

ARTS HERITAGE: A CASE STUDY

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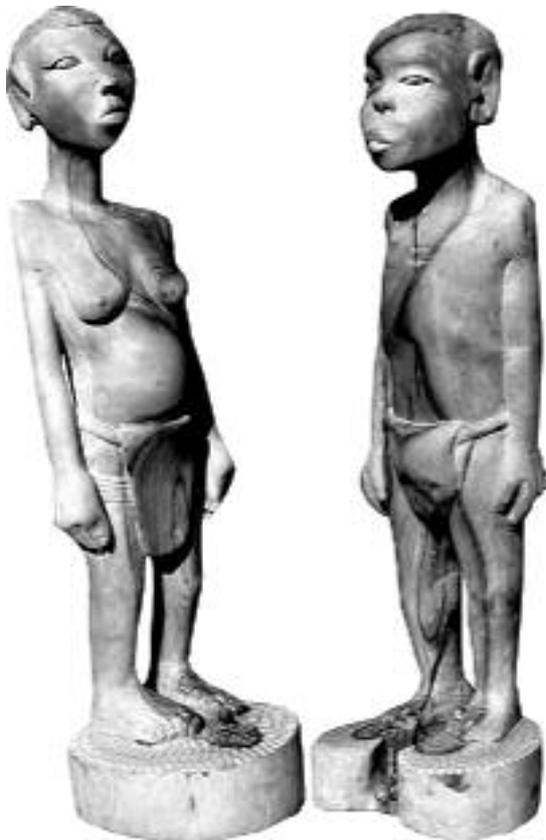
Sources of information

The cultural heritage of the area is predominantly Shangaan/Tsonga and the Vhavenda speaking groups, but the area has had influences from a variety of other groups such as the Boers, English, German, Portuguese, Indian, Swiss and Scottish communities.

For the purposes of this brief synopsis I have focused on the Arts and Cultural activities of the Shangaan/Tsonga and Vhavenda communities.

There is a wealth of Artists in the area with the following disciplines:

- Potters (Mukhondeni and Mashmba are the most well known)
- Vhavenda drum makers (Phineas Masuvhelele created a drum that was used at the the opening of the World Summit last year)
- Textile co-operatives (most of these are women's projects such as Tsonga textiles and Twananani).
- Traditional Shangaan and Vhavenda dress manufacturers.
- Beadworkers.



Sculptor: M. Raphalalani, photo: N. Hahn

- Cultural performing artists (Bungeni women's group).
- Cultural village experiences (Luvhola cultural village and Vatshonga cultural experience).
- Traditional healers (whilst not to be seen as an artistic form it nonetheless has become a tourism niche attraction and that should be explored).

The artists in the area include many local and world renowned individuals, such as:

- Noriah Mabaso
- Jackson Hlungwani
- Thomas Khubayi
- John Baloyi
- Florence Machume
- Sara and Lilian Munyai

The area needed a body to formalize the exposure of the artists and as a result the Ribolla Tourism Association was established in 1994. The section 21 company actively markets and promotes the artists as a tourist attraction as well as marketing their products on a commercial basis.

The Association has an underlying mission to ensure the sustainability of the cultural heritage of the area. Funded initially by local businessmen and various NGO's, RTA attracted the attention of an IUCN initiative (Fair Trade in Tourism) and this resulted in the very first Fair Trade in Tourism pilot project in the world being established around the artists in the area. This concept has now been introduced on a national basis.

References

In terms of research references I can only refer to the following:

- SAHRA (Ron Viney)
- University of Witwatersrand Archaeology Department did some work around the Ribolla mountain area in the 1970's and found evidence of terracing and other signs of Vhavenda settlements.
- SA Arts and Crafts Council.
- Alpheus Mangezi, an independent researcher based at Elim.
- Swiss Mission and Elim Hospital community members.

This is an overview and touches briefly on this specific area but nonetheless it outlines the successes of a coordinated approach to cultural heritage.