

calls an "ego-oriented action set." It is characteristic of a "set" to dissolve after its purpose has been achieved. It is the individual's *actual* network of relationships which is significant if a particular workparty is to emerge. In Caguba, as elsewhere, a person's actual network of relationships is subject to many influences and thus it is liable to change. In Caguba, such changes result, for example, from migratory labour, from ongoing conflicts at a given time in the village, from the changing interests of particular individuals when they join certain Christian denominations and so on. Since then the organisation of a workparty depends on a homestead head's *actual* network of relationships, and since these relationships are in a state of constant flux, no two workparties will be alike even if organised by the same homestead head⁽²²⁾. More than that, because ~~Mthwa~~-workparties are so clearly oriented towards the individual homestead and its economic interests, and because any workparty is only a task-related action-set, it appears once more that economic processes in Caguba have only a very limited integrative significance for Mthwa society; in fact they are an essential aspect of the *individualistic* existence of the various homesteads in the village.

There is a fundamental difference between the familial type of organised labour discussed in a previous section (see p. 213 f) and the assistance type. These are not merely two organisational forms of labour, but indeed two distinct conceptualisations of economic activities *qua* labour. In the first type it is taken for granted that every member of the homestead is unquestionably bound to fulfil his duty and render a service to the household community. In the second type, there is no such thing as a duty that compels people from outside a given homestead to participate in a workparty (*isitshongo*, ~~Vuma~~ *ma*): people participate because they have been asked for (*ukucelwa*) help. On the surface of Caguban daily life (and its frequent workparties in particular), there appears to be a functional relation between social bonds (of friendship and kin-

ship), moral values (Keeping a promise) and economic planning (organisation of labour). Yet a deeper understanding of the processes by which economic life in general and the workparties in particular come into being in Caguba reveals that a given workparty depends on a homestead head's initiative and organising efforts and skills. More than that, the whole process set in motion is based on the interests of the organising homestead.

From the point of view of its economic life, Mthwa society can be considered as only partially integrated. Thus the two major types of the organisation of labour, "assistance" and "familial obligation", correspond to each other: each prove in their own way that Mthwa's economic life is fundamentally characterised by a homestead economy and that this economic life is, equally fundamentally, *socio-economic*.

(iii) Organised labour as reciprocal assistance, and as wage labour.

There are two marginal types of labour organisation in Caguba. First, there are small groups of people who assist each other on a reciprocal basis; secondly, there is some possibility of wage labour and of self-employment in the village. From the *internal* point of view of Caguba's economic life, these two types of labour have limited significance; they add only slightly to an understanding of the structure of authority in the village and of the homestead. I shall outline only the essential aspects of both types of labour organisation.

On the interpersonal level, the principle of mutuality (*imvano*) carries great weight in Caguba but, on the level of formally securing a labour force, it has only marginal significance. There are a few small groups of people, with up to about six member homesteads, which give one another "mutual assistance" (*unce-diswano*) with respect to labour. Unlike workparties (see Section ii), these groups do not dissolve after a particular work has been completed, but rather

the same people will come together again when another of the members' homesteads asks for assistance. Membership is defined by this particular common interest of assisting one another with labour, irrespective of neighbourhood, kinship or mat-association membership. The small number of such groups (I came to know of only three in Caguba) indicates that they are little favoured. The majority of households prefer the isolated workparty (*ilima*) which is free from any obligation to reciprocate the help received.

The second marginal type of organised labour in Caguba is "wage labour" (*impangelo*)⁽²³⁾. Although not unknown in former times (see Hunter 1936:135), today it is marginal *within* the village. Very few people earn their living through "selling" their labour. In 106 households of the sample (see Table 13, p. 207; see also p. 209) I found only three self-employed men, who do carpentry and masonry on contract. Besides these there are persons employed as servants by a few of the members of the teaching staff of the local primary school. Others find employment in small jobs which, in the traditional setting, are performed mostly by workparties, such as going to collect firewood in a larger quantity, repairing the mud-plastering of a house.

The participation of Cagubans in wage labour in the form of migrancy (and commuting) is of course not a marginal category, but rather an essential aspect of present-day Caguba. 82 % of its households are involved in the cash economy (see p. 211). The present socio-economic situation of the domestic unit (and the homestead) has doubtless changed over the last few decades, and a view of the village situation in a historical perspective (as Beinart has given for the Mpondo in general, see Beinart 1979a, 1979b) would certainly add an essential dimension to the present discussion. However, there are two reasons for not including such a study. The first is that it would expand the present dissertation considerably. There are already several observations in the

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course of the present study which indicate that the socio-economic situation of the village is, indeed, the result of a historical process: (a) the majority of the households in Caguba include in their members at least one person who is absent from the village to participate in the labour market of the cities. This is an enormous change if one considers that by the turn of the century there was very little labour migration from Mpondoland (see Beinart 1979a). (b) A 25 % decrease in the size of the average domestic unit over the last 50 years can be observed (see p. 159). This means that each household has lost at least one able-bodied person. Given the relatively small number of persons in the average household and the general involvement of the Caguban households in migratory labour, the strength of any household's labour force is strongly affected. (c) The intensified cultivation of land over the last decades plus the decreased labour force per household has resulted in an increase in the number of workparties requiring to be organised. (d) Therefore, the organisation of labour in terms of familial obligation (see p. 213) will certainly have lost some of its significance in daily life. (e) Finally, the actual dependence on extra-household labour resources has increased - even if the *form* of organising workparties has remained within the framework of traditional procedures.

The second reason for not including a historically oriented study is that it would alter the basic perspective of the present dissertation which is concerned with the awareness of the people of Mthwa themselves rather than with inferences drawn from an analytical model of description like the historical model. As far as this awareness is concerned, even the strong participation in the labour market *outside* the village remains oriented towards Mthwa's homestead economy. Generally speaking, from whichever angle economic life in Caguba is approached, the conclusion is unavoidable that this economic life is fundamentally influenced by the individual homestead and its internal socio-economic life.

(d) The family: its cyclic life and economy.

It has been shown that economic life in Caguba centres on the individual homestead so much so that we can reasonably speak about a "homestead economy." Doubtless, ownership of property (*impahla*) is as important in Mthwa's homestead economy as it is in any other economic system. In the preceding chapter (Chapter V) I showed that in the centre of any homestead there is a family of kinsmen, i.e. a man, his wife (or wives), and his children. In Caguba, the relationships between the close range of kinsmen *within* a homestead define the ownership of and control over property. More specifically, ownership of property is, in a certain sense, subject to the cyclic life of the typical Mthwa family (see p. 168f) and to the system of inheritance. In this way, the Mthwa economic system becomes subject to the family and its social processes.

(a) The cyclic homestead economy.

An essential aspect of the typical Mthwa family is the life-cycle⁽²⁴⁾ that develops over three generations. At first, the domestic unit expands with a couple's children, but then it "shrinks" again as the children move out and live in their respective homesteads, leaving one brother and his family behind. It is this cycle of growth and disintegration that characterises the economic progress of the family as well. This is clearly observable in the context of the rules of inheritance which will be discussed in the final section (Section b, p. 237) of this chapter.

At least in times past, a person's life in Mthwa was accompanied by ritual acts and ceremonies from cradle to grave (and beyond), and all of them made heavy demands on household property in the form of grain and cattle. For example, when a new born baby was about ten days old the mother would prepare beer in order to "wash the hands," and two or three days later the father

would slaughter a goat to provide *imbela*, i.e. the skin in which the baby would be carried on the mother's back (this action is called in Xhosa *ukubeleka*). The killing of the goat is still generally observed, but the baby is now wrapped in towels or cloth. On the day of the funeral a beast is killed (outside the cattle byre) and eaten. The subsequent extended mourning period has several ritual stages that involve the provision of beer and meat. Between these extremes of a person's life, there are significant occasions which make even heavier demands. Most outstanding are the marriage negotiations, which conclude in the transfer of six or more head of cattle, the "bride-wealth" (*ikhazi*), from the bridegroom's to the bride's home. Secondly, the return of the young mother with her first baby, from her father's homestead where the birth has taken place, coincides with the transfer of a large number of gifts (called *uquli*)⁽²⁵⁾ from the bride's people to those of her husband. It is a kind of (belated) dowry from which the bride's own household and the households of her in-laws are going to profit. On the arrival of the *uquli*-party (i.e. the group of women who carry the gifts) the groom's father will slaughter a goat or a beast, depending on the quantity of gifts which have been given.

Ritual and ceremonial actions, even like those mentioned above, might seem to fall outside the sphere of economic reasoning, but the transfer of cattle, the amount of the dowry gifts and the corresponding size of the animal to be slaughtered clearly show the presence of the economic dimension in these rituals and ceremonies. Seen in the context of the cyclical life of the family, and thus in relation to the system of inheritance, these transactions acquire an even more specific significance: the question arises - who will be the owner of these assets if the present homestead head dies? The rules of inheritance define, among other things, rights of ownership over property. Such rights are closely linked with the agnatic kinship system, more specifically with the rule of primogeniture. Thus it makes a great deal of a difference whether the

inheritor is male or female, first- or second-born. The inheritance system favours the male above the female, the first-born above the second-born, but there is one way by which, in principle, each person can gain rightful ownership of property and the control over it, namely by becoming an independent homestead head. There are two possible ways of achieving this position of economic authority: the respective person must wait until all persons senior to him (and with whom he lives in the same household) have died, or the person must leave the father's homestead, i.e. a daughter leaves by marrying and a second-born son by settling-out.

In the discussion of the composition of homesteads in relation to the life-cycle of the family, the connection between primogeniture and settling-out was noted. If the elder brother rather than the younger brother is favoured by the inheritance rules, how does it happen that there is a tendency for the first-born brother to settle out? The answer is that even if the elder brother does establish his own homestead, he loses nothing, for eventually he can claim the original homestead from his younger brother because he virtually left him to look after his property. Thus I was told by a younger brother that his elder brother was "clever" (see p. 177) when the latter decided to go and build his own homestead. While the elder brother could go and work for his benefit, the younger brother had to stay at home looking after and, in fact, working for what did not belong to him. As for the elder brother, his right to the paternal property is assured by virtue of his birth-right; his position of authority, including economic right to ownership and control of property is already firmly established in the *paternal* homestead. As long as the second-born son remains in his father's homestead, this position of (economic) authority is barred to him; he remains dependent on his elder brother. Yet, the younger brother, as soon as he settles out and establishes his own homestead, can attain the same position as a senior within his homestead. He has drawn

equal with his elder brother who has to respect his younger brother's right as homestead head; he has - in the idiom of Dagoba - "to go on foot" (see p. 225) to meet his junior brother. Once the younger brother has finally established himself as a socially mature man, the homestead economy of his father (or of his elder brother) has lost a worker who under the labour system of familial obligation was compelled to render his service. In short, the economic process of the homestead is determined by the social processes which constitute its life-cycle.

The same correlation between the economic and the social processes of the homestead can be observed in an area which seems to be completely removed from these processes, namely the labour migration. In this context, the younger brother does not even need to establish his own homestead in order to prove his economic maturity. Labour migration allows him to "mind his own business" (*ndumilipog*). How is this possible?

I have shown (see p. 206f) that land-holding, cattle-owning and participation in the cash economy must be seen as correlated. Migrancy is an important dimension of the last of these three aspects. In a series of interviews conducted in 1981, I asked why particular members of the household interviewed had left on work contracts. The structured answers of the questionnaire allowed for a choice of responses between "support of home" and "personal reasons." The most of the answers were "support of home"; these answers were predictable on two grounds: first, the general need for cash (see p. 211), and secondly, the limited possibilities of earning it in Dagoba (see p. 129). Of the 83 persons who were away at the time of the census, thirty nine had left for the sole reason of supporting their families. Twenty four persons had personal reasons in addition to their intention of providing support. Seventeen persons left for personal individual reasons. About the re-

maintaining three persons I have no information. Thus the general trend of leaving Caguba for one of the cities as a migrant labourer is clearly "support of home." However, when I related the answers to the actual economic conditions, i.e. to the involvement in cultivation and cattle keeping by the households from which the migratory workers of my sample came, a modified profile emerged:

Reason for person's leaving for work	Number of persons		Person's Hh works a field	Person's Hh keeps cattle
+ support/ - personal	39	46,9%	76,4 %	35,2 %
+ support/ + personal	24	29,0%	73,6 %	68,4 %
- support/ + personal	17	20,5%	100,0 %	71,4 %
No information	3	3,6%	3,6 %	
Total	83	100,0%		

Table 15. Motivation for migrancy (Hh = Household).

Table 15 shows this trend in a more general sense: people leave Caguba as migrant workers on account of the economic situation of their respective households; but the table also brings to light that we can isolate other than economic, namely personal, reasons for choosing migrant work, and that the personal reasons become more prominent as the economic strength of a migrant worker's homestead increases.

In the numerically stronger group of migrant workers (who go to the cities primarily to support their families financially), there are in particular the (young) homestead heads and first-born sons who struggle to make ends meet. Yet, in this same group there are also those persons whose households do not cultivate a field and who have given their cattle in somebody else's care (*ukubusa*, see p. 209). These latter migrant workers are even more dependent on their cash income so that their main reason for migrancy is support for their families in a very strict sense.

In contrast to those Cagubans who are migrant labourers for support reasons, there are other villagers who go to the urban centres for personal reasons. The explicit reasons which were given by my informants were not very enlightening. They were mostly general statements indicating that "so-and-so likes it in town," or "my son just wanted to work 'there'" (i.e. in the city), or "he has gone with his friend and does his own 'thing'." Yet, as I considered the genealogical position of the migrant workers within their respective families, it appeared that they were mostly second-born sons and certain other sons who (as children of illegitimate birth) had been adopted into the family and legalised⁽²⁶⁾. In other words, genealogically junior persons preferred migrancy for personal reasons. I failed to elicit a fuller explanation from my informants. The evidence suggests the following explanation.

To begin with, it should be noted that the above statistics (Table 15, p. 235) are based on *reported* information. Therefore their representativeness must be taken with reservations. My informants were fathers, mothers, or wives. But, this reported information has its own significance, because it shows that people in Caguba take it for granted that there are such personal reasons which explain why certain people should become migrant workers, although the actual economic situation in the household may not require such a decision. For the people in Caguba, it is expected that a daughter will get married and leave the parental homestead, and the second born son will eventually establish his own household and homestead and leave the parental place as well. This is a basic aspect of the cyclic life of the typical Mthwa family. Since then settling-out is an essential part of the ongoing social process, it does not really matter by which means the settling-out proceeds, whether by marriage, by a new establishment of a homestead, or by migrancy. The result is in each case the same: a split in the existing family, and the constitution of two *independent* domestic units. This is the way in which a

men who are migrant labourers for support reasons, and those who go to the urban centres for personal reasons. The reasons given by my informants were not very enlightening, but they were general statements indicating that "so-and-so like, just wanted to work 'there'" (i.e. in the city), or "he got a friend and does his own 'thing'." Yet, as I considered the position of the migrant workers within their respective families, I suspected that they were mostly second-born sons and certain other children (children of illegitimate birth) had been adopted into the family. In other words, genealogically junior persons preferred leaving the family reasons. I failed to elicit a fuller explanation from my informants. The evidence suggests the following explanation.

It should be noted that the above statistics (Table 15, p. 10) are based on reported information. Therefore their representativeness must be taken into consideration. My informants were fathers, mothers, or other relatives. The reported information has its own significance, because it shows that people in Laguba take it for granted that there are such personal reasons which indicate why certain people should become migrant workers, although the economic situation in the household may not require such a departure. For people in Laguba, it is expected that a daughter will get married and leave the parental homestead, and the second born son will eventually leave the household and homestead and leave the parental place. This is an essential part of the cyclic life of the typical Mthwa family. The process of migration is an essential part of the ongoing social process by which means the settling-out proceeds, whether by marriage, by the establishment of a homestead, or by migration. The process is the same: a split in the existing family, and the formation of new domestic units. This is the way in which a

Mthwa person gains social status (as a homestead head or as a homestead wife) and (among other things) rightful ownership of property.

On the basis of this traditional social pattern, the migratory labour of senior persons becomes intelligible. It has long been known that it "is one of the regular expectations of the Xhosa boy ... to go to town" (Ph. Mayer 1961:91) as a step in his growth towards social maturity. Mayer (ibidem) interprets this expectation as the expression of a "moral value" (ibidem). While this interpretation should not be excluded, we can infer here a definite advantage for the junior person irrespective of some moral value. As wage-earner he can accumulate his own (cash) property independently of his father or elder brother; in this sense, he can become an equal of his seniors, something that the rule of primogeniture makes impossible. He can achieve his end of economic independence without necessarily getting married (as a daughter must) and establishing his own homestead (as a son must); i.e. he can achieve a certain maturity and status in the village without the traditional requirements. Obviously, social processes of maturation and of the cyclic life of the Mthwa family determine economic processes. This is nowhere clearer in Caguba than in the inheritance system.

(b) The homestead economy and the system of inheritance.

As is probably true for many societies, in Caguba the operation of inheritance from one generation to the next is loaded with conflict, despite the fact that it is universally asserted in Caguba that a man's eldest son is his heir (indlalifa, i.e. literally "the eater of the inheritance"). The elders are well aware of the quarrels that may occur in a homestead after the death of its head. In order to spare the children such difficulties, it often happens that a man summons them together with his (agnatic) kinsmen to witness the latter function as witnesses to the allocation of his property to his eldest son.

This action of allocating inheritance is called *ukulawula amafa* which means literally "to administer inherited property." Any man is at liberty to make such a public announcement before he dies⁽¹⁷⁾. It appears that the actual distribution of the property takes place *after* the man's death.

Beyond these general rules, my informants had great difficulty in clarifying how the distribution of the property should in fact take place. Often I was merely told *umini'mphala uyazazi* ("the owner of the property knows what to do with it"). The following account sums up what appears to be the general pattern of distributing inheritance. The buildings, the homestead (the garden and the field, if there is one) go to the married son who lives in the father's homestead (note that I say "go to," not "belong to;" see below) at the time of the death of the homestead head. In other words, houses, garden and field constitute a unit which is indivisible and which will be inherited as a whole. As far as the livestock is concerned, there is greater flexibility. To some extent the animals are regarded as being more important than the other items of property. The father is, in principle, at liberty during his lifetime to allocate the livestock according to his discretion, but he should not disinherit his first-born son. There are two rules which prevent ~~so~~ extreme an action. The first is that the first-born son inherits what belongs to him by right" (*ngomthetho*); the second is that the first-born son will receive as his own what is "left over" after the allocation has been completed.

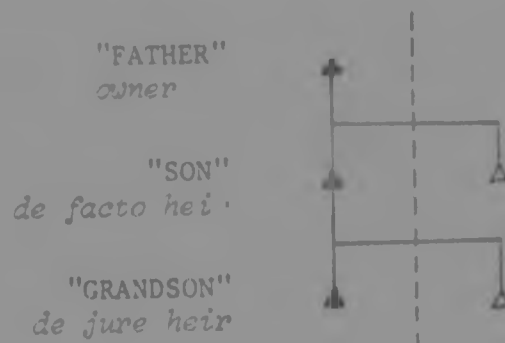
The vagueness of this account reflects the uncertainty of my informants and the complexity which overlies the general rules. This complexity has two sources. First, government regulations today define the allocation of land, and, secondly, children (whether sons or daughters) can today accumulate property within the cash economy over which the father can have no control whatever. In other words, the homestead head no longer controls the total

assets of the homestead. This creates uncertainties in allocating inheritance. The second source of complexity comes from tradition itself.

Notwithstanding the general rules that a man's main heir is his first-born son, there is another and more fundamental principle which states that a man's heir is his first-born *grandson*, born to the first son. There are three implications here:

- (a) The inheritance rules involve *three* generations: the generation of the man who is in actual control of the property (the generation of "FATHER"), the generation of that man's son who is *de facto* heir (the generation of "SON"), the generation of the man's grandson who is the *de jure* heir (the generation of "GRANDSON"). From this rule of a three-generational range of inheritance follow the two qualifications previously mentioned: that a person inherits certain property "by right," while regarding other parts of the total property he must be content with what is "left over."
- (b) Only a first-born son inherits anything at all "by right," never a second-born son. The latter must always be content with what his father allots (*ukusaula*) him.
- (c) More often than not, a man's *de jure* heir, i.e. his grandson, is an infant at the time of the grandfather's death. For the time being, his father (i.e. the man's son) will "by right" function as trustee of the inheritance. Thus the man's *son* becomes the *de facto* main heir.

This three-generational inheritance rule can be shown graphically as follows:



While I was discussing the matter with one of the elders in the village, the

man (about 65 years old) pointed to a little boy of about three years and said (28):

Nanku!
Nguye kuphela, unyanam,
onowudl' ilifa lam,
ngowonyan' omkhulu.

There he is!
 It is only he, my son,
 who should "eat" my inheritance,
 he is the son of my oldest son.

Thus the reason why the people in Caguba are so uncertain about how to define the distribution of inheritance, lies in the two intricate aspects involved which only the owner knows how to separate when it comes to the actual allocation of the inheritance: first, the composition of the property at the time it is inherited, and second, the son actually living in at the time of the father's death. I shall first discuss the composition of the property, and then the actual process by which property is inherited.

Since every father is first a son, he inherits certain property from his own father. However, his total inheritance includes property that has come from his grandfather. Thus in receiving the inheritance, he receives two properties. The one from his grandfather, he receives "by right." Up to now, his own father has been only its trustee and not at liberty to distribute his grandfather's property among the inheritor's brothers. But the father has accumulated further property by his own efforts, for example through the stock's natural increase or through the bridewealth which he has received for his daughter, and this he is at liberty to distribute among his children. In this regard the first-born son must also be content with what his father gives him; he can take only what is "left over." It is this part of his father's property which he himself receives in trusteeship for his own^{son}. Thus a son (i.e. a first-born son) receives from two sources (father and grandfather) and accordingly acquires ownership with regard to one part, while he receives only

man (about 65 years old) pointed to a little boy of about three years and said (28):

Kinkul
ngaye kaphela, anyaman,
amandl' izifa lam,
ngondanyan' emkhulu,

There he is!
 It is only he, my son,
 who should "eat" my inheritance,
 he is the son of my oldest son.

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trusteeship with respect to the other. While the first-born son receives from two sources, the second-born son receives from only one, viz. that part which is at the discretion of the inheriting owner. The act of inheritance becomes a process of "disentangling" two properties which have been merged; in other words, the accumulation and the distribution of wealth is subject to non-economic rules of the cyclic life of the Nthwa family. This may be shown graphically in the following way:

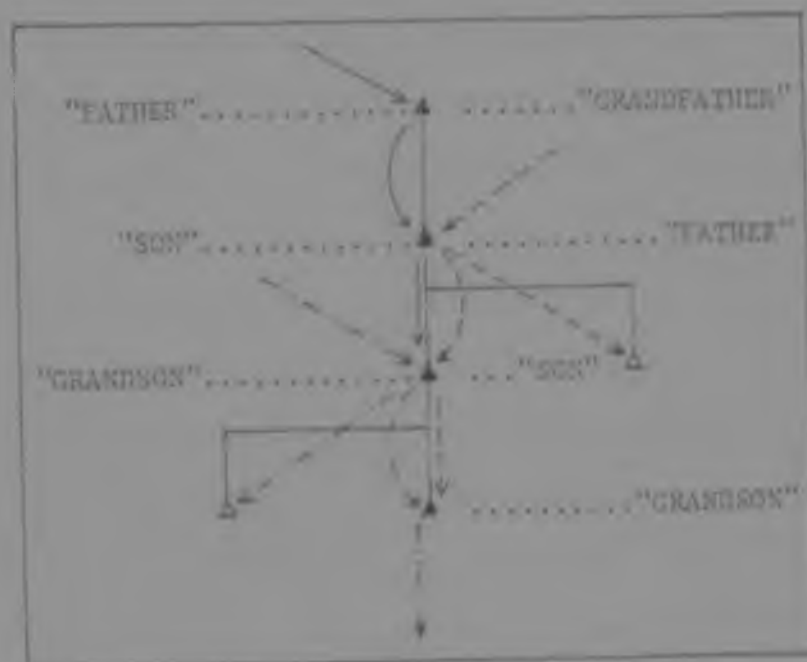


Figure 11. Nthwa rules of inheritance and of trusteeship.

Obviously, it is almost impossible to state in the abstract which part of the inheritance goes to which son, because this depends on the source of the property. This explains the uncertainty which my informants showed in defining rules of inheritance in Nthwa. The second reason for uncertainty is the complications resulting from the rules of settling-out.

In accordance with these rules (see p. 100), either the oldest son or the youngest son lives with his family in the father's homestead. Accordingly, on the father's death, the respective son "takes" the homestead with its

buildings and garden together with the fields as "his" inheritance - for the time being until the *granadon* inherits the grandfather's homestead, garden and field, and cattle. If a second-born son has been occupying the homestead he will be obliged to vacate the place in favour of the rightful heir: his elder brother's first-born son. This request to leave the homestead in favour of the elder brother's first-born son is a clear consequence of the three-generational life-cycle of the typical Mboya family. It was said (see p. 169) a typical family in Cagaba consists of a man, his wife, one married son, the son's wife, and the latter's children. More strictly speaking (and in relation to the rules of inheritance) the typical three-generational family consists of a man, his wife, their first-born son, this son's wife, and the latter's children of whom the *granadon* son will be the sole heir. Over the period of these three generations the domestic unit grows and disintegrates, and so does the property which belongs to the extended family (in the three-generational sense as defined here). In short, the homestead economy (as it relates to the accumulation of property and therefore to the working of the economic system) can be understood only with regard to the particular people who are in control of it at a given moment. In a very restricted sense, the family, not merely the father, is the owner of the property, since the father is (for a part of the property) the trustee, controlling the property on his first son's behalf. More than this: what a man owns "by right" now, is by the same right the future property of his grandson.

But, there are neither sons nor grandsons without mothers and grandmothers. Notwithstanding the rule that a man's sole heir is his first son (in the more restricted sense his grandson), women play an important part in the actual working of the system, as widows or as unwedded mothers.

The general rule of inheritance regarding women is that a daughter does not

ty. Being a person of authority for any of her children she belongs to the "old people" (*ababala*)⁽³¹⁾ who should be respected (*aduhlonipha*) by any child (*ummanan*, which means literally "junior person"). Given the death of her husband, the widow takes the highest position in the homestead, she is *um'kash'ani* ("female head of the homestead").

As was mentioned above, a widow's control over the homestead's property is, in Cagaba, considered to be "real." Thus the Cagabans speak about a female homestead head, and this is not mere flattery; it is the acknowledgement of a well-recognized authority. This I was able to witness ~~in 1975~~ during a heated argument between certain villagers, in February 1975. The people had gathered in a certain homestead for a feast of thanksgiving in honour of one of the homestead's neighbours; it was the homestead of a widow who was a polygamist's wife. (The deeper reasons for the eruption of tension between the people and for the argument do not need to concern us here.) The verbal clash between the opponents was sparked off by the question of who was in charge in the respective homestead, the widow or ~~her late husband's~~ her late husband's first-born son by his first wife. The first-born son, who claimed the authority in his "little mother's" (*um'kash'ani*) place, earned the scorn and ridicule of his opponents, and his two agnatic kinsmen went silent or tried to divert the focal point of the argument. In short, the control which a widow exercises in her homestead is an intrinsic aspect of Mithwa society, as the Cagabans understand it.

There is a second reason for a widow to exert servitude over her late husband's property. This results from the fact that a man's heir is his grandson; the widow becomes the guardian of the child's property — against her own son. At times, the control which the widow holds, can be so strict as to embarrass her son; "she makes him quarrel," as the people put it in Cagaba. Yet even if her

attitude embarrasses her son, he will hardly act against her will, the expected behaviour of respect (*intlonipho*) for a "senior person" (*miata*), preeminently his mother (*umha*), will prevent him from "behaving disrespectfully" (*ukusa*). Economic planning appears to be subject to moral precepts.

Inheritance proceeds from father to son and to grandson, and thus the agnatic line, which is so typical in the Nguni system of kinship, is strongly emphasised. The procedural rules, if we may call them such, by which the inheritance system works, integrates a man's widow into the system and underlines the importance of the homestead and of marriage in particular. Thus we can redraw the previous diagram (see Figure 13, p. 241), ignoring the distribution of the inheritance between brothers and introducing the significance of a man's widow:

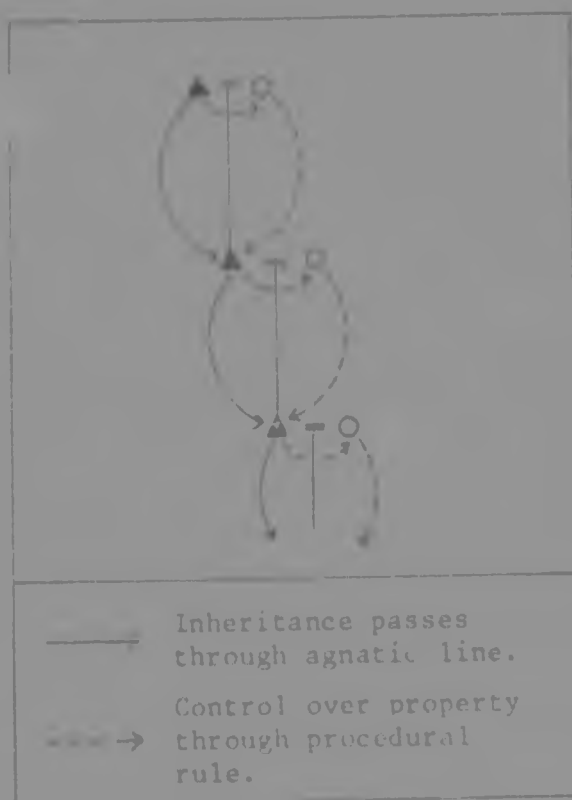


Figure 14. Female participation in control of property of the homestead.

Thus within the system of inheritance in Mthwa society, we can distinguish between the legal aspect of a "transfer of inheritance" (*ukudla izija*), and a

procedural aspect of trusteeship (*uhuzumbelazi*). Both aspects combine control and authority. In the context of trusteeship widows participate in the inheritance system. This shows once more how important the family is in regard to property and how far economic processes are linked to social aspects of homestead life, particularly to the three-generational life-cycle.

In Nthwa society, not only widows participate in the inheritance system, but also unwed mothers, provided that they live in their father's homestead. Such women are known as *umkhulu* (singular *umkhulu* which means literally "daughter of the home" or "little female"). The *umkhulu* is a special case of a free-woman (see p. 179, n. 1). If the only child, such a "daughter of the home" will be universal heir. If there are two such sisters in their father's homestead, then the elder takes precedence; the younger sister is in the position as a second-born son.

The rule about unwed mothers does not contradict the general rule that daughters should not inherit if married. The unwed mother functions as a trustee for her son who is an agnatic member of his mother's clan (see p. 163 on illegitimacy)⁽¹²⁾. But in fact it is not the clan (nor the clan-association) which is emphasized here but the unity of the homestead as a legal unit. Thus illegitimate children have a claim in the inheritance after the possibilities of legitimate children have been exhausted, and before further kinsmen (i.e. agnatic relatives of the dead homestead head) can have access to the property of the homestead. Direct membership of a homestead precedes all other relationships; thus the homestead and its unity as the most important social group in Nthwa society is economically underscored.

The *qibini* rule of the rules of inheritance applies if there is no possible heir to the inheritance from within the homestead, either male or female.

property devolves according to different rules: the land returns to the Crown, and will be free for re-allotment. Although kinsmen have no direct right to the land, they will be considered first should one of the kinsmen be without land. Other property, in particular cattle, goes to the senior "house" of the clan-section, that is to say, to a man's elder brother's "house;" but if there is no heir it goes to a senior classificatory brother, and to a more distant (but still senior) agnatic kinsman. In other words, should a certain household dissolve, inheritance does not "pass down" as from father to son (i.e. from a senior to a junior in the agnatic line of descent), but "comes up", from a man to his agnatic seniors. Even if, then, the homestead is a self-contained social unit, it remains oriented towards the agnatic kinship. This agnatic orientation of the homestead leads us into the sphere of Mthwa religion in Mthwa society.

The Mthwa economic system as homestead individualism, a preliminary note.

In Mthwa society, as in any other social system, there is at the centre of economic life a succession of decisions with regard to material resources, their allocation and use, i.e. the economic planning. In this sense, the economic system of Gguba consists of a multiplicity of homestead economies, from each of which such planning originates and to which it refers. For want of a better term, I shall call the economic system of Mthwa society "homestead individualism."

The conclusion about the Mthwa economic system as homestead individualism clearly reflects the conclusions of earlier chapters. The change of the typically Ngani settlement pattern of the relatively isolated homestead to a village type of settlement has not changed the actual significance of the individual homestead in Gguba (Chapter II). The central authority in any homestead is the homestead head. His is one of the politically relevant authorities

ties in the 'tswana chiefdom (Chapter III). The court system of Mthwa has its *sine qua non* in the authority of the homestead head who is the only legal representative of his homestead and who is a member of the chief's court (Chapter IV). With the three-generational cyclic life of the typical Mthwa family, there is an ongoing process by which the individuality of the homestead is re-created in each generation and by which any domestic unit is confined to a very small group of agnatic and affinal kinsmen. Thus economic homestead individualism is consistent with what has been said in the preceding chapters about the socially preeminent (and sociologically indispensable) significance of the homestead in Mthwa.

Notwithstanding its individualistic nature, the homestead is not, in present-day Caguba, economically self-sufficient; the majority of homesteads need to borrow oxen as draught animals and, still more, homesteads rely on the labour rendered by several homesteads at a time. Although not intended by the homestead heads, economic necessity seems to achieve a kind of integration of Mthwa society as people assist each other in workparties or by lending ~~goods~~ without apparent economic gain. Yet, it is this absence of any intention to achieve integration which distinguishes economic cooperation in Caguba from the court system of Mthwa. In the latter, the people of Mthwa share a common code of what is right and what is wrong. Each mature man of the chiefdom, i.e. each homestead head, has a right to be a member of the chief's court. Thus among the Mthwa people in general and their homestead heads in particular there is a *common* interest in Mthwa law. It is this common interest between homestead heads which is lacking in the economic sphere. Whatever cooperation there is, is inspired by the homestead's *individual* interests, at least with respect to short-term calculations. Once I asked a younger homestead head, who himself did not own a field but who participated quite often in workparties, what he gained from his participation. In a very unambiguous manner, he answer-

ed: "Why do I participate in *ilima*-workparties? Because that is how we do it here in Caguba. What I gain out of it? A sip of beer and then - to go and pass water." Economic homestead individualism is part of the Cagubans' conscious model of their daily life.

At the present stage of anthropological knowledge, Mthwa's economic homestead individualism appears to be exceptional among the Nguni-speaking peoples of South-East Africa, but it is certainly no exception in the Bantu-speaking area of Africa and in other parts of the world. Earlier on in this chapter (see p. 226), I referred to the study of the Ndendeuli of Tanzania by Gulliver (1971). Unable to account for cooperation among the Ndendeuli in terms of kinship, Gulliver postulated ego-centred action-sets as the most economical way of explaining the empirical facts at his disposal. Since it is the homestead head who, in principle, organises workparties in Mthwa and since any workparty comes together only for the work in hand and then dissolves, the situation in Caguba clearly resembles Gulliver's findings. As ego-centred (i.e. homestead-head-centred) action-sets, workparties in Caguba underline the individuality of the homestead.

A study of rural Tanzania and Kenya by Hyden (1980) supports Gulliver's study as well as my conclusion regarding the socio-political importance of the homestead in Mthwa society. Hyden (ibidem p. 9) speaks about the "structural anomaly of rural Africa" according to which "small is powerful." Regarding the peasantry in Tanzania and Kenya, Hyden (ibidem p. 15) writes:

The peasant mode of production is characterised by a rudimentary division of labour. Each unit of production is still small. Without any real product specialization there is very little exchange between the various units of production. Although these units, that is the peasant households, are not usually self-sufficient, management decisions are taken in the light of domestic needs and capabilities. There is no functional interdependence bringing them into

reciprocal relations with each other and leading to the development of the means of production. Each unit is independent of the other and the *economic structure is cellular*. To the extent that there is cooperation among producers in these economies it is not structurally enforced but purely a suprastructural articulation rooted in the belief that everybody has a right to subsistence. Consequently, *cooperation among peasants is temporary*, for example at the time of an emergency, rather than regular and formalized (all emphases are supplied).

The "belief" which Hyden records, that cooperation is "purely a suprastructural articulation," recalls my own findings in Caguba. It was said (see p. 225f) that there is no general assumption of cooperativeness, but that a homestead head must go and "ask for help." If he does go, however, he can be quite certain to receive the assistance which he requests. Moral precepts come to his support in organising an *ilima*-type workparty. This moral aspect of organising labour in Caguba connects our findings with a third study by Banfield (1958).

Banfield studied the moral condition or the economic backwardness of an Italian village. In explanation of the moral condition of the village, Banfield (*ibidem* p. 83) postulates the following central maxim:

Maximise the material, short-run advantage of the nuclear family;
assume that all others will do likewise.

