:79)

Organicist, metaphoric use of terms such as "maturity", "stages of growth" and "degrees of development" which feature in early modernisation theory also suggest an adherence to the rhetoric of biological explanations which defined racial difference in early colonial thought. However the rhetoric of early development theory contains similar notions of positional inferiority and a Western-defined path which must be followed in order to attain the fruits of economic production and mass consumption. In the case of cultural development in Ovamboland, I present an example of such emphasis on production through the commercialisation and commodification of culture, or culture which is for show and for sale, and which primarily serves to benefit producers and consumers.

Despite the criticisms of traditional modernisation theory, its discourse continues to persist and dominate at various levels, from national and international government policies to local considerations of progress and development. The inherent problems with the need for quantitative, usually economic or production-based outcomes in the activities of international non-government organisations also reflect the residual adherence to such models of development. Rostow's ideas on the need for "invasion" (1961:6) still circulate and legitimise such intercultural engagements. In this thesis, I address the complex relationship between donors and NGOs as representative of the debate surrounding quantifiable indicators versus qualitative change and suggest that engagement in cultural development work, whilst difficult within traditional development models, allows for the building of social and cultural capital and assists in empowering communities in self-determination. This idea is supported by Steven Robins (2001) who suggests that addressing issues of culture and identity in community development and NGO work

ensures empowerment in important decisions regarding social change. I also argue that not only should culture be an important consideration in development activities and international engagement, but that it should be an area of activity in its own right, in order to facilitate the intangible yet vitally important aspects of cultural identity formation. Throughout my research, interviews and professional experiences, the importance of knowing one's heritage and having access to the tools with which to form one's identity, inevitably led to greater agency in the ability to determine the terms of cultural exchange. Such a process of negotiation extends to social, cultural, environmental and political policy formation. By rejecting the previous notions of development along lines of economic progression, such as levels of production and consumption, development agencies can begin to consider the priorities of the communities with which they engage, one of which is the articulation of cultural identity. In addition, such reconsideration allows for greater local agency and control. I suggest that rather than using only Western determined outcomes, practitioners work with community organisations to determine development outcomes which best reflect the needs of the local people. Although such needs may still be congruous with economic development, I use the issue of community based cultural development to argue that, in fact, the research I undertook revealed that culture and the development of cultural identity were largely seen at a local level as imperative in addressing social problems and negotiating the impacts and terms of modernisation.

BACKGROUND

Namibia, formerly South West Africa, lies on the south western coast of sub-Saharan Africa and borders Botswana, Angola, Zimbabwe, and South Africa. A vast and arid country, much of Namibia's land is non-arable, yet southern parts of the country are rich in mineral resources and diamonds. Namibia comprises many different ethnic groups – Herero, Himba, Nama, Damara, Afrikaaner, San, Ovambo, Caprivian, Kavango, as well as Germans and South Africans. By far the largest of these is the Ovambo, which is made up of seven tribes and constitutes the majority of the population. The Ovambo people generally survive by means of subsistence farming, and occupy the land in the north central region of the country, along the Angolan border, which has come to be known as "Ovamboland" or "North Central". My research attempts to investigate the past, present and future of the articulation, practice and development of culture in this region.

Namibia was the last colony of Africa to be decolonised, achieving its independence in March 1990. Sam Nujoma was democratically elected as the President, ending the South African Government's rule by apartheid. As a young country, Namibia is at the interesting and challenging point in history of nation building and self-definition after years of oppressive rule by both the former South African dispensation and earlier Colonial rule and imperial domination. To this end, investigation into past, present and future notions of cultural identity and vitality is timely and may further serve future national cultural policy formation.

Ovamboland is a semi-desert region where the majority of people live without running water or electricity, which greatly affects the region's comparative social situation. The proliferation of Western culture, even in the most rural parts of Ovamboland, through historical vehicles such as colonialism and the South African occupation, and contemporary vehicles such as mass communications and globalisation, has meant that Western culture and ideologies have, to varying degrees, affected local life and identity.

Namibia is often called the "land of contrasts". Indeed the national anthem makes reference to "contrasting, beautiful Namibia". These contrasts are not only evident in the geographic environment, from savannahs to sand dunes, water falls and pastoral grazing land, but also in the sociological landscape. The gap between rich and poor in Namibia is one of the largest in the world, with 70% of the GDP received by 20% of earners[3]. Political independence, whilst dramatically changing the Namibian psyche, has done little to improve the material lot of the poor, with the majority of the Ovambo population depending on rainy seasons for crop cultivation in a country often punctuated by drought.

At independence, English was chosen as the official language of Namibia. Despite Afrikaans being widely spoken throughout the country, and with numerous tribal languages most commonly used outside of metropolitan centres, and even German spoken in some parts, English was chosen as an independent language - free from associations with past oppressive regimes. Another motivating factor was that English was an important language in international trade and economics, and as Namibia was eager to become part of the global economy, communication was a primary concern. The choice of English as an official language reveals much about the government's desire for the new country to align itself with Western modernity, rather than emphasise the country's alterity.

[3] Source: USAID

Fig.1.1 - Example of homestead

Fig.1.2 - Child outside homestead fence

METHODOLOGY

This thesis is presented as an investigation, and critical evaluation of actual projects and activities in the field. I use both academic inquiry and professional activity to demonstrate a more thorough investigation into the issues associated with cultural development. In personally engaging with cultural development, and critically evaluating work undertaken in the field, a number of ideological and philosophical issues become apparent, and these are presented to demonstrate the complexity of cross-cultural influences.

Material I have used includes primary source material such as interviews, personal observations, photos and images, and secondary source material such as reports, journal articles, minutes of meetings, academic writing, newspaper articles, etc. Transcripts of interviews are interspersed throughout to support my argument. Where appropriate, appendices are included to accommodate material which is too lengthy, and images attached in both print and electronic form. A CD is also used as an appendix, with files indicated within the text.

As a result of living and working in the area under investigation between 1998 and 2000, I was able to both gather material and undertake interviews and community consultation, as well as participate professionally in the area of work under investigation. The close relationships which developed as a result of my living with the community for 3 years, helped to contribute to a sense of trust within the community, and enabled me to conduct interviews with a broad and diverse range of people, from traditional kings and tribal authorities, to government officials and everyday people from the rural and outer-metropolitan areas. Although this experience is not uncommon to field workers, what was unique about my experience was that I had been employed in the country as a teacher prior to engaging in formal research into cultural development, therefore I had been a colleague and neighbour before undertaking interviews and documentation. These interviews and personal observations serve as the basis of my understanding of the significant issues in the area of culture and cultural development in the region. A full list

of interviewees and a short explanation of their background is included as Appendix A. Appendix B is a presentation of the problems associated with language differences in collecting data and information. As my Oshiwambo was not sufficient to conduct comprehensive interviews, I was assisted by my Namibian counterpart in the process of translation. However this often led to difficulties in answers being slightly skewed as respondents had been subconsciously directed to certain conclusions. I elaborate on these issues in Appendix B. A further trip to Namibia in November 2002 consolidated my research, and considerable time was spent collecting archival material and conducting further interviews. The return trip was important to gauge the progress and evolution of the cultural development project which I established before I left and is now run locally[4], and chart the progression of national sentiment regarding issues of culture and cultural development.

Terminology and Positioning

In this section, I outline what I mean when I use words and terms such as *cultural development; art; culture; developing country; the West; post-colonialism; Ovamboland; development; cultural capital* in order to avoid misinterpretation. Whilst I have made every effort to use appropriate language and exercise sensitivity in terminology, I realise that language usage and appropriateness are culturally dictated. The language I use is the one which I believe to be the most suitable for my purpose. Where necessary, translations of Oshiwambo terms are included as footnotes, and a glossary of terms is included for reference.

Much of the contemporary language used to describe both the region and the condition of the area in my thesis contains problematic, and unfortunate connotations. Namibia, like many newly independent, post-colonial countries, is described within development circles, government and non-government rhetoric and writing, by academics and indeed by the Namibian people themselves as a "developing country". Such a term automatically takes the West as the norm and defines itself against the West, thus reinforcing out-dated notions of centre-periphery models of seeing the world. This also applies to other words

[4] Further information regarding this project is provided in the Recuperation section of this thesis

used to describe certain regions of the world, such as "the third world", "under-developed", "non-Western" and "exotic". All have, implicit within the terms, a comparison to the West, which both reinforces hegemony and emphasises not only *otherness* but also implies inferiority and sub-ordinance. This implied inferiority is incongruent to my own view, however it is hard to find a neutral, politically acceptable vocabulary which avoids any of the loaded nature of these terms. Similarly, the term "low income" refers only to a country's comparative economic situation rather than the broad social and culturally distinguishing features which constitute such countries. Language, particularly sociological and academic language is not static and terms once regarded as acceptable norms, such as "savage", "primitive" and "native" now clang discordantly in our ears and reflect the thinking of the time. Whilst not necessarily containing de-humanising connotations, contemporary language about such regions still reflects current hegemonic power structures between the West and the rest. In the absence of a viable alternative, I use the term "developing" to describe the condition and location of Namibia, as in my experience it is currently the most widely accepted and utilised term by the people of such regions, even though the development of the West is far from complete!

The term "post-colonialism" also requires significant qualification. "Post-colonial studies" left unqualified, could be seen to refer to all study of all of the effects of European colonisation in the majority of the cultures of the world, and include all the academic disciplines in use in institutions of learning across the globe. The prefix "post" also requires contextualisation, as it is can be widely interpreted as meaning anything from "the end of colonialism" (which implies that decolonisation allowed the developing world a clean break from colonial exploitation) to "since colonisation began", which when viewed from an economic perspective, maps the transition from the dismantling of colonial political/administrative machinery to Western imperialism's interests in late capitalist economics. Similarly, critics such as Ahmad (1995) have questioned the rubric "post-colonial" on the grounds that it delineates developing countries in terms of their relation to colonising powers, rather than their internal concerns or relation to each other. Therefore, continuing to retain the term "post-colonialism" is seen to reinforce centre-

margin models of definition and identity, as developing nations are defined according to their relation to European imperial centres.

In this thesis, I view post-colonialism as the situation since colonialism began, and present post-colonialism as a process, for "if the inequities of colonial rule have not been erased, it is perhaps premature to proclaim the demise of colonialism." (Loomba 1998:7) And as modern colonialism has restructured the association between colonised countries and their Western colonisers, a complex relationship has formed which has effected enormous cultural change, as well as the well documented economically dependent alliance forged between the West and developing countries through globalisation. These cultural effects are the result of colonialism's process of "forming a community" in the new land, which essentially meant *"unforming* or re-forming the communities that existed there already". (Loomba 1998:2)

The *process* of post-colonialism in Namibia is an ongoing one. Without dismissing the significance of formal decolonisation and political independence, it is important to note the fact that unequal relations of colonial rule are reinscribed in the contemporary imbalances between "developed" and "developing" nations, which are both overtly and covertly exacerbated by the pace and nature of globalisation. This state of neo-colonialism questions whether once-colonised countries are ever truly post-colonial, as "the new global order does not depend upon direct rule … however it does allow the economic, cultural and (to varying degrees) political penetration of some countries by others." (Loomba 1998:7) So whilst semantically problematic, the term "post-colonialism" is useful as a generalisation to the extent that "it refers to a *process* of disengagement from the whole colonial syndrome, which takes many forms and is probably inescapable for all those whose worlds have been marked by that set of phenomena: 'post-colonial' is (or should be) a descriptive not an evaluative term" (Hulme 1995:120 in Loomba)

The term "Ovamboland" was originally used by missionaries and colonialists, and later by the South African dispensation[5], thus endowing it with negative associations. Although the term Ovambo is said to have existed prior to the colonial encounter, referring to the region as "Ovamboland" after the former homeland set up in the apartheid era is still sometimes viewed as a politically sensitive move, as some (often government officials) interpret this as a continuation of the discourse of apartheid. However others, often traditional authorities, wish to retain the term as it identifies the region culturally from the rest of the country. Such authorities believe the term to be culturally significant and believe it should be retained at all costs[6]. Recent attempts to refer to the area as North Central, thus avoiding negative historical connotation, have not extended as yet into the everyday vernacular, and "Ovamboland" has, since independence, lost much of its stigma in everyday usage. Similarly, referring to the region as "The Four O's[7]" as it is sometimes described, is also a politically sensitive move, as some interpret this as reinforcing political constituencies rather than social and cultural identification, as was the rationale behind the apartheid ideology of tribal essentialism by "divide and rule"[8]. I refer to the region as Ovamboland, as in my experience, it was the term most commonly used and accepted by the local people about the area in which they lived. Similarly, I will use the word "tribes" in reference to the 7 culturally, linguistically and socially distinct groups in the region as this is the most commonly used term in the region.

"Development" as a term, concept and practice is extremely controversial and, in much the same way as describing a region or country as "developing", is often seen to reinforce hegemonic notions of centre and margin, the process of maturation through modernisation, and constant comparison to the West. Esteva articulately sums up the difficulties of the term and touches on many of the concepts which are further developed in this thesis in the following quote:

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[5] "The term "dispensation" is the most common in Ovamboland, in reference to the South African administration of Namibia.
[6] Source: Fairweather (2001:144)
[7] Referring to the political constituencies of the region - Omusati, Ohangwena, Oshikoto and Oshana.
[8] Divide and rule refers to the apartheid Government's practice of reinforcing tribal differences and separating indigenous peoples into "homelands" in order to keep them from rising up together against the apartheid regime.

> Development cannot delink itself from the words with which it was formed – growth, evolution, maturation. Just the same, those who now use the word cannot free themselves from a web of meanings that impart a specific blindness to their language, thought and action. No matter the context in which it is used, or the precise connotation that the person using wants to give it, the expression becomes qualified and coloured by meanings perhaps unwanted. The word always implies a favourable change, a step from the simple to the complex, from the inferior to the superior, from worse to better. The word indicates that one is doing well because one is advancing in the sense of a necessary, ineluctable, universal law and toward a desirable goal… But for two thirds of the people on earth, this positive meaning of the word 'development' – profoundly rooted after two centuries of its social construction – is a reminder of *what they are not*. It is a reminder of an undesirable, undignified condition. To escape from it they need to be enslaved to others' experiences and dreams. (Esteva 1997:10)

In this thesis, I address many issues relating to the concept and practice of development, including issues of agency. However in my experience, the Ovambo people with whom I associated were comfortable with the term "development" and often spoke in binaries such as "developing" and "developed" countries. This was possibly as a result of the word implying a change for the better, following the oppression and domination of the past. Therefore although there are many complicated and loaded associations with such a term, I retain it based on its common usage and acceptance in the region.

Throughout this thesis, reference is made to "cultural development". This term requires explanation, as it could have a multitude of meanings for example the appropriation and refinement of European values and etiquette. The use of the term cultural development in this thesis, however does not refer to a specific art form or cultural activity, but rather a community based arts practice which involves collaboration between artists and

communities to create art and articulate identity. *Art* in this sense refers to all aspects of creative visual and performing arts such as music, dance, story-telling, craft etc. Cultural development activities can take the form of projects, research, exhibitions, festivals, events which incorporate all aspects of hybrid art practices. These collaborations provide opportunities for individuals to access, participate in and manage their own arts and cultural activities, encourage cultural expressions of diversity and a sense of identity in a community by increasing their opportunities to develop their own cultural activities and infrastructure, and provide support to practitioners and communities involved in arts and cultural endeavours. Cultural development therefore involves community at every level – in management, the development of creative ideas, consultation and liaison, and participation in projects. There is an emphasis on process in cultural development of this nature, and because of its inclusive nature and creative outcomes, it is often an appropriate vehicle to address social issues and community problems through arts and cultural activities. The enrichment of individual and community cultural life, and the creative expression of local identity are at the heart of cultural development activity. The Australia Council for the Arts gives the following description of Community Cultural Development (ccd):

> **Community**:
> A community can be any group of people who choose to identify with each other. Communities can be created through the things people have in common; geographical location, interests, cultural heritage, or simply a desire to strengthen relationships and share experiences.
> **Cultural**:
> Communities are complex and multi-layered, so there can be many 'cultures' within any community. Community culture might also include expressions of identity such as language, dress, cuisine or sporting activities in addition to what is commonly termed 'arts'.
> **Development**:
> This is the 'doing' part of ccd. Artists work with a community in the development of their culture. It is important to remember that many

> communities have highly sophisticated and/or traditional community cultures and 'development' is about building on and strengthening those positive aspects which already exist. A community may wish to actively enhance aspects of their cultural life, or to use its culture as a tool with which to develop other aspects of their community, for example – economic development, addressing social issues, empowerment, self representation, expressing identity, or reclaiming public space. Either approach is an example of community cultural development. (Australia Council 2002:5)

It is important to distinguish the two different forms that cultural development can take. One, as highlighted above, is the community based practice which is concerned with the process of creative community activity in projects which reflect the identity, values and features of a place and/or its people. This usually occurs through visual or performance art activities at a local, grass roots level, and involves community organisations, local individuals and artists. The second form cultural development can take is in commercial or enterprise development, usually involving the production and sale of cultural artefacts and/or performance based activity with an economic end. The main participants in this form of cultural development are commercial organisations, professional artists, distributors and consumers. I discuss both of these forms of cultural development; however the community based model is more closely investigated as my case studies fit into this model. The discussion of both models also reflects larger development dichotomies or rationales behind cultural production. The case studies and examples of the first form of cultural development illustrate a community participation, empowerment and self-determination rationale. The example of commercially based cultural development reflects issues of Western capitalism, essentialism, and economic development. The conflicting issues surrounding the greater dialectics of development and change become apparent when seen through the lens of culture.

In this thesis, I have also used the term "cultural capital" to describe the practices of creative identity expression within the community. This term has a similar function to

social capital, which "…refers to the processes between people which establish networks, norms and social trust and facilitate co-ordination and co-operation for mutual benefit". (Cox 1995:15) However by cultural capital, I am specifically referring to the processes which take place within a family, community, school and so on which facilitate cultural expression. Cox believes social capital can be measured and quantified. As I later demonstrate, cultural capital is less easily measured, yet equally important in equipping communities and individuals with the power to negotiate cultural change. The same spirit of egalitarian communitarianism found in the principles of social capital supports the generation of cultural capital, where communities, parents, individuals, teachers, organisations and governments support activities and practices, and transfer skills which allow for the creative articulation of identity.

"Those who study or write about the primitive usually begin by defining it as different from (usually opposite to) the present." (Torgovnick 1990:8) In the field of cultural development, the focus is on the process of community participation, expression of identity, methodologies and work itself. Having worked in the area of cultural development in both Australia and Namibia, in vastly different contexts, perhaps the greatest surprise has been the similarities between the situations of each country in this area. From budgetary restrictions (though obviously on a dramatically different scale), to a lack of government support, public awareness, bureaucracy, resources, lack of performance opportunities, communication, these are not issues unique to cultural development in Ovamboland. Indeed the community cultural development issues faced by cultural officers and practitioners in north central Namibia are predominantly the same as those faced by arts and cultural practitioners and officers in both grassroots community organisations and those in local, state and federal governments in Australia. The arts and cultural industries of Australia and Namibia face similarly daunting challenges in dealing with the needs and reflections of an ever changing society with its multi-faceted and complex identity. Arts and cultural industries often struggle to gain recognition and support in areas such as heritage, purpose and image in societies which frequently dismiss the industry as superfluous and unnecessary.

> The word culture has so many meanings (not all identical in all the languages which possess it) and is used in such diverse contexts and with such varied connotations, that it can cause a host of misunderstandings … The polysemy of the word 'culture' is the reason for its success, allowing it to become a channel for desires and aspirations which are as profound as they are imprecise. (Latouche 1996:39)

The term "culture" has been described as "one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language" (Williams 1981:87), and its use throughout this thesis must be qualified from the outset, as it is a word which has been historically loaded and connected to notions of class. The use of the word in this thesis is not in the Matthew Arnold tradition of the word, as representing the finest products of civilisation, which results in significant exclusion of non-Western cultural forms of identity expression. Nor is it the redemptive pursuit, through a principally literary education, of the best that human beings had thought and said, as Arnold spoke of in *Culture and Anarchy* in 1869. Indeed the term itself has undergone a type of decolonisation from this early usage as defining an elite "cultured" few and an "uncultured" majority. The importance of defining "cultural development" previously, as a community based process avoids connotations of the practice of refinement or civilisation. Culture in this thesis refers to the articulation of identity, in this case community identity. This can happen creatively through art, music, dance, dress, stories, craft etc and socially through language, customs and practices.

> Culture … is … the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group. It includes not only arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, values systems, traditions and beliefs. (UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies, Mexico City 1982)

"Ovambo culture", therefore, refers to the defining features which are unique to the Ovambo community and which are articulated socially and creatively. There exist unique characteristics which define the Ovambo people and distinguish them from other Namibian ethnic groups, and it is the expression of this uniqueness through cultural practice which is under investigation.

Another problematic term I have engaged with is the "West" or "Western" in reference to North America, Europe and Australia. The Macquarie dictionary defines the term as countries whose historical, cultural and political backgrounds lie in Western Europe, however this seems very arbitrary and does not take into account a colonialist or post-colonialist perspective. I am aware of the binary such a term creates, particularly as Stuart Hall (1992) points out, that the world is increasingly divided into "the West and the Rest". In this thesis, I have chosen to use the term "West" rather than specifically identifying the countries of Australia, North America and Europe when referring to features and impacts felt in Namibia, for two reasons. The first is a simple matter of brevity, as to refer to European, North American and Australian phenomena repeatedly throughout the thesis would disturb the flow. The second reason is that at the present time the term "West" is the most common way to describe specific countries and their influences throughout the world in Namibia. They do not refer to such regions as "the first world" or "the industrialised world". Although a geographically irrelevant term, in my experience, Namibians most commonly applied the word "West" to the wealthy parts of the world. Lewis concedes that

> While it is relatively easy to dismantle an intellectual construct like the third world, it is much more difficult to devise suitable alternatives. And alternative designations are sorely needed if we are to grasp a global geography where divisions are continually being produced and reproduced between wealthy people and places, and between poor people and places… a sophisticated global geography would acknowledge a variety of conceptual schemes (deploying one lexicon, for example, to discuss

economic flows, and another to analyse patterns of social development.) (Lewis 1999:358)

Personal Engagement, Methodologies and Background

> If, as Janet Gunn has put it, autobiography is not conceived as "the private act of a self writing" but as "the cultural act of a self reading"(1982:8), then what is at stake in autobiographical discourse is not a question of the subject's authentic "me", but a question of the subject's location in a world through an active interpretation of experiences that one calls one's own in particular, "worldly" contexts, (Gunn, 1982:23) that is to say, a willful positioning of oneself in history and culture. (Ang 1993)

In late 1997, I decided to leave the comfort of cosmopolitan Sydney and my job at the ABC and accept the challenge of working as an Australian Volunteer in the developing world. A number of motivating factors prompted the decision, from altruism to adventurism, but predominantly I looked forward to immersing myself in another culture and the challenges and opportunities it would present. For the first two years in Namibia, I lived in a small village near the Angolan border called *Oshikuku* or "place of many chickens", and taught English at Nuuyoma Senior Secondary School to Year 11 and 12 students.

Fig.1.2 – Example of landscape in Ovamboland

I became involved in local cultural activities in the community soon after arriving in Namibia. As I may have had the only music degree in the country[9], I was placed on a number of national government and non-government boards and panels such as the National Institute for Educational Development's Curriculum Development Panel for the Arts. Being the only white woman in the area, I was fairly conspicuous at the best of times, and people soon began to speak of me as *omukulukadhi goshilumbu okuna eitulomo mo mithigululwakalo goshiwambo* (white woman interested in Ovambo culture). I soon recognised that there had been little or no formal academic research done in the region in the area of culture. My observations and participation in the processes of cultural activity in the region soon clarified the unique research opportunity before me. It was the right time and the right place to research current activities, philosophies and practices of reculturation in a post-colonial paradigm. There were still hurdles and unexpected issues associated with my work that I address. As a result of directly engaging with a variety of people from different professional, social and political backgrounds, I was able to conduct interviews, which cover a large cross section of the community and canvass different opinions. It was through my research and involvement in local cultural activity that I was able to develop and co-ordinate a project in Cultural Development in the region, which was funded by the Ford Foundation. Further information on the establishment and associated activities of this project is outlined in the Recuperation section of this thesis.

> Anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient – and this applies whether the person is an anthropologist, sociologist, historian, or philologist – either in its specific or its general aspects, is an Orientalist, and what he or she does is Orientalism. (Said 1979:3)

Western involvement in the area of culture is often controversial, particularly in cultural recuperation as it has dangerous connotations of reinforcing essentialism, or exoticising and *othering* non-Western peoples. At this point, then, it is important to investigate some of the cultural complexities inherent in my own involvement, both in the context of

[9] No formal tertiary qualifications such as a Bachelor of Music are offered at the University of Namibia

working in cultural development, and in the larger context of being white, female, Australian, young, independent, and employed in Namibia. Orientalist attitudes involving the definition of European *self* against oriental *other* are extraordinarily important in the context of contemporary development work in Namibia, as well as shaping policy and ideology in the field. The ethnocentrism and fascination with the *other* implied by the theory of Orientalism continues to be one of the fundamental issues associated with Westerners working within and studying the post-colonial world, and is of particular importance when considering involvement in cultural development work.

> For if it is true that no production of knowledge in the human sciences can ever ignore or disclaim its author's involvement as a human subject in his own circumstances, then it must also be true that for a European or American studying the Orient there can be no disclaiming the main circumstances of his actuality: that he comes up against the Orient as a European or American first, as an individual second. And to be a European or American in such a situation is by no means an inert fact. It meant and means being aware, however dimly, that one belongs to a power with definite interests in the Orient, and more important, that one belongs to a part of the earth with a definite history of involvement in the Orient almost since the time of Homer (Said 1979:11)

In investigating issues of personal engagement, values and conscience in the context of development work, I am acutely aware of the sensitivity of personal ideology and motivation. The dichotomy of my decision to work in Namibia out of both a desire to live in a different culture whilst at the same time helping a country less privileged draws comparisons to the historical attractions of new worlds to colonialists, missionaries and anthropologists. How did my fascination with the *other* differ from Orientalist preoccupations with textual production of meaning and identity based on Western superiority?

> Orientalism depends for its strategy on this flexible and positional superiority, which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand. … the scientist, the scholar, the missionary, the trader, or the soldier was in, or thought about, the Orient because he could be there, or could think about it, with very little resistance on the Orient's part. (Ashcroft 1995:90)

Similarly, how did my desire to assist the "less privileged" differ from the early misguided humanitarianism of missionaries and colonialists? Such questions are not easily answered, however I believe part of the key involves the shifting paradigm which has evolved through greater access to information in the 21st century, particularly in the West, about the world and its people. This has resulted in a more informed understanding of non-Western cultures and the effects of colonialism and imperialism as well as contributing to emerging philosophies and re-thinking of development theory and the practice of contemporary development work. Prior to my departure to Namibia, I was able to engage with the country's history, landscape and culture through research, information and technology which did not exist previously. The ease of international travel means that cross-cultural experiences are now no longer limited to colonialists, missionaries and traders[10]. Attitudes about self and other have also changed with the breakdown of nation-states. As Kiernan's observations about the African experience of colonialism reveal:

> The notion of the African as minor … took very strong hold. Spaniards and Boers had questioned whether natives had souls: modern Europeans cared less about that but doubted whether they had minds capable of adult growth. A theory came to be fashionable that mental growth in the African ceased early, that childhood was never left behind. (Kiernan 1972:243)

[10] I should acknowledge that, with the exception of the dispossessed, international travel is still largely limited to the wealthy West.

These early theories reveal much about the attitude towards the *other* at the time of colonial encounter, and the inferiority with which such people were viewed.

Although my desire to live and work in another culture had existed long before I had acquired the professional and educational means to do so, it is perhaps not a coincidence that at the time I left Australia, I was living in the inner-city suburb of Surry Hills. The transition from an urban to rural or cosmopolitan to provincial was also the result of questioning the position of relative privilege I found myself in, and re-examining the social and economic institutions which put me there and allowed for such disparity in the world.

> Site of modernism, hotbed of intellectual life, product of industry, the city produces the alienation and crises in identity that fuel the work of many modernists and make them turn their imaginations (in some cases move their bodies) to the alternate space of the primitive – last, desperate, remaining, endangered model for alternative social organisations, for communities that exert communal power and live amid a sense of wonder that transcends the mundane order of modern urban life. (Torgovnick 1990:192)

In this sense, there was also an element of recuperation[11] in my decision to go to Africa.

Humanitarian development work today, specifically work which involves international volunteer sending organisations such as the one with which I was affiliated, is *ideally* based on a fundamental respect for the culture of the people. It holds a pluralistic vision of the world and recognises the position of privilege which people of the developed world have (education, opportunity, wealth etc) to assist people born without that privilege, rather than being preoccupied with *civilising the native* or the economic benefits of a

[11] I use the term "recuperation" here as referring to the state of ongoing identity negotiation as will be further investigated later in this thesis. In my case, there was certainly an element of recognising, exploring and reconciling my position in the world.

relationship with other lands[12]. The notion of "assistance" finds its history in the early, seemingly humanitarian idealism found in Truman's Point Four descriptions of development, and continues with the philosophies of partnership inherent in UN policies – where the richer countries are expected to contribute to the development of the poorer countries. (Khor 2000:9) However it also imputes unequal power relations which can exploit humanitarian compassion for self interest.

> The acceptance of the principle of capital assistance to developing countries is one of the most striking expressions of international solidarity as well as enlightened self-interest. This yoking together of solidarity and self-interest became one of the basic elements in 'development' discourse, as a way of convincing both those who emphasized the 'humanitarian imperative' and those who focused on national interests. (Rist 1997:91)

I too, naively, felt that in deciding to go to Namibia, I was being of assistance, without necessarily considering the larger evangelical neo-liberal mission of Western democracy I inadvertently found myself on. My intentions were to use my situation of relative privilege in terms of education, experience and so on, to the benefit of others. It is also important, when considering the concept of "assistance" to recognise that positions for Australian Volunteers International volunteers came at the request of the Namibian Government. The Namibian Government was short of English teachers and I had both the qualifications and desire to go. It seems the motivations behind my decision to work in Namibia were not incongruous with the feelings of other Australians:

> "Australians support overseas aid for reasons pertaining to moral responsibility rather than self-interest," Grant says. "[But] the Australian aid program is increasingly being used to support big-business interests

[12] Personally I had no intention of working in Namibia in order to contribute to the opening up of economic or trade possibilities with Australia. However current Australian Government practices of economic rationalism are putting increasing pressure on development organisations to focus their attention on "strategic" countries. Recent funding cuts to Aus Aid have followed this trend, with geographically determined countries considered to be of "strategic" benefit to Australia now receiving 90% of Australian aid. One can only assume such strategic development relates to the Government's priorities of economic development and security.

> under the guise of philanthropic development assistance." (Grant in Wade 2000:14)

Ideally, the recognition and consciousness of national obligations in an international context ought to pave the way for the emergence of an ethically and politically enlightened global community. As Fanon writes, the consciousness of self, "is not the closing of a door to communication. Philosophic thought teaches us, on the contrary, that it is its guarantee. National consciousness, which is not nationalism, is the only thing that will give us an international dimension". (Fanon 1990:199) Gandhi, in presenting an amalgamation of post-colonial theories, summarises a new philosophy, which serves as a positive model for development work, as an

> urgent appeal for a new, regenerative, postcolonial politics which refuses its share in the advantages of alterity, which is willing to act in and for the world without seeking cover under the bounded signs of race/nation/ethnicity, and which, as Trinh T. Minh-ha writes, insists upon its own radical indeterminacy: 'Not quite the Same, not quite Other, she stands in that undetermined threshold place where she constantly drifts in and out.' (Gandhi 1998:74)

Despite recognition of my place in the global order, the acceptance I felt from those around me in Namibia and the close and enduring friendships and relationships I developed there, the fact remained that by the very nature of the colour of my skin, I was awarded privileges and support even whilst working under equal pay and living conditions with locals in Namibia.

> The tropes and categories through which we view primitive societies draw lines and establish relations of power between us and them, even as they presuppose that they mirror us. (Torgovnick 1990:11)

And although I liked to think I went and lived "as an equal", the reality was quite different. I was white, was always going to leave at the end of my contract and had covert support which I, and my Namibian colleagues, were largely unaware of, but which would have dramatically separated me from them in a crisis situation. I had the opportunity for evacuation if my security was threatened, immediate medical evacuation should I have become seriously ill, and enough life-lines from home should anything unforeseen happen. And as Pratt states, this "interaction within radically asymmetrical conditions of power invariably produces an estrangement of familiar meanings and a mutual 'creolisation' of identities." (Pratt 1992:4)

One message which was reinforced to me prior to leaving Australia, was that as a volunteer, I was also in many ways an ambassador of Australia. This meant that I was required to take this responsibility seriously, act appropriately, and exercise cultural sensitivity, so as not to bring shame to the organisation or country which I represented. Rather than being a mouthpiece of Australian foreign policy, however, I found myself to be openly critical of some government policies whilst in Namibia particularly when issues such as reconciliation, Hansonism, economic rationalism and policies on asylum seekers made the international news. The difficulty of not having an Australian Embassy or High Commission in Namibia meant that volunteers were unable to lodge postal votes with diplomatic offices in neighbouring countries in time to vote in both the 1998 Federal Election and the 1999 Referendum. This frustration from the inability to participate in the election of government added to the feeling of disconnection and heightened sensitivities surrounding the implications of ambassadorial expectations. I felt largely misrepresented by a government elected in an election I was unable to vote in, and Australian Government policies which made news headlines overseas were often in opposition to my own beliefs.

The situation of relative difference which I often felt, in terms of being white, Australian, on a contract, and with a wealthy homeland to return to, was in some ways eased by the living and employment conditions I experienced. Being paid local wages, and living in the same conditions as my colleagues, neighbours and friends somewhat bridged the gap

of difference. When the electricity, phone-lines or water went off for two weeks, there was no difference between me and the rest of the village. When a rabid calf ran through the village, or in the contraction of malaria, I was at equal risk as those around me. The dependence on friends, neighbours and colleagues also helped to bridge the gap of difference, and the friendships which I formed cut across cultural differences and nationalities, and have remained strong since my departure. Despite the feeling of acceptance within the community, my decision to leave Namibia after three years was, however ultimately motivated by the issue of difference. There was considerable local support and pressure for me to stay, and there was still a lot of work to be done. I loved the area and its people and was extremely conflicted after 3 years about when, and indeed, whether to leave. My decision was based on the fact that I would always be an Australian living in Namibia. I would always be white in a black region, and I would therefore always represent difference, which was sometimes a difficult burden to carry as in Ovamboland, my nationality was unavoidably linked to economic prosperity, and the idealised "endpoint" of development which many Ovambos aspired to – Western, liberal democratic capitalism. Polarities, whether I liked it or not, would always exist. Torgovnick's ideas on "going primitive" resonated with me, despite the contradictory presence of difference.

> The metaphor of finding a home of being at home recurs over and over as a structuring pattern within Western primitivism. Going primitive is trying to "go home" to a place that feels comfortable and balanced, where full acceptance comes freely and easily. … Whatever form the primitive's hominess takes, its strangeness salves our estrangement from ourselves and our culture. (Torgovnick 1990:185)

Negotiating my own cultural identity was important, particularly as I had been professionally engaged in such work with the Ovambo community. This, I recognise, has significant Orientalist overtones, as "to study the primitive brings us always back to ourselves, which we reveal in the act of defining the Other." (Torgovnick 1996:11)

Torgovnick goes on to describe modern anthropologist "adventurers" as often, through the recognition of the shortcomings of the Western world they know, finding themselves in a state of "transcendental homelessness", where the search for meaning and the yearning for alternative systems and values leads to the exploration other cultures. Often, however, this search never ends, as the society they flee, which is seen to be long since removed from its "primitive" roots, has already penetrated the societies they seek.

> "Transcendental homelessness"… the phrase … sees the condition of the modern Western mind … as "transcendentally homeless"; secular but yearning for the sacred, ironic but yearning for the absolute, individualistic but yearning for the wholeness of community, asking questions but receiving no answers, fragmented but yearning for "immanent totality" (Torgovnick 1990:188)

Two years after leaving Namibia, I returned for a month. In that time I stayed with friends in my old village. With the distance of time and the virtue of hindsight, I asked a close friend, who I trusted would answer me with complete honesty, what he thought of me, as a foreigner, living and working all that time in Namibia. The following is a transcript of the conversation between myself and my friend Mbockoma Mungandjera:

IB Tate[13], I want you to answer very honestly, not as a friend or as a tate or anything like that, just very very honestly – what do you think about me, as an oshilumbu[14], working in cultural development in Namibia? Being white, being from somewhere else, coming in …

MM To be honest, I don't foresee anything wrong in the whole issue. I only believe that whatever we do, we really mean the best for this emerging young nation. We are all made up of the same flesh and blood, but your

[13] *Tate* means father, man, uncle. It is a respectful and affectionate term for a man, and in this case indicates the paternal relationship I had with Mbockoma.
[14] *Oshilumbu* means "white person". Once a derogatory term within the Ovambo community to describe South African soldiers, it now is just a descriptive word for "white person".

way of thinking depends on your experience. Some people maybe foresee that a white person is still like the Boers who were here. But to me that is different. A person should not judge a person according to history, or according to what you have. Try to look at the person, that specific person, and see what they are. I can know myself differently through somebody from outside reminding me of who I am.

Professional Methodologies, Interviews and ethics

The issues of personal engagement mentioned before extended into the professional arena as well, particularly working in the area of cultural development. In keeping with the philosophies of sustainable development, an inclusive and facilitative approach was taken in all professional methodology. Woods' (1990:4) emphasis on the role of local knowledge and social capital illustrates what was at the heart of the Cultural Development Project with which I was involved, as I demonstrate in the section on Recuperation. All decisions made regarding policy development and details of the projects undertaken by the North Central Cultural Initiative (NCCI) were made collaboratively between the sub-committee, which included representatives from government and non-government organisations, but most importantly members of the community and traditional authorities. Similarly, my role in the project would not have been of any use without the benefit of having lived and worked in the region for the years prior to the project's development, and developing an understanding of the people, culture, issues, methodologies, protocols and paradigm in which the project could potentially operate.

> Avoiding the pitfalls of the past, coalitions have been cautiously set up, placing more attention on process. NGOs, through networking… have demonstrated greater success, especially in relation to sustainability. Apart from basic organizing concerns, much attention has also been placed on negotiating with government and learning the ropes of parliamentary politics – advocacy, lobbying and electoral work. (Constantino-David 1995:160)

Consistent with Karina Constantino-David's ideas on contemporary development approaches, considerable integration with local community organisations[15] and collaboration with all stakeholders was at the heart of each activity within the project, and

[15] Community organisations included the Shack Dwellers Association, Catholic AIDS Action, Women in Industry Co-operatives

an understanding about political sensitivities and awareness of issues of inclusion were addressed. This was particularly important in the involvement of the two government regional educational offices in the area. Although the north central region incorporated the geographical areas of both of the regional Ministry of Basic Education and Culture (MBEC) ministerial offices, they operated quite independently and with considerable antipathy, making inclusion of both offices, which was vital for the success of the project, difficult. The importance of understanding the complex relationship between the two offices and the history behind it was beneficial in addressing issues of equity and representation. Although the regional offices operated under the same ministerial mandate, significant competition existed between them, for funding, recognition, and support. Whilst it is inappropriate to speculate on the origins of existing tensions between the regional offices, it is important to mention the antagonism as it significantly affected the planning, participation and inclusiveness of the Cultural Development Project (CDP). The attendance or participation of one regional office at meetings was often dependent on the absence of the other.

Given the nature and scope of the CDP and the fact that it was designed to be inclusive of all Ovambo tribes and political constituencies, it was imperative to be seen to be inclusive of both regional offices at every level and impartial in mapping out where activities, and even meetings would take place. Often a neutral space was chosen to hold meetings, which was equidistant to both regional offices, such as the Rössing Foundation in Ondangwa or the University of Namibia in Oshakati. The NCCI sub-committee, which was responsible for designing arts and cultural development activities and projects, was similarly representative of both government regional offices, as well as including individuals representing related community organisations and NGOs. The inclusive nature of the project was essential in order to ensure its acceptance, representation and relevance to the community it sought to serve. Members of the committee were elected, and were responsible and accountable to the North Central Cultural Initiative and the wider community. Every effort was made to obtain access to information, in spite of difficulties in geographical isolation and poor communication infrastructure, and all possible mediums were used in the distribution of information, such as radio,

publications, post, word-of-mouth, fax and so on. Traditional authorities were particularly helpful in accessing communities and distributing information in remote areas. Transport was made available for meeting attendance, and all associated administrative costs were shared by the CDP funds and the University of Namibia's Northern Campus. Although incredibly time consuming, the process of extensive networking, liaising with appropriate authorities and adhering to political and social protocols proved to be one of the strengths of the project, as it significantly contributed to one of the goals of the CDP – that of community sensitisation around arts and culture in the region, collaboration and consultation and the sharing of ideas. By engaging with people about the origins and rationale behind the project, as well as highlighting the breadth of community involvement and key supporters, discussion was generated, community support grew, strategic contacts and partnerships developed and the duplication of ideas and activities was minimised.

Working in the field of development, I consciously tried to avoid any notions of Western cultural imperialism or presumed superiority in my work. This included adapting ways of working to suit local customs, as well as changing my attitude. Although I might have considered there to be a faster or more efficient way of doing something, it was important that I comply with local systems, as not to do so was to neglect important cultural considerations which are not present in Australia. In attempting to remain inclusive at every level, and to allow local wishes to determine subsequent projects, I undertook significant community consultation and background research. This shaped the form and scope of activities which became part of the project. However, an important element in my having access to local resources, and in establishing the support of the community was the trust which had developed from my presence in the region in the years prior to the undertaking of the cultural development project, as well as a knowledge of the local language, customs and so on. Also, simply having a familiar face and association with the Regional Cultural festivals, National Institute of Educational Development (NIED), the University, and the MBEC regional offices meant that, in a small community with few white faces, I was easily recognised. This process of community consultation, however, and the constant monitoring of the project were quite difficult and laborious processes,

which involved significant self-reflexivity and evaluation. Many of the frustrations I felt came from this method of project development. Often when projects were not as successful as I had hoped, or attendance was poor at a meeting, after initially feeling personal disappointment, I would also have to re-evaluate the rationale, logistics and feasibility of activities. Time was a significant and constant challenge, as my Western notions of time-efficiency were completely unsuited to the Ovambo lifestyle. As Etounga (2000:69) writes, "The African sees space and time as a single entity. The Nigerians say, 'A watch did not invent man.' Africans have always had their own time, and they have often been criticized for it." Meetings would often start hours later than scheduled, and would run for hours longer than anticipated. Deadlines were futile and my expectations had to be dramatically altered in order to incorporate the levels of community involvement and inclusiveness necessary for such a project. The issue of time is useful in illustrating the problems associated with the dual mandate of development work which, as Robins (2001) believes, involves ambiguous dialectics between promoting cultural survival and modern socialisation.

> Time in Africa has both a symbolic and cultural value that are very important in the manner in which it is lived and felt. This is frankly both a benefit and a handicap – a benefit to the extent that it is satisfying for individuals to live during a period at a rhythm that is their own and that they have no desire to give up. But it is also a handicap to the extent that they are in competition with countries that do not have the same work methods and for which competition at the level of productivity, for example, passes through a more **rational**[16] use of time. (Servan-Schreiber in Etounger 2000:69)

Such Weberian ideas on the rational use of time are a major issue in development work, particularly where NGOs are accountable to donors preoccupied with efficiency, indicators, and quantifiable outcomes. Such themes are evident in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904-5), where Weber discusses the problems of rationality,

[16] My use of bold for emphasis.

the rationalisation of culture, and the emergence of a calculative way of life. Cultural development, however, by its very nature is preoccupied with what is viewed by modernisation theorists as *irrational* – culture, tradition, art, religion, ritual, custom and so on. I highlight the complexities of this contestation in the Recuperation section of this thesis.

I was largely able to adjust my expectations with regards to time, although it meant considerable emphasis in reports to the Ford Foundation on qualitative indicators such as community participation and increased levels of trust and commitment. Complying with other local systems, however, was not always a smooth process, as there were aspects of Namibian life which were anomalous to my own ideas with regard to social hierarchy and daily operations. Working and existing in an extremely patriarchal society often caused personal dilemmas for me, being incompatible with my own beliefs. My position of neutrality forced me to remain silent on such feminist issues and largely comply with the systems which were in place. This is not to say that I openly supported such systems, as my presence in the region and the cultural implications regarding gender roles which my presence brought, often spoke of the different ideologies from my own country – those of a woman on her own independently living and working abroad. Where appropriate, such issues could be addressed creatively through activities as part of the project, however social and cultural compliance was extremely important in gaining support for the project and not being seen to buck the system.

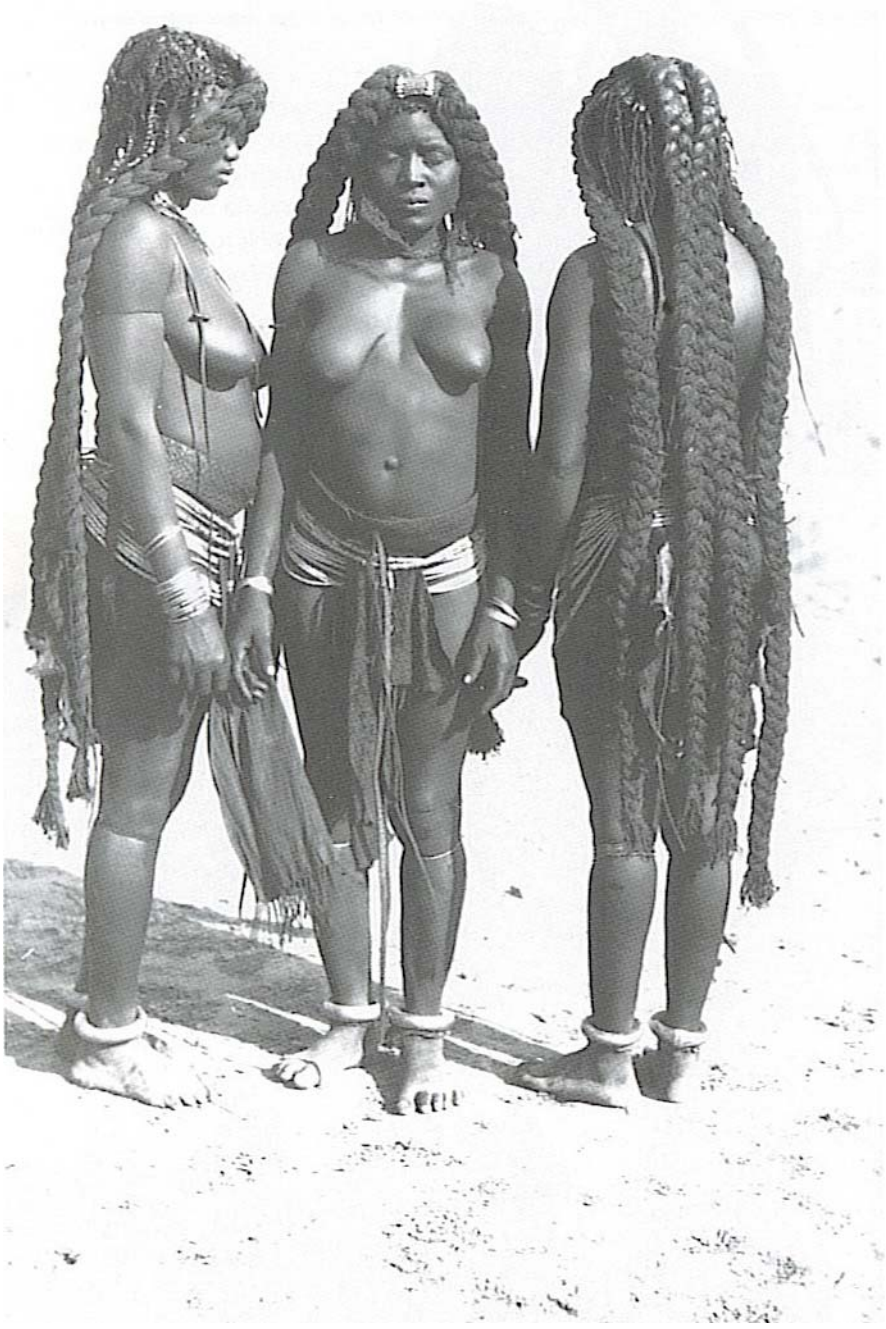
In Ovamboland, I was acutely aware of and sensitive to the misgivings and suspicions which my skin colour caused to some members of the community with whom I worked. This affected the frames of analysis and policy making parameters I utilised in my professional conduct. Considerable cultural, political and tribal sensitivity was exercised in decision making policies, and respect of hierarchy was also vital. This included knowledge of local customs and language in order to earn the respect and trust of the people with whom I worked, from traditional kings and government officials, to members of the community. Additionally, this assisted in establishing key contacts in the communities as partners in the project. Similarly, being seen to be inclusive and

representative at every level is vital, as historically, particularly under the previous South African dispensation, this was not the case in policy making in Namibia.

> Ethnographic authority has been a changeable concept in the twentieth century: sometimes requiring extensive reading, sometimes fieldwork, sometimes a totalising theoretical framework, sometimes a "dialogic" inclusion of differing views, including the views of the people being studied, sometimes a combination of these possibilities. (Clifford 1987:126)

Between July and October 2000, preliminary interviews were conducted in Namibia with the individuals listed in Appendix A, and further interviews took place in November and December 2002. Information regarding the ethics and the ethnographic methodologies employed in the collection of this data are provided as Appendix B. These interviews largely inform the local and national perspectives at various social levels on my investigations into cultural loss, change and recuperation.

