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Mmino wa setšo: songs of town and country and the experience of migrancy by men and women from the northern Transvaal

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Arts, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Johannesburg 1993

Declaration

I declare that this dissertation is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Doctor of Arts in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university.

Deborah James

1 day of SEPTEMBER 1993

Deborah Ann James

ABSTRACT

The thesis attempts to illuminate the process through which identitities, apparently strongly "ethnic", are constructed by migrant women, and to examine how these differ from the equivalent identities constructed by men.

The focus is upon northern Transvaal migrancy, and special emphasis is given to the central role played by musical performance - particularly that of the style called kiba - in constituting migrant associations. Men and women form separate dance associations: the thesis is concerned particularly with migrant women, and sets the dance groups in the broader setting of female migrancy in southern Africa. This is a phenomenon which has been neglected in the literature. The thesis criticises the adaptive emphasis of earlier writings on migrant association, and the lack of "local knowledge" in Marxist accounts.

Performers of the genre emphasise that the music is "traditional", and their lyrics legitimate the present experiences of contemporary composers by juxtaposing them with the past experiences of older ones. They view the roles they play in relation to their family members - both living dependents and deceased forebears - in terms of stereotypes laid down by sotho custom. But these independent migrant female performers of the genre, in contrast to their rurally-domiciled and dependent counterparts, are women whose disrupted and geographically mobile upbringing has led them to seek out modernity and progress rather than an adherence to the ways of "traditionalists". They are primary breadwinners for their natal families. Custom and tradition provide an idiom in terms of which, while retaining affiliations to men's kiba sufficient to ensure their continued access to a performance space and an audience, they enunciate an identity as relatively autonomous and emancipated migrants in an urban context.

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Preface

The first time I became aware of kiba was in the form in which it was sung by rural women - lebowa - during fieldwork I conducted in Sephaku village, Nebo district, during 1983. The Sephaku dance group, later to be named dipalela tlala (defeaters of hunger), adopted me as a kind of mascot, dressed me up in their uniform of smocks and asked for a ride in my car so that they could accompany their chief to the opening of the Lebowa parliament in Seshego. I later discovered that this chief was having an affair with the group's leader, which led me to suspect that it was something other than simple area or political loyalty which accounted for our presence at the parliament buildings that day.

But during this period of fieldwork I became aware that women's lebowa or kiba singing was a very widespread phenomenon. At a variety of significant occasions of state, I noticed that the presence of suited bureaucrats was always matched by that of groups of women singers in their brightly coloured smocks and headscarves, often adorned with costume jewelry or, more cheaply but just as effectively, with pink plastic potscourers. Images of these women singers were also to be found in published form: both in the popular press and adorning the front pages of magazines of local or national government propaganda.

The only male equivalent to this widespread and popular female activity of which I could find any evidence seemed to be football. When I went into a young woman's house and saw displayed on the wall two team photographs, in uniform - one of her together with her dance team, and one of her brother together with his football team - I became more convinced of this equivalence, at least in the case of younger people. I presumed, though, that the absence of male musical activity must be attributable to the absence from village life of middle-aged men as migrants.

When I went back to Sephaku in 1989, this time with the sole purpose of researching musical activity, I asked women singers whether their husbands had ever played or sung. It was then that I first became aware of the existence of the men's genre called kiba, which some of these men had performed while working and living as labour tenants on surrounding white-owned farms. I had read Huskisson's thesis on the music of the Pedi (1958), but did not then

identify the dinaka of her account with the kiba of which my informants were telling me. Despite the fact that this male genre was absent from village life in Sephaku, women made reference to its existence when they explained that the new fashion lebowa or mpepetloane which they had copied from women's groups in the neighbouring magisterial district of Sekhukhune, and which they were performing alongside an older women's style called makgakgasa, was unique in being the women's equivalent of kiba, formerly the preserve of men.

Only later, in 1990, did I see men's kiba performed in the context in which it had long become naturalised: on the dusty wastegrounds of Reef township, played and danced by male migrants from the northern Transvaal. It was at this stage, as well, that I had my first sight of migrant women's kiba singing and dancing. During the whole of 1990, I became, with Malete Thomas Nkadimeng who acted as my interpreter, a habitual visitor at the weekly practices in Alexandra, and at many performances both in Alexandra and at rural venues. Intruding into performers' meagre leisure time, we spent long hours on a Saturday morning or afternoon having discussions with men and women about their lives and their music.

It was in March of the following year, 1991, that the invasion of hostels by "the Zulus" or "Inkatha" - in reality, by co-ordinated groups of unemployed Zulu youths from outside the township - occurred. In the process of driving out the hostels' previous residents, which included large numbers of northern Sotho men, this invasion had the effect of sending kiba into a long-lasting exile. Dancers from Alexandra as from other townships like those adjoining Springs and Germiston, deprived of their informal arena beside the hostels, sought refuge by joining other groups in less strife-torn areas, or by simply ceasing singing for a period. As the list of performances in Appendix 2 indicates, an Alexandra-based group like Ditšhweu tša Malebogo met during the later part of 1991 only for the monthly meeting of the mohodisano to which most of its singers belonged in parallel with their membership of the singing group. Some of the kiba members driven away from their established venues by the violence centred around the hostels have, to this day, not yet resumed their singing and dancing activities to their satisfaction. My switching of focus to Maaparankwe, the Sekhukhune group in Tembisa, during the remainder of 1991 and for 1992 was prompted, then, not so much by my wish to avoid the risks of entering Alexandra township, but by the

reluctance of kiba members to risk continued performance there during these troubled years.

It was during 1991, as well, that I returned to Lebowa, together with Philip Mnisi who was acting as my interpreter at that stage, to find out more about the rural performance of mmino wa setšo and women's kiba. We visited the famous harepa player Johannes Mokgwadi at his home in GaMasha, and attended a performance by him at the wedding of Aaron Motswaledi, prominent ANC activist in the area. We visited women's groups in GaNkwana and Mphanama, and conducted extensive discussions with the members of the group Dithabaneng, in Nchabeleng village. We also discovered that there was a revival of men's kiba in the village, with older retired migrants teaching young men - mostly politically active "comrades" whose previous leisure activity had been confined to playing football - to play and dance.

During the years between 1989, when I began the research for this thesis, and 1992, when I started to write it up in earnest, I evolved a kind of three-pronged methodology. One aspect of this corresponded with what anthropologists usually term "participant observation": long hours observing kiba performance, and asking participants and audience about the nature and significance of various aspects of the music and dance. The second entailed discussions - and often heated arguments - with individual performers or groups of performers about the significance of the music and lyrics. The third involved discussions, sometimes recorded and subsequently transcribed, with particular informants. These were aimed at collecting life-histories, but were focused specifically around people's lives as workers and as musicians, and on areas of overlap between these two.

While discussions of this kind were conducted with numerous people within the world of northern Transvaal migrancy, I ended up with a comprehensive and detailed sample of 20 urban-based migrant women, whose names are listed in Appendix 1. It is on the life-histories, opinions, and lyrical compositions of these women, seen against the context of information gleaned from discussions with other informants, that the explorations and conclusions of this thesis are primarily based.

Introduction

On Sunday the 17th of March 1990, as on other Sundays, the piece of open ground adjoining the Number 1 Men's Hostel in Alexandra township was a focus of intense musical activity. It began in a fairly desultory way during the late morning, gradually building up into a fever pitch of excitement by the late afternoon. Sometime around midday, the blowing of a shrill whistle was heard. Individual men dressed in everyday clothes dislodged themselves from groups of drinkers sitting around in makeshift shebeens on tins under tattered plastic shading, and grouped themselves on one side of the drummers who began to play a set of hide-covered drums. In a rhythmical sequence, each man started to blow a note on a single aluminium pipe hanging around his neck from a piece of thong. The tune produced by these combined pipe-sounds was the regimental song monti, invariably used to introduce a day's dancing. Still continuing to blow their pipes, the men danced outwards from their grouped position to form a circle around the drummers. These men were the dinaka (a term referring to the pipes, but also applying to the group of musicians) of SK Alex.

As the drumming and dancing progressed through a series of different rhythms, a small crowd gathered. At the end of this first performance, the men retreated into the hostel to change into their full dancing gear. This included authentic Scottish kilts, white boxer shorts, white tennis shoes, white lounge shirts, seedpod leg-rattles and headdresses with ostrich feathers and goats' horns. During their next performance, and during a third one right at the end of the afternoon, the crowd gathering to watch increased in size and in enthusiasm until it was pressing inwards, threatening to engulf the dancers in its midst. It was kept at bay, with difficulty, by group members called "policemen" wielding whips.

In a ditferent part of the open ground, a performance by a different dinaka began, sometimes overlapping with the one which began before it. Each dinaka represents the Alexandra branch of a broad constituency of worker/musicians from a particular home area in the northern Transvaal/Lebowa. Thus, for example, SK Alex are the dancers from the rural region of Sekhukhune residing in Alexandra township, but there are also groups representing Matlala, Moletši, Molepo and other reserve areas. These identities are announced to the township audience by names painted on the side of each group's drums.



Figure 1: Men's kiba: the regimental song monti. Alexandra township

(photo: Santu Mofokeng)

The musical style or genre known as kiba - from the verb go kiba (to beat time, to stamp) - of which dinaka is the men's version, is played widely on the Reef and in surrounding areas of industrial and domestic employment. In the compounds of mines, power stations and factories, where it is encouraged by management as a form of competitive recreation, it is a male genre only, but in the less restrictive environment of the townships it has, since the late 1970s, acquired a female version which is now played as well in rural villages of the northern Transvaal.

In Alexandra, as in the other township venues of kiba, women's performances usually take place between those of dinaka. Their dress, like the men's, is uniform: layers of different coloured cloths tied around the waist, embroidered cotton smocks, headcloths of netting or velveteen, numerous beaded necklaces and anklets, and leg-rattles made of plastic from milk-bottle containers and containing small stones. The women sing rather than playing the pipes, and their dances are more sedate than those of their male counterparts. Koša is the name given to their songs, and to the groups of women. A women's koša is usually partnered by a men's dinaka, and performs in between the male performances.

Setšo (origin, or tradition) is the term which has recently been coined to describe both the music and dance of kiba and the costume, especially that of women, which goes with it. The term, applied to the overarching class of music mmino wa setšo (traditional music) of which kiba is considered a part, has been coined and used by promoters, elites, and presenters on the radio and television. Its recent popularity does not mean that it misrepresents folk concepts, however, since it substitutes for the older term mmino wa sesotho (sotho music) which is often still used interchangeably with it. Migrant performers have now come to espouse mmino wa setšo as a term which accurately describes the performative project in which they are involved. They enter mmino wa setšo competitions, belong to a Lebowa mmino wa setšo association, and wear printed T-shirts announcing their commitment to this kind of music.

The performance of kiba at this and similar venues ceased after the Reef hostels became the site of increasingly violent battles during 1991 and 1992. Those already residing in the hostels were forcibly expelled, and their places taken, by groups of mostly unemployed men



Figure 2: Women's kiba: Ditšhweu tša Malebogo performing at Funda Centre, Soweto

(photo: Santu Mofokeng)

characterised as being members of Inkatha or simply as "the Zulus". These, alleged by some to have enjoyed State backing, then waged war on the township residents - many of them ANC members - in the vicinity. Kiba groups, driven to find alternative venues, began to meet in arenas somewhat less accessible to the general public: fenced residential yards, or sections of the street outside the township houses of those few members privileged to have access to such formal dwellings. They continue, despite this refugee-like status in the townships, to give regular performances in northern Transvaal villages, where they are invited to play professionally at a wide range of functions. Although some groups have been unable to find alternative spaces for practice, and so meet only when invited somewhere to perform professionally, they anticipate with enthusiasm a time when they will resume their weekly gatherings. Despite the disruptions caused by the recent urban violence in South Africa, then, kiba continues to be performed and has a positive future projected for it by participants and audience.

Ethnomusicology and migrancy

Cultural forms characterised as "traditional" feature prominently in the activities and consciousness of migrant workers in southern Africa. It has been realised that to depict such people as an anonymous and identityless workforce does not do justice to the complex realities of the migratory experience. In contrast to the Copperbelt writers' insistence that, once in town, migrants' identities were to be understood only in terms of their urban experiences,[1] recent studies on southern Africa attempting to understand the migrant "way of thought" have given attention to rural experience and background (McAllister 1980, 1985), and especially to how this is invoked and becomes manifest in migrants' attempts to make sense of their experience as a whole (JL and J Comaroff 1987, 1989; Bozzoli 1991). One of the most potent ways in which the experiences and associations evoked by a migrant's rural

[1] See for example Mitchell (1956); Gluckman (1961). Argyle (1991) and Ferguson (1990) have criticised this perspective: Ferguson shows that "Gluckman's almost mantra-like slogan, 'An African townsman is a townsman, an African miner is a miner' has served ... as a sort of talisman guarding against reactionary attempts to style African urban workers as 'tribesmen' and 'primitives'" (1990:619). Vail and White say that the words of kalela reveal no inconsistency between the celebration of a Copperbelt life-style and the maintenance of a rural base as the context for self-assertion. The dance had become "an important means of discussing the contradictions for Africans that arose out of their living on the Copperbelt as long-term labour migrants and yet possessing out of necessity, ties with a countryside dominated by the 'traditional' political structures of indirect rule" (1991:50-1).

background are made to appear in his urban-based world is through forms of cultural representation such as oratory and musical performance, where they often appear or are named as "traditional".

It has, then, been mainly through an examination of such types of expression that writers have arrived at an understanding of how migrants "created and sustained cultures that mediated their two worlds" (Moodie 1991:57). Ethnomusicology, somewhat in advance of other branches of anthropology, has been in the vanguard of the study of these migrant cultural constructions. It has been ethnomusicologists or anthropologists of music who have been particularly interested in the creation by performers of a universe of experience and practice which straddles the rural/urban dichotomy and so expresses the realities of this oscillating lifestyle.

It was a complex interaction of influences which led scholars in the anthropology of music to pioneer this particular area of study. Earlier research, criticised for its inattention to change, nonetheless laid the basis for a later revival of interest in local traditions. The critics of this early approach, while commendable for their awareness of historical process and of attendant developments in music, overlooked regional specificities in their wish to bring the entire scope of southern African musical change into focus. These combined influences pointed the way to an anthropology of music which reconciled an interest in local styles with an awareness of broader changes.

Early interest in African music resulted in a number of studies which concentrated mainly on the relatively unchanging musical practices of bounded rural societies. Some looked primarily at musical form (Kirby 1934; H Tracey 1948, 1958, 1969; A Tracey 1970a and b; 1971; Huskisson 1958), while others emphasised social context (Blacking 1962, 1964, 1967, 1969, 1973; Johnston 1971, 1973, 1974, 1975).[2] Most, reluctant even to acknowledge the existence of migrancy or of the broad processes of proletarianisation and urbanisation that were taking place, were uninterested in social or musical change.

[2] For a fuller account of this tendency see James (1990c).

There were few precedents then when a scholar from the U S began to undertake research into changing styles in South African music.[3] During the 1970s, David Coplan researched the emergence of black urban performance culture in Johannesburg. He showed how, although an emerging social stratification was accompanied by the development of sub-styles, the transferring of influences from one incipient social class to another resulted in a broad-based black urban music with wide appeal which transcended narrower socio-economic divisions (1982; 1985).

Although Coplan's research project laid the ground for a new interest in the study of black South African music, its focus on communities undergoing definitive processes of urbanization tended to exclude a consideration of migrant communities whose originally rural cultures were being transformed through urban experience, but in rather different ways. It was for other researchers - and later Coplan himself - to look away from the sweeping processes of urbanisation which resulted in apparently universal styles of working-class music, and to focus instead on the regionally variant local traditions through which migrants only temporarily resident in the city constructed their identities.

Politically, this was an enterprise of disputed worth. The commitment by earlier students of African music to ignoring anything but "traditional" forms has come to be seen by critics as a tacit endorsement of the manipulation of ethnicities performed by the South African state to create the ideological buttresses of apartheid (Andersson 1981). But from the work of researchers who examined local musical traditions in more detail, it became clear that different groups moving to the city were involved in creating their own vital versions of rural/urban musical culture out of originally rural styles. These were groups of people who, while becoming involved in the urban labour market, retained strong links in the countryside. Instead of shedding their diverse backgrounds to immerse themselves in the homogenous urban culture which Coplan described, these groups evolved versions of culture which derived from their experience as migrants and from the particular kinds of deprivation and oppression they suffered. The construction of migrant identities facilitated by this music, far from representing a quiescent acceptance of government-imposed ethnicity, often entailed the

[3] Exceptions were Kirby (1959), Rycroft (1958; 1977).

expression of resistance and oppositional sentiments.

One of these local migrant styles was that investigated by Coplan himself: the lifela developed by, and celebrating the experience and bravery in the face of danger of, migrant labourers from Lesotho workir g in the mines of South Africa (1987, 1988, 1991). Their long and elaborate incantations, which Coplan characterises as "auriture" rather than music, invoke the symbolic authority of rural traditions while commenting on specifically urban experiences. They use metaphors, inherently dialectical in their structure, to "bridge the discontinuities" of the oscillating migrant lifestyle, and in the process to create a sense of personal independence and autonomy which counters "their identity as mere labour units in the political economy of South Africa" (1987:431).

Another such local music is that performed by the low-paid and hostel-dwelling Zulu migrants among whom Clegg and Thomas have done extensive research. It includes both individual, instrumental musical styles which developed out of the female songs of rural courtship (Clegg 1981), and communal dancing styles. In the latter, an area or clan rivalry with its genesis in rural insecurity of land tenure in the postcolonial era has been channelled into ngoma (song/dance) competitions (Clegg 1982). The fierceness of the competition involved, while not always successfully enclosed within the dance arena, has given rise to an extraordinary flowering of aesthetic activity (ibid.:10-1). And while attempts have been made by municipal authorities and by the employers of migrant labour to "domesticate" ngoma dancing (Erlmann 1991:95-111; Thomas 1988), these have not curtailed the opportunity which it provides for its participants to recreate ideas about rurally-based Zulu virility and male identity in an urban context (Clegg 1984).

A different aspect of the Zulu musical repertoire, somewhat more self-consciously sophisticated, is explored by Erlmann. He looks at the style known as isicathamiya, recently made famous by Ladysmith Black Mambazo, among whose sources are ngoma dancing, Christian hymnody and American minstrelsy. Through this music, a class identity based on objective material conditions is integrated with other sources of identity - primordial, missionary-derived, and stylishly urban and modern (1987). Despite the display of urban status and sophistication which the genre entails, it does not express a desire to deny or

underplay the rural pole of migrants' existence. Rather, it holds both of these poles firmly in view, and attempts to straddle them (Erlmann 1991:158).

It is, then, within a body of writings by anthropologists of music in southern Africa - or of aesthetic experience more broadly - that attempts have been made to understand the way in which migrants effect a straddling of the apparently irreconcilable worlds in which their lives are lived. And it is within the context of these writings that my own study is situated. The approach which focuses on migrant culture and consciousness by examining musical performance might be considered to be too formal and aesthetic in its emphasis, however. An emphasis on the origins, uses and meanings of formal and stylistic devices might imply authors' inattention to the real experience - unmediated by musical or literary expression - of the performers of these styles. In other words, a shortcoming inherent in the ethnomusicological approach could be one of "too much text" and "too little context".

Performance, text and context

There is a body of literature which concerns itself primarily with what text can tell us about context. This is the corpus of writings, mostly by historians, in which the lyrics of orally-transmitted songs have been used as sources of information in the study of non-literate societies (Vail and White 1978, 1983; Alnaes 1969, 1989; Harries 1987). In the absence of written sources, and given the potential fickleness or bias of individual informants, lyrics are thought to provide reliable insights into the doings and concerns of rural people, since these lyrics are likely to be retained only "if they express popular attitudes and opinions" (Harries 1987:95). Most of these studies have focused on rural groups using song to comment on, or protest about, harsh actions perpetrated by employers or government authorities.

The lyrics of the songs of northern Sotho migrancy - specifically women's songs, since those of men have become primarily instrumental rather than vocal - do indeed contain social commentary. Some of this is direct, like that in the song Mamelodi which expresses a kind of angry wonderment at the State's capacity for centralised record-keeping: no matter where or for what offence one is arrested, it will be known about in Tšhwane (Pretoria). In other cases, as in Maria o motšwetše ke kompong (Maria has given birth to a child in the

compound), the criticism directed against an errant individual reflects indirectly on the iniquities of apartheid and the system of migrant labour.

Songs of this kind derive, as White has shown (1982), from traditions of praise poetry which provide for a dialogue between holders of power and their subjects, and which - within defined limits - allow for demands to be made and criticisms to be uttered. In changed circumstances, such traditions may be reshaped for the expression of grievances to plantation owners, presidents of one-party states, and others (Vail and White 1991:294-6). There may, indeed, be pragmatic reasons why people do not express openly their criticisms of the status quo (Barber 1987:8). Where mmino wa setšo is performed by the village-dwelling wives of Transvaal migrants, their clientelist dependence on the area chief, and on the "homeland" authorities in general, means that their lyrics are never openly critical. Their frequent performances at state-sponsored occasions, however, provide opportunity to discern the subversive undertones in their lyrics for those who wish to hear them (James 1990b; Vail and White 1991:319).

From one point of view, such songs/poems of complaint may be thought to express "resistance" to constituted authority: from another, they might appear to be bred out of a community's inability to act on their situation in any other way than by singing about it. At the extreme they might even be thought to be indicative of "collaboration". But this is a crude dichotomy. For Vail and White its use is symptomatic of the "naivete of so much resistance psychology". It obscures, rather than reveals, the subtle and complex ways in which people come to cope with exploitation:

> A frustrated farm labourer in colonial Zimbabwe who misses work because of drunkenness may be viewed as undermining settler capitalism and, hence, as "resisting"; a man who works hard, saves his money to educate his children, and finds his satisfactions in ferocious church-going may well be seen as selling out to the system and, hence, as "collaborating". But with reference to which theories of the human mind do these labels become the "right" things to be said about such behaviour? (1983:886)

During the course of my study of the lyrics and performance of northern Sotho migrant music and of people's interpretation of these, it became clear that to single out only the expression of feelings of resistance from the total range of meanings enclosed in the text would be to

provide a distorted view. Quite as important as the expression of criticism against the broader structural inequities of South African society is that of the opposition, again often expressed in a veiled and equivocal manner, by women against the roles allocated them - within their narrower universe of northern Transvaal migrancy - in household, in village society, and in migrant association. And carrying equal weight to, or even outweighing, the lyrics' expression of protest is their conveying of pride in migrant women's own abilities as performers and dancers, as Chapter Three will demonstrate.

To isolate lyrics as sources of "true" historical data - about opposition to domination, for example - is thus to deny both their embeddedness within the performance context and the capacity of performance itself to alter, influence, or even constitute the objective or "true" social world of the performers. Barber and de Moraes Farias have commented insightfully on the inseparability of text from its performance context (1989). In the case of Nigerian oral literature there is no text hiding behind and partly obscured by the performance: "the whole point of an oriki text lies in what the performer is doing" (ibid.:14). The endeavours of an oral historian, even one as enlightened as Vansina who attempts to take account of these oral-literary devices, are, they claim, largely misguided since their ultimate aim is to discount these in penetrating beyond them to what the words state about the real or objective historical situation.[4]

These issues have been intensively debated in the field of performance studies.[5] One of the major sources of disagreement between writers or ethnographers using the performance approach concerns the connection between text and context. Writers like Clifford (1988) and Barber and de Moraes Farias (1989) accuse some such studies of limiting their idea of context too much to the microdynamics of performance situations and to the immediate conditions

[4] See also Vail and White - "to relegate aesthetic considerations to felicities of expression and then raid the content of these songs and poems for 'history' would be to abuse them profoundly" (1991:72-3).

[5] The particular approach which has come to be signposted by the use of the word "performance" has both grown out of and had a significant influence on studies in oral literature and ethnomusicology. It has expanded beyond a focus on acts of spoken or sung speech into a wider approach to the method and practice of participant observation in anthropology as a whole, in which even the interaction between informants and researcher is seen as having the quality of a "performance". For an overview of some issues raised by the study of performance, see Bauman and Briggs (1990). For texts in ethnomusicology influenced by this perspective, see Seeger (1989) and Basso (1985). For performance as suggesting a method and approach in anthropology, see Fabian (1990).

surrounding such situations, and thus of ignoring the broader socio-historical conditions within which performances are embedded. Bauman and Briggs respond by pointing to the impossibility of objectively defining the "true" context, since "the researcher becomes the judge of what merits inclusion" (1990:68). To decide on what constitutes the relevant background to a performance is also to deny one of the fundamental tenets of this approach: that performance is not simply reflective of its social background but that it is reflexive; that it constitutes the social settings in which it occurs rather than simply being cradled within them.

To bridge these apparently irreconcilable positions, Barber and de Moraes Farias plead for a compromise between the performance approach, which is in danger of "ignoring ... what the texts actually say" and the historical approach which denies "the properties of a text as a text":

> what seemed to be required was an approach that acknowledged simultaneously the historicity and the textuality of oral texts, that combined a sociology with a poetics of oral literature (1989:1)

My own approach is informed by this compromise. My subject is a musical genre rather than, say, the socioeconomic circumstances of migration from a given area. Of primary importance are the music, its performers and the clubs they have formed to sing and play and dance it, and what they think it means. But the context of migrant music from the northern Transvaal will be seen to extend well beyond the microdynamics of the performance situation itself. If I am "the judge" of what to include and exclude as part of this context, my judgement has been based on extensive discussions with performers - often mediated through reflections on the meanings of lyrics themselves - about their lives and attitudes. Performance here cannot be understood except in relation to their backgrounds in rural districts of the northern Transvaal, to their experience of migration (direct or otherwise), and to the ways in which they have formulated adult identities as migrant men, as stay-at-home wives, or as migrant women.

I would certainly agree, then, that performance, by uniting people in immediately-experienced experiences of collective orientation and identity, influences their experience of the social

environment and even comes partly to constitute this environment for them. In a variety of performance scenarios described in different places throughout this thesis I have attempted to show that this is so. But if text influences context in this way, influence in the reverse direction is a more complex process. There are striking disparities between context - the background in which many of the migrant women who sing mmino wa setšo were reared, in which modernity and civilisation were much stressed - and text - the "traditional" music which they chose to perform as part of the process of finding a place in the urban milieu.

The interaction and relationship of genres

One of the problems with the insistence in performance theory that text should be the primary focus of attention, creating and constituting its own relevant context, is the trickiness of ascertaining the limits of the performed genre in question, and thus of delimiting the object of study. If the genre or style belongs to a broader category of phenomena, not all of which are "performed", do these residual things form part of the social setting or of the genre? This is of particular relevance to my own study, since the category mmino wa sesotho (more recently mmino wa setšo) belongs within not one but two alternative broader conceptual categories. One is mmino (music/dance in general) which also includes church, gospel and modern recorded music alongside that associated with sesotho/setšo. But mmino wa sesotho/setšo also belongs to the category, defined by its qualifying adjective, which includes not only music but a whole range of practices and beliefs identified by reference to custom or tradition. This includes dress, forms of inheritance, and behaviour appropriate to women and men respectively, alongside the genres of direto (praises) and the singing and dancing aimed to cure malopo (possessing spirits) which have a more immediately obvious relevance to a study of performance. Elements from this whole range of sotho/setšo things, as well as simply the music, are invoked and referred to in particular circumstances by northern Transvaal migrants.

Restricting the focus somewhat, there is certainly some value in examining the relationships and interactions of closely-related genres as Seeger does in his insightful study of singing among the Suya of Brazil (1987). His insistence that music must be examined in its systematic relationship with other spoken or sung genres, such as speech, invocation and

'astruction, proved instructive in examining the links between the music of setšo and other genres defined as belonging within this category. But what made this a complex exercise was my realization of the rapidity with which each of the genres considered operationally relevant within the world of northern Transvaal migrancy is changing, both in itself and in relation to other genres.

A good example is that of the interaction between mmino wa setšo and direto (praises). In rural society, these praises take both a male and public/political form associated with people of high rank, and a female form more often associated with the domestic domain and with commoners.[6] Their inclusion into urban migrant performance takes the form of "quotes", sandwiched into or alongside music and dance on occasions designed specifically around the former. Similarly, while the music of malopo spirit possession once occupied a totally separate sphere from that of mmino wa setšo and was defined by reference to a separate "cult", it has come in a migrant/urban context to be thought of as associated closely, or even overlapping with this genre, as will be recounted in Chapter Seven.

The very fact that kiba, previously a male migrant genre perfected and primarily played in town in recent times, has acquired as its gender counterpart a female version, replacing the rural singing styles previously thought appropriate to women, points to the rapid transforming of the perceived relationship between the various forms of cultural expression.

The rapidity with which old forms change, or are adapted to carry new messages, also results in a lack of uniform and generally agreed-upon opinion about how all these genres fit together. Thus, in addition to differences of interpretation based on gender differences, there are disagreements about the meaning of lyrics, or the significances of particular styles, based on less structured and more idiosyncratic grounds.

One woman insisted, for example, that her involvement in mmino wa setšo is just "for fun" or "a game"; another stated that it had the added significance of pleasing the ancestors, since they too used to dance this music; while a third claimed that her regular participation in these

[6] For northern Sotho praises, see van Zyl (1941), for Tswana chiefly praises, Schapera (1965): for Zulu women's and commoners' praises see Gunner (1989), Gunner and Gwala (1991).

practices has something like the therapeutic effect which she derived from the drumming and dancing of malopo (spirit possession) while living in the countryside. In similar vein, although most participants are insistent that mmino wa setšo performance, being just for fun, has nothing to do with the secret music and dancing of koma (initiation school), urban experience has generated new overlaps between the two. The group Ditšhwĕu tša Malebogo, which was originally founded for the performance of the former, also constituted itself informally into a body to effect the initiation of a Tswana member and work-mate who wanted through Pedi initiation to become acceptable to her Pedi in-laws, and in the process instructed her in the secret performance of koma music.

Ultimately, there is an underlying logic in the way this variety of cultural activities or oral genres group themselves together, as I show in Chapter Seven. They are connected not as the fragments of an archaically clung-to rural culture, although many have the appearance of strong "traditionalism" and are defined by people as falling into the category of activities designated by the word sesotho. Rather, they are linked as components - invoked situationally, voluntarily and inventively by first-generation female migrants - of an identity which is cast in the idiom of inheritance and family continuity.

It is the position of this mmino wa setšo as a focal point of the reiteration of allegedly customary things in an urban context that demonstrates one of the most marked changes in the relationship between genres, or between a genre and its context. The rural female style on which its current urban migrant equivalent is based was tied not only to a gender but also to a specific part of the lifecycle - a time before marriage and before the assumption of onerous domestic responsibilities - and had the corresponding significance of "a game". Especially for the people who later became migrants, living on the farms and Trust areas of what was to become the northern part of Lebowa,[7] this music was part of a specifically sotho culture of girlhood, which was largely laid aside and replaced in adolescence by a more mission- or school-aligned set of songs, clothes, and orientations.

[7] The "Trust" farms or areas were those purchased by the South African Native Trust (later Bantu Trust, and later still Development Trust) to augment the original reserves or "homelands" which had been scheduled by the 1913 Land Act. These areas, together with the system of government control of agriculture which was implemented in them (often with only partial or minimal success) came to be known simply as "Trust".

When the new female style, women's kiba, began to become the fashion in both rural and urban contexts, its constituency was that of older women: married matrons, or mothers of older children, rather than the unattached and relatively unburdened younger women of before. The new style in rural contexts, except where encouraged and patronised by chiefs to augment the grandeur of occasions of state, is regarded as somewhat marginal - as a sphere of female activity easily discounted by men. But in urban performance, along with the male version of kiba with which it shares a space and an audience, it has been recontextualised: from being a "mere game" played by youths it has become a central part of weighty and consciously-maintained setšo (tradition) performed by the adults who form the pillars of the migrant community. Although this is done partly in the spirit of a cultural revival, it has connotations which link it more directly to lived experience than this term implies. It is connected to, and expressive of, the notion of "home", albeit one reconstructed in an urban area out of a widely-dispersed range of actual homes. And it serves as a locus for, and an opportunity for the expression of, the other activities regarded as part of sesotho - praising, possession, propitiation and divination. Using kiba and these associated activities as building blocks, its female performers in an urban context have constructed an identity as migrant women.

The social constituency of kiba

The musical family to which kiba belongs, and the broader family of cultural practices and beliefs in which it is conceived of as being situated, is thus characterised as wa sesotho (of sesotho) or wa setšo (of origin: traditional). What defines this category of "traditional" things is not only the interrelations - whether logically cohesive or rapidly changing - between its parts, but also its presumed links to a particular social constituency. As shall be seen, wa setšo does derive its significance in part by reference to a group of people which is thought of as concerning itself with things "of origin" or "of tradition". But the significance of "origin", socially defined in this way, then broadens itself in certain contexts to incorporate members of other, opposed social categories, and even at times the whole of a projected or imagined "nation".

The social categories which are of most relevance in defining music are those - paired and opposed - which refer to mission Christianity and which translated into English roughly as

"Christian/traditionalist". Historically, these categories derive their existence from the acceptance or rejection of the Lutheran mission, with its insistence on the transfer of allegiance from chiefs to the moruti (mission minister) and on the eschewing of tribal initiation. Particularly in the heartland of the Pedi polity, this division manifested itself in extreme form, with Christians distancing themselves physically from those who retained their affiliation to the chief, by leaving to live on distant farms or mission stations at a far remove from the sites of chiefly power (Delius 1983:160-78). But even within reserve areas, it gave rise to pronounced divisions. Most villages were, and some remain, physically and geographically divided between Christian and non-Christian areas (Mphahlele 1971:4; Sansom 1991-2:397-401).

Through these processes, substantial rifts were established within rural northern Transvaal communities (Pauw 1974:427-8; Sansom 1991-2:397-401). Although these were not altogether unprecedented, since those who accepted the mission way were often those marginal to society or disaffected with its leaders (Delius 1983:112-4), they were to be newly conceptualised around the pivotal feature of Christianity. The resulting social categories were differently named in sotho depending on the stance of the namer. Those proud to have affiliated themselves to the Christian way called themselves bakriste (Christians) and termed their opposites baheitene (heathens). Those aligning themselves with the chiefs called themselves baditshaba (those of the nation) in opposition to the derogatorily named majakane or majekane (Christians).[8] The geographical divide in many rural communities is named in similar vein: setshabeng is the place of those of the nation, and majekaneng is the place of the Christians. The paired terms majakane/baditshaba and bakriste/baheitene, while orienting themselves by reference to a common dividing line, thus imply opposing moral views of the division.[9]

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[8] Contemporary informants accounted for the origins of this term in various ways: one said it derived from the missionaries' insistence that women cover up their breasts by wearing jackets, while another claimed that it came from the Afrikaans "ja, maar kan nie" (yes, but [I] can't), a derogatory reference to Christian converts' inability to stick to the stern tenets of their faith.

[9] Similar social and conceptual divisions were established through mission activity in a number of other southern African areas, particularly the Eastern Cape (see Hammond-Tooke 1962:63-5; Hunter 1936:351; P & I Mayer 1961:20-41 and 1980) and Natal (Clegg 1981; Meintjies 1991; Reader 1966:338-42). The division appears to be particularly pronounced among sotho communities in the northern Transvaal, perhaps because of the Lutheran missionaries' insistence on their converts' total, almost feudal, subordination (Delius 1983:160-78).

Although these dichotomous categories remain in current use, their rigidity as concepts is applicable more when referring to cultural practices than when used to describe individuals or social groups. Baditshaba, it is universally agreed, are the people who both play and listen to mmino wa setšo (traditional music), while majakane appreciate only mmino wa kereke (church music) and a range of associated forms. The clarity of the division between opposing types of music, and thus the specificity of mmino wa setšo as a category of music, derives from the presumed clarity of the social division between Christians and non-Christians.

But where the terms are used to describe individuals or groups of people, these describe not so much the Christian/traditionalist divide as the class or status-group division which originally arose out of it. The assertion that mmino wa setšo is a music of baditshaba, then, rather than being primarily a comment on "traditional" religious orientation, signifies that its performers are low-paid migrant workers, with strong links to a rural base which they visit frequently, to which they intend to return upon retirement from work, and which they regard as gae (home). The majakane from whom they distinguish themselves are people who, although originally from the same areas, moved to the cities earlier and belong to the urbanised work force, or have remained in the country and form part of a "respectable" middle-class self-employed in small businesses, or working in education and various branches of the civil service.

A clear demonstration of the class or status-group orientation of these two categories is found in the example of people, originally migrants, who have achieved upward mobility. These are individuals who, although socialised by peers and parents into the rudiments of kiba performance, ceased their involvement as they began to mix primarily with people by whom the performance of this music was considered socially inappropriate, and thus of no aesthetic value. Some abandoned all involvement with the music. Others, though ceasing to be direct performers of kiba, concerned themselves with its promotion. One was a man who moved up through the ranks of the workforce at his factory to become the secretary of its recreational club. His duties included the organising of competitions between local dance teams and those representing other factories or mines. Another, Piet Makola, had achieved upward mobility

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and on their abandoning of all aspects of "indigenous culture" (Pauw 1974:427).

through the classic "poor-boy-made-good" means of success in sport. He founded a co-ordinating body - ultimately ill-fated - called the "Mmino wa setšo Association". Modelled on a football league, the aim of this body was to promote competition between, and the financial rewarding and professionalisation of, kiba performers. Both these men, in assuming the role of patron, were indicating their aspirations to middle-class status, their social distance from the ranks of the music's performers, and hence their remoteness from the social category of baditshaba.

Thus, while the insistence of informants that kiba is "for baditshaba" might appear to indicate that this cultural form is oriented towards "traditionalists" rather than Christians, this can be seen to translate more accurately as an orientation towards poor migrants rather than towards urbanised, or rural, people from better-off backgrounds.

There is a further complexity in understanding "origin" or "tradition" in terms of its social constituency if one considers the differences between male and female migrant performers of this music. For male migrants, the learning of kiba as young men at their rural homes is either continued into adult performance if they remain within the social and economic bracket of poor and rurally-based workers, or is discontinued if they move beyond this bracket. For migrant women, however, the link between the culture of girlhood and that of working adulthood is inverted.

The women who have been involved in the performance of rural women's "traditional" genres continuously since childhood are mostly those from areas of Sekhukhune, the heartland of the Pedi empire around whose dominance in the 19th century much of the area subsequently included in the "homeland" of Lebowa was centred. These women do not migrate, but rely on male migrant earnings for support, as Chapter Five will demonstrate. In contrast, the migrant women on the Reef who currently perform kiba in town mostly grew up in areas - known collectively as Leboa (the north) - peripheral to and north of this heartland. After girlhood, their predominant culture and songs were those of school and church, as is recounted in Chapter Six, and their present-day performance of the genre represents something of a cultural revival. For these three major constituencies of kiba from the northern Transvaal



Figure 3: Kiba championships held by the Mmino wa Setšo Association: judges and performers (photo: Santu Mofokeng)

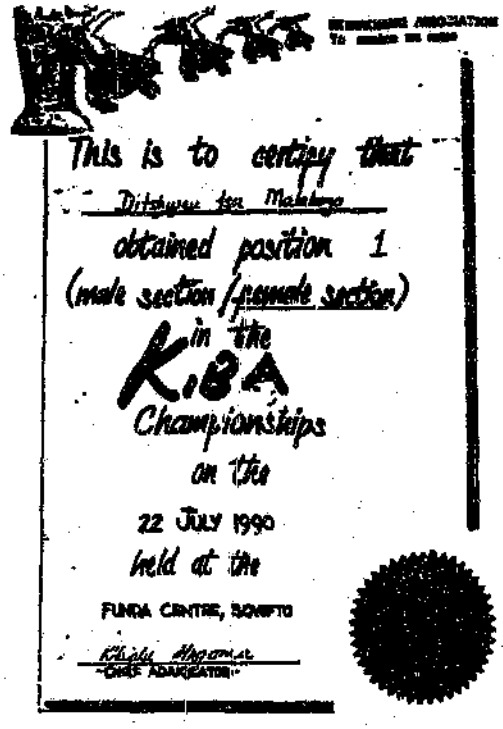

Figure 4: Kiba championships: certificate awarded to members of winning group

Ditšhweu tša Malebogo

- the migrant men, their stay-at-home wives, and the mostly unmarried migrant women - the notion of a music which invokes or is sanctioned by "tradition" or "origin" is very different. This points to some fundamental discontinuities, both stylistically and in terms of social constituency, between men's and women's urban performance. The genre known as kiba, said to have been originally imported into the northern Sotho area from further north, has been part of male rural and urban migrant culture for as long as men from the northern Sotho rural hinterland have been travelling to the mines and factories of the PWV area to work as migrants. In contrast, women's performance - both rural and urban - has been included within the definition of kiba only since the mid-1970s. The women's version of the genre was not, however, merely an imitation of its male equivalent, but had its roots in a series of older, rural performance styles of young women. As I will show in Chapter Three, women's kiba is arguably closer in style to this female rural culture than it is to the men's genre whose definition and whose urban performance space and context it now shares.

Whatever their differences of gender, style and social background, however, the one respect in which the performers of men's and women's kiba stand united also marks them off from the heterogenous urban mass identified as the agents of urban musical change (Barber 1987). This is their distrust and even fear of the broader urban environment of the township or location, and of its people. All informants I spoke to were careful to distinguish themselves from the category of fully-fledged urban residents and township-dwellers, whom they characterised as ill-mannered, drunk and violent. As part of their insistence that "home" is in the country rather than in the socially disrupted world of the location, both men and women migrants performing kiba in town are adamant that they want their children to remain in the country, to become educated and if possible to find employment there.

As it emerges, the division of the social world between the categories of "people from home" and "people from the location", like that between baditshaba and majekane, states things more starkly than they appear in reality. The world of the township - Alexandra, Tembisa, Daveyton, and others on and around the Reef (see p39) - in fact plays an essential role in the lives and especially in the performance schedules of these players and singers. For women, living in backyard servants' rooms in white suburbia and flocking to Alexandra or Tembisa on a Sunday, these areas provide a venue for relaxation and enjoyment away from the eyes

of their employers. For men, the townships have provided a residential base as well as an arena for leisure: many live in shacks or even in permanent township houses in these areas, and a number of male performers were resident in hostels in Alexandra and Tembisa until the factional violence of March 1991 drove them from these, in fear of "the Zulus", to seek refuge with relatives living in other township accommodation or with girlfriends or wives living in the backyards of white suburbia. Until this fateful date it was, indeed, around these hostels containing high densities of northern Transvaal male migrants that the performance of kiba was centred, and from which it drew its main audience. The Number 1 men's hostel in Alexandra, for example, featured kiba almost every Sunday, and served as storage place for the uniforms and bulky drums of groups from many different "home" areas in Lebowa.

This situation both conceptually outside of and yet physically within the township made for a fluidity of social boundaries. Among the regular attenders of kiba performance were migrants from a wide diversity of language groups. There were also people from northern Sotho-speaking areas whose higher educational levels, whose economic position, and whose long-standing urban residence and membership of mission churches would place them firmly within the category of majekane and of "people from the location". They took a nostalgic delight in observing the performance of a genre which they once knew as children but had outgrown or moved beyond, and their frequent or occasional attendance at these weekly practices served to identify them as part of an "imagined community".

An attempt to define the things and music of setšo by reference to a social constituency, while resonating with emic interpretations, is thus more complex than it first appears. Setšo, allegedly restricted to baditshaba (those of the nation), extends at times to incorporate and symbolise a nation conceived of in more modern terms, especially when used by elites both within the "homeland" of Lebowa and in urban communities who identify themselves with a broader northern Sotho collectivity. In rural areas, the recently-evolved female version of kiba has been taken up by the members of national elites within the "homeland" of Lebowa, and made to carry the message of a broader regional unity, as its other name - lebowa - signifies. Occasions associated with the presence and influence of the "homeland" government, from the inauguration of an area chief through to the opening of the parliament



Figure 7: Drum belonging to SK Alex being carried from the men's hostel to the piece of open ground where kiba performance takes place.

(photo: Santu Mofokeng)

buildings. have their grandeur augmented by women's kiba or lebowa performance, usually by groups under the patronage of particular chiefly figures. Official publications make extensive use of the colourful women's uniforms to adorn and give interest to their otherwise drab appearance (see Fig. 5). The theme of national unity is carried through, as well, in urban performances, organised by teachers or educationalists, and associated with such events as the opening of a northern Sotho school, or the anniversary of a women's federation, in Soweto or Mamelodi (see Fig. 6).[10] Here, the "imagined" community associated with the style includes not only the population of the "homeland's" eleven magisterial districts, but also extends to include an urban populace thought of as directly or indirectly associated with the rural northern Sotho-speaking areas.[11]

The use of tradition to glorify a broader Lebowa identity, while initiated by national or local elites in the instances described here, cannot be understood outside the context of apartheid's policy of ethnic separation. Elites within the "homeland" derive their position and standing in part from the existence of this policy, and their use of "tradition" must be seen against the background of a broader manipulation, effected through many different channels, of ethnic identities by the South African government (Spiegel 1989).

To pursue an understanding of mmino wa setšo within the broader context of South African society, we must then look beyond the organic links which unite performers and audience in a particular locale, and examine the interaction between the politically dispossessed and those financially or politically empowered. Unequal control over cultural expression includes attempts by company management to promote the competitive performance of tribal dance as a strategy to contain the energies of a compounded labour force. It also includes the manipulation of music for financial or ideological gain by the state-controlled media and by white-owned record companies such as Gallo. This area of investigation brings us back, by

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[10] I am grateful to the late David Webster for making these newspaper clippings available to me.

[11] See Vail and White for similar cases in which African politicians come to identify dancing "as a centrally important element in what they were trying to define as a new culture", perhaps even aiding in its fossilization "as an officially patronized part of public culture" (1991:264-5). See also Baumann and Briggs on "the analysis of control over discourse that extends from the small-scale and local to the global. A given folktale performance, for example, may be traced through connected processes of decentering and recentering in local oral tradition, in the nationalisation of culture as it is appropriated by learned elites in the service of nationalist ideologies, or in the internationalisation of culture as it is held up to view as part of world literature" (1990:78).

Historical background

The people of Lebowa are generally known as the Northern Sotho, but in reality the population consists of a variety of peoples, including some Ndebele, Tswana, Swazi, Tsonga and Venda tribes. These tribes are not related to each other and therefore have no common history.

The name Pedi or Bapedi is frequently used for the group as a whole. However, this name is not acceptable to the Northern Sotho, since Pedi refers to the Pedi kingdom, which did not include all of the Northern Sotho tribes.

Bapedi is thus not acceptable as a name for either the population or the territory. Owing to the linguistic and cultural diversity in the territory, the neutral name Lebowa was chosen, which means "the north".

The history of Lebowa can be broadly divided into the following periods:



LEBOWA

1

INFORMA Nov/Dec 1989

Figure 5: Picture of women kiba singers in the government-published Informa.
(Informa Nov/Dec 1989, Vol 36 No 10)



These sunglass-clad women, part of the Northern Sotho tribal dancers, contributed to the atmosphere of celebration present at the official reopening of the Lethabo Combined School in Naledi, Soweto.



Thousands celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Womens Fed at a rally in Mamelodi.

Figure 6: Newspaper photographs showing kiba dancers performing at public township events: the opening of the Lethabo combined school in Naledi, Soweto; and the 30th anniversary of the Federation of South African women in Mamelodi.
(Rand Daily Mail 32/8/84; Sowetan 16/5/84)

another route, to examine one major shortcoming of the study of musical change in South Africa. This has been the insistence on an inexorable and unilinear process of urbanization, in which "traditional" features only as a sign of ideological manipulation.

Media, Urbanization and Migrancy

Traditional music, whether promoted by the state-owned media, by the local record companies assumed to be influenced by state policy, or by large mining or industrial companies employing compounded labour, has been interpreted as a means of control. Writers analyzing the broad sweep of urbanisation in southern Africa have seen the various attempts by state and capital to manipulate listeners' and audiences' tastes as a bid to deny the emergence of a permanently-urbanized black population, and to posit or encourage instead the wished-for reality of a rurally-rooted migrant labour force. In the discourse of these writers, the word "traditional" is applied to a variety of musics which were promoted by media and/or management during the 1950s and 1960s: either syncretic forms played by rural musicians which are characterised as "semi-" or "neo-traditional", or those, apparently more thoroughly indigenous in style, thought of as wholly "traditional". The term is used in this context to evoke the futility of the state's pretence that black people, by the 1950s and 1960s, were still primarily oriented to customary ways rather than to a sophisticated city life.

One of the neo-traditional musics thus promoted was "new mbaganga". Wholly at odds with the tastes of urban Africans, it was created and marketed by the record company Gallo Africa in co-operation with the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) (Coplan 1979:198). This was effected by replacing the urban musicians of its recording studios by unlettered and rurally-based individuals, who played in a style close to "genuine traditional music" (ibid.:206-7).

This development is seen as having been synchronous with, and linked to, the demise of African jazz as a popular recorded music (Ballantine 1989). Jazz in both its imitative and more autochthonous forms is described as having provided an "international musical vernacular of the oppressed" and thus as having been the true "popular music" of the black urban classes. It was stunted and all but eradicated in the era of massive state repression

starting in 1960. This coincided with the launch of the ethnically divisive black radio service, whose musical bias was "... towards traditional, neo-traditional and religious music; the record companies followed suit" (ibid.:308).

From this perspective, traditional or neo-traditional music was what the state manipulated in order to promote, to implement, or at its most futile to claim an illusory success for, its policy of ethnic primordialism. But an alternative view, by Hamm (1987), suggests that the new policy of the SABC's ethnic radio stations was at least partly dictated by listeners' choice and preference.[12] Although the demise of African jazz after 1960 was linked to its lack of airplay on the radio, this was to be explained as much by its failure to appeal to a broad base of the populace as by blatant state repression and ideological manipulation. The emphasis by Coplan and Ballantine on jazz as the true expression of black urban aspirations constitutes a focus on the urban black elite and a disregard of the musical tastes of the lower echelons of the black working class which, from the 1940s, has in fact favoured precisely the "instrumental and vocal jive" which the media was disseminating (1987:354). This interpretation points to the existence of a large body of people, fairly recently-arrived in the urban areas, with aspirations and leanings very different to those of the sophisticated elite jazz-lovers of Coplan's and Ballantine's accounts.

Coplan does identify these people as a group - of "primarily migrant, domestic and industrial labourers" unschooled in the ideas and practices of urban resistance politics - which the media, in targeting, was attempting to place at the centre of a process of "restructuring ... African identity" (1979:207).[13] Although he did not consider them worthy of further

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[12] There is a common belief that the media manipulates the populace at large. Critics of mass culture, from widely differing political perspectives, have emphasised its commodity nature, and its passive consumption by audiences no longer able to choose a cultural expression more immediately suited and relevant to their way of life (see Manuel 1988:11-12; Frith 1978:191-6 for summaries of this approach). Hamm's approach is more in line with an alternative view which points to the ability of consumers to appropriate these commodities and integrate them into "subjectively motivated social practice" (Middleton 1990:139), or to have an influence on the nature of the commodities produced.

[13] In identifying this group, Coplan omits to consider the possibility which Hamm was later to raise: that the media was not only attempting to manipulate but was actively responding to the tastes and predilections of this group, since it had come to constitute a sizeable proportion of the urban population. When the ethnic services did attempt to play "genuine traditional" music, its failure to appeal to a mass audience, composed largely of people from this group, led to the abandoning of the policy in the early years of Radio Bantu (Hamm 1987:354). Considerations of profit and commercial success were, then, perhaps at least as important as those of ideology

attention within his study of urban black music, he has subsequently singled out the Lesotho-based section of this social stratum in his studies on lifela, mentioned earlier. But at the time of writing In Township Tonight, he allowed rural or traditional music to feature in only one of two places. One was at the earliest phases of migration - in Chapter Two - when the first waves of Africans were moving from the country to South Africa's industrial centres bringing with them their various folk cultures. The other was in the context of manipulation by the state and capitalist media, who were seen as attempting thereby to fix in time, or to set into backward motion, the onward process of modernisation and urbanisation for which jazz had become such a potent symbol.

Such studies of musical change in South Africa, while laudable for their challenge to the shortcomings of the earlier approaches mentioned previously, have substituted for the timelessness of these previous accounts a relentlessly unilinear view of urbanisation and social change, and of the accompanying development of apparently universal and homogenising styles of black urban music. Like other similar "modernist narratives of urbanisation" (Ferguson 1990), this kind of account overlooks the fact that proletarianisation has been an uneven process. Its incompleteness has been determined, not only by state initiatives to keep large sections of the workforce based and thus reproduced within the rural reserves, but also by pre-colonial or pre-industrial cleavages, and by differing degrees of resistance to proletarianisation, within the societies concerned (Bozzoli 1983:21; Marks and Rathbone 1982:19; Stichter 1985:7-16). The onset of migration from the rural periphery to urban centres occurred not at a single moment, but involved the townward movement of inhabitants of particular rural areas, or specific segments of the populations of certain areas, at a series of moments stretching from the earliest phases of mining and industrialisation until the present day. And it was partly through these uneven processes of proletarianisation that the rudimentary outlines of a class or status-group structure have been, and continue to be, established within the urban milieu itself.

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in the machinations of both state and independent media in this period. According to Rob Allingham, who works in the archives at Gallo, all the evidence points to the company's motivation, since its inception, by profit rather than by ideology.

The division has been written about as one between better-off, longer-urbanised people who constitute a "respectable" class, and poorer people, arriving later from more destitute areas and forming a tenant underclass (Bozzoli 1991:123). Described in the world of northern Transvaal migrancy in terms of religious orientation rather than in terms of length of connection with the city, it is a division which corresponds roughly with that between majekane and baditshaba. Although associated conceptually with distinct tastes in music, it is transcended in the appeal of "traditional" music, in certain contexts, to people from both categories. The broader appeal of mmino wa setšo, in recent years, has been fostered partly through the intervention of the media, in a somewhat less sinister vein than that described by Ballantine and Coplan.

An early attempt to target the poorer-paid and rurally-rooted section of the northern Transvaal labour force - baditshaba - by recording and diffusing mmino wa setšo had limited success. Both Gallo and some of its subsidiaries, and the SABC under the guidance of Yvonne Huskisson, made recordings of kiba from the 1940s through to the 1960s. Its lack of popularity during this period, like that of the other "traditional" music which Hamm describes, is not a simple indication that migrant members of the baditshaba category were uninterested in mmino wa setšo at the time. It points rather to the unsuitability of the genre, as a total event involving dance, music, and dramatic tableaux, to the format of recorded sound, and indicates its fittingness rather to a situation in which the links between performers and audience are immediate and unmediated. An individual genre, playing the same songs on a harepa (German autoharp) without the dance spectacle, enjoyed greater success on record than did kiba itself.

By contrast, the recordings made and disseminated by Radio Lebowa and by SABC television in the late 1970s and 1980s have been more popular. This relates to the greater immediacy of television recordings, which do manage to capture something of the whole kiba event. It also reflects the success of the cultural revival, patronised by national and local elites as well as by the media, of which the recent emergence and development of women's kiba was a part.

With kiba as with other forms of migrant music, attempts have thus been made to manipulate the genre for financial and ideological gain by a range of people, from the talent scouts and

record producers of white-owned record companies such as Gallo, through the planners and presenters of radio and television programmes, to the personnel managers of mining or manufacturing companies employing large numbers of northern Transvaal migrants and promoting the competitive performance of kiba as part of a strategy of control - or at least containment of the energies of - a cooped-up labour force. These interventions have left intact, in some cases even strengthened, but never diminished, the organic connection of kiba to its performers and audiences.

The term "traditional", applied to music, is an emotive one. Critics of apartheid's social engineering have used it to disparage and deny the effectiveness of state strategies in curbing the flow of urbanisation. But to those urban workers rooted in the country for whatever reason, the emotive appeal of a music which speaks of "home" and "origin" while enabling them to formulate an identity as migrants in town is one which cannot be denied.

Chapter Outline

The significance of northern Transvaal traditional music, performed in the context of migrancy, can thus be looked at in the context of debates within ethnomusicology and within studies on performance. Tradition, here, appears more flexible, less amenable to outside manipulation, and less restricted to circumscribed social groupings, than some of the literature would have us believe. But tradition is invoked in very different ways by various social constituencies in the world of migrant music: by male migrants, by dependent wives, and by independent female migrants. It is the meaning of tradition for this latter constituency, both within and beyond the sphere of musical performance, and the role of tradition in facilitating the construction of a specifically female migrant identity, which has been my major concern in the chapters which follow. But in order to understand the unusual way in which tradition or origin is invoked by such women, their experience has been juxtaposed, compared and contrasted: with that of migrant men on the one hand and with that of the dependent wives or sisters of migrant men on the other.

The thesis thus begins with two chapters in which the differential experience of men and women migrants is discussed, and moves on to a third in which the male and female versions

of the kiba genre are analysed in relation to one another. Women's kiba, I conclude, represents a creative combination of pre-existing women's and men's music: it has strong continuities with the former, but has transcended the domestic and rural preoccupations and the marginalised status of women's performance by claiming to be part of a genre which was previously the exclusive preserve of male migrants.

Migrant women's performance of this formerly male music, and their claiming of a quasi-male identity through this performance, is not an isolated instance in a life otherwise wholly female in its orientation. It is one part of a broader process of identity construction in which women use the materials of setšo or sesotho, and incorporate continuities with female rural experience while claiming status in equivalence with men within a male-dominated world. The next four chapters explore aspects of this process, focusing particularly on migrant women's place within their rural households and families, and on the "life-cycle" and processes of female socialisation within these families.

Perhaps flying in the face of chronological convention, the events and scenarios described in this exploration move from the present and immediate realities lived by adults, backwards to their remembered childhoods and adolescences; from their urban experiences to their rural ones. Thus, after Chapter Two has spelt out the lives and concerns of migrant women within an urban context, Chapter Four shows something of their sense of themselves as responsible breadwinners in the context of their rural families, acting "as sons" ought to do. Their experiences of childhood and early socialisation, formative in the process of identity-construction but in refracted and unexpected ways, are presented only in Chapter Six. Placed here, they contrast strongly with the more orthodox and custom-bound childhood experiences of the rurally-resident women singers described in Chapter Five.

The thesis is thus constructed in such a way as to facilitate the continuous contrasting of one understanding of setšo or sesotho with another: firstly, the different ways in which these concepts have significance for migrant men and migrant women, and secondly, their different significances for migrant and for stay-at-home dependent women.

What Chapters Two, Four, Six and Seven attempt to do, then, is to give some insi[illegible]o the way in which the construction of identity actually proceeds. Rather than being something created "out of thin air" or produced by an entirely random process of bricolage, the finding of a sense of self - as sotho - within the broader world of urban migrancy by these women is both facilitated and paralleled by their taking up of positions within a series of smaller spheres, less inclusive in breadth and span. It is as though their identifying of themselves as almost-men included within a particular ethnicity proceeded through a simultaneous claiming of quasi-male status within these nesting spheres: the household which each supports and over which each now presides, and the extended family including relatives both living and deceased from which each has inherited certain gifts and qualities, and within which many now play the major spiritual roles of divination/propitiation. As with the broader, apparently ethnic identity, none of these were automatically "given"; all had to be actively striven for and created.

Chapter One introduces the topic of migrant association. A review of the literature on this topic shows that the attention given to it in other parts of Africa has not been matched in studies of southern African migrancy. And previous accounts of regional association, within and beyond southern Africa, have given little attention to migrants' own conceptions of the "home" areas on which their urban groupings are based. I look at the changing ways in which northern Transvaal migrant men have conceptualised the rural areas from which they originate, and how they conceive of differences between these and other, neighbouring areas. Such conceptual differences, fed by events in pre- and post-colonial history, have given rise to major subdivisions within the ranks of northern Transvaal migrants on the Reef. Looking at the historical events and at the aspects of rural social organization which, filtered through migrant consciousness, thus differentiate the rural constituency of kiba, I attempt to provide a subjectively-oriented introduction to the rural background from which the performers of this genre, both rural and urban, are drawn. The end of the chapter introduces the female migrants who [illegible]form kiba, and gives some insight into their very different rural social origins. Their upbringing will be explored in detail in Chapter Six.

Chapter Two takes up the question of female migrancy and female migrant association. I focus primarily, here, on the urban experience of the migrant women who have formed into

clubs for the performance of kiba or koša (as the female version of the genre is also known). A study of this experience prompts a challenge to the predominant view of female migrants as either wholly dependent on men or as motivated entirely by a desire to escape from male controls and, simultaneously, from the patriarchal structures of rural society. For these performers, the idea of "home" has been a crucial one in enabling them to initiate and develop a set of migrant performance clubs which are autonomous although linked to "home-boys", and which facilitate the creation of a female migrant identity. Their conceptualising of this "home" as a uniting principle, while subjective and flexible as with male migrants, has entailed a greater degree of social and performative imagination since the actual areas from which these female migrants originate are scattered, geographically diverse, and have been subjected to major social upheavals. Performance and style are two major means through which this unifying "home" has been actualised.

