

AUTHORITY, AVOIDANCES AND MARRIAGE : AN ANALYSIS
OF THE POSITION OF GCALEKA WOMEN IN QWANINGA,
WILLOWVALE DISTRICT, TRANSKEI.

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ABSTRACT

Authority as it operates in the daily lives of married women in Gcaleka society is reinforced and maintained by a body of avoidances which women need to observe during their married lives. Avoidances constitute part of the control system in the society whereby wives are being 'kept in their place'. Avoidances do not only restrict her, but also safeguard her position and her interests. Lines of authority emerge through the process of interaction; the structure reveals itself as avoidances are acted out in time and space.

This study was conducted in Qwaninga, an administrative area in the coastal area of the Willowvale district, Transkei. The research started out as a study of ritual impurity and the status of women in a traditional, 'red' Gcaleka society. It soon became clear that pollution practices and beliefs associated with women form part of a greater body of avoidances which women need to observe during their married lives.

Avoidances entail economic, dietary, sexual, linguistic and spatial prohibitions; as well as restrictions concerning what a woman is supposed to wear, and her withdrawal from social life. These restrictions are enforced through certain ritual and other sanctions. Three forms of avoidances are identified in this study, and are discussed and analysed. Avoidances are found in the everyday male/female division in society; in the ways through which the wife shows respect towards her husband and her in-laws

(especially her husband's ancestors); and in the reproductive situations a woman finds herself in from time to time.

In many anthropological studies in the past women have often been hidden in the background. This study is an attempt to give women the prominence they should be given, to show that non-Western women are not as subordinated as people in Western society like to assume. In Gcaleka society the authority structure affecting the position of women is not only based on a distinction being made between males and females. It will be shown that a finer authority structure operates in this society whereby gender as well as age and kinship distinctions are being made. These distinctions constitute a system of classification which is safeguarded and protected by the avoidances and other restrictions imposed on women.

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Sections of the material contained in this study were presented at seminar groups at Rhodes University, as well as at the annual

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INTRODUCTION

The Introduction deals with the setting of the problem, the literature survey, the chapter outline and fieldwork. The conceptual framework is presented first at a general level, followed by the literature survey and chapter outline which take the form of a more detailed chapter-by-chapter breakdown of problems and conceptual influences.

The literature survey and chapter outline are not presented separately. This is done in order to illuminate the conceptual plan in each chapter and to show how this fits into the broader conceptual framework. In other words, like a builder constructing a building, I isolate the materials I am going to use in the construction of the thesis, I then show where the building blocks belong in the construction and how the constructed building is supposed to look on completion.

The fieldwork account follows where the field method is discussed as well as the development of the relationship between myself and the people of the Fukula subward and the surrounding areas.

PRESENTATION OF THE PROBLEM

A central concern of this dissertation is authority as it is experienced in the daily lives of married women in a Transkei community. Here institutionalised avoidances on the part of women express certain ideas about the moral order and structure their relations with the different categories of people such as

their senior male agnates, senior female affines, and junior male affines. Authority, avoidances and marriage are closely bound up with each other in a system which is simultaneously a system of meaning and a system of action. As a system of meaning it safeguards the 'purity' of cosmological and social categories; as a system of action it orders and controls relationships not only between men and women, but also among affines and between seniors and juniors.

The broader authority structure affecting women derives, in the first instance, from a set of basic organisational principles based on sex and age. Agnatic descent and affinity, in particular the relationship between a woman and her husband's parents and siblings, are also crucial contexts. Then there are the changes in the roles of married women which accompany her passage through the life-cycle, as well as those changes which emanate from the outside world calling traditional values into question. Female fertility causes tension in the social structure. Pollution beliefs deal with the problem of contradictions in the social structure caused by female fertility. Finally - the emphasis shifting from the community to the individual - there is the power built into the authority structure held by wives: the formal power women possess which protects their position and interests, even when they are young and subordinated; the informal power, exercised by wily women in a hidden and invisible structure of relations.

Authority of senior men is a reality in this society, in the formal, abstract sense of authority. But male dominance in

practice, implying a perpetual, universal imbalance in the power relations¹ between men and women, cannot be assumed a priori. Younger men (like younger women) are not authoritative figures in the social structure. Only through growing older do they achieve higher status and become seniors who are respected by people. Likewise, older women control considerable power in their own domains. It is argued that dominance in this society is as much a function of seniority as of gender. Among people of the same lifestage, men have higher status than women do, showing an asymmetrical relationship between the sexes. However, younger men have a lower status than older women have. Empirically, authority by male and female elders is tempered and even sometimes neutralised by the power of both their male and especially female subordinates in a whole range of everyday life situations.

¹ Relations of authority and power are usually not separable when people are acting them out. However, it is important to make a clear distinction between power and authority. Power is an aspect of most social relations. One can acknowledge that someone has power over you without actually experiencing it in action at that point. Power is the ability to exercise one's will over others. Authority, is power which is legitimately exercised, that is, with public consent and approval (Tiffany 1978: 43). Concerning the women in this study the main emphasis is on power. However, it is shown how they also have publicly recognised power, for example, over juniors. At the heart of this thesis is the argument that authority of seniors, especially senior men, is countered and balanced by the power of their juniors, especially junior women, and, that authority of senior men may often conceal a lack of power over women who are their juniors. A further distinction needs to be made between voluntary and involuntary forms of power. Voluntary power is a deliberate exercise of one's will over others to gain advantage. On the other hand, involuntary power, for example, in the form of supernatural powers, is believed to be released when women's bodies undergo biological changes after giving birth and while menstruating. They have no control over these powers. However, should women decide to neglect the observance of prescribed avoidances when their bodies are ritually impure, it would be possible for them to instrumentally employ these powers (voluntary power) to better their own position. Women are not merely victims of pollution taboos; as is the case with the patriarchal system in general.

THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The analysis and discussion of the position of married women as it reveals itself out of the daily interaction process, in this thesis, concerns itself with the social categories people are placed into, how classification systems like this one create certain rules and boundaries which need to be maintained and recreated as time passes, and how the individual finds his/her niche in this social structure that seems to be very limiting to him/her.

In order to illuminate the working of the classification system and how the position of married women is affected by the social categories it creates, I utilise a structuralist approach. Ideas of Levi-Strauss (Leach 1970, Levi-Strauss 1963), Douglas (1966, 1982), Leach (1976), and Moore (1986) are drawn upon. However, the structuralist approach gives an incomplete picture of the position of the married woman. It does not look at the effect of change nor at the manipulative nature of human-beings, particularly women. To complement this approach, it is supplemented by the developmental cycle approach of Goody (1971), the 'rites of passage' model of Van Gennep (1960), Turner's (1972) ideas on liminality, Meillassoux's (1981) materialist approach, Foucault's (1983) ideas on power relations, as well as a transactionalist viewpoint (Barth 1966, Bailey 1971).

The Levi-Straussian structuralists (Leach 1970: 21) argue that the external world and phenomena which we perceive have the characteristics which we attribute to them because of the way our

senses operate and the way the human brain orders and interprets incoming stimuli. One very important feature of this ordering process is that the continua of space and time are cut up into segments. We then think of the environment in terms of vast numbers of separate things belonging to named classes. The products of our culture have a structure, are segmented, ordered and cut up in the same way in which the products of nature are segmented and ordered.

An analogy is drawn between language and culture. Levi-Strauss (1963: 68, 69) writes that the material out of which language is built is of the same type as the material out of which the whole culture is built: logical relations, oppositions, correlations, and so on. According to Leach (1976: 10) non-verbal dimensions of culture, like spatial lay-out, are organised in patterned sets so as to incorporate coded information in a manner analogous to the sounds and words and sentences of a natural language. He says it is just as meaningful to talk about the grammatical rules which govern, for instance, the spatial lay-out and what people wear, as it is to talk about the grammatical rules which govern speech utterances. In this study the non-verbal dimensions of culture like what people eat and what they wear, are explored to the extent that they express ideas about the moral order, the basic social divisions in the society.

Social categories are used which are derived from cultural classifications imposed on elements of nature (Leach 1970: 34). Moore (1986: 2) writes that the natural world is divided into cultural categories, and the same conceptions and categories are

projected onto the social structure of society, the organisation of the cosmos, spatial organisation, the layout of ritual, and a wide variety of cultural activities and representations from the symbolic to ordinary daily activities. Likewise, in the Fukula subward and the surrounding areas where this study was undertaken, gender, age and kinship distinctions are projected onto daily activities, domestic life, the spheres of production and reproduction and married life. This will be viewed in the different contexts of the married woman's life.

In a certain sense this analysis could be seen as an analysis of female oppression, in other words, an approach feminists like Barrett (1980), Firestone (1970), Millett (1969), local Africanist feminists like Bozzoli (1983) and others would have taken in a study like this. As they do, I also start out by viewing the patriarchal structure of society indicating how this structure of relations leads to subordination of women. However, I soon depart from the feminist problematic, that is, the fact and implications of women's subordination to men, and of women's struggle against that subordination; I do not focus only on the male/female division in society, but also on social differentiation based on age and kinship differences. When seniority and kinship are brought into the picture it is seen that women also have dominant roles in the society. The feminist approach on its own does not provide adequate theoretical tools to cope with the subtleties which the complex social relations of gender, seniority and kinship demand. The patriarchal system cannot be equated with 'female oppression' as some feminists like Barrett (1980) would like to see the situation. In Gcaleka

society the patriarchal structure has mechanisms built into its structure that also allow women to have dominant roles and protect them against power abuse by their superiors.

THE CHAPTERS: PROBLEMS AND CONCEPTUAL INFLUENCES

This dissertation is divided into five substantive chapters. The historical background is set in Chapter one. Against this background, the unit of analysis - the Fukula subward - is located in its political, economic and social context.

Chapter two is the first of the four chapters that constitute the main body of the thesis. In each of these chapters different aspects of the married woman's position in the authority structure are highlighted and it is shown how avoidances, in the different contexts, fit into the authority structure.

The structuralist approach features prominently in chapters two and four, and is shifted into the background in chapters three and five. In the first of these chapters (chapter two) constituting the main body of the thesis, social differentiation based on gender, age and kinship differences is discussed and analysed in Fukula and the surrounding areas. Gender, age, and kinship distinctions constitute a classification system which is reflected in daily activities and the spatial layout which often entails certain avoidances. This system not only structures relations between people, but also structures their whole world. And, as Moore (1986: 2) maintains, these distinctions in their myriad forms are all transformations of the same underlying

logic. Distinctions have meaning attached to them, often taking the form of dual oppositions, which is the case with gender distinctions. Meaning becomes a reality when it is acted out. Certain characteristics are linked to each of these social categories, for instance, inferiority and superiority. Asymmetrical relations in the structure of relations are revealed, and each social category communicates certain ideas about one's position in the social structure.

This leads into chapter three, the second substantive chapter, where the structure of married life and associated female avoidances - avoidances that have to do with showing respect towards her husband's in-laws - are analysed within the female lifestage cycle. I begin the analysis by utilising the developmental cycle approach of Goody (1971) which takes into account how a wife's position undergoes a transformation over time. She does not remain restricted and subordinated for long. As she grows older and acquires more status in her husband's home, she starts figuring more prominently in the formal power structure, and I argue that she also takes on the right to exercise control over other people, that is, the younger women and the men younger than herself.

As her lifestages unfold, she is also moving from being an outsider to becoming an insider in her husband's home. To illustrate how she gradually acquires greater insider status, I utilise the ideas of separation, marginality and incorporation set out in Van Gennep's model (Van Gennep 1960: vii). No attempt is made to apply Van Gennep's staged ritual transition to an

understanding of the gradual incorporation of a married woman into her husband's descent group. The adult woman's social transition from separation through marginality to centrality in her husband's group does not constitute distinct stages. Elements of separation, liminality and incorporation can be found in the different lifestages. The symbolic behaviour associated with the married life of Gcaleka women at the same time represents ideas of liminality and incorporation, for instance, wearing her headdress higher up on her forehead shows that she is in a less liminal position than before and a step closer to being incorporated into her husband's group.

Although the model of Goody takes time into consideration, a static kind of reflection of reality is being given, people's behaviour never seems to change. In order to reveal the dynamic nature of behaviour, it should be taken into consideration that institutionalised behaviour in the context of the lifestage cycle undergoes changes in each successive generation and as time passes, in accordance with changes emanating from the wider society. This will be looked at among Gcaleka women in this study. Another shortcoming in the above approach is that what is being communicated through the symbolic behaviour of wives is not being given enough attention. In order to discover what meaning/logic lies behind the symbolic behaviour and avoidances women observe, the ideas of Levi-Strauss (1963) and Leach (1976) are drawn back into the discussion.

Among the Gcaleka in this study, the social division by gender, age and kinship creates social categories that are kept apart

through boundaries which often take the form of avoidances women have to observe; avoidances that have to do with daily activities and with showing respect towards her husband's people. When contradictions arise in the social structure, these restrictions/avoidances need to be made more explicit. This is the case with pollution avoidances in Gcaleka society, which leads the discussion into the next chapter (chapter four) and the third chapter in the main body of the thesis. Here reproductive situations, the fertility of women, as well as contradictions arising around these situations are examined among the Gcaleka in the Fukula subward and surrounding areas. A structuralist approach is called for again, and I rely heavily on the ideas of Mary Douglas (1966, 1982).

When a woman reaches her years of fertility, her reproductive capacities are desired by other groups. Another group will now allow this stranger into their midst on account of her fertility. The health and fertility of the wife needs to be safeguarded, as her husband's descent group, as well as the productive unit associated with subsistence activities, needs to be perpetuated. The built-in contradictions surrounding her fertility, seem to cause tension in society. Female fertility is surrounded by 'untidiness', contradictions and disorder. Female fertility is dangerous, it is a threat to the strongly desired order (Hammond-Tooke 1981b: 130, Moore 1986: 113). As Douglas (1966: 85) maintains, I also argue that avoidances associated with reproductive situations are created to symbolically restore and maintain the social and moral order; the form social relations and categories are supposed to take being acted out. In the same

way in which boundaries are drawn around reproductive situations, and fertility, and are maintained through the creation of pollution beliefs, social categories are supposed to be kept 'pure', distinct from each other and contradictions need to be eliminated.

The gap between pollution concepts and morality is not always so wide. Douglas (1966: 172) suggests a connection between pollution rules and social structure. This is also the case among the Gcaleka in this study; they project the social structure and importance of agnatic descent onto pollution beliefs and behaviour.

Concerning pollution beliefs, Douglas (1966: 2 - 5) writes that certain things are labelled as 'dirt'. It is a positive action to eliminate disorder, and to organise the environment. The ideal order of society is guarded by dangers threatening transgressors. Order is created by exaggerating the differences between categories like male/female, within/without, and above/below.

It can thus be argued that reproductive situations are liminal or marginal states which are characterized by ambiguity (La Fontaine 1985: 25). For example, a woman who has had a miscarriage is both a mother and not a mother (Hammond-Tooke 1981a: 20). Danger lies in ambiguous and transitional states. These states are undefinable and represent neither one state nor another (Douglas 1966: 116). Society finds it difficult to classify these people, and often resorts to re-classification (Hammond-Tooke 1981a: 20). Classification is thus concerned with

the ordering of collective life. Pollution is a by-product of ordering and classification, and forms a normal part of social life (Wuthnow 1984: 78, 88).

Finally, boundaries are not only attempts to order social life, and to safeguard the 'purity' of cosmological and social categories; they are also mechanisms used to achieve and maintain control over power and resources. Douglas argues that along with boundaries, power resides in a well structured social system (Hammond-Tooke 1981a: 24).

The picture of the position of married women in Fukula would not be complete without viewing the important role power relations play in the existing authority structure. An important aspect of all relations, 'the power element', is turned to in the final chapter (chapter five). Here the focus shifts from the community to the individual. The authority structure concerned with the spheres where women figure prominently - production, domestic activities and reproduction - will be illuminated through utilising Meillassoux's (1981) materialist model, bringing relations of production and relations of reproduction onto the foreground.

However, the manipulative role of the wife is neglected in Meillassoux's model: the so-called 'women' he constantly refers to, are 'hidden', and do not appear as individual actors at all. Maconachie (1985: 12) argues that what is peculiar about Meillassoux's model, is that it fails to establish an analysis of women's position within the domestic community - in the model

he has constructed of the domestic community, he conceals the prominent role women have in the society. In the formal structure Meillassoux looks at the hierarchical structure among men while no reference is made to a hierarchical structure among women. According to Maconachie (1985: 10):

Women it would seem, do nothing for their own benefit. Women exist only for the benefit of their children, their men or their community: Meillassoux mobilises a favoured model of femininity as eternal self-abnegation.

Furthermore, through merely referring to, for instance, the exploitation of women's reproductive capacities and their labour, the analysis becomes too static without the processes being revealed (Maconachie 1985: 10). In spite of these reservations Meillassoux's analysis has relevance at the macro level: illuminating the formal structure and organisation of the authority system in Gcaleka society. The individual actors acting vis-a-vis one another need to be 'placed into' this authority structure, in order to highlight the processual nature of power relations, and the constant power struggle between power holders and their subordinates. To this end, the approaches of Barth (1966), Bailey (1971) and Foucault (1983) are drawn into the discussion in order to view the individual actors; how they, as both power holders and subordinates, try to further their own interests in a constant power struggle. It is this power element, that 'electrifies' the system, brings changes about, and holds the existing structure intact.

By studying daily activities as an ongoing process, the analysis is not restricted to formal, institutionalized structures which

limit the individual actor's range of possible opportunities and strategies; it can also accommodate variations that occur. Variations result from the decision-making and the choices of the individual actors. Through now adding a transactionalist viewpoint to the above, one is able to highlight how the individual actors (especially the women in this study) do not necessarily accept normative evaluations of their position; but assess their options within the given boundaries set by society and then manipulate the given situation to their own benefit (Barth 1966: 4, Tiffany 1978: 38).

For example, Nophindile's husband asked her to clean a cupboard in one of their huts one morning, upon which she replied that she was not feeling well (this not being true at the time), and then promptly went off to visit the neighbours. This resulted in him, later on, cleaning the cupboard himself. Within the existing order, she was undermining the authority that her husband is supposed to have over her to further her own interests. It is also an indication to the researcher of how power can be exercised through an informal structure normally invisible to the public eye.

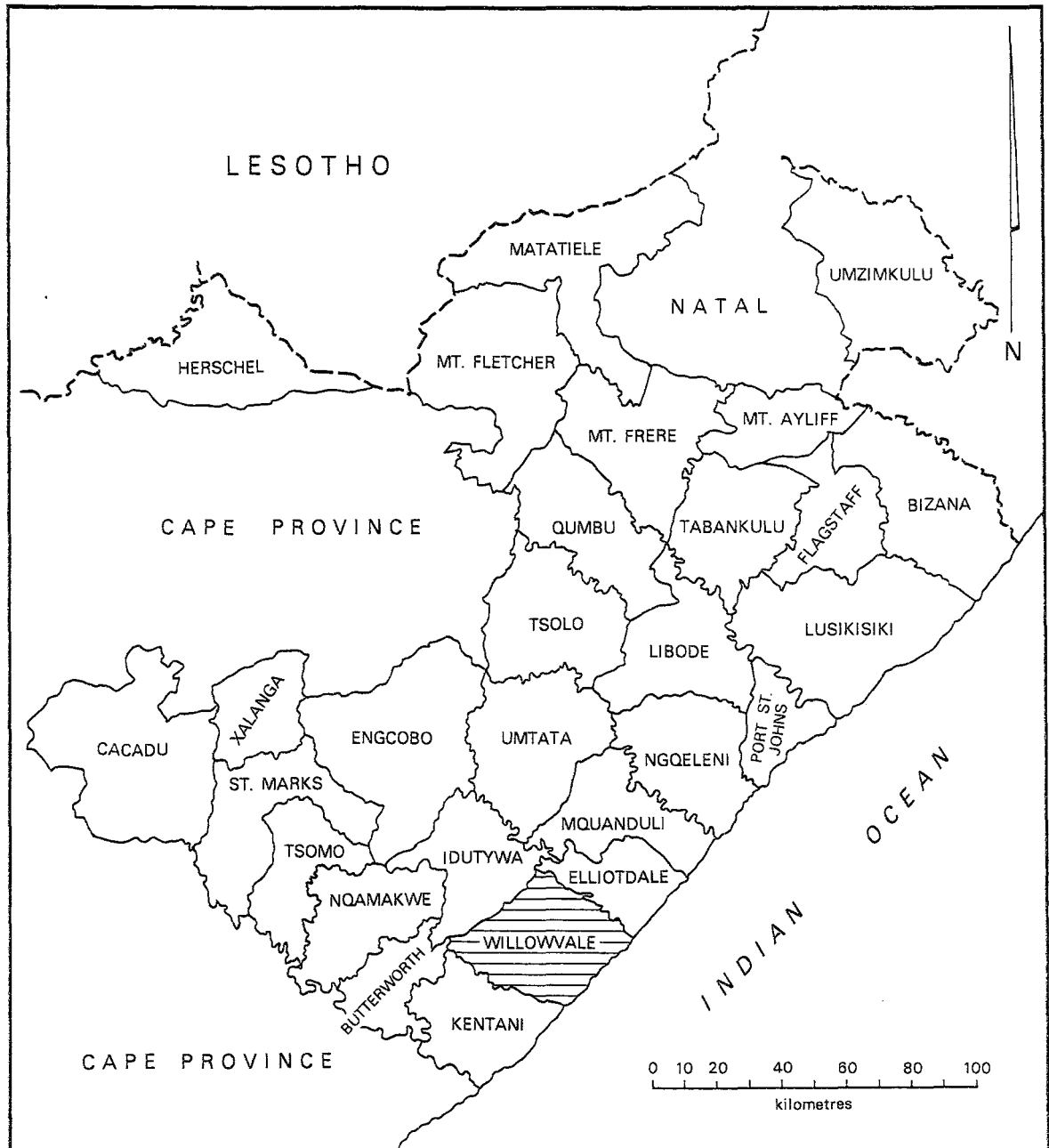
The power element is part of all social relations. In Gcaleka society a formal, authoritative system exists whereby male elders are given the right to dominate women and their juniors. I will show that beliefs and practices associated with avoidances do not necessarily contribute only to a subordinate position of women in society. Avoidances also safeguard their position and empower them. Furthermore, the imbalance the formal structure

creates is counter-balanced through their invisible role in an informal power structure.

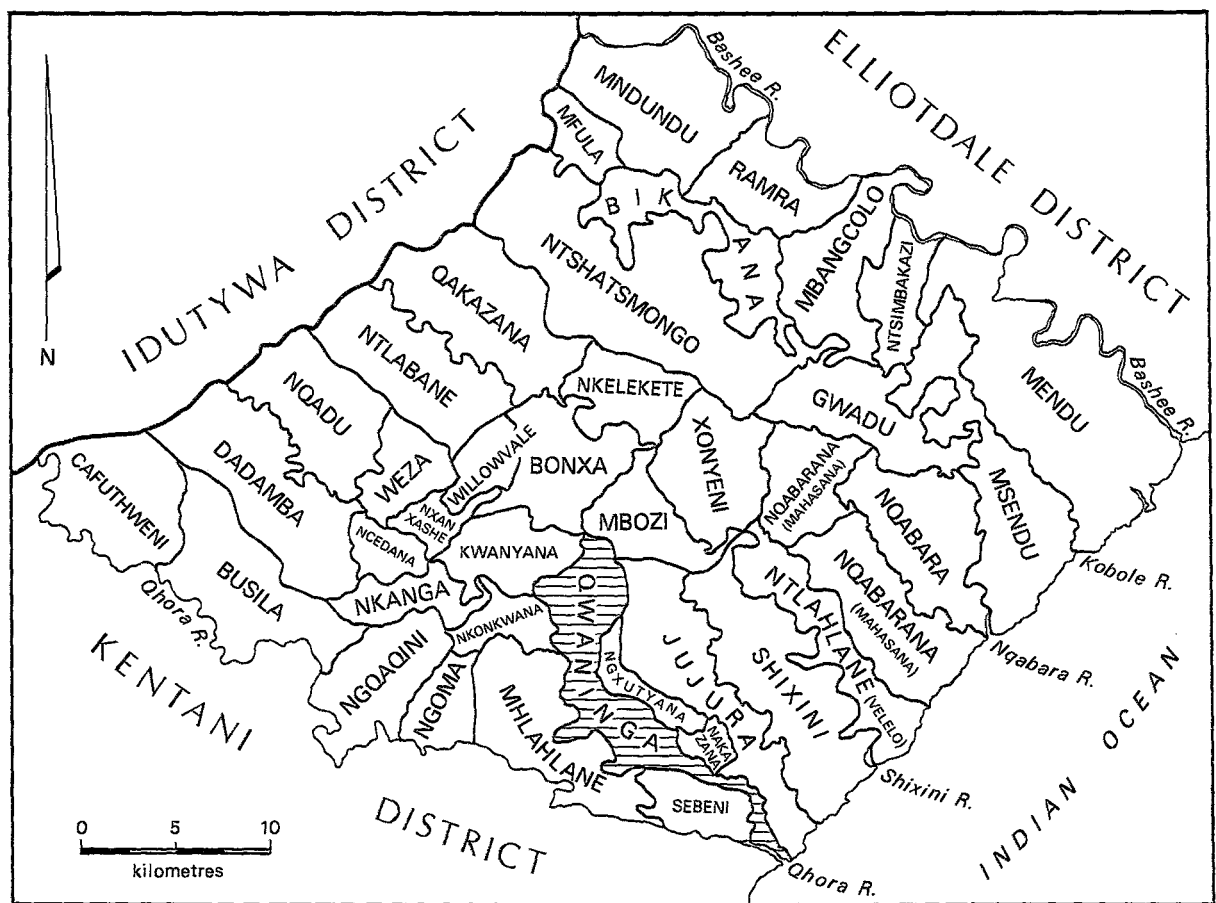
In the Conclusion, the position of married women is reconsidered. It is argued that female subordination cannot be assumed as the evidence supplied proves otherwise.

FIELDWORK

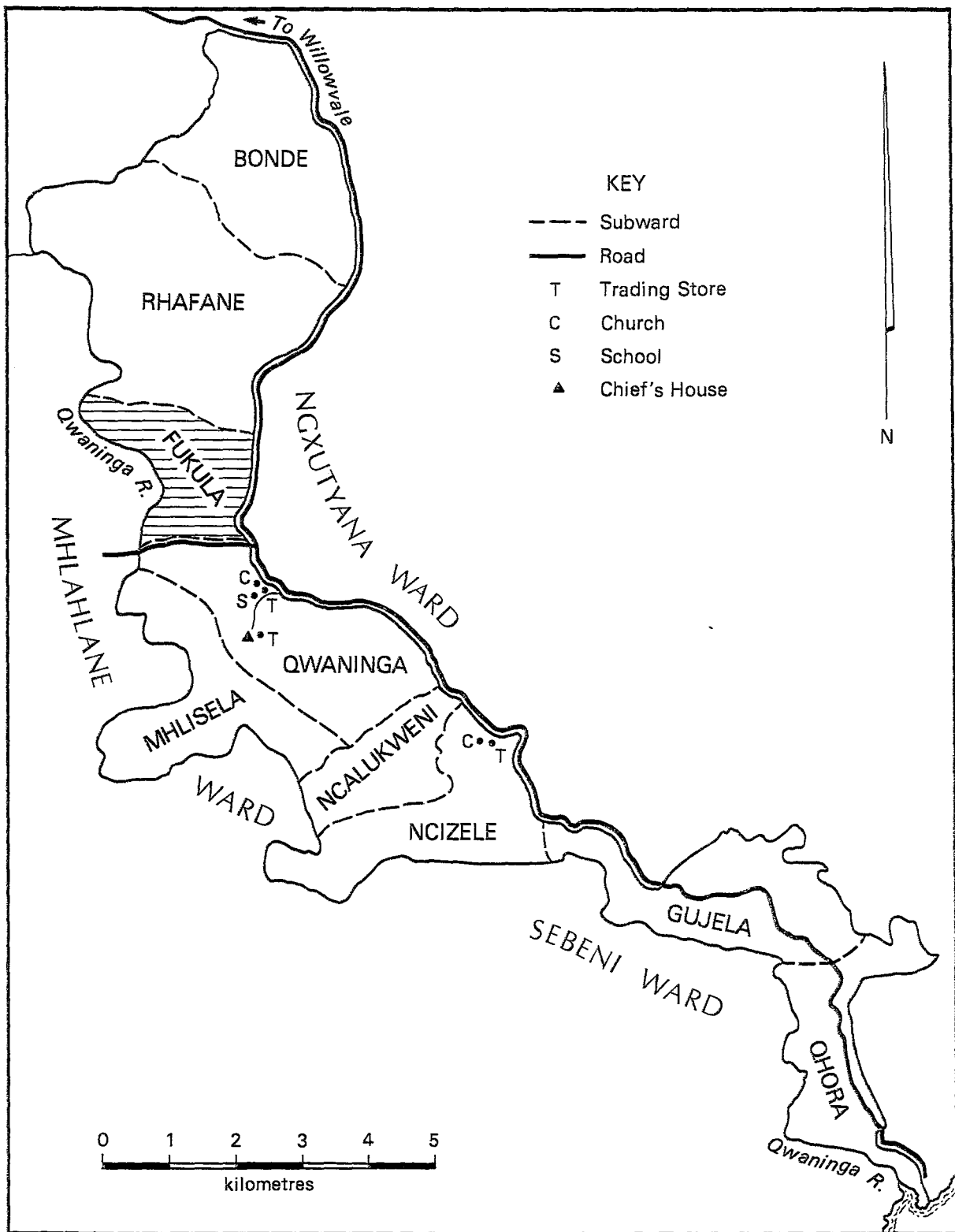
The fieldwork for this study was carried out between February 1989 and February 1991. Fieldwork in the Qwaninga ward, Willowvale district, Transkei (see map 1, 2), commenced in July 1989. During the previous five months a period of approximately 6 weeks - 6 days in February, 4 days in April, and 34 days in June/July - had been spent in adjacent wards to Qwaninga. During the June/July field trip two of these weeks were spent in the Ngababarana/Mahasana ward, 4 weeks in Shixini, and a few day trips had been made to Qwaninga (see map 2). When fieldwork commenced in Qwaninga in July/August 1989, the first trip was for 38 days. I stayed in a homestead in the subward Qwaninga (see map 3) close to the chief's place. During those few weeks I made friends with a woman in the subward Fukula (see map 3). Before leaving I asked her father, who happened to be the sub-headman in Fukula, if I could live in their homestead when I came back to continue doing fieldwork. He agreed to this. I returned there in October/November for another 38 days, in February/March 1990 for 42 days, in July for 27 days, and, finally, in February 1991 for 21 days. A total period of seven



Map 1: Districts of the Transkei



Map 2: District of Willowvale



Map 3: Qwaninga ward

and a half months were spent in the field.

