

Beadwork and
its cultural
significance
among the
Xhosa-speaking
peoples

DAWN COSTELLO

**NOT
ONLY
FOR
ITS
BEAUTY**





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CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE
AMONG THE
XHOSA-SPEAKING PEOPLES**

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Pretoria

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FOREWORD

The use of beads to convey one or more silent but highly visual messages has been the central focus of investigations carried out by anthropologists, linguists, ethnologists and historians over the years. The role beadwork plays in the socio-economic and cultural life of our rapidly urbanising communities needs to be monitored and documented. There is a serious concern therefore that unless research is timeously and responsibly conducted on the use to which beadwork has been and continues to be put, the opportunity to plot the significant milestones of this dynamic journey will be lost for future generations.

In today's world the beadwork most frequently seen by the average urban resident invariably consists of commercially produced goods of relatively successful acts of commercial entrepreneurship. In this book by Dawn Costello, the wonderful richness and diversity of the Xhosa people is exposed by tracing the historical background of beadwork leading up to the present day significance of this practice.

The history of beads, beadmaking and beadwearing and, more recently, beadreading, forms an important part of any cultural group's heritage and tradition. However, the meaning a wearer intends to convey by using any one arrangement of beads can become blurred, not only through the passage of time but also through inaccurate and inconsistent interpretations of the meaning intended by the wearer in his or her context. The cross-cultural dimension further compounds the difficulties associated with making these interpretations. Dawn Costello of the Department of Anthropology and Indigenous Law at the University of South Africa has enriched our knowledge through this excellent documentation of Xhosa beadwork. The magnificent plates included in this publication lead one to reflect on the significance of each striking article displayed.

The book also succeeds in bridging the gap between the traditional and present day use of beadwork within the social system of the Xhosa-speaking people at the south-eastern tip of Africa. The saying "beauty is in the eye of the beholder" is often used today to enable one individual's personal interpretation to enjoy equal status with that of another. This expression can also be applied to beadwork, since in its pure state it can be regarded as a true art form. Not only is the significance of the messages involved examined in this book thereby explaining a hitherto little known and documented dimension of Xhosa life, but we are also able to feast on this spectacular art form as we are led along the path of understanding it more clearly. Truly, this form of beauty is in the eye of every beholder.

Masiwalondoloze amasiko ethu MaXhosa ukuze sakhele ikamva lethu kuwo, ungalahli imbo yakho.

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PREFACE

This publication emanates from a deep interest in, and a love of, the traditional beadwork of the Xhosa-speaking people among whom I lived for many years. Its aim is to document the role of beadwork in traditional Xhosa society and by means of photographs to record its beauty before this is totally lost to posterity. The wearing of traditional dress and beadwork has all but disappeared. It is now only found in remote areas as yet to a large extent untouched by modernisation and Christianisation and occasionally seen at important celebrations such as traditional weddings when the older generation, usually women, who still possess beadwork, may wear it. It is my sincere hope that this publication will inspire the Xhosa-speaking peoples to look again at this heritage and to preserve what remains of their traditional beadwork. Many exquisite articles are being bought by overseas collectors and are consequently lost forever to the Xhosa people and South Africa. Perhaps what I have written will go some way towards reviving an interest in beadwork and beading.

The major part of the research for this publication has been derived from the written sources indicated in the bibliography, but some information has been obtained from informants living in Transkei and Ciskei or traders who lived in these areas for many years. I have also drawn on my own memories of the years spent at a trading store in Transkei. Source references within the text itself have been limited to facilitate ease of reading.

Since the prefix changes associated with the syntax of the Xhosa language are apt to be confusing to persons not familiar with it, the use of these has been restricted to the absolute minimum. The use of the present tense is deliberate since the beadwork and its role in Xhosa society has been described as it was traditionally used in its cultural context.

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Extensive use has been made of the *Kafir-English Dictionary* of Rev. Albert Kropf and Rev. Robert Godfrey for the captions under the photographs.



VARIOUS SOCIETIES AND GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

The Southern Nguni people or the Xhosa, as they are broadly referred to since they share a common language, *isiXhosa*, and are culturally similar, consist of various societies such as the Mpondo, Bomvana, Bhaca, Thembu, Mpondomise, Xesibe, Mfengu, Hlubi and the Xhosa proper. The latter may be further subdivided into the Gcaleka and Ngqika. For ease of reference the term Xhosa will be used to refer to the societies collectively.

The traditional land of the Xhosa was located on the south-eastern seaboard of the Republic of South Africa up to about 100 km inland in a territory that is presently (1990) divided into two independent states namely Transkei and Ciskei. In 1989 the estimated number of Xhosa living in Transkei was 3 500 000 and in Ciskei 1 000 000. Xhosa-speaking people also live in urban areas especially Cape Town, Port Elizabeth and East London and on farms outside Transkei and Ciskei.





HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO BEADWORK

Before the introduction of glass beads the Xhosa made beads from natural materials, such as ostrich egg shell, which was chipped and ground to the approximate size, bored and polished before being strung. Metal beads were also made since they polished well and were durable. As beads took a long time to make, they were scarce and highly valued. Other ornamentation consisted of animal teeth and horn (see Catalogue Nos. 181 and 129), bone, ivory, slats of sandalwood (*Colpoon compressum* or *Santalum album*), tambotie (*Spirostachys africana*) (see Catalogue No. 165; Coates-Palgrave 1988:156) and other woods, seeds and roots of plants as well as shells (see Catalogue No. 182). These were strung on fibre and animal sinews to make necklaces, bracelets, belts and anklets. Tufts of animal hair, pieces of animal skin, feathers and small horns were added for decoration. In addition to the above, grass ornaments, newly woven each season, were also worn. These original materials which were used as ornamentation did not disappear with the introduction of glass beads but were used together with beads as described below.

The first glass beads were brought to Southern Africa by Arab slave traders, then in larger quantities by the Portuguese and, later still, by the Dutch and the English. The advent of the Portuguese brought about a full-scale commercial trade along the east coast of Southern Africa. Among the articles traded were glass beads made by master craftsmen in Venice who learned the art of beadmaking from wandering Jewish and Byzantine glassworkers. An estimated 80 million beads were landed on the East African coast in the years 1508 to 1509, and through existing indigenous trade routes some of these reached the Xhosa. After the Dutch and the later English settlements which were established at the Cape, imported beads became more freely available but remained expensive. In 1653, a German priest on a visit to South Africa wrote that along the eastern Cape coast gold, slaves and other commodities could be bartered for soft goods, brass wire and beads. In 1780 the price of approximately 500 grams (one pound) of beads was one cow but by 1788 this had changed to between 1 000 to 1 500 grams for one head of cattle. In 1888, a hen could be bought for three beads while four beads were traded for three pumpkins. Alberti relates how he recovered two escaped Mozambican slaves who were sheltering amongst the Xhosa, after recompensing the ruler with many sheets of copper, glass beads and other items requested by him (Alberti 1968:72). Alberti was an officer in an artillery regiment stationed at the Cape of Good Hope between 1802 and 1806. During this period he spent most of his time in and around the territory occupied by the Xhosa and in 1807 wrote his *Account of the Xhosa* which was translated from the original German into English in 1968 by William Fehr.

In the above document the Xhosa are described as wearing a quantity of highly prized ornaments of different types. Men wore rings of elephant tusks on the left upper arm which was an indication of the ruler's favour since all ivory belonged to him.

The men also wore a leather strap decorated with the teeth of "a wild boar" (perhaps a warthog or bushpig since wild boars are not found in Southern Africa) or leopard around the upper arm and a brush of hair from the tail of an antelope attached to a band around their heads. The tail brush of an eland or ox was fastened below the knee where it hung down to the shin. Copper and iron rings threaded on a leather strap were worn around the abdomen. These rings were used much as we would use money today since they could be exchanged for commodities which included cattle. Both men and women wore a variety of shell necklaces, grass ornaments, necklaces made of pieces of scented wood and also a number of strings of beads. Bracelets of copper and iron and others

trimmed with shells adorned the wrists of both men and women. Both sexes wore earrings made of strings of small beads at the end of which a number of large beads were suspended. Members of the lower classes wore a leather strap, fastened at the ends, through the holes in their ears (Alberti 1968:33, 35). It is not clear whether the class distinction mentioned refers to royalty and commoners or whether the lower class people referred to are those who could not afford to buy beads since they were still scarce and expensive at that time.

In the 19th century the British Government established Fort Willshire on the Keiskamma River where White traders and the Xhosa could barter at periodical stock fairs at which cattle, hides, gum, elephant tusks and horn were exchanged by the Xhosa for, amongst others, glass beads, buttons and brass wire. Such occasions were usually accompanied by dancing. The neck cascade, *istokfele*, numbered 158 in the Catalogue, derives its name from these stock fairs. The rulers fixed the quantity of beads and other merchandise to be received for whatever was bartered and commonly took half of the goods by way of taxes, usually selecting the best for themselves (Theal 1910:182).

So eager were the Xhosa to possess glass beads, and so great was the value attached to them, that beads were used as currency. An early 19th century traveller wishing to visit Xhosa territory would provide himself with a good supply of beads in order to facilitate his journey. Guides and labourers were also paid with tobacco, beads and brass wire instead of money. An early missionary among the Xhosa related how one hundred strings of beads, thirteen ear beads and two buttons were put into the collection plate at a Sunday service (Shaw and Van Warmelo 1974:192).

After White traders commenced trading in the areas occupied by the Xhosa, beads became more common, the price dropped, and an extensive beadcraft developed. This brought the decorative talent of the Xhosa people to the fore even though the use of certain colours was culturally prescribed. When glass beads became plentiful, buyers were more fastidious about the exact colours and quality they required. At this time the quality of the beads was tested by biting them. Any that did not meet their standards were rejected.

Although glass beads were essentially foreign to the Xhosa they have become such an integral part of their culture that their use is accepted as being traditional and even the poorest family has some articles of beadwork. Each member of the household will have some beadwork which they will wear with pride when dressing up. A Xhosa mother would buy beads to make some form of ornamentation for her child to wear in the same way that a White mother would buy a dress or some other garment for her child.

The early missionaries were not interested in traditional beadwork which they perceived to be an outward sign of paganism. Converts to Christianity were thus forbidden to wear their beadwork or to use red ochre. This still applies in that the *amagqoboka*, Christians, do not wear tribal dress and beadwork as do the *amaqaba*, those who paint their bodies and clothes with red ochre or red clay. The latter have an ancestor cult and red is a colour beloved of the ancestors.

With increasing Christianisation and modernisation, traditional beadwork is fast dying out and is now found only in remote areas. The art of beading is, however, being revived through the formation of beadwork clubs such as the Indwe Ladies' Sewing Centre at Indwe on the border of Transkei. These women produced Nos. 178 and 237 in the catalogue and beaded the pipe numbered 180. They did not learn the art of beading in their youth but were taught the craft by an old *qaba* woman. To them it is a means of earning a living. Only a small percentage of the articles produced are strictly traditional since they are sold on the open market to tourists, curio shops and fashion houses overseas and in South Africa and are designed to suit the requirements of these buyers. They are able and willing to copy traditional items if provided with photographs or examples. There is a market for this type of work since various collectors are showing an interest in quality reproductions of authentic traditional pieces. Besides beadwork they also make items of traditional clothing such as braided skirts. Even on these, however, the traditional black braid which is scarce and expensive is frequently interspersed with a cheaper zig-zag braid.