SECTION ONE
"LOSS"



To write of Ovambo cultural "loss" is potentially hazardous, as it implies the absence of practices, activities or signifiers which once defined Ovambo identity, and now do not exist. Yet culture is not static but evolving, therefore things change and mutate constantly and to define such changes as leaving some form of physical emptiness in their place is incorrect. Similarly, identity and cultural identification themselves cannot ever be "lost", rather it is a process of constant re-negotiation. As Stuart Hall writes,

> …identification [is] a construction, a process never completed – always 'in process'. It is not determined in the sense that it can always be 'won' or 'lost', sustained or abandoned. (Hall 1996:2)

However, as this thesis is concerned with the *terms* on which culture evolves, and who/what is involved in the process of cultural exchange, the concept of cultural "loss" implies those things which have changed without adequate consent, and without the informed choice of the people who were experiencing it. "Loss" in this sense, and when used by Ovambo people to describe historical events resulting in such change, indicates a sense of regret about these changes, as well as sacrifices which were made often without negotiation. "Loss", therefore refers to the emotional and psychological sense of separation and a lack of continuity with practices of the past. The validation of these feelings is an important area of consideration in cultural development work.

> Change implies the capacity to relinquish at least aspects of a given identity. This, however, is likely to provoke feelings of anxiety and fear in the collectivity (Shall we not suffer through our loss? What shall we be turned into?). This is a basic fear about the mortality of the collective institution. (Robins 1996:61)

The identification of these perceived areas of loss helps to highlight and prioritise possible fields of activities in development, cultural recuperation and revitalisation. In my research, words and expressions such as "destruction", "fear of retribution", "damage", and "abandoned" have been used to describe the effects of the main contributors to

perceived cultural "loss" – colonialism (specifically the activities of missionaries), South African occupation (including apartheid and the Independence Struggle), and modernisation (particularly the cultural effects of the globalisation process). This concept of loss also has specific psychological, social and political meanings which evolve as ripple effects that dramatically alter the social and cultural landscape of the region after the colonial encounter. The inclusion of these agents of "loss" - missionaries, white administration and modernisation - under the notion of cultural "loss", is in many ways contradictory and somewhat problematic as historically they often had vastly different ideas about traditional cultural preservation, albeit for different agendas. This will be investigated subsequently.

I will first outline these identified agents of cultural "loss" in order to present the issues pertinent to the Ovambo people and the cultural expressions which were "lost" in the process of such encounters. However, linking these agents primarily to this concept of loss is problematic, as whilst generally viewed by the Namibian people as destructive of cultural practices, many of the inherent policies were not universally rejected in the initial stage of the encounter. What is certain is that these encounters, particularly the historical agents of missionaries and colonial administration, and the subsequent cultural changes experienced, were not freely chosen by the Ovambo people. If, as Kevin Robins believes, cultural identities must be considered in the context of cultural relationships, then the fact that Ovamboland's relationship with the West from the late 19th Century was not an optional one, becomes crucial. "We must consider identities in terms of the experience of relationships: what can happen through relationships, and what happens to relationships." (Robins 1996:79) If cultural identity is indeed a dynamic process of re-negotiation, then what separates the Ovambo experience with missionaries and South African occupation from other agents of cultural change, such as the influence of Western media, is the absence of choice. However "choice" is debatable in regard to Western cultural imposition, as governments in newly independent, post-colonial countries such as Namibia choose to follow systems of Western-style neo-liberal democracy, and the presence, priorities, and impact of international development organisations dramatically affect considerations of identity and the gains and losses of cultural change.

IDENTITY

Identity, and the process of identification, involves construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction of a sense of self and place, and is a process which is never completed. The articulation of identity may show social commonalities which have survived historical change, however it would be incorrect to think that identity exists as an unchanged unifying element found within a community. Superficially such elements, for example signifiers of rural life and subsistence farming practices, may appear to bind Ovambo identity. However in reality, and this is particularly true of contemporary Ovamboland, identities are never unified, but are "increasingly fragmented and fractured … constantly in the process of change and transformation". (Hall 1996:4) The process of personal and regional identification in contemporary Ovamboland involves using the resources of history, language and culture, often nostalgic associations of practices and traditions of the past, awareness of the present and global contextualisation. In 2003, urban, modern and cosmopolitan elements cannot be ignored as influential factors in Ovambo identity formation, in addition to traditional regional associations. Ian Fairweather (2001:100) writes of Ovambo "nostalgia" as being a powerful tool of self-definition. "Cosmopolitan and local attitudes are articulated through an idiom of nostalgia for an 'authentic', 'traditional' past that can provide a basis for the production of modern Namibian subjects." Bhabha addresses the concept of contemporary identity being intertwined with nostalgia for the past, and asks "Do we best cope with the reality of 'being contemporary', its conflicts and crises, its losses and lacerations, by endowing history with a long memory that we then interrupt, or startle, with our own amnesia?" (Bhabha 1996:59) Fairweather's position is that by publicly juxtaposing traditional and modern features, often through performance such as rituals and ceremonies, Ovambos are able to actualise their identities. Ovamboland is a region where the symbols of tradition and modernity co-exist, and this is often reconciled by urbanites nostalgically emphasising the "local" or "traditional", and rural dwellers emphasising the "cosmopolitan". This association with both tradition and modernity is an important tool

in cultural identity formation, and to a degree, empowers Ovambos with the option of choice in self-definition.

> In the animal kingdom, the rule is, eat or be eaten; in the human kingdom, define or be defined. (Szasz 1974:20)

In pre-colonial Ovamboland, cultural identity was linked to one's tribe, family, social position, and so on. However colonialism polarized identities through the marking of difference and exclusion, within the modalities of power inherent in colonialist ideology. If, as Kevin Robins believes, cultural identities are to be considered in the context of cultural relationships, then the dramatic shift in self-identification that occurred in the process of colonialism for the colonised subject becomes clearer. "What would an identity mean in isolation? Isn't it only through the others that we become aware of who we are and what we stand for?" (Robins 1996:79) In pre-colonial Ovamboland, "the others" would primarily have been those from other tribes, with different customs, however co-existing. However, the "others" of the colonial encounter, European missionaries and later native commissioners, were so vastly different, that Ovambo identity was conspicuously altered as hierarchies of power were introduced[17].

In identifying the discontinuation of pre-colonial practices as an area of cultural loss and as the perceived reason behind the absence of aspects of identity, Ovambos are creating a discourse of traditional customs in opposition to "modern" practices and influences. Such a dichotomy does not sit well in a post-colonial society especially because outside influences and heterogeneity are evident in almost all aspects of Ovambo life today. The following section on Change will highlight the cultural pastiche of contemporary Ovamboland. However, whether driven by nostalgia or idealism, most people consider pre-colonial practices as being good, important and significant, and post-colonial influences, such as those occurring with certain aspects of early Missionary activity,

[17] Historian Harri Siiskonen (1990) argues that the region was already deeply incorporated into networks of trade prior to missionary encounter, which brought them into contact with Europeans and the global markets. However my own research indicates that for the majority of people in the region, the first direct contact with Europeans came with the arrival of missionaries.

South African occupation and some of the effects of globalisation as destructive, negative, and dislocating.

The "loss" of culture is further reinforced when contextualised as follows: in almost all of my interviews, work, and research conducted into cultural identification, Ovambo people considered their "culture" to be practices and beliefs which existed before the colonial encounter. In the 21st century, culture was identified along the lines of traditional rather than contemporary cultural practice. In response to the question "how would you define Ovambo culture", the overwhelming response alluded to practices and activities such as traditional basket making, dance, oral story telling, clay pot production and other ancient practices[18] which are still considered to be the cultural signifiers which identify, and are unique to, Ovambos. The Ovambo culture of cuca shops[19], kwasa kwasa[20] popularity, and other more contemporary cultural signifiers were not mentioned. (See *Fig.2.1 – 2.2)* So, through this essentialised lens of what constitutes culture (as practices which existed before the colonial encounter), what the Ovambo see as really crucial is the sense of loss or change as a result of external influence. If culture is considered to be the "old" or traditional way of doing things, and the survival of such things has been threatened in the past, and continues to be threatened in the future, then the relevance of cultural "loss" and the emotional associations with it, are more tangible. Cabral examines this relationship between history and culture in dialectical terms:

> Whatever may be the ideology or idealist characteristics of cultural expression, culture is an essential element of the history of a people. Culture is, perhaps, the product of this history just as the flower is the product of a plant. Like history, or because it is history, culture has as its

[18] Many of these practices have survived in altered states and purposes, despite external influences of social and cultural change.
[19] Cuca shop, coming from the Angolan word, "cuca", meaning a type of beer. Cuca shops are small sheds selling soft drinks, alcohol, flour, soap etc characterised by imaginative names such as "USA No Money - No Life", "The Push and Pull Bar" etc, found even in the most remote areas of rural Ovamboland. There are estimated to be between 4000 and 5000 cuca shops in the region. (Source: *The Namibian* 18/9/98) They are the most common social meeting points in Ovamboland.
[20] Zambian dance music popular in Ovamboland.

material base the level of the productive forces and the mode of production. (Cabral 1973:42)

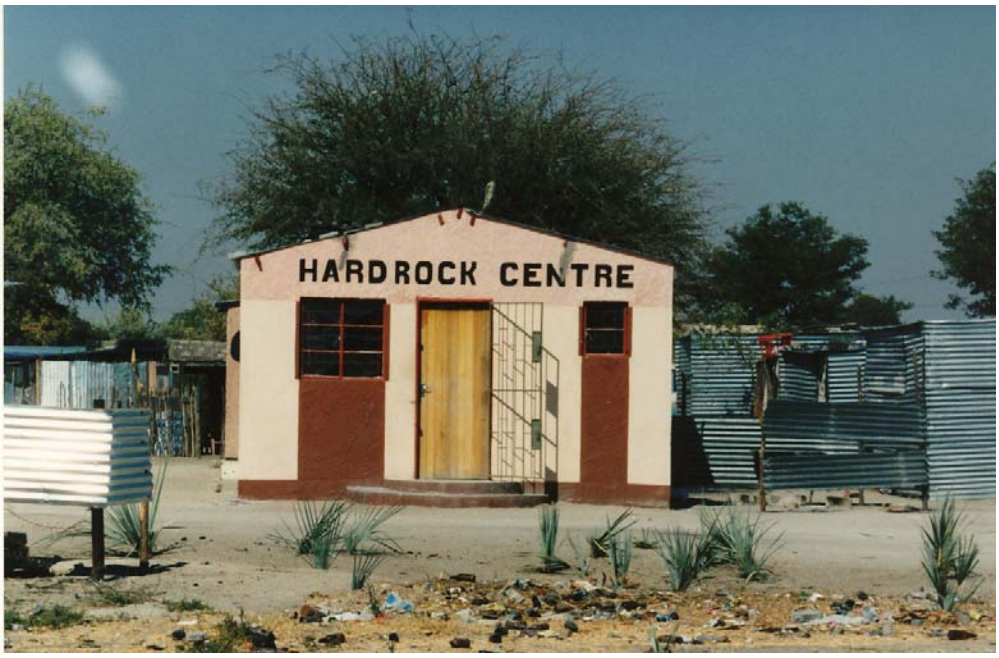


Fig. 2.1 – Hardrock Centre cuca shop

Fig.2.2 – Hot Fire cuca shop

The Psychology of Loss

> Imperialism was a sentiment rather than a policy; its foundations were moral rather than intellectual…(Somervell 1929:186)

The concept of cultural "loss" as felt by Ovambos today has to be considered within the paradigm of the European psychology behind colonial justification. The agents of change previously mentioned, fit psychologically into two categories or types of colonialism. South African occupation and the apartheid regime would fit in to Ashis Nandy's definition of rapacious bandit-type colonial conquer, which is characterised by motivations of racism, cruelty and segregation. Nandy refers to this type of colonialism as the "first generation of bandit-kings who conquered the colonies", which was generally followed by the second form of colonisation in the form of missionaries, modernists etc. However in the case of South African occupation, and indeed agents of modernisation in Namibia, the first generation of imperialism came after the more "helpfully" motivated colonisers. Although the order is reversed, the characteristics are similar. Nandy identifies the philosophy of the second type of coloniser as quite different. "They were well-meaning, hard working, middle-class missionaries, liberals, modernists, and believers in science, equality and progress." (Nandy 1983:xi)

Contact with both forms of colonialism had a dramatic effect not just on the physical, social and temporal life of the Ovambo community, but also on its psychology and identity. In Nandy's language, minds were also "colonised" and the forces released by such contact caused the significant alteration of cultural priorities. Nandy continues, "The West is now everywhere, within the West and outside; in structures and in minds." Missionaries, who had opposed slavery, argued in the name of human rights and philanthropy, and genuinely believed that colonisation would turn the people of these lands into workers through education, civilisation and Christianisation, "for the greater good of the conquered territories" (Rist 1997:51). For example, Victor Hugo triumphantly announced at a commemoration of the abolition of slavery:

> In the nineteenth century, the White made a man of the Black; in the twentieth century, Europe will make a world of Africa. To fashion a new Africa, to make the old Africa amenable to civilization – that is the problem. And Europe will solve it. (Hugo in Zorn 1989)

Although first coming into contact with the Ovambo people in the late 19th century, many of the ideas and aspirations of these "helpful" agents are still evident today in contemporary global social and geo-political policies and represented in organisations like the IMF, World Bank and non-government organisations dealing with development[21]. The atmosphere which allowed such an attitude to take shape, developed out of a dichotomous Eurocentric view of the world, where clear demarcations were made between the *Orient* and the *Occident*, the savage and the civilised, the child and the teacher. The preoccupation of the colonial mind with the construction of Africa as being in a developmental state of "childhood" imploring the intervention of Europe reflected the doctrine of progress evolving in the West. Pre-colonial Africa:

> …looked like a blank slate on which adults must write their moral codes – an inferior version of maturity, less productive and ethical, and badly contaminated by the playful, irresponsible and spontaneous aspects of human nature. (Nandy 1983:15)

It was therefore deemed the responsibility of Europe, as the "adult", to "save this child from a state of unrepentant, reprobate sinfulness through proper socialization, and help the child grow towards a Calvinist ideal of adulthood and maturity". (Nandy 1983:15) The cultural differences of Africa and its traditional social structures and cultural practices were seen as evidence of ignorance, irrelevance and weakness in a world increasingly defined by development, progress and modernity, all of which were characterised by industrialisation, high levels of production for export, economic value

[21] This will be further explored in the Recuperation section of this thesis. These organisations, however, when viewed as having trade agendas, fall into Nandy's first category of rapacious bandits, self-serving and seeking resources, domination and control, though far more covert in appearance and coming under the guise of humanitarian aid and financial assistance.

and European moral codes of behaviour. Clinging to less developed "childlike" and traditional practices was viewed as being responsible for hampering modernity and stopping progress and development. Through the polarization of the dynamic West and the static and immobile Orient,

> …the world was divided between the enlightened and the benighted. Its Other was made to symbolize whatever was alien to western modernity and its project of development. Europe thereby closed itself imperiously to the reality of these other cultures. (Robins 1996:79)

Even as late as the 1960s, critics such as Rostow, who went so far as to describe colonies as living in a vacuum, were primarily concerned with modernisation as being the only way forward for traditional societies, particularly when viewed from an economic perspective. In this way, colonialism was justified as a means

> …to organise a traditional society incapable of self-organization (or unwilling to organize itself) for modern import and export activity. (Rostow 1960:28)

This Western neo-liberal Orientalist view of the world and its inherent emphasis on the superiority of European modernity and the idea that one solution fits all problems has increasingly come under criticism. The idea that modern society is different from others, because it is secular and rational, as Rist points out, "is actually the result of Western arrogance". (Rist 1997:21) He, and other critics of such a binary view of the world, believes that no society exists which is not based upon traditions and beliefs. "It is necessary to reject the 'great divide' between 'tradition' and 'modernity', for modernity itself lies within a certain tradition." (Rist 1997:21) In reference to the creative processes of art and poetry, TS Eliot, himself a modernist, also rejected the idea that modernity can live in isolation from tradition and history. "The historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together, is

what makes a writer traditional. …No poet, no artist of any art, has complete meaning alone." (Eliot 1932:14) In other words, the present cannot be quarantined from the past.

As mentioned earlier in this thesis, there are continuing problems with the terminology associated with development and definitions, as terms such as "developing countries" still reinforce often invidious comparisons with the West, which geatly impacts identity consideration. This can possibly be traced back to Darwin's theories of social evolution, where, the non-West was an item for comparison rather than an analysis on its own terms.

> Non-Western societies were deprived both of their history (reduced to imitating the Western epic) and of their culture (left only in vestiges that ought to be made rapidly to disappear). Belief in the natural and inevitable 'development' of societies prevented them from being considered for themselves, with their own specificities. Instead they were simply judged in accordance with the Western reference. (Rist 1997:43)

This system of the constant reinforcement of alterity was perpetuated not only by socio-economic enticements, but also through psychological rewards and punishments, which sought to construct new social norms.

> … these outer incentives and dis-incentives are invariably noticed and challenged; they become the overt indicators of oppression and dominance. (Nandy 1983:3)

The effects of over a century of perceived cultural and social inferiority have manifested themselves in a variety of ways in contemporary Ovambo ideology, from personal identification and sense of self, to social policies, political agendas and economic strategies. The complexity of the emotional relationship which Ovambo people have with the two agents of change mentioned above is evident from the often contradictory contestation between what is considered lost, or sacrificed, and what is considered to

have been gained. Similarly, the feelings of inferiority engendered by the colonial experience led to anti-colonial, nationalist sentiment, yet contemporary Ovambos, who see the advantages of Western systems, are still haunted by the paradox. Nandy writes:

> He has a fluid self-definition, and he is willing to learn the ways of his civilized brethren unconditionally, provided such learning is profitable. (Nandy 1983:104)

This was particularly true of European-style education, training and support which Ovambo exiles received during the Independence Struggle, in order to politically overthrow the apartheid regime[22] and begin the process of rebuilding the country, having educated professionals to occupy post-independence positions. The paradoxes of Western style education will be presented in the section on "Globalisation".

However, due to the agents of social and cultural "losses" allowing the Ovambo people absolutely no choice or control over the changes which were inflicted upon them, these agents are now held responsible, in the minds of Ovambos, for many of the social ills which plague contemporary society in the region. Social problems such as alcoholism, teenage pregnancy, unemployment, marriage and family breakdown, and the spread of HIV are blamed on the disruption of traditional practices and ways of teaching, learning, living and understanding the world and one's place in it. The Mayor of Oshakati, had the following to say on such issues:

> Nowadays, and I believe in future, the Namibian cultures have been and will continue to be invaded by a variety of destructive un-Namibian cultures. Some of our highly desirable cultures have been wiped out. Unwanted or undesirable cultures, for instance alcohol abuse, drug abuse, theft, sex-practice before marriage, high rate of divorce, youth

[22] Rather than taking up arms, this was done by exiles through establishing diplomatic ties, which exerted international pressure on the South African Government.

> pregnancies, suicide, and laziness have destroyed our good cultures. All I mention here were heard of very seldom in the lives of our ancestors.[23]

Interestingly, however, the Mayor went on to express solutions to these imported social ills, not by suggesting a return to more traditional value systems and lifestyles, but by

> …cultivating an intensive study culture, especially in technology, science, maths and geography, in order to be able to manufacture and compete with global developed countries. We have to learn and study for production, manufacturing and job creation.

This dialectic, or the push and pull of Namibia's relationship with the West, is characteristic of contemporary Ovambo life and views on the cultural fragmentation which has occurred as a result of colonialism, apartheid and war. The result is an almost dichotomous identification process which Ovambos now experience, between that of their traditional past (which still largely exists in their lifestyle and means of survival, for example subsistence farming) and the globalised present, with its perceived "Western-ness", modernity and efficiency. There also appears to be a moral or ethical dimension associated with these agents of loss or change, as identified in Mayor Atshipara's speech. The changes in traditional codes of behaviour are perceived to result in immoral behaviour, supposedly inconsistent with traditional values. In India, despite the "well meaning" motivations of missionaries and colonialists, Mahatma Gandhi believed colonialism to be a moral issue, and assessed the gains and losses from colonialism as part of his critique of modernity which found the British wanting in both ethics and rationality. (Nandy 1983:100) It follows then, that if the methods and motivations of agents of change are deemed to be lacking in ethics, then their effects on cultural practices may destroy the ethical landscapes in which they operate.

[23] Englebert Atshipara, opening address UNAM Cultural Development Workshop October 1999.

Idealism and the "Happy Savage"

The process of identifying others, or the construction of "perceived" identities, was extremely important to early colonialists and missionaries in justifying their involvement and association with "primitive" peoples. The Orientalist exoticising of the "other" and assigning non-Western identity, existed historically to mask imperialist intentions, and still to an extent exists today as justification of the massive inequalities which prevail in the world.

> Western nostalgia for 'tradition' and the exoticism of the other has the potential to obscure social inequalities, as the poor and marginalized are constructed as 'traditional'. (Fairweather 2001:106)

Perceived and projected identities such as the "happy" or "noble savage" reveal much about the discourse of power and the discursive methods of articulating strategies associated with these people. This was true of pre-colonial Ovamboland, and the pleas to early missionaries from native commissioners – to save the "noble savages" of the region through Christianity. Similarly today a quasi-sympathetic and socially *right-on* attitude prevails in the Western world about those living in developing countries which implies that, despite their desperate poverty, these "others" have an inner happiness which transcends their physical needs.

> The belief that primitive societies are more harmonious than modern ones, that "savages" were noble, that life in the past was more idyllic than life today, and that human beings once had a sense of community that has been lost is not only reflected in the motion pictures and novels of our popular culture, but is deeply engrained in scholarly discourse as well. (Edgerton in Harrison et al 2000:127)

In my correspondence with friends in Australia whilst living in Namibia, and upon my return to Australia, I was occasionally faced with such attitudes from people who, quite possibly subconsciously and without informed inquiry, believed that those in developing

countries had some sort of hidden key to happiness, which the West lacked. Usually this was described as being a result of stronger ties to family and community and a different set of values and priorities to the materialist, consumer-driven, success-oriented West. This provides a modern day example of exotification, of the West again projecting ideas about the perceived identity and situation of those in developing countries. Identifying that which was not fully understood but perceived to be a certain way, and endowing such identities with qualities which seemed lost in the West, somehow rationalised a lack of genuine engagement. In colonial times, this rationalisation assisted in the conquest of new lands. "Newly-discovered Africa, with its strong emphasis on the folk, the oral and the rural could be more easily written of as savage" (Nandy 1998:17). Today such identification reinforces attitudes of "otherness" which often serve the dubious purpose of justifying global inequality and Western hegemony, ignoring or disallowing empowerment and self-determinism. Until recently in the field of aid delivery, decisions were made by organisations and individuals outside developing countries, based on their perceptions of what was good for such countries. Such attitudes reflect the modalities of power which reinforce difference and do not stop to ask the question of the preferences of those "happy savages" for example, between a sense of community or a way out of the cycle of poverty, if indeed the two need to be mutually exclusive.

Non-Sanctioned and Non-Doctrinal Changes

> … Because the authority of Western culture and Western institutions outstripped ours where the expression of faith was concerned, it succeeded in converting African Christians into a people without soul or visage, a pale shadow of the dominating pride of the Christian West. At the very heart and centre of the Church in Africa, we have in fact witnessed the mutilation of the African Personality, and the trampling of human dignity in Africa. (Diop 1964:50)

Diop's quote passionately articulates his view on the detrimental effects of Christianisation on identity in Africa. I will now address those changes which dramatically affected social and cultural life, yet were largely without doctrinal support.

The transformative social and cultural effects of missionaries on indigenous communities are widely acknowledged, and the specific cultural changes that Christianity, specifically the more puritanical Lutheran system, brought to the Ovambo region will be highlighted in this section. However it is important to note that missionaries were given some guidance in the methodologies to be employed in the African mission "field" by the Lambeth Conference in 1867[24]. The resolutions passed at this conference were in direct contradiction to ensuing missionary practices and methodologies, and present a very different approach to the acceptance and encouragement of local cultural traditions. This is of particular relevance when considering the notion of perceived cultural "loss", as many of the dramatic socio-cultural shifts and changes which early missionaries enforced were in fact inconsistent with the spirit of the Lambeth Conference. Resolution 19 stated:

> It is important that, so far as possible, the Church should be adapted to local circumstances, and the people brought to feel in all ways that no burdens in the way of foreign customs are laid upon them, and nothing is required of them but what is of the essence of the Faith, and belongs to the due order of the Catholic Church.[25]

However, as Ongandjera King Munkundi observes,

> The church did not integrate cultural practices into their activities – they were totally excluded from their activities. (King Munkundi interview 8/8/00)

Lambeth also emphasised the importance of the value of nationality and self-determinism of countries where missionary work was undertaken:

> No community of Christians has a right to attempt to produce a replica of itself in a foreign country, which it evangelises. Neither forms of

[24] The Lambeth Conferences comprise a body which is supposed to reflect Christian church policy and practice throughout the world.
[25] The Sixth Lambeth Conferences: 1867 – 1920; London:SPCK, 1920

> workshop, nor methods of thought, nor social institutions belonging to one race ought to be imposed on another.

Examples are rife where this is clearly not the case. One such example is that both the English and Kwanyama versions of "God Save the King" appear in the Kwanyama Anglican Hymnal, which until Republic Day in 1960 was sung consistently each morning at school assembly. (Mallory 1971:8) There appear to be very few examples of missionaries in Ovamboland, regardless of denomination, attempting to adapt Christian traditions to the culture in the region. Mallory suggests this was due to a lack of imagination, pressure of work, undue pride in their own culture, or the unconscious assumption of a superior attitude towards the local people and lack of genuine engagement with them. This attitude reflected social thinking at the time of colonialism. The same parent-child relationship between Europe and the colonies which continued to serve as a justification for imperialist expansion, was at the heart of missionaries' evangelical charge.

The first Oshiwambo speaking Christians were baptised in 1883, and within a few decades the religious lives of many communities were dramatically transformed, as Christianity challenged traditional social and cultural practices as well as spiritual beliefs. It is interesting to note that the number of baptisms in the early days of the missionaries was considerably affected by periods of drought and famine, when numbers soared in response to the hospitality shown to these new Christians (Hayes 1998:220).

> In times such as these, countless victims converge on the mission stations, because they know that if there is someone who can help them, it must be the white man. They stand at the missionary's door, many of them little more than walking skeletons, others with the bulging bellies that are both the result of intolerable hunger and an indication that their suffering will soon come to an end. (Tonjes 1911:15)

Coincidentally, the founder of the Rhennish Mission in Namibia, Hugo Hahn's descendent, 'Cocky' Hahn, became the Native Commissioner for Ovamboland within the colonial administration, just over 50 years after Hugo's entreaty to Finland to come and save the "thousands of needy heathens" he encountered in Ovamboland. (Nampala 2002:2) It appears that the Native Commissioner's understanding of the potentially damaging impact of Missionary influence on traditional social and cultural practices outweighed that of his ancestor. Cocky Hahn recognised that not all traditions had to be abandoned for Christianity, indeed theologically based teachings made no reference to such customs. Rather it seemed that the cultural imperialism of the early European missionaries was the reason for the forced rejection of traditional practices. On 4th April, 1933, Cocky Hahn wrote "There are of course tribal customs which are in conflict with Christianity and public morals, but there are many customs which in no way clash with them, but simply because they are supported by 'heathens' they are considered iniquitous and anti-Christian." (Hahn in Nampala 2000:1) Issues which were at the very core of the social structure of Ovamboland such as tribal discipline were being challenged on the basis that they were considered "anti-Christian" yet largely without biblical evidence to support such claims. Cocky Hahn's revision of such thinking showed a departure from, and questioning of former Missionary rectitude, which had pervaded and sought to change all aspects of traditional life. His questioning also appears to be aligned to the Lambeth Resolution 19 approach to missionary methodologies and local adaptation[26]. The significance of this was that conversion to Christianity, according to the Native Commissioner himself, no longer meant abandoning all Ovambo customs and practices. However missionaries were largely autonomous in the field and were able to enforce rules regarding matters of social decorum according to their own wishes, therefore styles of dress and worship were greatly influenced by the missionaries' own ideas of what was appropriate rather than as a result of theological reasoning. Also different denominations had differing ideas on which traditional customs posed a threat to Christianity, with the Finnish Lutherans seemingly the most vigorously opposed to any kind of "cultural synchretism" (Mallory 1071:51). Anglican missionary, Reverend George W.R. Tobias

[26] Hahn's motivations for this were likely to have been similar to the subsequent South African Authority's promotion of tribalism in order to consolidate control over the people of Ovamboland. Hayes et al (1998) and Silvester et al (1998) investigate this further.

observed in 1937, after many decades of Lutheran missionary influence, "The Finns aim at making as big a cleavage as possible between Christians and their heathen neighbours. Hence the national dress and many customs, quite innocuous in themselves, are forbidden as savouring of heathenism." (Tobias 1937:QP17) Finnish missionaries not only forbade traditional dress, names, ceremonies, dance, music and festivals, but even the drinking of traditional beer, *oshikundu*, was outlawed.

> When Christianity came, the missionaries made people not respect their culture. Cultural things were regarded as paganism. Christianity could have let people understand that even if you are a Christian, you can still follow the good practices of culture. Only later people came to know that Christianity can go hand in hand with your traditional culture. (Bernadette Mojekwu interview13/10/00)

The concept of God, a creator and omnipotent authority, existed in traditional belief systems before missionaries arrived in Ovamboland, and this God was known as *Kalunga.* In the same way that Christian God is linked to objects and symbols such as the cross, Kalunga is linked to sacred trees or ancestral sculpture. This however was condemned as idolatry. Conversion and evangelism were unfamiliar practices in traditional spiritual beliefs, as people were brought up in and only understood a particular belief system. Many missionaries missed the opportunity of building on the existing belief in Kalunga to assist in the communication of the Christian message, further confusing, dividing and alienating the community.

Similarly, the *ezaleko lyonyoka* ceremony for newborn babies, which consolidates the acceptance of the child within the father's family and clan, is not dissimilar to Christian baptism, in which newborn babies are initiated into the Christian family. At such a ceremony, a symbolic necklace made from oyster, cowrie or ostrich shells from southern Angola and rubbed with ochre powder is given to the child. Rather than being recognised as an important aspect of local culture and identity however, this was also condemned by the missionaries as paganism.

Names

Another area of perceived cultural "loss" in Ovamboland is the issue of names. In order for an Ovambo child to be baptised, the parents had to reject the tradition of naming their child according to the incidents which occurred on the day of their birth, geography and other traditional naming customs, and adopt Christian names, often biblical, or the names of missionaries known to the parents.

> … the missionaries, these are the people who did not want to accept our traditional names. I had to acquire the name Ervast, of which I did not know the meaning. I do have a traditional name, but it would never be announced in the church – my traditional name being Kandishiwar which simply means "I don't know". The reason is because when I was born, two other children, a brother and a sister died. And they died of malaria or something. And when I was also sickly, my parents were concerned. So they were asking themselves "we don't know" or "I don't know if he's going to make it". But this name would not be announced in the church, so I've got to be given the name Ervast, which will allow me to be baptised a Christian … that makes me a Christian! (Ervast Mtota interview 11/7/00)

This practice existed until only recently, indeed a close friend of mine was unable to have his 9 year old daughter, Tautiko, baptised because he refused to give her a Christian (Western) name, indicating that some priests in Ovamboland were still refusing baptisms based on names even after independence. There presently exists a mixture of traditional and Christian names in Ovamboland, particularly amongst the younger generations, with many parents defiantly naming their children in keeping with traditional custom. These names are determined by geographical locations, such as Mungandjera (from the Ongandjera tribe); significance to the family, such as Tunatate (loved by her father); after mbushandjes (name-sakes) who are significant people in the community or those who are

special to the family[27]; and significant events happening at the time of the child's birth. Hence a number of names exist from children born during the Independence Struggle with names such as Ndali (peace is coming) and Niita (I have been in exile). There also still exists a number of names inspired by influential missionaries, such as Selma, Petrus, Philemon, Martha, Andreas and Ruth. Father Stephen Okeke at St Martins Mission, Oshikuku is at pains to reverse this tradition and address this aspect of what he believes to be an inappropriate exercising of power by priests in baptisms, which contains no relevance to theology. Father Stephen tells parents wishing to have their children baptised that the name given to their baby must be one which is significant to the family, the region, and the time, as it was in pre-Missionary Ovamboland. He said that although priests who preceeded him at the Mission had refused to baptise babies with traditional names, he would never refuse a child for such a reason. The only reason he believed a child could not be baptised with a certain name was if the name was "highly inappropriate" or offensive to the church or God. When I questioned him as to whether he had ever had to refuse a baptism for that reason, he responded "… well only once. But I thought Celine Dion was not an appropriate name for this Ovambo child."(interview 27/11/02) Father Stephen further illustrated the attitude of former priests in the area regarding the choice of names at baptisms with the following story:

A former priest at Oshikuku Mission (unnamed) was asked to perform a baptism ceremony for a young baby from the area. When he arrived, the family had not chosen a Christian name, and the priest told them that, as the child was required to have a name in order to be baptised, he would name her himself. Trusting in the priest's knowledge of Christian names, the parents consented. The priest continued, "I baptise this child 'Idiot', in the name of the Father…" It was not until she was an old woman that the owner of this name realised that she had gone through life with such an insulting name. This shows not only the malicious attitude demonstrated by the particular priest, but also his unquestioned authority and abuse of power. The inconsequentiality and arbitrary ruling of church "sanctioned" names is also demonstrated because the woman continued as part of

[27] My close friends in Oshikuku named their last born Inga, after me. The significance of a namesake in Ovambo culture is great, as one is supposed to mentor the child through to adulthood.

the church, despite her name not being that of a former missionary or saint. The fact that the priest himself had given her this name, meant that it was not considered inappropriate.

The universal importance of one's name in terms of identification, signification and association is of particular magnitude in Ovamboland, where such a strong tradition existed prior to the baptism requirements of missionaries of *mbushandjes,* and the meaning associated with names continues to be an important cultural determinant with newborn babies. The sense of "loss" associated with not knowing the origins of one's name, and the break with the tradition of geographical, historical, spatial or relational connection is still felt by many Ovambo people in the region.

Although not uncommon in post-colonial countries, an interesting phenomenon which has arisen as a response to these customs of naming, is that many Ovambo people have two names. Traditional naming ceremonies are often held without the knowledge of the church, and the Oshiwambo name is used by the family and around the village, but the Christian name, which is given to the child at baptism, is often used at school or in the work place. It has now become the individual's choice whether they go by their Christian or traditional name. Certain stigma, however, is still attached to traditional names in the minds of many, and Christian names are still often seen as symbols of shedding the old way of life. When I was teaching in Namibia, about three quarters of my pupils[28] used Christian names. Often children from rural areas who went away to school in cities or towns used their Christian names during term times, but reverted to their traditional names during school holidays spent back in the village. Included as Appendix C is a class list of one of the classes I taught at Nuuyoma Senior Secondary School, to indicate the proportion of European versus traditional names in young Ovambos.

Dress

One of the most obvious and visually apparent aspects of traditional cultural identity is reflected through dress and physical appearance. The loss of Ovambo particularity in appearance for European style clothing and hairstyles was an outward sign of the

[28] Students ages ranged from 17 – 25, and they had known independence for up to 10 years.

shedding of the old ways and embracing of the new. Tonjes writes of the proliferation of European clothing in the region:

> A large quantity of European clothing has already found its way to Ovamboland. Such items of clothing are extremely popular and many natives no longer wear their traditional dress. Jackets, waistcoats, trousers, hats, shoes, shirts, blankets and such like are sought after barter items in Ovamboland, and a considerable number of clients have already learned to concentrate on quality rather than quantity, although the latter nevertheless remains an important aspect. I can remember that especially Ueyulu was very selective when it came to what he wore. Despite the protests of his elders, he had discarded the traditional dress, and wore exclusively European clothing which he received from traders and especially the missionaries living in his country. He enjoyed being well and elegantly dressed, and in some regards he was a true gentleman. (Tonjes 1911:46)

The Ovambo tribes' pre-Christian appearance strongly resembled that of the current Himba tribes of the north eastern regions of Namibia. Animal skins were commonly worn by both men and women, and unmarried women also wore elaborate ostrich shell "basques" or *oshindjendje.* These long scalloped belts were often adorned by shells or *ekipa* – a type of ornamental button made from ivory or bone. These were symbols of wealth and were used as currency in some tribes. *Ekipa*s are still highly valued pieces of jewellery amongst Ovambo women and are extremely difficult to come by, as elephants have not roamed the region for half a century, so the ivory clasps in circulation are all antiques. This has resulted in a tourist-driven market in the south of the country of fake *ekipas*. Ovambo women's hair was set in elaborate designs and held in place by a mixture of fats and dung.

Skin was also covered with red ochre and fat, as is still the case with the Himba today, to protect it from the elements. This was all discouraged and gradually disappeared as the *ovakriste* or "new Christians" learned to wash with soap and adopt European dress. The

pre-Christian appearance of Ovambos was so completely eradicated that many contemporary Ovambos are unaware of the physical appearance of their ancestors and their likeness to the Himba people.

> I was just astounded to read one book how Oshiwambo speaking people were plaiting their hairs, it came from Europe. Before that, those people were just similar like the Ovahimbas. They also had the same similarity in the way they dressed. But today you can see that the Oshiwambo women's dresses which they regard as "tradition" are Finnish in origin. I feel that the Christian missionaries did a big damage to the Namibian and African tradition. (Tobias Kandanga interview 12/9/00)

Two significant factors brought about the change from this traditional type of dress to European style clothing – the emergence of trade and exchange of currency for material goods with increased labour migration and market opportunities, and the symbolic shedding of the old ways with the spread of Christianity. Varying accounts are given of the importance which missionaries placed upon the converted adopting European clothing styles. Some regarded it as a significant outward sign to other "heathens" representative of repentance and adoption of Christianity's ideals and virtues. In some Missions "conversion was not achieved because people could not meet the requirement of adopting new dress". (Ruether 2002: 364) Others were less happy, even somewhat threatened by the number of Africans wearing European clothing, as they interpreted it in terms of inappropriate social aspirations. As Ruethers writes, "… as long as missionaries understood converts' appropriation of European-style costume as a means by which African Christians desired to set themselves apart from pagan kin, they did not criticise their behaviour." (2002:368)

For more liberal missionaries, such as the Anglican missionaries of Ovamboland, the question of European dress was viewed in a more pragmatic way, and the "sinfulness" of traditional appearance was questioned. As Tobias writes, "I would like to be able effectively to forbid the use of red grease to those who wear European clothing, while

allowing it to the others; but that does not work. Either I must say the thing is sinful and forbid it to all or I must allow it to all." (Tobias 1937:QP17) Tobias went on to discourage the use of "red grease" or ochre and fats, as it made a mess of European-style clothing, but for those who chose to remain in traditional dress, the covering of their skin was accepted, as it was an important part of their appearance. The dilemma came with young women who were not permitted to wear traditional dress, as described above, until after their *efundula* or female rite of passage ceremony. However, newly baptised Christians were forbidden to attend traditional festivals, feasts, sacrifices, and celebrations such as the *efundula*. Therefore, young women had no alternative but to adopt European clothing if they wanted to be included in the church, as the initiation ceremony which would have allowed them to adopt traditional dress was forbidden, so the associated traditional dress was also out of bounds to them. Interestingly, the first recorded "moral failures" were those which involved Christians attending the *efundula*, so important was it to the Ovambo society.

The issue of *efundula* was not just one of appearance and dress. It was an important identification process in a young woman's life, and prepared her for marriage and future life. As such, the issue and ceremony of *efundula* caused conflicts of identity on a number of levels for girls and their families. The ceremony was not held for one girl in isolation, but for many girls, of varying class and status, at the one time. The collective nature of the ceremony and the identification with one's community and tribe was therefore important and these bonds significantly contributed to the girls' sense of tribal belonging. With Christian opposition to the practice, girls and their families were again forced to choose between identification according to tribe, customs and community, and the Christian church. Each girl's personal identity and her future opportunities were affected by the decision of whether to participate in the ceremony. Traditional marriage was impossible for girls who had not undertaken the ceremony, and Christian marriage was impossible for girls who wanted to participate in the ceremony.

> Young women became the target of increasingly heated disputes between the missions and the administration, who allied with non-Christian

> parents, for all the missions in the north adamantly opposed the female initiation ceremony, the efundula. (Silvester et al 1998:42)

The complete shedding of traditional clothing, and contemporary social decorum which evolved since the colonial encounter, have dictated that Western style clothing is now the only option available to Ovambo people, as evidenced in an interview between myself and the Managing Director of the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation, Tobias Kandanga (12/9/00).

T.K. *Putting on the skin clothes while there are Western attires is very difficult. People will go for Western clothes.*

I.B. If someone was to walk in here wearing traditional skins, asking for a job, would you give them a job?

T.K. *I don't think so. Because the company has a dressing code. Even the NBC has a dressing code!*

I.B. So you can't come along wearing a bit of goat skin?

T.K. *No, no you cannot. It's very difficult for sure.*

Dancing was not strictly forbidden for Christians "provided the festival or celebration took place in a Christian kraal" (Mallory 1971:158) with the implication of this regulation being that a dance in a "heathen" kraal would have sinful associations.

> We've got some traditional dances, which were supposed to heal people, but they must never be performed in the Christian fraternity. (Ervast Mtota interview 11/7/00)

Dancing in church was not allowed by early missionaries, and despite efforts of contemporary priests in the area[29] today to incorporate dance into the service, there is still considerable reluctance on behalf of the parishioners to participate within the church building. Drumming was also disallowed, both inside and outside the church.

[29] Priests at both Okatana and Oshikuku Missions expressed to me their efforts to revitalise dance and drumming in church services.

Family Structures and Loss

Prior to Missionary arrival, polygamy played an important role in the life and livelihood of the Ovambo people. As women were responsible for most of the associated duties of subsistence farming, such as the planting, cultivating, pounding, storing and cooking of *mahangu*[30] it was considered prudent to have more than one woman to perform such traditional duties to insulate the family's situation in times of drought. Most homesteads comprised members of the extended family, often aged and infirmed relatives, as well as those in the immediate family, so the provision of food was of great importance. As Herzkovits writes,

> … polygamy, when looked at from the point of view of those who practise it, is seen to hold values that are not apparent from the outside. A similar case can be made for monogamy.... And what is true of a particular phase of culture such as this, is also true of others. Evaluations are relative to the cultural background out of which they arise. (Herzkovits 1972:12)

In early missionary times, when a member of the homestead converted to Christianity, the balance of domestic duties was disrupted as it meant that the convert had to either leave the homestead, as was the case for baptised women, or lose all but one wife, the case for men. This presented a major problem for Ovambos who wanted to convert to Christianity, and was the single biggest barrier to conversion. Because of the uncompromising demands made on polygamists, people often "dappled" in Christianity, rather than completely signing themselves over and disrupting their lifestyle. As Mallory writes, "Especially among heads of families with large establishments and several wives, people preferred to attend preachings and services and 'to play at Christianity' and hesitated joining classes for serious preparation." (Mallory 1971:38) The ripple effects of an individual's conversion were therefore felt by those in his/her immediate families, who might potentially be dismissed from the homestead, and those from related homesteads who would be forced to absorb these banished wives and children.

[30] A millet-based grain used to make porridge or *oshifima,* which forms the staple of the Ovambo diet.

Domestic Impact of HIV/AIDS

Christianisation, however, has not been the only influence on family and domestic life. Significant social and familial upheaval has resulted from urbanisation, but the most substantial disruption has come from the tragedy of HIV/AIDS which has hit Ovamboland harder than any other region in Namibia[31]. This has had an enormous impact on traditional family structures and roles. As a teacher I found it a daily occurrence that at least one learner would be absent to attend a funeral. So enormous was the problem, that coffins were sold at the post office.

There has thus arisen a culture and discourse surrounding the ritual of death in Ovamboland due to the enormity of the problem[32]. Rather than discussing the nature of a person's sickness or cause of death and out of a reluctance to even say the word "AIDS" out loud, people would extend four fingers as a sign of the unspeakable four letters that spell AIDS. The effects of changing family structures have meant that traditional roles in life skills education and the sharing of knowledge and cultural practices are now either undertaken by grandparents or not at all as an entire generation is affected by the pandemic. The AIDS orphan situation has escalated to frightening levels with community and church organisations unable to keep up with the number of orphans, let alone provide them with the social and cultural tools of empowerment.

> At the end of, say, another decade when many people will have suffered and then died from AIDS and there'll be many orphans and older people will have to be the primary care givers, what will be remembered? How

[31] Source: UNAIDS – Joint united Nations Program on HIV/AIDS

[32] An example of this which I encountered was the importance of cans of air fresheners at funerals. Where once incense was used in church services to purify the air, air fresheners now play both a symbolic and practical role in funerals. Due to the overwhelming demands placed on hospital morgues by the HIV/AIDS crisis, combined with the heat of the region, many bodies have already begun the process of decomposition by the time the funeral is held. Air fresheners are sprayed around the coffin and around the church or homestead at various stages of the funeral proceedings. Another unusual aspect to funeral proceedings was the taking of photos inside the church with the coffin. Different groups – family, friends, colleagues etc would pose with the coffin (open in the case of more well-to-do families) for a photo half-way through the funeral.

> will people regard their identities as Ovambos? (David Chiel, interview 14/10/00)

There is a strong belief in the community that the problem affects the entire community and therefore should be addressed by the whole community.

> To what extent the community use cultural expression to deal with the trauma and tragedy of AIDS is only just making itself known. (David Chiel, interview 14/10/00)

With the growing sense of social alienation which has resulted from "modern" life there is the additional issue of stigmatisation of certain members of the community who are identified as having the disease. This has significant ramifications in terms of responsibility and the provision of care for such people. Extended families no longer always live communally, and with the rise in individualism has come the problem of shared responsibility for those with the disease, as well as for the orphans of those who have died. On top of this in Ovamboland, there still exists enormous social humiliation and associations of guilt and shame for the families of those who have died of AIDS. At the funeral of a colleague which I attended, many of the elders were discussing the tragedy of the loss, and lamenting what they saw as a result of ignoring the "old ways" and not respecting the cultural practices of the past. When I asked a friend afterwards what they had meant, he informed me that the older people believe that the younger people who are dying of the disease are doing so because they do not respect their traditional ways and the teachings of the elders on fidelity and pre-marital sex[33]. Sex outside of marriage has historically been taboo and in some tribes, teenage pregnancy was punishable by death, with both the young man and woman being burnt alive. In other tribes the punishment was less severe, with both parties having dried grass placed upon their heads by the traditional authorities in the area, and having the grass set alight. At a

[33] It was unclear as to whether they were referring to pre-Christian practices, or the practices influenced by Christianity. As mentioned, prior to missionary arrival, polygamy was quite normal in the region. Regardless, there existed an interesting association of the past with more puritanical and honourable sexual practices, which had been lost to modern, liberal sexual behaviour.

senior secondary school in the Ohangwena region a few years ago, an Australian volunteer teacher reported that at an annual meeting with parents, when the topic of teenage pregnancy came up for discussion, many of the parents in attendance were supportive of a return to this form of punishment. Such attitudes reflect the feeling within the community that culture and tradition, albeit in an extreme form in the punishment example given, could provide vehicles with which to address the issues associated with the spread of AIDS. They also imply that had traditional forms of punishment, accountability to authorities and elders, and sexual behaviours not been lost, the current tragedy of AIDS might not have become the pandemic it is today.

One of the most significant effects of HIV/AIDS on domestic life is the erosion of trust. Apart from the distrust between consenting sexual partners, the much publicised raping of children or virgins, which is believed by some to cure AIDS, has resulted in increased levels of fear within communities, and a significant decline in community trust. As writers such as Putnam (1993) and Cox (1995) have studied, trust directly influences social capital within a community.

> We need to build a store of trust and goodwill as part of our social capital – a collective term for the ties that bind us. Distrust can stress and fracture our bonding. (Cox 1995, 11)

A close friend of mine, Reinharda Mungandjera, described the terror she now feels for her three young daughters. Routines are fundamentally changed in order for children to be more closely monitored by their parents, and the Mungandjera children can no longer take public transport[34] to school. As two of their daughters are approaching adolescence and attend schools which are a great distance from their home, Reinharda and her husband expressed that they live in constant fear of strangers as a result of the incidences of AIDS related child rapes.

[34] Public transport in Namibia consists of private taxis and minibuses or "combis" which are filled beyond capacity with a flat rate charged between certain distances. There is no state-run transportation in Namibia, and with vast distances to cover, taxis and combis provide the main means of transport for most Ovambos. School children utilise these means of transport during holidays and out-weekends in order to return to their villages.

Another impact of the AIDS crisis on domestic life in Ovamboland, is the altered family structures which emerge as parents and guardians pass away. The Mungandjera family, like many other Ovambo families, have become the guardians for three orphans whose parents died of AIDS and were relatives of the family. This has had a significant impact on their ability to provide food and education for their own children, as well as the children who are now in their care. Mbockoma Mungandjera expressed to me that the children must all be treated equally, in terms of education, support, clothes and so on, as the orphans under their care are the "innocent victims of this disease".[35] As a result of the three extra children under their care, the Mungandjeras have had to compromise on the quality of schools for their children, as schools previously attended are now too expensive. I will disscuss further issues of the impact of HIV/AIDS in the section on Change.

[35] Conversation with Mbockoma Mungandjera, September 2003.

Fig. 2.3 – Example of graveyard in Ovamboland

Fig.2.4 – Children's graves are common due to the AIDS crisis in the region

POWER AND POLITICS

Colonialism and the Spread of Christianity.

> Our ruling principle is supremacy, not equality.[36]

Prior to Missionary arrival in Ovamboland, tribal kingdoms stretched across the area and into what is now Angola, and pastoralism, hunting and grain cultivation represented Ovambo life. The Ovambo social system was defined by the predominance of matrilineal descent, which determined the laws of inheritance and succession, as well as post-marital residency. In the scramble for Africa, German colonial rule began officially in Namibia in 1884, and was only consolidated after an intense and prolonged military struggle, primarily with the Herero people in the south of the country. However as early as the 1850s, the Rhenish Missionary Society made preparations to open a new field in the Ovambo region, having had no previous mission field of its own. Hugo Hahn, the founder of the Rhenish Mission amongst the Herero, had insisted on the Finnish Missionary Society adopting Ovamboland as their own sphere. Hahn wrote "In the name of God and in the name of the thousands of needy heathens to whom the Lord has opened the door, I now direct myself to you with the prayer 'Come and Help us'." (Hahn in Nampala 2000:2) The first Finnish missionaries entered the southernmost Ovambo community, Ndonga, in July 1870 with German missionaries following soon after and Anglican missionaries arriving in 1924. The leading objective of missionary work in the Ovambo region was the establishment of Christian parishes, however schools and clinics were also set up. In referring to Somervell's posit, that imperialism's foundations were moral rather than intellectual, the implicit racism of early missionary policy and attitude is articulated in the following example of reportage on Ovambo life.