Chapter Three moves away from the urban-based social experience of migrants to look at the genre they perform. I trace the origins of men's kiba with its heroic concerns, and the parallel development of rural female singing styles, primarily domestic in focus, which were later to be renamed as, and incorporated within, this originally exclusively male genre. Contemporary kiba establishes a performance space within which the heroic men's and domestic women's concerns of older rural performance are transformed into a common idiom of migrant visiting which combines polite hospitality with fierce competition. At the same time, women's kiba retains a separation from its male equivalent. As a sung genre where the men's version is played on pipes, its lyrics provide opportunities for invention, transformation and reinterpretation. Here, older themes of rural female dependency are transformed into assertive statements of pride in women's independent performance. Women's kiba thus represents the masculinisation of a previously female genre, and the feminisation of a previously male one.

Chapter Four shows that domestic contexts and relationships, as an area of concern in the rural and urban experience of kiba's migrant singers, also remain an area of concern in the lyrics of women's kiba. Female behaviour, and relationships between men and women, are commented upon and evaluated in these songs, using the moral touchstone of "the proper sotho way". Suggesting a similarly conservative approach towards life, views of appropriate

kinship roles involve an invoking of sesotho or setšo (tradition). But the domestic contexts thus assessed and commented on are ones which have been thoroughly transformed. Within them, migrant women have had to establish identities as single people, playing a male-like role of major breadwinner viz-a-viz their rural dependents, and often in competition with brothers who stand in a structurally similar position to themselves. Tradition provides an idiom through which these new, partly masculinised, identities are established and assessed. This chapter develops the theme of the calling-into-service of tradition in order to enunciate new roles and attitudes.

Chapter Five introduces the rurally-resident female performers who depend on male migrants for a living. The performance of a rural version of kiba by a heartland singing group is part of a broader process of identification which village women make between themselves and sesotho: in contrast to men, who are associated with its opposite sekgowa (white ways). Other components of sesotho include clothing and a life-cycle viewed as typically female, which will be seen to contrast markedly with the life experience of female migrant kiba singers to be described in the next chapter. But even in this rural context, sesotho is a flexible and permeably-bounded unit. It has progressively incorporated elements from surrounding groups and from its opposite sekgowa, while retaining the distinctiveness of the contrast with this opposite. It is on occasions of performance, particularly, that this overarching female identity in opposition to men (while remaining dependent on them) is expressed.

Chapter Six discusses scenarios of discontinuity and dislocation in strong contrast to the experience of the village singers of Chapter Five. Most of the women who became future migrants and performers of kiba in an urban context grew up in areas where there was considerable population movement, simultaneous with although not directly associated with or directly caused by the removals of apartheid. The effects of these movements on a cultural level have been little analyzed: here, they are seen to have given rise to a blurring of normally distinct social categories such as majekane and baditshaba. Set against the context of this social and cultural flux, the girlhood of these future migrants was marked by a strong desire for modernity and "civilization", by themselves and often by their families. Their musical culture of youth and adolescence was that of church and school, rather than that of setšo or sesotho. But their position as daughters disadvantaged them educationally, and sometimes

placed them closer to sesotho than their brothers, despite this modernizing orientation. The chapter ends by tracing the life-crises, mostly within these girls' natal families, which led them to become migrants - "like sons" - to work for their families.

Chapter Seven reintroduces the revival of sesotho, already explored on the level of musical performance and lyrics in Chapters Two, Three and Four, by the urban women singers of kiba. Despite their background in communities oriented towards progress, many have rejected the church in favour of what they see as an alternative: the performance of traditional music. The logic of sesotho as a source of identity derives from ideas of family continuity which exist despite, or perhaps are evoked to counter, the social dislocations experienced in childhood. This continuity, in its most marked form, involves the interference by ancestors in the lives of their living descendants, through malopo (spirit possession) and the attendant ability to divine. But it is also manifest in less direct ways, through inherited gifts and abilities such as singing and auriture, and through ceremonies of ancestral propitiation in which these women, as female seniors in relation to their natal families, play a central role. This involvement of female migrants with their forebears is the cultural concomitant of broader changes which have constrained women to re-situate themselves with primary reference to a natal family.

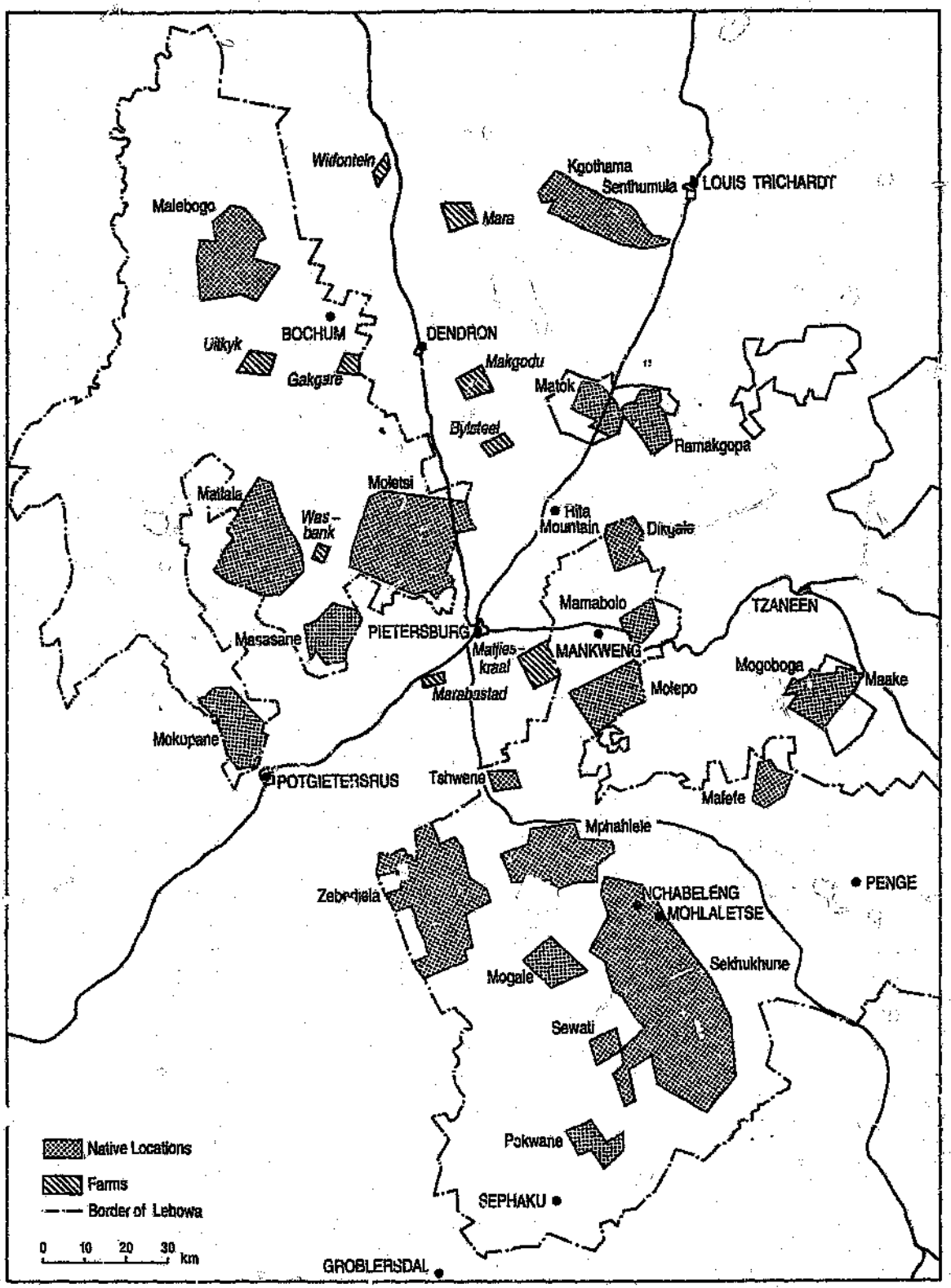

Figure 8: Map of part of Lebowa, showing locations, landmarks, and farms in common South Africa mentioned in the text.

TRIBAL DANCING

STANDARD BANK ARENA

5 MAY 1991

PRESENTED BY

PARTICIPATING TEAMS

1. AMAZULU CHILDREN (GIRLS)	P.T. & M.	12
2. AMAPONDO CHILDREN	GROOTVLEI	13
3. AMAZULU	KENDAL	12
4. AMABACA GUMBOOTS	LETHABO	20
5. AMAXHOSA CHILDREN	DUVHA	35
6. AMASHANGAAN CHAUKE	ROSHERVILLE	30
7. AMAZULU CHILDREN (BOYS)	P.T. & M.	26
8. AMA-NDEBELE	KRIEL	15
9. AMABACA GUMBOOTS	K[illegible]I)	15
10. BAPEDI	H[illegible]NA	24
11. BASOTHO	[illegible]	15
12. AMAZULU CHILDREN	K[illegible]	25
13. AMABACA CHILDREN	P.T. & M.	10
14. AMAZULU CHILDREN	INGAGANE	20
15. AMASWAZI ZINGILI	KENDAL	12
16. AMAPONDO	GROOTVLEI	12
17. AMAZULU	TUTUKA	33
18. AMASWAZI	DUVHA	25
19. AMAZULU	MATLA	25
20. AMABACA GUMBOOTS	MAJUBA	10
21. AMAZULU CHILDREN	KRIEL (2)	25
22. AMABACA GUMBOOTS	DRAKENSBERG	10
23. AMASWAZI	ARNOT	25
24. AMAZULU CHILDREN	MATLA	17
25. AMABACA GUMBOOTS	KRIEL (2)	15
26. AMAZULU	MAJUBA	35
27. AMASWAZI	KRIEL	35
28. BAPEDI	ARNOT	25
29. AMAZULU CHILDREN	DRAKENSBERG	25
30. AMABACA GUMBOOTS	DUVHA	20
31. AMASWAZI	KENDAL	14
32. AMAZULU CHILDREN	ARNOT	25
33. AMASWAZI ZINGILI	MATLA	30
34. AMAZULU	LETHABO	25
35. AMASWAZI	KRIEL	15
36. AMAZULU CHILDREN	COLENSO	28
37. AMASWAZI ZINGILI	ARNOT	30
38. AMAZULU	COLENSO	36
39. AMASWAZI	HENDRINA	30
40. AMAZULU CHILDREN	GROOTVLEI	24
41. AMAZULU CHILDREN	TUTUKA	40
42. AMAZULU	DUVHA	55
43. AMAZULU	ARNOT	45
44. AMAZULU	KRIEL	50
45. AMASHANGAAN AMABUNDA	ROSHERVILLE	30
	TEMBISA	70

Figure 9: Programme of annual traditional dance festival, sponsored by the parastatal ESCOM (Electricity Supply Commission), a major employer of black labour. Maaparankwe appears last on the programme.

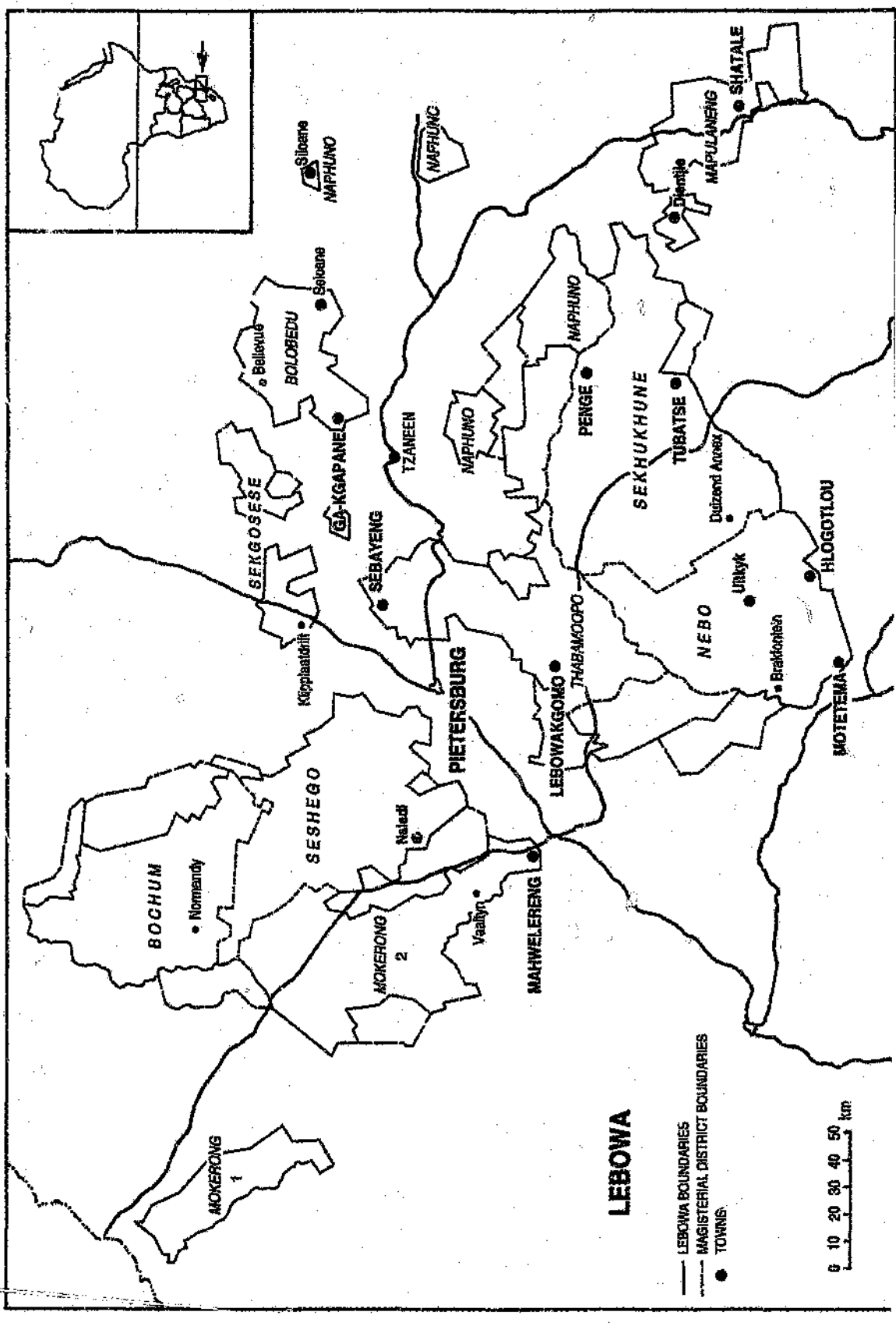

Figure 10: Map of Lebowa, showing boundaries of contemporary magisterial districts.

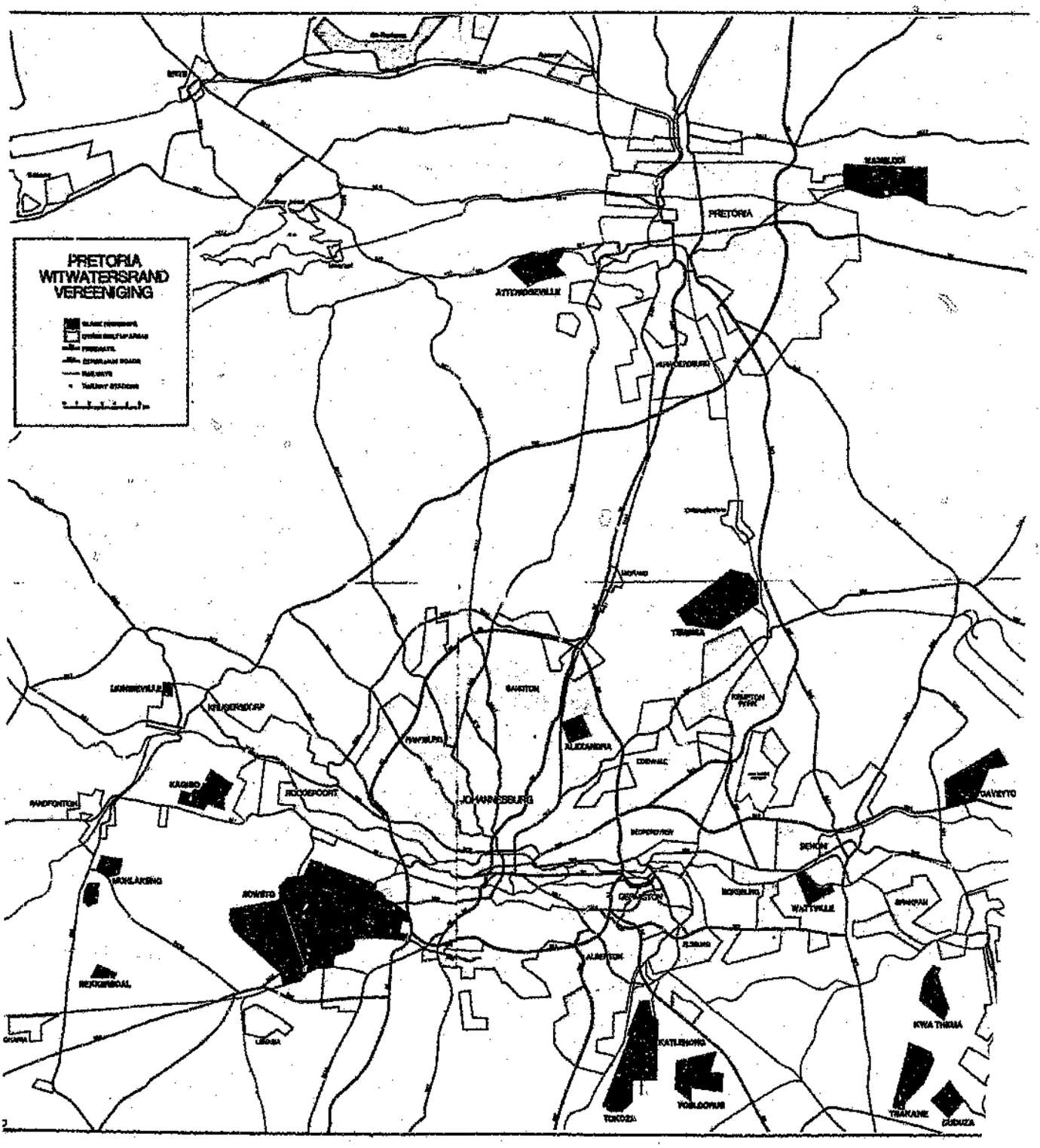

Figure 11: Map of the Reef and Pretoria, showing African townships.

Chapter 1

Migrant men, migrant associations, and performance

The effects of migrancy on rural communities form the focus of many recent local studies in anthropology. Absent migrants have left their agricultural duties to their wives, who have become increasingly dependent on migrant remittances to sustain their farming activities (Murray 1981, Manona 1980); absent migrants' dependents or deserted kin have evolved a series of kinship arrangements and household types distinguished by extreme fluidity and susceptibility to change and often displaying marked degrees of economic and therefore structural differentiation (Murray 1981; Spiegel 1980, 1987); returning migrants have been reincorporated into their communities using adapted rituals which attempt to minimise the extent of disturbance caused by this extremely disruptive experience (McAllister 1985). Even studies focusing more specifically on "homeland" issues - such as population removals, the effects of resettlement on farm labour tenants and former township dwellers, and the development of the long-distance taxi trade in "homeland" areas - have as their backdrop the movement of country-dwellers to and from their jobs in town.

Apart from appearances put in during occasional periods of leave, or on eventual retirement from work, migrants - usually male - feature in these studies only as absent beings. The impression created is that these people live out most of their lives in town where they may form the subject of study of "urban anthropology". This division between rural and urban studies on migrancy has been noted more widely than in southern Africa, and calls have been made for a more systemic approach to migrancy, which would investigate migrants themselves, the effects of their absence on the home community left behind, and the effects of their presence on the urban host community (N & TB Graves 1974).

This challenge has not been taken up for South Africa, however. After the Mayers gave their account of differing styles of migration to East London, in which rural connections were seen to structure migrants' urban social organization (1971), the topic of home-based or regional

association among migrants was largely neglected by South African anthropologists.[1] This is surprising in view of the extensive coverage of the topic by writers working in other parts of the continent around the same time. On the Zambian Copperbelt and in West and East Africa, detailed studies were conducted on the ways in which migrants referred to their origins when organising themselves in town. They categorised themselves and each other in terms of situationally-defined "tribal" backgrounds (Mitchell 1956); they formed small informal "home-boy" groups (Harries-Jones 1969); or became members of extensive and formally-structured "tribal", "regional" or "ethnic" associations (Little 1967; Parkin 1969; Southall 1975a & b).

These associations engaged in a range of activities, usually centred around self-help and social welfare. The benefits they offered their members ranged from those more concrete, such as providing clinics and schools in their home villages, or helping members to save money, through to the less tangible but no less important facilities of recreation, companionship and social identity. One of the main spurs to ethnic association seems to have been the felt need to repatriate the bodies of dead migrants for burial at "home" (Southall 1975a:272). But despite the emphasis on a common ancestry, and on a home to which migrants living and dead should return, these ethnic associations were not necessarily narrow or conservative in focus. They were sources more often of advancement and progress in the urban setting than of the backward-looking traditionalism associated with the Red Xhosa of the Mayers' account (1971). Starting with shared and familiar norms as a kind of "given", many of these associations gave their members a route to urban adaptation and modernity (Little 1967; 1973:421).

Such insights notwithstanding, it may have been the perceived conservatism inherent in mobilisation along "tribal" or "ethnic" lines which inhibited research into this topic in South Africa, especially during the 1970s and 1980s. Since apartheid was founded on the basis of ethnic differences reified by the state, scholars opposed to this policy were perhaps reluctant to lend weight to the notion that these differences were experienced as real by country dwellers or migrants. This reluctance was particularly strong among social anthropologists,

[1] A notable exception is McNamara (1978, 1985).

due perhaps to their awareness that there was a disturbing similarity between the cultural specificities stressed by their forebears and the concept of ethnic uniqueness which has been used to justify the depredations of apartheid.

For this generation of South African social anthropologists, as for other liberal and radical critics of the regime,[2] the major focus was the incorporation of rural communities into the ambit of the capitalist economy. The issues considered important were the dispossession of the land previously occupied by rural cultivators, their confinement within designated reserve areas, the impoverishment of these areas and the consequent movement of migrants to seek work in the towns, and the exploitation of these migrant workers by the mining and other industries in the urban centres.

In this context, notions of a rural "home" or common origin as a basis for association sounded suspiciously like the "homelands" created by apartheid for people of particular ethnic groups. Securing a population for these areas was seen to have entailed the forcible resettlement of people from other rural areas designated white; the exclusion and removal of Africans from the white urban areas to these "homelands" through the use of influx control; the replanning of the agricultural land in these "homelands" as part of a policy known as "betterment"; and the imposition of a reinvented system of tribal government for the "homelands" through what were called "Bantu Authorities". If a "homeland" like Lebowa in the northern Transvaal was thought to have any objective status, then, this was due to its physical redefinition, its repopulation and its redesignation by the planners of apartheid.

As with the "political economy" approach in anthropology worldwide (Ortner 1984; Roseberry 1989:12), these writers allowed their emphasis on the transforming power of the capitalist metropole to obscure the social and cultural specificities of the communities thus transformed.[3] Among South African social anthropologists, their documenting of the

[2] See, for example, the annual survey and other publications of the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR), the annual review published by the South African Review Service (SARS), and publications such as that by the Surplus People Project (1983).

[3] For a discussion of some of the problems of the dependency-theory version of this approach in South Africa, see Kuper (1987:1-10).

devastating effects of the state's projects of social engineering tended to assume a uniformity among the communities on which these changes were wrought, and hence a uniformity of their effects.

It was against this backdrop that I began, in 1989, to tackle the task of understanding the role of migrant performance in contemporary northern Transvaal-based associations. Watching the obvious attraction exercised by "traditional" music and dance, and observing the emotive deployment of heroic images of the chiefly past, it was impossible to believe that a shared history and the notion of a shared rural home associated with it had been of no importance in mobilising migrant energies and actions in the context of South African labour migrancy.

My investigation of these questions led me first to the work of social historians. The historical specificities of labour migrancy stressed in their writings allowed for a correction of the exaggerated emphasis on the sociocultural homogeneity of southern Africa's labour-sending areas. It also allowed for an advance on earlier anthropological writings, in which these associations tended to be seen as variations on one basic and timeless theme (Little 1973; Southall 1975b).

It appeared necessary, as well, to understand locally conceived-of subdivisions within the northern Transvaal labour reserve. A major conceptual cleavage exists between those areas south-east and those north-west of Pietersburg - Sekhukhune and Leboa.[4] To comprehend the significance of this divide, which neatly splits the Reef-based migrant performing constituency into two and then further separates Leboa into a series of smaller constituencies, I had to take into account not only objectively-recorded social histories but also the ways in which these were culturally represented through local knowledge. Based on varying precolonial histories, and on varying experiences of domination and resistance in the postcolonial period, the invocation of identity by men domiciled in these two regions involves

[4] Sekhukhune or GaSekhukhune is the local appellation, which does not recognise the limits of the magisterial district Sekhukhune, but extends its boundaries to all those parts of the northern Sotho homeland of Lebowa which are south-east of Pietersburg, and even to much of the white farming area beyond. I have used Sekhukhune to approximate this emically-conceived area, and Sekhukhune for the officially-imposed magisterial district. In similar vein, Leboa is the name for the northern areas as locally imagined, where Lebowa is the official name for the homeland as a whole.

differential use of the heroic chiefly idiom. This idiom is invoked with greater frequency and intensity by male migrants from Sekhukhune, where those from Leboa intersperse emblems of chiefly authority with a range of alternative, less politically-charged, symbols of identity.

While it thus seemed necessary to draw on the combined insights of social history and cultural studies, it appeared that an additional element was required, as well, to enliven the moribund spectre of migrant association. For such groupings to appear as vibrant and changing rather than as the preordained social phenomena which a functionalist view might dictate, it was necessary to see their leaders and their rank-and-file members as playing an active role in construing and reinterpreting the significance of the "home" and the "traditions" on whose existence the strength of such groupings was predicated. The changing invocation of these ideas by a Sekhukhune-based kiba group, Maaparankwe, will later be used to illustrate this point.

In the case of kiba groups, one force appeared as most potent in creating this shifting and situationally-invoked sense of home. This was obviously, this was performance itself. The present and ongoing attraction of a kiba group like Maaparankwe to its male and female members lies in its enabling them actively to participate in the continual modification of the significance of home, and in the continual remaking of home in the urban context. The significance of this home for migrant women is a very particular and distinct one, however. The common purpose which unites the members of such a group thus masks some fundamental differences between the men and women who belong to it. Contrasts between women and men in rural background, in styles of entry into the labour market, and in employment and accommodation on the Reef, have given women a different motivation in joining kiba. For them, performance style plays an even more fundamental role in enabling the creation of a notion of home, as will become clear in the chapter which follows.

Migrant Associations and social history

In the work of social historians I found a fusion of the insights of history and anthropology which allowed for an emphasis on the regional and temporal specificity of home-based associations, rather than on their shared and timeless features. These writers also directed

their attention to the particular resources around which these associations' activities were focused. Guy and Thabane, for example, showed how migrants from Lesotho to South Africa mobilised informally with their fellows on the basis of their identity as banna ba heso (countrymen). In the case of miners, this allowed them to secure occupational privilege; in the case of the Rashea gangsters, it helped to gain them protection from the law (1987; 1981). Others writing in this vein demonstrated how such associations changed in accordance with the altered circumstances and aspirations of their constituencies. Delius' work on the associations formed by Pedi workers from the Sekhukhune area indicates such a development. Originating in the need to return bodies home for burial, the societies spawned new groupings. These served as the basis for extensive political mobilisation in response to state attempts to interfere with land use and rural government. They, in turn, became the basis for ANC membership in the 1940s and 1950s (1989; 1990).[5]

These writers were demonstrating the truth of an observation made by Cohen about ethnic mobilisation more generally: that it is usually "political" in the sense of being directed towards the acquisition or protection of scarce resources in a situation of fierce competition for these (1969).

Aside from these political developments, the joint activities of labour migrants from the Sekhukhune area documented by Delius for the period 1900 - 1950 demonstrate the familiar themes of mutual support, shared recreation, and strong continuities with home area. These themes are found, as well, in accounts of migrancy from the Molepo district in Leboa (Molepo 1983; 1984). They are also echoed in contemporary migrant organisation from the same area. The history of the northern Transvaal as documented by these two writers merits further discussion here, since it provides insights into the strength and continuity of home-based groupings among migrant males from the region. This will be shown, in the next chapter, to contrast with the style of female migrant organisation from the same area.

[5] In similar vein, the ethnically-organised welfare and recreational associations of Ouagadougou were transformed into political parties (Skinner 1974:211-7): a trajectory similar to that predicted for other such associations throughout Africa (Wallerstein 1963).

Men began leaving home, from reserves in Sekhukhune and Leboa, to work for wages well before the collapse of the reserve economy had made it imperative that they do so. Control over the movement of these migrants to the diamond mines of Kimberley during the period 1870-1890 was exercised, with varying degrees of success, by chiefs and labour agents. Further attempts to regulate the flow of labour, and to stand between migrants and their freedom to seek their own jobs, were pursued during the 20th century by prospective employers such as the mining houses, and by the state itself. Operating within the reserves and "homelands" in accordance with state policy on the control of urban influx, the mine labour recruiting organisations occasionally found themselves in competition with state-initiated labour recruitment strategies.[6]

These attempts to channel the flow of labour were only partly successful in directing the actual movement of male migrants from the northern Transvaal. Workers attempting to remain free of these controls used nearby employment opportunities such as farms and local mines as stepping-stones to jobs in and around Pretoria, Johannesburg, and the East Rand. By 1930 there were two major spheres of employment for northern Transvaal male migrants. One was compounded mine labour, mostly recruited within the reserves, and concentrated at the Premier Diamond Mine east of Pretoria and at a range of gold mines on the East Rand. The other was domestic service in the suburbs of Pretoria and Johannesburg; an option which many preferred since it was less arduous and dangerous.[7]

As wages for domestic servants fell and an expanding economy provided new opportunities, many of these migrants moved out of their previous enclaves to find a range of jobs in the service sector and in industrial and factory employment. This entailed the informal establishment of new enclaves, with men from particular areas favouring specific factories. The Iscor steel works in Pretoria became a major employer of labour from Sekhukhune, for example, while the Modderfontein Dynamite Factory on the northern outskirts of Johannesburg employed large numbers of men from the areas further north. In some cases,

[6] Paragraph based on Delius (1983:62-82; 1986; 1989:582), Molepo (1984:8, 18), Wilson (1972:3, 96-7).

[7] Paragraph based on Delius (1989:582-3), Molepo (1984:28).

migrants from particular areas held virtual monopolies over jobs in specific factories.[8]

As these men began to avoid the recruiters of compounded labour and to move into industrial and service employment, they also started to seek accommodation in municipal hostels designed for single-sex dormitory accommodation. Between the 1930s and the 1950s male migrants from the northern Transvaal were starting to cluster in the Jeppe and Denver hostels in Johannesburg.[9]

Table 1: Northern Sotho speakers living in Reef districts: 1985
(RSA Population Census, 1985, 02-85-01:256-278)

District	Northern Sotho speakers	Total African population	Northern Sotho speakers as percentage of total African population
Benoni	20 893	135 481	15.4
Kempton Park	44 248	162 581	27.2
Randburg	23 139	104 848	22.1
Johannesburg	74 933	809 255	9.3
Randfontein	4 254	53 240	7.9
Roodepoort	5 498	73 967	7.4

In later decades, a range of new hostels were built in the black townships of the Reef and Pretoria, as part of the state's policy to disallow urban accommodation to anyone but single workers. In these, as in the hostels built earlier, Sotho-speaking migrants from the northern Transvaal established enclaves. Given the costliness of transport and the importance of visits to their rural-based families, it is not surprising that geographical proximity to their rural home played a part in determining in which of these hostels they chose to settle. The areas they favoured were in Alexandra to the north-east of Johannesburg (part of Randburg district), Tembisa to the north of Kempton Park, Kwa-Thema adjoining Springs, and Daveyton adjoining Benoni. There were fewer migrants from the northern Transvaal, or Lebowa as it

[8] Paragraph based on Delius (1989:593); Molepo (1984:26, 28-9, 32-4).

[9] Paragraph based on Delius (1989:594), Molepo (1983:75).

was now called, living in hostels or houses in Soweto to the south-west of Johannesburg (classified within Johannesburg district) or in the black townships of the West Rand (see Table 1).[10]

It was, then, around the scarce resources of jobs and accommodation that male migrants from Sekhukhune and the reserve areas further north in Leboa organised themselves. The strength of their commitment to this joint enterprise was based not only on having a shared rural home, but also on patterns of male association established during the process of initiation. Members of the same mophato (initiation regiment) would leave home together to look for work. In other cases, men would make contact with people from the same chiefdom or village after arriving in town, using special meeting-places in Johannesburg or Pretoria. These contacts helped people to find jobs, provided them with temporary accommodation, and gave a range of related support. Even in cases where migrant men had been living, not in close proximity with their fellows in compound or hostel accommodation, but scattered in the suburbs as domestic servants, their association as co-initiates or people from the same home area laid the basis for their coming together on Sundays in recreation.[11]

The writings of social historians on which this short account is based do not mention the existence of groups based on musical performance except in passing. But my own findings about migrant association during the period 1960-1990 reflect broad themes very similar to those discussed by Delius and Molepo, and suggest that kiba groups overlapped with, and played similarly supportive roles to, the home-based associations which these writers document.

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[10] This account, in attempting to depict overall trends and patterns, might be thought to have reified the notion of migrancy and to have obscured a diversity of cyclical and dynamic processes. Between the option of perpetual oscillation from town to country and back again, and that of settling with wife and children in a secure urban dwelling, there was a range of possible ways in which a man from a northern country area could arrange to stay on the Reef. One of the material factors influencing this choice was the time when members of the family first began to migrate, and the availability of accommodation at that time. The Introduction describes how another, less concrete, of these factors which acted to influence the trajectory followed was that of orientation to or away from mission Christianity. This orientation provided a conceptual dichotomy, between baditshaba and majekane, in terms of which the difference between migrants and those who have become more permanent urban dwellers is often described.

[11] Paragraph based on Delius (1989:583-592); Molepo (1984:39), and on interviews with my own informants.

The story of a man called Lucas Sefoka - nicknamed Boom after the street in Pretoria where he first worked - provides an example. He was born in 1944 in Sefoka village, Masemola district, in setshabeng (the place of the traditionalists). He attended school up to Standard 3 but, shortly after completing the first stage of initiation, he and others of his regiment ran away from home to work on white farms. While working there, they remitted a small amount of money home, and in between jobs they returned home for a period to complete the last stage of initiation. After about five years of farm work Lucas Sefoka and his paternal cousin Philip Sefoka decided to go by Railway bus to Pretoria to look for better-paid jobs. Although they had not informed any of their relatives in Pretoria of their intention, and were apprehensive about arriving unawaited in a place with so many people, they were fortunate to see a man of the same age-group - and from a neighbouring village - at the station. He took them to sleep in the backyard room of an old man from Sefoka village. Soon, both men had been fixed up with jobs as gardeners and with accommodation through contacts with fellow-villagers, and had been introduced to the Mamelodi branch of the Sekhukhune kiba players. When, a year later, Lucas left Pretoria to work in Johannesburg at a job found for him by his maternal cousin, he was transferred to the Alexandra club, SK Alex. After he was disabled in an industrial accident, some relatives who were also fellow-dancers accommodated him in a room in the yard where they lived in Alexandra, and he made a small living as a fruit vendor. He is currently the leader of the Alexandra dance club.[12]

The significance of people from home in this man's life has been considerable. They have helped to ease his passage into his first job and from one job to another, and to provide accommodation during a period of unemployment. They are his constant companions during leisure time. What is strikingly similar to the organization of male migrancy in the same area at an earlier time, and to that documented in other parts of Africa, is the degree of overlap between groupings at different levels of incorporation. Some of Lucas's closest associates are not only members of the same dance group, but also family members, co-initiates, people from the same village, and members of the same burial society. In some cases, though not in that of Lucas, these people share the same hostel accommodation on the Reef as well. The memberships of these different groupings are not identical - there are

[12] Lucas Sefoka, recorded discussion with DJ and MTN, Johannesburg, 2/5/1990.

migrants from Sefoka working in north-eastern Johannesburg who do not play kiba in Alexandra, for example. The situation is nevertheless strongly comparable to that described by Clegg for Zulu migrant men:

> This ... became part of the home-boy structure ... the little grouping of people who come from the same district, they live in the same hostel when they go to Johannesburg. In the hostel they have a burial society, a drinking club, a savings club, a dance team. So the dance team becomes incorporated into the home-boy structure (1982:10).

The life-history interviews I conducted revealed similar themes to those depicted in the writings of social historians. Migrant associations from the northern Transvaal, rather than being defined in terms of timeless and shared features, were oriented to the fulfilling of specific purposes for their members. Although these sharpened into overtly political and resistance-oriented focus at particular times, everyday access to resources such as employment, accommodation, funeral transport, and companionship in town, proved to be of ongoing concern to migrants. The need for these resources appears to have underlain northern Transvaal male migrant association from the early 20th century until the present.

Local knowledge, local divisions: Leboa and Sekhukhune

If the labour-sending areas were not, indeed, as homogenous as the political economists had supposed, it became necessary to investigate the specificities which made their inhabitants think of themselves as different from each other. Thus, in addition to examining the changing historical circumstances underpinning migrant association, and the specific resources around which it focused, it appeared important to me to look at the different, and perhaps changing, ways in which the members of these associations conceived of or imagined their relationship to a place of common origin.

Here it was heartening to note a new trend emerging, in South African anthropology more broadly, to take seriously the issue of "culture". Encouraged perhaps by international currents in which more emphasis has been placed on "local knowledge" (Geertz 1983), practice and agency (Ortner 1984:144-160) and cultural meaning (Rosebery 1989:13), writers were beginning to focus attention on the realities of action and meaning as enacted and perceived

by the local communities previously glossed as "the labour reserve".[13] Written from this perspective, an account of migrant organisation would acknowledge the fact that particular migrant constituencies have their rural "homes" in particular areas with particular histories both pre- and post-colonial, and would pay attention to the ways in which their members represent themselves by reference to both of these.[14]

Not only between regions, but even within them, local divisions and contrasts were in evidence which provided the basis for self-definition by migrants. One of these, of which I became aware only after some months of research - because the stressing of kiba as a style of all Lebowa had obscured it from me during my initial investigations - was the distinction between Sekhukhune and Leboa, corresponding roughly with the distinction between areas south-east and north-west of Pietersburg.

The conceptual division of northern Transvaal Sotho-speaking migrants between these two home areas has existed since the early days of migration (Delius 1989:588, 591). The distinction between the two presumably originated in the process whereby migrants, strongly connected to a rural home while domiciled in town, categorised themselves together with members of their own constituency whilst distinguishing themselves from those of the other.[15] It was, in other words, as homes for labour migrants who demed themselves situationally through urban-based but rurally-oriented groupings, rather than as objectively existing northern and southern geographical regions, that the contrast between the two areas was established.

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[13] This included both scholars from within the country, such as Spiegel (1991), Niehaus (nd), Bank (1991) and Stadler (1992) and those from outside working in the region: Ferguson (1985), Coplan (1987, 1991), Erlmann (1991).

[14] Such an account could make selective use of some of the writings in an older tradition in South African anthropology. These scholars' investigations into criteria for the classification of "cultural groups" had yielded social and cultural features not evident only to the analyst, nor used only to fulfil the devious ends of government policy, but also used by migrants for the purpose of grouping themselves together with, or distinguishing themselves from, other people.

[15] See Mitchell (1956) for an account of the emergence of similar broad categories in a Copperbelt town in Zambia.

But on what basis was it this particular subdivision, rather some other, which was stressed? The issue was complicated by my discovery that, in kiba performance, while Sekhukhune was indivisible, Leboa was further subdivided into smaller units named after small reserve areas in the north - Moletši, Matlala, Malebogo, and others.[16] In a Reef township like Alexandra, there is a series of kiba groups, each representing a specific rural constituency. Leboa is represented by a kiba group from each of these eponymously-named original reserve areas, while the entire region of Sekhukhune is represented by only one.

The key to understanding this contrast between one larger, all-subsuming southern home area and a series of smaller, northern, splinter homes, lay in a complex interaction between "our history" and "their history" (Roseberry 1989:142): between the machinations of the apartheid state and the reinterpreted precolonial experiences of those it had attempted to incorporate.

The "homeland" created by government policy-makers for all speakers of "northern Sotho" obscured a complex diversity of local groupings. Some of these had moved into the area from the west, and others from the areas to the north of the Limpopo River known as Bokhalaka (lit. "the place of the Kalanga", equivalent to present-day Zimbabwe). If a degree of cultural and linguistic uniformity came to exist between these diverse people, at its geographical edges this blurred, through a variety of dialects and practices, into other languages and customs (Krige 1937; van Warmelo 1974:72). According to present-day speakers of sesotho from Pietersburg, for example, the language changes as one moves further northwards, with sesotho giving way to setlokwa and eventually to setswetla.[17]

The later creation of "homelands" for separate ethnic groups was informed by the decision of which of these linguistic/cultural complexes to recognise as distinct "languages" with their accompanying "cultures", and which to regard merely as dialects or variants of sesotho.

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[16] The names of these reserves have been underlined, like Sekhukhune, to convey the sense that they exist, as named thus, in local conceptualisations rather than in official nomenclature. Although the original locations did bear the names of these chiefs, they have now been subsumed into magisterial districts with different names.

[17] Where Sotho denotes a language or a set of musical or other features which have been attributed to a group of people by analysts, it is spelt with a capital and is not italicized. But where, as the noun sesotho or as the adjective sotho, it denotes a language, a way of dressing, a state of being, a way of life, or a set of qualities which informants themselves have enunciated or commented upon, it is underlined and spelt without a capital. See JL and J Comaroff (1989:276-296) for a similar usage.

When the boundary of Lebowa was drawn it included the speakers of setlokwa but defined the speakers of setswetla as having a separate language and hence as belonging rather to the "homeland" of Venda (see Van Warmelo 1952; 1953:3). Because of the lack of a neat correspondence between geographical area and language unit, this was to involve the forcible resettlement of large numbers of people to the areas designated appropriate to their language group. Both the relative diversity - and the overarching uniformity - of language and culture in the northern Transvaal area thus came to be used by government planners in the paired activities of dividing certain groups of people from each other, and combining other groups together.

Apart from these locally-recognised distinctions in dialect, there were other means of identifying the inhabitants of particular areas as well. In the course of their migrations into and around the northern Transvaal area, clusters of people from diverse origins came to centre themselves around a series of dikgoro (s. kgoro) or ruling nuclear groups (Bothma 1976:184; Krige 1937:328). The people clustered together in this way identified themselves through their shared symbolic allegiance to an animal - tau (lion), kolobe (pig), noko (porcupine) and others.[18] But the reserve areas allocated to these groupings by the Native Locations Commissions of the 19th and early 20th Centuries, which later became the basis of the apartheid government's expanded "homelands", were known by the names of the chiefs of these ruling families - Matlala, Molepo, Mogobova, Mamabolo, and others (see p37). This reflected the centrality of chiefs in the systems of control and tribal administration devised by a succession of South African governments and perfected in the 1950s during the apartheid era.

For the members of these minor polities, and for those who eventually became labour migrants from them, this provided two alternative means for invoking the idea of home. The people known officially as coming from the Mogobova area, for example, speak of themselves in certain contexts as those who bina noko (sing/dance the porcupine): the people

[18] This sense of a unifying connection to a symbolic animal has been translated as "totemism" and as involving membership of a "fairly loose association of agnatic kin" (Monnig 1967:234). But Kuper argues that these were not kinship groups or clans (1982:46-8), and according to Hoernle "there is no special native term" for such a grouping (1937:91-2).

of Mamabolo as those who bina kolobe (sing/dance the pig), and so on.

For a migrant from south of Pietersburg, the names and symbols used in regional identification are less varied. They refer mostly to the centralised ruling aristocracy which held sway in the region during the late 18th and 19th centuries, and to the polity over which it ruled. The Pedi or Marota had established dominance over a range of smaller groupings with a diversity of totemic identifications. In the wake of conquest, they maintained their dominance through a variety of socio-political mechanisms. These included the use of court mediators, the bringing together of local youths in initiation regiments under chiefly control, and the establishment and maintenance of unequal political alliances through cousin marriage.[19]

The Pedi polity or empire enjoyed its period of greatest dominance under Thulare during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. It continued its influence in the region under Chief Sekwati and then Chief Sekhukhune, whose name the Pedi area still bears. Even after the definitive defeat suffered by Pedi warriors at the hands of the British in 1878, this era of Pedi supremacy continued to make its influence felt, as will be seen below.[20]

The contrast between the areas of Leboa and Sekhukhune, as manifest in more narrowly- and more broadly-defined rural "home" areas on which urban migrant associations were based, was thus linked to contrasts in the extent and range of the power of pre-colonial polities, and in the way these are made to appear in the present. But this contrast cannot be properly understood without reference to the post-colonial histories of these polities. Of especial significance are the ways in which they reacted to the impositions of state policy, and

[19] For detail on these strategies, see Delius (1983:12, 48-59). Women from the ruling family were sent as wives to the leaders of subordinate, local groupings, which were then inescapably locked into these alliances through the practice of matrilateral cross-cousin marriage. This practice of marriage with close kin has been singled out by anthropologists as a feature which Sotho-speakers have in common, and by which they may be distinguished from other "cultural groups" (Wilson 1982:59; Kuper 1975; 1982). I have heard it noted, too, by speakers of Nguni languages living in close proximity to Sotho-speakers. Although cousin marriage of various kinds was practised, and continues to a lesser degree to be practised, by commoners in Sotho-speaking societies, it would be inaccurate to regard this practice as a static and unchanging marker of cultural identity: its strictest enforcement was in its use as strategy by ruling groups to augment their power.

[20] See Delius (1983:15, 19-30, 83-104, 239-246).

especially to attempts by the state to interfere with the use and the administration of agricultural land.

Land: reserve and "Trust"

In the wake of their defeat, the Pedi were allocated a reserve. The territory, Sekhukhune, is tucked away between the Olifants River and the Transvaal Drakensberg range, and crossed by the Leolo mountains. Centrally situated in the reserve is the present seat of the Pedi paramountcy. The term "heartland" has been used in this and other similar contexts in South Africa to capture the idea of a territory, previously associated with a powerful and independent local polity, which despite defeat at the hands of colonial forces has seen minimal white settlement besides that by missionaries, health professionals, and a variety of state functionaries such as magistrates and Native Commissioners.

The limits of Sekhukhune as a magisterial district were not, and are not, recognised by local conceptualisations, which extend its boundaries to all parts of the Lebowa "homeland" south of Pietersburg, and even to much of the white farming area beyond. Bids were made to expand the officially-recognised reserve area through the purchase of some of this white farmland, first by "the tribe", and later by the state's South African Native Trust which was established expressly for this purpose. But even on those white farms which were never thought of as destined for inclusion in the "homeland" there were people living under conditions of rent- and labour-tenancy whose sense of themselves as part of a broader polity appears to have derived from their proximity to the geographical base of the Pedi paramountcy within Sekhukhune.[21]

In contrast to the heartland of Sekhukhune, the reserves set aside for African occupation in the area north of Pietersburg known as Lebowa were small and scattered, corresponding with the relatively low level of political centralisation which each chiefdom had achieved in the 19th century, and were interspersed with areas of white farming and settlement. Though chiefs lived on these reserves, many of their subjects were moving away to settle on

[21] Paragraph based on Minutes of Evidence of the Eastern Transvaal Natives Land Committee (hereafter E TVL) UG 32-1918, p 9, evidence of Sequati, p14; evidence of Maserumo, p15; James (1990a:45-7).

neighbouring farms in the first few decades of the 20th century. In some cases, such as that of Chief Mamabolo, these rulers were said to have little jurisdiction over their subjects because of their wide dispersal, but this was not a reason for them to wish for their people's concentration within the reserve areas: Chief Sentimula, for example, explicitly stated that he wished for those he ruled to stay on the farms since they would make a better living there.[22]

At a time when those identifying themselves with Sekhukhune were moving back into the reserve as their chiefs made bids to purchase more adjoining farm land for communal tenure, many people whom the state saw as denizens of the northern reserves were attempting to group together and buy or rent their own land, beyond the sphere of chiefly control, for advanced agricultural use.[23]

Both northern and southern reserves were later augmented by the addition of "Trust" land, intended not only to accommodate the existing population of the reserves and its natural increase, but also to provide space for the settlement of the thousands of people - many of them the tenants on or owners of farms in the white areas mentioned above - who were to be resettled into the "homelands" with the infamous "population removals" of the 1950s and 1960s.[24] Accompanying the removals was a broader strategy of control, which included the planned imposition of "Bantu Authorities", a system of government in which so-called traditional chiefs were to have their powers transformed into those of administrative middlemen. It also involved a plan for agricultural "betterment" within the "homelands" themselves, in terms of which villages were replanned, their occupants moved into new residential areas, their cattle culled and their use of agricultural land "rationalised".

This attempt to interfere in the lives of rural Africans met with differential responses in the areas south and north of Pietersburg. In the southern area of Sekhukhune, the government's

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[22] E TVL, evidence of Wedepohl p95, Masasane p98, Maraba p98; NEC, evidence of Nicholson pp100-4, Mamabulo p109, Senthumula pp78-9 (modern orthography has altered this spelling of the chief's name).

[23] Paragraph based on evidence of the Native Economic Commission (hereafter NEC), 1930-2, evidence of Hunt p658 & 706, Kirsten pp258-264, Urban location representatives p90, Daneel pp193-197.

[24] See Chapter Six p205-6. Some of these removals were occasioned more by "free market forces" or by people's desire for education or civilisation than by the grand plans of apartheid's architects.

strategy to resettle communities in "bettered" villages and to impose its vision of appropriate chiefly authority on them sparked violent rebellion. Pedi royals, with overwhelming support from their rural and migrant followers, refused to serve as puppet chiefs within the Bantu Authorities system. The Pedi paramount was exiled, and his successors, since returned to Sekhukhune, have been given no special recognition privileging them above other "Tribal Authorities" in the region. But the marginality of the Pedi chiefship within the official authority-structures of the Lebowa "homeland" as a whole has enhanced rather than reduced its status in the eyes of local inhabitants.[25]

In the reserves of Leboa, in contrast, there was a less effective expression of people's antipathy to state interference with land and government. This was at least partly because, in the North, many of the people who were to be forced into residence in the Trust areas consolidated as the northern part of the Lebowa "homeland" had lived most of their lives away from these areas, and lacked the strength of attachment to the land felt by their heartland counterparts in Sekhukhune.[26]

Based on these varying experiences of domination and resistance, inhabitants from the two areas invoke identity in different ways. For migrants from one of the small reserves in Leboa, the symbols used in identifying their home region may be those of region, of local chiefly authority, or of totem. A male migrant such as Isaac Lelahana belongs on the one hand to a kiba group named Moletši after the reserve which he calls home, and on the other to a burial society called Kwena Moloto which combines the totemic name of kwena (crocodile) with the name of the local chief, Moloto. In performative or ritual circumstances such as those in which direto (praises) are spoken, these markers of region and political authority are abandoned in favour of the more evocative kwena.

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[25] See Delius (1980:356; 1989:605-15); James (1987:191-2); Sansom (1970:38-43; 53-5).

[26] While it would be inaccurate to claim that the actions of betterment planners were accepted passively and without protest anywhere in the "homelands", there is evidence that, in heartland communities long attached to their land, resistance to betterment was more uncompromising than in more marginal - often more recently-settled "Trust" - areas (Surplus People Project Vol.5 1983:1|5; Hofmeyr 1991:120-125; Yawitch 1982:23-4, 55, 62, 71-9).

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In the discourse of migrants from south of Pietersburg, in contrast, the themes and symbols used are consistently those of royalty, referring back to a heritage of centralised dominance in the region. In most contexts, including those of kiba and direto (praise) performance, the names used are those of the former Chief - Sekhukhune - the ruling group to which he belonged - Pedi - and the trappings of royalty which marked his power - mošate (chief's kraal) maaparankwe (those of the royal leopard-skin clothing) and the like.[27] Based on the heritage of Pedi rule, and filtered through the experiences of insurgency and defiance, the symbolic invoking of the chiefship thus represents the past glories, not only of its dominance in the region during the 19th century, but also of its resistance to dominance during the 20th.

The different degrees to which these polities were centralised in the precolonial era and the ways in which they later accommodated or reacted against colonial and postcolonial rule laid the foundations for present-day migrant organisation and identity.

Home: shifts and emphases

But the invocation of these images of 19th century chiefdoms and 20th century defiance in contemporary migrant organisation does not occur through the automatic structuring of the present along lines laid down by the past. Rather, it involves the inventive agency of individual migrants. In the anthropological literature on migrant organisation referred to earlier in this chapter, the notion of a "regional association" implied a fixity rather than a flexibility of the "region" on which such an association is based. Despite Little's remark that "the basis of common origin is often more imaginary than real" (1967:27), much of this literature has tended to take for granted the existence of a clearly-defined rural home or place of origin, which in turn provided a clear-cut basis for membership. The possibility that the conceptualisation of this "home" might allow for subtle shifts in emphasis, or for creative representation by individual agents, did not concern the writers of this generation.

[27] But rural societies do sometimes bear the names of particular villages in the region, but the symbolic use of totemic animals is restricted to village contexts rather than finding its way into the discourse of Sekhukhune migrants on the Reef. See Chapter Five p165.

To demonstrate this point, and to show the evocativeness of the symbols of royalty used by kiba performers from the Sekhukhune area, we can look at the story of one of the best and most professional kiba groups on the Reef. Maaparankwe SK Land (those of the royal leopard-skin clothing, Sekhukhune-land) is a kiba group which presently meets every Sunday in the backyard of the house in Tembisa belonging to its serokolo (leader)[28], Jan Seašane, and which practises in the road just outside the house. It has been meeting at this venue ever since the violence of 1991 caused its members to flee from the Tembisa hostel.

Like the male members of other kiba groups, Seašane and his fellow performers have been playing and dancing kiba since they were children, when as herdboys they used to practise the dance in imitation of adult men, using reeds instead of the dinaka tša tshipi (metal end-blown pipes) which they now play as adults. After a short stint of farm labour, and a further stint as a "kitchen boy" in Germiston, Seašane sought work at a mine in the same area. Here, his ability to perform was seen as a special attribute differentiating him from the rank-and-file: he and other musicians were told "dinaka players, stand on one side", and he describes himself as having been "hired because of this art". The kiba group with which he played and danced while working here bore the name of the mine on which its members worked: a fact which caused considerable resentment, as men felt that their skill as a group was not rewarded, and that it accrued instead to the glory and good name of their employers.[29]

As Seašane and many of his cohorts moved from the mine into employment in brickworks, light industry, and the like, so a separation was established between their place of work and place of residence, with kiba centred more around the latter. Jan built a shack in a yard in the township of Tintela, adjoining Edenvale, in 1959, and called his wife from home to join him. Here, he and a number of his friends became masole (rank-and-file members, lit. "soldiers") of a kiba group founded and led by a man called Mantjane. The group was now

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[28] Serokolo translates literally as the name of a foul-smelling herb used by healers in the Sekhukhune area to cure various ailments. The proverb serokolo se se nyane se e kokotša ka monkgo (the small herb can magnify itself by emitting a foul smell) suggests that a person's achievement and ability to lead is not restricted by his inborn qualities. The term thus stresses achieved rather than ascribed qualities (Sam Nchabeleng, personal communication).

[29] This and the following two paragraphs based on Jan Seašane, recorded discussion with MTN, Tembisa, 24/3/91.

free of the institutional pressures of mine living to which many members had previously been subject. It was at this stage identified by reference to the name of its founder, but was understood as being composed of men from the broader Sekhukhune area.

The late 1960s saw the removal under the Group Areas Act of Africans resident on the East Rand from older to newer and more remote townships.[30] The kiba group moved to Tembisa with its members, where its activities centred around the single men's hostel where many members were housed.

Some years later, an influx of new members prompted a debate on what name the group should now be given:

> there were some people who joined us from Magakala, and most people thought that we are all from Magakala, and that this is the Magakala group. So we changed to Maaparankwe because every chief is a leapara nkwe (one who wears royal leopard-skin clothing). Our group came to be known as dinaka tša mošate (the pipes of the chief's kraal). It became SK, and everybody knows that SK is Sekhukhune the chief of chiefs".[31]

The favouring of this broader definition now made explicit the previously tacit understanding that the group was the musical representative, in this particular town area, of the broader Sekhukhune constituency. With the gradual freeing of kiba from the constraints of compound life, this trend in naming became current throughout all Reef areas where there were sufficient northern Sotho speakers to support kiba groups; resulting in such groups as SK Benoni, SK Alexandra, SK Mamelodi, and SK Germiston. The use of additional names, like Bapedi Champions by SK Benoni, or like Maaparankwe by what was otherwise understood to be SK Tembisa, restated by referring to emotionally-charged symbols or unifying identities the same basic allegiance to Sekhukhune.

In all these cases the name SK is paired with the name of a Reef area or township. Although this might be seen as drawing on both rural and urban areas as sources of identity, the urban

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[30] See SAIRR survey (1966:194) for an outline of the plan to remove all Africans in the East Rand area from the older townships to one of the following: Tembisa, Daveyton, Natalspruit or KwaThema.

[31] Prince Seroka, recorded discussion with MTN, Tembisa, 6/4/91.

part of the name was not entirely under performers' own control. Maaparankwe, for example, while certainly seeing themselves as being "from" Tembisa, were wary of attempts made by the township's new superintendent to appropriate their fame and earnings for his own kudos as a municipal official:

> what troubled us is the bad experience on the mines, where people would dance for nothing. This is because the money that was won was always taken by the mine dance organisers. ... This also happened to us in Tembisa where the superintendent took away the money. ... Martin of Tembisa asked us to be under his control in Tembisa. He said he liked this sepedi koša (Pedi singing). After competing for money, he would take the money that we had won and give us two big makoko (tins) of beer; others would get bo-phobe (mealie meal porridge). Most of us didn't know that we were being used.[32]

What the subdivision of the total pool of players from Sekhukhune between different Reef townships did provide was a kind of league for the purposes of competition. The fiercest dance contests are never between men from different rural areas, but between those from the same broad rural home - sometimes even brothers or cousins - whose place of urban residence divides them geographically while working on the Reef. Despite the fierceness of competition, the boundaries between these smaller urban subdivisions of SK are permeable; men from Sekhukhune who leave one urban area to live and work in another can get an automatic "transfer" to the appropriate SK kiba group.[33]

The move for men from backyard suburban rooms, through mine employment, into informal shack settlements and later to the dormitory accommodation of the new townships, entailed a shifting membership for kiba and an accompanying change in the identity which a group's name was seen as designating. It was particularly their transcending of the controlled and restrictive environment of the mines which allowed these players a greater freedom to define their own identity. But, despite an underlying assumption about the performers' connection to the constant and unfluctuating rural base of Sekhukhune, this connection was not an automatic one. It was, in fact, largely in the highly-charged and strongly communal activities involved in kiba performance that these links to home were enunciated, dramatised and

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[32] Ibid.

[33] Lucas Sefoka, recorded discussion with DJ and MTN, Johannesburg, 27/2/90.

maintained. Music and dance were, and are, central in linking migrants to "home".

Home: performance and community

Given the amount of time devoted to dancing and music in migrant associations throughout Africa, it is surprising that so few studies have paid any attention to the role of this performance in defining migrant origins and destinies. Although both the compins of Sierra Leone (Little 1967:158-160) and the gumbas of Ougadougou (Skinner 1974:209-10) were organised around dancing, for example, this activity receives attention from the authors only inasmuch as it is seen as facilitating the other group undertakings more conventionally associated with "tribal" or "voluntary organisations". In Skinner's study dances provided for structured and formalised interactions between youths of both sexes; in Little's, dances allowed men and women marginal to urban life a structured sense of belonging, and of participating in the life of the city.[34]

It has been assumed that the form and content of migrant dances mirror exactly the form and content of dances from the rural areas which migrants call home (Argyle 1991:77-8). The execution of such dances has been seen as indicating conservatism, presumably since it is believed to involve the frequent reiteration of rurally-based themes. In South Africa, such dancing has been interpreted as an acquiescent response to the plans of management to keep workers content. By harnessing migrants' energies in pursuit of backward-looking traditionalism, their attention is supposedly diverted from the more pressing issues of unfair labour practice and exploitation.[35]

But migrant dances, and the contexts in which they are performed, cannot be assumed to exhibit simple continuities with rural culture.[36] According to the view of performance

[34] Mitchell attempts to analyse the content of the kalela dance. But his claim that it represents a thinly-veiled expression of middle-class aspirations has been criticised (see Argyle 1991). Locally, recent studies by Thomas (1988) and Clegg (1982, 1984) on Zulu migrant performance have analyzed the lyrics of songs and the symbolic import of the dance.

[35] See Andersson (1981); Mr Kgalema, education spokesperson for the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), discussion with DI, Johannesburg, 8/11/91.

[36] See Chapter Three.

theorists, each apparent repetition of a ceremonial or aesthetic formula in fact involves "critical difference", and thus newly creates rather than merely repeats it (Drewal 1991). This perspective is adopted by Erlmann, who shows how the performance of the Zulu isicathamiya style is an effective means of straddling the rural and urban worlds, and of creating a secure home-based existence within an alien urban context:

> migrant performers' isicathamiya songs, lyrics and choreography ... are potent resources for action aiming at the definition of social space and at a secure location within these multiple, contradicting worlds (Turino 1988:130). They enable people ... to reconstruct their universe in terms which they can control. By creating multilevel symbols in which to reflect upon the experience of migration, isicathamiya performers are part of the very reconstruction of the migrants' world (Erlmann 1991:158).