The women who are currently doing beadwork buy the beads from and sell the completed articles back to institutions such as the Development Corporations and churches for resale to interested buyers in South Africa and overseas. An interest in beadwork and traditional dress has also been revived among fashion conscious Blacks without any emphasis on traditional colours and patterns.



TRADITIONAL DRESS AND ACCESSORIES

Since the traditional dress of the various status groups includes clothing, the use of ochre, head-dresses, pipes and tobacco bags as well as beadwork, a discussion of beadwork would be incomplete without reference to these other items of adornment. As individuals pass through the various phases of life they gain status. This can be exemplified by a boy gaining importance as he is allowed first to herd the goats and then the cattle. He then goes away to work, becomes a man upon initiation, marries, becomes a father and later the head of a household. Each change in status is accompanied by a change in dress and ornamentation. Despite differences that occur amongst the various Xhosa-speaking societies and in different areas, there is sufficient similarity for dress to be dealt with collectively although that of specific societies may be referred to on occasion.

Babies go naked except for a few simple strings of beads which are supplemented by a pubic covering, *inkciyo*, when they are about a year old, with little girls wearing a back apron as well. Bhaca boys of this age wear a skirt having a piece of skin front and back (Fig. 2). A pubic covering together



Figure 2 Young Bhaca boy wearing a skin skirt

with a blanket or sheepskin karos for warmth comprises the dress of boys and girls during their childhood years, although on occasion a small herdboys may be seen wearing a Western-style shirt or a piece of cotton sheeting tied around his hips.

Young uninitiated girls wear short skirts, usually simply decorated with strips of black cotton fabric torn into narrow strips and stitched on by hand. Only colour-fast fabric that can be torn into straight strips is used. Their skirts may or may not be decorated with beads (see Catalogue No. 1). A cotton sheeting shawl is worn around the shoulders but breasts are left bare. A pubic covering, *inkciyo*, which may be passed down from mother to daughter (see Catalogue No. 2) and a simple headscarf or handkerchief complete the outfit. It does happen that young girls do not undergo the customary ceremony prescribed for their entry into womanhood and that they put on the clothing of the women of marriageable age when their sweethearts are initiated. Should a married woman who has entered womanhood in this way fall ill or prove to be barren, a diviner, on being consulted, would advise that she return to her father's household and undergo the ceremony. This is believed to appease the ancestral spirits and cure her ailment or barrenness.

Youths who are junior members of the *umtshotsho*, which is the local gathering for adolescents, wear a loin cloth, and a blanket decorated with strips of fabric, but these are replaced by black shorts and a blanket when, after returning from the mines or other employment, they attain senior status (see Catalogue Nos. 118, 119 and 121). The mines for which they are recruited on a contract basis are usually the gold mines of the Witwatersrand. The recruiting agents are frequently the local traders or a recruiting agency in the nearest town or village. Young Bhaca youths who have returned from the mines wear wide-legged trousers tied at the ankles, a fashion trend which has been copied by other Xhosa-speaking societies. A decorated stick is an essential item of male dress among youths and men alike. These sticks are not necessarily decorated with beadwork; other means of decoration such as plastic tubing may be used (see Catalogue No. 120).

The *umtshotsho* referred to above takes the form of a dance which lasts from Saturday night until sunrise on Sunday and is held in any hut temporarily in disuse. Although meat and beer are not provided, these dances are well attended for the sheer enjoyment of the dancing and the experimentation with new dance steps and songs. The music for the dancing is provided by the singing and clapping of the girls. These occasions are also remarkable for the excellence of the beadwork worn (Broster 1967:22). Among the Bhaca the *umtshotsho* is known as *ikhandlela*, meaning candle, possibly as a result of these gatherings being held at night by candlelight. Such a gathering may also be organised when the owner of a new hut wants the earth floor stamped down. The young people dancing on the floor accomplish this task for him in one night (Hammond-Tooke 1962:92).

Married women and women of marriageable age mostly wear a long wrap-around braided skirt, *umbhaco*, made from cotton sheeting or a blanket having a black stripe woven into it (see Catalogue No. 122). The number of rows of black braid around the bottom of the skirt indicates the status of the woman in her household. Braid is painstakingly unpicked from an old skirt and re-used when it is unavailable at the trading stores or when there is insufficient money to buy new braid. Skin skirts, *izikhaka*, were originally worn and may still occasionally be found. With their skirts, married women wear a narrow bib-like apron, *incebetha*, made of cotton sheeting which is tied above the breasts and hangs down to the braiding on the skirt (see Catalogue No. 125). A decorated blouse or Western-style vest may replace the *incebetha* (see Catalogue No. 177). Writing in 1807, Alberti describes a gut-net cover worn over the breasts and tied with straps at the back. This was the possible origin of the *incebetha*. Such a cover could be decorated with beads to draw attention to her breasts if the owner so desired (Alberti 1968:32). Unmarried women, however, leave their breasts uncovered. A young woman of marriageable age may borrow a breast covering when journeying away from home in order to protect herself from being abducted by a man in search of a wife. By wearing the *incebetha* of a married woman she would be safe from unwanted attentions. A lightly braided cotton sheeting shawl, *ibhayi*, is worn over the shoulders or tied under the arms when working (see Catalogue No. 123). This is also used to tie a baby on to its mother's back. Among the Eastern Mpondo these shawls are decorated with beadwork as well as braid.

Skirts are held up by a belt which is frequently beaded (see Catalogue Nos. 3, 4 and 130) or a length of white cotton cord which varies in thickness. A leather purse containing shopping money usually hangs from the belt (see Catalogue No. 128).

On ceremonial and festive occasions men wear a short white braided skirt and carry a blanket over one shoulder. For daily wear they don Western trousers and shirts since these are found to be more convenient for working. In addition to these they carry a blanket which, among the Mpondo, is beaded.

Hunter, writing in 1936, stated that braiding was frequently done for a fee by women of the so-called "school people" who had sewing machines (1979:102). "School people" was the term by which the *amaqaba* referred to those Xhosa who had become Christianised and Westernised. I have personal recollections of my mother doing such braiding on a sewing machine at our trading store in Transkei. The charge was worked out according to the number of rows of braid on the item. On occasions the work done was not paid for in cash but by loads of firewood, a quantity of grain or by labour. The loads of firewood refer to the amount of wood a woman could carry. The wood was collected in the veld, in plantations and on the mountains and carried home perfectly balanced on her head (Fig. 3).

Imbola or red ochre (iron oxide) is sold by weight at trading stores where, in the past, it was packaged in conical containers fashioned by traders from pages of a periodical or government gazette. It is also tied in the corner of the buyer's shawl and carried home in this way. Ochre comes in differing shades, depending on the Xhosa society concerned or the locality, and is widely used to colour their bodies and everyday clothing and blankets (see Catalogue No. 123). In some areas a red-coloured clay powder, *mdiki*, is found and substituted for ochre.



Figure 3 Woman carrying a load of wood

The colour of the ochre varies from the orange-red used by the Bomvana to the brown-red favoured by the Mfengu and the deep brick-red of the Thembu. The Xesibe beat local earth into their garments instead of ochre resulting in a grey colour which tones well with the aluminium they use for ornamentation instead of brass. The Eastern and some Western Mpondo prefer "washing blue" as a colourant instead of the deep maroon-red ochre which was their original colour preference.

"Washing blue" is sold in small blocks and is an inexpensive commercial bleach intended for whitening washing when it is correctly used. A strong solution, however, will produce a pretty duck-egg blue colour which is regarded by those who use it to dye their clothes as being "white" (Mertens and Broster 1987:11). "Washing blue" may also be reduced to a paste with a little water and used to add decoration to especially white clay when this is applied to decorate the body. Its use is permitted by those to whom red ochre, the symbol of normality, is taboo since they are not leading normal social lives (De Lange 1963:88).

The replacement of ochre with white clay as a body cosmetic is an indication that something abnormal has occurred in the life of the wearer. The white clay is a symbol of transition prior to acquiring a new status. In the transitional state the person concerned is particularly vulnerable to ritual pollution which could be carried by others. An example of this is the youth undergoing initiation who paints his face and body white and is excluded from community life since association with the community could retard the healing of circumcision wounds. According to Alberti (1968:20) the women used to add sweet smelling herbs to the ochre mixture used for body decoration. In order to impart a durability and smoothness to this application of ochre, fat or marrow was rubbed over it. He does not, however, say whether this was applied in the raw state or first cooked.

To the *amaqaba*, red ochre is known as the blood of the earth and they believe its colour to be beloved of the ancestors to whom they occasionally offer propitiatory sacrifices which take the form of a ritual killing. Where possible an ox is killed for major occasions and a goat for those of lesser importance. For certain rituals such as the bringing back of the spirit of a deceased family head (*ukubuyisela utata*) both beer and meat are offered. After the animal has been killed, the beer is poured out in the cattle fold as a libation and a portion of the meat is placed in the main hut of the household between the walls and the thatch where the aroma may be enjoyed by the ancestors (Broster 1981:17). When a ritual killing takes place, those attending wear ochred dress (Broster 1986:5). All users of ochre, however, avoid its use during certain stages of their lives such as in periods of mourning or initiation, as mentioned above, and it is recommenced at the termination of such periods after a sacrifice has been made to the ancestors.

The dyeing is done by sprinkling dry powder on to the cloth and beating it in or by making a liquid dye into which articles are placed. It may also be emulsified by mixing it with fat and rubbing this mixture into the cloth. According to De Lange (1963:86), the Mfengu use fat together with ochre when dyeing clothing. A skirt dyed in this manner resembles the old ox-hide skirts and is considered to be the ultimate in dress for special occasions. White is generally the favoured colour for ceremonial and festive occasions, except among the Mpondo and Mpondomise who favour blue.

The skirts that are presently on sale are made of the traditional white cotton sheeting as well as red and blue cotton sheeting which is factory dyed. The bales of cotton sheeting which used to be prominently displayed on the counters of trading stores were not seen on a recent visit to Transkei (1990) since there is very little demand for it among the local population. A few of the white blankets with the black woven stripes were, however, stocked by two of the trading stores visited.

Young people of both sexes wear coloured handkerchiefs or scarves with a patterned border and plain centre or brightly coloured plain cotton scarves, sometimes decoratively stitched and beaded and simply tied around their heads (see Catalogue No. 5). They may wear a beaded headband with, or many headbands without the handkerchief or scarf. Young men who have just been initiated wear a simple black headscarf as they may not boast. The same applies to a young wife whose plain black headdress is tied closely to the head, well down over the eyes, to indicate low status and the respectful attitude due to her husband's family (Fig. 4). The spectacular turbans worn by married men and older married women differ from area to area with regard to colour and style and may



Figure 4 Young Gcaleka wife

be decoratively stitched (see Catalogue No. 124). A married woman may wear such a turban after the birth of her second child (De Lange 1963:91). The most elaborate headdresses are worn by those of senior status and may incorporate a towel, a black cashmere scarf as well as other scarves of different colours according to taste (Fig. 5-6). Unlike the married women who rarely wear headbands, a married man wears one or more headbands with his turban (Fig. 7). The black headscarves of the Mfengu are edged with blue beads and liberally decorated with pearl buttons, some of which are very old thus implying re-use when scarves wear out (Tyrrell and Jurgens 1983:29). The ceremonial headdress of the Mpondomise is arranged in a form which may best be described as similar to a peacock's tail (Fig. 8).

