

Maskanda Researched

The Parallax View

Research is a complex process. We *do* research. Many of my non-English-speaking students say, “We make a research,” and this does indeed describe the research process. Research is after all driven by conscious action. In this chapter, I describe my consciousness in the act of research into the maskanda domain. This explanation takes shape as a narrative that moves into maskanda from different starting points as I explore different ways of conceptualizing maskanda, what it becomes, how it is used and experienced, and of course also what it may mean.

The ethnomusicological project is concerned in the broadest terms with musical representations of social experience. From its inception as a discipline, ethnomusicologists have recognized music as social practice and understood that it is embedded in a social context rather than an adjunct to it. Musical practices are thus seen as taking shape within the framework of people’s experience. Responses to this view of music within the discipline have been varied, as ethnomusicologists, like those they study, cannot escape the ideologies of their day. To be sure, the application of this premise in a contemporary context is quite different from what it was in the past when musical cultures were studied as self-contained units. The study of any particular musical practice today inevitably calls for an investigation of a range of political, social, and economic theories, motivations, and ideals. As a consequence, the ethnomusicologist has to make choices from an expansive, interdisciplinary theoretical resource. These choices impact significantly on

how “the field” is conceptualized and represented. A primary issue is how the researcher positions her- or himself in relation to the chosen field. The idea of emic and etic positions has indeed been quite prominent in the analysis of the research process in ethnomusicology. However, recognition of the researcher’s position as either insider or outsider does not conclude a debate on the nature of the relationship between the observer and the observed and what is produced as a consequence of their interaction. Although I am in many senses an outsider—I am after all not a maskanda musician—my engagement with maskanda musicians and what they do means that I am inserted into the field of maskanda; I become, albeit in a way that is different from those who I study, part of their world. The most obvious consequence of this insertion can be seen in the process of gathering information from maskanda musicians. During these interactions, maskanda musicians respond to my presence and to all that it means to them. Similarly, I respond to them and all that they mean to me. The story is thus made as a consequence of the interaction between these two positions. Hence as Žižek expresses in his notion of the parallax, subject and object cannot be seen as separate entities where observation takes place as an action that is the prerogative of one party alone, namely, the observer. By positioning the field within our line of sight the observer automatically invites an exchange of gaze. The observed is never entirely passive in the representational process or that of making meaning. The observer and the observed are intertwined positions that produce realities through their interactions. Žižek describes the parallax as “the apparent displacement of an object (the shift in its position against a background), caused by a change in observational position that provides a new line of sight.” He elaborates on this “standard definition” by adding:

The philosophical twist . . . is that the observed difference is not simply “subjective,” due to the fact that the same object which exists “out there” is seen from two different stances . . . it is rather, as Hegel would have put it, that subject and object are inherently “mediated” so that an “epistemological” shift in the subject’s point of view reflects an “ontological” shift in the object itself. (2006, 17)

This reflexivity between subject and object in the parallax view subverts any polarization of subject and object as happens in the naming of them as such. Subject and object cannot be separated as each is inscribed in the other. Each responds to the other’s gaze in a process that produces realities. Furthermore, one is never entirely detached from that which one observes since “the reality I see is never ‘whole’—not because a large part of it eludes me but because it contains a stain, a blind spot, which indicates my inclusion in it” (ibid.). Reality is understood not as a something that exists but that is nevertheless

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beyond our comprehension, but rather as the unresolved paradoxes that are an inextricable feature of our *experience* of reality. One reality thus cannot be reduced to another. Phrased differently, my reality cannot be substituted for that of the musicians whom I study. The “realities” that are articulated here spring from the varied dialogues that I have initiated with the music and musicians who are central to this study. Various realities and “truths” are made in the contexts of these relationships.

Much of the information on maskanda is sourced in the actual music that musicians produce and in the lyrics to their songs. In these instances the parallax operates in a less obvious way for the music itself does not change in response to being observed; its meaning, however, does. The context in which songs are experienced is drawn more purposefully in this instance into the field of study as a background against which meaning can be sought. Just as an epistemological shift in the subject produces an ontological shift in the object, a contextual shift in the location of maskanda (be it across time or in a geographical location) produces a shift in the meanings attributed to it. At different times maskanda as a body of practice has embraced different positions. In a contemporary context the range of these positions is far more varied than they were during apartheid.

A number of different perspectives on maskanda are covered in this book, and while there are certainly many more perspectives than are covered here, it is through the relationships between different perspectives that maskanda and its range of meanings can be understood. Referring to Karatani’s exploration of the critical potential of the parallax view, Žižek asserts the radical critique to which I aspire, “. . . not as a determinate position as opposed to another position but as the irreducible gap between the positions itself [*sic*]” (2006, 20). How we understand maskanda is thus dependent on the relationship between varied representations of it. Through paradigmatic shifts brought about by the ideological perspectives of the musicians and praxial shifts in the way I have engaged with these different perspectives, it has been possible to produce a textured analysis that captures the nuances of different perspectives on maskanda and on transformation in South Africa today.