In Erlmann's work, as in other similar studies (Coplan 1987; Moodie 1991), emphasis is placed on identities not as static or preordained, but as actively carved out by energetic and committed agents in pursuit of individually- or communally-defined goals.

It is not, then, simply through reiterating the actions previously executed during a rural childhood and youth that a sense of home is invoked. "Home" also involves an active reconstruction of group cohesiveness in the urban context. This is true of both men and women migrant performers. But for women, because the basis for this reconstructed identity is a more tenuous one, its creation involves a greater degree of initiative, as will be shown further on.

In the case of Maaparankwe, the unity striven-for, and occasionally achieved, involves both the men and the women of the group in an intricate intermeshing of roles, with the male serokolo (leader), Jan Seašane, as an important catalyst. Seašane is a man who has devoted himself with exceptional zeal to the construction of a kind of migrant "moral economy". He pursues this project within the confines of the group which he heads, even if he has no control over the chaotic broader world of the location in which it is forced to exist.

The construction of this world of shared values has been achieved, by Seašane and his fellow-dancers, both through performance and through the creative manipulation of the contexts in which performance occurs.

Two examples may serve to demonstrate how the sense of a moral community with common values and experiences is sustained through performance itself. Both were festive events, involving imaginative modification of the more usual weekly-practice format.

***Mokete wa Matswala a ngwana* (child's birthday party)**

This took place in Tembisa in the street outside Jan Seašane's house. Having previously organised such a party for 's grandson, named Maradona after the famous Argentinian footballer (see figure 12), he and a female co-member, Flora Mohlomi, then arranged a second one, for the grandson of another female co-member, Julia Lelahana. The grandson, together with his mother, was visiting Johannesburg for a few weeks.

In addition to the normal festive activities of eating and drinking, other aspects of the celebration were innovatively incorporated into a regular kiba performance. Women marched into the performance space in the street from Jan's backyard, singing and dancing Tšhukutšhwane. One carried the child, another a huge basin full of scones which had been baked for the event, and a third and a fourth carried a table on which the child's birthday presents had been placed.

After this dance was complete, and the child and objects had been set down, the organiser Flora opened the presents, and then spoke praises to the child, to which the group then responded in chorus. A ceremonial giving of money known as serotwana then ensued. A male group member laid down a newspaper package, placing a R5 note next to it on the table, and saying "this R5 says that no-one will open the package". This established a betting scenario, in which people subsequently approaching the table were expected to lay down money, alternately "to open" and "to keep closed" the newspaper parcel. The mother of the child was then asked to record the names of donors and the amounts given in a book, so that reciprocity on future occasions could be ensured.

Men and women then performed in the usual sequence for the rest of the afternoon.

Festivals of reparation

These also centred around Julia Lelahana, and involved the patching-up of a rupture between her and another group member whom she had offended. Julia had made disparaging remarks in reference to the fact that some women are "afraid of having children", and the woman had interpreted these as a direct personal criticism. The perceived wrongs were righted, at Jan Seašane's suggestion, by holding two "home" performances. The first was at the offended member's house in the Mamabolo area. During the performance Julia made apologies and reparations, and Jan announced to the audience at large why the dance was being held. A second performance was hosted by Julia at her home in the Moletši area, at which the offended woman gave Julia a goat "for keeping her mouth shut". This ceremony successfully dramatised, and resolved, the tension between Julia and her co-member.

On both these occasions, musical performance was used to give dramatic and visible shape to Maaparankwe's striving, motivated primarily but not solely by its highly committed leader, for a sense of solidarity and unity. The first event set up a dance-centred ceremony, related only remotely to the "traditional" naming ceremony for a child, to incorporate into the urban-based group a home-based relative of one of its members. The second succeeded in resolving a dispute between two members regarding themselves as "fellow home people" by engagir g





A baby with big expectations to live up to ... Benjamin Maroka and two-month-old son Maradona Photographs: JOHN PERLMAN

The men who dream of distant homes

Dreams of Maradona, home and the old way of doing things ... JOHN PERLMAN investigates ordinary hostel life

THE two-month-old infant wrapped warmly against the late afternoon chill could have had no idea of the weight of expectation already resting on his shoulders.

"I have called him Maradona," said Benjamin Maroka, his father. "I was a good player. I could have been a professional, but living in those bloody hostels I had no chance."

Maroka has been a migrant worker for many years. Like his father before him, he came from Sekhukhuneland in the Northern Transvaal in search of work and survival and has never earned enough to go home again.

He would not wish on Maradona his own life. After years of working with machinery he became a skilled mechanic, only to find the factory was closing down. But what future does he want for his new-born son?

In the street outside the house where we talked, number 204, Kopanong section, Tembisa township, the celebrations to mark the birth of young Maradona Maroka were in full swing. Four drums, painted red, white and black, had been planted squarely in the middle of the road. Round the drummers a line of dancers — wearing Scottish kilts, arm and leg rattles, plastic horns on their heads and each man's chest in beads and jewellery — dipped and swayed and blew full-cheeked on their whistles made of aluminium pipe. All at once they would set their arms and legs flailing in a fiercely energetic dance; then they would return again to the swaying line.

Beyond them was another circle — men sitting and drinking beer, women and children chatting or shuffling through their own set of steps. And while the men took breaks for beer and to eat from the sheep and the goat that had been slaughtered in Maradona's honour, a group of women — also migrant workers from the north — would perform their dances, also decked out in traditional finery, but to the sound of singing, not whistles.

The men are members of a group called Maqparankwe — "those who wear the leopard skin" — denoting royalty. They all come from Sekhukhuneland and have been migrant workers all their adult lives. Until recently they had lived in hostels — wherever the next job took them. They fled when the violence that has wracked most Reef townships came to Tembisa.

Their current situation has only deepened the dilemmas created by a lifetime of low pay, uncertain employment and separation from one part of their lives. They believe the hostels should be humanised, especially so that their families can visit them — "if only they were made in such a way so that your wife could stay for a while, instead of having to look for a room in the township as we used to do," says Adam Mashabela, who lived in the Mdlanzeni hostel in Tembisa for 12 years before fleeing the violence.

"In that place we were just like cattle in a kraal."

But despite the deprivations brought on by drought and decades of increasing landlessness for each of them, there is still a piece of ground in the north that will always be home. And even if other family members are forced into migrancy, it is to Sekhukhuneland that they intend to return.

"When I am at work, I say I am a man from Tembisa," says Lucas Debeila, a factory worker who left his home in Mohlaletsi 35 years ago at the age of 18 — "I thought it would be for just a year or two" — and has been a migrant worker ever since.

"But when I meet ordinary people, I will tell you I am from Sekhukhuneland. If I was that able to earn properly, I would have gone home long ago. We are only here for the work."

Even Benjamin Maroka, who is pleased that he has a room in a township house so he can have Maradona there to watch his first steps — and kicks — does not want his son to spend too long in Tembisa. He has already sent his first-born son and his daughter back to his home village of Ga Manotwana. "I don't want them to grow up to be careless," he said.

"Children here are just messing around. My children can come back again when they are older."

Prince Seroka, who has been a migrant worker since 1965, feels the same.

"This is a place to work, not a place to stay; I would like to build a house here, so that my family can visit, but I know I will never afford that. God must just give me the strength to do what I can and then I will leave.

"In any case, I don't want my kids to live in town. I don't like this style here. Some of the children just don't have respect. I try to teach my children to respect the older men, even their older brothers," Seroka says.

Seroka, a storeman/driver in a factory in Halfway House, last year fled the Vusimuzi hostel where he had lived for seven years. "Those ones who came to the hostel saying they were Inkatha were not people we knew. They were not from the hostel," he said.

"They came and asked men what nation they were from. And in the room next door to mine they killed one man. I still haven't found a place — one night I sleep here, the next night there — but I will never go back to the hostel, even if I never find a room."

Troubled times like these seem to make the music and dance of the Maqparankwe even more important to Seroka and the others. A week before the feast, the backyard of house 204, Kopanong — the home of the group leader Jan Sejane — was a hive of activity, as members of the group repaired their drums with cowhide that had been soaked soft in the belly of the largest drum for more than a week. While the work went on, other men, all from Sekhukhuneland, drifted in and out — drank a little beer, exchanged news from Tembisa and from home, admired the work.

This activity, and the festivities a week later, were not just aimed at marking the birth of Benjamin Maroka's third child. They also seemed to reflect the determination of men and women with their lives in two worlds to bridge some of that distance and mark out their place in a home that has never felt quite like home.

Migrants from this part of South Africa have a decades-long tradition of supporting each other, both informally and in organisations like burial societies, running credit schemes, song and dance groups.

"This is the music I know from my childhood," said Peter Thobejane, one of the dancers.

"This music is part of our life," said Seroka. "We can't really live without it. It lets you forget everything and it lets us communicate with other people. It also reminds us of home. A tortoise cannot throw off his shell."



Celebrating the baby's birth, dancers, with feathered wrist bands and kilts

Figure 12: Newspaper clipping about the child's birthday party
(The Weekly Mail, 30/8-5/9, 1991)

in dance and oratory at the actual homes of each of these people. The imagery of visiting, hospitality and home were all invoked here in the successful healing of a threatened rupture in the fabric of kiba. This feeling of belonging to a broader moral community is achieved, as well, through the management of the group's financial affairs on the basis of strictly-maintained principles. Although priding itself on its professionalism in dance, Maaparankwe operates as an amateur club, whose profits never accrue to individual members but are kept in a common fund, to be used only to sustain the activities of the group.[37]

One use of this fund can be seen in the organisation of the hosting of performances, and the payment of money for them. These reflect reciprocal obligation rather than the maximizing of profits. As with other kiba groups, each member is expected at some point to invite the group back to his/her rural home to perform for some important function, such as a wedding or a girl's coming out from initiation. In this way, each member fulfils his/her obligation to host the group at home, and - in theory - to pay fellow-dancers for their performance. But a member thus hiring the group is charged a much lower rate than an unconnected person. The rate paid by a member in fact rarely even covers the cost of transport to the northern Transvaal, which is then funded by the group as a whole.[38]

Related financial transactions, too, are governed by a strong sense of moral correctness. At a performance at Ga-Selepe in Sekhukhune, the hostess tried to recoup some of the cost of hiring the group by erecting a makeshift amphitheatre out of sheets of plastic on a wooden frame, and by charging an entrance fee to all would-be spectators. The group's sense of outrage was so strong that they performed for the minimum possible time, and omitted their most exciting show-case acts. An acceptable way for her to have recouped her losses would be to have sold beer at the event, it was thought. But it was beyond the bounds of kiba performance morality to charge an entrance fee.

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[37] See Finnegan (1987:273-93) for an account of remarkably similar attitudes and practices in amateur musical groups in an English town.

[38] See Thomas (1988, cited in Argyle 1991:82) for an account of similar hosted visits home by Zulu migrant dancers. See pp140-1 for pictures of migrant performers on "home" visits.

It is thus within the immediacies of performance itself, and in the shared moral principles which govern the contexts where performance takes place, that a sense of a new community is created by kiba. This creation occurs partly, perhaps, through the cohesive psycho-social effects of co-ordinated and rhythmic dancing (Radcliffe-Brown 1948:248-52; Thompson 1974:14-6, 27-8; Chernoff 1979:113-4, 125-7). But the use of dance in the festive events organised by these migrants should be understood, not as expressing pre-ordained values deriving from rural society, but as actively attempting to create a sense of unity and balance in a context in which such conditions are lacking (Fernandez 1973:216-7; Blacking 1962). Singing, dancing and playing in these events - and controlling the values which govern them - gives men and women a sense of being a part of Maaparankwe.

It was for the migrant women who perform kiba that this innovative creation of community involved particular imagination. If, for migrant men, the existence of home-based associations was not simply given, but required the imaginative intervention of individual agents, for women this identity had to be created virtually from scratch. To understand the reasons for this, we must look briefly at the kinds of rural backgrounds from which these women came. A more thorough exploration of this background will be undertaken in Chapter Six.

Men and women

The description of Maaparankwe's activities on these pages indicates a keen participation by both men and women in the group's engagements and performances. But women's membership of such clubs has been a comparatively recent phenomenon. Kiba clubs and the genre of the same name were exclusively male in membership from the first appearance on the Reef of this type of music until the late 1970s. At around this date, kiba groups began to acquire female migrant members. This, together with other influences, set in motion the process through which the previously male genre acquired a female version.[39] Although, in particular groups, the alliances between male and female performers were far from stable, for reasons to be discussed below, women's kiba as a general phenomenon grew gradually in strength of numbers and in excellence of performance throughout the 1980s and into the

[39] See Chapter Three.

1990s. Most men's groups on the Reef now have female migrant members.

Some precise examples will demonstrate these points. The groups with which Jan Seašane had been dancing and playing since the late 1940s when he first came to the Reef to work had been exclusively male in membership. It was not until 1988 that his club, now called Maaparankwe, was approached for the first time by a prospective female partner-group, whose members had previously been briefly aligned with SK Alex. Having never before had female partners, Maaparankwe were hesitant, and asked for time to consider the proposal. But since committing themselves to the partnership, male and female members have expressed positive attitudes about it, in the main. Women have their own malokwane (leader),[40] mogadi wa malokwane (leader's deputy) and committee, and are careful to represent their own point of view at meetings. Although there are occasions when they feel that their representatives are not listened to, and although they are expected to assume some roles based on stereotypes derivin[illegible]m husband/wife interactions, such as preparing food at celebrations, they feel on the whole that they enjoy a greater degree of autonomy than any of them has had in other migrant clubs or societies. And there is strong commitment, by men and women alike, to the project of maintaining the group's moral principles and its professional standards.

In forming a partnership with the men of Maaparankwe, then, these women have become stable members of a migrant association. Their case approximates to something which has become a norm in the world of kiba: that each man's group is partnered by a group of women. But this norm obscures a range of actual experiences. Preceding the admission of these women into Maaparankwe, they had entered into a series of fleeting relationships with male kiba groups. For some other female singers, such as the current female partners of SK Alex, this pattern of brief partnerships ending in conflict has proved more the rule than the exception. Some singers have, indeed, resolved on the basis of previous experience to remain independent of male groups altogether. The women of Ditšhweu tša Malebogo (the bright ones of Malebogo), for example, feel that the risks of doing without male protection in the harsh world of the townships are compensated for by their freedom to manage their own affairs without male interference. Whether eschewing male alliances, or fleetingly or more

[40] Malokwane is the word used for a football referee.



Figure 13: Members of the SK Alex partner-groups.

(photo: Santu Mofokeng)

firmly linked to a club of male performers, what is interesting about these groups of women migrant singers is that their membership is drawn almost exclusively from the northern areas known collectively as Leboa. Even those clubs which have teamed together with men from Sekhukhune and so allegedly represent this area contain no women originating there.

When I first became aware of this disparity, obscured during the early days of fieldwork by the common symbols and identities which men and their female partners invoked, there seemed to be two possible explanations which could be explored. One was that there were more female migrants from Leboa than from Sekhukhune. The alternative was that, although comparable numbers of women migrated from both areas, only those from Leboa experienced the desire or need, or were able to develop the autonomy, to join migrant associations in their own right.

Investigating these possible explanations proved to be difficult. Sources, both written and oral, tend to obscure or even deny the existence of female migrancy from both regions. Women's migration is hidden, firstly, within communities in the labour-sending areas. A version of the "woman's place is in the home" ideology makes both migrant men and their stay-at-home wives in these communities either condemn female migrancy as an unusual and unfortunate aberration, or deny its existence altogether, even in cases where there is independent evidence of it. Discussions with informants in the rural areas from which these women come do not yield images of group strategies pursued by female migrants comparable with those followed by generations of their male counterparts.

The existence of northern Transvaal women migrants in this generation tends to be hidden, too, from the archival record. This is partly because female migrancy from these areas is a very much more recent phenomenon than male migrancy. Whereas all male kiba players belong to a second or third generation of migrants, almost all the female kiba singers I know belong to the first generation of women in their families who came to work in town, and many belong to the first generation of urban labourers of any kind, male or female. Most

arrived on the Reef after the middle to late 1960s.[41]

Another set of reasons why this generation of migrants is difficult to trace in published sources relates to the sphere of employment in which they work: domestic service. Obtaining employment as a domestic servant is not done through the recruiting agencies whose records are often used to yield figures on male migrancy. Recruitment to this sphere of employment is private and ad hoc, with women getting jobs through relatives or going from door to door to look for work. When individual women do find employment, they reside in a broad scatter of suburban areas, rather than being clustered together in specific hostels. Another reason for these women's invisibility as workers is the fact that, during the 1960s and into the 1970s when they began coming to town, the control of African movement into urban areas was very strictly enforced (Bonner 1990:247; Gay 1980:46). Employers often colluded with their employees in keeping the identity and whereabouts of the latter a secret from the authorities.[42]

Figures on female employment are available from the South African population census, but these are notoriously unreliable, particularly for rural areas of the country characterised by high levels of illiteracy. If the obstacles enumerated above have served to conceal the true extent of female wage employment and migration from view, they have almost certainly concealed it, as well, from the eyes of census officers.

The accompanying table, based on the 1985 census, shows percentages of the female population employed in service and other low-paid occupations. The average for the whole of Lebowa is five percent. Figures for the magisterial districts of Sekhukhune and Nebo, roughly corresponding with the broader region of Sekhukhune, both stand at around five percent, similar to the "homeland" average. Figures for the magisterial districts of Thabamoopo and Seshego, where the homes of a number of migrant singers are situated, are

[41] This relatively recent date of arrival does not hold true for all women who have left rural homes in the northern Transvaal in order to find work in the city: there are women from mission backgrounds who have lived in freehold houses in Alexandra for decades, and have worked and raised families there.

[42] In 1970 domestic service was the second largest occupational category - after agriculture - for African women, engaging 38% of all employed black women (Cock 1980:250, cited in Moore 1988:87). See also Gaitskell et al (1983:86-108).

Table 2: Lebowa women in employment: 1985[43]
(RSA Population Census 1985, 02-85-05: 531-4)

District	Rural Female Population	Women in low-paid employment	Percentage of rural female population in low-paid employment
Bochum	50 573	1 990	3.9
Bolobedu	77 614	1 641	2.1
Mokerong	144 184	7 753	5.4
Namakgale	9 868	586	5.9
Naphuno	49 985	2 380	4.8
Nebo	122 501	6 158	5
Sekgosese	47 622	1 314	2.8
Sekhukhune	177 944	9 618	5.4
Seshego	105 418	7 490	7.1
Thabamoopo	119 652	7 294	6.1
TOTAL	985 888	49 557	5

marginally higher at around six and seven percent respectively. But those for Bochum, Sekgosese and Bolobedu, home to other migrant singers, are lower at around three, two and two percent respectively. The census yielded no consistent contrasts, then, between rates of female employment in northern and southern areas.

The alternative thus seemed to require investigation: that only female migrants from Leboa, or certain female migrants from Leboa, experienced the desire or need, or were able to develop the autonomy, to join migrant associations in their own right. I found evidence to

[43] The census merely lists those men and women from particular areas who are employed, and gives no details about where this employment is situated. It does not, then, strictly speaking record female migrancy. The figures were obtained by taking the rurally-based female population of each district, and looking at the low paid sectors of employment - service, production and unskilled work, together with "workers not classifiable" since this seemed likely to describe low-paid rather than middle-class or professional occupations. Although theoretically these workers could all be employed within the district in which these women reside, this is unlikely since there is an extreme scarcity of jobs in the homeland areas for both men and for women. For a note on changed boundaries of magisterial districts, see Appendix 4.

support this claim from discussions with, and observation of the experience of, individual women kiba performers themselves. Combined with information from these life-histories, what the archival record does provide is some sense of the historical background to the circumstances in which many of these women, and their forebears, had lived before migrating: circumstances of considerable social dislocation which had precipitated them into migrancy, which had isolated them from other workers when they first began to live in town, and which had subsequently driven them to seek the companionship of migrant women in a similar predicament.

The female migrants who became urban performers of this music came from a very different kind of socio-economic background than their male counterparts. Even looking at a kiba group representing Leboa, the family backgrounds and orientations of its men are in strong contrast to those of its women. Stated most starkly, this is the contrast between mostly reserve-dwelling traditionalists on the one hand, and mostly farm-dwelling people, relocated into the reserves, with more modern aspirations and/or with a Christian orientation, on the other.

Earlier in this chapter, a contrast was presented between the heartland of Sekhukhune and the eponymously-named reserve areas of Leboa. In the first few decades of the 20th century, these northern reserves had been thought inadequate to the farming and grazing needs of their intended African populations. Although the chiefs after whom these reserves were named lived within their allocated areas, their subjects were dispersed on surrounding farms. The response of some of these people to the overpopulation and overgrazing in the region had been that of grouping together and buying or renting their own land, beyond the sphere of chiefly control, for advanced agricultural use. For some of them, the desire for education acted as a spur to remain as, or to become, tenants or freeholders on state, private or mission land.[44] Most of the women who later joined kiba clubs in town came from this kind of background.

[44] See Chapter Six pp202-211 for details.

People like these, living outside of the official reserve areas on African- or white-owned farms, were to bear the brunt of the infamous population removals of the 1950s and 1960s. Thousands of Africans living within "white" South Africa were relocated, mostly onto the lands which had been purchased by the state's South African Native Trust for the purposes of augmenting the size of the original reserves. The word "Trust" eventually came to stand, not only for this additional land, but also for the total package of interventions into rural existence - administrative, agricultural, and demographic - which apartheid's planners were determined to implement. It was the experience of dislocation resulting directly or indirectly from these interventions which had forced some future female kiba singers into the labour market, where many belonged to the first generation of migrants, male or female, from their particular families.[45]

The contrast between male migrants who dance kiba and their female counterparts is thus a contrast between long-standing reserve-dwellers from both Sekhukhune and Leboa, on the one hand, and people who had lived as peasant producers and labour tenants on farms outside the reserves, and who had subsequently moved onto the Trust surrounding these reserves, or into the reserves themselves, on the other. Linked to these different socio-economic backgrounds are a series of other contrasts.

Male players, while many have worked their way from employment in mining into better-paid jobs in the industrial and service sectors, still mostly belong to that class of reserve-dwellers thought of as baditshaba (traditionalists/lowly-paid migrants). Where they have progressed beyond this social category and have moved into the echelons of majekane (Christians/middle class), they have invariably abandoned this style of dancing since it appears as inappropriate to the holders of a higher social status, and as incompatible with adherence to Christianity. Female players, in contrast, are almost all from Christian backgrounds. Those who had lived as peasant producers outside the reserves belonged to the category of earlier converts known as majekane, while those from labour tenant backgrounds were baditshaba more recently

[45] Neither the experience of living on farms as independent farmers or as labour tenants, nor that of resettlement from these farms into the reserves, were unique to communities living north of Pietersburg. But it was from northern communities who underwent these experiences that the migrant women singers of kiba were drawn.

converted to independent churches. A very few had been raised in Christian communities within the reserves themselves.

The fact that these women come from an area of the country totally distinct, and from rural backgrounds very different, to those of their male counterparts, illustrates a point made by Bozzoli about female migration: "one cannot assume that the later women who leave the land 'belong' to the men who left earlier" (1983:156). For the men in kiba groups such as Maaparankwe and [illegible]lex, the women who "belong to" them - mothers, sisters, and particularly wives - are thought of as belonging, with these men's children, in the villages of Sekhukhune. These women are characterised as being rurally resident, even though many visit their husbands regularly and although some have moved to stay in town on a more permanent basis. None of these wives have acquired the degree of independence from conjugal control associated with female membership of an urban-based kiba group. When they attend and participate in urban-based kiba occasions, they do so in a way associated with earlier female participation in this male genre, as peripheral "praisers" of the male-dominated central event. Those male migrants' wives who do perform kiba are members of rural-based groups such as that described in Chapter Five.

In contrast, the women from northern areas who sing kiba in town, sometimes in partnership with male migrants, do so as members of largely independent groupings. Beginning their migrant careers as isolated individuals who were dependent on male "home boys" for social interaction, they have evolved an autonomous and a specifically female version of "migrant association", and have used apparently traditional music as a means of expressing their rather less than traditional outlook on life.

Chapter 2

Bagagešu:

migrant women and the creation of home

The images of migrancy yielded by the literature in southern and other parts of Africa portray a world peopled almost exclusively by men. In the literature on migrant associations, particularly, comparatively little attention has been paid to the role of female migrants as actors in their own right. If they are not altogether absent from the picture, they appear as dependent beings whose activities male migrants are determined - partly through home-based associations - to control. Their escape from such restrictions appears necessarily to entail an escape from these associations, and a loss of interest in maintaining their connections to "home".

This image of women in migrant associations as either firmly dominated or as desiring their freedom is linked to a set of central themes which emerge from the broader literature on female migrancy in Africa. Women's options of remaining at a rural home or of leaving this home to work in the cities have been seen as constrained primarily by their relationships with, and especially their dependence on, men.

In some instances, female migration has appeared as an opportunity for total escape from this control, and from the strictures of patriarchal rural society in general. This was so in South Africa prior to the extending of influx control to women (Bozzoli 1983; Walker 1991:188, passim), and also in towns in West and East Africa and on the Copperbelt (Little 1972; Cheater 1986:159; Parpart 1991; Parkin 1975). But in those cases where strict controls on women's movement were introduced - often with the overt collusion or tacit approval of tribal elders and of migrant men - the dependence by women on their husbands or other male kinsfolk was vastly augmented.

Under conditions like these, the entry of women into the migrant labour market is seen as inhibited by the need of their husbands to maintain them as the custodians of production and reproduction in the rural areas (Stichter 1985:145). In southern Africa it is precisely this kind of conjugal interdependence which has been thought to underpin the existence of the "migrant

labour system" (Murray 1981:165-170). When women - against the most difficult of odds and in defiance of the law - do enter the migrant labour market, it is the breakdown of conjugal relationships, and thus of their ability to depend on men, which forces them to do so (Gay 1980:41; Murray 1981:156).

These structuralist accounts of the centrality of women's dependent role within the logic of labour migrancy are indisputably accurate in broad outline. But, in omitting to examine how female migrants see themselves, they sideline women as agents engaging in their own strategies of survival, or grouping together with other migrants in an attempt to cope with the pressures of urban existence.

There are a number of reasons why an account written from this kind of structural perspective would be predisposed to ignore female home-based association even if it existed. In situations where female migration is relatively uncurbed there is a tendency to exaggerate women migrants' desire to be free from all strictures: they have been portrayed, for example, as promiscuous, or as entering into only fleeting sexual relationships. The readiness to portray women migrants in this light, according to Brydon, may say more about the desire of male vested interests to control these women than about the actualities of their experience (1987:171-2).[1] This exaggerated emphasis on female unconstraint has led to an assumption - inaccurate, as Brydon indicates (ibid.:176) - that the relationship of such women to male migrant associations is one of distance, or of distinct avoidance. One of the focus points of male migrant activity has been the desire to control or curb the activities of such women in town (Parkin 1969:165), or to procure exclusive access to their sexual services (Bonner 1990:241, 247-50).

On the other hand, in situations where the existence of male migrancy is predicated on the existence of a more-or-less viable rural economic base, and on the stable presence of men's wives to manage the rural economy, male organisation is thought to be dedicated in part to keeping such women in their rural place. The strength of ethnicity as a focus of association among migrants in southern Africa, according to Vail, is partly based on a powerful

[1] See also Izzard (1985:271) for a criticism of Little's depiction of migrant women as motivated primarily by a desire for independence.

primordialist ideology in which the maintenance of control over land and women are central (1989:14). Such an ideology may be paradoxically strengthened under the conditions of lengthy male absence from home (Gay 1980:52). This perspective, like the one previously discussed, excludes women as the possible members of migrant groupings. If they are the objects of control by these associations, they are unlikely also to be active subjects initiating or perpetuating them.

We have heard little, then, about women as beings who actively constitute themselves into groupings on the basis of sharing a common rural home. But we have heard even less about the ways in which such women conceptualise, imagine, and reconstruct their relationships to such a home. Describing the experience of the male migrant performers of kiba, I claimed in Chapter One that the rural homes which serve as a basis for migrant association are not so much preordained as they are creatively invoked. For kiba women, even more than for their male counterparts, their communally-experienced relationship to a rural area conceived of as home is an imagined one. It is a relationship constructed less out of a shared rural background than out of shared urban experiences. On the basis of certain elements objectively present, such as a common language and a common origin in a very broadly-defined rural area, these women have assembled an identity and a consciousness of commonality.

For the northern Transvaal migrant women who sing kiba, then, their membership of these originally exclusively male groups is neither a sign of dependency nor of an acceptance of control by migrant men. Most initially joined, and continue to belong to, male-dominated burial societies, to which they were introduced individually by husbands or male relatives. But they teamed up with other women only after they had moved away from this dependence on male kin. Their growing independence was paralleled by the autonomy they developed as members of these separately-structured female kiba groups, with female leaders and office-holders. At the same time, they developed a sense of home as a kind of mythical charter underpinning this membership. It was in the process of identifying themselves with this home that they entered into partnerships with men's groups, and involved themselves in some of the ambiguities which such partnerships entailed.

Migrant women: married and unmarried

If women's eventual membership of kiba reflected their growing autonomy, this was built up only slowly through several years during which they were dependent on husbands or male relatives. The reasons why these women left home to work, then, do reflect the existence - or the rupturing - of dependence on men. Their joining of kiba, later on, occurred once this dependence had lessened or disappeared.

For future female singers of kiba, the initial trip to Johannesburg was made for one of two contrasting reasons. A woman migrated either at her husband's suggestion in order to keep him company in town, or because of the lack of support from a wage-earning man - husband or father.

Migration by women to join their husbands has been noted in the literature, where it has been interpreted as "social" rather than "economic" in nature.[2] Noting this kind of migration in north India, Sharma criticises such a categorisation. She points out that a woman whose migrant trajectory is dictated by her husband's presence in a particular urban area, but who then engages in wage labour in that area, is no less guided by economic considerations - and no more guided by social ones - than a man who allows his choice of urban workplace to be influenced by that of a relative (1986:42). In similar vein, Stichter argues that economic factors cannot be arbitrarily separated from social ones (1985:6). In the case of future kiba singers who did cite their husbands' wish for their companionship in town as their main reason for migrating, the economic dimensions of their move were at least as important as the social ones. Mary Lebogo and Phina Komape, called by their husbands to join them in Johannesburg, did not allow much time to elapse before they had found work in domestic service to help with the family finances.

[2] Brydon (1987:167) writes of West Africa that a common cause of female migration prior to 1970 was coming town to join a husband: Parkin (1975:40) says that most East African migrant women at the time of his study were still dependent wives. Similar dependence accounts for female migrancy elsewhere in Africa, but to a variable degree: in Kenya and Tanzania, for example, there was a period during the inter-war years when more women migrated independently than motivated out of a desire to join their husbands (Robertson 1984:40). But Stichter, in her overview of African migrancy, insists that most women in Africa have migrated, not to join their husbands, but because of directly economic or family-crisis related reasons (1985:151).

It is the second of these two reasons, migration because of the lack of a male wage-earner in the family, which is most often cited in the literature on southern Africa as the major cause behind female migrancy (Preston-Whyte 1981:161; Gay 1980:41; Murray 1981:156; James 1985:178). This claim is supported by the presence in the present sample of a category of women who married young and whose subsequent experience of conjugal separation around five years later brought them back to their parents' village. But the category of women who never married are preponderant numerically. For some of these, their single status was not so much a result of being overlooked by some eligible suitor as because of their feelings of obligation and duty to their family of birth or orientation. For a woman like this it was the absence, not of a husband's support for her children, but of a father's support for herself, her mother and siblings which had initially engendered a sense of responsibility for her family in the rural areas, and which led her to come to town. At least in one case there was a definite aversion to marrying, while in others the idea of acting "as a son should" was seen, at least in retrospect, as incompatible with the reorientation of duty and responsibility towards a husband and his family. For women in this category, it was only later, when they bore children of their own, and when some of their siblings married or went to work in turn, that the profile of their rural dependents came to match more closely the usual stereotype: children at home in the country, supported by mother working in town.[3]

Many of those who never married, then, were driven by specific rural circumstances to view themselves from adolescence as playing the role of primary breadwinners for their families, whereas most of those who separated from their spouses began to play such a role only after moving back home after a period spent as married women at the home of their in-laws. Both the unmarried and the more recently single, however, migrated for what might appear primarily "economic" rather than "social" causes.

But, while the two separate causes of women's migration outlined above might be thought to have given rise to two rather different constituencies, their gender gave the members of both a feature determined very definitely by "social" considerations. This was their handicap in making independent connections to migrant networks in town. All these women, whether

[3] Chapter Six gives an account of the circumstances which led some migrant kiba women to see themselves in this way.

married or not, relied on individual, usually male, family members, related either by blood or by marriage, to bring them to town and to connect them into broader networks once having arrived. It was because female migration from the northern Transvaal was not undertaken by groups of people - youths socialised together, or clusters at particular factories or hostels of people from specific areas - that they were tied, at least at the start of their migrant careers, to husbands or particular male relatives and to the home-based networks to which they belonged.

The women who came to Johannesburg to join their husbands, like Phina Komape, Martina Ledwaba, or Mary Lebogo, became subsumed on first arriving within their husbands' networks of burial society members and worshippers in the Zionist Christian Church (ZCC). Unmarried women, like the Machaba sisters, or widows like Rosina Msina, came to Johannesburg at the suggestion or under the initial protection of a brother or uncle. To the extent that their isolation as domestic servants permitted them any social involvement, they were likewise subsumed within the area-based burial societies or church groups to which these male relatives belonged.

The contrast between the two female migrant constituencies was not, however, a permanent one. The criterion of marital status, initially differentiating between two contrasting reasons for female migration, became less important as wives became widows, divorcees became independent breadwinners, and unattached women acquired male companions who did not alter substantially their relationship to their rural families. When the women who had come to town for the sake of conjugal togetherness were deprived of this source of companionship and financial support through widowhood, and were simultaneously freed from the necessity of sticking within their husbands' migrant networks, they experienced the necessity but also the independence of selecting a network of their own. Likewise, when the single women driven to look for work had overcome the initial isolation of domestic service, and had begun to make their own female friends as an alternative to the male-dominated social circles to which male relatives had introduced them, they began to construct new networks from assemblages of these individual friendships.

The fact of being a single woman without male support was not, then, a uniform cause of northern Transvaal migrancy in the way suggested by much of the literature for other areas, but it was a major factor underlying the later coming-together of these women in kiba groups. For both categories of women - those widowed or separated, and those never married - the link between being single and joining kiba had two aspects. It involved opting out of, or relying less heavily on, the forms of group support previously relied on which had been automatically provided to them by their connections to husbands or male kinsmen. These were then replaced by, or combined with, new sources of help and succour entered into on terms of their own choosing.

Female members, male associations

The associations to which these women belonged before joining kiba were independent churches and burial societies. Over half the women in my sample had been raised as members, or had become members when marrying, of independent churches. Others grew up as members of mainstream churches. Their background in Christian peasant or tenant families, or on and around the farms of Pietersburg and areas further north where they were subject to extensive mission influence, is described in Chapter Six.[4] But most of these women allowed their church membership to lapse when joining a dance group. Some, like Phina Komape and Martina Ledwaba, were able to become dancers only after widowhood, since their husbands, strongly oriented to the ZCC, actively disapproved of what they saw as pagan dancing. For them, widowhood was both the spur to and the facilitator of a new group orientation, which they found to be more supportive and companionable than the group of churchmembers to which they had been linked through their husbands. The rejection of church membership by both the widows and the single women of my sample suggests that the independent churches, characterised as an important source of identity for migrants and rapidly proletarianising communities (Comaroff 1985:241), were more effective for male migrant workers than for women in this regard.[5]

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[4] The fact of rurally-derived church membership was one of the important factors differentiating Leboa migrant women performers from the stay-at-home women performers in Sekhukhune. See Chapters Three and Four for more detail.

[5] See Chapter Seven for more detail.

Most future kiba singers joined a burial society soon after arriving, either subsumed under their husbands' membership or at the instigation of the same male relative who had brought them to town. When attending the monthly burial society meetings, these women found themselves in a strongly male-dominated world. The leaders and members of the kudu tamaga (executive) were then, and are still, men, and although in some cases women were admitted to titled positions in parallel with men's ones, their influence lay in the right to veto rather than extending to decision-making. Women, as lower earners, felt that men's insistence on raising the monthly contributions in order to pay exorbitant matšhidiso (condolences) was based on their higher earnings and was thus unfair. Another area of disagreement, in which men's opinions usually predominated, concerned the status of dependents. The dependence upon a man of his wife and children was, and is, officially sanctioned in the burial societies: their membership being thus automatically guaranteed by his own. In the case of a single woman, or one who though married had an independent membership of such a society rather than being subsumed by her husband's membership, there was a reluctance officially to acknowledge her dependents as having an equivalent status to those of men. Although money may be given in the event of death, it would be less than that given in respect of the death of a male member's official dependents. In similar vein, women would argue heatedly about the fact that their dependents, consorts or husbands could not qualify for free transport to funerals or for free society badges, whereas men's wives would automatically be given these things.[6]

Despite the perceived inequalities in these societies, northern Transvaal women in the early years of migrancy derived significant benefits from their membership of them. But the benefits did not include a sense of continuing companionship, since the societies met only on the first Sunday of every month. Women were left lonely on the other three Sundays, often spending most of their pitifully inadequate leisure time sitting in their rooms. This pattern of isolation was broken only by activities such as the sewing lessons provided at various churches for domestic workers, infrequent visits from people working as servants in nearby houses, and occasional trips to watch soccer.

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[6] This information was gleaned from discussion with Joanna Maleaka, DJ and MTN, Johannesburg 24/3/90; Andronica and Salome Machaba, DJ and MTN, Johannesburg 13/5/90; and from my attendance at the meeting of the Kwena Moloto Burial Society in Alexandra, 3/11/92.

In the days before the founding of kiba, one of the things which made it difficult for women to sustain a connection with male migrants from the same home areas, above and beyond the monthly burial society meetings, was the fact that these and other less formal gatherings were held in or around the hostels where most male migrants lived, in such townships as Alexandra or Tembisa. During the 1960s and early to mid-1970s, when most future kiba singers first came to Johannesburg and established themselves in the job market there, transport between the white suburbs and the black townships was provided only by busses which operated on major arterial roads, and which were thus inaccessible to domestic servants in their scattered accommodation. On weekends and Sundays, especially, these busses ran infrequently.

This limited system of transportation was to be transformed with the development of the black-owned taxi trade during the late 1970s. A proliferation of mini-vans began to operate on routes and at times dictated largely by demand and hence by profit. As in cities in other parts of South Africa, the burgeoning of this taxi trade made it possible for domestic servants, from their isolated suburban enclaves, to establish and maintain contacts, during their rare leisure time, within the broader world of the township.[7]

In the case of northern Transvaal female migrants working in the northern suburbs of Johannesburg, it was these new opportunities for transport in the late 1970s, and their facilitating of more regular visits to Alexandra, that were an important factor in the genesis of women's kiba.

The move to relative autonomy

These female migrants were, then, initially constrained by need and by social expectation to rely on the mediation of husbands or individual male relatives, and to join the home-based associations to which their husbands or brothers belonged. Their move towards greater autonomy, which eventually enabled them to initiate female migrant associations on their own terms, was engendered at both the rural and the urban poles of their lives.

[7] My thanks to Eleanor Preston-Whyte for suggesting this line of research to me, based on her own work among domestic servants in Natal. See SAIRR survey, (1985:233-5; 1986:209-213; 1987-8;93-8).

At the rural pole, these women possessed, or developed, a strong commitment to their natal families. Many of those who had remained single had done so out of a strongly-developed sense of filial obligation to their parents. Owing partly to the particular rural circumstances of their upbringing, they viewed themselves from the outset as behaving "like sons" should. In looking after and providing financial support for their parents and siblings, they were coping not with the absence or loss of a husband's income, but with the effects on their natal families of the population movements engendered by or indirectly linked to the policies of apartheid.[8] For these women, then, a strong sense of commitment to natal family was intact since childhood.

Other women had married young, often by parents' arrangement rather than by their own choice. After residing for some time with their in-laws, they had separated from their husbands, between three and five years later, to return to their parents' village. For these women, re-establishing a position at the heart of their natal families required some effort. Some, like Elsie Lekgotwane and Joanna Maleaka, had taken the initiative in leaving their husbands' homes and in relocating, together with children, at their natal villages once more (see figs. 14 and 17). This could not, however, be a decision made completely independently: for Elsie it necessitated the approval of her parents who paid back the mahadi (bridewealth) so that custody of her child could be transferred back to her and to them. But she stressed that she and her family were active agents rather than passive recipients of the decision.[9]

When women in this position married again or established relationships with men met in Johannesburg, this second union did not prompt a second severing of natal ties or a subordination of these to marital ties. They retained their houses, continued to remit money for the care of their children to their parents, and sent the children from these second unions home to be cared for alongside those from the first. While the women in some cases received financial support from their new husbands or lovers, to contribute to the raising of their children with these men, they retained their independence from them in other ways. After being widowed, Rosina Msina, for example, married a second husband whom she met in

[8] See Chapter Six pp203-11, for details.

[9] Elsie Lekgotwane, recorded discussion with DJ and MTN, Johannesburg, 18/8/90.



Figure 14: Elsie Lekgotwane, leading SK Alex in performance.
(photo: Santu Mofokeng)

Johannesburg. He has a first wife and children living in his home village, and so has put no pressure on Rosina to move herself and her children away from the house which she built before meeting him. In 1990 he was contributing R100 a month to help with the upkeep of the four children she supports at her home, although only one of these is his own.[10]

From the urban end, the gradual building up of a female migrant's autonomy was achieved, with a great deal of individual effort, in moving from poorly-paid employment into better-paid jobs in different areas. While an initial job was procured with the help of a relative, the exertions made by these women to better their position were often made on their own initiative. In some cases this involved walking from door to door and asking for a job in areas where salaries were known to be better, but in others women used social contacts which they made through their employers.

A good example is that of the Machaba sisters, Salome and Andronica. Salome was first taken to Johannesburg from her home in the Malebogo area by her uncle in 1970. Typical of first-time female migrants, she was unable to speak English and her pass-book was not appropriately endorsed for residence in an urban area, so her aunt found her a job with an Indian family in Lenasia, earning R20 a month. This was a route favoured by illegal female migrants from other areas of southern Africa as well (Murray 1981:154). Her move into the employment market of the better-paying northern suburbs began soon afterwards with her employment in Parkhurst at R80 a month, but was temporarily interrupted by the birth of her child. Dismissed by her Parkhurst employers because of her pregnancy, she was forced to seek work in Lenasia again, with an accompanying drop in pay.

At this stage, she arranged for her sister Andronica to join her in Lenasia, where she found her a job with another Indian family. Here, Andronica too started with a monthly salary of R20, and had to sleep on the kitchen floor at night since her employers provided her with neither a room nor a bed. The two sisters moved from the poor pay and discomfort of Lenasia into domestic service in the northern suburbs of Johannesburg, where by 1990 both

[10] Rosina Msina, recorded discussion with DJ and MTN, Johannesburg, 21/4/90.

were earning monthly salaries of R350.[11] Once within the Johannesburg suburban ambit, they shifted through a succession of increasingly better-paid jobs, using contacts established through white employers.

Much of what has been written about domestic service in South Africa emphasises the extreme disadvantage experienced by those employed in this sector: their dependence on the whims of employers, and the absence of any defined rights or conditions of service (Gaitskell et al 1983:103-7). The life-histories of individual servants does demonstrate the truth of such a claim.[12] One area of uncertainty, for example, is the lack of any contracts or assurances of long-term employment in the future. A reason for this, in the case of future kiba singers, was the considerable physical mobility of Johannesburg's white population in the 1970s and 1980s. Many women's employers moved between cities or emigrated from the country, leaving them temporarily without work. Once Salome Machaba had made the initial move from Lenasia, for example, she had to change jobs twice because of her employers' departure from Johannesburg. When her Sandton employer left for Switzerland, she went to work for a colleague of this employer, who lived in Parkview. And when the Parkview family then moved to Durban, the estate agent who had sold their house employed Salome as a domestic servant, on the basis of the good reputation she had established with her previous Parkview employer.

If "white madams" enjoyed the privilege of dismissing their servants without notice, one should not ignore the extent to which their employees, albeit disadvantaged within the overall relationship, could use the unheralded withdrawal of their labours as a last line of defence.

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[11] A 1987 poll showed that the average monthly income for a domestic worker was highest (R149) in English-speaking urban homes and lowest (R59) in Afrikaans-speaking lower-income homes. The average monthly wage in the Transvaal in 1987 was R110 (SAIRR survey 1987-88:324). The monthly wage of live-in domestic servants in South Africa usually excludes board and lodging which are expected to be provided by employers as part of the deal. The improvement in conditions of service described here was, of course, highly relative: by comparison with any other form of labour in the same area at the same time this was still an appallingly low wage.

[12] It is not my intention in this thesis to document in any detail these women's experiences of exploitation at work, apart from looking at the impact these have had in structuring their "leisure" (that is, outside-of-work) time. For the earlier history of domestic service in Johannesburg see Van Onselen (1982); for theoretical overviews of domestic service in South African see Cock (1980: 5-15 and passim), Gaitskell et al (1983); for an excellent account of how domestic service fitted into the lives of a female migrant constituency see Bozzoli (1991:91-105).

Elsie Lekgotwane, without warning, left the communal house where she was working because she was required to do eight adults' ironing every week, which she felt was unreasonable. A strategy used by some, like Flora Mohlomi, was to spend the Christmas vacation period looking for another job, and simply not to arrive for work at her previous employer's place when the holiday came to an end.

A migrant woman did have some opportunities, then, to try to secure herself the best possible conditions of service. But one circumstance which interrupted the most energetically-pursued strategies was that of childbirth. The story of Salome's setback in her career as a domestic worker, in which pregnancy and childbirth caused her to have to "start again" in Lenasia, is echoed in the accounts of many other kiba singers. Some women attempted to minimise the interruption to their working lives by arranging for a temporary replacement during the first few months of a baby's life. It was through such a strategy that some women - like Joyce Ledwaba, filling in for her sister who had had a baby - gained an opening into the world of wage work. But it was not always an unqualified success, because the "replacement" in some cases would refuse to relinquish the job to its original holder.

When Salome Machaba's younger sister Andronica was faced by this setback of childbirth, she found an easier solution to it than Salome had done. In 1980, after her four-year absence at home to bear and look after children, her sister Salome, already established in the northern suburbs by this time, found Andronica a job nearby. This help by a sister was a foretaste of the kinds of benefits which the emerging female migrant networks were soon to be able to offer their members. The kiba group Ditšhweu tša Malebogo (the bright ones of Malebogo), of which both Salome and Andronica were later to be founder members, was able to secure employment for several of its other members on the cleaning staff of Redhill school in Morningside, Johannesburg. This was done informally, through contacts made by a single member who already had a job at the school. The shorter hours, companionable accommodation arrangements, and better pay offered at the school made it an employer preferable to the white "madams" for whom these women had previously worked.

The first few years of migrant existence for these northern Transvaal women were characterised, then, by a gradual move away from dependence on men. They shifted into



Figure 15: Andronica Machaba, leading Ditšhweu tša Malebogo in performance.
(photo: Santu Mofokeng)

better-paid and more stable forms of employment in the urban milieu, and entrenched their roles as principle breadwinners for their rural dependents. Accompanying these changes, identities based on a narrowly-conceived sense of home - as members of burial societies representing specific villages or regions, or as connected to the same churches they had belonged to in the countryside - were to be transcended by a broadening vision of shared origin. Individual friendships, tentatively formed with people met in town who spoke the same language, came to be formalised in the founding of women's kiba.

Female members, female associations

It was around the activity of male kiba dancing that the first women's kiba groups were formed. But informants' accounts of this process indicate that it involved, first and foremost, a linking of female migrants in similar predicaments. Although male groups provided a focus of and a model for association, as well as access to instruments, an audience, and a performance space, men were not implicated in the initial set of relationships out of which women's kiba was moulded.

By the late 1970s, the development of the minibus taxi trade had made it possible for northern Transvaal migrant women working in Johannesburg suburbs to overcome their sense of isolation on weekends by travelling to Alexandra, Tembisa or Daveyton. The area and social constituency to which they gravitated was not primarily that of the "township" people who owned permanent homes in Alexandra, but rather that of the migrants living in shacks or men's hostels.[13] Similarly, northern Transvaal migrants based in Germiston and Kempton Park would gravitate towards the men's hostel in Tembisa, and those in Benoni to the hostel in Daveyton. These venues became foci of social activity for migrant men and women.

During one of these visits to Alexandra, Phina Komape and her friends developed an interest in watching men's dancing:

[13] There were in fact important areas of overlap between these two constituencies, despite the clear conceptual boundaries between them on which informants insist. See Introduction pp16-19.

> One day while working in Brixton in 1979, I visited my sister in Alex, it was on Sunday. While there I heard that there was a group of dinaka playing in 19th Ave. I then developed an interest to go and watch them. While I was there alone, I met Salome and Joyce. By then I knew only Joyce because she is from Mašašane, and I did not know Salome. Now Joyce told me that they were looking for a group of women to sing traditional music. They wondered where they could find it, and decided to go to Alex men's hostel. As we discussed I became interested and we agreed to meet the following Sunday. Those who met were me, Joyce, Salome and her sister Andronica. We went to speak to some women from Matlala and talked to them about forming one group, and they agreed.[14]

At around the same time, some of the women who were to form the core of the initial group had started to dress in "traditional" sotho attire. Fransina Monyela claims to have been the one who initiated this practice in her particular circle, for the purpose of attending special occasions at the church sewing class. Two of the women she met at the class, later to become co-members of kiba, followed her example:

> ...we asked ourselves this question. Why can't we show our proper tradition and start singing? Let us not just dress like this with no meaning attached to it, let us also start singing to reveal our tradition properly in that attire.[15]

Other migrant women had also begun wearing traditional dress on these Sunday visits. Joanna Maleaka, from Kgothama area in Venda, was wearing Venda traditional dress on the day in question. She takes up the story:

> We agreed to meet at Zoo Lake the following Sunday to compose and practise our songs better. We went to Zoo Lake as agreed and brought tins to play on. We practised for three weeks and mastered our songs. Later on we went back to Alex men's hostel and asked Matlala men if we could use their drums after finishing playing dinaka. They agreed and we played their drums.[16]

The same story, in broad outline, is told by other women, who formed groups at around the same time. There followed a complex set of alignments, splits, and realignments between female and male performers. These resulted in some stable alliances, as with Maaparankwe,

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[14] Phina Komape, recorded discussion with DJ and MTN, Johannesburg, 31/5/90; Joanna Maleaka, recorded discussion with DJ and MTN, Johannesburg, 24/3/90 gave a similar account.

[15] Fransina Monyela, recorded discussion with DJ and MTN, Johannesburg, 20/9/90.

[16] Joanna Maleaka, recorded discussion with MTN, Johannesburg, 24/3/90.

some fleeting partnerships, as with SK Alex Basadi, and at least one wholly independent women's dance club - Ditšhwen tša Malebogo.

Especially in its initial phases, then, the creation on the Reef of groups of female migrants sharing a sense of a common rural home was undertaken partly in conjunction with male migrant associations, particularly through women's individual membership of burial societies. But when women later became performers of kiba, it was as members of separately structured groups with female leaders and office-holders. They formed their own clubs, using the template provided by men's ones.

The initial founding of these clubs, on the model of their male counterparts, is characterised by participants as having required a great deal of initiative. But, by a decade later, joining women's kiba had become something more of a standard option available to northern Transvaal female migrants. Julia Lelahana, for example, after watching women's weekly practices in Alexandra for some years during the 1980s, joined a group in 1988. This might lead one to see the founding of the initial women's group as typical of the early stages through which any migrant association must pass before it becomes established.

It is certainly true that these women's kiba groups provide the same kinds of practical and financial assistance to their members as other migrant associations have been documented as doing. Singers have helped other singers by using their informal contacts to get them jobs with better pay and conditions of service, as in the case of Redhill school mentioned earlier. Kiba groups have also provided support through their spawning of a range of mehodišano (rotating credit savings clubs: lit. "those which cause each other to save") whose membership overlaps partly but not wholly with their own. In one of these, women buy a specified list of non-perishable groceries - mostly soaps - every month and give them all to that month's recipient, so that she can send them home to her family. In another, each of two members take it in turn to pay the other R300 monthly out of a total salary of R500. Although some kiba singers claim they are "too poor" to belong to these savings clubs, others claim that the function of the clubs is precisely in helping them to overcome a lack of resources, since the social pressure exerted by the combined membership forces them to save and so to meet their obligation to send money home every month. Many combine the social pressure to save

exerted by these clubs with the facility of a savings account in a bank.[17]

This kind of involvement in systems of mutual reciprocity is far more prevalent among migrant women than among migrant men. Asked about the reason for this contrast, one male member of kiba remarked that "these women don't have fathers or husbands. Now they join many associations to secure themselves".[18] The combined membership enjoyed by a woman like Joanna Maleaka of several burial societies, of several mehodišano, and of kiba, suggests that she and others like her see their greatest security in a reliance on as many sources of financial, social and moral support as possible.

Less easily measured, companionship is a crucial benefit which kiba provides for its members. Singers' accounts make tangible the contrast between the isolation of their early years at the Reef and the bustle of sociable activity which accompanied their later membership of kiba. Some enjoyed the opportunity for physical exercise, shared with others, which kiba provided. They characterise the dancing as a kind of sport, and claim that missing a practice makes them feel sluggish for the rest of the week. For others, it was bereavement and the attendant emotional suffering which first drove them to seek membership. When Sarah Motswi experienced great sadness at the death of her father, and when Phina Komape and Martina Ledwaba felt lonely after being widowed, they watched the singers for a period and thought that to join them in their music-making would help them to overcome their sense of loss.[19]

But it was not only financial and social advantages which underlay the attraction of women's kiba. What made it central in the lives of its members was its provision of a unifying sense of a rural "home". And what marks its genesis as different from that of other migrant associations - from that of, say, a northern Transvaal male association some 70 years earlier -

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[17] See Kuper and Kaplan (1944) for an account of mahodisana and other voluntary associations among urban residents of Western Native Township during the 1940s: see Kurtz (1973) on rotating credit associations as mechanisms of adaptation to poverty, and Parkin (1966) on the same associations as ways of adapting to urban life.

[18] Alfred Thobejane, recorded discussion with DJ and MTN, Johannesburg, 30/6/90.

[19] Rosina Msina, recorded discussion with DJ and MTN, Johannesburg, 21/4/90; Salome and Andronica Machaba, recorded discussion with DJ and MTN, Johannesburg, 13/5/90; Sarah Motswi, recorded discussion with DJ and MTN, 19/10/90.

is the degree of effort which its founders, and subsequent members, had to put into constructing this idea of "home". Their origins in a diversity of scattered, and subsequently dislocated, rural communities, from which many had left to find work before a time when female migrancy was considered normal, made this an unusually difficult task. Musical performance was a primary means through which this was achieved.[20]

As I have already suggested, writers on migrant associations in other parts of Africa have drawn attention to the central role played by music and dance in these associations, but few have analyzed the message or meaning of these. One is left with the impression that music, providing entertainment, acts to draw people together so that they may pursue the more tangible benefits of association.[21] For the women of kiba, singing and dancing were more than simply sources of amusement. Performance provided the initial context within which they were to meet, a model on which to base their association, and an opportunity for "showing off" to others the diaparo tša setšo (traditional clothing) which many were beginning to wear. It also provided a means through which they could participate in the expressive modification of a rural-based female genre, and its incorporation within the definition of an urban-oriented male one. But kiba performance was to prove itself most potent in defining and elaborating the notions of gae (home), and bagagešu (people from home), and in associating them closely with notions of sesotho (sotho ways) and setšo (tradition), even for people whose socialisation might originally have oriented them towards other ways.

Kiba, women, and the creation of home

> "Home is where this music is sung ... we don't want to forget setšo sa gagešu (the tradition of our home people)"

This remark, by Fransina Monyela, a founding member of women's kiba, echoes the sentiments expressed by numerous other singers. It is common to hear similar feelings expressed by the players and dancers of men's kiba. But underlying this statement of

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[20] I am grateful to John Argyle for reading and commenting on this chapter. He suggested that the founding of women's kiba was no different to that of any other migrant association, and quoted a learned colleague "The trouble with women is that they are too much like men". I still disagree with him.

[21] See Chapter One pp62-4 for a discussion of this point.

straightforward and unproblematic allegiance to an area and a culture of shared origin are important contrasts between male and female performance, and between male and female migrants' sense of what home implies.

Men, from the section of the community known as baditšhaba (traditionalists) in reserve areas of both Sekhukhune and Leboa, had learned to play dinaka pipes as children, and had imitated the accompanying dance which they saw older men performing at home. Their practice of the genre was uninterrupted by their entry into the labour market. In cases like that of Jan Seašane, described earlier, the ability to play this music even gave him some guarantee of a job when he first came to town: he and other players were given preference over those who could not perform it.[22] In contrast, few of the women who came together in urban kiba groups had had continuous experience of performing the rural female genres which were later to be transformed into women's kiba. While some like the Machaba sisters had learned sotho music as children, or during koma (initiation), this had been replaced during adolescence, in the strongly school- and mission-oriented areas where they grew up, by a performance culture of koša ya dikhwaere or ya dikonsert (choir or concert songs, based on western musical principles). Other future members of kiba, like Elsie Lekgotwane, had never sung sotho music or donned diaparo tša sesotho (sotho clothes) at all before coming to the Reef to find work. Only a very few, like Julia Lelahana and Joanna Maleaka, had been active performers of sotho musical styles from childhood, through adolescence, into womanhood.[23]

Women's kiba did not, then, emerge through simple continuities with past practice. Forged out of a series of disparate though musically compatible rural female styles, for some of its performers it represented a revival of the sotho culture of pre-adolescence. But for some it involved an invoking of the musical practices seen as being not of their own but of their mothers' generation, while others had never seen sotho music performed by members of their own Christian-oriented families but only by unrelated neighbours characterised as baditšhaba (traditionalists). In the ethnically diverse northern Transvaal, yet others had grown up speaking languages such as Sindebele or Venda, and performing associated styles of music.

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[22] See p59.

[23] See Chapter Six for a detailed account of the youth and adolescence of these women.

Women's kiba, then, while apparently harkening back to a shared setšo (tradition), spoke more of a culture women acquired from their friends in town, or at least imbued with new significance there, than of a culture they had personally transported, intact, from the countryside.

For each of these women, the idea of gae (home) and its accompanying bagagešu (those of my home) was conceived of in narrow terms during the first few years of working in town, and later expanded to accommodate a broader, more flexible and more situationally-invoked concept.[24] Some clues as to how this process occurred can be found in group members' retrospective reflections on the individual friendships which were cemented in the founding of, or which later brought them into, kiba.

Home, in its initial and limited aspect, began with the narrow range of acquaintances, mostly from the same village or immediate home area and mostly male, to which each woman was introduced by the male kinsmen who acted as her initial protectors. As the woman established individual contacts with other women met in town, the criterion of a shared language became a crucial one in giving the idea of "home" a broader catchment area. One kiba singer pointed out that any chance acquaintance would qualify as a mogagešu (home person) if she spoke northern Sotho.[25] For women whose sojourn on the Reef had been too short and too isolated to allow the learning of other languages, merely overhearing another woman speaking northern Sotho was sufficient to establish a sense of commonality. Flora Mohlomi and Grace Shokane met by chance in a shop, and discovered that they spoke a mutually intelligible language. Through this means, Flora Mohlomi was later introduced to women's kiba, of which Grace Shokane had been a member for some years.[26]

Although language provided both the means for making such encounters and an image of commonality in terms of which these could be explained, there were other considerations, as

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[24] See Guy and Thabane (1987) for a similar concept, also situationally and flexibly invoked, among migrant members of the Marashea (Russian gang) from Lesotho.

[25] Flora Mohlomi, discussion with DJ and PM, Johannesburg, 11/8/91; Julia Lelahana, discussion with DJ and PM, Johannesburg, 13/10/91.

[26] Flora Mohlomi, discussion with DJ and PM, 11/8/91.

well, which made home people - broadly defined - more important than other casual acquaintances. As Julia Lelahana said, it would be in adversity, especially, that bagagešu could help her. If she became ill, for example, bagagešu would be more likely than any other person to ensure that she was taken back home.[27]

Sanctioned by these more broadly-defined notions of compatibility and shared rural base, women established the friendships which were to become the basis of kiba, or which were to introduce later-joining members to the group. But it was once these women had been thus attracted to the activities of kiba that their home-based identities, through the idiom of musical style, became most encompassing.

The language of northern Sotho, despite regional variations, had provided a template for the modelling of relationships between people from diverse areas. This was so, even for those who had not spoken it at home in childhood, and whose knowledge of it had been restricted to occasional contacts with neighbours. But regional variations in rural female genres of dancing were seen as more pronounced, and were initially more divisive. These were not so much at issue for the women who since early adolescence had eschewed rural sotho music in favour of church-oriented genres. But they were important for women like Julia Lelahana and Joanna Maleaka who had been active performers in the rural context. When Julia joined women's kiba, she found only a few women who danced in the style of her home area, Moletši. It was these women only whom, at that stage, she characterised as bagagešu. Affronted by what she saw as the others' inability to dance well, she began to try to teach them her own regional style, but they said, "wait, we will build each other". The ensuing process of reciprocal learning moulded the definitive way of performing which people nowadays have come to associate with the women of Maaparankwe.[28]

The creation of new home base transcending the boundaries of smaller regions transformed these women from strangers into bagagešu. This involved some change in the actual lyrics

[27] The male-initiated burial societies had been based on an extension of this idea: the notion of taking the body back home for burial. See Delius (1989:589-9).