Headdresses may be decorated with beaded safety pins and are kept in place by many hatpins (see Catalogue No. 178). The hatpins are bought at trading stores or made from old bicycle spokes, sharpened on stones, and beaded. They also serve as pipe cleaners. The act of creating such a headdress is known in Xhosa as *ukusentula*.

An interesting deviation from headscarves is found among the Mpondo where some men wear a Western style felt hat which has been traditionalised by decorating it with beads and buttons. An Mpondo married woman may also substitute a turban-like cloth ring or beaded heading for her headscarf if she so desires (Fig. 9). One or the other must, however, be worn as a sign of respect for her husband's family (Tyrrell and Jurgens 1983:41). Xesibe women also wear a narrow beaded heading which is frequently held in place by a long beaded snuff spoon. When they are breastfeeding a baby the beaded ring is replaced by an undecorated one.

Spectacularly styled turbans are also worn by the *amadikazi* when they attend the married men's dances. These women are the unmarried mothers, divorcees, deserted wives and widows who live



Figure 5 Older Gcaleka married woman



Figure 6 Thembu married woman



Figure 7 Thembu man



Figure 8 Mpondomise headdress



Figure 9 Mpondo woman wearing a beaded headring

permanently at their paternal homes. The men's wives attend part of the festivities attired in everyday dress but do not take part in the dancing. They are spectators only. These dances serve to give the *amadikazi* a dignified place within the social structure and ensure that they also have a share in the pleasures of community life. It is from this group that a married man takes a mistress. While absolute fidelity is expected from married women this is not required of their husbands. This is due in part to the prohibition of sex with a woman who is suckling an infant which is usually only weaned after eighteen months to two years. Contravention of this taboo is considered to be dangerous to the child.

Among the Thembu, the married men's dance, known as the *ibasi*, is usually held once a month over a week-end. Invitations are sent to all the neighbouring households. Those who attend pay a nominal fee in advance and the monies collected are used for the provision of refreshments. The men frequently arrive on bead-bedecked horses. A man's mistress (*idikazi*) collects his bead ensemble and brings it to the gathering where she helps him to dress. To array a man in full ceremonial dress is a lengthy process and she may enlist the aid of one of the other *amadikazi* who does not have a partner (Broster 1976:71-74).

When Alberti wrote his account of the Xhosa in 1807 he observed that the women wore caps made of antelope skin but that they were attracted to the cloth head coverings found among the Whites and were keen to acquire these for themselves. This could possibly have been the origin of the turbans in use today among the *qaba* women (Alberti 1968:32, 35). The skin caps were frequently decorated with beadwork.

One or more decorated tobacco bags and a beaded pipe with removable mouthpiece are essential for ceremonial or festive dress. The shape and size of pipes differ for each status level (Broster 1967:76). Older men usually have a short stemmed pipe, young people of both sexes a slim pipe of medium length, while older women smoke pipes with stems of up to 30 cm in length. The age and

prestige of older women is judged by the length of their pipe stems (see Catalogue Nos. 48, 179 and 180). Mfengu pipes are, however, generally short. When people are gathered in a group it is customary to pass a pipe around for everyone present to have a draw. Tobacco is shared and if it is not offered one of the group will ask who has a supply. The custom of each person using an own mouthpiece when sharing a pipe is not so much for reasons of hygiene but to prevent witchcraft since it is believed that a person can be bewitched by means of their body substances such as spittle and nail parings. The Xhosa set great store by conversation and to pass a friend or stranger on the road without exchanging news is considered to be ill-mannered. At such meetings pipes are frequently brought out and tobacco shared. Pipes in daily use are generally unbeaded. The significance of pipes in Xhosa society may be illustrated by the metaphor, *wayibeka inqawe*, "he has laid down his pipe", in other words he has died (Soga 1931:344).

Tobacco bags are part of daily dress. Women's bags are mostly made of cotton sheeting decorated with beadwork and braid and possibly a few wool tassels (see Catalogue Nos. 126 and 127), while those used by men are made from either cotton sheeting or the skin of a goat removed in such a way as to retain its shape. Previously, skins of wild animals such as the hyrax (dassie) were also used. Many cloth bags may be carried over a man's stick as a form of ornamentation.

Fashion changes in headscarves, breast aprons and ornamentation come from within the community itself but are also forced on them due to the unavailability of the preferred materials over a long period of time such as happened during the Second World War. During this period the beads and braid which are imported from overseas could not be shipped to South Africa.



SIGNIFICANCE OF BEADWORK

Beads are used for personal ornamentation as well as the decoration of garments and objects (see Catalogue Nos. 5, 28, 39, 121, 125, 177). They form part of everyday attire and are very important on festive and ceremonial occasions.

While there is no extensive bead language among the Xhosa such as that found among the Zulu and the Swazi, beadwork, in addition to being decorative, also serves as a means of communication between the sexes (Gitywa 1970:55). Among the Thembu there are three special headbands which are used by a girl to initiate a courtship with the boy of her choice. She hands the *icelo* (see Catalogue No. 44) to him without a word and if he accepts it a relationship is established and she gives him the *idayimane* (see Catalogue Nos. 42 and 43) and the *unonkciywana* (see Catalogue No. 41) as well. This establishes the relationship but should it come to nought these headbands and any other beadwork given to him must be returned (Broster 1967:24-25). The peak period for adornment is during courtship when beadwork has a deeply emotional significance equivalent to a Western engagement ring.

Beadwork is concerned with the organisation of Xhosa society in which there is a series of clearly defined levels through which each member of the society passes. According to Dubin (1987:137) passage from one level to the next is signalled by changes in ornamentation, including beadwork, and in clothes (see Catalogue Nos. 118 and 119). These levels are important in that they give stability to the social structure since specific responsibilities, obligations and privileges are associated with each level. Beadwork can also communicate the wearer's rank, wealth, status, and, in some instances, his or her profession, for example, a diviner. Together with traditional songs and dances, beadwork serves to unify the community and to record the customs and history of a people that does not have a tradition of literacy. In a culture where there is no written record, beadwork can serve as a legal document in a traditional court in cases such as breach of promise or adultery.

Colours of beadwork as well as red ochre are used to convey information to the knowledgeable observer. They warn others of the wearer's condition, for example, those who are excluded from normal public life such as those in mourning who remove all beadwork and other ornamentation and refrain from using red ochre thereby indicating a period of abnormality which is restored by means of a ritual killing or, in some cases, by the offering of beer in honour of the ancestors. A widower and other kin of the deceased mourn for one month but a widow is expected to mourn for a year.

The reason for this ritual killing is that the Xhosa, by tradition, have an ancestor cult. They believe in a Creator who cares for them in the greater matters of life and protects them in extreme danger, but it is the ancestral spirits who watch over their daily affairs and as such they must be informed regarding this restoration to normal public life (Elliott 1987:8).

According to information received in Transkei it is possible that yellow and green beads may be used not only by the Thembu but by others to indicate pregnancy and the number of children a woman has, since to them yellow signifies fertility and green, new life (see Catalogue Nos. 1, 178). The odd yellow bead is sometimes found in articles where it may appear to have been included by mistake. This is, however, deliberately done to indicate fertility (see Catalogue Nos. 223 and 224). Green and yellow beads are also included in the fertility dolls described next.

The making and keeping of beaded fertility dolls is a tradition found among women only and reveals their desire to attract an eligible husband and ultimately to have children. These dolls demonstrate a strong reliance on sympathetic magic. They are usually made of small bottles, maize cobs, cartridge cases or small rolls of cotton sheeting which are covered in beadwork and incorporated in a necklace. The dolls are frequently impressionistic in appearance.

De Lange (1961:86-101) describes a collection of beaded dolls which were, at that time, housed in the East London Museum. Some of these are believed to be of Xhosa origin while others can be traced to the Sotho. Those attributed to the Xhosa include the so-called "love dolls" which are worn around the necks of young girls. They are encouraged in this practice by older women since the dolls are believed to increase fertility. Married women may also wear the dolls as an outward sign of their desire for a child (Fig. 10). During initiation the young girl is frequently given such a doll by her parents. She will look after it carefully since it is believed that if it is lost or damaged there is a risk that when she has a child it will die. After the birth of her first child the young mother will return the doll to her parents for use by a younger sister (Carey 1986:57). Where the dolls are worn for the purpose of attracting a man, the young woman wears the necklace in secret, usually at night, since she must not indicate openly that she is looking for a husband.

The secret necklaces usually comprise both a male and a female doll on a single necklace while those worn openly have only one doll attached to them. Since these dolls are all beaded it is not known whether they existed in another form before the introduction of glass beads or whether they originated at the time when glass beads became an integral part of the Xhosa tradition.

Among the Xesibe there is a practice of using "hut dolls". Such a doll is carved of wood and put on the roof of the hut of a childless woman by a diviner as a plea to the ancestors to send a baby to the home. The doll may or may not have beads on it. It is left on the roof until a baby is born when it is taken down and burned with the placenta.

Certain beadwork items such as the *isidanga* (see Catalogue No. 183) are worn when a ritual offering is made to the ancestors and therefore have religious connotations. Only very rarely are appeals made directly to the Supreme Being. One such occasion is found among the Thembu who, when in dire straits due to severe drought or some other disaster, resort to prayer, song and the offering and consuming of consecrated beer and maize in honour of *uMdali*, the Creator. This takes place at a clear spring on a mountain after a week of preparation. The song is followed by a symbolic offering of white beads. The ceremony may be repeated on a smaller scale for several days (Tyrrel and Jurgens 1983:51).

White beads have been substituted for the pieces of medicine called *ichakata* which used to be handed to those present at a sacrifice made to the ancestors on behalf of all the members of the household. This was done after the meat of the sacrificed beast had been divided according to the customary manner and eaten. Each person present at the sacrifice was given a piece of medicine which was then returned and strung on a necklace to be worn by the head of the household. White beads are now given to those present and, on being returned, are strung on a sinew from the sacrificial beast and worn around the neck of the head of the household. Only white beads may be used since these symbolise enlightenment from the ancestors (Sobahle 1977:272-273).

Beads may also be included in charm necklaces such as those worn by nursing mothers (see Catalogue Nos. 166-168). These necklaces are made from the roots of a variety of plants such as *umtomboti* (*Spirostachys africana*). The mother bites off a tiny piece of the root on the necklace, chews this and spits it over the child when entering a strange hut or some other place where she feels the child may be endangered. Pieces of the root may also be ground to a powder, mixed with water, and smeared on both mother and child (Louw 1938:77). The child may also be given a very small quantity of the mixture to drink. These necklaces are significant in that they are intended to ensure the safety of the child. Upon returning home from an excursion a mother who is still breastfeeding her baby will chew a piece of the root on her charm necklace and spit this over the child before putting it to the breast to prevent any evil she may have encountered from harming the child (Hunter 1979:156). The nursing mother applies white clay to the necklaces as well as to her face to indicate



Figure 10 Xhosa fertility dolls (adapted from De Lange 1961:87)

that sexual relations with her husband are prohibited during this period since she may not conceive until the baby is weaned as this would endanger its life. The stoppers of eyedrop bottles and the covers from injection needles are included in the necklaces numbered 171 and 172 since it is believed that the power of the medicine that was in the bottles and the syringes has been transferred to the stoppers and covers and these will therefore be an aid to healing. If studied carefully traces of white clay can still be seen on necklace No. 169 thus indicating that it was worn by a nursing mother. The charm necklaces are also a means of telling all who see the wearer that she has a baby. This is important since the bearing of children gives her status within her household and the community.