Banfield calls this particular economic condition of the Italian village "economic familism." If I replace the Italian nuclear family with the Caguban domestic unit, and speak of "homestead individualism" instead of "familism", then the Italian village of Montegrano resembles, in its economic family particularism, the economic homestead individualism of the Mthwa village of Caguba.

It may be asked what is the reason for the cross-cultural similarity between the Mthwa-Mpondo, some East African societies, and a particular Southern European village. The answer appears to lie in the kind of awareness these econo-

mically active groups have of their social situation. Their interests are ego-centred (Gulliver), and the economic activities of the homestead/family are inwardly oriented (Banfield, Hyden). Whether the interests are purely economic or supported by moral values (Banfield), the economic system will remain "small." It will remain as limited in its integration as the *actual* interests of the economically active persons are.

As far as Mthwa society is concerned, on the basis of the evidence, the economically concerned person is the homestead head, and his interests are determined by the (material) well-being of his homestead and its people. Since these particular people are an important part of his planning and are the object of his economic efforts, his calculations cannot proceed in merely economic terms. The Mthwa homestead economy is fundamentally "bicentric" (see p. 184). It is the "people of any given homestead" (*abantu basekhaya*) which constitute in a definite sense the individuality of the homestead, an individuality which is ultimately rooted in the ancestor religion of Mthwa.

Footnotes to Chapter VI.

- (1) The description of Mthwa economy as *bicentric* is to be distinguished from what Bohannan (1963:248) calls a "multicentric economy" and what Godelier (1972:288) calls "socially pluridetermined" economy. Both authors refer to the economic structure of "primitive societies (in which) goods are classified in distinct and hierarchically ordered categories, and their exchange and circulation are strictly compartmentalised" (Godelier, *ibidem* p. 287), as among the West African Tiv (Bohanna, *ibidem*). There is no such hierarchy of goods in Mthwa; even cattle are not excluded from being convertible into other goods; a fact which Beinart (1979a:200) ascertains for the past and which the Cagubans confirm for the present.
- (2) I came across a case where a man deliberately kept a rondavel-type house in order "to celebrate in the proper manner" (*ukusela kakuhle*). This indicates that the Cagubans are fully aware of the implications of the new development in house-building methods.
- (3) At no stage in this dissertation do I discuss the chief's economic position in the village as related to a system of paying tribute. Today, the chief as headman is a state-paid official with a regular salary. I did not become aware of any tribute system, like death duties (*isizi*), as reported by Hunter (1936:378). The present situation of Mpondo (Mthwa)

chieftaincy has its roots in the 19th century when the "economic relationship between chiefs and people changed very substantially" (Beinart 1980: 121); a gradual decline of its political power and control over production took place. Tribute that is to be paid to the chief is apparently a non-issue in present-day Caguba. However, I have an incident on record according to which in 1978 the chief prohibited the cutting of grass allegedly to be used for a new church building. The Cagubans were not satisfied with the ruling; they argued that "grass belongs to all of us." This incident may symbolically reflect an expression of the chief's former economic authority (see Sansom 1974:137f). The regulation was withdrawn, and the Cagubans could continue cutting grass.

- (4) According to Hunter (1936:71) it seems that the siting of gardens near to dwellings is a recent development. Formerly the homestead chose for itself a garden somewhere in the vicinity of the home. The practice of allotting a site that includes space for dwelling and for a garden is common practice in the administration of rural Transkei today.
- (5) The distribution of the major clans of Caguba, from north to south, is Gwangule, Ncamane, Wotshe-Khanandana (see Map 2, Appendix 2). The distribution of the fields in the Mngazi River valley followed a similar geographical lay-out. In this part, the river runs parallel to the village so that the fields, from north to south, belonged to the clan-sections of the Gwangule, Ncamane and Wotshe-Khanandana.
- (6) The census on which the analysis is based, was taken in 1981. Since new settlers arrived in the village after the first census was taken in 1978, the figures used in Chapters II and V are not identical with those in the present chapter, but this does not affect the analysis.
- (7) Earlier (see p. 19) a population increase in the last decades was mentioned. Although I lack the precise figures, it can be conjectured that the factor of this population explosion needs to be taken into account in order to explain the high number of allotted fields.
- (8) For a system of land allocation at the present time, based on clan-membership, see the study of the Nyuswa-Zulu, Natal (S.A.), by Preston-Whyte and Sibisi (1975).
- (9) The rinderpest epidemic of 1896 had a great influence on the economic development, as Beinart (1979b) has shown. It finally led the Mpondo to accept migratory labour. I was told about another local outbreak of a cattle disease in the late fifties, which further reduced the low numbers of cattle in the village. Even so, the figures are low for a society which relied to a large extent on cattle keeping. Some other explanation for the present situation is required. See also Wilson (1971:57-58).
- (10) The number of head of cattle in relation to households is as follows:

Number of animals	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	17
kept in No of Hh-s	56	1	5	4	8	5	4	1	2	2	3	5	2	1	1	2	2
Sub-Totals	56					23											25

For two households I have no information. Thus, in 106 households there are 345 head of cattle. The 11 households with 6 or more oxen keep exactly 50 %, i.e. 69, of the animals in the village, which shows the clear concentration of oxen in a relatively small number of households.

- (11) For a short discussion of Kenneth L. Pike's distinction between "etics" and "emics", see Sturtevant (1968:477-8). *Etics* are "culture-free features of the real world." The term also applies "to features which are not truly culture-free, but which at least have been derived from the examination of more than one culture, or the sum of all the significant attributes in the folk classification of all cultures" (emphasis supplied).

- (12) Taxation of animals:
 Cattle of any type, per head: R 2,00 per annum;
 Sheep and goats, per head : R 0,50 per annum;
 Donkeys and horses, per head: R 3,00 per annum.
 Pigs are tax-free.

- (13) The taxation with which any household has to cope is the homestead tax which is R 20,00 per homestead head and his wife. For any single son of the age of 18 years and above, an additional R 10,00 is to be paid. Finally, each household (homestead head) has to pay R 10,00 for the maintenance of the hospitals. This is the minimum which every household has to pay annually. There is still the important outlay of money for primary schooling, which is R 12,00 annually per child of any standard.

- (14) First, it should be noted how I compounded the figure for "migrant workers" as used in this dissertation. At the beginning of my research I established genealogies of each household of the village. I included in the genealogies as many persons as my informant could "remember," affinal as well as agnatic kinsmen. On this basis, it was established who was considered, by my informants, to be a *permanent* member of the respective household; such permanent members may be actually living in the household or else absent for the time being. Of these permanent members, some were noted as being absent because of a work contract, i.e. for "labour." In this regard it was interesting that absconders (*iitshipa*) were considered "permanent members" of the household.

Secondly, long ago (see Schapera 1947) it was recognised that migratory labour as an ongoing and repeated (oscillating) movement between rural area and town is not only rooted in the purely economic conditions of the rural area, but also in its *social* conditions. In the present dissertation, I am interested in these social, Caguba internal, conditions which contribute to migrancy. I refrain, on the whole, from any evaluation of the consequences of migrancy whether socially or morally; disruptive. My silence regarding these consequences of migratory labour should by no means be understood as a justification of migrancy, neither with respect to the macro politico-economic situation nor with respect to the Caguban micro situation and its socio-economic condition. It is to the internal *social* reasons of migrancy that I wish to draw attention.

- (15) The conceptualisation of the relationship of the living to their ancestors as "service" is not restricted to the Mpondo. For example, the Tswana speak about *tirelo* which means literally "action to the benefit of somebody else." Setiloane (1976:65) writes: "The function of *badimo* is to ensure the good ordering of social relationships among the biologically living, and the fertility and well-being of men, their crops and stocks. In return, they expect *tirelo* ('service'). More generally speaking, *tirelo* is expected also by parents of their children. It is the proper attitude of juniors towards their seniors, and cannot properly be translated 'worship'" (ibidem p. 266, Footnote 7).

- (16) Informant Nyobela 13-4-81, Tape 190. The noun *itshongo* is probably related to *utshongo* which means "roasted maize." *Umoyiso* is an adoptive of Afrikaans *nooi* ("to invite").
- (17) Kropf (1915:216) records that *ilima* was "originally a number of people who came to help a recently married woman to hoe her garden, at her invitation (emphasis supplied) and who were entertained by her husband by having an ox killed for them."
- (18) *Unomcakidana* ("rhythmic hoeing") has its word-root in the noun *umchako* ("a piece of land").
- (19) The informant whom I quote here used a stereotyped answer. There is would be misleading to understand the quotation on its face-value of "participation in a workparty 'because of beer'." The information at my disposal is clear enough for me to judge that a severe conflict in the village led the informant to participate in the workparty. In order to avoid a "long story," the man gave a conventional (and for practical purposes of daily life, a plausible) answer to my question: he participated "because of the beer." It is a type of speech convention which was observed in connection with the breaking-off of a mat-association (see p. 72 and p. 100, n. 14).
- (20) The moral "pressure", implicit in the phrase "to ask for" (*ukucela*), can be observed in many contexts of daily life, particularly in the attitude between child and parent. Whenever a child rightfully *cela*-s it expresses its dependence on the parent who, then, on the basis of the child's "right", is obliged to help the child and grant the request. This is the social basis of a proverb commonly quoted *inga ngakhol'ile (fala embele- kwani* ("a child who does not cry dies on its mother's back"). This proverb may even be quoted when a man goes to a homestead and "asks for help" with regard to his forthcoming workparty.
- (21) Bloch (1973) discusses the essential difference between long-term and short-term reciprocity. Any action of gift-giving or of rendering a service creates an unbalanced situation between the giver and the receiver. While a system of short-term reciprocity has the effect of a material (economic) transaction, long-term reciprocity is of a different nature. In the latter case, Bloch writes (*ibidem* p. 76), "the actor sees himself as forced into imbalanced relationships by morality. We therefore can conclude that the crucial effect of morality is long term reciprocity and that the longterm effect is achieved because it is not reciprocity which is the motive but morality" (emphasis supplied).
- (22) The reference to the study by Gulliver (1971) makes it clear that the ego-centred social condition of Ntwa society is no exception in African anthropological literature (see also the Conclusion to this chapter, p. 247f). At this stage one would like to widen the analytical scope and continue the discussion along a path which P. Mayer (196.) has successfully opened up already with a study in the urban context, namely, of the significance of "networks" for moral and transactional purposes. See also Bloch (1973), Bailey (1969), A.Mayer (1966), Boissevain (1974). Obviously, as a man goes from his homestead into the wider world of Caguba, he (at least, partially) exchanges his homestead network for another one; and in both networks different norms operate. While at home, the man is the apex of a hierarchically ordered pyramid, while in the wider village he appears as an equal among other men, alternatively as a person subject to seniority based on age rather than on kinship. Although the respective norms are related to one another, it is analytically not permissible to reduce them to a single set, say, of the homestead or of a kinship type.

- (23) "Working for a wage" is in the vernacular known by two different words, depending on who speaks. The employee will speak about *ukuphanga*, a verb from which the noun *impangalo* ("wage labour, wage") is derived. The employer will speak about *ukugqeta* (or *ukugetha*), a verb from which the noun *ingqetho* ("economizing", see p. 227) is derived. "Wage labour" (*impangalo*) is quite foreign to *ilima*-workparties. If, while his work-party is in a progress, a homestead head should adopt an attitude which is characteristic of the wage labour situation he would be criticised for altering the intention of the participants: they did not come "to earn" (*ukuphanga*), but "to help" (*ukunceda*).
- (24) The phrase "life-cycle of the family" has been adopted from M. Fortes; see J.R. Goody (1958), but the meaning attached to the phrase here goes beyond that which Fortes had in mind. For Fortes, the life-cycle is the biological development of a family, starting with the marriage of two persons, increasing as the children arrive, and declining as the children grow and the parents die. Although I use this biological paradigm, I go beyond it. In addition I have in mind the *juridical* unity which exists between a man, his son (as *de facto* heir) and his grandson (as *de jure* heir). These three generations *together* constitute a single cycle.
- (25) The *aduli* ("bridal party") mentioned here must be distinguished from the party described by Prof. Wilson (Hunter 1936:194-9) which refers to the wedding feast. The party itself is quite a prosaic matter of taking the bride's people's gifts to her husband's homestead. Such a party and the gift-giving would take place even if the bride had given birth in her husband's homestead. Although there is no definite rule as to where the (first) child should be born, the common procedure is that the expectant mother goes to her father's place and has her first baby there. After confinement she returns with the baby, accompanied by *aduli*, the gifts carried by a special party. The bridal party and the young husband's people meet each other with a considerable amount of antagonism, as I observed on one occasion.
- (26) The findings, presented here, reflect an analysis by Brandel-Syrier (1980) involving 60 upper-class residents of a black urban township on the Witwatersrand. She discusses the successes and failures of members of the elite according to whether they are first or second-born sons. What appears in the present dissertation as the greater spatial mobility of second-born sons occurs among the urban elite as a greater social mobility. The reason, for both social contexts, lies in the system of primogeniture, and the privileges which the first-born son enjoys in the traditional setting. The resentment against the older brother, which is an undercurrent in Gquba, is an open fact in town. The ambiguous position of illegitimate (but legitimised) sons comes to the fore socially when there are inheritance disputes. Brandel-Syrier assumes that a "break-up of the rural economy" and a "destruction of the kinship system as a whole" (*ibidem* p. 10) is at the root of the urban development of the black elite. The present dissertation proposes that the urban condition is to a certain extent the heritage of the traditional society itself. This my conclusion accords well with Goddard's (1977:6) hypothesis that "whatever the internal or external causes or circumstances (...) which bring about contradictions and structural changes within a determined mode of production and society, these contradictions and changes always have their basis in internal properties, immanent in social structures."
- (27) I could not clarify whether the present practice of "allocating the inheritance" (*ukulandela umafu*) by the father is, in fact, influenced by European

practices of making a written will and by administrative regulations which were introduced by the then colonial government (Hunter 1936:121). In any case, none of my informants gave the impression that a father could or should not have the freedom and the right to allot his property according to his own discernment and in accordance with traditional norms.

- (28) The informants who are quoted here are senior men and women; one is a leading elder: Nyobela 15-4-81, Tape 190; Mphutswana 2-4-81, Tape 174; Mgqengqi 7-4-81, Tape 180; Makazela 6-4-81, Tape 180.

- (29) Kerr (1961:12-13) states for the Southern Nguni that "a widow has a servitude over her late husband's land and a personal right against the heir to be maintained." But, he did not see the full implications of the rule with respect to the totality of the inherited property, nor did he become aware of the trusteeship which a widow and an *inkusana* ("daughter of the home") may hold.

- (30) As for the derivation of "female brother": *umfo* ("brother") becomes **umfokazi* (suffixed by the feminine suffix *-kazi*; the derivative is contracted to the present-day noun *umfazazi* ("female brother, wife"). See Doke-Vilakazi (1964:201) and Kropf (1915:98).

Among the Xhosa (my recording in the Lady Frere district) and still more among the Zulu (see Doke-Vilakazi, *ibidem*; and my recording in the Harri-smith, Free State, area), the word *umfazazi* has acquired a derogatory meaning. In these societies, people do not use the word in order to address married women. Not only, in contrast, is the word used as a term of address in Cagaba, but it is the very term by which a married woman will assert her status as legally protected and as morally higher than any free-woman's status.

- (31) *Abadala* (singular *omdala*, literally "old ones, i.e. persons") is a generic term and is used as a term of reference for any person(s) senior to the speaker himself (including ancestors). This is particularly so in the homestead context (see p. 371). This term is to be distinguished from *abakulu* (singular *omkulu*; literally "big ones, i.e. persons") which is a term of reference or of address for "father's senior brother, father's father" and in a generic sense for any person of the grandparental generation.

- (32) The rule of inheritance for unwedded mothers applies also to the formally divorced woman, in the traditional sense of *ukukhetha iinkomo* (literally "to choose the cattle", i.e. for the purpose of returning the bridewealth). The vernacular phrase refers to the return of the animals from the divorced wife's people to those of her former husband. In the case of divorce in the traditional sense, the woman will be regarded as a "free-woman;" accordingly if she goes and lives at her father's place she will be known as *inkusana* ("daughter of the home") or else, if she establishes her own independent household, she will be called *idibazisi* ("free-woman"). The latter term has, in Mpondo, no derogatory meaning, quite contrary to its usage in Xhosa (see Kropf 1915:76).

FOURTH PART

MITHRA RELIGION AND
THE SYMBOLIC STRUCTURE OF THE WORLD

FOURTH PART

MIHWA RELIGION AND
THE SYMBOLIC STRUCTURE OF THE WORLD

CHAPTER VII

ANCESTOR RELIGION IN MTHWA SOCIETY

THE MAJOR concern of this dissertation is the structure of authority in Mthwa and the position of the homestead as the most significant social group in this society. The question arises as to what validates authority in Mthwa and how we can understand the fact of the homestead's significance, given that the allocation of authority throughout the society does not easily create a clear-cut order of institutions (in the sense of patterns of behaviour as well as of functionally-related systems). The answers to these questions are to be found in Mthwa religion, more specifically in ancestor religion as lived out in Mthwa society.

There is no ancestor religious activity (ritual) unless it is initiated by a particular homestead head, and unless the ritual takes place in his own homestead. The homestead head's authority in general, and his authority to call for an ancestral ritual, has been handed down to him from his agnatic forebears who are important (superhuman) objects of reverence in the rituals themselves.

The genealogically defined succession of a homestead head to authority (p. 79f) links ancestor religion to the agnatic kinship system which is the organisational principle of clans (more specifically, of local clan sections). As a result, ancestor religion belongs to social groups which trans-

end the individual homestead. On the occasion of an ancestral ritual, the organising homestead head's agnatic kinsmen will gather at his place and without them, the ritual cannot proceed.

In a stricter sense, it is not the homestead which is at the root of the initiative for the ancestral ritual, but an ancestor-spirit who begins communicating with one of the living (either with the homestead head or a member of his family). The ancestor-spirit "calls" on one of the living and the "response" by the latter takes the form of an ancestral ritual which the kinsmen perform on behalf of the individual who has been called. Ancestor religion, thus, relates in a fundamental sense to an individual person.

Finally, the ancestor-spirits are known to the Cagubans as communicating with one of the living through various means, particularly through dreams and misfortune which the ancestor-spirits "send" to the person who has been called. However, there are many dreams during a person's life and many misfortunes, but only some of them will be attributed to the ancestor-spirits. In the context of dreams and misfortunes, ancestor religion assumes an interpretative function in Mthwa society. Through this function ancestor religion is part of Mthwa's cosmology, i.e. their system of thought explaining the world, its origin and structure, and its ultimate principles.

Ancestor religion relates, then, to four different intersecting lines of the Mthwa way of life: to the structure of authority and the significance of the homestead; to the agnatic kinship system and its corporate local groups; to individual interests; and to Mthwa cosmology. Given this wide scope for ancestor religion the question arises: what is the purpose or *intended aim* when the Mthwa people become active in the context of their ancestor religion? The ritual action which identifies this intended aim will, in this dissertation, be called the *core-ritual* of the ancestral feast. The answer to the questions - what is the intended aim and what is the nature of the core-ritual - constitute the topic of the present chapter. The answers can be given in two ways to

which Spiro (1966) has already drawn attention. A study of religion, he says, can make a contribution towards the understanding of *society*. In this sense, the study of religion is in fact a study of a society and of religion's contribution to the life of this society. Secondly, it can be a study of *religion* itself; in this case the study focuses on the performance of rituals. Although the present chapter is, for the most part, directed to a sociological type of study (because of the particular interest in the structure of authority in Mthwa society and the position of the homestead in this society) I shall attempt a preliminary understanding of the cognitive dimension (see p. 307). Both approaches, however, will be based on an investigation of ancestral rituals and the verbal expressions used during the course of their enactment. The reason for this procedure is that it is in the context of the rituals where the various intersecting elements are most clearly exposed. In particular, the rituals reveal that ancestor religion, as an aspect of Mthwa's cosmological system (see below), is deeply rooted in the belief in a relationship between the living and the dead, a relationship which finds its expression in the "call" that comes from the ancestor-spirits and the "response" by the living, a relationship which occurs phenomenally precisely in the ancestral ritual. The major part of the present chapter will explain the nature of this relationship. But first, I shall briefly outline Mthwa cosmology as a whole.

(1) *Mthwa cosmology, an outline.*

For Mthwa society, as for other Nguni-speaking and Sotho-speaking societies, ancestor religion is one of several correlated strands of thought; its complexity can best be described within a cosmological framework. Hammond-Tooke (1974) has outlined the belief and ritual systems of Bantu-speaking peoples in Southern Africa in this way. Similarly, Berglund (1976) explores Zulu "thought-patterns and symbolism" in the same framework. Explicitly shows he how the "shades" (i.e. the ancestor-spirits) can only be understood, on the one hand,

within the wider context of belief in a Supreme Being and other divinities, of man's response to them and to the shades, and, on the other hand, in the context of expressions of power, of the perception of evil and of medicine and magic. Clearly, belief in ancestors is part of Nguni cosmology.

(a) *The Supreme Being.*

The present belief of Cagubans in a Supreme Being whom they know as *uQamata*, *uThixo*, *uThixo'Nkosi*, goes back to the pre-Christian era. The first two terms are personal names for the Supreme Being⁽¹⁾. The more common term, probably under the influence of the terminology used by the Christians, is *uThixo*. The latter term, *uThixo'Nkosi*, is a compound noun and means 'Chief Thixo.' There are other descriptive denotations for the Supreme Being, like "the Sky" and "Father of Strength." We may thus speak of a Sky-God or simply of God who is personally conceived and thought to be the creator of the world. These ideas confirm the findings of Hunter (1936:269) who reports that "the Mpondo had two words, *uMdali* ('Creator;' derived from *uMda*, 'to mould, to form') and *uMenzi* ('Maker;' derived from *uMenza*, 'to make') which might suggest a belief in a creator." Even if God is considered to be the source of all that exists, God comes into focus only occasionally; for example the great flood of April, 1978, was attributed to God. One woman angrily exclaimed, when I asked her about her field and crops which had been swept away by the heavy rain falls:

"Alright," she said, "we have done wrong, and Thixo is right to punish us. But I do not know what my fault could be. Would Thixo please speak up and tell me so that I can beg for pardon, Meanwhile I shall sit back, fold my arms and await his reply."

Asked whether it could have been sent by the ancestor-spirits, she replied:

"Never. Things like that can be done by Thixo alone."

Similarly, I was told that in case of a prolonged drought one would address petitions to Thixo and ask for help. Also a sudden fatal sickness, and death

following a lightning stroke may be attributed to Thixo.

Whether in the past there was an explicit cult or at least occasional rituals directed to God must remain undecided here. I have no clear evidence for this⁽²⁾. Today the ritually-expressed worship of God occurs exclusively in the context of Christian services. Almost 88 % of Caguba's population claim adherence to one Christian denomination or another. The Methodist, comprising about 45 % of the Christians, outnumber the other denominations. Against this strong background of (nominal) Christianity in Caguba, it is difficult to assess how much the traditional conception of the Supreme Being is influenced by Biblical-Christian thought. Whatever the concept may be, the belief in God serves, in daily life, as one of the means of interpreting certain occurrences, like a catastrophe and other exceptional negative events, and of interpreting the origin of man and of life in the most general terms. The public worship of God belongs to Christian services and prayer meetings.

(b) Ancestors and ancestor-spirits.

In the daily life of non-Christians and Christians alike, belief in ancestors is of great importance. (This could be shown statistically, by analysing the figures of participants at ancestral rituals; but the details must be omitted here for want of space.) There are several reasons for the almost universal significance of ancestors in Mthwa society.

It has already been said (p. 258) that ancestor religion is closely linked to the agnatic kinship system. Some of the very common terms by which categories of kinsmen are denoted, include *amawethu*, not merely living but also dead kinsmen. Thus by semantic necessity, whoever calls on the "kinsmen" (*amawethu*) re-calls the "ancestors" (*amawethu*).

Another reason for the ancestors' universal significance is that they are a means of interpreting certain negative events which occur in a person's

life. For example a certain Roman Catholic man's first child died. Asked who was responsible for the child's death, he replied: "Thixo gave the child, Thixo took it." Asked whether the death could have been caused by the ancestors, he said: "About such a possibility you think if the second or third child dies. If this should happen in my family, I certainly will consider the possibility." The ancestors are an explanatory alternative to the Supreme Being (and to other extra-human agencies to be mentioned presently).

A third reason is that the belief in ancestors implies the conceptual frame of authority in Mthwa, noticeably of the homestead head. In conclusion (in Chapter VIII) it will be shown that this belief in ancestors is an indispensable aspect of Mthwa understanding of a meaningful world.

The ancestors, unlike God, are of human origin; yet they are endowed with super-human powers which they use at will. As human as the ancestors are, they remain within the reach of man; after all, they are his forebears. This accessibility to man is expressed by the fact that there is an explicit cult of the ancestors. The ancestor cult provides to a large extent the content of what I call ancestor religion⁽³⁾; this cult (being the believers' response to the call coming from the ancestors) is part of a communication event which takes place between the living and the dead. This communication across the threshold of death, the communication between the living and the dead, makes a distinction between the ancestors as a whole and the ancestors who engage in such communication. The ancestors as a group never converse with the living; only an individual ancestor communicates with an individual living. For descriptive purposes I shall distinguish between an *ancestor*, one of the group of dead forebears of a given clan (local clan-section), and an *ancestor-spirit* by which I mean an individual communicating ancestor who may be agnatic or cognatic (affinal)⁽⁴⁾. Within the overall cosmological system, ancestors and ancestor-spirits fulfil different interpretative functions. It is the *ancestors*, as the agnatic fore-

bears, who provide the conceptual frame of authority in Mthwa; and it is the ancestor-spirits, whether agnatic or affinal, who are believed responsible for certain misfortunes. The ancestors and the ancestor-spirits need to be distinguished also with regard to the performance of the ancestral rituals, coming into focus at different stages of the performance, as will be shown subsequently. The essential distinction between ancestors and ancestor-spirits has a further analytical consequence: although ancestor religion is linked to agnatic kinship in Mthwa, agnatic kinship *per se* and ancestor religion are not simply functionally related systems of Mthwa society.

(c) *Spirits.*

Apart from the ancestors, there are other spiritual beings known as *imimoya*, which means literally "spirits." They are thought of as living in the deep forest (*abantu basehlathini*, the "forest people") or in a river (*abantu basemlanjani*, the "river people"). The information at my disposal is scanty, and differs from Hunter's detailed report (Hunter 1936:256-264). She describes the river people as agnatically-related forebears who are ritually served through offerings by the riverside (*ukunikela emlanjeni*). My informants are quite vague about the origin of the spirits. The most general opinion in the village is that these spirits are of (unknown) dead people who, for example, did not receive a proper burial. In demonstrating this origin of the spirits, one elderly woman referred to her own son who died in the circumcision lodge years back. He was informally buried in the forest, and turned into a spirit. Other informants of mine maintain that spirits are extra-human and, like the ancestors, are capable of acting according to their own will, but, unlike the ancestors, always act maliciously. There is no cult of the spirits in Caguba, as far as I know; people ward them off by using medicine which they obtain from a diviner⁽⁵⁾.

(d) *Extra-human beings: familiars.*

In clear contrast to the ancestors and spirits, there are beings which assume the appearance of people or of certain animals. These beings are essentially non-human in nature, either in origin or in existence. Furthermore, they cannot act in their own capacity, as the Supreme Being, the ancestors, and the spirits can do. In order to become active, these beings are called on by certain people and associate with them for evil purposes. Some informants claim that a daughter can inherit these beings from her mother (this makes it understandable why they associate with children; see below). In ethnographic literature, these beings are referred to as "familiars." Hunter (1936:275-290) describes the common beliefs of the Mpondo in familiars; Hammond-Tooke (1975b) analyses the symbolic structure of the cosmology of Cape Nguni societies. He discusses various categories of familiars, in particular animal-shaped familiars, and their relation to wild animals of forest and grassland, and to domestic animals. He shows how, structurally, the familiars correspond to the wild animals of the forest which, in turn, are the opposite of domestic animals of the homestead. On the levels of values, this is the opposition between evil and good. Since ancestors correspond to what is ultimately good, ancestors and familiars stand for the cosmological opposition between good and evil. The overall cosmological concepts of the Cape Nguni apply to Mthwa society as well.

The most commonly referred to familiars is *uthikoloshe*. It is described by my informants as a tiny, hairy, human-shaped creature. *Uthikoloshe* is male and highly sexual in nature. He is said to be inheritable by a daughter from her mother. He is seen by children more often, it seems, than by adults.

Another often mentioned familiar, like *uthikoloshe*, sexual in nature, is *impundulu*, the "lightning bird." *Impundulu* is there when lightning strikes" (Hunter 1936:282), and always appears to a female witch "in the form of a very beautiful young man who becomes her lover" (ibidem). Both, *uthikoloshe* and *impundulu* are used to cause misfortune and even death to a personal enemy.

Intsikizi is an omen rather than a familiar and has zootom; it is the Ground Hornbill, known as the "rain bird." This bird is considered sacred in Caguba and may not be killed. The "rain bird" featured in Caguba after the great flood (1978) when people sought to find a reason for the disaster they had experienced. Asked whether the flood could have been caused by Thixo (God), a certain informant said that he had found a dead *intsikizi* in the Mngazi River bed, after the flood had subsided. This was proof to him that it was not Thixo who was responsible for the catastrophe, but a sorcerer (*amthakazi*) who killed the sacred bird in order to bring death on the people. Killing the bird results in rainfall without end, my informant said.

The basic assumption about familiars is that they serve the individualistic, evil ends of their owners, witches and sorcerers. The misfortune, damage and death, which they inflict is essentially "unmerited" by the victim (Hammond-Tooke 1975b:31); he suffers innocently. This contrasts strongly with the assumption about ancestral wrath and the punishment which ancestors send: the victim deserves this punishment for negligence in the fulfilment of duties. Representing the evil counterpart to ancestral goodness, the familiars take on an important explanatory role in traditional Mthwa cosmology.

(e) *The neutral force of pollution.*

The cosmological principles discussed so far require personal agents. There is a further principle, which, unlike these, exists and acts without any such agent. It is a neutral negative force which from time to time befalls man (and indirectly domestic animals) without human intervention. This force does not appear in its own right, but is discernable only by its effect on the afflicted person or persons. The latter are ritually polluted, they suffer from "filthiness" (*ama-n-14*) or (more commonly called) "bad blood" (*igazi elibi*; see below). Ritual pollution makes a person (to a certain degree) socially unacceptable. He or she must withdraw, for the time being, from social intercourse. Since the conse-

quence of this neutral negative force (for which there is no special name) has no direct outward indication, save ritual pollution and social unacceptability, its presence must be identifiable to the people of Mthwa. I recorded four different types of circumstance which cause pollution.

The first is the female cycle of the menses which Hunter (1936:46) identified in the Mpondo vernacular as *umlaza*⁽⁶⁾. While the content of the term *umlaza* is well-known in Caguba and a commonly recognised reality, the word itself is quite unknown among the villagers. Nevertheless, I shall retain the word as a technical term. *Umlaza* denotes the condition of a woman during her monthly period which is considered dangerous to males and life-stock, cattle in particular. It is thought that a man will become sexually impotent and contract diseases if he has intercourse with a menstruating woman. Such a woman will avoid cattle, otherwise cows would become barren and cows with calves would go dry. "The bad blood of woman will cause the passages of procreation getting blocked," as one of my informants put it. In other words, *umlaza* if left unchecked endangers the very source of continued life of man: procreation. The polluted woman must wash after the bodily discharge ceases, then sexual life can be resumed.

Conviction in court is a second cause of pollution. This type of pollution in particular is identified by the Cagubans as *igazi elibi* ("bad blood"). Such a polluted person suffers from *igazi* ("bad luck"; alternatively, the people speak about *ukuba neshwangutsha* and *ukuba nebhadi*)⁽⁷⁾. Continued living in this condition of "bad luck" will attract further misfortune to the homestead or "the man 'of bad luck'." The polluted person needs to wash away *igazi* his condition and he will do so by inviting relatives and friends to a ceremonial beer-drinking at his home; it is a ceremony of reconciliation (see p. 276).

The third circumstance of ritual pollution occurs when a person lives under the expressed obligation of preparing an ancestral ritual: the person concerned is somebody who has encountered an ancestor-spirit who "demands food", i.e. the

performance of the ancestral ritual (see p. 275f). During the interim period between the diagnosis by a diviner and the ritual performance, the person (and his homestead head, if the person is not the homestead head himself) is "polluted with the spirits" (*ukuba namatya*), literally "to suffer from faults;" see below p. 230 and 323). If a person polluted in this way is present at the ancestral feast of another homestead, he will refrain from participating in the proceedings lest he may cause the hosts to experience "bad luck" (see Kuckertz 1981b:14). Only the requested ancestral ritual can cleanse the person of his pollution.

The most conspicuous form of pollution is the fourth one which occurs with death. It is called *izila*, a noun which may be derived from *ukuzila* ("to abstain, to refrain from")⁽⁸⁾. Whenever a person dies, the dead person's (whether child's or adult's) social environment will be affected by the pollution of *izila*, the polluting consequence of death. All the members of the person's homestead and all the agnatic relatives will be affected. In the case of a chief's death, the whole chiefdom will be mourning (*ukuzila*). The outward sign of this chiefdom-wide mourning is a period of restricted social and economic life.

The kinsmen of the person are polluted to the degree of their respective genealogical relationship to the deceased⁽⁹⁾. The most severely polluted person is the chief mourner, of a married man his wife, and of an unmarried child, the child's mother. Pollution incurred by death is almost as dangerous (to other people) as death itself. Therefore, the polluted person (particularly the chief-mourner) will be very restricted in his or her social involvement and spatial movement. The restrictions include total sexual abstinence for the period of mourning (*ixesha lokuzila*). This period lasts about three months if a child is mourned, and at least a full year if the husband has died. Furthermore, a widow not only has to dress in a special mourning attire⁽¹⁰⁾, she has also to adopt

the strict rules of respect (*Mutshimpha*) for her in-laws expected of a newly married woman. Still more, she must suffer all types of behaviour in her children and cannot correct them if they misbehave; this obligation is a sign of respect for her late husband. The restrictions are lifted in three stages: the first stage is reached about four or five days after the funeral; the second (in the case of an adult mourned) about three months later; the third is the culmination and termination of the mourning period at which the mourning dress is removed and the pollution washed away in a special ceremony. If the mourning period and the various ceremonies are not observed, particularly by the chief-mourner, the "irreverent" person proves himself or herself to be morally irresponsible because he or she deliberately endangers the lives of the people of the house, i.e. the agnatic kinsfolk of the dead person. Without hesitation, the irreverent person will be made responsible for any misfortune the house of mourning may subsequently experience; he may even be accused of witchcraft.

(f) *Conclusion.*

The belief about pollution in Mthwa society does not only provide one more cosmological principle which is impersonal, neutral, in contrast with three other principles conceived as being personal, but it provides an alternative explanation of the evil in the world, alternative to that of the belief in familiars, witches and sorcerers. Witches and sorcerers are actively involved in evil. The polluted person, however, is in a state of close contact with misfortune and evil, in such a way that he is *involuntarily* polluted. As such, he is responsible for halting and neutralising the evil through the observance of cleansing rituals. Accepting the state of pollution and undergoing the rituals of washing becomes a matter of social and moral responsibility on the part of the polluted person. The belief in pollution includes a cosmological as well as a moral dimension.

generally speaking, "Mthwa" cosmology shows a pre-occupation with the interpretation of misfortune; it has four alternative interpretations: the Sky-God, the ancestor-spirits, the familiars (together with their human masters, witches and sorcerers), and a neutral force. The most general term for "misfortune" is *isifo*, a noun derived from *ukufa*, "to die." *Isifo* means "sickness, death." If the cosmological pre-occupation is the understanding of misfortune, the practical concern within this framework of thought is: how to ward-off misfortune, sickness and death. The preceding account shows the two principal means of warding-off misfortune whether it be a divinely-sent catastrophe, the incurring of ancestral wrath, innocent suffering from evil, or involuntary experience of pollution: rituals and medicine. Indeed, for the Cagubans there is no sharp distinction between ritual and medicine, even if the one is the performance of certain actions in public, and the other the application of certain curative substances. Both, ritual and medicine, are understood to restore health and life. In this regard, ancestor religion proves once more to be an integral part of Mthwa cosmology: the subsequent description will show how much ancestral rituals are concerned with the afflicted person's life, social well-being of individual. In a certain sense, ancestral rituals are healing rites. We consider the cosmological pre-occupation with interpreting misfortune and the practical concern for warding it off, the central issue of Mthwa cosmology appears to be life, rather than any personal or impersonal cosmic manifestation: life as it is lived by man and animal, as it can be passed on, manipulated, and destroyed by evil-minded persons; life as it depends on the cooperation between man and man. Ancestor religion and ancestor ritual demonstrate

(2) *The structure of the ancestral family.*

(a) *Ancestors relate to a group of agnatic kinsmen.*

The ancestor religion of Mthwa society is based on a specific reaction to, or understanding of, death. The death of a person has a series of consequences in accordance with this specific understanding: the first consequence is one of separation; the second is a reuniting of the surviving people and the dead man on a spiritual plane; the third is that the dead man, after this reuniting, may assume a position of unchallengeable and unchanging authority over the living.