[28] Julia Lelahana, discussion with DJ and PM, Johannesburg, 13/10/91.

of songs, particularly in their references to the features of particular home areas, as some examples in the next section will demonstrate. But more important than the altering of explicit references to geographical landmarks were adjustments in performance, and the simultaneous broadening and standardising of music and dance style. Through this process, a diversity of styles, known in their rural contexts by a range of names - as koša ya dikhuru (kneeling song), makgakgasa, or collectively as mmino wa sesotho (sotho music) - came to be subsumed within the broader overall category of mmino wa setšo (traditional music).[29]

This process of stylistic homogenization has resulted, in some contexts, in an implied home even more encompassing than that which incorporates the diverse actual homes of a group's members. A complex interaction between urban and rural versions of the style has been involved. Fierce competition between groups in an urban context, and imitation by one group of features seen as excellent in another, has resulted in a homogenous urban style. This has in turn been transmitted to the countryside; either when a group plays at a member's rural home for a life-cycle ritual, or when it is hired to play by people from another - often very far-flung - village. The resulting sense of acquaintance with a broader region is based not only on a pattern of frequent and frequently reciprocated visits by performers from one local area to audiences in a variety of others. It is also forged through the blurring of specific area-based sub-styles to form a broader and more widely-accessible genre.[30]

Home: splits and realignments

It was not only the initial formation of women's kiba groups and the broadening of their style of singing which involved the ongoing re-elaboration of a common home base. Their fissions from and fusions with other groups also entailed a redefinition of separate and distinguishing, or shared and unifying, geographical origins. Where these splits and realignments occurred between men's and women's groups, they reflected conflicts over the deployment of performance resources - instruments, audience, style of singing, payments for public

[29] This process, for both men's and women's music, will be further explored in the next chapter.

[30] See also Introduction pp22-4 for an account of the use of this music to symbolise the "national" unity of Lebowa. See pp140-1 for urban groups on "home" visits.

appearances. At the same time, such conflicts often led women singers to take decisions which gave them greater control over their own performance environment. From this position of increased strength, they either elected to remain independent of male partners, or to re-enter such partnerships on terms of their own choosing.

Ditšhweu tša Malebogo was a group whose members decided to separate from their original male partners, and thereafter to stay unaligned. Their split from the men of Matlala, whose drums they had initially asked to use when first founding their group, was provoked by disputes over the use of these instruments. It was a split made possible on a practical level by the women's acquisition of their own drums, of a separate storage space for these,[31] and of people willing to commission and to support performances despite the group's lack of male partners. But the division was characterised as one between people of incompatible home areas and customs:

> "Matlala men chased us away. They said we are many and they don't know where some of us come from. They wanted only women from Matlala".

Another member accounted for the split in terms of style of dress:

> "The people from Matlala don't dress like us. We did not agree about the manner we dress".

A further comment similarly stressed the importance of differences in culture of origin:

> "we realised that Matlala women were discriminating against us because they did not want us to sing our own songs, so we decided to split".[32]

The extensive reference to different homes and cultures of origin in this description of group fission displays a notion of home more imaginatively invoked than based on real rural affiliations. The group which separated from men's Matlala to become Ditšhweu tša

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[31] Until the violence of early 1991, drums were normally kept in the men's hostel during the week, and brought out on Sundays for practices (see fig. 5).

[32] Joanna Maleaka, recorded discussion with DJ and MTN, 24/3/90; Salome and Andronica Machaba, recorded discussion with DJ and MTN, 13/5/90; Rosina Msina, recorded discussion with DJ and MTN, 21/4/90: all in Johannesburg.



Figure 16: Ditšhweu tša Malebogo in performance.

(photo: Santu Mofokeng)

Malebogo in fact retained two women from Matlala area, left behind in the Matlala group one from Malebogo who was "troublesome", and eventually incorporated a range of others from homes far beyond the borders of the Malebogo area which gave the new group its name. Two or three of the group's founder members, including the Machaba sisters, were from villages in Malebogo. But the definition of Malebogo as home base proved wide enough to include people of Tswana, Venda, Ndebele, and other origins.

One of these is Phina Komape. Her rural home is in the Mašašane area, in the Sindebele-speaking section of Komape village. But her version of the song Sekhekhe sa go nwa bjalwa (a drunkard who drinks beer) refers in its concluding verses to a more broadly-defined northern area:

Sekhekhe sa go nwa bjalwa	A drunkard who drinks beer
Ke a le bona le sobetse	I see it is sunset
Ba ipshina ka go re sega	They enjoy laughing at us
Le a re bona re tagilwe	You see us, we are drunk
Legoaïmong re tla so ya	Heaven is where we will go
Legodimong go bo kgaule.	Heaven, the place of forgiveness of sins.
Mathiri ge la kgobokgane le sang go nwa bjalwa	Young women, when you are together, stop drinking beer.
Nkwenya ya lena ke mang?	Who is your leader?
Nkwenya ke Maleaka.	Your leader is Maleaka.
Le a re bona re tagilwe	You see us, we are drunk
Felegetšang Mmanotwane sa go nwa bjalwa	Go with Mmanotwane, the one who drinks beer
Ke bana ba Mamotswiri	They are Mamotswiri's children
Kgane ga go na Masogana a go nwa bjalwa?	Are there no young men who drink beer?
Dirang ka pela le tloge	Hurry up so that we may leave
Se apa bošula o etla	Bad people are coming
Le a le bona le sobetše	You see the sun has set
Banna ba bangwe ba a betha ge se nwele bjalwa	Some men beat their drunkard wives
Dirang ka pela le tloge	Hurry up so that we may leave
Blouberg Makgameng	Blouberg Makgameng
Ditšhweu tša Malebogo	The bright ones of Malebogo
Lebelela Rita o bone.	Look and see Rita Mountain.

She has personalised the lyrics of an existing song by adding references to her group and its leader, and to the area to which it claims allegiance. She weaves together allusions to a variety of geographically disparate landmarks: the Blouberg, the range of mountains within the Malebogo area from which the group takes its name, and Rita, the large mountain north-east of Pietersburg which serves as a symbol of the whole of Leboa.[33]

[33] Phina Komape, recorded discussion with DJ and MTN, Johannesburg, 31/5/90.

Another such member is Joanna Maleaka, the group leader referred to in the song above, who comes from the Kgothama area in the homeland of Venda. While she subscribes to the idea that she and the other members of her group are all bound together by their sharing of a common rural base, the praises she recites express both her admiration of Malebogo and its clear contrasts with her own "real" home in Venda.

Re bina koša kua Alex	We dance in Alex
Kosa re a bitša Ditshweu tša Malebogo	Our group is called the bright ones of Malebogo
Malebogo ga se bodulo	Malebogo is not a place for settling
Go dula dikokoto	It is a place for heroes
Go dula banna ba mosadi	It is a place for the children of a woman
Iiuu! Ke motswetla, ga ke iphihle	Iiuu! I am a Venda, I don't despise myself
Ke tswa GaRamapulana	I am from Ga-Ramapulana
Go na kua ga bo Mphephu.	At Mphephu's place.

The "place for settling" refers to her own home, in a Trust area where the implementation of the government's plans for agricultural "betterment" led to massive relocations of people into ·ilaineng (lit. "the place of lines"; the grid plan imposed by Trust officials). She contrasts it with Malebogo, a reserve area in which people's antipathy to this planning led to its abandonment by the authorities. The lyrics serve both to highlight the heroism of Malebogo, the chosen rural reference-point of the group to which she belongs, and to announce her dogged defence of her own home area in the "Trust".[34]

There were other women's groups which, after experiencing similar separations from male partners, did elect to re-enter partnerships with men on terms of their own choosing. The women who now sing as part of Maaparankwe are an example. They, too, began their careers as urban singers in alliance with the men of Matlala. After their separation from these men, provoked partly by demands from them for sexual favours, they spent some time unattached to male performers. But their sense of physical vulnerability, especially when travelling to the countryside or to unknown urban locations to perform, drove them to seek out a partnership with the men's group SK Alex. The subsequent termination of this alliance was

[34] Joanna Maleaka, recorded discussion with DJ and MTN, Johannesburg, 24/3/90; and recorded discussion with DJ and PM, Johannesburg, 5/10/91.



Figure 17: Joanna Maleaka.

(photo: Santu Mofokeng)

caused largely by the women's dissatisfaction at their partners' lack of commitment to the performance enterprise. They accused them of attending practices only "tšatši le rata" (when they want to).[35]

For these women, all Leboa migrants, the seeking out of an identity as the female representatives of Sekhukhune in Tembisa reflected, in part, a desire for higher standards of performance. It was the wish for a semi-professional alliance with male dancers which underlay their separation from SK Alex and their approach to Maaparankwe. Their identity as representing Sekhukhune also gave them certain benefits as performers - a performance space, an audience, protection in the townships, jointly organized transport. In short, many of the advantages which first drove women into these partnerships remain as powerful incentives for continuing with such relationships. But their involvement in the moral economy of kiba has more to it than merely a partnership instrumentally entered-into. Despite their independence and autonomy as a group of female performers with their own leadership and hierarchy of positions, they are deeply involved, together with Maaparankwe men, in the ongoing recreation of "home" through a creative use of performance scenarios and contexts.[36] As part of this, the evocative and frequently-invoked symbols of the Pedi chiefship provide a powerful rallying cry, both for the men born in the area where this chiefship once held sway, and for the women born far beyond it.

On the level of style, there are significant differences between men and women in their use of the heroic discourse and symbolism associated with the chiefship. Women's kiba both subscribes to and distances itself from the epic quality of this discourse. Similar ambiguities affect the very definition of female migrant performance as part of the genre of kiba. Women's music, very different from the men's version in most respects, appears to depend on its definition beneath the sheltering rubric of an originally male style for its broader acceptability in the migrant constituency. These and other ambiguities which surround the relationship between women's and men's kiba as sub-styles within an overarching genre will

[35] Anna Dikotlo, recorded discussion with DJ and PM, Johannesburg, 17/8/91; Prince Seroka, recorded discussion with MTN, 6/4/91.

[36] See Chapter 1 pp64-7.

be dealt with in the next chapter.

The co-operative venture undertaken by men and women such as those of Maaparankwe was pursued, then, in the interests of polished performance and of harmonious social relationships, but given shape through the search for specific home-based identities. In this way, women from northern areas of Leboa have come to be thought of, by themselves and by others, in association with the Pedi heartland of Sekhukhune.

Through all these shifting partnerships and changes in membership, notions of an appropriate "home" have been invoked and activated. In the case of Ditšhweu tša Malebogo, this was to justify the hiving-off of one group from another: in the case of Maaparankwe it became the legitimation of one group's cementing of a partnership with another. It can be seen that these shifts of membership and identity have been very different for migrant women than for migrant men. For men, a knowledge of a constant rural home underlay all these changes. Women, on the other hand, have created a sense of cohesiveness out of a situation of scatter and diversity. Some, like Maaparankwe, have relied in the process on the prior and "readymade" identities provided by men's groups as an important template upon which to build. Others, like Ditšhweu, have constructed identities quite independently of men. But both have used kiba as a loose and flexible system for associating with other migrant women in town.

Conclusion

If we are to move beyond the view with which we are provided by much of the literature on women and migration, we must begin to see women as agents with some control over their own destinies, rather than as submitting passively to, or alternatively driven solely by the desire to escape from, the control of their "home boys". The rural backgrounds of many of the singers of women's kiba predisposed them, as major breadwinners for their natal families, to view the world more as if they were sons responsible for family upkeep than as if they were daughters or wives escaping from patriarchal structures. Even those who had been married prior to migrating subsequently established strong ties to their natal families. Women of both these types invested financially and emotionally in the establishment of a rural

domicile. As principle wage earners, they sent money home to a mother who in turn managed the land and undertook to care for children.[37]

The strong links to a home region which have been documented as a feature of male migrancy are predicated on two linked conditions. One is men's absence from home for lengthy periods in order to earn the wherewithal for its upkeep. The other is their secure knowledge that this home is being maintained in their absence. It is normally a wife who is expected to undertake these processes of maintenance sometimes summarised as "reproduction".

Home-linked association, appearing as the prerogative of male migrants, thus entails men's concern for home from a distance, combined with their reliance on a wife to take care of this home at close quarters. Women who became singers of kiba came to approximate these circumstances, usually relying on a mother to maintain their homes and families in their absence.

Kiba women thus became "as men" in their combining of specific concerns with the welfare of particular homes and families with a generalised attachment to a distant home conceived of and represented in heroic and even epic terms. But in order to have the freedom to associate with other female migrants on terms of their own choosing, women had to develop some autonomy from their "real" home-boys: brothers, husbands, and the members of home-based churches and burial societies. When they joined kiba groups, and engaged in the pursuit through musical style of a new concept of home, necessity dictated the continuation of some links to migrant men. But if these links became irksome or stood too squarely in the way of women's freedom of performance, they severed these in the name, once again, of a more accurate and faithful reflection of home.

The home which kiba performance creates, then, enables a distance from "home boys" while maintaining a professional connection to some of these. Home in this context is an idiom of solidarity between women who value their acquaintance with fellow-migrants encountered in

[37] See Chapter Four for details.

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an urban context, and who are committed to the same enterprise of caring for a rural-based family. Between them, they have created a home, symbolically predicated on a northern country area, in town itself.

Chapter 3

Ke rena baeng/we are visitors:

the development of men's and women's kiba

Kiba, designated as part of mmino wa sesotho and more recently mmino wa setšo, is recognised as being a genre rooted in the past. Its continuities with past performance, insisted on by practitioners and audiences, can be demonstrated by comparing its melodic and rhythmic structures with those documented by earlier researchers (Kirby 1934; Huskisson 1958). Its complex rhythmic patterns, and the descending melodic sequence with the distinctive northern Sotho six-note scale, are much the same today as in the Gallotone recordings of the 1940s, and probably much the same as when, decades earlier, migrants from the northern Transvaal first began to migrate to the Reef. Its use of polyrhythm and call-and-response, and its integration of individual players in a broader melodic pattern through the technique of "hocketing", are features typical of traditional music from other parts of subSaharan Africa (Chernoff 1979; Nketia 1975). Unlike the more eclectic forms with which it is usually contrasted - mmino wa kereke, wa sekolo, and wa sebjalobjalo (church, school, and modern music) - kiba has not taken on the ubiquitous three chords of the Wesleyan hymn, and its structure of endlessly repeated rhythmic and melodic cycles show no signs of giving way to the finite song-form of tin-pan alley or to the four-square rhythmic patterns of radio jive music (Manuel 1988:22-3, 85-6, 108).[1]

But despite these remarkable continuities of musical form, the genre is not a static or unchanging one. The past, while important to kiba's constituents, is not unmediated, but becomes evident in its refraction through the lens of contemporary performance, and in its reinterpretation by composers, performers and audience. Kiba lyrics thus share with other southern African oral poems a propensity to situate their commentaries on the immediacies of contemporary experience within a structure whose links with previous performance renders them durable and permanent (Vail and White 1991:42, 76-8). Like the words of West African

[1] The tendency of kiba to retain these features may be explained in the light of an observation made by Blacking: that of all systems of symbolic representation musical symbols are the most resistant to change (1977, cited in Erlmann 1991:11). But this would not of course account for the cases in which, like marabi, a transformed and highly syncretic style has arisen in a very short time span. I am grateful to Rob Allingham for making available to me the early recordings of kiba in his extensive record collection. See Appendix 3.

oriki, these lyrics indicate the relevance of the past in the present, and show that the present is interpreted in the light of the past (Barber 1991:15).

The giving of new significance to older songs, and the interpreting of new features against the backdrop of long-established conventions, occurs in the aesthetic of men's and women's kiba dance. Through performance, heroic themes seen as belonging to the precolonial era are transformed into expressions of the friendly rivalry which underlies much home-based migrant association. But it is in women's kiba - also called koša or, mostly in its rural version, lebowa - that the most flexibility exists for the creative transformation of older themes. Women's kiba, as a sung rather than an instrumental music, has lyrics which can be heard, recomposed and reinterpreted. Being sung rather than instrumental, it is stylistically as close to its rural female precedents as it is to the men's genre alongside which it has recently sought reclassification. This is so, despite the fact that many of its migrant performers have adopted it only recently, in the spirit of a kind of cultural revival. And as a sung genre, it facilitates some subversion of the grandiose and heroic emphases of its male equivalent. This chapter seeks to explore both the commonalities between men's and women's performance, and the new flexibilities and unorthodoxies which women have introduced into an originally male genre.

Borrowed instruments, old songs

Two assumptions have underlain much of the ethnomusicological study of southern African societies. The first is that music was integrated into the structures and activities of rural life in a very profound way. The second is that this music obeyed relatively fixed stylistic canons. These combined assumptions focused attention away from the phenomenon of stylistic change, and away from the existence of styles which might be less central to a community's life.[2]

[2] See, for example, Johnston (1975); Blacking (1956, 1964). The exception, for both Johnston and Blacking, was in discussing the music of imported spirit-possession cults whose charismatic leaders attracted a substantial following. See Johnston (1973, 1974); Blacking (1964:64, 333-4). Here, musical change was seen as linked to a fluid social setting which allowed for individual charisma: the links between social structure and musical form still gave rise to a logical and invariant stylistic consistency.

Assumptions of this kind have been shown to be flawed. Our attention has recently been drawn to the existence of marginal or peripheral arts which exist alongside mainstream ones in rural society (Barber 1987:16, 105): to the existence, for example, of personalised commoner praises alongside those with which chiefs and rulers celebrate their power (Gunner and Gwala 1991). It is often these unofficial genres which become the basis for transformed cultural forms in an urban or migrant context. Lifela, through which miners from Lesotho announce and elaborate their identity as workers, originated in boys' initiation songs rather than in chiefly praises (Coplan 1987:414-5). Zulu men's migrant guitar styles transform an individualised tradition of women's songs of love and courtship, rather than drawing from songs of communal or political import (Clegg 1981:2-3).

In similar vein, the northern Transvaal-based genre of kiba, in both its male and female versions, grew out of rural performance styles which were neither under chiefly control nor tied to events of general ritual significance. Both were thought of as dipapadi (games), and were performed by groups or teams of youths at occasions such as weddings, or at competitions held at neighbouring villages at which a rich patron might supply beer or present a goat as a prize for the winning group.[3]

Kiba, in its male form as a pipe dance, is said to have been imported. Its place of origin varies with different accounts: some say it comes from Venda (where a similar dance has long been linked to national political occasions), some from Zimbabwe, and some simply from "the north". Although the details of its origin need not concern us here,[4] the fact that players are so insistent on its provenance outside their own area seems to endorse its status as a peripheral form of cultural expression, free to be defined as "play" and later to become the major vehicle of a new migrant identity since, unlike its Venda counterpart, it has remained

[3] Bafedi Madihlaba, discussion with DJ and AM, Sephaku, 25/1/89; Eva Mogosa, discussion with DJ and AM, Sephaku, 27/1/89; Mr Makgaleng, discussion with DJ, Apel, 19/7/91; see also Huskisson (1958:101-5; 133-6, 140).

[4] A preoccupation with the origins and diffusions of musical styles was typical of an early phase of ethnomusicology. Kirby speculated extensively about the spread of this and other pipe dances (1934:147, 155, 162-7).



Figure 18: Dinaka (pipes) resting on the top of a moropa (drum), and men blowing dinaka: SK Alex, Alexandra township.

(photos: Santu Mofokeng)

beyond the ambit of rulers' jurisdiction.[5]

This stress on importation is even more pronounced in the case of women's music, whose modern form, kiba, developed out of a succession of female rural styles. Informants describe these as having been acquired by local populations from some other area - "we got it from GaMphahlele", "one of us saw this being danced at GaMasha, and the others learned it from her". Newer women's songs, imported into villages and replacing older ones in this way, were thought of as "fashions". They swept through the countryside, and often contained lyrics of great national topicality alongside those referring to more domestic and area-specific concerns. In the Pedi heartland Sekhukhune during the 1940s, great-grandmothers now in their seventies spent most of their leisure time between initiation and marriage singing mararankodi, with lyrics commenting not only on the trials of coping with in-laws, and lamenting the absence of migrant brothers, but also singing of the dangers of the Germans whom many of their men had gone to fight.[6] Women of a slightly younger generation sang tšhutšhumakgala (train), which referred to the struggle of Pedi cultivators and migrants against attempts by the South African state to govern them through the Bantu Authorities system. Subsequent fashions, sung by a succession of younger women, were makonkwane, eya, mankgodi, marashiya, and makgakgasa.[7]

Local accounts, in describing the origins and development of both men's kiba and of women's rural styles, thus emphasise their exotic origins. Such an emphasis might seem to contradict the insistence on the music's long-standing association with sotho tradition. But the borrowed or imported elements have not intrinsically altered musical content. Rather, they have provided novel ways of rendering old songs.

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[5] For detail on the Venda tshikona national reed pipe dance, see Blacking (1962). It is interesting to note that this dance, although occasionally performed by migrants, has not undergone a transformation into a migrant cultural form comparable to kiba.

[6] For details on the substantial Pedi involvement in World War II, see Delius (1989:596-7).

[7] Makgakgasa is an onomatopoeic word describing the sound made by stamping of women's feet with shakers attached. In some parts of the northern Transvaal countryside, makgakgasa has not yet been replaced by kiba.

When dinaka (pipes) were adapted from Venda or from "up north", they were used to play songs phrased in the six-note scale of northern Sotho/Pedi music, rather than the eight-note scale of the Venda pipe dance. The borrowing of the instruments did not change the songs, except by "submerging" their original lyrics, as will be shown further on.[8]

A similar adoption of a new instrument to play old melodies occurred with the later introduction of the harepa (German autoharp or zither). When Kirby did his survey in the 1920s, he found that "whenever possible the native owner of an autoharp has his instrument tuned by a European" (1934:257). But by the time of the first Gallotone recordings in the 1940s, northern Sotho musicians were tuning the instrument with their six-note scale. The harepa, although western in origin, became assimilated as part of pagan or traditionalist culture, and was shunned by members of the mission elites: a process which was repeated with tradestore instruments in other areas of the country as well (Clegg 1981:3,7; Coplan 1985:362-3). Rather than imposing or suggesting a switch-over to European melodic or harmonic forms, this instrument in Sotho hands allowed for a more effective realisation of indigenous musical principles than did the original instrument - in this case the plucked reed dipela - which it replaced (Rycroft 1977, cited in Coplan 1985:363).

The adoption of new forms, or the reliance on new fashions, does not then represent a rejection of older songs but rather a revitalization of these. The development of women's rural genres which resulted eventually in the emergence of women's kiba illustrates this point. Through a complex series of reciprocal interactions between town and country, women in both rural and urban arenas began to perform in a style previously recognised as the preserve of men. This has been the most recent and certainly the most radically different of the "fashions" which women's music has taken unto itself. Once again involving borrowed instrumentation, this change has led to women's use of the full set of four drums (meropa) where a women's song/dance was previously accompanied by a single long drum. But despite its naming as kiba, the genre has not borrowed the dinaka (pipes) of men's music.

[8] From the original few kiba songs documented by Kirby in the early 1930s, there appears to have been a proliferation as indigenous songs were included into the genre, resulting in a standard core repertoire which, in contemporary performance as at the time when Huskisson did her research in the 1950s, varies little even between distant areas (Kirby 1934; Huskisson 1958).

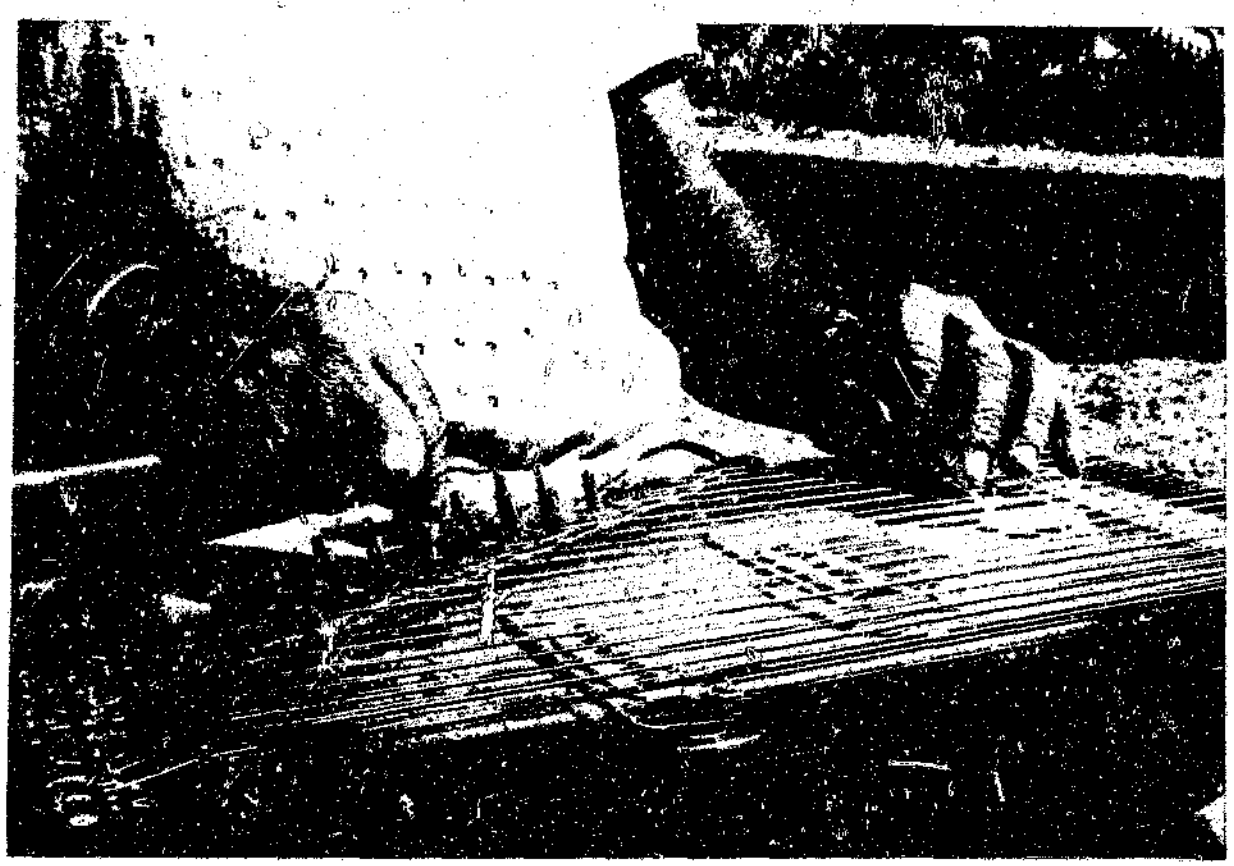

Figure 19: Harepa player at the Tembisa hostel.
(photo: Santu Mofokeng)

Its notes are sung ones.[9]

The naming of the new fashion or style shows something of its gender ambiguity. Sometimes termed koša but mostly kiba when performed by migrant women, it claims an equivalence with its male counterpart. Played by village women, it is often referred to as lebowa, indicating the frequent use made of it by new political elites in the homeland. A village women's group is called upon to represent its village at the Lebowa agricultural show, to make memorable the opening of a new school or tribal office, or to accompany its chief to the opening of parliament. It is in its rural women's version that the genre has come closest to becoming subordinate to the demands of local chiefs, largely because of the quasi-clientelist dependence of rural women on these chiefs (James 1990b).

The eventual merging of women's with men's music under the rubric of kiba was thus the most recent stage in the sequential development of women's rural styles. For decades before this, men's kiba had undergone its own development, in the context of the industrial compounds and hostels where most male migrants from the northern Transvaal were living.[10]

Kiba in an urban context

It was on the Reef, and particularly on the mines, where men were sometimes "hired because of their art" in performing kiba, that the genre acquired many of its present features. Here, performers began to be provided with parts of their gradually-evolving uniform by employers: durable plastic shakers to replace the indigenous ones made out of cocoons, headdresses with ostrich feathers and horns, white tennis shoes, and the like. It was on the Reef in the late 1940s and early 1950s that dinaka players, originally wearing the black trousers of the Malaita gangs,[11] or thetwana - a rather restrictive skirt-like garment made of appliqued and beaded cloth - first saw Scottish kilts, and adopted them as part of the uniform for their

[9] Women were acquainted with the drumming patterns of men's kiba, and in other contexts than those of compounded labour were often the principle drummers for this genre. But the performers for whom they drummed were male.

[10] See Chapter One pp47-8.

[11] See Delius (1989:589-92).

performances:

> We saw white soldiers wearing Scotch. Kiba is like soldiers organised against something, so we too wanted to wear one thing which was similar".[12]

In the early 1950s, a kilt cost three pounds, a considerable investment for a miner earning two shillings and sixpence a month. The adoption of kilts was to have a marked effect on the aesthetic of the dance due to the freedom of movement it allowed and encouraged. One of the most applauded effects in current usage is a tossing of the kilt from side to side over the buttocks "like a peacock", ending with a flourish in which the kilt remains up to reveal (in contrast to the famed Scottish practice) a pair of white boxer shorts underneath. Such a gesture would have been impossible in the restrictive thetwana, and would probably never have been thought of without the impetus provided by the kilt's swinging movement.

Not only the uniformity of soldiers' dress, but also something of the ethos of regimented soldierly behaviour, found its way into kiba. Rank-and-file members were called masole (soldiers), and the idiom used to describe membership of a kiba group - go joina (from the English, to join) - is the same as that used to describe enlisting in a military regiment, or "joining up". Although none of my informants fought with the Allied forces in World War II, many older kiba players did so. It is probable that much of the imagery of soldiery to be found in present-day kiba performance derives from this experience.

In men's kiba, these trappings and ideas drawn from the experience of modern soldiery have been combined with the military idiom of an epic precolonial past. Although men's songs have had no words since singing was replaced by the introduction of dinaka (pipes) from "the north", the original words are still known to some participants. These submerged lyrics form the basis of elaborate reflections on the significance of individual tunes, as in this interpretation of the song madikoti:

> On arrival home at the mošate (chief's kraal) the warrior will have to dance kati and say a sereto (praise) about himself. The chief ... will say "a brave man amongst brave men, when I say I am a chief, I am a chief because of you". He will go to one of his houses, and take one of his daughters who will then be given to the man who made them win the battle ... The chief will

[12] Members of the Lebopo household, discussion with DJ and PM, Nchabeleng, 19/7/1991.

> praise his daughter, saying "there you are, my child, there you are with the buttocks of a light-skinned girl who has never walked in bad ways".[13]

It is not only the lyrics which celebrate the heroic era of the chiefs, but the actions of the dance as well. In segoata-goatana (the one who sneaks away) and magana go bušwa (they refuse to be ruled) the secession by a splinter group from a chief's dominion is both described in the lyrics and enacted by the performers, who dance backwards in a stealthy way out of the main performance area.

One of the most important songs in the kiba repertoire is monti:[14]

> Monti was a mogobo, a situation where warriors from the war will enter the mošate (chief's kraal) singing and dancing. When people enter from the war singing it, it will have a double meaning. You will feel unhappy because some have died in the war, but you will also feel happy and satisfied because you have won the war. With us, as we use dinaka, we no longer do this mogobo, but instead sing monti. It is a regimental song, it is for attacking.[15]

It can be seen from this account that monti is conceived of, on one level, as a reenactment of, and perhaps a replacement for, the scenario of warriors returning from a battle. In contemporary use, however, this song serves as a song of greeting by visitors to a host and/or an audience, in which the ideas of respectful praise and pleasing one's hosts are foremost. Its expression of this visiting ethic is tied up with its role as introduction and as finale to the whole sequence of dances of which the performance consists. In greeting/introduction, the dancers group together at some distance from the central performance area (defined by the presence of the drums), and dance slowly onto centre stage (see fig. 1), where they then assume a circle formation and move around the drums; or, in situations with a more clearly defined inside space, such as the rural homestead of someone who has invited an urban-based group to play at a party, the performers will assemble in the road or public space outside, and dance through the gateway into the yard. At the end of the performance the dancers, having

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[13] Prince Seroka, recorded discussion with PM, Malebitša (Moutse), 21/4/91.

[14] I have been unable to establish with any certainty where this name originates. One suggestion is that it comes from the name of Montgomery of Alamein, thus referring, like a number of other kiba motifs, to Pedi soldiers' experience of World War II.

[15] Prince Seroka, recorded discussion with PM, Malebitša, 21/4/91. Mogobo denotes both a regimental song of war (the meaning used here by Prince Seroka), and a song sung by initiates who have undergone, and "conquered" the hardships of initiation.

formally greeted and taken leave of their host or audience, will use monti again to take them back through the gateway to the public space beyond.[16]

Migrant women kiba singers, performing their own version of monti, contribute to its transformation from a song of triumphal regimental return to one of migrant visitation. Women dance with a torch brandished in the right hand and a glove worn on the left; a practice explicitly thought of as substituting for the weapon and shield which members of a regiment once carried in the right and the left hand respectively (see fig. 23).[17] But the right hand may also be used to brandish other objects, such as the bottles of cold-drink which the host of the occasion has provided (see fig. 32). In this context, the action connotes praising and respectful visiting rather than aggression.

Much creative effort goes into harnessing the potentially disruptive effects of unbridled competitiveness. The men's song ke rena baeng (we are visitors) with its women's version basadi ba baeng (visiting women) stresses that the host dancers - equivalent to a football "home team" - should not feel threatened by the arrival of the visiting dance-group since the latter have come not in a spirit of rivalry but of co-operation, not to set themselves apart but to be included in a broader unity.

A situation in which the ritualisation of visitors' competitiveness could be seen alongside a more naked expression of this competition was at a kiba annual party.

> ***The annual party of SK Alex***
>
> At the piece of open ground next to the No.1 Men's Hostel in Alexandra, the dance group SK Alex held its annual party one Sunday late in 1990. They spent their accumulated savings from the year's performances on a variety of drink and food, of which the most important item was a sheep which was slaughtered at midnight on Saturday and by Sunday morning was cooking in a series of black pots on an open fire. The honoured guests, who arrived at midday, were Bapedi Champions, a group also representing Sekhukhune but based in the Benoni township of Daveyton. Immediately after their arrival in a hired bus, the visitors alighted and prepared to dance. While the women, already dressed in diaparo tša setšo (traditional dress) stood to one side, the men, still wearing their best Sunday suits, did a performance of the regimental song monti to greet their hosts. It was accompanied by such invocations as:

[16] Informal discussions with a variety of informants; and Johannes Mokgwadi, recorded discussion with DJ and PM, GaMasha, 16/7/91.

[17] Members of Maaparankwe, discussion with DJ and PM, GaSelepe, 27/7/91.

"we want to please those who have invited us: whatever food has been prepared here is for us, so we must please these people".

The hosts, SK Alex, also dressed in suits, responded with a similar greeting.

It was only later, after both men's groups had retreated into the hostel to change into full dance regalia that the fierceness of the competition between them started to be expressed in performance. The groups vied with each other in producing a range of special aesthetic effects never seen at regular practices. During a kicking dance step one man created great hilarity by "losing" a shoe which soared high above the heads of the spectators; another man "borrowed" a hat from a member of the audience as a dance prop, only to be outdone by a member of the competing group who "borrowed" a small child from its mother for the same purpose. The man eventually judged best dancer by the crowd, as measured by the amount of money thrown to him, engaged in an acrobatic display which involved equal measures of simulated aggression and comical self-mockery, and which ended with him turning somersaults and falling with mock surprise in the dust.

The women's groups had also kept some of their most striking dipapadi (dramatic tableaux; lit. games) for this stage of the competition. The host group put on an act in which a sick person, after first consulting a ngaka (traditional healer) for a cure, was then taken to a medical doctor in a white coat who examined her with a stethoscope and prescribed some bright pink medicine. The visitors, to the crowd's delight, produced a "monkey" - a woman clothed in overalls and a gorilla mask - who swaggered among the dancers and made as if to frighten the children in the audience.

The dancing and acting in this second phase of the event was no longer designed to please the hosts, but to outdo them. "We are two groups, and we must compete, just like Pirates and Chiefs".[18]

In a kiba performance like this one, migrant men combine a number of discourses. By assuming some of the costume and ethos of the Scottish military, they state their membership of a disciplined and purposeful group of urban-based musicians. By referring to the past in which their forebears were ruled over by the chiefs of the Pedi polity, they state their identity as inhabitants of their home in Sekhukhune. And by retaining some of the challenge of battle as a residue of meaning behind the actions of greeting and visitation, they use kiba as an idiom of competition with other urban-based groups.

Women's performance emphasises many of the same themes: the idioms of soldiery and "joining", of fierce competition ambiguously co-existing with deference, and of pride in rural-based identity. In some respects, then, women co-operate with men in the construction through performance of a unitary migrant identity: a world of visits, reciprocation, and competition. But in other ways, women's kiba performance distinguishes itself sharply from that of men. There are differences of style and subject-matter which facilitate the creation

[18] Orlando Pirates and Kaiser Chiefs, the two most popular South African football teams.



Figure 20: The men and women of Bapedi Champions at the annual party of SK Alex, 1990. Alexandra township.
(photo: Santu Mofokeng)





Figure 21: Kiba: male dancer performing solo, with pipe players in the background.
(photo: Santu Mofokeng)

through performance of a separate, specifically female, migrants' world.

Women's lyrics: composition and interpretation

> Dinaka is not supposed to be sung by women ... Now men have left it and women are trying to bring it back; that is why we say "lebowa".[19]

> In the old days of marashiya [a rural, pre-kiba style], there was no monti [for women]. We sing it today with our mouths while men blow pipes.[20]

These two statements capture some of the transformations which have brought female performance into the kiba fold. The first was made by a Lucas Kgole, a musical entrepreneur who has made several Gallo records with a female backing group and who currently makes a living from herbalism in the village of Sephaku, in a district adjoining Sekhukhune. Dinaka, or men's kiba, is more or less defunct in village life. Women, previously excluded from the genre, are seen as having revived it by starting to engage in its performance (albeit, in his case, under the patronage of a male group-leader). The second observation was made by a rural female singer in the Sekhukhune village group Dithabaneng. It indicates that, while women's songs like marashiya were previously named separately, they now have the status of female parallels to standard items in the male repertoire, distinguished from these by being sung rather than rendered instrumentally, and by the much more sedate style of dancing. What women's monti shares with men's, stylistically, is a distinctive pattern played on a set of four drums (meropa). Similarly parallelled by women's equivalents, and similarly sharing with them easily-recognised drumming patterns, are the other core songs in the men's repertoire: lerago, kiba (from which the style takes its name), fesi, and others (see Tables 3-6).

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[19] Lucas Kgole, recorded discussion with DJ and NP, Sephaku, 3/11/89. Lebowa is the mostly rurally used name for the women's equivalent of the men's song kiba from which the entire genre takes its name. The popular recording artist and herbalist Johannes Mokgwadi, in discussion with DJ and PM, GaMasha, 16/7/91, gave a similar account of the origins of women's involvement in kiba.

[20] Dithabaneng, recorded discussion with DJ and PM, Nchabeleng, 14/7/91. The name marashiya (or marashea) probably comes from the name given to the "Russian" gangsters from Lesotho, whom northern Transvaal migrants encountered on the Reef (Sam Nchabeleng, personal communication).

The standard rhythm for each song in the male repertoire provides a kind of hook onto which a range of women's songs adapted from previously-existing rural genres have been hung. In some cases, a man's song may have only one female equivalent, but in others it has several, each with its own lyrics, melody and dance-pattern (see Table 6). The multiplicity of

Table 3: Core songs documented by Huskisson in the 1950s, and still played today

Monti	A regimental song
Lerago	Buttock
Kiba	(From "to stamp or beat time")
Fesi	

Table 4: Additional songs, played by some of the groups met by Huskisson, and still played today

Madikoti	The girl with dimples
Lekwapa	Shangaan
O le metse	You used to steal
Segoata-goatana	The one who sneaks away
Magana go buswa	They refuse to be ruled

Table 5: Additional songs played today, not listed by Huskisson

Mahlwa le mpona	You have always seen me
Mojeremane/ke epa thaba	German/I dig the mountain

women's songs reflects two things: the greater diversity and scatter of home areas, and thus of female rural styles represented in a single woman's group, and the greater improvisational challenge posed - and freedom allowed - by songs with lyrics than by those without. If lyrics can be heard and appreciated, they can also be adjusted to enable the precise expression of particular sentiments. It is in the creation of new lyrics, the re-creation of old lyrics, and the constant process of reinterpreting both, that one can see women's music, having sought legitimation within the recognised migrant genre of kiba, moving beyond the constraints imposed by this definition to express concerns of its own.

If the features of women's kiba suggest its recognition as a separate stylistic entity, this distinctiveness is most apparent in its links to older, rural-based female styles. Although the new style of kiba has become popular and has replaced older ones in both urban and rural areas, there is a continuity of musical features and of subject-matter. Fragments of older songs are integrated into the context of newer ones, which are then reinterpreted by their performers: new lyrics are added which give older ones a different slant and which then provide the basis for a changed significance to an older song.

Table 6: Some men's tunes with women's equivalents

Men	Women 1	2	3
Lekwapa	Lekwapa		
Lerago	Setima		
Monti	Leg	Ke na le ngwana wa mošemane	
Kiba	Lebowa	Sekopa sa maisane	Mpepetloane

This observation provides a key to understanding the contrast between the unheard lyrics of dinaka (pipes: men's kiba) and the audible ones of dikoša (songs: women's kiba). At first glance, this appears as a contrast between a nostalgia expressed in heroic and metaphoric terms for grand public occasions in bygone days, and a concern for domestic situations in the more recent past expressed with critical and often comical directness. Dinaka tell of beautiful virgins given to brave warriors in far-off times, while dikoša, like other women's genres with similarly domestic preoccupations (Gunner 1989:13,33), comment wryly on the need to conceal an illicit love-affair from one's husband.

But this apparent preoccupation with the domestic and mostly rural setting of women's experience conceals the capacity of these songs to undergo a continual process of recomposition and reinterpretation. They are thus not fixed in structure or in meaning, but are characterised by what Barber and others have called an "emergent" quality. Lyrics which derive from older songs and which on one level might be seen as reflecting on rural women's domestic involvements in the past, on another level express a set of very contemporary and



Figure 22: SK Alex women: drummer and solo singer in performance.
(photo: Santu Mofokeng)

sometimes urban-based concerns, and provide commentary on extra-domestic as well as domestic issues.

The lyrics of these songs, like the West African oriki documented by Barber, consist of different parts which were composed by different people at different times, with the most recent contributions being those of the contemporary performer/composer herself (Barber 1984:504). In women's kiba, the solo singer adds her own new words onto those of an existing song, and sings the resulting combination interspersed with a chorus, usually also the song's title, in which the other singers dumela (sing a repeated refrain, lit. "agree").

The juxtaposition of old and new elements may at first glance appear confusing: some chorus singers, questioned about the significance of lyrical remnants composed by unknown singers in the past, claim ignorance because they are from "an old song" This suggests a throwing together of newer with older elements in a spontaneous and perhaps unconsidered way. But the use of these elements in the hands of accomplished composers, and their interpretation by seasoned performers and audiences, reveals a logical structuring which underlies this apparent lack of design. Themes of the lyrical fragments retained from past performance are often echoed, inverted, or transformed in those of the newly-composed sections.[21] It is through this structuring that the relevance of "the past in the present" is made explicit (Barber 1991:15), and that statements of singers' contemporary preoccupations, problems and aspirations are given a transcendent quality which links them to the concerns of previous generations, and to "tradition" (Vail and White 1991:42; Coplan 1987:415).

The linking of fragments within a broader structure which gives these meaning can be seen in songs which use "poetic licence" to utter veiled criticism.[22] Negative comments about the present misconduct of an individual chief within the homeland government are placed against a backdrop in which the abstract and transcendent qualities of chiefship are celebrated. Critical comment of this kind relies not only on interpretation by performers but also by

[21] See Kuper (1987:187). I am grateful to Adam Kuper for suggesting this line of investigation to me.

[22] Vail and White have borrowed this term from Tracey to describe, with more precision than the term's normal use in English, the satiric or critical content of much southern African oral poetry (1991:42-45).

informed and receptive audience response. Dipalela Tlala, a women's group from the village of Sephaku in a district adjoining Sekhukhune, sings a song of praise to the area and to its chief Jack Mahlangu which at once announces the women's clientelist dependence on him and simultaneously criticises him in a veiled manner.

Dipalela tlala, ko re yeng gae	Defeaters of hunger, let us return home
Bana ba Mahlangu	Children of Mahlangu
Bana ba Jack, ko re yeng gae	Children of Jack, let us return home
Dipalela tlala	Defeaters of hunger
Gopolang Sephaku naga matebele	Remember Sephaku the place of Ndebele
Sephaku, ntsiru ge le ke bone musi	Sephaku, give way, let me see the mist
Ke bone magoši diapara nkwe	Let me see the chiefs who wear the royal leopardskin
A ke bona magoši, ke bona mong a rena	When I see the chiefs, I see our own lord
Mong a rena, le ga le ka molatola	Our own lord, even if you say bad things about him
Mong a rena, le koloni ba mo dumela	Our own lord, even in the Cape they greet him
Mong a rena, le Pretoria ba mo dumela.	Our own lord, even in Pretoria they greet him.

Although this song appears primarily concerned with praise of the area and of the chief, its composer insisted in private discussion that it was critical of him, and that village and area audiences would be aware of this on hearing the song. The phrase dipalela tlala (defeaters of hunger) is a veiled reference to the chief's support of the introduction into the area of a much-disliked agricultural co-op, which landed most cultivators deep into debt and which forced them to have to face, and defeat, hunger and deprivation. The phrase "even if you say bad things about him", while appearing to invalidate criticism, in fact substantiates it, and the reference to his acceptance in Pretoria disparages him for his role in the state-controlled structures of government.[23]

It may, then, not only be factors intrinsic to the form of women's kiba itself, but also the dependent social relationships in which its performers find themselves inextricably involved, which makes this genre so dependent on sensitive audience reception for its fullest appreciation.

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[23] Lyrics and interpretation from Nkapile Hlakola, discussion with DJ and AM, Sephaku, 24/1/89. It is common for women to express their dissatisfaction with men who hold positions of authority in this veiled manner (Sam Nchabeleng, personal communication). See also Vail and White (1991:248-9). For further information on the co-op, see James (1987; 1990b).



Figure 23: Nkapile Hlakola, composer/solo singer of Dipalela Tlala, in performance with her group. (photo: Deborah James)



Figure 23: Nkapile Hlakola, composer/solo singer of Dipalela Tlala, in performance with her group. (photo: Deborah James)

Composers thus situate their criticisms within the context of history. The fragments of older songs may, as in the previous example, provide evocative descriptions of a past way of life in which leadership and area loyalty were sacrosanct. But the existing songs from which fragments are drawn may, themselves, describe more recent situations in which the deprivation, harassment and anxiety of the migrant existence are a feature.

Setimela (steam train) is an example which demonstrates this point. The song, today performed by a range of women's kiba groups, urban and rural, is presented here in the version sung by the rural-based group Dithabaneng:

Setimela sa Mmamarwale	Train of Mmamarwale
Nthshwanyana	Black carrier
Setimela nkabe se rwale buti bokgolwa	Train should carry my brother from bokgolwa
Buti e sa le a eya bokgolwa	My brother home from bokgolwa (the state of being a migrant who never returns)
Ngwana-mme o tla hwa ese ka mmona.	My mother's child would die without me seeing him.
Setimela nkabe se rwale	Train should carry women
Se re iseng kit lebowa khutlong sa thaba	It would carry us to Lebowa mountain
Ka ntshe gago tsotsi gago mathatha.	Where there are no tsotsis (gangsters) and no problems.

The first part of the song is a fragment which was composed about fifty years ago. The last three lines, recently composed by the leader of a neighbouring group and copied from it by Dithabaneng, evoked an elaborate and lively interpretation:

> They mean something that can carry them away from the past into the new style of living where there are no problems. I think they also have education in mind, where an educated person can rid his family members of financial problems. We are no longer, as in the past, milling our own crops, today we take them to the mill or get mealie-meal from the shops.[24]

The original character of this song, with its plaintive cry by an individual girl about the absence of her migrant brother, has been transformed through new composition into a self-aware statement of female group identity, linked with notions of modernity and nationhood. At the same time, this optimistic view of the benefits brought by the "new style of living" is

[24] Lyrics and interpretation from women of Dithabaneng, recorded discussion with DJ and PM, Nchabeleng, 14/7/91.

mediated by linking it to the deprivation which women have previously suffered on account of migrancy and the modern way. Heartland rural singers, while orienting themselves to progress and the future, regard themselves and their perf. mance as firmly situated within the world of sesotho.[25]

Another song which juxtaposes its composer's experience alongside the relatively recent predicament of other women has harassment by police as its central theme. Paulina Mphoka, encouraged by her friends to compose a new song, added new lyrics to the existing ones of Mosadi wa sepankana:[26]

Mosadi wa sepankana, mosadi wa diphafaneng	Woman who wears a skin, woman of beer
O rekiša bjala	She sells beer
Mapodisa a ka Lebewa-wa monyaka.	The police of Lebowa are looking for her.
Tsodio o otile, mokgwa ntshe ga a robala	Tsodio is thin, he does not sleep
O tshwenya ke malome-agwe	He is troubled by [the ghost of] his uncle
E le go Matšhabataga	Who is called Matšhabataga
Tsodio o bolaile Matšhabathaga	Tsodio has killed Matšhabathaga
Le ye Tsodio o nyakwa ke mapodisa.	He is also troubled by police.
Bas[illegible]a joinile ke masole	Women have now joined the soldiers
Batše. pasa le banna.	They are getting passes just like men.

The middle section is based on a song which, although part of the corpus of mmino wa setšo, was itself recently created by harepa (German autoharp) player and composer Johannes Mokgwadi, one of the best-known exponents of mmino wa setšo in the northern Transvaal. It concerns the molesting by police of Tsodio who, having killed his uncle Matšhabataga, is being both haunted by the ghost of his victim and plagued by the less ethereal representatives of law and order.

This fairly neutral reference to the police is made more pointed by its juxtaposition with the last section, of two lines. This, deriving from earlier female performance, refers to the including of women in the late 1950s within the legislation requiring Africans to carry passes. It records a time when women, moving to South Africa's urban areas, became subject to the same indiscriminate raids and arrests by police which men had been experiencing for decades.

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[25] See Chapter Five.

[26] Lyrics from Paulina Mphoka, discussion with DJ and PM, Johannesburg, 2/10/91.

Paulina's own, more recent experience of harassment, this time at the hands of the Lebowa rather than the South African police, is recorded in the first section, of three lines. Like a number of other kiba singers before they became migrants, she had supplemented her family's income by brewing illegal liquor, and had been arrested by police for doing so.

This combining of three separate incidents lends a weight to each of them which it could not have possessed on its own. None has the links with precolonial rural experience which might be thought necessary to a genre claiming links with the past, but each enshrines a broader view, critical and detached from immediate experience, of such scenarios of harsh persecution. Paulina's addition, here featuring as a new fragment set against an older backdrop, might some years hence appear as part of the collected stock of wisdom passed down from the experienced singers of the past to the novice composers of the future.

But Paulina's song is not only about police harassment. It has also been explained to me in other terms. It is about women's new-found identity as migrants who, like soldiers, form strong collegial bonds, in a disciplined group, with others who share their situation away from home. Another interpretation foregrounds the quality of botho (humanity or human goodness), illustrated by default in the story of the murderous Tsodio. Botho, described here in the context of other lyrics which refer to the strength and fortitude of women becomes, against this backdrop, a quality especially of women. As with other "emergent" genres, the audience interprets the lyrics' significance, and may construct the song anew at different performances through their differing interpretations (Barber 1991:15; Gunner 1989:21).

The source from which the story about Tsodio comes is not only the well-known song by Johannes Mokgwadi, often played on the radio, but also a hugely popular radio serial of the same name which has been broadcast by Radio Lebowa. It is the topicality and popularity of the radio serial and song on which it is based which enables listeners to attach to this brief reference a range of meanings not set down in the text itself. The flexibility enjoyed by an audience in interpreting a song like this one is inseparable from an imprecision about where one genre ends and another begins.

Genre-boundary blurring, and recontextualising

A blurring of genre boundaries is common within oral performance culture. This, another feature of oriki, is closely linked to its character as an emergent form with no apparent closure or fixity. Oriki could be seen as constituting a genre in their own right, but are also performed in the context of various other modes or genres, and rely on still further accompanying genres for their fullest understanding (Barber 1991:1-7; Coplan 1988:343-50).

In the case of women's kiba, its very emergence, as a set of previously existing rural genres newly incorporated within a male migrant one, is testimony to this lack of rigid genre boundaries. In addition, the process of composing lyrics and devising actions for particular songs entails a perpetual borrowing or importing of elements from sources apparently external to kiba itself.

One source is a series of scenarios from real life, represented in stylised form. Central among these are healing rituals, both divination by dingaka (traditional doctors) complete with divination mat and ditaola (diviner's bones), and the diagnosis and cure offered by Western doctors, featuring a white coat, a stethoscope, a telephone, and "medicines" made of commercial soft drinks. Other dramatic tableaux involve uniformed policemen who perform mock arrests and extract fines.[27]

Kiba also draws from parallel forms of expression or companion genres within the realm of sesotho (sotho ways). Among these are direto (praises), a form of expression in which many urban female performers are expert, proverbs, and certain songs from koma (women's initiation). These, although strictly secret in their original form, have been incorporated into kiba in a disguised form, as in the song Tšhukutšwane:

Tšhukutšwane	Female rhinoceros
Mmamogala wa basadi.	The brave one of women.

[27] See Chapter Five pp194-6 for a more detailed account of the role of these "police" in performance.



Figure 24: A "diviner" throws the bones: dramatic tableau of Dipalela Tlala.
(photo: Deborah James)



Figure 25: "Police" making an arrest: dramatic tableau of Dipalela Tlala.
(photo: Deborah James)

This comment on the bravery of women, likening it to that of the small but tenacious female rhino, is here taken from its restricted setting within initiation and given a broader relevance. As well as evoking memories of the experience of initiation, the song is thought of in association with the proverb Mmangwana o swara thipa ka bogaleng (a mother handles the knife on the sharp side).

Women's kiba, as an emergent genre developing within a rapidly-changing social context on which its lyrics reflect, thus draws on parallel forms of sotho cultural expression as well as on popular media such as records and the radio, as its sources. These elements are integrated within the framework of kiba songs, and reinterpreted in the light of singers' contemporary experience. One of the key events around which lyrics are explicated, and which inspires the creation of new lyrics and dance-steps to add to existing ones, is the act of performing kiba itself. The apparently domestic concerns expressed by some songs, inherited or claimed by contemporary female performers from their forebears, are overshadowed in certain contexts by the immediacy of kiba sung and danced in the here and now.

An example is one of the female equivalents of monti:

Ke na le ngwana wa mošemane	I have a boy child
Wena o lefšega.	You are a coward.

These lyrics reflect in their original version on a fairly common family situation, and one not unknown to kiba singers themselves: a woman is boasting about her son, and mocking the inadequacies of another woman whose inability to produce children is proof of her "cowardice". But, in becoming a song of kiba, these words have been reinterpreted as a statement of boastful pride in the singers' ability to perform, and of scornful disparagement about their rivals' inability to do so.[28]

Another example is the song Sakopa sa maiesane, sung and danced to the rhythm of the men's song kiba from which the entire genre takes its name. This song was taught to the group by Julia Lelahana, who learned it at her rural home.

[28] Lyrics and interpretation from Dithabaneng, recorded discussion with DJ and PM, Nchabeleng, 14/7/91.

Sakopa sa maiesane	(Meaning unknown)
Bošego bo ja kolobe	At night pigs are eaten
Mošate gae.	At the home village.
Nna nka senwe bjala	I will not drink beer
Go nwa bo ntage.	As it will make me drunk
Ge ke tagile bo ntira setlaela	If I am drunk I will look like a fool.
Ke melato ya lona lapa le	These are problems of this family
Le tla no šala le e bona	You will see how you solve them when I'm gone.
Le tla no šaia lentse le e kisa	You will remain imitating me
Ka gore ge go esa re boya le tsela.	Because when the sun rises we will have to go back.

All but the last section of the song consists of remnants from previous songs. While the meaning of the song's title and of the first three-line section was so obscure that none of the singers could explain it, the next section, like a number of other women's kiba songs, reflects on the disgrace of uncontrolled drunkenness. The third section, of two lines, speaks of domestic strife in a rural homestead. Julia's composition, the last two lines, follows on in style from the lines immediately preceding it. But it refers to a visit by herself and her fellow kiba singers where they make such an impact with the quality of their performance that local singers copy their songs and dances long after their departure. The idea, imparted by this most recent input, that the song is about kiba itself, also affects the interpretation of other lines: hence the specific disadvantage of drunkenness in this context is the fact that it impairs the dancers' ability to perform at their best.[29]

Julia interpreted the song lekwapa in similar vein. This, a core song in both men's and women's kiba, refers in its original version to a situation of ethnically-based antagonism:

Lekwapa a le bolawe	The Shangaan should be killed
Mamanoko a bo thoka	People of the stick
TShagate ga ana taba.	TShagate is not a problem.

The ostensible meaning of the song, still present as an underlying significance in the men's version, is a statement of enmity, set in a warlike context, against a Shangaan who should be

[29] Lyrics and interpretation from Julia Lelahana, recorded discussion with DJ and PM, Johannesburg, 13/10/91.

killed,[30] and of affinity with "Tšhagate" (a proper name, here signifying other Sotho-speakers) who can be left to live. But again, in its women's version, the song is reinterpreted as commenting on the rivalry between a competing dance group (equated with lekwapa) and the home team (Tšhagate).[31]

In these and many other examples, a commentary which contains reference to the domestically-oriented and rurally-based past of sotho women is overlaid with new significance. Through a process referred to by performance theorists as "recontextualising" (Bauman and Briggs 1990), an older text, incorporated as kiba and placed within the new context of migrant women's urban association, starts to offer a commentary on the feeling of fulfilment entailed in being a "soldier" who has "joined" other working women and who gains a sense of common identity through performance with these fellow-members.

The capacity of women's kiba lyrics to be interpreted as signifying pride in a group's own performance, alongside and simultaneous with the other concerns documented in this chapter and elsewhere in the thesis, is what makes this genre particularly adept at carrying the message of a new group identity for migrant women. This capacity enables kiba to refer not only to a range of domestic and extra-domestic issues in the lives or past experiences of its singers, but also to itself as a reflexive performative genre (Baumann 1989:266). It is through this capacity, too, that women's kiba remains firmly linked with the male version of the genre. The themes of self-praise, celebration of performance technique, and friendly disparagement of the inadequacies of rival dancers, are common to male and female performance as they transform heroic and domestic concerns, respectively, into idioms for friendly but fierce competition.

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[30] In certain contexts, lekwapa refers to Nguni-speakers in general, in others, to speakers of the Shangaan/Tsonga language. These people lived in areas of the northern Transvaal adjacent to, and even the same as, those inhabited by northern Sotho speakers. Apartheid removals attempted, not always successfully, to separate members of the two language-groups into their respective "homelands".

[31] Lyrics and interpretation from Julia Lelahana, recorded discussion with DJ and PM, Johannesburg, 13/10/91.

Men's genre, women's genre

Like men, women remake the past through kiba. Where men, through dance and music, transform submerged epic themes into statements of friendly competitiveness, women turn domestic themes into commentaries on their success as polished performers. But there is continual ambiguity about whether women identify wholeheartedly with the common projects of kiba. On the one hand, as the earlier description of woman's monti makes clear, there is a unity of purpose with men's kiba in enunciating the ethic of competitiveness combined with respectful visiting. But on the other, as can be seen from the lyrics presented above, there is also an independent initiative in which women's kiba marks off its participants as the holders of a specifically female migrant identity, pitting their communal sense of skill against that of other women migrants from the north.

Why has a female version of a male genre developed in the circumstances of labour migration on the Reef? Or, phrased in slightly different terms, why has women's music, by adopting the drum ensemble and rhythms of men's, been transformed into a subdivision of men's music? Why have women's migrant songs, so clearly different to men's in many respects, claimed recognition as a part of kiba?

In looking for an answer to these questions, it is fruitful to read some of the - still limited - anthropological literature exploring the impact of gender on forms of cultural representation. Recent attempts to understand gender divisions in cultural and musical practice have located these within the context of other, broader uses of the male/female dichotomy to divide the social world (Gal 1991, Koskoff 1989). Based on - and simultaneously confirming - a division of labour, such divisions also confirm and entrench the differential rights of women and men to exercise public power. They even enshrine the very conceptual dichotomies which are thought to underlie social life: public/private, nature/culture, and the like (Ortner 1974; Ortner and Whitehead 1981; Rogers 1978).

The oppositional division of musical roles between men and women is thus linked, in specific cultural contexts, to other conceptual divisions in the social world. From one perspective, gender-defined musical practices may be seen as complementary ~~and as relying on reciprocal~~

interdependence for their proper definition. But this division may also be seen as serving to separate women's music off from the main stream, and as providing women with a socially acceptable but restricted space for musical expression. In this way, a specifically "women's" music may be one with less of a voice, less of an audience, than that of men (Koskoff 1989:8-9).