Tonjes[37], in his quasi anthropological writings, includes a section on the physical health of the "thousands of needy heathens" he is living amongst in Ovamboland. However, he

[36] BMW, IV/1.4, 6a Synodal meetings in Southern and Northern Transvaal, Botshabelo, 13th June 1895 from Ruether op cit.

cannot avoid editorial comment from a position of assumed moral superiority on these people's spiritual health in the same section:

> I often noticed that the eyes of small children were virtually covered with flies, and the mother did not even bother to chase them away. While I mentioned to them that this could easily lead to eye infections, they usually responded with a disbelieving smile. I will only cursorily mention the numerous diseases that are the result of the general immorality which prevails here. The saying "sin is the people's downfall" is quite applicable here. (Tonjes 1911:27)

Missionaries and colonialists were met with varying local acceptance, and it soon became apparent that the presence of these Europeans was not negotiable.

> Missionaries had come to convert Africans and strongly desired to initiate certain cultural changes, but they had not thought how far-reaching the implications of their endeavours to christianise whole peoples would be. (Ruether 2002:368)

The region had existed prior to the colonial encounter as a complex social hierarchy of kingdoms and people, ruled by all-powerful kings and their council of headmen. The allocation of land and other matters were handled by traditional authorities. History has produced stories of brutal and corrupt tribal kings under whom the tribe suffered enormously. Understandably, for people living under oppressive rule, colonialism would have held some promise, at least initially, of an alternative system of governance. As Nandy writes, often in pre-colonial societies, for those who were cornered within the

[37] Hermann Tonjes, a German Catholic missionary, published his book, *Ovamboland* in 1911 claiming "I was prompted to write this book by the fact that … no specialised book has yet been written about the area … introducing Ovamboland and its inhanitants to the friends of our colony and the mission." Although ostensibly a notional reportage on Ovambo life, the language and moral positioning he uses throughout are of equal interest to the social and cultural customs described in 1911, as they poignantly illustrate the prevailing attitude towards Africans. Oblivious to the effect such an attitude has on those around him, Tonjes laments that "Very few will realise how difficult it is as a foreigner to establish oneself among a heathen people."

traditional order, the new order of colonialism "looked like – and here lay its psychological pull – the first step towards a more just and equal world". (Nandy 1983:ix)

Just as in India[38], when cultural meanings were ascribed to British domination, colonialism proper began in Namibia with early encounters with European missionaries. As Victor Hugo proclaims, land was seen as belonging to no-one, and therefore it's annexation was the assumed entitlement of Europe.

> Go forward, the nations! Grasp this land! Take it! From whom? From no one. Take this land from God! God gives the earth to men. God offers Africa to Europe. Take it! (Hugo in Zorn 1989:6)

Traditional Authority Challenged

> Modern colonialism won its great victories not so much through its military and technological prowess as through its ability to create secular hierarchies incompatible with the traditional order. (Nandy 1983:ix)

The *aahongi*, or Christian missionaries, were met with varying support from traditional authorities at the time of early encounters. This in turn resulted in varying support given by the missionaries in matters of tribal and political disputes in the area, with missionaries protecting their interests and security by providing ammunition to the tribe sympathetic to their work and presence in the region. (Eirola 1992:59) The influence of traditional authorities on their tribes was extremely strong, and individual leaders, such as Kwanyama King Mandume Ndemufayo [39], heroically stood up to these new powers in the region, and prevented, or at least postponed missionary activity. Even where missions were erected, the support given to them by the community varied according to the position of the traditional authority in the area. As Mallory writes, "Frequently in a new district, the headman and his principal men were opposed to any change in their pagan

[38] As observed by Nandy (1983:6)
[39] Mandume ya Ndemufayo (1890 – 1917) became Kwanyama King at the age of 21 and is a source of inspiration for Namibian and Angolan people for his heroic resistance to colonial oppression and foreign domination. Claiming he would "neither be captured alive or surrender to servitude and shame" he shot himself in 1917. Monuments and streets in Namibia pay homage to this young leader.

ways and as their influence was generally strong, out of fear many people thus avoided the Mission altogether." (Mallory 1971:33) The situation of alignment or non-alignment with whites destabilised traditional authority and often exacerbated existing tribal tensions.[40] Ruether (2002:367) believes that Chiefs and elders successfully controlled the extent to which the new belief in Christianity acted as a source of change and innovation; however at best they stalled the influence of European culture. It was impossible to deny the significant lure of the white man's offerings, material, physical and spiritual – education, work, shelter, salvation, medicine - which would have constantly undermined traditional authorities' efforts to keep the two cultures separate and subsequent changes at bay. Although tribal kings varied in their support of the missionaries, once Christianisation and the culture of the white man began to penetrate, the consequent colonial mercantilism was to change the fabric of Ovambo society forever.

The arrival and influence of Namibia's pre-colonisation missionaries were not uncommon phenomena, and the arrival of missionaries was often believed to soften the people to white colonialism, preparing the way for subsequent rule and domination by them. The enormous cultural changes brought to regions where missions were set up not only paved the way for colonial rule, but established a situation of trust and a desire to embrace the culture of the whites. With the expansion of colonialism and the growing contract labour system which uprooted Ovambo men from their homes in the north to work in the south of the country, money and new goods found their way into the area, which had a significant effect on the subsistence economy. With much of Ovamboland's semi-arid region prone to drought, men often had no choice but to leave their homesteads in the north or face starvation.

The land where missionary stations were erected was often said not to belong to anybody, although in some cases it was believed that people were instructed by traditional authorities to move in order to make space for the building of a mission station. The community often incorporated the new presence of missionaries into an existing system

[40] Particularly in tribes within Ondangwa West and Ondangwa East, and as will be later demonstrated could possibly have contributed to current political tensions between the two regions in the area of educational and cultural development.

of beliefs, such as the way missionaries were described as "diviners" or representatives of ancestral spirits – *aakalelipo yombepo ondjapuki/yopambepo* (Nampala 2000:4) and gradually new units of social activity emerged around the mission stations, replacing old social systems and extended familial obligations and living arrangements. A new community was formed, comprising servants, foster children, baptismal pupils and eventually baptised members of the congregation, teachers and preachers. Such authority granted to local people challenged traditional lines of authority and established a different set of moral and social values to those that had existed previously. Isolation from one's community was seen by the missionaries as important, in avoiding contact with heathen ways, and young people from homesteads, or kraals neighbouring mission stations were encouraged to leave their heathen surroundings and live at the mission where they were baptised. This new community afforded the missionaries spiritual and temporal authority over those who came seeking shelter there, which in many ways challenged the traditional Chief's and King's authority in the area.

> … the presence of the Christian mission station in the country stood as a separation from the old ways of the heathen community surrounding it. It was inhabited by strangers, "foreigners", who obviously had a completely new way of life together with their own internal system of organisation and government. In terms of the Chief's jurisdiction the Mission was extra-territorial; it paid no customary tribute to the feudal rulers of the land, and it was under an independent form of authority and discipline apart from the tribe. The mission burial ground was partitioned to prevent the burial of Christians alongside the un-baptised, and an adjacent plot was established as a heathen burial-ground. Christians were taught that the un-baptised might not be buried in the ground consecrated for Christian burial, because this would profane the blessing and was not proper to the new society. (Mallory 1971:156)

The strong sense of belonging to tribal communities and notions of clanship were greatly challenged by this new social order, as those wishing to be baptised were taught that they

must turn from many customs of the old society and turn to a new community, the community of the "ovakriste" ("people of Christ".) What began to emerge were rivalries and hostilities between the old culture and the new, as individuals wishing to be baptised were forced to choose loyalty to the new Christian community above all other loyalties, tribal or familial. This radical departure, which actually meant alignment and incorporation into another community and rejection of previous loyalties, was an affront to traditional beliefs in the collectivist views of tribes and communities. The ensuing cultural division was no accident, rather a carefully considered process undertaken by missionaries, as Edwin Smith writes:

> If the Missionary … gathers his converts, as he is strongly tempted to do, in a village under his own surveillance, where they will be removed largely from the contamination of paganism, where they will look to him and not their chiefs as their leader and guide in all things, and where they adopt European clothes … the tribal system is inevitably shaken to its foundations…(Smith 1926:256)

Such a departure from traditional collectivism and familial responsibility also played into the evolving ideology of mercantile capitalism in the area, where responsibility and provision for one's family was being replaced by responsibility for oneself and one's soul. New practices evolved – new crops were cultivated, such as guava and lemon trees, new skills were developed, such as doing the laundry for the missionaries, and new systems of education and health care were established with the building of schools and hospitals. Education was no longer part of family and community life, taught through stories by elders at an *ohungi* or traditional story-telling evening, around a campfire. (See *Fig.2.5)* It took place in classrooms, and involved learning to write and read the bible. Matters of health were no longer solely the responsibility of the traditional healers – new forms of medicine and healthcare were introduced with the building of hospitals.

Fig. 2.5 – Ohungi taking place in Oshikuku, June 2000

The relationship between the Native Commissioner and the missionaries came to be an important one, as in the absence of a traditional authority (as was the case when Mandume Ndemufayo was eradicated by British and Portuguese colonial forces) all decisions were deferred to the Native Commissioner. Not all missionaries were comfortable with the style of leadership which had been shown by the Commissioner, and even less so with the expectation that their presence in the region would reflect the authoritarian style Commissioners had enforced, as Reverend Tobias writes:

> The Bishop came to me before he left and said that Hahn [Native Commissioner] wanted me to change my attitude to the natives. 'Speak to them' he said, 'like a Sergeant Major, give orders and never hold conversation and do not be friendly.' Hahn also said to me 'Always speak with authority as to a child who is rather in disgrace.' (Tobias 1925)

The effect of this multi-lateral authority (traditional authorities, native commissioner, missionaries) was to cause considerable anxiety to Ovambos living in the region as they

had to make their allegiances, often not entirely aware of the consequences of their decisions. This situation has not entirely changed in contemporary Ovamboland, where people are constantly negotiating and re-negotiating their relationships with the powers and authorities which compete for their loyalty – politically, socially, ethically, commercially and culturally. This results in "the contradictions of a victim whose world has been fractured by his need to survive a split authority, part traditional and part imposed." (Nandy 1983:97)

As mentioned, despite commonalities, there existed antagonism between the opposing agendas of early missionaries and white authorities in Ovamboland. This created a situation of seemingly contradictory motivations in relation to traditional cultural preservation, despite mutually beneficial relationships. Silvester writes,

> Although there were significant tensions between mission and state, in general terms missions as institutions and missionaries themselves operated comfortably in the context of racial domination and backed up many individual government policies. (Silvester et al 1998:40)

Ostensibly, both institutions were about "control"[41], however the dramatic social and cultural shifts resulting from the demands of Christian conversion threatened to destabilise the tribal institutions which the white authorities had sought to perpetuate as they served their agenda of providing migrant labour to the south of the country. And such conflicts over the preservation of Ovambo culture within Christianisation showed the irreconcilability of the associated contradictions produced by indirect rule and migrant labour.

> To the administration, …increasingly determined to keep Ovamboland an unchanged backwater that would feed labour to the south but be unaffected by that migrancy, the new ideas members of the community

[41] "Further cleavages in white society emerged, this time between missionaries and officials, who held differing views on *how* to control Africans" (Hayes et al.1998:39)

> were appropriating threatened the entire colonial enterprise. This was not only because those ideas could potentially be applied to demands for equality with Europeans, but also because the presence of new status symbols and new social identities threatened an order which officials wanted to fossilise – a hierarchy based exclusively on elites (those who co-operated with the colonial Government) over commoners, men over women and, above all, older people over younger people. (McKittrick 1998:259)

The promotion of liberal Western capitalism had major effects on the culture of the Ovambos. Missionaries, or agents of Christianisation tended to follow the agents of merchant capital (both black and white) in the nineteenth century. The concepts and symbols of Christianity, which incorporated the values of Western capitalism such as individualism, the importance of work, and domesticity, dramatically changed the social and cultural attitudes of Ovambos, particularly during the early missionary encounters, therefore playing into the hands of white colonial authorities who sought to exploit this new system of values.

South African Rule and Apartheid

> I think the free expression of culture without fear of retribution was certainly impeded by the apartheid and colonial regimes that really had control over Northern Namibia for the better part of the last hundred years or so. They're still living with the legacy of that. (David Chiel, interview 4/10/00)

Under the treaty of Versailles in 1919, Germany was required to renounce all its colonial claims and in 1921 the League of Nations granted South Africa a formal mandate to administer Namibia as part of the Union. However, in 1956, when South Africa prepared to annex Namibia (then South West Africa) as a full province in the Union and rewrite the constitution, the UN decided that South African control must be terminated. Despite

this, the South African Government tightened its grip on Namibia, enforcing rule by the brutal and dehumanising apartheid system.

> Apartheid was racism made law.[42]

The "losses" experienced under apartheid are too vast to be extensively documented in this section, as apartheid was a systematic violation of all articles of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, resulting in a complete loss of power and dignity. However I will address those aspects of apartheid which dramatically limited or affected cultural activities, expression and pride and were responsible for the sense of "loss" felt by Ovambos today. As the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture Director of Arts, Rita-Louise Hofmeyr explains:

> There exists the whole issue of identity and inferiority complexes that were there to scare people through the previous [apartheid] regime, and I think that's a very big thing to work through with cultural development. (Rita-Louise Hofmeyr interview12/7/00)

Along with the many indignities Ovambos faced throughout the decades of apartheid, a complete disregard for human, social and cultural rights justified and perpetuated the system. This was hardly surprising, as Schouten observes:

> To put emphasis on one's own historical and cultural roots is an undeniable human right. The irony is that human rights are only respected by those people who would respect them anyhow, even if they were not formulated. The starting-point for the formulation of cultural rights is the idea of parity of all cultural systems and their expressions. The problem however is that all who violate these fundamental rights do not recognise this paradigm of parity. (Schouten 1996:53)

[42] www.un.org/av/photo/subjects/apartheid.htm

To this end, the major articles concerning cultural articulation as a universal human right[43] are as follows:

> **Article 22** Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realisation, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organisation and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.
>
> **Article 27** Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.
>
> **Article 29** Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible.

Under apartheid, the bulk of Namibia's viable farmland was parcelled into some 6000 farms for white settlers and the other ethnic groups were relegated to newly demarcated 'tribal homelands'. The official intent was ostensibly to 'channel economic development into predominantly poor rural areas', but it was all too obvious that it was, in fact, simply a convenient way of retaining the best land for white settlement and agriculture. As a result, a prominent line of demarcation appeared between the rich and predominantly white areas in the central and southern parts of the country, and the poorer tribal areas in Ovamboland. The freedom of movement of Ovambo people was limited and curfews were imposed between dusk and dawn.

There was also complicity between church organisations and institutions and the government's policy of apartheid. The South African administration left educational and medical care of the "natives" to the missions, and both the Lutheran and the Catholic Churches soon had separate school and hospital systems for whites and blacks. (Hunke 1988:629) The only education system taught and administered in schools was the Bantu system, which denied black students the right to learn Maths, Science, English, or any subject seen as potentially empowering. Instead, they were taught subjects like Afrikaans,

[43] As determined by the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the General Assembly on 10th December, 1948

Biblical Studies and Agriculture. As Ndilula writes, the justification of this was "in order to ensure efficient co-ordination of planning, the control of Bantu (the South African terminology for black people in South Africa and Namibia) education should be removed from the provincial administration and be vested in a separate department under the aegis of the Central Government", and that "their schools should meet the requirements of the Bantu community and not of an integrated South African European community". (Ndilula 1988:389)

In 1953, the deliberately and overtly racist Bantu Education Act no. 47 was adopted. In his speech in the Senate in Pretoria in July 1954, the architect of Bantu education, Dr Verwoerd (then Minister of Native Affairs) stated:

> The Bantu's education must be able to give itself complete expression, and there, it will be called upon to perform its real service. The Bantu must be guided to serve his own community in all respects**. There is no place for him in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour. Until now, he has been subjected to a school system which drew him away from his own community and misled him by showing him the green pastures of European society in which he was not allowed to graze[44].** (Verwoerd in Ndilula 1988:390)

There was also a policy of emphasising ethnic and tribal independence, which was commonly regarded as a smokescreen for 'divide and rule'. It was believed that if tribes were not united against a common enemy, in this case South African rule, they would be weak in their defence. All these factors dramatically affected the traditional cultural practices of the people, which were very much community oriented. For example movement between homesteads after dark, the sharing of stories, skills, songs, dances, customs were crucial in maintaining Ovambo culture.

[44] My use of bold for emphasis

> In the past, I think the greatest cultural barrier, the problem which the Ovambo people faced, was the South African troops in Namibia at that time. To tell you the truth, the situation was very bad during the liberation struggle. Most of the Namibian people in the north never had freedom of movement, freedom of association, and this lead to some of the culture being diminished in terms of normal interactive stuff. Because people were being forced to sleep earlier than before. As you know that traditional performance normally used to be performed during the evening time. And … a large group have to come together to perform traditional music. But during the time of South African occupation, it was very difficult because everybody was told that during this time there were curfews, and during this time a person should be in his homestead … no movement. So I'm sure that has caused, or deterred the development of culture in the north. (Tobias Kandanga, interview12/9/00)

With the loss of the opportunity to participate in traditional education through oral story-telling at *ohungis*[45], went the loss of access to information about one's own culture and the opportunity to develop skills in creative cultural expression such as story-telling, singing and dance.

> People have basic human rights … it's a basic human right that people should have access to the development of their creative abilities. (Rita-Louise Hofmeyr, interview12/7/00)

The apartheid system limited access to information from other cultures. Tightly controlled apartheid laws prevented significant international cultural exchange and global condemnation of apartheid and sanctions against South Africa in the late 1970s and 1980s reinforced this process. The Managing Director of the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation points out:

[45] traditional story telling evenings around the fire, where families and neighbours would come together to sing, dance and entertain each other through riddles, allegories and fables which would teach the young about life.

> The previous intention of the South African Government was just for people not to know more – they wanted just to keep the knowledge of the Namibian people limited to South Africa and Namibia. So most of the Western songs from other countries and other African countries were sanctioned. Like Bob Marley was sanctioned – not to be played on the station, because it carried revolutionary messages. They were subversive and that was the problem. So in most cases you can see that the link between South Africa and Namibia, it was just to keep the people in the darkness, not to know beyond the boundary of Namibia. (Tobias Kandanga, interview 12/9/00)

Throughout the 1950s, despite mounting pressure from the UN, South Africa refused to release its grip on Namibia. This intransigence was based on fears of losing income from the mining operations there. Namibia is rich in minerals and the world's foremost source of gem diamonds. With the oppression of apartheid, as well as forced labour, mass demonstrations and increasingly nationalist sentiments began to mount by the late 1950s, and by 1960, under the leadership of Sam Nujoma, the South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) was formed.

Liberation Struggle 1966 – 1990

> In Ovamboland, many of the cultural activities took place in the evening. During the war there was a curfew from dusk to dawn. You could not be seen by the Boers, in a big group. You don't walk at night. People used to go to neighbours, have celebrations, drink beer, slaughter cattle, sing, dance, as children we used to have what you call "night plays", *ohungi*, so during the war it was just not safe. (Ervast Mtota, interview 11/7/00)

In 1966, SWAPO took the issue of South African occupation to the International Court of Justice. The court upheld South Africa's right to govern South West Africa, but the UN

General Assembly voted to terminate South Africa's mandate and replace it with a Commission for Namibia to administer the territory.

In response, on 26th August 1966, SWAPO launched its campaign of guerilla warfare at Omgulumbashe in Ovamboland. Thus began a brutal twenty-four year war which was fought amongst the farms, homesteads and *mahangu* fields of Ovamboland and southern Angola. The People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) was supported by eastern block countries such as Cuba and the USSR, who were then also fighting for the liberation of Angola while the South African Defence Force had the support of the USA. The Cold War was playing itself out in rural Africa.

> … the north became a theatre of war. Life became increasingly insecure. Many of the young fled into exile, and their parents and elders lived under a curfew, in constant danger from land-mines, and subject to an increasingly ruthless competition for their allegiance between PLAN guerrillas and the security forces. Meetings were banned, repression was absolute. (Leys and Saul 1995:13)

The effects of the liberation struggle on the daily life of the people of Ovamboland were devastating. All aspects of cultural practice, education, and trust, which is such an important aspect of rural tribal communities, were dramatically affected by the war. During these years, many schools were either used as or built next to South African army barracks – the idea being that headquarters were less likely to be bombed with civilian children in schools acting as a buffers. The reminders of the struggle, such as minefields and barbed wire around the vicinity of such schools, still exist today. The limited education which was offered to children brave enough to attend school, was administered and taught by South African soldiers in Afrikaans. Such an environment did not present learning and education as liberating and empowering, rather it was viewed as another oppressive tool of South African domination, and the South African soldiers who acted as teachers were treated with much distrust and suspicion. Ervast Mtota recounted to me the details of a particularly brutal air raid by the South African Defence Force. At the time,

he was attending a lecture at the Ongwediva Teachers College, and the bombs were being dropped merely kilometres away. At the time of the air raid the teacher, a South African soldier, enthusiastically ran outside to look up in the sky with his fellow soldiers and congratulate each other on the number of "kaffirs" they had just taken out. When the air raid ended, he came back into the class of Ovambo students, who quite possibly came from the same village that had been destroyed, and continued the lesson. There are numerous accounts of South African soldiers raiding school hostels to "recruit" or kidnap students for the South African Army, a practice which led to numerous students escaping into exile in Angola.

The Independence Struggle also established alliances and divisions which did not exist before South African occupation, and which lingered long after the struggle had ended. Suddenly, particularly in Ovamboland, previously cohesive and united tribes were divided as people were forced to decide where their political ideologies and subsequent actions lay. As Chris Tapscott oberves:

> The demands of the liberation struggle in Namibia served to differentiate Namibian society into those who opposed and those who collaborated with the apartheid regime, those who went into exile and those who remained, and those who attainted rank and status within each of the opposing forces and those who did not. The policies of the apartheid era further served to reify racial and ethnic divisions throughout the society to the extent that different communities were segregated geographically, economically and socially. The combined impacts of the war and of apartheid rule have thus inevitably shaped both the form of the state inherited at independence and the evolving patterns of social differentiation. (Tapscott in Leys and Saul 1995:153)

International condemnation and trade sanctions against South Africa's apartheid regime as well as the economic, emotional and physical strains of the war meant that by 1988 the stage was set for negotiations on the country's future. The UN stipulated that the

transition to Namibian independence would formally begin on 1st April 1989 and would be followed by UN-monitored elections held in November 1989. Sam Nujoma returned from 30 years in exile and Namibians voted for independence, which officially ended years of domination and oppression, on 21st March 1990.

It is important to note that in each of the areas identified in this section as cultural "losses" at the hands of colonialists and the South African administration, remarkably most of the practices have survived the encounter in some, albeit altered, form. This is not to detract from the perceptions of "loss" that people have of such traditions, but does perhaps suggest a cultural resilience in the face of modernising or oppressive agents of change. Although there is a sense of regret that many practices no longer exist in their original form and purpose, they still remained a part of Ovambo life. As Latouche writes,

> When it was essential to 'know paper' and pretend, to please and face up to the white man by acquiring his magic, that was done; but it was done in parallel with the conservation of traditional cultural values. This double game, which was learned and played through the colonial period, does not,obviously, leave the original culture intact. (Latouche 1996:100)

It was often described to me that continuing to dance after curfews, make and wear traditional jewellery and artefacts, and call each other by traditional names was often done so in defiance of missionaries or colonial authorities which forbade such activity. In this way, cultural practices, whilst adapted, act as mode of resistance. Nandy argues that this form of defiance is an important means of cultural survival: "…he retains his latent rebelliousness and thus turns even the standard stereotypes others have of him into effective screens and means of survival." (Nandy 1983:104)

GLOBALISATION

> To be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and our world – and at the same time threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are. (Berman,1983:15)

Much of this section has been concerned with the cultural impact of colonial powers and associated feelings of loss. I will now investigate aspects of the globalisation process, which continue to contribute to the feeling of cultural loss, particularly through the entanglement - sometimes complicit, often forced - Namibia finds itself in with the West. Globalisation in this section refers to increased engagement with the West. As Berman's quote above highlights – the transformations associated with the course of modernisation hold many possibilities, and as I will go on to demonstrate in this thesis, many Ovambos have embraced the cultural changes which the globalising process has brought about. However, there is increasing awareness of the costs associated with such outside influences, and these "losses" will be located, therefore, within the cultural paradigm of the globalisation process. Although I have argued that in Ovamboland, both colonialism and South African occupation resulted in changes which were largely beyond the control of the local people, the globalising process – for all of its perceived democratic individualism, is also largely a disempowering process, for participants are rarely equal, nor informed about the socio-cultural effects of engagement. In this thesis, the terms *modernisation, westernisation,* and *globalisation* will be used varyingly in reference to their relevant context.

Modernisation – the economic, social, political and cultural processes which have, post-Enlightenment, become identified with industrialisation, capitalism, liberalism, rationalism and individualism.

Westernisation – the process of economic and cultural modeling, influenced by the hegemonic expansion of Europe and America.

Globalisation – the process of increased global inter-connectedness which shapes politics, economics and culture at an accelerated pace and scale.

In my explanations of each term above, cultural change is one of the dominant features of each process. And with such change, as I have mentioned, come both losses and gains. Latouche refers to such losses as *deculturation*. As opposed to the harmonious reactions of two cultures coming into contact through integration, assimilation and indigenisation of foreign culture which Latouche calls *acculturation*, *deculturation* occurs when cultural contact does not lead to a balanced exchange. This results from a massive flow in one direction, where the receiving culture is invaded, threatened and can be seen as the victim of cultural aggression[46]. Ovamboland shows evidence of both successful acculturation, as will be highlighted in the section on Change, but also, particularly in the emotional and psychological sense, shows symptoms of deculturation.

> In a way, Westernization is nothing more than a cultural cladding for industrialization; but the Westernization of the Third World is first and foremost a deculturation, that is to say purely and simply the destruction of all traditional structures, economic, social or mental, and their final replacement by a big heap of scrap-iron all ready to rust. (Latouche 1996:76)

Latouche's pessimistic outlook for the cultural future of the developing world is in keeping with theories of cultural homogenisation and standardisation as a result of the globalisation process. Frederick Jameson suggests that there are two possible debates surrounding the ideology of the cultural dimensions of globalisation. One suggests a post-modern style celebration of difference and differentiation, resulting in cultures around the world being placed in tolerant contact with each other in immense cultural pluralism which "it would be very difficult not to welcome". (Jameson 1998:57) Beyond this

[46] If the aggression results in the actual disappearance of culture, Latouche argues, it is genocide. If the aggression is symbolic rather than physical and the genocide is cultural only, Latouche refers to this as *ethnocide* "…the final stage of deculturation". (Latouche 1996:55)

celebration of difference, Jameson suggests, is a celebration of the emergence of a whole immense range of groups, races, genders, ethnicities, into the speech of the public sphere, and a falling away of those structures "that condemned whole segments of the population to silence and to subalternity; a worldwide growth of popular democratisation – why not? - … which is immediately expressed by a new richness and variety of cultures in the new world space." This extremely optimistic view of the cultural potentialities of globalisation, however, does not take into consideration the importance which economics play in the process. The second view Jameson presents, which is a far more commonly held view in theories surrounding the impact of globalisation on non-Western cultures, reinforces Latouche's view above, and emphasises the destruction of local differences:

> …the rapid assimilation of hitherto autonomous national markets and productive zones into a single sphere, the disappearance of national subsistence (in food for example), the forced integration of countries all over the globe into precisely that new global division of labour … Here what begins to infuse our thinking of globalization is a picture of standardization on an unparalleled new scale; of forced integration as well, into a world-system from which "delinking" is henceforth impossible and even unthinkable and inconceivable. (Jameson 1998:57)

This second view gives some insight into the anxieties which the people of Ovamboland have expressed in terms of the loss of cultural particularity in the region. As King Munkundi states:

> The greatest barrier to culture in this region is development and because of development, the young generation is only accepting other cultures … foreign cultures and forgetting their own. (King Munkundi, interview 8/8/00)

Jameson's quote also suggests the interconnectedness of culture and commerce, which I will address in relation to commodification and commercialisation. Jameson believes that

the two views of the effects of the globalisation process on culture are dialectically related. Indeed, in Ovamboland there exist conflicting feelings surrounding the benefits and costs of the process. The perceived cultural benefits of globalisation will be presented later in this thesis, however this section is concerned with the costs, or losses associated with the most recent aspects of the continuing interconnectedness between the West and the rest.

Interdependency and Loss of Independence

In considering the psychology of cultural loss, the notion of the ambivalent and symbiotic relationship between coloniser and colonised, Christian and Christianised, Western and Westernised is of great significance. Anecdotal descriptions given to me recounted stories of ancestors' encounters with early missionaries and the changes these encounters brought upon families, tribes, and communities.

> I remember my mother telling me about this, so it must be the 1930s. When the missionaries came, it would be that you were asleep and you suddenly woke up, whether it was from passivity or backwardness. You were seen to be backward if you practiced your traditional culture. Women who were involved in home-brewing, you are a pagan, you are not Christian. If you are putting on these clothes, if you are using your traditional name … so this is when these things came to be regarded as not suitable, not modern, or not even human maybe. So they started burning those necklaces. Women started burning those things. Some who became Christians started burning and burying their traditional things. Others felt that it's something that belongs to the family and if you burn it then the family might get doomed and somebody might die, so they were scared to do those things. (Ervast Mtota, interview11/7/00)

It was because of the physical and spiritual enticements of the pre-colonial missionaries, the promise of food, education, health care as well as salvation and eternal life, that Ovambo people, as with tribes and people throughout the colonised world, entered into a

relationship with Europe which meant they (with and without reticence) changed the way they dressed, lived, celebrated, thought, sang, spoke etc. As I have demonstrated, such changes, particularly when not negotiated, carry with them associated feelings of "loss". Albert Memmi has argued that the lingering residue of colonisation will only decompose if, and when, we are willing to acknowledge the reciprocal behaviour of the two colonial partners. The colonial condition, he writes, "chained the coloniser and the colonised into an implacable dependence, moulded their respective characters and dictated their conduct" (Memmi 1968:45). Even today, the impact of missionaries is seen as having had both positive and negative influences on the cultural practices of the Ovambo people. An interesting example of this divided thought comes from an interview with the traditional King of the Ndonga Tribe: (See *Fig. 2.6)*

> Missionaries did little to develop the traditional culture. They destroyed peoples' way of life, the way they dressed and discouraged traditional names. The church however did a lot with regard to teaching the natives, for example how to read and write. They also gave natives basic skills in handicraft work, but they neglected the cultural component. They destroyed ceremonies for traditional weddings. (King Kauluma interview 8/8/00)

King Kauluma's language is interesting, such as his use of the terminology of former regimes such as "native" in describing the skills endowed on his people by the missionaries, and he expresses conflicting reactions to the effects of missionary influence. Mallory believes the value Ovambos placed on European style education (reading, writing and arithmetic) developed as a result of three factors. The first was contact with more educated Africans on labour contract in the South, second the impact previous missionaries had made and finally the superior position of the white man, whose education, it was assumed, gave him both status and power. (Mallory 1971:31) However the seemingly contradictory opinion of King Kauluma on the positive (education) and negative (destroying traditions) aspects of missionary work in the region reflects a larger

dialectic which surrounds European education in Africa, which was and largely still is an oral culture. This is reflected by Walter Ong:

> Oral cultures today value their oral traditions and agonize over the loss of these traditions, but I have never encountered or heard of an oral culture that does not want to achieve literacy as soon as possible. (Ong 1993:175)

The loss of oral cultural tradition is significantly felt within the Ovambo community, and is often pointed to as a reason for what is considered a general decline in moral codes of behaviour resulting in things like teenage pregnancy, the spread of HIV etc. Traditionally moral education took place around campfires at night and was told through allegories and stories and riddles. From my research, it was also commonly believed that the lack of publication and documentation of stories and oral histories has resulted in a considerable loss of rich and valuable cultural heritage. Walter Ong refers to the transition from oral to written culture as the "technologizing of the word", where the spoken and heard becomes the written and seen. However in the absence of such a transition taking place, such as the many stories, riddles, allegories, narratives and histories of pre-colonial Ovamboland which have not been written down, the loss to the local people is felt acutely. This was articulated to me by a number of traditional authorities, elderly story-tellers, poets and writers in the region at the Cultural Development Workshop in 1999. I will investigate this issue further in the section on Recuperation.

In the process of cultural change which began with colonialism, the issue of this mutuality between oppressor and oppressed is key in understanding the puzzling circulation of desire around the traumatic scene of oppression and cultural rehabilitation. As Leela Gandhi writes, "The desire of the coloniser for the colony is transparent enough, but how much more difficult it is to account for the inverse longing of the colonised." (Gandhi 1998:11) Interdependent relationships between coloniser and colonised continue today in the complexities of globalisation and neo-colonialism, and are an important factor in the investigation of processes and ideologies behind cultural recuperation, which

will be addressed later in this thesis. The influence of *European culture*[47] on baptised Ovambos has allowed ideologies to permeate so deeply, that there now exists a significant moral barrier for those in congregations whose ministers attempt to revitalise traditional singing, dancing, drumming and dress in their ministry. Priests from both Okatana and Oshikuku Catholic Missions have recounted examples of situations where members of the congregation had expressed to them practices which they considered appropriate for Christian worship, and their views were based on the repressive regulations of early missionaries. This irony reflects the church's difficulty in being able to adequately address cultural issues. When people have believed for a long time that something is wrong and paganistic, and have perhaps reconciled or resigned themselves to the sense of "loss", a huge amount of work on developing trust and evidence to the contrary is required to change this belief. As Mallory writes,

> So much effort seemed required to combat the harmful aspects of the culture [of Ovambo people] that little time or attention was left to emphasise or develop the good and wholesome elements. And the absence of a positive effort to integrate the local culture into the life and worship of the Church from the beginning made it manifestly more difficult to incorporate cultural elements into worship when it was attempted. (Mallory 1971:50)

Similarly, it could be argued that the reticence to change the style of Christian worship represents the people's wishes to maintain the "new" cultural practices which they acquired and inherited from early missionary styles. Although priests and ministers today may wish to redress the situation of past practices which they believe was unnecessarily destructive of local culture, the attitudes of the parishioners themselves may differ quite substantially. Paradoxically, it now appears that for some Christians, the fear of losing European sensibilities in their style of Christian worship is greater than the fear of losing pre-Christian customs such as styles of dance and singing.

[47] I use italics here because, as has been shown, many of the changes which European missionaries brought with them were enforced without doctrinal rationale, and were therefore superfluous to the Christian teachings, serving merely as a subjective indicator of the European social decorum of the day.

Fig. 2.6 – King Kauluma of Ndonga tribe, September 2000

Breakdown of Community and Individualism

> If we had to cite a single characteristic of the African culture, the subordination of the individual by the community would surely be the reference point to remember. (Etounga-Maguelle 2000:71)

One of the social effects of globalisation which was constantly reinforced to me was the breakdown of community following the individualism which accompanies the transition to neo-liberalism. Much sadness and regret was expressed about this, as people identified younger generations as having little or no regard for traditional community support networks which had previously been in place. Extended families no longer always co-habited, and neighbours were no longer the communication and social life-lines they once were, with radio being the main medium for communication of information. Similarly, with urban migration and easier movement around the country and within the region, neighbouring homesteads are no longer necessarily the first point of social contact as in earlier generations. Ervast Mtota speaks of the breakdown of community which he feels

is a result of globalisation, and articulates the individualist attitudes which accompany "modern" life in Ovamboland.

> At a community level I think people, especially the young couples or middle-aged couples are becoming more modern so they are not so keen to share with neighbours. The neighbourhood relationship is becoming more individualistic. In the Ovambo culture, in the past, I wouldn't leave the village – say going to Oshakati – without seeing my neighbours. Just saying to them "hello, how are you, how did you sleep, are you fine?" Because you are scared that you will go to Oshakati and you will meet somebody who knows your neighbours and they ask "how are they?" and you have not seen them! (Ervast Mtota, interview 11/7/00)

Similarly, although the technologies of globalisation have brought improved infrastructure to the region, a sense of regret about the social costs of such conveniences still exists. Ervast Mtota goes on to discuss the decrease in communal activities such as the collecting of water, which once served a social as well as physical and agricultural purpose.

> Nowadays, modern families are so isolated. And I think it also came with development. We used to go to a single water point. The whole village would come at the same time to collect water or even giving water to the animals. Nowadays you can even get the water pipe that comes straight in your house so you don't even need to go to your neighbours to ask for that, or say "let's go together to get water." Or girls used to come to one house or two or three houses to start pounding their *mahangu*. It doesn't happen anymore. You take the bag full of *mahangu*, you go to the machine somewhere 5kms away and then you get meal. Families are so isolated. So the sharing of the culture and customs is not happening now. (Ervast Mtota, interview 11/7/00)

Although I have argued earlier that the impact of Christianisation on the Ovambo community led to individualism at the expense of collectivist thoughts, this push – particularly puritanical Protestantism and Catholicism – also gave rise to utilitarianism. Hard work in pursuit of salvation largely evolved into the secularised pursuit of wealth and capital. In Ovamboland, as with the rest of the world, this process can also be seen as a loss of faith in former "truths" espoused by missionaries, and replaced by "the proselytism of the secular message – the Rights of Man, formal democracy, utilitarianism, economic calculation, science and technology, growth and development." (Latouche 1996:30) Mbockoma Mungandjera is an example of a man caught between the two worlds of traditional subsistence farming and professional life. As he is one of the few members of his extended family to have a professional job as a teacher at a Senior Secondary School, he must provide for both his immediate family, as well as his extended family who live remotely in homesteads, surviving on *mahangu* cultivation. The responsibility of buying a tractor which was going to benefit many in his family and those in surrounding homesteads fell upon him by virtue of his having the means to do so. Similarly, when nieces or nephews need accommodation, school fees and so on, Mbockoma is responsible. This responsibility is not seen as a burden, rather more a familial obligation. Reciprocal gestures are common – goats, *mahangu* and palm wine are always freely offered to Mbockoma in exchange for his assistance. However Mbockoma represents a growing number of Ovambos who are negotiating the endowments of individualism with the expectations of communitarianism.

Despite the perception which was articulated to me, of Missionaries having been agents of cultural loss, Christianity remains popular in the region. The villages of Ovamboland come alive on Sundays, as people get together to walk or hitch a ride in a *bakkie*[48] to the nearest church. Services go for many hours, and therefore the majority of the day is spent demonstrating one's faith with friends, neighbours and family. Unlike Saturdays, where villages and roads are increasingly punctuated by funeral processions and mourners, Sundays, in my experience, were much more celebratory in spirit. The Oshiwambo

[48] The African term for ute, or utility vehicle. Up to 30 people would cram into the back of a bakkie, often with goats and chickens. They are the main form of transportation in Ovamboland as they are 4WD and can traverse across the sand of the region.

service of the Namibian Broadcasting Service plays only hymns, Christian music, prayers and church services, and these can be heard echoing from radios in homesteads throughout Ovamboland. Christianity has come to play an integral role in the identities of Ovambo people, particularly older people, children and teenagers. Christian prayer groups and singing groups were extremely popular at the Senior Secondary School where I taught. However young adults are increasingly less interested in Christianity and attending church. As with the secularisation process elsewhere, the lures of the modern world have resulted in less engagement in formal religion for this group. Therefore it appears that the communitarianism of Sunday rituals, which are often the main opportunity to catch up with neighbours in post-colonial Ovamboland, is also under threat with increased secularisation. A generous benefactor such as Mbockoma could be seen as an anomaly to the ideology of liberal individualism inherent in modernisation.

Cultural Commodification and Commercialisation

I have already touched on the relationship between culture and capital which has become a feature of the modernisation process, where skills and creativity become commodities. I will now present an example of cultural commodification and commercialisation in practice, where cultural development is primarily concerned with income generation and tourism. This form of cultural recuperation is designed to benefit the individuals who participate in the exchange of culture for capital – both the producers and the consumers. However I am including this section under the theme of "loss" because in the process, the community themselves believe they have lost important skills which were once shared within families and villages, but are now used primarily for profit. I will use the examples of Mud Hut Trading and the North Central Community Based Natural Resource Management and Enterprise Development Project's craft program. This form of cultural development is a contentious area of activity, and some of the issues and sensitivities associated with the economic agenda behind this form of cultural production will be addressed. I will present issues associated with Mud Hut Trading again later, as an alternative form of cultural "recuperation", however here I am primarily concerned with what is considered to be lost in the process of commercialising culture.

> Establishing economic value requires the disvaluing of all other forms of social existence. Disvalue transmogrifies skills into lacks, commons into resources, men and women into commodified labour, tradition into burden, wisdom into ignorance, autonomy into dependency. It transmogrifies people's autonomous activities embodying wants, skills, hopes and interactions with one another, and with the environment, into needs whose satisfaction requires the mediation of the market. (Esteva 1997:18)

Cultural commodification and commercialisation is significant in Namibia, and has resulted from adaptation to the capitalist consumerism inherent in Western style liberal democracy and the processes of globalisation. With greater trade opportunities come the opportunities to profit from cultural practices, through selling, exhibiting, performing and so on. For rural Ovambos who have depended on subsistence farming for survival with few other opportunities to raise capital, this is an irresistible exchange.

> The arts and culture of the Ovambo people will be able to show people who they are and to help the community to develop and generate income. For example, these *meme* and *tate kulus*[49] who are making these carved cups – by selling them and making them and showing them to people, they are developing their local culture as well as generating income for the region. We are facing high unemployment, and when people are getting self-employment and using arts and culture to generate income, this helps to alleviate this problem. (Bernadette Mojekwu, interview 13/10/00)

The cultural effects of such commodification, combined with the outside influences of both market tastes and Western styles, can result in cultural transformation which can be dramatic or gradual. Tyler Cowen addresses this issue and describes the pattern which usually emerges as a result of the meeting of two cultures. Initially, Cowen believes, a creative boom is produced, as individuals trade materials, technologies and ideas. In this

[49] *Meme* and *tate kulu* refers to elderly men and women in the community.

phase, often the materially wealthier culture provides financial support for the creations of the poorer culture, and aesthetics largely stay intact. This is the ideal situation, where both parties benefit from the exchange – artists are remunerated for their ability, and customers are satisfied with their purchases.

> Over time, however, the larger or wealthier culture upsets the balance of forces that ruled in the smaller or poorer culture. The poorer culture begins to direct its outputs towards the tastes of the richer culture. Communication with the outside world makes the prevailing ethos less distinct. The smaller culture "forgets" how to make the high-quality goods it once specialized in, and we observe cultural decline. (Cowen 2002:56)

Although such a theory is heavily laden with cultural value judgement, (such as using the word "decline") the pattern is interesting in that it demonstrates the transformation of non-Western cultural production to suit Western markets, which can result in the eventual disappearance of the practice or style in its original form. Whilst this is recognised as an inevitable aspect of cultural dynamism, in Ovamboland, as has been discussed earlier, the absence of some cultural practices has resulted in a sense of loss and regret.

It would be incorrect to solely blame modernisation for this development, as to do so does not acknowledge the complicity of the Ovambos in such a process. Also, cultural trade took place in the region long before the colonial encounter as people would exchange tools, pounding sticks, clay pots and instruments according to their needs. However the difference now is that such items have moved from being utilitarian to being commodities or Western objets d'art. In the same way, cultural performances are often separated from their original contexts in order to entertain. The mass production required to satisfy consumer-driven markets, as well as outside influences through cross-cultural contact on style and design inevitably means cultural transformation. The counter-argument of course is that any cultural production, regardless of its context, is still cultural production. Dances are still being danced, and baskets are still being woven and

this is considered to be better than no cultural activity or link to the past whatsoever. But the power which money brings into the exchange cannot be overlooked.

> Commercialisation will not dry up Third World and indigenous sources of creativity, but it will make them less uniquely specialized, at least relative to the already commercialized West. (Cowen 2002:72)

Whilst this attitude does reflect both Appadurai and Chow's concern with Western nostalgia for non-Western cultural "loss", it has also been expressed by contemporary Ovambos as an issue of concern.

> We must wake up very quickly to put things in place like a heritage council, heritage policy and arts policy for that matter, so that [Namibia's] products and commodities will not be exploited by the outside world. Otherwise you will be swallowed up by globalisation – before you know it, people will be in here having tapped all your resources. Communities should be able to be responsible for their resources. (Rita-Louise Hofmeyr, interview 12/7/00)

Mud Hut Trading is an interesting case study when looking at the issue of cultural commodification. Mud Hut Trading is the marketing arm of the Rössing Foundation's art and craft development work. The Rössing Foundation, which was established in 1978, is funded by donations received from Rössing Uranium Mine, but also manages a number of projects on behalf of NGOs and foreign aid institutions. Activities focus on three broad areas of operation, namely adult basic education and training, natural resource management and enterprise development. Mud Hut Trading has successfully capitalised on the tourism industry in the south of the country, and allowed some of its profits to be shared with the north. As Karin Le Roux, Project Co-ordinator of Mud Hut Trading states, "Tourism dictates a lot [of product development] and contributes to the dynamism of culture". (Interview 2/12/02) An article appeared in the *New York Times* about West African artefacts being sold to Western tourists under the pretence that they were

antiques. Author James Brooke suggests that there is no problem with the imitation and appropriation of other African traditions in artefacts which are sold to Westerners, so long as everyone involved in the transactions is happy in the game of "mental ping-pong". According to Brooke, the trade in artefacts involves the producer of the "fake" African antique being happy with his profits, and the consumer being happy to believe he had purchased the real thing at a bargain price. (Torgovnick 1990:40) As the *Times* suggests in the caption which accompanies Brooke's article "If the deceived and the deceiver part satisfied, who cares?"

Another issue in the cultural appropriation, commodification and authenticity debate is the greater capitalist axiomatic principle behind such exchanges. This "self-interest":

> …explicitly excluding any reliance on the kindness of others, stands in radical contrast to the practices of generosity and gift-exchange that characterize most societies. (Rist 1997:18)

This exchange of commodities, is supposed to be the best guarantee of social cohesion, for "man has almost constant occasion for the help of his brethren and it is vain for him to expect it from their benevolence only." (Smith 1776:18) However this social bond assumes that everyone is able to exercise their talents and receive due remuneration for their labour, in order to then obtain what they need. In reality, as Rist goes on to argue, it is far from guaranteed, "as the conversion of commodities into money permits accumulation and therefore inevitable inequalities." (1997:18) And this, I believe may be the source of my own ideological discomfort with Mud Hut Trading which I will now demonstrate.

Craft and rural art remain the focus of the Rössing Foundation's enterprise development initiatives, with about 1500 persons (95% women) participating in this program. Mud Hut Trading "serves as an avenue for increasing household income levels, and targets the potential growth of micro-enterprises in Namibia. Mud Hut Trading provides training, product development and marketing opportunities for these women." (www.rf.org.na)

Products collected through Mud Hut Trading are sold at the Namibia Craft Centre, which is also a Rössing Foundation sponsored business in which 35 stall holders from all over Namibia occupy space. The Namibia Craft Centre had over 35000 visitors in 2001 and is a premier tourist spot in the capital, Windhoek. Most of the products produced by Mud Hut Trading are "traditional" baskets, clay pots, jewellery and other artefacts – all very popular for tourists as they are of high quality and are relatively easy to transport out of the country.

Having purchased a number of striking baskets marketed under Mut Hut Trading from the Namibia Craft Centre myself, I was most surprised to often read the descriptions accompanying these baskets on their origins. The baskets which were said to be from the north central region of Namibia, 800 kms away from the Craft Centre in which they were being sold, only vaguely resembled the baskets which I had seen in north central villages and homesteads being sold on the side of the road. Rather, they seemed to represent Caprivian and even Zimbabwean style and design. The baskets of Ovamboland were often decorated using only two or three natural, pastel colours in their weave (from natural dyes available in the region), however the baskets claiming to have come from the region being sold in the Craft Centre were often made from deep colours, and different material to the baskets of the north. Could it have been that the design and materials used for these baskets was prescribed for their makers, according to tourist tastes, so that although the baskets had indeed come from the specified area, they were in no way representational of that region? Torgovnick (1990:38) writes that African carvers "gleefully imitate the production of neighbouring traditions, traditions not their own, if those kinds of statues or masks sell to Westerners." The question of cultural purity is again important here, as art and culture are dynamic and often built on appropriation and imitation.

My discomfort with the baskets which were sold at the Craft Centre was less to do with the possibility that Ovambo basketry styles could have evolved to more closely represent that of neighbouring regions and tribes, and more with the possibility that Western taste and market demand were affecting cultural practice, and the region's "tradition" was

being misrepresented. For the women involved in the production of these baskets, however, they were receiving an income, where previously they received none. One could hardly begrudge the women of rural Ovamboland the opportunity to derive an income from their talents in basketry. As Karin Le Roux, head of Mud Hut Trading states: "Market demand and business know-how helps to link skills and people with products". (Interview 2/12/02) Therefore this raises an interesting question of why I, as a foreign development worker, was uncomfortable with the idea that market demand was dictating cultural change. After all, cultural change can be brought about by much less democratic means, as has been identified previously. Was it the involvement of Western intermediaries, those involved in "product development" who were the go-betweens in the transaction between the tourists/consumers and the basket makers which caused my discomfort? Or was it more the fear that the producers of the baskets themselves were becoming commodities – means for delivering profit to the Craft Centre (run and administered by whites)?