The first consequence occurs with the fact of death itself and the actual burial which implies a strongly felt separation between the living and the deceased. This separation is not only strongly felt, but indeed feared. Both feeling and fear are expressed in a terminology of respect as regards dying and burial, and in the careful preparation of the grave. For example the expiration of life is called "leaving" (*ukuhamba*), or "going down like the sun" (*ukushona*), or "ceasing to exist" (*ukubhubha*). Yet, the actual word for "dying" (*ukufa*) is never used for humans. The burial is called "hiding away" (*imfihlo*); the corpse will be laid "down" (*phantsi*); the deceased has gone down to "those below" (*abaphantsi*). But, the actual word for burying (*ukungwaba*, *umngwabo*) is generally avoided.

A rectangular grave pit, about one and a half meter deep is carefully dug. A shelf is carved into the pit wall, just above the (usually bought) coffin, on which sticks are placed creating a kind of ceiling (see Figure 15, p. 272). On top of this ceiling, a layer of grass sods is placed, that is the sods which were removed when the digging of the grave began. Above the sods comes the filling of the grave, forming a mound above ground-level. The mound will be covered with the branches which were left over after the cutting of the sticks for the ceiling. On top of the whole, a heap of thorny bushes will

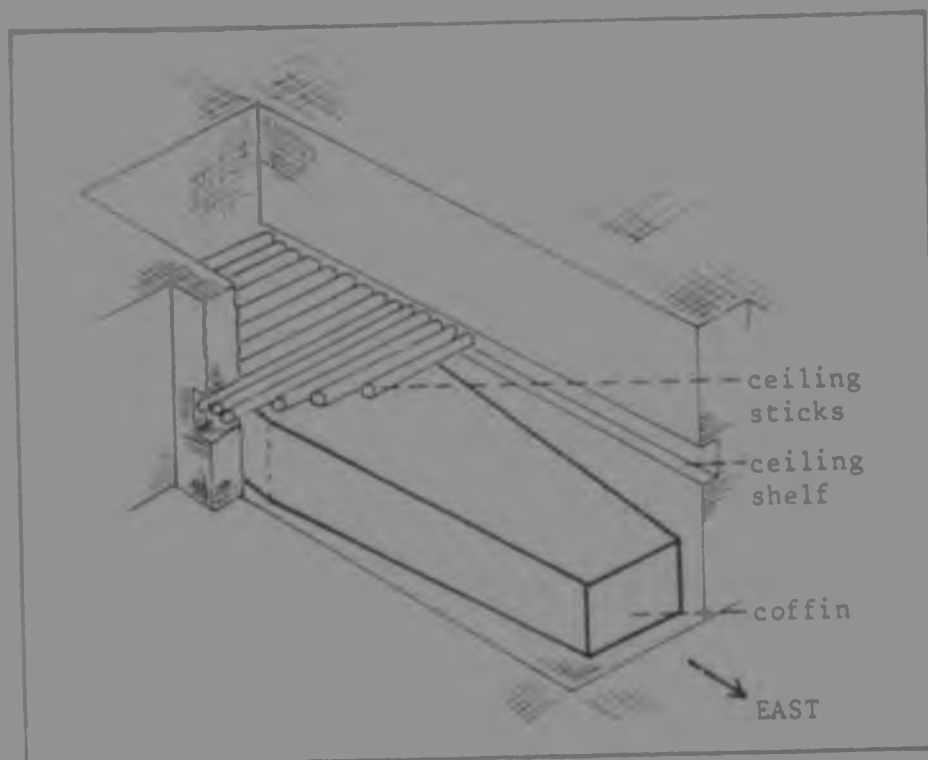


Figure 15. Grave pit and ceiling.

be placed, so as to prevent witches from disinterring the body. In a definite sense, the grave is the final abode of the earthly remains of a person. Finally, in the case of a homestead head's grave, a fence will be put around the grave, made of upright poles about one meter high connected by branches, in appearance much like the fence of a cattle byre. Built in the shape of a horseshoe, the fence is open on its eastern side, i.e. on the side where the feet of the body are. Nature will be allowed to take over; eventually the grave will be covered with bush or even a tree.

The second consequence of death is that agnatic kinship as the organisational principle of corporate groups gains momentum in two ways: first, the agnatic group, under the leadership of the ritual elder will be in charge of all the proceedings from the burial until the ceremony which terminates the mourning period; secondly, death has the (previously described) polluting effect on the deceased's kinsmen, in particular on the chief-mourner. Mourning does not only imply a state of mind; but, more specifically, it means that the "mourning"

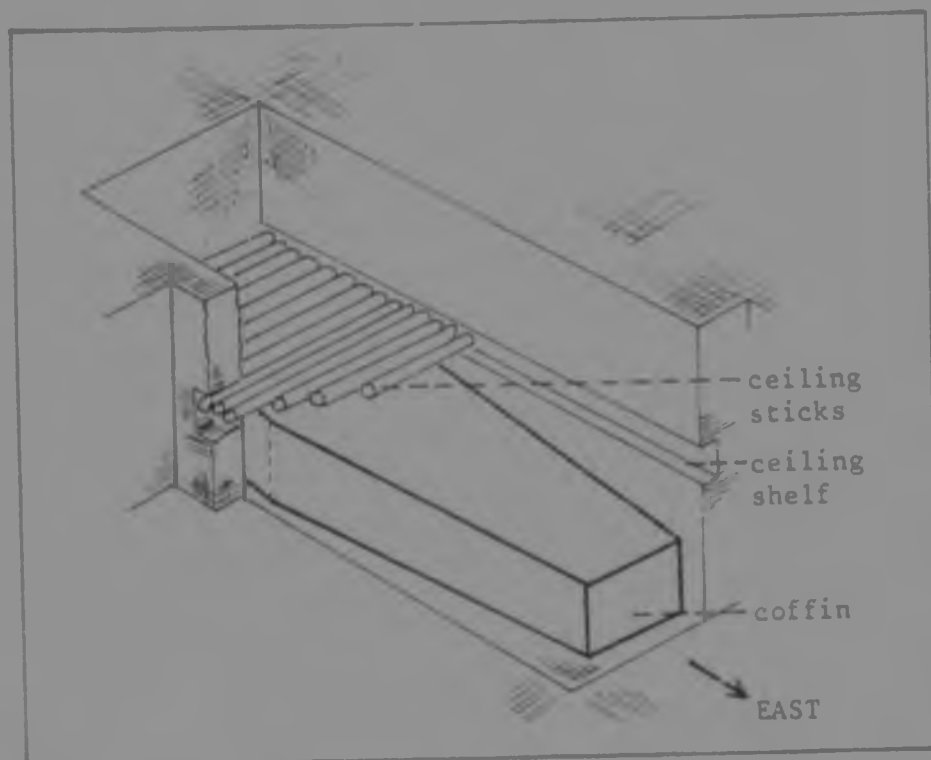


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persons abstain from manual work. The following genealogy gives an example of the corporate involvement of kinsmen and the division between mourners and manual workers at a child's funeral: "mourning" belongs to the senior generation; "digging of the grave" and "cooking for the burial party" belong to the junior generation (the child's parents, although of the junior generation, belong to the mourners):

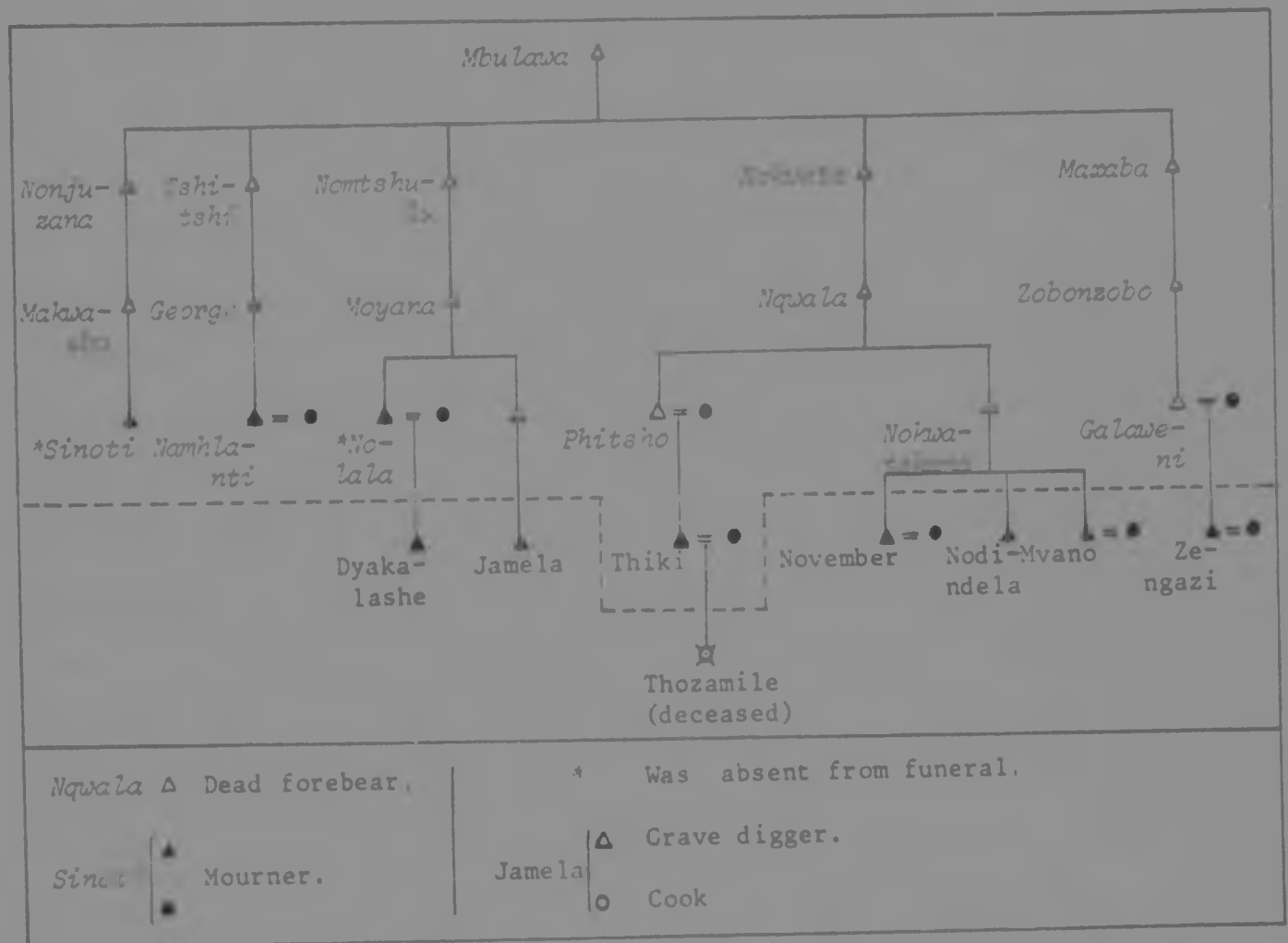


Figure 16. A group of agnatic kinsmen and their wives as ritual community. A typical case.

Death brings the local clan-section into focus. Internally, the clan-section is a hierarchy of adjacent generations and of members ranked in order of birth. Externally, the clan-section is defined by the polluting effect of death. Death is, thus, not only the separation of the deceased from the living, but of the deceased's polluted kinsmen from other people. Death is a decidedly social affair which carves out, as it were, a group of people in terms of their agna-

tic relationships, i.e. those who refer to themselves as *amawethu*, which means literally "those of us," those who can demonstrate their common descent from an apical ancestor.

The exclusive corporateness of the clan-section becomes clearest at the ceremony which terminates the mourning period, the ceremony of *ukususa iimpahla* ("the removal of the mourning attire"). As far as possible the whole clan-section will participate, including members which may not belong to the actually co-residing local group. They will all participate in the washing away of the impact of death (*ukuhlamba izila*), using, for this purpose, the "medicine of the home" (*amayeza asekhaya*). The social unity between the agnatic kinsmen (which the death of one of their members had established, and which is, as it were, re-established through the mourning rituals) has an important implication: the same final ritual of mourning re-establishes the unity of the living kinsmen with their deceased fellow, the deceased person "returns home" (*ukugoduka, ukubuya*), as the Cagubans put it. Thus the ritual re-establishes the unity between the living and the dead kinsmen on a spiritual plane: the dead is no longer "absent" (*uhambile, ushonile, akasekho*), i.e. dead, but he is spiritually present among the living; he has once more become "one of us" (*owakothu, uwethu*). The deceased who has "returned" takes his place among the ancestors (*amawethu*): the agnatic kingroup expands beyond the threshold of death.

Death has a (ritually mediated) third consequence: the returned deceased, the ancestor, has achieved a status of authority which none of his living kinsmen possesses. He can appear in a dream (*hongo*), communicate with the living (agnatic and affinal), and "demand food" (see below) without opposition from the living. Even if a child should appear in a dream and make a demand, the demand will be met. The communicating ancestor-spirits (*amathongo*) possess

the authority of chiefs (*inkosi*), it cannot be challenged. The ancestor-spirits are chiefs in their own right, they are *amakhosi* (literally "those who are like chiefs")⁽¹²⁾ (see p. 323). "Chiefs" (*amakhosi*) is a very common term for the ancestor-spirits and is an expression used when reverently greeting or addressing diviners: *Makhosi!* ("Ye Chiefs!").

Yet, no deceased would become an ancestor nor an ancestor-spirit without being a member of a particular agnatic group of kinsmen (*ama-ndaba*), i.e. a clan-section. This necessary link between a particular agnatic group of kinsmen and the status of an ancestor (spirit) is the distinctive element of all ancestor religion in Africa. Ancestor religion is essentially particularistic. In Mthwa society, as in all other south-east African Bantu-speaking societies, there is a "large number of discrete cult groups, each worshipping its own set of shades (i.e. ancestors)" (Hammond-Tooke 1974:345). Put differently, the ancestral rituals are no "cult of the dead" (Fortes 1965). A further necessary link exists between a particular agnatic group of kinsmen and the ancestral rituals in Mthwa society: the active presence of the agnatic kinsmen is the condition on which the ancestral ritual can proceed towards its aim, the restoration of one of its members to health (*empilo*). Without the agnates as the "constitututors" (Kiernan 1982:296)⁽¹³⁾, the ancestral ritual would remain ineffective.

(b) When ancestors demand 'food.'

Ancestor religion becomes an observable reality in Caguba through a variety of feasts which are celebrated either with respect to certain occurrences in a person's life or in reaction to a direct intervention that comes from the ancestors. Accordingly there are two types of ancestral feast.

The first type is celebrated as a thanksgiving to the ancestors for some favour received, for example, the recovery from a sickness or a successful

hospitalization of one of the homestead's members. The ancestors are thanked for the recovery of "one of us." A thanksgiving is also celebrated after an escape from grave danger. For example, at a court, somebody may be found guilty of pronouncing a curse. The accused will then be offered the opportunity to apologize or else have the case referred to the chief. The accused may opt for the apology. If the apology is accepted, reconciliation takes place, usually symbolized by hand-shaking. Subsequently, the now reconciled accused will announce "a little thing" which will "take place in his home" to which he invites the offended party. The people will celebrate the reconciliation and, by the same token, "wash away the mistake" or "take out the bad blood." The celebration ostensibly occurs merely on the social level, but it is in fact directed towards the ancestors; as the Cagubans put it: the "washing" (i.e. the ceremonial beer-drinking) *lithetha* *guk'oto* ("tells it all") to the ancestors. It is important to recognise that the initiative for this type of feast rests clearly with the homestead head: the outcome of an occurrence of, say, sickness or conviction in court *guk'oto* leads to the celebration of the feast which is then intended also to thank the ancestors.

The second type of feast is different. Here no feast takes place unless the ancestors have demonstrably intervened. This intervention occurs in the form of a repetition of dreams, or of repeated occurrences of misfortune, such as sickness or even death, within a relatively short period in the family. The afflicted person will begin to wonder and may take one person or another into his confidence. Ultimately, the person concerned will ask a diviner to "investigate" (*wahlalo*) the matter. The diagnosis of the divination may be that the dreams or the sequence of misfortunes have been caused by a certain ancestor and that this ancestor (or ancestress) is now "demanding food" (*guk'oto* *ukutya*). In other words, the experience of misfortune in the form of dreams, repeated calamities or an incurable disease is a means by which a specific ancestor communicates his wishes to the living, i.e. to a specific

living person. The diviner also clarifies the form in which the ancestor demands food: either beer or meat. The demand is not negotiable by the living and must be met by an ancestral feast.

But, an individual cannot decide for himself about such a feast. This requires the decision of his agnatic kinsmen. Having heard the diviner's diagnosis, the homestead head concerned will invite the kinsmen to a consultation (*ibhunga*). Once again the whole affair will be discussed, and, if the kinsmen are satisfied with the diviner's diagnosis, they will decide that "in conclusion, beer should be brewed" (*kusilelwe phezu kwento*). This is the beginning of an ancestral feast: the decision by the kinsmen. The beer is brewed exactly like ordinary beer. What makes the difference and constitutes the consecrating factor is the *intention* of brewing (see Kuckertz 1981b). In fact, the decision by the kinsmen and the brewing of the beer are the inception of the *response* which the ~~afflicted person~~ is requested to give to the demand and communication from the ancestor. The ancestor is the demanding authority; the responding afflicted person is the 'obedient child.' The ancestral feasts which are in response to an ancestor's "demand for food" constitute the ancestor *cult* in the strict sense of a particular form of religious worship and of devotion to a particular person.

The ancestral feasts, in the strict sense, have three different forms, depending on the ritual *materia* used. These involve either a *necklace* made from the tail hairs of a special cow called the "beast of the tail;" an *animal*, a goat or a head of cattle, which is to be killed ritually; or *beer* which is to be drunk in a special ritual manner. (It should be noted here that this ritual manner of beer-drinking is quite different, in form and intention, from what I call the ceremonial manner; see p.308f and 347 respectively; and that the beer which is used as the ritual *materia* is to be distinguished from the beer

of common feasting, even if the former is taken from the bulk of the beer which has been brewed for the consumption of all who participate in the ancestral feast.)

Ancestral feasts are celebrated in response to a sickness (*leifo*) (see p. 270), which has been diagnosed as caused by the communicating ancestor. This appears to be the only reason for which the ancestor cult is celebrated today in Caguba. Whether this is a recent development or, in fact, traditionally the central issue of the ancestor cult, I am unable to discern at this stage. However, assessing Prof. Wilson's material (Hunter 1936), it appears that all *foa* "means of influencing the *ancestors* (i.e. ancestor-spirits)" relate to some sickness to be cured. The four means (of which only one is used at a time) are: the necklace from the beast of the tail, the animal for ritual killing, beer offering, and the offering by the riverside (see above p. 254) (this last means I have never observed myself). Whatever it may have been in the past, today the ancestor cult in Caguba is in an essential sense a particular kind of healing ritual.

(c) The two major parts of the ancestral feast.

The ancestral feasts which are celebrated in response to an ancestor's demand for "food" and on behalf of the afflicted person always have two parts. In one, the *public* of the village is permitted to participate; at the other the agnatic kinsmen of a *clan-section* and their wives are present on their own. An ancestral feast of this kind, therefore, always involves a double feast. This fact was recognised by Hunter (1936:244) when she observed that

(The ceremony of a ritual killing) was very much a family affair. Only the family were really concerned when a mishap occurred, although the neighbours present condoled with them. The neighbours were only really interested in the feast. Most of them did not arrive until after the beast had been killed, and the crowd came on the second day.

The whole ancestral feast most often takes place on two consecutive days; but together the two feasts constitute an inseparable unit. The actual sequence of the public feast and of the clan-section can alter, depending on the circumstances of the homestead, but both are always observable, even if they seem to co-incide: the "family affair" is always clearly separated from what is in the interest of the public⁽¹⁴⁾. The two feasts require to be discussed separately.

(i) The ancestral *public* feast.

There are two reasons for speaking about an ancestral public feast. First, it refers to the participants in the celebration to which non-relatives are admitted and actively invited. They need not be neighbours in the strict sense of living in the vicinity. The second reason refers to the fact that something which is a "family affair" has to be made public. In other words, the family affair remains in the centre even of the public feast.

An ancestral public feast usually takes place in the morning, at any time of the day before the sun has passed its zenith. In contrast, the feast of the clan-section always takes place in the afternoon, i.e. after the sun has passed its zenith. Usually, before the actual ancestral feast opens, a particular kind of beer used merely for entertainment, known as *isagweti*, is served. Then follow the three main elements of the ancestral feast proper:

- (1) a performative announcement or a promulgation (*ingxala*) by the ritual elder, which includes some reference to the necessity for performing the ritual as the correct procedure (*isiko*)⁽¹⁵⁾ requires.
- (2) the thanksgiving (*umbongo*) and public statement by the homestead head, male or female.
- (3) an unspecified number of intercessions (*izibongozo*) on behalf of the afflicted person addressed to the agnatic an-

cestors, and instructions (*imiyalelo*) directed towards the afflicted person. These speeches precede and follow the thanksgiving. The speakers may be agnatic kinsmen, agnatic kinswomen, or kinsmen's wives.

The performative announcement is the marker which separates the ensuing ancestral ceremony from the ongoing social interaction. The stages through which the feast is going to proceed are also indicated by special reference made by the ritual elder. From the performative pronouncement onward, beer will not be drunk until the ancestral feast is concluded.

After the promulgation of the feast, certain speeches may follow. Themes tend to be recurrent, e.g. the necessity for concern for kinsmen (the most commonly used term here is *amawethu* which ambiguously includes the living and the dead), well-wishings for the afflicted person that he should be granted a "good life" (i.e. health) and that such good life would be to the benefit of "all of us" (*abakothu*; this is an alternative term for the agnatic kinspeople with special reference to "the people of the house" in which the festive gathering takes place; see p. 344). One congratulates the afflicted person on "from now on" being free from fear (*uzila*)⁽¹⁶⁾, since the chiefs (*amatyala*) (see p. 275) have been satisfied and the faults (*matyala*) have been cancelled ("chiefs" and "faults" are alternative terms for the ancestor spirits; see below p. 323).

These speeches, which may continue after the thanksgiving, make it clear that the afflicted person stands between two groups of people: the ancestors on one side and the living on the other (see Figure 17, p. 281). Most of these speeches have a particular ritualised form, in that they consist of an address followed by a song sung by the speaker himself who while singing, dances to the accompaniment of the hand-clapping of his audience which at the same time is the chorus of his song. The spoken address may include a formal praising

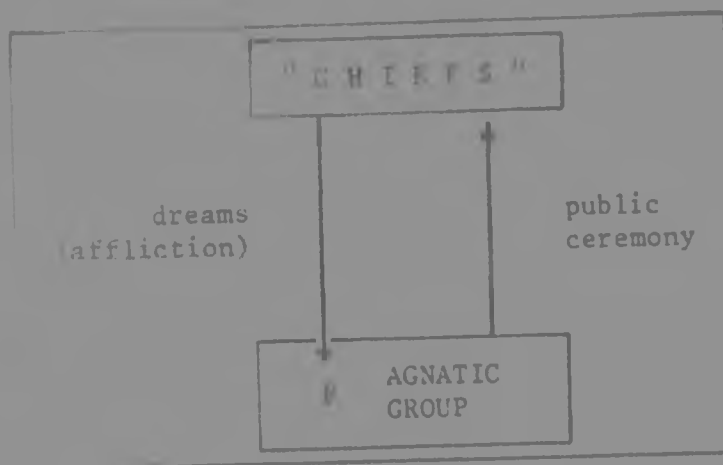


Figure 17. The afflicted person (P) as intermediary.

The clan ancestors. This praising is known in the vernacular as *ukunqula*. Any of the speakers, male and female may *nqula*. All speeches (irrespective of whether they include formal praisings) have in common a reference to the ancestors as well as to the living as *groups* of kinspeople; towards both groups the afflicted person has responsibilities. In turn, both the living and the dead, as groups, show their concern for the afflicted person.

The climax of the ceremony is the thanksgiving (*umbongo*) by the homestead head on behalf of the afflicted person. It is a public statement, therefore only the homestead head can make it (see p. 93). The homestead head publicly thanks the "kinsmen", i.e. the living and the dead (*amawethu*), for helping settle the problem that has arisen in the homestead, but then, as the thanksgiving speech continues, the content of the speech and the subsequent song change from the theme of "thanking" to that of expressing a relationship of obligation of the living "afflicted" person to the communicating ancestor-spirit. Thus the emphasis is no longer on the group of ancestors, but on the individual ancestor-spirit who demanded "food"⁽¹⁷⁾; the emphasis is no longer on the group of kinsmen but on the individual, afflicted person who roused the ancestor-spirit's wrath. This shift of emphasis from the group of kinsmen, living or dead, to the individual, afflicted person and the particular commu-

nicating ancestor-spirit is documented in the following thanksgiving (*ukubonga*) by a widow homestead head, a polygamist's wife. She thanked (*ukubonga*) on behalf of her adult daughter who had been suffering from a painful chest-complaint for a long time.

A. SPEECH OF THANKSGIVING.

Widow : *Banto bam nabaninawe bam.*

My children and you my younger brothers,

ndibuhlungu, bethuna,

I am grieved, my friends,

kurmandi ke kodwa,

yet (all things are) pleasant now,

oko ndehlule iminyany' ekh' apha kwezi zinto sizivayo

since I succeeded in convincing the ancestors of the home with respect to these things which we hear about (in the other speeches)

ngomntwanam ngokuzala kwam

(and which are troubling) the child of my womb.

Nd'yabulela, malcamane,

I am grateful to you, people of the Ncamane clan (the clan of her late husband, to which her daughter belongs)

'ba nizw'ngena kwicala lam.

that you came to my homestead (literally "to my side," the phrase alludes to the fact that she was wife to a polygamist).

'n'sawwela ndinganxwil' (Laughter).

That is all I want to say (literally "I should no longer drink, unless I got drunk." The self-ridicule is greeted with laughter).

B. SONG IDENTIFYING THE AFFLICTED PERSON AND THE ANCESTOR-SPIRIT.

Widow : *Kwathi, kwathi, kwathi kwez nyakanya bam.*

Repeatedly it was said with respect to these little nuisances (i.e. the repeated sicknesses of her daughter and the daughter herself)

'z' ungem' unuk' uHe'

you (i.e. the ancestor-spirit) should not oppose and accuse Hehe
(i.e. the singer herself who is the mother of the afflicted per-
son, her daughter)

People : Heke, 'nyakanyaka, yile ntomb' ka Nohehe'.
(Chorus) Quite right, the nuisance : the daughter of Nohehe.

Widow : Sithi y'nyakanyaka / suk'hamb'unuk'uHehe!
We confirm (it that the girl) is a nuisance, don't accuse Hehe!

Chorus : Heke, 'nyakanyaka, yile ntomb' ka Nohehe'.
Quite right, the nuisance is the daughter of Nohehe.

Widow : Sithi yinyakanyaka / 'z'ungafun' ku Hehe!
We confirm (it that the girl) is a nuisance, don't want (what you
demand) from Hehe (from the girl's mother).

Chorus : Yile nyakanyaka, yile ntomb' ka Nohehe.
This one, the nuisance, this one, Nohehe's daughter.

Widow : Sithi yinyakanyaka / 'z'ungafun' ku Hehe!
We confirm (it that the girl) is a nuisance, don't want (what you
demand) from Hehe.

Chorus : Yi [le nyakanyaka, yi [le ntomb'ka [Nohehe
This nuisance this one daugh- ter of Nohehe.

Widow : He, mha! Yiyo! Yiyo!
Oh, my mother, this one! This one!

Widow : Yiyo Yiyo Yiyo Yiyo!
It is this one, this one, this one, this one!

Chorus : Yi [le nyaka [nyaka, yi [le ntomb'ka [Nohehe.
This nuisance this daughter of Nohehe.

Widow : Yiyo Yiyo Yiyo Yiyo!
This one This one This one This one!

The widow, as head of the homestead, gave her short thanksgiving address while standing in the house at a place on the women's side near the door to the house; a place which indicates seniority (see p. 346). From this point she started to sing and dance simultaneously. She sang the solo part, the people accompanied her singing with the chorus. Both her speech and song are connected by the sequence of terms of address used. With the opening address, the widow establishes herself as "mother" and "older sister," placing her

'z' ungem' unuk' uHe'

you (i.e. the ancestor-spirit) should not oppose and accuse Hehe
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People : Heke, 'nyakanyaka, yile ntomb' ka Nohehe'.
(Chorus) Quite right, the nuisance is the daughter of Nohehe.

Widow : Sithi y'nyakanyaka / suk'hamb'unuk'uHehe!
We confirm (it that the girl) is a nuisance, don't accuse Hehe!

Chorus : Heke, 'nyakanyaka, yile ntomb' ka Nohehe'.
Quite right, the nuisance is the daughter of Nohehe.

Widow : Sithi yinyakanyaka / 'z'ungafun' ku Hehe!
We confirm (it that the girl) is a nuisance, don't want (what you demand) from Hehe (from the girl's mother).

Chorus : Yile nyakanyaka, yile ntomb' ka Nohehe.
This one, the nuisance, this one, Nohehe's daughter.

Widow : Sithi yinyakanyaka / 'z'ungafun' ku Hehe!
We confirm (it that the girl) is a nuisance, don't want (what you demand) from Hehe.

Chorus : Yi le nyakanyaka, yi le ntomb'ka Nohehe
This nuisance this one daugh- ter of Nohehe.

Widow : He, mha! Yiyo! Yiyo!
Oh, my mother, this one! This one!

Widow : Yiyo Yiyo Yiyo Yiyo!
It is this one, this one, this one, this one!

Chorus : Yi le nyaka nyaka, yi le ntomb'ka Nohehe.
This nuisance this daughter of Nohehe.

Widow : Yiyo Yiyo Yiyo Yiyo!
This one This one This one This one!

The widow, as head of the homestead, gave her short thanksgiving address while standing in the house at a place on the women's side near the door to the house; a place which indicates seniority (see p. 346). From this point she started to sing and dance simultaneously. She sang the solo part, the people accompanied her singing with the chorus. Both her speech and song are connected by the sequence of terms of address used. With the opening address, the widow establishes herself as "mother" and "older sister," placing her

audience in the position of her "children" (*baninawe bam*) and her younger brothers (*baninawe bam*). As mother, she occupies the highest ranking (moral) position in Mthwa society⁽¹⁸⁾. The sequence of addresses starts on the (social) level of the people who have gathered for the occasion, and ends on the spiritual (ancestral) level of addressing the communicating ancestor-spirit, her own late mother: *he, mha!* ("Oh, my mother!"), when the widow and mother accepts for herself the role of a "child" who owes obedience to her senior (*ondala*). (*ondala*, plural *abadala*, which means literally "the old ones," is a common term of reference for any senior and for the forebears in particular; see p. 321). While dancing she moved in rapid but very small steps towards the back of the house where her daughter (the afflicted person) was sitting. Arriving there, the widow suddenly turned in the direction of the fireplace and addressed the ancestor spirit, her own mother, and identified her daughter as the "nuisance" (*unyokonyoka*) responsible for whatever anger had been aroused in the ancestor-spirit. After the song, the people burst into cheers and ululations of applause (*uhukukula*).

With the thanksgiving and the song by the homestead head, the ancestral public feast has accomplished its aim: it has made public the fact that the afflicted person is not sick on account of the malicious intentions of others, but because of the intervention of the ancestors. It is made public that, although the activity (of the subsequent feast of the clan-section) is taking place behind closed doors, this is not antisocial, for its members are under the authority of the ancestors. The public feast announces a "family affair," after which the family will withdraw into itself and celebrate "in private" the ancestral lineage feast. After the ritual part of the feast, the public feast continues with a ceremonial beer-drinking which will be described in the final chapter (see Chapter VIII).

(ii) The ancestral *lineage* feast.

It is with the lineage feast (for the usage of the term "lineage feast", see p. 299) that the difference between the three forms of ancestral feast appears (see p. 277). During the lineage feast, the core-ritual of the ancestor cult (see below), which is supposed to give the ancestor the required "food" and cure the afflicted person of his "sickness," takes place. This core-ritual requires its particular ritual *materia* either a necklace made from the tail hairs of a certain cow, or an animal killed ritually, or beer to be drunk in a particular way. It was asserted by my informants that the ancestor-spirit communicates to the living which "food" he wants, i.e. which form the ancestral lineage feast will take. In any case, the ritual *materia* is expected to satisfy the communicating ancestor-spirit and to cure the afflicted person of the ancestrally-caused sickness. The basic ritual structure of all three forms of ancestral feast is identical; I shall concentrate on one, namely the feast at which an animal is ritually killed. The animal preferred is a head of cattle (*gokhwa*), but in practice a goat (*gokhwa*) is more often used. Sheep are never used as ritual victims since they do not cry out when stabbed. The bleating and bellowing of the goat and beast respectively is essential at one stage of the ritual: it carries the message from the living to the dead.

The main elements of the ancestral lineage feast are:

- (1) The invocation of the agnatic ancestors, the "informing of the ancestral authorities."
- (2) The ritual in the main-house: the ritual of burning the meat for the ancestor-spirit, and the core-ritual by which the afflicted person is healed and by which he makes an act of reverence to the ancestor-spirit.
- (3) The common meal involving those who are present at the feast.

Corresponding to the three parts of the ancestral lineage feast, there are three ritual centres (see Figure 18, p. 286): the cattle byre, the fireplace

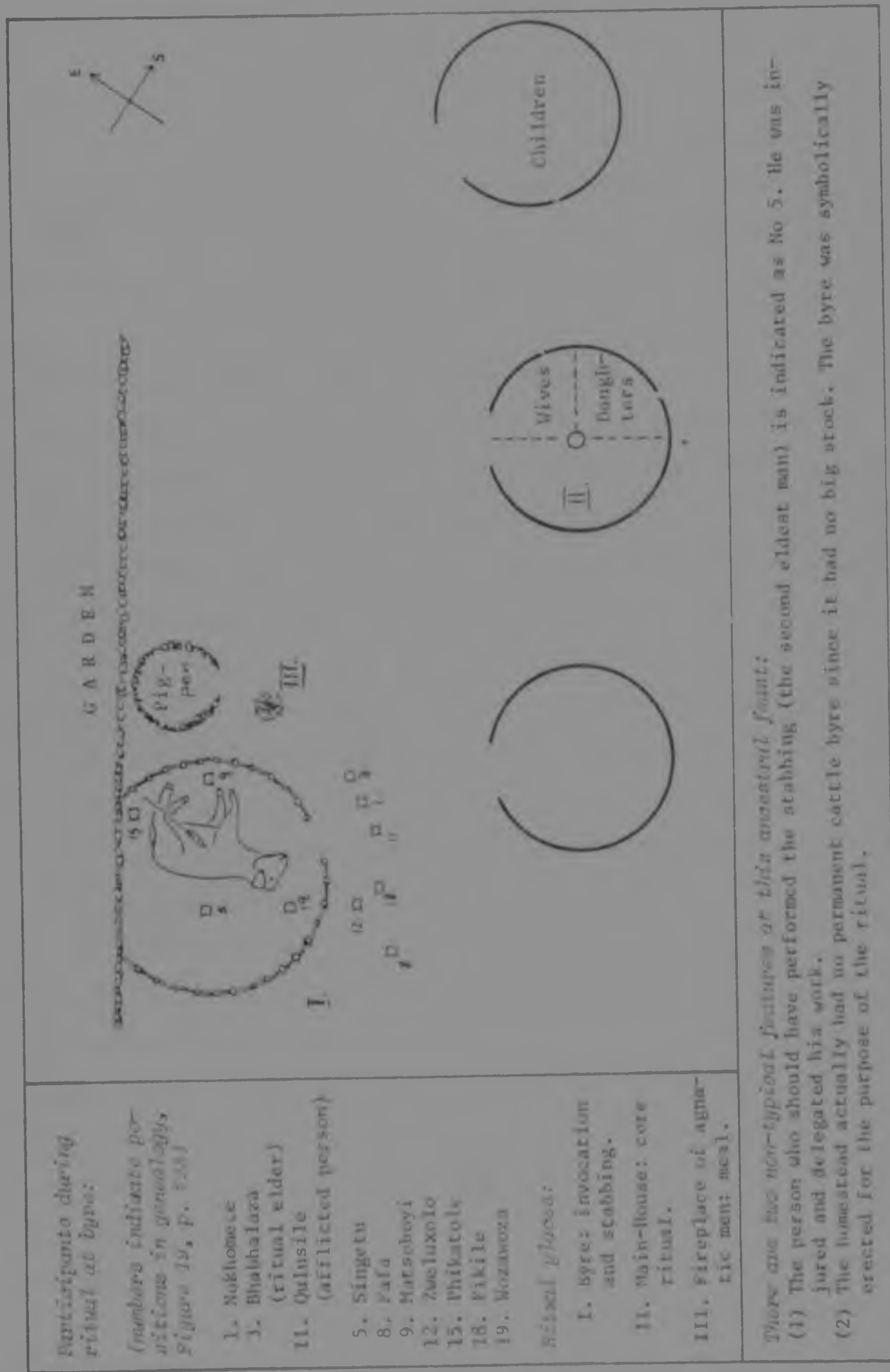


Figure 18. Ritual places and congregations at an ancestral lineage feast.

in the main-house and the fireplace of the agnates outside (preferably in the cattle byre). On the fire in the agnates' fireplace, the meat will be cooked by the men. This fireplace of the agnates, it was explained to me, is in reality a displacement of the fire-place in the main-house so that there are, strictly speaking, only two ritual places, namely the cattle byre and the fire-place in the main-house. The two ritual places structure the essential parts of the ancestral lineage feast.