Despite major disruptions in the form and content of social relationships, dichotomies of this kind are still used to represent gender role divisions in the world of southern African labour migration. In the northern Transvaal region of Sekhukhune in particular, rurally resident and dependent wives/sisters play roles conceptualised as specifically female, and thought of as strongly linked to the domain of sesotho.[32] In this rural setting, women's music remains in a separately-defined sphere of female, sotho performance. Despite its use by chiefs and homeland elites on occasions of political importance, and despite women singers' use of it, reciprocally, to utter criticism of the holders of power, in everyday settings it is largely ignored by men since it belongs to a domain of things qualified by the adjectival clause tša basadi (of women).

Women's music, even that stylistically identified as kiba, is thus in rural circumstances generally assigned to a separate sphere and denied a broader audience. It may be in order to escape the lower status of a female genre that its migrant performers, particularly in an urban setting, have sought to make themselves part of men's kiba. They "have begun to 'cross over' into the mainstream", and have enjoyed a corresponding rise in "musical status" (Koskoff 1989:12).

The consequences of a failure to gain such recognition may be seen in the case of the song/poems of migrant women from Lesotho, whose art has remained generically distinct from men's. Lacking a classificatory label of their own, these songs are excluded from the precincts of sesotho within which the equivalent male migrant poems are accommodated:

> ... within the politics of performance in Lesotho, a woman's genre whose texts are often fiercely critical of the behaviour of men and governments is being denied a public identity (Coplan 1991:174).

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[32] See Chapter Five.



Figure 26: SK Alex on "home" visits: preparing to leave, and arriving at Mamone, Sekhukhune. (photo: Santu Mofokeng)



Figure 27: Rural women singers performing to greet their urban visitors, SK Alex. Mamone, Sekhuhkune. (photo: Santu Mofokeng)

In contrast, the women's songs redefined as kiba have undoubtedly gained broader recognition from their inclusion within a previously exclusively male genre. The adoption of the drum ensemble and rhythms of this men's style have allowed women to continue singing and improvising on specifically female songs, but under the rubric of an established male migrant cultural form.

If women's migrant song is part of the male migrant genre of kiba, and if it evokes an enthusiastic audience response commensurate with that enjoyed by the male version, it is primarily the highly-polished, vibrant and exciting quality of the dancing and drumming which gives it this shared identity. And if, despite its inclusion within kiba, it remains distinct from its male equivalent, it is in the importance of lyrics and the freedom to improvise on these that this separateness can be seen. In the sung and danced aspects of men's and women's performance, there are contrasting variations of restriction and freedom. While men's kiba, lacking lyrics, provides fewer opportunities to express comment than women's, the effectiveness of women's ability to do so is curbed by the focusing of the audience's attention away from their lyrics and onto the dancing which is more easily appreciated. On the other hand, while dancing, men have more freedom than women to improvise as individuals, each showing off his own distinctive style. For women, the same rhythmic free flights played on the solo drum prompt a set of movements apparently improvisatory in nature, but carefully co-ordinated together as a group.

The creation of a female version for a male genre, or the recasting of a female genre with male instruments and in a male guise, thus represents a seeking of higher status for a style otherwise thought of as being of little account. As a musical reclassification it does not, however, represent a mere sleight of hand. The migrant singers of kiba, unlike their rural stay-at-home equivalents, are constructing a new gender identity in terms other than merely musical ones. The roles they play "as sons", and as primary breadwinners within their natal families, call into question the criteria conventionally thought to differentiate men's behaviour from that of women. The adoption of these new roles, within the context of existing family relationships, will be seen in the chapter which follows to be one of the concerns which kiba lyrics express.

Chapter 4

Women as brothers, women as sons: commentaries on domestic predicaments

Changes in domestic relationships resulting from labour migration in southern Africa have been documented in some detail. Emphasis has been placed, in particular, on the effects on women of marital breakdown. In the worst scenario, the conjugal dissolution or reluctance to marry which conditions of migrancy engender has led to the emergence of small female-headed households: the most deprived of all family types in the southern African labour reserve (Brown 1983:375-380; Murray 1981:154). But alternative developments have seen unmarried women provided with some security within ongoing agnatic structures (Schapera & Roberts 1975:267; Murray 1981:110; Izzard 1985:268-9). Another possibility, particularly for migrant or working women, has been the creation of households based on structured co-operation between sisters, between siblings of both sexes, or between mother and daughter (Izzard 1985:272-4; Niehaus 1989; Preston-Whyte 1978). The documenting of the "reconstruction" (Schapera 1940:356) of families, while thorough, has shown us little of the way in which gender roles, thus radically restructured, are conceptualised. We do not know whether women, newly centred within families in which the various ties of blood provide continuity where those of marriage have failed to do so, continue to think of their relationships to men in the conventional terms laid down by previously-established gender stereotypes. In the case of migrant kiba singers, certainly, convention combines with reconceptualisation to provide a complex and equivocal view of gender relationships.

Women's kiba, as I claimed in the previous chapter, clothes new themes in the trappings of tradition. In addition to expressions of pleasure and pride in its performers' ability to outdo rivals through virtuoso performance, it offers comments on aspects of the broader social environment. Aspirations to live in "the new style", criticisms of chiefly misbehaviour, and complaints about police harassment are grist to the mill of both rural and migrant kiba composers. Lending these utterances greater weight, kiba eludes, at least in its use by migrant women in the urban context, the stigmatization of a women's-only style by claiming broader recognition alongside the performance of men.

This suggests a challenging of the received wisdom about male and female behaviour. But the intricacies of domestic relationships, in the context of which such conventions are forged and reinforced, have not been a concern of any of the lyrics presented thus far. I have claimed, indeed, that these lyrics succeed in transcending the limitations of the strictly domestic preoccupations which were a concern of earlier female styles.

Where kiba or proto-kiba lyrics do present and comment on relationships within the household, they appear to depict women in the role of the dependent, stay-at-home wife, sister or daughter-in-law. Apparently enshrining conventional womanly roles, they often direct themselves to correcting wayward or unfeminine behaviour. The migrant singers of these lyrics, however, while seeming to comment about the conduct befitting a dependent wife, are actually conceiving of their own roles in terms of the dependability associated with a brother or a son. But their assumption of such responsibilities is not phrased directly through kiba. It is expressed, rather, by means of an ongoing reconsideration of "proper sotho" kinship roles. Here, the pertinent domestic relationship is not that between a dependent woman and a male provider, but that between a brother and sister within a natal family. The co-operation that should exist between such siblings, and the antagonism and competition which may result from their attempts to occupy similarly central roles within a family, are the main areas of contestation. If we examine kiba lyrics in the light of this redefinition of gender roles, we find that they do, indeed, contain strident criticisms of male behaviour, albeit phrased in terms of the marital-style relationships which are of little pertinence to most migrant women performers.

Kiba: men as husbands, men as brothers

Apparently conservative views of womanly roles are expressed by many rural songs which fed into the later development of kiba, and in kiba songs themselves. The necessity of being courted and chosen in marriage is sung about in the song mankgodi:

Mankgodi o a pholo ke saletswe	I, the vulture, am delayed
Ke saleditswe ke go hloka diphego	Delayed by not having wings
Ke nna kgarebe ke a bina	I am an initiated girl, I am dancing/singing
Ke bina koša ye.	I sing this song.
Bjale thaka tse tsaka mo lekgotleng	Now my peers in this group
Ba tlo no ferewa nna ke saletse	They will be courted, and I, delayed

Wa nkwa gore ga ke na diphego	Hear me, I have no wings
Ka gore nka sere ke a go rata.	Its because I cannot say that I love.
Esita motho ge a robetse o wa tsoga	Even if you are lying down you can rise up
Sella tsa gago, tsa gago di tla tla.	Do not cry for yourself, your turn will come.

The vulture left behind without wings to fly with is the kgarebe (initiated girl) who, unlike her fellows, is not approached by a suitor: as she is a woman she cannot propose love or marriage to a man. "As I don't have wings, I will just stay behind until maybe someone comes to me". Others advise her "don't cry, wait, your turn will come".[1]

Linked to this theme of dependency on men to initiate courtship is the preoccupation with the necessities - clothes, cash, and other material goods - such men are relied upon to provide.[2] And a further theme, intrisically connected to this dependency on a husband or suitor, is the importance of childbearing to give a woman her proper status in society.

Makonkwane sebata makonkwane	Makonkwane the beast
Moswari wa theka laka	The holder of my waist
O sa tle Mabulane	Has gone to Penge mine
Theka laka le ge le se ne sebako	My waist, even if it has nothing around it
Theka laka le tseba ke wene	My waist, the one who knows it, is you
Makuku we..e. maraga theto	Makuku, you, the ones who kick away string aprons
Ke bommago Joubere	The people of Joubert's mother
Mošimanyane wa sekolo	The school boy
Re re o a lla legokgolana	We say he is crying
O a lla Joubere wa Hlabirwa Mmamorei	He is crying, Joubert, son of Hlabirwa Mmamorei
Hlabirwa ke monna yo elego rragwe	Even if he is a short man and holds me
Leba shoti ge ba ntshwana ke aya	I will go with him to hear what news he has for me
Ke yo ekelwa mehlamo ka mo nthago ga Meswana	I went with him behind the thorn tree
Ntemogeng ke imile	Notice me, I am pregnant
O tla mpona ka foiye ge dumisiwa.	You will see me with prickly pears (i e pregnant).

This song celebrates courtship and childbearing. The ones who "kick away string aprons" are the recently-initiated youths who cause young women to become naked: that is, their lovers. The song was accompanied by a dramatic tableau in which one female singer played "mother", another played "father", and a doll was assigned the role of "baby". The baby was named Joubert, and his father was given the sereto (praise name) Hlabirwa Mmamorei. The

[1] Makgolo wa Pine Khulwane, recorded discussion with DJ and PM, Nchabeleng, 28/7/91.

[2] See Chapter Five pp173-6.

use of the praise name was an acknowledgement in general terms of a young man's achievement of fatherhood: but it also had the effect, according to informants, of concealing the specific identity of the lover of the song's original protagonist. The song as a whole stresses not only the importance of childbearing to giving a young woman (and her suitor) their aspired-to status in society, but also the importance for both of fidelity: he, as her lover and intended husband, should be the only one who knows whether there is anything tied around her waist.[3]

When the excitement and risks of early courtship give way to the burdensome and even lonely experience of being a daughter-in-law, the songs assume a critical dimension. They explore the ambiguous links between a woman, her place of birth where she feels at home with her siblings, and her place of marriage (bogadi). In ngwana o tsŋabile bogadi, a "child" (young woman) has run away from her in-laws. Her siblings chase her back again, saying that although marriage entails many pains, she should not run away from these. They, in their turn have had to put up with these sufferings, so they advise their sister to return to her in-laws' place and endure her hardships in silence. A similar theme is contained in a version of the song mararankodi:[4]

Mararankodi, taba tša lesego	Mararankodi, news of laughter
Taba tša bogadi le bagaditsong	News of marriage and of being a co-wife
Ebego ke dibotša mang?	To whom will I tell thi news?
Ebego ke dibotša mang, taba tša bogadi ye?	To whom will I tell this news of marriage?
Bana ba bogadi ba nkgowa-bjang	The children at my husband's place are shouting about me
A ba nkgowa bjang ba sa bone mpa mantsha	They are shouting about me because they don't see stomach (I am not pregnant)
Ke bolabolong ngwana sesuwana?	What will I say as an orphan?

The idea of a daughter-in-law as an orphan, deprived of the support and friendship of parents and siblings while living at her place of marriage, is found as well in the laments of Tumbuka women in Zambia and Malawi (Vail and White 1991:251-2).

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[3] Lyrics and interpretation from Dithabaneng, Nchabeleng, 19/7/91.

[4] Lyrics from singers of Mararankodi, Nchabeleng.

Images of appropriate womanly behaviour are celebrated in some proto-kiba and kiba songs, while unbecoming or disorderly behaviour is sharply criticised in others. Of a series of songs about beer and its consumption, for example, some, like sekhekhe sa go nwa bjalwa (a drinker who drinks beer), celebrate the act of drinking if it is done in appropriate circumstances by older women, while others, like o tla loiwa ke batho (people will bewitch you), warn against the loss of self-control, particularly inappropriate to a woman, during excessive drunkenness, and about the possibility of being bewitched by an enemy while in this state.

But many of the most strident criticisms of unfeminine behaviour in these songs are interpreted as being directed, not towards women in general, but towards the woman a brother is planning to marry. One of these is sebodu (lazy person), a contemporary kiba song:

Sebodu sa go rata go ja	Lazy person who likes to eat
A sa sile a sa reng	Who doesn't grind meal
Sehlwela boroko	Sufferer of drowsiness
Sebodu o mmotse tee, o mmotse seturu-turu	Lazy person who likes to be told about tea, about a big tea-pot
O mmotse "condense", basadi baraga-theto	Who likes to be told about condensed milk, women who kick away string aprons (young women who immodestly expose themselves)
Ke sebodu mahlwela boroko	Its the lazy person who suffers drowsiness
Masogana kgaetsedi tša ka	Young men, my brothers
Le mo tsee lang le mmona a le sebodu?	Why do you take her knowing she is lazy?

Similar slovenliness in a sister-in-law is criticised in the song dinala di a rotha (long nails), which tells of a woman who refuses to go with her fellows to fetch water, but who will want to drink once the water has been provided. A rural version of this song expresses similar sentiments:[5]

He wene mosadi wa sebodu mammabjang	Hey you lazy woman who is always sick
O reng o babjwa ge o bona go lengwa?	Why do you get sick when you see people plough?
Ge re sola o wa tsoga.	When we dish out food you get well again.[1]

The sharp criticism of these songs has a poignancy since it anticipates a sister's immanent loss, not only of the companionship of her brother, but also of his earning power as a

[5] Lyrics from Makgoio wa Pine Khulwane, recorded discussion with DJ and PM, Nchabeleng, 28/7/91.

migrant.[6]

Jealousy and antagonism between sisters-in-law as a theme of kiba and of pre- or proto-kiba lyrics points to the centrality of the brother-sister relationship in northern Transvaal communities: a bond of closeness from which strains arise when sisters begin to play an active role as breadwinners. Kiba's portrayal of men in the role of lover/husband in these songs is certainly not without relevance to the lives of kiba singers - some, like Salome Machaba, have a male companion in town, while others, like Rosina Seshothi and Flora Mohlomi, have married men whom they met while working in Johannesburg. But in terms of their structural relationships with the rural families which they support, the link to a man of most significance is that with a brother. The role of major breadwinner, responsible formerly for siblings and presently for their own children and mothers, makes many kiba singers central in the continuity over time of their own families of origin or orientation. Their brothers, occupying a similarly central role, are co-operators but also potential competitors with them.

The kinship roles of sesotho

The importance of an adult sister in her natal home, and in relation to her brother, has clear precedents in northern Transvaal communities. Anthropologists documenting rural life among the Lovedu and Pedi have pointed to the central role played by a kgadi (eldest sister) in ritual and in intercession with the ancestors (Monnig 1967:56-7; EJ and JD Krige 1943:235): she became "the ritual head of a family, just as the eldest brother [became] the jural head" (Kuper 1982:60).[7] The pivotal importance of a sister to her brother was evident in the practice of the "cattle-linking" of these siblings through cross-cousin marriage. The bridewealth paid to a family for a girl's marriage would be used by one specific brother when he required cattle with which to pay bridewealth in turn, and this linking would give the sister particular ritual rights and duties over the house established by the brother through his marriage (ibid.)

[6] See Chapter Five pp171-4, for songs which express a sister's dependence on a brother for affection and for the purchase of clothes, and which lament his absconding as a migrant.

[7] See Chapter Seven pp246-8 for a fuller discussion of this point.

Bonds between siblings, with these precedents in the northern Transvaal, appear to have become increasingly important under present conditions of conjugal collapse in the labour-sending areas of southern Africa more broadly. They have even served as a model for the formation of households, in situations where conjugal collapse has made maritally-based households unviable:

> Here relations of marriage are almost the converse to relations between siblings. Conjugal bonds are exceptionally formal. They are established by bridewealth payments and characterised by specific obl ons. In accordance with patriarchal norms, husbands are considered "providers" and wives "housekeepers". By contrast sibling bonds were extremely relaxed. They lack specified obligation and have a greater component of willing reciprocity (Niehaus 1989:3)

This broader reciprocity within the natal or agnatic family has been of considerable significance in ensuring continued support for women whose desertion by their husbands would otherwise leave them without support (Schapera and Roberts 1975:267; Murray 1981:110; Izzard 1985:268-9, 272-3). Among the rural singers documented in Chapter Five, for example, stay-at-home women unsupported by husbands or lovers were receiving some support from men in the broader agnatic group into which they were born. A sense of obligation originating between siblings even extends to members of the descending generation: a malume (mother's brother) may provide support not only for his sister when her husband dies, but also for this sister's children and even for their children in turn.

The wage-earning women of urban kiba, although similarly bonded in co-operation and amity with male siblings, occupy a position of great structural similarity to them which may result in rivalry and even displacement. Whatever support these men do offer their sisters and parents may be feared to be short-lived, owing to the obligations they incur towards a wife and children of their own. Alternatively, a daughter acting "as a son should" in a family which has younger sons of its own may find herself in competition with this brother for a variety of resources.[8]

[8] A number of these women had their access to the household's educational budget curtailed in favour of their brothers' schooling: see Chapter Six pp218, 224.

The means by which these migrant women singers conceptualise their role as family wage-earner in equivalence with that of a male sibling are complex. Referring to sotho custom, there is the acknowledged obligation of an oldest child to support his younger siblings, and of a youngest son to look after his parents. Alternative obligations, towards his own wife and children, may however render a son unable or unwilling to offer full support to parents and siblings. Where a daughter succeeds in fulfilling these obligations in her brother's place, and thus in redefining a role sanctioned by custom as that of a son, this gender interchangeability shows a distinctly modern character. But her capacity to perform this role of support where her brother has failed to do so indicates her success in behaving in accordance with "real sesotho".

"In sotho, the oldest child should support the younger ones" was Helen Matjila's explanation of her entry into migratory wage labour as a domestic servant. The tradition to which this refers is that in which an oldest son should act as custodian of family assets such as cattle, holding them in trust for his younger siblings (Monnig 1967:336-7; James 1988:39-40). When an older daughter rather than a son assumes such responsibilities, she may be thought of as not simply "like" but "better than" a son, especially from the point of view of people in the parental generation. This is because the daughter's becoming a parent does not, as with a son, serve to distance her from her family of birth, but rather if anything brings her closer to this family. Children born to a family's son in a stable marital relationship are cared for by their mother while their father works to send home money to this specific nuclear household. Children born to a daughter - either outside of a marital relationship or in one of short duration - are mostly cared for by their maternal grandmother. The mutual dependence established by wage-earning daughter and child-caring mother has benefits for both parties, as has been documented in cases from other parts of the labour reserve (Izzard 1985:273-5; Preston-Whyte 1978:62-9). It is because of this mutual dependence, both prompted by and enabling intergenerational family continuity, that the wage-earning capacities of a family's daughter are not lost to her relatives, as they frequently are in the case of a son. Even in cases in which the wage-earning daughter lost her child, as with Salome Machaba, she remained involved in an informal arrangement of co-operative "linked migration" in which she provided support for her mother and the children of her non-wage-earning siblings.

A brother may contribute, despite being married, to the upkeep of his natal family, aiding his sister in this burden. The brother of Helen Matjila somewhat lessened the load she bore as sole breadwinner when he went out to work and, in addition to providing for his wife and children, undertook partial support for his family of birth. But this was possible only in a situation where he had not built his own house, established a separate household, and so undergone the transformation from lešogana ga na le lapa (young man without a yard) to monna o a lapa (adult man with a yard). The norms of sesotho stipulate that an older son should live at home with his wife until his younger brother marries and so takes up his position as owner of the parental residence. But the older son's leaving may be prematurely precipitated by conflict over access to his earnings between his wife and those in his natal family laying claim to his support (Molepo 1983:81).

From the point of view of such a brother, his commitment to meeting the needs of wife and children above that of mother, sister, and sister's children may be expressed through a redefinition and a narrowing of the proper duties of a kgaetsedi (brother) and a malume (mother's brother):

> Let's say [your sister] is old enough but not married, and on top of this she has got some children. You on the other hand have got some children and a wife, and in this situation you won't be able to manage both - your sister and her children together with your wife and your own children. Another thing is that my sister's child is not that much connected to me.[9]

The sloughing off of responsibilities by brothers/sons for their sisters, sisters' children, and parents, like the assuming of these responsibilities by these sisters/daughters in their place, are much discussed and contested. Both processes involve a change in roles formerly played by men and women, but are nonetheless justified in terms of custom and sotho tradition.

A matter of similar ongoing renegotiation is that in which sons do assume responsibility for broader natal family upkeep and so enter into potential competition with their sisters. The expectation, again defined in terms of sesotho, is that a youngest son should, when marrying, take up residence in his parents' home. In pragmatic terms the arrangement appears as a

[9] Prince Seroka, recorded discussion with MTN, Tembisa, 21/4/91.

bargain in which the heir's taking over of the parental home is exchanged for his parents' access to his wage-earning power and to his wife's domestic and agricultural input in the home (James 1988). In the case of migrant kiba singers, this brother's transformation - from a dependent sibling of his older sister into a married adult who assumes the mantle of household head - requires adjustments in authority. Matters such as access to family land and the right to negotiate over and receive bridewealth payments may have to be negotiated between he and his sister.

The realignment may sometimes be made without difficulty, as in the case of Anna Dikotlo. An unmarried daughter who did not build her own house, she shares the rural establishment of her parents (now both deceased) with her younger brother. While the latter supports his own wife and children, he also remits money which, combined with that earned by Anna, serves to support their younger sister who is still at school, and to help pay for the schooling of their nephews and nieces. It is Anna's brother who, as head of this joint household, has negotiated bridewealth payments in respect of the younger sister's marriage, but Anna accepts this and trusts his capacity to manage the money wisely on behalf of the entire family. The family's residential stand and ploughing land are registered in his name, but agricultural operations are undertaken jointly and for the benefit of all members.

But the relationship between unmarried wage-earning daughter and married youngest son may, as in the case of Sarah Motswi, also involve conflict. Her three children were born during stints of domestic work in Tzaneen and then Phalaborwa, but she never sent them home to her mother to be cared for because this source of child-care was being monopolized by her two brothers and their wives. Eventually the tension between Sarah and her younger brother's wife became so great that, with her parents' eventual agreement, she moved to a different village and built a house there.

> I have got married brothers whose wives stay at home with their children. Now I thought this would create a conflict amongst our children, and one of my sisters-in-law did not like my children. So I thought it best to leave my family and settle in a different place.[10]

[10] Sarah Motswi, recorded discussion with DJ and MTN, Johannesburg, 19/10/91.

Here, the accepted structures of rural family life were still those in which a daughter was expected to leave for the place of her in-laws, and the younger son's wife, in a sense replacing her, would occupy a position of ongoing and increasing importance in the family, both caring for her in-laws and in turn deriving childcare and other benefits from them.

Seen against this background, the least ambiguous position is enjoyed by those migrant kiba singers without brothers or male relatives in the immediate family. Julia Lelahana, upon the death of her youngest brother several years ago, took upon herself the "youngest son's" duty of looking after her parents. In this way she came to include support of her parents alongside her existing role of breadwinner for her three children and deceased sister's children. She pays for the ploughing of the family's land, and intends to be the recipient of mahadi (marriage payments) when any of her daughters marry, as she "is motswadi" (the parent). Although she realises that a male relative such as an uncle may want to step in and take control, because "many people do want to eat", she feels that the role she has played as breadwinner during difficult times entitles her - on behalf of her immediate household - to be the sole beneficiary of bridewealth payments.[11]

Another woman migrant who lost her brother was Joanna Maleaka. Although her mother is the locally-resident household head, Joanna takes responsibility for arranging to plough the lands, and has negotiated bridewealth payments for her daughter's imminent marriage.[12] She expressed a wish that her role as sole wage-earner for her mother, daughter and granddaughter would soon be transformed into that of rural household head when her daughter in turn goes out to earn money.

> I want to work and later return home.
>
> *What will you be doing at home?*
>
> I will be looking after my grandchildren while their mother is at work. ... My daughter would have completed her studies and be working for me. She will be a teacher by then. I will remain home and prepare food for her when she

[11] Julia Lelahana, discussion with DI and PM, Johannesburg, 13/10/91.

[12] Wage-earning daughters supporting rural households tend to assume headship of these households only when retiring from work: see Izzard (1985:273).

comes home from school. I am tired of working, it is a long time that I have been working.[13]

It was not clear from the conversation whether this daughter would combine the new obligations established by her marriage with her existing ones owed to her mother, or whether Joanna predicted that her daughter's marriage would be as short-lived as her own. But the future scenario outlined in this statement suggests that, in terms of authority if not of economic benefit, the rural role of least ambiguity for an ex-wage earning woman is one in which no men - neither husbands nor brothers - feature at all.

When defining domestic relationships within rurally-based families, migrants thus make extensive reference to sesotho. Bonds between siblings have precedents in rural society, drawn on to sanction co-operation between brother and sister in the present. A brother's responsibilities to his sisters and their children are either validated or avoided by reference to the sotho kinship roles of kgaetsedi (brother) and malume (mother's brother). And a sister's assuming of new responsibilities, substituting for or adding to her brother's position in the family, is conceived of in terms of the duties expected, in sesotho, of an oldest or youngest child.

New roles are thus defined by reference to the domestic relationships of old. But how do these claims to position, phrased in kinship and domestic terms, relate to the domesticity and dependency of the kiba lyrics with which this chapter began?

Kiba: dependency and criticism

Although many kiba lyrics transcend the concerns of domesticity as documented in the last chapter, others, especially those of the older songs from which women's kiba has evolved, do contain comment on relationships within the immediate household. Those cited earlier in this chapter reflect on situations both of courtship and marriage, and of sibling affection and the concomitant jealousy of a sister-in-law.

[13] Joanna Maleaka, recorded discussion with MTN, Johannesburg, 24/3/90.

Despite the apparent preoccupation in these songs with the praise or censure of other women, they also concern themselves with the behaviour of men. Unacceptable male conduct appears in kiba lyrics as that of a husband or lover - unfaithful, unreliable, or incapable of behaving as a proper husband should - towards his dependent wife or consort. In some songs the criticism is direct. A man is castigated for failing to work and support his family[14] -

Mme a bolawe ga ana mošomo
A swanetše a bolawe.

Mother, he must be killed, the unemployed man
He should be killed.

- or for trying to restrict his wife in her pursuit of independence and entertainment, as in the song sekgalabjana which recommends a treatment of similar severity for an old man who will not let his wife stay out late singing with her group. Complaints about men's restrictions on their wives' activities are contained as well, though less stridently, in sekhekhe sa go nwa bjalwa (a drunkard who drinks beer).[15]

But comments on men's behaviour, like those on the misconduct of a chief, are often veiled. Appearing more in audience interpretations than evident at face value, the meanings of these songs are open to contestation. Lyrics apparently enshrining conservative views of women's roles can prompt explanations more contemporary in import which challenge established norms about passive female behaviour. Mokankanyane, a favourite song about beer with roots well established pre-kiba, is a good example:

Bjalanyana wa mmago Mpoyi
Ge o ntima, ntime
Ge o nkgela, nkgele
Ge o ntima wona
O tla mpona ge ke tagilwe.
O setlatla seota
Setlatla tena le go aga polata bodimo mahlong
Thaka tša gago ba go jela bodimo mahlong.

Beer of Mpoyi's mother
If you refuse me some, refuse me
If you give me some, give me
Even if you refuse me some
You will see me drunk.
You are really a stupid one
The stupid one who builds a flat-roofed house
Your friends are eating your sacred things in front of you.

These lyrics have a range of referents, including not only the older songs and known contexts from which snippets of them are drawn, but also the private associations they spark off in

[14] Lyrics and interpretation from Ditšhweu tša Malebogo.

[15] See Chapter Two p102.

particular singers or listeners. On the surface, the song refers simply to a context in which people are drinking together, and in which the singer intends to drink whether or not she is offered beer by the hostess. Sexual infidelity appears as a hidden reference, however. The woman is mocked, not only because she built a flat-roofed house where a pitched roof would have been a sign of higher status, but also for her inability to see that her friend, "eating your sacred things in front of you" is having an affair with her husband. He has been able to provide her neither with the outward trappings of material wealth, nor with the security of sexual faithfulness.

Such inadequacies and infidelities, described in songs, give rise in turn to a variety of interpretations. These were sharply divided along gender lines in a case I witnessed where female kiba singers disagreed vehemently with a migrant man about the morality of an unfaithful husband described in a song. Reuben Malaka, listening to Mokankanyane, pointed out its parallel with the theme of another song:

Ge a tshika mmethe nko tse
A tswe mokola.

Hit him on the nose when he is cheeky
So that he can bleed.

He claimed indignantly that a wife often lays a trap for her husband, to prove him guilty of infidelity, by hiding on a plate some food which he did not eat the previous night. Having done this on three consecutive nights, on the fourth she will accuse him of sleeping away from home with a lover, strike him in the face, and then use the plate of uneaten food as evidence when the case is brought to court before his kinsmen. Three of the women who had been performing the song disagreed with this interpretation. Since husbands often stay away for the night with their lovers, they argued, the accusation against the husband in the song must have been well-founded, and his wife was thus entitled to strike him.[16]

Lyrics describing domestic interactions between men and women may, then, contain veiled criticisms, with the true meanings of these being contested between male and female members of the audience. But however insistent female singers or female listeners may be about the

[16] Both sets of lyrics, and interpretation, from Reuben Malaka, Dora Mashaba, Maggie Sebati and Mary Lobogo, recorded discussion with DJ and MTN, Johannesburg, 7/4/90.

inadequacies of male behaviour which songs are held to portray, the domestic situations they represent remain couched in the idiom of dependency. Similarly conventional-sounding epithets about proper relationships between men and women are expressed by migrant singers outside the kiba arena:

> I view it as a bad thing [that women come to town to work] because it is a known thing that husbands should work for their wives.[17]

The orthodoxies of marriage, thus endorsed despite the stated irrelevance of the institution in the lives of most of these singers, appear as a template held up to reality. Kiba lyrics generate a utopian vision of a "traditional" family which serves as a platform for the appraisal, and denouncing of the inadequacies, of present-day kinship roles and relationships (Coplan 1987:424; Vail and White 1991:248-264).[18] Once again, as in the kiba lyrics discussed in Chapter Three, commentaries on present predicaments are contextualised and made meaningful by juxtaposing them with people's understandings of the past.

Conclusion

The view of changing domestic relationships and changing gender roles, expressed by migrant women singers through kiba and through an ongoing redefinition of sotho kinship roles, is thus a complex and equivocal one. While they themselves, as mostly single women, appear to have stepped into social positions markedly masculine in their attributes and in their attendant duties, they continue to assess men's and women's interactions in terms of the criteria of conventional marital domesticity.

Migrant women's becoming more "like men" can be seen in a review of the material presented in previous chapters. Chapter Two contains a discussion of the way in which migrant women's acquisition of autonomy from "home-boys" enabled them to group together as female migrants, within their own independent associations. In Chapter Three, the musical

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[17] Rosina Seshothi, recorded discussion with DJ and MTN, Johannesburg, 21/4/90.

[18] Women poets from Lesotho give utterance to two apparently opposed perspectives on marriage: one rejects it as restrictive while the other enshrines it as a worthy, if unattainable, ideal (Coplan 1987:424).

genre which gave them the occasion for forming these clubs, and which gave them the means for performing once thus united, is shown as having been originally a male one. And migrant women's seeking-out of an apparently masculine identity by moving into the social roles normally occupied by brothers or sons is shown in the present chapter. But at the same time as assuming an apparently masculine identity, northern Transvaal migrant women continue to sing about the behaviour appropriate to women - and to the men on whom women rely - in the relational terms deriving from primarily marital domestic relationships.

If there is a challenge to conventional gender roles being articulated here, the idiom used is one which strongly endorses convention. On the one hand, there is the expected behaviour of a dutiful son or brother: on the other, there is the customary propriety which should operate between husband and wife. Both the new familial roles into which these migrant women have moved and which they validate in terms of kinship duties, and the old ones whose integrity they uphold in song, derive their authority from sesotho. Where Basotho women singers' performance is denied categorisation within the male-oriented definition of sesotho, (Coplan 1991:174; 1988:348-9), these northern Transvaal migrant singers are laying claim to sesotho as a domain which includes them alongside men.

But sesotho is a concept with some adaptability, which can be invoked in a variety of ways by people of different sexes. It is used by migrant women, both by singing and by denoting a web of kinship obligation, to endorse their new domestic roles. But it is also operationalized by rurally resident and stay-at-home women who are thoroughly dependent on the earnings of men. Where it appears in its use by migrant women as a validation of a position which straddles gender roles, its invoking by rural women performers denotes a wholly female enclave.

Chapter 5

"I dress in this fashion":

rural women singers, the life-cycle, and the idea of sesotho

Consciousness, and its "colonisation", has recently become an issue of concern in the study of southern African society (JL and J Comaroff 1989; Bozzoli 1991). Although not expressed in quite the same terms, the processes by which such colonisation has been withstood have preoccupied scholars in southern Africa for somewhat longer (P and I Mayer 1971; Alversson 1978, McAllister 1980, 1991). While other writers have examined overt acts of resistance, anthropologists have concerned themselves with subtler means of defying domination, often through the reassertion of apparently traditional cultural forms, with effects sometimes perceptible no more widely than within local communities themselves.

Recent studies in this vein examine rural people's portrayal, through local knowledge, of their colonisation and their incorporation as an industrial proletariat within the capitalist world. This knowledge is seen as both enabling people to conceptualise their own history as dominated but resilient subjects (JL & J Comaroff 1987:193) and, in parallel, as facilitating the ongoing construction of group or individual identities by such people (Ferguson 1992; Thomas 1992).[1] The production of this local knowledge often involves the invoking of tradition (Coplan 1987, 1991), and often counterposes this with images of modernity, resulting in sets of opposed dualities: town/country, townsman/peasant, Christian/non-Christian, setswana/segoa (JL & J Comaroff 1987; Roseberry 1989; P & I Mayer 1971).

Criticisms have been levelled at this writing. Spiegel, for example, disparages "dualist approaches" for the inappropriateness of their search "for persistences of a pre-industrial world view in the ways in which people order and perceive their contemporary relationships" (1990:46). But the emerging contrast between, for example, setswana and segoa, was not "a confrontation between a primordial folk tradition and the modern world" (JL & J Comaroff

[1] The "construction of identity" is frequently discussed in contemporary studies, but has in fact been of concern to anthropologists since Barth (1969) and Cohen (1969) published their influential pieces on ethnicity/retribalisation. The debate about "the construction of ethnicity" has occurred in parallel with, but only recently in explicit conversation with, that about "constructed identities". See Conclusion pp260. For recent studies on southern African ethnicity, see for example Vail (1989), Harries (1989) Webster (1991).

1987:194-5). Rather, Tswana tradition came to be formulated largely through its complementary opposition to "the ways of the European". Roseberry suggests that the very images of a pre-industrial or pre-capitalist world which feed into the making of such dualities are products of people's encounter with the relationships and realities of the industrial or capitalist one (1989:144, 201-3, passim).

Spiegel categorises the Comaroffs' work alongside that of McAllister, whose accounts of Transkei migrants show strongly-bounded groups identifying consistently with "Red" or "traditional" values, and thereby resisting the inroads of the industrial world or the influence of Christian missionaries or neighbours. But the "traditional" values of sesotho are not rigidly identified with a particular group of people. It is true that in some contexts they are thought of as aligned with bad shaba (those of the nation; non-Christians), as I have outlined in the Introduction. As I will show here, however, the boundary between majekane (Christians) and baditshaba, even in the heartland where it might be thought to be strongest, is fugitive and vague if one seeks for it in concrete terms. Both the contrast between sesotho and sekgowa, and that between majekane and baditshaba, tend then to be used as conceptual tools rather than as labels for the actions or orientations of definite groups of people.[2]

The present chapter investigates these issues through a focus on rural women's sotho clothing, an important aspect of musical performance and a distinctive sign, alongside others, of whether or not such a performance qualifies as one of mmino wa sesotho or setšo. While migrant singers came from rural backgrounds where few had worn sotho clothes before arriving on the Reef, for village singers there are strong continuities between the clothing worn in everyday life within the village/domestic arena and that worn in the heightened context of musical performance. Migrant singers, by adopting the clothes and performing the music of sesotho or setšo, announced their newly-forged identity as northern Transvaal female migrants. Village singers have remained within the domestic domain, dependent on men, through the stages of a female life-cycle viewed as typically sotho. Here, most wear sotho clothing both for singing kiba and when doing the normal tasks of domestic life.

[2] See Introduction pp16-19 for a discussion of the origin and meaning of the majekane/baditshaba contrast.

Traditional sotho dress, whether worn only for performance or every day, is not however static or unchanging. In a heartland Pedi village like Nchabeleng, the clothing identified with sesotho has progressively incorporated elements from the clothing of other groups and from that of sekgowa itself, in much the same way as kiba songs acquire new meanings or have new sections written for them by contemporary composers. The adoption of these new elements has often coincided with points of change in the life-cycle, after which they become adopted more generally. But, despite these changes, the clothing continues to be defined as belonging within the domain of sesotho, and is contrasted strongly with its opposite sekgowa.

In addition to the flexibility of the paired opposites of sesotho and sekgowa, there is another point which this chapter will stress. Sesotho and sekgowa are differentially adhered to and invoked by women and men, and the contrasts between the two sets of opposed terms are often thought of as aligned.

I start with a discussion of the identification between village women and sesotho, of which clothing is an important outward and visible sign. Due to the incorporation of new elements, introduced through a variety of channels but especially through schooling, the details of sotho dress have differed for each successive group of female initiates. In parallel with innovations in the content of women's sotho dress, the means whereby girls acquire the clothes of adulthood have also changed, with older generations of women having been given money to buy them by fathers, brothers or husbands, where their daughters spent short spells as farmworkers to earn the money themselves. These stints of independence were followed, for women remaining single as for those who married, by a return to the sphere of motherhood, household work and subsistence agriculture. In contrast, the earlier and more consistent involvement of boys in the worlds of school and work have meant that their clothing, once they become adults, is invariably that of sekgowa.

But this opposition between male and female orientations and behaviours, as expressed in the outward and visible sign of clothing, is not consistently experienced or invoked. Indeed, in the context of particular women's domestic living circumstances with particular men, it may be absent altogether. It is on the occasion of musical performance, as the second part of the chapter shows, that sesotho is stressed through singing, dance, dress, and the consumption of

sorghum beer. Through these means, performance provides for a dramatisation, partly through parody, of an overarching female identity in opposition to men. The cohesiveness of womanly and customary ways presented in a performance context may be less strongly stressed elsewhere.

Women, the domestic domain, and sesotho

Village women, especially in certain contexts, are associated with sesotho more strongly than men. To appreciate why this should be, we must look at the connections between the domestic domain and sesotho, and at how the assigning of women to the former often entails their cloaking in the guise of the latter.

The role of women in providing for the continuity or reproduction of the household or domestic sphere is a common theme, in studies both of capitalism in the first world and of its intrusion into third-world contexts. There is some ambiguity as to whether this role should be seen as a sign of subordination and oppression, or as a source of social power, or perhaps as a mixture of both. In some European peasant societies, for example, the domestic arena appears as a source of great influence to the women who occupy prime positions within it, where their menfolk, marginalised from power in the wider socio-political arena and denied any significant role in the family, are virtually without any influence at all (Rogers 1975, Gilmore 1980).

In the case of southern African societies, there is a similar ambiguity about the assigning of women to the domestic sphere. It has been argued that the central dynamic of the precapitalist agricultural societies of the region arose from their ability to control women's productive and reproductive capacities within the homestead unit (Guy 1990). Later, the control of these capacities in turn lay at the basis of these societies' "giving up of labour" to the industrial centres of South Africa, while at the same time allowing them to escape "full proletarianisation" (Bozzoli 1983:151). Indeed, according to one viewpoint, which has now been largely dismissed (in part as overly functionalist), South African capitalism depended upon and even purposefully enforced the conservation of families in the reserves as systems of support and reciprocity, in order to be able to rob them of the labour-power of their male

members (Wolpe 1972:108).

Some women were to escape from this realm of enforced and custom-bound domesticity, often under the rubric of alternative definitions of the domestic provided by Christianity or colonial ideology (Delius 1983:113, Comaroff 1985:150, Bozzoli 1991:15 59-60). But those who remained as rural wives dependent on the earnings of male relatives continued to be seen as somehow responsible for the continuity of the household and the domestic domain. The ambiguity about the role of such women centres around whether this work has been assigned to them as unwitting dupes of the combined forces of precolonial patriarchal ideology and capitalism, or whether they have thereby derived some power previously denied them by actively retaining and augmenting their part in sustaining household and village life as partly autonomous domains.

One could rephrase this issue in local terms. In the Lesotho communities studied by Murray, he found that women's "keeping house" amounted to doing the "work of custom" (1981:150). In the absence of men, it was mainly women who, although subordinate and conceived of as inferior, played a major role in maintaining "the ideas and practices which are recognized as 'proper Sesotho'", and in using these to help "reproduce social relations, between the living and the dead, between men and women, and between the generations" (ibid.:149).

In my study, as in Murray's, what materialist approaches represent as women's role in reproduction translates in folk terms as women's role in enacting and behaving in the ways of sesotho. As with the more material tasks of reproduction, there is an ambiguity concerning the status with which this role is endowed. On the one hand, some of the most sotho of the things that women do - such as sitting on the floor while men sit on chairs - are thought of as part of the respect normally shown by a woman to her husband and parents-in-law in particular, but also to men in general. In such a case, the upkeep of sesotho performed by a woman on behalf of others is thought of by some - not only outside onlookers but also women who have made an early escape from the strictures of rural domesticity - as demeaning to her. On the other hand, the espousing of sesotho (or seŝo) by the migrant women who feature in other chapters of this thesis serves their own purposes, and empowers them.

The claim that women have become responsible for the "work of custom" is not one that derives only from the absence due to migrancy of males to do this work. It has its genesis as well in other dislocations of the public socio-political domain which have been wrought by the apartheid re[illegible] In an area to the north of the Pedi heartland, Hofmeyr shows how the genre of oral historical narrative, previously the domain of men and performed mainly in the central kgoro of a village, was unable to survive the destruction of this public space which occurred with the forced relocations of Betterment planning. 'Traditions of female storytelling, situated in the household all along, did in contrast transplant successfully (1991:17).

Sesotho of singing, sesotho of wearing

In the village of Nchabeleng, situated in the Pedi heartland Sekhukhune not far from the seat - recognised by locals though not by the South African government - of the paramountcy, there are several women's music groups. Each is based in a different part of the village, and draws its membership from this particular locality. The group whose members' experience forms the subject of this chapter, Dithabaneng (those from the place of the mountain), takes its name from the rocky hill around whose base its singers' houses are clustered.

The women of Dithabaneng can put a precise date on their origin as a group with this particular membership, clothing, and style of music and dance. They came together in 1976, having seen and been inspired by the new style - called kiba in an urban context, but referred to as mpepetloane or lebowa in a rural one - performed by women singers from Mphahlele some 70 kms to the north west.

Dithabaneng has many features shared by other groups which sing in this style. Members have elected a leader (malokwane) and a leader's deputy, whose function is to call the group together for practices and performances, to lead the singing, and to discipline latecomers or those inappropriately dressed. There is a variety of other personnel, including two "police" who dress in khaki uniform with leather Sam Brownes and who levy fines upon male onlookers whom they arrest, and two nurses with epaulettes who administer "medicines" to the singers. In addition, members of the group have conceptualised and formulated a consistent policy which differentiates a range of different performance scenarios, from

weddings, for which they charge a standard rate, through competitions, which they enter with a hope of winning, to dances at the houses of prominent group members, when they buy food and drink with their past earnings and, in the words of one member, "we eat our money".[3]

The members of Dithabaneng are drawn from a very small area, and many of them have played and sung together in the past. A succession of women's singing styles drew local singers - and before them their mothers and grandmothers, many of whom are no longer active in performance - together in a variety of groupings. Some of these were named, though none was characterised by such uniformity of dress as the present group.

As this generational continuity within a single village suggests, a number of women have remained in their natal village even after marriage. This is explained partly by the high rate of cousin marriage among group members, even among women marrying as late as 1981.[4] Of the women singers I know, only one came to the village from a distant location (about one hour's drive away), a further three moved from nearby villages to marry, and the remainder were born in the village itself, some moving no further than a few doors away to set up house with or near their in-laws who were also their relatives.

The women in the group are thus connected by various ties of kinship, both consanguineal (including lineal and collateral relationships) and affinal. The group contains several pairs of sisters, several pairs of sisters-in-law, and one mother-and-daughter combination. A further linking factor, cross-cutting kinship to some degree, is that women of the same age-group born and raised in the village attended initiation and were formed into mephato (initiation regiments) together. The ties eventually formalised as membership of Dithabaneng thus had their origins in a range of previous and sometimes long-standing local connections, at least between the group's core members, from whom those more peripheral or recently-arrived have taken their identity as singers.

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[3] Mmagojane Kgalema, recorded discussion with DJ and FM, Nchabeleng, 29/12/90.

[4] Evidence suggests that this practice has been more persistent in heartland than in Trust contexts. Bothma's research in Nchabeleng in the late 1950s showed that "almost all the marriages were contracted between relatives of some sort, because hardly anybody is not in some way related to everybody else" (1962:46), while my own work in a Trust village peripheral to the reserve (James 1988:37) shows the decline of cousin-marriage in such a context.

Despite these close ties, the women do not normally regard themselves as equals. Even those as closely related as sisters are distinguished by their individual marriages, their widely differing levels of income and, consequently, their differing orientations to sesotho. They constitute an undifferentiated group only in the act of singing together, using a range of performative devices thought of as characteristically sesotho. It is the dance which forms the group.

One of these unifying motifs is the invocation of tau (the lion). By virtue of marriage if not of birth, all the people in the group - like most of those in the village - bina tau (dance the lion). In the context of performance, the invocation ditau (lions) is used as an address to co-singers on occasions of heightened significance, or to assert some sense of overarching and symbolic local-political unity when performing in front of people from other villages or places.[5]

A further expression of group cohesion and uniformity is the clothing worn when singing. The entire performance, including mmino (dance) and diaparo (clothing) is characterised as sesotho.

"I dress in this fashion"

Dithabaneng's performances emphasise sesotho as an inviolate concept, but the actual orientation towards sesotho has been transformed over several generations. In addition, sotho clothing - albeit older and less striking than the group's uniform - is worn by some singers all the time, while others, often due to the influence of their husbands, have made a move to the clothing of sekgowa, saving sotho clothes for performance only.

Neither the flexibility nor the variation of sesotho are visible in accounts of "traditional" Pedi dress. In a classically static account of a rural lifestyle, Monnig describes Pedi clothes as having been significant in demarcating the different phases of the lifecycle from one another, and simultaneously in providing for a gradually deepening distinction between the sexes. To

[5] See Chapter One pp53, 57 for a discussion of "totemic" animals in northern Transvaal society.

substantiate this he gives information on the first two major phases of life (summarised in Table 7).

	Male	Female
Pre-initiates	Lekgeswa skin loin-cloth Hair shaven close to head	Lebole or theto short string apron in front around loins Ntepana triangular skin apron to cover buttocks Semabejane short cotton blouse just covering the breasts Leetse Hair fashioned in long strings treated with fat and graphite
Initiates	New loin-skins Hair reshaven	Lebole or theto short string apron in front around loins Ntepa[6] long back apron of married women Semabejane short cotton blouse just covering the breasts Tlopo hairstyle of marriageable and married women

Table 7: Pedi clothing demarcating life-cycle stages
(Monnig 1967:107,123,128)

Monnig comments, however, that:

> in practice, most [initiated] girls nowadays wear long, gaily-coloured cloths from their loins down to their feet, covering the traditional clothing, while very few women wear the traditional hair-style, usually covering their heads with a head-cloth instead (1967:128)

[6] Monnig spells this word, and its diminutive version, wrongly as ntepha/ntephana.

He also indicates that semabejane, the short blouse worn by initiated and by older uninitiated girls, "was introduced by missionaries, but has been adopted by all the Pedi, Christians and non-Christians alike" (ibid.).

This account, like many of its kind, sets up an idealised version of the traditional life-cycle with its accompanying clothing. If people adopt some Western clothes, they are seen as treading a one-way path from tradition to modernity. In fact, the semiotics of dress, and its social concomitants, are more complex.

The short smocked cotton garment Monnig calls semabejane, and referred to by Dithabaneng women as nyebelese or gempe for initiates (from the Afrikaans hemp - shirt) or gentswana for non-initiates (little shirt), is a good example of this complexity. By the mid 1950s these garments, although certainly deriving in style and material from European influence, were items of clothing indicating a thoroughly sotho orientation, as the name given to one version of the garment - sesothwana (little sesotho) - suggests. An orientation towards the paired opposite, sekgowa, was shown by wearing clothes known as roko (dress; pl.diroko) or khiba (pinafore; pl.dikhiba). In the village, still cleft by a deep social and geographical divide between Christians and non-Christians, it was mostly the former who wore the clothes of sekgowa, while the latter wore sotho clothing.[7] In this instance, then, adherence to one or other polarity of the sesotho/sekgowa duality was associated with membership of definable social categories.

But sotho dress,[8] like its opposite, was to undergo continual transformation. Although gempe (sotho smocked shirt), and its accompanying lebole (string or leather apron) are still worn by returning initiates, in other contexts these garments have been supplanted by a new version of sotho dress. This has three main identifying features: a lešela (length of cloth) or tuku

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[7] Members of Dithabaneng, recorded discussion with DJ and PM, 20/7/91, Nchabeleng; dates calculated according to when members of particular regiments were initiated. The geographical divide in the village was reflected in terminology: majekaneng was "the place of the Christians" while setshabeng was "the place of those of the nation".

[8] lit. sesotho of wearing (sesotho sa go apara). This is distinguished from sesotho of speaking (sesotho sa go bolela) and from various other forms of sesotho.

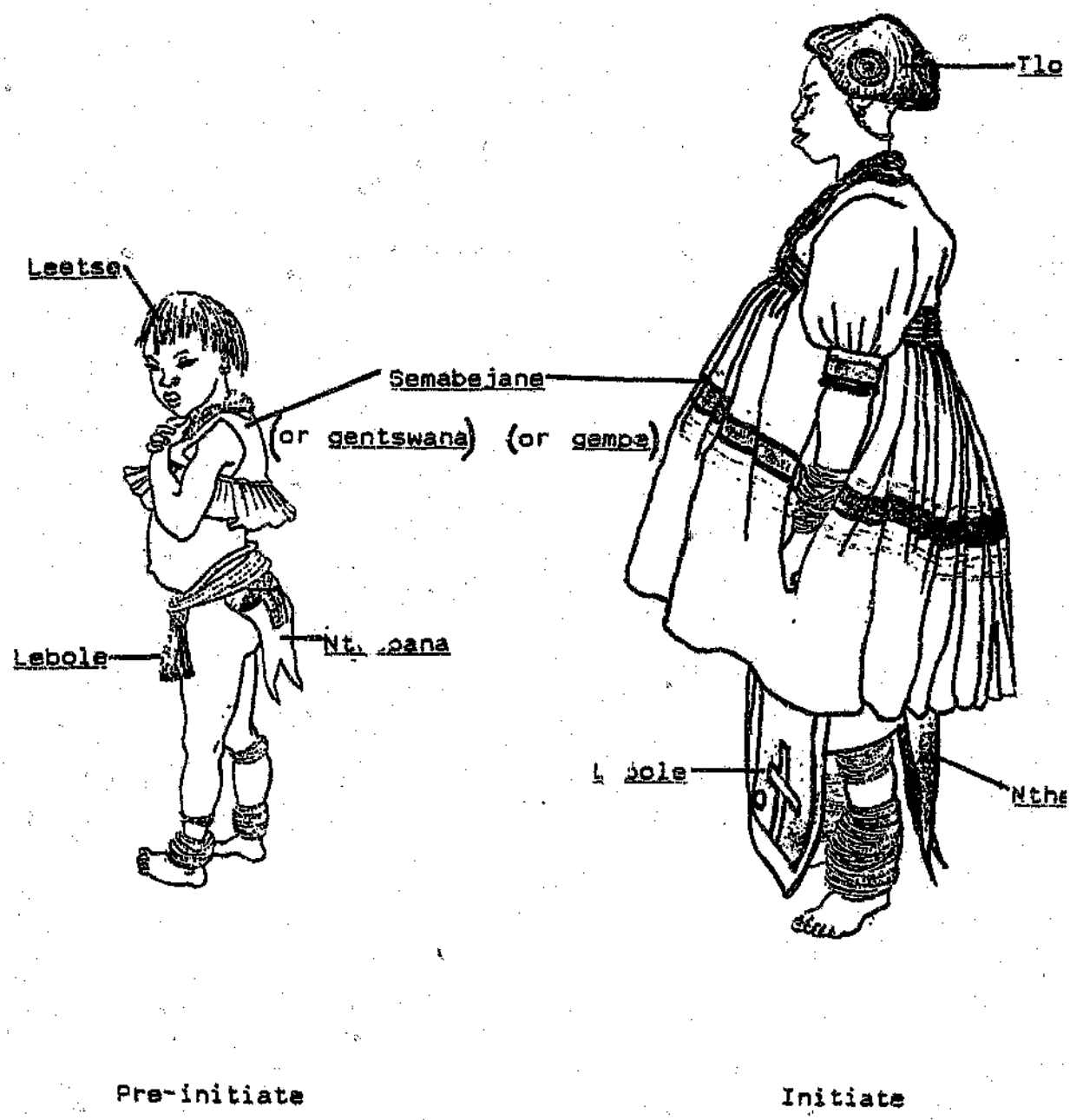


Figure 28: Female sotho dress of Pedi, showing semabejane or gempe in its pre-initiate and initiate form.
(Tyrell 1968:67; Monnig 1967:107, 123, 128)

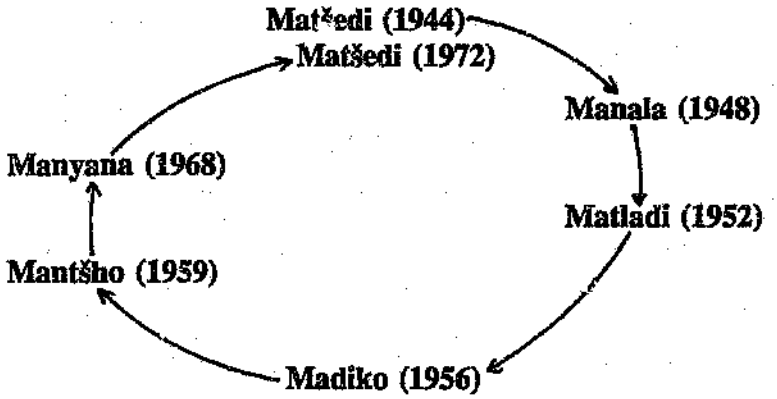
(from the Afrikaans doek) wrapped around the waist; a šeše (headscarf consisting of a large piece of fabric); and maseka (bangles). If these elements are present, the fourth element - a commercially-made vest, "skipper" (short-sleeved cotton knit shirt) or overall does not detract from the whole ensemble, but indeed becomes a part of it. This ensemble of clothes appears in various versions. For the performance of kiba, it is characterised by the use of striking colours and of materials thought to be particularly attractive. But in an everyday context, the materials used are often drab, and sometimes old and tattered.

It can be seen then that certain types of clothing deriving from mission influence, and named with words deriving from sekgowa, were nevertheless included within the definition of sesotho, and strongly contrasted with sekgowa, throughout. The sesotho/sekgowa contrast thus coexists with an image of change within the category of sesotho. If, for these villagers, opposed polarities such as sesotho/sekgowa do enable a conceptualisation of historical change as the Comaroffs claim (1987:193), the actual mechanism through which change occurs, and through which these categories are continuously replenished with new elements, is through life-cycle rituals, particularly initiation. The experience of successively initiated mephato (initiation regiments) orients these conceptions of change (Molepo 1984:16-28). Thus, the life-cycle stages which, for Monnig, provided for a static approach to understanding society, in fact allow for a more dynamic self-perception, since each mphato (regiment) has a different experience of these stages.

The transformation of clothing, and of the sotho lifestyle, was prompted partly by a variety of what might crudely be called "culture contacts", including - for an older generation - the presence of trading stores, visits to husbands in town, and - for a younger generation, and far more influential - the proliferation of schools in the area after the 1950s. The means for purchasing the clothes defined as necessary to consecutive stages of the life-cycle had to be provided by wages earned beyond the domestic domain. For the older generation of women - the present grandmothers in Dithabaneng - this money was procured by men: by fathers and brothers in the case of initiates, and by husbands for their wives. A younger generation - Dithabaneng's present older mothers - followed the example of boys in leaving home to earn their own money on farms around the time of initiation. But in contrast to boys who then went off to work in contract labour in the urban areas, these girls, having earned enough

money to buy the clothes appropriate to their new status of initiates, then returned to the domestic sphere to raise children and keep house. Here, they came again to depend on male earnings for clothing and other basic necessities, or in some cases were forced to subsist without these earnings.[9]

Figure 20: The cyclical succession of initiation regiments in Nchabeleng[10]



For the village-dwellers of Dithabaneng, then, the acquisition of clothing for different phases of life has necessitated links connecting them within their rural families to urban centres in white South Africa (referred to as makgoweng: the place of the whites). Although it became commonplace for women of an intermediate generation to make brief forays into employment at white farms (referred to as mabaleng : the place of the plains), these links have mostly been made by fathers, brothers and husbands.

[9] The money earned was used to buy cloth, and to pay a village seamstress using a treadle or manual sewing machine to make up the garment.

[10] Apart from providing conceptual hooks which allow for a perception of history in the absence of the linear time-plans of literacy, the succession of mephato also orders men and women into age-groupings, enabling a rough calculation of age for people who do not precisely know their date of birth. Initiation dates shown here are for women, about two years later than those for men of the same regiments. The name of a regiment derives from the name of the chief's son who leads it, being allotted to this son in view of his future role as regimental leader.

Men's earnings, women's clothes

The oldest of the group's singers, Makgolo wa Pine Khulwane,[11] was born around 1930 and initiated around 1944 in Matšedi regiment. For her co-initiates, as for older women whose activity as singers ceased some time ago and who never became members of Dithabaneng, the money for the purchase of the clothes necessary to a proper sotho woman's lifestyle was earned by fathers, brothers and husbands in contract employment. Worn by a married woman, these clothes in turn, like the elaborate and heavy gempe (sotho smocked shirt) once worn by Mmagomathumasha Madibane and still stored by her in a trunk, became outward and visible signs of her husband's wealth. The more material used in the extensive smocking of these, and the more garments worn one over the other, the richer the provider was seen to be.[12] The clothes were thus worn with pride on both a woman's own and on her husband's behalf.

The lyrics of songs sung both by Dithabaneng and by older and now inactive singers reflect the dependence of this generation of women, and indeed of subsequent ones, on the earnings of men. In the song Lebowa, women sing:[13]

Lebowa la kgomo le motho
Pula-medupe yana Mohlakeng.
Lebona ge ke te kapere
Ke tšhonne ke hloboletse
Ke setse ka dibesete
Ke lebowa le kgomo le motho
Pula ya mamehlaka e yetla
Nke be ke na le kgaetsedi
A nthekele onoroko.
Re supa gore gare sa sila.

Lebowa of cattle and people
Stormy rain.
Seeing me half-naked
I have no clothes to put on
Except a vest
It's Lebowa of cattle and people
A stormy rain is coming
I wish I had a brother
Who would buy me a petticoat.
We no longer grind our meal.

[11] Rural women singers address each other as "the mother of so-and-so" or "the grandmother of so-and-so", rather than by the names given to them at birth or at initiation. Thus, Makgolo wa Pine translates as "Pine's grandmother", Mmagopine as "Pine's mother", Mmagoviolet as "Violet's mother", and so on. Migrant women singers, in contrast, address each other not with sotho names at all, but with English, often biblically-derived ones - Salome, Mary, Joanna.

[12] Mmagomathumasha Madibane, recorded discussion with DJ and AM, Sephaku, 25/1/89.

[13] Lyrics from Mathabatbe Mokwale, recorded discussion with PM, Nchabeleng, 29/12/90.



