

The relationship between traditional authority and modern democracy is one of the recurrent themes in African development. In rural South Africa, as in many neighbouring countries, chiefs and elected councillors fight over the power to allocate land and to rule their communities. Customary courts continue to exist alongside magistrates courts. And because of the apparent tensions between tradition and democracy, policy-makers are hesitant to come up with clear guidelines on which of the 'two bulls in the kraal' has the right to rule.

But how great is the gap between the systems of government? What has changed since 1994? Rather than offering a theoretical answer to this question, this book contains scenes from everyday life in Sekhukhune, in the Northern Province. Vividly, it describes how ordinary people are getting to grips with change. It outlines the debates that take place under the thorn tree, in the tribal council, in ramshackle schools.

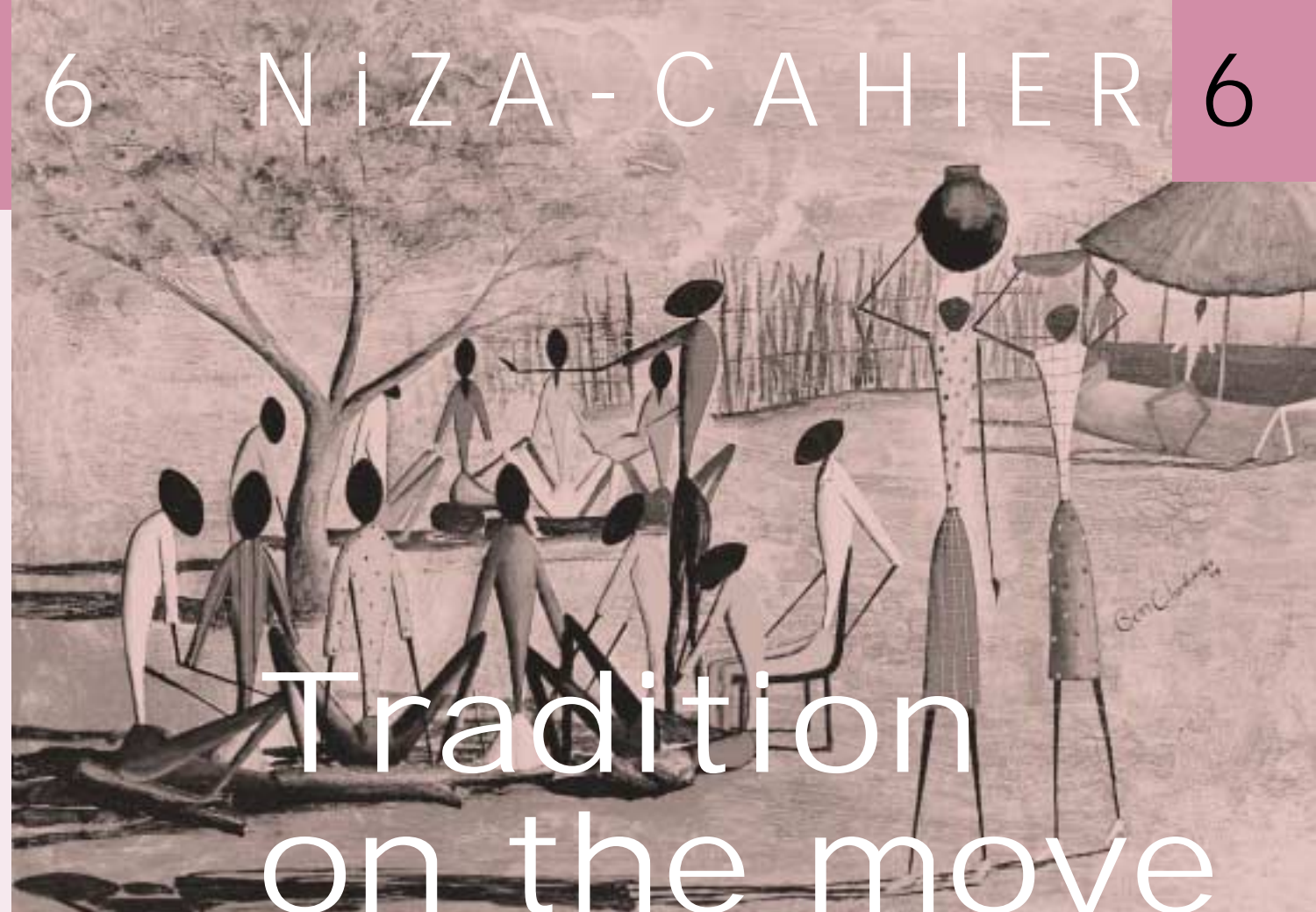
In doing so, these descriptions offer a fascinating insight into day-to-day life in one of the poorest parts of post-Apartheid South Africa. But the scenes also constitute a powerful plea to the government to support those powers at the local level who are trying to align tradition and democracy. Only then will rural development really get under way.

The Netherlands institute for Southern Africa (NiZA) is an independent NGO that disseminates information on the region of Southern Africa. NiZA is an intermediary organisation whose principle aim is to direct its strategic interventions at decision-makers and policymakers. Most activities are concentrated on three programmes: 'Media & Freedom of Speech'; 'Economic Relations' and 'Human Rights & Democratisation'. Political objectives are realised by research, lobbying, project support and other instruments.

The institute, financially supported by 30,000 donors, publishes the quarterly magazine 'Zuidelijk Afrika', the NiZA Cahiers, the Occasional Papers and has an extensive documentation centre.

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# Tradition on the move

*Chiefs, democracy and change  
in rural South Africa*

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