Maskanda and Transformation

Music making in South Africa today is taking shape in a social environment that is heavy with expectations of change. The life stories and compositional choices of contemporary maskanda musicians express the way change is understood and experienced in the current political economy. Meaning is shaped and attributed in different ways in maskanda. Song, dance, dress, and poetry all play their part in giving expression to the experience of transformation in

post-apartheid South Africa. At times songs are heavy with overt commentary; at other times, the responses to a post-apartheid world are expressed in the subtlety and nuance of poetic language and musical style.

The concept of change is not only highly politicized in South Africa, it is also loaded with moral obligations. Politicians frequently call upon the citizens of this country to embrace change in the hope of freedom, justice, and equality for all. But how is change understood and experienced by the “ordinary person”? Does it bring the freedom, justice, and equality frequently referenced in political rhetoric? In order to address this question (it is by no means my intention to answer this question conclusively), the presentation of transformation on different public platforms is compared with the representations of transformation embedded in maskanda.

Transformation ideals are most often seen to be concerned with reversing the consequences of the exclusionary policies of apartheid. This process is most often represented as a postcolonial project that reverts easily to the categories and constructions made to serve apartheid. The language of transformation is thus closely entwined with identity discourse. African Studies is often “littered with suspect second order ‘objectivisms’, sweeping formulations like ‘Bantu Philosophy’ and ‘African Philosophy’ that have occluded the varieties of native experience for over fifty years” (Mudimbe 1993, 147). It is not as “Zulu” music, or “black” music, that I approach maskanda, but as the music of individuals, people with specific experiences, experiences that are often the result of a social order built on prescriptive and controlling notions of identity, particularly ethnic and racial identities. My desire to avoid a postcolonial tendency to contain identity discourse within the parameters set out by colonialism has steered this research in the direction of a phenomenological or even an existential approach to identity and human experience.

Identity has long since been recognized in social studies as a social construct. Rather than being thought of as a “thing” that is had, it is recognized as a process in the making, one that is shaped by each individual’s interactions with the world around him or her. However, the way that these interactions are conceptualized, talked about, and represented is dominated by the most powerful elements in society. This study involves the meeting of a range of different identities (including my own) that intersect with various positions of power that are themselves constantly being readjusted in the current climate of political transformation in South Africa. Maskanda performance is packed with responses to life in South Africa, both past and present.

It was conceived and grew in the unsettled environment of the early twentieth century as a musical response to change. Zulu society had been restructured as a result of the clash between colonial and missionary ideology and

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that of the Zulu nation. It is amid the distortions and disjuncture that followed from the imposition of radically different ways of seeing, ordering, and making sense of human experience that maskanda has its roots. It is not surprising then that maskanda carries concomitant distortions and disjuncture and is inconsistent both in its reach across time (with its paradoxical claims on both tradition and modernity) and in its marking of place. While the ambivalence of its location may at times be obscured by the emphasis on tradition and the common assumption that tradition resides in a rural space, maskanda (like its early proponents) is rooted somewhere between the rural and the urban location with each of these spaces being variously called upon as meaning-making tools. Similarly, it is marked by musical characteristics that are categorized as western or European practice *and* those that are seen as Zulu, without ever being exclusively one or the other. Maskanda thus can perhaps be thought of as being positioned in an “in-between” space—one that was not only the place of the Zulu migrants who first brought maskanda to life in the early decades of the twentieth century, but also the place occupied by the majority of Zulu people throughout the apartheid era. However, “in-betweenness” can only be recognized as such when the domains on either side are constituted as formed and functional alternatives. Settler (British and other) claims on Zulu land and labor relied on severe exclusionary constructions of difference and an implied hierarchy that demarcated and defined the contest over land and labor, and they sought justification for the pursuit of dominance in Christian ideology. A dichotomizing logic was soon infused in the everyday life of dominated and dominant. This logic has also found its way into maskanda, as can be seen in its dependence on (perhaps even exploitation of) the dialectical tension between past and present, home and away, rural and urban, and Zulu and western (them and us) for the making of meaning. The dialectical relationship between tradition and modernity is perhaps the most obvious of any such relationship in maskanda. Both concepts are heavy with allusion not only to a series of values, moral judgments, and ideals but also to identities. Up until the 1994 elections, and indeed even for some time after this landmark in South African history, maskanda performance was shaped by, and as, the experience of marginalization. Maskanda performers and those who claimed it as their own were alienated from the world of modernity, a domain of exclusivity claimed variously on the basis of race, religion, ethnicity, class, capital, gender, and more. But theirs was a kind of double alienation, for their world of “tradition” was lost to ambivalence and disjuncture. The paths of continuity had been disrupted as a result of the breakdown in familial relationships as young men moved away from their rural homes for long periods of time in search of work in the cities and towns and as a consequence of religious and ideological hostility from those in positions of power.