During the initial six weeks in the field, I was absorbing as much as possible of what was going on around me, vaguely understanding the language and attempting to speak it (as I had not been able to find an interpreter yet), and was often only subconsciously aware of the possible meaning people attached to the strange behaviour and actions I observed at their gatherings and rituals. I had entered the field with the university course in Xhosa fresh in my mind. Our training had laid emphasis on an understanding of the structure of the language and not on the speaking of the language. As time passed 'my ear' became tuned in to the language I was hearing all day long. I started memorising the names people gave to the objects around us, started to follow short conversations and tried to answer people when they spoke to me. There were many amusing moments when we through words and gestures tried to communicate with each other.

In retrospect, these six weeks have turned out to be a time during which I went through a very intensive 'fieldwork training period', as I had entered the field without any previous fieldwork experience. It was a time of visiting chiefs to obtain permission to do research in their areas, applying for a residence permit, meeting the people for the first time; experiencing 'culture shock'. The areas I entered in Ngabarana and Qwaninga have seldom been visited by white people. I was considered to be a 'strange phenomenon', and the 'doing of fieldwork/research' was a new idea to them, which scared some people off, while others thought it silly and would laugh at me.

We had a strong impact on each other, and did not know how to relate to each other. This was the beginning of a two-way relationship that needed to grow over time before we were able to start understanding each other any better. Different attitudes were shown towards me: people were scared, friendly, did not like me, tried to make friends, reacted to my being a woman and in need of protection (this of course minimized my being a threat to them), reacted to my being 'white'; others felt sorry for me because they thought I appeared to be lonely (isithukutezi).

In the beginning it was a great problem to find a suitable interpreter, as the people who did come forward could not make themselves comprehensible enough in either English or Afrikaans. I was assisted by seven different interpreters. Five of them were young girls from the local area who assisted me for a few days at a time. The communication problem was solved when I in July 1989 took an interpreter with me from Grahamstown. She, however, consequently got married to a man from Willowvale town after our field trip. At my wits' end, matters suddenly changed when I met a young woman (in her early thirties) from Grahamstown who was fluent in Afrikaans, English, and, of course, Xhosa. She went with for the first time in February/March 1990. She immediately was a success in the field. She was sensitive to people's feelings and reactions, knew when to keep quiet, was soon liked by almost everyone as they said she was a person that cared about other people.

The first six week period of real fieldwork, started on Tuesday, 30 May 1989. Fieldwork was done for two weeks in the subward,

Zwelitsha, in the Ngabarana ward, before I moved to Shixini (see map 2). There are approximately 35 homesteads in Zwelitsha. Although a homestead survey is usually only done in the later months of fieldwork, we decided to start off with the homestead survey immediately. My interpreter lived in that subward, which made it easier to enter people's homesteads. We decided that a good way to approach the people, would be to introduce myself and to tell them about myself. We would then ask them similar questions about themselves which covered most of the questions in the homestead survey. However, I did not stay there for long, because I soon discovered that these people were not so 'traditional' anymore, and I had set out to do research among 'traditional' people. It had not been a waste of time to be there though, as it was good practice and training, and prepared me for later field trips.

Research included the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data. These methods included observation, as far as possible participant observation, daily interaction with people, asking questions on the spot, and participating in gatherings and other daily activities. In this way I attempted to achieve an 'inside' view and understanding of society.

Participant observation was supplemented by data obtained from literature, a diary, as well as formal and informal interviewing, in order to reveal the concepts, practices, and attitudes of women on their daily activities that have to do with marriage, reproduction, production and their domestic lives, set against the background of gender, age and kinship roles and values in

society.

Statistical data was obtained through a homestead to homestead census of the subward in the later stages of fieldwork in July 1990. This general survey (see appendix 1) of the subward, to obtain quantitative data, included queries on household composition, how many people were not at home, the birthdate of people, and data on whether they have a field, garden, cattle, and goats.

It is important to analyse qualitative data in conjunction with quantitative data to reveal to what extent action systems concerned with daily life, marriage, production, and reproductive situations reflect the basic cultural ideology about social differentiation based on gender, age, and kinship distinctions and of a more generalised worldview (see appendices 2,3,4 for questions on hierarchical relations, married life and hlonipha, and ritual impurity).

However, the effectiveness and successful use of these field methods is dependent on the living conditions and the situation the researcher finds him/herself in; on the people themselves, and especially on how the relationship between the researcher and the people develops over time (cf. Evans-Pritchard 1951: 82). In this study, the field methods and techniques used were affected in a positive way by changes that occurred as time passed. For instance, observation was at a distance in the beginning. As time passed people allowed me to come closer. I attended more social gatherings and sat in their homes more often. During the final

stages of fieldwork, observation started turning into greater participation. For example, I would also clap at a ritual, would, while I was visiting, help a woman wash dishes, take maize off the cobs, pour the tea, and so on.

As I settled down and found the living conditions becoming more comfortable, we at the same time started growing more relaxed in each others' company. I started getting better and clearer answers to my questions. Vague answers I had been given in the beginning, because we had not been on each others' wavelength yet, were clarified. My diary was an important pointer towards the changes that occurred as time passed.

During the first two weeks I soon discovered which activities women were occupying themselves with most of the time. While visiting their homes in order to introduce myself and meet them, I found one woman smearing the hut's floor with cow-dung, another washing dishes, another clothes, one came back from the river with a bucket of water on her head, one with a pile of wood on her head. Passing another homestead, I found a woman re-dunging the hut's outside wall with a mixture of cow-dung, soil, and water. Inside another home, an old lady was weaving a sleeping mat.

During the first five weeks I kept on feeling tremendous discomfort, missing my Western comforts, for example, a bed, taps, electricity, certain foodstuffs that were perishable, a radio, regular meal times, and so on. I felt insecure without my Western lifestyle being lived around me. During the first while

there (in July 1989), we had to cope with rats in our hut; and in October 1989 I was stuck in a hut alone for a week during the rainy season. It was impossible to go out to people to interview them under these circumstances. In my hut, the roof was leaking badly and buckets were standing all over the floor. If you dared to go outside, you would slip in the mud. On the gravel road motor vehicles had to stop travelling. All day long frogs could be heard in the dams in the surrounding areas, everything was hidden in dense mist. As soon as it cleared up for an hour or two, people would try to do some ploughing in their gardens. I longed for my Western world 'out there' then - I wanted to quit the fieldwork and go home.

I noticed how secure people were in their own world, realising that 'my world' must make them feel correspondingly as insecure, that our technologically advanced ways may for this reason not be as impressive to them as we may have thought, that security is conditioned by the mind.

Going back for the second period of five weeks brought this change about - in my mind I suddenly stopped feeling uncomfortable. Our food made on the paraffin stove suddenly became tastier than the food at home in Grahamstown, it was more 'homely' by candlelight, fetching drinking water by the fountain showed a beautiful countryside which the city person often misses, walking everywhere instead of driving in a motor-vehicle brought one closer to the heartbeat of the society; there was a greater concern for one's fellow man in this society, people were not rushing past each other, had time for each other. They say

that no person should either be alone or have to deal with problems alone when he needs help. You should always be there for each other: 'you are a human-being through other human-beings'. Into this I suddenly felt myself being drawn.

I was trying to find my niche there, and wanted to start participating more in what was going on around me. In my diary I noted down that I thought that I should try to put more of an effort into 'tuning into their lifestyle and rhythm'. I needed to learn more patience though. From February 1990 onwards, an optimism started showing in the diary that never faded away again. I had started growing fond of people, and had missed them when I went away. I noted down that people were less aloof now. They were more relaxed when I entered their homes, of course also reacting to my being more at ease and to my participating in what they were doing. I started to just visit people sometimes. They started giving me information without my asking them.

My new interpreter and I got on well, and together we never seemed to have a free moment anymore as had been the case in the beginning. We would get up as early as the people every morning. When we were not going to see people to ask questions, we would be fetching water, meeting people on the way and talking to them, cooking, doing washing down by the river, going to a ritual, smearing our hut's floor with cow-dung, participating in what people were doing. I had for the first time there started becoming involved in what was going on. I shared in the sorrow of the family who lost their mother through death, heard the

local gossip, was made aware of people's joys and saw the anger of others. We did a lot of walking - we were there without transport having been dropped off by the other Rhodes students who were doing research in the adjacent administrative area of Shixini - and sometimes walked to places that were two hours' walk away. We had become 'real' to each other. In the beginning I had been like someone who had come from outerspace, they could not imagine that I had feelings like them, for instance, feeling cold and feeling sad. When they one day saw me crying, it surprised them, and things started changing after that. They in a joking way 'fitted' me into their social structure which taught me a lot about the working of their social structure. This happened on a number of occasions. For instance, they joked and said that I was the second wife of one of the senior men in the subward, and told me what I should be occupying myself with being his young wife. He would call out when we passed that homestead every day, and name things I must do.

The initial disillusionment I had experienced in the field was probably an important element in my 'growing up' in the field. In February 1991, I stopped wearing my watch in the field. I found it helped me to 'tune in' better to what was going on around me. I had learnt to be more patient. The people and I were far more relaxed with each other. I would visit their homes for a longer period at a time and only after an hour or more start asking questions. I was getting better answers than before. Being more patient, I was able to start feeling timelessness, peace, and would sit with the people relaxing and enjoying their company. I came to realise through my own

experience that the 'tool kit' of field methods and techniques I used in the field would not have produced as good data and material as it did, had 'time' not been added to the other tools in the bag.

CHAPTER 1: THE GCALEKA OF FUKULA**INTRODUCTION**

This chapter is concerned with describing and contextualizing Fukula, one of the nine subwards in the Qwaninga ward, Willowvale district, Transkei (see map 3, p.18). The historical background is set. Against this background the Gcaleka of Fukula¹ are introduced and the Fukula subward is located in its political, economic and social context.

THE ECOLOGICAL SETTING

The Transkei lies in a summer rainfall region. Thunderstorms occur frequently. The ecological setting in Fukula and the surrounding areas is one of undulating slopes and hills, rivers in the lower lying areas, and scattered homesteads often found on the hilltops. Huts are built in a semi-circle, facing the cattle-byre. Gardens are attached to the homesteads (in many cases being the size of a small field); whereas the fields of its constituent homesteads are situated adjacent to each other in the lower lying areas. Fields are not fenced, whereas gardens are.

There are a few forests in the area which supply people with wood for cooking and building material. In each forest only certain subwards have the right to use the wood. A matter of great concern to the people is the fact that the forests are becoming

¹ Throughout the thesis I use pseudonyms for the people of Fukula and the surrounding areas.

smaller all the time as more and more trees are being chopped down. People have now been forbidden to use axes in the forest and 'forest policemen' have been appointed to control the situation. The forest policeman I met a few times, used to pass on horseback with a rifle on his shoulder.

Each subward has specific places where they fetch water in the river (places where they fetch drinking water and do washing being separated). During the dry winter period the rivers in the area start drying up and women have to walk far to find water. Because of a severe drought this became an even bigger problem during the winter of 1989. The chief's wife found her own solution to the problem: one used to see her driving off with huge containers to a place seven kilometres away to fetch water for their big household.

POLITICAL BACKGROUND

The first inhabitants of the Willowvale district were probably Bushmen (San) who roamed the countryside in nomadic bands. Europeans first settled in the area in c.1839 (Hammond-Tooke 1956: 8, 13). Gcalekaland (Willowvale and Kentani - see map 1, p.16) was annexed by conquest in 1878. The Willowvale district's boundaries were demarcated in 1891, and the district was divided into 39 administrative areas ('locations', wards) in 1916: Qwaninga constituting one of these administrative areas (Hammond-Tooke 1956: 5). The various administrative areas were divided into a number of subwards. The bureaucratic line of command ran from the chief magistrate to the district magistrate to the

government-appointed ward headman, and finally, to the sub-headman who was in control of the subward (Hammond-Tooke 1975a: 16, 93).

In Qwaninga, Gagadu Manxiwa is the current chief², he is the direct descendant of Manxiwa (Lindinxwa) from the xhiba-house³ (see appendix 5 for the genealogy of Gagadu), and he belongs to the royal Tshawe clan⁴ (Hammond-Tooke 1956: 31, 40; Peires 1981: 48). Qwaninga and seven other administrative areas⁵ are grouped under the Kwamkoloza tribal authority. Chief Khalukhalu Thabathile Sigcawu is the head of the Kwamkoloza tribal authority, which is situated in Willowvale town (Jackson 1975: 6). In Qwaninga, chief Manxiwa is assisted by the sub-headmen in the nine subwards. Political authority at subward level is exercised through the sub-headmen.

In the 1951 census the population of the Willowvale district numbered 63 339; and in 1970 the population had risen to

2 In actual fact chief Manxiwa is a headman, and not a chief (inkosi). A chief usually is in control of more than one administrative area. Most headmen in Willowvale are also chiefs, and are never addressed as headmen. The term isibonda (which means headman rather than sub-headman) is commonly used to refer to a sub-headman (McAllister 1979: 32).

3 Through the course of history it was the custom of chiefs to group their wives in different houses. The most important of these are the great house and the right-hand house. One of the wives is placed at the head of each of these. Additional wives are regarded as supports for these two houses and are allocated to one or the other of them. The xhiba house, is a third house Xhosa chiefs occasionally have (Jackson 1975: 5).

4 The definition given by Hammond-Tooke (1975a: 17) for the 'clan' is applicable here, that is, an aggregate of kin who believe themselves to be descended from a common ancestor in the male line, but is unable to trace their exact relationship genealogically.

5 The other wards this tribal authority comprises of are: Mhlahlane, Nkonkwane, Kwanyana, Sebeni, Nakazana, Ngxutyana, and Jujura (Jackson 1975: 77) (see map 2, p.17).

an estimated 77 000 (Hammond-Tooke 1956: 16; Hammond-Tooke 1975a: 103). Qwaninga had a population of 2114 in the 1951 census, and this figure rose to 2578 in 1970⁶ (Hammond-Tooke 1956: 18; Jackson 1975: 77).

ETHNOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Environment and homestead layout

In Gcaleka society, the mode of settlement followed the typical Nguni pattern of scattered homesteads. In the late nineteenth century and before, homesteads consisted of from ten to forty huts under the control and authority of a single male head (McAllister 1991b: 368). In later years, the average homestead consisted of three or four huts built in a semi-circle facing the cattle-byre, with the principal hut in the centre of the others (Hoernle 1937: 75; Soga 1931: 408).

Most homesteads had their own gardens next to the cattle-byre. Homesteads were grouped into certain localities which were separated by large stretches of grazing land. Each locality had its fields nearby, usually situated in a river valley, and the surrounding forests supplied firewood⁷ (Hammond-Tooke 1956: 68, 69, 75).

6 After writing to the Cape Archives Depot, the Department of Internal Affairs in Pretoria, the Department of the Interior in Umtata and the District Commissioner in Willowvale town, I still do not have up-to-date census figures on Qwaninga and Willowvale.
7 Fire was everywhere made by friction: a thin, hard stick was twirled rapidly between the hands into a notch cut in a softer stick, and the resulting spark caught up in dry grass (Schapera 1937: 131).

Economic life

In the olden times people lived partly upon the natural resources of their environment, and partly on domesticated plants and animals. Cattle, goats, sheep⁸, chickens, and grain provided them with the most of the necessities of life (Schapera 1937: 131; Soga 1931: 381). The Gcaleka have always been a pastoral people and although agriculture is the principal source of subsistence, it has played a secondary part in their economy and social life (Hammond-Tooke 1956: 71; Schapera 1937: 137; Soga 1931: 382). Everything to do with cattle was men's work, and agriculture was mainly women's work. Each family group was supposed to be self-supporting (Alberti 1968: 56; Hammond-Tooke 1956: 71; Pim 1930: 7). In this regard, McAllister (1991b: 368) claims that the larger homesteads in former times made economic independence possible. However, duties and claims of hospitality were so wide that in practice the food of all members of the group was held in common. Food and beer were not bought or sold. Beer may be regarded as a community food, as beer was seldom brewed for private domestic use, and all were welcome to partake. According to Soga:

An unwritten law required that every householder should brew beer for the general community at fairly regular intervals (1931: 399, 400).

They used materials out of the environment for building materials and household utensils. Clothing consisted largely of articles manufactured from the skins of animals (mostly ox

⁸ Willowvale is not a big sheep farming area. Goats are extensively used (Hammond-Tooke 1956: 72).

hides) which were as pliant as cloth (Alberti 1968: 29; Hammond-Tooke 1956: 70; Schapera 1937: 147; Soga 1931: 241). Men on ordinary occasions wrapped themselves in a skin blanket/cloak, and wore a penis sheath (Schapera 1937: 143; Soga 1931: 410). The men also wore tails of different animals tied round their thighs, and wore a 'chest to thigh' skin skirt (Alberti 1968: 31; Hammond-Tooke 1956: 70). Women's bodies were always covered. They wore headdresses (made of a small antelope skin), and wrapped skin cloaks double round their bodies (Alberti 1968: 32, 60). As time passed, the principal article of clothing worn by women became, a long skirt made of ox-hide (isikaka), and dyed a dark colour; a skin cloak/cape (isibaca) worn in the cold weather, a headdress, a breast cloth (incebeta), and bracelets and arm rings (Schapera 1937: 142, 143; Soga 1931: 242, 411, 412).

Kinship and household composition

Each homestead was occupied by an individual family. Homesteads were larger than today, and consisted of a patriarch with his wives and dependant children, his married sons with their families, often including an aged parent, and possibly also unrelated married dependants. Polygyny was an ideal which every well-established man strived to attain (Hammond-Tooke 1956: 68; Hoernle 1937: 75; McAllister 1991b: 368). Wives, of course, moved to their husbands' homes on getting married.

Concerning women, Alberti (1968: 59) said the following:

... she is ... in possession of a certain gentle authority which she exercises over the men, and by means of which she obtains influence and standing

However, the wife had the large duty of hlonipha (the custom of showing respect), entailing certain restrictions of speech and behaviour (see chapter 3), to the family into which she had married (Soga 1931: 208). For instance, she was not allowed to intrude upon the men's side of the hut. Should she meet her in-laws in the pathway, she stepped aside. She did not eat freely with them nor appear in working undress before them until she was fully settled in the homestead by bearing children for them. These restrictions continued until a woman was head of her own homestead (Hoernle 1937: 77).

Cosmology

Two forces bound people into a cultural unit. In this regard:

The first was spiritual as exemplified in their religion, and in the spirit-world wherein dwell the spirits of their ancestral chiefs, and of each family's departed relatives. These spirits are active, concerning themselves with the things which pertain to their unseen world, and, at the same time, keeping in touch with the living, and requiring the living to keep in touch with them through ritual acts and ceremonial rites (Soga 1931: 7).

They had a conception of a Supreme Being: a God who controls and governs all and is the creator of all things. He was worshipped through the medium of the ancestral spirits, who in the unseen world were nearer to Him, and knew more than men on earth (Hammond-Tooke 1956: 66; Peires 1981: 64; Soga 1931: 149, 150).

According to Peires:

it seems probable that most of the important features of Xhosa religion were extensions of household worship, relating as they do to ancestor veneration or the life-cycle. Each household head was a religious practitioner in that he made the offerings and performed the beneficent magic which accompanied the daily business of living (1981: 64).

People believed that the unseen world was active in this one and exercised an important causal influence:

Health and fertility were accepted as the natural condition of things, and any deficiency was attributed to dereliction of duty or to the influence of malevolent persons. It was further assumed that the unseen world was comprehensible, that its forces behaved according to set patterns, and that it was therefore open to manipulation and control. Similarly, correct observance of ritual was a prerequisite for success and happiness in everyday life (Peires 1981: 67).

The second binding force in the society was the customs. Customs gave a special character to the group (Soga 1931: 46). Customs backed up the system of law, controlled and ordered social life, stereotyped opinions and ideas of conduct, and thus unified social life (Soga 1931: 129).

Change

In the Transkei contact with the 'white man' - missionaries, Government officials, traders, ordinary people and labour recruiters - brought about many changes. They revealed to the Xhosa new forms of dress and decoration, of speech, and of material culture in general. Missionaries introduced a new form of religion and associated morality, as well as a new system of education. Government officials represented a new system of

administration, taxation in money, new laws, and new courts. Others were responsible for such new social services as health, and economic development. Traders brought in the material products of Western civilization (e.g. clothes, blankets, materials for dresses, ploughs, and even matches), and a new system of trade. Labour recruiters introduced new forms of occupations which involved a lengthy absence from home (Schapera 1937: 358, 364).

When this complete and self-contained communal system came into contact with the Western system, to adopt Western ways involved violating many sacred usages. Western influence has changed and modified much connected with the earlier life of the Xhosa. For instance, more than 100 years ago the first Western plough made its appearance among the Xhosa (Soga 1931: 382, 383). Another new implement of agriculture was the iron hoe with its long handle. These have changed also the food question, in that much larger crops of grain were harvested, which replaced milk as the principal article of diet. New varieties of grain and vegetables have also gradually been introduced by Western farmers and traders (Soga 1931: 393).

In the 1920s radical changes in the methods of agriculture were initiated. These included deeper ploughing, weeding with cultivators, and the use of mechanical planters in place of broadcasting the seed (Soga 1931: 396). Cattle tanks for the regular dipping of stock were built (Soga 1931: 398).

Like the agricultural implements, clothing has undergone great

changes and has been widely replaced either completely or partially, by Western clothing of a lighter weight and softer material. Woollen blankets replaced skins in the dress of the Xhosa, in their turn replaced by Western dress (Hammond-Tooke 1956: 70; Schapera 1937: 142; Soga 1931: 241). Women started wearing cotton sheeting skirts (umbhaco), fastened round the body, and decorated at the bottom with rows of black braid (Soga 1931: 412). There was an increasing tendency for men to adopt Western-type clothing. By the 1950s, it was the 'school people' who were wearing Western-type clothes (Hammond-Tooke 1956: 71); now almost everyone does. Although 'traditional' women wear the Western-type clothes now, they dress in such a way that it conforms to their own norms and values concerning clothing.

The Western material culture, as well as the wares of the trader, were accepted readily. However, the people resented the new form of political control and the abolition of the powers of the chiefs by Administration (Schapera 1937: 359, 361).

The above took place on a material, visible level; whereas the influence of the missionaries was on an ideological level. It was the missionaries' aim to convert the Xhosa to Christianity, to instil their system of morals and general behaviour, and to use education as an instrument through which the people could learn to read the Bible (Ashley 1974: 201; Schapera 1937: 360). The missionaries stood for civilisation, Christianisation, and education (Molema 1963: 220). In the South African Missionary Conference Report (1928: 19), it was said that:

Native education ... is the outcome of the impulse toward a new life given to the Natives by the missionaries through the teaching of Christian truth ... it is necessary that religion continue to be the central force in Native education.

As the cultural obstacle to change became apparent, education was to be a means whereby people were gradually weaned away from the traditional way of life and its role was defined as part of the attack on traditional culture. Missionaries were aware that schools could bring about a change in values and habits. They forbade converts to practise 'ancestor worship', witchcraft, magic, polygyny, inheritance of widows, the lobola custom, initiation, and to dress in certain ways⁹. These practices clashed with the teaching of the Christian Church, and constituted a powerful threat to the life of the Xhosa Christian Church. Children at school were pressurized to abandon these practices, and the wearing of clothes was a crucial issue (Ashley 1974: 201; Schapera 1937: 360; Soga 1931: 141). Attacking witchcraft was like denying the existence of a disease. They could not persuade the Xhosa to abandon polygyny and bridewealth as this formed the cement of all social relationships. As they lacked the concept of sin, the Xhosa could hardly share the missionaries' objections to dancing and nudity. (Peires 1981: 75).

In the Willowvale district, the first mission work was begun in 1841 when Beecham Wood was established by the Wesleyan

9 The hlonipha custom was not attacked by the missionaries, as it did not conflict with the way in which their own womenfolk were expected to behave, that is, in a quiet, gentle, submissive sort of way.

Methodist Missionary Society (Hammond-Tooke 1956: 21). The Gcaleka were on the whole indifferent to the work of the mission but great progress was made in evangelizing the Mfengu (remnants of a number of tribes which had been scattered by wars) (Hammond-Tooke 1956: 22). The indigenous ancestor cult was still practised. Witchcraft and magic continued to play an important part in community life and there was little sign that belief in them was dying out (Hammond-Tooke 1956: 65, 67). Christians were expected to cut themselves off from traditional social activities such as initiation ceremonies and dances, and tended to form a closed endogamous group. There was, however, close economic integration, since most Christians had pagan relatives and friends (Hammond-Tooke 1956: 60).

The traditional cosmology had no place for Western beliefs and values and no way to deal with the threat they posed (Peires 1981: 68). Christianity has had little effect upon traditional magical beliefs and practices. These persist strongly even among many professing Christians (Schapera 1937: 371). The so-called 'red' people rejected the education that was offered. It was rejected as part of the attempt to change their way of life, their national customs and their identity. To become a 'school' person was to lose a way of life, a culture. Chiefs found school people unamenable to their authority, and boys were diverted from their herding duties, thus interfering with economic life (Ashley 1974: 202). Red conservatism, as an ideology, has long included an element of resistance (McAllister 1991a: 131). In this regard, Mayer (1980: 4) explained the Red ideology in terms of a normative framework within which people lived their own, firmly

defined moralities. The ideology had to do with large ideas such as humanity (ubuntu) and human dignity (imbeko). The Red people strove for human dignity by maintaining their identity in the ways laid down by the ancestors.

LIFE IN FUKULA IN THE OLDEN DAYS

Life in the earlier days was described by the four oldest inhabitants in Fukula. They are two men, one being blind, and two women. The men respectively were born in 1911 and c.1914, and the women in 1920 and c.1904. The Mvulane and Mzangwa clans are represented by them.

There were four homesteads (represented by the Tshawe, Cirha, Mzangwa, and Mvulane clans) in Fukula, c.1914. A close relationship existed between human-beings and their environment: in order to survive almost all their materials came out of the environment, for example, they used soil to make bricks with, cow-dung for the floor; grass for the roof, sleeping mats, ropes, and baskets; and wood for making fire with, and for goat and cattle enclosures. All of this has been and is undergoing change: the outside world is gradually 'moving into their world'.

At the time, people were living in dome-shaped grass huts, which had a door one had to crawl in through, no windows, and were smeared with mud inside. The blind man says he lived in one of these huts. According to the old lady, who was born in 1920, some people were still living in these huts in the 1920s: the old and the new form existed side by side. This old lady was living

in one of the 'new huts', a round mud-brick hut¹⁰. It had a thatched roof, a cow-dung floor, no windows, was smeared with mud inside and outside, and had a door which was woven out of branches. The mud bricks were later replaced by walls made out of poles that had been planted in the ground, and sticks and branches were woven into this structure.

'Furniture', that is, in Western terms, was unknown to them. On the left side of the door as one entered, against the wall, a 'place to sit' was built up out of the floor with mud and was covered with cow-dung.

Sleeping mats were used as beds, and their clothes and other belongings were kept in wooden chests. This is still the case in the hut of the old lady who was born in 1904. At night, the fire gave them light, as well as lit dry cow-dung covered in pork fat. A glowing coal was used to light, for example, a pipe, and a fire was often made by friction.

People had fields in those days. According to the old man born in 1911, there used to be no gardens. However, he started his own garden in the early 1930s, and remembers starting off with three tobacco seeds and three pumpkin seeds. Maize, sorghum (amazimba), kidney beans, and pumpkin were important crops at the time. The maize was kept in storage pits in the cattle-byre and covered

10 The beehive-shaped hut (ngqu-phantsi) was a grass hut, and had a coating of mud, mixed with cow dung to give it toughness, and was plastered all over the inside (Peires 1981: 3; Schapera 1937: 144; Soga 1931: 409). The rondavel type hut (isithembiso) was a circular hut made of mud bricks, laid row upon row, with a thatched dome-shaped roof (Soga 1931: 410).

with large, flat stones. Patches of tobacco were planted near their homesteads, and covered with small bushes.

Sowing seeds and planting was done by hand. A long, sharpened stick¹¹ was used for ploughing and hoeing, and large stones acted as axes. Cattle were sometimes used as horses¹². Both men and women worked the fields. According to these informants, the white man introduced the plough, horses, pigs, chickens, and sheep. Goats and cattle they already had¹³.

Household utensils consisted of wooden spoons, grass mats for eating, clay pots and clay water containers, iron three-legged pots; and skin bags (imvaba) in which sour milk was kept. There was no flour and maize meal. In order to make dough, they had to grind the soaked maize kernels into a fine powder form on a grinding stone, mix it with water, and cook the dough in a pot with water. Salt, tea, and sugar, were introduced to the people by the Mfengu arrivals.

People were still using garments that were made out of animal skins. They also, for instance, used woollen blankets and women

11 Soga (1931: 393) describes 'this stick' as: a piece of sneezewood shaped into the form of a spade (ikuba), flattened and sharpened at the digging end, and rounded for holding, for the remainder of its length (about two feet long).

12 According to Soga (1931: 371) hunting used to be the primary sport among the Xhosa. He says another of the tribal sports, which the above informant must have been referring to, was cattle racing: in the estimation of the people it occupied much the same position as horse racing does in England. Cattle-dipping regulations put a stop to this sport.