The first part of the lineage feast takes place inside and outside the cattle byre (*esibhayeni*, standard Xhosa *ebuhlanti*). For the occasion the whole homestead is tidied. By the time the ritual at the byre takes place, the women, i.e. the wives of the agnatic male and the adult daughters of the homestead head, are in the main-house. Children, girls and little boys are kept confined to a separate house of the homestead. All is very quiet.

Inside the byre is the animal to be killed. Also in the byre is the second most senior of the agnates, who must stab the animal, and a number of younger agnates who will hold it when it is stabbed and who take charge of the skinning and cutting up of the carcass. Only the person who is to stab the animal is genealogically defined (see below); the other men merely assist because of their youth and strength.

The ritual of this first part of the ancestral lineage feast begins with the "throwing down" (*ukwisa*) of the ritual victim (*inkomo*, literally "head of cattle;" this term would be used even if the animal were a goat). In Caguban colloquial language, the phrase "throwing down the beast" (*ukwisa inkomo*) is often used as a phrase to denote the whole ritual of the ancestral lineage feast. Thrown down, the animal should fall on its right side. The whole ritual takes place in the right side of the byre, seen from the entrance.

Immediately after the "throwing down," the animal is stabbed with a spear. This method of killing an animal distinguishes the ancestor ritual from

any other ritual and from non-ritual occasions. For example, a goat may be killed on the occasion of the coming-out ceremony of the newly-circumcised. On such situations, the animal will be killed with a knife by severing the cervical vertebrae just behind the head and by cutting the artery. The blood will be allowed to spill over and sink into the soil. This method is called *ukuxhela* ("to slaughter") and may be applied in non-ritual situations as well. In contrast to this ordinary method of killing an animal, there is the method of stabbing (*ukuhlaba*) which is observed only at the ritual of the ancestral lineage feast.

The senior takes the spear (*isikhali*) and carries it around the animal which is lying on the ground. Starting over the animal's stomach, he lets the spear glide over the animal, passing the spear between the forelegs; then, over the head and back, the spear is passed between the hindlegs until again it reaches the spot above the stomach. This act consecrates the animal, which is to be made wholly acceptable, "clean", to the ancestors.

Then the senior thrusts the spear into the stomach. In agony, the animal cries out and is left bellowing for a moment until the man tries to drive the spear deeper into the animal's body and penetrate the heart. The stabbing prevents the animal from bleeding externally, since no blood should be spilled at an ancestral ritual. At this stage of the ritual, not the killing but the bellowing of the animal is the essential element, because the cry is the medium by which the praises, spoken by the ritual elder, outside the byre, will be taken to the agnatic ancestors.

Outside the cattle byre, about two or three metres away from and facing in the direction of the entrance, stands the ritual elder. In the ideal situation, expressed by my informants, the ritual elder is genealogically the oldest man of the senior generation, i.e. the first-born son of a first-born son (*inkulu*,

see p. 79). He is the ideal person genealogically to address the agnatic ancestors; and next to him, the second-born of a first-born son is the ideal person genealogically to perform the stabbing of the ritual victim. But this ideal arrangement is seldom found, since frequently there are men still alive who belong to the senior generation and who may be later-born sons of second or third-born sons. On account of their age, they take precedence over the seniors of the junior generation. Thus the actually working ranking system is that of relative age: the actual oldest person of the senior generation is the ritual elder and the actual second-oldest agnatic kinsman stabs the animal in the byre.

In front of the entrance to the cattle byre and together with the ritual elder stand the afflicted person and the homestead head, with all other agnates present. While the animal is being stabbed in the cattle byre and crying out, the ritual elder invokes the ancestors. This invocation is a praise of the clan ancestors and an intercession on behalf of the afflicted person. The following is an example of such a praise (*unqulo*):

*Sibongoza umntakwetini
aze amatyala*

*akwaLudidi
akwaXapa
aseLobola-ndevu*

amthwale, azomfikisa.

We plead on behalf of our relative
that the ancestor-spirits should come

those of Ludidi's place
those of Xapa's place
those at Lobola-ndevu

that they should care for her
and make her return (*scil.* to health).

As the ritual elder faces the entrance to the byre from the outside, so does the crying animal from the inside. The cry of the animal mediates the elder's words to the ancestors; the animal's cry "tells them everything," the Cagubans say. The *unqulo* is an acceptance of the authority of the ancestors; they are asked to care for the afflicted person, to restore her to health (*impilo*).

The co-incidence of the praising invocation and the animal's crying out, which is ritually essential, underlines the fact that the ancestor cult is part of the communication between the dead (the ancestor-spirit) and the living: the ancestors have called on the living, and the living must respond. The ritual constitutes this response.

Outside the cattle byre, the response is made by the ritual elder of the agnatic local group, the clan-section, and he makes this response on behalf of the afflicted person. The response is directed to the *clan* members of a time long past and for whom no genealogical relationship can be demonstrated any longer. The cry of the dying animal, inside the cattle byre, fills the genealogical gap, as it were, and makes the plea (*isibongozo*) heard by "those of Lobola-ndevu," i.e. Mthwa, the legendary person with whom the whole area of Fono's chiefdom is identified (see p. 3). If Mthwa is a legendary person, then Ludidi and Xapa have hardly the characteristics of individual persons; they represent the "patrilineal past," as we can paraphrase the vernacular term *imilowo* in the most general sense (see p. 87 and p. 101, n. 25), a past from which all life in the clan and the (local) clan-section originates. With the names of the ancient clan members, life itself is invoked: the clan-ancestors' names, invoked at the ancestral lineage feast, represent what Hammond-Tooke (1968a) calls the "theological level" of ancestor religion.

Later, when the ancestor feast proceeds in the main-house (see below), a different response will be required. This time, it is the afflicted person himself who must reply, and his response will be directed to the individual ancestor-spirit whose name is well-known and with whom the genealogical relationship can be demonstrated clearly; the ancestor-spirit may be agnatic or affinal.

When the prayer is finished and the animal has stopped bellowing the people

wait in silence for the animal to die. Its death concludes the first part of the ancestral lineage feast. The afflicted person retires into the main-house where the women (see below) have gathered. With the afflicted person's movement, the ritual place changes from the cattle byre to the fire-place in the main-house for the second part of the ancestral lineage feast. Before the ritual elder leaves the cattle byre for the main-house, he takes the first piece of meat from the animal, some fat from the entrails of the animal which protrudes through the wound. Immediately the men start skinning (*ukubhala*) the carcass in order to obtain the second piece of meat essential for the ritual to follow. The vernacular term for the work of skinning is, in fact, the most commonly used name for rituals in Caguba when the rituals include the killing of an animal. The term *idini*, which frequently occurs in anthropological literature, is rarely used in Caguba, although most of the Cagubans know its meaning: "an ancestral feast at which an animal is killed"⁽¹⁹⁾. During the first part of the ancestral feast the animal's *bellowing* is essential; for the second part of it, the animal's death is required as it provides the *materia* (see p. 185) for this form of ancestor cult.

The second part of the ancestral lineage feast begins with the piece of fat, called *in-ihukuhla*, which the ritual elder takes to the main-house. There he burns it on the fire for it belongs wholly to the ancestor-spirit. It is the spirit's food (*ukudla*; this is the *hlonipha* word⁽²⁰⁾ for the common word *ukudla*, which means "to eat" or "food"). The word *in-ihukuhla* is derived from the verb *ukuhukuhla* (see Kropf 1915:162) which means "to shake something or a person violently." Doke-Vilakazi (1964:337) give a meaning for the Zulu equivalent which provides a clue to the understanding of the term in Mpondo: "break a fast, eat for the first time in the day, eat after a long abstinence"⁽²¹⁾. *In-ihukuhla* is the ancestor-spirit's "food", given to him after a long "abstinence." In quantity, the piece of meat is no bigger than a man's thumb, but the

being burnt on the fire, is the fulfilment of the ancestor-spirit's demand. The meat is given to him (or her) individually: it is not offering to the ancestors of the agnatic kinsmen as a group, nor is the meat shared by any of the living. It is the ritual response to the communicating spirit, agnatic or affinal. When the meat is put on the fire and burnt, there is silence in the house. No special prayer or praise is said. "The ancestor-spirit (*ithongo*) knows (*ukuya*) that it is for him," the Cagubans say. One of my informants considered the burning of the *intlhukuḽa* so important that he described it as the whole purpose of the ancestral ritual.

A short time elapses until the men have finished skinning the carcass, cut off the right fore-leg and removed the second piece of meat which is ritually important. This is the muscle below the arm pit, called *intsonyama* (see p. 294). With this *intsonyama* the afflicted person will be restored to health. It is about the size of two hands joined together and is taken into the house and handed over to the ritual elder who cuts it into a long strip, or collop, and roasts it on the fire. Meanwhile, fire has been prepared outside (either inside or next to the cattle byre) on which the agnates start cooking the rest of the meat. The door of the main-house is closed and the house fills with smoke from the roasting *intsonyama*; "ritual for the ancestors always goes with smoke," the people say. The smoke consecrates the place, the people inside the house, and the ritual proceedings: it is the symbol of the ancestor-spirit who is present here and now.

At this all-important moment of the ancestor cult, the ritual focus shifts from the congregation of agnates gathered at the cattle byre to the congregation of wives and daughters in the house. The male agnates (except for the ritual elder) depart from the main-house; they remain outside, at the byre, while the wives and adult daughters witness the core-ritual (see below). This

separation of the two congregations is indicated in the following genealogical chart based on data which I recorded at an ancestral lineage feast in 1979:

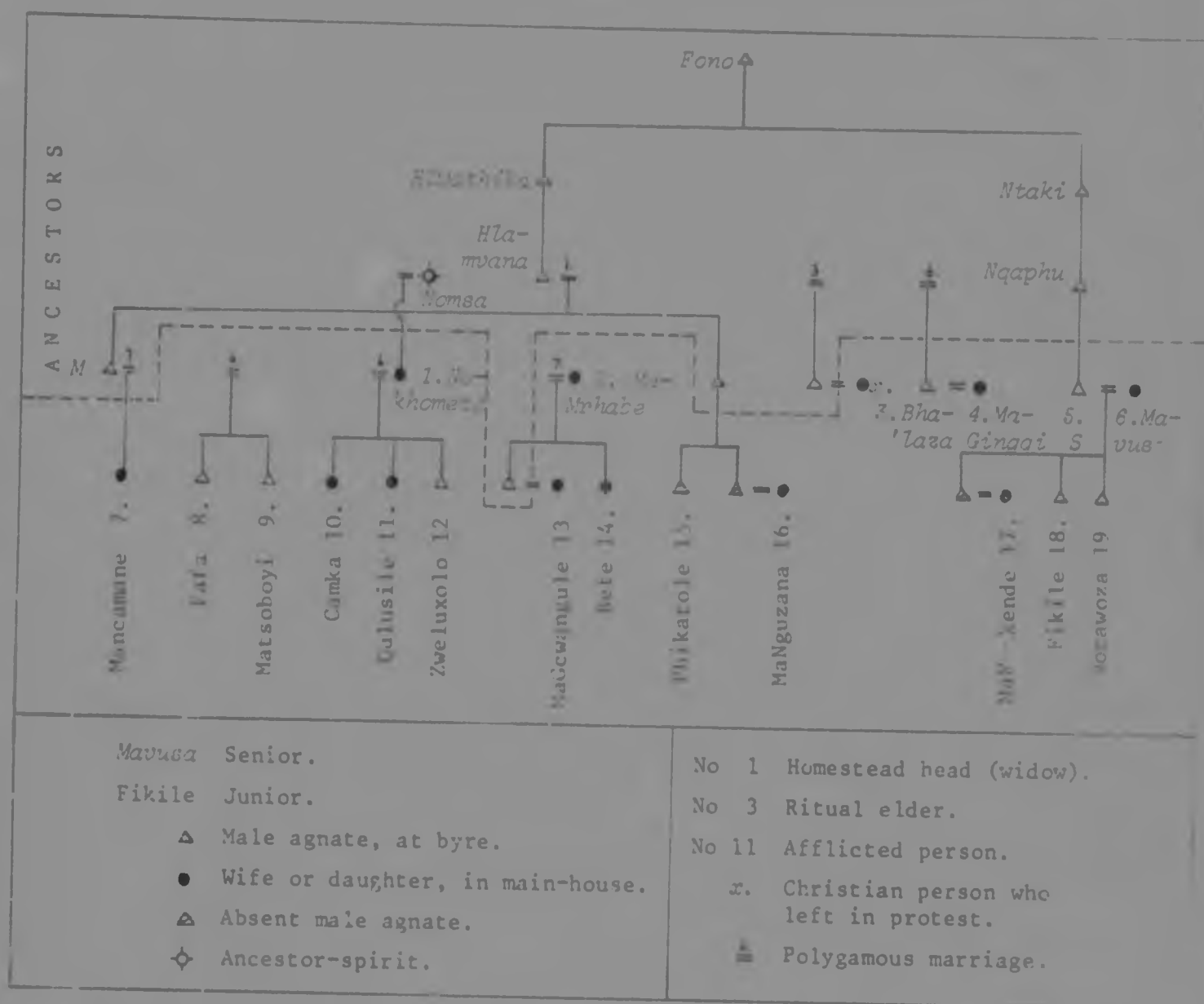


Figure 19. Participants at an ancestral lineage feast. A typical case.

The ancestor is, at this stage, no longer an affair of the agnatic group or kinsmen, living and dead, *per se*. Their last collective action, as it were, was the provision of the ritual *materia*, the meat. With the afflicted person's (and the ritual elder's) retiring into the main-house, with the transfer of the ritual meat to the fireplace inside the house and with the change of congregation, the ritual focus shifts. It shifts from the agnatic group to the individual afflicted person, from the agnatic ancestor

individual agnatic or cognatic ancestor-spirit. The same type of shift was observed during the ancestral *public* feast (see p. 281). When the homestead head makes his thanksgiving, he starts by extolling the virtues of the agnatic group to which the afflicted person belongs and continues addressing the individual ancestor-spirit who has a particular interest in the afflicted person. During the ancestral *lineage* feast, there is the same type of shift from group to individual marked by the spatial move from the cattle byre to the main-house. This structures the ancestral lineage feast in two parts, the invocation of the agnatic ancestors at the byre, and the healing of the afflicted person in the main-house. This latter constitutes the intended aim or the *core-ritual* of the ancestral feast and of the ancestor cult as a whole.

The core-ritual centres around the *intsonyama* (literally "the meat that comes from stabbing deeply"⁽²²⁾), and consists of three symbolic actions by the afflicted person using small pieces of meat cut from the collop. These ritual actions are:

- the "sucking" (i.e. touching with the lips) of the meat;
- the "throwing away" of the meat into the back of the house;
- the "eating" of another little piece.

The symbolism can best be understood by first giving a few details of the ritual proceedings.

The arrival of the *intsonyama* in the main-house (see p. 292) marks the beginning of the core-ritual. As an outward sign of the beginning of the ritual, the door to the house is closed and will not be opened again until the core-ritual is completed. The closing of the door has two immediate consequences: the rising smoke from the smouldering fire slowly fills the house; and movement of persons going in and out is not permitted for the time being, that is to say, the closing of the door marks the constitution of the (actual) ritual

congregation⁽²³⁾. From among those present, the women of the senior generation (the "mothers") sit in the first left-hand quarter, while the women of the junior generation (the "daughters", i.e. agnatic women as well as daughters-in-law) sit in the second left-hand quarter of the main-house. The ritual elder sits in the first right-hand quarter of the senior men (see p. 343), next to the fireplace. A typical example of the sitting order during the core-ritual is given in the following diagram (Figure 20, below); it is the case of the afflicted young woman quoted above (see genealogy, Figure 19, p. 293):

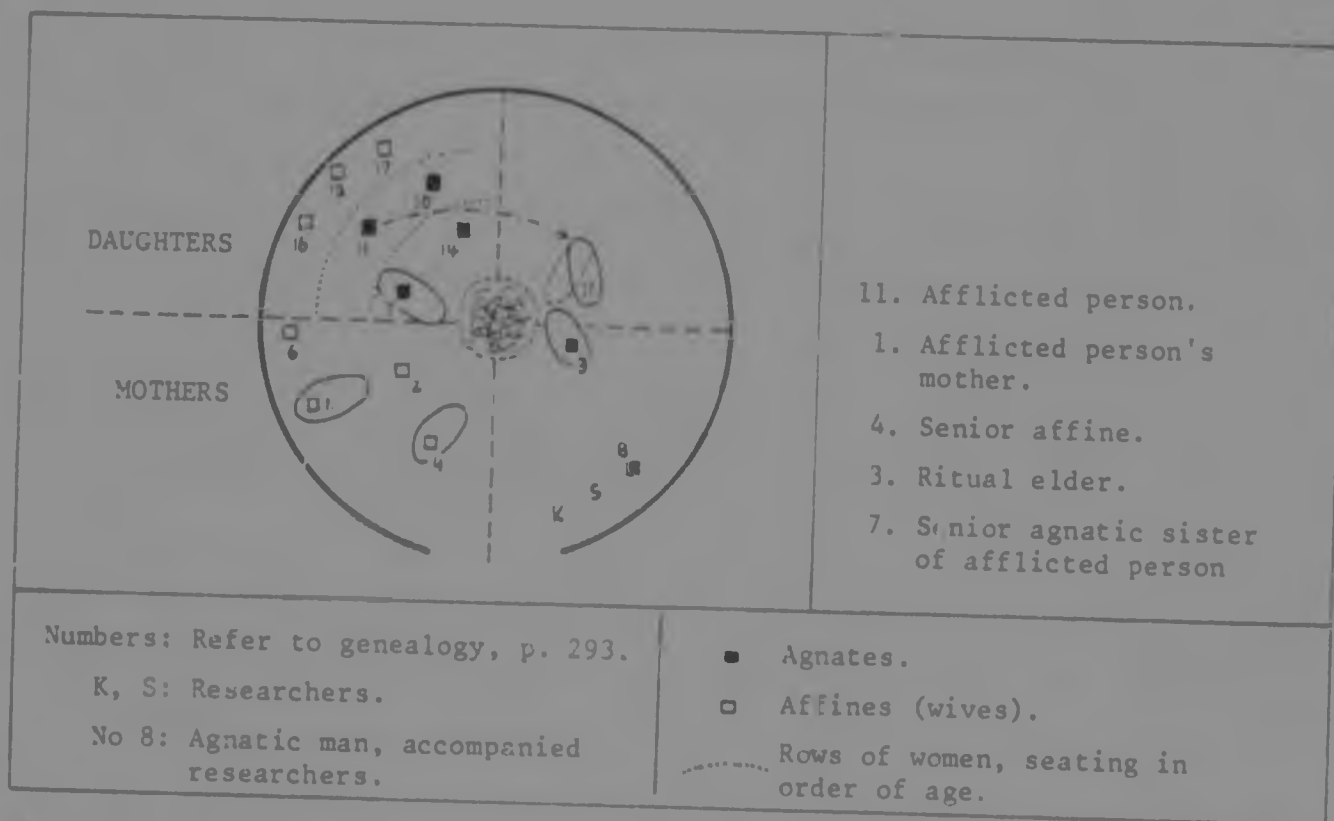


Figure 20. Typical case of seating order at the core-ritual of an ancestral lineage feast.

When the *intaonyama* is sufficiently roasted, the ritual elder calls the afflicted person into the centre of the house, next to the fireplace (see arrow in diagram, Figure 20, above). She kneels down in front of him. The elder cuts off a little piece from the *intaonyama* collop (about the size of a man's thumbnail). The afflicted person stretches out both hands, the palm of the right hand resting crosswise on the back of the left (see also Hunter 1936:234), so

that she receives the piece of meat on the *back* of her right hand. This mode of receiving the ritual meat is the reverse of that of accepting a gift. In the latter case the hands are cupped, with the back of the right hand resting in the palm of the left. The *ritual* mode of receiving is just the opposite: both hands face downwards and no cup is formed.

Having received the food, the afflicted person is instructed to "suck" (*ukumunca*) it. This particular ritual was observed for the Bhaca by Hammond-Tooke (1962:239):

The patient receives the meat with crossed arms, like a novice at the initiation of a diviner, and first sucks the meat before eating it.

The word *ukumunca* means "to suck something in vain," like a thumb or an empty breast. The ordinary sucking of a child at the mother's breast is called *ukumcanca*. In contrast, *ukumunca* is "sucking in vain," it is the ritual form of sucking which involves only the touching of the meat with the lips without eating it⁽²⁴⁾; it is supposed to be an "eating in vain."

After the "sucking" ritual, the little piece of meat, still lying on the back of the right hand, the afflicted person performs the second ritual action, that of "throwing away" (*ukujula*). She swiftly raises her hand and throws the meat over her shoulder and into the back of the house. The discarded meat symbolises the misfortune, the sickness (*isifo*) itself which the person casts out (*ukujula*; see also p. 305). Colloquially the symbolic action is called *ukulahla ibhadi* ("to abandon, reject the misfortune"). Symbolically the afflicted person dissociates herself from the affliction (*ibhadi*) and ritually she prepares herself for the restoration of her health, for receiving new life.

The third symbolic (ritual) action is believed to effect the positive restoration of health. For a second time the afflicted person stretches out her

hands and receives (in the same manner as described above) another piece of the *supper*. Carrying the meat on her hand, outstretched in front of her, she is instructed to keep motionless. This is no easy task; it requires a high degree of self-control in the presence of the acrid smoke which severely burns the eyes. At this moment, the people present become actively involved in the ritual. Rather than convey compassion, the people ridicule the afflicted person for her present pitiful tormented state. They criticise her for her former life of disrespect for the living and the dead (see also below, p. 307f). Then the ritual elder instructs the afflicted person to eat (*ukudla*) the piece of meat. She lifts her hands, *takes* the meat with her lips and eats it. As soon as she has eaten it, the people present start a ritualized cheering and, with ululations, congratulate the afflicted person for having "eaten the ancestor." These encouraging comments underscore the intention of this final action of the core-ritual which is believed to restore the afflicted person to health and to be a communion with the ancestor-spirit (see below, p. 306). The outward sign of the ritual accomplishment of the core-ritual is that the door to the house is opened again, the people may again move in and out and the smoke starts to disperse. All this indicates that the core-ritual and with it the second part of the ancestral lineage feast have come to an end.

The third and final part of the ancestral lineage feast is a common meal of all the people who are present in the homestead: the agnates, their wives and their children, and other people who have arrived incidentally. The characteristic feature of this ancestral meal is that it has been prepared by the agnatic men. Men cooking a meal is the reverse of the ordinary division of labour (see p. 213f) and contrary to the procedure of other festive occasions, e.g. cooking at a funeral (see p. 273).

Soon after the death of the ritual victim, some younger agnates will make

a fire. The site for the fire is preferably inside the cattle byre, on the left side, but alternatively the fire may be made close outside the byre. It is at this fire that the kinsmen congregate, in contrast to the women (wives and daughters) who have gathered in the main-house. The main-house is referred to in the vernacular as *indlu* (which simply means "house"), but, significantly, in the ritual context the cattle byre is called *indlu* as well. Thus the main-house and the cattle byre are identified as "houses," though in fact they are *one* house in which the homestead head provides the food.

The meal consists of two parts. First, the remaining meat of the *intso-*~~nyama~~ is shared. Should the afflicted person be married, he will share with his children first, cutting a piece from the collop for each child. Should the afflicted person be an unmarried mother, she will do likewise for her own children. After this the ritual elder will proceed to cut for each person present a little piece from the *intsonyama*.

The second part of the meal involves sharing in the remaining meat of the victim. The right fore-leg will be reserved for the household and will be eaten by the household members alone on the following day. The bones of this leg will be kept for several days or months and then are burnt. The burning of the bones is the ritual termination of the whole ancestral feast. As far as the participants are concerned, however, the ancestral feast closes with the common meal on the day of the killing. This meal comes to an end, without other food or beer being served (this may be done the following day), during the early hours of the evening when the sun has well set. After the meal (when the other visitors have left) agnates of the clan-section stay in the homestead for the night and arrange for going to bed.

(iii) Summary and brief discussion.

An ancestral feast of the type at which an ancestor-spirit demands food (see p.

27) is a complex ceremony. The ritual takes place among a group of agnates (within a demonstrable range of descent) and their wives. The practical aim of the ritual is the healing of a kinsman or a kinswoman who suffers from a disease (including dreams) ostensibly caused by an ancestor-spirit.

The structure of the ancestral feast.

The whole ancestral feast consists of two clearly distinguishable major parts both of which are essential. The first part is essentially a public statement by the homestead head on behalf of the afflicted person, a member of his family; this is the ancestral *public* feast, usually celebrated in the morning. The second part is a ceremony which consists of several ritual actions and which requires the presence of the clan-section to which the afflicted person belongs; this is the ancestral *lineage* feast, usually celebrated in the afternoon.

Mthwa ritual thinking does not permit an individual to perform an ancestral ritual for himself; he always relies on the active participation of his agnatic kingroup, the clan-section which, for convenience, I have called a "lineage." In particular he relies on the ritual elder of his kingroup, who in actual fact is most frequently the oldest man of the local clan-section. This essential reliance on the kinsmen's active involvement in the ancestral feast justifies my speaking of a "lineage" (i.e. a clan-section) feast, although the intended aim of the ritual is not to integrate the kingroup nor to reconfirm it as a corporate social body. The intended aim is the health of *one* of the group's members. A further reason for speaking about a lineage feast is that certain ritual actions belong to the agnates so that their involvement in the various rituals serves as a structuring element for the whole feast.

The ancestral lineage feast consists of three clearly distinguishable parts,

namely the ritual at the cattle byre, the core-ritual in the main-house, and the ancestral meal. At the cattle byre, the agnatic group as such is important; in the main-house, the individual afflicted person is at the centre of the ritual; at the meal, the agnatic men see to the cooking, but all those present in the homestead will share in the meat, thus the homestead which arranged the feast is as important as the agnatic group.

Even though the agnatic group is so important for the ritual that it can serve as the label for the second part of the whole ancestral feast, namely the "ancestral lineage feast," it is not the sole element of the feast. It should be stressed that the ritual has various dimensions: space, ritual *materia*, congregations, performance (main actors). Spatially, there is the movement from the cattle byre to the main-house, more specifically to the fire in the main-house. Correspondingly, there is a change of the ritual *materia*: at the byre it is the animal victim (alternatively beer, see below Section 3), while in the main-house two different pieces of meat are essential. ^{the ritual proceedings} While, outside the house, the male agnates appear as a corporate group; inside the house, the affinal wives form the congregation. Finally, at the different places there are different main actors. At the byre it is the ritual elder who is pre-eminent, but in the main-house it is the afflicted person. Correspondingly, at the byre the agnatic group of ancestors is invoked, but in the main-house the focus is on an individual ancestor-spirit. This last shift, from the agnatic ancestors as a whole to a particular individual ancestor-spirit, provides us with an important clue to the understanding of the symbolism of the core-ritual, to which I shall turn presently. The structure of the ancestral feast as a whole comprises, then, four different dimensions and, during the course of the ritual proceedings, three distinct stages of each of these dimensions. This is graphically summed up in the following figure (Figure 21, p. 301).

	ANCESTRAL FEAST			
MAJOR PARTS:	PUBLIC	LINEAGE		
Ritual places:	<i>main-house</i>	<i>cattle byre</i>	<i>ancestors' in main-house</i>	
Ritual material:	<i>beer</i>	<i>animal or beer</i>	<i>public statement, special meat</i>	
Witnesses (congregations):				
Main actors:	<i>homestead head</i>	<i>ritual elder</i>	<i>afflicted person (P)</i>	

Figure 21. The structure of the ancestral feast in Mthwa.

When we view the structure of the whole ancestral feast, a certain dynamism and inner logic appears by which the ritual proceeds. From the wide range of involvement of the public, *via* the two intermediary stages of the involvement of the agnatic men and the affinal wives, the ritual proceeds towards its intended aim, namely the afflicted person's act of healing and reverence for the communicating ancestor-spirit. The intended aim and the whole dynamism of the ancestral ritual reveal that the ancestor cult results from the initiative which the ancestor-spirit is believed to have taken: he has called one of the living who is obliged to respond as custom (*isiko*; see p. 331, n. 15) requires. This response is the content of the core-ritual.

The symbolism of the core-ritual.

The guiding principle of the ritual actions and the symbolism of the core-ritual is that these rituals represent *reversals* of certain actions which occur in ordinary life. On the basis of this principle, the core-ritual appears to be a *session of healing* for the afflicted person (healing in a wide sense, including healing of afflictions from recurrent dreams) as well as a *culitic act of reverence* (worship) of the ancestor-spirit. Expressing what belongs to a folk-understanding of death and to the realm of the dead in terms of ordinary actions-in-the-reverse is not unique in Mthwa; it is a widespread phenomenon in Africa (Jeffreys (1948-9) and elsewhere (Bendann 1974). Berglund (1976) shows that, among the Zulu, inversions (or reversals) belong to a wider category of thought-patterns which are formulated in terms of opposites. He distinguishes three types of opposites (*ibidem* p. 363-4): those related to the sexes, those related to moral values, and those which are "funerary inversions" (Jeffreys). The reversals which interpret the realm of the dead belong to the third type. Accordingly, the Zulu understand "the underworld as one where things are reversed in comparison with the upper world" (*ibidem* p. 370). This understanding reflects the ritual-conceptual situation in Mthwa. Here I am not interested in the cross-cultural significance of the findings in Cagumba. I am merely discussing the symbolism of the core-ritual of Mthwa ancestral feasts in its own right.

The first ritual action of life-in-the-reverse occurs even before the core-ritual begins, namely with the little piece of fat (*intlhukuhla*). This piece is explicitly intended as "food," food for the ancestor-spirit. But, unlike food in the ordinary sense, this fat is not eaten; it is destroyed by being burnt on the fire. In a sense, the meaning of the word *intlhukuhla* itself denotes the reversal of a certain state of affairs: the ancestor-spirit has *received*

food; the prolonged time of abstinence (*ukuzila*) is reversed; with the burning of the little piece of fat, the ancestor-spirit's hunger (*ukulamba*) will be satisfied ritually (see p. 333, n. 21).

After the arrival of the second piece of ritual meat (*intsonyama*), the door to the house will be closed, although smoke is rising from the fire. In ordinary life, either the door would remain open if there were smoke or else the fire would be extinguished. Ordinarily people do not sit immersed in smoke. Now they deliberately bear the torment of the acrid smoke, since it is the symbolic manifestation of the ancestor-spirit's presence. Burning the food (for the ancestor-spirit) and bearing the smoke, both actions of life-in-the-reverse, are believed to bring about contact with the numinous sphere of the dead (*abaphantsi*, literally "those down below").

The afflicted person receives a first piece of the *intsonyama*. While ordinarily a gift is received in the cupped hands, the ritual gift is received on the back of the hand, the palm facing downwards (*phantsi*) towards the dead (*abaphantsi*), i.e. towards "those down below." This metaphor of "down below" gives us a clue as to why the mode of receiving should be "the reverse" of the ordinary way of receiving a gift. The ritual elder functions as the instrument of the dead. Although it is he who places the meat on the hand of the hand of the afflicted person, the meat is thought to be something that comes from "down below," from the ancestor-spirit. Receiving the meat is a ritual re-enactment of the contraction of the sickness (*isifo*) which is at the same time the ancestor-spirit's punishment and his presence in the afflicted person. The person's unfortunate condition of ill-health, the torment from the acrid smoke, her holding her hand with the palm downwards, and her bearing the piece of meat on the back of her hand, all these are none other than signs of the spirit's presence; and the ancestor-spirit needs to be present in order to

the prolonged *rit* of abstinence (*rit*) is reversed; with the burning of the little piece of fat, the ancestor-spirit's hunger (*shulamba*) will be satisfied ritually (see p. 110, n. 21).

After the second piece of ritual meat (*intsonyama*), the door will be closed, although smoke is rising from the fire. In ordinary life, whether the door would remain open if there were smoke or else the smoke would be extinguished. Ordinarily people do not sit immersed in smoke. The ritual is a way of being in the presence of the ancestor-spirit, since it is the ancestor-spirit's presence. Burning the food and bearing the smoke, both actions of life-in-the-world are being about contact with the numinous sphere of the ancestor-spirit, literally "those down below").

The ritual is a way of being in the presence of the ancestor-spirit. While ordinary life is a way of being in the presence of the ancestor-spirit, the ritual gift is received on the back of the hand, the palm facing downwards (*phantsi*) towards the dead. This is a way of being in the presence of the ancestor-spirit, "those down below." This metaphor of "down below" is a way of being in the presence of the ancestor-spirit. To why the mode of receiving should be "the reverse" of ordinary way of receiving a gift. The ritual elder functions as the instrument of the dead. Although it is he who places the meat on the hand of the afflicted person, the meat is thought to be something that comes from "down below," from the ancestor-spirit. Receiving the meat is a re-enactment of the contraction of the sickness (*shelpe*) which is at the heart of the ancestor-spirit's punishment of his presence in the afflicted person's unfortunate condition of ill-health, the torment from the smoke, her holding her hand with the palm downwards, and her bearing the piece of meat on the back of her hand, all these are none other than signs of the spirit's presence; and the ancestor-spirit needs to be present in order to

punish the disobedient "child." This is at the phrase *ku* have" or "to suffer from faults," see p. 268) means, namely to live in the special presence of the ancestor-spirit and to be in the spirit's *deb*. contact with the spirit-world is not liked, but feared.

The understanding of the ancestor-spirit's presence as a form of affliction explains the next inverted action, namely *ukumunox* ("sucking in vain"). The child's reliance on its mother is proverbial in Caguba: *umwana ugaba nina* ("a child relies on its mother"). This is true throughout a person's life (see above p. 243f), but especially during the child's early years when the mother suckles (*ukuncanoa*) her child; an empty breast would be disastrous. The child's dependence on the mother is a precondition of its life: this is paradigmatic of the dependence of the living on the dead - and this dependence does prove detrimental in the life of the afflicted person. "Sucking" the ritual meat is "in vain." Thus there is not only the sucking-in-vain as the reversal of the ordinary feeding of a child at its mother's breast, but the very relationship between the afflicted person and the communicating ancestor-spirit is different from that between mother and child. Instead of motherly indulgence, there is demanding authority. Not to obey that authority is as dangerous as sickness and death can be. The "gift" which is placed on the back of the hand is, after all, not a gift, but a punishment. This is what is indicated by the criticism and ridicule of the women who witness the ritual. The person suffers for the "nuisance" (see p. 283) she has committed.

It is normal for somebody to "throw away" a "gift" which is to him the cause of misfortune; this done on the ritual level becomes an act of dissociation. However, the gift which the person receives on the back of the hand is roasted meat, i.e. food which is for eating. Yet the reaction to this food is that it is thrown away. Thus, there is once again, an action of life-in-the-reverse;

and it is doubly in the reverse.

Throwing away the piece of ritual meat is intended as a curative action. The afflicted person thus dissociates herself ritually from the sickness which the meat manifests. She gets healed. Thus, the ancestral feast is, in an essential sense, a *ritual healing*. The Cagubans put this fundamental understanding of the ancestral feast into simple words: *isiko liyeza*, i.e. "the (correctly) performed ritual is medicine" (see p. 331, n. 15). Through disobedience to the living and the dead, misfortune and sickness are contracted, "sent" by the ancestor-spirit. This is what the phrase *ukuba namatyala* ("to be with faults") indicates. Yet, through the performance of the ritual, the afflicted person can loosen the grip of the sickness, dissociate herself from the affliction and get cured.

There is still more to the throwing away than merely a dissociation from sickness; it is more than a healing rite. In the vernacular the explicit term for this particular ritual action is *ukujula* which means not only "to cast out," but also "to drive a number of cattle from the pasture to a hamlet where one of them is to be slaughtered for the celebration of any ceremony" (Kropf 1915:174). This means that the afflicted person, when *jula*-ing the piece of meat, ritually re-enacts the pre-ritual preparatory action, namely the driving-in of the cattle. The symbolism is that of the relationship between a totality and some part of it. The preparatory action is that *all* the animals of the homestead head's herd are driven into the byre, but only one of them is chosen and killed while the invocation of the (agnatic) ancestors takes place. Correspondingly, for the core-ritual, the whole of the *intsonyama* meat is taken into the house, but only a little piece is cut from the collop, a piece which is not *jula*-d for the group of agnatic ancestors, but for the individual communicating ancestor-spirit, whether he be agnatic or affinal. In other words, the *ukujula* of the piece of meat is the reversal of the ritual action at the cattle byre: then the ritual elder invoked the ancestors, here in the main-

house the afflicted person performs the ritual for himself with respect to the ancestor-spirit. Thus, in a second essential sense, the ancestral feast is an *act of devotion*: the ancestral ritual is the expression of the ancestor *cult*.