> When culture … is viewed from the demand/supply angles, it is suddenly reduced to a tourism commodity … where cultural production is shaped by the wishes of the market, where the visit population is cast and animated in that image, and where the supply-side host and the demand-side guest interact. (Jafari 1996:43)

Or was my discomfort simply a sad acknowledgement of change resulting from economic necessity and a fear that goods which once existed simply as beautiful, practical tools were now becoming mere aesthetic artefacts, divorced from their original context and meaning? The exchange of tourist money for these baskets reflects the larger issue of the realities of consumer-driven capitalism – people produce in order to sell, and they sell so that they can buy something else. Latouche also laments this symptom of modernity: "By alienating Third-World peoples from their own culture, Westernization makes them, in that same sense, uncultured, turning them into passive consumers." (Latouche 1996:41) Naturally, *bargaining,* trade, or some form of exchange has taken place in rural Ovambo communities throughout history. However modern commodification of goods such as

baskets, and the autonomous economics of contemporary exchanges are quite different. Social and community accountability and personal, relational aspects are subtracted from the dealing. As Rist explains:

> Now people are considered free in relation to one another, and their isolated mutual dealings are mediated through objects whose autonomy is established by a market price insensitive to any individual intervention. (Rist 1997:17)

The beneficiaries of the culture-for-capital exchange in the case of Mud Hut Trading are the individual artists, the tourist-consumers, and the intermediary of Mud Hut Trading. The communities of the north central region can only be seen to benefit in this exchange through the circulation of capital, rather than the circulation of skills, creative talent and education. Without formal support given to cultural development nor governmental support for cultural opportunities to be promoted through educational syllabi, skills are rarely shared within the wider community, but are, instead, "lost" to commercial imperatives.

> We know that there are people who are having an understanding and great knowledge of the culture, but were not given formal opportunities to express themselves in their arts and culture, or identified and known by the majority of people. (Bernadette Mojekwu, interview 13/10/00)

Elders, and those with specific creative skills are often seen as cultural custodians, who have a responsibility to pass these skills on to younger generations. But with the introduction of capital and market tastes dictating stylistic changes, culture is no longer a community identifier shared inter-generationally, rather it becomes an individual asset. This has resulted from modernity's obsession with rationalism, for as Braverman states, "…capital seeks to displace labour as a subjective element and make it into an objective element in a productive process now conducted by management". (1974:159)

In identifying areas of cultural "loss", there is a very real threat of reverting to the preoccupations of cultural essentialism. This is not the intention of this presentation of issues associated with "loss". Perceived traditional cultural lacunae and the sense of loss felt by Ovambo people have been identified by the Ovambo people as areas where development is needed, and the recognition of specific cultural practices which have been "lost" can help determine future projects in such cultural development work. However the development of traditional practices which are under threat of extinction should not be the only object of the cultural development practitioner's attention, as to call such heritage conservation work "cultural development" is a misnomer. Rather it should stand as one of many areas of development, taking into consideration contemporary community cultural needs and aspirations. Paul Gilroy discusses, in investigating disputes over the contending values of traditional and universal cultures, that the pro-traditional side of this dispute has extended into the active reinvention of the rituals and rites of lost African traditions. This renaissance has seen the acquisition of African names and African garments being worn which, it could be argued, can provide a bulwark against the corrosive effects of racism, poverty, and immiseration on individuals and communities. Gilroy uses the ideas of Dr Maulana Karenga to illustrate the redemptive role of historical cultural re-articulation and reconstruction:

> As cultural nationalists, we believe that you must rescue and reconstruct African history and culture to re-vitalise African culture today. … [There is] the need for a reorientation of values, to borrow the collective life-affirming ones from our past and to use them to enrich our present. (Karenga in Gilroy 1993:193)

In the following sections on Change and Recuperation, I will demonstrate the importance of concepts of nostalgia and cultural remembrance in identity formation in Ovamboland, where reconstructions of tradition and pre-colonial cultural practices are important. This practice is undoubtedly a way of "rescuing" culture and history, and provides a proactive response to the absence of such activities in their traditional form in contemporary Ovambo society today. However, as will be argued in the next section, change, evolution

and the re-negotiation of culture, including what is appropriated, maintained, lost and indigenised is imperative in considerations of cultural development.

SECTION TWO

CHANGE

> … there are many consistent signs of resistance, survival and endurance. They bear witness to the vitality and creativity of these cultures: cultures which show themselves in the emergence of syncretic forms, appropriations, counter-cultures. (Latouche 1996:103)

Following on from the discussion associated with perceived cultural "loss", this section will address the dynamic nature of culture and identity in Ovamboland, contextualising aspects of culture which have contributed to the heterogeneous world of contemporary Ovambos. I will investigate the background of and reasons for cultural change and will address the terms on which this cultural change is contested. As Baumann (1997:4) writes, "There are no gains without losses, and the hope of a wonderous purification of gains from losses is as futile as the proverbial dream of a free lunch." I will also examine associated issues of power inherent in such debates including the role of the State, contemporary social issues, the proliferation of broadcast media and the effects of HIV as major contributors to cultural change in the region in the early 21st century. The notion of identity and identification is a crucial aspect of cultural consciousness and change. Three general issues which are considered in this section are: how/why has Ovamboland developed into the cultural pastiche it is today; on whose terms are cultures appropriated, incorporated, lost; and what are the effects of this process of change? To this end, the discursive forms of cultural change and the cultural meaning behind issues of modernisation and politics and power will be addressed, as these significantly affect the contestation of the terms of cultural change.

IDENTITY

In the previous section of this thesis which focussed on perceived cultural "loss", I highlighted the fact that invariably all Ovambos with whom I was in contact over three years, identified the colonial experience, or contact with early European missionaries, as the turning point in local cultural practice and expression. The perception of "loss" associated with this encounter which my interlocutors articulated during my research and interviews is, I believe, primarily to do with a sudden awareness of self as relative to these "powerful" European others, and subsequent altered sense of cultural identity. According to my informants, never before had cultural practices, customs, traditions, and other distinctly Ovambo expressions meant so much in the region as when confronted or threatened by outside cultures, due to them being questioned and seen as barbaric and lacking in civilsation as I addressed in the previous section. The same sentiment of "loss" was expressed with regard to South African occupation in the region, and is perceived to exist today in a climate of global cultural influences and the threat of homogeneity.

> Today, when 'Westernization' has become a pejorative word, there have reappeared on the stage subtler and more sophisticated means of acculturation. (Nandy 1998:xii)

In contemporary Ovamboland, identity continues to *become* as a result of reflection and comparison to "others". For some, this began with the colonial encounter, urban migratory labour, and political exile abroad, yet now such reflection and comparison exist in a much more complex situation brought about through mass communication, greater access to information about the world and its people and increased contact with citizens from a wide range of countries. To illustrate this, I refer again to Mbockoma Mungandjera's comments cited earlier:

> To be honest, sometimes I may not know myself until somebody tells me, or reminds me, or sort of makes me think otherwise about my culture. (Mbockoma Mungandjera, interview 25/11/02)

Diversity

As I have previously highlighted, contemporary Ovambos have multiplex identities, which should affect both government policies in issues of diversity, and also international intervention. By this I am referring to both economic penetration as well as development and humantarian aid programs. However such diversity does not sit comfortably with a government striving to promote national unity after years of division because of apartheid, nor foreign intervention, which seeks a unified, often essentialised model in order to justify neo-liberal motivations.

> Few interventions [are] designed to promote cultural change, and indeed the whole idea of promoting cultural change has been taboo. (Harrison 2000:xxx)

Steven Robins believes that NGOs are uncomfortable with the idea of complex and multi-faceted identities in developing countries, or what he terms, the "hybrid". At the risk of an essentialist stereotyping of "pure" and "detribalised", he believes that NGOs are less comfortable with the complex African who is imbued with a multiplicity of cultural and social layers, often the result of contact with the West. Even the most traditional African peoples have not been able to avoid encounters with the West through colonialism, Christianity, capitalist wage and indentured labour, donors, NGOs, academics, journalists, white farmers, tourists etc. Not only has this affected the way African people are perceived by each other and these outside countries, but also their own sense of identity. In the context of post-colonial, independent Namibia, the issue of identity becomes ever more complex and evolutionary, as has previously been presented. As Said (1993:xxviii) writes:

> Gone are the binary oppositions dear to the nationalist and imperialist enterprise. Instead we begin to sense that old authority cannot simply be replaced by new authority, but that new alignments made across borders, types, nations, and essences are rapidly coming into view, and it is those new alignments that now provoke and challenge the fundamentally static notion of *identity* that has been the core of cultural thought during the era of imperialism.

In the field of cultural development within the context of the socio-cultural effects of globalisation, significant tension exists between perceived cultural homogenisation and heterogenisation. A considerable amount of support for the homogenisation argument comes from media studies in notions of Americanisation and commodification. However, as Arjun Appadurai observes, what these arguments fail to consider is that at least as rapidly as forces from various metropolises are brought into new societies, "they tend to become indigenised in one or other way: this is true of music and housing styles as much as it is true of science and terrorism, spectacles and constitutions." (Appadurai in Featherstone 1993:295) The *native* is no longer available as the pure, unadulterated object of Orientalist enquiry, such as Tonjes' Namibia presented in the section on "Loss". She is contaminated by the West, dangerously un-Otherable. "So it is that the contemporary Orientalist blames living third world natives for their modernity, their inexcusable loss of the ancient non-Western civilisation, his loved object." (Chow 1993:2) In Ovamboland, Western-style popular culture is embraced and the right to consume it is vigorously defended. One example is the airing of American soap operas on Namibian television.

In the field of cultural development, when facing the question of cultural preservation and conservation versus innovation and dynamism, the answer perhaps lies in a synergy between the world of traditional cultural practice and articulation and that of contemporary popular culture, technology and global communication in all its various forms. This fusion need not necessarily water-down cultural identity, indeed it may serve to facilitate the perpetuation of certain cultural practices particularly through education.

An example of this in practice is a project involving the use of videos powered by generators to teach traditional dance in remote villages in Ovamboland in the absence of teachers, as was initiated by NCCI[50]. Or using the internet to teach learners about Namibian history, heritage, culture and tradition.

> In the youth in general, I think you have got the media's influence. Your traditional culture is, I think, being now looked upon and compared to what you see in tv or whatever media. You think your culture comes second. But I don't know how we're going to counter that! But we can at the same time use the tv and media to promote our own culture. (Ervast Mtota, interview11/7/00)

Beyond the facilitative role technology can play in the dissemination of culture, finding a relevant way to use culture and cultural identity in social policy development, economic and infrastructure planning in keeping with global practices adds another dimension to global identity, and the new global territory Ovambos find themselves in. Neither technology, nor the urgent development needs such as poverty, conflict, social fragmentation and material deficiency need be divorced from community cultural development. By allowing communities the opportunity to tell their stories, build their creative skills and be active participants in the development of their culture through whatever means are available, both "traditional" and "modern", such issues can be meaningfully addressed in an inclusive and accessible way. Much excitement and optimism exist surrounding the possibilities which technologies provide in facilitating cultural transmission, be it inter-generational, cross-cultural, urban – regional and so on.

> People should use the technology that globalisation has brought about, like television, to develop and educate people about their traditional culture. (Bernadette Mojekwu, interview 13/10/00)

[50] Further information regarding the North Central Cultural Initiative is provided in the Recuperation section of this thesis.

Despite the endurance of many aspects of traditional Ovambo culture through the most oppressive regimes, and against the fiercest odds, the socio-cultural effects of globalisation are seen by many Ovambos as offering the greatest threat to cultural "purity" and "integrity". Appadurai observes, that a state of purity is already lost and this should not necessarily be lamented in light of the marginalised circumstance it imposed. However, pre-dating colonialism cultures were still "infected" by other cultures, therefore cultural purity exists only within the hazy context of nostalgia. The question of "losing one's culture" becomes irrelevant when viewed from a global perspective, as culture is dynamic and is constantly evolving and mutating. Such change may involve appropriation such as a form of cultural change that involves consent and the desire to embrace symbols, icons, and affectations from the West and has not resulted from the use of force or threat, as in apartheid and colonialism. In Ovamboland, such indigenisation is also a form of cultural recuperation as images and identities are negotiated, appropriated and contested by Ovambos in order to claim the terms of cultural change. As previously mentioned, if cultural development in Namibia were to singularly concern itself with the preservation of traditional culture – its practice, artefacts etc, then it would reinforce an Orientalist's view of *other*. Culture would become essentialised and fossilised. This is a dangerous approach and would greatly disempower the Ovambo people, by denying them the right to choose – to adopt new practices, technologies, even ideologies which contribute to a vibrant and evolving culture.

This is reinforced in the following excerpt of a transcript from an interview with David Chiel, Program Director of the Ford Foundation in Namibia, in which he discusses the impact of popular culture and globalisation on cultural development in Namibia.

> …the extent that popular culture is coming through… when you think of it …television, movies, radio, music, fashion, through all that stuff – obviously it's going to change the culture. It's not going to eradicate it. That which is new and is associated and identified with the developed world is accorded tremendous value and prestige and esteem especially amongst younger people. And that happens. But by the same token, if

> people can appreciate that they have a culture and identity that's distinct and of their own, and still enjoy and choose to adopt the popular and globalised culture, I think that would be operable. That it doesn't eradicate, it doesn't supplant existing culture, but it's likely to change it. But it's a syncretic experience, it mutates, but it does it in a way that doesn't completely destroy or eradicate, but helps people adapt. And at the same time there is at least an appreciation of what came before and that it isn't devalued because it's not rap music, or it's not likely to be seen on MTV or whatever. I mean, I think that's what one hopes for but you know, to say or to think that that which exists or existed needs to be preserved at the expense of something new, I just don't think that's on. I don't think you can control those forces and it would be patronising to do so because … we make our own choices as individuals. You know – our cultures are changing, there's no doubt that … you're an Australian and Australian culture's changing – whatever Australian culture may be, or American culture. Why would we want to pickle it or putting into taxidermy someone else's culture? (David Chiel, interview 4/10/00)

Many Ovambos are not consciously in the habit of blindly and unquestionably accepting Western, particularly American culture and values. In my experience, Ovambos were selectively discerning and many exercised careful judgement of the positive and negative aspects of Western values. Besides, common cited examples of the proliferation of American culture, such as the availability of coca-cola and McDonalds, do not always precede unequivocal acceptance of the value systems behind such products. Although the Namibian Government has chosen the path of Western style liberal democracy, within the villages of Ovamboland there still exists considerable scepticism about the moral authority and unquestioned power of the USA after their military and financial support of the South African Defence Force (SADF) during the apartheid era and the Independence Struggle. This antagonism has been heightened by events such as the attacks on September 11th.

> Remember, we have suffered very much under the hands of the Americans. Although we condemn terrorism, we remember that the Americans too have been the terrorists. And the Namibian people have suffered. (Mbockoma Mungandjera, interview 9/8/02)

Like citizens of other countries around the world, Namibians – academics, intelligentsia and the general public - have called into question U.S. foreign policy and influence on Namibia, rather than just accepting constructed Western superiority and might. On 7th April, 2003, the front page of the national newspaper, *The Namibian*, showed protesters in Windhoek burning an American flag "to express their feelings over the US-led invasion of Iraq", indicating that many Namibians did not support the U.S. Government's aggressive intervention in Iraq, nor see it as a liberating mission.

HIV/AIDS and Gender Considerations

> There's a great crisis facing all of the Ovambo community today with HIV/AIDS and it won't destroy the community, nor will it destroy the culture, although many, many individuals will die and there will be great trauma within the community. It's going to affect the culture, it's going to effect it in ways that I don't think people have a notion of as yet. (David Chiel, interview 4/10/00)

One in four Namibians are HIV positive (Source: UNAIDS 2002). The highest rate of infection occurs in 25 – 29 year olds. One in three pregnant women in Windhoek are HIV positive, and in Ovamboland this figure is estimated to be closer to 50%.[51] The average life expectancy in Namibia is now 39 years due to the HIV situation. The social and cultural implications of these staggering figures cannot be underestimated. It affects every echelon of society. Contrary to what one would expect, most people in Namibia would agree that the current problem is not a result of lack of education or availability of condoms and safe sex information. Information surrounding the transmission of HIV is widely available and published around Ovamboland, from billboards to school syllabi.

[51] Source – Dr Femi Awe, epidemiologist - St Martins Hospital, Oshikuku.

Every high school is required to have condoms available for students and include education on HIV/AIDS in compulsory Life Skills classes. HIV community service announcements are regularly made on the radio and television. Every group in society, from children to mothers, truck drivers to adolescents, are targeted in specific campaigns around HIV prevention and social acceptance of those with the disease. Clinics which are spread throughout even the remotest parts of the region are well equipped with condoms. NGOs working specifically with issues surrounding AIDS[52] such as orphans, support and advocacy are active and visible in Ovamboland. *Sister Namibia*, an organisation which publishes a quarterly magazine[53], the only one of its kind, defends human rights and women's rights and strenuously publishes stories and articles on the empowering role women can take in the fight against HIV. The publication however, faces considerable opposition in the community for its stance on equal rights for women as well as for the homosexual community. Public statements have been made by Namibian Government officials stating that gay and lesbian people in Namibia have no rights under Namibian law and are liable to arrest, deportation or imprisonment on the grounds of their sexual identity[54]. *Sister Namibia* has largely been targeted in such attacks, and in 2000 its national headquarters were fire-bombed. One of the biggest contributing factors to the spread of HIV in Namibia is the continued cultural disempowerment of women.

Polygamy[55] is still widely practised in Namibia, despite most Namibians identifying themselves as Christian, yet the practice is rarely discussed. It is less common for multiple women to live on the same homestead, but a significant proportion of Ovambo men at all levels of society have a number of women or "girlfriends" apart from their wives, with whom they have children. So whilst the issue of establishing security of livelihood through polygamy is less relevant, the social tolerance of the practice continues, and this has significant ramifications on the spread of HIV. I believe that the

[52] Organisations such as UNAIDS and Catholic AIDS Action to name but two

[53] *Sister Namibia*'s publication dates depend largely on funding and whereas in 1998 it was a monthly magazine, by 2000 it was only being published bi-monthly or quarterly with hopes of more frequent publications.

[54] Home Affairs Minister, Jerry Ekandjo was repeatedly in the news in late 2000 for upsetting human rights and equal opportunities organisations for his controversial comments regarding homosexuals in Namibia.

[55] Not in the sense of many official wives as in pre-colonial times, rather one wife and other sexual partners.

reason polygamy is less overtly supported today is due largely to the spread of Christianity, and people wishing to avoid displaying the practice of pre-Christian traditions which were regarded as sinful paganism, as well as awareness of feminist movements which call for gender equity both in the home and the workplace. In other countries such as Uganda, government sponsored slogans which promote monogamy as the most effective weapon in fighting HIV have been successful in so far as maintaining a plateau in HIV infection rates. However in Namibia people of my aquaintance, including educated locals and development workers, generally believe that the President has not spoken out enough about HIV. Indeed the first time his name, picture or face was put to any HIV awareness campaign was in 2002 with the production of a poster by UNAIDS, UNICEF and the Ministry of Health.

Changing gender roles and gender equality in the West are concepts which Namibia attempts to "mimic", however cultural and traditional institutions in rural areas are proving difficult to break. Traditionally gender roles in Ovamboland have women doing the lion's share of domestic, familial and crop related duties. Men once were the hunters, however with the disappearance of game in the region since the 1960s, they are now limited to duties associated with goats and cattle, (depending on the wealth of the family) and the physical maintenance of the homestead. Women are considerably disadvantaged in what is an extremely patriarchal society, and, whilst education is equally available to girls, the attributes of humility, subservience and quiet dutiful compliance are highly regarded. This attitude exists not only in domestic expectations, but extends to sexual relations also. The alarming figures of HIV in Namibia indicate that the diseaseis mainly transmitted by sexual intercourse and perenatal transmission through pregnancy, birth and breast-feeding. (Source: UNAIDS[56]) Many Ovambos attribute the spread of HIV to the increased movement of people as a result of globalisation and blame the West for their current plight as more liberal Western moral codes are perceived to have risen in popularity.

[56] www.unaids.org/hivaidsinfo/statistics/fact_sheets/pdfs/Namibia_en.pdf

> Nowadays, and I believe in future, the Namibian culture has been and will continue to be invaded by a variety of un-Namibian cultures … such as sex practice before marriage….My call here is for all Namibians to start waging war against falling victims of sex mania…[57]

Their situation is further exacerbated by the unavailability[58] of anti-retroviral medication in the region.

> Let's take for example the drugs for AIDS, which are being produced in the Western world, which Africa cannot afford. But we are in dying need for those medicines which prolong the lives of our AIDS sufferers in Africa. But we don't have the money. Technology is moving much faster than a social conscience. (Tobias Kandanga, interview 12/9/00)

With the current transnational flow of information, Namibians are acutely aware of the life-prolonging drugs available for people living with HIV in developed countries, which adds to their feeling of alienation, stigmatisation and abandonment in this crisis. As well as the transnational flow of information, globalisation has made transnational movement not only easy, but essential in keeping up with the local and global economy. The spread of HIV is also affected, particularly in the north with the borders of Angola, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Zambia all connected to Namibia. The end of the Indpendence Struggle and increased economic opportunities have resulted in greater travel to and from these countries.

I do not mean to imply that AIDS is the result only of increased transnational movement of people and information, but wish to highlight that gender roles have been affected by the social impact of HIV. Once a very puritanical society, Namibians are suddenly faced with an onslaught of safe-sex messages, which have resulted in the discussion of

[57] Englebert Atshipara, Mayor of Oshakati, opening address UNAM Cultural Development Workshop October 1999.
[58] Unavailability is due to prohibitive costs incurred and by hospitals not stocking drugs such as AZT in rural hospitals.

previously taboo subjects in communities, churches, families, classrooms and so on. Advertising campaigns in AIDS prevention are increasingly directed at women, urging them to "Take Control". This promotion of female empowerment could be seen as a positive step towards dealing with the HIV situation, by providing role models in advertisements, and exposure to Western cultural notions of gender equality. Many women have embraced in theory the idea of "taking control" but in practice this is very difficult as it involves a dramatic change in traditional gender roles.

> We have gender policies which are endorsed by the government, which stipulate that some of the traditional practices should also be done away with. I'm sure that in terms of women's equality and all those sorts of things it will affect the culture of the Oshiwambo speaking people. You remember that a long time ago, the women were not important in the Oshiwambo tradition. Despite that, women have been doing a lot since before colonialism – women were looking after the whole family. So I feel that the balance between the Western culture and modern thought is going to do away with Oshiwambo culture. Who should be at the head of the family? That is also changing as everyone should now share equal powers. (Tobias Kandanga, interview 12/9/00)

Gender relations are extremely complex in Ovamboland, and issues which are apparently straightforward, such as consent or non-consent in sexual relations are blurred, because they are enmeshed with masculine power and authority. For example, is sex still considered consensual when a female high school student is given a new dress, or a bottle of beer in return for sleeping with her teacher? This scenario was not uncommon in rural Ovamboland, yet was largely un-punished except where the student became pregnant. At a high school not far from the one I was employed at for two years, the Principal was under investigation for rape. The charges were apparently only brought forward by the learner's parents because she had become pregnant, and financial compensation was being sought to support the child. Usually in such cases, teachers were not dismissed for rape, rather they were moved to administrative duties instead of classroom teaching. New

legislation allowed pregnant learners to complete their education and schools to accommodate students who became pregnant, however this was rarely practiced in my experience, with female learners simply not returning after school holidays. No child care facilities were provided at schools as this is still largely seen as the responsibility of the family of the "shamed" student. This is an example of the complexity of both Western and traditional values on gender attempting to reconcile in practice. Despite some measures being put in place to protect female students in the case of pregnancy, in keeping with Western notions of gender equality, insufficient disciplinary measures taken against teachers who engage in relationships with learners perhaps reflect the wider complexities surrounding female disempowerment in Namibia.

CASE STUDY:

PEP Guy

Contemporary Ovamboland provides numerous examples of the cultural paradoxes which exist when traditional community structures and lifestyles largely still exist, yet there also exists the desire to be seen as modern, cosmopolitan, and part of the capitalist system. In the absence of sophisticated marketing tools to bring the products and commodities of modernity to the often remote communities in Ovamboland, methods are indigenised in order to reach the same end – the circulation of capital in the exchange of goods.

(Refer to CD Appendix D for video footage)

In Oshikuku, most of the sounds around the village were of goats, chickens, donkeys, children, and neighbours greeting each other. Occasionally cars would be heard around the village, however it was generally a quiet place. Due to the extremely hot weather, the streets[59] of Oshikuku were not hubs of activity. One morning, however I heard a sound coming from outside my house and found a young man alone and wandering around with a megaphone, advertising (in Oshiwambo) a clothing store from the region called PEP. This image struck me as quite surreal, as there was no-one in the streets of the village to hear him, and he did not seem to necessarily have a determined route, he was just wandering with a megaphone and a PEP bib on to identify himself.

When I considered this image later, I found it quite poignantly illustrated the "foot-in-both-worlds" aspect of life in contemporary Ovamboland. Such an image focuses on the consumerism of modernity, through the advertising proselytism, yet using localised means, wandering around a village by foot almost like a town crier. This image also displays innovation through indigenised marketing and advertising strategies, utilising Western concepts of bringing advertising messages to absent consumers through

[59] Namibia has one major road (the B1) which is sealed, which goes from South Africa to Angola. In villages such as Oshikuku, there were demarcated sandy roads which evolved as people drove along them. Streets were not named, and often moved if someone built a house in the middle of one. Floods in the rainy season also resulted in different routes becoming roads, however there did not exist a formal town-planning policy on streets or roads as far as I could tell.

technology. Although in this case, without the guarantee of mass communication availability in the village, the technology was as simple as a megaphone.

Ironically, in much the same way as consumers in the West often become immune to advertising and indifferent to its messages despite marketing plans of penetrating one's home and life, the response in Oshikuku to the PEP guy was similar. Nobody appeared to be paying him too much attention and certainly nobody approached him with questions about the store he was promoting. I saw him a few hours later, still wandering alone around Oshikuku with his megaphone, announcing things in Oshiwambo to empty streets, and presumably an impassive and unresponsive audience! As unusual a sight as this was to me, my colleagues and neighbours made no mention of it later, which led me to believe that such marketing techniques were not uncommon or unexpected.

POWER AND POLITICS

> …ideas, cultures, and histories cannot be seriously understood or studied without their force, or more precisely their configurations of power also being studied. (Said 1979:5)

In investigating the discursive forms and contestations of cultural change in contemporary Ovamboland, significant attention must be paid to the role of government in such a process. As Said notes, the configurations of power must be understood in order to properly investigate and contextualise cultural understanding. This is particularly true of contemporary Ovamboland, as although modernisation suggests that power is moving away from the state and towards the economic sphere of transnational corporations, in the hearts and minds of Ovambos, government authority is absolute, and therefore the priorities and policies developed by the government play a significant role in the process of cultural identification and development. In this section I will address issues of power as they relate to cultural change. Politics and power are important themes in post-colonial investigations, as they attempt to explain the perceived complicity between the partners of the neo-colonial condition. As with the colonial encounter, these can take the form of both the show and application of force, as well as cultural reform. In the issue of cultural change and contemporary cultural identity negotiation, politics and power in Ovamboland presents both possibilities and limitations, as I will demonstrate through addressing the cultural implications of neo-liberalism.

SWAPO and Political Nationalism

Chidi Amuta (1997) presents Franz Fanon's position on national culture, as contained in *The Wretched of the Earth*, as a pattern of cultural evolution among the colonised both during and after the colonial era. This evolutionary schema, Amuta argues, advances three phases:

- The assimilationist phase, in which "the native intellectual gives proof that he has assimilated the culture of the occupying power".

- The *cultural nationalist* phase in which "the native intellectual remembers his authentic identity and kicks against attempts to assimilate him."
- The nationalist phase which is also the fighting phase in which "the native man of culture" after having tried to lose himself in the people and with the people, will on the contrary shake the people.

Amuta argues that the relevant response of the "colonised intellectual" is contained in the second phase, that of cultural reaffirmation characterised by unbridled traditionalism, and the recourse to resuscitate past glories is a defence mechanism by "native intellectuals to shrink away from that Western culture in which they all risk being swamped". (Amuta 1989:159) There is a common Ovambo saying, "oshigwana kashina omithigululwakalo osha kana" which translates "a nation without culture is lost".

Fanon's call to nationalism is an outdated concept in contemporary Ovamboland, where globalism is evident in many aspects of life and even in some cases in the practice of traditional culture. Further, nationalism, and the nation-state model when presented to non-Western cultures as their only entry into the global economy at the moment of political independence or "decolonisation", did not necessarily address their specific needs, and the price of this continues to be paid in the subsequent cycle of poverty and debt endured by developing nations. Nationalism in Namibia also contains complexities due to the number of different tribes which exist in the country. Disproportionate representation in government, and varied levels of funding towards services throughout the country contribute to widening chasms between tribal groups which make a united sense of nationalism in post-independent and culturally diverse Namibia a complex and difficult issue.

For many repatriated exiles as well as many others in post-independent Namibia, there exists difficulty in viewing objectively the government in power whose revolutionary ideas during the Struggle demanded absolute trust and faith in SWAPO. This has resulted in a situation where the distinction between party, government and State seems difficult to grasp. And yet, as Tapscott points out, "in a multi-party democracy and in pursuit of

national reconciliation, the government portrayed itself as the government of all Namibians." (Tapscott 1995:166) Memories of the united front which fought for SWAPO during the Independence Struggle, in terms of political, military, diplomatic and ideological support for the party, are still fresh for many, and this is somewhat exploited by the SWAPO Government which claims to represent all Namibian people. However as Leys and Saul explain, the broad representation of SWAPO in its early stages and later when given the full support of the United Nations, only came about due to a lack of alternatives. Once given official recognition by the UN, and therefore the international community, SWAPO became constructed (accurately or not) as the voice of all Namibians, and all Namibians who opposed South African occupation had no alternative but to defer to SWAPO. During the years of the Independence Struggle, Namibians in exile were dependent on SWAPO for all of their material, political, educational, physical and social needs, and those within Namibia put their faith and trust in the party as a liberating force of change.

> … after intensive lobbying, the UN General Assembly recognised SWAPO as the 'sole and authentic representative of the Namibian people'. From this point on most Namibians in exile became almost totally dependent on SWAPO. In any case of conflict between individual members of SWAPO and the leadership, governments sympathetic to SWAPO, UN agencies and non-governmental solidarity organisations all naturally tended to defer to the views of the SWAPO leadership. To do otherwise would have seemed to question an authority that had been conferred on the SWAPO leaders by the international community, not just one they claimed for themselves. (Leys and Saul 1995:7)

Much of this dependence and deference to SWAPO has remained long after independence, and there are sentiments of nationalism in attitudes towards the government and ministerial offices in Namibia.

> There's a history, and certainly it's manifest still today, of relying on government for example to deliver the goods. And certainly in the field of culture and education that's also the case. In other words, not only do they expect government to facilitate things, but in a way they are reluctant to play too autonomous or independent a role without government being at their side, lest they anger or alienate some part of the bureaucracy or maybe some part of the political class here. (David Chiel, interview 4/10/00)

As this deference extends to concepts of responsibility, I will discuss some of these issues in reference to the role of the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture in cultural development work in Ovamboland. But it is important to note that the combination of years of oppression and disempowerment at the hands of the South African apartheid regime, and the democratically elected harbinger of change, SWAPO, has played an extremely important role in Namibians' passivity / dependence / reluctance to "rock the boat" of independence they fought for. Similarly, the Marxist idealism of the Struggle has been somewhat compromised by the elected government's acceptance of a Western-style system of capitalism and democracy. As Tapscott observes, the government's decision to opt for a 'mixed economy' – in practice a capitalist economy – although in large part dictated by circumstances (Namibia's dependent economic status, and the collapse of support from socialist countries in particular), set the parameters in which the new government must operate. Upon independence, SWAPO controlled the political arena but not the economy, which continued to be dominated by outside forces.

> While a formally democratic system has indeed emerged in Namibia, it seems fair to say that little popular empowerment has been realised. … the SWAPO leadership seems to have felt it had little choice but to accept a 'neo-colonial' niche within the regional and global economic system. The almost inevitable complement to a neo-colonial economics is a 'neo-colonial politics' which limits popular demands for radical social and economic policies. (Leys and Saul 1995:4)

Apart from the history of SWAPO in the region of Ovamboland and the significance of the political party heralding from the region, the strong political support SWAPO enjoys today in the north is largely due to a continued lack of genuine alternative opposition parties. The 1999 elections saw the newly formed Congress of Democrats (CoD)[60] gaining some support in Ovamboland. This was the first time a strong, Ovambo-led opposition had presented itself as a genuine alternative to SWAPO in the region, however their campaign was difficult, fraught with violence, slander and preposterous rumours. At most public CoD rallies in the north, stones and objects were thrown at party members, and according to newspaper reports, party members were beaten. One teenage girl from my village was severely beaten by her own family for having been seen at a CoD rally. CoD ended up winning 10.7% of the votes in the 1999 election, and whilst a small figure in comparison to SWAPOs 76.8%, it still established them as the main opposition party. This situation highlights the strong loyalties and memories which exist in the region and in many ways illustrates the absolute deference to SWAPO. Liberation songs which glorify SWAPO and Sam Nujoma are still sung at social gatherings in Ovamboland:

> "Sema ouli peni elule pandela
> elule pandela olya Namibia"[61]

Identification and Post-Independence Choices

> Although Africa's last colony was now independent, Europeans continued to flock to the continent in search of its natural wealth and beauty. Only instead of guns and bibles, we now came with cameras and cheque books. (Lush 1993:304)

The SWAPO Government made a number of choices about the direction of the country following the end of South African occupation, apartheid rule and the Cold War. Most

[60] Ex-SWAPO hero and former High Commissioner to Britain, Ben Ulenga established the Congress of Democrats as a major opposition party to SWAPO, with membership support coming from all regions of Namibia. The party was seen by some as the first genuine threat to SWAPO sovereignty over Ovamboland.
[61] "Sam, where are you to raise the flag? To raise the flag of Namibia"

significantly, Namibia chose to adopt a liberal Western style of democracy as its political ideology. I will address this issue and the implications it has had for subsequent SWAPO governance later in this thesis, but it is important to note that the choice of specifically Western paradigms (language, education, capitalist values etc) upon independence also relates to Ovambo notions of identity.

> Before independence, and during the Liberation Struggle, we had two blocks. Either you are with the East or you are with the West. And you cannot say "I am neutral" you must be with one of them. So now whether we say "socialist", whether we say "communist", whether we say "capitalist", we must say. We must be somewhere. Where are we? What do our people want? What is good for the Namibians? Maybe we might have chosen Western democracy because it was going to create less conflict, both nationally and internationally, than maybe choosing the other. (Mbockoma Mungandjera, interview 25/11/02)

There was, upon independence, a desire to identify with the liberal ideals of Western democracy and freedoms such as self-determination and individualism which had been denied to Namibians since colonisation. This alignment with the West extended to the choice of English as the new official language. This solved the problems that would have been created had Afrikaans or German been made the official language because of their association with earlier oppressive regimes. However it also meant an overt affiliation with a language which though presumably advantageous for trade, investment and economic ties with the West, had never been taught or spoken before. Fairweather (2001:22) writes that the adoption of English as the official language of Namibia meant that the language became associated "with progress and cosmopolitanism, and the benefits of national independence."

Democracy in post-colonial Africa models itself on the West, but it also needs to adapt to and incorporate local specificities in terms of cultural, ideological, historical, geographical, social, tribal and political distinctiveness. Bhabha terms this desire to be

almost the same, as "colonial mimicry". In Namibia, the theory of mimicry, or "double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation, and discipline, which 'appropriates' the Other as it visualizes power" (1997:153) can be applied to both the earlier colonising agents (the missionaries) who sought to Christianise and civilise the natives, whom they never saw as fully equal to whites, and also the newly elected government. The priorities of post-independent Namibia reflect what Bhabha calls the "metonymy of presence" – the concept of being "almost the same but not white". This is the difference between "being English and being Anglicized"(1997:157) or in the case of contemporary Namibia, the difference between being Western and being Westernised. A change as radical as the adoption of Western liberal capitalism and democracy was always destined to take years of fine tuning, involving constant observation and appropriation of the practices and policies of the West. It is not surprising then that this trend may also contribute to feelings of subordination and ultimately potential antagonism towards the nations who appear to have perfected Western capitalist systems, while the promise of democracy fails to improve the lives of most Namibians. Nandy writes of such a trend in India, where

> In the colonial culture, identification with the aggressor bound the rulers and the ruled in an unbreakable dyadic relationship. The Raj saw Indians as crypto-barbarians who needed to further civilize themselves. It saw British rule as an agent of progress and as a mission. Many Indians in turn saw their salvation in becoming more like the British, in friendship or in enmity. (Nandy 1998:7)

The continued presence of Western development organisations and foreign corporations in Namibia could also be seen as contributing to such feelings of subordination, by reinforcing the superiority of Western models. As Latouche contends:

> Neo-colonialism, with its technical assistance and humanitarian giving, has contributed much more to deculturation than did colonialism in all its original brutality. (Latouche 1996:57)

Neo-colonialism is not a situation which is limited to the fields of economic and social policies. The implied authority of the West has a dramatic effect on cultural policies and identity. As I will address later in this section, Namibian president Sam Nujoma's recent attempt to give the country's broadcast media a more nationalistic agenda and local content as well as government funded material on the tv and radio, has been met with varying support. In theory people agreed, and were excited about seeing more Namibians on television, more locally produced dramas and magazine style shows. However the realisation that the price to be paid was losing American soaps caused a national revolt.

Decentralisation and Co-ordination

Colonialism and later modernisation found political and economic power in the metropoles. On a national level in Namibia, power is still largely seen as being found in the urban centres and specifically in the capital city of Windhoek. This notion and the larger realities in terms of resources and services, introduce an interesting dialectic surrounding issues of decentralisation and co-ordination, particularly as these are two of the greatest challenges facing cultural development in Namibia. The centralisation of resources and services in Windhoek can largely be attributed to the continuation of existing social, economic and class differentiation post-independence, and this means that a disproportionate amount of public funds is spent on urban areas. This, according to Tapscott, shows that the government has "done nothing to redress one of the most glaring inequalities of the colonial system … [spending public funds] to service in the first instance a largely urban elite". (Tapscott 1995:164)

Centralised arts bodies such as the National Theatre of Namibia, the National Art Gallery, the College for the Arts, the Warehouse Theatre, the John Mwafangeyo Art Centre, National Archives, as well as organisations like the Franco Namibian Cultural Centre and the British Council are all located in Windhoek – 800kms away from Oshakati, the largest town of Ovamboland. They are not only geographically removed from the Ovambo people, but most Ovambos are not even aware of their existence. Attempts by the College for the Arts to decentralise their services and send teachers or

tutors to schools in the north have met with minimal success, largely due to the absence of a Ministry of Basic Education and Culture Subject Co-ordinator for the Arts in that region (with most other regions in the country having such a position). There is also a lack of appropriate facilities, and a general lack of knowledge about the College and the services it provides.

> The College is really geared for the decentralisation of our services, but unfortunately in Ovambo we do not have a fixed centre like in some areas. (Ervast Mtota, interview 11/7/00)

The resources which are available to the residents of Windhoek, are significant in terms of training, performances, exhibitions, courses and so on. It should be noted that the vast majority of white Namibians, who comprise less than 5% of the population, live in the capital. Although in post-apartheid Namibia, Namibians enjoy freedom of movement and the right to live anywhere in the country, property in Windhoek is prohibitively expensive for most Namibians. Urban migration to Windhoek usually finds most black Namibians still living in the former township of Katutura[62] – a sprawling area of shacks and shanties on the outskirts of the city.

> Beyond the old compound stretched row upon row of township shacks … on and on as far as the eye could see… built with cheap concrete bricks and a sheet of corrugated iron stuck on top to make a roof. Outside was a tap, the only source of water for the household. … It was not uncommon for twelve or more people to share the four rooms. (Lush 1993:5)

The hills of the region mean that Katutura is not visible from the affluent suburbs of Windhoek, and David Lush suggests that this was a deliberate town-planning move. Almost without exception, the relatives of my Ovambo friends, colleagues and associates who had migrated to Windhoek actually lived in Katutura. Despite the lively and

[62] Katutura is an Otjiherero word meaning "the place we do not want to settle". The original residents were forced to move there under apartheid from the Old Location area which was deemed too close to white suburbs.

dynamic atmosphere of the area, there is high unemployment and high crime, and it paints a starkly different picture to the more affluent parts of Windhoek.

The majority of formal cultural presentations, performances, festivals and events which take place in Windhoek are of European or imported origin. In my three years in Namibia, the African performances, presentations and exhibitions I attended were most often imported from other African countries such as Zimbabwe and Botswana, which have a greater tradition of performing, exhibiting and selling local traditional artefacts than Namibia. The prevalence of European culture over local culture might reflect the preferences of the main consumers of these cultural products – the wealthy whites who live in Windhoek. This Eurocentrism is not surprising given that funding for such arts and cultural performances usually comes from European funding bodies such as the Franco-Namibian Cultural Centre or the British Council. In 2000, I attended a "Film Festival" funded by the British Council in Windhoek on the assumption that it would feature African films. Instead it featured the work of European directors such as Lars von Trier. Another British Council funded cultural anomaly was the tour of the English acappella group "Black Voices" in 2000. I happened to be in Windhoek when they were on tour at what I can only imagine was great expense. Ticket prices were quite expensive and performances were held in the heart of Windhoek, consequently the audience was largely white. Workshops and regional tours outside of Windhoek were not part of the tour.

This centralisation of resources and subsequent inaccessibility to the Ovambo people reflects Leela Gandhi's claim that there exists "an absolute schism between intellectual activity and political realities". (Gandhi 1998:56) Although on paper, it would seem that Namibia should offer great opportunities for Namibian artists and cultural practitioners, in reality, given that the majority of the population have never and probably may never visit the capital, where such cultural opportunities and resources exist, this is not the case. An important question is whether considerably more aid and effort by donors, sponsors and government is being put into visible cultural development, that is developing art and culture for show and for sale, rather than as part of every day life, cultural identity,

tradition and the promotion of social unity in diversity. As was shown in the section on "Loss", the Rössing Foundation[63] have put considerable effort into *Mud Hut Trading*, which generates employment and financial opportunities for women of different tribes in Namibia. This appears to be an example of how local rural communities can benefit from the production and generation of traditional cultural artefacts, whilst at the same time participating in capitalist exchange. However there are significant shifts away from tradition in the designs of the baskets, types of materials used, and so on, so as to cater to tourist tastes. This means that these *traditional artefacts* actually bear little resemblance to the baskets and jewellery used and worn in the rural communities from which they originated. Although an essentialist view of culture is dangerous, so too is falsely claiming essentialism or authenticity. These issues will be further discussed in the section on Recuperation.

In the context of the centralisation of arts and cultural education, and resources in post-colonial Africa, the perpetuation of Eurocentric practices, training and tradition in countries such as Namibia highlights the importance of interventions made by writers such as Achebe. He argues that African art should have its rules and standards based on African cultures and aesthetics, and not simply reinforce the humanist attitudes of post-Enlightenment European thought. (Ashcroft 1997:61)

The reluctance to decentralise the arts is by no means unique to Namibia – indeed current national policies in federal funding opportunities in the arts in Australia are only just beginning to support regional community cultural development, with the Australia Council restructuring their funding allocations to benefit grass roots organisations and community based cultural activity. However, such stratification of urban and rural, or the cosmopolitan and the provincial, reinforces the centre-margin dialectics of power inherent in the modernisation process. These in turn have dramatic ramifications regarding access to resources and creative tools which assist in the negotiation of cultural identity.

[63] The Rössing Foundation and Mud Hut Trading will be further investigated in the section on Recuperation.

Political Change = Social Change?

One of the major driving forces behind national consciousness and the emergence of anti-imperialist movements in the 1950s and 1960s was Marxist ideology. Marxism provided theoretical frameworks and concepts which inspired and mobilised people in their struggles against oppression and imperialism. Namibia, like many African countries at crucial points in the de-colonisation process was no exception. SWAPO used Marxism as an extremely powerful tool in the political education of Namibians to give them a language and ideological basis on which to build resistance to the apartheid regime. Marxism offered SWAPO an ideology of commonalities in the human condition such as a shared opposition to the privileges of history, race, or class; and a negation of the equivalence of property and political power. It functioned as an idealistic text for a new beginning.

However, whilst a useful philosophical tool in identifying the class differentiations which existed under the oppressive regime, Marxist theory implied an entirely new social and political structure after independence. As Mudimbe writes, "Most African Marxist projects … ignored the complexity of their own epistemological roots and thus erased the paradoxes of their own discourse and practice." (Mudimbe 1994:41) Great expectations had been building over the years of the Independence Struggle, however the new government's ability to deliver on issues of social and economic equality was severely compromised by its decision, perhaps unavoidable, to adopt a democratic (capitalist) system which inextricably tied Namibia to Western hegemony in terms of aid and trade. Frantz Fanon writes of this common post-colonial phenomenon,

> National consciousness, instead of being the all-embracing crystallization of the innermost hopes of the whole people, instead of being the immediate and most obvious result of the mobilization of the people, will be in any case only an empty shell, a crude and fragile travesty of what it might have been. (Fanon 1977:119)

This forsaking of ideals in order to enter into a neo-colonial relationship with Western powers is almost inevitable as newly independent countries such as Namibia have practically no economic power. This trend usually results in the replication of the social and productive relations established under colonialism. According to Fanon, newly independent nations, in seeking to replace the outgoing power, will "send out frenzied appeals for help to the former mother country." (Fanon 1977:120) Tapscott agrees:

> Namibia reflects many of the characteristic patterns of a neo-colonial state, including continued economic dependence on its former colonizers, accelerated social differentiation amongst the formerly subordinated population, and the emergence of a new elite, elsewhere described as an organizational or bureaucratic bourgeoisie. (Tapscott in Leys & Saul 1995:153)

The promise of self-determinism, which was an integral part of active colonial resistance in the Independence Struggle, was severely compromised by the need to defer to former oppressors for assistance in the process of nation building and the economic and social development of the country. This situation created an uneasy and antagonistic relationship with former colonisers, because of the unavoidable associations with the hegemonic power structures of colonialism. For example, Germany is the largest international provider of development aid and foreign investment in Namibia. Whilst the government diplomatically expresses gratitude for this situation, there are occasional outbursts that suggest that the Namibian Government is not quite comfortable with this situation of dependency. A recent example televised in Namibia and widely reported in the international press was a heated interview between German journalist Thomas Knemeyer of *Die Welt* and President Sam Nujoma. Nujoma was visibly agitated by the interview, despite the somewhat benign and non-provocative subject matter. His responses alternated between gratitude,

> We have a good relationship with Germany … we are no longer dealing about what happened in the past. We leave the sad history behind and

> forge ahead with co-operation in terms of resources … and enter into joint ventures for mutual benefits, for the Namibians as well as for the Germans."

and accusation,

> It's our land. We fought for it. You Germans … why should you want to come and poke your nose into our affairs? We Namibians know precisely what we want and how to implement our plans in this country. (Nujoma interview transcript, *Mail & Guardian* 6th December 2002:16)

I will investigate further the politics of international development activity in Namibia in the section on Recuperation, however the exchange between the President and Thomas Knemeyer is mentioned here to illustrate some of the complexities and sensitivities which exist surrounding international intervention. Latouche writes of the almost naïve complicity in which neo-colonial developing countries find themselves:

> By denouncing economic imperialism, Western radicals were really pursuing the Westernization of the world by other means – while their rivals in the Third World, by throwing themselves body and soul into the battle for development, were deepening that same process. (Latouche 1996:53)

Marxism also contains contradictions with regard to the exploitative relationship between the West and its others under colonialism. As Jameson (1998) concedes, Marxism neglected to address sympathetically the historical, cultural and political alterity of the colonised world and, in so doing, it relinquished its potential appeal to postcolonial thought. Nevertheless, an important area of investigation in contemporary Namibia, despite its neo-colonial links to the West, is the history and usage of Marxist ideology for nationalism and anti-colonial resistance. In Namibia, Marxist revolutionary rhetoric is still in common usage and it is not unusual, 13 years after independence, for President

Sam Nujoma to be addressed as "Comrade" both formally and informally by fellow Namibians. Similarly, the term is used extensively in Ovamboland as an affectionate term of solidarity and friendship. Colleagues in the workplace are referred to as comrades, and the SWAPO Youth League, many of whom were very young during the Independence Struggle, are extremely fond of using revolutionary grandiloquence at public rallies and in press releases. Why do people in Namibia still hold firmly to a discourse which has been forsaken and replaced by liberal Western democracy characterised by capitalism? Mudimbe suggests that this, and the "remarkable failure of the Marxian paradigm" can be explained by recognising that:

> … the rhetoric and ideology of Marxism was based on the fundamental equality of people, however the body of discourses used was vague, unsettled, proposed but never really named, indicated but always absent, dramatized but, at every turn, covered by confusing adjectives that kept it veiled. (Mudimbe 1994:44)

The government's decision upon independence to adopt a policy of national reconciliation in forging a new national identity was crucial in overcoming the racial, ethnic and class differentiations as well as the endemic political enmity and social distrust which developed during colonial rule. However, in practice national reconciliation also meant the reinforcement of the *status quo* "by protecting the pre-independence gains of the minority, by reproducing existing relations of production and by legitimizing patterns of social differentiation that had existed in the colonial era." (Tapscott 1995:162) The gap between rich and poor remained. The white settler community and the tiny black elite which had emerged under the interim governments leading up to independence made up just 5% of the population, yet generated 71% of the GDP. The bottom 55% of the population, characterised, for example, by the subsistence farmers and migrant labourers of Ovamboland, generated just 3% of the GDP. (Source: USAID) Independent Namibia remains a country with one of the largest gaps between rich and poor in the world today. This could explain the reluctance within the Ovambo community to completely jettison Marxist ideology, despite their neo-liberal reality. It also serves as a reminder of an era of

socialist solidarity and fighting for the common good, and – as has been shown in the conscious continuation of certain practices such as subsistence farming – indicates a level of uncertainty or distrust in liberal capitalism.

Accountability and Responsibility for Cultural Development

Along with the significant loyalty to SWAPO in Ovamboland, comes an expectation that social and cultural needs of the region will be met by the government. In the section on Recuperation, I will discuss the importance of and major players in cultural development activity in north central Namibia. Both local and international involvement will be addressed, as the mere presence of outside "players" has a considerable impact on the cultural fabric of the area, because their influence can covertly promote Western style democracy as the model followed by wealthy countries. Locally, the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture are in a powerful position due to the popular support and trust invested in the SWAPO Government by the majority of people in Namibia, and therefore the assumed responsibility for cultural development is seen as lying with them. I will now address the important role the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture play in the negotiation of terms of cultural change due to their power and influence in the community.

Ministry of Basic Education and Culture

Referring back to Said's quote on the importance of investigating configurations of power in order to understand culture, in the minds of many Ovambos, the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture (MBEC) is believed to play an important role in supporting and developing cultural initiatives in the region. In my research, this was usually articulated in very general terms, with very little detail given of specific projects or activities which the Ministry had instigated in the development of culture, despite the mandate suggested by the inclusion of "Culture" in the Ministry's portfolio.