For many maskanda musicians, the present is conceptualized as the temporal arena of modernity and the past as the temporal arena of tradition. In general academic discourse the inaccessibility of the past is recognized as problematic because it can only be accessed through (often agenda-driven) reflections and representations that recall fictions constructed in the imagination but set in real-life contexts, whereas in maskanda the inaccessibility of the past gives it status and immunity. It is no wonder that in maskanda the past has such an elevated role in the making of meaning. It is constructed as an idealized location that functions as an allegory for the safety and comfort of home. What is important here is not that it is an imagined past that is recalled, but rather why any chosen past has relevance in the present, that is, how the present motivates and directs the versions of the past that are recalled in the present. Dominant groups make different pasts to those who exist on the fringes; the histories of each are constructed according to different principles and “different details emerge because they are inserted, as it were, into a different kind of narrative home” (Connerton 1989, 19). Positioning maskanda in relation to dominant discourses, be they musical, political, religious, economic, or moral, is essential to an understanding of the “language” of maskanda. While the “present is experienced in the context of the past: the different pasts that are available to us are put to work for different purposes and the present is directed by these choices” (ibid., 2), so, too, is the past constructed in relation to the present. The way identity has been expressed and made in and through maskanda is closely tied to its claim on the past. Maskanda has not, however, simply laid claim to tradition as a way of marking its identity; it has also been represented *as* tradition.

The task of researching, analyzing, and writing about maskanda music and the personalities who bring it to life takes place within the pulse and pandemonium of everyday life in South Africa. The complex multiplicities of intertwined positions that are part of everyday individual experience disrupt the stark and ordered constructions of unified identities that appear in the public domain as they are put to work in a range of different situations, but most obviously for those vying for power. The tools of comprehensibility, such as the categories and classifications that are given to every aspect of our lives including music and its performers, may also serve as tools of manipulation in every version of power struggle, be it for power and dominance or as a means of empowerment, as a way of taking charge of the circumstances of one’s social existence.

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Reflections on Maskanda as “*Habitus*”

Maskanda is more than a musical practice. It is a location of experience that embraces both the creative capacity of the individual and the forces of expectation and prescription that are imposed by its social setting and by its history. One cannot think of maskanda exclusively as the product of oppressive dominant power structures, where dissent is substituted for complicity. The relationship between culture and society is interactive—as in the parallax each responds to the other.

Maskanda embraces a variety of “positions.”¹ While some positions are assumed consciously, others seep from the unconscious; some are intentional action, others are determined by outside ideologies. Each version of maskanda is stamped with something of its creator, and at the same time each one is brought together as a consequence of a common system through which the music is formulated and through which it takes shape as maskanda. Maskanda can thus not be halted in definition. It is in this sense that Bourdieu’s notion of *habitus* offers an appropriate way of thinking about maskanda. Rather than being a static and contained domain, *habitus* references an acquired system of generative schemes that produce “thoughts, perceptions, expressions and actions—whose limits are set by the historically and socially situated conditions of its production, the conditioned and conditional freedom it provides is as remote from creation of unpredictable novelty as it is from simple mechanical reproduction of the original conditioning” (Bourdieu 1990, 55).² Dominant discourses that underpin the powerhouses of social, political, and economic systems have a significant impact on the way culture takes shape. During apartheid political ideologies were unleashed in action and rhetoric that forced people to live the identities that were given them. Cultural production was thus severely limited by conditions imposed on society. There is a direct correlation between the nature of the standards of practice in cultural formations that are constituted as a body of practice (such as a genre) and the nature of the dominant, institutionalized formations of power (Bourdieu 1993).

Maskanda is identifiable as such by the existence of particular qualities, procedural characteristics, and features of style, all necessary definitive features of a genre. The processes through which maskanda evolved as a genre inevitably involved some formalization of what one might reasonably assume were the idiosyncrasies of individual expression that must have been part of the earliest versions of this music. Maskanda emerged as a “constituted body of practice” during the height of the apartheid era in the 1980s.³ Its path to formalization was cut both by the political and economic drive of those in power at that time and by the social resources and musical aesthetics of the

musicians and the communities who engaged with it. There is a relationship between the choices that musicians made and what was made available to them in the political economy of apartheid. As maskanda has evolved over time, the choices to take on new features and abandon or retain old ones can indeed be linked (albeit in varying degrees) to the pressures and influences of institutionalized positions of power. Where there is an overwhelming consistency in the musical style and in the subject matter of the lyrics, there is also an overwhelming system of dominance in play.