Figure 30: Mmagonnathumasha Madibane with digempe she wore when first married.
(photo: Deborah James)

Like those of other kiba songs, these lyrics consist of a densely-packed combination of themes, some surviving from older songs and others introduced by the current singers. Interpretations of these vary between different singers, and between different contexts in which the song is to be understood. One of these is the context of dancing itself: within this, the semi-nakedness of the woman in the song is interpreted as rendering her unable to dance with her fellows in Dithabaneng.[14] In more general terms, however, the theme of dependence on male earnings for clothing, and of deprivation without these, can be clearly heard. A similar theme occurs in the song Marashiya in which a woman bemoans the fact that her husband has failed to bring her necklaces, (again making her unable to dance with her colleagues):

Ke reng ka hlaela pheta ye botse I don't have a shiny necklace

Commenting on this line, Makgolo wa Pine said

> when other men have gone to town to work, he is always here at home not working, so I won't be able to dance as I have nothing to put on, no shiny necklaces.[15]

The dissatisfaction expressed here about men who have failed to provide new clothing might seem to indicate a greater desire for the fruits of an absent husband's labours than for his companionship in the household. Rather than being reflective of a callous desire for material gain, however, this theme coexists with others to suggest an ambiguity about one of the central paradoxes of migrancy in southern Africa - the fact that parents have been forced to live apart in order to ensure the well-being of their families (cf Murray 1981:102).[16] The song Setimela,[17] already cited in another context, bewails the absence of a brother who has become a lekgolwa (a person who leaves for the city and never returns):

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[14] Members of Dithabaneng, recorded discussion with DJ and PM, Nchabeleng, 14/7/91; for more detail on the reinterpretation of lyrics as referring to the context of dance itself, see Chapter Three pp135-7.

[15] Makgolo wa Pine Khulwane, recorded discussion with DJ and PM, Nchabeleng, 28/7/91. See p242.

[16] Vail and White document a similar ambiguity by Tumbuka wives about labour migration, similarly expressed in terms of the clothes it can provide or the lack of clothes if a migrant neglects his duties to his far-off family (1991:258-9).

[17] Dithabaneng, recorded discussion with DJ and PM, Nchabeleng, 14/7/91. See p130.

Setimela sa Mmamarwale	Train of Mmamarwale
Nthshwanyama	Black carrier
Setimela nkabe se rwale buti bokgolwa	Train should carry my brother from bokgolwa
Buti e sa le a eya bokgolwa	My brother home from bokgolwa
	(the state of being a migrant who never returns)
Ngwana-mme o tla nwa ese ka	My mother's child would die
mmona.	without me seeing him.

Songs thus express sadness, not only about lazy men who have no employment, but also about those whose employment takes them away forever. On the other hand, the absence of a man who is working to send his wife money for clothes and basic necessities, makes room for her to have affairs with other men who are present in the area, and it may be precisely those clothes bought by a woman's husband which she wears to make her look attractive to these other lovers.[18]

Wene o se nago lešira	You who have no headscarf
Makolone a tlogo feta	Those from the Cape will pass you by
Wene o se nago lešira	You who have no headscarf
O wa hlaka	You will suffer
Makolone a tlo go feta.	Those from the Cape will pass you by.

Those "from the Cape" to whom this song refers were men who came to the bus depot in nearby Apel as drivers of railway busses, and who would spend the night with local women. As single men who went home only once a year and who "saved all their money in an atchar tin", they were seen as rich and therefore as desirable lovers.[19]

For the present grandmothers of Dithabaneng, sources of contact with sekgowa were fairly limited. Since all were from setshabeng (the place of non-Christians), none took any interest in church nor went to school. They dressed in gempe (sotho: smocked shirts). Although this was a missionary innovation, the garment had by the 1940s and 1950s already long been

[18] In the Molepo district further north, when male migrants began to use privately-owned taxis rather than busses to return home, these became known as mmethisa [wa mathari] (those which cause young married women to be beaten), since these brought husbands home at unexpected times and enabled them to walk in on their wives' illicit affairs (Molepo 1983:77).

[19] Song and comment recorded in writing during discussion with members of Dithabaneng, Nchabeleng, 28/7/91.

regarded as part of sotho apparel, and was definitely not a part of the dress of Christians. These women paid visits to their husbands in town, but these were sporadic and of short duration. Sometimes, as in the case of one singer who visited her husband in his Pimville, Soweto shack for two weeks, the visits were made not only for the sake of general companionship but also for the specific purpose of falling pregnant:

> I waited long enough for him to give me "a hairy man", then I returned home.[20]

When visiting town, the people these women met were not so much the white bearers of sekgowa as its black adherents from other parts of South Africa: an encounter for the most part equally alienating. For Makgolo wa Pine, the speech of the Christian Xhosa people she met while visiting her husband, around 1957, in Springs where he worked as a compound policeman, sounded so incomprehensible that she thought they were asking her to fetch water when in fact they were praying. But more alienating still was her experience when she left her daughter with them for some hours while running an errand and returned to find that they had taken off the child's skin garments and clothed her in roko (a dress).

> They took my child, undressed her and gave her a new style of dressing. I didn't like it, and as I didn't know what was going on, my husband found me crying. He asked me what the matter was and I told him that these people want to thopa (capture) my child. They took away all that skin clothing and gave her a dress and had her hair cut. My husband told one old man about this, and he came and explained that they did this because they wanted the child to look like theirs and not to be different. Even if the children didn't understand each other, they should look the same. Upon realising that I was against this, the old man called the others after a few days to come and apologise for the mistake they had made.[21]

In this rather dramatic narrative, the use of the word go thopa, normally used to denote the taking of captives in war, illustrates the strength of Makgolo wa Pine's fears that her daughter would be taken from her and from the nurturing bosom of sesotho, and lost to the world of sekgowa as represented by these Xhosa Christians.

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[20] Singers of Mararankodi, discussion with DJ and PM, Nchabeleng, 28/7/91.

[21] Makgolo wa Pine Khulwane, recorded discussion with DJ and PM, Nchabeleng, 19/7/91.

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[20] Singers of Mararankodi, discussion with DJ and PM, Nchabeleng, 28/7/91.

[21] Makgolo wa Pine Khulwane, recorded discussion with DJ and PM, Nchabeleng, 19/7/91.

At the time of the visit, around 1957, Makgolo wa Pine and other married women of her original regiment were still wearing gempe (sotho smocked shirts) and mekamo (elaborately-combed and greased hairstyles) similar to those described by Monnig. Certainly, the photo in Makgolo wa Pine's passbook, issued at around the same time, confirms that this was so. Cognisance should be taken, however, of the fact that already at this time the most sotho of clothes were being reserved for occasions of greatest auspiciousness, and having one's photograph taken was one of these. Although she wore mekamo for the photo, Makgolo wa Pine was by this time putting on šeše (a headscarf) for everyday wear.

Women's earnings, women's clothes

There were a number of things demarcating the experience of this older female regiment from those following it. One of these was that its members, while firmly believing that brothers and prospective husbands should go off to work on farms to prove their manhood, never worked on farms themselves, whereas most of the women from subsequent regiments did.

For a number of male regiments consisting of boys born from around the mid 1920s onwards, farm work was an expected part of the life-cycle.[22] A large part of the expectation placed on boys to work on farms - although to begin with their departure was mostly without parents' consent - was as a kind of second-tier initiation, proving adult male status and showing, especially to a prospective wife, ability to work in more lucrative employment later on:

> To show that you will work in future, you will first run away from home to the farms. This showed that you were a man, and you would work for yourself.[23]

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[22] Lucas Sefoka, recorded discussion with DJ and MTN, Johannesburg, 27/2/90; NEC, Evidence of Neethling p8-11, 31. Delius (1989:595-6) claims that even traditionalist communities in Sekhukhune were changing their attitudes to education and beginning to send their sons to school from around the 1930s, and that a number of "tribal schools" were established in the 1940s. But judging from life-histories of migrant men from Sekhukhune, it was only in the 1960s and 1970s that schooling for boys gained acceptance so widely, for non-Christians as much as for Christians, that it eclipsed or supplanted the period of work on the farms, or displaced this into the period of school holidays.

[23] Mmagojane Kgalema, during recorded discussion with members of Dithabaneng, Nchabeleng, 19/7/91.

But a more immediate consideration for boys themselves was the necessity to buy clothes.[24] This was, likewise, to be the main reason why girls in their turn began running away from home to work on farms. Those born around 1940 and initiated in Matladi regiment in 1952 were among the first to do this. A possible reason why they had not done so earlier, apart from the greater restrictions placed on girls generally, is that the arduous journey on foot from Sekhukhune to white farming centres such as Marble Hall and Roedtan was seen as more easily undertaken by boys. By the time girls began to undertake this journey, they did so in the trucks sent by farmers right into the reserve areas to recruit labour.

Girls, following in boys' footsteps into the world of labour at mabaleng, also imitated and adapted the songs they heard men singing. Mmagojane Kgalema, initiated in Mantšho in 1959, described such a song, which was sung while weeding on the farm:[25]

Owi owi owi	Owi owi owi
Eya tsena Neisele	The Nissan is coming
Ke ya ga khayi letebele Kekana	I am going there to the place of the Kekana Ndebele
Tlou letebele	Elephant Ndebele
Ngwana wa MmagoRaisibe	Child of Raisibe's mother
Mapeperesane	Truck with a large loading space
Pholo ya mpone tše pedi.	Ox with two side mirrors.

For a variety of reasons, parents were mostly not in favour of their daughters' working on farms, so most of the girls who did so departed from their homes with stealth and subterfuge, as Ramogohlo Diphofa, initiated around 1954 in nearby Mphanama, recounts:

> We didn't ask for permission from our parents, we ran away whilst they were away at their fields ... At times when they were around, you would just put your clothes and blankets over the wall of the yard without them seeing you.
>
> *If you asked for permission, wouldn't they allow you?*
>
> They would not allow us.

---

[24] This reason given by men for first leaving home to work is reflected by other accounts from the Transvaal: Niehaus (nd), Molepo (1984:16), NEC. evidence of Neethling p31, 50; Gilbertson p50; Mareli p333; Fuller p412.

[25] Members of Dithabaneng, recorded discussion with DJ and PM, Nchabeleng, 19/7/91.

Were your parents and others upset about this?

> In fact when we got on the truck, little boys would do so as well, but when the truck pulled off, they got off and we would ask them to tell our parents that we had left.[26]

Mmagopine Khulwane, from a regiment initiated about ten years later, tells a similar story:

> From my home, I met my father on the way ... He asked me where I was going and I lied, saying I'm going to fetch water. It was when I was next to the truck that I showed him the blanket and said, I'm going to the farms. My father told my mother about this.[27]

The reluctance of parents to let their daughters leave was in fact not always uniform: fathers were seen as most strongly disapproving while mothers were more ready to give permission, being unable to suggest any other means by which their daughters might acquire the clothes they wanted:

> Sometimes, if you find your mother is at home, you say, I'm going to the farms: "well, go, and buy yourself some clothes"[28]

For girls as for boys, then, the main spur to this phase of mild defiance against parents was the need for clothes appropriate to the status of an initiate. Mmagoshower Debeila emphasised the necessity of this, since "we would be thought naked if we continued to wear ntepa, lebole and leetše".[29] She indicated that it was not her family's shortage of money which drove her to work at this stage, but rather the fact that she had seen older friends returning from work with clothes and was influenced by this, and by her co-initiates, to go. The departure for farms of Nchabeleng's adolescent girls, then, was similar to the phase spent working as domestics by young girls from Phokeng (Bozzoli 1991:91-3): occurring at a phase of life when these women had not yet taken on broader familial responsibility, it was seen not as providing a contribution to general family finances but as facilitating the purchase of

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[26] Ramogohlo Diphofa, recorded discussion with PM, Mphanama, 20/12/90.

[27] Members of Dithabaneng, recorded discussion with DJ and PM, Nchabeleng, 19/7/91.

[28] Mmagojane Kgalema, recorded discussion with PM, Nchabeleng, 29/12/90.

[29] Mmagoshower Debeila, discussion with DJ and PM, Nchabeleng, 16/7/91.

a specific set of goods for the girl herself.[30]

Despite this individual orientation, and despite the apparent rebelliousness of these girls, their departure for the world beyond the village was in a number of ways reincorporated into the life-cycle of the obedient daughter living out her life according to the tenets of sesotho. A contract lasted three months, and at the end of the first of these a daughter like Mmagoshower brought her wages - a total of R18 in around 1960 - back to her mother, who then used them to buy the vests and dituku she needed.

By the time a girl went off on her second three-month stint as a farm labourer, after a break of about a month, her parents no longer protested at her departure. And for most, the third or fourth contract was the last, since it was at around this time that most of them prepared for marriage - "we were being courted" as Mmagojunius Ramaila put it - and for building a home the village.

While it is true, then, that go tšhaba maburung (to run away to the place of the Boers) signified in some sense a rebellion by groups of age-mates against control by the older generation, it is also true that the challenge to parental authority which this practice represented was soon co-opted and transformed as its perpetrators became, in turn, custodians of the domestic domain and of sesotho.[31] It must also be noted that the set of mores and practices rebelled against were based not on a monolithic and cohesive ideology, but on one deeply divided along gender lines. By the time the members of Mantšho were undergoing initiation in 1959, girls were rebelling not simply against the arduous duties defined as appropriate to them within the domestically-defined boundaries of sesotho - childcare, fetching water, weeding and chasing the birds away from the crops, and helping to repair the house - but also against the emergent modern definition of a girl's role as scholar. Parents were frequently divided over which behaviour was most appropriate to a girl, and in some

[30] In the case of Phokeng, the girls worked for money to buy their trousseaux.

[31] Rebelliousness followed by later conformity is of course a common theme of studies on youth: see for example Bozzoli's description of how in the successful peasant economy of Phokeng it was boys who had the greatest desire to escape the strictures of society's patriarchal controls, but were later to gain more rewards than women out of "accepting the system" - eventual independence and access to land (1991:81).



Figure 31: Old sotho dress: Mmagopine dressed up in the garb worn by initiates for rainmaking rites.



Figure 32: New sotho dress: Mmagopine in sese (headscarf), vest and dituku (waistcloths): Dithabaneng in performance.

cases this division separated mothers as proponents of the conservative, domestic version of sesotho from fathers who, although not necessarily wishing to convert to Christianity, were keen to encourage their daughters to complete at least the primary levels of education and hence to engage in the world of sekgowa and tlhabologo (civilisation). This was so in the case of MmagoPine:

> My mother said that I should leave school and stay at home. ... If a girl could write a letter to her husband, that was just enough. ... She said that I should repair the wall with mud and do weeding in the fields. So I ran away to mabaleng.
>
> *So you were running away from duties at home?*
>
> I also didn't like going to school. I knew that after stopping school for a week when my mother told me to do so, my father would order me back to school again. So I realised that if I ran away to the farms, I would spend three months there and during this time, the teachers would take me off the school registers, knowing that I had gone to mabaleng.[32]

For this girl, her flight to the farms in order to escape conflicting sets of pressures from both parents nevertheless led her inexorably back home and back into the values and ways of sesotho when she returned to her mother's house to bear children and to become involved in domestic duties as a mother.

School, clothes, and women's life-cycle

From around the 1960s it was school - whether attended or fled from - which was seen by people as playing a central role in transforming the attitudes, ways of dressing, and ways of behaving of men and women, and of older and younger people alike.

Makgolo wa Pine gives an account of this process. Having wept at the efforts of Christian Xhosa to dress her daughter in the clothes of sekgowa in 1957, she and her contemporaries were, a decade later, to welcome the new dressing style seen as emanating from school. They came to feel that the necklaces, bangles and many-layered gempe (smocked shirts) of earlier

[32] Mmagopine Khulwane and Mmagojane Kgalema, in recorded discussion with members of Dithabaneng, Nchabeleng, 19/7/91.

sotho clothing had been heavy and uncomfortable. When their daughters were encouraged by teachers to wash out the grease and graphite of the leetse hairstyle, they eventually followed suit by washing out the grease of the mekamo, till then thought appropriate to married women. Not wanting to be thought naked, however, they replaced this hairstyle with setlanyana (a small headscarf), "then I saw those wearing a bigger one, and copied them", until eventually the modern sotho headscarf šeše became the norm.

The change in head-dress is an example demonstrating the full complexity of the transforming of sesotho dress. A generation of non-Christian women whose resistance to the idea of school for their daughters was so strong that they actively encouraged them - in many cases successfully - to leave, nevertheless embraced some of the new stylistic trappings seen to accompany the activity of scholarship. Their incorporation of these trappings appears on the surface to have had something of the character of an acceptance of mission or colonial ideology.[33] From the point of view of the wearers, however, it represented on the one hand a wish to replace one kind of haircovering with another, and thus to continue to express the respect required of a woman by her in-laws and by men in general, but on the other it signified a moving beyond the discomfort and restrictiveness of statically-defined rural dress and a pleasure in the attractiveness of rapidly-changing styles.[34]

Although this liberation from unnecessarily restrictive ways was rejoiced in, there is a sense of ambivalence about some of the changes for which school was seen as responsible. The proverb used by Makgolo wa Pine to describe the older generation's imitation of their children in adopting new ways shows that this process was not viewed entirely in a positive light.

> A cow will fall into a donga as it tries to follow its calf. This is the same with people. If your child is burning, you will go into the fire to fetch it out.[35]

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[33] Comaroff suggests that "headscarves are widely worn by black women in South Africa and express the canons of mission modesty, which overlaid the elaborate code of hairdressing" (1985:224).

[34] Members of Dithabaneng, recorded discussion with DJ and PM, Nchabeleng, 19/7/91.

[35] Ibid.

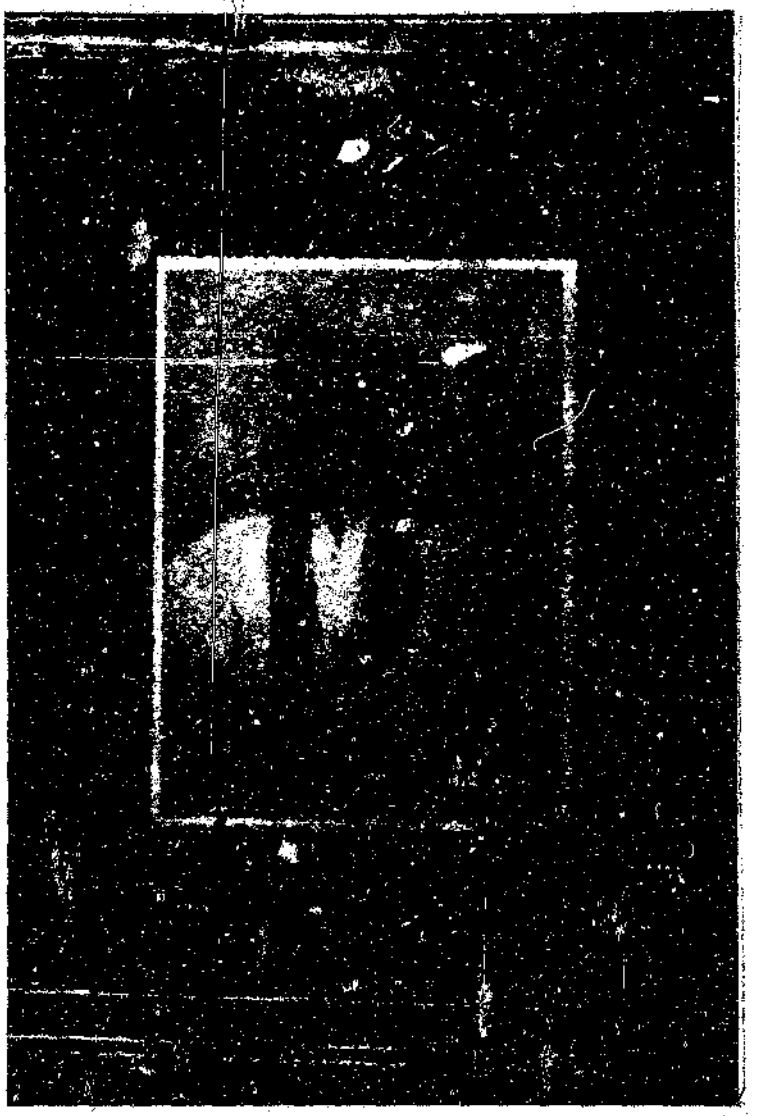

Figure 33: Woman with mekamo hairstyle, Apel, Sekhukhune.
(photo: Deborah James)

School was seen by women of an older generation not only as having provided for changes in clothing styles, b[illegible] as having introduced transformations in behaviour - and indeed in the typical sotho life-cycle - which are viewed in a much more unambiguously negative light. Makgolo wa Pine offered the "pencil" and the ability to write as a monocausal explanation for the ability of youth nowadays to evade parental authority, and for the associated decline in sexual morals:

> a boy may come and study with your daughter. They boy will take a pencil and write so[illegible]ething for the girl to read. And if you as a parent suspect something and sit around with them to keep an eye on them, that wouldn't help. Because after the boy has written her something on the paper, she would also take her pencil and reply to him. All this happens in your presence, and when they do this, you will think that they are studying and that your daughter will pass at the end of the year because she has a friend who is helping her to study.[36]

But instead of engaging in diligent scholarship, what the couple would be doing, said Makgolo wa Pine, was taking advantage of the mother's inability to read in order to plan a clandestine liaison which would eventually lead to the pregnancy of the girl.

For some people, school and literacy appear as jointly responsible for having widened the generation gap between themselves and their children, and for having introduced a range of related ills. According to such a view, it is because girls no longer mix with other girls but rather form friendships with boys in class that girls began to fall pregnant at a younger age. This has caused the age at which children are initiated to decrease (from mid-adolescence to the age of six or eight years). Previously, when re be re na la malao (we had laws), a girl would leave for the farms, return without yet having become pregnant, and become initiated thereafter. But now children must undergo this ritual earlier, as "we do not want to take a mother or father to be initiated". In this account, the virtual disappearance of the phase of childhood prior to initiation - bothumasha for girls, bošoboro for boys - is seen as having come about because of education.

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[36] Members of Dithabaneng, recorded discussion with DJ and PM, Nchabeleng, 19/7/91.

Schooling thus had a range of significances: it allowed for an incorporation of new elements into the sotho lifestyle, but it also introduced lawlessness and indiscipline, seen as contrary to the principles of sesotho, or indeed to any code of morality. From yet another perspective, schooling appeared as a harbinger of sekgowa.

People's different orientations towards schooling were influenced by a range of factors. One was religious orientation: to Mmagomotala Mofele, who considers herself moditshaba (one of the nation; a non-Christian), to go to school was foolishness: "as we grew up we only knew that those going to school were children of majekane (Christians)" while majekane in turn would mock them, saying ba tšhaba tlhabologo (they're afraid of civilisation).[37] Another factor was age and/or position in the family: often older children did not attend school, or attended only for a few years, where their younger siblings acquired a fuller education as the necessity for this became more generally accepted. Place in the order of siblings played a part inasmuch as parents were sometimes able to send younger children to school once their older siblings had grown up and were contributing to the household finances. It was also sometimes the case that parents opposed to schooling for an older child had become accustomed to the idea when their younger children reached schoolgoing age. A further factor was individual motivation. Mmagoviolet Phakwago, a member of Matladi regiment, was so keen to be a scholar that the teacher reached an agreement with her mother to let her stay home and tend children one day if she could come to school the next. Her younger sister, in contrast, ran away from school with friends to work on the farms. But it was gender which was perhaps the most important factor in influencing which children were sent to school and which were not, before a time when it became accepted that all children should attend school as far as possible.

According to Mmagoviolet Phakwago, when she was a child and people "did not yet know the importance of education", old women thought it a waste to take a girl to school rather than having her come to help in the fields.[38] Mmagojane expressed the perceived differential needs for education thus:

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[37] Mmagomotala Mofele, discussion with DJ and PM, Nchabeleng, 17/7/91.

[38] Mmagoviolet Phakwago, recorded discussion with DJ and PM, Nchabeleng, 17/7/91.

> A girl will always be at home, but a boy needs to go to school so that he will be able to find employment. If he finds that he does not know even a single "A", he will have to come back and stay at home.
>
> *So with a girl there is no problem [if she leaves school]?*
>
> No, there is no problem with a girl because a man will come and marry her and she will get support from him. Now, with a boy, who will support him?[39]

It was therefore expected that boys would be more particularly exposed to sekgowa, first at school itself, and then through the careers which took them off to the farms and then to work at centres of industrial employment. This is reflected in the clothes worn by boys and men. Although Monnig's rather sketchy account of the differentiation of the male life-cycle by clothing describes initiated boys as dressing in "new loin skins" (1967:123), informants in Dithabaneng and elsewhere explained, in contrast, that from around the time of initiation - corresponding roughly with a boy's first trip to the farms for an older generation, or from the time of his first starting school for a younger one - he ceased wearing lekgeswa and began instead to put on trousers and shirts. There was in some cases an intermediate phase in which short trousers were worn during school hours to be replaced with lekgeswa for the rest of the day.[40] But in general, in contrast to girls whose clothing throughout the life-cycle, although gradually acquiring new elements, was continually redefined as sotho, their brothers and cousins experienced a swift and decisive move from the sotho clothing of childhood to the clothing of sekgowa which defined their adolescence and adulthood.

For these men, working on the mines or in the cities, it was only during the performance of kiba both in town and during visits home that the clothes of sesotho could again be worn. In this domain there was, as with women's clothing, a redefinition of new elements, such as the Scottish kilt, as part of sesotho or setšo.

A similar differentiation of male and female clothing among reserve-dwellers is noted by Jean Comaroff in the case of the Tshidi Tswana:

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[39] Mmagojane Kgalema, recorded discussion with PM, Nchabeleng, 29/12/90.

[40] Salome and Andronica Machaba, recorded discussion with DJ, Johannesburg, 19/10/91.

> Indeed, male hair and clothing styles have been more closely regulated by the idioms of discipline and production than have those of females, reflecting the greater engagement of men in the world of industrial capitalist production (Turner n.d.(a)). Women, on the other hand, remain closely associated with the domestic sphere (1985:224-5).

In Nchabeleng as I mentioned earlier, the divide between the ways of sesotho and those of sekgowa was often thought of as aligning with that between two social groupings which, certainly for the first half of the 20th century, were regarded as quite distinct: non-Christians (baditshaba) and Christians (majekane). But from the evidence presented here it can be seen how even within the social category baditshaba, and indeed even within a single family in that category, there are a number of further differentiating factors - age, place in the order of siblings, personal motivation, but especially gender - which align some members closer to one and some closer to the other side of the sesotho/sekgowa divide. To summarise: because the present members of Dithabaneng have since childhood been identified more closely with home and with the domestic than their brothers, have worked beyond the village only in rural employment and then only for short periods, while their brothers have spent years as labourers on the mines or in the city, have had little or no exposure to schooling, and always less than the male members of their families, it is easy to see how these women have had their role in the domestic domain identified closely with the idea of sesotho.

Women, married and unmarried

I earlier suggested that Dithabaneng's older members, as younger women, were dependent on male kin or affines to buy them the clothes necessary to the life of a proper sotho woman. As young married women, their adornment in heavy cotton smocking was an important means by which their husbands could display their wealth, derived both rurally and from contract employment. For the young women of later regiments, although their brief move into farm employment allowed them some independence and provided for the purchase of their own cloth, their return home was, ideally, a move towards economic dependence on a husband similar to that experienced by members of previous regiments. Indeed, it was the fact of "being courted" and of preparing for marriage which made further stints of farm labour inappropriate, since it was thought that a married woman should not bereka (work for money).

For members of these younger regiments, however, this ideal did not always correspond with reality. Almost half of Dithabaneng's members in this age-group, who became marriageable from about 1960 onwards, are now living their adult lives as unmarried mothers within their parents' or mothers' households, and dependent on the earnings of a brother or an uncle, or on a mother's pension. For the other half of this generation as represented within Dithabaneng, the return from farm work did result in marriage: to a cousin, in most cases.[41]

In Nchabeleng village and the broader area there are women who have spent periods working in town - mostly in domestic service - but none of the group's members, even unmarried ones, have done so. Although the presence or absence of a husband as a wage-earner is an important factor in economically differentiating Dithabaneng's members on either side of the marital divide, the poverty of even those without husbands has never been sufficient to drive them to work in town. This is largely because all have remained ensconced within, and able to depend upon, broader agnatic structures rather than having been driven into the social and economic deprivation of the "small female-headed household" (Murray 1981:154).

Those members who are married and receiving regular remittances are, as were their older counterparts, dependent on their husbands for, among many other things, the purchase of clothes. Such dependency also carries with it the obligation to listen to a husband's dictates about what to wear. Few husbands have much interest in influencing their wives' wish to wear the everyday contemporary sotho dress described earlier. But since husbands, even non-Christian ones, are often oriented more towards sekgowa than sesotho, wives' dependency on them sometimes entails a move towards a way of dressing, and of behaving, more in line with this orientation.

For Mmagoshower Debeila, the malokwane (leader) of Dithabaneng, such a change in style occurs only on particular occasions. She was married in a conventional western wedding

[41] To separate Dithabaneng's members out into those who have and those who have not married might seem to be a misguided exercise in static typologizing, since as Murray has indicated most rural families undergo diverse temporal processes of change which may take them through several apparently discrete "types" within a single generation (1981:100-7, 155). In the area of Lesotho he studied, for example, many women after a period of virilocal residence as a wife in the absence of a husband might experience marital dissolution, work for some time as a migrant, and later return to rear children in a matrifocal household (ibid.:155).

dress, as a photograph on her wall testifies, and she wears diroko (dresses) when she spends some time staying in the location adjoining Premier Mine in order to visit her husband at his place of work.

In the rather unusual case of Mmagoviolet Phakwago, her husband's preferences overlaying certain tendencies in her own background have effected her transformation from a woman wearing sotho dress along with female siblings and cousins to a woman dressed in the clothes of sekgowa. It is only when dancing with Dithabaneng that she dresses in sotho style and sings sotho music. Sesotho, as I will show, serves in the context of musical performance to emphasise the equality of female kin and to offset the economic factors which in material terms differentiate these women married to different men, or unmarried, from each other.

One of the things setting Mmagoviolet apart from her contemporaries, and indeed even from the sister born after her, is the fact that she knows the year of her birth - 1939. This is because her paternal uncles were Christians (majekane), and when she was born her parents were living with these uncles at their place. Although her father had not attended school, had been initiated, and so was not considered a proper Christian - the Lutherans originally forbade converts to become involved in this ritual - he lived amongst people who were literate. By the time her next sister, Mmagojunius, was born, her parents were "no longer taking this [Christianity] seriously", and had moved away from these kin to the section of the village inhabited by non-Christians (baditshaba), so the date of birth of this second child was not recorded.

It is hard to know whether it was this early influence from literate people which influenced her in her later interest in schooling. Again, this was in contrast to her younger sister. Although both schooled only to Standard One, for Mmagoviolet it was a struggle to remain at school even for that long, where for Mmagojunius it was "bad influences" which caused her to leave so early and run away to the farms: the idea of education which parents could not adjust to for the first daughter had become acceptable by the time the second was old enough to attend. For the older girl, attending school at all involved an elaborate negotiation between her mother, who wanted on the advice of some village women to have her tend the baby, and the teacher. Asked by the latter to choose between school and home, and unable

to relinquish what she desired - school - to do what she felt she ought to - childminding - she could not decide between the two. The teacher suggested a system of daily alternating, but domestic duties finally won out, causing her to leave school after three years. (Her youngest brother was eventually to be schooled right through to Standard Ten).

The man Mmagoviolet was to marry came from a background in which there was a similar mixture of mission and anti-mission influences. His parents, too, had lived in "the place of the Christians" (majekaneng) but although his father had been baptised his mother was "one of the nation" (motlitshaba; a non-Christian), and they too moved back to "the place of those of the nation" (setshabeng) after some time. He, having followed the normal trajectory for a youth from this section of the village, was retrenched from his job as a factory worker and decided to establish a small rural trading-store, with a diversity of attendant enterprises such as picture-framing. His house is one of the few in setshabeng with electricity and a television, and he likes to watch sport with his friends on a Saturday afternoon.

While he was at work on the Reef, he managed to procure a house in Tembisa. At an earlier stage in the family's development, his wife used to spend periods of several months at a time living there with him: now that he has left the Reef and moved back to Lebowa, his son in turn has settled in the family's Tembisa house. This pattern of procuring a secure place of urban residence as one of a rural family's assets is common in sections of the community with a long-standing history of migration, and often with a Christian background, and it is yet another feature marking off Mmagoviolet and her family from her contemporaries in Dithabaneng, whose husbands are all housed in compounds at their places of employment. In this family, however, a move towards the more modern and urban lifestyle described by the term sekgowa did not entail an affiliation to Christianity.

What the story of Mmagoviolet and her husband shows is that membership of social categories such as Christian or non-Christian, and affiliation to accompanying styles such as those of sekgowa or sesotho, was neither static nor historically preordained. Within the life process of one family, different members could be oriented in a variety of ways, or the same members oriented differently over a period of years, with respect to these major social and conceptual divides. Despite the ease of movement between these clearly-distinguished and

mutually exclusive categories, the history of this family still displays the basic pattern in which women and the domestic domain belong to sesotho while men are seen to connect them to and even pull them towards sekgowa. Mmagoviolet, although she wore dresses as her husband wanted her to, and went to town to be with and to keep house for him there, was far happier when she could return home where she had the help and support of her mother-in-law and the companionship of her female neighbours. The following section will explore the way in which, for her as for her less "modern" sisters, cousins and co-singers, the occasions of Dithabaneng's performance use the idiom of equality, subsistence agriculture and female sotho identity to express this sense of cohesive - albeit contested and only momentarily achieved - female companionship and bonding.

Women, performance, and the crops of sesotho

For a period after Dithabaneng was formed in order to sing the new kiba style of music, there was a wide range of performance contexts in which the group was involved. It took part in a number of local competitions, and was very much in demand to perform at weddings for a fee of around "twenty pounds" (R40). More recently, however, their popularity has waned and live performance has been replaced at weddings by taped music played on a hired hi-fi system. The range of possible performances has thus shrunk to one main type: "parties" held at the homes of individual members. These are ostensibly for enjoyment and pleasure alone, but in fact like many other such "parties" in this reserve area they entail an aspect of phasa (ancestral propitiation).

A party at Mmagojane's

The preliminaries and preparations for the party, to be held at the house of Mmagojane Kgalema, one of the group's "police", began in late July 1991. In an initial discussion between Mmagojane and her fellow group members on the one hand, and her husband on the other, he was informed that the group had designated her the host for the next of these parties, and in which he expressed his surprise that this was the case and his reluctance to provide the food that he imagined would be required. He was assured that he would not be held liable for all costs, but would be asked to provide only a goat to be slaughtered and a tin of mealie meal. After some further protestations and expressions of dissatisfaction at not having been informed of this earlier, he finally agreed.

The next stage was for each member of the group to contribute a tin of sorghum from her year's crop, which was then made into beer by the hostess and some of her fellow-members. Indeed, it was said that August was the best month for such a party, since it came in the time between harvesting and planting when there was still some sorghum left for making beer.

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On the night before the party the goat was slaughtered, leaving time for the meat to be cooked in black pots over a fire on the following day.

During the party itself, the sexes remained separate. The women of Dithabaneng performed in the open space in front of the yard, observed mostly by children and other women who stood or sat on the ground in a circle around the dancers.

During breaks in the performance, singers and audience drank home-made sorghum beer from calabashes. Mmagojane's husband and other men who were home from town sat on chairs under a tree some distance away from the performers, and drank bottled beer out of glasses. Men and women, in these separate areas, had their food served to them by the women of the house.

Occasionally one of the "police" would approach the men in their separate circle and involve him in a mini-drama of mock arrest, with one of the "police" making as if to handcuff him, asking aggressively for his pass, and eventually fining him some money before agreeing to let him go.

At the very end of the party, the skin of the goat which had been slaughtered was spread on the back of the woman whom, the group had agreed, should host the next party. At the previous such event, held during December 1990 at the house of the other "policeman", Mmagolina Sebei, a similar laying on of the skin had signified that this present party would be held at Mmagojane's house: "we felt that, after one police, the other police should do the same thing". Proposed future celebrations will be held at the homes of the leader and of her deputy, since it is thought that office-holders in the group should host these events.

To understand the significance of the different foodstuffs served at this party, it is necessary to examine the practice of - and the decline in - agriculture in the village and in the broader area of the reserve in which it is situated. All Dithabaneng's married women acquired arable land from their in-laws when setting up house, and even its unmarried members work in the fields of their own parents.[42] As in reserve areas throughout southern Africa, the significant factor influencing agricultural output is not, however, the availability of land but rather the availability of cash.[43] The high cost of hiring traction makes it impossible to grow any food without an input from wages earned in urban employment. For married Dithabaneng women this comes from their husbands, while for those unmarried some money is paid out of a mother's pension or by a brother. In economic terms, then, the greater amount of money available for ploughing to married women receiving regular and fairly good remittances certainly ensures a higher return on this investment: where Mathabathe Mokwale paid R50 to plough a section of her fields and reaped only one bag of sorghum worth R60, Raisibe

[42] See James (1988) for an account of the contrasting ways in which married and unmarried women are affected by rules of inheritance.

[43] See, for example, Murray (1981:76-85), James (1987:76-8). As in the Lesotho villages studied by Murray, landholders in Sekhukhune who have no money for ploughing frequently let out their land for sharecropping by people who have cash or own tractors (P Delius, personal communication).

Sebei paid R180 to plough a larger area and reaped five bags worth about R300 in total.

Even for those households with a more secure access to male wages, however, their fields are, and are regarded as, a supplementary rather than a primary source of food. This again is a common theme in studies of southern African reserve areas: indeed, in a more global view, it is the decline of these reserves which is seen as having caused their wholesale dependence on the sale of labour to the industrial centres of the Republic. In this area specifically, the factor of unremitting drought has been a further major impediment to agriculture: people who a few years ago reaped a reasonable harvest have found the returns on whatever cash they do invest in ploughing declining year after year. For some, the combination of a shortage of cash with the uncertainty of any return have made them plough smaller sections of their fields in each successive year.

Another factor which in this agriculturally poor area of Lebowa has led to the sense that field produce is supplementary rather than primary is the fact that the land here, while able to be used for growing sorghum, is or has become incapable of sustaining the crop which has come to be regarded as a staple - maize or mealies. This food must be bought directly with money remitted by men, without the intervention of female agricultural activity to make it available.

An excerpt from a song sung by young women during the 1950s shows clearly how, at that stage when mabele (sorghum) was still a food eaten widely in the village as a whole, maize was becoming associated with migrant men, who both supplied it and demanded to be fed it:[44]

Mararankodi, taba tša le sego	Mararankodi, news of laughter
Moratiwa o tlile bošego ka tsoga kangwedi ka kgatla lehea	My lover came at night, at the time of moonlight, and I woke to grind maize
Moratiwa o tlile bosego rrago-ngwanaka ka kgatla lehea	My lover, the father of my child came in the night, I woke to grind maize
Ga a je mabele, ga a je leotša	He doesn't eat sorghum, he doesn't eat millet
Ke kgatla lehea.	I grind maize.

This rejection of earlier subsistence crops in favour of bought maize has since become commonplace. The sorghum which is still grown in varying amounts, having been assigned

[44] Lyrics from singers of Mararankodi, Nchabeleng. Another portion of the song is cited on p145.

this marginal role, remains within women's sphere of control, and is used for two main purposes: as seed for the next planting, and to make beer. Although this sorghum beer provides a small income to unmarried women in some poorer households such as Mmagomotala Mofele, the increasing rejection by men of sorghum beer, a signifier of backwardness, in favour of the bottled variety makes such an income negligible in comparison with that earned, for example, by Mmagoshower from the sale of commercial brands at her spot (informal bar).[45]

The main use of the beer made by Dithabaneng women from the sorghum they grow, then, is for the ritual and ceremonial purposes associated with sesotho. The fact that all members - despite fairly wide disparities in income deriving ultimately from differences in access to male earnings - can contribute some sorghum towards the beer which is to be drunk at a performance and then consume the resulting brew together, stresses the links binding them together as equal participants and as kinswomen, and de-emphasises the economic differentiations which divide them and which link some to the ways of sekgowa through their links to particular wage-earning men.

Another aspect of the group's performance which dramatises the sisterly communality of women and the division - even antagonism - between them and men is that of the "police" play-act. Although "police" are not the only dramatis personae in kiba - Dithabaneng and other groups have a range of characters, including baboons and monkeys, dingaka (diviners), and doctors and nurses - the "police" act has most impact since it involves members of the audience and even those outside the circle of onlookers. Its strong amusement value also derives from the fact that it involves transvestite dressing, and in this respect it is the reverse of some equally amusing pageants in male kiba groups in which men dress as women and engage in exaggeratedly female behaviour, including kissing and mock love-making. Here, the aspect of male behaviour and dress which is latched onto is that of intimidating uniformed authority.

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[45] See Colson and Scudder (1988) for an account of the declining ability of women to produce an income from home-brew as men began to favour bottled beer. In Sekhukhune, the rejection of sorghum brew in favour of the bottled variety was fuelled, as well, by fears that women might bewitch men by concealing some poisonous substance in their home-brew (Sam Nchabeleng, personal communication). See also the song o tla loiwa ke batho referred to on p146.



34: Mmagojane Kgalema dressed in her "police" outfit: Dithabaneng in performance.
(photo: Deborah James)

There is an element of genuine crowd control in the function of these figures: in men's kiba, for example, "police" do not dress in uniform, but are known merely for their use of a whip to keep extraneous people and onlookers from moving into the circle of dancers. For women's police, although they are thought of as having a similar controlling function, the limits on their authority, based partly perhaps on limited strength, have increased the play-acting component of their role:

> Some men force their way through because we are women. When arrested, they will refuse to pay and just because we are women, we leave them.[46]

Mostly, then, women arrest unsuspecting men whom they believe will comply with their demands for a fine rather than genuine troublemakers:

> *Do they arrest men only?*
>
> Yes, they don't arrest women.
>
> *Do they arrest those men who have done something wrong?*
>
> Its papadi (a play/game), they just arrest them even if they haven't done anything wrong.[47]

Sometimes an element of secrecy is necessary so that the "police" can conceal her intentions from one of her innocent victims:

> As men are drinking there, we will go and arrest them. We will approach them as if we are dancing. ... You can't arrest them in a group because, if you arrest one, the others will try to run away. ... I will take him away and tell him, "Why did you come to the dancing without your jacket, it is against the law?" He will take out some money, and then he is released. Whether he pays five cents or ten cents, there is no problem.[48]

But sometimes an arrested man might pay as much as R1. The fines are collected together, and counted up at the end of the day:

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[46] Mathabathe Mokwale, recorded discussion with PM, Nchabeleng, 29/12/90.

[47] Rhisibe Sebei, recorded discussion with PM, Nchabeleng, 29/12/90.

[48] Mmagojane Kgalema, recorded discussion with PM, Nchabeleng, 29/12/90.

> after eating, just before we go home, someone would tell us how much we have raised: "Batau (lions), your money is so much".[49]

In these dramatic interludes, a range of elements are compressed, including an obvious component of social commentary and satire about the arbitrariness and frequency of police intervention in black people's lives within broader South African society. But an equally important aspect - albeit of symbolic rather than material significance - is that of concerted female action to wrest from returnee migrants an amount of money which can be put into the dancers' collective fund and "eaten" at a future party.

On a practical level, it would have been impossible to hold a party - despite the contributions in sorghum and female labour - without the pressure exerted by the collectivity of singers on Mmagojane's husband to donate from his sphere of male-owned assets the substantial contribution of a goat to be slaughtered. In similar vein, but in the domain of papadi (play/game), women police assuming the trappings of an authority normally denied them, make inroads into a source of wealth within the possession of men - cash - and incorporate this under their collective control within the domain of sotho performance, dress, and celebration.

Conclusion

This chapter began with the suggestion that sesotho, rather than suggesting a rigid adherence to the ways of the precolonial or primordial past, has been successively redefined in its opposition to the category sekgowa. Both are conceptual tools rather than describing the orientations of bounded groups of people; they are used as grids or templates to order experience in a variety of different settings. Even in cases where this and other similar sets of paired opposites are used to characterise definite and concrete groups, as in the frequent association of baditshaba (those of the nation; non-Christians) with sesotho, other contexts prompt alternative uses and alignments of this term, such as its identification with women in contrast to the identification of sekgowa with men. And the alignment of sesotho with women is temporary in turn. While in performance contexts it acts as an idiom of sisterly

[49] Ibid.

equality and solidarity, the women it connects in this way in other contexts are linked into social categories not normally associated with sotho behaviour.

But, despite the differences which divide these rural singers, their use of sesotho expresses and dramatizes some themes common to all of them: themes in strong contrast to those implied by sesotho in its use by migrant singers. One is their dependence on men, whether husbands, brothers, or uncles, for a livelihood. The other, linked to this dependence, is their occupying of the rurally-based domestic arena usually associated with the stay-at-home female dependents of migrant men. For the wage-earning singers of kiba, sesotho was something revived in adulthood after a set of life-stages and a youth spent in a rural context in which modernity and the things of sekgowa were much valued. Coming from disparate rural backgrounds, they grouped together to counter their experience of initial isolation as migrants by invoking the notion of a shared home to explain the strength of their commitment to each other. Chapter Six presents something of the geographical and social disruption and flux which characterised their early lives.

Chapter 6

Dislocations and continuities: the youth and adolescence of migrant women singers

The previous chapter shows how women singers from a heartland community succeeded through group performance in expressing a cohesiveness which countered in some measure their experience of the pressures of differentiation. Although all of them had lived through the massive changes wrought by migrancy, school and the ongoing collapse of the reserve economy, their experience of these, expressed in terms of the dichotomy between sesotho and sekgowa, provided for a sense of continuity in what was thought of as the sotho lifestyle.

The experiences of migrant women singers were very much more disparate. Their eventual sense of being people from one home and of sharing a common tradition represented a triumph over the diversities which initially divided them. Some of the women who were later to become urban kiba singers, for example, had lived with their families as labour tenants on white farms and later moved to the reserves; some had lived in reserve areas from birth; a few came from successful peasant families which had rented land outside the reserves and were producing plentiful grain for sale; and one grew up in Alexandra township and moved back to the country only at the age of ten. It was out of these very different experiences of childhood and adolescence, lived in a range of disparate areas, that urban kiba performers were painstakingly to build up a sense of cohesiveness.

Despite this miscellany of early rural experience of which I shall try to present some kind of ordered picture, there were certain things which these singers did have in common. One was the fact that all of them came from Leboa (the north). It will be seen in the following pages that, in these northern areas there was an earlier exposure to, and even a seeking out of, sekgowa, both on freehold and white-owned farms and in rural towns such as Pietersburg and Tzaneen, and through missions, churches and schools. In such communities, although the basic conceptual division between baditshaba and majekane existed, there was a greater fluidity in people's affiliation to one or the other of these, often resulting from the movement of families during resettlement from areas in which one of these social categories held sway to those in which the other was dominant. Contemporary singers of women's urban kiba

include majekane (Christians of long standing belonging to mainstream mission churches) and baditshaba (non-Christians) who have recently affiliated to independent churches.[1] Some of these singers came from communities in which sotho clothes were worn and sotho music sung, whereas for others their joining of kiba represented their first exposure to this type of music and dress.

Despite the greater orientation in these northern areas towards the ways, dress and music of whites, and despite the greater fluidity between social categories based on acceptance of or rejection of Christianity, a division usually persisted between the sexes. Boys and men came into closer, and earlier, proximity to sekgowa, particularly through school, than did girls and women. When a small proportion of these women did migrate to the Reef to work, they did so with the built-in gendered disadvantage of little or no education, which together with other factors placed them squarely and inescapably within the low-paid sphere of domestic work, abandoned several decades previously by men from the same areas in favour of better-paid jobs in factories, dairies or the catering industry (Molepo 1984).

Resettlement and civilization

The basic conceptual division between Sekhukhune and Leboa - coinciding with "the distinction between those groups which had been subject to the Pedi Kingdom and those which had not" (Delius 1989:588) - has been described in Chapter One.[2] Certain fundamental contrasts between the communities of Sekhukhune and Leboa have also been spelt out. These include the contrasting degrees of precolonial political centralisation experienced in the two areas and, subsequently, the contrasting ways in which communities in these areas, decades after formally submitting to colonial control, reacted to the increasingly stringent restrictions which successive governments attempted to place on their lives and livelihoods. It was suggested that the less vigorous resistance to these state controls manifest in some northern communities was at least partly related to the disruptions of

[1] See Chapter One pp73-5, Chapter Seven pp228-231.

[2] Further evidence of this divide was provided by K J Nalane, recorded discussion with DJ and NP, Johannesburg, 27/10/89; discussion with Modderfontein dancers, Modderfontein Dynamite Factory, 11/11/91.

population resettlement. When the most stringent interferences with land and government were imposed, many of the people who were at that stage living in the northern part of the Lebowa homeland had spent most of their lives away from these areas, and remote from any affiliation to the tribal chiefs who administered them. They thus lacked the strength of attachment to this land felt by their heartland counterparts in Sekhukhune,[3] and did not protest as vehemently against the imposition of fresh controls.

What had underlain the initial movement of such communities to places beyond the jurisdiction of their chiefs was not only the lack of farming land available in the officially-designated "reserves". It was also the wish to farm as independent producers rather than under tribal tenure, and to involve themselves in the culture of church and school which often accompany such a modernising orientation.

Thus it was that similar conditions of overcrowding and overgrazing in northern and southern reserve areas elicited somewhat different responses. Subjects of the Pedi chief were by the 1930s moving back into these areas rather than away from them; driven by a desire for freedom from white control but also expressed as a yearning for the glorious days of the Pedi chiefship: "let us go back to Thulale, let us go back to the good old times".[4] The traditionalism of this statement, although caricatured, nevertheless suggests a contrast with the individualism and desire for progress said to characterise those living in adjoining Pokwani and in the north. Many in these areas had grouped together to buy land, not under their chiefs as in the heartland but as "pseudo tribes" of people who were practising advanced agricultural techniques. But even for those working as labour tenants on white farms rather than ploughing independently, there was a strong desire to acquire schooling. Indeed, if people in these areas left the farms it was not so much from a desire to live under traditional chiefs but rather for the sake of children's education, and it was sometimes to towns rather than to reserve areas that they went.[5]

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[3] See Chapter One p57.

[4] NEC, evidence of Hunt p658 & 706.

[5] NEC, evidence of Hunt p658 & 706, Kirsten pp258-264, Urban location representatives p90, Daneel pp193-197.

The twin themes of a desire for schooling and a wish to escape the strictures of farm labour run throughout the pages of evidence given to the Native Economic Commission at its sittings in these northern areas. While there were exceptional farmers who had schools on their lands or whose farms adjoined mission areas where schools were situated, and who could thus attract families to live and work on their lands, the life of labour tenancy or of "squatting" on farms was seen in general as one which inhibited a child's chance of education. And while white farmers wished to implement farm apprenticeship schemes to bond youths to them in a kind of informal agricultural education which would destine them for a life as agricultural labourers, African urban representatives from Pietersburg were requesting more schools in the area precisely in order to avoid the possibility of boys' becoming farm labourers.[6]

It is true that there were reserve-dwellers in Sekhukhune as in Leboa for whom education had become an important issue, and for whom it was imperative that a compulsory state-subsidised education programme be set in motion as soon as possible to break the missionaries' stranglehold over schooling. Pleas were made by both constituencies that education - now beginning to be seen as necessary even by non-Christians - should not entail the alienation from families of their own children who would be taken "to live at the Church" as had been the case with mission converts for decades previously.[7] But the evidence in the northern area of extensive mission activity from early on, and of well-developed links between chiefs and townspeople, indicates that even reserve-dwellers in this area were more favourably oriented towards schooling and civilisation than were their heartland counterparts.[8]

There was then during the early decades of the 20th century a broad contrast between people living on the freehold and white farms, and even the reserves, in the north, and people living in the heartland of the south, in attitudes to education and the things of sekgowa. The effects of this, half a century later, can be seen in the higher levels of education among urban kiba

[6] NEC, evidence of Menne p279, Kirsten p268, Daneel p193.

[7] NEC, evidence of Monubatse p740, Maserumule p755, Thema p317. See also Delius (1989:595) for changing attitudes of communities in Sekhukhuneland to education during this era.

[8] E TVL, evidence of Grobler p59, Wedepohl p94; NEC statement made on behalf of Chiefs Mololo, Ramakgopa, Matlala, Massasane and Mareli by Thema, and their evidence, pp316-340.

singers from these areas in the north than among their counterparts in Dithabaneng. In a sample of these singers whose average age is 45, the average level of education is Standard 2, where Dithabaneng with the same average age had an average educational level of Grade 1.[9] What this figure conceals is the fact that education and the things of sekgowa were differentially available to people involved in two very different kinds of landholding arrangement in Leboa: labour tenancy, and peasant farming on freehold or rented land. Whereas successful peasants were in many cases early adherents of one of the mainstream mission churches, people living on farms were more often baditshaba whose eventual conversion, usually to an African independent church such as the ZCC, took place more recently. It is true that the average educational level of urban kiba singers is inflated by its inclusion of some women from Christian peasant backgrounds. But even if one ignores these and directs one's attention exclusively at women from this area who had grown up in reserves or on farms, their educational level was significantly higher than that of their counterparts in Sekhukhune. Sekgowa, then, had been aspired to by, and had found its way into the lives of, a range of people from the northern areas: both those who considered themselves baditshaba and those whose early Christian affiliations would have earned them the designation of majekane.

When the infamous "population removals" of the 1960s, underlain by the imperative of ethnic consolidation, were carried out, their effect was to curb the freedom of both these social constituencies of Africans - independent farmers and labour-tenants on white farms - to live beyond the jurisdiction of their "tribal chiefs". But it was not only forced relocations which caused the movement of people within the northern areas in this period. By the time coerced resettlements were occurring, there were other factors, as well, which led Africans off the white lands of common South Africa and into the reserves, now designated as ethnic "homelands". One of these, which caused the movement of many future kiba singers' families off the farms, was the very same desire for schooling and progress towards modernity which had driven some beyond chiefly jurisdiction in the first place.

[9] In both the north and the heartland, girls of a given generation were educationally disadvantaged relative to their brothers, as will be further explored below.

While one should not underestimate the disruptions caused by apartheid planners in the lives of the migrant women who became kiba singers, then, one should not ignore the extent to which individual choice, shaped as much as cultural as by purely economic factors, was possible in responding to broader processes apparently beyond the control of the individual.

A glance at the categories of population relocation listed by analysts of apartheid indicates the types of landholding arrangements by Africans which these official relocations were designed to eliminate. Those in which future urban kiba singers' families were involved were freehold or mission-land farming and labour tenancy, destined for eradication by "black spot" clearance (Category 1) and "abolition of the labour tenant system" (Category 2) respectively (see Table 8).

Table 8: Categories of Population Relocation in South Africa
(Mare 1987:ii)

1	Clearance of 'black spots'
2	Relocation due to the abolition of the labour tenant system and 'squatting' on white-owned farms
3	Relocation through the operation of influx control legislation
4	Urban relocation
5	Relocations due to the institution of 'betterment schemes'
6	Relocation for strategic or infrastructural schemes
7	Relocation as resistance
8	"Homeland" consolidation

"Black spots" included both African freehold farms such as Makgodu and Witfontein where the Machaba and Lebogo families lived respectively, and mission farms such as Mara where the Msina family lived and farmed. In the 1960s, these families moved to a variety of "homeland" areas. The Msinas were relocated to the Kgothama section of the Venda "homeland", and were subsequently dispersed as a family due to "homeland consolidation" removals (Category 8) designed to separate members of disparate ethnic backgrounds. The different widows of the family head were relocated to three different "homelands" in accordance with their officially-recognised ethnic groups. Labour-tenant families living on white farms in and around the Pietersburg district included the Dikotlo, Lelahana, Ledwaba,

families. In the mid-1950s (in one case) and in the 1960s, at around the time when such tenancies were being finally abolished in the Transvaal, these families all moved into nearby areas of Lebowa.

Relocations affecting families already living in reserve areas at this time were those resulting from "betterment schemes" (Category 5). When the new arrivals, separated from their earlier homes, moved into already-crowded reserves or onto "Trust" farms, room was made to accommodate them by forcibly relocating the existing residents - such as the Maleaka family of Kgothama, Venda, and the Monyela family of Molepo, Lebowa - from their previous homes and into the "lines" of grid-planned villages. Although agricultural rationalisation was the stated reason for these removals, their primary effect here as elsewhere in South Africa was to make room for people resettled into the reserves.[10]

While for incoming families this betterment relocation provided space for them to take up residence, general overcrowding did mean a severe limitation on the size and availability of residential and farming land to which they could gain access. Even those families whose villages were not subjected to this replanning - like that of Anna Mei in Kgothama, Venda and that of Francina Monyela in Molepo, Lebowa - were indirectly affected by the population influx of the 1960s in that it caused especially their younger members to experience a severe shortage of land.

But the families whose living arrangements prior to relocation have been briefly documented above were not all forcibly removed via one of the "categories of resettlement". Social planning of the magnitude, and involving the degree of dispossession, of that undertaken in the name of apartheid, has been rightly condemned in many quarters. Its highest profile has been achieved both locally and internationally by such episodes as those of 'black spot' removal, in which African owners of freehold land (and their African tenants) have been summarily evicted from the farms which they have lawfully purchased, and dumped by Government trucks in underequipped and inhospitable surroundings in the "homelands". These dramatic and high-profile events should not obscure the fact, however, that some of the

[10] See Yawitch (1982:31, 45-6, 95); James (1987:66-7).

movement of African people to the reserves during this era was due not so much to the direct interference of the South African state as to less visible and less sinister forces.[11]

In some cases - as in the movement of people from 'black spots' even before state intervention - these movements had their genesis in the conflicts between African landholders and their tenants (James 1983:7-8). When the Machaba family left Makgodu village for GaKgare in Lebowa in 1957, preceding by several years the government's official removal of the farm's African owners and their tenants to the "homeland", it was tensions in their relationship with their African landlords which prompted the move. In other cases - as in the departure by Sarah Motswi's family from the Reef to Lebowa - such moves were rooted in individuals' perception of the countryside as affording a greater degree of long-term security than the town. And in yet others - as in the departure by the Dikotlo, Lelahana, Ledwaba, and Mohlomi families to the homeland from the white farms where they had lived as labour tenants - one major factor had caused them to leave these farms before government legislation had made this imperative. This was the urgent desire to live under conditions less restricted and perceived as more civilized and modern.

Peasant and tenant daughters

The fluidity of social categories based on adherence to Christianity, and the ready blurring of these to produce an overall culture of modernising orientation with selective use of customary elements, was a function of the rapid population movements of this time, whether forced or voluntary. People from independent peasant backgrounds experienced the move as retrogressive on the whole, while those from labour tenant backgrounds saw it as an advance on their previous conditions.

Those for whom their departure to the reserves represented a step towards a life which was sekgalekgale (old-fashioned) compared to that which they had been used to were those who had lived as independent cultivators on freehold farms, such as the Machaba sisters, Salome and Andronica. They were born in the 1940s in Mmakgodu village, near Dendron where their

[11] On state strategy in this era see Posel (1990; 1991:227-255); on removals see Surplus People Project (1983), G Mare (1980), C Desmond (1971).

family rented land on a freehold farm cultivated by African owners. People in the village as a whole were Christians, and their mother's family who lived on the farm Uitkyk some distance away were staunch Lutherans. The girls' early upbringing then was one appropriate to a decent Christian family, involving regular attendance at school, the wearing of diroko (dresses) and the singing of the mission-influenced koša ya dikhwaere (choir songs).

The fact of belonging to one of these peasant families, however, was not sufficient in itself to guarantee that a daughter would be educated. The biases against sending a girl to school ran deep, especially in cases - like that of Rosina Seshothi's father who lived with his family at Mara - where the family's affiliation to the church served more as a guarantee of land on a mission farm than as a sign of fundamental commitment to an anti-traditional lifestyle. Although Rosina's father claimed Catholic affiliation, he did not have any of his children baptised, and he refused to send Rosina or any of her sisters to school.

> I don't even know which way the door of the school is facing. My father declared that girls will not attend school, only boys will attend. Boys attended and we remained at home looking after livestock.[12]

Here, despite the patriarch's apparent orientation to Christianity, his attitude to the education of his daughters reflected similar sentiments to those expressed by the heartland dwellers described in Chapter Five. Many Leboa families, indeed, despite a greater overall acceptance of or even desire for education, disadvantaged their daughters in this way.

> My father was not in favour of educating girls.
>
> *Why?*
>
> He said it was because he wanted us to be married and get cattle of bohadi (bridewealth).[13]

Beside some disparities in levels of and attitudes towards education, what girls from this kind of peasant background had in common was that, until they left these areas, their families had lived entirely from agriculture and animal husbandry, with no male migrant income

[12] Rosina Seshothi, recorded discussion with DJ and MTN, Johannesburg, 21/4/90.

[13] Joanna Maleaka, recorded discussion with DJ and MTN, Johannesburg, 24/3/90.

whatsoever. In some cases, as in that of the Machaba family, theirs was a fairly modest output of around 60 bags of grain and beans plus vegetables, while in others such as that of the Seshothi family whose male head had 6 wives, the family produced several hundred bags of grain for consumption and for sale.

What the removals of the 1960s entailed for girls from this background was both physical disruption - as in the case of Rosina Seshothi whose half-siblings were relocated with their respective mothers to Venda in the interests of "homeland consolidation", while she and her mother were moved to Lebowa - and also a blurring of social and cultural categories, as in the case of the Machabas. When tensions in their relationship with their landlords caused them to move from Mmakgoalu in 1957, a few years' prior to the Government's official "black spot" removal of the farm's occupants to the "homeland", they went to a village in the Malebogo district of Lebowa, GaKgare. Here, sotho ways were predominant. They found children wearing the leather nthepa and thetwana of Monnig's account,[14] in contrast to their dresses. Their lessening of this cultural gap by attendance at koma (initiation) at their new home will be described in the next section of the chapter.