Previous to the call of the ancestor-spirit, the relationship between the living person and the dead ancestor had been merely genealogical. The core-ritual however, over and above the healing, not only re-establishes this relationship, but it transforms it into a relationship between a devotee and the object of his devotion, i.e. the ancestor-spirit. The final action of the core-ritual is, in some sense, a non-ritual (non-reversed) action: a second piece of meat is cut from the collop and, like any other food, it is eaten. In this sense, the action is merely an enactment of ordinary life. Yet in another sense, it is the reversal of ordinary life. Unlike food prepared for a meal in the ordinary sense, this food from the ritual meat is *not* shared ~~during the period of the~~ *core-ritual* with any other person. The afflicted person, the devotee, eats it *exclusively*. Her ritual eating is her *communion* - and hers alone - with the ancestor-spirit. For when the devotee eats the second piece of meat from the *intsonyama*, she performs an act of worship directed to the ancestral spirit. This is unlike the meal at the conclusion of the ancestral feast, which is a communion between the *living* when the ancestor-spirit has disappeared. The meal is *no* form of worship. Thus in one sense, the ancestral feast is a socio-religious affair among agnates and their wives, but in a second sense it represents a form of religion of which the central concern is worship, as in any other religion. What now needs to be established is the attitude of the worshipper (Section 3) and the nature of the ancestors who receive such worship (Section 4).

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(3) *The ancestral lineage feast: a court trial and an act of contrition.*

The preceding section was an analysis of the *structure* of the ancestral feast. The agnatic group of kinsmen emerges clearly as the social pre-condition of the ritual proceedings of the feast and of the afflicted person's healing. The afflicted person relies on the homestead head at the ancestral public feast, and on the ritual elder when the ancestral feast begins at the cattle byre so that finally the afflicted person himself can perform the core-ritual in answer to the demands of the ancestor-spirit. In other words, the ancestral feast can be understood as the acceptance by the individual (afflicted) person of *authority*, and authority of different kinds: of the homestead, of the kingroup, of the dead. It will be shown that, in Mthwa, ultimately all authority is seen as participation in and a reflection of the authority of the ancestors. I shall base my discussion of authority on the proceedings of ancestral feasts at which *beer* is the requested *materia* (see p. 277). The more extensive verbal behaviour characteristic of such feasts provides the data for my subsequent discussion of the states of consciousness intrinsic to ancestor rituals. The basic structure of an ancestral feast with beer as the ritual *materia* is identical to the type of feast, previously described, at which meat is the demanded "food."

(a. *First part of the ancestral lineage feast: informing the ancestors.*

For the first part of the ancestral lineage feast, the agnatic kinsmen and their wives assemble in front of the cattle byre⁽²⁵⁾; it is the place which is called *inkundla*, i.e. the place where ordinary court trials proceed (see p. 132f). Besides the choice of this particular place, there are still other elements which indicate that this first part of the ancestral lineage feast is, in fact, a symbolic, ritual court trial. To begin with, the attitude of the participants is restrained, showing respect and in particular a type of re-

spect that is due to the chief and his court. Thus, women sit on the floor; the men are bare-headed, sit on their haunches, refrain from smoking and speak with a low voice (see Hunter 1936:255). The people show no compassion for the afflicted person; on the contrary, the general theme of conversation is unmistakably criticism of the afflicted person, who has after all brought the misfortune on himself (see above p. 297)⁽²⁶⁾. The conversation occurs simultaneously with the ritual of "abandoning the beaker" (see below) and corresponds to the hearing of witnesses at an ordinary court trial. The effect is that the ritual beer, which is finally poured out in the cattle byre, serves as the medium used by the kinsmen to inform the ancestors (i.e. to those who ultimately hold authority over the living kinsmen) about the misbehaviour of the afflicted person⁽²⁷⁾.

The kinsmen, led by the ritual elder and together with the afflicted person, form a row, facing the entrance to the cattle byre. At the far left of the row will be the ritual elder; then follow, in order of age, the kinsmen. At the very end of the row is the afflicted person. Behind the men, there is a second row, consisting of the wives in an order I could not clearly discern. The evidence suggests that they are ranked in the same way as their respective husbands, but, while the sequence of the men increases in seniority from right to left (facing the cattle byre), the sequence of seniority among the women is the opposite (see following diagram, Figure 22, p. 309).

When all have settled down, any of the agnatic males may be called by the elder to go and fetch some of the beer which is kept in one or more big earthen pots (*umphando*, singular *umphianda*) and stored in the main-house. Only a small quantity of beer is drawn, about half the capacity of a beaker which usually contains about five litres of beer. On his return, the man hands the beer to the ritual elder who takes it to the afflicted person, at the opposite (right)

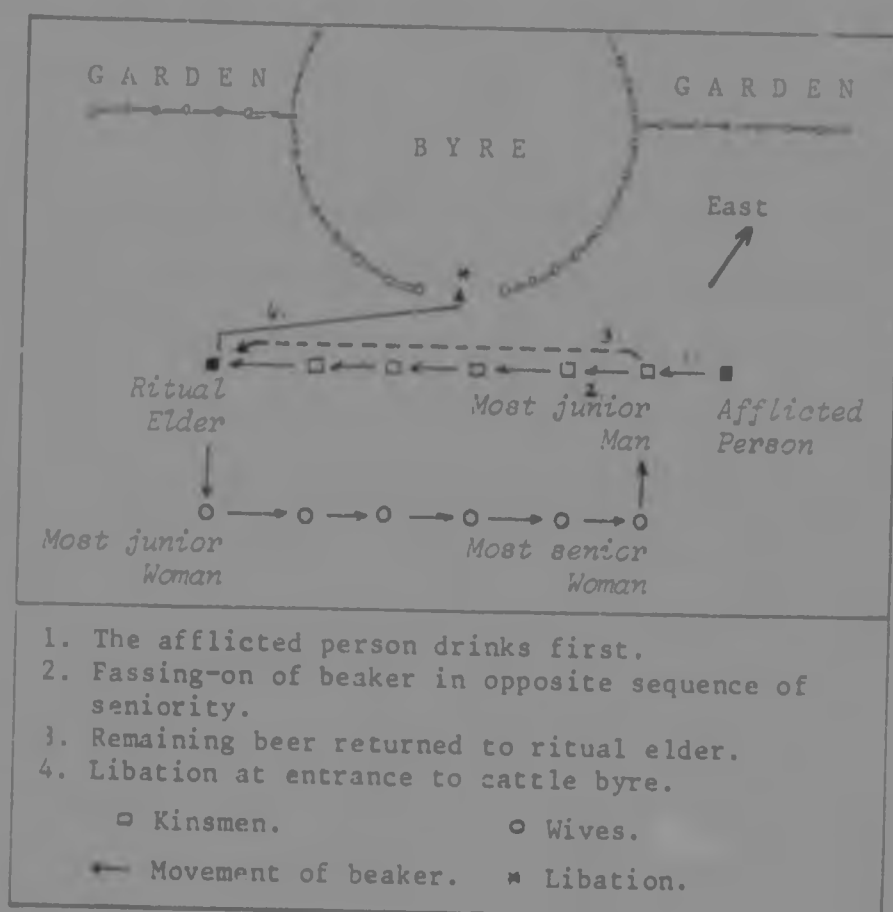


Figure 22. Beer-drinking ritual at cattle byre.

end of the row of the kinsmen; then follows the beer ritual which consists of two actions: *drinking from the ritual beer* by all those who are present at the byre, i.e. the kinsmen and their wives, and the *libation* in the cattle byre, made by the ritual elder. Both these ritual actions are together known as *uku-namisa* which means literally "to cause somebody to abandon something"⁽²⁸⁾.

The afflicted person drinks first from the ritual beer, then he gives the beaker to the man on his left, who is the most junior of the kinsmen who have gathered at the cattle byre. This man drinks a little and again passes on the beer, and so on until the beaker reaches the ritual elder. The latter now gives it to the women (in the second row) starting with the most junior. This woman gives it to the one on her right, and so on until the beaker reaches the most senior woman. She returns the beer to the front row of the men. Depending

on the quantity still left in the beaker, the drinking continues until a very small quantity, about a cupful, is left. Everybody drinks very little so that all can have a share of the beaker. The first ritual action of drinking in common from the beaker of ritual beer closes with the return of the beaker (with the very small quantity of beer) to the ritual elder. The second ritual action, namely the libation by the ritual elder follows immediately. He goes to the entrance to the cattle byre and pours down the beer in the direction of the centre of the byre saying *Makhosi!* ("Ye Chiefs!") or *Ebukhosini!* ("[In your honour, you who are] in the position of authority!").

The significance of drinking beer in the ritual manner (*ukuncamisa*), i.e. the manner of "abandoning the beer" is the procedure (of the *junior* person drinking before the *senior*) is the reverse of ordinary as well as ceremonial drinking and eating patterns. The ordinary procedure is called *ukubambela* (see p. 349) which literally means "to hold for, or on behalf of somebody else." This latter procedure involves the *senior's* being served first, and, by this, his higher rank is expressed. In addition, when the senior is served he may drink as much as he pleases. When he is satisfied, he passes the beer on to the next junior person. The last to drink from the beaker finishes the beer. All this is the reverse of the ritual situation, in which the junior is given the beaker first, but, out of respect for the senior, he cannot drink as much as he likes, but rather must "abandon the beaker;" he drinks a sip and then passes the beer on to the next senior person. Yet this senior person is still subject to other more senior persons, and so on. Thus there is an inherent dynamism in the ritual which forces the beaker to move to an ever higher rank of authority until it reaches the ritual elder. Even the ritual elder cannot finish the beer; he still must pass it on to those senior to himself. He goes to the cattle byre and makes the libation. In doing this, he passes the beer on to the ultimate authority which kinsmen can reach

in their ritual, i.e. the authority of the "chiefs" (*amakhosi*), the clan-ancestors.

The ritual aims at informing the clan-ancestors about one of their descendants, and the libation of the beer is the ritual means of achieving this end. Therefore, in the first place, the beer is not really food on which the participants of the ritual at the cattle byre feed. It is the ritual means of communication with beings who have passed the threshold of death. The beer must be "abandoned" by the person who is drinking in order not to interrupt the communication process. In the second place, the content of the communication between the living and the clan-ancestors is the guilt expressed by the afflicted person himself. This guilt is intentionally and symbolically attached to the beer, since it is the *afflicted person* who drinks first. His drinking first is an implicit statement of guilt (*ityala*, plural *amatyala* which is one of the terms denoting the ancestors). His drinking first amounts to an un verbalised *confession* of which the ongoing simultaneous conversation spells out the content. In short, the participating kinsmen are an essential part of the communication between the afflicted person and the ancestors (see p. 199). Finally, the kinsmen themselves are seated according to rank. Thus the agnatic kinship hierarchy is the only *order* in which the ancestral authorities can be correctly approached; agnatic kinship clearly forces its organisational principles on the ritual procedures of the ancestor cult. The ritual "abandoning of the beaker" is a vivid expression of this order as it enacts the sequence of seniority in the reverse ⁽²⁹⁾. Yet, what happens at the byre, the mediation by the kinsmen, is only a *stage* in the ritual proceedings, as it was shown in the previous section (Section 2). Mthwa ancestral cult requires that the afflicted person himself must *explicitly* accept his guilt ritually, if he wants to be cured from the punishment (the sickness) which the ancestors have sent. The nature of this acceptance remains to be shown in the subsequent

section; it will be shown that it is an act of *contrition*, in front of the living and the dead (*amawethu*).

(b) *Second part of the ancestral lineage feast: the core-ritual as an act of contrition.*

The second part of the ancestral lineage feast, irrespective of whether the ritual *materia* is meat or beer, constitutes the core-ritual which invariably takes place in the main-house (*endlini*). During this part of the total rite, the afflicted person is the main actor. Coming from the cattle byre, the agnates and their wives congregate in a circle form around the fireplace in the main-house. Looking from the entrance to the house, the men sit on the right side, and the women on the left, following each other in order of seniority. The most senior person takes a place near the door. The afflicted person takes a position in the back of the house, apart from the agnates. There may be visitors present, men and women. They form a second circle behind the agnates; they sit in order of age, the oldest man sitting near the door. This ceremonial seating order will be discussed further in the following chapter (see p.342f).

The ceremony in the main-house begins with an address by the diviner who has been consulted by the afflicted person (see p. 216) and speeches by one or more senior kinsmen. Usually, these speeches do not include praises to the ancestors, nor are they followed by dances as is the case with the speeches which take place during the ancestral public feast (see p. 280). The recurrent themes are recalling the afflicted person's past, his failures with regard to the kinsmen, the afflicted person's reconciliation with the agnates. Furthermore, the speeches make allusions to a medicine (*iyesa*) which is being applied and which will heal (*ukuphilisa*) the afflicted person. The medicine to which the speakers refer is the ancestral feast as a whole; it is the beer ritual at the cattle byre; it is the beer which will be served at the subsequent meal

after the core-ritual; in particular, it is the core-ritual itself, a ritual dance by the afflicted person.

During the ritual beer-drinking at the cattle byre and the speeches in the main-house, the afflicted person keeps silent. The speeches are followed by the ritual dance (*umxhentso*) performed by the afflicted person which he himself interrupts once or twice to give short speeches. In these speeches he expresses his pain and grief (*ubuhlungu*), his want of concern (*imfanelo*) for his kinsmen, his awareness of the demanding presence (*ukumela*) of the ancestor-spirit (and of the living kinsmen). The following is an abbreviation of such a speech made by an afflicted person:

*Umphefumlo wam udwengeke kakhulu
Bekungangathi abantu*

*bakulo mha
nabakulo bawo
nabakubo mhakulu*

Bonke bandimele

*kule nto
ndiyicingayo
ingandilalisiyo*

*Wonke la malanga.
Ngale ndlela ndihleli ngayo*

*ndibuhlungu ngaphakathi.
Kubuhlungu kum.*

Akumandanga.

My 'soul' is greatly distressed.
How obvious should it be that

the people of this our mother
the people of this our father
the people of the grandmother's place

all of them are waiting for me

with respect to this thing (i.e. the feast)
which keeps my mind occupied
which does not give me sleep

all these days.

That's the way in which I live

I am full of pain inside.
It hurts in the centre of my self.

It is no pleasure.

The afflicted person indicates his "faults" as well as his dependence on the ancestor-spirits (*amatyala*). His declaration (*ukuvuma*) is a confession (*ukuvuma*), in the sense that he publicly admits the charges which have been laid against him. These have been known from the time when the diviner first diagnosed the ancestral dissatisfaction, through the time when the agnatic males came together in order to discuss his misfortune and decided that beer should be brewed, to the ritual comments of the participants of the feast itself. More specifically, the afflicted person has another consultation (*umhlahlo*) with the diviner on the day of the feast itself; then he confesses to the diviner his quarrels with his neighbours and kinsmen. There is the charge of failure in domestic life which the kinsmen "report" (*ukubeka*) to the ancestors during the ritual beer-drinking at the cattle byre. Finally, all these omissions, failures and shortcomings are summed up by the speakers just before the core-ritual starts. The afflicted person acknowledges the overwhelming weight of evidence. Even if speaking only in *umculo*, he makes a confession the content of which the listeners know in detail (30). The actual statement of confession may be as short as the following:

*Ndiyivume yonk'
 ebebeyifuna kum,
 kusukela namhlanje.
 Noba yiyiphina.
 Naiya kuxelela.*

I admit everything
 that they are talking about me
 (literally, "that they are wanting from me")
 from today onwards.
 Whatever it may be
 I should report/tell it.

The afflicted person, then, "admits everything" (*ukuvuma yonk'*) he has been accused of. It is rather like an ordinary court trial after the accused has been found guilty. All the evidence gathered from the witnesses condemns him. He must admit his guilt publicly, and he must undergo the restitution demanded from him. In the ritual court of the ancestors, admission of guilt is also required, but instead of restitution, an act of contrition is demanded, a ritual action that

will indicate the new life which the culprit is now prepared to live in accordance with the wish of the kinsmen and the satisfaction of the ancestor-spirit. This ritual action is the dance.

The ritual dance (*umzhentso*) is always a solo dance which consists of the actual dancing (*ukhentsa*) accompanied by the handclapping (*ukombelela*) of the audience. While he is dancing the afflicted person sings a song; he himself sings the verses of the song, and the people respond with the chorus⁽³¹⁾. The afflicted person carries a white stick which expresses the presence and authority of the ancestors. The stick is the most typical symbol of a mature man's authority in Mthwa, and the colour white symbolises the ancestors and their work of healing. For the ritual action, the afflicted person stands up and goes towards the middle of the house. At his request that the people should "clap for him," they fall silent immediately; everybody knows the implication of this request, namely the performance of the core-ritual. The afflicted person intones the response to his song. The song may be a new composition unknown to the people, but the text is always closely related to the situation of affliction and healing by the ancestors. Then he dances a few steps so as to indicate the rhythm which the people will immediately adopt for their handclapping. The situation in the house is quite tense and the people are absorbed. The afflicted person starts dancing and singing with an apparent lack of energy. After a few cycles of the song and of the dancing, the movement becomes firm, the feet start stamping the floor energetically, as the people put it: "the person wakes up" (*umntu uyavuka*), "the spirit is roused" (*umoya uyavuswa*). My informants maintain that the "waking up" and the "rousing of the spirit" depends on the handclapping. Like the white stick, the handclapping is a medium of the presence of the ancestor-spirit. Suddenly, the afflicted person interrupts his dancing and gives the first of his declaratory speeches (see above, p. 313). Then the singing and dancing con-

tinue, still stronger in energy and movement. A second interruption occurs at which the confession takes place. Now emotionally and physically involved, the afflicted person continues with the second dance and song: the act of contrition. He literally shouts out his regret for past failures respecting the "people of his father's place" (*abantu bantakaya*), failures such as shunning traditional rituals honouring the ancestors, meanness in providing ceremonial celebrations with meat and beer for the kinsmen, breaking off from the agnatic group. The following is the edited version of a song of contrition which I was able to record in full:

(see next page)

A SONG OF CONTRITION

Introduction: *Ded' unamanyala, goduka!*
 Move on, you are filthy, return home!
Awugoduk', ulele?
 You don't return home - are you asleep?
Yi! Goduka!
Yi! Return home!
Unamanyala, goduka, yey'!
 You are filthy, return home, yey'!

Stanzas 1. *Yeyi ye goduka*
Yeyi ye return home
'namanyala
 you are filthy
'namanyala
 you are filthy
atsh' ah ah ah
 (the ancestors) say so ah ah ah

2. *Betha, betha, betha*
 Strike, strike, strike
yithi ke, ngoku
 let it happen then, now
yiyekezi, he
 ye leave it, he
yeho, mame lani
 yeho, ye listen
ye, mame lani
 he, ye listen

3. *Atsh' atsh' atsh', awuv'*
 They say so (3x), you should obey
hamba, hamba, hamba
 go, go, go
shenxa, shenxa, shenxa
 move away, move away, move away
u u u u
u u u u
hamba, hamba, hamba
 go, go, go

4. *Yeha, yeha, yeha, yeha*
Yeha, yeha, yeha, yeha
huru, unamanyal', ugoduka
 gosh, you are filthy while returning home
yo, na! ts'hip' ugoduka, nab'abanye
 yo, returning with the absconder, with others
woth' amaNcamane?
 what will the Ncamane people be asking?
awugoduk' unani na?
 are you not returning, what's the matter?

5. *Yiyho, unamanyala*
Yiyho, you are filthy
awuve, yima
 you should listen, pay attention
yewu yehe, yeyo muma
 yewu yehe, yeyo my mother
yey' awuve
 yey' you should obey

Chorus: *Goduka,*
 Return home,
goduka,
 return home,
goduka,
 return home,
goduka!
 return home!

goduka,
 return home,
goduka,
 return home,
goduka,
 return home,
goduka,
 return home,
goduka!
 return home!

goduka,
 return home,
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goduka!
 return home!

goduka,
 return home,
goduka,
 return home,
goduka,
 return home,
goduka!
 return home!

This song of contrition was sung by a man who was struck by a nail and blinded in his left eye. I shall omit all the details of the particular case, which are reflected in the song, and concentrate on two aspects of significance for the ancestral lineage feast in general and the core-ritual in particular. These two aspects are expressed (in the song) in the terms *ukugoduka* ("to return home") and *ukuva* ("to listen, to obey").

The most important word (of the song) is the percussion-like response by the people: *Goduka!* ("Return home!"). Any person who returns "home" - according to Mthwa thinking - has only one place in mind, namely *ekhaya*, i.e. "at (the person's) father's place." The home (*ekhaya*) is the place to which the ancestor-spirit has been returned (*ukugodusa*, see p. 274) after the funeral. In particular the spirit of the dead homestead head who has been "returned home" establishes the "home" in a very definite sense. Thus, "returning home" is the fundamental orientation in a person's life in Mthwa society. Anything that contradicts such a "returning home" can result only from a wilful act of disregard and disrespect; it can only be malicious in intent; it reveals a person's "filth" (*umoya*), disgracefulness and indecency (see Kropf 1915:301). In contrast to such serious misconduct, returning home means undoing whatever the particular "filthiness" may consist of. Returning home becomes an act of contrition by the person who had fallen short of "whatever" (*umoya*; see confession, p. 314) rightful demands the "people of father's place" (*abantu basekhaya*) had made.

Contrition, however, is a particular type of consciousness which only an individual can have. As the dynamism of the ancestral feast moves towards the intended aim, i.e. the ritual action by the afflicted person (see p. 301), so the ritual demands of the afflicted person, and of him alone, that he give the outward sign of his inner contrition, i.e. that he perform the core-ritual as

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an act of contrition⁽³⁾. In short, the ancestor cult of Mthwa society aims at the afflicted person's restoration to health of the whole person rather than at the unity among agnates. The structure of the ancestral feast and the expected attitude of contrition by the afflicted person support this conclusion.

The second important word (of the song quoted above, p. 317) which expresses the generally expected attitude of the afflicted person, is *ukuva* ("to listen, to obey"). The ancestor-spirit demanded that food be given to him, that beer be brewed, the ancestral feast be celebrated, the core-ritual be performed. The whole ancestral feast, celebrated on behalf of the afflicted person, is his response to this call from the ancestor-spirit. Obedience, like contrition, is a type of attitude and of consciousness which belongs to the individual. But, more than an attitude, obedience is the expression of a social relationship; the ancestral feast, demanded by the ancestor-spirit, is the "work" (*umsebenzi*; see p. 215) of obedience towards this authority (*ubukhosi*; see p. 310). The ancestor-spirit's authority over the afflicted person is perceived by the Mthwa people in terms of kinship relations ordered hierarchically (see p. 79f) and embracing all members of the clan-section. Therefore, obedience is the attitude which not only explains the relationship between the living and the dead, but the relationship between a junior member of the agnatic group and any of his seniors, near or distant (see p. 214f). Thus we must ask: what is the nature of the authority attributed to the ancestors? What is the nature of an ancestor-spirit to whom the afflicted person - and, for that matter, any of the living - owes obedience?

(4) *The ancestors as conceptual frame of authority.*

The preceding descriptions record a variety of terms denoting "ancestors." The various terms may seem to have little connection with one another. For example,

there are terms which have a kinship referent like *amawethu* (literally "those of us"); while other terms lack this referent. They, like *abadala* (literally "those who are old"), refer rather to seniors than to kinsmen. Other terms occur only in the context of rituals. In this context, the ancestors are spoken of as *amakhosi* (literally "authorities like chiefs") or *amatyala* (literally "faults"). In this short section, I shall sum up the connections between the various terms and add those which I collected and which have not yet been discussed in this dissertation (see also Appendix 3). On the basis of the occurrence of the terms in daily life in Caguba, it is possible to group them rationally in four different categories.

Ever since Driberg's (1936) contention that ancestors should be understood as elders, the debate continues as to whether the ancestors are venerated or worshipped. Recently, a contribution by Kopytoff (1971) infused new life into the discussion. Kopytoff compares terms denoting "ancestors" in several Bantu languages and concludes that the ancestors are elders rather than divinities, and that they are worth of respect rather than of worship. Subsequent publications have corrected what they consider to be the narrowness of Kopytoff's linguistic basis (Brain 1973) and have shown that, at least with respect to the Nguni-speaking peoples, ancestors are worshipped (Hammond-Tooke 1978). The material presented in this chapter supports *both* sides of the argument and makes a contribution to the ongoing discussion (see West 1975:185) as to whether the "ancestors" are spirits, elders, shades or anything else? As will be shown, Mthwa people have a wide variety of terms denoting their forebears. These terms allow the Cagubans to speak about their ancestors *situationally* and perceive them as senior kinsmen *or* elders, as super-human personal powers *or* divinities.

The first set of terms, with their clear indication of the agnatic kinship

system, includes the most frequently used terms for the ancestors. These terms express the unity of the kingroup across the threshold of death:

<i>umlowo</i>	(plural <i>imilowo</i>)	agnatically related ancestors (see p. 87).
<i>ukhokho</i>	(plural <i>ookhokho</i>)	ancestors of the great-grand-parental generation.
<i>amawethu</i>	(cognate terms <i>amawethu</i> , <i>amawabo</i>)	unified group of agnates, living and dead. When used the term may refer either to the living or to the dead, or to both the living and the dead.

The frequency with which the latter term is used indicates the importance of the agnatic group as a socio-ritual unit. The discussion of agnatic kinship as the necessary condition for the ancestral feast to take place and proceed at all (see p. 185f) made this abundantly clear.

Yet, we have to relate to this first set of terms a second one. Here the emphasis changes. The stress is now on seniority rather than on kinship. Relative age and membership of a given generation is emphasised rather than the more specific agnatic relationship. Thus the ancestors appear as elders:

<i>ondala</i>	(plural <i>abadala</i>)	literally "the old ones." It can refer to any near or distant senior, male or female, when used in the singular. In the plural it refers to parents (irrespective of sex), elders and to ancestors in the general sense of forebears. It is a very commonly used term referring to elders and ancestors. As a form of address, it would be derogatory.
<i>ingwevu</i>	(plural <i>irigwevu</i>)	literally "a man with a grey beard." It is a term of endearment for the elders; seldom used for the ancestors.
<i>amanyange</i>	(plurale tantum)	the term is probably derived from the verb <i>ukunyanga</i> which means "to doctor, to heal." The term refers <i>in cumulo</i> to the dead forebears as elders who are endowed with a power which is beyond man's reach, i.e. the power of healing.

The term "the old ones" *omdala, abadala*, is the most important here. Although the parents of a person are most commonly indicated by this term, it removes the actual biological connection between a child and its parents. Parents are elders, and any elder should be regarded as if he or she were a parent. In other words, "the old ones" are generalised "parents." In this sense a person's ~~next~~ senior is already his elder who has a right to give orders and to expect obedience. This unchangeable relationship of a senior to his junior is expressed, for example, in the seating order on the occasion of ceremonial public feasting (as will be explained in the next chapter; see p. 342f). Among the persons who meet for such an occasion, the most senior will, in a literal sense, take the place nearest to the door so that he can "see the grave." The person who sits to the right of the entrance is not even a kinsman of the homestead head at whose place the people have met for the celebration.

With the reference to the "grave", we enter the third category of terms for the ancestors, "those who are down below (*sehl.* in the graves)" (*abapantsi*). Beyond the most senior man, there are the ancestors, the elders *par excellence*. Just as the men are the law-administering chiefs (*iinkosi*, see p. 145), the ancestors are "authorities who are like chiefs" (*amakhosi*), yet infinitely surpassing the former. There is no simple continuum from the mature men and legal majors to the authority wielded by the ancestors: death and mourning rituals have changed the latter into super-human powers. The ancestors are in a special way authorised to find "fault" (*ityala*, plural *amatyala*) with any living person. They are "those in the position of authority" (*ebukhosini*; see p. 310) who can demand food from the person to whom they appear in dreams. This is an authority which virtually no living person controls (except the homestead head in his own homestead). The ancestors are empowered to find fault with the living and to demand "food" from them; and they do so by appearing in dreams which are beyond man's ability to manipulate. Somebody who communicates

by means of dreams is an *ithongo*, i.e. a communicating ancestor-spirit. The third category of terms belongs to the sphere of ritual:

<i>ithongo</i>	(plural <i>amathongo</i>)	the ancestors in so far as they appear in dreams. They are beyond man's control (see below).
<i>umakhosi</i>	(plurale tantum)	the ancestors as the super-authorities. It is a common term of address during rituals. The diviners are referred to by this term, as <i>umakhosi</i> (plural <i>oomakhosi</i>) and are addressed by the same term.
<i>amatyala</i>	(plurale tantum)	the ancestors as the demanding voices which (through the interpretation of the diviner) point to a person's faults (see p. 280 and p. 311).
<i>amatywala</i>	(plurale tantum)	literally the term means "kinds of beer" or "feasts (with beer)"; it denotes the ancestors in their demands for food (<i>ukutya</i> , <i>ukudla</i> ; see p. 291). The ritual <i>materia</i> , meat or beer, is a manifestation of the ancestors themselves.

The most important term here is *ithongo* (which I translated as "ancestor-spirit" in this dissertation). This term of reference to the ancestors is very popular in Caguba and distinguishes the communicating ancestor(-spirit) from the group of ancestors. The performance of the mourning rituals elevates someone recently dead to the status of an ancestor (*uvetimu*) (see p. 274), whereas dreams reveal an individual ancestor as a super-human being. The basis of this understanding of ancestors is a certain folk-psychology of dreams (*amaphupho*, *amathongo*). The important word, here, is *ithongo* (plural *amathongo*) which can be traced to a proto-Bantu word **/-tongo/* "sleep". The Xhosa word for sleep is *ubuthongo*, a word which shares the same stem for the vernacular nouns denoting "dream" and "ancestor-spirit." A person dreams while asleep. A sleeper is thought of not merely as someone motionless, but rather as a person who has surrendered his will for the time being (see, for example,

the song of contrition, p. 317. The second line of the introduction asks the afflicted person: "Are you asleep?" The question becomes understandable if it is paraphrased "Have you surrendered your will-power?") Even if asleep, the sleeper's mind is not necessarily at rest, it may be active, and - if active - it is controlled by agencies outside the sleeper. The agencies may be witch-familiars (see p. 265) or ancestors. In the case of witch-familiars, dreams are externally-controlled activities of the sleeper(s mind); in the case of the ancestors, dreams are the latter's manifestations themselves. It is the diviner's concern to interpret dreams and to discern the agent which causes them. The manifestation of and the communication from an ancestor by means of dreams defines what I call an "ancestor-spirit" and what is in the vernacular called *ithongo*.

An ancestrally caused dream is a *vision*, and thus a dream represents to the dreamer something that is real, like anything else which is perceived by any of the senses. Thus dreaming can be thought of by the Cagubans as a form of communication. But, what concerns Cagubans most is that the communicating ancestor-spirit *controls* the visionary's mind (and subsequently his life) without any appeal against the spirit's demands. The spirit takes possession of the visionary and will not leave the latter until the demands (*amatyala*) are met by the rituals of devotion (*amatywala*) (unlike dreams caused by witchcraft which can be neutralised by some countermagic or medicine). Although the communicating ancestors are originally human, the dreams (*amathongo*) reveal them as beings with super-human powers; they are "beings beyond human control like dreams" (*amathongo*); they are "ultimate demanding authorities" (*amathosi*). They are the ancestors par excellence. However, since they can be specified by name, *amathongo* have a clear kinship aspect, agnatic or cognatic (affinal), in each case it is possible to trace kinship relations demonstrably. As those who appear with a demanding voice in dreams and whose

demands are irresistible, the ancestor-spirits are super-human kinsmen. They are beings who can demand absolute obedience and respect, who are met with awe and worshipped (see p. 305f). The ancestor-spirit has passed beyond the level of merely human existence; he is an authority beyond appeal; he is not only an ancestor *par excellence*, but he is a being surpassing the nature of man.

This latter aspect of the ancestor-spirits, as the authorities of a super-human "ultimate" dimension, is noted in a final set of terms which, once more, avoids the aspect of kinship and generalises the ancestors as the authorities of all the people:

<i>izinyanya</i>	(plural <i>izinyanya</i>)	the elder-spirits.
<i>m. londekhaya</i>	(plurale tantum)	the ancestral protectors of the homestead.
<i>izikhawukhawni</i>	(plural <i>izikhawukhawni</i>)	literally "the tiny little thing," i.e. "spiritual" beings which remain unnoticed by the person who lacks apprehension.
<i>izithixo</i>	(plural <i>izithixo</i>)	"spirits." For a short discussion of this term, see Appendix 3, p. 376.

These terms take the people of Mthwa nearest to the concept of divinities who deserve explicit respect and reverence. They are protectors and guardians, and they are of a "spiritual" nature. Speaking of the ancestors in their superhuman dimension, the people refer to them as *izinyanya*. This noun is derived from the verb *ukunyanya* which means "to be in fear, to be afraid." The term is clearly abstract, denoting a category of beings. When speaking among themselves, the Cagubans may occasionally use the term. But they seldom speak in the abstract. If the ancestors are to be discussed in connection with dreams, misfortune or a forthcoming ritual, the more concrete terms are used, preferably those with a clear kinship connotation. Therefore the term *izinyanya* was more frequently used when I - the researcher - asked

for generalisations. And that is what the term *izinyanya* stands for in Caguba: the superhuman ancestor-spirits *tout court* without any direct reference to a specific group of agnatic kinsmen.

In the following, the various terms are shown in tabular form. There are two frames of reference denoting "ancestors;" these two frames of reference express the social and the religio-ritual orders of Mthwa society:

	ANCESTORS	
SOCIAL ORDER	expressed in terms of <i>KINSHIP</i>	generalised in terms of <i>SENIORITY</i>
	<i>imilowo</i> <i>ookhokho</i> <i>amawethu</i>	<i>abadala</i> <i>ingweru</i> <i>amanyange</i>
RELIGIOUS ORDER	in terms of <i>SUPER-HUMAN EXISTENCE</i>	generalised as <i>ULTIMATE AUTHORITIES</i>
	<i>ithongo</i> <i>amakhosi</i> <i>amatyala</i> <i>amatywala</i>	<i>izinyanya</i> <i>imilondekhaya</i> <i>izikhawkhawu</i> <i>izithixo</i>

Throughout this dissertation, authority has been repeatedly defined in relation to agnatic kinship. The first such authority was the office of the chief which had a clear kinship basis: ideally speaking, the chief would be the most senior man of the royal clan-section at any given time. Thus chieftaincy, abstractly speaking, appears as a particular instance of the principle of primogeniture which operates in every clan-section and in every homestead of Mthwa. Within a clan-section, the most senior agnate is the ritual elder. Kinship has its clear imprint on the dynamism of the family life-cycle which operates visibly in the settling-out of junior brothers and in the inheritance system. Finally, the authority of the mat-leader is

conceptualised in terms of authority in a "house", i.e. in terms of the authority which the "head" (*intlolo*; see p. 80) holds over his descendants. In the context of ancestor religion we can see why and how kinship can become so significant in *conceptualising* authority in domains of daily life which are organisationally set apart, i.e. in the political, associational, domestic and ritual domains. The reason for this conceptual significance of agnatic kinship is the fact that the "ancestors" are at once the point of reference in defining authority within any given agnatic group as well as (in the generalised form) the conceptual frame of any authority whatever. The ancestors are "parents" and "elders", they are "super-human authorities" with respect to the respective living kinsmen, and they are "divinities" with respect to the people of Mthwa. Thus generally speaking, *any authority in the chiefdom is - in some sense - participation in the authority of the ancestors.* The ancestors are the *model* of authority in Mthwa.

But conversely, human authority, as a social reality, provides the model according to which the ancestors are conceptualised. After all, nobody has seen them, except in visions and dreams and through the interpretations of the diviners. The authority of the ancestors is a "theory or chart (which) models physical relationships (of authority and obedience in Mthwa) in such a way ... as to render them apprehensible: it is a model of 'reality'."

But at the same time, "the theory is a model under whose guidance physical relationships are organised, it is a model *for* 'reality'" (Geertz 1966:7).