Among the Bhaca, twins are considered to be out of the ordinary and a woman who has twins is required to wear a special charm necklace made from the leg bones of a fowl until the babies are weaned. Each of the twins wears a necklace made from the foot bones of the same fowl. If these necklaces are not worn it is believed that the twins will become ill and die. The bones are obtained from a fowl slaughtered together with the goat that is traditionally sacrificed to introduce a new baby to the ancestral spirits. It is not said whether beads are included in such necklaces or not (Hammond-Tooke 1962:72).

Persons other than nursing mothers also wear charm necklaces to prevent illness or as an aid in the curing of illnesses (see Catalogue No. 173). If a baby's nose is continuously running or it has sore eyes or a protruding navel, a string of white beads is put around its neck as it is believed that this will remedy the condition.

Other charm necklaces are made from the tail hairs of the "cow of the home" which is kept especially for this purpose. An alternate name for this animal is the "cow of the necklace". The eldest son inherits this cow from his father while any younger brothers are usually given a heifer of this cow. Should this be impossible or not have been done the members of such a man's lineage segment gather at his home and, with them as witnesses, he sets aside a cow for the above purpose. A woman receives her own "cow of the home" from her father upon marriage or, if a heifer is not available at that time, one is given later. This cow may not be sold or slaughtered by her husband nor may it be attached for debt. It is used by her or, according to some sources, by her and her daughters, to make charm necklaces which may incorporate some beads. The wearing of such a necklace is a prayer to the ancestral spirits. It also happens on occasions that a Christian bride, who is unable to conceive or is ailing, goes back to her father's household to beg the tailhairs of a cow which she will make into a necklace. This necklace will, however, not be worn openly but hidden in a cloth covering (Wilson 1972:193). Should a woman die, her "cow of the home" is inherited by her eldest son and if it dies without having produced heifers her husband has to provide a replacement. The hairs are plucked by her husband or some other male family member at sunrise on a fine day.

The charm necklaces made from the tail hairs of the "cow of the home" are worn especially during times of transition such as birth, initiation, marriage and pregnancy in order to ensure the assistance of the ancestors. They are also worn during illness or menstruation and are believed to strengthen a herbalist's or diviner's medicines. When they are too old to be worn they are discarded in the cattle enclosure (Olivier 1981:30). The beads which form part of the necklace to be discarded are incorporated into each subsequent necklace.



BEAD PREFERENCES AND BEADWORKING

Purchasing of beads

Beads are generally bought at local trading stores where the purchaser looks for bright, clear colours and well-shaped beads with a fair-sized hole. Beads which do not meet with all these requirements remain unsaleable even at reduced prices. In the past beads were sold in strings with those from broken strings being sold by the spoonful, the size of which depended on the price of the beads since some were more expensive than others. At the trading store where I grew up the hanks of beads used to hang from nails and under each hank there was an enamel basin into which the beads from any broken strings would fall. It was these beads in the basins that were sold by the spoonful. The size of the beads themselves also plays a role when purchasing beads. Two sizes of glass beads, namely the *intsimbi* and the *amaso* are distinguished. The *intsimbi* are the smallest variety available in the trading stores and give the beadwork its overall delicate and modest effect when compared to the heavier beads used by the Zulu. The *amaso*, which are said to resemble eyeballs, are the large variety which are used both for effect and in single strings (see Catalogue Nos. 154-156 and 208-209). When referring to bead items, however, both types are called *intsimbi*.

Bead colours

The different Xhosa-speaking societies have their own preferred colour ranges within which certain combinations are prescribed by a set of commonly held standards. Beadworkers are consequently very discerning buyers who will not tolerate variations in the colour and size of the beads that are culturally prescribed and fashionable at a particular time. The exact range of colours which was available to the Xhosa-speaking societies at different periods since their introduction to glass beads is not known nor is it clear whether changing colours led to a change in designs. What is known is that colour fashions have always been subject to change. Many a trader realised this when he was unable to sell the beads in his shop and consequently suffered financial losses.

Bead colours which are characteristic of all Xhosa-speaking groups are blue, pink, red and white with each group having colour variations within this spectrum plus additional colours according to custom. The Thembu use mostly deep turquoise blue plus a little red together with white and navy as a contrast excepting for persons of mature years who use predominantly navy and white with pink as an ancillary colour. The Mfengu favour pink, blue and white with a deeper blue and pink combination being popular for wide collars. They use more pink beads than the other Xhosa-speaking societies. Red, black and dark blue beads, worked on a white background, are also used by the Mfengu for their large beaded tabs which are decorated with animal and human shapes (Tyrrell 1968:177). According to an informant who traded among the Mpondomise for many years they do not use green and yellow, nor were these colours stocked by him. Their beadwork is mainly done in blue, pink, red and white with black and white *amaso* used for effect. The Xesibe repeat the green and orange of their wool pom-poms in their beadwork. Amongst the Xhosa proper, white, pink, blue and red with black and navy for outlining are the general colours in use but variations occur in the shades and colour combinations, the Gcaleka preferring a bright turquoise blue contrasted with red, navy and white except for the older generations who substitute pink for red as a contrast colour. Mpondo beadwork is predominantly blue with contrasts of white, orange and black. This matches the blue of their clothing and blankets (Mertens and Broster 1987:11). Where different Xhosa-speaking societies live in close proximity to each other cultural borrowing takes place in that they, on occasion, use each other's bead colours.

The Thembu use yellow and green in the beadwork of the initiated married persons and those who have a child or children. The uninitiated would not flaunt yellow and green in their beadwork for fear of upsetting the ancestors. An odd yellow or green bead may, however, be unobtrusively included in an article, perhaps under a button. An exception is the wearing of strings of large green and yellow beads by very young Thembu boys as a sign of their future virility (Broster 1976:6).

In normal day to day activities white beads have no special significance in matters of love such as that given them by the Zulu and Swazi, but since they do signify well-being, purity and revelation, they are symbolic of illumination received from the ancestors and consequently only diviners may wear pure white beadwork. White is considered to be the colour most closely linked to religion and as such white beads are also used when making offerings to the river spirits, *abantu bomlambo* (Gitywa 1970:56). The Xhosa consider the bird commonly known as the Cape wagtail (*Motacilla capensis*) to be semi-sacred and if one is found dead or has been accidentally killed it will be buried together with a few white beads since it is believed that the killing of these birds will result in the culprit always being poor (Soga 1931:200).

White beads and white clay figure prominently in times of transition from one phase of life to another since these are considered to be periods of abnormality. Examples of such transition phases include emergence from a confinement, the suckling of an infant, the initiation of boys and the initiation of diviners (Pauw 1975:126).

Another colour distinction is found in the large red beads called *ubuhlalu*, which is a term distinct from *intsimbi* and *amaso* and used to denote a class of beads considered to be the prince of beads. As such they would be worn by a ruler as a symbol of royalty. Alberti, who wrote in 1807, stated that among the Xhosa red beads were so highly prized that they were put on a par with gold (Alberti 1968:21). A necklace of *ubuhlalu* beads would be given to a ruler as a badge of office at the time of his inauguration. Ngqika, the senior Xhosa ruler to the west of the Kei River, was invested with such a necklace in the early 19th century and according to Shaw and Van Warmelo (1988:661), a similar red necklace was used at an investiture in 1962. These ornaments of distinction have now fallen into disuse. There is, however, some difference of opinion regarding the *ubuhlalu* necklace since records show that from the beginning of the 19th century some rulers wore white beads. Duggin-Cronin (1939: Plate II) comments on his photo of Ngangomhlaba, Paramount ruler of the Xhosa, that he would, in former days, have included in his beadwork the necklace of large red beads known as *iintsimbi zobuhlalu* but that this has been discontinued since the rulers were to a large extent stripped of their power by the colonial powers. By contrast the Swazi royal necklace is pink and since only royalty use pink beads, they are expensive whereas among the Xhosa their usage is common and they are therefore relatively cheap (Louw 1938:1).

The vernacular colour names given to beads may differ from area to area. Some of those in common usage are given below:

white	<i>intsimbi emhlophe</i>
black	<i>intsimbi emnyama</i>
pink	<i>intsimbi epinki</i>
opaque red	<i>igolomi</i>
blood red	<i>ebomvu</i>
light blue	<i>intsimbi ehobe</i> (a dove)
deep blue	<i>intsimbi eluhlaza</i>
royal blue	<i>ulwandle</i> (the ocean)
navy	<i>intsimbi emsobo</i>
orange	<i>intsimbi eorenji</i>
green	<i>intsimbi eluhlaza</i>
yellow	<i>intsimbi emthubi</i> .

Both green and blue may be referred to as *eluhlaza* and blood red, opaque red and a brownish red as *ebomvu*. *Eluhlaza* may also be linked to grass to indicate green or to the sky to indicate blue.

Each colour may also have several shades, each with its own name. The shade chosen has to be exactly right for the article to be made.

Should the term *intlaka* be used in front of any of the colour names, it would indicate that the bead is translucent (see Catalogue Nos. 197 and 205). The word refers to the gum of a tree which is also translucent. The translucent beads are also referred to as *ookhanyi*, a word derived from *ukukhanya* which means to be light or to shine (Gitywa 1970:57).

The names of bead colours and beadwork articles may vary on account of the *hlonipha* custom which dictates that a woman may not use any word which has a sound similar to the name of her father-in-law or any senior male and female relative of her husband's family. In such a situation, the colour or article would have to be identified in another way since this language of respect is strictly enforced among the *amaqaba*. Many shopkeepers know the alternate names but if they do not have this knowledge, the purchaser is forced to request someone else to ask for the beads she requires. A child may sometimes accompany a woman to the trading store to interpret for her.

Makers of beadwork and other personal ornamentation

Beading is a craft practised by women and expresses their taste and artistic skill in the fashioning of ornaments and decorating of clothes and other objects. Such is the significance of beadwork that girls who cannot bead are considered to be incompetent. The art is passed from mother to daughter and from sister to sister with the best, and most, beadwork being done by teenage girls and unmarried women (Sobahle 1977:275). This is because they bead for themselves, their boyfriends and their brothers and help their mothers to bead for their fathers. It is within this group that new ideas, innovations, colour combinations and fashion changes usually originate. Their own beadwork is consequently less elaborate and they may, on occasions, borrow some of the pieces they have made for others provided tradition does not forbid them to wear such items (Elliott 1986:3). Married women bead for themselves, their husbands and children, but never for other men as this would be tantamount to infidelity. Married men with mistresses wear beadwork made by them as well as that made by their wives. There is great rivalry among women as a splendidly attired husband is a major social achievement.

Most beadwork is done in the winter months when the harvest is in and the workload lighter. This is the time for weddings, initiation ceremonies, beerdrinks and dancing when full bead ensembles and party dress are worn (see Catalogue Nos. 121 and 122). For everyday wear ornamentation is simple.

Brass wire bracelets, anklets and waistbands are worn together with beadwork as ornamentation. These are, however, made by men both for themselves and their womenfolk (see Catalogue Nos. 10-19, 95-114, 131-140 and 144-153). There are men who specialise in the making of the fitted brass bracelets worn by the married women from wrist to elbow (see Catalogue Nos. 141-143).