Maskanda's constitution as a genre not only coincided with the height of apartheid but also with its entry into the realm of commercial production. Once maskanda had been recognized as a possible source of income, another layer of interaction was introduced to its domain. Its "position" as its capacity to produce capital (cultural capital money), and the relationship between this potential and the structure, which determined how this capital is distributed (Bourdieu 1993, 30), altered significantly. The products of its new position not surprisingly also changed.⁴

In an environment that is said to be transformative one would expect a greater emphasis on remaking the maskanda domain rather than reproducing what has gone before. South Africa's history of dominance and exploitation, and the weight of hegemonic formulations of authenticity that are a product of this history, have complicated the relationship between positions and position-takings in an expressive domain like maskanda where the concept of tradition is central to the meaning-making process. In the current climate claims on tradition are often prescribed in order to count as transformative. These claims are seen as contestations of the order imposed by western hegemony, as if they somehow annihilate the identities given under the oppressive regime of apartheid and colonialism that preceded it. Irregular vacillations between notional histories seem to be more easily grasped as transformative than any creative recourse to the diverse sonic language of the here and now, or the identities and experiences that occupy everyday life.

Bourdieu does not separate culture practice and social practice into different and separate domains; for him they are interwoven. Culture is played and plied by social structures, and social formations are confirmed and (perhaps to a lesser extent) challenged through culture (Bourdieu 1984). As he points out, often the dynamics of political and ideological struggles are infused in cultural practices through the "management" of aesthetic sensibilities that direct perceptions of "how things should be." This also has significant consequences for the way identities are made. Culture is closely tied to notions of identity; thus, dominant discourses are often not only behind what is regarded as appropriate versions of culture but also what constitutes an appropriate identity in different contexts. Culture and identities are however *not* entirely

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controllable. Bourdieu's concern for the role of culture in the reproduction of social structures is essentially about the self-perpetuating strategies of established institutionalized power constructs. Nevertheless, it is the capacity of culture to work as such a powerful tool in the perpetuation of dominant institutions that also renders it a powerful tool of resistance and change, albeit within the constraints imposed by the status quo. A central theme of this study is just this: it explores if and how some maskanda musicians engage with the notion of change beyond the platters of prescription supplied by those who control their world. Following Bourdieu's assertion that there is a direct correlation between cultural practice and dominant positions of power in society, particularly those that are institutionalized, I identify some of the motivations behind maskanda's development as a constituted body of practice during the apartheid years. Furthermore, a central paradigm underpinning this project is that any change in cultural practice must indeed be connected to changes in the social milieu. Art is not just the product of an artist's labor, it is also an expression of the "field" out of which it is produced (Bourdieu 1990, 1993).

There is nevertheless a tension in contemporary maskanda between prescriptions of style, form, and procedure and innovations that are largely a response to changes in experience, attitudes, and ideals. The idea of change is often framed so that old and new are "set up" in a comparative, and often exclusionary, polemic that ultimately defers to struggles over ownership, the right to particular identities, positions of power, and access to economic resources.

An essential part of this investigation of contemporary maskanda is indeed an investigation of how claims to authenticity are made. Taking an existential perspective, notions of authenticity are seen as constructs that are shaped by social contexts. The way authenticity is formulated (what is seen as constituting authentic action) is linked to a broader discourse that needs justification for particular actions that serve specific positions. Signifiers of authenticity, while they may be represented as fundamental essences distinguishing various categories of identity expressed in sentences that include phrases such as "women are" or "Zulus are," are social constructions that are grown in response to the struggle over positions of power.⁵ Where marginalization excludes groups of people on the basis of these identities, dominant groups strongly direct how signifiers are made.

I return for a moment to culture's capacity to shape social experience, focusing not only on the particular features of maskanda as a performance style per se but also as one that comes with already designated notions of identity, ownership, location, and social purpose. Music (like other performed expressive genres) stands out as a form of cultural production that has an immediate and powerful experiential dimension. In the moment of

performance, the ordinary boundaries of everyday experience can be transcended and both performers and their audiences can be transported to new and different realities. While knowing is generally regarded as a cognitive process that takes place only in the mind, for maskanda musicians, knowing often takes place in and through the body. It is as an experiential type of knowledge that may never translate into articulated thoughts and ideals, that maskanda performance is most commonly processed and understood. It often seems that those who claim it as their own, do so almost unconsciously and are rather taken aback when asked why they choose to play maskanda rather than any other kind of music. This would suggest that maskanda is engaged as an experience rather than a set of ideas. The body grasps knowledge in a deeply subjective and embedded way that takes on performed identities *as* reality. It believes in what it does.⁶ It does not simply represent something outside of itself; it pulls these realities into the here and now. “What is learned by body is not something that one has, like knowledge that can be brandished, but something that one is” (Bourdieu 1990, 73). Performance thus carries the capacity to reconstruct the way people experience themselves, a capacity that not only has the potential to challenge the controls that any social order has on what people feel about their lives, but also how they think about it, since “the ‘external’ ritual”—the act of participation—“performatively generates its own ideological foundation” (Žižek 1994, 59). Maskanda can therefore be seen as having the capacity to call its followers (I use the word “call” here as it is used in Althusser’s notion of interpellation),⁷ not simply as a distraction from the basic realities of everyday life but as ideological rooting or frame of reference for their experience. Performance gives agency where otherwise it might be lacking. Furthermore, it is not only a way of trying on different identities, with different available paths of action; it also makes memories of these alternative identities—stores of reference points to become histories for alternative selves.