It appears, then, that the distinction between model-*of* and model-*for* operates in Mthwa in *two* dimensions. First, there is the horizontal dimension, namely from kinship based on parenthood to the generalised understanding of seniority and elders. Secondly, there is the vertical dimension, namely from a state of existence before death to another after death, i.e. from human to superhuman existence. These two dimensions may be represented graphically as follows:

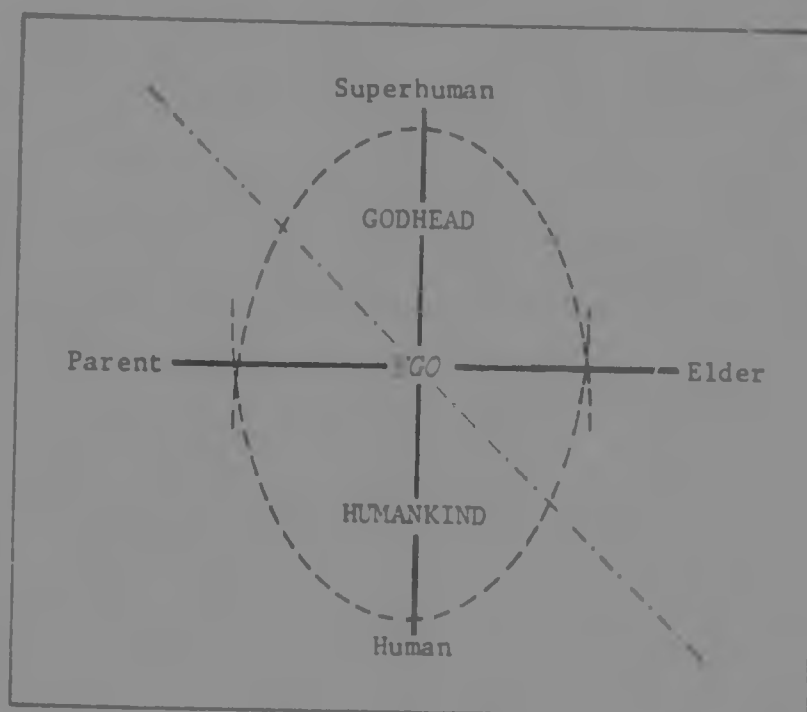


Figure 23. Ancestors: model-of and model-for authority in Mthwa.

This two-dimensional "intertransposability" (Geertz) creates a complexity which besets the observer and which, for the member of Mthwa society, requires a given context in order to understand what an ancestor "is". Thus in the centre of the intertransposing dimensions we find *ego*, the individual. At one stage, he may perceive the ancestors as human, like himself, and call them *Mawethu!* ("you-of-us!"); at another, the ritual stage, he experiences them as super-human, unlike himself, and calls them *Makhosi!* ("You-authorities-beyond-human-reach!"). In this way humankind intertransposes with the Godhead to whom unchallenged obedience (*ukuva*) is due. This is the efficacy (or as the Cagubans would say "the work," *umsebenzi*) of the ancestral ritual and of the ancestral feasts in Mthwa society. In short, the nature of the ancestors cannot be "fixed": it changes in accordance with the social situation in which they come into focus. Correspondingly, the relationship between the living and the ancestors cannot be decided upon once and for all; it may be reverence at some stage, but worship at another.

Just as the people in Caguba have difficulties in speaking about ancestors in the abstract, so are they unable to think about ancestor feasts "as such." Ancestor feasts only take place in, and with respect to a *particular* homestead and the situation of a *specific* member of the family. Yet, when people meet for such a feast, each person has his place. He or she may be a fellow kinsman of the homestead head or merely a visitor. An ancestral feast is in one respect an individual's concern, while in another it is fundamentally a feast of the homestead, but, in a third respect, it is a feast of the people of Mthwa. Thus the homestead is the place where, for ritual purposes, Mthwa society meets. The homestead is a symbol of the world. This will be shown in the final chapter.

Footnotes to Chapter VII.

- (1) *UTHIRO* and *uQamata* are probably of Khoisan origin. The word *UTHIRO* is reflected in "the Cape Hottentot *Thimmar* or *Tigga*, found also as *Tau//oap* in Nama" (Doke-Vilakazi 1964:797). The name became popularised through the translation of the Bible into Xhosa and is today used by all Christian denominations, including the Independent Churches (see Oosthuizen 1976:15-8). The term *uQamata* is traceable to "San names for the Supreme Being derived from *//gana*, who was conceived both as the ghosts of the dead and as a personified being. Among the Heikum of Etosha Pan, */garab* was spoken of as the creator who received the souls of the dead" (Hodgson 1981:47). See also below, Appendix 3, p. 376, comment on *tsithiro*.
- (2) Hodgson (1981:34-6) assesses historical sources and concludes that the Cape Nguni traditionally worshipped the Supreme Being when lightning had struck. The people then made an animal sacrifice which "disputes the assertion that no rituals were directed to the worship of the supreme being."
- (3) I adopt the phrase "ancestor religion" from Hammond-Tooke (1981b).
- (4) The necessity of distinguishing the ancestors from the communicating ancestors has been established for the Ndlambe of East London, Ciskei, by Bigalke (1969).
- (5) In a short survey of Transkeian indigenous societies, Lamla (1981:29-33) discusses what he calls "African diseases." He shows how at the root of such diseases is the belief that spirits possess a person and that the person can be freed from them by the application of medicine in the sense of some curative natural substance.
- (6) Kropf (1915) does not record the word *umlana* for Xhosa. The noun may be traceable to Zulu *ukulana* (Doke-Vilakazi 1964:452) which means "to become stale, lose weight, pass season without fertilization (of cattle)."

Bryant (1905:352) records a further meaning: "Lose body, begin to lose flesh, as a person who has passed his prime, or from some wasting illness."

- (7) *Isimangutaka* and *ibhadi*, both mean "bad luck;" *isimangutaka* is the intensive form of *ibhaka*, and *ibhadi* is an adoptive from English "bad."
- (8) Kropf (1915:489) translates *izila*: "The ceremony of killing a beast as a kind of sacrifice for one who is dead." In this sense, I could not confirm this meaning of *izila*. Most probably, Kropf is speaking about the ceremony of *inkomo yokuhlamba* ("the beast of washing"), i.e. the ceremony which terminates the mourning period; see Kuckert (1979:10-15).
The belief in pollution through death is a common cultural phenomenon among south-east African societies. There are two basic concepts connected with this belief, changing in various societies, namely "darkness, blackness" on one hand, and "(ritual) impurity, dirt" on the other. For example, "darkness, blackness" occurs among the Kgaga called *thefi* (Hammond-Tooke 1981a:120); among the Pedi it is called *sefi* (Mönnig 1966:141) and among the Zulu *sempama* (Ngubane 1977:80). Among the Pedi we find "impurity" called *ditshila* (Mönnig 1966:141), Southern Sotho *ditshila* (Paroz 1961:460); and Mpondo *isila*. The phonological similarity between the Sotho and Mpondo nouns, *ditshila* (*ditshila*) and *isila* respectively suggests some common root of the nouns. In fact, when pressed to identify *isila*, some of my informants spoke about *iditi*, which is an adoptive from English "dirt" and has that meaning in Mpondo.
- (9) This differential impact of death pollution is noted as a feature of several societies; to mention only two, Ngubane (1977:80-1), speaking about the Zulu, distinguishes between the "chief mourner" and the "other bereaved persons (whose) degree of intensity (of pollution) is less than that of the chief mourner;" Junod (1927, I:143), describing the Tsonga, speaks about "concentric circles" of the "state of uncleanness."
- (10) Formerly, the mourning attire for a widow was plain white clothing. Today it has been replaced by a totally black costume. Some traditionally minded widows combine a white blanket with the modern black mourning dress.
- (11) *Ukubuyisa* and *ukugodusa* are causatively extended forms of *ukubuya* and *ukugoduka*. In the case of a deceased homestead head, there will be a special feast of "returning home" which is independent of the celebration that terminates the mourning period.
- (12) Any mature man may rightfully be addressed "chief" (*inkosi*). The stem of the vernacular noun is */-khosi/*. To this stem the prefix of noun class 6 is added, */ama-/* which in some cases conveys the idea of things which occur in pairs, or different kinds of the same thing, or of an analogy. Thus *ama-khosi* are persons who are "like chiefs."
- (13) Kiernan (1982), in a paper on "The 'problem of evil' in the context of ancestral intervention," makes a valuable distinction between "constitututors" and "allocators," i.e. between agnatic and affinal ancestors responsible for a person's affliction. The agnatic ancestors inflict misfortune *qua* punishment; they are "constitututors;" in contrast, the affinal ancestors inflict misfortune *qua* evil; they are "allocators." Yet, this dichotomy between agnatic constitututors and affinal allocators would not apply to any of the cases recorded in the field, because in all these cases which came to my notice, the communicating spirit was thought to be

interested in the "conversion" of a wrongdoer, i.e. any misfortune inflicted by an ancestor-spirit was considered to be punishment. What appears from the present analysis is that the agnatic *living* kinsmen should be considered as the "constitututors" since without them no ancestral feast can proceed efficaciously and restore an afflicted person's health. The allocation of the misfortune becomes a matter of identifying any one of the four cosmological alternatives as responsible for the misfortune in question.

- (14) The double aspect of the "family affair" and a "public feast" is observable in other ritual contexts which have not been discussed in this dissertation. For example, the celebrations at the various stages of the mourning period. The actual ritual is performed "in private," in a separate house, while at the same time the people have already gathered for participating in the feast. During the feast, the ritual elder (or rather, the master-of-ceremonies) will announce the purpose of the feast. This announcement is an essential part of the *feast*, but it does not add to the efficaciousness of the privately performed ritual.
- (15) In anthropological literature, the vernacular term *isiko* is most commonly rendered in English as "custom;" see also Kropf (1915:388). This rendering hardly expresses the full meaning of the Mpondo word. First, like the English word, the Mpondo vernacular *isiko* means "habitual or usual practice, common way of acting" (Oxford Dictionary). For this complex of thought, there is a specific noun in Xhosa, namely *isimbho* (see Kropf 1915:232). In addition, the Mpondo word has a legal connotation (see Hunter 1936:413, n. 1) expressing a usage which by continuance has acquired the force of a law or right" (Oxford Dictionary). Finally, and actually the relevant meaning here, *isiko* expresses a performative reality which depends on the correct procedure of the ritual and on the person authorised to perform the ritual act. *Isiko* is what Skorupski (1976:93) calls an "operative ceremony."
- (16) *Uvalo* means literally the cartilage of the breastbone and, in a more general sense, sickness (see Kropf 1915:450). It is one of a great variety of terms indicating "conscience" or "pangs of conscience." The Mthwa people (and the Nguni in general) have a highly developed concept of the conscience as man's inner guidance and condition. More commonly, researchers have recorded *intliziyo* (literally "the heart") as the only term for "conscience." *Intliziyo* refers to conscience as well as the wilfulness of man's activities, as apposed to *indalo* (literally "in-born or inherited characteristic") which indicates a predisposition of a person over which he has no control. The concept of conscience is to be discussed in a separate study.
- (17) The *communicating ancestors* or *ancestor spirits* (as I call them in this dissertation) may be maternal (affinal) ancestors. Even then, the ancestral ritual will be performed by the agnatic kinsmen. This raises fundamental questions with respect to extra-descent group ancestors (see McKnight 1967) among Nguni-speaking peoples, questions which fall outside the scope of the present dissertation. Thus, in quoting the case of the young woman who saw her maternal grandmother in a dream, the actual analytical problem of maternal kinsmen (ancestors) in the context of an agnatic feast remains taken for granted.
- (18) In the context of law, all women are minors; in public life, the women are to a large extent subordinate to the men. Yet, in the domestic context and with respect to moral values, women as mothers have a dominant

position. A woman's pivotal social position (given certain circumstances, namely the death of her husband) has been discussed in relation to the inheritance system (see p. 242f).

- (19) The term *idini*, and with it the whole state of analysis with respect to "sacrificial killings" among the Southern Nguni, needs more specific research. Here I should like to mention a few hints that come from mere linguistic considerations. To begin with, Soga (1931) translates *idini* simply by "sacrifice." Hunter (1936:240) describes it as an *animal* that is killed on the demand of an ancestor who wants it, and on behalf of a person who is sick. Thus the concept of a "sacrifice" is already in question. Among the Bhaca (Hammond-Tooke 1962:238) there is a clear morphological cognate, *idini*, which is a ceremonial killing in certain contexts of *thanksgiving* and *beer* offerings. This makes the concept of "sacrifice" very doubtful from a comparative point of view.

There are, at this stage, two not immediately reconcilable (linguistic) ways of understanding the term in question.

(a) There is an Arabic word in the background. See, for example, Johnson (1939:75) who records that Swahili *dini* (of noun-class 5) is a derivative of Arabic, meaning "religion, creed, worship." Snoxall records (1967:44) Luganda *ddini* (also a noun of Class 5, like Xhosa and Bhaca) with the meaning "religion, creed." The author mentions specifically that it is of Arabic origin and was adopted into Luganda via Swahili.

(b) Looking for morphological cognates nearer home, there is Tsonga (Cuenod 1967:33) with the noun *idini* (also a class 5 noun) with the meaning "fermented maize porridge." In Southern Sotho (Paroz 1961:498) we find *leting* (again class 5) which is morphologically the exact Xhosa equivalent, with the meaning "light kaffir-corn beer" and another noun *ting* (noun class 9), meaning "a kind of beer;" the latter noun may occur in phrases like *ting tsa modimo* ("beer of the ancestor-spirit").

The Arabic influence on Nguni languages is well-known. An example is the word *imazi* ("money") which came to the Nguni languages via Swahili (see Doke-Vilakazi 1964:479). Thus there is enough reason for *idini* to have a similar origin accounting for the easy adoption of the noun with a religious significance.

But, there is the very specific meaning of the Tsonga-Sotho nouns referring to fermentation and beer. Furthermore, there is the explicit reference in Bhaca with respect to beer as well. Finally, the Mpondo author Chief Poto (1927:83-4) avoids the word *idini* when writing about ritual killings; he speaks only about *ukhulima* ("to skin").

Thus we arrive at an interesting conclusion, namely that perhaps, at one stage in its religious history, beer rituals could have been far more important than anthropologists might have thought for Nguni societies. This conclusion accords well with the technical phrase of Caguba's ritual language. The people say that "beer is brewed 'in conclusion' of things," meaning that beer is to be brewed when the kinsmen come to the conclusion that a certain state of affair is to be attributed to the intervention of the ancestors. Finally, the assumption that beer rituals could have been more important than it was assumed is supported by the fact that among the Cagubans virtually no ritual or feast goes without the presence of beer so that beer becomes the ubiquitous symbol of the presence of the ancestors. But, beer is (a) made of grains, and it is (b) an important item of the diet. The linking of ancestor feast (ancestor religion) with an *agriculturally* oriented society becomes the only feasible solution.

For the above linguistic information, I am grateful to Prof. D.T. Cole, Head of the Department of Bantu Languages, Witwatersrand University.

- (20) *hlonipha* words (*ukuhlonipha* means "to respect") refer to a special vocabulary which either camouflages ordinary words or completely replaces such ordinary words. They are used to "respect" certain people or material items. For example, wives are expected to "respect" the names of the husband and his agnatic kinsmen; or the novices in the circumcision lodge are expected to "respect" a number of things, such as food-items, the fire, the lodge.
- (21) *Ukuhlukuhla* (the meat with which the ancestor-spirit "breaks the fast") is the opposite of *ukuzila* ("to fast, to abstain;" see p. 330, n. 8). Being under the influence of the ancestors (*ukuba namatyala*; see p. 267f) is a form of pollution which enjoins social restrictions. These are terminated when the ancestrally demanded ritual is performed. In short, *ukuhlukuhla* and *ukuzila*, *intlhukuhla* and *izila* are oppositional correlates.
- (22) *Intsonyama* is a compound noun. Kro, f (1915:431; see also Doke-Vilakazi 1964:600) assumes the noun to be derived from */*intso* + *inyama*/ which would literally mean "kidney-meat." An alternative morphological interpretation of the noun is possible which is nearer to the actual ritual situation.
- The piece of meat in question (the muscle below the arm pit of the right foreleg) is called in Southern Sotho *ntsintsi* (my record, obtained in Bethlehem area). This word appears to be derived from an ideophone *ntsi* which means "of stopping in surprise, of stabbing" (see Paroz 1961:312). In Zulu there is an ideophone *tsi* meaning "of piercing deeply" (see Doke-Vilakazi 1964:820). On the basis of Zulu and Southern Sotho, we can speculatively reconstruct the Mpondo noun *intsonyama* as */*in-ts-o* + *inyama*/ which would mean "meat /*inyama*/ which is obtained after stabbing deeply */-ts-/"
- The fact that *intsonyama*-meat is ritually used on occasions where the stabbing method of killing the ritual victim is not applied (e.g. at the coming-out ceremony of the initiants) would need to be dealt with separately.
- (23) The word "congregation" is understood here in the sense of "ritually required witnesses," because in the present situation the congregation is not an integral part of the ritual proceedings themselves. Analytically it is important to draw a clear line between the agnates who are the necessary condition for the ritual to take place at all and the core-ritual which concerns only the afflicted person.
- (24) The "sucking ritual" is not to be confused with the "tasting ritual" (*ukubala*). The latter belonged to the first-fruit ceremony which is obsolete in Mthwa society. In none of the ancestral rituals is there any "tasting" ritual. Nor should the sucking ritual be confused with rituals which involve spittle, for example at the open grave. When the corpse has been lowered into the grave, the people may approach the grave and pay homage to the deceased. This is usually done by throwing some soil into the grave. Certain individuals may bring the soil near to their lips first and spit on it before throwing it into the grave. The inattentive observer could easily equate the sucking ritual and the rite of homage.
- Hunter (1936:335) records the ritual of "sucking" for the novices to divinership.
- (25) There are two traditional places for the performance of the beer ritual, namely either in the main-house at the fire, or else at the cattle byre

(see also Hunter 1936:255). The latter place is the preferred one; as the Cagubans put it: "The ancestors have their own house," i.e. the cattle byre.

- (26) At this stage of the discussion, it would be necessary to describe the relevant facts by a detailed conversational analysis. This is outside the adopted descriptive method and, thus, goes beyond the scope of the present study. The few hints given must suffice here. An example of this type of conversation will be found in Appendix 4.
- (27) It is important to remember that the ritual beer-drinking is the equivalent of the ritual killing and the simultaneous invocation of the ancestors. That is to say, the beer is the ritual equivalent to the bellowing animal. Beer and animal are the *medium* of conveying a *message* to the ancestors. Thus, just as the libation is not a sacrifice, neither is the killing of the animal a sacrifice or a peace offering. The rituals of killing the animal and of pouring out the beer are parts of a symbolic court trial, in which the ancestors have the role of "chiefly authorities."
- (28) *Ukunomisa* is the causative form of *ukunomisa* ("to abandon"); thus the literal meaning is "to cause somebody to abandon something." The metaphor is quite obvious: since the junior person is given the beaker first, the ritual implies a disregard for the senior who should be served first. The senior's waiting for what rightfully belongs to him "causes the junior to abandon" the beaker.
- Hunter (1936:254-5) describes the beer-ritual and mentions explicitly that no libation took place. For the difference in ritual procedure I have no explanation.
- (29) The ritual procedure of "passing on" from the junior to the senior person is an ordinary pattern of daily life among Sotho-speaking societies. If, for example, among the Pedi somebody would like to greet the chief, this person would lodge his greetings with a near senior who then "passes" the greetings on until it reaches the intended destiny, the chief (see Mogoba 1981; Mönnig 1966).
- (30) The lack of explicit content in such ritual public pronouncements is no uncommon feature among Nguni-speaking societies. See, for example, Callaway (1868:92); Shaka's prayer for rain to the Lord of Heaven consists of the following:

Second part, or response: *I ya wo.*

Callaway (ibidem, n. 66) comments: "This song consists of musical sounds merely, but imperfectly represented by the above, without any meaning." The point is that the explicit meaning of ritual verbal behaviour does not need to occur in the performance itself, but it can be explicated by the actor.

- (31) This particular type of dance is typical for diviner-initiates as well. Hunter (1936:325) reports that "the *ukwuhentaa* dance (by the novices) is always performed in a hut except on the day of the final (coming out) ceremony (*ungidi*) ... (that the novice) depends on friends to clap for her ... (and that) some also close the door of the hut." All these details correspond well with what I observed at ancestral feasts. My conclusion is that *ukwuhentaa* of the diviners is a ritual of reverence (worship?) of the ancestors. Divinership depends on the presence of the ancestors who are manifest in the sickness from which the diviner (novice) suffers.

- (32) With regard to the core-ritual as an act of contrition, the question arises whether the contrition is an *inner* reality of the actor or merely an *outward* performance. On the basis of the material presented here, it is not possible to give a clear answer. However, further evidence at my disposal suggests that the repeated assertion by Africanists that African peoples know only of an "outward morality" needs serious reconsideration. With respect to the core-ritual as an act of contrition: the ritual would not take place at all without a certain inner disposition. The people are fully aware that they are performing a *religious* act when enacting the core-ritual. In a preliminary paper, "Custom and morality" (Kuckertz 1979:78-174), I discuss the question of morality and of moral judgement in Mthwa society.

CHAPTER VIII

THE HOMESTEAD - SYMBOL OF THE WORLD

THE HOMESTEAD is - in Mthwa society - the readily-observable point of social interaction which lies at the centre of the understanding of the life of the chiefdom. As in former times, the homestead has retained much of its traditional individualism. Formerly, a single homestead was a landmark in its own right in the wider landscape. Today, since compact villages have become the general dwelling pattern, the scattered homestead has disappeared from Mthwa, but its individualism has remained. Even under the present administrative system, the political field of the chiefdom is to a large extent a concatenation of alliances between the chief and a multiplicity of homestead heads (see Chapter III). Today, despite a national economy, homestead individualism continues to characterise economic life in Caguba (see Chapter VI). Mthwa traditional ancestor religion, in its central concern for the good life, not only springs from a "family affair" (Hunter), but has its focus in an individual member of the family (and in an individual communicating ancestor-spirit) (see Chapter VII). In a fundamental sense, Mthwa society has a cellular structure. Each homestead is a cell which, at a certain stage of its growth, separates itself from the rest so that each new cell develops and proceeds in a unique way and to a large extent independently of any other homestead (see Chapter V). At the root of Mthwa's institutional divergence are the inwardly-oriented interests of the individual homestead.

In spite of the lack of cohesion of Mthwa society with regard to its institutions (see Chapter III), the image of this society changes if it is viewed from the perspective of its major processes of social interaction. Such a processual description shows that the homestead is embedded in a social life which transcends the afore-mentioned individualism. It was shown that several homestead heads join and form a mat-association for political and certain ceremonial purposes (see Chapter II). Economic necessity demands that homesteads cooperate with members of other homesteads and form action sets in order to cope with the work in hand (see Chapter VI). Most important, it is the Mthwa court system which unites the mature men in a body which adjudicates law when a trial is in progress; the court system itself depends on such processes (see Chapter IV). Finally, whenever the ancestral ritual takes place, the celebrating homestead relies on the active involvement of agnatic kinsmen (see Chapter VII). In short, no homestead is an island unto itself. At one stage or another of its life, every homestead gets involved in processes which draw it into interaction with other homesteads for as long as these processes continue. These processes arise from particular situations and engender different kinds of integration in Mthwa society depending on the type of interaction: it may be limited (like mat-associations, work-parties) or it may be chiefdom-wide (like the court system).

When these processes are looked at carefully, it appears that all of them originate in a particular homestead and for a particular purpose with regard to that homestead. The court system would not emerge unless a homestead head charged with a mat-leader; a mat-association is not founded unless homestead heads organise themselves; a workparty does not come together unless a homestead head goes and asks for assistance; there will be no ritual congregation of agnates and their wives unless a homestead head calls the kinsmen together. Notwithstanding its basic individualism, in terms of processes

the homestead is the *locus nascendi* of situational cohesion in Mthwa society. The homestead is, thus, an ambiguous social reality; it is at the root of the (institutional) divergence and of the (processual) integration of village life in Caguba.

The question which arises at the conclusion of this dissertation is: is there any observable social reality which unites these two opposing tendencies in a single pattern of interaction? The answer is found in Mthwa's art of ceremonial beer-drinking or "eating food," as the Cagubans would put it. Food, of course, is never eaten in the abstract; somebody must provide it. It is provided, always and exclusively, by a *particular* homestead whose head is a member of a particular clan(-section). Thus the ceremonial beer-drinking (which is an art: that of reconciling opposing tendencies) takes place in a condition that "here and now" a particular homestead invites people for the ceremony. Individuality appears again, in the very symbolising of universality. How is this possible? The answer is that the homestead, as an ideal spatial organisation, is a symbolic representation of the world and its order, in which the living and the dead, kinsmen and non-kinsmen, men and women.

The significance of beer, ceremonial beer-drinking, and the spatial organisation of main-house and homestead are not social features unique to Mthwa. They have been described for many African societies and discussed by various authors. Junod (1927, I:341f), in his pioneering study on the Tsonga, mentions beer-drinking customs without specifically elaborating on what these customs entail. Cook (1931:26-30) describes "beer customs" of the Bomvana and distinguishes "ceremonial drinks" from non-ceremonial. Krige (1932) unfolds, for the first time systematically, the significance of beer among the Lovedu. She describes the many kinds of beer which the Lovedu produce and the wide range of occasions for which beer-drinking is an integral part of social interaction. Among the

Lovedu, beer and beer-drinking have great economic, social and religious value. Van Warmelo (1932) describes in detail the preparation and offerings of libations which the Venda make to the ancestors. Subsequent ethnographic monographs on south-east African societies all discuss the social significance of beer and beer rituals (e.g. Hunter 1936:253ff). More recently, Karp (1980) and McAllister (1981) describe and discuss specific aspects of beer rituals. Karp (1980:83), writing on the Iteso (living on the Kenya-Uganda border), demonstrates that "commensal beer drinking provides a synthetic image in terms of which Iteso represent to themselves contradictions in their social experience." McAllister (1981:1) discusses a particular type of ritual beer-drinking among the Gcaleka (Transkei) which is called *umzi-ndleko*. The ritual is "held for migrants shortly after their return from work." This beer-drinking has a strong ritual-religious character and is essentially an "incorporation" (Van Gennep) rite⁽¹⁾. The subject of ceremonial beer-drinking in Mthwa deserves a more extensive discussion than is possible in this dissertation. In Caguba, ceremonial beer-drinking is the enactment of the world as an ordered universe (see also Kuckertz 1981b); this universe requires a given homestead in order to become socially real, it depends on the spatial order defined by the main-house (*indlu*) and the lay-out of the homestead (*umzi*).

The fact that a homestead is conceived of in terms of a spatial order has also been established in ethnographic literature; for example, this has been shown for the Venda (Steyt 1931), the Bomvana (Cook 1931), the Mpondo (Hunter 1936), the Swazi (Marwick 1940) and for several other societies. But few studies attempt to penetrate to a deeper understanding of the symbolic-ritual implications of spatial orders. Kuper (1980) discusses in a structuralist mode the legal and symbolic significance of the traditional homestead plans of four Nguni speaking societies (Mpondo, Bomvana, Zulu and Swazi). The author finds that "the Nguni homesteads all share a fundamentally similar spatial

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idiom (which) ... may be represented by two underlying plans, one concentric and one diametric" (Kuper 1980:15). This applies to the Mthwa pattern as well, as will be shown presently. A common feature among many Bantu-speaking societies is the east-west direction of the lay-out of the homestead. For example Huffman (1981) discusses "expressive space at Great Zimbabwe" and finds that "the Shona associate sunrise and the east with life and sunset and west with death" (ibidem, p. 138). When people meet in Caguba for a ceremony, it is always in a particular homestead. The spatial order, physically reflected in the homestead's lay-out, becomes the lived social order by which the ceremony proceeds. The spatial order includes the cosmic dimensions of east and west; the symbolic order bridges gaps as deep as the gap between life and death. The art of ceremonially drinking beer and the homestead unite in a symbol of the world.

(1) Ceremonial beer-drinking: the celebration of unity.

Ceremonial beer-drinking in Mthwa must be distinguished from forms of drinking together which are non-ceremonial. There are two non-ceremonial forms. The first is known as *indali* (from *ukudala*, "to produce"). It refers to the incidental meeting of people at a place at which beer is sold. Somebody buys a beaker (*bhekile*) of beer (usually the quantity is about two litres) and shares it with a few friends. The second non-ceremonial form is called *intseto* (from *ukusela*, "to drink"). It is the occasion for the free entertainment which a homestead may offer on special days, like Christmas or Transkeian Independence Day. Whoever happens to call in at the homestead will partake of the beer. The celebrating continues until resources are exhausted. Usually the total amount will be consumed on the same day.

Different from these non-ceremonial forms of drinking beer are the ceremonial forms which always occur in connection with ancestral feasts (see p. 279f) or

other feasts of thanksgiving and reconciliation (see p. 276). It will appear from the following description that ceremonial beer-drinking is clearly distinguished from the ritual beer-drinking at the cattle byre (see p. 309). The ceremoniality, characteristic of festivities, applies also to the beer-drinking after work-parties (see p. 200f) and after harvest, and to other occasions of a ritual nature, like the termination of the mourning period and the return of the newly-circumcised from their lodge. Three elements differentiate ceremonial and non-ceremonial forms of beer-drinking. First, ceremonial beer-drinking requires a special seating order; secondly, any such ceremony will have a mast-of-ceremonies, thirdly, the ceremony is governed by rules of sharing.

(a) The ceremonial spatial order of the main-house.

The average homestead (household) of Caguba has three to four houses. One of them is often used as a store-room, a second as the sleeping house of the homestead head and his wife, a third for a marriageable daughter and, finally, there is the biggest house, the main-house (*indlu enkulu* or simply *indlu*) which serves several purposes. The sleeping house of the homestead head is generally respected (avoided) by the older children and the daughter-in-law, and by visitors. The older children have their own house or houses. The younger children sleep in the main-house, since the fire is there. It is on the main-house fire (*iziko*) that food is usually cooked and the ritual meat is burnt and roasted (see p. 291). All household members eat in the main-house, and visitors are received here as well. The main-house is the social and (after the cattle byre, the second most important) ritual centre of the homestead.

Movements in the main-house are restricted, even under non-ceremonial conditions. The most important restriction, that of dividing the sexes, applies

always, for all family members as well as visitors, and under non-ceremonial as well as ceremonial circumstances. The main-house is divided in two halves. The right-hand side of the house (as one enters) is restricted to the men, and the left-hand side to women. At an ordinary meal, the homestead head sits on a little stool (*isigqiki*) near the fireplace, in the back quarter of the right-hand side of the house. Also on the right-hand side, leaning against the wall, there may be a plough and, hanging from the roof, a horse's bridle and saddle. On the left-hand side of the house, in the front quarter near the fireplace and facing her husband, sits the wife (out of respect for her husband, she does not sit on a stool, but on the floor). With her are small children who eat together from a single dish. Older sons are on the father's side. Also on the women's side, in the back quarter however, is the place of the daughter-in-law, and nearby is the grinding stone. Other household objects (like a bucket, eating mats (*izithebe*) and sleeping mats (*iinkukho*)) may be hanging from the wall or the roof.

When a visitor arrives, he or she chooses a place (in accordance with sex) on the left-hand (female) or the right-hand (male) side of the main-house. The visitor (who may be an adult or a child) chooses, without any instruction given, a place near the door, against the wall. There is often a little bench (*isiqobo*) or a tree trunk for this purpose. The place near the door is "humble," and sitting there expresses respect for the family members and the homestead head in particular. It would be "presumptuous" (Hunter 1936:38) for a visitor to take a place further into the house. The implication is that sitting in the front part of the house expresses respect for the house and its members, under non-ceremonial circumstances. This pattern of the spatial order is reversed for ceremonial purposes.

The symbolic spatial organisation of the main-house, for ceremonial purposes,

follows two principles. First, there are two diameters which divide the house into four quarters, clearly indicated by the two main rafters of the roof frame. Secondly, there are two concentric circles, dividing the house into two spheres. The centre for both dividing principles is the fireplace:

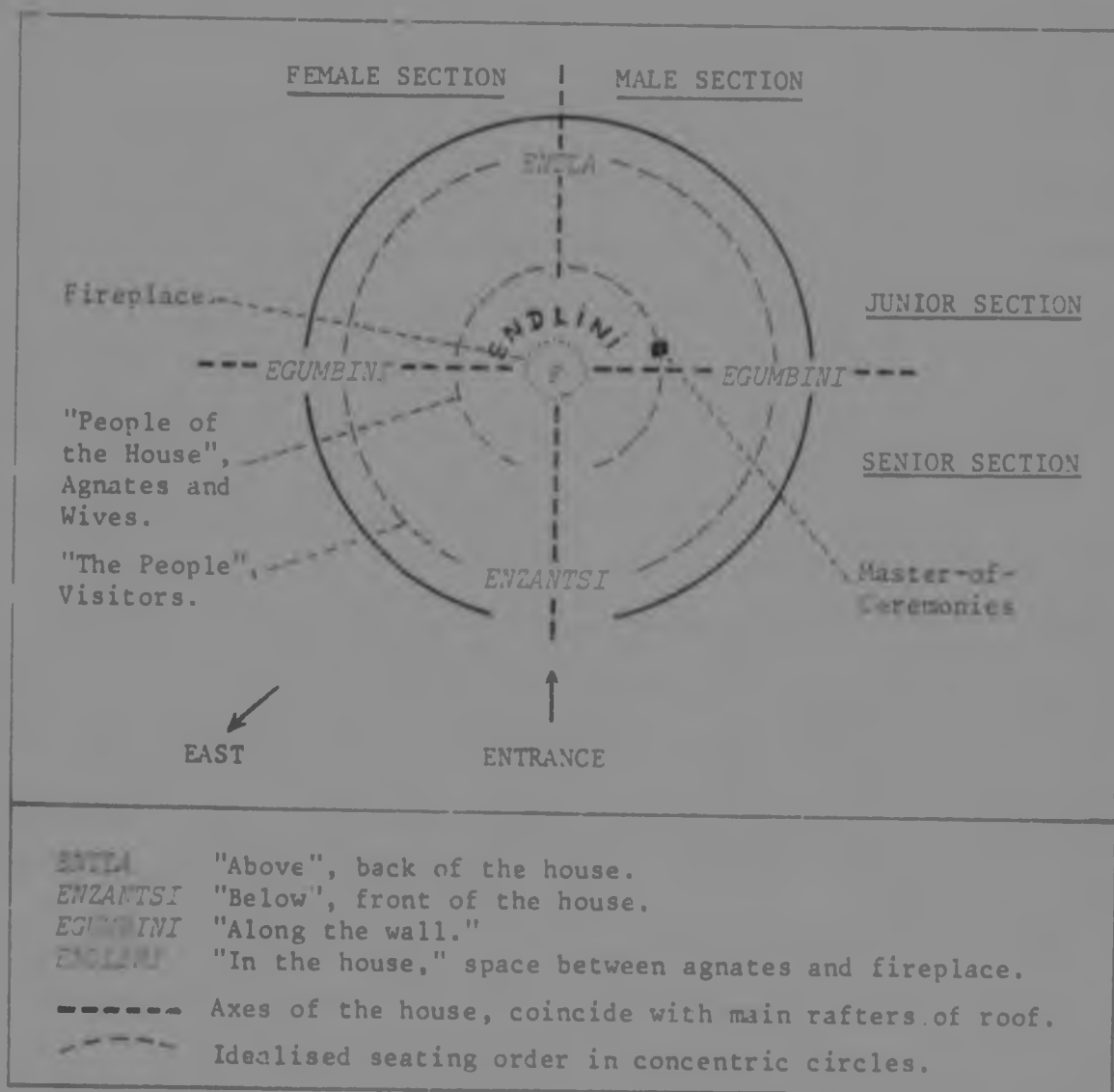


Figure 24. Symbolic spatial order of Mthwa main-house.

Based on these two organisational spatial principles, there are three rules which define the ceremonial seating order. The rules express an oppositional relationship between male and female, agnate and non-agnate, senior and junior. Regarding the first pair of terms, male and female, the men sit on the right-hand side of the house which is therefore called *emadodeni* ("at the men's side"); the women sit on the left-hand side, called *ebafazini* ("at the wife's side").

The second pair of terms contrasts agnates and non-agnates, who sit separately in two circles. The inner circle is occupied by the agnatic members of the *clan* to which the homestead head belongs; on the women's side of the inner circle sit the clan-men's wives. If the homestead head is a widow, her late husband's clan is the agnatic group of reference; if she is a free-woman (*idikazi*, see p. 179, n. 5), the inner circle is taken by her own agnatic kinsmen and their wives. This inner circle is called "the house" (*indlu*); the clansmen and their wives constitute "the people of the house" (*abantu base-ndlini*). Thus, "in the house" (*endlini*) there are not only agnatic members of the homestead head's clan-section (which is the necessary condition for the performance of the ancestral feast), but any agnatic member who may be present at the ceremony. In addition, "in the house" there are affines, the agnates' wives (but no other affinal kinsmen).

In contrast to the "people of the house", there are, in the outer circle, the non-agnates, the visitors, in Caguban colloquial language "the people" (*abantu*). They sit, quite literally, with their backs "against the wall" (*egumbini*). Therefore the visitors are referred to as "the people alongside the wall" (*abantu basegumbini*). Here, "alongside the wall," sit the affinal relatives of the kinsmen in the centre circle, the agnates of the latter's wives, and unrelated people. Obviously, the wives who are sitting "in the house" of the agnates are a mediating social reality between the agnatic group of men and their wider maternal and affinal relatives (see p. 362f).