13 Related to this, Wilson and Thompson (1969: 107, 109) say that the Nguni people kept mainly cattle and dogs, but also goats and a few sheep. Horses, pigs, woolled sheep, and a new variety of goat were introduced by the white settlers.

wore cotton sheeting skirts (imibhaco). Western-type clothing, like cotton dresses, shirts, and trousers, were worn by the 'church people'.

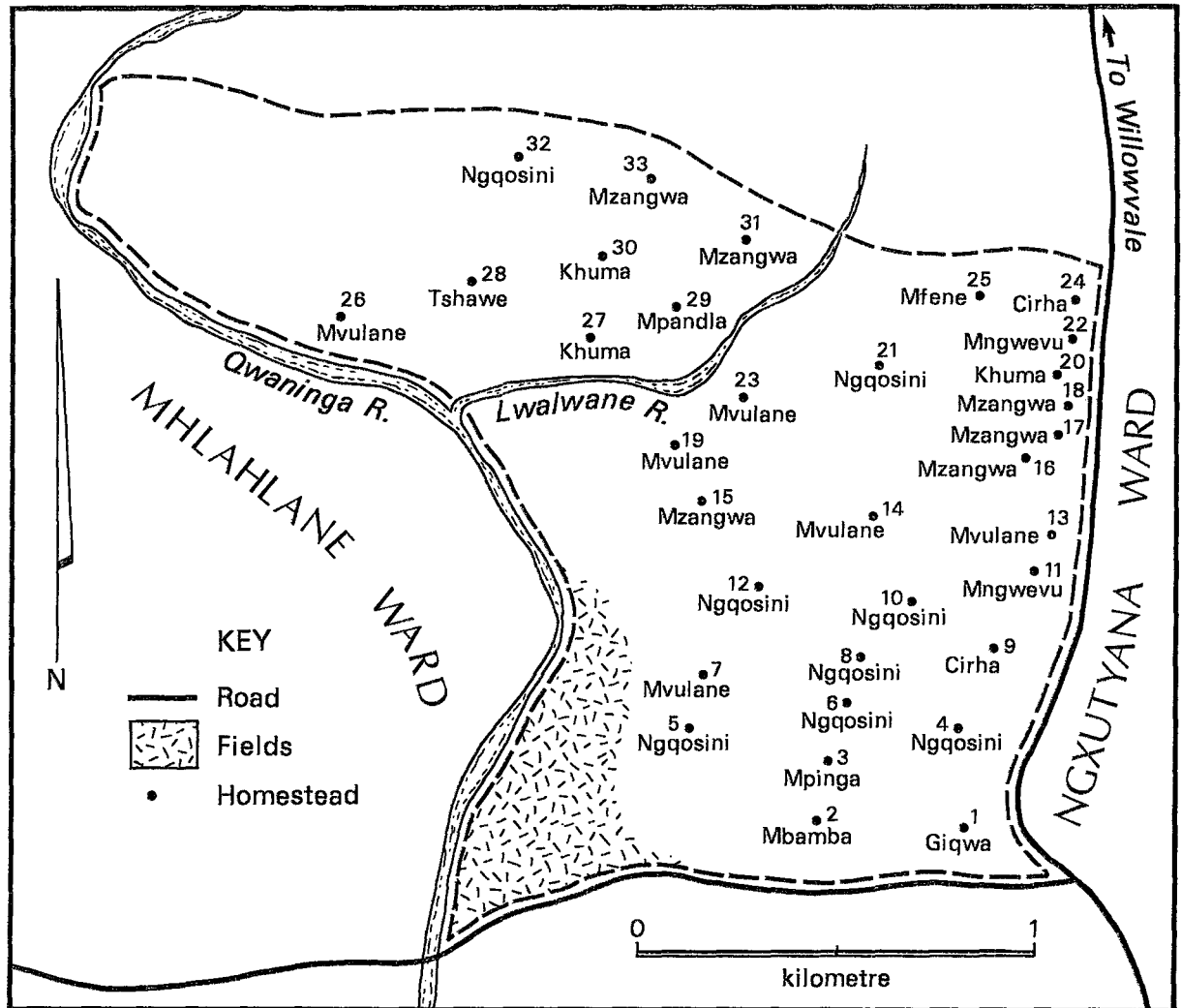
LIFE IN FUKULA TODAY

Political life

Political authority at subward level is through the sub-headman. In Fukula the sub-headman and the other senior men deal with local level politics and the enforcing of law and order. For instance, less serious cases of transgression are brought before 'the court' in the homestead of the sub-headman (homestead 13 - see map 4, following page)¹⁴ on Wednesday mornings. They meet in that homestead's courtyard (area between the cattle-byre and the huts) and the guilty person/s and witnesses appear before them. We could see the proceedings out of our hut's window. For instance, while I was living in that homestead a man who had stolen frozen chicken pieces from a child who was coming back from the trading store, was told to pay the boy's mother back with money. Another young man who at first refused to admit that he had stolen the only eight chickens of a widow living in homestead 25 (see map 4), was given a severe beating and was told to leave the subward permanently.

Although women do not have a public voice in these matters, their ideas are often voiced through the decisions their men make. At home they are able to tell their husbands what they think, which

14 The names on the map refer to clan names.



Map 4: Fukula subward

influences decision-making - men often not even realising this.

Demography

There are 33 homesteads in Fukula today. As indicated in table 1(i), there was a total population of approximately 163 in this subward in July 1990; with 42 people absent at the time. Persons older than 40 years represent 20% of the total population, the group aged between 19 and 39 years old represent 30%, and those younger than 19 years old, 50% (see table 1(ii)). Therefore, age-wise - 80% of the people in Fukula being younger than 40 years old - this is a very young population.

Table 1(i): Population of Fukula in July 1990:

	Males		Females		Children		Total	
home	15	39%	33	77%	73	89%	121	74%
town	23	61%	10	23%	9	11%	42	26%
total	38	100%	43	100%	82	100%	163	100%

Table 1(ii): Age breakdown of the population in Fukula in July 1990:

Age	Male	Female	Total
under 19	45	37	82
19 - 29	8	16	24
30 - 39	13	12	25
40 - 49	10	4	14
50 - 59	4	7	11
over 60	3	4	7
Total	83	80	163

There is a constant flow of adult members of the community - especially males - to and from the towns where they work as migrant labourers (see table 1(i)). Each time I went back I found myself meeting certain members of the community, whom I had been told of during the household survey, for the first time. People whom I was looking forward to seeing again, I would find had left to go to town again. During the year and a half I went there, only five of the men never left the area, as well as eight of the women. They include the sub-headman, two very old men (one being blind), a preacher, and a man in his early forties who has two wives. The women are: the sub-headman's two wives, his married daughter, the preacher's wife, two very old women; and two women in their fifties (one being a homestead head). It can be seen, though, in spite of the constant coming and going, that not more than 30% (see table 1(i)) of the total population in Fukula appears to be away at any given time. In other words, of the 163 people living in Fukula, most of the people are at home: only 42 (26%) people are away, 23 (55%) of them being adult males, 10 (24%) being adult females, and 9 (21%) of them children. Each time I visited the subward, there was always at least one representative of the different female and male age groups at home.

Local geography and the agricultural cycle

In Fukula, gardens are attached to the homesteads, the fields of its constituent homesteads are situated adjacent to each other in the lower lying area near the Qwaninga river and alongside the road to Mhlahlane (see map 4, p.44). Four of the 33

homesteads (homesteads 7,9,16,25 - see map 4, p.44) in Fukula are fenced. This seems to have to do with the new individualism making its appearance and people wanting to protect and hold on to what they have.

The main crop is maize, the secondary crops are, for example, beans, pumpkin, sweet potato, chillies¹⁵, wild spinach (imifino), potato, squashes, and tomato. Gardens are used more for the secondary crops. As can be seen in table 2, 76% of the homesteads have a garden, and 46% have a field¹⁶. The eight (24%) homesteads that do not have gardens, also do not have fields.

Table 2: Gardens and fields in Fukula:

Gardens			Fields		
yes	no	total	yes	no	total
25	8	33	15	18	33
76%	24%	100%	46%	54%	100%

The agricultural cycle is arranged around the seasonal changes. The rain usually commences early in October, when the planting season begins. This is followed by the dry winter period (April-September). In Fukula, there is a spring that supplies people with drinking water all year round. However, in the dry season the water takes some time to rise. People stand and wait their turn. When this takes too long they leave their buckets there,

15 Chilli tea is a favourite drink among the people in the area.
 16 In their fields and gardens they, today, use the ox-drawn plough, mechanical planters, the iron hoe with its long handle, and fertilizers.

standing in the row, and go home.

By January/February the countryside has become green, the maize plants have grown tall, and the people begin to hoe their fields and gardens. Harvesting takes place in April and May. This is followed by the non-productive period (July-October) when people have more time to themselves: they brew beer, hold rituals, and have many beer parties.

Economic life

Although agriculture is more important as a source of food than are pastoral activities, pastoralism is more prestigious and ceremonially important than agriculture. As in other Transkeian communities, a high value is attached to cattle and cattle-keeping, as well as goats to a lesser extent. Cattle and goats are slaughtered at rituals as they are the means of communicating with the ancestors. Bridewealth (in the form of cattle) ensures the reproduction of the husband's group and descendants to worship the ancestors (McAllister 1979: 22). Among the Gcaleka in Qwaninga, except for milk (and especially sour milk), cattle do not supply the people with food. Instead they determine a man's wealth and social position in society. Only as a ceremonial offering, or through the natural death of the animals, are they eaten. Their care is the privilege of their owner, and, as found in Fukula, the owner knows each member of his herd by name. Cattle also supply fertilizer, and make ploughing possible, as well as the transporting of heavy goods - like

poles, wood, and bags of maize - with the ox-drawn sledge¹⁷. As seen in the communities mentioned before, people in Qwaninga also own horses, pigs and poultry - these being economically less important.

Subsistence agriculture and local economic activity is dependent on cash inputs from especially migrant labour, and to a lesser extent old-age pensions (only 7 people in Fukula get old-age pensions). In Fukula differences in wealth¹⁸ are not great. Only the sub-headman is a 'wealthy' man. Money is also raised through the sale of alcoholic beverages like 'Jabulani' beer, selling tobacco (out of the garden), working for each other; and buying, for instance, vegetables (like cabbage and potatoes), bread, and cigarettes in town, in order to sell it again at a profit. There are three trading stores, one of which is run by the chief's wife (see map 3, p.18).

Kinship, household composition, and the social network

The 33 homesteads are represented by 12 clans (see table 3(i), 3(ii)), and map 4, p.44). Marriage is virilocal, and the local groups consist of the descendants of a common grandfather or great-grandfather (in other words an agnatic

17 The ox-drawn sledge is the only means of transporting goods, as no one in Fukula owns a motor vehicle. People go to town and elsewhere by bus, on horseback (men), with a lift, with a bicycle, and even walk sometimes. Willowvale town is 15 to 35 kilometres away, depending on where one is situated in Qwaninga.
 18 'Wealth' refers to wealth in their terms, which is relative to the given situation; in Western terms this 'wealth' would be considered to be a state of poverty.

Table 3(i): Clans represented by homestead heads in Fukula:

Clan names	Number	%
1 Giqwa	1	3%
2 Mbamba	1	3%
3 Mpinga	1	3%
4 Ngqosini	8	24%
5 Mvulane	6	18%
6 Cirha	2	6%
7 Mngwevu	2	6%
8 Mzangwa	6	18%
9 Tshawe	1	3%
10 Khuma	3	9%
11 Mpandla	1	3%
12 Mfene	1	3%
	33	100%

Table 3(ii): Clans represented by wives in Fukula:

Clan names	Number	%
1 Mpinga	2	5%
2 Ngqosini	4	11%
3 Ntlane	2	5%
4 Tshezi	2	5%
5 Bhele	1	3%
6 Nkabane	1	3%
7 Ndzila	1	3%
8 Rhadebe	1	3%
9 Tshawe	3	8%
10 Mzangwa	3	8%
11 Mvulane	2	5%
12 Cirha	6	16%
13 Duna	2	5%
14 Qwambe	1	3%
15 Dlamini	2	5%
16 Mtolo	1	3%
17 Mndungwana	1	3%
18 Mngwevu	2	5%
19 Bhayi	1	3%
	38	100%

cluster¹⁹) (Hammond-Tooke 1975: 17). Brothers (or fathers and sons) often have adjoining but independent homesteads. For example, in Fukula one finds three brothers of the Mzangwa clan and their father's brother living near each other. This is also the case with the Mvulane brothers (see map 4, p.44). Wives belong to the group of their fathers, while their children belong to their husbands' group: a cause of tension in the social structure (and an issue which will be looked at in the following chapters). Marriage is regulated through clan exogamy. A man can only marry 'outsider women', and thus only they can ensure the perpetuation of his kinship group (Krige 1981: 5). In Fukula there are four cases of polygyny - represented by the Mvulane, Gigwa, and Ngqosini clans; the sub-headman (Mvulane) being one of them.

As indicated in table 4(i), one finds a nuclear family in nine (27%) of the 33 homesteads. There are eight (24%) one generation homesteads, fifteen (46%) two generation homesteads, seven (21%) three generation homesteads, no four generation homesteads; and six (18%) homesteads are headed by widows. The average number of people per homestead is six (see table 4(ii)). Homesteads are smaller today, fewer people live in the homestead than before, there are fewer generations living together, polygyny is fast disappearing, and fewer homesteads are headed by the 'traditional' patriarch.

19 Because of the difficulty with the concept of 'lineage' (see Hammond-Tooke 1984), I shall here refer to 'local agnatic cluster' or 'agnatic cluster' for short. The agnatic cluster being a group of locally-resident agnates, who can demonstrate the genealogical links between them, and have a common clan name (Hammond-Tooke 1984: 86).

Table 4(i): Homestead composition 1989/90:

Husband and wife	4
Polygynist and his second wife *	1
Husband, wife, and children	9
Polygynist, his two wives, and children	2
Widower and his children **	1
Polygynist, first wife, married sons and their wives and children, married daughter and children, and unmarried daughter and children ***	1
Wife ****	1
Widow, married son and his wife and children	3
Widower, married son and his wife and children	1
Widower	1
Two widows *****	1
Married man whose wife and children left him*****	1
Widow, married sons and their wives and children, and unmarried son	2
Husband, wife, children, and other kin	2
Vacant homestead *****	3
Total	33

- * first wife returned to her parents' home after her husband insisted on marrying a second wife
- ** wife died after a miscarriage in February 1990
- *** homestead of the sub-headman
- **** second wife of the sub-headman
- ***** mother and her daughter
- ***** wife and children went back to her father's home (the sub-headman)
- ***** husband, wife, and children have left (2 cases)
- ***** husband and wife died - daughter looks after the homestead

Table 4(ii): Homestead numbers in July 1990:

Number of people per homestead	Number of homesteads	Total number of people
0	3	0
1	3	3
2	5	10
3	2	6
4	4	16
5	1	5
6	6	36
7	2	14
9	3	27
10	2	20
12	1	12
14	1	14
Total	33	163

There is a close network of relationships between people in Fukula. Relationships are characterised by an emphasis on the importance of the value of mutual help, people gossip a lot about each other, they love each other, quarrel, and are jealous - even I, after being cautious not to do so, was told not to favour certain people. What is happening in the subward is of utmost importance; for instance, important issues include: the cattle, rain, what is going to be planted in the next season, a social gathering, birth, and death. The outside world is less important,

and is ignored as far as possible. For instance, people would say to me that they are not interested in the political activities of the outside world.

Retention of Tradition

Fukula still has a largely 'traditional'²⁰ character, which is detectable in, for example, the traditional dress of the women (i.e. a long skirt, a blouse, a towel or strip of material around her waist, barefeet, a cloak around her shoulders for going out, a headdress, and often carrying a tobacco bag and a long-stemmed pipe)²¹. As can be seen in table 5(i) and 5(ii), only young women and women who regularly go to church do not consider the wearing of traditional clothes important anymore. Other signs of the traditional are: round huts and homestead layout, circular stock enclosures, as well as the frequent holding of traditional rituals. Round huts²² (mud-brick and thatch) are found in 92% of the homesteads - this often being associated with the 'traditional'. An average of two huts per homestead is found, each homestead has one or more circular stock enclosures, and 39% and 30% of the homesteads respectively have cattle and goats (see table 6).

20 As Spiegel and Boonzaier (1988: 40, 53, 56) argue, 'traditional', as in this context, cannot be assumed to merely refer to age-old and unchanged institutions repeatedly being transmitted. As found in Fukula, transmission of beliefs and practices also needs to be viewed as an ongoing process: a process of social adjustment to continuously changing circumstances. In Fukula, the social adjustment is a very slow-moving process.

21 Although men wear Western-type clothes and seldom walk barefeet like women do, they do, however, wear blankets and bracelets, as well as traditional dress at rituals.

22 As it occurred in the 1920's, table 6 indicates how the 'new building structure', that is, the 'four-corner' house (as they term it) with its corrugated iron roof, is starting to appear alongside the 'traditional' huts.

Table 5(i): The relative seniority of married women in Fukula:

Married women			
junior wives	wives	senior wives	total
19	10	9	38
50%	26%	24%	100%

Table 5(ii): Women and traditional dress in Fukula:

Married women							
junior wives		wives		senior wives		total	
T	NT	T	NT	T	NT	T	NT
2	17	6	4	7	2	15	23
11%	89%	60%	40%	78%	22%	39%	61%

T - Traditionally dressed
 NT - Less traditionally dressed

Table 6: Huts, cattle, and goats in Fukula:

Huts			Cattle			Goats		
round	4-corner	total	yes	no	total	yes	no	total
69	6	75	13	20	33	10	23	33
92%	8%	100%	39%	61%	100%	30%	70%	100%

Most of the members of the adult population in Fukula have been to an urban centre at some time during their lives. The majority of the adult population (96,3 %) in Fukula can only speak Xhosa, cannot read and write, and have to rely on school children to write their letters. Only one young wife and two men who work in Johannesburg are able to express themselves in broken English. The influence of the 'outside world' is difficult to determine when looking at the material content of their homes - one only suspects that should they have sufficient income, they would be eager to purchase 'luxury items'. Western furniture, radios, and so on, seem to act as status symbols: in adjacent subwards, people who make a point of having these items in their homes are treated with greater respect as people believe that they have a lot of money.

Western furniture, for instance, is limited to beds (in approximately 50% of the homesteads), tables and wooden benches (in most homesteads), as well as cupboards or wardrobes in one or two of the homesteads (trunks most often being used as a wardrobe); and less than twelve of the 33 homesteads have a radio. They readily accept the Western material culture only if it does not conflict with their own ideological system. It is among the less traditional people (the so-called 'school people'), that the proportion of Western-made goods is much larger (Hammond-Tooke 1956: 69).

Education

Although Qwaninga has not been subjected to any form of

betterment, chief Manxiwa feels it important that all the children in Qwaninga are educated. Qwaninga has its own primary and high school (Mathumbu High School), and in the high school the following subjects are taught: Xhosa, English, Biblical Studies, Economics, History, Mathematics, Science, and Biology. The chief has found it necessary to make school attendance compulsory, yet he values 'traditional customs' highly, and encourages people to hold such rituals frequently. Thus while the adult members of the community are mostly involved with the observing of customs, the children are subjected to many new ideas at school, and it is likely that they, on reaching adulthood, may cease to observe these customs.

Religion

There is a Catholic church next to the high school, and a Twelve Apostle church has recently (February 1990) been completed (see map 3, p.18). The Zionist church hold their meetings at different homesteads over the weekends. The Presbyterian, Baptist, St. John, Old Apostle, and Wesleyan churches, as well as the Church of St. Matthews have a few members in Qwaninga. There is no clear separation found between Christians and traditionalists²³, since most of the Christians still cling to traditional beliefs and practices in certain situations, for example, an ox is slaughtered as a gift to a deceased father. This is an indication of the major importance given to the ancestor cult in the

23 Furthermore, many of the people in Fukula, and in the rest of Qwaninga, have friends and family living across the road in the Mfengu ward, Ngxutyana (see map 3, p.18), where most of the people are Christians.

society. Belief in magic and witchcraft, and in the power of diviners and herbalists is strong. For instance, in Fukula, Nophumile (the neighbour) had a miscarriage in February 1990, and died three weeks later. People say that her body is now being controlled by witches, and that her body was never really buried at the funeral. The body of the baby also mysteriously disappeared from underneath the woodpile where it was buried. A diviner was consulted, and they were told by him that someone in the subward had used witchcraft against the people of that homestead. As Nophumile and the sub-headman's unmarried daughter, Zimela, had had a serious disagreement in December 1989, which was never resolved, suspicion is laid on the homestead of the sub-headman.

CONCLUSION

Many contradictions exist side by side in Fukula and the surrounding areas. On the ideological level the 'traditional' and Western ideas are constantly clashing with each other. It is especially affecting the relationship between the older and younger generation in a negative way, for example, it is contributing towards parents having less control over their children. On the level of the material culture, the outside world is infiltrating the daily life of the people in the sense that material out of the environment is starting to be replaced by goods bought in the towns and at the trading stores. Environmental material is still utilised a lot like before. However, inputs from the 'outside environment' have become essential to their survival.

In Fukula social adjustment is a very slow-moving process. It can be argued that the maintenance of the 'traditional', and the resistance to change, are ways of adjusting to the wider economic and political context in South Africa; and furthermore it enables the older generation to continue exercising control over those younger than themselves. In this regard:

The strategies that such people have adopted over the years are clearly attempts to protect themselves from the effects of white domination, to limit their involvement in the wider economy and in urban society, and to try to conserve their rural niche (McAllister 1991a: 131).

The existing authority structure affecting the lives of women in their husbands' homes, and the gender, age and kinship distinctions on which it is based, are a crucial part of these strategies of self-defence and conservation, but then also represent the front line in the assimilation of externally-derived change. We now turn to a detailed examination of the structure of patriarchy in Fukula.

CHAPTER 2: THE STRUCTURE OF PATRIARCHY AMONG THE GCALEKA IN FUKULA

INTRODUCTION

Authority as it is experienced in the daily lives of married women¹ among the Gcaleka in Fukula and the neighbouring areas, becomes a social reality in the process of interaction. Authority structures the social situation: one participant 'demands' and the other or others 'listen' (Kuckertz 1990: 22, 23). The structuring of the social situation is achieved through the creation of categories and concepts. Order is important, especially cognitively, as a confusion of categories can lead to social breakdown. Boundaries are demarcated between categories in order to prevent overlapping of categories (Hammond-Tooke 1981b: 138, 139). Boundaries are not only attempts to order social life, they are mechanisms used to achieve and maintain control over power and resources (Hammond-Tooke 1981a: 24). Criteria of age and sex are regularly used as organisational principles in social systems (Moore 1986: 62).

Sex and age are important bases of social differentiation in Gcaleka society and Fukula. Within the communities of men and women, seniority in age confers relatively superior status. Men are not always superior to women in status, as age differences also play a role in their relationship with each other. Sex and age distinctions structure relations both among kin and unrelated

1 Married women here referring to women who 'came in from outside' their husbands' descent groups as wives (henceforth 'outsiders' or 'outsider women').

persons. As Wilson (1952: 107) found in Keiskammahoek, so among the Gcaleka, children are taught from their early years to defer to older siblings, to be obedient to their parents and to extend these patterns of behaviour both to other kinsmen and to unrelated people.

In its implementation the authority structure in Fukula and the surrounding areas organises relationships between people hierarchically through the social division by gender and age. This is the broader authority structure affecting the daily lives of married women, and in particular their relationship with their agnates, and their husband's parents and siblings. At the community level the married woman finds herself being controlled by senior men and women. At the household level this group may be differentiated into six categories:

- senior men she is not related to;
- senior women she is not related to;
- her senior male consanguines;
- her senior female consanguines;
- her senior male affines;
- her senior female affines;

Senior men have more authority over her than senior women do, revealing an asymmetrical relationship between men and women. Male authority is a reality in her daily life. However, male dominance should not be taken for granted, as dominance is as much a function of seniority as of gender in this society. Furthermore, male authority is often opposed and even neutralised

by female power² (see power relations in chapter 5).

In the existing authority structure, kinship figures very prominently. Although the chief, headmen, sub-headmen, and senior men in every subward represent a centralized political system, it is the kin group, particularly the group related by agnatic descent, that acts as a corporate entity and has politico-jural, economic, religious, and other social functions. As Hammond (1978: 198) observed, among the majority of small-scale, nonindustrialized societies it is still the kin group, particularly the group related by descent, that has primary responsibility for providing the social order and political protection that people require to make a living. The descent groups involved in exercising control over the married woman, of course, would be her father's agnatic descent group, and especially her husband's agnatic descent group. Here, a further social division, based on affinity, arises between people belonging to these two groups. The rights and obligations structuring their relationships are aimed at distancing them from each other. Keeping them apart, is a way through which they show respect towards each other.

Boundaries are demarcated between social categories based on

2 In terms of the formal structure power holders have both power - they are able to impose their will on their subordinates - and authority, the public legitimation of power (Tiffany 1978: 43). In their relationship with their male, as well as female superiors, married women have less authority, but through their 'invisible role' in an informal power structure, they attempt to even out this imbalance created by the formal structure.

gender, age, and kinship differences³ in order to keep the different categories of people apart; and it is especially women, in their capacity as wives, who are forced to adhere to these boundaries which here often take the form of institutionalised avoidances. Authority, avoidances, and marriage are closely bound up with each other in a system which is simultaneously a system of meaning and a system of action. As a system of meaning it safeguards the 'purity' of cosmological and social categories; as a system of action it orders and controls relationships between people.

SOCIAL DIVISION BY GENDER

The formal relations between the sexes in Fukula and the surrounding areas, and the social roles allocated to adult men and women, are clear-cut. In the daily activities⁴ including the labour division (see table 7), there is a distinct male/female separation. Initiation rituals are usually dramatic reinforcements of sexual distinctions, and designed to underline the separation between the genders (La Fontaine 1985: 117). In order to obtain adult status, it is necessary for males to undergo initiation - this not being the case with women. However,

3 Although it is not dealt with in this thesis, it must be kept in mind that ascribed authority based on gender, age and kinship differences is affected by such variables as mental or physical disablement, good or bad character, married or unmarried status. For instance, the sub-headman in Fukula is given less respect than one would expect him to have - probably because his intellectual ability is slow.

4 That is, working, and other activities like eating, sleeping, visiting, walking somewhere, attending a meeting, slaughtering an ox, and so on.

a fertility ceremony⁵ (intonjane) is held for them, and as is the case with the male initiation ceremony, the sexual distinction is reinforced.

Table 7: Labour division between resident women and men:

Women	Men
cooking grinding/stamping maize washing dishes/clothes nursing/tending children chopping/fetching wood making mud bricks fetching water weaving sleeping mats, baskets, etc. sweeping/cleaning house re-dunging floors/walls brewing beer feeding pigs/chickens brewing beer cutting grass	tending goats/sheep taking cattle out to the fields milking/dipping cattle slaughtering an ox/goat chopping poles fetching wood with an ox-drawn sledge fencing garden erecting a cattle-byre cleaning yard digging drainage ditches fixing fences, tools, huts' roofs, etc. ploughing the soil so as to make mud bricks
hoeing (Jan - Feb) harvesting (April - May) hutbuilding (mostly June - September)	ploughing (with a team of oxen) (Oct - Nov) hoeing (Jan - Feb) hutbuilding (mostly June - September)

Pastoralism is the domain of the men, while agriculture (and having control over the pigs and poultry) is the domain of the women. The daily activities and chores that form part of her

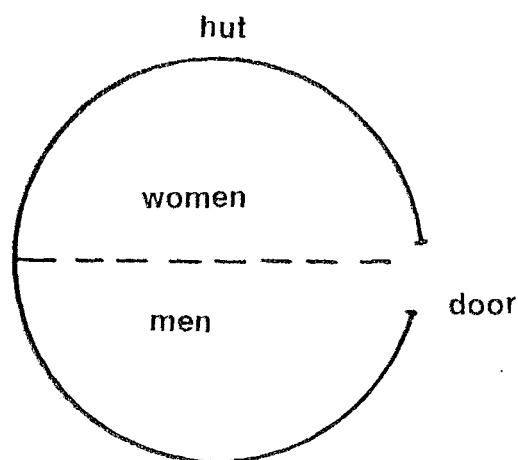
⁵ This ceremony is often, in the literature, considered to be initiation into womanhood. In this regard McAllister (1991a: 142) says that intonjane's earlier form was that of a puberty rite, which has changed into a ritual of affliction. In and around Fukula I found that most women do, either before their marriage or thereafter, have this ceremony held for them by their fathers to ensure their future health and fertility. They usually suffer no affliction at the time.

sphere usually take place in and around their home, while his sphere includes activities that often take him away from home.

Each daily routine cycle one finds is influenced by the annual agricultural cycle, in the sense that each daily cycle is organised and revolves around the phase in which the annual agricultural cycle finds itself at that moment in time (sometimes causing the daily chores to be neglected), be it the planting, hoeing, harvesting, or non-productive phase.

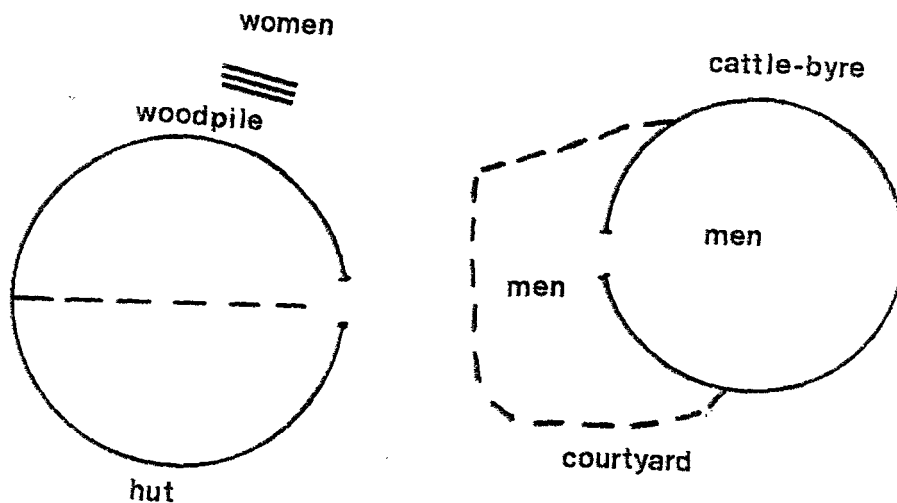
During their daily activities, men and women are not only away from each other most of the time, but when they are spending time together, for instance, hoeing together, attending a ritual, visiting, eating, holding a meeting, or are busy building a new hut; they stay in their respective groups most of the time and are spatially separated, a spatial map being created in and around the homestead.