While I am consciously averse to defining maskanda, and it certainly is not my intention to do so, this study must inevitably contribute to an understanding of what constitutes maskanda not only in the post-apartheid moment but also at various points along the way of its development. The development of maskanda over the past century and its connection to some momentous shifts in social experience is important as a backdrop for this study, for it is against historically constructed notions of maskanda that contemporary transformations are measured and understood. Maskanda’s earliest beginnings are associated with experiences of change, and significant landmarks in its development correlate with significant shifts in the political and social environment in South Africa. The development of maskanda can accordingly be divided broadly into three phases: the phase of inception

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in the early decades of the twentieth century during the era of British imperialism; the phase of formalization (approximately 1960–80) during the apartheid era; and the phase of expansion in the current era heralded by the 1994 democratic election and referred to as the era of liberal democracy. Discussing the early years of maskanda's development is very problematic as the documentation of this era is scant. I do not know of any informal recordings of early performance. Indeed much of the information about this era exists in the stories that people tell about it, and these are limited particularly by the circumstances in which the information has been gathered and (re)constructed.

Maskanda as Tradition

The story of maskanda's beginnings remains incomplete. Two concepts that feature prominently in these "stories" are tradition and ethnicity not least of all because the authenticity of maskanda performance is usually formulated in relation to its status as traditional Zulu music.

A notion like tradition does not always hold the same meaning when it is bounced between different cultures, worldviews, and most importantly languages. Despite the many different cultures in South Africa, it is often assumed that we are all talking about the same thing when we use the term "tradition." While maskanda music has changed over time, change has not separated it from its task as tradition: maskanda produced in 2008 is often perceived as just as traditional as maskanda produced many years before this.⁸ At times Adorno's view of tradition as prescribed practices that resist change and that capture agency within the boundaries of "pregiven" and "unreflected" forms and ideals does hold sway in the world of maskanda but in rather a convoluted way.⁹ Certain features of maskanda are marked as traditional because there is some connection between them and older practices that extend well into the past, but they are quite clearly not the same as these older practices. Their connection with older practices is symbolic rather than literal. However, having been marked as tradition these features become prescribed practices that take hold as Adorno describes. But this is not always the case. There are also other instances where tradition and change work side by side as comfortable companions. What constitutes tradition is not always identified in the same way, nor does it always have the same meaning or function across the maskanda domain. The way tradition is perceived and used is often connected to the way change is understood, desired, and expressed. Perhaps this is because tradition has been given such a powerful role in the way identities are constructed in South Africa. Indeed the status and function of tradition in maskanda are not without contradictions and paradoxes.

The idea of tradition has been used to give substance to the ethnic divisions that underpinned apartheid ideology and to host a Darwinian-style social hierarchy where the traditions of some ethnic groups were seen as evidence of their primitiveness, and the traditions of others as evidence of their “cultured” status. At the same time—that is, within the same social climate—tradition also functioned as a positive cornerstone in the making of identities that counteracted the hostilities of the social world for (among many others) young Zulu men. What is interesting here is that the tools of empowerment and those of disempowerment are shaped in the same form, namely, as tradition. Tradition has to be recognized as heavily weighted with ambiguity. Much of what is believed to be an intrinsic part of traditional practice has in fact been intentionally invented in order to give credence to politically motivated versions of identity (Coplan 1994, 16; Olsen 2000, 10). Hobsbawm and Ranger’s seminal work, *The Invention of Tradition* (1984) brought to the fore some of the inconsistencies in the way tradition is perceived and how it operates. The various authors of this collection set out to show how traditions are closely tied to ideological constructs and how both choice and manipulation play a part in the creation and continuation of traditional practices.

The obscurity inherent in the concept of tradition arises out of the push and pull of competing notions of process and change, on the one hand, and notions of a static, established body of practice, on the other. The idea of tradition carries allusions to “a complex process of acquisition, memorization and social interaction” (Boyer 1990, vii). These complex processes are frequently bypassed when the focus is on reconciling the idea of change with established practice. Boyer proposes a theory, which does not render the idea of tradition incompatible with change. He describes tradition as a “type of social interaction which results in the repetition of certain communicative events” (ibid., 23). These events are repeated in the sense that they recall similar events or ways of being that existed in the past. The issue is not the faithful replication of cultural material, but rather the fact that this material is *believed* to be the same as that of the past. But the idea of “sameness” here does not refer to the details of what happens in maskanda but refers rather to the cognitive and emotive effects of the practice. Traditional practice is marked as such not because of what it is, but because of what it does.

