

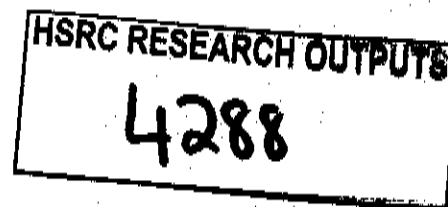
**Topic: Tradition, representation and public space: a focus on
Chitsungo, Mbire (Zimbabwe)**

Presenter: Mafukidze, Jonathan

Date: Friday, July 21, 2006

Workshop Name: ISA Junior Sociologists Workshop

Venue: Coastlands Convention Center - Durban



Tradition, representation and public space: a focus on Chitsungo, Mbire

**Interrogating participation in
diversity.**

**By Jonathan Kaya Mafukidze, Sociology
student, University of Pretoria, courtesy of
HSRC**

Introduction

- This paper seeks to show how tradition enables participation of diverse people within a rural context. It looks at how tradition allows for negotiation and mediation in inclusion and exclusion.
- It is a product of an Ethnographic study carried out in the area.
- It is informed by Postcolonial theory
- It is divided into five parts:

Conceptualising of issues

• Tradition is a reservoir of trans-generational knowledge, wisdom and a mode for the transmission of such, and a community's habits, which in turn mould recipients into a certain kind of beings that form a community. As such it is not an aspect fixed to a primitive past, arrested to a historical era but an integral part of today's life. Informs culture.

Why is it important to discuss participation

- **To gain an appreciation of how communities handle heterogeneity esp. with regards access to material resources & ideological space**
- **To show that there are spaces out there where people negotiate co-existence outside the perimeters defined by state politics.**
- **That the understanding of tradition as a binary opposition of modernity is political and removed from the lived realities of ordinary people.**

Context and Evidence

- **Mbire an old Korekore settlement characterised by high in-migration. Historically doubled as a conservancy and as such was sparsely populated. Fertile soil. In-migration allowed during the war to make the area accessible. Larger inflows came in the 1980s after the war and the eradication of tsetse flies. The need for land grew and with it questions of identity and belonging. All newcomers are known as the Vhitori.**

Evidence continued

- **Access to land: This question is addressed together with ownership. The land is owned by Mhondoro and they distribute it to their own descendants. How then do outsiders get it. The mhondoro have to accept them first and this is shown through processes. Once accepted, one becomes a child of the mhodoro; gets land and protection.**

Evidence continued

- **Governance: Chiefs are appointed by mhondoro and from that get legitimacy.**
- **1973, 500 Vhitori arrived and accepted by mhondoro. Allocated an area of their own. Asked to choose their own headmen and reps to mhondoro.**
- **Both groups share insights into their cultural traditions. Agree that each group should cont. practicing its own but no violation of those set by mhondoro. Amicable coexistence.**

History of the debate

- **Politics: colonial and postcolonial idealise and manipulate tradition.**
- **Colonial: direct and indirect rule. i.e. From rejection to re-invention**
- **Causes: European philosophies. Military resistance to occupation organised around mediums and chiefs**
- **Postcolonial: tribe is divisionist and manipulable. vs. nation building and reconciliation**

Conclusion

- Tradition informs social processes and through a good understanding of it Africa would avert ethnic and tribal conflict and xenophobia.
- That tolerant occurrence in such spaces should be understood and inform those in other places.
- That tradition is not inimical to change but allows for change and as such does not stand opposed to modernity.