Threading of beads

Beads were traditionally threaded on animal sinew obtained from either side of the backbone of especially goats or on twisted plant fibre such as sisal (see Catalogue No. 215). In Transkei, a particular aloe (*A. arborescens*) known to the inhabitants as *ikhala*, is planted around the cattle enclosures as it is fairly impenetrable. The fibres from the leaves of these aloes make strong thread for beadwork. The fibres are prepared by cutting and beating the mature leaves to remove the fleshy part which is then washed away, leaving the fibres which are dried, twisted and used. No needle is required to thread beads on sinews and plant fibres. When cotton thread became freely available at trading stores this was used and it remains the most popular threading material for beadwork, although nylon thread is used on occasion (see Catalogue Nos. 6-7). The process of threading is known as *ukuhlahla*.

Beadwork may be dated by means of the material used for threading the beads. A twisted length of vegetable fibre, sinew or a leather thong is a sign of the traditional method and beadwork con-

taining such materials is unlikely to be more recent than 1945, whereas machine made thread, such as cotton, indicates a date after 1925 at the earliest. The use of a beading needle and wire-strung beads is fairly recent while nylon has only recently been utilised (Carey 1986:14).

Beads may be strung individually (see Catalogue No. 23) or built into a flat fabric or tab by linking one bead at a time with an existing row or series of rows of beads (see Catalogue Nos. 9, 24, 27, 216-217, and Fig. 11). The practice of weaving beads into a flat fabric became common among the Xhosa-speakers only in the 19th century and opened the way for a greater variety of ornamentation than previously existed. It is not known from whom this method of weaving beads was learned. The earliest recorded mention of this technique was made by Van der Kemp in 1800 when he wrote of headbands made in this manner being worn by Xhosa headmen (Shaw and Van Warmelo 1974:199). Once begun, the weaving of bead fabric flourished except during the two world wars when, due to limited bead supplies, there was a temporary return to single- and double-stranded necklaces. Open beadwork is made by linking strands of beads into a trellis pattern using spacers (see Catalogue Nos. 157 and 200). The "lazy stitch" in which up to twelve beads are threaded at a time and then secured to a material or other base is used to cover larger articles quickly (see Catalogue No. 26).

Design

Despite the material poverty of the *amaqaba* their beadwork has a beauty rich in imagination with its own aesthetic appeal (Broster 1986:7). Designs are geometric with the beauty of the beadwork coming primarily from the colour and texture of the beads. The overall effect is one of light clear colours with contrasting colours being used to highlight the design. The pattern is beaded directly on to the article being made and is not worked out beforehand.

From the records of early travellers it would appear that up to the end of the 18th century the beadwork of the Xhosa-speaking people consisted almost exclusively of long necklaces and multi-stranded waistbands. In the 19th century the increased trade with Whites led to a greater variety of beads being available which in turn resulted in the development of more complex designs.

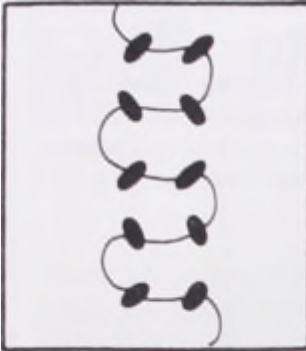
Patterns commonly used include the repetition of a single motif especially the chevron, zig-zag, lozenge, triangle, v-shape and straight lines both horizontal and vertical (see Catalogue Nos. 25, 29 and 230-232) and occasionally squares. These patterns are combined in numerous ways thus allowing some personal freedom in the design despite cultural prescriptions (see Catalogue Nos. 8 and 45). Motifs of the same or varying sizes and colours are alternated or repeated so that the variations are endless (see Catalogue No. 236). Strings of beads are frequently wound around an object or fabric core to create a decorative design (see Catalogue Nos. 20-21, 161-164 and 174).

Further variations in design may be obtained by twisting single strings of beads to form a rope (see Catalogue No. 22). Individuality in design is also achieved by alternating small beads, *iintsimbi*, with large beads, *amaso*, in various ways (see Catalogue No. 235).

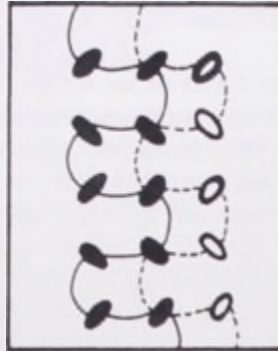
By including strips of fabric and lengths of cord the design possibilities may be further extended and the designer's creativity expressed (see Catalogue Nos. 210-214). Pearl buttons are highly prized and included in many designs (see Catalogue No. 8).

Information regarding the wearer of an article can be included in the design. A good example of this is the "keeper of the heart" necklace which is purported to depict the character of the man's wife by means of the female figure beaded into the tab (Broster 1967:65). A lazy woman has no arms, the hands of a hard worker are emphasised and a good dancer is indicated by the positioning of her arms (see Catalogue No. 237). Information such as the number of children a woman has or the number of cattle received as marriage goods (*ikhazi*) for her may be contained in the beaded pins she wears (see Catalogue No. 178). *Ikhazi* is not intended as a means of buying a bride but is rather a custom designed to give a woman a distinct status, to secure her rights and to protect her from abuse. Should a wife be ill-treated by her husband she can return to her own family without their having to forfeit the cattle given for her in the marriage settlement.

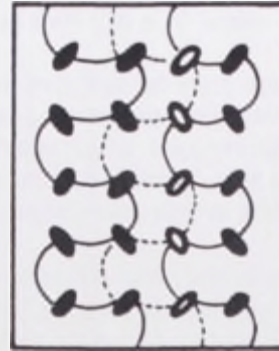
METHOD 1



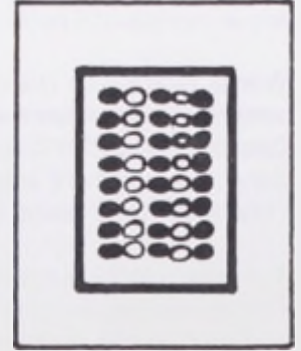
FIRST STEP



SECOND STEP
Another string of beads is added with the thread passing through some of the beads of the first string, thus joining them

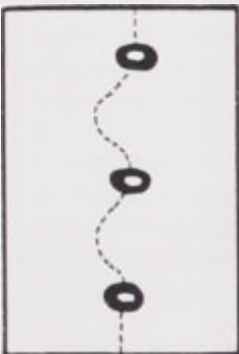


THIRD STEP
A further string of beads is added and so the weaving process continues until the fabric is the required size

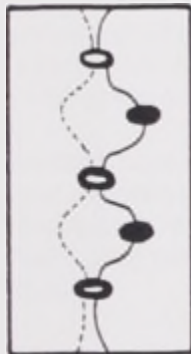


When the strings are pulled tight the beads are arranged in horizontal and vertical rows

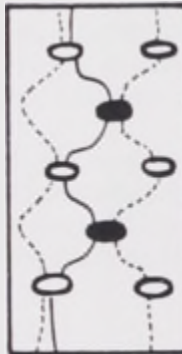
METHOD 2



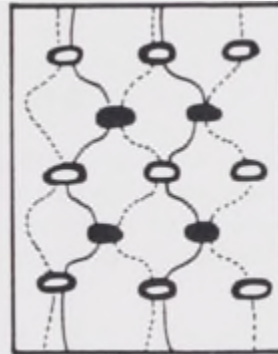
FIRST STEP



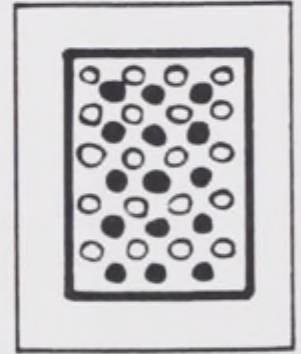
SECOND STEP
Another string of beads is added with the thread passing through the first beads as well thus joining them



THIRD STEP
A further string of beads is added with the thread passing through the beads on the second string



When the strings are pulled tight the beads are arranged like bricks in a wall



The fabric is gradually built up to the required size using the same method

The second method is the one commonly in use at present. One or more beads can be threaded between the beads, holding the fabric together. Designs must, however, be linear. It is not possible to make curves. Beaded strands may also cross over each other in order to make ridges in the bead fabric.

Figure 11 Methods of weaving bead fabric (adapted from Shaw and Van Warmelo 1974:200-201)

Designs are also inspired by the natural surroundings. The zig-zag represents the many rivers which wind through the countryside in which the Xhosa-speaking people live or it may refer to an unidentified mythical snake which is believed to live in the rivers. The design in article No. 45 in the Catalogue represents pools of water in a dry riverbed (Broster 1967:33-34).

Words relating to the design may be included in the name of an article, for example, *isiqweqwe*, which refers to a band or tab of densely strung beads frequently incorporating superimposition (see Catalogue Nos. 226-228), and *imigqini*, which refers to bead streamers attached to one end of a beaded band or tab. Where animal hair or other objects are incorporated into the design this, too, is often reflected in the name of the article (see Catalogue Nos. 30, 50 and 229).

Teenagers include many bells and wool pom-poms in their designs. Among the Thembu, the youth favour wool of a cerise colour (see Catalogue Nos. 31, 32, 49 and 53), while the Xesibe use green and orange and in some areas the Xhosa proper use red (see Catalogue No. 1). Once a girl marries or a boy is circumcised bells and pom-poms are usually laid aside.

The ornamentation design may indicate to which of the Xhosa-speakers the wearer belongs. The Mfengu favour stylised animal patterns in their beadwork and decorate their blankets and skirts lavishly with many straight rows of buttons (Tyrrell and Jurgens 1983:29). Originally china buttons were used but when these became unavailable they reluctantly accepted mother-of-pearl buttons instead. As many as one thousand buttons may be sewn on to a garment in many rows. During the time of the first White settlers in the Eastern Cape (early 19th century) incidents are related of White children being set upon in the veld by the Mfengu to obtain the buttons on their clothing (Tyrrell 1968:175). The children were mostly released unharmed.



STATUS LEVELS AND THE WEARING OF BEADS

Babies and very young children wear very simple beadwork but commencing at puberty, and as adolescence advances, the wearing of beads becomes increasingly important, reaching a climax during courtship when it is more varied and intricate. The beadwork of older persons is less flamboyant but of better quality than that of their earlier years.

From birth to about five years of age simple strings of beads are worn. The growth and development of young children is measured by a simple waistband of large beads, *amaso*, which is enlarged as the child grows. Any colour may be used but white is favoured. Protective medicine obtained from diviners or herbalists is put into tiny beaded cloth purses, *isipaji somntwana*, and tied around the child's neck (Fig. 12). A necklace of seeds and beads is worn by babies to facilitate teething. In Xhosa the seeds are known as *amatantyisi*. The common name for the plant from which these seeds are obtained is Job's tears and the botanical name is *Coix lacrymajobi*. The seeds which are about the size of a pea are found at the end of a grass-like stalk which passes through the seed thus making a hole for easy threading. Sex differentiation is marked by the difference in the beaded pubic covering worn; that of little girls having a small apron or bead fringe at the back.

As well as their simple strings of beads, older children may wear plaited grass circlets around their legs, arms, waist and neck. They are taught to make these circlets for themselves, when they need renewing, from the fine grass growing between the maize fields.

Traditionally pre-pubescent boys and girls wear very little beadwork. A gift of a white cloth bag decorated with pins and coloured handkerchiefs is given by a girl to the boy of her choice. He reciprocates with a gift of two towels, some coloured handkerchiefs, a penknife, a small mirror, a brooch and some sweets. These gifts take the place of the beadwork exchanged by the older unmarried groups (Gitywa 1970:59).