Maskanda and Zuluness

Intersecting economic and political agendas had a significant influence on the way maskanda was formalized during apartheid. The solidification of maskanda as a commercial product coincided with a proactive surge in Zulu ethnic nationalism in the 1980s and early 1990s, and indeed its success in the

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marketplace was not least of all because it was promoted as Zulu music. As noted by Morrell (1996, 107), ethnic identity is a way of marking difference, which frequently emerges in times of social and economic upheaval. These were troubled times in South Africa as the apartheid regime stubbornly and violently resisted an increasingly visible liberation movement that was labeled then as a “terrorist movement” and that carried a perceived threat that was color-coded as “*swart*” or “*rooi*.”¹⁰

Tradition and ethnicity are seen working hand in hand during maskanda’s formalization period, most notably in the 1980s. Ethnic identity in the language of Zulu nationalism was strongly dependent on a connection with the past and, in most instances, defined meticulously as being rooted in a very particular past. Ethnicity is a social identity that is distinguished by

culturally specific practices and a unique set of symbols and beliefs; a belief in common origin and common history (“the past”) that is broadly agreed upon, and that provides an inheritance of origin, symbols, heroes, events, values, hierarchies, etc. and that confers identity; and a sense of belonging to a group, that in some combination . . . confirms social identities of people in their interaction with both members and outsiders (members of other groups). (Maré 1995, 43)

In the face of the fragmentation and erosion of Zulu social formations and practices, maskanda music offered a means of expressing cultural specificity (through the prescriptions of style associated with it in its now “genre-ized” form) and asserting common origin (particularly through the inclusion of *izibongo*), and a sense of belonging that affirmed the idea that there was a proper way to be Zulu. Because it engaged practices such as *ingoma* dance and *izibongo* with obvious connections to older performance practices and contexts, maskanda served as an alternative musical language for tradition to these older practices that had been part of Zulu life, and as “living proof” of the relevance of their ethos in the present. Furthermore, maskanda performance creates a sense of community at different levels, be it in quite general terms through language, dress, style, and the form of the music, or more specifically through its rhythmic association with particular regions and clans, and even more specifically through its highly personalized lyrics that often publicize particular events or individual experiences that are pertinent in a particular community or group. Bhodloza Nzimande takes pleasure in this feature of maskanda and wherever possible takes the opportunity to warn people:¹¹

Don’t do something, which is bad in front of a maskandi—something you would regret. Because if it was done in front of a maskandi guy, he will compose a song and he will perform it and you might hear it on the air! (Qtd. in Olsen 2000, 121)

A consciously mobilized ethnicity that is used to service political ideals and purpose is often quite different from an individual's experience of the ethnic aspect of his or her identity. What people were told about their ethnicity during the height of apartheid was often quite different from what they lived as a consequence of this identity. The formation of the Inkatha Freedom Party in 1975 took place in an era in which political affiliation was defined and to a large extent determined by ethnic identities. One's birth into a particular ethnic identity often meant that one similarly inherited the political ideology of the party prescribed as the political representative of that particular ethnic identity, as can be seen in Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi's statement:¹²

All members of the Zulu nation are automatically members of Inkatha if they are Zulus . . . no one escapes being a member as long as he or she is a member of the Zulu nation. (Qtd. in KLAD 1975, 134)¹³

Just as the National Party was associated with Afrikaner ethnic nationalism, so the Inkatha Freedom Party was seen as synonymous with Zulu ethnic nationalism. While the position held by Inkatha did not go uncontested, it held a dominant position as an authority on Zulu identity. It clearly defined the boundaries of Zuluness and “wove into definitions of ‘Zuluness’ loyalty to Inkatha and its leader, Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi” (Morrell 1996, 2).

The version of Zulu identity that was most prominently paraded in the public arena was one that was suitably constructed to serve the political ideals of Inkatha. Inkatha used a growing sense of solidarity among black South Africans suffering the paralyzing effects of apartheid to construct an image of Zulu identity, which would provide a haven for both aspirant entrepreneurs and displaced migrant laborers. While “mobilization of ethnicity can only be successful to the extent that it resonated with an existing social identity” (Maré 1995, 239), it has been responsible for the popularization of certain images of Zuluness that have found their way into the general discourses of everyday life. These discourses are reflected in cultural products, which, particularly when popularized through commercialization, in turn participate in the construction process. Marked as traditional Zulu music, *maskanda* has indeed had an important part to play in the making of perceptions of Zuluness.

Maskanda is thought of and explained differently by different people. The information that is produced about *maskanda* is to a large extent dependent on the criteria valued by the producers of that information. *Maskanda*'s roots lie in the musical responses of young Zulu men to their experience of labor migrancy during the early decades of the twentieth century. The music that these young men played did not start out with the name *maskanda*. Its

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naming as maskanda signifies a broadening of its field of production and reception. It also signifies the emergence of a gap between music as spontaneous, intimate, and personal expression that is not bound by any clear formulations of genre (the moments of origin), and music that is made under the umbrella of a constituted practice that has very specific prescriptions of form, style, and musical procedure. This transformation of maskanda from a creative act that is unnamed to one that is named involved an intricate process. Music does not emerge in a vacuum but is entwined with everyday life; it is a response (directly or indirectly) to the experience of the human condition. It is a domain of deferred representations and elusive meanings that are heavily dependent on the relationship between the music itself and the one who makes meaning from it, be it a performer or a listener. The meaning of maskanda thus “changes automatically with each change in the field within which it is situated for the spectator or the reader” (Bourdieu 1993, 31).