Inside the hut the following occurs:



When visiting, men sit on the right side of the doorway (see diagram) on a wooden bench or on a bed, while women sit on the left side of the doorway mostly on a sleeping mat (ukhuko) or on a bed as well. The same division applies when they sleep.

Outside one finds the following situation:



Here the cattle-byre and courtyard (inkundla - area between the cattle-byre and the huts) (see diagram) are associated with males, while the area adjacent to the woodpile (igogo - usually alongside the huts) is associated with women. Women receive their female guests here, sit and rest, and do their cooking here. In the courtyard, men hold meetings, sit and chat, and receive their male guests. When working in the garden or field, women and men are spatially separated. When men and women (e.g., a husband and his wife) walk somewhere together, the man walks in front, and the woman follows behind him.

When women are busy with activities like preparing food, boiling water and grinding maize; they carry the activities out in the

back of the hut, in the centre of the hut, on the women's side of the hut, or outside near the woodpile. Men eat on the right side of the hut, in the courtyard, or in the cattle-byre. Women eat on the left side of the hut, or outside sitting near the woodpile. Men may eat inside, while the women eat outside, or vice versa.

A typical daily cycle of activities revolving around hoeing, can be taken as an example in the homestead (homestead 18)⁶ where I stayed for five days in March 1990:

Case: Homestead of the local herbalist

As it grew light in the morning, Nophindile's (the wife) work started. She would light the paraffin stove in the back of the hut, and start cooking. All the while, she would give her teenage daughter chores to do. In the meantime she would, for example, sit on the left side of the hut talking to someone, sweep the floor, and make tea. Then she would continue with the day's chores. She would, for example, grind or stamp maize, wash clothes down by the river, and fetch water. Because it was the hoeing season, these activities became secondary, and hoeing in the neighbours' or their own garden or field became the main activity of the day. She did not have time to prepare food during the course of the day, and would tell her daughter to do the cooking. As it started growing dark in the evening, Nophindile would give everyone something to eat, wash herself, and make tea before she went to sleep.

When eating, sleeping, washing themselves, and so on, the females stayed on the left side of the hut. Outside, women were often found near the woodpile. When eating, men were given their food and tea before women received theirs.

In the meantime, with what was Siphwiwo, her husband, occupying himself? One of the first tasks that would receive attention early in the morning, would be to milk the cows (often done by his teenage son). He would then, for instance, wash himself, sit and chat somewhere, or drink a cup of tea and eat. These activities took place on the right side of the hut, in

6 Homesteads referred to by number are all found in map 4, p.44.

the courtyard, or the cattle-byre. During the day he and/or a few boys would take the cattle out to graze in the fields. He takes great pride in his cattle and enjoys spending time with them. During those few days he went to town on horseback one day, and spent another day out on business. While at home he spent most of the time hoeing in their garden. Inbetween all of this he erected a new garden fence and busied himself with odd jobs in and around the homestead. As it started growing dark in the evening, the cattle and goats were brought home and put in their respective enclosures. He and his son then would milk the cows, after which he would go inside, sometimes wash himself, and have a meal. On two occasions he went out on business and to visit someone before he went to bed. On the other evenings he and the family sat talking in the semi-darkness (as only a small paraffin lamp, creating a cosy atmosphere, had been lit) until they grew tired.

According to Needham (1979: 7), the most common dual classification system is seen in the symbolic linking of categories by paired opposites, for example, right/left, male/female, purity/impurity, and so on. In each pair, one category is defined in some respect as superior to the other, which is indeed true here. Among the Gcaleka in Fukula and surrounds, concerning the concepts of 'man' and 'woman', the emphasis is on 'female subordination' and 'male domination'. As Wilson (1952: 107) observed in Keiskammahoek, women's inferior status is also evident in every sphere in this society: their social behaviour is circumscribed by a greater number of restrictions than are imposed on men; their rights of inheritance are very limited; they are debarred from holding political office and from taking part in the political affairs of the subward and surrounding areas; and they are unable to intercede with the ancestors.

Levi-Strauss argues that, these pairs are then related to each

other to form a system (e.g. male things associated with right and white, and female things associated with left and black) (Kuper 1973: 178). The opposition between male and female is linked to other dualisms in mutual reinforcement. In Gcaleka society, the opposition between male and female, and the corresponding pairs, like for instance, right/left, dominant/submissive, strong/weak, independent/dependent, are therefore ways of thinking about the world. In this regard Moore (1986: 115) says that the male/female distinction provides a kind of metaphorical filter, in which things find order and throw up images of themselves. To these images values are assigned, but these values are not fixed. For example, women in Fukula may be associated in one context with the dependent wife, and in another with the power-seeking female who is trying to be self-supporting. The male and the female are, therefore, just like other pairs of contrasts, never in fixed and permanent opposition. As symbols, they always contain their own opposites: that is, they are simultaneously what they represent and what they oppose.

The social division by gender may imply sexual asymmetry, but it usually implies complementary role relations as well (La Fontaine 1985: 118; Tiffany 1978: 46). Moore echoes this view:

To make appeal to notions about male and female is to understand relationships in terms of qualities of 'maleness' and 'femaleness'- qualities which appeal to a structural relation in the way perceptions are ordered. The qualities of male or female are ways of thinking about the world; they both represent and are constituted through conflict and complementarity. Thus the male and the female are symbolised genders which can be used in a whole range of contexts to express such things as conflict, tension and division, and/or such things as complementarity, unity, and productivity (1986: 111).

The general view held by strangers, of Gcaleka society being a male-dominated society where men are lazy and leave the hard work to the women, seems to be a distortion of reality - each have their own domains to tend to. In Fukula, to be hardworking is considered to be an important means of gaining prestige and attaining greater status in society. Both men and women say that their respective domains of activities complement each other and that they must decide together about matters of the home. The division of labour delineates tasks and duties which both husband and wife undertake to form a joint project or unit, with shared responsibilities.

The picture that emerges out of the daily cycle and the annual agricultural cycle at first seems to be one of a woman dominated by men, working very hard, doing strenuous physical tasks, constantly growing more tired and weary, and having no time to rest. However, as I started spending more time with the women, it started to occur to me that although they were working tremendously hard and getting very tired physically, they were actually resting enough in between: chatting with visitors at home, going to visit people, eating, resting while in the forest or field, and so on. Furthermore, some of the chores are either given to the children to do, or they utilise their position in the hierarchy among women to delegate chores to junior women. For instance, fetching water or going to the shop. An important organizing principle in this society also eases their workload, namely the fact that people are supposed to help each other at all times. One often finds a few women aiding each other with chores; for example, going to chop wood together, taking turns

to stamp or grind mealies, and taking maize off the cob while chatting/gossiping. Work-parties are also organized when either the time of the year or the particular situation necessitates it, for example, harvesting the crop and building a new house. Therefore, women are merely tending their domain, and not overworking themselves.

As Moore (1986: 115) found in the Endo social system, there is also a marked pervasiveness of the male/female distinction as a symbolising mechanism in Gcaleka thought. The particular qualities associated with the polarity of gender: weakness and strength, dependence and independence, and so on, are abstract ideas which are made manifest in the persons of the participants, who thus become living symbols of basic concepts, the truths on which the moral order is founded (La Fontaine 1985: 125). Everything associated with 'the female', for instance, the left side of the hut, the woodpile, and preparing food, is linked to, and becomes symbols of these ideas of submissiveness, dependence, and weakness. Accordingly, the right side of the hut, the courtyard and cattle-byre, and milking the cows, represent ideas of superiority which are associated with 'the male' and the ancestors.

The asymmetry between males and females also reveals itself in the following: men interfere with and enter the domain of women easily, for example, the woodpile need not be avoided by them, as is the case with the left side of the hut. On the other hand, women's entrance into the domain of men is restricted, for instance, they only enter the courtyard when men call them to

come there (usually when something specific needs to be discussed). Male domains are associated with the ancestors and ritual happenings, whereas female domains are only associated with the domestic sphere. This could be seen as a further reflection of male superiority versus female inferiority.

Men enter the domain of women when they, at the beginning of the planting season, plough the fields, and in February/March one finds both them and the women hoeing in the fields and gardens. He would also help with other female domestic chores, for instance, the cooking, while his wife is busy elsewhere. As one young wife explained, when her husband is at home he would often do the cooking in the evening while she is busy with the baby. On another occasion an adult man was sent by his mother to make tea for my interpreter and myself, and another man did some of his own washing when his wife was occupied elsewhere. In the above examples it can be seen that male and female activities also represent (are symbols of) unity, and a symmetrical relationship between the sexes: women and men work together as in a team, they say that their activities complement each other.

Male dominance is often assumed in this society. However, the authority structure operating here does not only constitute two categories of people: males dominating females and expecting submissive behaviour from them. A 'finer' authority structure exists, based on sex as well as age distinctions.

SENIORITY AND GENDER

Among the Gcaleka in the area where this study was undertaken, hierarchical relations based on age differences exist among men, between men and women; and among women. In their respective groups women and men acquire more status and seniority as they grow older and, at the same time, complete more of the succession of stages which an individual's life is made up of. They then have authority over persons who are ranked lower than themselves within the existing structure. At beer drinks, women and men are respectively spatially ordered according to their position in this hierarchy. Although hierarchical relations between men and women are acted out on a daily basis, they do not consciously exist in the minds of people as is the case with hierarchical relations among men, and among women. On the cognitive level the separations between the sexes are so marked, that the hierarchies of men and of women probably cannot be reconciled in the minds of the participants⁷.

Women and seniority

In the hierarchical structure among women, the lifestage a woman finds herself in at a given moment in time dictates the extent in which she will be restricted and how much authority she will have over other women. When asking women about status differences among themselves, I was told that at social gatherings/rituals where an ox or goat is slaughtered, and/or beer is drunk, three

⁷ The hierarchy among men will not be discussed here, as it is not pertinent to this study.

groups of women are clearly distinguished from each other through giving each group their own dish with meat and/or container with beer. They are: the junior wives (abafazana), the wives (abafazi), and the senior wives (abafazi abakhulu)⁸.

Concerning the share of beer given, it was explained that, for example, if there are three containers of beer at a beer party set aside for the women, the abafazi abakhulu will be given two containers of beer, and the other container will be given to the abafazi group. The abafazana are not even allowed to attend beer drinks (as is the case with young men) or drink beer publicly (they do, however, secretly taste and drink beer in the privacy of their own homes if they wish to do so). All of this is a sure indication of their position in the hierarchy among women. Abafazi abakhulu can call women out of the abafazi group for a sip, as they are ranked lower than themselves in the hierarchy among women, and, for instance, ask them to pass a container of beer around.

The dividing of meat and beer at a ritual reveals, among other things, the existence of different groups or stages among women. Hierarchical relations among women become more apparent when the division of work among women at a ritual is considered: hierarchical relations being reflected by the amount of work being done by the different groups of women, that is: the more work she does, the lower her status is in the hierarchy among

⁸ The three main groups they usually refer to are discussed here. However, it must be kept in mind that finer distinctions are made among women. For instance, among the junior wives, a woman most recently married, is called makoti, and among the senior wives, a woman who has recently entered this stage, is called unongena.

women⁹.

Case: The hierarchy among women at a ritual

In July 1990 a ritual was held in the sub-headman's homestead (homestead 13). It was being held by him, as he on that occasion wanted to give a gift to his deceased father through brewing beer and slaughtering an ox for him. The ox was slaughtered late on Friday afternoon. Mvulane clan members arrived from nearby and faraway places, and people were coming and going all the time. Many of the people slept there for the weekend: men and women staying in separate huts. During the first night, the beautiful singing of the women could be heard several times, as they were walking around outside, going in and out of the men's hut, and then returning to their hut.

Young women as well as the other older women (the hosts) living at that homestead, were working the most. Girls were running up and down doing chores, for example, taking tea to the cattle-byre. On the Friday afternoon, a group of eight young brides, dressed in their traditional clothes, with black headdresses hanging around their faces like veils, went to the forest to chop wood. They returned with huge bundles of wood on their heads while walking in single file, and walked around the back of the houses, as they were avoiding the courtyard (this also showing their lower status). On Saturday morning the same happened when they all went to fetch water, and carried back the buckets filled with water on their heads. It was the junior wives who were continually making tea for new arrivals, and giving them bread which they were busy baking in three-legged pots on the open fire. Each morning and evening, tea and food had to be prepared by them, and given to the guests who were sleeping there. After the first meat had been roasted on Friday night, the rest of the meat was cooked outside in big pots during the next two days by these young women (meat also being cooked by men in the cattle-byre). The older two groups of women were sitting in their respective groups most of the time: chatting and drinking beer, and some of them were smoking their long-stemmed pipes. As soon as more meat was ready to be eaten, the most senior group of women would divide the women's share of the meat. Certain parts of the meat are always given to the same group of women (as is also the case with men). While eating meat, older women called women ranked lower than themselves in the hierarchy, and children, to give them pieces of their meat (same as the giving of sips at a beer drink, which, of course, is an indication of their higher status in the hierarchy among women).

⁹ The hierarchy makes sense in biological terms as the capacity for hard work is greater among the younger women.

The women who have the lowest status in the hierarchy among women find that they are the ones who are expected to do most of the work at rituals. In the everyday situation they again are inclined to work harder, as they are told what to do by older women, and are supposed to obey them. They must avoid idleness. The older women have more of a choice concerning how much work they are going to do, and how much time they will spend resting. A woman has the right to ask persons ranked lower in the hierarchy than herself to help her and to do chores for her. For instance, the abafazi group can ask junior women entering their houses to help them with the chores they are busy doing.

Case: Four old ladies having a 'beer party'

One Monday morning in February 1991, found four old ladies secretly drinking 'Jabulani' beer, as they did not feel like working. Everybody else was hard at work hoeing in their fields and gardens. Here they sat and chatted the whole morning, and as soon as one container of beer was finished, they would pool money and send a child to go and buy another container of beer at the neighbours' homestead.

In the hierarchy among women, these four old ladies have the right to do as they like. They kept it a secret, though, as other women would have frowned upon their drinking in the middle of the week (and the men ranked higher than themselves in the hierarchy between men and women, would have been angry with them).

Men, women, and seniority

Each of the respective female groups have a corresponding group among the men: the men exercising control over their

corresponding female group (an asymmetry in the rights of men and women revealing itself here), but not over the group of women who have higher status than these women (see table 8).

Table 8: Corresponding male and female age groups

	males	females
senior	iindoda ezindala	abafazi abakhulu
inbetween	iindoda	abafazi
junior	abafana	abafazana

In theory, the 'higher ranking' group of women (could be their mothers) have authority over these men. A woman can 'ask' any man who is her junior to do chores for her, and must respect and obey men who are her seniors. For example, this is acted out at rituals when abafazi abakhulu call young men (abafana) to bring them a knife to cut the meat with, and old men would call her to have a sip of their beer. Whereas women who are her juniors are 'ordered' to do chores, she merely can 'request' men who are her juniors to do something for her (she may try to order them, though, if they are the age of men who could have been her sons). They are not supposed to refuse her request. Should she request something from a man who is her senior, he has a choice as to whether he is going to refuse or not. An asymmetry in the rights between men and women become apparent here, as men usually give orders to women who are their juniors and do not make a request. The group at the top of the hierarchical order between men and women, of course, would be the male elders (iindoda ezindala), and those at the bottom would be newly-married young

women (abafazana).

Age usually determines the hierarchical position a man finds himself in with women. However, a visit to the neighbours one day showed how ascribed status could be affected by unmarried status. Present at the time, was an older unmarried man and three junior wives, who were clearly younger than him. They were treating him as their junior: teasing him, disagreeing with him, and were patronising him at times. His unmarried state gave him a lower status than the three married women, and age was considered less important.

A young wife living in the neighbouring subward, Rhafane, says that the only men who have to listen to her would be boys and young recently married men. She merely has the right to request men who are her seniors to help her. However, in this instance, a way in which women sometimes manipulate men, is, for instance, to ask an old man to help her; he then tells a junior man to do what she has requested.

Case: Hierarchical relations at a ritual

One Saturday afternoon (approximately from one o'clock to six o'clock) in July 1990, a beer party was being held in the neighbouring subward, Rhafane, as a circumcised new man had come out of seclusion. People were happy: laughing, chatting, and smoking their pipes while they were drinking beer.

Most of the men were sitting in the courtyard, while the rest of the men were sitting in the cattle-byre, in their respective groups. Women were sitting near the woodpile (igogo) in their respective groups. A man sitting in the courtyard would call junior women (often being his secret girlfriend) to have a sip of his beer. Women would kneel in front of them, hold the container with both hands, and take a sip - I, also

found myself being called for sips¹⁰. The men were given a bigger share of beer than the women, as each male group was given more beer than their corresponding female group (women were given a lot of this beer through sips, though). This indicating an asymmetry in the rights between men and women, and a certain degree of male dominance¹¹.

Through the course of the afternoon, men were not only calling women to come and have sips of beer, but were also shouting at boys and girls, young men, as well as young women, to fetch something, to give someone something, to call someone, and so on. Although women were also noisy among themselves, they were much more subdued than the men. They were giving orders to children and junior women, and requesting junior men to be of help. When a young woman would go for a sip to a senior man, she would often sit and chat with him for a while, and they would sometimes secretly 'flirt' with each other.

Had the beer drink taken place inside a hut, a similar spatial division based on the same set of ideas as outside, would have been found: women on the left side and men on the right side of the hut divided into their respective age groups, senior men and women sitting closest to the door. As the order moves from senior to more junior persons, they are placed further away from the door moving through to the back of the hut. This spatial organisation also occurs on ordinary working days in the homestead.

Out of the above one begins to see that although society dictates that women should be more reserved and subdued in public places,

10 Calling me for a sip was a way in which I was being 'fitted' into their social structure in a joking way. I was called by senior men who would jokingly refer to me as their wife. One senior man used 'my new married name', Noretun, when he called me, which made the whole gathering laugh. I was learning more about their social structure, only realising this later.

11 But also, subtly, symbolically, that the formal asymmetry could be mitigated by informal relations between the dominators and the dominated.

and in their relationships with men, it does not necessarily make them lesser beings. This is only the visible part of a woman's relationships with men, and one almost expects that this incomplete formal structure she finds herself in with men, should be supplemented by some informal structure, which is indeed the case: her relationship with men becomes 'complete' through the silent, hidden ways (e.g., flirting with men at the beer drink, and making her secret boyfriend¹² do favours for her) she employs to even out the imbalance which is created through the formal structure.

As was the case with the male/female distinction, the social division by age is also a symbolising mechanism. The hierarchical order among women, among men, and between men and women, divides those 'who come first' from those 'who come after'. The 'first ones', the elders, have more privileges and are less restricted than those 'who come after'. Old people of either sex occupy the most respected positions in the community. Old men and women are closely identified with the ancestors. Ideas concerning status differences (positions of anteriority), are linked to each age

12 We by accident discovered one of the ways in which girlfriends and boyfriends go about meeting each other. The hut in which we were staying in in October 1989 had been occupied by the sub-headman's married daughter, Vangaye, the previous summer. In the middle of the night in mid-October somebody (whose footsteps had sounded like a man) started knocking on our door with a stick. This gave us a big fright. My interpreter threatened to call the sub-headman if the man did not leave immediately. Fortunately he then left. The next morning we were all embarrassed when we found out that it had been the neighbour who had returned from Johannesburg during the night. He had thought that Vangaye was still living in that hut and came to call her because her boyfriend, who had returned from Johannesburg with him, had sent his friend to call his girlfriend. As Vangaye is a married woman - separated from her husband - all of this was explained to us in confidence by her.

group. For instance, doing the heavier duties, sitting in the back of the hut when other people are there, and going to have a sip of beer or to receive a piece of meat when one is called, represent ideas of submissiveness linked to an age group with a lower status. Ideas of superiority which are associated with an older group, are symbolised through, for example, sitting closest to the door, being the person who divides the meat at a ritual, and receiving a bigger quantity of beer at a beer drink.

KINSHIP, SENIORITY, AND GENDER

Among kin, the categories of kinship are defined in terms of gender and seniority differences. Furthermore, categories of kinship determine, for instance, where a person lives, his group and community membership, whom he should obey and by whom he obeyed, whom he may and may not marry, from whom he may hope to inherit and to whom pass on his own status and property (Beattie 1964: 93, 94).

In Gcaleka society, also among the Gcaleka in Fukula, the authority system is kinship-based, it is the centralized political system as it is expressed at the local level. Descent is traced through the male line. The bond of socially recognized shared descent serves as the basis for regulating internal relations and relations with other groups (Hammond 1978: 198, 203). The senior males in each agnatic descent group are the power holders. This is reinforced by the kinship-connected religious system, taking the form of ancestor worship. According to Hammond (1978: 204), the ancestor cult then ritually

reinforces kin group solidarity.

Kin solidarity and the ancestors

The homestead (umzi) is a place of worship and of sanctity, a place where a man enters into a relationship with the shades of his forefathers, and is the social entity through which a man enters into a relationship with the community (McAllister 1979: 37).

For the Cape Nguni, as is the case among the Gcaleka in Fukula, the homestead acts as a model for human society - they have no true village life but live in scattered homesteads. It is the place where each individual acts out his daily life (Hammond-Tooke 1975: 25). Each homestead is part of a kin group within which the descendants of a common male ancestor form the most important unit (McAllister 1979: 39). A man's homestead is closely identified with his ancestors, they are ever-present in the homestead, it is their homestead as well as his; no sharp distinction is made between dead and living agnates, and they are unified by a single conceptual frame of authority (Kuckertz 1990: 289; McAllister 1979: 61, 62). The involvement of the ancestors in their descendants' homesteads and the close interest they take in their affairs is of central importance in the life of the homestead (Hammond-Tooke 1974: 330, 331; McAllister 1981: 2, 3). Regarding the relationship between the living and their ancestors, a male elder in Fukula explained it as follows:

The ancestors continue to own the things that used to belong to them when they were alive. They are like the wind. They are everywhere. They come to you; you speak to each other in a dream. You do what they ask you to do. If you ignore their wishes your body may start aching, because you are behaving like a naughty child who is disobeying his parents.

The close association of the dead with the living is a symbol, on the cosmological level, of the solidarity of descent group members (Hammond-Tooke 1975b: 30). Each agnatic descent group among the Nguni, and among the Gcaleka in the Qwaninga ward where this study was undertaken, forms a separate and discrete cult group worshipping its own particular set of ancestors who only have influence over their own descendants (Hammond-Tooke 1974: 345). Agnatic kinsmen are actively involved whenever an ancestral ritual is held at one of 'their' homesteads (Kuckertz 1990: 272). Ancestral rituals all express symbolically the unity of family and descent group (Hammond-Tooke 1974: 354).

The agnatic group and local clan solidarity is evident in many spheres of life. The core worshipping group is united against outsiders, they settle disputes between members, and co-operate economically (McAllister 1979: 40). Outsiders who pose an immediate threat are the wives in the homestead. For instance, moral prescriptions based on the values of kin solidarity are reflected in the husband-wife relationship. It is thought wrong for a man to be too closely involved with his wife, as this may conflict with his loyalty to his kinsmen. Husband and wife do not spend their leisure time together, they are segregated during work time and at public gatherings. If he shows too much affection for her in public, he could even be suspected of being bewitched (Hammond-Tooke 1974: 361).

Case: A wife and husband spending time together

In Fukula the husband and wife, Siphiwo and Nophindile, who live in homestead 18 are very close and like to spend a lot of time together. They are the only married couple in Fukula who married 'for love'. When he is at home from work (in East London) for a

few weeks, he starts looking for his wife when she disappears. For instance, she likes to go to beer parties or just to visit people. He would arrive there were she is with his whip. While cracking the whip he would pretend to be very angry and tell her to go home with him. All of this making the people laugh a lot. The next moment off they would go.

As people think this kind of behaviour (of a husband and wife wanting to spend time together) is not right, they gossip about this a lot and say that he is too possessive over his wife. However, they show no ill-feeling towards the two of them and like Siphiwo's way of teasing and making jokes with everyone. Through his behaviour with the whip he was acting out the role he is supposed to play in the society and at the same time showing that he did not wish to be such a dominating person.

This incident brought an important hidden aspect about male dominance into the foreground. Males are supposed to behave in a dominating manner. However, in the real life situation they sometimes allow their subordinates to dominate them and they do not always enforce their will on their juniors as it is expected of them.

Formal kinship relations in the society

Among kin who are related through agnatic descent, the male elders who are the power holders in the group, in Western terms, act as the 'managing directors'. Agnates one would expect to find living near each other would be unmarried brothers and sisters, married brothers and their fathers and grandfathers. All the married women belonging to this descent group, of course, on

marriage, move to the homes of their husbands. Day-to-day decisions concerning the group are thus made by resident men. Their married sisters are only called to be present on ritual and other important occasions. Older women in the group may be given almost equal status, but have less right to speak up publicly. The asymmetry between the sexes can be seen here. Female elders often do not live nearby, and although a woman as an old lady has more authority, she does not have the opportunity to exercise control over younger persons who belong to her father's descent group - on a day-to-day basis she is usually interacting with unrelated people, and, of course, her husband's parents and siblings.

On the daily household level, age organisation makes its appearance, and agnates who have authority over a married man, are: his father, his father's father, his father's older and younger brothers (in other words his 'other fathers'), and his own older brothers. Agnatic kin belonging to this group who have authority over him but are usually not there, would be: his father's sisters, and his own older sisters. If his older sisters are around, they may try to correct his ways, and tell him to do things. In Fukula, under the conditions of migrant labour, at least 39% (see table 1(i), p.45) of the married men are at home at any time. While doing fieldwork, I found that there were always persons representing the different age groups among men as well as women at home, making it possible to see the daily interaction among the above-mentioned categories of people.

The tracing of descent, either in the male or female line, may

provide the basis for the significant residential and political groups in society, giving a further dimension to gender (La Fontaine 1985: 117). This being the case in Gcaleka society and Fukula, the wife moves to her husband's home when she gets married, where she is considered to be an outsider in her husband's group. It also contributes to her being in a dependent and submissive position. As La Fontaine (1985: 120) found in Gisu society, Gcaleka women are transferred to the jural authority of their husband and his group at marriage. All of this, of course, showing the unequal status existing between men and women accentuated by virilocal marriage.

The senior male representatives of the local agnatic cluster choose wives for the younger men as this alliance is not only between two individuals, but one between two groups of agnates. Both wives and their husbands are thus being controlled by these older men. This also signals the start of a lifelong alliance between the two groups. Male elders in both descent groups make the decisions concerning the two groups.

One finds a tension in the social structure existing among affines. Fox (1967: 114) argues that each descent group cannot perpetuate their own group, but needs to negotiate the reproductive capacities of 'outsider women' into their group so as to not only increase the productivity of their group through childbearing (as offspring is granted to the husband's community), but also through economic services. Furthermore, the wife's descent group wants the reassurance that 'their child' is taken good care of. This secures her position, as her in-laws,

in their behaviour towards her are accountable to 'her people'. The authority structure with its emphasis on agnatic descent protects her and gives her a powerful means, within limits of course, of being in control and not being exploited by her superiors in her husband's homestead.

Ensuring long term reciprocal relations with the wife's people, necessitates the setting in motion of a control system in the husband's group. Very rigid rights and duties structure the relationship between the involved parties and include marital rules like clan exogamy, the alliance between affinal groups, how the wife is treated, post-nuptial residential rules, and strictly controlling the reproduction of individuals and their places they occupy from birth onwards.

Affines distance themselves from each other: categories are being kept apart and order is being created. The separation between them stops the existing tension from erupting into conflict. Although they are distanced from each other, the two groups need each other, they complement each other, and are together working towards the smooth running of the system in the society. The underlying tension between affines is acted out. The tension is symbolised through the behaviour that distances affines from each other, like, for instance, formal, prescribed behaviour observed between affines when the bride is brought to her new home, gift-giving between them, avoidances the wife needs to observe towards them, and avoidances her husband needs to observe towards 'her people'. For example, informants say that the husband, when he occasionally sees them, must show respect towards his wife's

people, in particular towards the older men and women in the group. He has to abide by certain rules and keep his distance. When he goes to visit there, he is expected to wear a jacket/coat, a hat, and to carry a stick with him. When he arrives, he waits in the courtyard until someone comes to enquire where he has come from, and then invites him into one of the huts. He must never touch his mother-in-law, and must avoid her. In that homestead there are no places he needs to avoid. He is not allowed to use their names, though. He must call his mother-in-law, ma, his father-in-law, bawo, and his brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law, sibali. That a wife's in-laws give her a new name after getting married, seems to be their way of showing respect towards 'her people' by avoiding the use of her name, as she must theirs.

The closer social categories are forced together, the greater the need is to keep them apart. Through separating them, conflict is avoided. The wife is the outsider who is being forced to live the closest to the 'others'. Therefore 'distancing', in her case, needs to be emphasised more. In her relationship with her in-laws she is more restricted than her husband - this also indicating an asymmetry between men and women.

Wives and their in-laws

The persons belonging to her husband's descent group who have authority over a married woman are: her father-in-law, his brothers and sisters, his father and his father's brothers and sisters, her husband's older brothers and sisters; but not the

younger brothers and sisters of her husband - age organisation manifesting itself here among affines.