Girls' bead ornaments are graded according to those of their boyfriends but are not identical. Contrary to the custom among Westerners, the boys are more splendidly decked out than the girls, possibly because the latter do not have much time to bead for themselves. For a Xeslbe girl the making of her boyfriend's beadwork is no mean task since a well-dressed young man wears row upon row of beaded pins on his skirt in addition to head and arm ornaments and a bead collar (Fig. 13). Unique to the bead ensembles of Bomvana girls are the beaded leggings worn below the knees. These are made of row upon row of large pearl-like beads of various colours and are decorated with beaded tabs made of small beads (*iintsimbi*).

On reaching puberty boys and girls become members of the *umtshotsho*, the local gathering for adolescents. Within this group, beadwork plays an increasingly important role to the extent that members can be recognised by their ornamentation as belonging to a certain status category, for example, *intombi yamakhwenkwe*, a girl for boys, or *intombi yabafana*, a girl for young men.

The bead ensemble of a boy who is a junior member of the *umtshotsho* includes a decorated penis sheath, brass wire armbands and leggings, many plastic bracelets, black or red rubber rings on the forearm, goatskin leggings, a steel whistle, unbeaded pipe, beaded pins and a handkerchief tied tightly around the head with, or without, accompanying headbands (see Catalogue Nos. 37-38, 55-74, 75-94, 95-114 and 115). Their beadwork becomes more extensive when they have a girlfriend to bead for



Figure 12 Young Thembu girl wearing a medicine purse

them. If, at a gathering, adolescent boys are going to indulge in stick fighting most of their beadwork is left at home. At most they will wear a few leggings which have dried insect cocoons attached to them.

Senior members of the *umtshotsho* are those who have already been away to work, frequently on the mines. They return with articles such as broad leather belts, large rubber rings, spectacle frames and leather purses, most of which are then decorated with beadwork by their girlfriends (see Catalogue Nos. 47, 54, 116-117). Having been to work they have the money to provide the beads necessary for this task and for the making of other more elaborate articles such as beaded armbands and leggings, intricate body harnesses, beaded mirrors and large beaded earrings incorporated into a face mask (see Catalogue Nos. 31-32, 33-36, 40, 46 and 52). Custom permits them to use a beaded pipe, wear many headbands and, shortly before initiation, to have a beaded tin can which is carried to the dances. Potions obtained from diviners or herbalists are frequently carried in a small beaded container incorporated into a necklace. These potions are put into a sweet or can of beer to induce love in an unresponsive girl (see Catalogue No. 51).

To the unmarried initiated men, the *abafana*, the wearing of beads is less important and extensive since with their higher status comes greater responsibility and they are therefore expected to take life more seriously. They wear a variety of headbands, one of which is a combination of black and white beads worn by the newly initiated who are called *ikrwala*, meaning nearly ripe fruit. Among their neck ornaments are a semi-circular collar and the *isidanga* which are also worn by mature men (see Catalogue Nos. 183 and 200-204). They wear strings of different coloured beads, brass leggings and rubber rings around their lower limbs and a pair of anklebands which are buttoned or laced on and have a geometric pattern of light blue, royal blue and black on a white background. The patterns on the left and right anklebands differ with the right being wider than the left (see Catalogue No. 184-185). A body harness, girdles and a stick complete the outfit.

Girls of marriageable age wear a number of beaded leather belts below a decorated waistband and an ornately fringed girdle low on the hips. To complete their ensemble they have a variety of headbands (some having long fringes), neckbands, collars, bracelets, anklets, necklaces and other accessories such as a face mask, a beaded pipe and tobacco bag. Young Mfengu women of marriageable age wear a small beaded tobacco bag decorated with thongs in front of their skirts and also carry a cow's tailbrush set in a beaded handle.

Married women are not permitted to attend the *intlombe*, which is the local gathering for the young adults of marriageable age as well as young married men. The young men are now called *abafana* or, if only recently initiated, *amakrwala*, and the young girls are known as *amantombazana*. These gatherings are usually held every two weeks. Ochred clothing and only a minimum of beadwork is worn, usually one or two necklaces and armbands. Both sexes wear handkerchiefs around their heads. Etiquette demands that the men cover their lower body when dancing so they borrow the girls' shawls and fasten these around their waists over their black shorts. A formal *intlombe* is held about



Figure 13 Beaded pins on a young Xesibe man's skirt

four or five times a year on which occasions full bead dress and white clothing is worn. The beadwork on these occasions is designed to accentuate movement, especially of hips and hands. The men wear white wrap-around skirts and blankets, both of which are braided, and both sexes wear full bead ensemble. The unmarried men attending the *intlombe* place great emphasis on headbands, legbands, armbands and body harnesses. On the formal occasions they may wear five or more headbands, the fringes of which hang down their backs. The fringe is repeated in a matching necklace and hangs down over the chest. The young man may include yellow and green in his bead ensemble. For formal occasions he wears a broad bead collar, throatbands, matching arm and legbands, a waistcoat and numerous bead necklaces, some incorporating a purse, mirror or small beaded bottle. He wears beaded leather belts and cloth waistbands as well as hip girdles. From his beaded stick hang several decorated tobacco bags and he may even sport a beaded black umbrella. The beadwork of the young girls attending the *intlombe* is not as lavish as that of the young men but much of their ornamentation is similar to that worn by the men. For the formal *intlombe* the girls favour a headdress comprising two or three triangular cotton scarves in bright colours which are folded to make a turban. The men wear a headdress of dark melton cloth stitched in white except for the newly initiated who wear a simple black headscarf.

Although she may wear flared bead collars a young wife's beadwork is characterised by its simplicity because, until she has borne children, her demeanour should be modest. She does, however, wear some necklaces, anklets and armbands and has a purse hanging from her waist. In addition to these she wears a series of narrow fitted brass bracelets from wrist to elbow. Each of these bracelets fits so closely to the next that the flesh does not show between them. Frequently as women become older and put on weight the bracelets become too tight and cause pain but they will seldom remove them for fear of angering the ancestors. Shopping money is often tucked under the bracelets for safekeeping (see Catalogue Nos. 141-143).

As married women grow in status they wear more and increasingly elaborate beadwork in the colours used by the mature women of the group of Xhosa-speakers to which they belong (see Catalogue Nos. 159-160 and 175). The ornately styled turbans take the place of headbands which are rarely, if ever, worn by the older women.

Married men continue to wear beadwork and may own many pieces which must be put on in the correct sequence. Their beads are works of art which testify to the patience and skill of the women who made them. An older man of means can wear as many as seventy pieces of beadwork simultaneously, some of which contain a multitude of beads which makes the full ensemble very heavy. As such it is only worn to celebrations such as beerdrinks or weddings at his own home or close by. Many beaded collars are worn, one on top of the other, the widest being put on first, together with a variety of neck ornaments some of which have long streamers hanging to the knees (see Catalogue Nos. 187-189, 190-191, 192-193, 198-199, 200-204 and 218-221). Headbands, arm and anklebands and body harnesses are common (see Catalogue Nos. 184-185, 186, and 221-225). Beadwork replaces the tie worn by a Westerner and together with a variety of girdles, belts and waistbands completes the ensemble (see Catalogue Nos. 194-197, 206, 207 and 210-214). Among the Thembu the colours for the middle-aged man are navy, white and pink but since children are so important green and yellow items are also worn. The importance of children in Xhosa society lies in the ancestor cult. When a man dies he must leave children behind to honour him so that he is not forgotten in the spirit world. Sons are especially important as they perpetuate the lineage. Children also provide extra labour in an economic system based on subsistence farming.



BEADS FOR SPECIAL PERSONS OR SPECIAL OCCASIONS

Introduction of a baby to the ancestors

The Xhosa have a ritual for introducing a new baby to the ancestors which is necessary for its good health and wellbeing. This ritual takes place after the umbilical scab has dried and fallen off. The baby's limbs and body as well as those of the mother are smeared with ochre and a ritual offering of a goat is made to the ancestors. After this has been done the father gives each of the guests a present of two white beads which they return to him saying, "*Camagu*". This word may be loosely interpreted as, "We give thanks to the ancestors for blessings received". Its use here is an expression of thanksgiving to the ancestors for having blessed them with a child and a plea for them to care for the child. Apart from being an expression of gratitude the word *camagu* can also mean forgive, be merciful, be appeased or be satisfied. It is especially used in connection with the ancestral spirits. The mother immediately strings the white beads into a simple necklace for the child. Broster (1976:4) sees a resemblance to a Christian baptism in this ritual in the sense that the child will be taught to honour the ancestral spirits as it grows up and that the red ochre and beads are the first symbols of the *qaba* faith.

Initiation of boys — *ulwaluko lwamakhwenkwe*

Among most Xhosa-speaking societies the initiation of boys takes place at an age of between approximately seventeen years and the early twenties. It usually takes place during the autumn after the harvest is in. The initiates are secluded in a lonely place in a specially constructed beehive-shaped hut made of grass, traditionally until the spring (Tyrrell 1968:191). Broster (1967:125), writing of the Thembu, says that initiation may take place in the spring and autumn and not at all if the harvest is bad and the food supply low. Should the latter circumstances prevail there would be insufficient grain for the brewing of beer for the ceremonies that go with initiation. The period of initiation may, however, be shortened since there are initiates who have to return to their employment in the cities from which they cannot absent themselves for such a long period. A number of boys are usually initiated together, if possible at a time which coincides with that in which a young heir to the chieftainship is to be initiated. During this period they are under the control of a specially selected instructor. Since any male who has not been initiated remains a boy and has a low status within the traditional society no matter how old he becomes, this ceremony has a far greater significance than the Western coming-of-age ceremony.

While initiation is not specifically a religious ceremony it does have religious elements since on the completion of their term of isolation the new young men are believed to have been brought into a real relationship with the ancestral spirits. An uninitiated male will not be able to join the ancestral spirits after his death, neither will he be able to officiate at ritual killings for these spirits since he is not regarded as an adult.

On the day appointed for the start of the initiation the boys assemble at the home of the principal host where all the feasts connected with the initiation are to take place. A propitiatory sacrifice is made to the ancestors, all beadwork is removed and put in the main hut of the household by the official who will look after the initiate during his initiation. Each boy is given a new blanket to wear during the period of isolation. Traditionally these were made of a number of sheepskins joined together but an ordinary blanket bought from a trading store may now be used instead.

A very important necklace made from the tail hairs of the "cow of the home" is given to each of the initiates. This is a circlet of hair knotted in four places which is intended as a supplication for wisdom, protection, strength and healing from the ancestors. It is made by the boy's mother or sister and serves as his good luck charm. De Lange (1963:93) states that, during initiation, ornamentation made from reeds, seeds or cloth may be used as a substitute for beadwork while Shaw and Van Warmelo (1988:660) mention that trophies from birds and small mammals caught on hunting expeditions are sometimes incorporated into headdresses. The Mfengu initiates wear clay beads, wool tassels, feathers and halos made of dry maize leaves as ornamentation during their period of seclusion (Tyrrell 1968:179). White clay, which is periodically renewed, is used on the bodies and faces of the initiates.