It was during the apartheid years that maskanda began to be understood, experienced, and disseminated as a genre, and hence during these years the prescriptions of practice associated with a genre took shape. I see this era as having a powerful presence in relation to contemporary maskanda performance, since it is the practices constituted and accepted as characteristic of maskanda performance during this era that provide the measure against which contemporary maskanda is seen as changing or not. Before it can be established if and how contemporary maskanda performance practice deviates from the template of maskanda performance made during the apartheid years, the nature of this template and how it evolved must be understood. It is to this end that the principles or ideals that motivated maskanda’s path from an informal performance practice to one that was formalized as it engaged with the institutionalizing forces of mass dissemination and commercial production, are explored.

Life Stories

While life stories may seem to be an obvious source of information on the experiential domain of maskanda musicians and the way they think about their lives, it is important to recognize how they are made and what can be expected from them as an analytical resource. As a “situationally conditioned construct, a cognitive chaining of selected elements from the past, present and future, simultaneously” (Knudsen 1990, 122), a life history must be seen not simply as a recollection of the “facts” about someone’s life but also as an emotional response to the past in the context of the present and even the future. As such it must be seen “not as a story of life but rather a conscious or even unconscious strategy for self-presentation, a legitimization of moves

and counter-moves and of projection for the future” (ibid.). Remembering the past and the making of identities through reference to the past are selective processes that vary across time (Thomson 1998). The present brings its own pressures and conditions to bear on how the past is remembered; the past is often remade to serve present circumstances. My concern is with the choices that maskanda musicians make as they engage memories of the past as part of their musical discourse in the present. These choices are read in relation to discourses of dominant institutions like government, the music industry, the public media, and education. I understand each life history (somewhat paradoxically) as a part that makes up the whole, rather than as representative of the whole (Clifford 1986), and as speaking of social structures and the inclusions and exclusions that give them definition. Life stories reveal the conditions under which certain “positions” and “position-takings” are seen as the preserve of particular groups, these being identified in maskanda most often in terms of ethnicity, gender, and age.

Maskanda Played by Women, or Women’s Maskanda?

In its earliest years maskanda took shape and grew as a male performance domain. Maskanda’s development into a constituted body of practice took place in an era during which gender relations were fragmented and strained. The relationship between Zulu men and women, and their respective roles, had been radically altered largely as a result of labor migrancy. Once labor migrancy became an established way of life, women’s roles and responsibilities were redefined as they single-handedly managed the domestic world by raising children and caring for members of their extended family who were without work. Men were often disconnected from family life because of long periods of absence, and their social and personal sense of worth was often undermined because women managed without them. The disempowerment of men did not, however, translate into the empowerment of women; both were trapped in the dysfunctional condition of disconnection exacerbated by the acceptance of an overwhelmingly patriarchal framing of gender relations.

While it was not unusual for women to feature in men’s maskanda performance as backing singers, their position as leaders of groups and composers of songs is a relatively recent development. There is an interesting dynamic in this development, different aspects of which are identified, explored, and developed under an overarching paradigm that sees dominant patriarchal orders as impacting in quite radical ways on the course of women’s lives and, more importantly, on how they think about themselves in relation to the world around them. The claim on maskanda as an expressive domain owned by men (it was, after all, grown of the responses of men to labor migrancy) has produced

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various responses to the role of women as maskanda musicians. Their participation may be read as an indication of a shift in perceptions of how women are seen and as evidence of an increase in opportunity for women where it was not available before. But one may also ask why women choose to express themselves in a musical domain so obviously dominated by men. Is it that of all the musical genres available today maskanda has special appeal because of its discourse on belonging? Women's maskanda is automatically set up in a comparative relationship with its male counterpart. This may well be because "when we try to understand masculine domination we are (therefore) likely to resort to modes of thought that are the product of domination" (Bourdieu 2001, 4).

Back to Transformation

The idea of transformation has an overwhelming presence in discourses on the "new South Africa," and not surprisingly so, since it was as an agent of transformation that the African National Conference (ANC) came to power in the 1994 elections. Like the term "tradition," the term "transformation" is called upon to give authority to a confusing variety of policies and actions. It has an assumed status within the public domain borne out of its association with the liberation struggle. It is generally viewed as something morally profound—"a good thing." As a consequence, much is justified in the name of transformation.

For an idea that is so widely invoked, however, it appears to be surprisingly immune to serious interrogation. Peter Schraeder's analysis of the politics of development in Africa shows that there is a significant link between different expectations of transformation and political ideology (Schraeder 2004, 135–36). Dividing the political terrain of Africa into three dominant ideologies, his observations can be summarized as follows: for the African capitalist, development can only take place within the constraints of a system that favors economic growth over economic equality; there is an emphasis on urban-based industrialization rather than rural-based agriculture. African capitalism seeks transformation within the framework of a free-market economy that promotes private business enterprises that can compete with global markets. For the African socialist, development means a return to a communitarian ethos that dominated indigenous economies before colonialism. The African socialist is suspicious of private ownership and favors a decentralized governmental style that allows for the local management of group interests but with all major commercial enterprises being controlled by the state. The African Marxist seeks a radical shift away from past and present systems, looking primarily to eradicate any form of class difference. While, like the socialists, Marxists see the public sector as the primary agent of development, they favor absolute control of the economy by central government.