As has been noted earlier, SWAPO are an extremely influential force in Ovamboland. Government ministries, therefore, hold extraordinary authority and power in the minds of the people, and the MBEC is no exception. Whilst citizens in most developed countries

enjoy the privilege of actively challenging government policy, people in post-colonial countries like Namibia, where democracy is in its infancy, are reluctant to rock the boat. The SWAPO Government achieved a majority vote of over 90% in Ovamboland in the 1999 elections. People seem willing to accept the government's priorities as far as education and support of the arts is concerned. The government has not put any mechanisms in place in school curricula to cater for education in any aspect of Namibian arts and culture. The responsibility for teaching the cultural heritage of the country is left up to individual teachers who may implement creative activities in arts and culture or access available resources such as the College for the Arts outreach program. Thanks to the work of inspired individual teachers and supportive principals in Ovamboland, informal education in areas like basketry and dance is being provided in some schools. However these are not Ministry initiatives. Rita-Louise Hofmeyr describes the difficulties associated with attempting to implement arts in schools without having formal recognition and support for arts in the school curriculum, and the effort that is required from people involved in the College for the Arts decentralisation program to address this:

> Nothing will really improve until principals are fairly sensitised to the fact that arts should be on the curriculum … the structures are not in place in the Regional Offices. [Our program] would not have worked if there wasn't a very dedicated team back home here who was also convinced of the qualities of arts and the importance of arts. I've got the most amazing team of people that surround me, I always say I'm flanked by angels! It's not to sound patronising – it's really an astonishing group of people who have learnt through the years how to stretch resources and how to adapt to situations and how to transform things and really drive things. (Rita-Louise Hofmeyr, interview 12/7/00)

At the UNAM Cultural Development Workshop in October 1999, in response to a number of possible activities for cultural development, participants were asked to identify who should be responsible for such activities. The activities were based on the participants own ideas, and included suggestions such as:

- professional recording of music in order to conserve music and culture
- greater performance opportunities and promotion of local music
- training for musicians, youth etc to develop skills
- active participation of communities in dance development
- greater opportunities for dance presentations and demonstrations
- liaison with dancers, artists in other regions
- recording research in arts and crafts and publication
- training and skill-share development in arts and crafts

In response to each of these suggested areas of development, the MBEC was identified unanimously as the responsible body. This is despite the fact that community organisations, individuals and collectives were probably far more appropriate to carry out such activities. This overwhelming belief that the Ministry bore sole responsibility for promoting such development shows the local attitude towards government responsibility which exists in the community.

> [teaching] has to be a much more open experience … for example principals and teachers welcome parents into the classroom and say "look, you know a lot about culture, can you come in and tell the students about what it was like 20, 30 years ago when the *kaspirs*[64] first arrived? Can someone tell us about a story that they learnt from their grandparents and their grandparents and their grandparents? Can someone come in and do a dance? (David Chiel, interview 4/10/00)

Gramsci (1957), in his discussions on hegemony, sees power as being achieved through a combination of coercion and consent, and stresses the incorporation and transformation of ideas and practices belonging to those who are dominated, rather than simple imposition from above. In a newly independent country, in which the government comprises a party and a cause for which the Ovambo people fought and died, it is

[64] Armed personnel carriers which the South African Defence Force used during the Independence Struggle

understandable that people are reluctant to alienate themselves from such a powerful force. As Ahmad writes:

> There are hundreds of nationalisms in Asia and Africa today; some are progressive, others are not. Whether or not a nationalism will produce a progressive cultural practice depends, to put it in Gramscian terms, upon the political character of the power bloc which takes hold of it and utilises it, as a material force, in the process of constituting its own hegemony. (Ahmad 1987:5)

As a result, despite both my informants and the members of the community in which I lived and worked, voicing concerns regarding Ministry disinclination to proactively engage in new cultural initiatives and activities in the region, there was a reluctance to go on record as critical of the government on this same issue. Informal discussions, particularly with artists and cultural practitioners, revealed deep dissatisfaction with the level of government support of arts and culture, yet also largely revealed a continued allegiance to and belief in the SWAPO Government.

Geographical Legacies

As well as State power playing an important role in the process of cultural change, the power of place is significant in addressing access to creative institutions and services which contribute to the determination of cultural identity. The geographical legacies which have endured in contemporary Namibia are a reminder of the existence of highly centralised, powerful metropoles in the past. Despite the contemporary government's policy of national reconciliation, the reality of the old systems of colonial hegemony and apartheid still endure. Ovamboland, a former homeland under apartheid rule, was divided after independence into four political regions[65] and the old government structures based on traditional tribal regions were replaced by a newly created system of elected regional councils and governors. Traditional leaders retained their positions, and were responsible for the ambiguous area of "traditional law". The reality is, however that most of the

[65] The regions, known as "the four O's" are Oshana, Ohangwena, Omusati and Oshikoto.

towns are still divided along racial lines, with whites living in leafy comfort and the majority of (though by no means all) black and coloured Namibians staying in other locations (former townships). The country itself is still divided by the Red Line which separated the white 'Police Zone' from the black homelands in the years of South African and German rule. The line now exists as a veterinary control point but, in many ways marks the divide between the two worlds – that of the wealthy white landowners and businessmen in the south and that of the black subsistence farmers in Ovamboland. (See *Fig.3.1*)

After independence in 1990, the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture (later the Ministry of Basic Education, Youth, Sport and Culture) was established. Not surprisingly, given the number of portfolios falling under one ministry, official legislation as well as policy and capacity building in the area of cultural development was never clearly established[66]. This is highlighted by the centralisation of the Ministry's services, particularly in regard to arts and culture. There is little interest in the decentralisation and provision of services to the north with all opportunities, facilities, and national arts organisations based in the south. Although Namibia has a National Gallery, a National Theatre, College of the Arts, and numerous other arts and cultural institutions, these are outside the knowledge and beyond reach of the Ovambo people living in the north. The geographical centralisation of such services largely reflects the priorities of former dispensations. As mentioned, the north held little interest for the German colonial authorities, except for evangelising, and the South African regime was mainly interested in the region as a thoroughfare to Angola.

As the colonisers drew up borders and maps, which essentially divided tribes both geographically and culturally, and the regime of apartheid limited the movement of the people in Ovamboland, there was a limited amount of space available. This meant that overgrazing and desertification caused devastating environmental problems and rendered the land almost barren. Soil is very sandy and the rains in the *efundja* or seasonal floods

[66] At the time of researching, an official policy on arts and culture had not been adopted by the Namibian Government.

are barely enough to sustain agriculture. (See *Fig. 3.2)* Although such effects appear to be primarily environmental and agricultural, they have also manifest social and cultural impacts. More time must be spent on cultivating the land, which detracts from other social and cultural rituals, meetings, *ohungis,* celebrations etc. There are few trees, and therefore homesteads have been modified to compensate for the lack of wood, and the tradition of carving (musical instruments, tools, furniture etc) is now scarcely practised. These European-imposed borders have also separated members of the same tribe and the same families, particularly those belonging to Kwanyama. With half of the Kwanyama tribe living in Angola, which only recently emerged from a tragic and brutal civil war lasting almost 30 years, trade and social interaction between Kwanyama people has been affected. A tangible example of this is *Thaboliza,* a local curio shop specialising in traditional beads which are important for traditional *onyoka*[67] and *oshindjendje*[68]*,* as well as traditional tools, carvings, skins and other local artefacts still in circulation for use or collection. The owner of *Thaboliza*, a very elderly lady, told me that she no longer goes across to Angola (which was once the northern part of Kwanyama) to buy her beads and so on, because it is too dangerous. The trade journey she has been making all her life is now too unsafe because of landmines.

[67] *Onyoka* are traditional necklaces made from either snail or ostrich shells and dyed with ochre. They are of great traditional significance at all major customs through Ovambo life.
[68] *Oshindjendje* are worn around the waist of unmarried women who have not had children. From birth, babies are adorned with *oshindjendje*, which comprise usually eight strands of beads. They are not removed until the girl marries or gets pregnant.

Fig. 3.1 – Ovamboland sign at the Red Line

Fig.3.2 – Homesteads are built on dry, sandy, rain-dependent land

Fig. 3.3 – Centre of Oshakati, the unofficial capital of Ovamboland

GLOBALISATION

> Industrialisation is the high road to the delights of Western living standards and the mirages of its power. It is universally attempted, whatever the cost. Of course it involves the destruction of previous economic structures (handicrafts, rural communities); and those structures were not just neutral means of producing consumer goods, they were very deeply associated with the grounding beliefs and myths of the societies concerned. (Latouche 1996:62)

Local Responses to Globalisation

Ovamboland is presently at a fascinating period in history, where many cultures, those of the developed West, and traditional Ovambo customs, practices, lifestyles and beliefs, are engaging head to head. In many ways Ovamboland is a cultural crucible where these worlds are forced together due to the undercurrents generated by globalisation. Images, objects and ideas from America and Europe are thrust upon Ovambos via the mass media, which penetrates even the most rural and isolated areas. Add to this the influence of Finnish missionaries (still apparent in the "traditional" dress, and Christian names of many Ovambos) South African occupation (with the availability of *biltong* and *boerwors*[69] at local supermarkets) and German colonialism (in street names such as "Kaiser Wilhelm Strasse"), and the heterogeneity of the cultural landscape becomes ever more clear.

Namibia is no longer shut off from the popular culture of consumer-driven commodification in the "global village". The term *coca-colonisation* can be taken literally in a country where, although water may not be available, one is never more than a couple of kilometres from a cuca shop selling Coke[70]. The scarcity of water is an

[69] *Biltong*, or dried meat and *Boerwors*, or sausages are popular food snacks in South Africa.

[70] As a teacher, I was surprised to come across the words "cocacolastic" or "coketastic" when marking essays. I was informed that, due to the prevalence and popularity of coca-cola, sprite and fanta, students assumed the word "fantastic" was derived from a soft drink.

ongoing problem in Ovamboland. In my time in Namibia, it was not uncommon for me to be without water for up to two weeks and unable to shower, flush my toilet or turn on a tap, yet I could still surf the internet. Such economic and cultural paradoxes are common in Namibian life. Ovambos may wear "Titanic" t-shirts, although the nearest cinema is 800kms away[71]. In 1999 when I asked my Year 12 learners about their favourite film stars, they had never heard of the cinema. Yet they had pictures of Leonardo di Caprio pasted on the front of their exercise books, cut out from South African gossip magazines. This fusion of cultures, albeit often subconscious, supports the notion that "the new global cultural economy has to be understood as a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order, which cannot any longer be understood in terms of existing center-periphery models" (Appadurai 1993:296) In many ways, Namibians perceive Western cultural imperialism as the new hegemonic power, homogenising the world. Cultural icons, such as pictures of Leonardo di Caprio, can be celebrated as totems of Western culture even though their context or origins are little understood. Access to such totems, in the developing world, represents status and esteem regardless of context. An inverse example of this is in the popularity of "primitive" art and artefacts in the Western world. Regardless of the original purposes of these artefacts and their often sacred or utilitarian purposes, they symbolise exoticism, sophistication and aesthetic universalism when situated in homes in the West.

Bernadette Mojekwu, the Co-ordinator of Culture and Lifelong Learning at the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture in Ondangwa West, expresses the attitude of one form of local response to these outside influences:

> Globalisation has already started showing its signs. Like with the dances, the women are dancing dances which are no longer traditional dances, but now suit the style of Michael Jackson etc. People should use the technology that globalisation has brought about, like television, to develop and educate people about their traditional culture … and let people see that

[71] In addition, most Ovambos have never seen a boat in their life.

> they are equally as good as the dances of Michael Jackson etc. (Bernadette Mojekwu, interview 13/10/00)

CD Appendix E features video footage of a Regional Cultural Festival, showing Michael Jackson moves incorporated into *Ndilimani* style of dance, as identified by Bernadette Mojekwu, and members of the NCCI dance committee.

The belief that the technology associated with modernisation can be used as a tool of empowerment and cultural preservation is popular in Ovamboland. It displays another form of indigenisation, as mass-communication technology such as television, radio, the internet and so on is used to revitalise interest in cultural practices of the past and show that traditional cultural practice and the perceived tools of modernity need not be mutually exclusive.

> The youth in general, I think you have got the media's influence. Your traditional culture is, I think, being now looked upon and compared to what you see in tv or whatever media. You think that your culture comes second. But I don't know how we're going to counter that! But we can at the same time use the tv and media to promote our own culture. (Ervast Mtota, interview 11/7/00)

I undertook some research on the practical applications of such attitudes in a project in cultural development[72]. We hoped that, in the absence of dance teachers in remote areas, televisions powered by generators could show videos of traditional and other local dance styles to primary school children at "bush schools". This idea was extremely popular, however as it involved engaging with schools, the project was left to the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture to administer.

To my mind, one of the most telling examples of the fusion of popular and traditional cultures in Namibia, has been the prominence of the Nike advertising symbol. As a status

[72] Referred to earlier in the section on Diversity.

symbol suggesting American wealth and sporting prowess, the Nike symbol appears in different forms in Namibia such as graffiti and clothing imitations, but perhaps most significantly it is often carved into traditional wood items such as drums and masks, and woven into traditional baskets. Does the carving of a Nike symbol into a traditional drum imply a desire to appropriate American culture into traditional African culture, or of incorporating a symbol of the surrounding commercial world into a local cultural product (carving)? Or is it a creative response to the precise circumstances of the carvers' existence? As Wilk points out, "… there is nothing contradictory in the maintenance of distinctive local cultural practices and identities while awash in imported goods, language and ritual." (Wilk 1995:5) This incorporation and appropriation of images of modernity into traditional baskets, carvings and so on is not a new phenomenon. During the years of the Liberation Struggle, when B52 bombers were flying over the *mahangu* fields of Ovamboland, their shape inspired new patterns in the woven grass of baskets in the region. (See *Fig. 3.4*) The shape of the planes on baskets is now considered "traditional" and a feature of indigenous basketry from that region of the country.

Fig. 3.4 – B-52 Bomber pattern woven into "traditional" basket

This does not necessarily always imply the automatic homogenisation of culture with the influx of commercial symbols and commodities, such as the Nike swoosh.

> The globalisation of culture is not the same as its homogenisation, but globalisation involves the use of a variety of instruments of homogenisation (armaments, advertising techniques, language hegemonies, clothing styles and the like), which are absorbed into local political and cultural economies, only to be repatriated as heterogeneous dialogues. (Appadurai 1993:307)

Cultural re-imaging in Namibia has required significant government influence, as will be examined later. As Jameson writes, "There is neither theoretical ground nor empirical evidence to support the notion that bourgeois nationalisms of the so-called Third World will have any difficulty with post-modernism; they *want* it." (Jameson in Ahmad 1987:77) Rita-Louise Hofmeyr, the Director of Arts in the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture agrees:

> … there should be space for people to draw from that and change it and adapt it and move along. And I think what often happens in Namibia is that people often think that you are messing up a culture if you are introducing other influences, but I mean it's human nature to draw on various things … there is no single pure culture. Development embraces knowledge of heritage and preservation yes, but preservation with the idea of fully grasping different elements and the free will of human beings to change and juxtapose and be alive! So for me, the arts is really here to show people that they're alive! (Rita-Louise Hofmeyr, interview 12/7/00)

Examples of the cultural pastiche of traditional and popular culture which globalisation has created in post-colonial Ovamboland are evident in cultural signifiers everywhere, and can perhaps best be conjured by the image of a rural semi-arid desert where the access to coca-cola and the internet far outweighs the access to clean water.

The response of the Namibian Government to the current onslaught of Western, mainly American popular culture, has been to reinforce local images of culture particularly in broadcasting. Presently, at least 70% of broadcast material on the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) radio is not locally produced. This figure is not dissimilar to Australian public broadcasting statistics[73], however cultural and aesthetic differences such as the type and style of music aired across genres in Australia are not as dramatic. Another significant difference is that currently a foreign "Bureau of Standards" determines the NBC's play list. This began during the apartheid regime when international sanctions against South Africa affected the SWABC, as it was then known, and their available play list. Tobias Kandanga, the Director of NBC Radio in Oshakati, believes that the influence of South Africa on Namibian broadcasting was motivated by provincialism, and an attempt to keep possible revolutionary influences such as the subversive lyrics of Bob Marley, off the air. However the effect of so much exposure to the music of South Africa has created a taste for the music of that region.

> Now most of the people like the Luckys[74] and the Brendas[75] and others. If you play local stuff they think that it's not of quality. Because you know the Bureau of Standards is in South Africa, which is very difficult. We have to come up with our own organisation or Bureau of Standards, so that we can set up standards in music and industry production or whatever. And one thing that you need to know is that the music industry of South Africa, because it's big and advanced, it also plays a major role. Most of the Namibian music which is recorded locally, the quality is not really up to standard. (Tobias Kandanga, interview 12/9/00)

Even listeners who call in to the NBC Oshiwambo service do so in English.

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[73] ABC Triple J aims for 35% local material, and ABC Classic FM aims for 20% however these statistics largely reflect the proportion of available recorded Australian music as compared to the global markets.
[74] Possibly referring to either Lucky Tshabala or Lucky Dube – popular South African recording artists
[75] Brenda Fasie – also a popular South African recording artist

> You can see even today when children are phoning in, phoning programs, instead of saying, of calling the numbers in their own language, they are doing it in English. (Tobias Kandanga, interview 12/9/00)

There exists concern in Namibia not only about the effects of external cultural influences, but also regarding the protection of the image Namibia presents of itself to the world. This fear of cultural imperialism, homogenisation and misrepresentation within the context of globalisation is of great significance to Rita-Louise Hofmeyr, who heads the Arts Directorate at the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture in Namibia.

> I think every country should get its act together so that it's not swallowed up by globalisation, in the sense that I think countries should have the infrastructure so that it can determine the image that it will have in the world. And in Namibia, one is not always sure that that is the case. Namibia doesn't always have the right legal framework, it doesn't always have the right policies in place to protect its assets and in this regard we must wake up very quickly to put things in place like a heritage council, heritage policy and arts policy for that matter, so that its products and commodities will not be exploited by the outside world. Otherwise you will be swallowed up by globalisation. (Rita-Louise Hofmeyr, interview 12/7/00)

A recent letter to *The Namibian* newspaper highlights one reader's concern about the image which Namibia is presenting of itself to overseas tourists through the choice of music played on the national airline, Air Namibia:

Letter to *The Namibian* 18/7/03

> ALLOW me to air my view through your most respected newspaper.
>
> The matter is that too much foreign music is being played in the biggest aircraft owned by the state airline, Air Namibia. I have observed that all of the music played and shown in the Boeing are not composed or played by Namibians. This includes the movies. Most of the music

> listened to by the passengers on board originates from the USA, Germany, Netherlands or South Africa. The local music is excluded completely in all forms on the Boeing 747-400. Yes, it is true that most of the passengers are from European countries but Air Namibia should use local music to entertain the passengers. According to my knowledge most of the passengers are tourists. Those coming in to our country are here to visit and see the beautiful land of the brave. When they come here they want to see Namibians and the country at large. They want to listen to our songs, especially those composed and played by local musicians. They also want to see the local movies about nature, our sport, and everything that is done by Namibians themselves. That is their objective. But, Air Namibia as our national airline controlling the Boeing 747-400 fails to keep the local music on board and fails to introduce Namibia as a country on its planes. Thank you to Air Namibia's mouthpiece the Flamingo for giving real facts about our country. Once again in Boeing 747-400's lounge it is full of European newspapers and magazines. Is it not good enough for Air Namibia to use local magazines like Sister Namibia and others. Thank you once again for local newspapers namely The Namibian, Die Republikein and Allgemeine Zeitung. Lastly, I challenge our national airline to recommend a change in policy on entertainment on its flights. I am appealing to the airliner to respect local musicians and local filmmakers by playing their songs and movies onboard. You must introduce your country to the tourists and not other countries.
>
> Theo-Tangeni Nangolo - Windhoek

Stuart Hall, in identifying the possible emergence of new ethnicities as a consequence of globalisation, has coined the term “global postmodern” to refer to the perceived breakdown of previously established cultural identities and codes, and the pluralisation of styles. Many contemporary Ovambos could be described as “global postmoderns”, as they continue to negotiate different cultural influences which shape and reshape, define and re-define their identities. Although this thesis has reinforced the importance of “tradition” to Ovambo people in their consideration of identity, there also exist transformative processes of cultural translations of external cultural influences. These two responses are rarely mutually exclusive, and many Ovambos appear to either be comfortable with both, or happy to oscillate between the two. As Gillespie writes,

> Identities are in transition, involved in a multiplicity of crossovers and mixes. This globalisation may mean neither universal assimilation into one

> homogenous culture, nor a universal search for roots and revival of singular identities, but a complex, highly uneven process of many-sided translation. (Gillespie 1995:19)

The combination of new information technology with archaic systems of information organisation and processing, has meant that an enormous amount of bureaucracy exists in Namibia. Less than 30% of the population of Namibia has a telephone and still a large proportion of the country is without electricity. The prevalence of information technology in Namibia, although growing, remains extremely small. There is more internet activity in the city of New York, than in the entire continent of Africa[76]. Also, although globalisation has made modern technology more widely available in Namibia, it is not necessarily affordable or efficient. In my time in Namibia, telephone lines were constantly being cut down in Ovamboland, to make copper jewellery from the wires – an example of poverty producing ingenuity, or an extension of Wilk's notion that "… each culture will just absorb global culture and recontextualise it … foreign and international ideas and objects are effectively localised – incorporated into local systems of meaning and value". (Wilk 1995:24) For those who did not have land-line telephones (70% of the population), making money from selling jewellery made out of the copper seemed like a much more practical and immediate way to participate in the benefits of this new technology. Also, increasingly, digital mobile telephone reception is available in remote (and not-so-remote) areas, where people have been waiting many years for land-line telephones. Consequently, increasing numbers of Ovambos rely solely on mobile telephone communication as their village, despite post-independence promises, still have no telephone lines connected. The pace of globalisation in Ovamboland has created situations of inconsistent and sometimes contradictory access to modern technologies such as those cited earlier. Ovambo people are aware, yet largely unphased by such inconsistencies and bizarre reflections on local versus global infrastructure, which further emphasises their adeptness at negotiating cultural change.

[76] Source: CNN World Report 24/5/00

Reflections on Television

In 2002 President Sam Nujoma appointed himself the Minister of Information and Broadcasting, and promptly imposed a local content policy. This new policy was a backlash against the amount of foreign material aired every day on the national broadcaster, the NBC, particularly on television which broadcasts for up to 10 hours each day. Currently, 90% of television material aired is produced outside Namibia. (Source: Nampa 30/7/03) The public were supportive of having more local content on television, however when *The Bold and the Beautiful* went off the air in mid 2002, the public outcry was phenomenal. Neighbours, colleagues, friends and families all discussed this move, radio talk-back lines were choked with callers dismayed that their favourite show had been pulled off the air. After two days of public opposition the show was reinstated! Lull notes, " …we should not accept at face value the idea that industrialisation, modernisation and globalisation forcefully destroy cultures against their collective will." (Lull 1995:121) Namibians were collectively so deeply drawn into the life of this American soap opera on a daily basis that, regardless of patriotism and the motive to replace it with local content, they wanted to keep watching it. In my experience, lounge rooms in Ovamboland lucky enough to contain a television are full of friends and neighbours at 1800h each weeknight when *Bold* comes on. Where people once came together at night to share songs, stories and dances, they now share in the angst of American soap. With the supposed breakdown of community in the region, ritualised soap watching not only brings people together physically, temporally and emotionally (through vicariously shared experiences) but it also constructs a symbolic community, as conventional Western soaps "[weave] together the every day lives of its inhabitants in a fine web of intricate relationships between kin and neighbours, friends and enemies". (Gillespie 1995:142) A new form of ritual has arisen, in which participants are involved in shared experiences and the reaffirmation of common values. Ovambos have been able to indigenise *Bold*, which otherwise appears to represent a life and lifestyle far removed from the Ovambo experience,[77] through the universality of the show's issues, such as infidelity, love, lust, trauma, success, failure, inter-generational conflict and jealousy.

[77] *The Bold and the Beautiful*'s storyline revolves around the drama of two rival top fashion houses and portrays luxurious lifestyles of the west coast of America.

When I watched the show with Ovambo friends there would be an ongoing commentary amongst them and I would be told conspiratorially that "this one is a terrible woman, who is sleeping with that one's husband" etc. As Gillespie writes, "A sense of intimacy is heightened by passing moral judgements on the characters which often serves as a confirmation of shared values." (1995:96) This is particularly important in Ovamboland, where traditional and Western values are constantly contested.

President Nujoma's views on the role of television in Namibia again made the news in a recent article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (8/8/03) regarding the phenomenon of *Big Brother Africa*[78]. Described as "the most ambitious of the world-wide Big Brother series", *Big Brother Africa* comprised English speaking contestants from 12 African countries living in a house in South Africa. The cultural implications of this are enormous, as contestants lived in a Western-style house, largely modelled on houses of other series in Western countries, and were forced to live, communicate, cook and promote themselves in a way which television audiences approved of. Just as Bhabha (quoted earlier) observed, there is undeniable mimicry in such a format. Similarly, such a format appears to support the cultural homogenisation arguments of globalisation, as contestants are forced to adhere to a model of Western-style domesticity which denies alterity.

> "It's great for Africa", a Ugandan, Alan Nsubuga, said. "There is so much tribalism and stereotypes that we Africans have about each other. This show is changing all that." (Pearlman, 2003)

The program is aimed at viewers who have access to both television and telephones, which are necessary in order to watch and interact with the program by voting contestants out. The availability of such technologies in rural Ovamboland is a long way from that of other Western countries which have aired such programs, however the program is

[78] A Western reality-television construct, *Big Brother*'s formula in the numerous countries where it has aired, has been to have a group of "contestants" living together in a house for a number of months who are eliminated by being voted out by the television viewing public. Every move of the contestants' daily lives is filmed by hidden cameras throughout the house.

supposedly the highest rating show on African television. Although as often happens with statistics regarding Africa, the continent is measured as a whole, rather than recognising the diversity of the 54 countries which comprise it.

> African TV stations, which do not have big budgets to spend on entertainment, typically import US shows far removed from Africans' daily reality. In contrast, the *Big Brother Africa* house features an outdoor spa, a brightly coloured living area decorated with fat pillows and an endless supply of wine-filled glasses. There is also "shower hour" where the camera dances over the housemates in a spiffy black-and-white bathroom, a segment described as the "most absorbing and entertaining" part of the show. (Pearlman, 2003)

Publicity for the show has said that it has done more for African unity and reconciliation than any other post-apartheid steps taken by governments, including independence and the pan-African movement. Nevertheless, Malawi's conservative parliament voted overwhelmingly to stop the program being aired, citing complaints which claimed it encouraged young people to engage in immoral behaviour. Namibian President Sam Nujoma has also ordered the NBC to stop screening the show, saying the public should instead "watch educational films". (Pearlman, 2003) Namibian furore about the show initially was focused on the country's representative contestant being a white male, Stefan Ludik, despite whites comprising less than 5% of the population of the country.

> …fellow Namibians have complained about being represented by a member of the country's small white minority. A survey by the newspaper *The Namibian* drew withering responses: "It is an embarrassment," said one reader. "Not even South Africa is represented by a white person." Another said: "Some whites may be born here but they are not black. His grandfather probably came from Europe." (Sydney Morning Herald 17/6/03)

However, Stefan has proven to be a popular housemate with home-viewers, and therefore despite President Nujoma stating, "I would like to call on the NBC to stop showing this so-called *Big Brother Africa* and to start showing the history of Namibia," (SMH 30/7/03) the Director General of the NBC has dismissed this request, stating that the show would remain on air and that comments made by the President were taken out of context.

As Tobias Kandanga confirms, Namibians are not always passive consumers of external culture. Rather they are independently involved in the process of choosing which external cultures they choose to adopt, and wish to be proactively involved in the negotiations of cultural change. Nationalism in programming and increased local content, whilst generally viewed as positive measures, would only be successful *on local terms.*

> It is also about what the people want. We cannot isolate ourselves from the whole world, because otherwise we will be left in the darkness. You need to respect the rights and desires of the individuals, because I'm sure for example ploughing with donkeys and oxes cannot continue if there are tractors. And it is very difficult to be putting on the skin clothes while there is Western attires. People will go for Western clothes. (Tobias Kandanga, interview 12/9/00)

Although the prevalence of television ownership in Ovamboland is not great, many people would have experienced television at the home of a friend, relative or neighbour. Viewing is not necessarily restricted to houses with electricity, as some huts in remote villages could power their television via a car battery for up to half an hour, and would do so in order to watch their favourite soap opera. Viewing also rarely takes place in isolation. Television is translocational, therefore, in the case of my friends enjoying *Bold* each afternoon, it is possible to be cosmopolitan without leaving Oshikuku. Appadurai

discusses the global process of "disjunctures and conjuntures" between ethnoscapes and mediascapes[79] as offering to those who experience and transform them,

> A series of elements (such as characters, plots and textual forms) out of which scripts can be formed of imagined lives, their own as well as those of others living in other places. These scripts can and do get disaggregated into complex sets of metaphors by which people live … as they help to constitute narratives of the 'other' and proto-narratives of possible lives, fantasies which could become prologemena to the desire for acquisition and movement. (Appadurai 1990:299)

Lull, who very much believes in audience empowerment and active subjectivity, notes that "culture is uncontrollable partly because symbolic representations are always open to multiple interpretations, and because ways of living are being constantly reconstructed and redefined …people choose, combine, and circulate media representations and other cultural forms in their everyday communicative interactions and in doing so produce meaning and popularity".(Lull 1995:140)

CASE STUDY:

Water Rats

Whilst carrying out research into how Australian identity was reflected through Australian television programs aired in other cultures, I interviewed a Namibian colleague, Metusalem Ashipala, both before and after he watched an episode of *Water Rats*, which was broadcast weekly on the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation. I was hoping to investigate the relevance and significance of a program about the Sydney water police, to a small village in a developing country in Africa, as "the historically fixed images may attain a different meaning when viewed in a context where art and social privilege are no longer entangled". (Bathrick 1991:151) Whilst I anticipated Metusalem's reactions to the images would highlight the differences between Australian and Namibian

[79] 'Ethnoscapes' refers to the landscapes of living persons, and 'mediascapes' refers to image-centred, narrative based accounts of strips of realities.

culture, and the irrelevance and distortion of meaning presented in this program, in fact the opposite appeared to be true. The Australian identity which I imagined would be presented and depicted to Metusalem was very different to his actual observations and interpretation of meaning.

The Australian identity as presented in *Water Rats* which Metusalem observed was that Australians are "mostly white"; exist in a "class-less" society where there is "gender balance"; are "generous" and have a strong sense of "co-operation and togetherness"; are "Christian"; are "hard-working"; and live in a society that is "not safe".

Metusalem reflected on significantly more similarities than differences between the image of Australia that was presented, and what he believed to be true of Namibia. These similarities were both geographical and socio/cultural. He observed that both countries have coastal areas, both countries are predominantly Christian, and both countries have a high crime rate in the urban areas. Metusalem's response to the program showed considerable scepticism and questioning of the reality of the image presented. He challenged the representation of Australia by the television image of the show, and used his own knowledge of Australia to do this. This was particularly so in the representation of ethnicity, as he observed that "they are mostly whites … that is not a true representative of Australia since there are people who have got different colour and probably belong to different races and different origins who were not represented in the show". Similarly in the representation of Australians all living in urban, harbour areas, Metusalem observed "… the show only displayed one part of Australia, which is an urban area, and there is no single reflection on other parts of Australia. Sydney is not only a city – it doesn't represent the whole of Australia." This supports Baudrillard's idea, that "Rather than creating communication, [information] *exhausts itself in the act of staging communication*. Rather than producing meaning, it exhausts itself in the staging of meaning." (Baudrillard 1994:7)

Metusalem's hypothesis on the motivation behind the programming of *Water Rats* on the NBC, was that it was a form of community education and awareness, and to promote

tourism, both locally in Namibia and in Australia. Metusalem believed that the program, with its strong emphasis on water, was specifically programmed on Namibian television to promote tourism in Walvis Bay![80] So despite the intention of "mass media institutions and technology … [to] stimulate ideological and cultural diversity" (Lull 1995:121) they also, perhaps unintentionally, present cross-cultural similitude. A consideration which may have influenced Metusalem's interpretation of *Water Rats* is the fact that almost all of the locally produced material on the NBC has a strong moral theme – community announcements about domestic violence, short dramas about the transmission of HIV, one-off programs about responsible parenting and so on. Almost all the salacious, comedic, and action drama material aired on Namibian television is imported. By drawing upon moral observations he made about *Water Rats*, Metusalem is demonstrating Gillespie's notion of television allowing a cross-cultural confirmation of shared values[81].

As a final reflection on issues of cultural change in contemporary Ovamboland, I will now present discussions and a recent Ovambo poem on clay pots. Clay pots serve as an effective conduit for demonstrating cultural change, as their role, function and symbolism have changed within Ovambo society. These pieces demonstrate some of the complexities surrounding modernity in practice in Ovamboland, and illustrate the dichotomies of loss and gain in such a process.

[80] Walvis Bay is an uninspiring naval port, whose main claim to fame is a cluster of fish canneries.
[81] Referred to earlier in section titled Reflections on Television

Discussions on Clay Pots

On 17th November 2002, after a 2 hour off-road drive in the back of a ute through the mahangu fields of the Uukwambi region near Ogongo, in a shade hut, drinking fanta in 45 degree heat and with the assistance of a translator, her nephew Mbockoma Mungandjera, the following conversation between myself and Verena Endjambi (81) took place…

> "The young people are culturally lost. They don't understand their deep culture. They used to sit with their parents and grandparents to tell stories, but now they are not interested."
>
> What sort of stories?
>
> "Like marriage. A story has to be told to daughters about what men like, but now the young ones don't listen, or live their own way and the marriage falls apart. Or clay pots. I am afraid that the future of clay pots is dark."
>
> What do you see as the future of clay pots in local culture?
>
> "A clay pot is not so good because if you fall when you collect water, the clay pot smashes. Now that we have buckets and containers, we do not have such a problem. We like the plastic, but we miss the clay pots because they keep the water cool! This seems to have caused a revival in clay pot production, as a kind of rebellion towards globalisation and technology. Pots are misused and have different designs, but they are still around to show we are still in touch with our culture."
>
> How has the design and purpose changed?

"Pots are sometimes used to hold plants or such things. And the design has changed … improved. They now have a lip for carrying. Before colonialism the pots had a nipple' on the side which was for carrying. This was the old tradition which went with puritanical Christianity. Missionaries and colonialism has destroyed our culture. So the future of clay pots is not so good."

Are you sad about this?

"It's like *Onyoka*[82]. My mother used to make them, and she taught me how to make them, and now I am trying to teach my young ones, but they are not interested. I feel sorry for them and feel sad that we are a lost nation. I am trying to tell the young people things which will help them, but they are not interested. They are lost."

What is your view on modernity?

"I am very happy about technology and such because it doesn't involve ritual, tradition, spirituality etc. Bottles are more convenient than skins or clay pots. I feel strongly that it is good … for convenience. But it will not replace traditional things. And you – are you participating in your own traditional culture?"

In trying to explain to Meme Endjambi that Australia was also a colony and the cultural implications of that, it was soon established that she did not understand where Australia was. When I tried to draw a map in the sand, I was told that she had never seen a map. When her nephew asked if she knew where Angola was (about 15kms away), she said she wasn't sure if she knew.

[82] Traditional beaded necklace

I found two things to be extraordinary about this exchange. The first was that an old woman could be so concerned about Western influences on traditional customs, without knowing, geographically, where these influences were coming from, which highlights the irrelevance of culturally specific Western hegemony. In a sense it was not important, all that was observed was that things were changing, and had done so since missionary arrival, and this fact produced a multitude of feelings in her. From positive feelings (convenience, freedom from ritual, traditional, and spiritual baggage) to negative feelings (youth no longer interested in culture, lost identity, social breakdown) to contradictory feelings (missionaries destroying culture, but Christian devotion freed her from aspects of culture and the mixed feelings around clay pots).

Later that day, at Verena's sister's homestead, a further drive deep into the veld, with the temperature rising, drinking sprite under the shade of the marula tree and sitting on plastic chairs, with the assistance of a translator, her son, the following conversation with Maria Endjambi (83) took place …

> Which customs have disappeared as a result of modernity?
>
> "Men used to carry a *knobkirrie*[83] and use a bow and arrows for hunting. Now they use guns, there is no more hunting, to protect his family and property. This is not good as it creates war. Guns are more secretive. Before you could see people coming because of their equipment."
>
> What is your attitude about modernity?
>
> (Referring to her son's fridge) "A fridge cools drink. We are happy. But if you have meat, the meat you put in a fridge loses value compared to traditional methods. Meat from a clay pot is better. Frozen meat is not as good as fresh meat. Modern things are good, but they don't really have value. The feeling of attachment to culture is good. I would prefer to use

[83] Walking stick and important symbol of manhood

traditional things, as there is more feeling. I very much value tradition over modernity."

So you would prefer clay pots to plastic containers?

"Bottles and containers are much more convenient. They are easier to carry and store water. And they do not break easily or require a long time to produce. But they make water warm. I would prefer a calabash and clay pot which are superior because they keep water cool."

What if you could have a fridge?

"A fridge? Here? Of course!"

Again, the issue of clay pots has come to represent positive and negative elements of tradition versus modernity, and again contradictory feelings are expressed which proves that such binary oppositions are impossible in the minds of Ovambos. There is no simple tradition = good; modern = bad or vice versa in their minds, as positives and negatives are weighed up, contested and contradicted. Although essentially living traditional rural lives of subsistence farming and crop cultivation, the women I spoke to are not untouched by external influences which change and complicate their views on traditional practices. The following poem shows the altered context which the author considers clay pots – from their rich history, to being a relic of the past captured on a postage stamp.

This morning I received a letter
carrying a stamp of an old clay pot.
S. Nowers took it by camera in 1996
Namibia written in bold.

An old clay pot, alone,
covered in mould,
i's neck decayed by ants,
it no longer sat on the reed mat.
Once the village women carried water in it.
For the milker it was a custodian of wealth.
The sower's heart rested in its bosom.
Foaming beer paralysed even hunters.

In the hands of the percussionist
the village listened and danced to its music
Its waters were reserved for village elders.
The herbs healed our illnesses.

The pot rested in the dark corner of our courtyard,
Potted by the skilful hands of my grandmother.
Today, it does not rest on the papyrus mat
nor lean against invalani - *the homestead walls.*

Masule Sibanga (1996)

Fig. 3.5 – Verena Endjambi at her homestead

Fig. 3.6 – Two clay pots made by Verena Endjambi

SECTION THREE

RECUPERATION

The reason I have used the term "recuperation" rather than recovery in reference to culture is because recovery implies the existence of a definitive loss which has been replaced. As has already been highlighted, culture cannot be "lost", even though there is a sense of loss associated with the discontinuation of certain practices, therefore to imply that an unchanged culture is restored or reinstated is incorrect. Recuperation in this section refers to the process of obtaining an equivalent for, compensating for, regaining or replacing that which was considered lost. The section on Change illustrated that the binary oppositions and fundamentally static notions of identity which traditionally accompanied imperialist thought are no longer applicable as contemporary Namibians have a multiplicity of social and cultural layers often resulting from contact with the West. Non-government organisations, development organisations and the state are some of the new agents of change, which confront such complexities and are, in various ways, involved in the process of post-colonial recuperation. Cultural recuperation, refers to the state of ongoing identity negotiation – those processes and practices which address these issues and agents of change, and help to determine cultural futures and terms of exchange and interaction. As was addressed in the previous section on Change, Ovambo identity is a process of constant transformation which involves using the resources of history and culture, along with often nostalgic associations with practices and traditions of the past, as well as awareness of the present and global contextualisation. This section is concerned with the activities and principle protagonists which are associated with such a process, particularly in reference to engagement with traditional practices, as "nostalgia" continues to be a powerful tool of self-definition in contemporary Ovamboland. I will investigate the concept, ideologies, motivations and methodologies of "development" as well as the role of organisations involved in development, including government bodies, NGOs and the community, as these all represent agents of cultural transformation in the region which are seen as assisting or impeding cultural recuperation. The differing agendas of donors and NGOs and their impact on cultural considerations will be situated in the wider issue of the dual mandate of development – that of conservation versus transformation. Also, commodification of culture will be examined to illustrate the

problems of measurable outcomes based on Western indicators which inevitably promote neo-liberalism and market capitalism.

I will present the argument that culture is an important area of development which has not traditionally been considered in projects taking place in Namibia. Also, that specific community based cultural development is important in addressing issues of identity, pride and purpose in post-independent Ovamboland. Community cultural development is an important tool in self-determinism and empowerment because it presents a counter-attack on the socio-cultural influences of globalisation through exploring terms of cultural negotiation. It is also seen as a contentious area for involvement by development organisations and the government alike, as it challenges the "deculturation"[84] of modernisation.

In this section, I will address three main questions which are connected to the idea of recuperation by investigating issues of development and intervention: how/why should culture be an area or consideration of development; what are some of the effects of international development activity; what are the motivations behind the presence or absence of cultural development?

As with previous sections, this section on "Recuperation" is divided into three sub-sections, each relating to the theme of cultural recuperation: Identity; Power and Politics; Globalisation.

In the first sub-section, "Identity" I will address the concept of identity recuperation and look at the community based model of cultural development and how this assists in such a process. I will discuss questions surrounding the justifications for such work, as well as some of the inherent problems in cultural identity recuperation in the context of modernisation and development. I will address the post-modernisation consciousness or "enlightenment" which is emerging in Namibia, which allows for such considerations of

[84] Latouche (1996) refers to deculturation as the situation where two cultures come into contact which leads to a massive flow in one direction – the receiving culture is invaded, threatened in its very being, and can be seen as the victim of actual aggression.

identity and proactive cultural remembrance to take place in a climate of dramatic Westernisation. I will illustrate, in the form of case studies, local examples of community based cultural development activities whose design purpose was cultural recuperation and expression.

In the next sub-section, "Power and Politics", I will address the subject of development work and some of the current issues facing such work in north central Namibia. The presence and impact of foreign intervention in the process of recuperation is of great significance, and I will investigate the absence of cultural considerations and specific cultural activities and projects in such work. I will address issues relating to the cultural and ideological influences of such intervention, as well as investigating the cultural complexities of engagement in development work and how these often inhibit active participation in the cultural recuperation process by organisations in the field. This section further develops some of the complexities associated with working with "culture" in the process of recuperation, whilst having to reconcile often qualitative community impact with outcomes-focused agencies. I will discuss how the development goal of community cultural empowerment and causality, which in Ovamboland is very much tied up with nostalgic cultural recuperation, is often at odds with contemporary neo-liberal Western development ideologies, motivated by democratisation and modernisation. In addressing issues of responsibility and accountability for cultural recuperation, I will also address the consequentiality of local intervention, or lack of intervention, including the role and expectations of the SWAPO Government's Ministry of Basic Education and Culture, as well as investigating residual cultural dilemmas following the end of apartheid.

In the final sub-section, "Globalisation", I will look at the history of development work as part of the continuum of modernisation, and the impacts of this process on north central Namibia. I will investigate the political nature of such work and the overt and covert influences inherent in the promotion of Western-style neo-liberal democracy. Since most Ovambos encounter foreign nationals as the human and socio-cultural side of this, I will present the motivations and modus operandi of three major international sending

organisations. The presence of such organisations significantly impacts upon considerations of cultural identity, terms of cultural negotiation and recuperation. In this sub-section, I will further develop the issue of cultural commodification and commercialisation, which the process of globalisation has affected. In the section on "Loss", aspects of this issue which produced an associated psychology of cultural loss were presented. In this section, however, cultural commodification and commercialisation, along with tourism, will be presented as a form of cultural recuperation. Perhaps the antithesis of the community based model presented earlier is culture produced for consumption, but it is a legitimate and popular form of recuperation nonetheless, which benefits individuals who participate in the exchange of culture and capital.

IDENTITY

Enlightenment

Epapudhuka – to wake up

Contemporary Ovambos are extremely articulate about the importance of their identities, in a personal, local and national sense. The process of Ovambo identity formation

> … is an active process for all… in which the participants selectively forget some details, whilst they appropriate other memories. In doing so, they deliberately aim to resolve ambiguities and tensions arising from the current pace of social change in Northern Namibia. (Fairweather 2001:34)

The assertion of this importance shows not only a deep respect for their ancestry, but also an understanding of the cultural impact inherent in the globalisation process and its potential threats to *Ovambo-ness*. With the breakdown of national economic, cultural and social barriers through the process of globalisation, there is increasing awareness of the impact on Namibia of greater access to international cultural influences. Ovambos demonstrate their knowledge and cosmopolitan fluency in such issues, and in so doing assert their identity through the understanding and articulation of such threats and cultural possibilities that globalisation presents. Threats often refer to the possibility of homogenisation, a perception that a cultural sameness may develop as a result of the influx of Western popular culture which is enormously popular in Namibia. An opposing argument, which is somewhat more essentialist in its premise, is that the influx of Western popular culture as well as access to other global cultural influences, threatens to eventually deny cultures their uniqueness as features are appropriated and indigenised, resulting in cultural amalgams rather than distinct, separate cultural identities. Both of these processes were expressed to me as very real threats, as well as contributing agents to Ovambo identity.

> Identity is very very important. It's the only thing that can make us be seen as Namibians or Ovambos. You might be a rich country, like if you have got a lot of sea products, a lot of agricultural products, but if you don't have culture – as a nation or as a community or as a person – you are lost. It's very very much important. People say that a nation without culture is like a tree without roots. So it's really very important. Globalisation to me means that the people in Ovamboland must also know what is happening in our world. And I think it's an opportunity to learn form those that we did not know before and then planning from there. And if you seem to be a person, for instance recognized as an Ovambo person by somebody coming as far as Russia – how do you feel? You feel that you are also somebody. (Ervast Mtota, interview 11/7/00)

I will address the cultural effects of the globalisation process in greater detail later in this section, however it is important at this point to investigate what drives individuals and communities to involve themselves in the process of cultural identity "recuperation" particularly – as I will demonstrate – when other agencies such as the government and non-government sectors seem reluctant to be involved in such issues.

The term *epapudhuka* or "to wake up" was once used by Ovambos to refer to the spiritual awakening which came with Christian conversion. As Ervast Mtota states of his mother's encounter with missionaries in the 1930s:

> I remember my mother telling me about this thing, "epapudhuka". Literally it would be that you were asleep and you suddenly just woke up. So you woke up from … whether it was passivity, whether it was backwardness as you were seen to be backward if you practised your traditional culture. (Ervast Mtota, interview 11/7/00)

However, I suggest that the term could also be used to refer to the "enlightened" consciousness which accompanies post-colonial considerations of identity. In my

research I was often confronted with the discursive problems associated with the naming of phenomena which, whilst observed and acknowledged in Ovamboland, had not necessarily been named. My friend and former colleague Mbockoma Mungandjera used the word "enlightened" in this sense, to refer to his new reflections on identity following his disillusionment with the promises offered by missionaries, in the form of salvation and civilisation, SWAPO, in the form of equality and prosperity, and even the promises of modernity itself[85].

> I'm a little bit enlightened, I can reflect, I can think about this tradition, culture, modern way of thinking, and try to balance it. … When you do that, you can find your own philosophy or way of thinking. I have stopped and reflected on these things and now can put everything in context. (Mbockoma Mungundjera, interview 25/11/02)

Such a process implies a personal and empowering journey towards a multiplex cultural identity in contemporary Ovamboland, which equips Mbockoma with the ability to negotiate the terms of cultural change he and his children choose to adopt. As Goldstein and Rayner suggest, such consideration could not have happened in isolation.

> ... [there is] the possibility that collective identity in late modern society might often be strengthened through a process of continuous interaction with other collectivities – a process that requires each community to see itself from the perspective of others, and incorporate those perspectives through the prism of its own consciousness in a continuous reflexive process. Collective identity would be recognized as selectively *chosen* (within certain parameters) rather than merely given. (Goldstein and Rayner 1994:382)

[85] When I asked Mbockoma what the Oshiwambo word for such consideration would be, he was flummoxed as he said he had not named such a practice, nor heard it named. After some deliberation, he said that such a practice could be referred to as "oshinanena" which means "to speak of contemporary thought." It is interesting, however, that the practice of considering ones' identity in the context of post-colonial, post-independence modernity, precedes appropriate discourse.

Mbockoma's description of his experience of "enlightenment" is reminiscent of Immanuel Kant's argument, that Enlightenment is the possibility whereby man philosophically acquires the status and capacities of a rational and adult being, through "emergence from his self-imposed immaturity." (Payne 1996:175) In this sense, immaturity, ironically, is far from the model of savagery which justified colonialism. Rather, immaturity in a post-colonial sense refers to the unquestioning acceptance that West is best. Enlightenment, therefore, reassesses and challenges this notion. In its most extreme form, such reassessment could result in a total rejection of imposed Westernisation, as Serge Latouche writes, "Those who have been disappointed by or taken in by myths turn towards aggressive forms of cultural affirmation reconstructed on an anti-Western basis." (1996:75). This is not the case in Ovamboland, where – as has been demonstrated in the section on Change - the cultural influences of the West have largely been incorporated and indigenised into Ovambo identity. Mbockoma's attitude represents not an aggressive rejection of Western influences, but most assuredly a questioning of its authority, and a desire to balance its effects by proactively engaging in activities of cultural remembering.