The people for whom the move to the reserves was a step forwards - away from what they saw as the stagnation of farm life and towards a life of convenience and progress - were those who had lived as labour tenants on white farms. The backwardness from which they wished to escape, although characterised as sesotho, was not some primordial condition but rather a product of paternalist and patriarchal relationships established on the farms. In these northern areas, as elsewhere in the country, it appears that the authority of senior males within tenant families was intensified by the conditions of tenancy. This often made conditions unbearable for especially the younger men of a family, who were expected by the farmer and by their fathers to render unpaid labour.[15] If the young men resisted this pressure to work, sometimes through the simple measure of deserting, the whole family would often be forced to leave. The family of Anna Dikotlo, for example, moved away from the farm Matjieskraal to the reserve area of Molepo, some 20 kms away. Although a gradual trickle of families had

[14] See Chapter Five p166.

[15] See Morrell (1983:181), James (1985; 1987:128-9), Sharp and Spiegel (1990).

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[14] See Chapter Five p156.

[15] See Morrell (1983:181), James (1985; 1987:128-9), Sharp and Spiegel (1990).

preceded them as all were "tired of farming", what prompted the move in this specific case was that Anna's brother refused to work and so the family was evicted.[16]

Conditions of tenancy established in the early 20th century had allowed varying degrees of freedom to different family members. In some cases the tenant's wife and all his sons and daughters-in-law were obliged to work as well, in others it was men only who worked for 90 days on the farm and then were free to go out to work in town, and in yet others there was the much more arduous and restrictive system of working two days out of every week in the year.[17] Increasing restrictions placed on the conditions of tenancy caused a movement off Leboa farms from the 1930s onwards, but for those families who remained on the farms until the 1960s, or who for some reason had to move to them after having lived elsewhere, their labour contracts became even more arduous.[18] A rejection of such conditions prompted the family of Anna's co-singer, Julia Lelahana, to move from the farm Bijlsteel to the Moletši reserve:

> women would work for a week without pay and they would work the following week for money, and it went on like that. In the case of men they worked three months for nothing and the following three months for money. That's why we ran away.[19]

Although farmers regarded the labour of whole tenant families as bonded, the daughters of these families did not agree. They preferred to work on other farms during their school vacations for money. Like the girls already resident in the "homeland" areas to which they were to move they spent a period, after koma (initiation), of working on farms to earn an allowance. Julia Lelahana and her peers, though claimed as labourers by the farm owner at Bijlsteel, left stealthily (go khukhuna - to creep away) to work on a nearby potato farm at Mankgodi:

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[16] See James (1985:182; 1987:35) for similar cases among tenants in the Middelburg District, Transvaal.

[17] E TVL, evidence of Stanford p92; NEC, evidence of Senthumula and Khutama p66, Lyle p120.

[18] Studies of relocated farm labourers in an area of south-western Lebowa and in Qwaqwa have shown that the longer families remained on farms, the greater the restrictions placed on the amount of land ploughed for themselves and on the number of cattle they could keep, and the more "forced" their eventual relocation (James 1987:22, 35-42; Sharp 1982).

[19] Julia Lelahana, recorded discussion with DJ and PM, Johannesburg, 4/5/91.

> We didn't want to work on the farm. We went outside to work for money. The older women were left behind, at work.[20]

The desire for a better life which acted as a spur for many families to move off the farms was expressed in other terms as well as those of escaping from arduous and unpaid labour. The backwardness of farm life included the entrenching of certain aspects of customary behaviour. As in similar situations elsewhere in the Transvaal, the farms had become sites not only of augmented patriarchal relationships within tenant families, but also of practices and rituals pronouncedly traditional in orientation (Delius 1989:249-50). For people moving to the reserves in the 1960s, the contrast between farm and "homeland" was squarely identified as one between old-fashioned and civilized. It was on the farms that people wore sotho dress and danced sotho music. In some cases, it was back to the farms that children would be taken by their parents to attend koma, since the commitment to progress and the Christian way did not, for baditshaba who converted more recently, exclude attendance at this important ritual.[21]

If backwardness, expressed in these terms, was a spur to leaving, then progress was thought of as an attraction of the places to which families were heading. For Flora Mohlomi, whose family had moved about a decade earlier than the Lelahana and Dikotlo families and under slightly less restrictive conditions, it was the wish for proximity to tlhabologo (civilisation), with its schools, shops and especially the ZCC church, which prompted the relocation from a white farm to Boyne, close to the ZCC headquarters Moria in the Molepo reserve. And although most kiba singers whose families had stayed on the farms until the 1960s had been able to attend school, it was a similar wish to have easier access to such facilities which acted as an important spur to the exodus from the farms.

Attendance at school, even before moving to the reserve, was a feature of these girls' childhood. Most families recognised the necessity of schooling up to a certain age, although

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[20] Ibid.

[21] James Makola, discussion with DJ and PMb, Johannesburg, 8/9/91. Makola grew up on a farm near Pietersburg for a few years, and was later taken by his father to stay with Christian relatives at Mankweng in the Molepo reserve.

this age was lower for girls than for their brothers. This meant that farm labour, undertaken on their own or on adjoining farms, was combined with schooling rather than being allowed to interrupt or terminate it. Working on farms did not, as for the girls in Sekhukhune, represent an escape from school.

Disruption, both geographical and social, thus characterised the early lives of the women who later migrated and joined kiba. This was not simply the dislocation of forced resettlement, although the state's role in designating areas for African occupation and in moving people to these areas should not be underestimated. Much of the movement of population in which these girls' families were caught up was engendered, less brutally, through inextricably interwoven economic, social and cultural factors.

The cultural environment of the reserve villages in which these women - peasant and tenant daughters - were to live out their later childhood and adolescence was one which for some represented an advance and for others a retrogression. But this culture, mixing elements of custom like koma (initiation) and sereto (praising) with elements of modernity like clothes, church and school, retained its overall orientation towards a life of tlhalogo (civilization).

Initiation: clothing, music, school and a girl's life-cycle

In the context of this social and cultural flux, one childhood experience which all future urban singers of kiba from these areas did have in common was koma (initiation).[22] Their disparate backgrounds meant that their attendance at this ritual was prompted by widely differing, even contradictory impulses. Given this disparity, and given the experiences of dislocation which preceded involvement in koma, the ritual was not for these girls to have the same effect of binding age-mates together into solidary regiments as it did for the singers of Dithabaneng. Neither was its effect to entrench a commitment to a custom-bound lifestyle or to an outmoded social order, since the culture of post-initiation in which they engaged was

[22] The exception was Thabia Makola, a Tswana-speaker who was later to be initiated by her co-singers in 1990, prior to her marriage to a Sotho man from Molepo.

to be one more oriented to church and school than to sesotho.[23] What the ritual did do, however, was to lay the basis for an identity which these girls, once working in town, were to revive and to enunciate as that of sotho or setšo. It also served as a site of transmission to them of some of the musical and performance practices which would become associated with such an identity.

The reasons for attendance at koma varied with these girls' social backgrounds. Those who had moved from freehold farms or from the Reef were initiated because of pressure from peer groups encountered in their new homes, sometimes against the wishes of their parents. For the Machaba sisters, from a family of majekane, rebellion against the authority of their father involved conformity - albeit motivated more out of desire to "fit in" than out of a wholehearted espousal of traditionalism - with the social mores of their age-group in the reserve. In the village of GaKgare to which they moved, where most children were dressed in skins in contrast to their dresses, they had felt isolated and conspicuous. After attending koma, they found that their status as initiates served to lessen the gap which had divided them from their age-mates. But although they felt less alienated after going to koma, the experience did not carry for them the same sense of unification and bonding as it had for the members of regiments in Sekhukhune.

Another family, which although not Christian had spent years in town and so was disinclined to send its children to initiation, reconciled itself to the idea:

> I ran away to initiation, my parents did not send me.
>
> *What made you decide to run away?*
>
> I will say I was influenced by my peers to run away. Now the chief sent a message to our parents and informed them that we had run away to initiation in his village and our parents had to pay whatever fine we were fined.
>
> *So were your parents displeased that you went to initiation?*

[23] Bozzoli, in the case of Tswana women of Phokeng, shows that a flight from or refusal to attend initiation may represent an escape from the old social order (1991:81).

They were pleased because it is their setšo (tradition).[24]

For future singers of kiba who had grown up in the reserve areas, or for those who moved to these areas from tenancies on white farms, koma was not out of line either with peer-group or with parental expectation. These people were baditshaba, recently converted to mostly independent churches, for whom Christian affiliation did not involve rejection of initiation as it had for those converted early by the Lutheran mission.

Seen as a stage or marker in the life-cycle, koma in these northern reserves demonstrates interesting contrasts with its equivalent among girls in the Sekhukhune heartland. As in Sekhukhune, initiation corresponded with the acquisition of clothes appropriate to bokgarebe (initiated girlhood). These were not, however, the dituku (cloths) worn by heartland girls, but rather diroko (dresses) or dikhiba (pinafores). The purchase of these clothes, although coinciding in some cases with the girls' experience of farm labour and even bought with the proceeds of this labour, was made in most cases by the girls' fathers. And where girls did work on the farms, as mentioned above, this was done not instead of but in combination with attendance at school.

Also indicating this overall orientation towards modernity, and of greatest interest in the context of my focus on performance, was the music which girls, reaching the status of bokgarebe (initiated girlhood), began to sing. This was a range of profoundly Western-influenced styles such as dikoša tša dikolo (school songs), dikoša tša dikhwaere (choir songs), and dikoša tša dikonsert (concert songs) and also the more specifically Christian mmino wa kereke (church music).

The espousing of this school- and church-oriented culture did not, as might have been thought probable, signify an elimination of the differences between uninitiated and initiated children. Studies of "traditional" rural music-making in southern Africa have placed great emphasis on the way in which musical performance differentiates gender and age roles from each other (Blacking 1967, 1969: Johnston 1971, 1975; Huskisson 1958). In such contexts, any broader category of music or song is eclipsed by smaller categories, each specific to a particular

[24] Sarah Motswi, recorded discussion with DJ and MTN, Johannesburg, 19/10/90.

occasion and social status, and never sung outside of this (Merriam 1964:262-70). The adopting of a mission-influenced musical culture has not been analysed in detailed terms as providing similar points to age or gender, but has, implicitly, been assumed to engulf all generations and sexes in its grip. But musical markers of status were important in Leboa communities, although they were not defined in the same terms as those used by heartland villagers. Age and initiated status were emphasised more strongly than sex.

The songs of pre-initiation for these Leboa girls, such as dikoša tša go bapala or dikoša tša go raloka (playing songs, for skipping and the like) were signifiers of childhood but not of bothumasha (uninitiated girlhood). This phase of life and its accompanying music were thought no longer to exist since "there was now tlhabologo (civilisation)".[25] This was in contrast with Sekhukhune where girls of the same age were still singing the songs of mathumasha (uninitiated girls) - including a rainmaking song crucial to the agricultural viability of society. The subsequent phase bokgarebe (initiated girlhood) was still designated by reference to sex and to initiation. But the songs and music whose performance marked it off, rather than being those of sesotho, were the songs of a mission culture which had become general to all social classes and categories in these reserve areas. They were learned at school, through a mixture of oral and literate transmission, and performed by school choirs, especially in the context of competitions. The Machabas, for example, belonged to mothetha, a choir for both girls and girls under the leadership of a senior boy, which sang dikoša tša dikolo (school songs).

> We'd go with our school choir to visit other schools, and spend the night. We'd hear their songs, and learn them, and take them as our own.[26]

Various qualifications were given to the basic noun dikoša (songs) to describe the sub-styles of this music - tša dikolo (of school), tša dikhwaere (of choir), and tša dikonsert (of concerts). But all belonged to a genre described in the literature as makwaya (choir).

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[25] Andronica and Salome Machaba, recorded discussion with DJ and PM, 19/10/91.

[26] Ibid. The format of visiting, competing with, and learning from one's hosts has much in common with certain non-mission forms of performance such as the bepha (musical expedition for young people) of the Venda (Blacking 1962), and also shows similarities to the process of visiting and imitating which characterised the spread of kiba described in Chapter Three p113.

This musical genre first came into being as a result of the impact on local sung traditions in southern Africa of Christian hymnody, whose successful implanting in this context was probably due to the fact that:

> traditional music in the south is predominantly vocal, characterised by choral singing in complex, overlapping responsorial patterns (Manuel 1988:28-9).

The impact of hymn-singing was profound: the imprint of its 3-chord harmonic structure can be detected in a wide range of popular South African music including not only makwaya but also stretching from marabi, through kwela and mbube, to the mainly media-disseminated mbaqanga (ibid.:86,108). But even in the mission contexts where it initially took root in the 19th century, it provoked not so much the slavish imitation of which some writers have complained (Andersson 1981:16) as the inventive and eclectic responses of such genres as makwaya (Manuel 1988:107).

Most of what has been written about makwaya stresses its initial association with the nascent African middle class in both rural and urban contexts (Coplan 1985:72,118; Manuel 1988:107). It was transmitted mainly through a medium available only to literate people - the tonic sol-fa system of notation - although the development of the genre in an urban context saw some choirmasters switch over to a way of teaching songs more oral in its focus, in which their choirs sang "by heart" or "out of their heads" (Coplan 1985:117). The aspect of makwaya that has not been examined is that, simultaneous with its decline among the urbanising middle-classes who began rather to favour jazz as an expression of their cultural aspirations (ibid.:128), its popularity gradually increased in the rural districts of South Africa. Here, although in its strictly religious form as African hymnody it was sung only by churchgoers, its most frequent performance occurred in schools by scholars on both sides of the Christian/traditionalist divide.[27] Although identified at its inception with the African

[27] The case of makwaya shows that people's use of cultural forms originating in the mission does not necessarily have an "overwhelmingly imitative character" as is claimed by the accounts which Ranger criticizes (1975:6), or signify "the colonisation of consciousness" (JL and J Comaroff 1989). Even within the mission context and among converts, people may transform the religion of the colonisers into something significantly different, as Hofmeyr has shown in her excellent study of the oralisation of literate Christianity in an area which is part of Lebowa (1991:68-83). New and syncretic cultural forms which do arise among churchgoers, as makwaya did, may spread through a variety of channels to reach - and to be actively sought out by - even those people who do not count themselves among the ranks of the converted.

middle class, its later developments took it across boundaries of income, occupation and status into the ranks of those who derived their income from unskilled migrant labour. In the areas of Leboa where urban kiba singers grew up, as in many other labour-sending areas of rural South Africa, this music became a major form of cultural expression for school-going children and adolescents.

The significance of initiation in the northern areas where urban kiba singers grew up was thus a complex one. It was not, as it appeared to the girls of Sekhukhune, an opportunity for temporary freedom from domestic and agricultural obligations: these northern girls were committed to a vision of modernity in which the way forward lay in schooling rather than in "running away". Neither was it a mark of group identity which excluded those from other ethnic groups (La Fontaine 1969:180-2) or from the ranks of non-traditionalists, since it incorporated Christians of long standing and of recent conversion alongside those who had never been churchgoers. It did not mark a commitment to an outmoded social order. Indeed, while koma itself represented perhaps the most intense experience of sesotho and its ways yet undergone, especially for those of longstanding Christian affiliation, it also heralded a phase in most girls' lives when the things of sesotho would be put behind them almost completely, at least temporarily. Koma did, though, lay the basis for proficient practice of sotho cultural forms when these girls, as women, began to sing kiba in town. The songs and music of koma, while secret and not supposed to be repeated outside of this strictly-defined context, had a basic structure and style which was similar to that of present-day women's kiba. It was at koma that most informants, but especially those whose parents were Christian and so taught them no sotho music, learned through purely oral transmission to sing in a sotho style.

The theme of a general orientation towards modernity, which was to be followed much later by a selective revival of sotho culture when joining kiba, must be qualified in some important instances. The school culture which took root in these northern communities was not strongly differentiated by gender, as I have said above. But girls were still required to perform more duties in the domestic domain, were still less free to move beyond this domain for long periods of time, and were still less likely than boys to be given anything further than a primary school education. This did, in some cases, mean that girls were thought of, by contrast with their brothers, as "more sotho". Their orientation to the domestic sphere often

meant their acquisition of forms of musical or oral culture from mothers and grandmothers where boys, at school, were not in a position to acquire these. And it was these girls, more sotho than boys and more sotho than some of the other women with whom they would later club together to sing in town, who would become the king pins of kiba teaching and development in this urban context.

The life of Julia Lelahana, which was disrupted perhaps more than others portrayed here, is one example. She grew up on the farm Bijlsteel, about 30kms north-east of Pietersburg, "ran away" to work on a nearby farm for money rather than yielding up her labour for nothing as her parents were compelled to do, and eventually moved with them to a betterment village in Moletši, Lebowa.[28] This major move had not, though, been the only one in Julia's life. When she was born her parents were living in a location adjoining the white town of Pietersburg. When this area, later called Masoleng (the place of the soldiers) was to be developed as an air force base, they and others living there were evicted. Unable to acquire a stand in the officially-designated township of Seshego, Julia's family moved to Bijlsteel farm where her father's father was living as a labour tenant. It was this move away from town which explained why Julia, the youngest of five children, had no education at all where her older siblings, brothers and sisters alike, had schooled in the location up until the time the family left for the farm.

Growing up on this particular farm she was remote from the school culture described above, but also from the gender-specific culture of heartland initiates: the songs she sang as a child were not the mixed choir songs of boys and girls nor the sotho songs of dikgarebe (uninitiated girls), but the music of the herdboys with whom she worked and played. As a young girl she was sent to herd cattle together with boys her own age on the farm, and they taught her to make and play a string instrument called botsorwane or setseketseke. Perhaps with the hindsight of a migrant career, she observed:

> I was not shy and I had no problem in playing things that are senna (of men/meant for men). I did this because I was a herdgirl.[29]

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[28] See p209.

[29] Julia Lelahana, recorded discussion with DJ and PM, Johannesburg, 13/10/91.

Her lack of schooling, owing to the vicissitudes of population removal, set this girl apart from all her older siblings. But the contrast she noted between herself as motho wa sesotho (a sotho person) and her brothers as batho ba dikolo (school people) was due not only to this educational disparity but also to her acquisition of an interest in sotho ways from her parents and older relatives. She learned go reta (praising) from her mother and grandparents, with whom she spent much time around the house. Another means by which she acquired a love of the ways of sesotho was through a kind of cultural inheritance from her father, who was a diviner, a maker of drums for spirit-possession drumming, and a player of men's kiba.[30]

It was a woman like Julia, with an exposure to and interest in sotho things beyond the boundaries of koma and despite her background in a generally mission-oriented area, who was later to become a key figure in the development of urban kiba. She is the malokwane (leader) of Maaparankwe. She, like Phina Komape, Joanna Maleaka and Julia Lelahana, leads the singing, teaches songs learned at home to her fellow-singers, embellishes existing songs with new words or actions, and can provide extensive interpretation of these words and actions if called upon to do so. On the other hand there are those, like Anna Dikotlo and Margaret Ranku, who have learned all the songs from others, who mostly sing the chorus rather than the lead part, and who are hard pressed to explain the significance of particular songs. In some cases, though certainly not in all, these leading figures are those who were exposed to some sotho ways in their own and in relatives' homes. Conversely, the musical followers are often those whose early exposure to this music was restricted to what they learned at koma.

The cultural background of the girls who spent their youth and adolescence on the farms and later in the reserve villages of Leboa was a complex one. A variety of inputs contributed to the overall culture of modernity to which they and their families aspired. These inputs were refracted through the lens of gender. Despite a strong desire for schooling, most were disadvantaged by the deployment of household resources in educating their brothers by preference. Although wanting the things of sekgowa, their role within the household gave some a leaning towards sesotho.

[30] The acquisition of such inheritances, including praising and divining, forms the theme of Chapter Six.

The place they occupied in relation to the men of their natal families, whether absent fathers or brothers in competition with them for crucial resources, was to prove formative in their adult lives. It was this situation within the family which drove many of them to leave home for work, and later influenced the way in which they came to see their roles as women once they had become breadwinners.

Adulthood: daughters, mothers, migrants

The disruption of moving from the farms, whether freehold African- or white-owned, had consequences on a number of levels besides those documented above. One of these was its precipitation of young women from communities and families whose daughters and wives had not previously migrated, into migratory wage work. Their entry into the labour market often followed hard upon the heels of a failure of paternal support, due to the desertion of a father also unaccustomed to working for a wage. Parental financial support failed, as well, in the case of girls from reserve-dwelling communities in which migration had been a longer-term feature. In all cases besides those of the women who were called to town to join their husbands, migration commenced because of the need for a primary breadwinner who could act towards her natal family and parents "like a son" in providing support, and eventually combine this with a role "like a father" viz-a-viz her own children as well.

For those who had lived in the white areas of South Africa in peasant farming or labour tenant families, their fathers' first move to town as workseekers, and their families' first dependence on a migrant wage, occurred only after moving into the "homeland".[31] The start of involvement in migrancy at this time confirms a claim made in the report of the Surplus People Project that relocation, especially from "black spots" to settlements without agricultural land, often led to higher levels of migrancy within the population. The same report indicates that these relocated people newly entering the labour market often had to accept employment in the least skilled and worst-paid jobs, since they had not been involved in the gradual

[31] As has been mentioned above, most of these girls had the clothes of adolescence purchased for them by their fathers from the proceeds of farm labour or farm produce.

building up of urban networks known to those longer acquainted with migrant labour.[32]

One man who began to work only after leaving his original farm was the father of Flora Mohlomi. He took his family away from their tenancy at GaKgopa, and moved them to a new home in Boyne in Molepo district in 1953. His first migrant contract, subsequently, took him to Port Elizabeth, which made visits to his family costly and thus infrequent.

In other cases it was not so much the father's initial departure to look for work that caused the disruption to the family, as his permanent absence from the family subsequent to this departure. For the father of Salome and Andronica Machaba, the family's move from their rented acres at Makgodu to GaKgare in the Malebogo district prompted his departure to look for work, but he never returned to his family:

> after he disappeared, that was the end of him. Even now we have forgotten what he looks like. Our children do not know him. They just hear us say "you have a grandfather".[33]

Other singers, especially those born late to older fathers like Mary Lebogo and Rosina Seshothi, had already lost their fathers at the time of the move to the "homeland"s. And others, like Helen Matjila, had fathers who even in the face of dire need by their families were unwilling to travel to towns to look for employment after leaving the farms.

In contrast to these farm-dwelling girls, their counterparts already in the reserve areas came from families which had relied on migrant wages for at least one generation. But this did not necessarily mean a greater reliability on the part of the male providers of this income. Mary Kapa, born in the Mašašane district of the "homeland", lost her father to the city just as the Machabas did. The father of Phina Komape from the Moletši district died when she was a child, leaving her family unsupported. And in the case of Fransina Monyela, from Molepo, her father became ill and so was unable to earn a living. For all these women without wage-

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[32] Surplus People Project, Vol. I, (1983:26-7). For an account of similar contrast between longstanding networks built up by heartland migrants and the lack of such networks among recently-resettled labour tenants, see James (1987:183), Sansom (1970:71-4, 97-8).

[33] Salome and Andronica Machaba, recorded discussion with DJ and MTN, Johannesburg, 13/5/90.

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[33] Salome and Andronica Machaba, recorded discussion with DJ and MTN, Johannesburg, 13/5/90.

earning fathers, reserve-dwellers and former farm-dwellers alike, this absence of a paternal income was to play a definitive role in causing them, in turn, to migrate.

For the majority of these girls, the future of progress and modernity to which they and their families had oriented themselves had not included the possibility of wage work. In only three instances, of families already in the reserves, did the mothers of these girls go out to work before them. Two of these families were living in reserve areas directly adjacent to Pietersburg, and their mothers were working either in domestic service in the town itself, or taking in washing from townspeople to do at home. The other family, that of Joanna Maleaka, lived further north in the more remote Kgothama district of Venda, and her mother worked as a domestic servant in Pretoria. All the other mothers of kiba singers have been stay-at-home wives or widows. As with the rural communities in Botswana studied by Izzard, the comparative recency of women's migration from these northern communities means that the first generation of female migrants is still mostly away in town, rather than having retired to the countryside (1985:278).

Migratory wage-work was unusual, not only for the mothers of these women, but also for their contemporaries and their female relatives of the same generation. All kiba singers I know have sisters and sisters-in-law who remained at home as dutiful rural wives managing their absent husbands' households. And although each woman when questioned agreed that her area had become one from which women do now migrate to work in town, a good number of them appear to have preceded what they regard as the wave of urban female migration by several years. Even if female migrancy later became more commonplace from these areas, then, it was unusual at the time the future singers of women's kiba first moved away from home: these women were unusual in their families, and unusual in their sending villages, in having become wage workers when they did. Given that "a 'need for cash' ... is an almost universal 'need' in the so-called 'sending societies' from which some but not all individuals migrate" (ibid.:259), it must be asked why these particular women rather than others took the step into migrancy and thus away from expected female behaviour (ibid., Moore 1988:110-2, 114). The answer, in the case of northern Transvaal kiba singers, lies in the interaction of a number of factors in the life of a migrant: the family history already explored above; and the place in the order of siblings, education, and gender of the migrant.

Linked to the social and economic disruptions of resettlement, and to the failure of a father's migrant income, was the premature termination of the school education which almost all these singers so strongly desired. Apart from the four women mentioned earlier whose fathers had been opposed to providing schooling for girls, another who was summoned by ancestral spirits to the calling of a diviner thought to be incompatible with school, and one whose family's move to a farm precluded the possibility of her education, all the other kiba singers I know were forced, by circumstances beyond their control, to leave school earlier than they would have liked.

Five of these left because of their fathers' inability to provide financial support for his family, which would later precipitate their entry into the labour market in turn. In other cases, these girls' leaving school was again due to discrimination against girls and in favour of boys: in families strapped for cash, their brothers had more schooling than they did. For some it was their place in the sibling order that underprivileged them educationally. As studies from elsewhere in the Third world have shown, an early stage in the developmental cycle of a family entails a greater number of dependents than generators of income, making the family unable to afford to send its older children to school, whereas its later development with an altered ratio of providers to dependents may permit younger children a fuller education (Moore 1988:110).

In many cases, these factors interlinked, resulting in an "overdetermination" of educational disadvantage for these girls. The departure from school in St. 6 of Helen Matjila, for example, was motivated not only by her parents' inability to pay her own school fees since her father was not working, but also by the need for her to earn a wage in town which would then enable her younger siblings to become further educated. Some of the brothers born after her were educated further than she was, and her youngest sister, born at an advanced stage of the family's developmental cycle, is presently studying for a teacher's diploma. In such a case, as Moore points out, an older child subsidises the education of her younger siblings, while allowing them to defer their entry into the labour force until their degree of schooling ensures them a more desirable and better-paid job (Moore 1988:109-110). Sometimes, given the rapid social mobility characterising some areas of rural South Africa, the parental generation occupies a different position on the class/status ladder than do its children. In a

case like Helen's, the older sibling was placed in a mediatory position between these two generations. Helen's father was a farm labourer, her sister hopes to become a teacher, and she, bridging the gap, has worked in factories and in domestic service. Like female migrants from other parts of southern Africa, she has invested for younger family members in the education of which she was deprived, in an attempt to procure social mobility (Stichter 1985:167; Bozzoli 1991:238).

Failure of paternal support, arising in some cases from the disruptions of population resettlement, thus caused these daughters to take up the role of breadwinner, often curtailing their much-valued schooling to do so. Marriage and affinal ties featured only briefly or not at all, except for that category of migrants whose first trip to town was made to join a husband there.[34] For most kiba women, the preoccupations of adult life arising from the circumstances of their youth served to bind them ever closer, as responsible providers of support, to their natal families, and later to their children reared in these families. Their experience of domestic and gender relationships within these natal families, and their view of such relationships, has been spelt out in Chapter Four.

Conclusion

If we look again at the contrast between the rural kiba singers of Dithabaneng and the urban ones of groups like Maaparankwe and Ditšhweu tša Malebogo, we find substantial variations on the theme of rural-based sotho womanhood. In both contexts, the security of marriage-based financial support is on the decline and is being replaced in importance by consanguineal relationships within the natal family or agnatic group. Rural singers remain in roles of dependence within these families, however, while their urban wage-earning counterparts are coming to play new, more central, and more male-like roles in ensuring the intergenerational continuity of their rural families.

The upbringing of these migrant women was in significant ways different to that of their brothers. In some cases this meant taking on roles which boys, moving closer to the things

[34] A fuller discussion of the marital careers of kiba women is given on pp79-81, and a criticism of the literature which sees marital crisis as the major cause underpinning female migration.

of school and sekgowa, had left behind them. In some cases it meant that girls, remaining within the domestic sphere, were better-versed in the ways of sesotho with which this sphere was associated; it will be shown in Chapter Seven how aspects of sotho custom associated with the realm of the spirits, as part of the cultural baggage being jettisoned by men, was seized upon by these migrant women and remade into a new statement of their own significance.

The revival of sotho cultural forms, both musical and spiritual, had its genesis not in a backward-looking but in a dynamic impulse, however. The move by urban kiba singers into the role of heir and breadwinner, normally thought of in sotho as the preserve of a son, represented the bold seizing of an initiative rather than merely the filling of a gap left empty by the absence of the normal incumbent. The same desire for advance which made almost all these women regretful that they had not gone further with schooling was manifest in their challenging of the accepted wisdom about appropriate female behaviour.

Chapter 7

Family gifts, family spirits: migrant women and the logic of sesotho

Sesotho has provided an idiom for articulating women's new-found sense of themselves as migrants. Rural and urban sources of identity merged as the importance of sharing a common home became synonymous with the importance of sharing a set of experiences on the Reef. Interacting with this idea of belonging together with others from "home" to a broader constituency of people subscribing to sotho ways, was the sense of self which derived from a woman's place within particular rurally-based households. For such a woman, conceptualising a position within her family involved not only the juggling of gender roles with a brother or the forming of bonds of co-operation with a mother, as discussed in Chapter Four. It also meant situating herself within a group of relatives having a deeper span: those no longer living. This was not the preordained "descent group" of functionalist anthropological theory, but rather a series of forebears from whose connections and continuities living kiba singers have constructed for themselves, in the midst of experiences of relocation and social dislocation, a sense of genealogical connectedness.

Deep-rooted family ties are evident in the influence of badimo (ancestral spirits) in the lives of their living descendants: through dreams and ancestral propitiation, and also through spirit-possession illness, its cure, and its conversion in some cases into the art of divination.

Sotho music, for urban singers, did not represent a continuation of the culture of girlhood, but has been grafted onto a youth spent in contexts where the cultural trappings of modernity, of sekgowa, and of progress, were things much sought-after. But the invoking of this music in an urban context, although characterised by definite discontinuities, was not done through an entirely voluntary process of syncretism or bricolage. Their abandoning of the things of sekgowa was forced on some by possessing spirits who drove them inexorably into a world of sesotho. Here, praising, singing, propitiation and curing had the underlying logic deriving from affiliation to badimo (ancestral spirits). Even for those not summoned in this way, the sense of having "inherited" or "been given" certain gifts by those who preceded them provided an idiom whereby such women could position themselves in relation to the families

within which they see themselves as so firmly ensconced.

From church to kiba

In Chapter Two I give an account of the gradual process which led to the founding of women's kiba. I mention that a number of women who became singers of the genre had previously belonged to mainstream or independent churches. Some had been raised in families of longstanding Christian affiliation called majekane, others were from families of baditshaba who had joined more recently, and still others had converted when marrying. For the majority of these women, becoming members of kiba had meant a lessening or even an abandonment of their involvement in church activities. Of the 17 women who have attended church at some point in their lives, only four out of seven majekane, and two out of ten baditshaba, remain as active churchgoers. This fading of the attraction of church for kiba singers, as I indicated earlier, raises some questions about the effectiveness of churches - particularly independent ones - as sources of migrant identity and as expressions of peasant/proletarian consciousness.

Table 9: Church membership: baditshaba and majekane

Church Membership	Attend church today	Do not attend church today	Total
Majekane	4	3	7
Baditshaba Never joined	0	2	2
Raised from childhood	1	2	3
Joined in adolescence	1	4	5
Joined when marrying	1	2	3
TOTAL	7	13	20

The popularity and success of independent churches have been accounted for by the fact that their members are drawn from among the "poor" (Kiernan 1977), and, more specifically, from the ranks of peasant/proletarians (Comaroff 1985:188-9; 192-3), where the mainstream

churches have tended to be associated rather with petty-bourgeois and bourgeois elements (ibid.). To be even more specific, the Zionist Christian Church (ZCC) appears to have a particular appeal to workers themselves more than to their rural-dwelling dependents: among the Tshidi for example

> the membership ... seems to have been drawn from roughly the same socioeconomic stratum as the other Zionist groups, with one telling difference: it comprised more men and women in employment, especially female domestic workers, and contained fewer who were engaged in peasant production (ibid.:241).

The ZCC was certainly the most popular church among the proletarianising communities of Lebôa: of the ten baditshaba in the kiba-singing sample who were or became members of Zionist churches, six belonged to the ZCC. Their membership did not coincide with their entry into the labour market as Comaroff's point suggests, but rather preceded it, beginning in the rural areas during childhood, adolescence, or early married life. This was perhaps influenced by the fact that most of them spent their youth in areas very close to the headquarters of this church at Moria in the Molepo area. If their joining of the ZCC occurred before their move into the labour market, in all but the two cases of women who remain as ZCC members it was not to survive their arrival in town by many years. Those who had joined because of their husbands became involved, with them, in an intensive programme of church services, ZCC burial society meetings, and social interaction with other church members. But upon becoming widows these women, rather than retain membership of the church in their own right, allowed their membership to lapse and transferred their affiliation to kiba. Other former churchgoers followed a similar course of action. This suggests, as I have said before, that the ZCC appealed more to migrant men (and to the women attached to them) than to the particular group of unattached migrant women who became singers.[1]

In my earlier account of the abandonment of church by migrant women who became involved in kiba, I suggested that this decision was part of a move away from dependence on men in general - husbands, brothers or uncles, and home-boys - and towards a more autonomous form of migrant association generated by women independently of men. This suggestion is

[1] See p82.

supported by accounts which stress the central and dominant role of male preachers in these churches and the subordinate role of their largely female congregations. But if we shift our attention from the social structuring of such churches, we may find other reasons why kiba women ceased to participate in them.

One important factor was the paucity of leisure time for these women in domestic service, and the number of activities between which this time had to be divided. Only one singer, who did "piece jobs" rather than being a live-in domestic servant, had the whole weekend off. For others, arrangements varied between having every Sunday free through the more restrictive scenarios of "every second Sunday" or "Sunday afternoons only". Considering the difficulty of fitting into this limited monthly leisure time attendance at both a burial society meeting and mohodišano, and a visit home, as well as the regular weekly dancing practice and various "away" performances, a continuing additional commitment to attendance at church required a sacrifice of time and/or money. Some of those who managed to combine church with kiba did so by going to church one week and singing the next, while others attended church early, in one place, and had to pay the extra taxi fare to arrive at kiba on time. But the majority has simply chosen to leave attendance at church out of their weekly schedule altogether.

This opting out of one Sunday activity in favour of another should not, though, be taken as an indication that the two are irreconcilably opposed. For some of the women who have abandoned formal Christian worship for the singing and dancing of kiba, these are rather alternative ways of realizing the same principles. Compatibilities in cosmological beliefs, according to some writers, have allowed for a merging of the Christian and traditionalist notions of "spirit", and thus paved the way for the emergence of a variety of syncretic religions whose divergence from "traditional" religion is not nearly as marked as was that of the mainstream churches (Schutte 1972, 1974; Sundkler 1961:238-294; West 1975). The very emergence of the independent churches is seen as having been based on this spiritual merging.[2] It is against this background that one might understand the affiliation to kiba of

[2] In the northern Transvaal, one of the factors making for a less rigid distinction between mainstream and independent churches was that neither type of church, active in the area subsequent to the initial proselytising of the Lutherans, has insisted as the Lutherans did on non-attendance at initiation. In similar vein, none of these

Flora Mohlomi. She was raised in the ZCC, later became a Methodist when marrying a Xhosa-speaker she met in town, and now no longer attends church at all: "my church is Maaparankwe".[3] A singer who expressed similar sentiments is Anna Dikotlo. As a child, she accompanied her family every Sunday on their journey from the white farm where they lived to the Roman Catholic church in the ne[illegible]ring Molepo location. At present, although she sees no contradiction between church and kiba and acknowledges that there are members who combine membership of both, she stated that:

> Now, I mostly go for dancing. I can't mix the two [church and dancing]. ... Even in the Bible, in Psalm 130, they say, you can please God by dancing dinaka (pipes), makope, metato (one-stringed musical instruments), so there is a connection.[4]

There is a certain irony in Anna's use of this biblical reference to justify her leaving the church. The use of vernacular terms to translate the musical instruments of David's famous psalm was part of a well-meaning missionary endeavour to make Christianity accessible to the heathens by couching it in an indigenous idiom (JL and J Comaroff 1989:282-8), but here it becomes an indication that the ends of religion may be served as well by "traditional" as by Christian music and affiliation. The boundary between Christian and pagan belief and practice is seen in this case to be permeable in both directio[illegible].

But for other women there is a distinct opposition between the spiritual forces underlying church membership and those seen as reconcilable with kiba performance. These are the women who were driven away from church by the malopo possessing spirits. Of the five women in the sample who experienced the illness which these spirits inflict, two continued to attend church without any apparent ill-effects, but the other three were informed by diviners or by church leaders that the spirits would not allow them to combine their affliction with attendance at church. Other urban singers, on whom I have less comprehensive life-

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churches paralleled the Lutheran's requirement that Christians foreswear fealty to their chief in allying themselves in semi-feudal manner to the minister.

[3] The kiba group to which she belongs: "those of the royal leopard-skin clothing". See Chapters One to Three.

[4] Anna Dikotlo, recorded discussion with DJ and PM, Johannesburg, 17/8/91.

history information, had a similar experience.

One of these afflicted people was Joanna Maleaka. Before beginning her career as a labour migrant, she became sick as a young woman of 20, at her home in Kgothama. She suffered from swollen feet and neck, and from blurred vision and occasional blackouts. Although she joined the ZCC in search of a cure, the healing offered by this church was ineffective. The sickness became worse after she began to work in Johannesburg, and she was told after consulting a ZCC prophet that she must leave the church and do as her ancestors wished: the church could not cure the sickness of the ancestors. She then went to a ngaka (diviner) who confirmed that her illness was due to possession by badimo (ancestral spirits) whose complaint was that Joanna had forgotten them and no longer did anything for them. Her cure entailed her training, in turn, as a ngaka, and her avoidance of church:

> I no longer go to church because they will complain, saying, "why am I moving away from them? Why am I in conflict with them?"[5]

Whereas Joanna relied on intermediaries for the interpretation of her symptoms, another sufferer, Mary Kapa, was more conscious of the message being conveyed to her by her forebears. Raised in a family which attended the ZCC, she began at the age of thirteen to suffer feelings of strangulation and to have dreams in which ditaola (diviners' bones) featured strongly. Again, the prophets were unable to o a cure, and told her, "this is your own people who are doing this to you. Your people want you: they want you to do something." When she consulted a ngaka, the diagnosis was confirmed: "the ancestors want you, and you are defying their laws". She, too, trained as a ngaka, and ceased going to church.[6]

The kiba women who left the church, then, were advised to do so by spiritual leaders, both within and outside of Christianity. These leaders diagnosed an illness ancestrally caused, whose cure lay in the recognition that the sufferers were being summoned by their ancestors to the profession of ngaka (diviner), and in their being trained to assume this profession. Before being called by their ancestors in this way, both Mary Kapa and Joanna Maleaka

[5] Joanna Maleaka, recorded discussion with DJ and PM, Johannesburg, 5/10/91.

[6] Mary Kapa, discussion with DJ and PM, Johannesburg, 30/10/91.

belonged to the ZCC. This was a church whose appeal lay not only in its providing of an identity to proletarianising communities like those from which these women came, but also in its ability to heal. In my experience in southern Lebowa, it was often through a failure to become healed of illness by "traditional" diviners that sufferers had made the decision to join the ZCC. But the illness from which these women suffered proved untreatable by the methods of this church.

To some kiba women, then, the ZCC proved inadequate not only in terms of the social constituency to which it introduced its members in town, but also in terms of its inability to contain particular kinds of ancestral affliction. The route into bongaka (divining) which they subsequently followed provided them with a source not only of specific ancestrally-given identity, but also of professional status, which the church could not have given them. For these two women, and for three others called in the same way, the prestige they acquired as ancestrally-appointed diviners parallelled the independence they were achieving as major breadwinners, and the autonomy they were gradually acquiring as kiba singers within a female-dominated group.

Women's entry into the previously male-dominated role of diviner, expressed in the idiom of spirit-possession, is believed to entail the direct influence of the dead upon their living descendants. The implication of strong continuities between the generations in this process will be seen to underlie the devolution, not only of this particular role, but also of a range of other abilities, skills and behaviours to be discussed in this chapter. But, like kiba singing itself, the practice of bongaka (healing) and other inherited arts is very different for relatively independent women in an urban context, such as the singers of Maaparankwe, than it is for dependent rural householders in a rural one, like the singers of Dithabaneng. In the case of healing, firstly, the phenomenon of women's possession in a rural context has led to such a proliferation of diviners that the profession has become somewhat devalued. Migrant women called to this profession and practising it in an urban context, on the other hand, enjoy an enhanced status. In the case of other qualities - especially negative ones - thought to be transmitted or passed down within the family, there is a sense for dependent rural householders that these must be passively accepted. For independent migrants, in contrast, the idea of acting on one's situation - often by appealing to or propitiating ancestors, or by

praising them - provides a way of transcending their "given" situations. The theme of independence and autonomy, gained by these migrants on material and social levels, is once again paralleled on the level of spiritually-guided identity.

Malopo: illness or vocation

Let us deal firstly with the question of possession illness and divining. My argument, stated briefly, runs like this. The role of diviner, according to the literature and to informants, was one previously reserved for men. It was a spiritual gift to them, mostly given through dreams, from their fathers and grandfathers (Monnig 1967:95). The illness associated with malopo, although also ancestrally caused, was in contrast usually suffered by women (EJ and JD Krige 1943:248; Monnig 1967:87; van der Hooft 1979:148). In rural society as documented by these writers, the cure of malopo led its sufferers, not to the acquisition of an important role in mainstream ancestral religion, such as that of ngaka, but rather into membership of a "peripheral" or "marginal" cult. Presently, however, among stay-at-home women and in migrant constituencies alike, it is acknowledged that a woman possessed in this way may be receiving the diviner's calling from her own male forebears.

This recognition is by no means an uncontested one. In rural circles particularly, the rate of spirit illnesses has reached the proportions of an epidemic, and some of the diviners who receive their calling as a result, and who then become trained, are thought to have had their illnesses wrongly diagnosed. Even in the urban situation, male migrants speak of this women's illness with the combined embarrassment and dismissiveness characteristic of the way in which maladies such as womanly hysteria have been seen in the West. But, although the acknowledgement of malopo as a means to becoming a mainstream diviner is neither universal nor uncontested, some of the migrant kiba singers who have acquired the art of divining through this route have derived definite status and recognition from its practice.

Any approach which posits that ritual and healing practice are undergoing change must challenge the accepted wisdoms about the tenacity of entrenched ritual practices. This is particularly strongly entrenched in the literature on spirit possession, in which a fundamental separation is posited between societies where spirit-induced dissociation is central to

mainstream religion and those where it is peripheral (Lewis 1971; Firth 1969; Douglas 1973). The former are dubbed central cults, or those of mediumship, while the latter are characterised as peripheral cults, or simply as involving "possession". Possession in this latter sense has been documented as a feature of societies or of segments of society which experience deprivation (Bourguinon 1967). Women, in particular, have been found to suffer disproportionately from possession sickness. Their doing so has been interpreted as a semi- or sub-conscious ploy which enables them to advance their interests (Lewis 1971:31-4).

Working with this conceptual dichotomy, some authors have attempted to understand the relationship between mainstream ancestral religion and peripheral possession cults in a southern African context (Sibisi 1975; Hammond-Tooke 1986). In an overview of existing ethnography, Hammond-Tooke indicates that cults involving "spirits of affliction" have arisen in Africa south of the Limpopo during the last 80 years, originating probably among the Shona of Zimbabwe (whose main religion involves the possession of mediums by ancestral spirits, and would thus be classified as a central or mediumistic cult). The possessing spirits, he insists, are foreign in origin rather than ancestral, and are dealt with by exorcism rather than through communicative incorporation. Seeking for an understanding of these mostly female cults - and their foreign spirits - on the level of cosmological belief, he concludes that they are "a response to fundamental social change in African society, in this case confined to its most helpless class" (ibid.:164). The dangers of being afflicted by an alien spirit are expressive of, or in parallel to, the confusing and potentially harmful intrusion of alien people - Whites, Indians, or simply people from other tribes - "into the family life of the indigenous peoples" (Sibisi 1975:54).

The view of these writers is that, when possessing spirits intrude, they do so in a way which is unconnected to the mainstream religion. Like a coda hurriedly added to an integrated musical composition, such spirits fail to interfere with the internally consistent world view engendered within such religions.

But, although possession cults may have been foreign in origin as these writers claim, they have been in some instances integrated together with ancestral cults. As long ago as the 1940s, the malopo possessing spirits of the Lovedu in the northern Transvaal were written of

as being those of the ancestors, with a cure which involved not exorcism but the acknowledgement of the ancestor and his/her demands (EJ and JD Krige 1943:241-9). Of similar provenance were the malopo spirits afflicting Pedi-speakers (Monnig 1967:87; van der Hooft 1979:149, 151).

The insistence on rigid classifications by writers on religion and on spirit beliefs is thus misleading. Both the distinction between "mediumship" and "possession", and that between mainstream ancestral cults and fringe spirit-possession cults, can be seen to impose "a conceptual rigidity that distorts the essential fluidity of interpretation and consequent ... articulation of the phenomena [of possession]" (Crapanzano 1977:9). The main problem with a conceptual rigidity of this kind is that it obscures the possibility of processual or historical change. Altered circumstances in the northern Transvaal have generated the transformation of a peripheral cult into one through which the deities of mainstream religion begin to communicate, and in which - as cause or consequence - the sufferers have moved from the sidelines to take up a position closer to centre stage.

In the process, the distinction between possession as a peripheral cult which destines its sufferers for treatment by drumming and by entry into the possession cult, and possession as a route to mainstream divining, has become blurred. For some women suffering possession, the normal cure of having to leletšwe moropa (go though drumming), and perhaps of joining the cult of malopo dancers, is sufficient. But for others who continue to be troubled the diagnosis or their own persistent dreams about dipheko (diviner's bones) indicate that an ancestor is calling them to take up the art of healing: not as a marginal malopo or mapale doctor, but as a mainstream ngaka. Possession has begun to replace the older style of inheritance as a means of entering this profession, and women have begun to outnumber men as dingaka.

This process is recounted by some of the rural women singers of Dithabaneng -

> *Would you say that there are more male or female doctors today?*
>
> Most of them are female dingaka today. ... Its because they are the ones who

are mostly troubled by malopo.[7]

Older people are uneasy in the face of the change -

Would you say most of the dingaka in the past were women?

Most of them were men, women were afraid of becoming dingaka in the past. You would hear people saying, so-and-so refuses to accept dipheko (diviner's bones), saying, she is still young, she can't manage. ...

Is there one of your family members who suffered from this?

Yes, there is one.

What did she do to get cured?

She had malopo and she went to thwasiša (get cured), a goat was slaughtered, ... and she began to dance malopo every day. ... As this person was dancing, later on she told us that so-and-so has given her some dipheko (diviner's bones) ... so it was felt that a goat is needed so that we can ask badimo to leave her. And, after slaughtering the goat and telling them, they left her for some time and we thought it was over. We asked them to leave her, telling them that it's because she is a woman, a woman can't manage as a ngaka, this needs a man. There was peace for some time ... but they visited her again and told her that she is a ngaka ... there was no alternative, and finally she became one.[8]

Although there are still dingaka who receive their calling from ancestors without possession, and although there is a clear distinction between the two alternative styles of calling, the end result is the same:

Are there different types of dingaka or are they the same?

They are different because some have to dance malopo to become doctors and others don't have to do this, they are born given bongaka (the ability to divine). You will sometimes hear people saying that so-and-so has gone somewhere to "drink" divining bones (i e to train as a ngaka) and one day you will see him/her divining. ... Both of these have got divining bones but had

[7] Mmagoshower Debeila, recorded discussion with PM, Nchabeleng, 16/12/91; see also Mmagojane Kgalema, discussion with PM, Nchabeleng, 20/12/91.

[8] Makgolo wa Pine Khulwane, recorded discussion with PM, Nchabeleng, 24/12/91.

> these given to them differently. One g/ . them whilst dancing malopo and the other one whilst being cured (i e undergoing training).[9]

Although some sufferers receive clear communications in dreams or during possession itself about the nature of their affliction and thus about its cure, others experience their symptoms as inexplicable, and must rely on the interpretation of diviners. The extensiveness of malopo affliction in recent times, and the fact, linked to this, of the huge proliferation of diviners in the present day, are thus in part dependent on the diagnosis of illness by other diviners. One Christian informant, while citing as proof of the ver city of malopo the case of a teacher who was called away from his profession to practise as a healer, nevertheless laid the blame for the almost epidemic proportions of malopo at present on the existence of fraudulent healers. A healer interested only in financial rewards, he cla med, would be inclined to diagnose illness as being due to possession rather than to some simpler cause, since he could receive a higher payment for the ensuing treatment.[10] In a view such as this one, the increase in the number of diviners is both cause and effect of an increase in sufferers of malopo.

Other people, while not necessarily analyzing the problem at this level, share the same critical perception of diviners' motives. In contrast to dingaka of the past, who would wait until the efficacy of their treatment was proved before receiving payment, those of the present are disparaged for demanding money in advance. The lack of this verifying mechanism of withheld payment is in turn seen as buttressing and making unassailable the position of fraudulent dingaka, called gadikgone (those who cannot).

> They won't tell you that they are incapable, this is because they want ntadiyana (money). They will just say, let's try, and you hope that it will work ut. You will keep on waiting but nothing will take place. But money is gone: you shall have parted with some money by this time.[11]

In the opinion of many - including some women - it is the healers who have undergone training in recent times as a result of malopo possession who are the most suspect. But there

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[9] Mmagoshower Debeila, recorded discussion with PM, Nchabeleng, 16/12/91.

[10] Mr Makgaleng, discussion with DJ, Apel, 19/7/91.

[11] Makgolo wa Pine Khulwane, recorded discussion with PM, Nchabeleng, 24/12/91

are also those - especially women - who claim that they prefer to consult a female ngaka since it gives them more freedom to explain their secrets and troubles. One result of the recent increase in the number of healers, then, appears to be that it allows for a wider choice (and, one might argue, for a kind of "fair competition on an open market").[12]

Overall, then, in a village context there is a sense in which malopo possession, and the status of healer to which it may lead, appears to have escalated out of control and at the same time to have become devalued. It should be borne in mind, however, that not all sufferers of possession go beyond the state of thwasiša (being cured) - which may involve an initial leletšwe meropa (going through drumming), future involvement in malopo drumming and dancing for the benefit of other sufferers, and a stay of months or even years at the home of the diviner who has diagnosed the sufferer's illness and who is effecting the cure - to become diviners in turn. The rural group Dithabaneng, for example, counts among its members four women who have suffered possession at some point in their lives, but none of these have been called to become healers. While some of them, whose cures are complete and who seldom engage in malopo dancing, are no different in appearance from their neighbours, others can be identified, by their apparel and their frequent engagement in malopo dancing sessions, as belonging to the ranks of cured possession-sufferers (now known by the borrowed Nguni term sangoma). For such people, possession does still appear to denote a seeking for recognition, in a domain beyond the main stream, by marginal figures (Lewis 1971:30-6).

In the case of urban migrant women who sing kiba, possessing ancestors did not stop short at the point of demarcating their sufferers as members of a marginal group, but took them further, leading them towards mainstream ngaka status. Out of the five women in the sample who have malopo, two are fully-trained diviners holding certificates from a training centre in Hammanskraal north of Pretoria, while a further two are undergoing training intermittently during visits home.

One of these certificate-holding and practising healers is Helen Matjila. The illness which began some years after her first coming to the Reef to find employment was diagnosed by

[12] Ibid.; Mmagoshower Debeila, recorded discussion with PM, Nchabeleng, 16/12/91; Grace Diphofa, discussion with PM, Mphanama, 25/12/91.

an old family friend as caused by her being etelwa (visited) by her father's paternal grandfather, who had been a ngaka and who was handing on his craft to her as mpho (a gift). She found time after the end of one domestic job and before beginning to look for another to spend three months undergoing training in Hammanskraal. Her entry into the diviner's profession, apart from facilitating the cure of her possession illness, has also had material benefits. It brought her luck in finding a better-paid domestic job, she says, and gave her a way to supplement her earnings with the money she is paid by patients: she may earn as much as R500 extra a month. When prompted by her great-grandfather in dreams, she travels to Tnaba ya Badimo (the mountain of the ancestors) near Nylstroom to gather the herbs needed for her practice. The only real difficulty of her situation is that her employer, who regards the terms "witchdoctor" and "witchcraft" as synonymous, must be kept ignorant of Helen's profession: a sometimes tricky operation given the numbers of people who make their way into her small domestic servant's quarters to have her consult her bones on their behalf, or who enter her miniscule backyard bathroom to be given ritual cleansings. Aside from this minor obstacle, however, Helen's experience of her role as healer has been a positive and rewarding one, and has enhanced her status in the eyes of everybody except the woman who pays her monthly salary.[13]

From the story of Helen Matjila, as from that of the other possessed women mentioned earlier, it is clear that entry into the divining profession has proved generally beneficial. But even for these migrant healers in an urban context, their status as women who have been called to the profession through the malopo route is not unequivocally prestigious, particularly among men. I saw an illustration of male dismissiveness towards malopo sickness during one of Maaparankwe's weekends performing in a rural area. Mary Kapa, a malopo sufferer who has already undergone training as a diviner, manifested the characteristic falling-down behaviour typical of malopo possession. Several other malopo women, seemingly through contagion, fell down in turn. The unaffected members of the women's group put great effort - by singing snatches of song and by speaking directly to the spirits in quiet and urgent tones - into making them "cool down" and cease troubling their descendants. It was because the group's malopo sufferers had failed to perform a suitable phasa (ancestral propitiation)

[13] Helen Matjila, recorded discussion with DJ and PM, Johannesburg, 8/7/91.

informing their possessing ancestors that they were to travel to a faraway place, and asking them not to give trouble during this absence, that the unexpected attack of malopo sickness was thought to have occurred. Throughout the procedure of bringing the afflicting spirits under control, the male members of Maaparankwe sat around, half-amused and half-embarrassed at this public display of possession illness in a strange place and amongst strangers. In response to my concerned enquiries about whether the women, apparently in a dead faint, needed to be rushed to a doctor, the leader of the men's group laughed, and indicated that these women were "not sick".

The incident illustrated a clear division between the group's men, who scoffed at and dismissed malopo sickness as something old-fashioned and womanly, and its women, who rallied round to provide support and to administer a cure through singing. It is precisely this access to a group of women who understand the nature of the sickness and can help to treat it which in part explains the appeal of kiba to malopo sufferers. Some migrant women joined a singing club in town because they saw it as a sort of substitute for the therapeutic dancing and drumming of the rural malopo cults. This is especially necessary in an urban environment, in which strangers might be unable to understand the cause of the illness, as I was told by Andronica Machaba:

> let's say I'm with some people, and these people don't know anything about this setšo (traditional) thing - malopo - and should it happen, they will be frightened and call my employers, who will then take me to hospital. I tell you, I won't get cured at the hospital, and the other thing is that I'm not actually sick, it's just malopo. At the hospital, when seeing this, they might think I'm mad. But if this happens while people like Joanna Maleaka and Phina [fellow kiba singers] are around me ... they won't call the whites. Instead they will try to talk to the badimo (ancestors) to cool down.[14]

Other singers are less ready to posit a link between the drumming and singing of malopo and that of kiba. They acknowledge only the connection that badimo (ancestors) like and approve of this music, since they once danced it in turn. Yet others deny any connection between kiba, which is "just a play", and malopo dancing, which is "a serious matter".[15] But despite

[14] Andronica Machaba, recorded discussion with DJ and PM, Johannesburg, 19/10/91,

[15] Ibid.

this diversity of interpretations, all the women singers proved ready to rally round and help in the cooling of the troubling ancestors.

The definition of malopo as a woman's illness, and of the calling to bongaka which results from it as somehow different from that of a male diviner is, then, still prevalent among male migrants. Even for the sufferers of this possession in my urban kiba-singing sample, there may thus be some truth in the theory that possession provides a route to recognition by the disenfranchised (Lewis 1971). Although they have achieved some independence and autonomy, these singers do experience the irksomeness of subjection to male and patriarchal authority at both the urban and rural poles of their existence,[16] and so might be thought to gain a degree of leverage over men from a veiled expression of protest.

More convincing, however, is the view which sees migrant diviners as acquiring the prestige previously reserved for a role played by men, even if the perception of this prestige is restricted to the ranks of fellow migrant women and does not extend to their male counterparts. Of perhaps greatest importance, though, malopo is a channel of ancestrally-given identity. It is women's own grandparents or great-grandparents who speak to or through them, and - especially in the latter case - who pass on to them the ancestrally inherited "gift" of healing. Whereas this gift was previously passed down through males from grandfather to grandson by means more normal and less vividly and dramatically experienced, the disruptiveness of its transference to granddaughters appears to necessitate a direct and physical intervention of the ancestors in the lives of their descendants.

Two ways were cited earlier in which a person may "get divining bones" (become a diviner). One was through being given the ability to divine at birth, and the other was through dancing malopo. A decline in the number of male healers, who were thought of as born with this ability, has been accompanied by an increase in the number of female healers, who enter the diviner's status through malopo. Possession by the ancestor bequeathing the divining gift has become the idiom in which inheritance is couched, as it switches from patrilineal inheritance by males to a flexible and collateral inheritance by females.

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[16] See Chapter Two pp83, 103, Chapter Four.

Malopo is thus concerned with the construction of an identity by a woman out of characteristics acquired from her forebears. Taking up recent suggestions that the idea of the "self" in many non-Western cultures is not necessarily that of a bounded, rationally motivated and unified entity, Crapanzano claims that

> "the spirit idiom ... provides a means of 'self-articulation' that may well be radically different from the self-articulation of the Westerner",

and that

> "much of what is articulated in the West as within the individual may be articulated as outside the individual in those societies in which the spirit idiom is current" (1977:11-2)

If the ability to play a significant and high-status role in relation to the sacred world is still conceived of as properly part of the male domain, and as couched in the idiom of patrilineal succession, then its transfer to the granddaughters rather than to the grandsons of families requires the radical externalising, and then incorporation, of this male principle into the identity of the female self.

Luck, suffering, propitiation and praising

Possession, then, is most fruitfully understood as one of the many ways in which badimo (ancestors) communicate with, or bequeath things to, their living descendants. The transference of a special ability or talent like that of healing (bongaka) is described by the use of the word go fa (to give), and the ability thus transferred is thought of as mpho (a gift), using a term surprisingly close to the English one for the same idea.[17]

It is tempting in this context to use the English term "inheritance", since this encodes a range of processes whereby members of a senior generation - living or dead - confer certain assets or qualities upon family members junior to them. But this term should be used with caution, since it imputes conceptual unity to a series of separate phenomena. A youngest son's acquisition of the rights to his parents' residential plot and their field, for example, is called

[17] See Seeger (1987:61-4) for an account of the way musical, spiritual and other "gifts" are transmitted through genetic or other "natural" means in three different societies.

go šala lapeng (to stay in the family yard), which carries the same sense of continuity as the word "inheritance" without the implication of transferred material assets.[18]

The word in sesotho which does approximate the English "inheritance" most closely is one which refers to the transfer of personal qualities - leabela, with its associated verb go abela in the active form (to confer in inheritance) and its passive form go abelwa (to receive in inheritance). A variety of physical features or flaws are thought of as being acquired through this means, such as hlogo ya sefapi (a congenital headache) or the propensity to suffer from toothache, as well as less material qualities such as botho (humanity or kindness) and bokelema (from the Afrikaans word "skelm": the quality of being bad, like a "tsotsi"). Another thing which is spoken of using the word go abela (to inherit) is luck, both in its negative sense as mahlatse madimabe (bad luck) or mahloko (suffering) and in its positive sense as mahlatse lehlogonolo or mahlogo (good luck).

Older rural women, like the grandmothers of Dithabaneng, use a discourse which conveys a sense of unavoidable destiny in the transference of qualities from parents or grandparents to their children or grandchildren. An example can be seen in the lyrics of the song Marashiya:

Ke reng ka hlaela pheta ye botse	I don't have a shiny necklace
O se ke wa ntelela mohlako	You who is looking at me, you see suffering
Ke gore hjale ke ago kgalema wene o ntelelago	Don't scold me or feel pity for me
Ge e le mohlako ke leabela	Suffering is an inheritance
Nna ke abetse mmane	I inherited it from my mother
Mme o abetse makgolo.	She inherited it from her mother.

In explaining this song, the singers of Dithabaneng showed a remarkable degree of consensus in their acknowledgement that luck is something o wa tswalelwa (one is born with), and that there is little one can do to change it. The woman in the song is complaining about her husband's failure to provide her with the womanly attire she desires, but in attributing this suffering to inheritance rather than to his inadequacies she is resigning herself to her situation:

[18] See James (1988) for a fuller account of this process. Although I used the word "inheritance" throughout this article to describe the transfer of residential and agricultural land, in retrospect I would have paid more attention to linguistic precision. The fact that the notion of "inheritance" may translate as a number of diverse concepts in sesotho was first brought to my attention by Patrick Pearson, whose help I gratefully acknowledge.