On her arrival, the new wife is 'slotted into' this pre-existing structure of relations; relations whereby both the interests of her in-laws and herself are protected by the system. Through the daily interaction process, the existing authority structure is maintained as well as constantly undergoing changes. At her husband's home the mother-in-law (also an 'outsider' who has now gained seniority in the homestead) controls the bride, as well as her older sister-in-law if she lives there. Many of the rules governing her life at her new home are given to her and enforced by her mother-in-law. She must obey her mother-in-law and observe avoidance behaviour towards her. She works very hard daily, does chores for her mother-in-law, and for her older sisters-in-law (if they are living there). She must get up early in the morning, submit to her husband's authority (even if he is the same age as her), cook for him, and work in the garden and fields. He is her guardian: he gives her a garden to cultivate, clothes, and money. They give each other advice, and are supposed to decide about things together. Fukula women like to see their position as equal to and complementing their husbands and would like to see the doing of household tasks as the equivalent of 'guardianship', even though this of course is not the case. She soon tells you that she looks after him in many ways, for example, she cooks food for him and washes his clothes.

Wives and the separation between affines

A woman is more limited in her activities in her husband's homestead than in the homesteads of her male agnates.

It was seen that when men and women work in the garden or field, they are spatially separated. Should any of her husband's senior male agnates be present, the outsider woman avoids going anywhere near them. One young wife explained that when her father-in-law is hoeing in the field with them she works at the opposite end of the field. When a wife and her father-in-law walk somewhere together he walks in front and, because they have to respect and avoid each other, a spatial distance of up to a few metres is kept between them. Although it is an asymmetrical relationship between them, both the father-in-law and the daughter-in-law are being restricted.

In the domain of men the spatial organisation and the activities that are associated with the ancestors, like the care of the cattle and goats, are not forbidden to all women, but only to outsider women. For example, the daughter-in-law will never milk her father-in-law's cows, and when his cattle are anywhere in the vicinity, she will always make a detour (a wife, as I was told by the herbalist's wife, is usually quite happy not to enter this domain, as this gives her less work to do). Insider women entering this domain find themselves in a more flexible position: they are sometimes limited by their male seniors (the male/female asymmetry manifesting itself), but are not forbidden to enter the male domain.

In Fukula the following occurs inside the hut: if she is an

outsider, and especially if she lives in the same hut as her father-in-law (he, of course, represents the ancestors), she is not allowed to walk on the right side of the hut at all. Her sisters-in-law sleep and sit on the males' side when the men are absent, and even sometimes sit there in their presence.

Outside one finds the following situation: the only cattle-byre a woman may enter, and that is while she is not menstruating, is the one at her father's home, because she is a member of the clan group whose ancestors are believed to reside there. This also applies to the courtyard. If an outsider woman should find it essential to enter the cattle-byre on any particular occasion, she will first do her utmost to get someone else to go in there, for her. Finally, if she has no other option left - which usually seldom or never happens - she will resort to going in there herself. Informants say that she may do so only after having taken something off her body, for example, a towel or a bangle; and having thrown it into the cattle-byre. In this way she obtains the necessary permission from her husband's ancestors to enter, as they are said to be watching her.

In order to show respect towards her female in-laws, a wife avoids them as much as possible, for example, dropping her eyes when they pass her. The 'distance' between herself and her male in-laws is even greater, for example, she must avoid her father-in-law, never touch him, and avoid coming physically close to him. This applies to all her senior male in-laws. Her male in-laws use women as channels to communicate with her and to tell her to do certain chores. The male/female asymmetry can be seen

here. She does not use her in-laws names. For instance, she calls her younger brothers-in-law, bhuti, and her younger sisters-in-law, sisi. Out of respect towards her husband, she avoids using his name. She would, for instance, call him, 'father of Thandeka', if they have a daughter called Thandeka. She calls her mother-in-law, mama, and her father-in-law, bawo.

Activities in the domain of men which are not forbidden to the outsider women would be those daily activities that are not associated with their husbands' ancestors. For example, she would repair a hut's roof in his absence, and fix a garden fence.

Case: Women fixing hut roofs'

Heavy rain commenced in Qwaninga in October 1989, and continued for days on end. The gravel roads became so slippery that vehicles had to stop travelling to and from town. The roofs of the five huts in the homestead of the sub-headman started leaking very badly. When it cleared up for a few days he, however, refused to repair the roofs. It had been his first wife who had requested him to do so, and as he openly favours his second wife, this probably was his way of expressing his displeasure with her. A day or two later found a party of women from the neighbourhood at his homestead: they had been 'called' by his first wife. Without the help of any men, fixing one roof at a time, they managed to repair three of the roofs that day.

Rigid boundaries exist when outsider women want to participate in male activities that are associated with the ancestors, whereas insider women are restricted less. The relations of authority arising out of the male and female domains, and spatial organisation, at first seem to reflect a male/female dichotomy. One can see the male/female opposition in that both insider and outsider women are being restricted more than men. However, a further distinction is drawn here, that is, between the insider

woman who is less restricted than the outsider woman, which creates a division between insider men and women versus outsider women. In the everyday sphere of activities, outsider women are being isolated and sanctioned through certain avoidances they are expected to observe. The wife is simultaneously being sanctioned and being given her own space and a certain degree of freedom; an own space where others, especially her in-laws, are not allowed to come too close to her.

How do these avoidances 'fit into' the authority structure in this society? Meillassoux (1981: 82) argues that the power holders in society, apart from drawing authority from their managerial functions, develop a certain ideology in order to preserve their authority and the group's cohesion: it being the sublimation of the father and of the ancestors that he represents, in Gcaleka society. Certain sanctions sometimes back up this ideology. The avoidances which need to be observed by married women constitute part of these sanctions. Avoidances express their deference to in-laws, to persons older than themselves as well as to men in general, separating insiders from outsiders, juniors from seniors, and males from females.

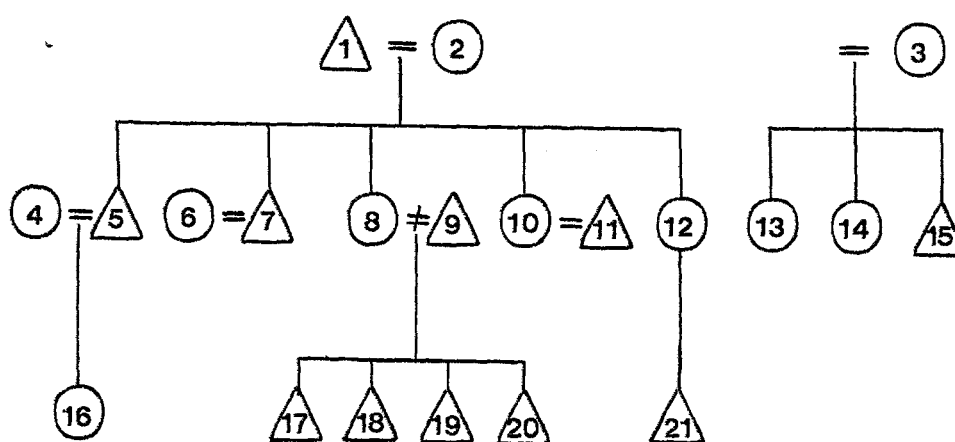
In the following case study, it is illustrated how gender, seniority, kinship, and avoidances, are closely bound up with each other in everyday life:

Case: Homestead of the sub-headman

Three generations live in this homestead (homestead 13): the sub-headman(1), his first wife(2), their two married sons(5 and 7) and their wives(4 and 6) and a child(16), his unmarried daughter(12) and her son(21), as well as a married daughter(8) and her four little boys(17,18,19,20). The kinship chart on the following

page illustrates the above kinship links. The married daughter(8) was sent back to her father's home permanently by her husband(9), after he had discovered that she had had a boyfriend in his absence. He, however, does not want his lobola cattle back, as this is the 'money' he is giving them to raise his children with. In December 1991 he remarried. During Christmas time he burnt down their hut's roof - a symbolic act severing the ties between them.

Kinship chart: People in the household of the sub-headman:



- | | |
|----------------|---------------|
| 1 Nggezwana | 12 Zimela |
| 2 Nokhawuleza | 13 Thandeka |
| 3 Nobuyisile | 14 Nombeko |
| 4 Nocollege | 15 Maboy |
| 5 Sipho | 16 Vuyiswa |
| 6 Nothando | 17 Siyanda |
| 7 Thembu | 18 Thembelani |
| 8 Vangaye | 19 Rheli |
| 9 Dikwe | 20 Tengo |
| 10 Nokhumshile | 21 Kitso |
| 11 Siseko | |

The second wife(3) of the sub-headman lives in an adjacent homestead (homestead 14). She has her own two round huts there, as well as a garden. Their three children (13,14,15) all died at a young age. The sub-headman clearly favours his second wife - this, of course, causing jealousy between the two wives, which they are not openly allowed to show. He, for example, eats most of his meals at his second wife's homestead, and, furthermore, is often impatient with his first wife, which is seldom the case with his second wife. On returning from beer parties the two wives usually seize the opportunity to insult each other by, for instance, accusing each other of being

'empty-headed'. If you are willing to listen, the one then gives you a detailed description of the worthlessness of the other one.

Age organisation is as follows in this homestead: the sub-headman, Nggezwana, is at the top of the hierarchical structure in the household. The other adult members in the household are hierarchically ordered in the following way: directly below him, his first wife, followed by his second wife, his older married son, his married daughter, his younger married son, the older daughter-in-law, the younger daughter-in-law, and, at the bottom of the hierarchical structure, his unmarried daughter. The hierarchy is acted out on a daily basis in the homestead. However, participants are not consciously aware of its existence. The dominance relations among kin related through descent, and kin related through affinity, are as much a function of seniority as of gender in the homestead.

The members of the household constitute part of a team: the men busy themselves with their activities, and the women with theirs. Sipho and Thembu (the two married sons) are often away at work, but when they are at home, they are expected to work harder than their father. This is only the case with Sipho. Thembu is used to the town ways now. He either stands around a lot when he is at home, or disappears during the day. The daughters-in-law are expected to work the most. They seldom sit down during the course of the day, as they seem to be running up and down doing chores: often being told to do chores by their two mothers-in-law, their older sister-in-law, and their husbands (as well as women older than themselves, their husbands' age-mates, and older men, when these people visit that homestead). Although they show respect towards their younger sister-in-law, she does not give them chores to do. When Nggezwana wishes them to do something, the other women in the homestead act as his mouthpieces. Being female, outsiders, and young, Nothando and Nocollege are the persons being restricted the most in this homestead. Zimela (the younger unmarried sister) works equally as hard. Vangaye (the older sister) has gradually, over a period of two years, started to do less work, because, as she says, she simply does not feel like doing more work (she can get away with this, as she has more freedom of movement in her father's homestead). Although Nokhawuleza and Nobuyisile (the two senior wives) like to work hard as well, they need not do as much work as before, as they have achieved seniority in the homestead now. While the men are busy with the cattle, the women busy themselves in the garden or field, usually leaving someone at home to do the cooking, washing, and so on.

The men in this homestead seldom do 'women's work'.

Nothando and Nocollege avoid having anything to do with the cattle: they do not milk the cows, do not herd the cattle, do not go into the cattle-byre or the courtyard (inkundla), and avoid walking anywhere near the cattle. For example, Nocollege one day was walking on the path that runs in front of the houses. When the cattle suddenly crossed the path, she immediately retraced her steps, and stood waiting until they had passed.

Vangaye and Zimela go into their father's cattle-byre when they are not menstruating. Zimela sometimes milks the cows in the cattle-byre. In February 1991 Vangaye was often seen milking the cows outside the cattle-byre in the late afternoons. The two sisters also enter the cattle-byre when a ritual is held in that homestead, as they are members of the Mvulane clan whose ancestors are believed to reside there. The mothers-in-law never milk the cows. They sometimes enter the courtyard when they are called there by their husband, if he needs to discuss some important matter with them. As is the case with the daughters-in-law, the mothers-in-law do not go into the cattle-byre. They say they were taken there on one occasion only: to be introduced to their husband's ancestors when they arrived at this homestead as brides.

In the main hut Nothando and Nocollege never walk on the males' side of the hut. When they sit down there, it is on the women's side of the hut, at the back. They sit here, as women who are their seniors (for instance, their mothers-in-law), sit closer to the door - this also applies when they sleep. Nothando one day entered our hut, and went to stand on the males' side of the hut. Her husband came in, and she moved to the women's side of the hut. When next her one mother-in-law entered the hut, she moved to the back of the hut, and kneeled down (only not allowed to go on the males' side of the hut, in the main hut, and in her father-in-law's hut).

As Vangaye and Zimela are insiders in the homestead, their position, in this context, is more flexible: they sometimes sit on the men's side of the hut, when the men are away; and also when their father, their brothers, and men with lower status than themselves, are in the hut. However, they get up when other senior men enter the hut. Only the women and children sleep in this hut (on sleeping mats). The two sisters sleep on the males' side of the hut most of the time. The three men each have their own huts.

When they have visitors, men and women are often separated. For example, women either sit inside, while the men sit in the courtyard or cattle-byre; or the men sit inside while the women sit next to the woodpile. Often, in the mornings and evenings, one sees the men sitting in the courtyard while they are

eating their meal, and the women and children either eat inside or at the woodpile.

The men and insider women enter each others' domains in this homestead, while the outsider women avoid male activities and areas which are associated with their husbands' ancestors. Their position is a function of gender and seniority as well as of 'outsiderness' in this homestead.

Unless seen in the context of a homestead as in the above, clear-cut analytical grouping of men versus women, seniors versus juniors, agnates versus non-agnates, is an oversimplification. Regarding the different categories of people, Kuckertz (1990: 293) argues as follows:

Such terms do not reflect the shifting social reality: 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 person is a senior, and in the next he is a junior. In the most general sense it must be said that, unless seen in relation to a homestead, no person's position can be defined ... in terms of ongoing social interaction, or for the purpose of establishing the structure of authority.

Moore (1986: 107) asked the question of how the organisation of space comes to have meaning. The same question can be asked when it comes to social differentiation. As is the case with the organisation of space, the organisation of relations based on sex, age, and kinship divisions, is not a direct reflection of cultural codes and meanings, but is a context developed through the interaction of individuals: value and meaning are not inherent in any given order, but must be invoked, meaning is being given by actors (Moore 1986: 120). Therefore, as Moore (1986: 120) said about the organisation of space, the following can be said about social differentiation as well:

It ... is a cultural representation - and it is

through this representation that the individual constructs both herself/himself and her/his image of the world. Representations are therefore interpretations, and interpretations are ideological-interrelations - that is, they re-describe reality

THE HARD-EDGED SOCIAL ORDER

Societies generate their own culturally determined rules for making boundaries and dividing the social into spheres and levels with invisible fences (Ardener 1981: 11, 12). Avoidances or routines of dissociation mark social boundaries and affirm distinctive identities. Mary Douglas (1966: 138) holds the view that people really do think of their own social environment as consisting of other people joined or separated by lines which must be respected. For instance, the taboos of the Indian caste system, like not eating together and not shaking hands serve this purpose (Mayer 1975: 259).

In Fukula and the adjoining subwards relations among kin, and between kin and non-kin, are handled with a tight discreteness, people are given distinctive identities and kept apart. A social map is created and boundaries are drawn between these people. For instance, the clan exogamy rules mark a clear distinction between kin and non-kin, so that the two categories of people are never confused. The group is close-knit for the discreteness and the autonomy of the homestead, as the basic social unit, is highly valued (Hammond-Tooke 1989: 99-101). Mayer (1975: 259, 262, 279, 280) writes that the homestead is the confined stage where the different categories of people (old and young, male and female, agnates and non-agnates) continually have to interact. Here

people 'act out' their definition of hard-edged categories and the routine social separation which that involves. Adult women, in their capacity as wives, are strangers in the close-knit agnatic group of their husbands'. Mayer (1975: 260, 261) calls these kinds of social orders 'traditionalist orders', and says that the so-called traditionalists are:

... hard-edged social thinkers, categorists with an ideological commitment to the dogmas of difference and distance, and the superiority of the traditional virtues ... they are seeing their fellow man primarily in terms of a number of fixed different categories and specific limits ... the traditionalist world-view makes it seem tight and proper that people whom it categorizes differently must be treated differently 'according to their kind'

For people who like hard contrasts, 'purer' social categories represent order, security, and decency. A soft-edged social style where boundaries are not drawn as clearly and more choice is allowed, appears to them as untidy and confusing. A hard-edged way of life necessitates more self-restraint, not doing what one easily could or would like to do (Mayer: 259, 260).

As Mayer (1975: 263) said about the Gusii of southwestern Kenya, the same can be said about the Gcaleka:

[In the] Gusii household, although [it is] untidy and often not very clean ... the sense of order [was] there ... directed along social lines, in terms of personal propriety, roles and images. This made it a tightly ordered, highly structured little world, with the ideal of 'a place for everyone and everyone in his place'

Likewise, among the Gcaleka in Fukula, their 'little world' consists of a social grid. The separate 'compartments' it creates, draw lines between the people interacting with each

other. Viewing age, gender and kinship distinctions, it would be possible to distinguish twelve different categories of people. If one takes the three male age groups, and the three female age groups discussed in this chapter, and a distinction is also made between agnates and affines among these groups, it creates the twelve different categories of people shown in table 9. At the homestead level the important categories of people who are in daily interaction with each other are categories 1,3,5,8,10,12 (see table 9).

Table 9: Categories of people created by gender, age and kinship differences:

		agnate	affine
male	senior	1	2
	inbetween	3	4
	junior	5	6
female	senior	7	8
	inbetween	9	10
	junior	11	12

The above is illustrated through viewing a few homesteads in Fukula in the following survey:

Survey: Different categories of people in Fukula

In homestead 11 live the father-in-law, husband, wife, and their children (categories 1,5,12 respectively). Being the senior male in the homestead, the husband's father has the most rights and responsibilities. His son shows a lot of respect towards him and listens to him, while the wife, as the outsider, is the person being subordinated the most.

In homestead 30 live an elderly couple on their own (categories 1 and 8). They have been married for 42 years. He is in charge of the homestead, is a senior

person, and respected in the community. His wife also has more rights in that homestead now. She behaves like an insider and has more status. However, she still needs to observe the avoidances that show respect towards her husband's dead and living agnates.

In homestead 24 live a husband and wife with their younger children and their adult unmarried daughter (respectively categories 1,8, and 11). As he is starting to grow older, the father of the homestead is becoming a more respected person in the community.

Although the wife as an outsider observes certain avoidances, she is a person in her own right now and does not have a mother-in-law to listen to anymore. The daughter respects and listens to her parents. However, she is an insider there and, for instance, need not stay out of the cattle-byre and away from the family graves as her mother must.

CONCLUSION

Social differentiation based on sex and age distinctions structure the relations between kin as well as unrelated people among the Gcaleka in Fukula and the neighbouring areas. The relationship between people who are related through marriage has a further dimension to it, that is, of having to avoid each other at all costs in order to show deference to each other. Dominance is a function of both gender and seniority and, in the case of married women, also a function of affinity.

A woman is more limited in her activities in her husband's homestead than in the homesteads of her male agnates. The boundaries created by the division of labour and other daily activities are only strictly sanctioned in the case of outsider women through certain avoidances they need to observe: they avoid activities and spatial domains associated with their husbands' ancestors. Avoidances constitute part of the control system in the society whereby 'outsiders' are being 'kept in their place',

and it contributes to their being isolated as a separate group in the society: the 'outsiders' versus the 'insiders'. These restrictions safeguard the interests of both the insiders and the outsiders, a factor which will be discussed in fuller detail in the following chapters. The avoidances back up the authority structure that is rooted in authority attributed to the ancestors.

In Fukula and the adjoining areas, the authority structure affecting married women is a system of action as well as a system of meaning; the social division by sex, age, and kinship, both does something, and says something - it expresses social order as well as norms. Through the separation of the sexes, age groups, and insiders from outsiders, relations between the different categories of people are being ordered and controlled. For instance, the labour division and the organisation of other daily activities, are based on the male/female distinction, and here men as a group have more authority than women have. Age divisions organise the female and male groups into younger persons, that is, those who do most of the work and those who are older and have more authority and responsibilities. The social division by kinship, emphasises a great separation between affines, with senior persons having the most authority in this relationship, especially if they are males.

Social categories created through social differentiation are talking: a person's maleness, femaleness, his/her age, and relationship with an affine, are symbols of, or represent something. Certain characteristics are linked to each of these

social categories, like superiority and inferiority. These ideas are then expressed through linking certain behaviour patterns and spatial domains to the different social categories.

Patriarchy as it is manifested in Fukula is a more gentle system than the analyses of certain feminists (cf. Barrett 1980, Bozzoli 1983, Millett 1969) might imply. The patriarchal system in Qwaninga and Fukula places women in subordinate as well as dominant roles. As an agnate she has more freedom of movement, as an affine she is subordinated. She is subordinated in her husband's group when she is young, inexperienced and still needs to be given a lot of guidance. When she grows older and acquires more status she finds herself in the position to lead others. For instance, a widow can be a homestead head with the younger men and women in the homestead submitting to her authority. 'Femaleness' implying subordination is a feminist way of 'looking at the world' which does not hold true for the Gcaleka in Qwaninga and Fukula. In Gcaleka society 'femaleness' in different contexts can imply domination or subordination. Furthermore, as it was seen in the incident with the whip (see p.84), all men do not wish to dominate other people; there are men who would be quite happy to rely more on the advice and decision-making of their wives. This does happen sometimes, but is hidden behind the acting out of the role that is expected of them.

In the existing structure of relations based on gender, age and kinship distinctions, the wife has a changing role. The transformations her position undergoes as time passes, is examined in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3: 'OUTSIDER WIVES', THEIR CHANGING ROLE AND AUTHORITY

INTRODUCTION

The relations of authority arising out of the daily interaction of wives with people in their husbands' homesteads in Fukula and the neighbouring subwards constitute a process, acted out in time and space, whereby a wife's position is constantly undergoing transformations. In this chapter the structure of married life and associated female avoidances (henceforth hlonipha avoidances), will be analysed within the life-cycle of the married woman comprising three stages of development; the junior wife, wife and senior wife stages. This takes into account how the rights and duties of the wife change over time; she is gradually becoming a more authoritative figure as she works her way through the different female lifestages.

Initially, she is an outsider in her new home, and to show how she gradually acquires greater insider status and figures more prominently in the formal authority structure, Van Gennep's ideas on separation, liminality and incorporation will be drawn into the discussion (Van Gennep 1960: vii). The married woman's social transition from marginality to centrality in her husband's group is a gradual process with no distinct stages. One could liken the process to a continuous scale, with liminality and incorporation into the husband's group at the two opposite ends of the scale:

0% C	25% C	50% C	75% C	100% C
100% L	75% L	50% L	25% L	0% L

L - liminal
C - incorporated

As she starts growing older and lives through the succession of female stages, she becomes less liminal and more incorporated. Her status in this home increases, and her full admission to the group is recognized through the gradual relaxing of prohibitions, though prohibitions are never fully lifted. As an old lady she would, for instance, be 80% incorporated and 20% liminal on the above scale. When she dies, she is 100% incorporated when she is 'brought back' as an ancestor in her husband's clan group and buried at his home. For example, in Fukula, in homestead 16¹, Nophumile, a mother of five children, died after a miscarriage on Sunday, 25 February 1990 and was subsequently buried in a grave they dug behind the homestead's cattle-byre. Nophumile was, therefore, buried at her husband's home; a symbol of her incorporation into his group. They say her husband's ancestors made their presence known on that day: while we were all standing near the grave a snake suddenly moved through the grass in front of me. People said not to harm the snake, as it was an ancestor of the home in our midst.

Married life and associated rules and hlonipha avoidances

¹ Homesteads referred to by number are all found in map 4, p.44.

constitute a process whereby information is being communicated and at the same time relations between people are being ordered and controlled. For instance, hlonipha behaviour separates outsider wives from insiders, structuring the relationship between affines in the homestead. Information being communicated, which is represented by certain objects and behaviour, encapsulates the idea that the wife is an outsider who is gradually turning into an insider. The fact that she has to work hard to attain insider status is an indicator of the solidarity of kin. A system of classification is being safeguarded and maintained: distinctions between affines based on gender and age differences are being made. The structure of patriarchy; an authority structure based on gender, age, and kinship distinctions (see chapter two), and the prominence given to agnatic descent, is reflected in the above situation and in the hlonipha avoidances the wife must observe.

This is not to imply a static model: the role of the outsider woman is subject to change on two different levels. On the one level change is in the form of a repetitive cycle: the married woman is working her way through three female lifestages. These stages seem to be cyclical, unchanging. On the second level, social change is affecting the female lifestage cycle; the life-cycle is undergoing changes in each successive generation and is not as unchanging as it appeared to be on the first level of change.

Relations of authority are shaped through daily interaction which

causes the given structure of relations to constantly be adapted to new circumstances. People operate within this given structure of lines, boundaries and restrictions imposed on them. The social grid it creates gives individuals, especially wives, a space of their own, while it also places an individual in several categories at once. Being fitted into hard-edged social categories, as is the case here, distances people from each other, especially subordinates from their superiors. Giving each person 'a space' of their own gives them some degree of protection against intrusion 'from outside'. For instance, structuring relations in this way stops superiors from abusing the power they have and invading the space of their subordinates. It also allows each individual, even the subordinated young wife, to behave in a manipulative way (see chapter 5 for a discussion of informal power play). In this structure of relations, the wife is initially subordinated in order to achieve an elevated position later. Fukula women in general have a proud bearing which even holds true for the newly-married women. They say that they do not like to be restricted by old people but that 'this is the way things are done' (the way they have been socialised). Working their way towards achieving higher status in the society necessitates their subordination for a brief moment in time.

NEGOTIATING THE MARRIAGE

Marriage is an alliance between two kin groups, and not only a relationship between two individuals. Before two young people can get married, the husband's group and the wife's group negotiate the marriage. It is the male elders in the agnatic groups of the

husband and the wife who are the persons marrying you. Although the different agnatic descent groups do not maintain a monopoly of their women, they do try to control whom their daughters marry, in other words, with which group their own group is going to form an alliance. The choice of a wife, of course, is limited by the clan exogamy rule. Women act as bridges between the two groups. The affinal alliance entails, for example, marital negotiations, 'exchanging wives and cattle', giving gifts to each other and 'polite verbal exchange'. For instance, they will give the wife gifts to take with her when she goes to visit her parents' home.

People in Fukula say that girls can get married when they start menstruating. That could be at the age of fifteen. However, they say that the school is changing their children and girls are even falling pregnant before they get married. Until this point in time the young girl had been used to participating in ordinary daily chores/activities in her father's home. She was allowed to enter the cattle-byre there (when not menstruating), could walk through the courtyard (inkundla), and in some cases sometimes milked the cows there (as she is a member of this clan group). She had to show respect to her father and mother and obey them; her father having more authority over her than her mother - in Fukula children still seem to respect their parents and obey them. Her father had to feed and clothe her, give her money when necessary, and hold certain rituals for her as she grew up (e.g., an ukusindela ceremony for a child and an intonjane ceremony for the grown woman) to ensure her future health and fertility. The young girl's mother and father were responsible for taking care

of her in the above-mentioned ways, and also for teaching her her role and responsibilities in the society. Becoming a pubescent female indicated that the time had arrived for her to leave her parental home.

Informants were asked about the proceedings and how a wife is chosen. One informant's reply can be taken as fairly representative of what everybody more or less said:

The old people used to look at a girl and say that they liked her because she was hard-working and not lazy. When a father chooses a bride for his son, he does not look at how she looks, he looks at how disciplined she is and whether she shows respect towards her parents. He does not look at the importance of her parents, but at their minds. A son goes to his parents and says he would like to have someone in their home who can help his mother. His father asks him if he has seen a girl, if they must choose a bride for him, or whether he wants to make his own choice. After making the choice, the husband's parents ask a few men to go and negotiate with the girl's parents on their behalf. They arrive, and while speaking to her parents, say that they have seen 'a dish' in that home which they would like to use at their home. If her parents agree to what has been asked of them, the husband's people start making plans to give lobola cattle to the girl's parents. If they do not have the cattle, they will give her parents the cattle later on.

This informant neglected to add that representatives of the local agnatic cluster choose wives for the younger men and should an independent choice be made they need to be consulted first. People, therefore, usually do not marry 'for love' as their marriage is arranged for them. Being in love is usually limited to the relationship between a woman and her boyfriend. In Fukula, the herbalist's wife (homestead 18) is the only wife who married the man she was in love with. She says that he used to be her boyfriend before they got married.

If the girl's father agrees to the marriage proposal, this signals the beginning of a reciprocal relationship and a lifelong alliance between the two groups. The wedding proceedings begin. The exchange of women for cattle puts the woman in a close relationship with the ancestral spirits of the family from which the cattle came (Kuper 1982: 17).

In the following case study² which involved the choosing of my interpreter as a new wife, it is shown how the senior male representatives of the local agnatic cluster in one specific case attempted to exercise control over the situation in the homestead of one of their junior members. They were making decisions for the wife, and afterwards for her husband, expecting them to comply with their decisions. Even senior female agnates were involving themselves in the problem in their brother's homestead:

Case: Decision-making by the male elders

At our neighbouring homestead (homestead 16) the wife, Nophumile, had her fourth miscarriage on Sunday, 4 February 1990, and she died three weeks later. The baby was buried under the woodpile by her husband's father's younger brother, Skweyiya, and her husband's older brother, Siphiwo - senior male representatives of her husband's agnatic group. During

2 This case appears a number of times in the thesis in one way or another. There are a few reasons for this. Happenings in this homestead seemed to cover so many aspects of my research that it could not be ignored. For example, there was the involvement of the members of the local agnatic cluster in the affairs of the homestead, the miscarriage the wife had, witchcraft accusations, a funeral was held, a new wife was chosen, and a ritual was held for their teenage son. The people in the homestead were always helpful and gave good answers to my questions. The wife in the homestead (who died after the miscarriage) and I became friends. When I think of her I feel a fondness towards her and I still feel sad about her death that was probably caused by blood poisoning which could have been prevented had she been able to go for treatment at a hospital. In a way it became very important to me to write about this homestead in a kind of dedication to her.

this time, while Nophumile was waiting for money to arrive from her husband which would enable her to go to hospital, her husband's two older sisters (senior female members of her husband's agnatic group living in the neighbourhood)³ helped her a lot every day: fetching water, going to chop wood and looking after the five children (aged four to sixteen years). When the money arrived from her husband, the elders (represented by Skweyiya and Siphiwo), decided that she should rather go to her husband in Johannesburg and consult a doctor there, as she seemed to be growing weaker every day. They told her to brew beer first (she would be helped by other women, of course) in order to inform her husband's ancestors of this decision. However, she died two days later.