Such a process is not common to all Ovambos, and I do not believe that Mbockoma was implying that his ideas were something to which all Ovambos subscribed. He explained the process of enlightenment in very personal terms, as a result of the shifting dominant power structures in his life. Fairweather (2001:114) suggests that such philosophy and reconsideration of tradition is more commonly found in "urbanites", or modern Namibians, for whom having roots is an expression of membership in the modern nation. He cites Tate Frans Ihuhwa who stated:

> Your past is your past, it remains yours wherever you find yourself. In the modern world it is better to know where you come from. Culture, tradition and ethnicity must be preserved at all costs … Let the modern world go on but the culture is the root of any nation. (Ihuhwa in Fairweather 2001:114)

Although Tate Ihuhwa chose to live in a traditional style house, drink traditional beer, and eat traditional food, he was a well-travelled and multilingual "cosmopolitan". Tobias Kandanga does not see this empowering return to roots and construction of identity as the counter to the effects of modernisation in ordinary people:

> An average Ovambo, I don't think that they would understand about globalisation. They will just embrace the Western influence without knowing what they are doing. Normally people are doing it without knowing. People are unconsciously embracing these new Western influences but not realising it's at the expense of their tradition and traditional identity. But there is no other option. (Tobias Kandanga, interview 12/9/00)

Foucault challenged the universality of Kant's Enlightenment argument, interrogating and historicising "the contingency that has made us what we are". (Foucault 1984:46) In Ovamboland, this may involve shared historical experiences, which may simultaneously be unique to each Ovambo and form diverse and multifaceted identities and responses to modernisation. Paul Gilroy, in *The Black Atlantic* writes

> The enthusiasm for tradition therefore expresses not so much the ambivalence of blacks towards modernity, but the fallout from modernity's protracted ambivalence towards the blacks who haunt its dreams of ordered civilisation. (Gilroy 1993:191)

However, there exists in the minds of Mbockoma, Tate Ihuhwa, and many of my informants, a moral imperative to consider and preserve one's *Ovambo-ness.*

As mentioned earlier in this thesis, nostalgia through performance is one method of negotiating cultural identity and self-definition Ovambos demonstrate an engagement with the wider world and the possible outcomes of such engagement by representing their culture as being under threat. To illustrate this, Fairweather uses the example of attending

a "traditional" wedding, where an urban couple returned to Ovamboland for the ceremony, which was important to their identities, despite their long separation from traditional rural life. At the ceremony, despite the "nostalgia" of the couple, the rural villagers in attendance were eager to display their cosmopolitanism via "modern" status symbols such as video cameras and Western clothes. Fairweather writes,

> This performance expressed … the villagers' interest in presenting themselves as cosmopolitan citizens of a modern world … By representing 'tradition' as vanishing, they successfully resist the stereotype of the traditional rural villager that the hegemonic narratives of nation-building and cultural tourism threaten to impose. (Fairweather, 2001:20)

This attitude is reinforced by interviewee Rita Louise Hofmeyr:

> Many of us have absorbed so many different things through the years that we've almost become universal in the sense that we are part of a global world – we are constantly interacting with things that are applicable all over the world. The way we dress, we drive cars, we watch DSTV, we go on the internet, so in a sense a lot of us have become citizens of the world. That doesn't mean you don't know who you are and where you come from and that you have a mother tongue somewhere and you have a resource of stories that you were told. But then people also have the right to uproot, to change, to adapt. (Rita-Louise Hofmeyr, interview 12/7/00)

SWAPO, in seeking to encourage appreciation of diversity whilst maintaining unity made a significant theoretical departure from the unifying influences of Marxist nationalism which motivated their Independence Struggle and created a united national front against apartheid. As Fairweather writes,

> This early nationalism was unashamedly assimilationist, denying differences between Namibians, but after independence SWAPO's

> rhetoric shifted towards the appreciation of Namibia's different cultures and the right of all Namibians to their 'cultural heritage'. (Fairweather 2001:36)

The issue of unity in diversity is particularly difficult in post-apartheid Namibia, due to the many and varied ethnic groups living there. The policy of national unity which the SWAPO Government chose to adopt upon independence, was absolutely essential to address the issues of racial difference which had been the *raison d'etre* of the apartheid regime. National unity, as a policy, sought to promote equality in diversity in order to begin the reconciliation process of a country torn apart by difference. However this policy, as in other culturally multiplex societies, presented problems of "national identity", since Namibia comprises so many diverse ethnic groups. Hofmeyr states that

> We believe that a national identity is made up out of a sense of unity, but in that you've also got to respect diversity, and it's always much easier to develop or to have diversity than to have unity – it's much easier because it's in human nature to live in groups. (Rita-Louise Hofmeyr, interview 12/7/00)

Not surprisingly, Ovambos are also attempting to reconcile their local and national identities in light of government policies, tribal, familial, regional ties, and now global awareness.

> Personally you want to be identified by your tribe, but not to look at it as though that is all that is important, because you need to develop your personal identity as well as your local and national one. There is a certain amount of cultural pride which goes along with identifying with certain ethnic groups or tribes. Within those ethnic groups and that identity, it is also important to accommodate for different groups and tribes, to celebrate diversity as we are all Namibians and that is the most important fact. We

> have to harmonise that diversity. (Bernadette Mojekwu, interview 13/10/00)

Why Cultural Development?

In this section, I will present two forms of cultural development – the first being community based, which I will refer to as cultural development, the second being commercially based. This second form, or commercially based cultural development, was mentioned earlier in this thesis in relation to the perceived "losses" which accompany such practices. Commercially based cultural development will again be addressed in the section on globalisation in relation to the exchange of culture and capital. However, I now wish to address some of the motivations behind the community based model of cultural development as they relate to the theme of recuperation.

In the introduction to this thesis, I presented one definition of cultural development as being community based arts practices which involve collaborations between artists and communities to creatively reflect identity. I mentioned that, as a practice, it incorporates all aspects of creative visual and performing arts and can take the form of projects, activities, research, exhibitions, festivals, events etc which provide opportunities for individuals to access, participate in and manage their own arts and cultural activities. It also encourages cultural expressions of diversity and a sense of community identity. As such, cultural development is an effective vehicle for addressing social issues and community problems through the arts and cultural activities. In Namibia, arts and culture are seen as one of the vehicles to address the challenges which the region faces such as community responses to AIDS, particularly as there remains a reluctance to openly discuss the issues at stake in a straightforward manner. Creative approaches are seen as a way to both articulate sensitive information and educate the community, through drama, visual art and so on.

> What can we do as artists to notify the world about the problem of AIDS, how can we use the arts to alert people in Namibia, how can we use arts to raise funds, to be of benefit? There's an enormous role that we can play as

> artists in helping Namibia through what is beginning to show it's real signs of impact. (Rita Louise Hofmeyr, interview 12/7/00)
>
> As you know, there is AIDS which is now rife in Namibia, which needs people to care for each other now. Then culture would be the best to solve that issue. (Tobias Kandanga, interview 12/9/00)

In considering cultural recuperation, cultural development activities which are community based contribute to the enrichment of individual and community cultural life, and the creative expression of local identity. Such activity also presents opportunities for proactive community engagement with social problems, as the arts are seen as a non-threatening, creative conduit for creative expression and change.

As this thesis has been largely concerned with the *terms* of cultural change, and the negotiation of cultural identity in an age of modernisation, cultural development is an integral means for such considerations. I propose that cultural development provides people with the tools to consider their cultural identities, their place in the world and subsequently their ability to negotiate the terms of cultural change brought about by modernisation and the socio-cultural effects of globalisation.

> Cultural identity as a living force will eventually prove itself as a powerful countertrend against the global cultural domination of the West and the cultural uniformity it brings with it. Cultural identity represents the wish to protect the uniqueness of one's own culture, language and identity – and their attached value-systems – from foreign influence. Our roots are becoming increasingly important, to quote Naisbitt (1990): "The more homogenous our lifestyles become, the more steadfastly we cling to deeper values. We all seek to preserve our identities, be they religious, cultural, national, linguistic or racial. The more worlds grow more similar, we shall increasingly treasure the traditions that spring from within". (Schouten 1996: 54)

Through consideration of identity, people are informed about the significance of self and place, and that equips them with wisdom and awareness about perceived threats to self and place. As with Fairweather's research and Mbockoma's appreciation of "enlightenment", Strathern believes that a strong sense of one's roots is essential for the negotiation of one's place in modernity.

> … the most successful pursuits of modernity have been found in those modernist regimes (I refer to cultural regimes) that have negotiated tradition as a source of special values. Such values may be protected as the kind of raw material on which moderns build – like the traditional family that is also the basis upon which the individual citizen goes out into the enterprising world. The citizen must of course do his or her bit to ensure that those traditional values are also there as a future resource for others. (Strathern 1996:41)

Also, as identified in the previous section on Change, there is a renewed interest in Ovambo cultural identity within the community. Ideally, development work should focus on the needs and desires of the people who have most to gain or lose from the process. In the case of cultural development, in my personal experience, Ovambo people have expressed in no uncertain terms their view that an interest in the revitalisation of cultural identity is both a moral imperative and a practical necessity in negotiating their place in the global community. As Ovambos largely associate "culture" with tradition, and because retrospection plays an important role in cultural definition, the recuperation of Ovambo cultural identity involves drawing on the well of culture, tradition, history, place and community for social empowerment. The survival of cultural practices such as traditional customs, dances, songs, stories and artefacts throughout the tremendous adversities of apartheid and war, is a testament to the importance placed on these aspects of Ovambo identity by the community itself.

Community based Cultural Development – NCCI

I will now present some practical and organisational case study examples of community based cultural development activities in north central Namibia.

> Development projects must involve the full participation and approval of local people, and be designed to meet local needs. They should build on 'common' knowledge about the environment and social requirements. And they should be small-scale and sustainable in terms of resources available. Good projects are often modest in their expenditure and fit naturally into local ways of doing things. In general the voluntary agencies are much better at doing this than government departments … Foreign aid is usually best spent funding local people to solve their own problems, rather than employing foreigners who have little understanding of the African situation. (Woods 1990:4)

With these sorts of warnings in mind, in June 1999 a group of individuals with an interest in the promotion and development of arts and culture, representing various government and non-government organisations, met at the University of Namibia's Northern Campus to discuss the current state of cultural development in the north central region. These stakeholders came from various backgrounds, but had a common interest in revitalising and energising the culture of the region, and according it social and, in some cases, economic significance. Government and non-government organisations were represented at the meeting, and representatives from the churches, the tourism industry, the University of Namibia, the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture, the Northern Namibia Environmental Project, the Ford Foundation, regional constituencies and councils, Nakambale Museum and various other organisations were also present. The group was driven by the need for cultural promotion, heritage conservation, awareness raising and economic development in the area. This group came to be known as the **North Central Cultural Initiative** (NCCI), and a sub-committee was formed which met regularly to discuss the aims of the initiative and how to facilitate them in the community. I was elected to the sub-committee of the NCCI, and my role soon developed into the

position of co-ordinator after I wrote a proposal to one of the major donor organisations in the country, the Ford Foundation, to formally undertake the facilitation of the development of culture with a view to promoting civic vitality and cultural pride in the region. One of the first activities undertaken by the North Central Cultural Initiative, was to organise a Cultural Development Workshop. The findings, outcomes, and recommendations of this workshop gave considerable insight into the arts and cultural priorities of the region, and largely dictated subsequent activities.

CASE STUDY:
University of Namibia Cultural Development Workshop, 1-2 October 1999

Organised by the North Central Cultural Initiative (NCCI), the Cultural Development Workshop in October 1999 was designed to provide a forum for discussion, an opportunity for display, presentations, performances and keynote speakers, and general sensitisation to the arts and culture of the north central district. The forum was seen as a necessary way of bringing stakeholders in the community together to look at arts and cultural issues which had previously been discussed only by those involved in NCCI. It was attended by artists, government and non-government officials, community leaders, and representatives from organisations involved in and interested in the development of culture in the region. Invitations went to both regional ministerial cultural offices (Ondangwa East and Ondangwa West) as it was hoped that the findings and subsequent actions to come out of the workshop would encompass the whole north central region, and build on the social and cultural capital which exists in the region.

> Culture is identity. Art and culture reflect the values, beliefs, heritage, creativity and tradition of a society. The art and culture of the north central region of Namibia is as rich as it is diverse, yet it has historically been fragmented, and perhaps shaped by colonialism, apartheid and war. As culture is not a static phenomenon, the threat to its extinction is very real with the influx of popular culture through globalisation. There is a need to maintain, develop and preserve the heritage of the arts and culture of this

> region of Namibia through education, promotion, co-ordination, research, training, liaison and encouragement. There is a certain amount of urgency for the arts and culture to be seen as valid, relevant and important enough to be taken seriously – academically, socially and commercially – to generate cultural awareness, pride and identity. (Introduction to Cultural Development Workshop Report)

This was a significant event as it was the first time that a workshop had ever been held in the region to celebrate cultural output and establish future directions and support of the arts and culture of the region. It was seen by many to legitimise the activities and work of individuals in the community who had never been accorded economic or academic significance. Similarly, bringing together stakeholders from so many different areas of interest and backgrounds was quite a task. A certain amount of sensitivity and antagonism existed between different government ministries, regional offices, tribes, commercial interests etc, and to bring them all together over a number of days, to focus on arts and culture – practices which in themselves involve competition for opportunities, funding and recognition - was a significant task. Planning for the workshop was undertaken collaboratively by the sub-committee, with all findings gathered and collated into a report which I wrote and presented to all participants as well as senior government officials, interested stakeholders and so on. This document was important as it was the first time the cultural needs and desires of Ovambos were articulated and published.

The workshop had two main objectives:

i) to look at the current state of the arts

ii) to establish possible future directions

In looking at the current state of the arts, the organisers hoped that a type of inventory could be formed, identifying the activities, resources, key people, archival and research activity, and other information, which were happening in schools, as well as in the community at a local and regional level. Groups were formed according to particular disciplines of art and culture, and these groups were asked specific questions in order to establish what was already happening in the fields of:

· music

· dance

· poetry/story-telling/drama

· art and craft

· traditional customs.

For the second objective – to establish possible future directions - these same groups were asked to note down and present opportunities and constraints for their particular art form, as well as thinking about future directions, goals, and who could be responsible for achieving these goals. It was from these visions that an action plan was drawn up which the NCCI would facilitate. The common concerns and proposals are highlighted below.

Each group met twice and the following questions were put to the groups:

Current State of the Arts:

· *What, where and when are the current activities taking place? (eg community, schools, festivals etc)*

· *Who could tell us more?*

· *How could we gather more information?*

· *Who collates, manages and updates information?*

· *How can you maintain ownership?*

Visions and Constraints:

· *What would you like to happen by the year 2005?*

· *What are the constraints to achieving this?*

· *What do you want to happen in the next 12 months? (5 examples)*

· *Who will be responsible for each of these achievements?*

A full description of each group's responses is provided as Appendix F, with a summary of the common concerns and common proposals presented below:

Common Concerns:

Concerns which were common to all of the groups are summarised as:

- Recognition – little interest shown in the arts at an academic, social or commercial level by government and community;
- Resources – lack of human, material and financial resources available for the development of arts and culture;
- Communication – lack of communication and co-operation between artists, the community, government and non-government organisations resulting in lack of co-ordination, confusion and duplication;
- Performance opportunities – lack of performance, presentation and display spaces and opportunities.

Common Proposals:

Proposals common to all groups are summarised as:

- Education/Training – primary, secondary and tertiary educational opportunities should be available in arts and culture, both formal and informal education needed, and resourcing for teachers.
- Performance/Presentation opportunities – greater opportunities for presentation of arts and culture at existing facilities in the community, both public and private venues. Also broadcasting opportunities should be explored.
- Cultural Centre – a multi-purpose space specifically for the promotion and development of arts and culture.
- Research/Documentation/Archiving – greater recording of local arts and cultural practices in various forms of media.

Conclusion and Personal Observations

The Cultural Development Workshop was an important first step in establishing the arts and cultural needs and resources of Ovamboland. Many of the outcomes of the group sessions provided valuable information about individual art forms. Over 100 people

attended the workshop, and all were very positive and excited that such a workshop was taking place especially because Ovambo arts and culture had never before been accorded such significance. Particularly positive were the grassroots organisations and individuals – women who made baskets and taught traditional dance to children in villages and so on. The presence of traditional authorities, local councillors, academics, and government directors who are held in high esteem by the community ensured that the workshop was taken seriously by all who attended.

One of the difficulties in the workshop having been organised by a collective such as NCCI was that many of the issues raised (particularly those to do with insufficient services and resources provided by the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture), were outside their control. Therefore none of the suggestions which involved the Ministry were necessarily going to be further addressed without the mandate coming from inside the Ministry, despite strong ministerial presence at the workshop. Also, although the workshop attempted political neutrality, old sensitivities still existed between the two regional offices of Ondangwa East and Ondangwa West, which often affected discussion forums. As mentioned, copies of the report (which included all findings and suggestions from group work sessions as well as conclusions and future directions) were sent to attendees, and personally given to government officials at both a regional and national level. This report appeared to be more positively received and thoughtfully read by government officials at a national level such as the Under Secretary for Culture and the Director of Arts, than those at a regional level who were in a greater position to enact some of the recommendations outlined.

One of the disappointing outcomes was the lack of follow-up activities after the workshop. All participants agreed that the workshop had been an incredibly worthwhile venture and in no uncertain terms expressed an eager desire for another such workshop. However, a further workshop would only have been possible had there been follow up activity to the first one. Each small group (music, dance, etc) expressed the need and wish to meet regularly and report back on issues addressed, and actions followed, however in the six months following the workshop, attempts to facilitate these meetings in the

community were frustrating and largely unattended. What we, the organisers, had hoped for was for a sense of ownership to be generated, and for groups and individuals to realise their own potential for change and activity coming from them – individually and collectively. However this was not the case.

An interesting question which was addressed in the small groups was that of responsibility – who was responsible for carrying out the suggested activities and initiatives which would pave future directions for each art form. The suggestions in themselves were valuable and achievable, but the views on how these suggestions were to be achieved and who was responsible were interesting. As I was facilitating the small group for music, I found that the immediate response to the question of responsibility was almost a knee-jerk reaction by each member of the group. "The Government" was the only suggestion which was initially offered. Who is responsible for education and training? "The Government". Who was responsible for creating performance opportunities? "The Government". Research? "The Government". And so it went, until it was pointed out that from what we knew to be true of our regional cultural officers, perhaps we should be thinking about other possibilities for the assumption of responsibility. People then started thinking much more laterally and realised overwhelmingly that the responsibility for a great number of their suggestions lay in the grassroots – parents, local practitioners, relatives, teachers, themselves! Obviously, activity *was* happening at this level already. However the articulated concern that such activity was not being adequately supported led to the conclusion that support had to come from external sources, such as government involvement, rather than coming from inside the community.

Ford Foundation and the Cultural Development Project

After the Cultural Development Workshop, using the findings of the workshop as the basis for proposed activities, I wrote a project proposal to the Ford Foundation[86] which came to be known as the CDP (Cultural Development Project). I hoped to continue the

[86] An American donor organisation with offices throughout Africa, the developing world and the United States. See www.fordfound.org

work of the North Central Cultural Initiative in a more formal way, incorporating capacity building measures for a sustainable approach to the development of Ovambo culture through education, promotion, co-ordination, research, training, liaison and support. The motivation of the cultural development activities of the CDP was to contribute to the generation of cultural awareness, pride and identity, and result in local Ovambo arts and culture being accorded academic, social, and, in some cases, commercial significance.

The CDP proposed a number of activities in collaboration with the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture, University of Namibia, and the local community to be initiated by the NCCI so as to facilitate the needs and desires expressed by the community at the Cultural Development Workshop. These activities involved the five categories of art and culture as defined at the Cultural Development Workshop – art and craft, dance, music, traditional customs, oral culture. Each of these categories had a representative sub-committee responsible for identifying and prioritising activities, and disseminating information into the community.

The initial project proposal was for one year, and requested US$20 000 with the majority of the funds going towards the co-ordination of the project, and the rest being used for logistical and administrative expenses. Initially, no funding was provided for material resources, and inkeeping with Ford Foundation policy, no money was provided for capital infrastructure. Conscious of sustainability, I insisted that one of the conditions of the project was that funding include the employment of a Namibian counterpart to continue the work when I left Namibia. Having the project run by a Namibian not only would ensure the continuation of the project in my absence, but would also establish community trust, overcome language difficulties, and ensure that the project was visibly run by an Ovambo, for the Ovambo people.

Until June 2000, the Cultural Development Project really only existed in an administrative sense as an individual grant to myself. In order for the project to continue to operate and grow, it was necessary to find an organisation or institution to administer

the project and provide it with the foundation or base required to increase its activities. After some investigation and discussion with the Assistant Representative Program Officer for the Ford Foundation in Namibia, it was decided that the Rössing Foundation should be approached about the possibility of being the future administrator of the project. I wrote a further 12 month proposal which was presented to the Director of the Rössing Foundation[87], which agreed to take on the project, as it was very much in line with the Foundation's goals and activities in community development, resource management, craft development and education. This was a significant development for the project as it now had an affiliation with a local well-established organisation active in community development and non-politically aligned. Funding for the Rössing Foundation Cultural Development Project (the continuation of the original one-year Ford Foundation grant) was approved and covered my counterpart's salary, a budget for activities for each particular area of the arts (music, dance, art and craft and so on), administrative costs, contract workers, computer equipment and a field trip.

Dual Mandate

Although I will address the role played by development NGOs in the process of "recuperation" later in this section, it is necessary at this point to investigate some of the cross-cultural implications of intervention, particularly in relation to cultural identity and cultural development. Conflicting agendas often exist within the politics of donor-funded NGO activities. Steven Robins highlights the ambiguity of the perceived dual mandate of NGOs working in the developing world. They seek to both promote the cultural survival of indigenous peoples *and* to socialise them into becoming virtuous modern citizens within a global civil society. (Robins 2001) These ambiguities invoke a repetition of stereotypes about 'pure' and 'detribalised' and have created an artificial divide which is of particular relevance in work involving the recuperation of culture. I will address the political ramifications of this and how it affects development policy in the next section on Power and Politics.

[87] Further information on the Rössing Foundation can be found later in this section.

In my capacity as Arts and Cultural Development Co-ordinator I was acutely aware of the evolutionary nature of culture, and sensitive to local concerns about both cultural homogeneity[88] and cultural heterogeneity. In the task of cultural revitalisation and development, I was faced with the dilemma of maintaining and preserving traditional culture, a priority which was identified in pre-project research, whilst not preventing the access to and appropriation of influences from other cultures. I was also constantly forced to confront and reconcile the enormous social importance given to Western culture.

> If somebody has a choice – do I drink some *oshikundu*[89] or do I drink a coke, or do I listen to a recording of the Backstreet Boys or an old recording of Tate Iita[90], they will embrace the Western influence, without knowing what they are doing… Because most people who are drinking *oshicoca-cola*[91] will think that they are more advanced than people who are drinking *oshikundu*. They will just think that they are primitive. It's also a sign of wealth. You cannot afford coca-cola, that's why you are drinking *oshikundu*. (Tobias Kandanga, interview 12/9/00)

An important consideration in my work was, therefore, facilitating and developing the image of Ovambo cultural identity which they, themselves, wished to promote. This meant that projects reflected a multi-faceted Ovambo identity which often displayed a fusion of tradition and modernity, provincial and cosmopolitan. As I will address in the section on Power and Politics, this culturally multiplex and plural identity does not sit comfortably with either development organisations, or governments attempting to create a "national identity". In the methodology section of this thesis, I addressed some of the issues associated with personal engagement as it is important to acknowledge the

[88] Cultural homogeneity refers to the process of conformation resulting in perceived sameness, or global norms, often expressed in reference to the effects of U.S. cultural imperialism. Cultural heterogeneity also refers to the effects of transnational cultural penetration, this time resulting in a multitude of diverse, "watered-down" identities, culture being incommensurably influenced by outside.
[89] *Oshikundu* is a traditional fermented drink made from *mahangu*.
[90] Tate Iita is a very elderly, well known singer in the area, renowned for his knowledge of traditional songs.
[91] Often Namibian's indigenise English (sometimes referred to as Namlish), in this case by adding the Oshiwambo prefix of "*oshi*" to the Western "coca-cola".

enormous cultural significance of my skin colour in relation to the work in which I was involved, in cultural development and recuperation.

In the field of cultural development, a synergy between the world of traditional cultural practice and articulation and that of contemporary popular culture, technology and global communication in all its various forms need not necessarily water down cultural identity, indeed it may serve to facilitate the perpetuation of certain cultural practices particularly through education. An example of this in practice is the use of videos powered by generators to teach traditional dance in remote villages in Ovamboland in the absence of teachers. Such a project was initiated by NCCI. Another example is using the internet to teach learners about Namibian history, heritage, culture and tradition. Using available technology to facilitate access to information and participation in cultural activities was at the heart of the *Ongushu Yomithigululwakalo* radio program.

CASE STUDY:
***Ongushu Yomithigululwakalo* NBC Radio Program**

Radio is a very powerful medium in the north central region, being the main form of public communication in a region largely without electricity and telephones. As part of the CDP, I put forward a proposal to the Director of the NBC Oshiwambo Service, Mr Tobias Kandanga, to have an hour of air time every week dedicated to the arts and culture in the region. This hour of broadcasting would include interviews, guest speakers as well as reports and stories on different issues related to arts and culture, such as community cultural enterprises, coming events, guest artists, cultural oppression in the past etc. The proposal was accepted and in June 2000, the first program of *Ongushu Yomithigululwakalo* ("Our Culture") was aired nationally. Due to its popularity, the program is now repeated, giving listeners another chance to hear the program which was aired that week. The program was designed to focus on the arts and culture of the Ohangwena, Oshikoto, Omusati and Oshana regions of northern Namibia. Through a series of programs, listeners would be given an insight into the history as well as the

current cultural activities in their local region. And Ovambo people living outside the area would be kept informed about the activities taking place in the north central region.

Each week, guest speakers and specialists in the topic area of each program are invited to speak on the subject. The program is conducted in Oshiwambo, and is presented on air by Vilho Shigwedha and Metusalem Ashipala.

Some of the topics under discussion have been:

- Christianity and culture – Guest speakers Dr Munyika, Tate Amakutuwa
- Ministry of Basic Education and Culture initiatives in culture – Guest speaker Bernadette Mojekwu
- Culture to bring about social change – Guest speaker Tate Nghifikwa
- Community cultural enterprises – APC Oshikuku Mission, Penduka
- The effects of Apartheid and the Liberation Struggle on culture – Guest speakers Chief Ankama, Dr Nambala
- Popular culture – what it means in Ovamboland
- Traditional Ovambo weddings and other customs
- A career in the arts in Namibia – Guest speaker Andre Strauss
- Funding and opportunities for arts projects in Namibia – UNESCO, Rössing, NCCI
- Story-telling hour – Guest speakers Chief Ankama, Tate Nghifikwa, Mwatala
- The importance of culture to the community – Guest speaker Ben Shikesho

The NBC's agreement to air a weekly program on culture was, in many ways, an experiment to test the community's interest in the development of local culture. At the time of writing the proposal, I was not sure whether the listeners would find the program entertaining or engaging enough for it to serve its ideal purpose – a focus for dialogue and involvement in cultural development.

The response of the Director of the NBC and the producers who assisted in the implementation of the program was very positive, in fact they decided to review their whole broadcasting schedule to fit the program in at a time when there would be the maximum audience. However the real response and measure of success came from the listeners themselves and was a testimony to the true desire and wish for more focus on the development of local culture. The Director of the NBC himself expressed how overwhelming the listeners' response was.

There are a number of factors affecting the transmission of information on traditional cultural practices and customs – the breakdown of the traditional family unit, the influence of popular culture, urbanisation, changing social and gender roles etc. This program plays an educational role as well as entertaining and informing listeners about issues surrounding culture. The significance of radio as a communication tool, and the authority which it is granted in the Ovambo community[92], mean that "culture" is seen as something worthy of intellectual discussion and debate, as well as entertainment. Through the presentation on-air of well known people from the community such as Tate Amakatuwa, Tate Nhifikwa, Chief Ankama and Bernadette Mojekwu, listeners were drawn in by the familiarity of the names and thus engaged in the subjects discussed.

The radio program was also designed to address the issue of posterity which was brought to the attention of NCCI on a number of occasions by elders and members of the community concerned with poetry, story-telling, music and traditional customs. It was often felt that unless certain songs, stories, personal histories and information on traditional customs was recorded and shared with the Ovambo people, they would be lost. Each program was recorded and held at the NBC, with tapes available to the listening public upon request.

A considerable amount of old recordings exist from ethnomusicologists' recordings during the apartheid era, however these are on vinyl records, poorly catalogued, of

[92] Radios in Ovamboland are largely battery operated. Therefore in the absence of electricity or phone lines, community messages, news and current affairs as well as music, talk-back etc are still accessible in even the most remote corners of Ovamboland.

dubious recording quality and have not had a specific place in NBC radio programing. Also, many of the elders today who are considered to be gifted musicians, story-tellers, historians etc by the community, were not recorded. The director of the NBC said that these vinyl recordings had unfortunate associations with the previous dispensation and its method of divide and rule. Mr Kandanga believed that the collection of this material was part of the apartheid regimes policy of emphasising tribal identity and therefore avoiding an Ovambo united front in the face of a common enemy. So the emphasis was on individual tribal identification rather than collective Ovambo identity. Regardless of the rationale behind the collection, the vinyl records are a valuable asset to the NBC and it is hoped that they will be re-recorded for posterity on cd in the future for greater sound quality. Theme music for the program was chosen from these records as the music was local and unique to Ovamboland. Currently there do not exist any cd recordings of traditional Ovambo music, such as dance music or music to be sung at *ohungis* or traditional ceremonies, or recordings of stories. Tobias Kandanga later observed:

> The programs have been very successful. So far the outcome or the response that we've got from the program actually is that people are feeling great, because people who are being interviewed are people who are knowing about tradition. And the way the callers participate in the program is wonderful. (Tobias Kandanga, interview 12/9/00)

Ongushu Yomithigululwakalo presents a balance of traditional and contemporary cultural practices and issues to its listeners. This was most important to me as in the field of cultural development, as Steve Robins points out, there are often perceived advantages in promoting cultural "purity" at the expense of change and modernisation. Despite the importance of tradition in Ovambo identity, an essentialist view of cultural heritage conservation denies people the right to evolve and develop their own culture.

The methodology I employed was an important step in the avoidance of a one-sided approach to cultural development – that of preservation alone. The background research

undertaken, in the form of community consultation, workshops, interviews, questionnaires etc, was significant in assessing arts and cultural priorities which were not simply about preservation, but also about development and creating opportunities for contemporary practices, according to the desires, priorities and will of the local community. What followed was a combination of the development of contemporary cultures and traditional cultures, particularly in the area of music and dance where, for example, local rock bands were promoted and given further opportunities for exposure through local performances, and the same amount of financial resources were allocated to the development of contemporary dance (through performances, competitions, festivals etc) as to traditional dance. Similarly, the project combined the development of culture in the expression of local identity, cultural awareness and pride, as well as in economic development with the promotion of artists and art forms for commercial gain such as through the sale of baskets, or paid performances. Income generation was identified as an important part of cultural development in research undertaken prior to the establishment of the project, and the setting up of local co-operatives was seen as a potential community based option in order to achieve this; however, this was a minor aspect of the CDP. Cultural recuperation in the CDP allowed for creative exploration of cultural identity through a variety of media, genres and art forms, both traditional and contemporary. An example of one project which addressed such goals, and presented Ovambo identity as images embodying contemporary and traditional culture, was the *Otse Mbaka* poster campaign.

CASE STUDY:
***Otse Mbaka* Poster Campaign**

In consultation with the NCCI, I decided to begin a poster campaign in order to get visual images of Ovambo culture circulating in the community. This would also provide further focus for cultural sensitisation in the region, in conjunction with *Ongushu Yomithigululwakalo*, the weekly radio program on culture. Funding for the campaign came from the publishing budget of the Ford/ Rössing Foundation Cultural Development Project. I hoped that by clear, public visual representations of different aspects of their

culture, a sense of cultural pride and significance would be generated amongst the people of the north central communities. The name of the campaign was the expression "*Otse Mbaka*" which means "this is who we are", as the images which were collected and chosen for display depicted both traditional and contemporary images of cultural expression. Each of the aforementioned categories the NCCI worked with in the Cultural Development Workshop were represented: dance, music, traditional customs, art and craft and poetry/story-telling/drama. These posters were distributed to the general community as well as to government and non-government organisations, resource centres, with a small portion of the posters to be sold at the Craft Centre in Windhoek, to generate some income towards future re-prints or new posters.

The collection of images used for the campaign proved to be extremely difficult and time consuming as no professional photographers had published or even endeavoured to photograph the contemporary cultural life of the Ovambo people. I contacted Gerald and Marc Hoberman in South Africa, who are probably amongst the best professional photographers in the region, and who have produced many exceptional books featuring photographs of Namibia, however they had no images at all of the areas of culture we were working in. Although images of Namibia – its landscape and natural resources - are bountiful, images of the people who make up the majority of the population and their cultural practices were nowhere to be found. This was quite significant as it indicated the lack of interest shown in the collection of social and cultural images from the most populated region in the country. With limited experience, I actually had to take some of the slides myself! However the end result was dramatic and quite spectacular, and provided a tangible and enduring visual representation of the culture of the north. Each of the representative images was chosen collaboratively (a very time consuming task as consensus on aesthetics is not always easy) and the text composed by myself, in consultation with the NCCI.

It was decided that the images should be vibrant and colourful, rather than in black and white or sepia tones as this subsumed culture into history, rather than celebrating its vitality. Three of the images feature Ovambos in traditional dress, while the other two

feature children in tracksuits and women in casual attire. All of the images were manipulated using a method of over-saturation of colour, designed to give them a contemporary feel, which was important in presenting images of culture as both traditional and modern at once.

The images are as follows:

· Dance -	Young woman dancing in traditional clothes and adornments
· Music -	Two boys playing large *ngoma*[93] drums
· Traditional customs -	*Meekulu* performing traditional wedding dance
· Art and craft -	Two women seated, making baskets
· Oral culture -	children seated around a fire at an *ohungi*

These images can be found in the attached CD as Appendix G (1-5)

Community response to the posters was very positive, and when I returned to Namibia two years later, there were still many posters hanging in public places, libraries, offices etc.

[93] Tom-tom drums played by hand

POWER AND POLITICS

> If culture is important and people have studied culture for a century or more, why don't we have well-developed theories, practical guidelines, close professional links between those who study culture and those who make and manage development policy? (Klitgaard in Harrison 2000:xvi)

NGO Work and the Absence of Cultural Content

Following independence, the Namibian Government has, through a series of bilateral and multilateral diplomatic agreements, established a situation where a number of international government agencies and NGOs are currently active in Namibia. These organisations are involved in development work in a wide range of areas such as the environment (DRFN, NACOBTA, NNF), the economy (NEPRU, World Bank), education (USAID, World Teach, VSO, AVI, UNESCO, SIDA), health (MSF, Catholic AIDS Action), agriculture (DFID, UNDP), human rights (NSHR), and community development (Oxfam, UNDP, NORAD). Many of these international non-government organisations have offices in Namibia, and enlist expatriates from their countries of origin to work in partnership with Namibians in establishing projects and activities in specific fields. As well as the development organisations currently in Namibia, there also exist donor agencies, which financially support projects undertaken by organisations within Namibia in the field of development, in similar areas as mentioned above. The relationship between the Government of Namibia and the NGOs and development organisations working in Namibia has generally been one of mutual respect, collaboration and partnership, with the Namibian Government's Ministry for Foreign Affairs providing visas for nationals of other countries entering Namibia to work on contracts of usually upward of two years. However, recently this attitude has begun to deteriorate because of the influence of Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe's vocal "anti-colonialist" sentiment over the issue of land redistribution which is widely supported in the region. Further details on the antagonistic relationship between the Namibian Government and foreign aid organisations active in Namibia were addressed in the section on Change.

Despite the wide-ranging areas of NGO involvement in development work in north central Namibia, the area of cultural development has seemingly been overlooked, except where commercial possibilities exist. Even the United Nations cultural arm, UNESCO, has no active projects in Ovamboland, nor any plans to initiate any[94]. This situation reflects current Namibian Government and active non-government organisation priorities – the building up of a healthy and sustainable education system, environment and health care system with a view to poverty alleviation. What is neglected, however, is the important role that culture and identity play in establishing appropriate projects and considerations in the task of nation-building. At this most important time in Namibia's development, having been an independent country for only 13 years (and with the vulnerability people have expressed about the socio-cultural effects of globalisation, which were addressed in the section on Change) cultural considerations and notions of what it means to be Namibian are yet to be an integral part of development work, or an area of development in its own right.

> We feel that arts and culture are indispensable to a person's life. We feel that it is something that can in the end contribute to the alleviation of unemployment, poverty, and that it contributes to a person having a self-realisation. Arts is very crucial to nation-building and self-realisation. (Ervast Mtota, interview 11/7/00)

This absence is curious, as nationalism played an important psychological and cultural role in the liberation of Namibia – the liberation of a people consigned to "barbarism, degradation and bestiality by the harsh rhetoric of the colonial civilizing mission". (Fanon 1990:171) Much consideration was given to issues of national identity, solidarity and pride in fighting for Namibian independence. However, the situation after independence and the realities of the global market have necessitated a far more outward, international focus. Along with the pressures of competing in the global economic market come the unavoidable cultural implications which follow such global connectedness. Said (1993:xxviii), conscious of inherited and evolving post-colonial identities and post-

[94] Information received from UNESCO Field Office 4/12/02

nationalist government lines, states that "the ideological concern over identity is understandably entangled with the interests and agendas of various groups that wish to set priorities reflecting these interests." The pressure for international economic relevance is inescapable in contemporary global society, creating an interesting arena for the consideration of personal, local, national and international identity. As Gandhi (1998:130) writes of Fanon,

> It is Fanon's contention … that the unpredictable exigencies of the decolonising project radically unsettle centuries-old cultural patterns in colonised societies. The shifting strategies of anti-colonial struggle, combined with the task of imagining a new and liberated postcolonial future, generate a crisis within the social fabric. As old habits give way to the unpredictable improvisations of revolutionary fervour, the colonised world submits to the momentum of political renovation and cultural transformation.

Such 'cultural transformation' and its ramifications, which independent Namibia faces, have not been reflected in the development and adoption of concrete cultural policies by the Namibian Government. Non-government organisations have also been largely silent on this issue. I will address possible reasons for this.

Donor vs NGO Agendas

> There is essential agreement that 'development' is above all an economic matter of production and accumulation, based on private investment and external assistance. (Rist 1997:85)

I will now outline why economic and ideological reasons have so far proven to be significant barriers to extensive work in the field of cultural development. Fisher (1997) observes that in recent years, NGOs have come to be seen by policy makers, development practitioners, donors, politicians and social scientists as conduits for the dissemination of the ideas and practices of "civil society". However, the agenda of undertaking such a

significant responsibility is called into question when NGOs are increasingly dependent on the "whims and fancies" of international donors, state aid agencies and corporate patrons and their ideological paradigms. This is of particular significance in the area of cultural development as donors also perceive NGOs as effective brokers of Western liberal democracy and neo-liberalism, which contribute to competitive economic market policies. In cultural development, economic outcomes are not the specific motivation of such work, nor are they easily measured. Therefore support is not easily justified by donors. In such a climate, donors would be correct in asking "how and why cultural development?" – particularly in the form of the community based model presented earlier in this section. This is perhaps the major logistical reason for the lack of development activity in the area of culture in projects undertaken by NGOs due to the significant difficulty in measuring and quantifying outcomes. Community cultural development, which is essentially concerned with the enrichment of individual and community cultural life and the creative expression of local identity, does not always offer tangible indicators of effectiveness which are required by donors who must justify financial involvement in projects according to priorities and agendas. Karina Constantino-David (1995) observes that it is easier for donors to support quantifiable interventions, for example income generating projects, infrastructure, or high visibility achievements, than community organisations involved in non-quantifiable process driven projects such as cultural development work, although donors and NGOs are both caught up in the same rhetoric of development. Until a direct link can be made between economic development and self-sustainability and cultural development work, it will remain a difficult area to justify especially as more "immediate" areas of need are so desperately apparent. Poverty, conflict, social fragmentation and material needs must be addressed; however local knowledge and the historical narratives of elders could be a valuable source of social capital in the quest to forge a collective sense of belonging, psychological well-being and social cohesion.

> How are we going to build programs for young people who don't have a secure home base? What can we do as artists to notify the world about the problems of AIDS? How can we use the arts to alert people in Namibia?

> How can we use arts to raise funds, to be of benefit? There's an enormous role that we can play as artists in helping Namibia through the problems of AIDS which are now beginning to show their real signs of impact. (Rita-Louise Hofmeyr, interview 12/7/00)

This could also, as Steve Robins argues, facilitate the development of viable livelihood strategies. In regions such as Ovamboland,

> There need not be an artificial dichotomy between the more materialistic rural development strategies of NGOs … and cultural projects aimed at stimulating social capital formation through inter-generational knowledge transfer. However it remains to be seen to what degree these indigenous knowledge and cultural practices can be used as a basis for 'cultural survival' and economic sustainability for present and future generations… (Robins 2001:849)

Self-sustainable development strategies, as Oommen (1997:52) points out, have income generation as their major agenda, which is seen to lead countries on the path of economic self-sufficiency and autonomy. This defines development as a function of capital and technology with goals conceptualised in terms of urban middle class aspirations. This presents a problem for the participatory aspect of development work, as it demands that the ideologies, ethics and expectations of the receiver of aid reflect those of the giver of aid, regardless of cultural, social, historical and environmental differences. As Raghuram (1999:45) states, "one of the crucial factors of aid coming under pressure of markets is that the ethics of receiving is often forced to conform to the ethics of aid-giving institutions." As "development" continues to be seen largely as a process of capital growth, international assistance or investment under the guise of solidarity and social responsibility usually holds some self-interest. As will be highlighted later in investigating cultural commodification, funding is often only possible when projects can be measured by the standard Western indicators of economic development and income generation. Cultural development work, however, suggests that growth need not be

singularly concerned with increased capital, levels of production, trade and consumption, rather it can occur through the freedom of cultural expression and the determination to negotiate the terms of cultural change.

Donors are perhaps also cautious of involvement in cultural development because of the seemingly contradictory implications of promoting cultural survival, the revitalisation of traditional practices, and heritage conservation whilst at the same time inculcating the values and virtues of progress, modernity, liberal individualism, development and democracy. This would seem to further draw attention to the dichotomy between colonialist notions of "modernity" and "tradition". In this framework, "modernity", or Western ideas on democratic decision making, proceduralism, accountability and self-determinism, continues to be associated with progress, development, rationality and order.

> One of the most controversial issues … [is] the extent to which cultural change should be integrated into the conceptualizing, strategizing, planning and programming of political and economic development. The issue becomes highly controversial when the initiative for such changes comes from the West. (Harrison 2000:xxx)

"Tradition" is therefore associated with stasis, stagnation, underdevelopment, poverty, superstition, tribalism and disorder. In the case of contemporary Ovamboland, people do not fit neatly into this dichotomy, with hybridisation[95] evident in all aspects of everyday life, from clothing to crop cultivation to governance. Ovambo people exist in a "democratic" country and largely survive through subsistence farming yet have access to (though not necessarily the ability to afford) mobile telephones, cable television and the internet.

[95] Hybridisation in this sense refers to the complex, multi-faceted identities and practices of contemporary Ovambos.

However, donors supposedly have a "strong interest … in the 'cultural survival' of vanishing cultures and languages". (Robins 2001:849) Therefore, strategies which emphasise traditional essentialism and, in turn, generate the production of cultural commodities which can attract tourism are more likely to meet the requirements of economic self-sustainability. Apart from the commodification of culture and the contradictory agenda which this sets up against the original agendas of promoting community identity, pride and cultural awareness in community based cultural development, the danger of such strategic essentialism is that it can obscure intra-community differences. As Spivak points out, these "ethnic" strategies of mobilisation also tend to ignore and degrade cultural hybridities in the name of "pure essences" and cultural continuity, thereby encouraging tensions between the "pure" and "westernised" elements of local indigenous community. (Spivak in Robins 2001:850)

Perhaps the answer lies somewhere in between – in communities engaging with "modern" means of production without "being swallowed up by the homogenising forces of modernity and globalisation". (Robins 2001:843) Essentially, this is where the conditions of cultural change should be contested. This would require communities to adapt and recast their reliance on Western institutions in order to reconstitute and reproduce their own cultural ideas and practices. And through participation in NGO or donor-driven cultural development projects, should they be available, indigenous groups could draw on the resources of a global civil society to reconstitute themselves as a culturally vibrant, proud and distinct community, in touch with their traditional cultures. As well as cultural survival, engagements of this kind are then merely instrumental manipulations of culture and identity in order to gain access to material resources. "They are also cultural practices aimed at the recuperation of social memory and identity to other cultural reclamations taking place throughout post-apartheid …[southern] Africa". (Robins 2001:850) Rita-Louise Hofmeyr strongly believes in the creative value of arts and culture in order to negotiate modernity:

> In a rapidly changing environment, like we do have in Namibia, internally and also with pressure from outside, you can't keep people in isolation so

> people change and circumstances change and I think art is a fantastic vehicle for any society to express that change. (Rita-Louise Hofmeyr, interview 12/7/00)

Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Issues of accountability and reconciliation are of great importance when considering notions of politics and power in the process of nation building and cultural recuperation. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in South Africa was established in 1995 following the fall of the apartheid regime and democratic election of Nelson Mandela as President in 1994.

> The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was set up by the Government of National Unity to help deal with what happened under apartheid. The conflict during this period resulted in violence and human rights abuses from all sides. No section of society escaped these abuses. The TRC is based on the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act, No 34 of 1995. "... a commission is a necessary exercise to enable South Africans to come to terms with their past on a morally accepted basis and to advance the cause of reconciliation." Mr Dullah Omar, former Minister of Justice.[96]

The TRC was given the task of examining the context in which the conflicts of the past had occurred, both within and outside South Africa. This is of particular significance to Namibia, where, despite a national policy of reconciliation being adopted upon independence, a country-specific TRC has not been established. Therefore many of the atrocities perpetrated in Namibia by South African Defence Force soldiers acting under the mandate of the apartheid South African Government have not been investigated. As Christopher Saunders discovered, access to information relating to Namibia in TRC archives or the TRC Report itself is limited, and the material is grossly inadequate and incomplete.

[96] Source: www.doj.gov.za/trc/

> …the focus is very much on high-profile incidents, which are not adequately contextualised, and there is no attempt to be comprehensive. There is no detailed account, say, of the human rights violations inflicted on the people of northern Namibia over many decades. …Overall it can be said that for researchers on the recent history of Namibia, the TRC has turned out – for all its value as an essential part of South Africa's emergence from apartheid – to be another disappointment, though it was, perhaps, not to be expected that any dramatic revelations relating to Namibia's liberation struggle would be revealed. (Saunders 2000:5)

The TRC Report states clearly that "South Africa's occupation of South West Africa would merit a separate truth commission of its own", (Saunders 2000:2) although this would open up both sides of the struggle to investigation, and SWAPO would not be exempt from scrutiny of crimes committed during the apartheid years. It is perhaps for this reason that such an event has not taken place.

Saunders believes this absence of significant findings and reportage on Namibia in the TRC is because those who appeared before the TRC were not compelled to talk openly about what they had done in Namibia. This was based on legal grounds, as the Namibian Government had not specifically agreed to respect any amnesty granted in South Africa to those who appeared before the commission. It is unclear whether the Namibian Government was approached by the South African Government and refused to agree to a bilateral amnesty; however the failure to secure such an agreement robbed the TRC of much potential evidence relating to Namibia, as only 13 members of the South African security forces applied to the TRC for amnesty relating to incidents in Namibia.

The absence of a formal investigation into the atrocities and events of the apartheid years in Namibia, which had a devastating effect on psychological, social and cultural life in Namibia, leaves a wide gap in the attempts to research the effects of such events on cultural development and identity. Stories and anecdotes about the effects of the war and the oppressive practices of the apartheid regime serve as powerful narratives in the

absence of formal evidence and investigation, and serve as powerful forms of relating experience. The refusal to hold such a commission in Namibia shows a reluctance to proactively address the cultural and psycho-social impact of the apartheid regime and the denial of the importance of acknowledging and engaging with these effects. With the darkest secrets of apartheid as yet un-addressed, Namibians have been denied the opportunity for a recuperative conciliation of the past.

Like the fish
escaping the tide,
the refugee fled the land.

When he crept away
his heart was a kraal
full of hopelessness.

Good fortune, he crept
under the bush,
bothered by
whispering bullets.

There, he hid until they
raised the last net and fish basket.
Then he wriggled home.

(Shipena Pinehas Panduleni 1997)

Clearly, from the rich volume of poems and songs written about the events and effects of apartheid, articulating themes of dispossession, exile, oppression, violence, disempowerment etc, there are many traumatic experiences which are relieved through such creative outpouring. Arts and cultural activities provide powerful vehicles for creative expression which assists in the healing process.

SWAPO, Education and the Role of MBEC in Cultural Recuperation.

Mbockoma Mungandjera is a local school teacher in Oshikuku, a staunch SWAPO supporter and prime example of an Ovambo man living comfortably between two worlds – the traditional rural Ovambo life and the modern, Westernised life of a professional. Educated in Sweden whilst in exile for eight years during the Liberation Struggle, Mbockoma has experienced life in the West first hand. He is in many ways a Westernised Ovambo, yet one who is strongly in touch with his tradition and culture. Like many professional Ovambos, he lives in a house, yet also owns several goats, cattle and a homestead to which he goes on weekends or more often during the cultivating season. Expanding on Mbockoma Mungandjera's previous comments on being "enlightened", the following statement shows the shifting priorities which have eventuated in his current considerations of identity as he speaks of the political journey which has brought him to this state:

> Before 1970 I was not very much enlightened, like the way I am now. (Though still on a small, small scale!) Maybe in the 1970s I never thought of culture, I was only thinking of freedom and independence. That's why I participated in a lot of demonstrations, strikes, etc. We had to wait until now to talk about these things. We had to wait until independence. Now I am enlightened. I have stopped and reflected on these things and can put everything in context. I'm a little bit enlightened, I can think about tradition, culture, modern ways of thinking, and try to balance it. (Mbockoma Mungandjera, interview 25/11/02)

These comments give a dramatic insight into post-independence Ovambo thinking. The priorities of the past, notably the overthrowing of oppression and gaining of freedom and independence, have now evolved into a more reflective and contemplative consideration of the impact of outside influences on life in Ovamboland. But the belief exists that such consideration is only possible as a result of political independence and freedom. And such freedom was only possible through the resistance and leadership of SWAPO. The

power of political nationalism has been addressed previously in the section on Change, but a consideration of the connectedness of identity consideration, freedom and politics is important in addressing issues of recuperation. This interconnectedness is one possible reason behind pockets of the community being reluctant to proactively participate in cultural activities which they feel are the responsibility of the government, as shown in the reflections following the UNAM Cultural Development Workshop. I will now investigate the enormous responsibility placed by the community on the SWAPO Government's Ministry of Basic Education and Culture in the area of cultural recuperation.