The third pair of terms distinguishes between seniority and juniority which applies to the people "of the house", the agnates, and the people "alongside the wall" (the visitors), respectively. Within the "house" of the agnates, the distinction between seniors and juniors cuts across the various clan-sections and "along the wall" it cuts across the various agnatic groups

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altogether. Generally speaking, what distinguishes a "senior" (*omdala*) from a "junior" (*umntwana*)⁽²⁾ is relative age, but there are two intervening elements, namely age-group (*intanga*) and generation (*isizukulwana*). There is an informal age-group system observable in Caguba (the nature of which I failed to determine clearly; but see Mayer, P. and I., 1970). Each group consists of a few members, about five to six. The members are more or less of the same age, and - as a certain elder put it - they have girl friends of roughly the same age and guard them jealously. The members treat each other as lifelong friends and sit together at ceremonial beer-drinking. Among the peers of a given group relative age is important, but in public they regard each other with leniency when it comes to the seating order so that sequence in relative age does not need to be observed strictly. Membership of a particular generation is of greater importance among "the people of the house." Because agnates sit together, it can happen that a certain man is younger in relative age than another kinsman while the former actually belongs to the senior, i.e. the parental, generation. In such a case relative age usually *precedes* generational seniority⁽³⁾. In general, the relationship between a senior and a junior person is identified by relative age so that, basically, relative age defines the order of seating among kinsmen in the house and the visitors alongside the wall.

A man's nearest senior sits on his left and, correspondingly, his nearest junior on his right, irrespective of clan-*section* membership (in the house) and *clan* membership (alongside the wall). The eldest of the people of the house and the eldest of the visitors sit, in their respective circles, nearest to the door. This position at the door, is called *enzantsi* (literally "down below"). The most junior man, in both circles, sit in the back of the main-house; this place is called *entla* (literally "above"). The line which runs from "down below" to "above" in the main-house is the dividing line between the sexes and

is in a north-eastern to south-western direction (see below, Section 2).

With the reference to the two places in the main-house, at the door and at the back of the house, a person's left and right side are indicated. Sitting on a given man's left (and on a woman's right) is generally referred to as "down below." The person who sits "below" is the senior and he rightfully expects respect (*intlcnipho*) from the one who sits "above;" the latter is the junior. Showing respect (in the order of sitting and, figuratively speaking, in other social contexts) is called *ukunika indawo*. Literally the phrase means "to give a place." It is a metaphorical expression showing the respect due to a senior. In other words, the seating order is the spatial expression of the social order; and the actual sitting order of the men and women at a given feast indicates who ought here and now, at a given feast, to show respect (*ukunika indawo*). The person who sits "below" has a right to command (*ukuyala*) a person who sits "above." While the former can speak (*ukuthetha*) with authority (*ubukhosi*), the latter must "listen and obey" (*ukuva*). Thus, the ceremonial spatial order of seating is not only an expression of the social order in Mthwa, of the generally held relationships between men and women, agnates and non-agnates, seniors and juniors, but, in fact, it is an expression of social norms⁽⁴⁾ which govern these relationships. For example, if a person who is not a member of the respective clan (*isiduko*) were to take a place "in the house" (i.e. in the inner circle), he would commit an act of grave disrespect to the "house" (i.e. the agnates of the place). If a person were to assume a place senior to another man older than himself, and fail to respond to the biting criticism of his misbehaviour (*ukuza*) by stepping down (*ukudeda, ukuthoba*), he would do so at the risk of a stick fight (*ukubetha*). If a person were to cross the line which divides women and men, he would arouse the most serious suspicions of adulterous intentions; in fact such misconduct could be interpreted as a proof of suspected adultery. The offended husband

immediately and take the offender to task⁽⁵⁾.

These three spatial rules which order the main-house symbolically according to sex, agnation and seniority, enable a person to find his proper place at any given feast and homestead. At some feasts he is an agnate, belongs to the "people of the house" and sits in the inner circle; at other times he is merely a visitor and sits with his back "against the wall," in the outer circle. In other words, the three rules - with respect to a given homestead - constitute categories of people. The rules are markers of social boundaries, and thus they divide rather than unite people. Unity is achieved symbolically as the beaker (*ibhekile*) with the beer is passed from one participant to another, crossing all boundaries - of sex, agnation, and seniority - according to the rules of ceremonial beer-drinking.

Ceremonial drinking order.

A public feast in Caguba has its master-of-ceremonies (*wikhokeli* or *umlawuli*, from *ukhokela*, "to lead" and *ukulawula*, "to give orders" respectively). At an ancestral feast, the ritual elder is usually the master-of-ceremonies, at other feasts it can be any other man chosen by the homestead head. Even if he is a non-agnate, the master-of-ceremonies takes a place in the inner circle with the agnates, more precisely he takes a place in the seating order where - in non-ceremonial situations - the homestead head has his place (see Figure 24, p. 140). The master-of-ceremonies is in control of the feast; he is in particular responsible for the correct distribution of the beer.

The master-of-ceremonies opens the feast as a whole and introduces each round of beer with a short speech. The first part of the initial speech clarifies the purpose of the coming together; the master-of-ceremonies announces the name of the feast (beer) (*ukubhekile* (gama) (*ibhekile*)). as the Cagubans put it,

This performative speech (see p. 279) implies, among other things, that "now on" certain rules of sharing 'food' (i.e. beer) apply. The force of the rules applies until the master-of-ceremonies announces that the feast is concluded. He does so with the prosaic (but nonetheless important) phrase, "the food is 'now' finished"⁽¹⁰⁾. The second part of the initial speech and the content of the speeches preceding any subsequent round of beer is the "circulation of the beer" (*ukulawula utywala*).

A round of beer usually consists of the circulation of at least two five-beakers (*ukhupha*). Depending on the number of participants in the feast, there may be three or four beakers at a time. Irrespective of the number of beakers, the allotment of the food implies two things. First, the various beakers are given to certain "owners of the beer" (*umminitywala* or *umminibhe*) that is, to persons who are to be specially honoured at the feast. These honoured persons have the right to drink first and as much as they like. They may be men or women, depending on the circumstances and (at a later stage in the feast's progress) on the master's decision. Secondly, the master-of-ceremonies announces the mode of sharing the beer, that is to say, he distinguishes those who *must* and those who *may* share in the beer in a given round. The distinction between "must" and "may" is enshrined in the type of drinking rule (see below). As the master-of-ceremonies defines the group of people who share the beer, he, in fact, defines the movement of a given beaker as it is passed from the "owner" to those with whom he is sharing. There are two different rules for drinking beer together at a public feast. The first concerns the special respect to be shown to the most senior elder (man or woman if the master should indicate someone else more honourable on a particular occasion); the other rules are rules of ceremonial sharing.

1. *UKUNCAMLA*, "to taste". This is often referred to as *ukukhupha ubu* which means "to remove the poison." Before the honoured person (the "owner")

to whom the beer has been allotted, drinks, a junior man *may* be asked to drink first from this particular beaker. It is a means of showing honour to the guest. The *ncamla*-rule reflects an old practice of showing that the beer given to a chief is not poisoned.

2, a. *UKUBAMBELA*, "to hold for." This is the most important drinking rule since it operates in accordance with the seating order of relative age, i.e. of seniority. In principle, a senior person is served first, and when he has satisfied himself he *must* pass the beer to the man sitting on his right-hand side; correspondingly, a senior woman *must* pass the beer to the woman sitting on her left-hand side. The precedence which the senior has over the junior, and the senior's obligation to pass to the person next in rank after him or her, constitute the basic rule of ceremonial beer-drinking (whatever additional rule of sharing may be pronounced). The *bambela*-type of sharing is the precondition of the ordered procedure of the ceremony, of the "game" (*igem'*) as some Cagubans colloquially refer to procedural rules. Since the order of sharing now coincides with the order of seating, the beaker necessarily moves from a senior position (*enzantsi*), i.e. "near the door," to a junior position (*entla*), i.e. "towards the back of the house" (see Figure 24, p. 343). This ceremonial form of beer-drinking (that is *ukubambela*) is the opposite of the ritual form (that is *ukuncamisa*) when the junior person is served first and must then "abandon" the food. The junior passes to the senior, until the beaker reaches the ritual elder who makes the libation in the cattle byre (see p. 309f).

2, b. *UKUSHELELA*, "to slip away and return." Only after a special announcement by the master-of-ceremonies are the guests welcomed and told they *may* share with any member of the festive congregation, irrespective of the seating order. This allowance is made in addition to the *bambela*-rule. The *shelela*-rule requires that a person share the beer with a friend before passing it to the next in order of seniority. After the friend has drunk, the bea-

must be returned to the person who "held" (*ukubamba*) it since he is obliged to pass it to the person junior to him. The *shelela*-rule, particularly, permits sharing across the dividing line between the sexes (see p. 341f and Figure 24, p. 343). The invited woman comes to the line which runs invisibly from the door across the house, receives the beaker there, drinks, hands it back to the man and returns to her place. Similarly, if a woman invites a man to share with her, he goes to this central line and drinks there. In daily life, the sharing of food is a sign of close acquaintance between persons, therefore the sharing of beer (i.e. of "food") across the line dividing the sexes could give rise to suspicion of adultery. Thus the sharing between men and women tends to be patterned: a man often shares with the woman who happens to sit opposite him and only seldom with any other woman (see Figures 25.2 and 26.2, pp.

2, c. *ncamla*, "to choose." This rule requires that a beaker be allotted as the exclusive right of a single person who may be a man or a woman. Usually this particular rule applies at a later stage of the feast when all the participants have been satisfied. According to the rule, the honoured person may at his own discretion choose individuals from among the men and women to whom he gives a token of special friendship or appreciation. The person thus distinguished (the "owner of the beer") drinks, chooses a particular companion and passes to him (or her). After the companion has drunk, the latter returns the beaker to its "owner" who then drinks again and chooses another friend, and so on until the beaker is empty.

All these ceremonial rules for beer-drinking express respect and esteem for the guests, but in different ways. The first rule mentioned above, the *ncamla*-rule, honours the most distinguished guest (the "chief") of the occasion. He may be the village headman, a mat-association leader, or the most senior elder who is present. The last two rules, the *shelela* and the *khetha*-rules, allow a

sharing between friends who honour one another. Finally, there is the *bambela*-rule which is the first and foremost of the rules for celebrating the feast in a ceremonial manner. Because the *bambela*-rule is so important it is taken for granted and so is not stated explicitly by the master-of-ceremonies. Given no further instruction, when beer is about to be shared, a man or woman *must* share with his or her next in order of seniority. In this manner the *bambela*-rule ensures, in the first place, that all the guests partake of the beer and, in the second place, it expresses the respect (*intlonipho*) for each guest at the feast in relation to the whole festive congregation, because the order of drinking is based on the seating order which expresses differences in sex, kinship and relative age.

Only if the rules of the seating order are rigidly observed by the guests can the drinking order proceed according to rule. If the seating order shows irregularities the master-of-ceremonies will have great difficulty in choosing the right persons to initiate the drinking without offending others. Leaving aside all intricacies, the basic rules for allotting the beakers, i.e. for choosing the persons of honour, are the following (depending on whether there are two, three or four beakers, the following persons are honoured either consecutively or simultaneously): first, the person for whom the feast is celebrated, man or woman; secondly, the most senior non-agnatic elder, i.e. the oldest man next to the door; thirdly, the most senior agnatic elder, the oldest man "in the house," i.e. the member of the inner circle seated next to the door; finally, the most senior visiting woman. The combination of the rules for drinking (outlined above) and the places of honour in the seating pattern constitute ceremonial beer-drinking in Mthwa society, and the operation of these rules creates unity among the participants at the feast. I shall briefly show how these rules combine in operation by describing a particular feast of thanksgiving (a form of implicit ancestral feast; see p. 275f). The homestead head

had eaten something poisonous (apparently by accident) and recovered from a critical condition. He had been hospitalised and restored to health. He thanked all those who had assisted him to return to life (*impilo*).

The following four diagrams (Figures 25 and 26, pp 353 and 354) show the allocation of four beakers of beer, two beakers at a time. In the discussion I ignore the rules of "tasting" (*ukuncamla*) and of "choosing" (*ukukhetha*), because they do not add to a general understanding of ceremonial beer-drinking and the unity this ceremony achieves. The significant rules involved are the "holding for" (*ukubambela*) and "friendly sharing" (*ukushelela*) rules. From the diagrams it can be seen how the movements of the two beakers in each case (of Figure 25 and 26 respectively) are mirror pictures of one another, i.e. the same rules of drinking ceremonially apply to the men as to the women.

The first beaker (Figure 25,1) was allotted to the afflicted man, seated in a "junior" position. Since he had to pass the beer next in seating order, he gave it to the wives seated "in the house." Subsequently, it was passed on to the women visitors "along the wall."

Simultaneously, the second beaker (Figure 25,2) was given to the most senior elder. He was specially honoured by the fact that a young man had come "to take out the poison". Then the elder drank, and in strict order of seniority, the beaker "went up" (*entla*) to the juniors "along the wall." Finally, as there was still some beer left in the beaker, it was passed to the members "in the house." But, with the second beaker, in addition to the *bambela*-rule, the rule of "friendly sharing" (*ukushelela*) was announced. As the beaker moved on in order of seniority "along the wall," it "slipped away" to the women sitting opposite. It "slipped away," but "returned" in order not to interrupt the basic rule of "holding for" (*ukubambela*).

Of the second pair of beakers, the first one was given to the senior of the agnatic males, seated in the inner circle. From the senior, the beaker

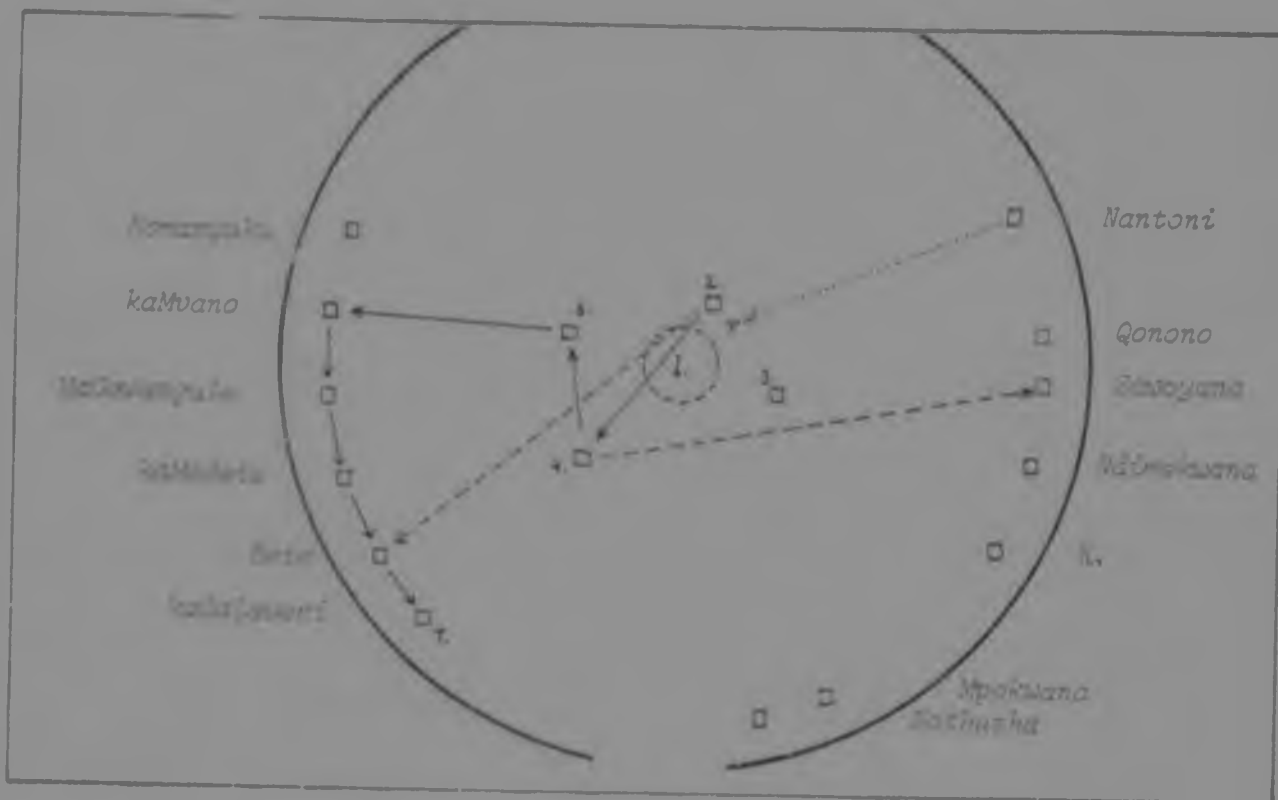


Figure 25,1. Beaker of the "house."

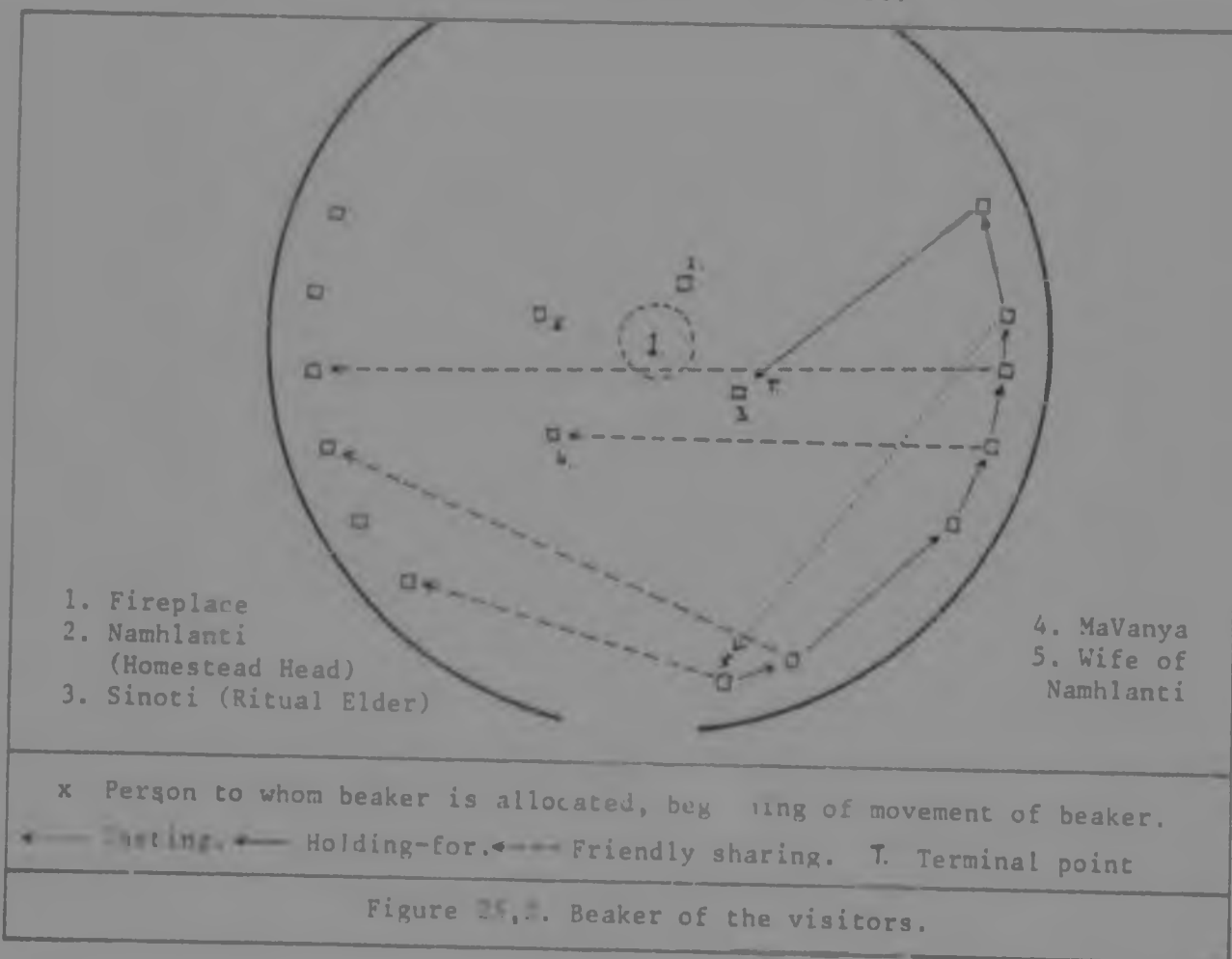


Figure 25. Beer ceremony, Pattern I.

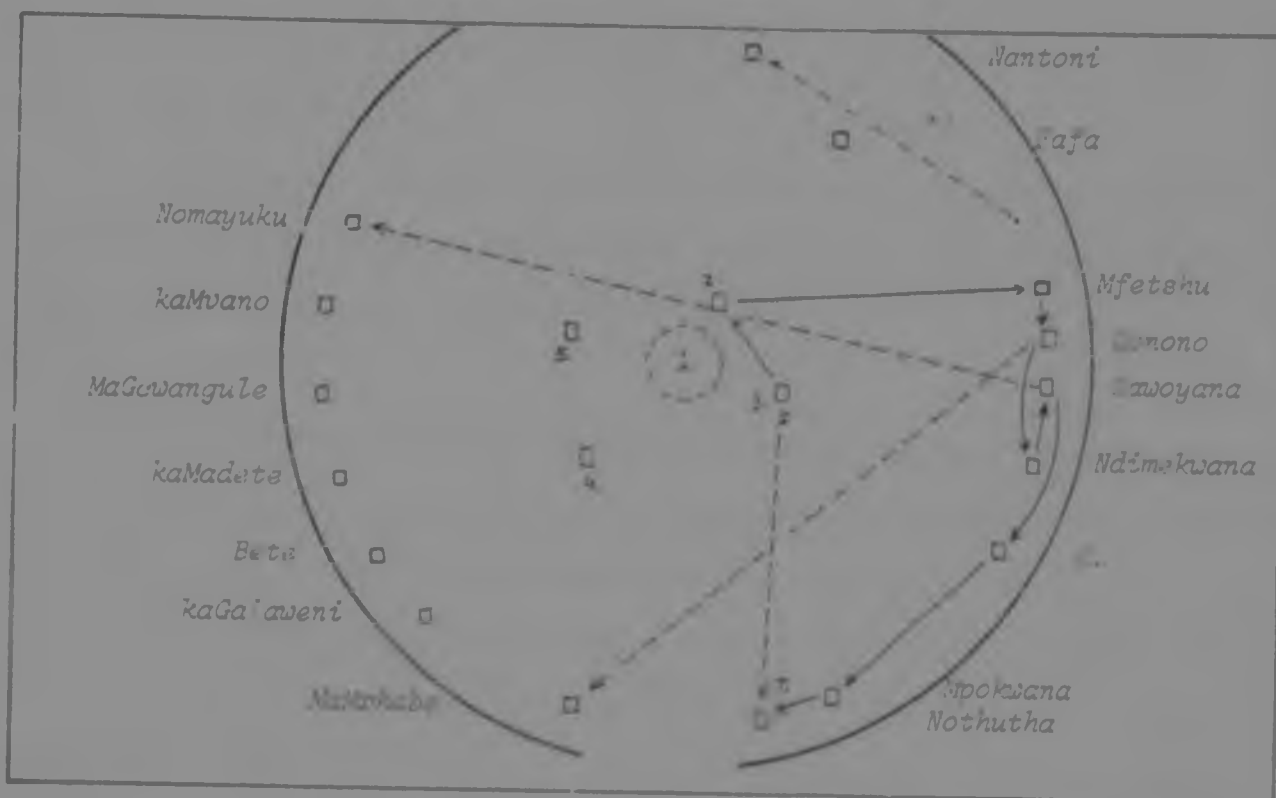


Figure 26,1. Beaker of the "house."

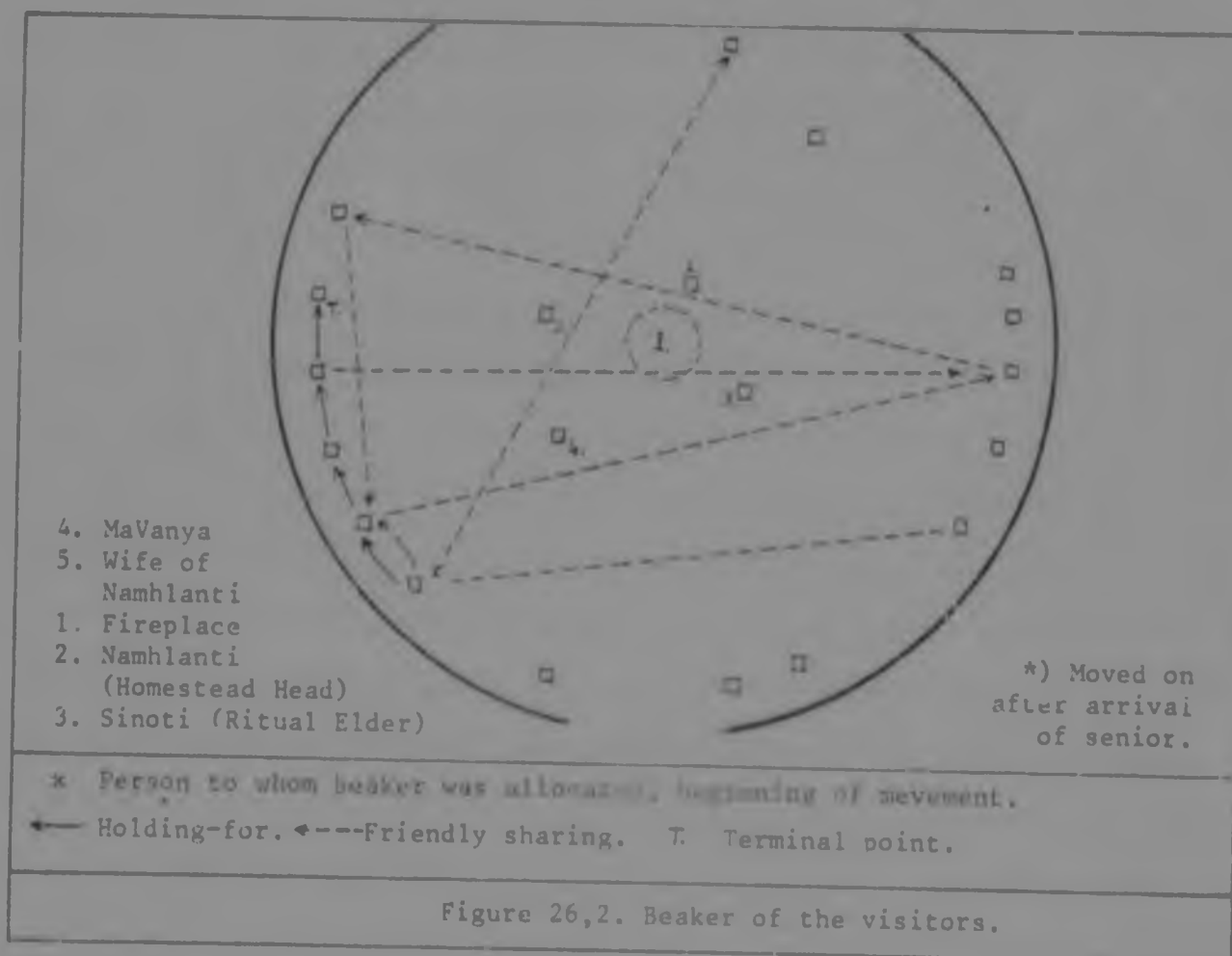


Figure 26,2. Beaker of the visitors.

Figure 26. Beer ceremony, Pattern II.

moved up "in the house;" subsequently the beer was shared with the visitors on the men's side.

Simultaneously, the second beaker was allotted to the senior woman-elder. From her, the beaker moved up to the junior women. Again, the additional instruction of "friendly sharing" was given.

Since at least two beakers are usually in circulation, there are several movements going on in the main-house at the same time as people share the "food" ceremonially. This can be seen from the diagrams if the figures (Figures 25,1 and 2 and Figures 26,1 and 2) are considered together respectively. Given that three or even four beakers circulate simultaneously, a great complexity of movement occurs. This complexity requires of the guests and of the master-of-ceremonies in particular great skill and acute awareness, so that the correct movements may be observed. (The reader may assume that manipulation of the rules is frequently attempted, either for the sake of gaining a bigger share of the "food" or else for signalling special friendship or even barely concealed disrespect. See p. 368, n. 5). The whole festive congregation is drawn together by intensive interaction which one another as the beakers move "in the house" of the agnates and to the visitors (Figures 25,1 and 26,1), and as they move "along the wall" and between the men and women sitting in the two sides of the main-house (Figures 25,2 and 26,2). Metaphorically speaking, the beakers create a web of relationships between the participants, and they symbolise the unity (*ubunye*) among the guests of the homestead and the homestead head. The precondition of this unity is that each person takes the place which he or she can rightfully claim in accordance with the differentiating features of sex, agnatic kinship and relative age. By taking the right place, a person (man or woman) respects (*ukuhlonipha*) everybody else in the main-house; as the Cagubans put it, he or she "leaves (to the other guests) the places" (*ukunika indawo*) (see p.

346) which they can rightfully claim. Yet, this ceremonial reality of order and mutual respect reflects in its active realisation the particular homestead in which the people have met. Abstractly speaking, the homestead, as the most important place of social intercourse in Mthwa, appears as the picture of the ordered world in which the people share.

(2) *The ideal plan of a homestead in Mthwa.*

(a) *The north-eastern direction of the main-house.*

The main-house, and usually any other house in Caguba, has its entrance in a north-eastern direction. Climatic reasons account for this fact to some extent, but not totally. The direction of the rising sun is certainly an important factor in explaining this very widespread pattern of building houses in Caguba, and in the whole of Mpondoland (see next section). Ideally, the entrance to the main-house faces the entrance to the cattle byre. It has been pointed out in this dissertation (see p. 206) that about 50 % of the homesteads do not keep cattle. Is the assumption about the main axis therefore mere inference? Since it was in a homestead which did not keep cattle that I learnt about the thought-pattern behind the symbolism of the main axis, this cannot be mere inference. It must be part of the Cagubans awareness of their social universe.

It was in this homestead, at an ancestral lineage feast, during which beer was the medium of "informing the authorities" (see p. 307), that the kinsmen discussed where the ritual of pouring the beer should be performed, whether inside the main-house or outside. It was decided that it should be outside, because, they said, there is "a house where (beer) is drunk by the ancestors" (*indlu apho kuselelwe khona ngamawethu*), namely "at the cattle byre" (*ecale-nt kwesibhaya*). The kinsmen and the afflicted person, together with their

wives, went outside, formed a row according to seniority, and started the ritual drinking beginning with the most junior person - but there was no cattle byre, not even one symbolically indicated (see Figure 18, p. 236, a case where such a symbolic byre was built). Instead the people merely faced east, and the ritual elder poured the beer in an eastern direction. The direction of seating and pouring indicated the "house of the ancestors," opposite to the entrance to the main-house: a thought-pattern was in operation.

(b) *The living in union with the dead.*

Main-house and cattle byre are built along a single axis - given the ideal situation. In the discussion of the spatial order of the house (see p. 342f), the endpoints of the main axis were named as *entla* ("above"), in the back of the house, and *enzantsi* ("down below"), in the front part of the house at the entrance. Continuing along this axis, we enter the cattle byre. Just outside the enclosure, still on the right-hand side, there is (or eventually will be) the grave of the homestead head. Correspondingly, his wife will be buried on the left-hand side of the byre, although a little distance away. Furthermore, should a child die, it will be buried at the opposite boundary of the garden, at its "highest" point, i.e. farthest from the byre, just as the juniors are seated away from the entrance. The places chosen for the graves in the garden correspond to the spatial organisation in the house; the axis within the house is kept, and along that axis the dead are placed: the living and the dead mirror each other in the spatial organisation of the homestead. The living and the dead constitute a unity (see Figure 27, p. 258).

Once I asked an elder why, in Mthwa society, the most senior person, both male and female, should sit next to the door (*enzantsi*)? He answered with a smile: "They should see 'those down below' (*lo mmutu makabone abaphantsi*)."

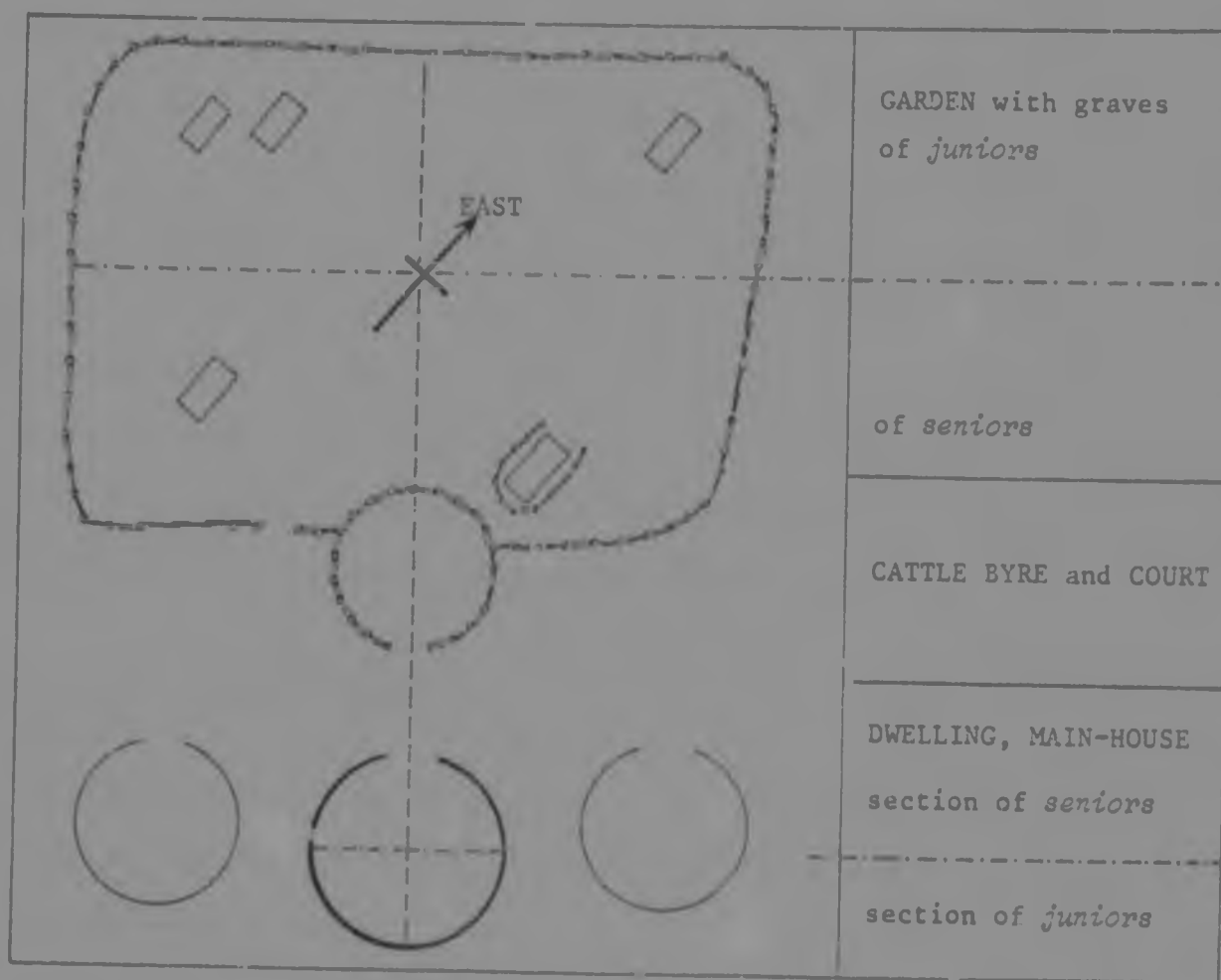


Figure 27. Ideal plan of a homestead (*umzi*)

The answer was more than a pun on the word *enzantsi*⁽⁷⁾. The oldest person is expected, in the nature of things, to die next and join the dead, the ancestors (*abaphantsi*). The living will go and "hide" him (see p. 271) "down below" in the grave. They will place the corpse facing the rising sun⁽⁸⁾, i.e. in an easterly direction. Even if overgrown with bush, the graves remain "in sight" of the people of the homestead. In a very literal sense, the living and the dead constitute a spatial unity, a single world of people related "by blood," unified by a single conceptual frame of authority. It is the elder who invokes the ancestors in front of the cattle byre when the animal bellows in agony and "takes his word to the ancestors;" it is the elder who pours out the beer and "informs those who are in the position of authority" (see p. 310). Main-house and cattle byre, dwelling place and garden, the living and the dead, "face" each other. The elder was therefore quite correct in saying that "the oldest

...the role of the elder in Mthwa's understanding of the world: he faces the dead and the living. Thus he is entrusted with the law (*umthetho*) and is authorised (authorised) to say (*ukuthetha*) what is right, and, as the homestead head, he must summon (*intetha*) the culprit in a case as well as the aggrieved person and hear the case (*intetho, ityala*). The place of the elder, and primarily of the homestead head, is in the court yard (*enkundle-*...). The ideal plan of a homestead (i.e. the local place of a household, ...). The structure of authority in Mthwa.

1) Sanctioning rules of behaviour.