The husband, Jakatyana, was summoned home. After the funeral was held, as well as a beer drink a week later to release the family, the husband's agnates held a meeting one afternoon. Present were the two sisters, Nobuyisile and Nomight, Skweyiya, Siphiwo, Jakatyana, and Siphiwo's wife, Nophindile. It was decided by the elders that the two sisters would look after the five children and that Skweyiya (living in homestead 17) would move to this homestead to act as homestead head in Jakatyana's absence. Concerning Jakatyana, they thought that he should get married again soon, as his children needed a mother, and the crops in his field and garden needed to be tended to. The choice was made, and he was told to approach my interpreter and to tell her that they wanted her to be his new wife. He was complaining about this (even crying his sisters told us), as he did not agree with them, but later on was forced to go and speak to her. The following day, Skweyiya, as the most senior representative of the local agnatic cluster, also came to see my interpreter, saying that they liked her because she is a person who cares about other people and told her that she was going to be 'his son's' new wife. This decision was kept a secret and was not told to the other people in Fukula. My interpreter was quite shocked and overwhelmed. In town where she had grown up she had been used to a situation where the choice of a partner in marriage was a personal matter.

Jakatyana has a girlfriend in Johannesburg. The elders did not consider her as a possibility for a new wife even though she has already given him a child. Time has passed now and he has not remarried yet.

3 The older sister, Nobuyisile, is the sub-headman's second wife (homestead 14), and the other sister, Nomight, is a widow living in homestead 25.

MARRIED LIFE: THE SOCIAL TRANSITION FROM LIMINALITY TO INCORPORATION

The movement from separation through liminality to incorporation is represented by certain objects and behaviour; abstract ideas are converted into a material form. Information is conveyed through the complex interconnectedness of cultural events itself (Leach 1976: 2, 37). Geertz (1975: 9, 10) writes that analysis is about the sorting out of the structures of signification (established codes) and determining their social ground and import. The ethnographer is faced with conceptual structures, many of them knotted into one another. Ethnography is the art of thick description, the art of unravelling these hidden codes. Leach (1976: 95) writes:

every detail of custom must be seen as part of a complex ... details, considered in isolation, are as meaningless as isolated letters of the alphabet

Non-verbal dimensions of culture, such as food, styles in clothing, spatial organisation, cooking, physical gestures and so on are organised in patterned sets so as to incorporate coded information like the sounds and words and sentences of a natural language. To talk about the grammatical rules which govern the wearing of clothes and the spatial layout is just as meaningful as it is to talk about the grammatical rules which govern speech utterances (Leach 1976: 10).

Separation

The separation phase can be referred to as the 'moving out'

phase. The young woman leaves her parents' home and moves into her husband's homestead, which is symbolic of her separation from her earlier life as an unmarried girl. In Fukula the homestead she moves to is usually the homestead of her father-in-law. Female informants said that they had been at home when they reached that time in their lives and not away in a town. Only one wife (living in homestead 11) said that she was in town at the time and was married in a magistrate's court.

The separation phase comprises symbolic behaviour and objects signifying the detachment of the individual or group from an earlier fixed point in the social structure (Turner 1972: 338, 339). Before she leaves her parents' home she enters the separation phase of the 'rite of transition'. Her separation from her previous state as an unmarried person and the partial severance of her links with her own kin, are symbolized through the ritual they hold for her before she leaves, the new clothes and other gifts⁴ they give her and the actual departure of the

4 Being very eager to see these gifts for myself, I was very excited when my interpreter and I one day (22 February 1991) by coincidence walked into a homestead in another subward, Ncizele (see map 3, p.18) where the young wife had been 'taken by force' two months before, and found the gifts she had brought from her parents' home the previous day neatly laid out on the main hut's floor on display. There was an air of excitement in the homestead. It was a happy day for the young wife. She was smiling and excited when we admired the beautiful new traditional clothes she had on. The gifts consisted of the following items and easily must have cost them 350 rand or more:

1 washing basin, 2 baskets, 1 tray, 1 big kettle, 1 big plastic jug, 4 cups and saucers, 3 enamel bowls, 1 paraffin lamp, 1 glass lampshade, 1 sickle, 1 hoe, 1 bucket, 2 brooms, 2 sleeping mats, 1 round grass mat for food, 2 x 2,5 kg sugar, 2 big packets of Teaspoon Tips, 2 kg flour, 1 box of matches, 1 big box of powder soap, 1 bottle of cooking oil, 3 spoons, 1 strainer, 4 loaves of bread, 3 bottles of brandy, 3 bottles of beer, 1 bottle of cooldrink, traditional clothes, sweets (for the children), and 1 pair of shoes.

young woman from her parental home. The crossing of social frontiers calls for a ritual. Before she leaves her parents' home a goat is slaughtered. They tell her that they will be taking her to her new home and what her future responsibilities at that home will be. They give her rules of conduct she is to follow at her in-laws' home and tell her that she must respect her father-in-law and mother-in-law as if they are her own parents. All of this indicating to the young woman that she is now in the stage of detachment from her 'old life'. They are helping her to emotionally prepare herself for what is to come. Gifts/dowry (called otyemba) are given to her, after which the girl leaves ('detaches herself from') her parental home and is accompanied to her new home.

The young woman who is to become a bride, is given a new set of clothes by her parents. Her old clothes are never worn by her again and are given away. This is a symbolic action whereby her old life, like her old clothes, is left behind her and is being replaced by her new married state⁵. She puts on her new clothes to mark her change of status.

Getting married

As the wedding is a stage between separation and the movement from liminality to incorporation, the wedding rites represent elements of separation, liminality as well as incorporation.

⁵ Likewise, a circumcised new man, at the 'coming out' ceremony, is also given new clothes (will never wear his old clothes again). This is symbolic of the change from one state to another.

In Fukula, most of the women (old and young) when asked about their own wedding, said that they had been 'taken by force' (ukuthwala which means 'to carry/abduct') or ukutyiswa amasi (which means 'to eat sour milk') was done for them. The latter being the most popular form of marriage today. One of the senior wives in Fukula (homestead 2) is the only woman whose wedding took place in a church. Interestingly enough, this wedding turned out to be a 'blending' of the old and the new: after she was married in the Presbyterian church on the Tuesday, they, two days later at her husband's homestead held the ukutyiswa amasi ritual for her. She was introduced to her husband's ancestors in the cattle-byre and a goat was slaughtered. They gave her sour milk to drink. After that occasion she was allowed to use the milk and sour milk in that homestead.

One of the junior wives (living in homestead 11) is the only woman in the subward who was married in a magistrate's court⁶ (in Somerset West, Cape Town). No wedding rites have taken place in her husband's homestead yet. For instance, because a goat has not been slaughtered yet, she cannot use the milk and sour milk in that homestead.

Two women, that is, the most senior woman in Fukula (in her eighties) and a woman who is in the 'wife stage' - respectively living in homesteads 19 and 10 - had traditional weddings held for them. In the following two case studies of their weddings, the form traditional weddings take is revealed.

⁶ Standard eight and nine girls were interviewed and said that if they were given a choice, they would prefer to be married in either a church or a magistrate's court.

Case: The wedding of the most senior woman in Fukula

Girls and young men accompanied the bride to her husband's home. On their arrival they waited behind the huts until the husband's people came out to ask where they were on their way to. They answered that it was late and asked to sleep there for the night. The guests were given their own hut to stay in. Where they had been waiting, they left a bottle of brandy behind for the husband's people.

After a while, the head of that homestead brought a sheep to the guests' hut. He said that they had nothing they could give them to eat and were now giving them this 'chicken' to eat. He thanked the visitors who had brought the bride, and then slaughtered the sheep. The meat was brought to the bride's people.

The bride had brought an ox with her from her home (called the impotulo ox). The husband's people slaughtered this ox the next day. On the same day in the afternoon, the 'marriage ox' (called the umguco ox) belonging to the husband's people this time, was slaughtered. Before the ox was slaughtered, the bride and the girls who had accompanied her were taken into the cattle-byre and the bride was introduced to the ancestors of that home. She was taken back into the hut. Speeches were made in the cattle-byre and the ancestors were told about the new wife.

During this time of festivities, the husband's people slaughtered two goats. Speeches were again made in the cattle-byre and the ancestors were told that this woman is getting married here now. On the second occasion they were told that she would start drinking milk and sour milk in that home as this goat was slaughtered to allow the bride to drink milk and sour milk in that home (the ukutyiswa amasi ritual).

Case: Traditional wedding of a younger wife

This wedding took place in 1976. Nine head of cattle were given as lobola to the wife's people by the husband's people. They slaughtered a goat at the wife's home before she left. She was accompanied by young women and young men. They arrived at her husband's homestead. Soon after her arrival they gave her a new name. Nothing was slaughtered for the guests on the first day. The next day, the impotulo ox the wife's people had brought with them, was slaughtered. On the following day, the ukutyiswa amasi ritual was held and they slaughtered a goat. She sat inside a hut behind the door where they came and gave her a cup of sour milk; she had to dip strips of roasted goat meat into the sour milk, eat the meat and drink the sour milk.

A week after the impotulo ox had been slaughtered, her husband's people slaughtered one of their own oxen (the 'marriage' or umgugo ox). Before the time she and the young women who had accompanied her were taken into the cattle-byre. They were wrapped in white blankets. They spoke to her there and told the ancestors of that homestead that they had brought the bride to the cattle-byre to show them that she is a new member in this homestead.

Before the bride's people returned home she unpacked the gifts/dowry her parents had given her. She immediately started working in her husband's homestead after her people's departure.

The traditional wedding (uduli) is seldom held today as people are no longer financially able to afford festivities that easily last for a week. Cattle, goats and sheep were slaughtered. The wife and the people accompanying her did not only bring an ox (impotulo ox) with from their home, but also another beast (the ubulunga cow) which belonged to the wife, given to her by her father to provide milk for her at her new home. Among the wives in Fukula only two cases could be found of an ubulunga cow that was brought from the father's home.

Elements of separation, liminality and incorporation can be seen in the above wedding rites. For example, the final separation is signified by the departure of the people who accompanied the bride to her new home. She is made aware of her liminal position during the first few days there; she is subdued, quiet and drops her eyes when her in-laws are present. She is in a position of total submission in this inbetween stage. Her in-laws give her the rules 'the outsider' must obey in their homestead which indicates how ambiguous and liminal her position is. When she is introduced to her husband's ancestors and the 'eating of sour milk' ritual (giving her permission to use the milk and sour milk

in her new homestead) is held, it is a symbol of and first step towards incorporation into the husband's group: they are beginning to 'allow her in'.

According to informants, people rarely slaughter an ox when the young woman is brought to her husband's homestead today. On her arrival, if they are financially able to, they slaughter sheep and goats. Sometimes a goat and a sheep are only slaughtered some time later. They bake a lot of bread and brew beer for the occasion. Variations occur in the 'eating of sour milk' ritual, for instance, strips of the roasted meat are dipped into sour milk and given to the woman to eat, a piece of rope is dipped into the sour milk and is given to her to suck off. This is called ukutyiswa amasi. Women in Qwaninga and Fukula tend to use this term when they refer to their wedding rites in general. The following case study is an example of the marital form they call ukutyiswa amasi:

Case: The marriage of the sub-headman's older daughter in c.1980

The wedding rites lasted for four days. At the bride's father's homestead (homestead 13) they slaughtered a goat for her. Before leaving there, her parents gave her gifts (otyemba) which included a bed, clothes, dishes, groceries, and so on. Her parents stayed at home and asked some older people and young girls to walk with the bride to her new home (homestead 20). When she arrived there, the bride put her new clothes on and a black headdress which hung like a veil around her face and almost covered her eyes. She and the other young girls then put buckets on their heads and went to fetch water. A goat was slaughtered while they were away. The meat was roasted on that day, and was cooked on the second day. Another goat was slaughtered for the 'eating of sour milk' ritual. The bride and the young girls were taken into the cattle-byre where they kneeled on a sleeping mat facing the gateway. The old men in the husband's group gave the bride rules and told the ancestors about the new wife. They left the cattle-byre and then kneeled in the courtyard (inkundla) on a sleeping mat facing the gateway of the

cattle-byre again. A mug of sour milk (amasi) was brought to the bride and was drunk by her. The wedding ceremony ended after the four days and the bride started working at that homestead straightaway.

The following two case studies show how the wedding rites are often stretched out over time:

Case: Marriage of a woman whose wedding rites have been stretched out over six years (homestead 21)

Two men came to her home and brought brandy with them for the people of that home. They spoke to her parents, asking them whether their daughter could become a wife at their home. Her parents agreed and asked for seven oxen as lobola.

On the agreed day her father's sister and two young men accompanied her to her new home. On the way, in a hidden place, she changed into the traditional clothes her parents had given her. On their arrival, the guests were given a hut to stay in. The husband's people slaughtered a sheep. Tea was made for them, and they were given meat to eat. Soon afterwards she was given her new name by her sisters-in-law. When her people left they took the lobola cattle with them.

Some time later her parents sent her gifts (otyemba) buckets, basins, cups and saucers, clothes, etc. She still does not drink milk and sour milk in this homestead, as the ukutyiswa amasi ritual has not been held for her yet. She has not been taken into the cattle-byre to be introduced to her husband's ancestors (she is therefore still in a very liminal state in her new home). She says that it became nice to live in her husband's homestead after a while when she started getting to know the people there better and did not feel like a stranger anymore.

When a woman is 'taken by force' - often physically carried off by men - she is, as it seems to be the case in Fukula, the only party who is not informed beforehand. The parents of the two people have often already negotiated the marriage. This happened in December 1990 to one of the daughters in homestead 4. She did not know that she would be stopped on the way to the shop that day while all along it had been arranged by her parents and the

negotiations had already taken place:

Case: A young wife 'taken by force'

The young woman arrived at her new homestead and discovered that the man she was to be married to was a total stranger. A day or two later the bride's brother went to that homestead to negotiate about the number of cattle to be given as lobola. He went home with five lobola cattle.

On 22 February 1991 when we visited the young woman's parental home her mother was busy sorting out the gifts (otyemba) she was planning to give to her daughter. She proudly showed us some of the gifts: among the gifts there was an apron she had made, other clothes, a table, a table cloth and a wooden trunk. The mother said that when her daughter came home to fetch everything they would bring two more lobola cattle with them. The last two lobola cattle would be brought to their homestead in December 1991 at which time the husband's people planned to slaughter a goat (ukutyiswa amasi) so that the young wife could start drinking milk and sour milk in her husband's homestead.

As can be seen in the following survey, the wives living in homesteads 18, 24, 25, and 30 experienced 'getting married' in a similar way to the woman in the above case study:

Survey: Wives who were 'taken by force' in Fukula

Nophindile (homestead 18), Nomight (homestead 25), Nosandile (homestead 25), Nokwakha (homestead 24), and Nosintu (homestead 30) were 'taken by force'. All of these women, except Nosandile who is a junior wife, have married children. Nosandile is the daughter of Nokwakha and the daughter-in-law (molokazana) of Nomight. Nophindile and Nomight are sisters-in-law.

Nophindile, Nomight, and Nokwakha were married in the early 1960s, Nosintu in c.1948 and Nosandile in 1987. Nomight said that she tried to fight the three men who came to fetch her. This resulted in them dragging her through the river. When she arrived at her husband's home they dressed her in traditional clothes. All the wives were given rules of conduct soon after their arrival at their husbands' homesteads. Nophindile and Nokwakha were given their new names immediately. Work in their husbands' homesteads started straightaway.

After a certain time had passed, they asked permission to go back to their parents' homes. A goat was slaughtered for them there and on their departure they

were given gifts (otyemba) to take with them. They said that their 'going home' occurred after the lobola cattle had been given to their parents. Nosintu's parents received nine head of cattle and Nokwakha's parents seven. Afterwards the wedding rites commenced in their husbands' homesteads. In the case of the junior wife, Nosandile, the 'drinking of sour milk' ritual has not been held for her yet.

To be 'taken by force' means that two people can become husband and wife while almost no expenses have been incurred. This situation continues until people are financially able to 'pay their debts'. For instance, the household articles and new clothes her parents give her are only given to her some time later. In the meantime her in-laws lend clothes to her. The ukutyiswa amasi ritual is held for her at a later stage. She starts acting as a wife and working in that homestead immediately. She remains in an extreme liminal position for a longer period in time in her new home as the first steps towards incorporation are being delayed by this situation. Fukula women do not seem upset about being 'taken by force'. Without exception all the women spoken to who had been 'taken by force', in Fukula as well as in the surrounding areas, related the story to me with great excitement and even acted it out.

From liminality to incorporation

The new wife is a complete outsider in her husband's home; her position is one of extreme marginality and ambiguity. Regarding new wives the following said by Wolf (1972: 167) about rural women in Taiwan also is true in Gcaleka society:

The rural woman ... is an outsider and an outsider is always an object of suspicion and potentially dangerous because she is a stranger.

The behaviour and objects representing her outsidersness and the transformations her position is undergoing over time are expressed through hlonipha avoidances and other prohibitions as she progresses from a bride, to a junior wife, a wife and then to a senior wife.

People in Fukula say that young people are supposed to go and live with the husband's parents until they either have two children and/or have been in that homestead for a few years, and the young wife has been working for her mother-in-law and submitting to her authority. In this regard, Mayer (1978: 57) says that the system protects women against being left to cope single-handed. The customary service of the young daughter-in-law has a double benefit that the young woman is not single-handed in the early years of her marriage, and that the older woman has a junior to share the work.

One of the three polygynists in Fukula staying in homestead 6, has moved into a homestead adjacent to his father's homestead (homestead 8) after being in that homestead for approximately four to five years. According to informants this is how it is supposed to be. However, young people who want more 'freedom' will try to start their own homestead sooner. McAllister (1991b: 368) writes that formerly young married men remained in their fathers' extended family homesteads for many years after marriage. Today, Xhosa men, encouraged by their wives, tend to try and set up independent homesteads fairly soon after marriage and to achieve economic independence. In Fukula this has not been happening - probably due to the fact that people are not

financially able to set up their own homestead so soon after getting married. Although the newly-married couples in Fukula do not have their own homesteads, they are 'free' sooner because the husband's father and mother are not there; they are either away doing migrant labour or are not alive anymore, for example, in both homesteads 11 and 12 the young wives are living alone because their fathers-in-law and husbands are working in town and their mothers-in-law are dead.

This is the time in her life when a woman starts wearing a headdress (called ighiya) of black cloth tied low over the forehead almost in her eyes. It is raised after a short time. She wears a shawl over her shoulders pinned at the neck. It is soon lowered below the right armpit leaving the right arm free to work. Her clothing is reflecting her 'new wife' status. As is the case with the clothing of the women in this study, items of clothing have no meaning unless they are put together in sets to form distinctive markers of specified social roles in specified social contexts. The progression from social status to social status is marked by changes of dress (Leach 1976: 55).

She has now entered the liminal period at her new home. Her liminal position is emphasised through prohibitions/avoidances she needs to observe - they are 'keeping her out' as she is an outsider. For the first few weeks she is called 'bride' (umtshakazi) and kept at a distance completely. She is told that these avoidances are necessary as she needs to show respect towards the senior people at her new home, especially towards her husband's forefathers, his father and other senior male and

female agnates. The distance between her and the men is greater than between her and the women (see chapter 2). An asymmetry in relations exists here; senior men are given more respect than is the case with senior women. Hlonipha⁷ avoidances are avoidances being observed in order to show respect towards the senior and older persons in the homestead (Finlayson 1984: 138). I was told by married women in Fukula that at this point in time you are 'ruled by old people' and that there are many things you are not allowed to do. As they will eventually gain more status most young women almost seem proud to be working their passage and obeying these rules. Furthermore, hlonipha avoidances and rules are backing up the authority of the ancestors which acts as a powerful sanction that usually prevents the wife from even considering the possibility of disobeying these rules.

Although the young wives in Fukula (living in homesteads 6, 12, 13, 21, 25, 27) submit to the authority of their seniors, they never behave in a down-trodden way: they are spirited and full of ideas of their own. When the seniors are not around, for instance, when they are all at a beer party, they take the opportunity to relax; they sit and visit, talking, laughing,

7 In Kropf (1899: 154) ukuhlonipha is explained as, 'to keep at a distance through reverence', 'to shun approach'. It is described as a custom between the relations-in-law which is generally not exclusively applied to the female sex. For example, sons-in-law must be respectful to their mothers-in-law (as it was also seen to be the case in chapter two). Hunter (1936: 36) gives a similar definition of ukuhlonipha: it is to show respect towards all senior relatives of the husband, particularly his male relatives and is expressed through the observance of avoidances. Among the Gcaleka in Qwaninga and Fukula people also say that ukuhlonipha is to show respect, especially to senior people. However, when they describe how respect is expressed they include avoidances as well as other prohibitions and instructions given to wives.

gossiping and even sometimes smoke cigarettes. We came across this situation a few times. In many ways they are still children. The security their parents used to give them is now a responsibility that has been transferred to their in-laws (this is the case in homesteads 6, 13, and 25 where they are living in the extended families of their husbands'). They are still being looked after in the same way in which their parents took care of them as children, too much responsibility is not expected of them yet nor need they make any big decisions. At this stage they are only assisting in the homestead.

The wife has to observe elaborate verbal, spatial and other avoidances in her new home. In order to show the necessary respect the wife is given rules concerning avoidances and other restrictions at her new home that will govern her life from this time onwards. It is usually her mother-in-law and/or her sisters-in-law who give her rules⁸ soon after her arrival at that homestead (Finlayson 1984: 138). In the following the Fukula wives described the rules given to them, how it affects their

⁸ Likewise, a circumcised new man is also given rules at his 'coming out' ceremony. They instruct him what is expected of him as a married man and how he should behave towards other people in this capacity. For example, in July 1990 in the subward, Rhafane, on the day a circumcised new man came out of seclusion, one of the elders said the following words to him: 'You have now reached the stage of being a man. We must give you a word; pay respect to your parents and the people around you. Look after your mother and father and do not argue with them. It is a windy day. We do not know whether our words are going into your head or whether it will blow away in the wind. To build a homestead you must start at the bottom to move upwards. You must build a homestead and must have animals and chickens in the homestead. We wish to see you build a cattle-byre and sit at home thinking about what must be done. You must slaughter your own cattle. We are giving you rules and will give you a wife too. A wife starts sitting behind the door like you do. A man is given rules until he dies.'

daily lives and what it entails.

Informants said that in and around the homestead the wife shows respect through what she wears, what she eats, whom she avoids, where she avoids walking and in the way she speaks. These are symbols of her outsidership and liminality. They tell her that she is not to use sounds in the names and surnames of, for instance, her husband⁹, her husband's forefathers, his great-grandmother, his grandfather, his father, his older brothers, and so on (see table 10 for examples). They say that when she goes to town she takes children with her to say the names and words she is not allowed to use. For the rest of her life she is to continue observing the verbal avoidances¹⁰. This is a reflection of the fact that she is an outsider in her husband's group and is never allowed to forget it even when she starts becoming more of an insider in her husband's group.

They say that out of respect to her husband's ancestors she is

9 The young wife in homestead 11 who was married in the magistrate's court, says that she uses her husband's name and does not think that she is being disrespectful in any way. This is one of the changes starting to make its appearance among the younger generation.

10 A man also has to use hlonipha language and avoid using certain sounds/words during the time he spends in seclusion after he has been circumcised. For example, we were allowed to visit the circumcised man in the dome-shaped grass hut he was staying in during the last few days before he came out in July 1990. During those few days certain women were allowed to go there. He was wrapped in a blanket and smeared with white ochre. His eyes were lowered all the time and he only spoke when he was spoken to. It was expected of him to follow the instructions of the man who was looking after him. The hlonipha language he was using was one of the ways in which he was being restricted: he was not allowed to use the names of the objects around him like spoons, pots, ash, and so on.

Table 10: 'Hlonipha language'

word	sound being avoided	name	substitute word
ibokhwe (goat)	bokhwe	name of father-in-law: Bokweni	imbuzi
pheka (cook)	pheka	name of brother-in-law: Phekeni	theleka
entla (up there)	tl	surname of f.i.l : Ntlomelwane	entyu
galela (pour in)	ga	name of f.i.l: Galelekile	faka
ikhona (it is here)	kho	name of father-in-law: Pokholo	idona
umnyango (door)	nya	name of father-in-law: Nyama	umphumo
ihlathi (forest)	mhla	surname of f.i.l : Umhlaba	ingethe
umhlaba (soil)	mhla	surname of f.i.l : Umhlaba	umgada
ubuhlanti (cattle-byre)	hla	surname of f.i.l : Umhlaba	ithango
inja (dog)	ja	name of gfather-in-law: Jakatyana	ibetha
isitya (dish)	tya	name of gfather-in-law: Jakatyana	isimundelo
indawo (place)	nda	name of father-in-law: Zanendaba	immango
imagi (mug)	ma	name of gmother of husband: Maki	inkonkxa
khohlela (cough)	khohl	surname of husband: Khohliso	ntunguza
indlela (road)	ndlela	surname of that home: Ndlela	impambuko
hlala (stay)	la(e)la	surname of that home: Ndlela	ukuzinza

not to go outside bare-headed¹¹ and she must always wear something around her waist. She wears a skirt that almost reaches down to her ankles, a long sleeved blouse or shirt and a shawl around her shoulders when she goes out. At her new homestead she walks behind the huts during the first few weeks. This emphasises her extreme liminal position in the beginning. She is moving on the boundaries of her husband's group and is not allowed in yet.

Further restrictions that signify a newly-married woman's marginality are that she must not eat chicken, pork nor intestines and the head and feet of a slaughtered animal¹². This was told to me repeatedly. She does not drink sour milk and milk (ubisi) - until the ukutyiswa amasi ritual has been held at her new home. She is not supposed to drink beer, go to beer drinks and other social occasions. They say she is the young wife who does not 'know about things' yet. She is still like the neophyte; hidden and not fully part of the social structure (Turner 1972: 338). She is not to have a boyfriend. The young wife needs to work for her mother-in-law - if she is not doing migrant labour - before she moves out into their own homestead. This is an indication of her liminal position and that she is working her way towards incorporation.

11 Only on two occasions did I see women without their headdresses on. One day I joined the women and girls when they went down to the sea to collect mussels. Before they started wading in the water they all took their headdresses off first. Another time when I was leaving early in the morning I entered a hut where the mother-in-law, her married son, daughter-in-law and children were sleeping. The mother-in-law in her sleepy state did not have her headdress on yet.

12 The junior wife in homestead 11 said that although she was not allowed to eat chicken, pork and meat from the head of an ox when she was newly married, her husband sometimes gave her chicken and pork when he was eating it.

Out of respect to them she must avoid her husband's father and mother and his elder brother and sister. She does not touch her father-in-law nor any of her husband's senior male agnates. She is not allowed to use her father-in-law's plates, dishes, cups, spoons, etc. When her father-in-law is near she must physically stay far away from him, and when they go somewhere together, they walk a few metres apart. Informants say that she must not greet her father-in-law with the hand nor the other senior male agnates of her husband. She must not give him food; either a child must give it to him, or she must put it down in front of him. Women act as channels when senior male agnates want to speak to her. If her father-in-law lives in that hut she does not walk on the right side (men's side) of the hut. She can smear the floor there with cow-dung. When she sits down it is behind the door on the left side of the hut. A woman who has been married for six years, described it as follows:

I do not go near my father-in-law or touch him. I do not walk on his side of the hut. When I want to give him food I call a child to give it to him. I live in the same hut as my father-in-law and mother-in-law. If my father-in-law is already there I do not remove my headdress but sleep with it on and change under the blanket. My father-in-law's name is 'Jubele'¹³. I must avoid using his name and the name of my mother-in-law and sister-in-law. I use the word igeyempe instead of 'ibeleembe' because I must avoid the sound 'bele'. My mother-in-law also has told me to avoid certain sounds in the names of certain ancestors out of respect to them, I use nombe instead of 'inkomo', ububanti instead of 'ubuhlanti' and umbanzi for 'umzi'.

Although it is an asymmetrical relationship, these avoidances

13 The words/sounds in inverted commas were said by a child.

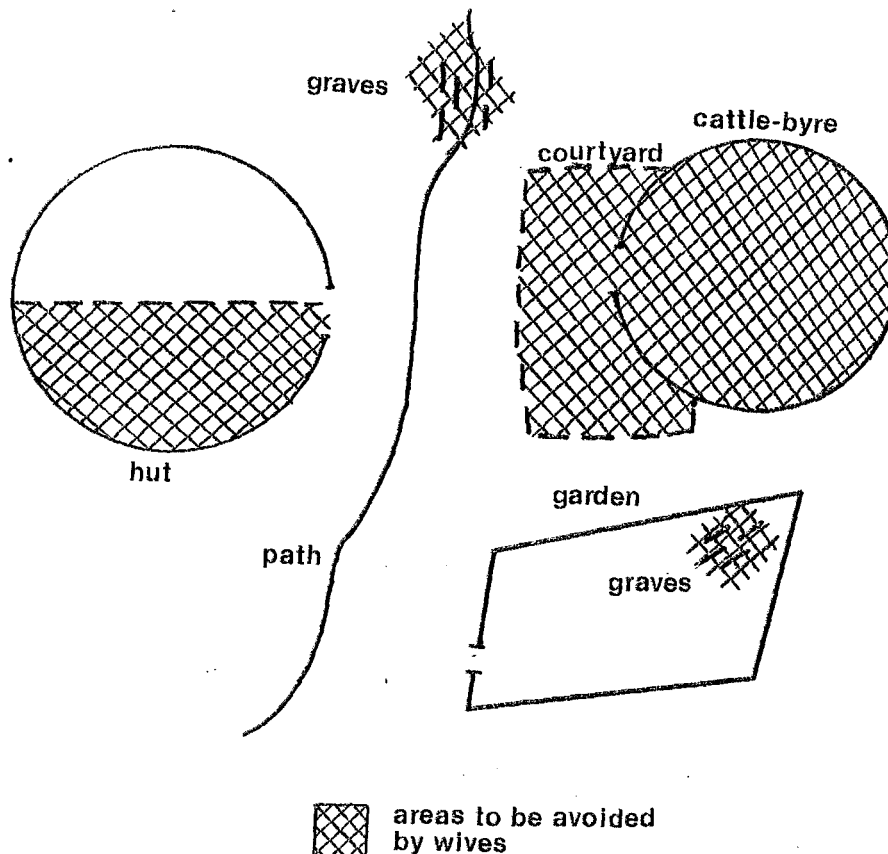
restrict both the wife and her in-laws. The distance between the father-in-law and the daughter-in-law is the greatest. Laughing, a senior man one day said to me that this custom keeps him away from his son's beautiful young wife. He cannot come physically close to her, touch her nor speak to her.