> A national policy on arts and arts education can protect, enhance and empower artists and arts education. This is vital in modern technocratic society. Without some effective legislation, the arts in Namibia are in a precarious position. (Mans 2000:1)

The section on Change in this thesis examined the history and role of the government in Namibian society. In that section, I outlined some of the reasons behind community deference to government on issues which could be more effectively addressed elsewhere, such as arts and cultural activities and education. It also examined whether neo-colonialism and government priorities of modernisation were often at odds with the philosophies behind community based cultural development. This section looks at community and organisational expectations of the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture in arts and cultural development, and why these are not being met.

> Education, if you look at the broad term "education", I think there's a lot of misconception and we're trying very hard in every single meeting that education should be seen as a broader thing that embraces culture. Because people tend to think of education really as reading, writing and arithmetic. And education of people implies that you're educating people to have certain values and ethics and the way they're going to look after the environment and the way they're going to interact with people. So in

> that way, it's essential that education is seen as a much broader thing that also embraces creativity and people's right to be creative and have an outlet for that. (Rita-Louise Hofmeyr, interview 12/7/00)

In my research, a number of significant themes emerged in responses from interviewees. All who were interviewed, regardless of social or professional background, believed that arts and culture should be taught in schools. It was believed that this should occur either holistically through the understanding of education as having a cultural element, an attitude expressed above by the MBEC Director of Arts, Rita-Louise Hofmeyr, or specifically taught as a separate promotional subject[97] in its own right. The importance of informal educational opportunities in arts and culture was also strongly stated, with most believing that broader concepts of teaching should be developed, to encourage more community participation and collaboration in classrooms.

> Education is a tremendous, powerful vehicle if used properly, to promote cultural identity, cultural diversity, cultural tolerance, appreciation of culture … by that I don't just mean artistic expression but certainly that. But culture is understood as what any community is – where they've come from, where they're going. But to do that you have to have qualified people teaching something about arts, something about cultural identity. And schools also have to be a place where it's not just teachers teaching and learners learning, but where students and their parents and their community members can feel that it's a place where they can go to, to express themselves, and where they can share their experiences and they can enjoy the authority that goes with standing up before a class. (David Chiel, interview 4/10/00)

[97] Subjects are divided into promotional and non-promotional categories, which determines how many hours per week are committed, to what level the subject can be taken, resource allocation etc. These categories are determined by the Ministry.

> Formal education and informal education should work together. We shouldn't be working alone, as we are working for the same goal. We need to co-ordinate and co-operate. (Bernadette Mojekwu, interview 13/10/00)

> Nothing will improve until principals are fairly sensitised to the fact that arts should be on the curriculum. Provision has been made for it, there are curricula in place. But because of various reasons, principals don't always implement those subjects. They say people aren't educated, they don't have trained teachers, which is not really the case because any person who has gone through the recent BETD training can teach the core arts and can take it right through to grade ten. My feeling is that there's lots of pressure on principals to show results in the hard sciences and in the languages and that people are under immense pressure because the curriculum is very broad and there are many subjects that are offered. And I think that if they can't cope with that then they often use the arts period or the information science period to deal with the rest of the curriculum. Most times when I have asked principals why arts is not being offered at the school they'll say simply because they are over-stretched with the curriculum. (Rita-Louis Hofmeyr, interview 12/7/00)

> I think part of the education will be the most important one, for people to understand that culture can change as times go on. It's not static. So I feel that in accepting of that, people should promote culture in the syllabus, education syllabus, because art and culture should be taught in schools. (Tobias Kandanga, interview 12/9/00)

There also exists a strong feeling that the government is not doing enough to adequately address the teaching of arts and culture in schools. Presently, no attempts are being made by the government for teachers to try to retrieve cultural practices which have been marginalised.

> Although the president and other politicians always look to singers and dancers to entertain and enlighten official visitors to the country, this does not necessarily translate into financial or moral support for cultural heritage or contemporary art forms. (Mans 2000:4)

Although arts and culture is either not taught at all, or taught in a small selection of affluent schools in the south of the country as a non-promotional subject, and despite the previously addressed psychological dependence on government initiatives, there exists government expectation that people will independently practice and develop their culture.

> Since independence, Namibians have been encouraged to rediscover and celebrate their own cultures. (Mans 2000:5)

Although this does indeed happen in the remote villages and homesteads of Ovamboland, it does not translate as government support of culture. As highlighted earlier, the Namibian Government's principal objectives upon independence were national reconciliation, the socio-economic development of the country and its population, and the integration of Namibia in the international economy and community of nations. In order to achieve this, an educated population was seen as a crucial requirement, as it was believed that only with a healthy, self-sustaining, and educated population and labour force would Namibia eventually be in a position to overcome external dependency, efficiently operate its capital infrastructure, develop industries and promote economic growth. Investing in human capital was the first step in promoting socio-economic development, and the newly elected government set out to reverse the effects and practices of state sanctioned inequality and minority privilege through education reform. Although many Namibians had received training and teaching qualifications whilst living abroad in exile during the war, there were far too few qualified teachers upon independence to adequately facilitate the education reform, which was prioritised by the Government, therefore outside assistance was sought.

Attracting support for these goals from non-government organisations was not difficult, as Gonzales writes, "Given the international attention which the country's struggle for independence drew, the government's objectives of reconciliation and development, and the democratic zeal of the population, development agencies and organisations from around the world eagerly established projects to assist the state in its transformation efforts." (Gonzales 2000:27) Namibia was seen by development organisations as an exciting and politically stable focus country for innovative educational development projects and a site to send teachers as development workers whilst Namibian nationals undertook the task of upgrading their skills and competencies to meet the new syllabus and language requirements. New educational ideologies and philosophies based on Western styles and learner-centered techniques were to be implemented. After years of rote learning and indoctrination in classroom teaching, this radically new methodology was a significant shift in the educational paradigm and required new understanding as well as material and human resources to carry out. Of particular significance in this process was the government's decision to adopt the Cambridge system of education, which had syllabi and exam question papers written in the U.K. As such, there was no specific Namibian cultural context in the syllabi.

Education reform is not uncommon in any society, however in a newly independent country which has endured years of oppression and division, the reforms were particularly significant. Education was seen as liberating and empowering. "For learning to be liberating," states the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture, "it must involve developing both a critical consciousness and a solid sense of self-confidence." (Gonzales 2000:15) Such self-confidence had been radically undermined in the previous dispensation, and would take significant effort to develop in the new system. "Liberation" in the education system chosen, however, created a dependence on external teachers, externally written and designed syllabi, and subject priorities which would suit the post-independent priorities of liberal democracy, specifically economic development. It was constantly reinforced to learners at school that if they did not study hard in subjects such as mathematics, economics and science, that they would end up "back in the

village"[98], reinforcing a feature of modernity – that urban life should, (with the assistance of Western-style education) take off from village communal life. It is not surprising given such an affiliation with the philosophies of modernisation in the ideology of the education system, that subjects such as arts and culture were not considered as both independent and integrated areas of formal education. This absence was a continuation of culturally repressive policies of the past.

> During colonial occupations (due to wars and transfers among European powers, Namibia had 3 separate ones) the music, dance, and visual arts of Namibians were considered second rate and primitive. Such arts were not taught in schools. They were not brought into the public arena in any way. Cultural music and dance were confined to isolated rural areas, political rallies and guerrilla camps. (Mans 2000:5)

The ministry also saw social relevance as a crucial part in recognising its need to "reconsider what we mean by high quality education to be sure that we do not unthinkingly carry the values of education for the few into the era of education for all." (Namibia 2000:38) This was a significant task, in a country with at least 12 ethnic groups[99] and in order to achieve this, the actual material taught to learners needed to be inclusive and appropriate for each different group. This formidable task was most certainly not adequately met in the text books and syllabi I taught, in Year 11 and 12 IGCSE English, which were extremely Eurocentric in their content and design[100]. Material previously taught under the apartheid system had been both disempowering and held little relation to the learners' experiences and everyday lives. Post-independence syllabus development was rushed in order to produce text books, therefore few attempts

[98] Despite this threat, in my experience as a high school teacher at Nuuyoma Senior Secondary School, agriculture was always nominated as learners' favourite subject when asked.

[99] Identifed as Ovambo, Kavamngo, Herero, Himba, Damara, Europeans, Caprivians, San, Nama, Topnaar, Basters, Tswana. Many sub-groups exist in each of these identified groups.

[100] In 1999, the IGCSE Year 11 English listening exam asked students, for many of whom English was their third language, questions relating to the London Underground system, referring to it as "the tube". Another exam was about a trip to the Opera. I often observed that in exams, students were greatly distressed as they could not contextualise Western names, settings, or examples used in such exams. Many concepts were completely unfamiliar to them.

were made to make material "inclusive" of all ethnic groups and these attempts were quite superficial, usually simply allowing for culturally diverse contextualisation, rather than educating on diversity. Such an example comes from a 4th grade social studies textbook, published in 1995 and based on the "new" syllabus, which asked questions such as "What happens in your family when a baby is born? … Find out what your parents did when you were born". (Gonzales 2000:12)

A significant impediment to rapid educational transformation in post-independence policy reform, was the introduction of English as the medium of instruction from Year 4 onwards. This severely disadvantaged learners in the higher levels of primary and secondary schools, and caused significant difficulty and anxiety to teachers who were not adept at teaching in the new language.

Personal experience gained in my two years of teaching English at Nuuyoma Senior Secondary school in Oshikuku, gave me insight into the generational difference between learners in Year 11, aged 18 and learners in Year 5, aged 11. Due to the war, and the devastating effects it had on education in Ovamboland[101], many learners did not complete high school until the age of 25. The English spoken by the primary school aged learners in Oshikuku, who had enjoyed the benefits of English as the medium of instruction, was often better than that of graduating Year 12 students.

Accountability and Responsibility

The government institution responsible for the development of primary and secondary school curricula, the National Institute for Educational Development (NIED) established panels for the development of curricula and policies for a number of subjects, both promotional and non-promotional, including arts and culture. The arts and culture panel however is now disbanded, so much of the advocacy work and academic input have been lost. The draft syllabi for integrated performing arts and art and craft have not been

[101] Many schools in Ovamboland were used as South African military bases during the Independence Struggle. The legacy of this exists today with some schools still having active landmines around them. Similarly, recruitment raids of senior secondary schools were not uncommon, where Ovambo learners would be kidnapped and trained as *koeffot* for the SADF. Not surprisingly, learners were too afraid to attempt to walk to or stay at school under such conditions.

implemented in schools other than by those which have initiated them as non-promotional subjects of their own volition, and often by schools in Windhoek with access to resources and extra-curricula support, or schools where teachers have been members of the curriculum development panel. Namibian academic and arts advocate, Minette Mans, in her article entitled *Creating a Cultural Policy for Namibia* makes the following recommendations:

> …arts education needs to be more clearly defined within the Namibian context, and its needs more emphatically articulated in [a] policy document. Arts education should be located within Namibian cultural traditions … many incumbent teachers resist this as they lack confidence to facilitate learning experiences … the task of re-educating teachers in terms of arts practices in different cultures resides with the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture. (Mans 2000:16)

Despite Ministry of Basic Education and Culture officials being included at every stage of the cultural development work I was involved in between 1998 – 2000, cultural activities undertaken by non-government organisations aroused considerable suspicion within the Regional Offices because work in this area was seen as the government's responsibility. I was told in no uncertain terms by cultural officers that "no cultural activity could take place without the government being involved". This view of culture and of freedom of cultural practice and expression demonstrates the attitude that exists in Namibia about government authority and indicates people's reluctance to operate autonomously outside of the government. The transference of power from colonial rule to national rule, whilst having massive political implications, did not entail a complete change in ideology or greater confidence in questioning of governance and existing hegemony that had existed in the colonial period. Minette Mans writes,

> … it is vital that governmental structures and procedures enhance, not hamper, efficient functioning. An arts policy should not enhance bureaucratic control. (Mans 2000:15)

The notion expressed by the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture, that cultural activity cannot take place without government involvement, implies that the activities which are taking places in homesteads, around camp fires, in playgrounds etc are not sanctioned by government. Activity still happens in such contexts, however and people emphatically told me that the concept of "education" needed to be promoted to extend beyond formal classroom learning and that the informal learning possibilities provided by parents, neighbours, relatives and so on could play a valuable role in the teaching of culture. In the absence of a syllabus-based promotion of arts/cultural subjects at schools in the region, these informal learning possibilities comprised the only opportunities to develop skills in the creative arts.

> The notion that only teachers can teach, especially in the realm of culture is absurd. Anyone can teach … many people can teach about culture, probably they know a great deal more than teachers know about culture. So I think to make it the sole reserve of teachers who have graduated from teaching academies or have somehow filled the requisite requirements that enable them to have a teaching certificate is ludicrous. (David Chiel, interview 4/10/00)

"Loss" or Preservation?

In investigating power and politics, some reference must be made to the role of the previous dispensation in cultural recuperation. Ironically, while apartheid and South African rule are perceived by many as responsible for cultural "loss", various cultural activities and initiatives which sought to preserve and promote culture in the region also took place during this time. Although people sceptically regarded such activities as subversive measures which were designed to reinforce essentialist attitudes, promote tribalism and therefore support theories of "divide and rule", the legacy which exists as a result of such activities is undeniably seen as a positive thing by the communities of the north. Examples of such initiatives are the Regional Cultural Festivals, NBC recordings and the collection of archival artefacts.

The Regional Cultural Festival is an annual display of music, craft and dance, which is held in each political constituency in Namibia and culminates in a National Cultural Festival with considerable prize money and prestige associated with attendance at the event. The festival is now organised and run by the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture, and is the main cultural activity of the Ministry each year. Cultural groups compete and perform in traditional dance, and certain regions are renowned for their consistently strong performances. Winning groups are often enlisted to perform for presidential and diplomatic events.

> I can remember that before independence, there used to be cultural festivals and that was really just traditional dances. And whether it was with a good intention or not, people did look at it in a different light because it was organized by people who were in the regional government, and you know then the regional government was seen to be a white South African imposed government. So they thought it was something that was imposed upon them. But I think it was a good project. Sometimes, the people who were putting on the festivals, you could see them in their camouflage gear – and at the same time you could see the parachutes. You know they mainly used the Oshakati Soccer Stadium, and while you are there dancing, your attention will be drawn to some soldiers jumping out of the plane high up in the sky! I don't know whether the festivals were to draw the attention of the population there away from the political situation, but they were still cultural festivals. One would have thought that this was propaganda, to show the world that they were there to develop the culture and not just in the region because of the war. I think it was to keep people busy so that they forget any political thoughts. (Ervast Mtota, interview 11/7/00)

Regardless of its original intent, or the past suspicions of the Ovambo people, the Regional Cultural Festival is whole-heartedly embraced throughout the country and has

grown to be one of, if not the most popular large annual regional community event[102]. The irony of this is evident on a number of levels, particularly that such a culturally destructive and oppressive regime could generate a popular celebration of Ovambo identity, which is extremely well supported and attended by the community. (See *Fig. 4.1 – 4.2*)

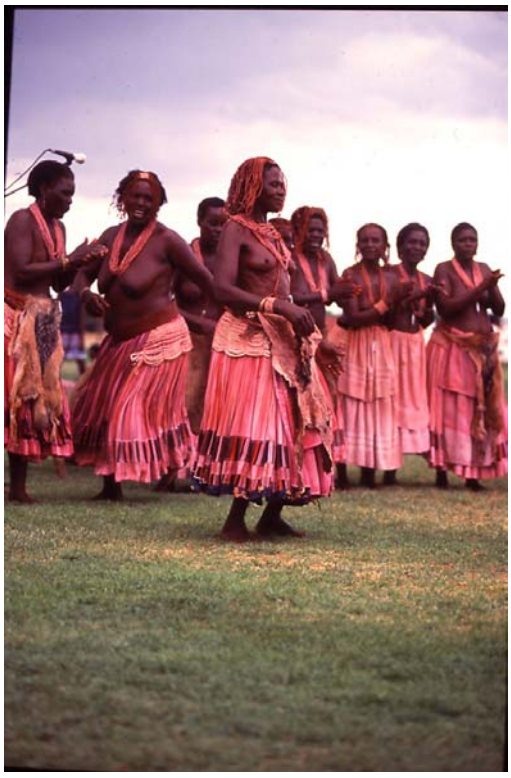

Fig.4.1 – Women at Regional Cultural Festival

Fig. 4.2 – Men at Regional Cultural Festival

Also ironic, however, is the festival's emphasis on "tradition" in an era, and a country which denounces tribal autonomy and instead promotes national unity. Post-independence, emphasis on ethnic difference is regarded as highly inappropriate, even offensive. SWAPO is supposed to be representative of all Namibian people, effecting political policies and promoting a new government sanctioned ideology of unity. "…unity and the transcending of traditional divisions was a principle constantly reiterated by the [SWAPO] leadership." (Leys and Saul1995:13) The National Cultural Festival, in which the winners of each regional festival compete, is a dramatic display of cultural essentialism, with regional groups being defined by their pre-colonial

[102] Soccer also rates pretty highly!

appearance, dance style and music. Also, the use of the term "cultural festival" for what is essentially a dance festival featuring traditional dances from each region in the country, has been questioned by academics such as Minette Mans. Having been associated with the organisation of the Regional Cultural Festivals of 1999 and 2000, I suggested the possibility of incorporating new categories into the competition, such as local jewellery making, basketry, cooking, pottery, carving, story-telling etc. These new categories were accepted at a regional level and proved popular on the day of the festival. (See *Fig.4.3*) They were rewarded with ample prize money provided by the Ministry which prior to the inclusion of further categories, had only been awarded to dance groups. Such limited prize categories had often resulted in a large surplus being given back to the Ministry each year. However, although regional changes could be made to the festival, the national festival provided no opportunities for more broad interpretations of "culture", nor the opportunity for the display of any form of cultural expression which was contemporary or post-colonial. There was, for instance, no opportunity for hip hop, R&B or rap performances, despite the popularity of such genres in the community. (See *Fig. 4.4*) It seemed as though the presentation of traditional dance and appearance, which have already been identified as having associations of "loss", were more important and the event was seen to be more about the preservation of heritage and pre-colonial traditions than a more broad representation and celebration of contemporary culture.

Fig. 4.3 – Cultural artefact displays – a new category at the festival

Fig.4.4 – R&B group at Nuuyoma Senior Secondary School Talent Quest, 1999

Another area where effort was put into the preservation and presentation of Ovambo culture under the apartheid regime was in the recording and broadcasting of local music. In a region as vast and isolated as Ovamboland, radio was and, in the absence of electricity in most of the region, continues to be an extremely important tool of communication.

> The NBC, or the former SWABC used to showcase a lot of local home grown music, so I think the music part of it was probably kept alive via the radio, but not via the education system, certainly not! I know because I was working in radio in those days and we recorded a wealth of music and that's all in the archives. (Rita-Louise Hofmeyr, interview 12/7/00)

Indeed, almost all traditional Ovambo music and songs which are broadcast on the NBC today come from vinyl recordings which were produced during the apartheid era. Again, the practice of recording and broadcasting local traditional music was treated with suspicion, but regardless of the intention, the outcome and public response were positive. As Tobias Kandanga states,

> The situation pre-independence was based on the policy of segregation, and each radio station was concentrating mostly on its ethnic province. And the music which they were playing on the station was only of that ethnic group. A long time ago, the Oshiwambo service in particular, most of the music which was played on air was Oshiwambo music. And in 1967 when they launched the SWABC in Oshakati, the only music which was broadcast was Oshiwambo music because it was the first time for people to hear the radio and all those sort of things, so they were very pleased to listen to their traditional music. Then in the 1970s, things started to change when Western music started to come in, but mostly it was not Western music, it was South African music. (Tobias Kandanga, interview 12/9/00)

The Church's Role in the Struggle

Another interesting outcome in the process of post-colonial cultural recuperation in Namibia, can be seen in the church's role in the Independence Struggle. Ironically, after having played such a significant role in Europeanising Ovambo culture and contributing to perceived cultural "loss", churches played a crucial role in the liberation and independence of Namibia by providing support to SWAPO and publicly speaking out

against the oppressive practices of apartheid. Many church leaders were imprisoned or forced into exile for their solidarity with the Namibian people. The ambiguity of the churches' role in Namibia's history is evident in the comparison between the early complicity and co-operation with the colonial powers, and the eventual rejection, open criticism and opposition to South African domination. Ervast Mtota, the principal of the College for the Arts, sees the Independence Struggle as being a significant turning point, when issues such as independence, political liberation and freedom from oppression, became more important than the legalistic naming requirements for baptism. Names began to emerge which once again represented wider events yet also incorporated Christianity, such as "Tuyakula" which means "God assist us". The church underwent a dramatic change in its role in the community in its commitment to the freedom and liberation of the people. The church also began to encourage expressions of local culture in church proceedings, such as traditional dress, ululation[103], and traditional songs and dances.

> I think it was towards the end of the 1980s that the church started to review their stance on names and such, and began fighting for human rights and fighting for the Independence Struggle. The church really, really started changing completely and it began serving the objective of independence. I think it was in the middle of the 1970s that the church started becoming the enemy of the South African authorities. (Ervast Mtota, interview 11/7/00)

The active role played by the church in Namibia's Independence Struggle was also helped by the establishment of independent Namibian churches, such as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN) and the Council of Churches in Namibia – an ecumenical body which worked towards the liberation of the country, for the human dignity of the Namibian people and for Namibians to be the masters of their own lives. (Hunke 1988:628) Following somewhat discrete statements by the Lutheran church to the

[103] Ululating is a traditional Ovambo form of appreciation, recognition and thanks, much like the Western tradition of clapping/applause. It is a high-pitched noise made by women involving the rolling of the tongue.

South African Government denouncing torture, police brutality, Bantustan policy[104] with the consequent inhumane forced migration and the intolerable housing policy on the locations, the Black Lutheran Church leadership came out with an open letter in 1971. (Included as Appendix H). This came after the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice which validated the United Nations' decision of 1966 and 1969 to terminate the mandate of South Africa over Namibia and called for an immediate withdrawal of its administration from the territory and for the granting of independence. Given the church's significant links with international institutions, it also offered its services as a mouthpiece for Namibians without a voice.

Hunke describes the role of the Black Namibian churches (Lutheran, Black Anglican and Black Roman Catholic) in the Independence Struggle as happening on three levels: institutional, ideological and operational. On the institutional level, churches allowed a sense of ownership through Namibian leadership, which gave a visible inclusiveness and representation to the Namibian people, and also gave a voice to the voiceless. On the ideological level, these churches began preaching liberation theology, using the Gospel event as evidence of God's fight against collective evils like oppression, exploitation, and his creation and redemption of every single person equally. This also rendered churches anti-authoritarian in the sense that they refused to recognise the illegal status quo of South African occupation and control of Namibia. On the operational level, the church published statements which informed people about their rights and how to proceed on a legal basis in cases of torture, and on the implications of certain events such as the sham elections in December 1978. (Hunke 1988:633) The church also publicly denounced the partiality of the courts, provided information to the international community using links to international bodies and institutions, and provided educational programs to empower people in subjects like English, literacy, community organising etc.

[104] South Africa's "Bantustan" policy, inaugurated in the early 1960s under the apartheid regime, called for moving existing Native Reserves, or portions of what was considered worthless land, towards independence. This would satisfy African demands for greater political power, increase racial isolation and leave the black population entirely dependent on whites for economic survival.

This massive turnaround in the relationship of the churches with the South African Government did not happen suddenly, and initially resulted in great division between the churches which supported colonial rule in Namibia and those which opposed it. (Haikali 1988:635) It also required a fundamental rethinking of Christian theology as the philosophy that Christianity was a religion of equality began to flounder because of some Christian churches' support of evil regimes which were exterminating their own people. This division threatened the existence of some churches in Namibia, and resulted in many priests and ministers being imprisoned or forced into exile. As Haikili writes: "The more churches supported the right to self-determination, the more they were defined as enemies by the South African regime. The Church had now also become a victim of the South African oppression." (Haikali 1988:636)

The perceived "losses" due to the activity of missionaries are still a source of sadness, regret and a sense of injustice. However the subsequent role which the churches played in the Independence Struggle, whilst not completely compensating the community for their "loss", at least showed a dramatic turnaround in priorities, for example solidarity with their congregations in matters as trivial[105] as names, dress, and social and cultural protocol, to the monumentally important issues of self-determinism, independence and freedom from oppression. However this too would have led to some issues of cultural identity as those who rejected Christianity as a form of white imperialism would have felt conflicted when the church essentially changed sides and became a champion of ordinary people. Also, as I have previously demonstrated, the churches' attempts at encouraging the free expression of traditional practices as part of Christian worship have been met with scepticism within the community.

Similarly, although the example of the apartheid government establishing regional cultural festivals shows how the previous regime, regardless of intentions, preserved some aspects of Ovambo cultural life, numerous examples exist of cultural genocide[106], in the sense of physical aggression causing the disappearance of culture. Latouche

[105] Trivial insofar as these changes, as I have previously shown, were not doctrinally based.

[106] A term used by Latouche to refer to the disappearance of culture through the aggressive one-way push of deculturation.

(1996:55) refers to this as the final stage of deculturation. The destruction of cultural artefacts and records as well as forced cessation of practices and absence of written documentation make the process of recuperation challenging, as I will now demonstrate.

The Writing of Culture

Presently there exists little published research specifically on the culture of Ovamboland, before, during, or after colonialism and apartheid and their effects.

> I see arts and culture as a wealth that can be explored, if one's going to look at publication. I think all over the world you're going to find that local languages are slightly endangered. They must be published for the future. I don't know if there's a market for that if a country doesn't put in place publishing machinery to get cheap, accessible publications in the local vernacular to its people, then that's something that's going to be very definitely endangered in the future. (Rita-Louise Hofmeyr, interview 12/7/00)

There are a number of historical resources, anthropologists, historians and other academics such as Jeremy Silvester, Patricia Hayes, Colin Leys, John Saul, Ian Fairweather, and Peter Kajivivi have made valuable contributions to the study of Namibia. But specific texts on culture and cultural change in the country are scarce. Sources such as missionary reports are products of their bias, ideology and era and have to be interpreted accordingly. One such source is *Ovamboland*, a quasi-anthropological account of life in Ovamboland in 1911 by German missionary Hermann Tonjes. This publication is of great interest, not only for its descriptions of the traditions and customs still practised in Namibia in 1911, but also because it includes some anecdotal evidence of the social and cultural impact of missionaries and white people in the area. The book reads as an extended personal journal and was designed to be published in Germany to rally support for the missionary cause in the region. Examples of this work can be found in the section on "Loss" in this thesis.

> Despite their detailed reportage of landscape, custom, and language, they inevitably privilege the centre, emphasising the 'home' over the 'native', the 'metropolitan' over the 'provincial' or 'colonial', and so forth. At a deeper level their claim to objectivity simply serves to hide the imperial discourse within which they are created. (Ashcroft 1989:5)

Other such examples of Euro-centric presentations of Namibia can be found in fascinating publications such as the *South West Africa Annual* (*S.W.A. Annual*), which existed ostensibly to report on the "progress" of the colony of "South West Africa". Articles reflected on business ventures, local (usually white) stories of adventure in the country, and occasional cultural and socio-anthropological tales about some of the Namibian people. What is particularly interesting in the *S.W.A. Annual* is the historical backdrop of each annual publication. Significant mention is given to the Second World War, and its effects on trade and access to European goods in the country, for example in the Administrator, P.I. Hoogengenhout's preface:

> When I wrote a foreword to the S.W.A. Annual last year no one was able to prophesy that the end of the war was in sight … and yet it has come to pass. The reaction in South West Africa was one of relief and thankfulness and the machinery for reconstruction work was set in motion without undue delay. (*S.W.A. Annual* 1946:7)

There is a complete absence of any mention of the anti-colonial resistance, or the Independence Struggle which took place in the north of the country between 1966 – 1990. Instead, in the 1968 edition of *S.W.A. Annual*, there is an article entitled *The March of Progress*, which describes the building and development of infrastructure in Ovamboland and shows photographs with captions such as "heavy machinery operated by Ovambos"; "laying pipelines between Oshakati and Ondangwa".

> Tremendous developments are taking place in Ovamboland under a comprehensive plan involving expenditure of R30-million during the

> coming five years on cattle breeding, fencing, water affairs, electricity, townships, buildings, roads, airports, economic affairs… (*S.W.A. Annual* 1968:111)

Ovamboland is represented as a place of great progress and development, rather than a rural war zone. This is not surprising because this propaganda was important not only to further consolidate South African control by showing the prosperity of the region, but also to attract investment despite the war being fought in the region. Such texts can be perceived as representations of Europe to itself and of others to Europe, rather than accounts of different peoples and societies, a projection of European fears and desires masquerading as scientific/ "objective" knowledges. Said examines the process by which this discursive formation emerges, in *Orientalism.* As Said writes, "In a quite constant way, Orientalism depends for its strategy on this flexible, *positional* superiority, which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand. … The scientist, the scholar, the missionary, the trader or the soldier was in, or thought about, the Orient because he *could be there*, or he could think about it, with very little resistance on the Orient's part." (Said in Ashcroft 1989:90) The complete absence of a body of literature examining the cultural effects of former imperialist regimes in Namibia is also significant because the writing down or documentation of history is legitimisation of its subject. The absence of narratives on this subject implies the disappearance of the colonised. As Said writes,

> The power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging, is very important to culture and imperialism, and constitutes one of the main connections between them. (Said 1993:xii)

During my time in Namibia, people reiterated constantly the importance of writing down, recording and otherwise documenting local culture, as literacy is highly valued in the country. "To be literate and educated is an important marker of status for Oshiwambo-speakers today." (Fairweather 2001:46)

> Where do you come from? You must remember these things and you can only remember if you have some certain written, documented events. (Mbockoma Mungandjera, interview 25/11/02)

At the Cultural Development Workshop held at the University of Namibia's Northern Campus at Oshakati in 1999, all of the participants, practitioners of various arts forms, traditional authorities, Ministry and NGO representatives agreed on the need for significant recording of local cultures, particularly oral history, poetry and story-telling.

> Many arts and cultural groups are concerned about their particular traditional art form becoming extinct through lack of documentation and archiving. Some suggestions have been made regarding ways to keep a record of each art form through research, documentation and archiving. This documentation and research would be available to the general public and would be stored in museums, libraries etc. (UNAM Cultural Development Workshop Report 1999)

The need for written preservation of history was expressed explicitly throughout my time in Namibia, as key resources such as elders are dying and taking their memories and history with them. Namhila (2003:6) writes,

> …apart from scattered international resources, we are struggling to preserve what we have at home, but is vanishing every day with the death of our old people – or even, in these times of AIDS, our not-so-old people. Their memories, their rich history runs the danger of getting lost, because many significant and important historical events are NOT recorded.

There is a need for indigenous reportage on local culture, rather than purely academic, theoretical writing. The University of Namibia appointed an Oral History Research Facilitator in 2000 to collect, research and document stories and artefacts from the north central region. It is hoped that this appointment will address some of the community

concern at the lack of research taking place at a local level. Published in 1992, *Speak For Yourself* by Patricia Hayes, encourages Namibian students to research, collect and present oral history. Sadly, however, this book does not fit within the current IGCSE school syllabus.

In late 2000, the National Archives of Namibia, a valuable resource of historical artefacts, documents, publications, reports, journals and photographs of Namibia, moved to a new location in Windhoek. However public access to the information stored there is problematic. Many Namibians have never been to the capital and it is situated 800kms from Ovamboland. None of my former colleagues, friends or associates from Ovamboland had ever visited the National Archives, or indeed knew where the building was located or what information was held there. This raises an important question regarding public access and ownership of knowledge and history. At the moment, the archival section is extremely poorly organised, with no public access to databases for checking reference and archival material. When I visited the National Archives in December 2002, the computers were down and I was told that they had been down for over two weeks, and that it was unlikely they would be fixed before the date of my departure from Namibia. Such logistical problems limit the effectiveness of this otherwise extremely significant and valuable national resource. Another significant limitation which the National Archives faces is in the accessioning and collection of material. Many key documents from the South African regime in Namibia, including records of the office of the Administrator General, were transferred from Namibia to South Africa upon the closing of this office on the eve of Namibian independence. According to international law regarding rules of state succession, this transfer was illegal. (Namhila 2003) As I mentioned previously, the absence of a formal Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Namibia has resulted in many of the wounds of apartheid not being addressed. Such an investigation could piece together and determine personal histories by locating relevant evidence from the many decades of South African rule. However the collection of such material is not easy. As Namhila (2003:4) writes,

> The recording of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa reveals that, during the period between 1990 – 1994, huge volumes of public records were destroyed in an attempt to keep the apartheid state's darkest secrets hidden. The records of police surveillance activities and large quantities of documents confiscated from individuals and organisations opposed to apartheid were equally destroyed. This also refers to the South African secret police records. And, unlike in some sudden revolutions, where the secret police of the old regime did not have time to destroy their records, the one-year-long UN-supervised Namibian transition process and the half decade between Nelson Mandela's release from prison and the first free elections in South Africa left the apartheid state machinery with plenty of time and opportunity to cover its tracks.

Attempts to address the lacunae in historical evidence providing vital keys to identity recuperation are being made by the National Archives. The German Government funded "Archives of Anti-Colonial Resistance and the Liberation Struggle Project" (AACRLS) is appealing to international sources for the return of material which can help in the process of recuperation through "filling apartheid gaps in the public memory".

GLOBALISATION

Development Work: Moral Imperative or Economic Strategy?

Achebe (1988:57) writes,

> Let every people bring their gifts to the great festival of the world's cultural harvest and mankind will be all the richer for the variety and distinctiveness of the offerings.

Robert Woods (1990:3) writes,

> Western aid is frequently tied to the construction of unwieldy and useless projects designed by foreign 'experts' who don't understand the African predicament or environment. These people are imported at great cost to do jobs they are often ill qualified to do at home. They rarely speak the local language or ask local people what they want. And they design projects with more regard to how they appear on paper than to whether they meet local needs or capitalise on local knowledge. The result is frequently irrelevant to local requirements, relying on costly Western technology and great technological expertise.

I will now look at the history of development work as part of the continuum of modernisation, and further ways that this process has impacted on "recuperation" in north central Namibia. I will do this by investigating the political nature of such work and the overt and covert influences inherent in the promotion of Western-style neo-liberal democracy on cultural recuperation. As the impact of foreign nationals is the human and socio-cultural side of this which most Ovambos encounter in the form of volunteers, I will present the motivations and modus operandi of three major international sending organisations. The presence of such organisations significantly impacts upon cultural identity consideration, terms of cultural negotiation and recuperation. In this sub-section,

I will further develop the issue of cultural commodification and commercialisation, on which the process of globalisation has greatly impacted. In the section on "Loss", aspects of this issue were presented which produced an associated psychology of cultural loss. In this section, however, cultural commodification and commercialisation, along with tourism, will be presented as forms of cultural recuperation. This is perhaps the antithesis of the community based model presented earlier as culture is produced for consumption, but a legitimate and popular form of recuperation nonetheless, which benefits individuals who participate in the exchange of culture and capital.

Development is inextricably tied to the process of globalisation, as it is an enterprise pre-occupied with the ideology of progress largely modelled on the West. As Latouche writes, "… at the heart of all these synonymous enterprises [modernization, globalization, westernisation and development] is the idea of progress. The objective is pure mimicry." (Latouche 1996:69) The history of development both as a term and as a policy can be traced to U.S. President Truman who first coined the terms "development" and "underdevelopment" in his inaugural address. Point four of this speech proposed

> A bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas. …The old imperialism – exploitation for foreign profit – has no place in our plans.[107]

However even before Truman's time, leading up to the decolonisation process, colonisers began to define their agendas for the colonies in more positive terms and concepts. This represented a new, though thinly veiled, attempt at making the colonial endeavour more socially palatable, which in turn led to the concept of "development". As Esteva writes,

> To give the philosophy of the colonial protectorate a positive meaning, the British argued for the need to guarantee the natives minimum levels of nutrition, health and education. A 'dual mandate' started to be sketched:

[107] *Public Papers of the President 1949* (January 20), pp.114-115

> the conqueror should be capable of economically developing the conquered region and at the same time accepting the responsibility of caring for the well-being of the natives. After the identification of the level of civilisation with the level of production, the dual mandate collapsed into one: development. (Esteva 1997:10)

Rist argues that the decolonisation process and the rise of U.S. hegemony are interlinked, as the United States had an evident interest in dismantling the colonial empires to gain access to new markets. This is hinted at later in Point 4 of Truman's speech:

> What we envisage is a program of development based on the concepts of democratic fair-dealing. … Greater production is the key to prosperity and peace. (Truman 1948:114)

Development, or intervention in this sense does not necessarily imply the transfer of values or a pedagogical program in which people from outside have the initiative, as in colonialism, but implies an increase in production and better use of the world's natural and human resources, to help everyone to produce more. The key to propsperity and happiness in this new form of development, as Rist points out, is increased production, not endless debate about the organisation of society, ownership of the means of production or the role of the state. (1997:76) Gross National Product became the basis of comparison, rather than levels of civilisation.

The term "development" is problematic, and has inevitable connotations of growth, evolution and maturation which again seem to reinforce centre-margin models and imply the process of making one part of the world more closely resemble another part of the world, namely Western liberal democratic countries which wield considerably more economic power. "Development" also implies a positive change, an advancement from simple to complex, from worse to better. However as cited earlier, Esteva (1997:10) points out that for two thirds of the world's population, the term "development" reinforces or reminds them of *what they are not*. Attempts have been made to categorise

countries' comparative levels of "development" and represent them in ways other than through the economic measurement of their GDP, for example the United Nations Human Development Indicator (HDI) measures levels of education, life expectancy and income. Although it attempts to give development a more human focus, the HDI does not take into account cultural diversity and the subsequent multiplicity of indicators, attitudes and values in measuring "growth". In the absence of an alternative term, however, and using parlance which is still widely accepted in reference to international aid programs, I will continue to use the term "development", but wish to highlight that I do so with caution. As mentioned at the beginning of this thesis in reference to terminology such as "developed" or "developing", these terms are in common usage amongst the protagonists of such dialogues, therefore despite the connotations implied by Western application, in my experience Namibians were quite comfortable with such words.

In this section I will examine issues relating to non-government activity including the different types of development which NGOs are involved in, the differences within the non-government sector between rights based and advocacy work, as well as the politics of the work undertaken by such organisations. This includes arguments surrounding ideological, moral and economic ramifications and the notion of aid delivery being driven by profits and neo-liberalism, and the push for self-sufficiency of sovereign nations following the end of colonialism and the Cold War. In order to illustrate this, I will compare the motivations and philosophies behind both large volunteer sending organisations, and the individuals involved in such work. The outcomes of the promotion of a unilateral style of "democracy" in nation-building will also be addressed. I will present the conflicting agendas of NGOs and donor organisations in order to establish why there is a continued lack of cultural content in NGO work and why so few specific cultural development projects are initiated despite culture being repeatedly identified in my research as an imperative area of development in Ovamboland. The complexities of the contradictory dual mandate of cultural survival and cultural change which is implicit in development work, and subsequent cultural hybridisation will be presented as possible explanations.

NGOs are often synonymous with "development" of some form. Before looking into the issues associated with development NGO activity in Namibia, it is first necessary to investigate the *concept* of development and possible definitions and applications, which often reflect the ideologies and motivations behind NGO work. Gilbert Rist, in attempting to find an adequate description of development, comes up with three distinct possible presuppositions, which affect the interpretation and application of development:
Social evolutionism – that is catching up with the industrialised countries of the West
Individualism – that is developing the personality of human beings
Economism – that is achieving growth and access to greater income.
However each of these positions is based upon the way in which one person, or set of persons pictures the ideal conditions of social existence. (Rist 1997:10) So is development the expression of a wish to live a better life, or the great mass of actions which are supposed eventually to bring greater happiness to the greatest possible number? And can this be separated, in contemporary society, from the economic expansion of the market system, since a significant aspect of sustainability in a mercantile world demands the production of commodities geared to effective demand? This seems to undermine the motivation of the vast majority of NGOs active in international development work, which essentially aim to alleviate poverty throughout the world. With this as the starting point, (particularly in relation to Western/non-Western relationships and in the field of culture) it can be said that "development" consists of a series of practices, sometimes contradictory, which aim to transform and contribute to a better life of those participants in the process.

Within the non-government sector, there exists different categories of aid delivery which fall into three basic areas of NGO activity:
(i) Development NGOs – those which promote the concept of development as the standard path to poverty alleviation through capacity building, the development of infrastructure, community empowerment and civic participation
(ii) Rights based NGOs – those which promote the rights of specific groups, often minorities or marginalised groups, such as women, youth, ex-combatants, the gay

community etc and address democratic expectations and the expectation of the respect of rights from governments and communities.
(iii) Advocacy NGOs – those which promote human rights, meaningful cross sector dialogue, education, and local community roles in self-determinism.

The lines between each of these areas are often blurred and do not always exist with mutual exclusivity. This section will primarily investigate the role of *development* NGOs, as these are the most prevalent in Namibia. It is the concept of "community empowerment" inherent in development NGOs, which would appear to accommodate and support the cultural needs of the people involved in such activity. However, as I will demonstrate, development NGOs have largely resisted work in culture and cultural development, as "empowerment" is usually reduced to terms of economics, production and sustainability.

Politics

NGOs are important players in the field of development and the delivery of aid, as they are often economically strong, have considerable influence on Government policies and activities, extensive geographical coverage and representation in many different sectors, and the power to change and interract with communities, making them a major player in the whole geopolitical climate. There are considerable differences between foreign and local NGOs, particularly in areas of organisational structure, accountability and funding. The significant presence and involvement of international NGOs in developing countries has generated considerable debate, criticism and varied responses by both observers and participants in current projects and activities. At worst, their presence is described as "dominance and control over civil society" and "recolonisation" (Abdul-Raheem 2000), and at best, as representing "long-time commitments to human welfare" and "offering activity as an antidote to despair." (Boulding 1990:41) NGOs offer an alternative to government or state sponsored projects, although the money which supports these projects and agencies largely comprises funding from governments in the developed West, in the form of "contribution to foreign aid and development". Not only does debate exist around the activities in which NGOs are involved, but also the economic

ramifications of government funding and money spent on overseas aid are hotly contested issues. A recent piece in the *Sydney Morning Herald* reflects one of the debates which surrounds the politics of NGO related activity in relation to covert support being given to subversive activism which the author, well-known for her right wing conservativism, believes may destabilise Australia's relationship with its neighbours:

> NGO activism may or may not be in a noble cause. But since it is greatly funded by the Australian taxpayer, with repercussions for our foreign policy, we need to know what is being done in our name. (Devine 2002)

This reflects the unease that conservative governments and sections of society have with NGOs. However the sheer volume of international NGO activity means that it is virtually impossible for individual Australians to become familiar with the minutiae of each of the organisations, their ideological and philosophical agendas, financial support networks and the political leanings of each affiliated individual and organisation. In Australia, organisations such as AID/WATCH assume some of the responsibility of such investigation. AID?WATCH aims "To support people and communities in low-income countries to determine their own development futures; to ensure that aid money reaches the right people, communities and their environments, and that aid projects are implemented with stringent environmental, ethical, social and cultural guidelines."[108]

The issue of development NGOs working internationally, yet based in and governed by the industrialised world, is an important one in the context of globalisation, as the historical role NGOs have played and the assumptions under which this involvement was established have changed dramatically. As Michael Edwards writes:

> Globalisation integrates patterns of wealth creation, social exclusion, and environmental degradation around the globe, making traditional north-south, donor-recipient relationships increasingly redundant. Increasingly NGOs will confront a patchwork quilt of poverty, inequality, and violence

[108] Source: www.aidwatch.org.au

> both within and between societies, rather than solid and geographically distinct blocs of rich and poor – a radically different picture to the one that greeted the architects of the post-World War II system in 1945. (Edwards 1999:26)

This is particularly important in the case of Namibia, where the distribution of income in the country is generally recognised as the most unequal in the world, with 70% of GDP received by the top 20% of earners. (Source: USAID) This indeed creates the patchwork quilt effect which Edwards refers to, with pockets of the country having specific development needs which are not being met by the government alone, hence the deployment of development NGOs. Similarly, although NGOs were originally founded as charities to channel money from rich countries to poor countries, some NGOs now find it increasingly difficult to adapt to a globalised world of more equal partnerships and non-financial relationships. However some NGOs have embraced this shift which suits their agendas of closer relationships with community and grass roots projects, particularly rights based and advocacy NGOs. This shift away from foreign aid and toward a wider agenda of international cooperation has led to the widespread decline in official aid budgets, and the call for greater accountability and financial reconciliation by NGOs. As Edwards writes, "Post cold war, there is no real political constituency for foreign aid in the industrialized world, and – although public opinion is generally sympathetic to humanitarian assistance – there is no sign that public pressure will be sufficient to reverse this trend." (Edwards 1999:26) There is however an economic mandate as well as a growing concept of an anti-welfare state ideology and a greater push for self-sufficiency and empowerment, rather than dependency on foreign funds, with the idea being that countries should trade their way out of their predicaments. This has led to the establishment of multilateral trade agreements (via the World Trade Organisation), which are designed to curtail aid dependency. The capitalist ideology driving such thought is for developing countries to find what their comparative advantage is and work towards strategically developing that. In the case of culture, this trend will be addressed in the section on Commodification and Commercialisation. This is supposed to result in the emergence of free-trade zones, mass mono-cultural agribusiness zones and the attraction

of foreign investment, with countries structurally adjusting their economies to be capital friendly. Aid is generally moving away from funding NGOs to carrying out projects, and towards private corporations and contractors being employed, with the implication that aid delivery is driven by profits. In Australia, it appears that this is against the will of the people:

> A Newspoll survey last year showed more than 85 per cent of voters support overseas aid spending for humanitarian and moral reasons, and because Australia is wealthy and can afford it. (Wade 2002:14)

Martin Khor believes that the Bretton Woods institutions (World Bank and IMF) have eclipsed the United Nations in the power they wield in developing countries, with the UN's authority and influence in the social and economic areas depleting in recent years. This has accelerated with the influence of the World Trade Organisation and more recently US moves in bilateral trade agreements. As a result, in the process of globalisation, economic liberalisation and the high priority given to commercial interests have dominated policy-making above the United Nations approach in economic and social issues.

> The UN and its agencies represent the principles of partnership, where the richer countries are expected to contribute to the development of the poorer countries and where the rights of people to development and fulfilment of social needs are highlighted. The kind of globalisation represented by the UN is not favoured by the powerful nations today, and the UN's influence has been curtailed. (Khor 2000:9)

The implication is that this type of "partnership" is impossible as social and cultural development take a back seat to economic development, free-trade and neo-liberal capitalism. From my observations, preoccupation with cultural identity is not as obvious in Australia as in Namibia, where people think about such issues often as they reconcile the worlds they exist in – largely traditional yet increasingly cosmopolitan. Therefore the

contact and influence of foreign intervention, both its ideologies and its participants, are extremely important in a region of conscious identity negotiation and cultural recuperation.

Motivations

Stringent monitoring of overseas development activities by donor agencies, field officers, fellow NGOs and governments in affected regions is necessary to avoid situations where foreign aid in fact has a detrimental effect on the community it was seeking to assist. There have been numerous examples of development follies in Africa, such as the Saharan Water-the-Desert[109] scheme, and the Village Fishponds Programme[110] around Lake Victoria. The potentially devastating ecological and environmental effects of projects can be equally matched by social and cultural effects, when people are exposed to new methodologies, ideas, and supposedly more efficient and modern practices which are designed to improve the lives of people living in developing countries. The unavoidable promotion of Western neo-liberal ideology which accompanies the presence of international NGOs funded from outside the developing world carries enormous social and cultural influence. Sadly, too, the attitude that accompanies some projects has little to do with thinking of those individuals and communities as equals, rather it has hints of imperialism and reinforces hegemonic power relations between the parties who give and receive aid. This issue will be addressed through the example of volunteer sending organisations active in Namibia.

In investigating the motivations and modus operandi behind development work in practice and volunteer programs and some of the problematic issues which are inherent in

[109] In the spirit of community consultation, Westerners asked the Bedouin what they wanted. "Water for our camels" was the reply, resulting in the Europeans boring extensive wells, providing substantial water for the camels. The camel population grew, yet there was no extra available food to accompany the water. The result was hundreds of dead camels surrounding the new bore-holes. (Woods 1990:2)

[110] Nile perch were introduced to Lake-region dwellers for ponds in their backyards. The result of these fish escaping into Lake Victoria has seen the biggest mass extinction of vertebrates in modern times. Soil erosion and desertification have also resulted from the locals having to cut down trees to smoke the fish which are too oily to be dried in the traditional way. (Woods 1990:2)

this area, I will focus on the United States Peace Corps program[111], and follow with a brief comparison to the two other major volunteer organisations at work in Namibia, Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO) and Australian Volunteers International (AVI), looking at issues of ideology and nationalism in ambassadorial representation, sustainability, accountability and partnership. Although there were numerous other Western volunteer sending organisations in existence, the reason I have chosen to focus on these is because they have the largest presence in the north central region in Namibia, particularly in areas of social development such as education. Their presence also has significant ramifications in the negotiation of cultural identity, as individuals come to embody representations of Western liberal democracy, Western culture and ideology, which are a powerful influence on Ovambos who are actively considering their own cultural identities. Such presence of Western development workers has affected Ovambo cultural positioning which is integral in the process of recuperation.

Peace Corps

USAID, the American Government's main contribution to overseas aid, spent US$275 million on the Peace Corps volunteer program worldwide in 2002[112]. The Peace Corps has three goals:

1. To help the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women;
2. To help promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served;
3. To help promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans.

The implicit nationalism of Peace Corps, whilst not uncommon to American people in general, in the context of a development ethos appears to emphasise centre-margin models which often accompanied imperialist ideologies of the past, as investigated in the section on "Loss". Although the rationale behind the Peace Corps program is ostensibly

[111] Whilst Peace Corps is used here to illustrate the point, the issues raised are not unique to Peace Corps, with other Western development programs having similar ideological motivations eg Youth Ambassadors program through AusAID.
[112] Source: www.peacecorps.org

"understanding" rather than the domination or control which have accompanied foreign involvement in the colonial past, the focus on difference is reminiscent of orientalist fascination with the *other* in order to assert identity. There also exists in this type of philosophy an assumption that developing countries *want* to know more about and better understand Americans. The aim to assist interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women does not appear to involve capacity building within the country in question, rather to deploy trained American men and women to do the job for them, reinforcing Steve Hellinger's criticism of NGO aid demand and supply.