Schraeder thus links expectations of transformation directly to political ideals and different systems of governance. Confusion arises in the South African context out of the ANC government's association with liberation ideology. For while liberation ideology in South Africa was overtly linked with Marxist and socialist ideals, the ANC, even in its role as a negotiator in the transition from apartheid to the new democracy, threw in its lot with a capitalist ethos (Saul 2002). The political domain is currently thick with ambiguity. While shifts in the racial profile of those who have access to wealth and opportunity may well be registered as a positive change, the fundamental ethos of capitalism prevails and class-based disparities remain the order of the day. Nevertheless, the association of the ANC with liberation ideals is kept alive in the public imagination through the status that the ANC has as a primary agent in the destruction of an iniquitous system that exploited inequality to serve the ruling class.

Both the view that transformation is contingent upon the institutionalized ideals of the ANC and that transformation rests on a postcolonial response to the present are commonly paraded in the mass media; this study looks for any "translation" of these views into the cultural domain. In fact, it is within the context of the inconsistency between what is experienced in material terms as change, and the emotional investment that people have in the idea of a new and transformed society, that many complex and at times contradictory responses to life in post-apartheid South Africa emerge. I think that it is important to resist being charmed by the "miracle" of a post-apartheid South Africa and hence to underestimate the complexity of the social formations we have inherited. A society made and controlled through race and ethnic definition resulted in "the development of ontological commitments to racialized and ethnic identities" (Zegeye 2001, 344). Zegeye sees the ANC government of 2001 as being intent on "de-emphasizing the apartheid-constructed divisions through its policy of non-racialism and the construction of national identity" (*ibid.*). But does policy translate into practice? The walls of division carry an allure for those, with sinister or noble intention, who seek significant changes in South Africa. They offer familiar recourse not only for those who seek an easy path to power but also in reparation strategies that hope to compensate for the disadvantages that people have in the present because of the past. It is often difficult to imagine identities and relationships beyond those that were so fanatically pursued in the past. After all we are not simply at liberty to "produce and reproduce ourselves" or "shape and re-shape our world" (*ibid.*)—we do not have that level of agency. Our world(s) and our identities are made and shaped dialogically in the context of what is already there. Nevertheless, some South African academics contest the inevitability of apartheid's appropriation of difference for division as a way of thinking about contemporary South Africa. Sarah Nuttall (2009, 19), for example, argues that while

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“apartheid engineering did and still does work to fix spaces that are difficult to break down in the present” there are “other configurations” in South African society that warrant different kinds of analytical approaches. These “other configurations” offering alternative perceptions of what we are and what we might become beyond the obsession with difference as division are evidence of a transformative process in action. My quest in this research has been to look for evidence of the emergence of “other configurations” in maskanda by analyzing transformations in contemporary maskanda in the context of what maskanda was during apartheid. Can people now frame the South African world independently of apartheid constructions?

One would have to be a delusional idealist to imagine that transformation is driven entirely from within the country. South Africa’s engagement with global economies, together with a shift in the theoretical underpinnings of Marxism itself from Leninist “dialectical materialism” to a “materialist dialectic,” have made it all but impossible to translate the socialist ideals of the revolution into a new social order (Žižek 2006, 4–5). The ideals and indeed the promises of the liberation movement in South Africa have been tempered by this inversion of Marxist ideals within the global economic environment generally, and by the desire, or perceived need, to be part of a global economic network. Many of the successful maskanda musicians have had some opportunity to take their music to global audiences. For the most part these concerts take place in the United Kingdom, Western Europe, and the United States of America. Very few maskanda musicians travel to other African countries or to the East. For many of the musicians who have performed overseas, these concerts are not a representation of their individual experiences so much as a representation of Zuluness, and indeed it is the Zuluness of maskanda music that is seen as a prominent draw for international audiences. Thus the pressure to mark Zuluness in maskanda is still evident, but now it comes from the desires of the global market rather than from ethnic nationalist ideals. How musicians make this Zuluness for these global audiences is often the consequence of what they believe these audiences want. Hence the exotic, tribal imagery already made during apartheid is often emphasized over representations of an everyday life experience that may indeed be much closer to that of people in other countries.

How musicians respond to the notion of Zuluness, how they construct and perform it globally also offers insight into how Zulu identity is thought of and used at home. Among the questions that I consider throughout this book are: Do maskanda musicians now think of Zuluness in ways that are different from those that dominated during apartheid; and is there evidence of a disparity between their thoughts on Zuluness and their physical experiences of it?