Out of respect to the ancestors, and because she is not a member of their descent group, she avoids their sacred places, that is, the cattle-byre (ubuhlanti), the courtyard (the area between the huts and cattle-byre) and places where their graves are to be found. When there are graves in the garden the same applies to the garden. Informants say that a goat or sheep needs to be slaughtered first before she is allowed to go into the garden where the graves are. If she wants cow-dung (ubulongwe) from the cattle-byre she calls one of the children to fetch it there¹⁴. These avoidances are to be observed for the rest of her life and are markers of her social role as an outsider.

If she believes in the cult of the ancestors, the ancestors constantly watching her becomes a powerful sanction governed by ideology. A young wife (homestead 21), Nolitha, once made a detour and avoided the path we were walking on because her husband's ancestors were buried there. On enquiring why she observed this avoidance even though no one was there to enforce it, I was told that her husband's ancestors were watching her.

14 Old men of the clan sometimes after discussing the matter give a wife permission to enter the cattle-byre at her husband's homestead from then on (that is, their own homestead and not her husband's parents' homestead).

Certain spatial patterns conveying information about the position of the wife therefore emerge together with those discussed in the previous chapter. They can be illustrated as follows:



After a couple of weeks the new bride starts wearing her headdress higher up on her forehead, her dress is just below her knee and she now may walk in the front of the huts (not through the courtyard, though). She is called makoti, and she finds herself in the group called abafazana (junior wives). Her dress and behaviour show that she, on the scale mentioned in the introduction, has started moving away from extreme liminality towards incorporation. She continues to work for her mother-in-law. As time passes further symbols of her progression on this

scale can be seen in the fact that she begins to attend social occasions in the subward, her shawl is tied under both armpits, across the breast, and her headdress is worn higher up on her forehead. She may give birth to her first child. In the following case study the situation junior wives find themselves in in Fukula and the neighbouring areas is illustrated through looking at the position of four wives. The role social change is playing can also be seen:

Case: The position of four junior wives

In the homestead of the sub-headman (homestead 13) the two young daughters-in-law, Nothando and Nocollege, move around the homestead very quietly: they seldom speak loudly, speak when they are spoken to, do their chores, avoid the cattle-byre and the courtyard (inkundla) and do not enter their father-in-law's hut unless they are told to go there. When they do enter his hut they do not walk on the side where his bed is (right side of the hut as one enters). They avoid the path running adjacent to the cattle-byre as there are graves of people from that homestead there. The two daughters-in-laws do not go near the cattle when the men and boys take the cattle out to the fields in the mornings and bring them back in the late afternoon.

The sub-headman to whom they must show the most respect they avoid completely, they keep their eyes lowered in his presence, never speak to him directly and never touch him. If he wants them to do something, it is told to them by the other women in the homestead. When they want to give their father-in-law food or something to drink they either call a child to give it to him or put it down on the floor in front of him.

These two wives are far more restricted than the two junior wives, Nosizwe and Nolitha who respectively live in homesteads 12 and 21. They are not living in their husbands' extended family groups as Nothando and Nocollege are. Their husbands are away doing migrant labour most of the time, which gives them much more freedom. On a daily basis there are no in-laws whom they have to show respect to and obey. As their homesteads are new homesteads, there is no cattle-byre and cattle to be avoided by them. They often lock up and go away to their parents' homes for a week or two, something Nothando and Nocollege cannot so easily do. This is the 'new freedom' more and more young women are starting to experience.

Gradually the junior wife acquires more status as she starts bearing children. Her headdress is worn higher up on her forehead. She is now allowed to eat everything. These are the signs reflecting her gradual acquiring of more status. She has full responsibility as wife and mother and no longer works for her mother-in-law because she and her husband are usually living in their own new homestead at this stage. She is called umfazi (wife). Today, senior wives merely tell the junior wives when the time has come for them to enter the next female lifestage. No ritual is held to mark their change of status. In earlier days, according to informants, a ritual - a beer drink - was held to announce the status change. At the beer drink the young wife was told that she is not a 'little woman' anymore, that she may attend beer parties, other social occasions and drink beer from then on.

As time passes and her children become teenagers, her decisions and opinions carry more weight in the homestead and people listen to her. It seems as if men are not free to ignore the opinions of their wives as this could lead to great upset in the homestead, a situation that is better avoided. Without anyone having said so, it is clear that she is no longer considered to be the 'dangerous' stranger. Having children of her own places her in a position where she has her own family right there in her husband's homestead which makes her more of an insider. This is the situation with Nokhemisti, Nomight, and Nophindile (who respectively live in homesteads 4, 25, and 18):

Case: The position of three older wives

In their respective homesteads Nokhemisti, Nomight, and Nophindile continue to observe hlonipha avoidances

which include verbal avoidances, not being allowed to go into the cattle-byre nor go near the graves in those homesteads. There are certain signs reflecting their acquired status: their headdresses are bigger than those of junior wives, they are less careful of their appearance than before, they speak up more easily than before not having to be subdued and quiet under the watchful eye of their mothers-in-law.

Nokhemisti listens to her husband and at the same time tells him what she thinks. She seems to have a lot of influence in that homestead. She gives instructions to her juniors (adults and children) all the time and likes to argue her point when she disagrees with someone. Nophindile's position is very much the same. She, however, has a gentler, hidden way of making people listen to her. She and her husband consult each other about the things they plan to do, and listen to each others' advice.

Nomight is in charge of the homestead as her husband is dead. Her married son (and only child) is therefore not head of the homestead. There are no cattle there; she takes care of the goats and milks them when necessary. She likes to make independent decisions and seems to resent it when important matters necessitate that she consult her brothers who live in adjacent homesteads (homesteads 16 and 18). She does, however, like to ask the advice of her father's younger brother (homestead 17) who is the most senior male in Fukula.

The married woman's children start growing up. She is told by older women that she has become a senior wife. She wears a big headdress, is more relaxed, less careful of her appearance, has reached (or almost reached) the end of her years of fertility and her children start marrying. Her daughters move away on marriage, while her sons get married and settle either in or near their homestead. She has become a mother-in-law - some mothers-in-law being very protective of their sons. The burden of the daily chores are carried out by daughters, wives and children in the homestead, while she, for instance, looks after her grandchildren. Having her children and grandchildren around her gives her a feeling of security, that she belongs there and has almost become an insider in her husband's group now.

Characteristic of this phase is that there are now often three generations living together in the homestead¹⁵ and the family has become an extended family.

Advancing old age enhances the status of women; they are treated with respect by both sexes, they have considerable say in the affairs of the homestead and are confident of their power. She is still keeping the rules of her husband's home and setting the example for younger wives. If any of her older female in-laws are around she shows respect towards them, but contrary to the situation earlier when she only spoke to them when it was expected of her, she now answers them back if she does not agree with what they are saying. She has the right to supervise and control the work of members of her own sex on all occasions. She is responsible for the promotion of younger women. The married woman has gradually acquired status in this home and is almost fully incorporated in her husband's descent group now.

Case: The most senior woman in Fukula

The most senior woman¹⁶ in Fukula lives in a homestead (homestead 19) which consists of one hut that has been built in the fenced garden. Her husband is dead. Her widowed daughter, also a senior wife, lives with her. During the summer months they and their hut are hidden behind the tall maize plants in the garden. There are no cattle and goats in the homestead, but they have a few chickens. She is still a person of

15 There are seven (21%) three generation homesteads in Fukula - see table 4(i), p.52.

16 On one of my visits to this old lady I one day gave her a banana. She had never seen a banana before in her life. She looked at 'this thing' and was quite nervous to taste it in front of me. However, she was pleasantly surprised by its sweet taste and was glad that it was soft because she hardly has any teeth. She seemed quite excited and kept half of the banana to show to her daughter and to give to her to taste. As it gave her so much pleasure, I on subsequent field trips always used to take her one banana, shortly after my arrival.

'the old ways' and has had very little contact with the outside world during her lifetime. She has no idea of the Western world's lifestyle 'out there'.

She still observes hlonipha avoidances like verbal avoidances and although she is less careful of her appearance, she is dressed in the proper, respectable way. She still works in the garden herself but tells her daughter to do most of the other chores in the homestead. She is respected by everyone and is an authoritative figure. When she speaks people keep quiet to listen to her.

In the above case study the widow replaced her husband as homestead head after his death. This is also the case in homesteads 2 and 32 where the senior wives are the homestead heads. They have authority and rule the people in the homestead. This includes their married sons.

The above female life-cycle is undergoing changes. Junior wives often do not spend time working for their mothers-in-law anymore. The change from one lifestage to the next is not accompanied by a ritual. Because young men are becoming more economically independent, the authority of the elders is being threatened. Mayer (1978: 102) holds the view that once the ideological foundation of the Red system is undermined - the principle of seniority, sanctioned ultimately in the ancestor cult - the authority of the old over the young and of men over women is undermined as well.

In this regard, Wilson and Thompson (1971: 94) say the following:

From the moment migrants go out to work, relationships between the generations are modified. Traditional authority may be asserted for a time, and young men hand over their earnings to their fathers who, in turn, fulfil traditional responsibility in providing marriage-cattle, but as the use of money spreads, ... sons seek economic independence.

One of the senior women in an adjoining subward to Fukula described it as follows:

The old people are crying today. The husband, when he was a migrant worker, used to send home money to his parents, but now he is sending it directly to his wife. The wife used to stay with her mother-in-law and her father-in-law, but now she often goes to live with her husband in town or she goes to stay with her own parents for weeks at a time when her husband is away at work. Had this happened in earlier times her in-laws and husband would not have given her any money.

In the neighbouring subward, Rhafane, an old lady said the following to me:

People here are Red people, you can see this in their dress. The Red people have not changed. It is only the Church people who are trying to change the minds of the children. I enjoy being 'Red' just as the Church people enjoy being like they are. They do not praise the ancestors. Customs are done by the Red people and not by the Church people because this is not in the Bible. I have noticed that children are less interested in the customs of the Red people and are less obedient. Young parents come from the towns and teach their children the 'new ways and freedom'. At rituals where they slaughter an animal and brew beer, children are there but they are not interested and asking questions about these customs.

In small ways the elders are starting to feel the threat to their authority which is especially coming from the young and upcoming generation:

Case: The most senior man in Fukula

The most senior man in Fukula (in his eighties), lives in homestead 17. He became our biggest friend in Fukula. On the way to places we would often drop in to see him. We would sometimes share our meal with him. He would then give us vegetables out of his garden and give us meat at rituals. The old man lives here on his own. He has one hut that is in need of repair, a small garden which he works in himself, and a few chickens. He does his own cooking, washes his clothes, chops wood, fetches water, and so on. He has lived here all his life. His wife left him and never returned after an argument they had had. According to him she is still alive.

Although adults younger than himself show the necessary respect towards him, it is the children, the new generation, who ignore his requests for help. For example, he asks them to carry something for him or to go to the shop for him and they just refuse. He says there is nothing he can do about it.

SYMBOLIC BOUNDARIES AND THE SOCIAL ORDER

The prohibitions and hlonipha avoidances that form an integral part of an adult woman's married life create symbolic boundaries that separate certain categories of people like kin and non-kin from each other. At the same time it communicates ideas about the social and moral order. In Gcaleka society and Fukula hlonipha avoidances and other restrictions safeguard the classification system based on the making of gender, age and kinship distinctions, in other words the structure of patriarchy (see chapter 2).

These beliefs surrounding the married life of women represent ideas of how different she is; in the hard-edged social order different kinds of people are kept separated from each other. Restrictions affecting her mark social boundaries and affirm distinctive identities. It does not only communicate ideas about her outsidersness, but also contains symbols of how she gradually is becoming an insider. The 'complex interconnectedness of cultural events' is a system of communication, it is speaking in the same way in which one speaks through a language. The principle of seniority - the ideological foundation of the system sanctioned in the ancestor cult - is acted out by wives on a daily basis. Locked up in the structure of married life, which includes avoidances and other prohibitions, is coded information.

Symbols that show that her position is that of an outsider in her husband's group are the verbal and spatial avoidances which she continues to observe for the rest of her life. These avoidances are unchanging and mark her role as an outsider. The prohibitions specifying what she must wear and eat, reflect seniority differences, in other words they mark status differences. It indicates that an individual's position is changing all the time: the stranger they were so suspicious of in the beginning has proved herself in many ways and starts behaving more like an insider being confident of the power she has.

Hlonipha avoidances and other prohibitions affect outsider women the most. They are being separated from the insiders (men and women in their husbands' agnatic groups) in their husbands' homesteads. Younger wives are restricted more and have less freedom than older wives - like a daughter-in-law and her mother-in-law - which creates a further distinction between younger and older women. Men are affected the least by these rules which illuminates gender differences.

These beliefs are subordinating the wife and are at the same time safeguarding her position. Both parties' interests are being protected as marriage is about the maintenance of a good relationship between two kin groups. The symbolic behaviour and boundaries existing between in-laws therefore is a way of acting out the relationship as it is supposed to be between them. These boundaries as Goffman (1972: 62) expresses it, lead the actor to keep at a distance from the recipient and not to violate the 'sphere' that lies around the recipient.

The in-laws of the outsider woman are not allowed to invade the space the symbolic boundaries are creating around her. Simmel (1950: 321) calls this the 'ideal sphere' that lies around the person and continues:

Although differing in size in various directions and differing according to the person with whom one entertains relations, this sphere cannot be penetrated, unless the personality value of the individual is thereby destroyed. A sphere of this sort is placed around man by his honor ... the radius of this sphere marks, as it were, the distance whose trespassing by another person insults one's honor.

Persons towards whom she can behave with familiarity are usually status equals. They are also the persons invading her space/sphere more easily as no distance needs to be maintained between them (Goffman 1972: 64). Persons whom she has to respect the most and distance herself from, have to maintain formal relations with her and are never allowed to enter her space. The persons who are forced to stay the furthest away from her by this ideological system are her father-in-law and other senior male agnates of her husband. Her mother-in-law is allowed closer. Although their relationship is asymmetrical, the senior male must avoid the outsider woman as much as she must avoid him.

Her husband's people have to take care of her, protect her, give her clothes, money, food, and so on in that homestead. They have to respect her, treat her well and keep their distance (allowing her to have a space of her own). If they do not do this, they are accountable to her people. In the same way the outsider woman has responsibilities towards her in-laws; she must also respect them, keep her distance and do what they ask her to do. A disobedient wife may be sent home to her parents, who will be told to

instruct her again about conduct in the homestead of her in-laws. The patriarchal structure of relations has in-built mechanisms protecting the interests of all the involved parties. A social grid of hard-edged categories of people is being safeguarded and maintained by these boundaries structuring peoples' lives. Symbolic boundaries separate different categories of people from each other and prevent blurring/confusion of social categories, an intolerable situation in this society.

Symbolic boundaries are also concerned with controlling power and resources. As the wife holds a potential danger to the husband's group in her capacity as an outsider and stranger, this power she possesses needs to be controlled. Her behaviour is restricted and the power she has over them is changed into a positive force: through working her way through a sequence of stages she is becoming an insider who is developing her own interests in the homestead. Simultaneously she is furthering the interests of her husband's group.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter the meaning of signs in their patterned relations with each other were looked at in the context of women and their married lives. Restrictions and avoidances create social divisions/symbolic boundaries which separate insiders from outsiders, younger women from older women, and, men from women. Symbols connected to the married life of women 'speak about' the wife's outsidership, relations between affines, hierarchical relations, status differences between women, the wife's gradual

incorporation into her husband's group and her changing position of authority. Married life seen as a 'rite of transition' is a symbolic system reflecting ideas about the social and moral order.

The symbolism attached to the married life of women give an outward and visible form to an inward and conceptual process. The 'complex of interconnected cultural events', in its decoded form, reveal more about the foundations on which the system is built in Gcaleka society and Fukula. It illuminates the structure of patriarchy: the importance of kin solidarity and respecting the idea of seniority. These beliefs and symbolic boundaries constitute a system of classification. It maintains the structure of hard-edged social categories through creating distinct divisions among the different categories of people.

It was seen that the married woman has different roles. Her position revolves around being a wife, a mother, a grandmother, a daughter-in-law, a sister-in-law, and a mother-in-law. It is in her position of mother, and later of grandmother and mother-in-law, that she has the right to exercise control over other people. When she is older her status is less determined by sex than by age. These roles are associated with being an insider in her husband's homestead.

In her role as sister-in-law (if she is younger than her in-laws), wife, and especially as daughter-in-law, it is a case of 'them' exercising control over her. This is her outsider role. It is surrounded by avoidances and other restrictions. Direct

control over her, in this position, is mostly exercised by her mother-in-law. Her husband's senior male agnates can only communicate with her through the other women in the homestead.

Avoidances and other prohibitions affecting wives in their husbands' homesteads constitute part of the authority structure in this society and form part of the sanctions backing up the ancestor cult. Restrictions imposed on wives is a way of exercising control over them, 'keeping them in their place' and in a separate group. It also protects the position of the wife giving her a space of her own, a personal reserve that is not to be invaded by her in-laws, especially if they are her husband's senior male agnates who are the power holders. Violation of rules regarding separateness is not tolerated as that would cause blurring of hard-edged social categories.

Contradictions in the hard-edged social structure in Gcaleka society and Fukula are a cause of great concern to the hard-edged social thinkers in the society. In the next chapter contradictions in the structure and how this problem is dealt with is discussed and analysed.

CHAPTER 4: FEMALE FERTILITY, STATES OF POLLUTION AND THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE

INTRODUCTION

In Gcaleka society one of the contexts in which health and fertility are matters of concern is agnatic descent; agnatic descent figuring prominently in the social structure. The health and fertility of a wife are important in the successful building of her husband's homestead. It is about the relationship between the living and their ancestors and the maintenance of kin solidarity. According to Hammond-Tooke (1974: 361), in these societies it is the procreational aspect of sex (not mere love-making) that is sacred, it must be handled with care and respect, and be safe-guarded. Bearing children for her husband's group will not only ensure biological reproduction of his agnatic descent group, but also structural reproduction: reproduction of the existing structure of relations between agnatically related kin.

In this chapter the connection between female fertility, states of pollution and the social structure is discussed and analysed as it was found among the Gcaleka in Fukula and the surrounding areas. The wife's fertility gives her supernatural power which could harm health and fertility in general, and especially in her husband's group and home. Her reproductive capacities are a resource that the senior male agnates in the kin group of the husband are attempting to control. However, their control of her reproductive capacities is restricted, as she could harness her supernatural power against them, should they attempt to abuse

their power. States of pollution reveal where the real powers and dangers in society lie; it simultaneously serves the interests of, and restricts, both the wife and members of her husband's descent group.

Female fertility is a source of tension in the social structure and is surrounded by ambiguity: it is simultaneously a positive and a negative force, maintaining the existing social structure and threatening it. As a positive force it attempts to bring about kin solidarity; as a negative force it drives agnatic group members apart and allows strangers into the group. The adult woman has an ambiguous role brought about by her potential fertility. This creates an anomaly in the social structure which affects the unity of both her father's and husband's agnatic descent groups in a negative as well as a positive way. The cognitive confusion it creates necessitates the clear drawing of boundaries and, to prevent their infringement, the creation of pollution beliefs: her reproductive capacities are believed to be dangerous and charged with power. Reproductive situations including menstruation, sexual intercourse, miscarriage and giving birth, are surrounded by avoidances she needs to observe in order to nullify their disruptive potential and she is considered to be in a polluted state under these circumstances. The power inherent in the reproductive capacities of adult women is believed to affect people, animals and even crops in a negative way unless kept under firm control. Through the restrictions imposed on the woman, the danger within is harnessed in order to turn its power to work for the social good (Sanday 1981: 93). The social good concerns itself with the importance

of agnatic descent and kin solidarity, and therefore, not only with the interests of the husband's descent group, but also with the interests of the wife and her descent group.

As Douglas (Wuthnow et al 1984: 77, 84) advocated, the approach here will be to treat things that are regarded as polluted/ritually impure as important because of what they reveal about rules of classification and hence cultural systems. The basis of cultural classifications, of order in social life, is the presence of symbols that demarcate boundaries or lines of division. Trying to achieve an understanding of notions of impurity reveals more about the innermost secrets of the moral order itself and the means whereby society constantly renews and maintains its basic social relations and collective sentiments. It gives insight into relations of authority existing between the involved parties. According to Edmund Leach human classificatory systems depend not only on our matching names and items, but on avoiding or tabooing that which falls on the boundaries between categories or names (in Lessa & Vogt 1979: 153). Classificatory systems usually have in-built contradictions, and restrictions/avoidances are there to attempt to restore and maintain the desired social order. In this regard Douglas (1966: 39) comments:

Any given system of classification must give rise to anomalies, and any given culture must confront events which seem to defy its assumptions. It cannot ignore the anomalies which its scheme produces ... we find in any culture worthy of the name various provisions for dealing with ambiguous or anomalous events.

In Gcaleka society and Fukula, pollution beliefs and behaviour

deal with the in-built contradictions in the social structure caused by female fertility. They control and order relations between people, and at the same time represent ideas about structural dimensions of the social order. For instance, the powers believed to emanate from women and their reproductive capacities 'force' them to go into seclusion and/or observe other avoidances at such times. Her husband's agnates are also restricted, as the supernatural power she possesses prevents them from ever obtaining complete control over her reproductive capacities. It protects the interests of both the husband's group and the wife. For instance, it gives her a deserved time of rest and ensures the reproduction of her husband's group. Reproductive capacities of women are being controlled and safeguarded for the social good, and pollution avoidances symbolically create the boundaries that keep social types pure and prevent blurring.

In Fukula, pollution beliefs seem to have to do with keeping agnatic descent groups as pure as possible. Boundaries in the form of pollution avoidances reinforce the authority structure the agnatic group is responsible for, and the gender, age, and kinship distinctions on which it is based.

Pollution avoidances and 'danger contacts' are related to social life and are symbols of the relationship between parts of society. The female body, reproductive capacities and fertility, become symbols of both social order and disorder; representing ideas which revolve around the belief in the ancestors. Powers and dangers credited to the social structure are reproduced in small on the human body. The desired order of society is

protected from dangers which threaten transgressors (Douglas 1966: 2-4). Douglas continues:

pollution behaviour is the reaction which condemns any object or idea likely to confuse or contradict cherished classifications (1966: 48)

BUILDING OF THE HOMESTEAD AND THE POSITION OF THE WIFE

Each man is a living representative of his agnatic group. He is responsible to it, including its dead, for the good name of the group and for the 'building of his homestead'. When you die, the living must continue building it for you, which will ensure continued solidarity in the agnatic descent group. The homestead must be built in the material sense, as well as in a social and moral-religious one. A man without a homestead is materially poor, both he and his wife lack social standing in the community and he is limited in his reciprocal relations with his ancestors, kin, and others (McAllister 1981: 2, 3; McAllister 1991b: 368). The living depend on the ancestors for good fortune, and to ensure the good health of people and animals in the homestead, while the dead rely on the living for attainment, recognition and maintenance of their ancestral status (Hammond-Tooke 1989: 63; McAllister 1979: 61, 62). For instance, in Fukula, while a child is growing up, an ukusindela ceremony is often held to ensure that he/she remains healthy while he/she is growing up. The following ukusindela ceremony was held in Fukula in the homestead of the sub-headman on Saturday, 9 March 1990, for the two year old son of his unmarried daughter, Zimela:

Case: Ukusindela ceremony for a little boy

The previous day the unmarried daughter of the sub-headman, Zimela, and her two year old son, Siyanda,

were waiting at the busstop near their home to leave for Cape Town, when her father suddenly appeared there and said that they could not leave until an ukusindela ceremony had been held for his grandson. He said that if they neglected to hold this ritual for the boy, he would not be protected against becoming ill in Cape Town.

Before the ritual commenced, the mother smeared the floor with cow-dung in the hut where the proceedings were going to take place. On this occasion, the mother of the little boy was called 'umdlezana' - usually used to refer to a woman who has just given birth - for the duration of the ceremony.

The grandmother of the child mixed white ochre with water and applied this on the body of the child, and on the mother's face. The mother and child then sat on a sleeping mat behind the door. Her father appeared in the doorway. He spoke to their ancestors and to his little grandson, saying that he must not get ill in Cape Town, that he was going to slaughter a goat for him. While he was speaking, the grandmother and the child sat in the middle of the floor in front of him. The father then went to the cattle-byre, where he continued speaking to the ancestors saying that he wanted this child to be well, and to come back home healthy. He stabbed the goat, and they then slaughtered and skinned it. The father brought a piece of meat on a green branch into the hut, where he roasted the meat on the little fire that had been lit in the middle of the floor, and gave the meat to the mother and child to eat. Afterwards, the women who were outside, roasted and ate the meat that had been given to them, as did the men with their share.

A man will not be considered mature unless he takes a wife and builds his homestead. His homestead represents his maturity. For the wife it means independence from her mother-in-law and an own home to run, and for the husband independence from his father or elder brother (Kuckertz 1990: 290, 292; McAllister 1981: 2; McAllister 1991b: 368). If he has a homestead, the ancestors will protect him. A man must 'build' his homestead in order to ensure that it will be successful. Success in a homestead can be seen in terms of productivity, prosperity, health and fertility, and it is marked by the adequate performance of social and moral-

religious obligations. Establishing a new homestead involves economic changes; for instance, it gives them the right to a garden, a field and to grazing. In a successful homestead there is a degree of economic self-sufficiency. They do not ask others for food, in such a homestead a man has land, cattle, and children, people work hard and cultivate the fields, and the 'customs of the home' are conducted which strengthens the home (McAllister 1979: 38; McAllister 1991b: 368; Moore 1986: 69).

These characteristics of Southern Nguni social structure may be illustrated by means of the following case-study, in which the occupants of one particular homestead, assisted by their agnates, are engaged in the intricacies of 'building the homestead':

Case: Building the homestead

In Fukula, in January 1990 in one of the Mzangwa homesteads (homestead 16)¹, the wife, Nophumile, was living alone with her five children. It is a homestead to be proud of, tidy and clean, fenced, with three big huts, a cattle-byre, a goat enclosure, and a big garden. Her husband was away working in Johannesburg at the time and regularly sent money home for the homestead. Her husband's father's younger brother, and her husband's older brother, with his wife and two children, lived in adjacent homesteads (respectively homesteads 17 and 18). As Mzangwa clansmen, they were always busy helping each other, and especially helping in this homestead. The wife worked hard in their garden and field, cooked for the family, did the washing and so on. The children were always helping with the chores. The two sisters-in-law were in and out of each others' homesteads all the time, working together, helping each other, and planning together. The wife would consult the two men whenever she needed either advice or permission to do something that she normally would have spoken to her husband about first. The building of the homestead was a successful enterprise: it was prosperous, productive, the crops were good, and there were children in the homestead who would remember their father's name after his death.

1 Homesteads referred to by number are all found in map 4, p.44.

The cattle and the goats, which the wife could not look after, were seen to by the men in the two neighbouring homesteads, and they were helped by her three boys.

The husband came home for one week. During that weekend a ritual was held for his eldest son (sixteen years old). In order to ensure his teenage son's good health in years to come, and to ask the assistance of the ancestors in the matter, he and other members of the local agnatic cluster held a ritual at his homestead. At the time, male and female agnates were present in the cattle-byre, and after invoking the ancestors, they slaughtered a goat there. The first piece of roasted meat was given to the boy to eat, after which the other people also joined in. People in the neighbourhood arrived there; it became a happy social gathering where they were drinking beer and eating meat.

Materially, socially, and moral-religiously this homestead was being built successfully. The ancestors seemed to be happy, as the reciprocal relationship between them and their descendants was being maintained well.

According to Mayer (1978: 70), among the Red Xhosa, as is also the case among the Gcaleka in Qwaninga, the jural status of the children and the moral rights and obligation of husband and wife to help build and maintain the homestead, are two of the most emphasised aspects of marriage. They ensure physical and social reproduction. Children 'reproduce' the homestead. If there are no children the homestead ends (Mayer 1978: 36). A man without children is a man without status; there is no one to guarantee his decent burial. A man who dies without children dies forever, as there will be no great-grandchildren to remember his name. Children in Gcaleka society bring a man prestige; they signify the productive potential of his household, the successful nature of his marriage, the continuation of his kin group and the

reproduction of the society. Children ease the burden of daily labour in the homestead when they are young. When they grow up, parents are entitled to their support when they begin to earn money and in their old age. Only a man's sons can sacrifice to his ancestors and continue his agnatic group. The belief in the ancestors intensifies the common interest in the children (Mayer 1978: 35, 36).

As Meillassoux (1981: 47) argued, the family, in this case the people in the homestead, as the cell of production, becomes the locus of the development of an ideology and ritual in which respect for age, cults of the ancestors and fertility, all in different ways, celebrate the continuity and the solidarity of the group, and strengthen its hierarchy. In Gcaleka society and Fukula, the fundamental moral prescription is the need to show respect to all members of the senior generation and be loyal to one's kin group. Ancestor worship and the acceptance of descent group authority is the very basis of the social structure (Hammond-Tooke 1974: 360, 361; Hammond-Tooke 1989: 64). The senior males in each agnatic descent group are the power holders. As discussed in chapter two, agnatic descent groups have the primary responsibility for providing the social order and political protection in the society.