...foregoing it is only logical to suppose that the homestead provides a framework of thought for the sanctioning of typical Mthwa behaviour pattern. The key-word in this context is *indlu* (the "main-house"). This word "house" has a variety of meanings in Caguba all of which focus on the two symbolical places in the homestead, namely the main-house and the cattle byre. With regard to the main-house, *indlu* means a group of people characterised by a specific code of behaviour. I do not wish to expand on this point, but to recall that the kinsmen (and their wives) sitting concentrically in a circle around the fireplace are called colloquially "the house." With regard to the cattle byre, *indlu* means the agnatic ancestors in their totality. They have a second abode in the homestead, i.e. the fireplace which is symbolically in the centre of the main-house and symbolically in the centre of the agnatic group. Thus cattle byre and fireplace (places of ordinary activities like keeping stock and cooking food) complement each other. Put differently, the everyday-life world (represented by cattle byre and fireplace) symbolises the spiritual world of the ancestors, of the unchallengeable authority - unchallengeable for kinsmen and non-kinsmen alike (see p. 320f). The ideal plan of the homestead (spatially symbolising major categories of Mthwa

thought: sex, kinship, relative age) amounts to a charter of what people ought to do; it involves proper relationships between the sexes, special regard for the agnatic kinsmen and their wives, and the correct attitude of submissiveness to the seniors (among whom the most powerful are the ancestors). These fundamental aspects of the code of behaviour are summed up in the term "respect" (*intlōniphō*).

(2) *Correlating the major divisions in Mthwa social universe.*

The relation between the cattle byre and the main-house, as the charter of the homestead (as the conceptual frame of thought), stands for a relationship of dependence to which the living are subject. In social life the strongest dependence is that of the women on the men in the *legal* domain (see p. 92). But beside this there is a strict division between men and women in social (public) life in Mthwa: the line of division that runs across the main-house from the entrance to the back of the house is a line almost as absolute as death. When, for example, "friendly sharing" takes place, no man or woman could dare to cross the boundary dividing the sexes, aware of the suspicion he or she would most likely create. The ultimacy of separation in social life is reached with death. Physical death is irreversible; and if it were reversed it would be the work of embodied evil ones, the witches and sorcerers. The division between the sexes, and between the living and the dead, is ultimate. Thus men and women, living and dead, are the ultimate units through which Mthwa society is generated. It is a correlation of dependencies which links these units together.

The division in the main-house between left-hand and right-hand corresponds to a similar division in the cattle byre. There we find the ritual victim being killed on the right-hand side of the enclosure and the men seated on the left. Women are dependent on men; but men are dependent on the incestuous

men are not ultimate authorities, they are a link in a correlation of dependencies. In short, the right-hand sides of byre and house stand for *authority*, while the left-hand sides of these places stand for *dependence*. Thus we arrive at the correlation:

Women : Men :: Lineal Males : Ancestors.

(See Figure 28, 362)

What appear as divisions on one level of analysis, are integral parts of a conceptual whole on another: a male will never become a mature man (*indoda*), fit to sit with the other men in the court, unless he takes a wife (*wmfazi*) and builds his homestead. Indeed, a man's token of maturity is his homestead (*umat*). Similarly, there would be no ancestors unless the homestead made the sequence of birth (primogeniture) and the sequence of generations a decisive feature of establishing authority. Men and women complement each other, in the same way as lineality and ancestor religion do.

(e) *Agnates, affines and the world.*

The above correlation ignores one important factor, namely that men are superior to women in the legal domain alone. Outside this domain, a man holds a position of authority only with respect to his wife (or wives) and daughters. In daily life a man cannot order and command just any woman. If he should try to do so he would certainly be heading for conflict in Caguba. Women are wives with respect to their husbands, but they are daughters and sisters with respect to their fathers and brothers. Although integral parts of their respective homesteads, wives do not change their clan membership (*isiduko*). Also, as wives, they remain their fathers' daughters and they remain oriented towards their respective agnatic ancestors. Therefore, as the "people of the house" go to the cattle byre in order to inform the "authorities," or gather for a ceremonial feast in the main-house, there are always *non-agnates* in

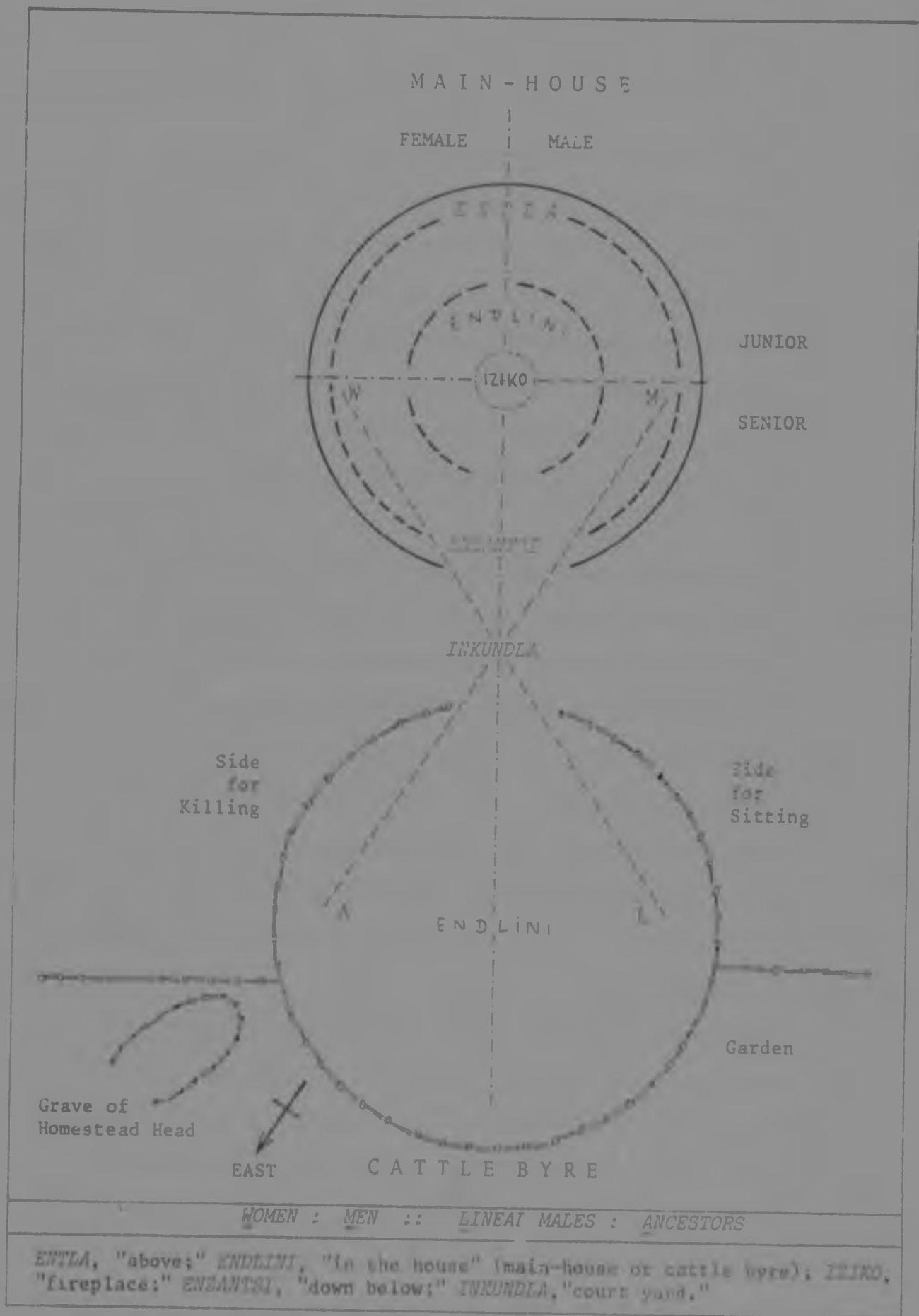


Figure 28. Mchwa homestead as symbol of the universe.

their midst, namely their wives. There is only one exception to this generalisation: at the invocation of the ancestors at the cattle byre when a killing takes place. Then the agnatic group appears on its own - but even then, the wives are inside the main-house, at the ancestral abode of the fireplace in order to be witnesses of the ritual drama there. In other words, the agnatic group does not live without representatives of other clans in their midst. More than that. Varying generational depths of agnatic (see p. 26, on clan-clusters), maternal or affinal relationships are remembered. Therefore it is not surprising that virtually all Cagubans are related to one another. *Kinship is ubiquitous.*

This (rather obvious) conclusion has an important implication, at least for the present dissertation, in assessing agnatic kinship in Mthwa. Since kinship is ubiquitous it is almost impossible for the ethnographer of social life in Caguba not to "discover" kinship as a significant dimension of that social life and not to recognise its sociological relevance in describing the authority structure in Mthwa society. But, the repeated emphasis (in this dissertation) on *agnatic* lineality is an *analytical construct* adopted from a generation of anthropologists. This emphasis, however, should not lead to an exaggeration of the importance of agnatic kinship, as far as social life in Caguba is concerned. There as in any other society, social life consists of patterned interactions between persons and thus involves some form or other of corporateness which unites the interacting persons. In this context of social *corporateness*, agnatic kinship has only relative significance in Mthwa (as was shown in earlier chapters; see particularly Chapter III). Strictly speaking, agnatic kinship serves as a form of social organisation in Mthwa society only in the religio-ritual domain of ancestor religion. Mthwa society grew, and continues to grow, out of the dynamics inherent in the life of each individual homestead and its life-cycle which comprises three successive generations (see Chapter V). The 1/2

of each individual homestead yields, among other things, kinship (as agnation and affinity) as a by-product.

Since kinship is ubiquitous, the wives who sit "in the house" are not complete strangers - a (classificatory) father or brother, mother or sister, will most likely be present among the people "along the wall." Clear-cut analytical grouping of men *versus* women, kinsmen *versus* non-kinsmen, seniors *versus* juniors is an oversimplification. Such terms do not reflect the *shifting* social reality in Caguba and in Mthwa as a whole: in one situation a woman is a subordinate daughter, in another she is a widow wielding authority in her homestead as a man does in his own; in one situation a man takes the seat among his agnates, in another he must accommodate himself as a "visitor;" in one situation a person is a senior, and in the next he is a junior. It would be an oversimplification to reduce this shifting social reality to a "social structure" of Mthwa as a whole.

But, a "structure" does *emerge* as the people gather in a *particular* homestead: *now* their roles are defined (but see p. 368, n. 5). *At this given situation*, certain people are agnates and appear as such; others are their wives and appear as such. But certain other people are "non-kinsmen" now; their way of ordering relationships among themselves is seniority now. In the most general sense we must say that unless it is seen in relation to a homestead, no person's position can be defined in Caguba for the purpose of *ongoing social interaction*. As the beer is passed on from person to person, crossing the boundaries of sex, kinship and seniority - in the way they are relevant in the given situation - the unity (*ubunye*) of the Mthwa world appears as Caguba's lived reality.

In the context of this *hic et nunc* lived reality, there are, then, "real" agnates, affines and non-kinsmen; in this given situation, these categories

of people are as real as the beer which they drink ceremonially - but all these categories are irrelevant when a homestead head goes out and organises an action-set for getting some work done for his household. There are "real" agnates, affines and non-kinsmen when a discrete cult group gathers for an ancestral lineage feast and for the ritual court trial of "informing the authorities" - but all these categories are irrelevant when the men settle down and adjudicate Mthwa law. The world appears, to the Cagubans, first as a homestead, and second as the chiefdom of Mthwa. Thus the world is built along a single axis which is socio-political: the Mthwa world connects its smallest unit and its totality, homestead and chiefdom directly. The homestead, however, is built along a second axis which is socio-religious: here, Mthwa world connects any (single) homestead and the universe. From the perspective of the homestead, it is possible situationally to account for diverging categories of people in Mthwa society; and from the same perspective it is possible to see Mthwa writ large in the totality of the chiefdom and the universe. The homestead mediates between diversity and unity and accounts for both.

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Postscript.

In this last section, what must remain an ambiguity in my handling of this dissertation has become evident: a shifting definition of agnates and affines, of kinsmen and non-kinsmen, within the context of social interaction as an ongoing event. Yet, ambiguity characterises social life in Caguba to a large extent. To mention the major points once more: mat-associations are determined by voluntariness as well as a "dominant clan-section" (see p. 31): agnatically defined authority is segmental as well as inclusive.

(see p. 80); the inheritance system is enveloped in the complexity of settling-out and the difference between ownership and trusteeship (see p. 239); ancestors are human and superhuman (see p. 328); the homestead accounts for diversity and unity. This problem of social ambiguity is both challenging and disturbing. It is challenging because learning how a society or a group of people cope with such ambiguity makes it possible to learn what social life is about. Man cannot live for long with such ambiguities, he is bound to resolve them. For example, even if a mat-association is determined by voluntariness as well as a dominant clan-section, a homestead head must "make up his mind" when choosing a particular association: will he make use of his freedom of choice or will he find himself bound by some (by him assumed) kinship duty? Or, a devoted Christian must decide for himself whether he will accept his ancestors as merely human who are worthy of reverence, or as divinities who must be worshipped in a (semi-)public cult? But, what may appear to one participant in a given social situation as the resolution of an ambiguity, may constitute, for a second participant, just another ambiguity, which, of course, requires its own resolution... Social life becomes a process of manipulating states of affairs in accordance with the individual's perception of the social situation as ambiguous or unequivocal. As for the Cagubans, they are masters in defining and re-defining social situations in the course of their daily lives. This dissertation provides but a dim reflection of their mastery, partly because it has not been my concern here to describe and analyse how participants define social situations.

This problem of social ambiguity has been a disturbing factor in the writing of this dissertation. My theme of "Authority Structure and Homestead in a Mpondo Village" has been presented explicitly within the tradition of social anthropology for which the concept of a "social structure" is central. Yet,

this paradigm of a "structure" tends to rely on terms which are *conceptually fixed*, it cannot really handle social ambiguity. In other words, the disturbing problem of social ambiguity is inherent in this dissertation. It could not be dealt with directly, being outside the scope of the present study, and requiring the presentation of different types of data and a different type of analysis altogether. I have therefore by-passed the problem by changing the perspective from an institutional to a processual one.

A further study, then, is needed on how Cagubans construct their social reality in the course of their interaction with one another. Their mastery and skill, when they determine in the ongoing situation what a person "ought to do now," remains to be shown. What is clear at the end of *this* study, is that the central image of the homestead is more than an abstract, analytical category. It is, on the basis of the evidence presented here, a *universe of meaning*.

Footnotes to Chapter VIII.

- (1) The economic aspect of beer-making has been discussed in a number of publications. Hellmann (1934) describes the significance of beer-drinking as leisure entertainment in urban life and significance as a form of subsidiary cash income. Saul (1981) shows the effect of beer-making from sorghum on farming and grain transactions in Upper Volta.
- (2) The dictionary translation of *umtwana* is "child." This is a very specific meaning. *Umtwana* is the diminutive form of *umtu* which denotes a socially mature person and, in a more restricted sense, a man who has the socially required personality of sitting in the court (see p. 131). Thus *umtu* denotes a senior, a person who wields authority. *Umtwana* is the diminutive form of that semantic field; in short *umtwana* denotes a junior person with respect to everything represented by a senior, it denotes the person who owes obedience. The "child" (in the sense of a member of the filial generation) is the radical (specific) type of junior.
- (3) This precedence of age over generation defines the ritual elder. See p. 289.
- (4) What kind of social norms they are - moral, legal, procedural (etiquette) - cannot be decided here. The sociological assumption that "social" equals "moral" (see, for example, Evans-Pritchard 1956) is too simplistic.

if not wrong. The moral sphere is categorically reflective, while the social sphere - on the level of the actor (which is the participant-observer's concern) - is categorically non-reflective. The actor has an awareness of the ongoing situation, but (in the strict sense of the word) he does not reflect. Certainly, the reflective and the non-reflective social spheres are related to each other (morality is for action and interaction), but a discussion of how these spheres are related is a topic wholly beyond the scope of the present dissertation.

- (5) Kuper (1980:18) writes that "the symbolical importance of homestead layout is naturally recognised, and consequently open to manipulation." What Kuper has in mind is the physical layout which, for example, a diviner may reverse in order to express the presence of the ancestors. Yet another type of manipulation is possible. It occurs when a person accepts the actual physical order of the arrangement in the main-house, but claims a place which has been or may be taken by somebody else. Claiming a place is claiming a place of status, respect and authority in Caguba. It is not the physical layout that is manipulated but the social arrangement between the participants which it is supposed to express. Put differently, the actual seating order at a given feast is not a statement about Mthwa social norms but about an *ad hoc* arrangement of how (certain) Cagubans relate to one another at a given feast, or else challenge each other.
- (6) A role very similar to that of the master-of-ceremonies has been recorded for the Mpondomise (Hammond-Tooke 1963:306) where he is called *injoli* (from *ukujola*, "to give out").
- (7) *enzantsi* is the locative case of an obsolete noun *inzantsi* (see Doke-Vilakazi 1964:191). The pun which the speaker made suggests that folk-etymology correctly relates this place adverb to the nominalised adverb *abaphantsi*. Following Doke-Vilakazi (1964:646), there is a proto-Bantu noun underlying *enzantsi* meaning "country." Thus the man's reply confirms these various pieces of linguistic evidence: "The man sitting next to the door should see 'those in the country down below'."
- (8) The general practice today is to bury persons facing east. But some elders among my informants queried this as the traditional method. The corpse should face west, according to these elders, so that the dead man can "watch over the affairs of his homestead." This alternative method of burying would still coincide with the general direction of the of the homestead and of the main-house in particular. Furthermore, some of my informants were reluctant to draw a cosmic conclusion from the general eastern direction of the homestead. For them, the relationship to the grave was sufficient explanation.

APPENDIX

Appendix 1.

Mrp No 1. Mthweni, the Ncamane chiefdom,
ca 1850, and the administrative area of
Caguba, 1980.

- (1) The map indicates the boundaries of the chiefdom after Fono had withdrawn from Luthengele and Ntsimbini.
- (2) Furthermore the map shows movements of certain other major groups which may have been little chiefdoms at one stage.
- (3) The material is presented here as I collected it from oral historians in Caguba. Little cross-examination of the material took place. Therefore the map must be accepted with reservations from a strictly historical point of view.

Map No 2. The map shows the area of Caguba in 1880, and the residential area of Caguba, 1980.

The map shows the surrounding hamlets, which no longer exist, the map shows the settlement pattern of Caguba which has evolved over a period of approximately 100 years, ca 1850-1950.

The map shows that the Great Place of Fono (indicated as homestead in the centre of the triangle) was surrounded by a circle of hamlets with up to about 15 homesteads in each hamlet. The hamlets surrounded an area of open space which allowed for relatively isolated homesteads. These scattered homesteads belonged mostly to the local clan-sections of the royal clan. Thus, in fact, there were two homestead settlement patterns which accounted for an effective control over the land.

From Hiamvana's time (ca 1880), the area in the centre of the hamlets begins to be more densely populated. By the turn of the century the compact village-type of settlement is clearly observable.

As the rehabilitation scheme became effective (late 1950s) the remaining homesteads of the hamlets were removed and were resettled in the area of today's four wards of Caguba village. The resettlement separated homesteads from one another in order to be regrouped according to clan-membership of the various homestead heads. The result is that there is a stronger appearance of agnatic groupings in modern times than there might have been the case several decades ago.

Appendix 3.

Terms for "ancestors", linguistically.

Some of the terms which have been discussed in this dissertation were recorded before the present research took place, but these terms have been checked in the field. My pre-knowledge was derived from Hunter (1936) and Kropf (1915). The terms which I myself recorded have been indexed (C). Whenever a term refers to "ancestor" or "ancestor-spirit" as the primary meaning, the word is written in *CAPITAL* letters. The present comprehensive list of terms may give an idea of the complexity of thought in Mpondo with regard to the religious order.

The following list of terms is arranged according to the derivation of the various nouns. This not only the distinction between "ancestors" and "ancestor-spirits" must be recognised, but the full complexity of the derivations as well. The latter is one of the main sources of Kopytoff's (1971) shortcomings in his discussion regarding ancestors to elders. On p. 377, I shall arrange the various terms according to noun-classes. This arrangement shows the width of the semantic field covered by the various terms for "ancestors."

I. Terms for "ancestors," listed with reference to derivation of nouns.		
(1) Underived nouns.	Singular	Plural
(a) great-grandparent, on father's or mother's side, male or female. ancestor.	ukoko or ukhokho	ancestors in sense of consanguinal forebears.
(b) denotes "respect and authority" (Kropf 1915:194). formerly restricted to chiefs of royal blood, it is used today for every mature man as a term of address.	inkosi probably derived from <i>ukhokhokha</i> , "to lead."	AMAKHOSI ancestor-spirits, without specific agnatic or cognatic implications. major term of address when invoking ancestors. ^{*)} ancestors are understood here as spiritual leaders "like chiefs."

^{*)} Only two terms are used for directly invoking the ancestors, namely MAKHOSI and MAKHUTHU (see below). But this does not mean much, since particularly important use of "third person," have any noun class.

<p>(c) the term indicates in the singular a crime, guilt, a fault of a minor or a serious nature</p>	<p><i>ityala</i></p> <p>(d) beer, fermented liquor made from malt or fruit. In singular not used for ancestors.</p> <p>(e) trance, nocturnal vision, dream. Individually communicating ancestor-spirit, can be specified by name. no term for living persons (see Hunter 1936:131)</p>	<p><i>matyala</i> (C)</p> <p>in the plural, the term is used to address the jury at the court <i>Nko-si, Matyala!</i> ("Chief, gentlemen of the jury!")</p> <p>ancestor-spirits which have the authority for "laying charge." The term has no agnatic or cognatic implications.</p> <p><i>uaba namatyala</i> ("to have faults") means to be under the influence of the ancestor-spirits as long as a ritual obligation is unfulfilled.</p> <p><i>matyala</i> (C)</p> <p>primary meaning in plural is "beer-parties" or "kinds of beer."</p> <p>ancestor-spirits in their demands for "food."</p> <p>ANCESTRONQO</p> <p>ancestor-spirits with a clear consanguinal reference, paternal or maternal, as the case may be.</p> <p>the spirits as beings who are beyond human control "like dreams."</p>
<p>(2) Nouns derived from nominals.</p> <p>(a) somebody who is older in age and therefore by definition "senior" and "elder."</p>	<p><i>cedala</i></p> <p>derived from adjectival stem /-dala/ (old)</p>	<p>ABADALA</p> <p>the "aged" people, the senior members of the society, including any near senior and one's parents. The general term for "elders" if used as term of reference, never in addressing them.</p> <p>the ancestral elders in general.</p>

(b) an ancestor in the main line of agnatic descent.	<p>IMILOWO (C)</p> <p>the ancestors of agnatic stock, particularly with reference to the main line of agnatic descent.</p>
(c) meaning as before.	<p>IMILOMA (C)</p> <p>meaning as before. But because of "third position", the otherness of the ancestors, as compared with the living, is emphasised.</p>
(d) someone who belongs "to us/you/ them" (depending on actual grammatical form).	<p>ANAWETHU</p> <p>those who share basic characteristics and belong to the same group, particularly in the sense of common agnatic descent of any degree, thus the term means:</p> <p>the living, together with the dead, agnates.</p> <p>grammatical necessity compels the speaker to speak (a) in terms of relationships and (b) of those in relation to himself. "Communality" becomes a matter of <i>speech</i> rather than of social situation.</p> <p>most common term for invoking the ancestors.</p>
(e) an old grey-headed man	<p>ĩngwethu (C)</p> <p>the ancestors seen as very respectable elders. The term is not often used, and several of my informants did not accept it as applicable for ancestors.</p>

(3) Nouns derived from verbal roots.			
(a) a professional person who has been instructed in the art of medicine and healing	in/anza derived from /-nyang-/ (to heal), proto- Bantu */-yanga/ (heal), Doke- vil, (1964:620).	amnyunge (C)	the ancestor-spirits in their relation to sickness and healing. The term is a conceptual consequence of <i>ithongo</i> , the "communicating spirit" whose medium of communication is, among other things, sickness, misfortune and their cure.
(b) although it is a generic term for anything "ancient" and "from the beginning" (like an old spear or a first-built house of a home-stand), its referent is, in the first place, the powerful people of ancient time, the ancestors as a category of beings.	ISINYANYA derived from /-nyany-/ (to be in fear, afraid), with a further derivation from ideophone /ny:/ (of disappearing suddenly).	ISINYANYA	the most general and commonly used term for speaking about "ancestors" in general as beings superior to men. It is a category-label.
(c) "departed ancestor of a chief who was believed to appear to men, especially the witchdoctors when commencing practice." (Kropf 1915:303).	IMNYANYA (Kropf 1915:303). derivation as above.	IMNYANYA	same meaning as in singular.
(d) a little thing. the powerful ancestor who needs only "invisible" things for striking nightly. It is a generic term.	isikhazukhulu (C) in the first place, the term is derived by reduplication (diminutive) from another noun, which is derived from /khulu/, an ideophone meaning "things that happen in intervals" (Doke-vil, 1964:384).	isikhazukhulu (C)	(I am not certain whether the term is used in the plural at all. The meaning would be a generic term referring to a category of "spiritual beings" which the ancestors are believed to be.)

<p>(e) the protector "at home", i.e. the <i>temlondi</i> chief, one's father. The ambiguity is in the phrase "at home" which is either in the strict sense of "father's place" or figuratively used.</p>	<p>"household gods" (Kropf 1915:219). The powerful spiritual protectors of the home. The term has an overtone of juridically sanctioned authority, thus "the protectors against any injustice." The term is very homestead specific.</p>
<p>(4) Nouns derived from adverbs.</p> <p>in the singular the term is related to a dead person, in the given grammatical form it simply means "something (with the corresponding noun in Class 1) which is on the ground, below."</p>	<p>the ancestors in the sense of "the dead" in general. The context must clarify to which "dead" the speaker is referring.</p>
<p>(5) Adopted noun.</p> <p>the term indicates that the ancestors are a category of beings who are essentially different from <i>uThixo</i> (see p. 261f). The term is an adaptation from Khoisan (see p. 129, n. 2), whose stem served to form the neologism which translates the biblical concept of "idols." There is good reason to assume that the terms <i>isithixo</i> for rendering the biblical concept of "idols," were introduced into Xhosa before the introduction of Christianity, precisely on the basis of influences from the Khoisan-speaking peoples. Peires (1981:65) concludes that "the influence of Khoisan religion in preparing the way for Christianity through familiarising the Xhosa with analogues of God and the Devil may have been considerable." In Caguba, some of my informants used <i>isithixo</i> freely as a term for the ancestors as "decidedly spiritual beings (while different from God)", while others rejected the term precisely because they refused the idea that they could be idols, thus then submitting to these "spiritual beings."</p>	<p><i>isithixo</i> (c)</p>

II. Terms for "ancestors" ordered according to noun classes. A semantic field.

In order to keep the picture simple, I shall concentrate on the terms whose primary meaning refers to the ancestors. But in principle, it would be possible to include all the above-listed terms in the discussion. To mention one small point: I was said in the above survey (p. 1/4) that my informants did not agree without reservation that *ingwevu* ("a grey-headed person") is a term which denotes ancestors. This disagreement is borne out by the fact that if accepted it would be the only term which belongs to Class 9. The remaining terms can be grouped in noun classes, and a clear semantic field of the various terms emerges which is reflected in this dissertation.

class 2	class 1 & 4	class 5 & 6	class 7 & 8	Semantic field
<i>abadaia</i>				the elders, living and dead
<i>abaphanteti</i>				the dead
	<i>untoko</i>			the agnatic (dead) ancestor
		<i>amabakulu</i>		agnates, living and dead
	<i>untondi</i>			homestead specific ancestors
	<i>umnyanya</i>			chief's homestead spec. anc.
		<i>amababisi</i>		ancestral authorities
		<i>ethango</i>		consanguine communicating spirit
			<i>isinyanya</i>	spiritual being, otherness
GENERIC	SOCIO-RELIGIOUS	RITUAL	GENERIC	

The "odd" member in the table is *amabakulu*, but if we see it as a term which basically occurs in formal speech, including particularly the ritual language, things fall into place. With classes 5 and 6 there is an association of a "cult language" in Mpondo dialect.

Appendix 4.

Extract from a conversation which took place during a beer ritual of "informing the authorities."

A. THE AFFLICTED PERSON'S NEGLECT FOR THE RITUAL.

(The conversation criticises two things: the neglect for the people "of his home", i.e. of the agnatic kinsmen, favouring the maternal kinsmen instead. This allocation of favour resulted in the afflicted person's disregard for the ancestral ritual. The quotation begins as the ritual elder refers to that misplaced favour and the resultant negative consequence which the agnatic kinsmen regarded as an act of disrespect towards them.)

The recording took place while the beer was passed on from the lowest ranking person to the ritual elder. The libation was about three minutes ahead.)

The various speakers speak in the order of the lines as they follow each other. Where a vertical bracket combines two lines, the respective utterances coincide.)

Ritual elder: *Naba senilikhulu...* (incomplete sentence)

Even if you are a hundred (maternal kinsmen)...

Zange ndiliv' eli bhekile.

I never tasted from this tin-can (of ritual beer)

[*Kuthwa liphel' utywala.*

Some people argue that the beer (i.e. the ritual) is dead.

Diviner:

Hayi

Alingeke eli.

No.

It should never happen.

Elder:

Hayi, zange, zange ndilibone.

No, never ever did I see it (the ritual at this place).

Senior Woman:

Alipheli.

(The beer, i.e. the ancestor ritual) isn't finished (dead).

Diviner:

Liphela nje nguwe lo wenzayo.

It dies only if you permit (it's death) to take place.

Junior Man:

Ehe! Le!

Precisely! That (is the point)!

Diviner:

Ukukreqwa ngol' hlobo.

Apostasy (happens) in that manner.

Senior Woman: *Ewe, umnt' okreqa kak'hle ngo'kreq' emzin'akhe.*

Correct, the precise apostate is the man who deserts from his own home.

Ritual Elder: *Ethambanqeni, mngi kuthe liphela.*

Thank goodness, it was never decreed that (the ritual) is dead.

Elder: *Hayi, lingabagqivanga abantu.*

Well (this is so, because) the beer (i.e. the ritual) did not kill the people (in the first place).

Ritual Elder: *Si lantlaba liphela? Hayi, alidingi.*

This (ritual which is performed at) the cattle byre, should it have been decreed dead? No, far from it.

B. PASSING THE VERDICT: A COLD-HEARTED MAN.

Ritual Elder: *Hayi nditheth' u'thi kalok' angad' alifinc' kakhulu.*

Well, I mean to say that he (the person who drank at that moment) should not finish (the beer) off completely.

xa kuyintwana 'thele pha' (incomplete sentence)

if it is only a little quantity which (we) pour there (in the byre, it will be sufficient).

	[<i>intwana (incomplete)</i>	[<i>sel' utywal' obu.</i>
	a little drop	drink the beer.
Junior Man :	---kung'kho mona. ---	ngabantu bonke ---
	[there should be no envy	---by all the people --

Ritual Elder: *'sel' utywal' ob' lapha.*

Drink this beer here.

Junior Man : *Ungaphezi!*

(But) don't finish (it off)!

Ritual Elder: *'intenay' 'begiy'funa, z'yaxela oha.*

If it is only enough to make the report.

Diviner : *Siyathetha.*

We are having a court case.

Ritual Elder: *Ewe, siyaxela ngesiny' isici.*

Correct, we are informing (the ancestral authorities) about a cold-hearted person.

(After this last utterance it took about 20 seconds for the ritual elder to go to the entrance of the cattle byre and pour the "little quantity" of the beer inside saying: "(To those who are) in the position of authority.")

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Only those interviews are listed here which have been quoted directly in the course of this dissertation. There are about 220 tapes at my disposal containing more than 300 hours of recordings most of which are recordings of life situations. The informants are represented by their social names.

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Bhabhalaza	13-5-78	Tape	87
Bhabhalaza	21-7-79	Tapes	160-1
Bhabhalaza	31-3-81	Tapes	171-2
Calvin	11-6-78	Tape	121
Calvin	28-3-81	Tape	-
MaGingqi	7-4-81	Tape	180
MaKazela	6-4-81	Tape	180
Matukuva	3-2-78	Tape	-
Mp'utswana	2-4-81	Tape	174
Nodli	3-4-81	Tapes	174-5
Nothutha	1-3-78	Tape	39
Nyobela	15-4-81	Tape	190
Polishi	10-2-78	Tape	27
Polishi	21-7-79	Tape	162
kwiSibonda	1-6-78	Tape	112
Sidumbu	31-3-81	Tapes	171-2
Sinoti	6-1-78	Tape	9
Sinoti	7-1-78	Tape	10
Sinoti	3-6-78	Tapes	114-5
kuNobhala	1-6-78	Tape	112

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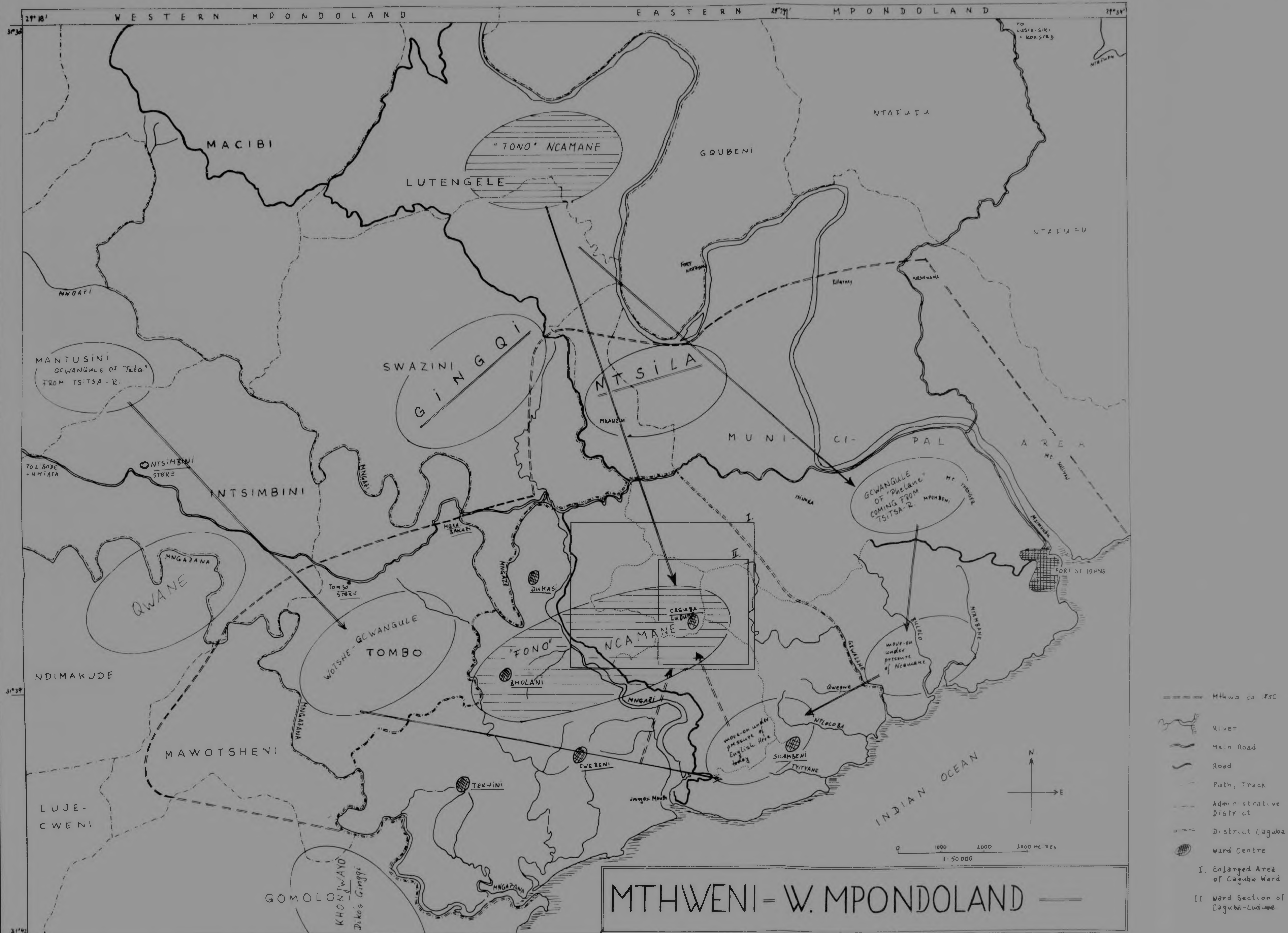
CAGUBA

NCAMANE CHIEFDOM

Approx Scale 8,343



- == Ward Boundary
- (1) Ward Section
- (2) Ward Section, abandoned
- Homestead
- ⊙ Homestead, abandoned
- + Grave of Chief
- ⊙ Circumcision Lodge
- * Ritual Washing
- ~ Path
- == Road
- ~ Brook
- ⊙ Bush, Natural Forest
- NISTLA Senior local agnate group
- Homesteads at Fonos time, ca 1850
- Homesteads at Hlamvina's time, ca 1900



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