Amongst the Thembu a ceremony, at which gifts are given to the initiates, takes place on the ninth day after circumcision. The girls of the *umtshotsho* and the sweethearts of those undergoing initiation send them cloth tobacco bags into which sweets and tobacco, tied in a handkerchief, are put. The popularity of the initiates is judged by the number of bags and handkerchiefs received. The bags and handkerchiefs are used to decorate the stick each initiate carries over his shoulder. These gifts are not delivered by the girls themselves since they may not see those undergoing initiation. The task of delivery is undertaken by the *amadikazi*. At the end of the initiation rites everything that was worn and used while in seclusion is burned together with the hut in which the initiates lived during this period (Broster 1967:135).

When the "new" young men emerge from seclusion they are given new clothes, resume the use of red ochre and again don their beadwork. They may once more be seen by married women. They are expected to wear blue or green earrings but, if working for Westerners, may wear a hat instead. Among the Thembu, a string of black *amaso* is placed around the neck of each as a symbol of his manhood. The Mfengu graduates receive a choker of dog's teeth and have their new blankets decorated with at least four rows of pearl buttons. Large beaded earrings are also included in their outfits.

Initiation of girls — *intonjane* ceremony

A girl's initiation usually commences on the occasion of her first menstruation. After informing her mother of what has occurred she is taken a little distance from the huts accompanied by the other girls of the household and returns at sunset covered in a blanket and is then secluded in any convenient hut behind a grass mat which is stretched across the women's side of the hut. All bangles and beadwork are removed and, for the period of seclusion, the girl is addressed as *intonjane* and not by her given name. If she has to leave the hut to answer a call of nature she is swathed in a blanket and has to be accompanied by a chaperone. She usually goes out at night or just before dawn so as to avoid being seen. According to Soga (1931:216) the word *intonjane* is derived from *ukutomba*, meaning to menstruate for the first time. On the other hand, Broster (1976:39) says that the word *intonjane* is taken from the life cycle of the stick insect, the caterpillar of which encases itself in a grassy cocoon from which the adult insect emerges. At the end of her seclusion the young girl will emerge from behind the grass mat as a young woman. The word *intonjane* is also the diminutive form of *intombazana*, meaning little girl. During her seclusion the initiate sheds her childhood and emerges as a young girl ready for marriage. Young girls, with the exception of two sisters of approximately the same age, are initiated separately, each at her own home.

During her seclusion she makes herself a woman's pubic girdle which may have green beads for new life or red for menstrual blood. This girdle is made of beads and held in position by ties made of leather thongs on which brass washers have been threaded. It is worn until menopause when the washers, which are now no longer obtainable, are handed down to a daughter, niece or granddaughter.

Every night the young people of her own and nearby households gather at the *intonjane* hut where they dance, sing and sleep. As these are not festive occasions in the true sense of the word normal attire is worn and therefore not full bead dress. The initiate remains behind her mat and does not take part in the festivities. She has her food specially prepared for her by a woman who looks after her and she may eat anything apart from sour milk to which she will be re-introduced at the end of her seclusion (Cook n.d.:68).



Figure 14 Drinking beer

On the tenth day of seclusion a sacrifice is made to the ancestors. This is related to the initiate's capacity to bear children and on this occasion she wears a beaded fertility doll, the colours of which include green and yellow.

Before the end of the *intonjane* proceedings, the initiate's father arranges a beerdrink and dance to which all married women and unmarried mothers of the locality are invited (Fig. 14). They come attired in festive dress, except for bead earrings and face masks. Faces and brass armbands are covered with white clay in order to attract the attention of the ancestors. This is the occasion when the married women who are barred from participating in the *ibasi*, the married men's dance, may enjoy themselves.

At the end of the period of seclusion the initiate and other girls of the household go to the river to wash and after this cleansing they all don their beadwork finery. The newly initiated girl is now a woman and therefore puts on a woman's long flared skirt.

Among the various Xhosa-speaking societies variations of the *intonjane* ceremony do occur, but they all have many aspects in common, such as the removal of bead finery, seclusion, the taboo on sour milk and the covering of the girl when she goes out of her hut. The length of time for which the initiate is secluded may also vary. According to Soga (1931:216) this may depend to a large extent on the ability of her father to provide food for those who chaperone the girl and for the guests who attend the *intonjane* festivities.

Betrothal

Except among the Mpondo, the initial overture to marriage is usually accompanied by the gift of a string of beads or an assegai left by a messenger of the groom at the prospective bride's home. He makes sure that he is seen so that the family group making the overture can be identified. If

for some serious reason the proposal is refused, the gift is returned. Acceptance of the beads or assegai, however, signifies acceptance of the marriage proposal and further negotiation regarding the marriage now takes place.

Bhaca marriage

This usually takes place a few months after the betrothal and can be divided into four stages, the first of which entails the bringing of six head of cattle by the bridegroom's kin to the bride's home. These emissaries are welcomed and a goat slaughtered. When the carcass is divided they are given the gall, liver and ribs which are considered to be great delicacies, the bride receives a foreleg (a part which has ritual significance), and the rest is eaten by the persons belonging to the household.

The second stage commences when the bride, together with some girls of her own age group, accompanies the emissaries to the groom's household. They are adorned in their best beadwork finery with the bride also wearing eight special brass bangles, four on each arm. She now wears the long, fat-smearing goatskin skirt of a married woman. To denote her impending new status she covers her breasts with a blanket. On arrival at the groom's household the bride and her companions are allocated a hut and a goat is slaughtered. The bride's party are given a foreleg and strips of meat from the chest. Since they may not eat in front of the members of the groom's household, they eat their portion after dark out of sight of the huts. The next day, a beast approved of by the bride's attendants is slaughtered after which the girls go down to a stream in the vicinity to wash. On their return they are wrapped in blankets and have their headscarves tied in a distinctive fashion around their heads. Once back in their hut they again don their beadwork and the bride and two attendants come out to face the members of the groom's household gathered in front of the hut. All three drop their blankets and stand, naked to the waist, while their beauty is commented on by the on-lookers. The girls are then led to the cattle enclosure where the groom's father awaits them. Here they are required to stand with downcast eyes and their backs towards him since he may not look on the breasts of his son's wife. This latter ceremony is possibly intended to impress on the bride the respect due to her father-in-law especially in the first years of married life. The trio now return to the bridal hut with their heads held up so that they may show their beauty to the women clustered around the hut.

While the above ceremonies are taking place at the groom's household, beer has been brewed at the bride's home in preparation for the third stage which entails the return of the bride's party to her home and the handing over of the rest of the *ikhazi* cattle unless agreement has been reached for these to be given in instalments. The bride's party and the emissaries are accompanied by the women and the young people of the groom's family but not the groom. Throughout the ceremony the young people, clad in their best beadwork finery, spend much of the time dancing in the area between the huts and the cattle enclosure. At the end of the festivities the groom's family request that the bride be allowed to return with them but their request is not acceded to since her family still has to collect the various articles such as buckets, dishes and other household utensils needed for her new home as well as gifts for her parents-in-law. The latter will be reciprocated at a later stage by the groom's family.

When the bride is finally ready to be transferred, the emissaries from the groom's family once again escort her and her attendants to her new home. Before she leaves, a sheep or goat is slaughtered and the inflated gall bladder attached to her headdress to show that she has been given a proper farewell by her family. The party arrives at the groom's home at sunset. The following day a goat is slaughtered and a piece of the skin reserved to be tanned and bound around the bride's forehead as a sign of respect to her parents-in-law. A temporary skin band is used in the period it takes to get the reserved skin prepared. The band of goat-skin is removed from her forehead after the birth of her first child. Before the bride's attendants leave for home they go with the bride to fetch water at a stream and also help her to make traditional maize bread for all the family since these tasks will be among the many duties she will perform as a young wife. After the slaughter of another goat the attendants return home leaving the bride to start her married life in her husband's household (Hammond-Tooke 1962:102-112).

Thembu bride and groom

The bride and her retinue work on their beadwork during the time they spend in seclusion in the hut allocated to them at the bridegroom's home during the wedding festivities which may stretch over a considerable number of days depending on the affluence of the groom's family. During this period long hours are spent on their toilet. Faces and bodies are rubbed with petroleum jelly or animal fat, their hair is combed and fresh applications of ochre are made. Since they are in seclusion they wear simple wrap-around underskirts and no beads except at night when they are allowed to dress up and leave the hut to talk to the bridegroom and his friends. No dancing takes place at these meetings. When, at the end of the period of seclusion, the bride and her attendants make their formal appearance they wear elaborate beadwork. That of the bride includes a headband and matching anklets made of white *amaso* and a deeply fringed collar together with a necklace of at least 24 turquoise strands similar to the *isidanga* worn by the men (see Catalogue No. 183). The turquoise is repeated in her waistband, leather belt, purse, cloth bag, armbands and neckband. Her attendants wear similar but simpler beadwork, but do not wear the *isidanga* (Broster 1976:60-61).

The bridegroom's outfit is elaborately beaded with the colours and design being repeated in his flat and fringed headbands, long fringed necklace, body harness, armbands, legbands and waistbands. Yellow and green beads abound. His cotton skirt, black umbrella, stick, tobacco bags and large white handkerchief are also decorated with beadwork. The groom's attendants also wear full bead dress and facial make-up. From the literature it is not clear which women are responsible for making the bead ensembles of the bridegroom and his attendants. Both male and female guests attending a wedding are decked out in their best clothes and adorned with beadwork.

Xhosa bride

In the past it frequently happened that the first intimation a girl had that she was to be married was when she was told to paint herself. She would then cover her body, excluding her face, with red ochre. This painting with ochre still occurs at a traditional wedding, the difference being that today the girl knows of the marriage arranged for her and may even have chosen the groom herself. After marriage she never again wears the beadwork of an unmarried woman (*intombi yabafana*) but is modestly attired in the long braided skirt of marriage since, until she has borne children, her demeanour should be modest. She wears traditional ornamentation at the wedding ceremonies. This includes bracelets, a headband of cowrie shells, a necklace of animal teeth or a multi-stranded necklace known as an *isidanga* which is similar to that worn by the men (see Catalogue No. 183). Afterwards she will wear these items on all formal occasions when items of traditional ornamentation must be included in a married woman's ceremonial dress. The importance of the above items is illustrated in an incident related by De Lange (1963:91) where a traditional wedding was postponed until the bride could obtain a cowrie shell headband. In contrast to the Bhaca, a Xhosa bride squats on a grass mat when being viewed by her husband's relatives. Her torso is bare, her eyes cast down and her hands clasped in her lap.

A death in the household

When there is a death in the household those who are to bury the corpse strip themselves of their clothing, beadwork and other ornamentation. This is because these would become contaminated by contact with the corpse and would have to be destroyed. After the burial all present go to the river to wash off the pollution of death and members of the bereaved family shave their heads as a sign of mourning. The widow or widower, or the mother, if a child has died, wears a couple of straws around the neck instead of beadwork. Then follows a period of seclusion after which beer is brewed and drunk by the relatives and new clothing is donned by the widow, widower or mother. As previously mentioned this clothing may not be ochred during the period of mourning (De Lange 1963:93). In writing about the Bhaca, Hammond-Tooke (1962:229) states that all the relatives go into mourning upon the death of a member of the household. The young men and girls remove all their beadwork, other ornamentation and bangles. Any that cannot, for some reason or another, be removed, are covered with cloth since all things that shine must be avoided.

Alberti (1968:95) is the only one of the sources consulted that mentions ornamentation specifically associated with mourning. A widower wore a necklace made of copper rings threaded on the tail hairs of an ox until the hair disintegrated. The ox from which the hairs were taken had to be allowed to die a natural death.