> A lot of NGOs – certainly in the United States – followed the aid establishment and its money, while continuing to focus on the quantity rather than the quality of aid. … The policies of aid are being made from afar and creating an environment that makes local level development more difficult than ever. (Hellinger 1996:1)

Since 1961, more than 165 000 Americans have joined the Peace Corps (source: USAID), their alumni includes the current Senior Vice-President of Exxon Mobil Corp, Samuel Gillespie III (Kenya 1967 – 1969). There are currently more than 7000 Peace Corps volunteers working in the developing world and approximately 160 Peace Corps volunteers in Namibia at any one time. Unlike other volunteer organisations, whose policies of recruitment are based on qualifications and experience, and come from a specific request by the government of the country in question, Peace Corps volunteers are recruited for their "common spirit of service, dedication, and idealism". This means that often Peace Corps volunteers find themselves working in professional capacities in which they often have no previous experience or training. I knew of a Peace Corps Volunteer (PCV) teaching Year 11 and 12 mathematics at a public high school in Ongwediva who was half way through a psychology degree in the States. Placements are for two years, and the pre-placement orientation comprises four months of in-country training prior to reaching their "site". Placements vary greatly and are constantly monitored as to their effectiveness to the community, and generally Peace Corps volunteers are only allocated to a particular "site" once. However the emphasis on recruitment, which is unavoidable in

literature surrounding Peace Corps activity throughout the world, and the actual situation in the field and availability of skilled nationals, implies that rather than fostering accountability and responsibility on behalf of the Namibian Government in addressing issues of capacity building, Peace Corps are essentially doing the jobs for them[113].

There also appears to be a much greater focus on the individualistic outcomes in becoming a Peace Corps Volunteer, with less emphasis on what the individual can contribute to the world, and more on what the experience will bring to the individual in terms of life experience, professional opportunities and even greater access to university graduate schools.

> Serving in the Peace Corps gives Volunteers the chance to learn a new language, live in another culture, and develop career and leadership skills. The Peace Corps experience can enhance long-term career prospects whether you want to work for a corporation, a non-profit organisation, or a government agency. The Peace Corps can even open doors to graduate school.[114]

This is reminiscent of the erosion of the principles of partnerships with the rise of neo-liberal capitalism, referred to earlier by Khor. Although some mention is made in information material on the Peace Corps and its aims, of volunteers working with locals to develop self-determined outcomes, significantly more emphasis is put on what the experience will bring to the individual and to America. Indeed, when John F Kennedy established the Peace Corps in 1961, he manifested his vision "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country." On the Peace Corps website, those considering signing up to Peace Corps can access links to a list of benefits

[113] This is particularly significant when considering cultural recuperation in the area of education, where most PCVs are deployed. As I have previously outlined, education and the choices made regarding systems, teaching styles and syllabus priorities, reflect certain values which in turn affect identity negotiation. The absence of Namibian cultural content in syllabi, combined with the delivery of education by non-Namibian teachers who are largely unable to culturally contextualise Western teaching material, results in schools not necessarily being the fertile grounds for developing cultural identity that they could be.

[114] Source: www.peacecorps.org

including: “Professional/Career Benefits”, “Educational Benefits”, “Loan Deferment”, and “Financial Benefits.”

An important consideration in all bilateral aid agreements which involve the deployment of nationals in the field, is that of presenting a public and political image and message about the country providing the aid. In the case of Peace Corps, a significant function of its work in newly independent and democratic countries is that of a major political public relations exercise which presents the United States message of liberal democracy and capitalism in a humanitarian way. Volunteers become ambassadors of their country and through their involvement with people from other cultures, they become the embodiment and a tangible human example of Western democratic ideals of rich helping poor, haves helping have nots. This promotes American style liberal-democracy as being palatable and desirable, and promotes the causes of capitalism, which in turn reaps significant economic benefit to the USA, although individual volunteers are not necessarily aware (or informed) of this side-effect of their presence. It is the process of such ideologies which perpetuates the economic agenda of this form of development. Aid results in trade. In looking at the emergence of welfare states and NGO strategies, Oomen states,

> In fact, development itself was defined as a function of capital and technology; development goals were conceptualised in terms of urban middle-class aspirations… Understandably, this paradigm of development deprived the people of their participatory potential. (Oomen 1997:52)

In Namibia, Peace Corps volunteers who were part of the Teacher Training Scheme, which involved individuals working with a cluster group of “bush schools”[115], (See *Fig.4.5*) were each given 4WD vehicles to use during their contracts. In 2000, the type of vehicle was upgraded from Double-cab Fords, to brand new Jeep Cherokee vehicles. Whilst the nature of the program and the distances involved in travelling between schools

[115] “Bush schools” are junior primary schools which are extremely remote and isolated and often exist without basic infrastructure such as classrooms, or resources such as books, writing implements etc. Often classes in such schools are held under trees or in thatch huts with learners sitting on the sand during lessons.

obviously necessitated some form of transportation, the unambiguous excess which was displayed in the choice of vehicle, and the conditions of use certainly alienated the volunteers from their communities. Rather than utilise local transport or perhaps establish contacts with community members with vehicles, volunteers drove around huge air-conditioned 4WDs with American flags and "USAID" on the sides. Volunteers were not allowed under any circumstances to travel with a Namibian in their cars, for reasons of insurance and indemnity. Volunteers found to have done so were punished, having their vehicles confiscated, thus preventing them from being able to do their jobs for up to a month. The volunteers themselves felt considerable discomfort with the message that these vehicles sent out to the local communities in which they were attempting to assimilate, about American wealth and privilege. One of the ironies of this particular Peace Corps program was that volunteers who were employed as Teacher Trainers were required to live with Namibian families in traditional rural homesteads, as an important step in "integration". Such homesteads were without electricity or running water, and it was not uncommon for volunteers to spend searingly hot summer nights sleeping in their air-conditioned Jeeps outside!

Most aid which is funded and resourced by government tends to reflect the Peace Corps concept – to benefit the country of origin and enhance their own interests. As the delivery of aid is becoming more privatised, so aid is essentially becoming more profit-driven and geared towards trade. Australia is no exception to this idea with the official Australian Government's aid body, AusAID, sitting within the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Therefore it has, by nature, a trade agenda. The benefits of this form of aid stretch far beyond the positive publicity of humanitarian propaganda, as they inspire the Western ideals of liberal democracy, capitalism and free-trade.

Fig. 4.5 – Example of a bush school where Peace Corps teacher-trainers worked

VSO

Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO) is an international development "charity" which recruits volunteers from the UK, Canada and Holland. "We passionately believe we can make a difference in tackling poverty by helping people to realise their potential" (www.vso.org.uk). There are currently 2000 VSO volunteers engaged in placements in the developing world. In Namibia, there are approximately 80 VSO volunteers at any one time. Placements are for two years, and volunteers are sent by VSO to work towards the long-term objectives of the organisation – sustainable development rather than the short term relief of certain problems. Volunteers are recruited on the basis of tertiary qualifications and professional experience in their chosen field and undergo intensive pre-departure orientation and ongoing education in development issues throughout their placement. Despite the organisation's philosophy of *sustainable development* which implies helping people to eventually help themselves, VSO has a rigorous recruitment campaign, and has a policy of generally replacing volunteers with volunteers. Rather than establishing counterpart situations of one-on-one partnerships with locals, and setting up mutually beneficial skill-share arrangements, volunteers - mainly recruited in the areas of education and health - generally fill vacant positions in schools/hospitals. This appears to undermine the idea of sustainable development as it fosters a dependency on foreign recruitment. An example of this in Namibia was at Nuuyoma Senior Secondary School, Oshikuku. This school had consistently had a VSO science and English teacher since independence, and despite each volunteer reporting that there was no further need for VSO teachers at the school as Namibian teachers were available for these positions, volunteers were continually replaced with volunteers. Not only did this foster dependency, but it allowed the school, and in turn the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture to save money on salaries for equally qualified Namibian teachers, as VSO volunteers were paid from Britain. Since independence, and with the improvements in access to secondary and tertiary education, the number of qualified teachers is increasing. Although not common to all learning areas, teacher shortages in certain subjects in the north of the country were often indicative of a lack of incentive for Namibian graduate teachers to work in the most economically disadvantaged part of the country. This situation seems to call for government initiatives in attracting local teachers to these

regions, rather than the deployment of foreign teachers for whom they do not have to take financial responsibility. In the same way as with the presence of Peace Corps volunteers, the covert influences of the presence of significant numbers of British volunteers includes the promotion of Western liberal democracy. In my three years in Namibia, the only places Ovambos expressed a desire to one day visit were the USA and the U.K. This is by no means a coincidence given the nationality of the majority of Westerners in the region with whom Ovambos came into contact. Again, this contact had a significant impact on the consideration of identity. At Nuuyoma Senior Secondary School in Oshikuku, the principal had been educated in the U.K whilst in exile during the Independence Struggle. Following this, constant references were made to her experiences in Britain, and in many ways she considered herself to be an Anglicised Namibian, aspiring to run her school as efficiently as she had witnessed in the U.K.

AVI

> Australian Volunteers International provides opportunities for Australians to live and work in partnership with people in developing communities in order to foster cross-cultural relationships and international understanding, assist in the development of their own and other communities and contribute to a peaceful and just world. (*Guidebook for Australian Volunteers*)

Between 1998 and 2000, I was an Australian volunteer. The following information comes from my experiences as a volunteer, as well as official policies and literature on Australian Volunteers International (AVI). Australian Volunteers International began sending volunteers to the developing world in 1951, making it the oldest international volunteer organisation of the three under investigation. At the time of writing, there are 750 Australian volunteers working in the field, and 3 Australian volunteers in Namibia. This number, which is quite small in comparison to the number of Peace Corps and VSO volunteers, reflects the organisation's philosophy of success being measured by "working oneself out of a job" or not replacing volunteers with volunteers. When I arrived in Namibia in 1998 there were over 20 Australian volunteers employed. AVI is supposed to

be built on the following values: participation; learning through experience; respect; partnership; integrity; equity; cultural diversity; recognition of reciprocal benefit. (www.ozvol.org.au). Perhaps the most significant differences in the philosophy and practice articulated in AVI promotional material as compared to the other volunteer agencies mentioned are:

- the notion that "all people should have a right to make decisions about their own development and to participate in the development of their own society".
- the recruitment of volunteers based on a bilateral agreement with the Government, or non-government organisation (NGO), of the country in question.

This second point is of significance, and is the main area of departure from other volunteer organisations' philosophies and practices as it means that volunteers become the responsibility of the government of the country in which they are placed, rather than recruited by an agency with an office in a particular country. As such, volunteers are paid local wages, which vary according to position and country, and are very much employed as equal[116] colleagues. In contrast, the responsibility of financial remuneration for Peace Corps and VSO volunteers lies with the organisations themselves, and indirect funding from the United States and British Governments. In the case of Namibia, there is no Australian diplomatic representation in the form of an embassy or high commission, and in the absence of AVI providing social, financial or logistical support in-country, Australian volunteers must establish their own support networks within the country, and rely more heavily on local systems. This situation, and the payment of AVI volunteers in local wages means that volunteers are integrated on a more equal basis in the community and better equipped to form closer links with employers, colleagues, and the community.

AVI volunteers are instructed prior to departure for their overseas placements, to remain politically neutral at all times and avoid any situations of public political comment. In essence, we were told to "keep our eyes open and our mouths shut." Such a policy is important in avoiding the espousing or publication of individual political points of view which could be seen as indicative of the opinion of the government of the country one is

[116] "Equal" in terms of salary and conditions of employment though, as explored in the section of this thesis on methodology and issues of personal engagement. Obvious inequalities exist such as covert support from Australia, a finite contract of two years and medical insurance.

representing. Ambassadorial responsibilities are, after all, an important aspect of the cross-cultural exchange of international volunteering. However what this policy also meant in practice, was that volunteers were effectively disabled from speaking out or effectively being involved in advocacy work in-country which could be seen to be in any way politically motivated. As much advocacy work involved working with marginalised and disaffected members of a community, region or country, volunteers were unable to engage fully in activities which were in areas other than those sanctioned by the governments in their countries of deployment. This was a particularly difficult aspect of work for volunteers who witnessed and opposed social injustices, human rights violations and so on which were exacerbated by government inactivity or indeed were the effects of government policy. The frustration of political neutrality meant that, personally as a volunteer, I felt as though often we were used to treat problems without being allowed to engage with the underlying reasons for such problems. A particular example of this was an incident of extreme racial injustice which I witnessed and wished to publicise as it involved a prominent business in the region. However my "political neutrality" as an AVI meant that I was unable to identify myself or my organisation in the ensuing media interest on the issue. The "silencing" of volunteers whilst in the field, as well as frustrating and disempowering supposed advocates for change, meant that genuine engagement with the ideological, social and political contributants to inequality and injustice was impossible.

Cultural Commodification, Commercialisation and "Sustainable" Development

I have addressed the issue of commercially based cultural development earlier in this thesis, in reference to the psychology of loss which accompanies the commodification of culture. In this section, however, it will be addressed as another form of cultural development which is contributing to recuperation in Ovamboland, and is viewed by Namibians as an important form of income generation.

> I think when people look back, not only would their own identity have been promoted through arts and culture, but they can also generate income for their own community. I also think that the younger ones with an

> interest in culture, if they see that this is happening, then they might even be able to employ themselves and have an interest in taking up arts and culture. Arts and culture will also help to develop their condition and their way of life, by benefiting the community through arts and culture, they are also benefiting their own local way of life. (Bernadette Mojekwu, interview 13/10/00)

In my time in Namibia, Mud Hut Trading was the only arts and cultural development project, other than the Ford Foundation Cultural Development Project, which was active in Ovamboland. Whilst it does not specifically fall under the traditional definition of community cultural development, due to its marketing drive and economic agenda, it is however an important NGO project to investigate because, as mentioned, the CDP was auspiced to the Rössing Foundation, therefore the philosophies of the organisation would affect the progress and direction of the project. It also opens up many issues regarding the production and sale of non-Western art for a Western market. This is a subject which has fascinated Marianna Torgovnick, who delves into the commodification of "the primitive" – in art, culture and lifestyle – and looks at various motivations, inspirations and exploitative practices from anthropologists to curators to profiteers.

> In the deflationary era of post-modernism, the primitive often frankly loses any particular identity and even its sense of being "out there"; it merges into a generalized, marketable thing – a grab-bag primitive in which urban and rural, modern and traditional Africa and South America and Asia and the Middle East merge into a common locale called the third world which exports garments and accessories, music, ideologies and styles for Western, and especially urban Western, consumption. (Torgovnick 1990:37)

Despite Western, and indeed my own, misgivings about the complexities surrounding the exchange of culture for capital, which I addressed in the section on "Loss", it is an extremely important aspect of cultural production for artists and practitioners in the field,

as it offers an opportunity to generate income and contributes to the alleviation of poverty in a country with extraordinarily high unemployment. Ovambos use their creative ingenuity in a number of ways, such as has been mentioned previously with the cutting down of telephone wire in order to make copper jewellery. The opportunity to make money from creative practice, performances, even homestead tours, is welcomed by Ovambos and seen not only as a way to make money, but also as a way to perpetuate cultural practice.

> I see arts and culture being able to enhance the economy of the area, if tourism picks up. I see it being able to enhance a sense of identity. I see it being enhanced as a commodity that can be marketed if people do it properly and do it well. … maybe we should have more people that are trained in the arts so that they can learn advertising and filming and promotion so that the images and the assets of Namibia can be more broadly exposed to the world. (Rita-Louise Hofmeyr, interview 12/7/00)

Such cultural production, however, relies on a Western audience, and the type of consumers who would be interested in such activity are more likely to be tourists, than Western business people visiting the region.

As both Mud Hut Trading and the CDP, which later became known as the NCCED, were part of the Rössing Foundation's community based natural resource management program, I will now look at some of the issues which arise from the involvement of the organisation. The Rössing Foundation's community based natural resource management program is run through training and outreach programs with the aim of increasing local capacity, both for local management structures and/or individuals. The program is part of a national Rössing Foundation strategy to "promote the sustainable development of rural livelihoods in Namibia, and is a partnership between Government and civil society".[117] A Foundation which is working in natural resource management, and sustainable social and environmental development and which is based on profits from uranium mining raises

[117] www.rf.org.na

interesting political, environmental and ethical questions. Despite significant Western opposition to uranium mining, due to its environmental, health and safety hazardousness and potential misuse in nuclear weaponry, it remains Namibia's largest export, after diamonds. Notwithstanding the apparent support for the mine from the current government, given the significant economic benefits it brings to Namibia, the Rössing Uranium Mine has a problematic past. Construction work began on the mine in 1974 and the mine plant (then owned by the Rio Tinto-Zinc Corporation [RTZ]) became operational in 1976. This was at the height of the Independence Struggle between Namibia and South Africa, and the collaboration between Rössing Uranium and the South African forces who were, at that time brutally occupying Namibia, was documented in 1980 by Alun Roberts in "The Rössing File". The establishment of the mine and uranium extraction were deemed as "illegal" and "theft" and dramatically opposed by SWAPO during the Independence Struggle. The United Nations decreed:

> No person or entity, whether a body corporate or unincorporated may search for, prospect for, explore for, take, mine, process, refine, use, sell, export or distribute any natural resource, whether animal or mineral, situated or found to be situated within the territorial limits of Namibia without the consent and permission of the United Nations Council for Namibia[118]

Namibia is the fourth largest producer of uranium in the world, and uranium is therefore a significant export resource for the country. Regardless of negative historical, environmental and political connotations, it remains an important area of economic profit for Namibia. There is only limited public disclosure on the more sensitive issues relating to the Rössing Mine, however information on activities undertaken by the Rössing Foundation is much more easily accessed[119]. It can however be assumed that part of the rationale behind the establishment of the Rössing Foundation and its continued community activities are an important public relations strategy in presenting the mining

[118] Decree No.1 of the United Nations Council for Namibia, passed by the UN General Assembly on 13/12/74
[119] For example via their website: www.rf.org.na

and export of uranium by a large multinational organisation[120] as having benefits for the community in terms of education and development. As the Rössing Uranium Mine website states under the heading "Building Bridges of Sustainability":

> The Rössing Communities Policy sets out a business goal for excellent management of community issues, based upon three underpinning principles as articulated by the Rio Tinto Communities Policy, that of - mutual respect, active partnership and long-term commitment. This goal has been adopted in recognition of the fact that good relations with the Company's neighbours are fundamental to the long-term success of the business, both in ensuring that we continue to operate our existing site and also to qualify us undertake new developments when our record will be examined. Furthermore, Rössing's community programme reflects its commitment to social impact mitigation and community development to achieve a lasting legacy of sustainable development beyond the life of the Mine.[121]

Tourism in Ovamboland

Presently, tourism in Ovamboland is extremely small and generally limited to business people interested in investment in the region. As with many recently independent developing countries, Namibia has repeatedly identified participation in the global economy as a priority. Much of the international aid and development assistance Namibia receives is geared towards achieving this. Greater ease of international travel and availability of information have increased the ease and appeal of tourism in Namibia for international tourists interested in visiting Africa. Namibia has been described as "Africa for beginners" – a politically stable, relatively safe place to visit with good roads, hotels and infrastructure around the main tourist sites. Tourism provides a significant percentage of the country's GDP, and possibilities abound for economic development through

[120] Rio Tinto own 69% of the Rössing Uranium Mine.
[121] Source: www.Rössing.com/communities

cultural and eco-tourism. Rita-Louise Hofmeyr believes strongly in the opportunities which exist for culture in the development of tourism:

> The biggest challenge is to give people appropriate skills that are market related, to give people the right kind of technology that they can use to enhance their lifestyle and there I think our work with the youth is very important. Because I have enormous belief in the arts as an income generating skill. Especially if tourism can be enhanced and if you're going specifically to Ovamboland I think it's being very underdeveloped – I think there are certain initiatives which show great poptential. The artists should really also capture that market and that opportunity. (Rita-Louise Hofmeyr, interview 12/7/00)

A new policy of community based resource management is being introduced in rural communities and this empowers members of those communities to use the natural resources of their environment to develop their own economy. Although Namibia has spectacular tourist attractions such as sand dunes, canyons, waterfalls and game reserves, there is now also an increased interest in cultural tourism – in seeing how people live. This is the market niche which the people of Ovamboland hope to cultivate, as Ovamboland is generally considered to be the cultural heartland of Namibia, with a large majority of its population in the region, and still living what tourists would consider a "traditional life."

Over the past five years, a number of feasibility studies have been undertaken by non-government organisations to assess the interest, impact and opportunity for sustainable economic growth through cultural tourism in Ovamboland. To the south of Ovamboland lies the great salt pan of Etosha. Surrounding this pan is one of the most popular and populated game reserves in southern Africa. Etosha is Namibia's foremost tourist attraction, and being just 200kms – a small distance by Namibian standards – away from Ovamboland,is seen as a potential way to open up the north to tourists. Presently, the route between Etosha and Ovamboland is somewhat circuitous. Traditional authorities

and the community at large approved a proposal to open the disused northern gate of Etosha, and improve the road to Ovamboland. Despite construction having been completed, negotiations are presently underway with the Ministry of Environment and Tourism regarding the official opening of the gate, to be named the *King Nahale* gate. This project has been fraught with difficulty, with much of the funding for it coming from Department for International Development, the British Government's overseas development fund attempting to work in partnership with the Ministry of Environment and Tourism.

The reason the proposed community based and natural resource management tourism plan is of significance is because consensus was reached through discussions about the nature of local resources and ways to explore cultural development in the region. It emerged from these discussions that the members of the community did not see the philosophy of developing the resources and culture of the region primarily for economic development through tourism, but to revitalise and support local cultural practice and expression. Also, such discussions showed that the community was quite comfortable with the idea of cultural tourism in the area, despite having expressed concerns about the cultural changes resulting from outside influences and other cultural impacts of globalisation. This was possibly due to the feeling that cultural tourism, particularly based on the natural resource management model, would take place *on their terms* with profits going to communities. As Fairweather writes, " … the importance to the villagers of performing cosmopolitan or local styles was related to the potential they had for asserting a degree of control over the production of locality in the post-colonial environment in which they operated." (2001:116)

Sensitivity regarding the production of culture for profit surrounds both cultural change, when driven by Western market demand, and cultural stasis, also driven by Western demand for what is considered essential and untouched.

> Tourism has the tendency of commercializing the host culture – commodtitising, deodorizing, and sanitizing for the consumption of

> tourists rushing in and out of their lives and turf… How would this manipulation of the host culture influence its integrity, its very structure and existence? To what extent can its contents and boundaries be defined and redefined? Should people and their culture be "frozen" in time and space for the sake of tourists? (Jafari 1996:45)

Cultural tourism is a sensitive, diverse and multi-faceted topic area, and to adequately address it is unfortunately beyond the scope of this thesis. However it is mentioned here to represent one aspect of commercially based cultural development, which has significant ramifications for cultural recuperation in Ovamboland, as whether the production of culture changes or remains in a form of stasis, the terms of production are dictated by the West.

Interestingly, although the project which I was involved in adhered to the principles of community based cultural development, which have been illustrated as being activities of and for the community, under the auspices of the Rössing Foundation, it subsequently followed a very different path. This new path was far more commercially-driven, and the emphasis was on cultural production and consumption, as I will now address.

Return Trip and how CDP had Changed

As mentioned previously, I returned to Namibia in November 2002. I was particularly interested in seeing what had happened to the project I had established, and how my former counterpart Metusalem Ashipala was finding the co-ordination of the project, after its affiliation with the Rössing Foundation in 2000. I was to discover that significant changes had taken place. The Rössing Foundation had established a partnership with the Namibian Community Based Tourism Association (NACOBTA), and begun a project funded by DFID called the North Central Community Based Natural Resource Management and Enterprise Development Project. The latter part of this scheme (the "Enterprise Development" project), or NCCED, was what Metusalem was now primarily involved in, and it was a significant departure from the cultural development project which I had left.

> The goal of NCCED is to see rural poverty reduced through increased income and employment from crafts, tourism and sustainable community based natural resource management in the North Central Regions. (Project Brochure)

Amongst its identified activities was the objective to "provide the support and development of product ranges for sale on the export and local market" and "develop a commercially viable and sustainable craft marketing structure for at least 10 community based craft enterprises." This shift, which placed all emphasis in "craft development" on income generation, marketing and export, showed a dramatic change in direction from the CDP, which followed a more traditional definition of community based cultural development.

Metusalem, who was now using marketing terminology quite comfortably, told me that the "target market" were tourists, and these were mainly accessed via the Craft Centre in Windhoek, which was discussed in the previous section of this thesis regarding Mud Hut Trading. Metusalem also told me he had learnt much about "product development", but the project was waiting on a "consultant" who would work specifically on this aspect of the project. I was most interested to learn more about the background such a person would have, assuming he/she would be an African, with strong local connections with craft producers and networks in the community. However, I learnt from staff from the Rössing Foundation, that it was intended that this position be filled by someone from outside, with a business background. When I expressed my thoughts on the power such a position could hold in terms of representation of culture, levels and conditions of productivity and other issues associated with forces of cultural change, I was reminded that the project was about culture being an economic resource. "If it's a means to an economic end, then the resource has been used." (Karin LeRoux, interview 2/12/02)

Another significant, though not unexpected change which had occurred with the project, was the breakdown in relations with the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture. The

project now operated autonomously from the MBEC, after significant frustrations caused the participants in the project to disassociate themselves from the Ministry. These included inter-regional political sensitivities and misunderstandings regarding responsibility for cultural projects and activities in the area, as addressed in the section on Change. "Ministry co-operation was impossible". (Metusalem Ashipala, interview 18/11/02) The project was now more closely affiliated with the Ministry of Environment and Tourism. This effectively meant that the previous agenda of cultural advocacy with the most appropriate[122] governmental ministry had been dropped. This also precluded access to schools and educational institutions as sites of cultural development.

The changes to the project indicated a significant shift away from cultural development of and for the community, with emphasis on community participation and the creative expression of local identity, towards a much more economic focus with emphasis on economically benefiting individuals who produced marketable products for export. Rather than cultural development becoming a community issue, it has become a commercial enterprise which benefits only those who are immediately involved in the exchange, and does not necessarily incorporate inter-generational or other forms of skill sharing in the practices which are being marketed. Community concerns regarding the discontinuation of practices are not being addressed except with regard to individual practitioners, who participate in the economic exchange. Even then, however, it appears these practitioners are given little or no say in the creative process and artistic design of material. This direction of cultural development illustrates some of the issues addressed earlier regarding the difficulties with the qualitative outcomes of cultural development as insufficient for donors, and the economic appeal of quantifiable intervention such as income-generating projects.

> As NGOs have expanded the range of their activities, it has become apparent that many donor agencies have found it easier to support quantifiable interventions. This shift was first noticeable in donor policies

[122] Powerful in relation to culture, in the minds of the people of Ovamboland – as has been addressed in the previous section on Power and Politics.

> that emphasised income-generating projects. (Constantino-David 1995:165)

In looking at the *terms* of cultural development in the direction taken by the NCCED project, the control over cultural production, aesthetics and representation does not appear to lie with the producers of baskets, but rather with market demand by foreign tourists, potentially soon to be mediated by a foreign business-savvy consultant. The significance of this is that this form of cultural development is designed, operated, and largely controlled by Western taste and values.

CONCLUSION

> Our strategy should be not only to confront empire, but to lay siege to it. To deprive it of oxygen. To shame it. To mock it. With our art, our music, our literature, our stubbornness, our joy, our brilliance, our sheer relentlessness, and our ability to tell our own stories. Stories that are different from the ones we're being brainwashed to believe. (Roy 2003:3)

The Ovambo people of North Central Namibia have endured enormous cultural upheaval since the late 19th century. From the historical agents of change such as missionaries, colonialists and the South African administration to contemporary agents of change such as the socio-cultural impacts of the globalisation process and the rise of Western style neo-liberal capitalism, Ovambos have traditionally had the terms of cultural change determined on their behalf. The absence of adequate engagement with the cultural effects of the modernising process, which began with colonialism and persists today with geopolitical internationalism, has continued to challenge Ovambo peoples access to the cultural tools necessary for considering the impacts on identity development. Despite these challenges, expressions of cultural articulation have continued both out of defiance, as well as through methods of resistance and appropriation. Aspects of traditional and contemporary cultural practices which reflect the multiplex Ovambo identity are evident throughout Ovamboland today.

In this thesis, I have proposed that the cultural fallout of the modernisation process must be considered in development practices. I have also presented through case-studies, community based cultural development activities which allow for the creative expression of identity, as a means of addressing such issues. As Ovambos negotiate the two worlds in which they exist, living lives which have features of both tradition and modernity, they are increasingly aware of the impact which external agents of change continue to have on them.

In reaching the conclusion of this thesis, and reflecting on the themes of "Loss", Change and Recuperation, I find myself in the position of having a number of certainties, yet also some lingering uncertainties as a result of issues I have investigated. This no doubt comes from having had the opportunity to step back from the work I was professionally engaged in whilst in the field, and consider it within a larger theoretical context after some time. As mentioned in my thesis, in November 2002 I returned to Ovamboland in order to undertake further research, and also find out how the cultural development project with which I had been involved was going. The changes which had occurred provide a useful illustration of some of the uncertainties which have arisen in my mind regarding cultural development work in Namibia.

Upon returning to Namibia, I learnt that the cultural development project had taken a more "strategic" turn through the development of "a commercially viable and sustainable craft marketing structure". I found this change in direction quite significant, as previously the project had much more closely followed a community based cultural development model. This departure is indicative of the important role which income generation plays in Ovamboland, even within the realm of arts and culture. Whilst I had always acknowledged that income generation had been a priority in cultural development, it now seems to be the only arena in which cultural development activities are practiced. I find myself having lingering reservations about the benefits to the community, other than the circulation of capital, of such cultural exchange, and who and what become commodified in the process. This change in direction is also indicative of the vulnerable position in which community based cultural development exists, where quantifiable outcomes, usually measured through economic development and production levels, increasingly dictate development activity.

Another question which remains for me is the issue of culture in Ovamboland being strongly associated with past practices and activities, and the notion – particularly with the older generation – of the old way of life representing good and the new way of life representing bad. This appears to stifle cultural dynamism and deny the incredibly diverse display of traditional and contemporary Ovambo identities which exist in the

region. Ovambos actively appropriate and indigenise Western culture, yet continue to associate features of *Ovamboness* as being firmly rooted in past practices which were threatened by missionaries, colonialists, apartheid and so on. Until significantly more support is given to the development of arts and culture in the region and it is seen as a priority by the government, culture will continue to be regarded in such static terms.

This prioritising of arts and culture in policy development extends internationally, and the final concern I wish to present is regarding the participation and support given to community based cultural development work by international NGOs. With the increasing rationalisation of development activity, and the constant pressure put on NGOs for quantifiable outcomes and strategic benefits for donor countries, investment in cultural capital will continue to be problematic. Similarly, as international development activity often serves the additional agenda of promoting Western style neo-liberal democracy, then encouraging local culturally determined outcomes for the community could present too much of a risk.

However, after presenting some of the reservations which my research leaves me with, there are a number of certainties which my work has confirmed. I continue to believe that culture is an imperative consideration in international development work, both in policy formation and practice, as such consideration determines the success, failure and relevance of development activity. It is encouraging that reconsiderations of traditional modernisation and development theory are beginning to result in more ecological strategies, with the socio-cultural aspects of such theories and practices to follow.

My research and experience in the field has confirmed the importance of the terms of cultural change being negotiated by the people most affected. Only through greater agency and control by the people of Ovamboland themselves, by determining the costs and benefits of cultural change can people be adequately empowered in the decisions regarding losses and gains which are an inevitability in the process of globalisation. In Namibia, I believe that the government holds extraordinary power in prioritising and developing policies, which can support culture and in turn determine local engagement

with the issues of what is critically at stake as Namibia actively seeks a place within the global economic community. My research has left me certain that arts and culture are valuable vehicles with which to negotiate identity, and that such identity negotiation is imperative for determining socio-cultural, economic and political futures.

Throughout my consideration of cultural change in this thesis, and as a result of engaging with the Ovambo people in the field, the importance of building cultural capital within the community has been confirmed. Cultural capital is an essential element in strengthening communities which have become fragmented as a result of the modernisation process, and the generating of cultural capital which contributes to greater awareness of cultural identity is an effective and empowering tool with which to confront the individualism inherent in modernity.

Esteva writes:

> One of the most interesting facets of the ongoing regeneration in the new commons being created by ordinary men and women is precisely the recovery of their own definition of needs, dismantled by development in perception or in practice. By strengthening forms of interaction embedded in the social fabric and by breaking the economic principle of the exchange of equivalents, they are recovering their autonomous ways of living. (Esteva 1997:21)

Although my thesis has used the region of Ovamboland in Namibia as the lens through which to address issues of cultural loss, change and recuperation, the principles of investigating creative ways to address the cultural side-effects of the modernisation process lends itself to a much wider and more diverse application. Through the encouragement and nurturing of cultural practices, an understanding of the importance of identity is promoted, and the terms of cultural change are more equitably negotiated. This in turn allows those most affected by cultural change to actively participate in the determination of cultural futures. Arundhati

Roy's quote at the beginning of this conclusion suggests laying siege to empire through creativity. In Ovamboland, empire can be confronted, identity can be considered, and the terms of modernity can be contested with a resounding "*Otse Mbaka"* – This is who we are.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A : LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

Key Informants:

Ervast Mtota
Principal, College for the Arts – Windhoek. A visual artist himself, Ervast has long been involved in arts and cultural world of Namibia. Ervast grew up in Ovamboland during the Independence struggle.

Tobias Kandanga
Director, Namibian Broadcasting Corporation – Oshakati. Tobias is responsible for the Oshiwambo service of the national public radio station, the NBC. Tobias is also responsible for the collection and archiving of Ovambo musical and oral culture which the NBC have.

Rita-Louise Hofmeyr
Director, Arts – Ministry of Basic Education and Culture. Based in Windhoek, Rita-Louise is responsible for the Ministry's outreach programs, as well as arts activities involving both educational and arts institutions in Namibia.

King Munkundi
King – Ongandjera tribe. King Munkundi is responsible for "traditional law" amongst the Ongandjera people and is a highly respected authority within the community, whose counsel is sought regarding community decisions of a diverse nature.

King Kauluma
King – Ondonga tribe. King Kauluma is responsible for "traditional law" amongst the Ondonga people, and is a highly respected authority within the community, whose counsel is sought regarding community decisions. He is also a key resource in the local history of the region, and has a close affiliation with the Nakambale museum.

David Chiel
Assistant Representative Program Officer – Ford Foundation Southern Africa. David was responsible for the administration and progress of projects and activities which were funded by the Ford Foundation in Namibia.

Bernadette Mojekwu
Director, Culture and Lifelong Learning – Ministry of Basic Education and Culture (Ondangwa West). Bernadette is responsible for the administration of cultural groups and activities which are part of the Ministry's program with culture. She is also instrumental in co-ordinating the annual Regional Cultural Festival.

Mbockoma Mungandjera
Teacher, Mathematics and Agriculture – Nuuyoma Senior Secondary School, Oshikuku. As well as teaching and hostel co-ordination duties at the local senior secondary school, Mbockoma is a highly esteemed and valued member of the community.

Secondary informants:

Haaveshe Nekongo Nielsen
Chief Ankama
Stuart Keane
Francois de Necker
Karen Le Roux
Jane Moeller
Maria Enjambi
Verena Endjambi
Enos Nampala
Methusalem Ashipala
Father Stephen Okeke
Ben Boys
Job Tjiho
Father Frans Houber
Normon Jobb
Giovanni Fontana Antonelli
Rachel Malone

APPENDIX B : ETHICS AND ETHNOGRAPHIC METHODOLOGIES IN INTERVIEW PROCESS

With the exception of some traditional authorities and organisational representatives, each of the interviewees were known to me, and I believe adequately represented the aspect of their work, or place in the community, which was relevant to my research.

Interview participants were approached through the appropriate channels, and their participation was requested prior to arrangements being made. This request included details of the motivation for the research, and a copy of questions and consent form (translated into Oshiwambo where necessary). The request for participation usually took place by telephone, however due to the remoteness of certain locations, also had to be through word of mouth via key people at traditional authority offices/ post offices etc.

Where appropriate, participants were remunerated. Such remuneration was not discussed prior to the interview taking place, as this may have been interpreted as some sort of bribe technique, which would not have ensured an objective interview, and would have jeopardised the notion of free and informed, legitimate "consent". Where large excerpts of participant contribution are used, a copy of the final dissertation will also be sent to the individual/s.

Ethical Clearance from the University of Technology was granted for this research to take place. Every effort was made to ensure an ethical approach to the collection and collation of research including issues surrounding informed consent, privacy and confidentiality. Questions were generally phenomenological therefore required the participant to reflect on what he or she has observed or believes to be true of their community or organisation, thus avoiding personal sensitivities. Personal questions, such as "what effect do you anticipate globalisation will have on the arts and culture of the region", do not specifically require the participants to disclose personal ideology or private information.

Consent forms were translated, where applicable, into the appropriate languages, so that there was possibility of deception or misconception about the nature and area of research. All of the interviews were undertaken by me. Where a translator was necessary, I had the assistance of either my Namibian counterpart, Mr Metusalem Ashipala, or friend Mr Mbockoma Mungandjera who are both well known and respected in the community, where a translator was required.

Power relationships were acknowledged and respected, particularly with reference to traditional authorities. In such instances, traditional customs and practices required when dealing with such figures was observed. These included the method in which participants are contacted, the place of the interview, appropriate respect in conduct and questioning, and remuneration.

At the commencement of each interview, participants were invited to intercede if at any point they felt that their position was being compromised by the line of questioning, or method employed. Should the participant wish for his or her identity not to be disclosed in my final dissertation, or for complete anonymity, this request will be respected.

The purpose of these interviews was to determine issues for further investigation by establishing what Ovambo culture was understood to be; what had affected it in the past; what effected it presently; who was responsible for its development; what challenges exist; how should cultural development be planned, conducted and implemented and by whom. It should be noted that the interviews were not intended to cover the entire breadth of information required for the topic of my research.

This was an interesting learning experience as some of the issues which arose will effect the methodologies employed in future investigation. For example I learnt how important it is to brief interpreters on the imperatives of objectivity during an interview. Unfortunately some of the interviews were not “clean” as the interpreter unintentionally directed answers of the interviewees. This was as a result of giving too much information

and using examples to prompt answers. Having only very basic understanding of Oshiwambo, at the time I didn't realise this was happening, however on transcribing the answers it soon became apparent. This is a significant problem to consider in this particular area of research as many of the concepts involved in notions of cultural identity and practice are difficult to articulate when there is not a discourse for such concepts in local language. Fortunately very few interviewees required an interpreter.

Another issue which arose was that of political and personal agendas coming out in interviews. Obviously bias is unavoidable, however I am now more sensitive to certain issues and approaches involved in the area of research. For example, people representing the Ministry spoke of numerous cultural activities organised in the community. People in the community, however, spoke of great disappointment at the lack of Ministry initiatives and activities in the community. The presence of Senior Headmen at interviews with Traditional Authorities was also quite unexpected and significantly changed the atmosphere of the interview. It was somewhat like being in the presence of the mafia instead of just the godfather.

Geographically, research was undertaken within the 7 tribes of Ovamboland, situated in the north of the country within an area of 400kms, as well as with various representatives of organisations in the capital city, Windhoek. Two areas of research were followed – the effects of cultural dislocation and current activities in Cultural Development

APPENDIX C – CLASS ROLE

Nuuyoma Senior Secondary School

Class List for Grade 12C 1999

Afunde	Pelagia
Aimbala	Gideon
Aiyambo	Priska
Alweendo	Mateus
Antonius	Joakina
Amafulu	Kornelia
Amalovu	Fillemon
Amoomo	Basilius
Amoomo	Melksedek
Eita	Hileni
Hailaula	Daniel
Hamufungu	Immanuel
Johannes	Selma
Kapewasha	Ruusa
Kashinduka	Sabina
Kwedhi	Gerhard
Markus	Simson
Nangolo	Letitia
Nauyala	Isdor
Nenkavu	Otaiteele
NepoloJohanna	
Nkumbo	Paulus
Shatiwa	Henriette
Shikongo	Paulus
Shikulo	David
Shivute	Hilma
Shivute	Joseph
Shivute	Titus
Shoombe	Rosina
Titus	Maliseline
Ukonga	Joseph
Uugwanga	Leonard
Uutemo	Frans

APPENDIX F : UNAM CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP FINDINGS

COMMON CONCERNS

Concerns which were common to all of the small groups can be summarised as: recognition; resources; finances; communication and performance opportunities. Further detailed as:

Recognition
Each of the groups expressed a common concern about the lack of recognition their particular art form was given. This lack of recognition is manifest in little or no interest being shown in the arts at an academic, social or commercial level. This lack of recognition was articulated in different ways by each of the groups.

The Music group expressed that there exists a lack of recognition of the importance and value of music, and a lack of autonomy given to culture at a Ministry level, as it is combined with the Ministry of Basic Education.

The dance group also expressed that community members do not understand the importance of sharing information, and the importance of the arts in a society needed to be highlighted. The dance group echoed the music group in their concern about the arts being given "second rate status" by the government and community.

The poetry/stories/drama group also expressed a lack of interest and co-operation among people in the community. They attributed this to the culture of drinking and other destructive activities. They also noted that Western culture has influenced a lot of people, which could be at the cost of their own traditional culture.

The traditional customs group similarly expressed concern about the apparent lack of interest in traditional cultural activities.

Resources
There was a common theme of the lack of resources available to each discipline. These resources are in the form of human resources, material resources and financial resources. A common concern in the area of human resources was the age of the skilled elders in particular fields, and the necessity to make use of their knowledge before it was too late.

The music group expressed that there were no teachers, instruments, performance/practice space, training, books or information available to people interested in music.

The dance group also expressed concern about the lack of qualified teachers in the area.

The arts and crafts group expressed that the lack of financial resources combined with their small incomes resulted in a lack of sustainable development. They also expressed concern about the lack of trained personnel who are able to train and develop the skills of others.

The traditional customs group expressed concern about the lack of available resources for some traditional practices.

Finances
Each group recognised a need for financial support, in order to promote and develop their particular art form.

This was expressed generally by the music, arts and crafts, traditional customs and poetry/stories/drama groups, as the resources mentioned all involve considerable cost.

The dance group expressed the absence of scholarships in the field of dance, to motivate artists in that area.

Communication
Each group was concerned about the lack of communication and co-operation amongst artists, the community and various government and non-government organisations, resulting often in duplication of activities, or misunderstanding about activities which are taking place.

The music group expressed concern about the lack of communication between the community and resource people, and were worried about the elders being too old to pass on information.

The arts and crafts group said there was a lack of co-operation among people and organisations involved in arts and crafts.

Performance Opportunities
Both the dance and music groups expressed concern about the lack of performance opportunities made available to them.

The arts and crafts group also expressed dissatisfaction about the lack of display or presentation opportunities they had as well as a lack of commercial opportunities for their crafts in the region.

COMMON PROPOSALS

Education/Training
Each group emphasised the need for education and training, and had a number of proposals in this area. The most common theme was the proposal that each discipline be

taught as a promotional subject right through school, to raise the profile of that art form and provide an opportunity for learners to nurture their talents in each particular field.

The music group suggested that music be taught in schools as a promotional subject, and that there be more training of music teachers. They also suggested that there be tertiary opportunities available for studying music at UNAM. The suggestion was made that there be more training for musicians, interested people and youth to develop their skills.

The dance group again echoed the sentiments of the music group in promoting dance in schools, and providing scholarships for further study. They also suggested the possibility of inviting cultural groups from other regions to collaborate with them.

The poetry/stories/drama group similarly believed that each of these literary disciplines should be taught in schools up to Grade 12. They articulated that school children should be encouraged to recite stories, poems and plays at the end of the school year parties. They believe that people in villages should be taught how to read, and a cultural group should be established at each school to promote oral tradition.

The arts and crafts group believe that handiwork, arts and craft subjects should be included in the school curricula as a promotional subject.

The traditional customs group expressed a need for people to be trained in order to train other people in the region

Performance/Presentation opportunities

A number of groups expressed the need for performance or presentation opportunities in and around their community.

The music group suggested performances at community facilities and school facilities. They also suggested the idea of culture fairs, where skilled elders pass on their knowledge to younger artists, and musicians are given an opportunity to perform. There was a proposal that to promote local music, regular performances could be organised at venues such as the Ministry of Youth and Sport, UNAM stadium, Multipurpose Centre, Club Fantasy etc. It was suggested that every Friday night there be a performance of traditional music, and every Saturday night a performance of contemporary music.

The dance group suggested a plan where the 5 constituencies perform a dance presentation or demonstration, in order to get more active participation from the communities in dance development.

The poetry/stories/drama group suggested that villages should initiate and carry out writing competitions. The also suggested that night time story-telling should be encouraged and reinstituted in every house.

The arts and crafts group proposed that the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation should introduce a local radio discussion program about traditional arts and crafts topics.

Cultural Centre

Each of the groups proposed a centre or space which would be utilised for their particular art form, providing opportunities for presentations, displays, performances, archival material, storage of resources, training and rehearsal space etc. The form that such a centre would take varied between groups, but there was a common desire for a specific area to be made available for the promotion of arts and culture.

The music group suggested establishing a music library/museum/performance space for traditional and contemporary music for young people to watch and listen to. It was hoped that such a space would provide training facilities and other resources which are of value to music.

The arts and crafts group suggested the building of a community arts and crafts centre, as well as a museum or display room for traditional items.

The traditional customs group suggested that a museum should be built as soon as possible. They also suggested a cultural centre should be built so that people can have a place in the community for practicing and entertainment. They believed that a facility pertaining to the development of their culture should be established.

Research/Documentation/Archiving

Many groups were concerned about their particular traditional art form becoming extinct through lack of documentation and archiving. Some suggestions were made regarding ways to keep a record of each art form through research, documentation and archiving. This documentation and research would be available to the general public, and would be stored in the proposed museum, libraries etc.

The music group suggested that professional recordings (videos, cassettes, CDs) be made of local traditional music for young people and the community at large to watch and listen to, and to conserve music and culture.

The dance group suggested that research could provide a way to gather and exchange information about local traditional dance.

The arts and crafts group proposed that any discussion, research findings etc should be recorded and made available in book form to the community at large.

Establishing Committees

Some of the groups expressed an interest in further establishing committees in their field of art.

The poetry/stories/drama group suggested the formation of a regional/village writing committee, which would be the responsibility of the regional councillors.

The arts and crafts group proposed the formation of a Cultural Information and Advisory Committee. They suggested that this committee be responsible for training and skill-share development, as well as facilitating workshops.

Some of the concluding comments were that the Cultural Officers need to be more proactive with their resources, and to think through how to use them, in order to have the most effective impact in terms of awareness raising.

The role and function of NCCI was further highlighted at the end of the workshop. And the point was emphasised that NCCI would act as a resource, or as a channel to the different sources of support which each particular area of the arts required. It should be seen as an umbrella body, which would assist in the facilitation of cultural projects. The success of any future endeavours depended greatly on the initiative coming from each of the groups, representative groups being formed, and community support.

APPENDIX H: OPEN LETTER TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF SOUTH AFRICA
(Source: National Archives of Namibia)

The Church Boards of:
Evangelical Lutheran Ovambokavango Church
Ondangwa, Ovamboland

and

Evangelical Mission Church in SWA
(Rhenish Mission Church)
Windhoek

His Honor
The Prime Minister,
Mr B.J. Vorster
Pretoria

His Honor,

After the decision of the World Court and the Hague was made known on 21st June 1971, several leaders and officials of our Lutheran churches were individually approached by representatives of the authorities with a view to making known their views. This indicates to us that public institutions are interested in hearing the opinions of the churches in this connection. Therefore we would like to make use to the opportunity of informing your Honor of the opinion of the Church Boards of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in SWA and the Evangelical Lutheran Ovambokavango Church which represents the majority of the indigenous population of South West Africa.

We believe that South Africa in its attempts to develop South West Africa has failed to take cognisance of Human Rights as declared by the UNO in the year 1948 with respect to the non-white population. Allow us to put forward the following examples in this connection:

1. The government maintains that by the race policy it implements in our country, it promotes and preserves the life and freedom of the population. But in fact the non-white population is continuously being slighted and intimidated in their daily lives. Our people are not free and by the way they are treated they do not feel safe. In this regard we wish to refer to Section 3 of Human Rights.
2. We cannot do otherwise than regard South West Africa, with all its racial groups, as a unit. By the Group Areas Legislation the people are denied the right of free movement and accommodation within the borders of the country. This cannot be reconciled with Section 13 of the Human Rights.

3. People are not free to express or publish their thoughts or opinions openly. Many experience humiliating espionage and intimidation which has as its goal that a public and accepted opinion must be expressed, but not one held at heart and of which they are convinced. Ow can sections 18 and 19 of the Human Rights be realised under such circumstances?
4. The implementation of the policy of the government makes it impossible for the political parties of the indigenous people to work together in a really responsible and democratic manner to build the future of the whole of South West Africa. We believe that it is important in the connection that the use of voting rights should also be allowed to the non-white population. (Section 20 and 21 of the Human Rights)/
5. Through the application of Job Reservation the right to a free choice of profession is hindered and this causes low remuneration and unemployment. There can be no doubt that the contract system breaks up a healthy life because the prohibition of a person from living where he works hinders the cohabitation of families. This conflicts with section 23 and 25 of the Human Rights.

The Church Boards' urgent wish is that in terms of the declarations of the World Court and in cooperation with the UNO of which South Africa is a member, your government will seek a peaceful solution to the problems of our land and will see to it that Human Rights be put into operation and that South West Africa may become a self-sufficient and independent State.

With high esteem,

Bishop Dr. Auala
Chairman of the Church Board of the
Evangelical Lutheran Ovambokavango Church

Moderator Pastor P. Gowaseb
Chairman of the Church Board of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church in S.W.A.
(Rhenish Mission Church)

Windhoek, 30 June 1971

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