> she says that despite the suffering, she won't part with him, but will console herself saying that maybe she has inherited it from her mother and ... from her grandmother.
>
> If you are born into it [suffering], you may try to change it, you may have money but misuse it. You may buy a car and people might think you are getting better, but after a short while the car breaks, you spend a lot of money trying to fix it, but all in vain. The car will then be towed into the yard and stay there.[19]

There was less agreement within the group about the ultimate origins of this luck: for some its source lay no deeper than with one's own forebears whereas for others it was attributable to modimo (God), conceived of less as the biblical patriarch and more as a being senior to badimo (ancestors) but operating through their mediation.[20]

Only members of the younger generation feel that suffering, being ka boomo (self-made), can be avoided by their own efforts, according to the older rural women who discussed this issue with me. The girl in the song who was not given a shiny necklace was experiencing a bad luck specific to stay-at-home women. Such women are dependent on men's earnings both for a livelihood and for clothing and adornment. Revealing this perception, Dithabaneng singers suggested that the way in which a younger woman could sidestep or escape her destined allocation of bad luck would be by attaching herself to another man - perhaps a teacher - in the hope that he might provide for her more adequately than her husband had done:

> she won't depend on the head of the family. She will say, "this means that I am going to inherit suffering", and in order to avoid this, she will have an affair with someone and get some food so that when her real husband comes home he will find some food. He will think that she got this from her parents. That's why we say that a young person never suffers.[21]

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[19] Lyrics and interpretation from Dithabaneng, recorded discussion with DJ and PM, Nchabeleng, 28/7/91. See p173 for a previous citing of this song, and a discussion of its expression of the themes of womanly dependence.

[20] This conception of modimo was explicitly spelt out by a number of informants; see also West (1975:189, 200; Kuper 1987:170).

[21] Makgolo wa Pine Khulwane, recorded discussion with PM, Nchabeleng, 24/12/91.

In the idiom presented here, the inevitable destiny of being "born into" a position of misfortune is conceptualised in terms of descent. Although younger women are said to be less passively resigned to this fate than their elders, it is suggested here that the only means by which such a woman may actively transform her situation is through transferring her dependence on her parents or husband to a different man, conceived of as alternative provider.

This rather touchingly idealised version of the Cinderella story appears, in purely material terms, to express a faith in the possibilities offered by hypergamy - a romantic link to a teacher! - for overcoming the poverty of a woman's life in the labour reserve. But it belies the fact that marriage or its variants have proved far less durable than the structures of agnation for providing dependent rural women with support. The singers of Dithabaneng whose husbands or lovers have failed to sustain their needs for cash, have had to rely on brothers or uncles for the sustenance necessary to insulate them against the necessity of going out to work.

The singers from Leboa who lacked such insulation explained their fortune in rather different terms. The notion of "luck" does to some extent hold sway among these migrants. It was used, for example, by Anna Dikotlo when expressing her uncertainty about her future as a childless woman who would one day retire to her rural home without the assurance of a source of wage income. Asked whether the nephews and nieces to whose support and education she is presently contributing financially would support her in retirement, she replied that she was unable to answer this question, since it was a matter of mahlatse (luck). The use of this idiom by urban kiba singers I have spoken to, however, tends to focus less on the inevitability of inherited suffering or bad luck than on the possibility of asking their ancestors to send good or better luck.

This is done through an informally-constructed system of phasa (ancestral propitiation), which lays especial emphasis on the communication between a single individual and the spirit of a particular forebear. In the rural context, individual ancestral visitation or crisis on the one hand, and family misfortune or thanksgiving on the other, give rise respectively to more private and personal, and more strongly group-oriented, versions of phasa. The latter usually involves the slaughter of a beast and the making and offering of beer, whereas the former

may be accomplished by a person on his/her own, with a simple mixture of water and snuff.

It is this version of phasa which has become current among kiba singers in an urban context. Living in cramped servants' quarters in the backyards of white suburban residences, they choose a special spot just outside the door of the room, pour on the ground the water-and-snuff mixture, and speak to the ancestral spirit in question. According to Anna Dikotlo:

> when I am asleep, if I dream of my father, I will, the following day, take snuff and water and phasa, even if I'm here in town.[22]

A similar account was given by Flora Mohlomi:

> If I do not hwetša bophelo (find life) I will consult dingaka (diviners). They will tell me that my grandmother wants something from me. ... I should take snuff and some water and then go to a particular corner outside here, and pour them out, and speak to her.[23]

In the lives of these women whose circumstances and personal qualities led them to become major providers for their rural families, their very departure to town to find work was accompanied by individualised phasa:

> You will have to take some water and snuff, then go outside and tell them that you are going away to makgoweng (the place of the whites) to look for employment, ask them to be with you, and give you some mahlatse (luck) so that you can find some work.[24]

> You should tell them by way of phasa ... that you are leaving for town to work for your children.[25]

The sense of acquiring ancestrally-given good fortune was most marked in the case of those kiba singers who had actually experienced ancestral intervention in its most direct form,

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[22] Anna Dikotlo, recorded discussion with DJ and PM, Johannesburg, 17/8/91.

[23] Flora Mohlomi, recorded discussion with DJ and PM, Johannesburg, 11/8/91.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Andronica Machaba, recorded discussion with DJ and PM, Johannesburg, 19/10/91.

through possession. Some are undergoing training as a ngaka, like Joanna Maleaka and Phina Komape. Others were already certificated as a ngaka, like Helen Matjila. For all, the diagnosis of their possession illness and the onset of its successful remedy is seen as having marked a turning point of fortune in their migrant careers. But even those engaging with the spirits in the more "mainstream" mode of dreams and ensuing propitiation do so with an awareness that it is thus possible actively to transform their circumstances.

There is a clear parallel between the material and social situation of these people and the way they think about invoking the spirit world in the pursuit of good fortune. These are single women who visualise themselves as situated primarily within the context of their own natal families. By becoming major breadwinners for their parents, siblings and eventually children, they have demonstrated their capacity to act on and change rather than resign themselves to their rural situation. Although marriage and its attendant status as dependent wife became a possibility for some of these women at an earlier point in the life-cycle, none was in a position to continue deriving security from this status, nor to see it as the primary means of escape from the circumstances in which they found themselves in their own families. Even those who eventually contracted marriages or became involved in informal conjugal partnerships in town did so in ways which were not fundamentally to affect, and certainly not derogate from, their primary responsibilities to their rural families of origin.

The single status of most urban kiba singers has another important implication for the link between migrant women, their kin, and their ancestors. In customary family ritual, an important role was played by the kgadi (senior father's sister, or woman of a senior generation belonging to the family group by birth rather than marriage).[25] Although a senior man would attend to the slaughter of a sacrificed beast, it was the kgadi who officiated and performed the ritually more significant tasks, such as ensuring that the blood was spilled correctly onto the grave, placing the pots of beer appropriately, and returning to fetch them when the spirits had had their fill. If a kgadi were married, her role would have been an ambivalent one: although ritually crucial to her own family and even featuring as an ancestor within it, she was ritually of little significance to the family in which she was married and

[25] This observation was made to me by numerous informants, and is also substantiated in the literature (Krige and Krige 1943:76; Hammond-Tooke 1974:347-8; Kuper 1982:60). See also Chapter Four p147.

in which she spent most of her time (Monnig 1967:56-7; EJ and JD Krige 1943:235).

In a rural situation such as that of most urban kiba singers, in which marriage has not featured or has proved of limited duration and durability, and in which women see their only responsibility as being towards their family of birth, the role of kgadi, in which most singers are positioned in relation to these families, becomes less ambiguous. It is true that in terms of authority and material resources the non-married status of these women does place them in a situation of potential conflict with their younger brothers, whose right to be the heir or the one officially-designated to šala lapeng (stay in the family yard) is still enshrined by "traditional law".[27] But this same unmarried status operates to buttress the strength of their ritual position. The assumption of this crucial ritual role by singers such as Helen Matjila, Anna Dikotlo and Andronica Machaba in relation to their rural families is seen by them to have occurred with the death or absence of female agnates of a generation senior to them. But it can also be seen as a reflection on a ritual level of the social status they have achieved, as members of the urban workforce and as supporters of their families. Public ancestral ritual at their homes, either cyclical like the harvest thanksgiving or occasioned by some particular incident or misfortune, cannot take place without their involvement.

In some cases they are called upon to perform this role even in an urban context. In addition to the private version of go phasa (propitiation) described earlier in this chapter, Andronica Machaba, the oldest daughter in her family, has on two occasions had to phasa on behalf of her siblings who like her are working in Johannesburg. On one of these, her younger sister Salome was troubled by eerie noises in her room at night, and was told by the diviner she consulted that since this was due not to witchcraft but to neglect of her ancestors, a sacrifice was required. On another, her brother was experiencing problems, and was given the same advice by the leader of the Apostolic Church to which he belongs. On neither of these occasions would a private propitiation have been sufficient. The younger sister Salome could not simply have sacrificed on her own behalf -

Why didn't you just phasa at your place?

[27] See Chapter Four p149.

> It's because Andronica is the eldest, she is older than me ... and so she is the one whom the ancestors would listen to. I cannot face them on my own and do this personally, no.

So the ritual was performed instead in the context of a family gathering, with Andronica officiating.

> It was good timing, because all my mother's children were here. ... Salome and my sister came very early in the morning, and my brother John also left Baragwanath [near Soweto] very early in the morning, and before the sun rose, we were all together here. We took the bucket of _nabele (sorghum beer) and did phasa with it, and we took that chicken, killed it, and did phasa with the blood. ... Then we took that chicken and cooked it, and ate it. Then my brother was fine after that.

On the occasion of the first sacrifice a measure of judicious management was required to ensure that Andronica's employers did not become aware of the ritual taking place in their back yard, but on that of the second they were fortunately away on holiday, having left the house in Andronica's care:

> They were not there, that's why we enjoyed it, and had a nice time.[28]

It is not only an older sister acting on behalf of her junior siblings, but also an older kiba singer acting for her group as a whole, who may play the role of kgadi in an urban context. Since the club contains many unrelated men and women, communication with badimo is here conducted in the most generalised of terms. The logistics of urban accommodation exclude female members from certain rituals performed by a kiba group, such as the slaughter of a beast for the annual year-end and year-beginning parties. This is because, in order to leave time for the skinning, cutting up, and cooking of the beast, it must be slaughtered in the township during the Saturday night before the Sunday when women arrive from the suburbs to attend the party. But other parties are done on the initiative of women, and involve them in a central role. At the child's birthday party described in Chapter One, Flora Mohlomi was the hostess and prime mover during the festivities. Being the oldest female member of Maaparankwe, she was seen as kgadi in relation to her fellow-performers as a whole.

[28] Salome and Andronica Machaba, recorded discussion with DJ and PM, Johannesburg, 19/10/91.

Mokete wa matswala a ngwana (child's birthday party)

After the women had danced into the performing space in the street from Jan Seakane's back yard, carrying the child and his birthday presents, Flora gave a welcoming speech and invocation couched in the formalistic language of sereto (praising), the form of oratory in which so many singers excel:

Le a mmona, le a mmona naa?	Do you see him, do you see him?
Ke sello	He is Weeping (proper name)
Sello sa masetha le pelo.	The weeping that will make one feel heartbroken.

She then addressed the ancestors - again in a generalised sense, on behalf of the child and the group as a whole - directly:

Bagolo tsogang	Great people rise up
Ke ya ngwana wa lena	Here is your child
A le a mmona, a le a mmona naa?	Do you see him, do you see him?

This was followed by the singing of a song about the child, by a ceremonial giving of presents, and later by a performance of the group's general repertoire.

A party like this one was a voluntary event, unsanctioned by rural ritual practice except through the remotest relation to the customary three-month hair-cutting ceremony (Monnig 1967:102). It appears as secular in nature, with its spirit of cultural revivalism in an urban context, and its inventive combining of ancestral invocation by a senior woman with music, praising, and present-giving. But whether primarily or only at one remove concerned with the actual presence and influence of the ancestors, such a performance demonstrates how these forms of oratory and performance associated with sesotho or setšo appear to derive their central logic from a connection to the deceased forebears of their living practitioners.

At this party Flora's role as kgadi involved no formal phasa but rather a generalised invoking of the ancestral presence through direto (praises). The ability to praise (go reta) is one which is frequently associated with ancestral invocation, both in this more general sense and in its more ritually specific one -

> Through phasa one can learn to do a sereto (praise) because she will be listening to someone talking to a particular person and say a lot of things about that particular ancestor, and from there switch over to others as well. To phasa and to reta is nearly

the same thing.[29]

Praising is centrally concerned with, and is propagated through, the continuity of the family. Especially in the domestic sphere, it is practised largely by women, who have learned the art from their mothers and grandmothers. Often, as in the case of Andronica Machaba, the same older sister who has assumed the role of kgadi also specialises in go reta.

Besides the manner of its transfer from the older to the younger generation, and its association with occasions on which the living communicate with their dead forebears, go reta (praising) is linked to family continuity and inheritance in another important way. Through its elaborate stanzas and chant-like incantations, a practitioner of this art reiterates the descent lines and affinal ties which have begotten her and which underlie her own existence. Bilateral rather than unilineal, the unique combination of these which characterise every new generation must be mastered and skilfully merged by the praiser. In Andronica's case, for example, although she spent more time with and so learned more praises from her maternal grandmother when growing up, she also picked up some of the praises appropriate to her father's side of the family from his mother. The result, in which both are "put together", provides a lengthy but rapidly-recited account of Andronica's forebears on both sides of the family, each addressed ceremoniously via his/her animal "totem"[30] rather than individually, as the following excerpt demonstrates:

We are the people of Machaba and Maraba,
The ones who shine among the clouds in the sky,
Those who get food for themselves;
You who swears and curses the Baupo people,
Where will you get a brother-in-law?
We are the grandchildren of Ranyalwa and Selaelo of the Lions,
And Mosibudi and Lekgaphola of the Leopards,
We are the grandchildren of Motlatso of Nkgaru and the Hare,
Those who don't die the death of a dog, but who die only if killed by a hunting stick
If you strike me I won't feel the pain, the pain will be felt by the heart,
We are the grandchildren of the milk that overflows from a bucket,
I'm Motlhaloga, the cousin of Mmapoo, the one of the black mountain from which you can see Bokgatla Makotong,
People of the spear that pierces, the one which has pierced the sister to Mathakgale of Matloga,
Matloga the son of Malesela,

[29] Salome and Andronica Machaba, recorded discussion with DJ and PM, Johannesburg, 19/10/91.

[30] See Chapter One p53.

The people who, when they are hungry, get angry,
Who are used to being bellyful.[31]

For women of Andronica's generation, the experience of resettlement and the resulting social dislocation made it on the one hand more difficult to reconstruct these histories, owing to the interrupted contact with the older female family members from which such praises were learned, but on the other it established conditions which made the creative articulation of a family-based identity perhaps more crucial than it would have been under circumstances less disrupted.

Sotho activities like praising and possession, in which urban kiba singers are to a greater or lesser extent involved, do not occupy a fixed place in an unchanging universe of coherently connected cultural forms. Just as malopo suffering is handled inventively by these singers, so the art of praising is flexibly reinterpreted in new ways by them, and made to overlap and interact with other genres.[32] In addition to its fully-fledged performance by a practitioner such as Andronica Machaba, mentioned above, it is imaginatively incorporated into kiba songs by singers such as Joanna Maleaka, or by Julia Lelahana who prefers to reserve praising proper for performance at home with her family. Andronica Machaba and Joanna Maleaka, acknowledging that home is the proper place for praising in its complete form, have found an ingenious way to straddle the distance: they have made cassette recordings of themselves praising, and sent them back to their mothers to play.

Whether in the unabridged form associated more strongly with rural performance, or in one of a number of urban permutations, praising facilitates the expression of identity. Women such as Andronica Machaba and Julia Lelahana, despite the social dislocations which accompanied their early childhood and those which brought them to town as young women, root themselves through praising in the context of an orally-transmitted tradition of the perpetuation of the family. What malopo possession achieves through the direct and unmediated intrusion of spirits into the bodies of their female descendants, then, the art of go reta accomplishes through conscious learning, artifice and skill. For a woman involved in

[31] Andronica Machaba, recorded discussion with DJ and PM, Johannesburg, 19/10/91.

[32] See Chapter Three p133 for a discussion of genre boundary blurring in oral forms of expression.

either or both of these activities, her actions and words provide a "screen on which are projected, in condensed form, her family history and her own biography" (Zempleni 1977, cited by Crapanzano 1977:26).

Conclusion

My argument is that migrant women from the Trust and reserve areas of Leboa in the northern Transvaal were not seeking in kiba simply the security of a "voluntary organisation", as the overly sociological accounts of adaptive urbanisation by writers of the 1950s and 1960s might lead us to believe. Participation in kiba provided not just a cohesive group of fellows with whom the tribulations and successes of migrancy could be shared, but also an environment in which a number of activities, conceived of collectively as those of sesotho, could be carried out. The pursuit of these activities played a crucial role in providing for a sense of migrant female identity.

Such activities - the propitiation of and in some cases possession by ancestral spirits, divination, and praising, all combined in an urban context under the rubric of the weekly kiba practice or performance - had been first experienced or engaged in by these women during childhood.[33] In most cases, however, sesotho had represented a weak strain of girlhood culture, culminating in the experience of koma (initiation) but soon overtaken by an adolescent culture more oriented to school, to tlhabologo (civilisation) and to the things of sekgowa (white ways).

Their intensive reinvolvement in this world of sesotho as mature women, some years after beginning to work in town, could be accurately characterised as having the appearance of a selective cultural revival. It did not involve an abandoning of those aspects of tlhabologo (civilisation) still thought to be beneficial: none, for example, would consider going to a ngaka (diviner) for an illness other than a spiritually induced one. What such a characterisation would overlook, however, would be the rootedness of sotho singing, praising, divining and ancestral invocation in the idiom of family permanence and ongoingness.

[33] See Chapter Six p211-9.

Many of these women had previously been members of independent churches, especially the ZCC. This might suggest that they had already, before singing kiba in town, established attachments to sources of group-oriented healing and support as solutions to the problems of individually-experienced affliction and misfortune. But most were disinclined to maintain their church membership after they had ceased being linked to the churches through their husbands. This suggests that the idiom and message of such churches was better suited to the expression of male migrant identity and consciousness than it was to that of these women - first-generation female migrants, whose departure for the Reef was generated out of a strong sense of responsibility and connection to their families of birth.

For these women, the range of performative genres associated with sesotho uses the idiom of kinship, bilateral descent, and the ongoing concern of forebears in the affairs of their living progeny. Through these means, sesotho provides for the expression of a specifically female migrant identity.

Conclusion

This thesis has been an investigation of the use of "traditional music" by a range of people involved in, or affected by, northern Transvaal migrancy. Methodologically it represents a re-exploration of a number of terrains which, although they have been traversed by other writers, have not previously been mapped to highlight the features which appear prominent in this study. Nor have they been laid over each other or seen as intersecting as they appear in this context.

Migrant labour has been an issue of great interest and concern to anthropologists, not only in South Africa, but also in West and East Africa, and on the Zambian Copperbelt. One aspect of the study of rural-urban migration has been an interest in regional or ethnic associations during the 1950s and 1960s and, in more recent years, in ethnicity more broadly. A contemporary trend has been to re-explore the same issues in different terms: through looking at the use of real and imagined space in orienting people's worlds and conceptions of their worlds, and the aligning of different places with values which go beyond the merely spatial or geographical. In my own study, this has become manifest as an interest in the significance of migrants' ideas about home. Home, more than just a geographical locality, is a source of orientation and identification created by migrants using materials drawn from pre- and post-colonial history.

Here, the anthropology of migration has intersected with the anthropology of music: it is partly through musical performance that images of home are created. Southern African studies in ethnomusicology have attempted to document, in advance of other studies, the culture and consciousness of town- and country-dwelling Africans. But this approach, while giving due attention to culture, tended to underplay the importance of the material and sociopolitical circumstances of particular constituencies of musicians and their audiences. The people who played or listened to music appeared to belong to broad and relatively homogenous categories, and little information was given about the significance of songs or dances in the context of particular lives or life-experiences.

A marrying of the anthropology of migration with the anthropology of music required the acknowledgement that life experience and musical performance overlapped in fundamental ways. Migrants' music and dance are not merely passive reflectors of already-constituted social relationships and identities, but play a role in formulating and cementing these. Songs labelled "traditional" sung by migrants in town are not anachronistic survivals from a rural home, but building-blocks in the creation of home and identity in an urban setting.

Exploring the convergence between music and migrant experience became an exercise in understanding the particular and the subjective. From a political economy perspective, migrancy is often understood as a product of broad processes occurring on the level of the capitalist economy and the state. But the migrants whose life histories I recorded and whose performance I observed and documented were not the passive victims of such processes. Rather, they were actors, drawing on both personal and cultural resources to shape their choices and to structure their lives. A focus on migrant performance allowed me to look at the "local knowledge" in terms of which broad processes of rural dispossession and of proletarianisation were understood and dealt with.

The anthropology of women and gender was a third major area of interest. This, too, was a terrain previously traversed. But its intersections with migration and performance had not yet been mapped. In discussions of migration and of ethnic associations, women have often been assumed to be appendages of men. But the migrant women who came to constitute the major focus of my study were making their own choices about the creation and affirmation of a sense of home. For them, perhaps more than for men, musical performance was a crucial means by which this home was created. Given that the intersection of music and migrancy had directed my attention to the particularities of subjective experience, it was one of my concerns to understand what it was that made women migrants, apparently coming from the same areas of the country and using the same broad set of symbols as men, view "home" and "tradition" in such unique ways.

In so doing, it became necessary to challenge the standard opposition between Christian and pagan/traditionalist which has structured so many studies of South African migrancy and also of South African music. The women migrant singers of my study are mostly former

Christians. Their adoption of a style of music normally viewed as the preserve of pagan or traditionalist men represents a transcendence of the rigid dichotomies - of religious orientation, as well as of gender - which have characterised much of the literature.

Rather than being limited by the behaviour associated with given social categories, the migrant women singers of kiba have thus drawn eclectically on the materials of tradition and modernity, of manhood and womanhood, in constructing a sense of shared home and of identity. It is to this process of identity formation, in which the substance of setšo (origin or tradition) is paradoxically used in concocting something which emphasises autonomy and emancipation, that I wish to turn in the last few pages of this study.

Origin and identity

The word setšo (o), sometimes replacing and sometimes used as an alternative to sesotho, denotes a series of values, experiences, places and relationships, which are drawn on as a resource by various migrant constituencies in the northern Transvaal. Music and dance are one major means through which this is achieved. Migrant men and migrant women on the Reef, and stay-at-home women in the villages of Lebowa, group together for regular practices and performances of a music/dance defined by reference to origin or tradition.

The structures and rhythms of this music show little evidence of change, but the lyrics, particularly those of women's music, provide a space and an opportunity for extensive commentary on present-day situations and predicaments. Kiba integrates topical comment by contemporary composers alongside accounts of the experience of composers from previous generations, and places these within a marked-off arena of heightened expectation and attention. It is this capacity for combining the new with the old which makes the performance of kiba ideally suited to articulating setšo or sesotho.

As this suggests, neither setšo nor the genre which it defines is immutable and unchanging. Its use in particular social contexts is what imbues it with specific significance. Male migrants in compounded employment and in hostels and shacks have utilised it to activate and elaborate a sense of a rural "home". In the contemporary kiba performance of these migrants,

events from different regions' contrasting precolonial and colonial histories are selectively invoked, with those from the south favouring imagery which celebrates the 19th century Pedi polity while those from the north stress specific, often totemic, local identities. The performance of the female version of the same genre by stay-at-home women articulates and dramatizes - sometimes in an exaggerated, even parodic fashion - their domestic, dependent status, and their position within a separately-defined, female realm.

But this study has been mostly concerned with a social context in which setšo appears at its most shifting and innovative, and at its least immutable or unchanging: that is, the associations formed around musical performance by groups of northern Transvaal migrant women. In this context, the suitability of music to articulating the values of setšo - in its most innovative and changeable form - becomes particularly clear. In the experience of women newly arrived in the Reef as migrants, things of home or origin were at first narrowly defined by reference to a particular home area. It was through the evolution of a broad, encompassing and homogenous style of dance/music/lyrics out of a series of area-specific local ones that the development of a broader home or place of origin was largely achieved. Here, a development on the level of a "traditional" musical style was the means through which an urban-based grouping of autonomous wage-earning women came to claim a common home, as manifestation of the common experiences which bound them together on the Reef.

These women's common experiences as migrants on the Reef were laid over a series of earlier rural experiences characterised by high degrees of social dislocation on the one hand, and aspirations to live in a civilised way on the other: both features in strong contrast to the lives of the stay-at-home heartland singers of Chapter Five. Against this backdrop, "origin" has come to have uses and significances different to those which it has in its use both by male migrants and by stay-at-home women. The identity which migrant women have assembled using setšo or sesotho - expressed mainly through its musical manifestation, but also using the other ideas, contexts, and values associated with it - is a strikingly modern one.

Tradition, and particularly the music associated with it, has frequently been used as a means to modernity (Erlmann 1991:11), or as an idiom through which to articulate modernist aspirations (Ranger 1975, cited in Vail and White 1991:50). As Waterman notes of the immensely popular juju style in Nigeria,

> modernity and tradition may be mutually dependent, rather than opposed processes ... images of deep cultural identity may be articulated and negotiated through cosmopolitan syncretic forms (1990:146-7).

It may, indeed, be precisely the claim to authentic traditional status which lies at the basis of a music's claim to be popular and modern (ibid.:82-6). Ranger's acclaimed observations about the essential flexibility of precolonial African custom can thus be seen to be true of indigenous "traditions" in the contemporary era as well. Links with custom and continuity serve not to make for something static and unchanging as in the European "invented" version of African tradition, but to maintain a sense of ongoing identity despite the changes and adaptations for which tradition allows (1983:247-8).

The case of migrant women singers of kiba, and their use of the music and things of setšo as the cornerstone of an identity as autonomous wage-earning women beyond the domestic domain is not, then, as paradoxical as it might at first appear. But is it not perhaps a distortion to single out and stress as central the strand of modernity in the identity which these singers assembled from the materials provided by setšo? The backgrounds and communities from which they came were not, after all, uniformly oriented towards tlhabologo (civilisation) or away from a custom-bound way of living. The very dislocations of the resettlement era served to juxtapose with unprecedented immediacy those from progressive Christian backgrounds with those from traditionalist ones, often leading the former to adopt customary practices such as initiation where they would not otherwise have done so. And even in those families with an apparently wholehearted commitment to the modern way, gender made for an uneven texture in the fabric of this commitment. Boys had the edge in becoming educated, and thus in being integrated into the industrial labour force under relatively favourable conditions. Girls had less education, which was eventually to disadvantage them when they began to work. They spent more time around the house with grandmothers and aunts, often acquiring the elements of a "weak" strain of sesotho in this way, despite the overall modernising orientation of their families.

The trajectories followed by the lives and careers of these northern Transvaal migrant women, like the "life strategies" of the women of Phokeng who came from a more uniformly Christian or Christianising background, were thus a mixture of "assertiveness and conformity" (Bozzoli 1991:237). They belonged to communities of people who had sought freedom from the strictures of a custom-bound or patriarchally controlled existence, but their place as girls within the household had made for their acquisition of some of the culture and values of sesotho which they were later to draw upon when formulating an identity as migrants.

It was, then, a mixed bag of background influences and experiences, both within and beyond the household, which formed the background to these women's adult lives. Within this framework, their assumption of new roles conceived of as similar to those of men, their ability to exist as relatively autonomous breadwinners, and their aspirations to educate themselves or at least their younger siblings and children, do indeed appear as emancipated. The stressing of the importance of "the tradition of our home people" by migrant kiba singers does not contradict or outweigh, but rather complements and gives shape to, the equally emphatic stressing of the importance of tlhabolego (civilization) and the modern way.

The asserting of a broadly-defined home by these women, through the medium of a music "of origin", should thus be understood not as a sign of nostalgia but as a project of social advancement. This is easiest to grasp if one thinks of the relationship between tradition and modernity, not as the stark contrast between a past of docile obedience to customary ways and a present of liberation and freedom (Berman 1982:25), but rather as a contradictory combination of the "desire to be rooted in a stable and coherent personal and social past, and [the] insatiable desire for growth" (ibid.:35). To be a part of the modern world is to be involved in a process "that destroys both the physical and social landscapes of our past and our emotional links with those lost worlds" but simultaneously to seek allegiance "to ethnic, national, class and sexual groups which we hope will give us a firm identity" (ibid.).[1]

It is the search for such an "identity" which thus motivates the use of images of origin and tradition in the lives of northern Transvaal women migrant singers. Since these are images

[1] My thanks to Jonathan Hyslop for bringing this source, and other sources on modernity, to my attention.

associated with sesotho, which is contrasted implicitly or explicitly with the ways of other cultures, their invoking by these women does appear to suggest the seeking of an allegiance to a group defining itself in ethnic terms. The idea of ethnicity and that of identity have, in fact, occasionally been used interchangeably in recent writings in the social sciences.[2] But although they are linked, they refer to two different processes. If ethnicity describes the way in which a group comes to develop a "sense of otherness and distinctiveness" (Maddock 1991:10), then investigating identity should make us focus on how particular selves come to regard themselves as part of such a broader group. Identity "unites a sense of self with a sense of belonging" and so comprehends elements of both personal and collective psychology (ibid.:11).

Both the strongly emphasised quality of a group's boundaries, and the strength of an individual's commitment to such a group, appear as highly contingent and situational in the light of recent writings about the "construction of identity". Individuals may be "born into", and even socialised within, particular social circumstances, but it is the process by which they activate this birthright, or - for those not included by virtue of birth - the process by which they claim or legitimise their group membership through some other means, which is of interest from a constructivist standpoint.

For migrant women, scattered in the suburbs as domestic workers, there was a variety of materials available for the assembling of a migrant identity. One was the exposure to sesotho which some acquired during girlhood. Another was the model for association provided by male dancing groups, around which their groups were later to form. But, in constructing an identity from these elements, women were to overcome both the undervaluing and ghettoisation of female sotho culture in a rural context, and the limitations both on autonomy and on the extent of actual geographical "homes" which would have disadvantaged them in the strictly male-dominated clubs in town. Neither of these ingredients would have served, on its own, to define a broad-based association which would eventually accommodate not only women speaking northern Sotho, but also those from Ndebele-, Tswana- and Venda-

[2] See, for example, Wilmsen (1993), Wilmsen and Vossen (1990), Goldin (1989). The concept of identity has previously been of concern more to psychologists or social psychologists than to anthropologists. See, for example, Brown (1985:771).

speaking communities and families. Alignment with a group and a musical culture which defined itself as sotho, for these "outsider" women perhaps more than for their counterparts whose socialisation gave them some basic components of sotho-ness, involved them as active subjects choosing a position in the world.

But the group identities which people construct or with which they align themselves are not only ethnic ones. Between an individual and a group defined by reference to the usual trappings of ethnicity - shared blood, common origins, ancestral land, and the like - there may be smaller groups within which an individual positions him/herself. For the migrant singers of kiba, identification with the smaller unit has perhaps been a means through which an individual identified herself, or reinforced her identification, with the larger. Kiba singers' allegiance with sesotho/setšo occurred not only in public through their performance of music and dance, but also within the domestic sphere. This is evident in their taking up of positions in the family normally occupied by - or in competition with - brothers or sons. It can also be seen in the transformation of ideas about the intergenerational devolution of gifts and spiritual qualities within the family. Certain migrant women have been possessed by male ancestors, even in some cases receiving the gift of divination from their fathers or grandfathers, and have been in subtle ways empowered by their assumption of a role once reserved for men. In both the shouldering of new male-like roles of support and responsibility, and the assuming of inherited spiritual traits previously the preserve of men, the notion of sesotho has served as a validating motif. Behaving in accord with the dictates of sesotho within the sphere of the family, and enunciating the values of sesotho in the broader realm of urban migrant life, thus appear as closely linked processes.

The women of kiba, in seeking out a space for themselves within the legitimating precincts of sesotho, have begun to sing in a male style in a public domain previously reserved for males, have taken on male roles within the family, and have become inheritors and practitioners of male spiritual arts. Is the identity of sesotho/setšo which these women are constructing for themselves, then, an essentially masculine one?

While an attempt to answer this question in full would take me into areas of theoretical sophistication beyond the ambit of this thesis, a tentative answer may be offered here.

Anthropological writings on ethnicity have mostly posited male subjects. Ethnicities emerge around the control of resources - access to urban employment or housing, or rural land - which have been assumed to be of importance primarily to men. Indeed, women have been seen more often as belonging among the resources controlled by ethnic, tribal or regional associations than as belonging among the ranks of the potential controllers. And where women do align themselves emphatically with the ways or traditions of a particular group, they have been seen as acting in defence of a threatened way of life, and as resisting "the destruction of their culture" (Mona and Etienne 1980:21). Thus, while the claiming of a primordial identity by men was seen as articulating situationally-evoked struggles over scarce resources, the claiming of a similar identity by women appeared, where it was discussed at all, as a wholehearted and unmediated alignment to roots and to a culture of origin.

But for women to align or identify themselves unconditionally with a specific ethnicity in this way might be an undertaking of uncertain and ambivalent value. Male identity is likely to be valued more highly than female identity within a group identity that has developed around the control of resources including subordinate or dependent women. Under these circumstances, it is easier for a male subject to identify himself squarely and unequivocally with the predominant image of male-appropriate behaviour within a given culture or ethnicity than for a woman to identify herself with the predominant image of the female.[3] For rural dependent wives and sisters in the northern Transvaal, for example, sesotho represents ambivalent values. It is the locus of family continuity and of the positive values associated with this. But at the same time, seen from the perspective of "the male-dominated dominant discourse" (Moore 1992:8) it is marginal, and hierarchically inferior, to male sothoness.

Alignment with sesotho in this sense might indeed, in the case of rurally-based women, represent the defence of a domain of domestic and customary values against encroachment and ultimate destruction by the ways of sekgowa. At the same time, however, it signifies

[3] It is Moore's suggestion that most cultures possess a male-dominated discourse in which the dominant image of appropriate male behaviour is valued more highly than that of the female. I have developed the argument in relation to ethnicity. Moore suggests that the insights of post-structuralism can be used to suggest as a substitute for the cohesive Western self a self or subject involving a "multiplicity of alternative subject positions" (1992:8). Such a multiple subject is to be found positioning itself in the gap between the actual experience of individuals and the models of appropriate behaviour offered within a particular culture.

identification with a sphere which is marginal and undervalued. But alignment with sesotho by migrant women seeking independence represents a bold step beyond the sphere of custom and domesticity. Their version of sesotho, unlike that of rural women singers, does not allow for them to be "pathologized" (ibid.) by having their songs labelled as less important than men's. Like men who perform the music of sesotho or setšo, they have the authority to comment publically. But the necessity to remain autonomous of men prevents a wholehearted alignment with male images of sesotho. Migrant women performers of mmino wa setšo have created an identity by selecting and interweaving elements from the shifting terrains of sotho man- and woman-hood.

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Appendix 1

List of recorded discussions

Migrant Women

The names marked with an asterisk are those of the women on whom I recorded comprehensive life-history information, and who comprised the sample of twenty women referred to in the thesis. In the case of a joint interview, the sample member is underlined.

Name	Date	Place	
Esther Rapetswa	1/3/90	Alexandra	
Joanna Maleaka	24/3/90	Johannesburg	*
D Mashaba, M Sabati and M Lebogo	7/4/90	Alexandra	*
Rosina Msina	21/4/90	Johannesburg	*
Andronica & Salome Machaba	13/5/90	Johannesburg	**
Martina Ledwaba	20/5/90	Johannesburg	*
Phina Komape	31/5/90	Johannesburg	*
Anna Phetla	20/6/90	Soweto	
Elsie Lekgotwane	18/8/90	Johannesburg	*
Mary Lebogo	25/8/90	Johannesburg	*
Fransina Monyela	20/9/90	Johannesburg	*
Joyce Ledwaba	21/9/90	Johannesburg	*
Margaret Ranku	22/9/90	Johannesburg	*
Sarah Motswi	19/10/90	Johannesburg	*
Anna Mei	10/11/90	Johannesburg	*
Julia Lelahana	4/5/91	Johannesburg	*
Flora Mohlomi	11/8/91	Johannesburg	*
Anna Dikotlo	17/8/91	Johannesburg	*
Anna Dikotlo	5/9/91	Johannesburg	
Salome Machaba	7/9/91	Johannesburg	
Paulina Mphoka	2/10/91	Johannesburg	*
Joanna Maleaka	5/10/91	Johannesburg	
Julia Lelahana	13/10/91	Johannesburg	
Helen Matjila	8/7/91	Johannesburg	*
S & A Machaba	19/10/91	Johannesburg	
Mary Kapa	23/10/91	Johannesburg	*

Migrant Men

Mr Nalane	27/10/89	Johannesburg	
Lucas Sefoka	27/2/90	Johannesburg	
Maleka & Co	11/3/90	Alexandra	
Lucas Sefoka	2/5/90	Johannesburg	
Alfred Thobejane	30/6/90	Johannesburg	

Piet Makola	7/7/90	Edenvale
Sam Nchabeleng	29/7/90	Johannesburg
Lucas Masemola	28/10/90	Johannesburg
Frans Sefoka	1/12/90	Alexandra
Jan Seašane	24/3/91	Tembisa
Pieter Thobejane	24/3/91	Tembisa
Prince Seroka	6/4/91	Tembisa
Prince Seroka	21/4/91	Malebitsa, Moutse
Reuben Malaka	10/4/91	Johannesburg

Rural Men and Women

Mmagomathumasha Madibane	25/1/89	Sephaku
Eva Mogosa	27/1/89	Sephaku
Mathumasha Madibane	2/11/89	Sephaku
Magobaby Lerobane	2/11/89	Sephaku
Magoouma Mashiane	2/11/89	Sephaku
Dipalela Tlala	3/11/89	Sephaku
Lucas Kgole	3/11/89	Sephaku
Kutupu	3/11/89	Lukau Mission
Norah Sekonya	18/8/90	GaNkwana
Mpe Sebei	7/9/90	Nchabaleng
Ramogohlo Diphofa	20/12/90	Mphanama
Mmagojane Kgalema	29/12/90	Nchabeleng
Mathabathe Mokwale	29/12/90	Nchabeleng
Raisibe Sebei	29/12/90	Nchabeleng
Ramadimetse	30/12/90	Madibong
M Kgobalale	8/1/91	Madibong
Mmagolain Sebei	13/7/91	Nchabeleng
Motlatle Sebei	14/7/91	Nchabeleng
Jackson Shaku	14/7/91	Nchabeleng
Dithabaneng	14/7/91	Nchabeleng
Johannes Mokgoadi	16/7/91	GaMasha
M Phakwago	17/7/91	Nchabeleng
Mathabathe Mokwale	17/7/91	Nchabeleng
Makgolo wa Pine & Dithabaneng	19/7/91	Nchabeleng
Makgolo wa Pine & Dithabaneng	28/7/91	Nchabeleng
Singers of Mararankodi	28/7/91	Nchabeleng
Rangwane Jane	29/12/91	Nchabeleng
Mmagojane Kgalema	20/12/91	Nchabeleng
Maribulle Ramaila	16/12/91	Nchabeleng
Ramogohlo Diphofa	23/12/91	Mphanama
Makgolo wa Pine	24/12/91	Nchabeleng
Hutama Debeila	16/12/91	Nchabeleng

Piet Makola	7/7/91	Edenvale
Sam Nchabeleng	29/7/91	Johannesburg
Lucas Masemola	28/10/91	Johannesburg
Frans Seloka	1/12/91	Alexandra
Jan Sealana	24/3/91	Tembisa
Pieter Thobejane	24/3/91	Tembisa
Prince Seroka	6/4/91	Tembisa
Prince Seroka	21/4/91	Malebitsa, Moutse
Reuben Maloka	10/4/91	Johannesburg

Rural Men and Women

Mmagomathumasha Madibane	25/1/89	Sephaku
Eva Mogosa	27/1/89	Sephaku
Mathumasha Madibane	2/11/89	Sephaku
Magobaby Lerobane	2/11/89	Sephaku
Magoouma Mashiane	2/11/89	Sephaku
Dipalela Tlala	3/11/89	Sephaku
Lucas Kgole	3/11/89	Sephaku
Kutupu	3/11/89	Lukau Mission
Norah Sekonya	18/8/90	GaNkwana
Mpe Sebei	7/9/90	Nchabaleng
Ramogohlo Diphofa	20/12/90	Mphanama
Mmagojane Kgalema	29/12/90	Nchabeleng
Mathabathe Mokwale	29/12/90	Nchabeleng
Raisibe Sebei	29/12/90	Nchabeleng
Ramadimetse	30/12/90	Madibong
M Kgobalale	8/1/91	Madibong
Mmagolain Sebei	13/7/91	Nchabeleng
Motlatle Sebei	14/7/91	Nchabeleng
Jackson Shaku	14/7/91	Nchabeleng
Dithabaneng	14/7/91	Nchabeleng
Johannes Mokgoadi	16/7/91	GaMasha
M Phakwago	17/7/91	Nchabeleng
Mathabathe Mokwale	17/7/91	Nchabeleng
Makgolo wa Pine & Dithabaneng	19/7/91	Nchabeleng
Makgolo wa Pine & Dithabaneng	28/7/91	Nchabeleng
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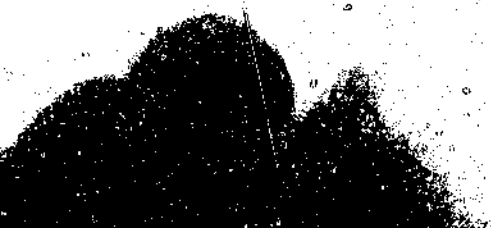
Maribulle Ramaila	16/12/91	Nchabeleng
Ramogohlo Diphofa	23/12/91	Mphanama
Makgolo wa Pine	24/12/91	Nchabeleng
Hutama Debeila	16/12/91	Nchabeleng



Piet Makola	7/7/90	Edenvale
Sam Nchabeleng	29/7/90	Johannesburg
Lucas Masemola	28/10/90	Johannesburg
Frans Sefoka	1/12/90	Alexandra
Jan Seašane	24/3/91	Tembisa
Pieter Thobejane	24/3/91	Tembisa
Prince Seroka	6/4/91	Tembisa
Prince Seroka	21/4/91	Malebitsa, Moutse
Reuben Malaka	10/4/91	Johannesburg

Rural Men and Women

Mmagomathumasha Madibane	25/1/89	Sephaku
Eva Mogosa	27/1/89	Sephaku
Mathumasha Madibane	2/11/89	Sephaku
Magobaby Lerobane	2/11/89	Sephaku
Magoouma Mashiane	2/11/89	Sephaku
Dipalela Tlala	3/11/89	Sephaku
Lucas Kgole	3/11/89	Sephaku
Kutupu	3/11/89	Lukau Mission
Norah Sekonya	18/8/90	GaNkwana
Mpe Sebei	7/9/90	Nchabaleng
Ramogohlo Diphofa	20/12/90	Mphanama
Mmagojane Kgalema	29/12/90	Nchabeleng
Mathabathe Mokwale	29/12/90	Nchabeleng
Raisibe Sebei	29/12/90	Nchabeleng
Ramadimetse	30/12/90	Madibong
M Kgobalale	8/1/91	Madibong
Mmagolain Sebei	13/7/91	Nchabeleng
Motlatle Sebei	14/7/91	Nchabeleng
Jackson Shaku	14/7/91	Nchabeleng
Dithabaneng	14/7/91	Nchabeleng
Johannes Mokgoadi	16/7/91	GaMasha
M Phakwago	17/7/91	Nchabeleng
Mathabathe Mokwale	17/7/91	Nchabeleng
Makgolo wa Pine & Dithabaneng	19/7/91	Nchabeleng
Makgolo wa Pine & Dithabaneng	28/7/91	Nchabeleng
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Mmagojane Kgalema	20/12/91	Nchabeleng
Maribulle Ramaila	16/12/91	Nchabeleng
Ramogohlo Diphofa	23/12/91	Mphanama
Makgolo wa Pine	24/12/91	Nchabeleng
Hutama Debeila	16/12/91	Nchabeleng

Unrecorded discussions referred to in the thesis

Thapedi Lerobane	24/1/89	Sephaku
Nkapile Hlakola	24/1/89	Sephaku
Bafedi Madihlaba	25/1/89	Sephaku
Mogopi Madibane	25/1/89	Sephaku
Magomadripana Makeke	2/11/89	Sephaku
Magomadereka Lerobane	5/2/89	Sephaku
Mmagomotala Mofele	17/7/9	Nchabeleng
Mr Makgaleng	19/7/91	Apel
Lebopo household	19/7/91	Nchabeleng
Maaparankwe	27/7/91	GaSelepe
Mr. Kgalema (education spokesperson for NUM)	8/11/91	Johannesburg
Modderfontein dancers	11/11/91	Modderfontein

Abbreviated names of interpreters who assisted with discussions and with transcriptions:

AM	Anna Madihlaba
MTN	Malete Thomas Nkadimeng
PM	Philip Mnisi
PMb	Philip Mbiba
NP	Neo Phakathi

Appendix 2

List of kiba performances

This list excludes all regular practices, which take place on Sundays (usually excluding the last Sunday of the month, when many migrants return home to visit their families). It is not an exhaustive list, but it gives an idea of the variety of venues and occasions at groups performed during the period 1990-1992. I either attended or was given information about these performances.

5/2/89	Dipalela Tlala performed at a party at their leader's house.
26/11/89	A variety of groups from the Reef performed at the "Second Annual Traditional Dance and Attire Competition", organised by Sabikwa Afts Society incorporating Daveyton Cultural Foundation, at Sinaba Stadium, Daveyton.
18/3/90	SK Alex annual party in Alexandra township, featuring performances by SK Alex, Bapedi Champions and Ditšhweu tša Malebogo.

22/7/90	Kiba competition at the Funda Centre, Soweto, organised by Pete Makola and the Lebowa Mmino wa Setšo Association. Won by Ditšhweu tša Malebogo (women's section) and Bapedi Champions (men's section).
22/7/90	Rally at Phokwane, Nebo district, to welcome John Nkadimeng, returned ANC exile, back to Lebowa; featuring Manganeng rural woman's group. Debate about whether these women's groups should become ANC-affiliated.
3-8/9/90	Kiba competition at the Lebowakgomo [illegible], featuring numerous groups of rural women singers and of young men and women of schoolgoing age.
1/11/90	SK Alex trip to Masemola village, to perform at the wedding of the younger sister of group member Lucas Masemola.
30/12/90	Dithabaneng performed at the house of one of its "policemen", Magolina Sebei, in Nchabeleng.
24/2/91	Ditšhweu tša Malebogo and Mašašane Alex group performed at a party in 4th Ave, Alexandra. TV3 (from Potgietersrus) performed at a party in 11th Ave, Alexandra.
2/3/91	SK Alex performed at a wedding in Potgietersrus. The Matlala Alex group performed at a party in the Malebogo area.
9/3/91	SK Alex performed at a party at a group member's home in Dennilton.
28/3/91	Maaparankwe spent the Easter weekend performing at the opening of a bottle store and bar/lounge belonging to Nelson Ramodikwe, the Chief Minister of Lebowa, in Lenyenye, Naphuno district.
21/4/91	Maaparankwe performed at Malebitsa, Moutse district, at a party for an old man, a kiba enthusiast and former dancer, arranged by his daughter.
21/4/91	Maaparankwe performed for the birthday party of Maradona Maroka, the grandchild of the group's leader Jan Seašane.
5/5/91	Maaparankwe performed at a Tribal Dancing festival organised by Eskom at the Standard Bank Arena, Johannesburg.
27/7/91	Maaparankwe performed at GaSelepe, Sekhukhune district, at a party held by the wife of a group member.
17/8/91	Dithabaneng performed at the house of another of its policemen, Mmagojane Kgalema, in Nchabeleng.
8/9/91	Ditšhweu tša Malebogo performed at a meeting of a mohodisano consisting of group members, held in the backyard room of Salome Machaba, in Johannesburg.

20/10/91 Maaparankwe performed for the birthday party of the grandchild of Julia Lelahana, a group member, in Tembisa.

1/12/91 Maaparankwe performed at their own end-of-year party in Tembisa.

16/2/92 Maaparankwe performed at their own opening party "go bula modiro" (to open the business/work) in Tembisa.

Appendix 3

Select Discography

This list was kindly compiled for me by Rob Allingham, both from records in his own private collection and from records and master tapes in the Archive at Gallo Africa. Dates are rough estimates, since no record of exact dates was kept.

EMI RECORDS

Bakxaga Singers	(composer credit: J Shai)		
MV JP126	Dikgaka	OAS 565-1	c.1952
	Mmapula	OAS 566-1	
HMV JP127	Moyakhakga	OAS 567-1	
	Nama Lemphaka	OAS 568-1	
HMV JP2009	Samphephethu	OAS 569-1	
	Mashekane	OAS 570-1	
Elizabeth Radzaga	(composer credit: Radzaga)		
HMV JP2001	Matimba	OAS 1006B	c.1953
	Mathinya	OAS 1007B	
Dipela Tsabapedi	(composer credit: J Mashelane)		"
HMV JP2052	Thsusu	OAS 909	
	Kxetsi	OAS 910	
Vesha Dinaka	(composer credit: traditional)		"
HMV JP2070	Lexalani	OAS 968	
	Lexowa	OAS 969	

Dipela Tsabapedi	(composer credit: Dipela tsabapedi)		
HMV JP542	Sewelewele	OAS 1227	c.late 1950s
	Sekonkwani	OAS 1228	
HMV JP561	Skinkbord	OAS 1289	
	Kakapan	OAS 1290	
HMV JP624	Matjid	OAS 941	c.1953
	Mmaijele	OAS 946	
HMV JP693	Bothakga	OAS 1567	c.late 1950s
	Mogobo	OAS 1568	
HMV JP718	Moria	OAS 1709-1	c.late 1960s
	Mmutla	OAS 1719-1	

TROUBADOUR RECORDS

Mmatou Rammutla			c.mid 1950s
B2 1218	Setata	AD 493	
	Dithakaume	AD 494	
Johannes Marera			"
B2 1342	Sekutupu	AD 742	
	Maphere	AD 743	
Dinaka			"
B2 1379	Mathavhagomo	AD 816	
	Mutshaini	AD 817	
	Linotsi	AD 818	
	Visa	AD 819	
Malopo aba thokwa			"
B2 1418	Makole	AB 894	
	Doropong	AB 895	
Marara Chewe			"
B2 1502	Dinotshe	ADB 198	

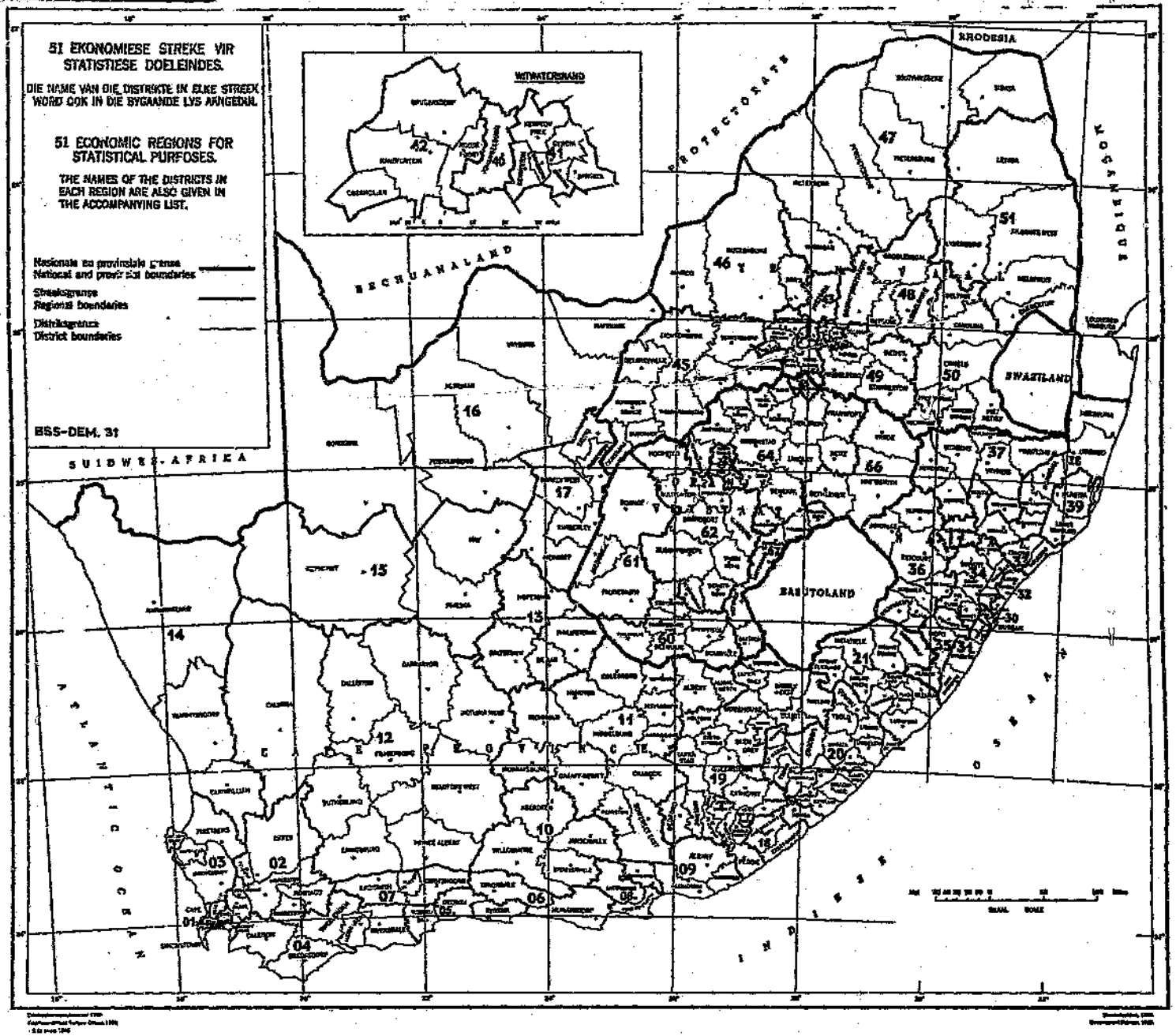
SK Skukuland	(composer credit: Jack Sloane)	
	Monte	c.1954
	Keba	
Frans Ncha		
	Mamarupini	c.1956
	Maleriya	
Evans Nchu and the three girls		
	Mahlalela	c.1960
	Sebedubedu	
	Shuru	
	Mnamutsumi	
	Adiyo jaxo kxaja Nkwe	
Mapedi a Pietersburg	(composer credit: Daniel Rankofi)	
	Pesha Latshoene	
	Lekoapa	

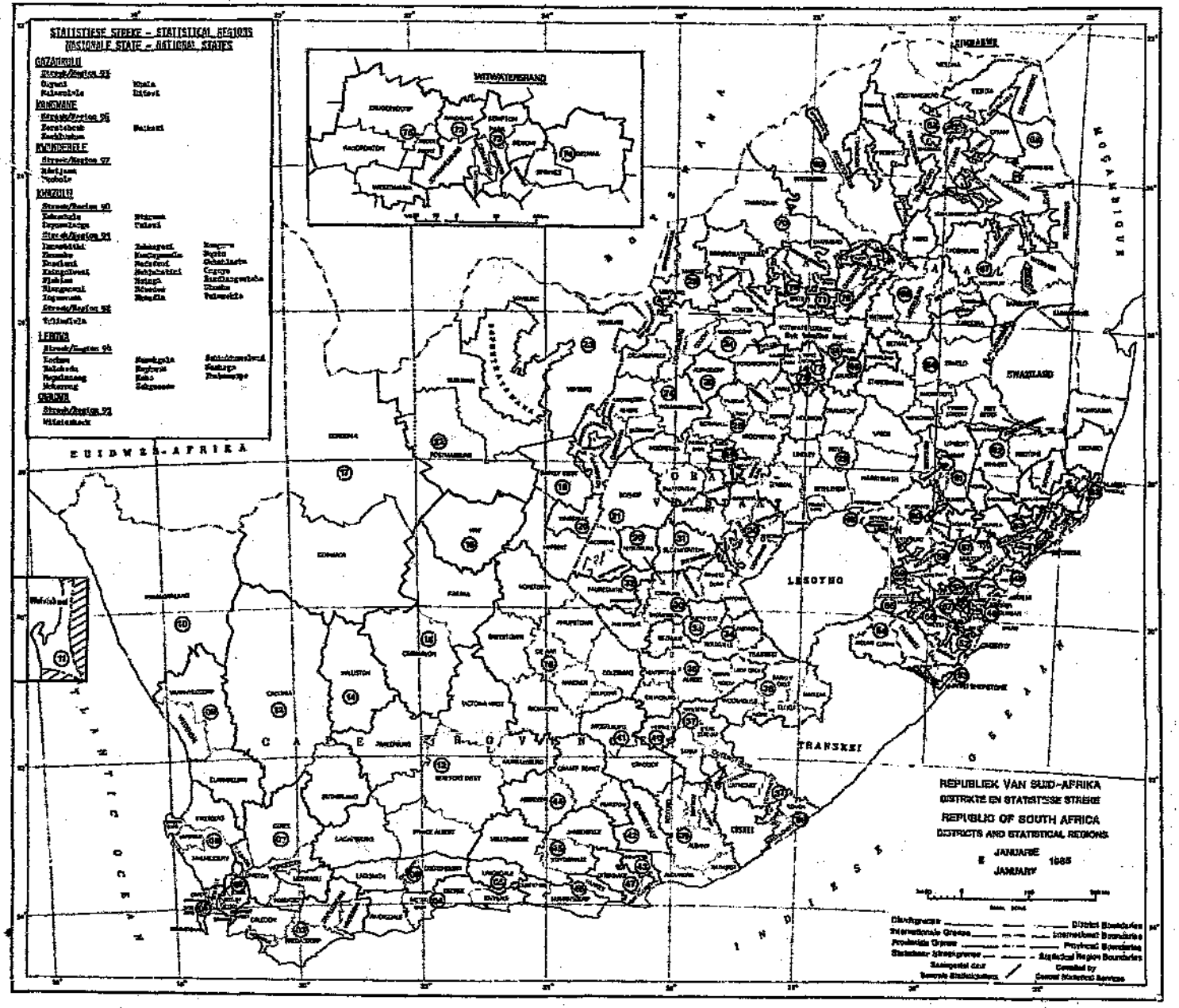
GALLO TAPES

Makgagkasa	Dikgwari tsa rena Lebowa (compilation)	1988
BC647	Makgakgasa (J Mohlala)	
	Kgoparara (J Mohlala)	
	Setla ka masa (SM Malapela)	
	Difofora (J Mokgwadi)	
	Tshisthi (J Mohlala)	
	Marashiya (E Ntobeng)	
	Tsodio No 2 (J Mokgwadi)	
	Shibale Barwele (L Kgole)	
	Mpoho (J Mohlala)	
	Mmabaledi (L Kgole)	
	Terone No 2 (J Mohlala)	
	Sebiletsa (J Mohlala/E Mohlala)	
	Lepelele (F Matseke/E Maila)	

Appendix 4

Boundaries of the magisterial districts in South Africa have been changed. This makes data from earlier censuses incompatible with later ones. The earlier magisterial district boundaries cut across what would later be designated as "homeland" boundaries. See appended maps.


51 EKONOMIESE STREKE VIR STATISTIESE DOELEINDES.
DIE NAME VAN DIE DISTRIKTE IN ELKE STREEK WORD OOK IN DIE BYGAANDE LYS ANGEGEE.
51 ECONOMIC REGIONS FOR STATISTICAL PURPOSES.
THE NAMES OF THE DISTRICTS IN EACH REGION ARE ALSO GIVEN IN THE ACCOMPANYING LIST.
Nasionale en provinsiale grense
National and provincial boundaries
Streksgrense
Regional boundaries
Distriksgrense
District boundaries
BSS-DEM. 31
WITWATERSRAND
RHODESIA
BECHUANALAND
SUIDWES-AFRIKA
SWAZILAND
BASUTOLAND
PROTECTORATE


STATISTIESE STREKE – STATISTICAL REGIONS
NASIONALE STATE – NATIONAL STATES
GAZANKULU
KANGWANE
KWANDEBELE
KWAZULU
LEBOWA
QWAQWA
WITWATERSRAND
SUIDWES-AFRIKA
ZIMBABWE
MOSAMBIEK
SWAZILAND
LESOTHO
TRANSKEI
BOPHUTHATSWANA
VENDA
CISKEI
REPUBLIEK VAN SUID-AFRIKA
DISTRIKTE EN STATISTIESE STREKE
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA
DISTRICTS AND STATISTICAL REGIONS
JANUARIE 1985
JANUARY 1985
District Boundaries
Provincial Boundaries
Statistical Region Boundaries



Author: James, Deborah.

Name of thesis: Mmino wa setso: songs of town and country and the experience of migrancy by men and women from the northern Transvaal.

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