At the beginning of the 19th century a person other than royalty was, if possible, taken from the hut when death appeared to be imminent and put in the shade of a tree. Apart from a husband or wife, nobody remained with the dying person. Upon death the corpse was immediately abandoned to be disposed of by wild animals. No ornamentation was removed since this was believed to be contaminated by death. Purification rites then followed for the relatives of the deceased. A ruler remained in his hut until death and his weapons and ornaments were inherited by the officials who had assisted him during his period of office. A ruler was buried in the cattle enclosure and his hut was abandoned (Alberti 1968:93-96).

Among the Bhaca the hut of the deceased is not destroyed as is done among some of the other Xhosa societies such as the Mpondo. Today wooden coffins bought at the local trading stores are used by Christians and *amaqaba* alike. Hunter (1979:227) states that after the death of a child or any unmarried person the hut in which they died was merely swept out and smeared with cow dung in order to get rid of the contamination but, after the death of the wife of the hut or her husband, if he died in it, the hut is also burned.

Soga (1931:320) states that the clothes of the deceased, his sleeping mat, wooden headrest or pillow, blanket, goat-skin bag, pipe and every personal article were placed in the grave first and that the corpse rested on these so that it might be more comfortable. According to Hammond-Tooke (1962:229) the Bhaca formerly buried the dead man's blankets, pipes, sticks and spears with him. No specific mention is made of beadwork. It was not believed that these items accompanied the spirit to the ancestor world, but this was done to remove these objects from sight since they were contaminated and had therefore to be disposed of. There does, however, seem to be some difference of opinion as to whether all the personal belongings were buried or merely some of them. It would appear that only the oldest blankets and clothes were buried and that the rest of the man's possessions were kept by his wife or inherited by his eldest son who kept what he wanted and disposed of the rest. Hunter (1979:227), writing about the Mpondo, says that all the belongings of the deceased such as sticks, spear-shafts, blankets, mats, beadwork and other ornamentation are buried with him. Only sharp objects such as blanket pins and knives are left out in case the deceased, on becoming an ancestor spirit, should use these against the living. She agrees that the belongings are not used in the spirit world but are disposed of by the living because of their impurity. Before there was regular trade with Whites, iron was extremely scarce in much of the territory occupied by the Xhosa, so the exclusion of metal objects from the grave had practical advantages as well.

Information obtained (1990) from two elderly Xhosa women who live on a farm situated on the border of Transkei and who grew up among the *amaqaba*, although they have since become Christianised, indicates that in their grandfathers' time a man's pipe, tobacco bag and stick were buried with him so that he might go well on his journey to the spirit world. One of the women remembers that only her father's pipe was buried with him. According to these informants a woman's necklace, made from the tail hairs of the "cow of the home", is not removed but buried with her. At present those who have beadwork bequeath it to their children, grandchildren or a close relative.

Procession for the protection of the crops

The girls of the *umtshotsho* and *intlombe* are summoned to a central household to perform protective songs and dances around the maize fields when the plants are about 45 cm tall. This takes place daily from dawn until early afternoon, whatever the weather, until all the fields are protected. The girls remove all clothing and ornamentation except for a small beaded pubic girdle and rub themselves with red ochre. No other persons are permitted to witness this procession. This ceremony, known as the "fattening of the maize", is found among the Bomvana and is intended to bring rain and rid the crops of pests.

Diviners and herbalists

Diviners are the men and women who interpret the wishes and commands of the ancestors. They are consulted when someone is sick or something is amiss since the cause is usually believed to be supernatural. They also expose evildoers and identify witches and sorcerers. The Xhosa term for these people is *amagqirha*, (singular *igqirha*). The Xesibe and Bhaca who live adjacent to the Zulu are an exception since they refer to their diviners by the Zulu term *isangoma*.

The various methods of divination include the throwing of divining bones and getting an answer from the positions in which they fall, and ventriloquism where the diviner claims to be led by whistling voices believed to originate from the ancestral spirits. Other diviners use the *vumisa* method whereby those consulting them are asked to respond to a series of questions in the light of which predictions are made. This procedure follows a set pattern whereby various possibilities are suggested as to the purpose of the visit. To each of these the clients reply "*siyavuma*" (we agree) and from their enthusiasm and tone of voice deductions can be made as to whether the predictions are correct or not. When the problem is identified those who are seeking advice become very excited although the reply remains the same. Should the diviner persist with a wrong prediction, the reply changes to "*phosa ngasemva*" (throw behind), in other words, try something else. The latter reply, when used enthusiastically, may also indicate that a correct prediction has been made. The *vumisa* method therefore depends on the enthusiastic responses and body language of the clients.

The call to become a diviner may come in a recurring dream in which white beads, the insignia of a diviner, may be seen, but frequently takes the form of a special illness known as *ukuthwasa* which is interpreted by a diviner as being a call from the ancestors to become a neophyte or novice and receive training in the art of divination from a qualified diviner (Pauw 1975:165). According to Broster (1981:24) the white beads seen in the dream are offered to the one who is being called but before they can be grasped wild animals such as lions, which have long been extinct in Transkei, prevent this from happening. When the decision is taken to commence training all ochre and ochred clothes are removed.

The period of training differs since for various reasons it may be interrupted and some may never complete their training. One of the reasons for interrupted training is pregnancy which results from the breaking of the taboo on sex for those in training. This is especially true for married women. When the student is ready for advancement the sacrifice required and the beadwork appropriate to the new status will be revealed to them in a dream.

Throughout the training period the student undergoes therapy in the form of cleansing and strengthening medicines, emetics and ritual washings. This therapy is intended to restore the balance of the mind disturbed by the *ukuthwasa* sickness and to make the dreams, that are believed to be the link with the ancestors, clearer. There is also a daily ritual of prayers, songs and dances which further stimulates contact with the ancestors (Broster 1981:23).

White has a special significance for diviners who are called *abantu abamhlophe*, meaning the "white people" or people of light (Broster 1981:23). They wear white clothes and white beadwork, and may smear themselves with white clay. They alone may use pure white beadwork although some, like the Bomvana, do add other colours as well. White symbolises illumination from the ancestors and guards against evil. The string of beads wound around the right wrist is ritually placed there when they commence training. In the case of qualified diviners these beads cover the whole forearm but with students only half the forearm is covered. These beads are known as the *camagu* or prayer beads. At the feast which marks the end of the period of training of the student, the guests give presents of white beads to the newly qualified diviner. These are included in their ornamentation.

The beadwork and other ornamentation of the students is an indication of the level of training reached. As students advance extra items of ornamentation and beadwork are added. A Thembu student in the first year of training wears two strands of white beads around the head plus a single, short strand of white beads called *icamagu lomqala* tied loosely around the neck as well as the beads around the wrist which are known as *icamagu lengalo*. Broader beaded headbands and armbands of goat-skin are an indication of a Thembu student in the third year of training.

In general the life and training of diviners in all Xhosa-speaking societies has much in common but differences do occur in dress, beadwork and some of the procedures. There is a certain amount of borrowing of customs between the various societies. Bhaca diviners dress entirely in white and have a headdress with a fringe of white beads to which the inflated dried gall bladders of goats are fixed as the dwelling place of the spirit under whose guidance they work. These gall bladders are obtained from goats ritually killed in honour of the ancestors on behalf of the student diviners during their period of training.

Among the Ngqika, offerings of white beads, pumpkin seeds, sorghum, maize, matches and tobacco are placed at midnight, in two rows, on the seashore by the tutor who is accompanied by a senior assistant and the father and some family members of the student about to graduate. The rows begin and end with white beads. The offerings are packed by the student into the two small baskets in which they are carried to the beach. The taking away of these offerings by the tide is seen as acceptance by the ancestral spirits, known as *abantu bomlambo* or river people. A prayer is offered for the student and a libation of beer is poured out for the spirits. The rest of the beer is drunk and a pipe smoked before the tutor and companions return to the hut where the rest of the people attending the graduation ceremony are gathered (Broster 1981:53-54).

Traditional colours are included in the beadwork of Ngqika, Gcaleka and Bomvana diviners. These colours include turquoise, pink, green and black. The Gcaleka diviners wear beaded girdles over their long skirts and some favour a swathed headdress of melton headscarves while the first silver coin received by an Mpondo graduate diviner is incorporated into the white fringed headband that hangs over the eyes with the coin dangling above the nose. A more modern innovation, however, is a bead encrusted hairstyle. The Mpondo diviners do not adhere strictly to orthodox dress but incorporate Western style garments in their regalia. Amongst them the students favour a headdress which includes feathers and inflated gall bladders.

Xesibe student diviners wear showy headdresses comprising a band of white goat-skin, many inflated gall bladders and some white feathers. The fully fledged diviner wears an elaborate headdress made up of a swathed coloured towel, baboon fur, many red pom-poms and much beadwork. The colours of the towel may be repeated in their beadwork. Both students and qualified diviners favour Western dress which, in the case of women, takes the form of a brown print dress for informal occasions and a pure white calico dress for formal occasions. A skirt of brightly coloured wool tassels is worn over the above clothing (Broster 1981:56).

Bhaca novices wear a short white skirt. The women cover their breasts with a white breast apron and bind a white cloth close around their heads like a young wife. The only ornamentation worn by a novice is a necklace of medicinal roots. The bead headdress of a qualified Bhaca diviner is white.

Among the Thembu, student diviners wear a plain white wrap-around skirt and a simple string of white beads but as they advance in training their beadwork increases to the full regalia of a qualified diviner. There is no timespan for this process and some students for various reasons fail to qualify. The qualified diviners wear white clothes, white beadwork and strips of white goat-skin and use white clay as a cosmetic. They carry the white brush of the beast that was sacrificed for them upon their graduation. Their headdresses include inflated gall bladders from the goats sacrificed for them during their training. The graduate diviners model their headdresses on that of their tutor. Animal skins from the animals revealed to the particular diviner in dreams are also included in the full regalia where at all possible.

Herbalists carry their medicines in goat-skin bags and in many beaded antelope horns strung around their necks. They do not wear the distinctive beadwork and dress of the diviner. In theory the difference between diviners and herbalists is that the latter do not practise divination. They are called in to immunise and protect using only medicines, whereas a diviner first finds out the supernatural cause of any misfortune or illness and then uses medicines to heal. Herbalists, for example, use their potions to protect people and homes against evil influences. In practice, however, their functions overlap since a herbalist may supply medicine for an illness and a diviner be called in to protect the maize fields (Elliott 1970:115). A herbalist's knowledge is usually handed down from father to son. They do not claim to have supernatural powers.



FUTURE OF BEADWORK

Traditional beadwork was a primary means of artistic expression among Xhosa-speaking peoples and although glass beads did not originally feature in their material culture, they were very quickly assimilated and a cultural tradition, which played an important role in all aspects of their society, was built around them. Modernisation, Christianisation, literacy and changes in leisure activities, especially in the urban areas, have caused a rapid decline in the significance of beadwork among the Xhosa. The traditional way of life is no longer found throughout the areas occupied by the Xhosa but is restricted to small communities in remote areas as yet relatively untouched by Westernisation. Recently, however, there has been a revival in the art of beading which has been stimulated by the tourist trade and fashion world in particular. Whether this will bring about a return to traditional patterns and meanings or result in a change in designs and styles as dictated by the purchasers of such work, time alone will tell. It is to be hoped that this wonderful artform with all its richness of meaning will not be totally lost but will continue to serve as a means of non-verbal communication among future generations of Xhosa-speakers.