The reproduction of the group and the clan rests on the labour and the procreative power of women. This fact challenges the overriding importance of the clan and the elders (Moore 1986: 71). It gives the wife a very powerful position: she is potentially dangerous to their group; in her capacity as an

outsider she can influence the prosperity and productivity in her husband's homestead in a negative way. Her procreative power and economic services need to be controlled and harnessed for the social good.

FEMALE FERTILITY AND IN-BUILT CONTRADICTIONS IN THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE

To ensure productivity through childbearing and economic services in her husband's homestead, a married woman needs to be healthy and fertile. The descent group, as well as the productive unit associated with subsistence activities, needs to be reproduced: her good health and fertility is very important in the context of successfully building her husband's homestead.

In Fukula and the surrounding areas, menarche, the onset of menstruation, signals the start of many years to come in which a woman's position is going to be undefinable in many ways. She is usually in her father's home when her first periods start. She is an insider by birthright in her father's home and group, and will always, even as a wife, remain orientated towards her agnatic ancestors. However, being fertile indicates that she must get married soon, and that she must leave her father's group. In the new group she enters she is an outsider and a stranger. The birth of children is the guarantee of her social status and as the years pass and she bears children for her husband's agnatic group, she will be accepted more as an insider and incorporated into his descent group.

In this regard, Meillassoux (1981: 76) writes that the notion of

'women' in societies with this mode of production includes a number of definite functions that vary with age. Her social role begins at puberty. Pubescent women are controlled and subordinated, and directed into alliances which are defined by their community's obligations, so that procreation takes place in the context of male relations of descent. As an outsider she is being subordinated. In contrast, after the menopause, and even more so as a grandmother, she has almost become an insider, she is freed from many constraints and socially she comes into her own, gaining an authority that was denied her earlier. When old and widowed, and no longer able to procreate, her position becomes closer to that of men.

Her position is ambiguous. In her role as a wife she is an outsider, but, as a mother, she becomes an insider who, together with others, is working towards building the homestead of her husband. Leach (1976: 74, 75) described the above situation caused by the ambiguities arising around notions of unilineal descent associated with clan exogamy, in the following terms:

... every married woman first joins the descent group of her husband as an alien. She is considered to be a foreign object, a sexual object, and ideas of impurity are often associated with her sexuality. In due course she becomes the mother of new members of her husband's descent group. In this second capacity she is intrinsically good, the very criterion of virtue and cleanliness, the antithesis of a sexual object.

A woman's fertility sets a process in motion whereby she is not only distanced from her own people, but a distance is always maintained between herself and her husband's people. Female fertility creates confusion and contradictions in the social

structure which is a cause of tension. Female fertility causes a 'break-up' in her father's descent group, and separates her from her people. She becomes 'useless' to her own descent group, and there is no point in keeping her (Fox 1967: 116). Her reproductive capacities are desired by other groups. Their descent group, as well as the productive unit associated with subsistence activities, needs to be reproduced.

Her father's descent group loses the children of their daughters/sisters (Fox 1967: 44). They lose her agricultural, domestic, and reproductive services which would have contributed towards 'building the homestead' and ensuring kin solidarity. Through leaving, the unity of their group is being threatened. Another group will now allow this stranger into their midst on account of her fertility. She is a 'threat from outside' entering their 'closed group'. Here she also poses a threat to kin solidarity, this time as an outsider wife to the kin group of her husband. Her fertility and the above situation creates tension between affines. For instance, the tension can be seen in the situation a woman finds herself in at her husband's home. Initially she is excluded from the group in as many ways as possible. Gradually some of the restrictions are lifted. The desired social and moral order is threatened by her fertility.

As wives, women live as representatives of other clans in the midst of the agnatic group of their husbands. Although integral parts of their respective homesteads, wives do not change their clan membership (Kuckertz 1990: 292). As Hammond-Tooke (1974: 330) observed concerning the Cape Nguni in general, women in

Gcaleka society, and Fukula, if they marry, are also influenced by two sets of shades: those of their fathers' agnatic group and those of their husbands'. She is under the control of her husband's group - whose ancestors also partially protect her as a wife - but her father's ancestors continue to protect her as a daughter (Ngubane 1977: 91). For instance, one of the senior women in Fukula said that should a wife be infertile, both her father's and her husband's ancestors could be approached about the matter.

The wife is supposed to further the interests and solidarity of two kin groups. This, of course, creates confusion in the social structure as one's loyalty is supposed to reside with only one group. Her ambiguous role poses a threat to the solidarity of both groups. As Ngubane (1977: 91) found among Zulu women, so among the Gcaleka, a woman at the same time forms bridges as well as boundaries between people. On the one hand she represents her father's kin group and forms a bridge between it and the kin group of her husband, and on the other hand within the latter, she forms boundaries and not bridges - boundaries between her own children and those of her co-wives, or between her children and those of her husband's brothers. In other words, a man's children are divided by their maternal relationship, but united as siblings. The wife's ambiguous role represents a threat to the continued unity of her husband's corporate group.

'Fertility' seems to not only create tension in the social structure, but also causes conflict. Should she be infertile, it could, for instance, be said that it is because her father has

neglected to hold an intonjane ceremony for her. This ceremony would have ensured her health and fertility, and safeguarded and protected her against infertility. It may be said that her ancestors (they are, above all, concerned with the health and fertility of their family) are withholding her fertility because her in-laws have done something to annoy them, for example, they have not given all the lobola cattle yet (Kuper 1982: 15, 17). The existing tension in social relationships between the two kin groups is being reflected in the above. 'Female fertility' needs to be treated with care as it has so much to do with relations between people and with the ancestors.

Case: An Intonjane ceremony

On the first day of my arrival in Qwaninga while we were unpacking, we were told that an ox was going to be slaughtered that afternoon in a homestead in the subward, Fukula. They said that it was a ritual being held as part of the intonjane ceremony a young wife's father (the sub-headman) was holding for her. The wife, Nokhumshile, was a mother with one child, living in the subward, Mhlisela (see map 3, p.18), and had 'come home' to have the ceremony done for her. It was going to take three weeks.

At the time when we arrived she had already been in seclusion in a hut behind a grass screen (umkhusane) for a week. The intonjane ceremony was being held to ensure her health and fertility in the future and had not resulted from any form of illness she had suffered from. They had already slaughtered a goat a week before on the day following the evening she had gone into seclusion. When we arrived there the ox had already been slaughtered and women were walking in a circle in front of the cattle-byre, singing (this is called 'to tsholoza'). They told me and my interpreter to join them, which we did. As it was my first time there this caused a lot of amusement among the people. Afterwards children started gathering around us - something their parents did not allow again at future occasions. I was feeling quite overwhelmed and did not understand much of what went on that afternoon. We were taken into the hut to meet the 'intonjane' behind the grass screen where she sat wrapped in a blanket. They were busy roasting strips of the first meat for her on a fire inside the hut. Before we left we were also given roasted meat to eat.

I returned there many times during the following two weeks to find out more about this ceremony. Seven days later I asked their permission to sleep over in the intonjane hut with the intonjane and the teenage girls who were sleeping there every night. Their first reaction was one of disbelief but then they said I could come. We arrived there with our blankets we had brought with us and were given food to eat. The girls then sang for a while after which we all curled up in our blankets and went to sleep. Because of my presence the boys had been too scared to come there that night. The girls asked my interpreter whether the presence of 'a white person' would make them dream of ghosts which they afterwards admitted had not happened.

A few nights later the intonjane and the girls had to run and jump over a burning fire several times (called 'going to the mountain'). Five days before she came out they slaughtered another goat. Early in the morning on the day she came out, she went to wash in the river, dressed in her ordinary clothes and returned to her husband's home.

Through holding this ritual her father was easing the tension that can be expected to exist between affines. He was asking the ancestors of his home to look after the health of 'their daughter' and that she would be able to bear more children. This, of course, would ensure her productivity through childbearing and economic services in her husband's homestead. The good relationship between the two kin groups and the ancestors was being renewed and maintained. This ceremony would contribute to the successful building of the wife's husband's homestead.

The tension and contradictions in the social structure caused by female fertility are symbolised and dealt with in the pollution beliefs surrounding a woman's fertility and reproductive capacities. Certain dietary, sexual, and spatial (seclusion included) prohibitions are sometimes observed, as well as cessation of economic activities and other avoidances. Fertility is dangerous. It is charged with power, it must be safeguarded

and protected, 'kept in its place'; and is a resource that needs to be controlled. Contradictions need to be eliminated, and 'fitted' into the ordered structures found in society. The 'purity' of social categories needs to be safeguarded in order to avoid confusion.

The wife's position is characterised by being liminal - that which is neither this nor that, and yet is both (Turner 1972: 341). Danger lies in these states as they are undefinable and represent neither one state nor another (Douglas 1966: 116). Society finds it difficult to classify these people, and often resorts to re-classification (Hammond-Tooke 1981a: 20). An attempt is then made to create categories of non-contradiction into which she can be 'slotted'.

STATES OF POLLUTION AND AVOIDANCES

Among the Gcaleka in Fukula, they call certain forms of ritual impurity umlaza. Umlaza is conceptualized as a mystical force which creates a condition of pollution that is considered to be dangerous. Ritual impurity/pollution is more often closely associated with women's fertility. This was also found among other Nguni groups like the Zulu (cf. Ngubane 1977), the Bhaca (cf. Hammond-Tooke 1962), and the Mpondo (cf. Hunter 1936). To the Bhaca the word umlaza conveys the idea of uncleanness and defilement, which also holds true for the Gcaleka and Zulu. Concerning umlaza, the Bhaca as well as the Mpondo appear to differentiate between two types of ritual impurity connected both with the sexual functions of women and with death (Hammond-Tooke

1962: 69; Hunter 1936: 46-47). Among the Gcaleka in Fukula and the adjoining areas, umlaza in most instances is associated with only reproductive functions of women and not with death².

The reproductive situations women find themselves in from time to time, which are considered to be states of pollution, are: during menstruation (ukuhlamba), after sexual intercourse (ukumetsha)³, after giving birth (ukuzala) and after a miscarriage (ukuphuma isisu).

In Fukula and the neighbouring subwards, people say that both men and women have umlaza after sexual intercourse. According to informants, they are equally polluted and dangerous to 'others'. Concerning menstruation, giving birth and a miscarriage, they disagreed as to whether women in these states have umlaza. This contradicts Olivier's finding (1981: 104) that among the Gcaleka in his study, they called the ritual impurity caused by menstruation and a miscarriage, umlaza⁴. However, most of the people agreed that these situations give rise to umkhondo/umthothovane (like a disease) in animals (cattle, goats, and sheep), and sometimes in crops. Polluted persons are

2 Ritual impurity caused by death was also not called umlaza by informants in the study Olivier (1981: 105) made among the Gcaleka. This contradicts Hunter's finding (1936: 46-47) among the Mpondo where ritual impurity caused by death was called umlaza.

3 This term given, is usually the word used for 'external intercourse'. People seemed embarrassed to use any other word.

4 This discrepancy could be an indication of how pollution beliefs are constantly undergoing changes in Gcaleka society.

dangerous to animals (except pigs and poultry)⁵, crops (pumpkin plants seemed to be emphasised by informants), and medicine. People who are ritually impure must follow certain taboos. They are not dangerous to themselves; polluted persons possess supernatural power that could harm others. This powerful position needs to be controlled for the social good.

Umlaza, in Fukula, is a condition of pollution that is chiefly caused by reproductive substances, for example, a discharge, semen, placenta, or blood. These substances are dangerous and believed to cause umkhondo/umthothovane that can cause animals to become weak, thin, and even to die. It has the same effect on crops: the growing plants may shrivel up and wither away. People can attract umkhondo/umthothovane to themselves - they become weak and lose their strength - through walking in places where bad things lurk at night, for example, crossing the path of a witch. Informants say that a pregnant woman must not fetch water before sunrise or after sunset because she may cross the path of, for instance, a snake or a witch and this will give her umkhondo, which could result in a miscarriage⁶.

5 Pigs and poultry are not affected by polluted states, they are not subject to umkhondo as cattle, goats, and sheep are. Hammond-Tooke (1975b: 24:) explains this through saying that the 'other domestic animals' - including pigs, poultry, sheep and horses - are all recent importations and have not been incorporated into the symbolic system. However, in Fukula, sheep have already been incorporated into the symbolic system, and the question still remains why pigs and poultry have been excluded. This could possibly have to do with the fact that pigs and poultry are more closely associated with the female domain, and not linked to the agnatic group and the ancestors.

6 A pregnant woman cannot give people, animals, and plants umkhondo. She is not in a polluted state. However, during pregnancy she needs to observe certain dietary prohibitions. Female informants said that she, for instance, should not eat potatoes and anything sweet like jam and honey. It could give the baby a rash, or weaken the child in some other way.

Among the Zulu, pollution (umnyama) is viewed as a marginal state (Ngubane 1977: 78), this also being the case among the Bhaca and Gcaleka. These states all have strong negative aspects, and, as states of pollution, must be removed as soon as possible (Preston-Whyte and Miller 1987: 14). Umlaza, in Gcaleka society, and Fukula, is removed through washing hands or the body (Olivier 1981: 104). Hammond-Tooke (1989: 92) holds the view that a constant reference to washing in the context of ritual impurity, indicates that the people think of pollution as a form of dirt. And as people contaminated by these states are regarded as marginal to the society, and dangerous, they are subjected to various taboos (Hammond-Tooke 1989: 91). Washing symbolizing a separation from a previous state (McAllister 1979: 203).

According to informants, after sexual intercourse (ukumetsha) both the man and the woman find themselves in a polluted state until they have washed themselves. Substances from their bodies are sources of danger. If they do not wash, and then enter the hut of a diviner, it will negate the power of his medicine. Whilst in this polluted state, they must not touch anything and, furthermore, no food which the woman has touched may be accepted by anyone, until she has washed. Before undertaking an important enterprise both men and women refrain from sleeping with a lover or spouse, so as not to endanger success. The success of many rituals demands that the officiants abstain from sex for particular periods of time (La Fontaine 1985: 127). Men abstain from sexual intercourse the night before a ritual slaughtering, as it will cause the ox not to bellow when slaughtered, thus indicating the annoyance of the ancestors and their rejection of

the ritual that is taking place.

People say that a mother can give umkhondo to her baby if she sleeps with her husband/boyfriend while nursing the child. A boy who has recently been circumcised (umkhweta) can become ill and the healing process slowed down, if one of the men looking after him should sleep with a woman during that time. The boy is very susceptible to influences like ritual impurity (Olivier 1981: 106). Likewise, after sexual intercourse, a woman must not visit a new mother who is still in seclusion before she has washed, because this may have a negative effect on the healing of the wound where the baby's umbilical cord was cut off. In this state, she is dangerous to positive healing forces.

A menstruating woman must not enter any cattle-byre (ubuhlanti), and must not drink milk (ubisi) or sour milk (amasi). She must avoid going near the crops in the garden and the field, she avoids walking through a herd of cattle grazing in the veld and walking in the paths of these animals for fear that sickness and harm will come to them. She must not tread over a yoke (idyokwe), or a rope/chain (umqokozo), because the cattle will then become ill. She also will not touch her husband's spears or sticks (iintonga) as it will draw the power from them. Should she ignore these rules, it will weaken the stock. Some women say that it will result in her bleeding too much. Because she is in a polluted state, she must sleep with no man, as this will make him weak and prone to grow tired easily. She is, therefore, dangerous to the positive healing and fertilizing forces in her husband's group and the wider society. Her power is an anti-social force

that needs to be controlled for the social good. A young married woman, Nolitha, living in homestead 21 described the above situation as follows:

When I menstruate, I do not go into any cattle-byre, because the cattle will get umkhondo. I do not drink sour milk, because it will cause me to bleed too much. I do not sleep with my husband, as it will make him feel weak; and I stay away from the herbs of a diviner because the herbs will lose their strength.

The umkhondo/umthothovane that a woman who has had a miscarriage gives animals, also causes miscarriage in animals. In Fukula, they say that she must stay inside and near the house. After the miscarriage she stays on the female side of the hut behind the door for five to six days, and is looked after by her daughter, a sister, or her mother (this person is called umfukamisi). If she does go outside, she makes sure that she stays away from the animals and the garden. A hole is dug next to the woodpile (igogo) outside, and the baby is buried there. During this time she drinks sweet black tea and eats porridge and boiled kernels of maize (inkobe). When she comes out, she smears the area where she has been sitting, with cow-dung, and goes to wash her clothes at the river. Washing afterwards may suggest a cleansing ritual (Ngubane 1977: 80).

The following week they brew beer (umqombothi) to release her, so that she can go among the people again. That day she sits behind the door, and the family of that home are present. They are told that they all may go among the people again.

Case: A miscarriage in Fukula

Nophumile (homestead 16) had a miscarriage on

Sunday, 4 February 1990. Men dug a hole next to the woodpile straightaway, and buried the baby there. The next day they took her to a medical doctor, because she was bleeding too much. He said that she had been working too hard in those last couple of weeks, and that she should stay in the hospital for a while to get some rest. However, she came home the same day, because she did not have money to stay in the hospital, and had to wait for her husband to send her money from Johannesburg. On Tuesday, although her body was still aching badly, she had already started working again: cooking, making the fire, and so on - she would rest inbetween - sometimes going outside to sit in the sun next to the woodpile. She was mostly eating porridge and drinking sweet black tea. She was wrapped in a blanket all the time. I asked her why she was working instead of resting, upon which she answered that her husband's people expected her to work hard. This seemed strange as she had been married for at least sixteen years at the time, and had gained more status and had more freedom in that homestead - and probably had to do with her own sense of duty and the fact that she was not able to give her husband a child as his girlfriend in Johannesburg had done. She already had five other children, and this had been her fourth miscarriage during the last few years. Although she did not stay inside the house for a few days, she stayed away from the animals and the garden. They were considering to take her to a diviner as soon as word and money arrived from her husband, to determine what had gone wrong. However, three weeks later, before anything could be done, she died.

After giving birth, a delivered woman (umdlezana) stays inside behind the door on the woman's side of the hut for eight to ten days, resting a lot; sitting and lying on a sleeping mat. This can either be at the home of her parents or at her husband's home. When she feels the birth pains start, a fire is made in the house by the woman who looks after her (the umfukamisi). As the baby is born, the mother enters a polluted state: the afterbirth emission is dangerous. The mother cuts the umbilical cord (imfesane) with a blade. The umfukamisi then buries a mixture of ground soil and placenta behind the door. A certain fruit that looks like a hard, green guava (called umthuma) and ash from a

pipe are mixed and then applied three times a day on the place where the baby's umbilical cord was cut. They say it will begin to heal after three days. The umthuma-fruit, green branches from a tree called isifutho, as well as the bark of a tree, are left behind the door. Every day during the seclusion period, these branches are placed on smouldering coals, and the baby is then passed through the smoke (called ukufutha). According to Hammond-Tooke (1956: 60), the child is passed through the smoke of a fire in which special herbs are burnt in order to ensure health. In Fukula and the adjoining areas, 'ukufutha' is an important custom. The married sister - in her late thirties - in the homestead of the sub-headman, for instance, said that it had been very important to her to make sure that she observed this custom with her four male children during the first ten days of their lives.

The mother smears her face with white ochre to show that she has had a baby. To prevent a rash, the baby's whole body is smeared with white ochre as well. In certain homesteads (informants said that this is determined by her mother-in-law) a woman is not allowed to enter the garden while she is still nursing a baby. Should she walk in the garden, the young pumpkin plants will die. Staying in and near the house will ensure that she does not weaken the cattle and cause them to have a miscarriage. She is not allowed to have sexual relations with her husband or any other man during this whole time. This, however, is not strictly adhered to anymore. Men and boys are not allowed to come into the hut. Only the husband is allowed there. This is the only female domain men do not enter. However,

although they usually would never go there, senior men are not restricted if they need to enter the hut - showing a separation between not only men and women, but also older and younger men. She smears the floor with cow-dung early in the morning, on the tenth day, leaves the house, and starts working as usual.

The mother does not use milk, sour milk, and meat during the first ten days. While in seclusion, the woman eats porridge (isidudu), samp without beans, boiled maize kernels (inkobe), and drinks a lot of sweet black tea. She drinks milk and sour milk again after four to six months. If she is at her parents' home, the mother may stay there for two months, during which time the baby is kept inside most of the time. These restrictions are simultaneously protecting her and are restricting/controlling her fertility for the social good. How these pollution avoidances are protecting, isolating and restricting her, can be seen in the following case studies, as well as the differences and similarities occurring:

Case: Births in January/February 1990

In the neighbouring subward, Rhafane, a young woman gave birth on the 29th of January 1990, and I visited her nine days later. She and the baby were sitting on a sleeping mat behind the door, on the woman's side of the hut, and they were both smeared with white ochre. She said that she had only eaten boiled maize kernels (inkobe) during the first week, and that during the next two months she was not supposed to eat meat, nor drink milk and sour milk. If she did, it would cause umkhondo, and affect the animals and crops.

Another woman, in a neighbouring ward, Bojeni, gave birth on the tenth of February 1990, and I visited her five days later. She and the baby were sitting on a sleeping mat behind the door. The baby's umbilical cord had already dropped off. She said that she would stay inside the house for about eight days, and that the baby would be kept inside most of the time for the next two months. In the first month

she would not eat meat, nor drink sour milk and milk - it would cause umkhondo. They gave her brandy before she gave birth, and did not make a fire as usual. The umbilical cord was cut off, and then pegged off. A mixture of umthuma fruit and ash from a pipe was smeared on the wound. Green branches were lying on ashes against the wall behind them. According to the mother, a fire was made with these branches each day during the seclusion period, and the baby was passed through the smoke. The baby was smeared with red tree bark, and wrapped in a blanket. The mother was not smeared, wore ordinary clothes, and had a black headdress on. She said that other men were not allowed to enter the hut during the seclusion period. However, her husband was entering the hut during this time. She does not believe in the custom that a woman must not sleep with her husband/boyfriend again for two years after giving birth. Her other baby was only one year old at the time.

I visited yet another woman who had given birth the previous month, in the neighbouring subward, Rhafane, on 18 February 1991.

She described the experience as follows:

I was not allowed to go anywhere near the animals and the plants, as I was told that the plants would die. I could give umkhondo to the animals and plants. They told me to do these things. I do not know what causes umkhondo, nor what it is about my body that can cause umkhondo. I stayed inside for six days, and went outside, staying close to the house, during the next four days. I took the baby outside after eight days. On the tenth day, I smeared the floor with cow-dung. During the first ten days the only man who was allowed to enter the hut where we were, was my husband. I swung the baby through the smoke of smouldering coals every day during the first ten days. I smeared the baby's skin with white ochre to prevent the skin from becoming greasy, and mixed ground umthuma-fruit and the ash from a pipe, and applied this on the wound where the umbilical cord had been cut off. I only ate porridge (isidudu) and drank sweet black tea during those ten days. After a month I started to use milk, sour milk, and meat; and I went into the garden and near animals again. I could sleep with a man again after three months. The old people used to wait for a longer time to pass - even two years sometimes - but today these rules are adhered to less and people do not wait anymore, especially when your husband suddenly returns home after a prolonged period of doing migrant labour.

Concerning the above, Mair (1977: 128) observed that in most of rural Africa, a couple should not resume intercourse while the wife is suckling a child, and that suckling commonly lasts three years. In the ward adjacent to Qwaninga, Shixini, sexual intercourse by nursing mothers was still frowned upon until quite recently. According to Mayer (1978: 76), strict observance, the Shixini women admitted, could lead to frustration, especially when the husband's visit could not be timed. In Fukula and the surrounding areas, women do not anymore avoid sexual intercourse for two years after giving birth, nor do their husbands wish to wait that long. Men are most upset that their wives are having boyfriends in their absence, and are even becoming pregnant with the child of another man.

Adults expect school girls to continue observing the avoidances associated with reproductive situations when they grow up. Concerning menstruation, one old lady said:

If they do not observe the avoidances they are 'throwing themselves' away. Should girls drink milk and sour milk while they are menstruating, their parents will soon notice this, because their animals will suddenly start growing weak.

Young people in Fukula and the neighbouring subwards, especially those who go to school, say they find it hard to take these beliefs surrounding reproductive situations seriously, but observe these avoidances out of respect towards their parents. One of the newly-married women, in Fukula, said that she thinks that nothing would happen if a person does not wash after sexual intercourse. Two unmarried women in their early twenties, said that they do not believe that menstruation and other reproductive

situations can be dangerous to the cattle and the crops. Out of respect towards their parents they both do not enter their father's cattle-byre when they menstruate, but they do, however, secretly drink milk and sour milk. People are hesitant, though, to disregard these beliefs totally. People were horrified when a schoolteacher returned to school within three days after having given birth in town on the Friday, as she was neglecting to observe a seclusion period after giving birth. When cattle in the area then suddenly became ill, it of course 'proved' that coming back too soon was the cause.

In the above it can be seen how states of pollution influence behaviour and bring desired states about, for instance, it protects the interests of the husband's agnatic group, restricting and controlling the wife's fertility. On the other hand, the wife's in-laws are restricted by the supernatural power she possesses when she is in a polluted state, her interests are protected, and she is, for instance, given a time of deserved rest. States of pollution act as a vehicle to bring about the desired states which serve the interests of the society as a whole: hard-edged social categories are being maintained, as well as a system that emphasises the importance of agnatic descent. States of pollution express important beliefs which are symbolized through the female body. This will be turned to next.

THE FEMALE BODY - SYMBOL OF THE SOCIETY

In Fukula, pollution beliefs seem to have a lot to do with the social structure - a social order wherein ambiguity is found

intolerable. Pollution beliefs usually reflect structural dimensions of the social order, for example, a male/female separation, a separation between agnates and non-agnates and so on. Taking a closer look at the existing pollution beliefs and associated avoidances, shows how the female body in certain ways acts as a symbol of the society reflecting the powers and dangers which inhere in the social structure (Douglas 1982: vii). Pollution beliefs reveal more about critical human issues people are concerned about. Sanday (1981: 92) writes:

The presence of such beliefs provides us with a clue to the presence of critical human concerns. By projecting these concerns onto women, people provide themselves with a stage on which to control the dangerous forces they face.

A system of classification is being safeguarded: the dangerous social forces people are confronted with are symbolically being controlled 'on the stage'. Critical human concerns are projected onto the female body; the enactment of pollution beliefs portrays the form social relations are supposed to take, reinforcing and maintaining the desired order and social unity, controlling behaviour and protecting hard-edged social categories. The idea of society is a powerful image which has form; it has external boundaries, margins, an internal structure; and power and energy in its lines and margins. Its boundaries are hedged with prohibitions; and the power contained in its outlines reward conformity and punish transgressors (Douglas 1966: 114, 128). Concerning this system of ideas, Douglas argues:

The only way in which pollution ideas make sense is in reference to a total structure of thought whose key-stone, boundaries, margins and internal lines are held in relation by rituals of separation (1966: 41).

Contradictions in the system

A hard-edged social order that is fully realized, would have everybody firmly slotted into his categorical place and perfectly merge with his part. A strict pattern of purity imposed on people's lives does not work as neatly on the ground. Contradictions exist in the system, and it is difficult to socialize people completely (Douglas 1966: 163; Mayer 1975: 281). Mary Douglas (1966) has explained the notion of cleanliness in terms of perfect conformity to type. 'Proper' is literally the same as 'clean'. An object is made 'unclean' by acquiring features that do not fit into any of the existing social categories, and is felt as particularly uncomfortable and threatening (Mayer 1975: 262, 263). In Gcaleka society, and Fukula, the desired order concerning agnates, would have agnates forming a close-knit group, a united front against outsiders, furthering the interests and solidarity of their group, maintaining an internal structure of relations based on sex and age distinctions.

The lack of clear boundaries when it comes to the classification of adult women in the agnatic group, causes great concern and uneasiness to the hard-edged social thinkers in Gcaleka society, which necessitates the clear drawing of boundaries, and the creation of pollution beliefs. If Douglas is right, societies with an 'introverted' or 'closed' social system tend to be preoccupied with questions of boundaries (Hammond-Tooke 1981b: 129, 139).

It was seen how the in-built contradictions in the social structure had to do with the agnatic group not being able to remain a 'closed' group. The unilineal descent group wishes to be self-recruiting and self-perpetuating on a kinship basis (Fox 1967: 41). This not being possible as the rule of clan exogamy requires that sisters leave the group to get married, and outsider women be brought into their group as wives. In both groups her fertility places her in a marginal position. Ritual barriers - barriers around the reproductive capacities of women - are built and new boundaries are conceptualised. It is an attempt to force experience into logical categories of non-contradiction (Douglas 1966: 162). A wife finds herself on the margins of two kin groups, where she poses a threat to the solidarity of both groups. Her ambiguous position is a source of danger that can destroy the purity of social categories. In order to eliminate contradictions as far as possible, the category of 'impurity' is created into which the 'marginal' person is slotted. As Hammond-Tooke (1989: 102) found among the Sotho, cases of pollution are attempts to cope symbolically with paradoxical boundaries. It is safeguarding a system of classification and the position of each individual in this structure.

As Keesing (1981: 339) writes about many New Guinea societies, it is also the case in Fukula and the neighbouring areas that a symbolic division of the cosmos expresses lines of cleavage in the social structure and is reflected in spatial organization and ritual behaviour. Physical crossing of the social barrier is treated as a dangerous pollution. The danger which is risked by boundary transgression is power. Those vulnerable boundaries,

and those attacking forces which threaten to destroy good order, represent the power inhering in the cosmos. Ritual which can harness these for good is controlling power indeed (Douglas 1966: 19, 161).

Pollution beliefs and the social structure

A set of beliefs, and external actions, objects, and behaviour, are often related. The observable is a transformation of an unobservable patterned set of ideas. In order to understand the unobservable, the observable needs to be decoded (Leach 1976: 17). Viewing pollution beliefs and behaviour in this way in Fukula and the surrounding areas, reveals a lot about the pivot on which many things turn in Gcaleka society.

The young woman's liminal position is reflected in reproductive situations: reproductive situations are also marginal states which are characterized by ambiguity (La Fontaine 1985: 25). Among the Gcaleka in Fukula, female reproductive situations are surrounded by ritual impurity and 'uncleanness' which contaminates one through no fault of one's own. The danger is believed to be greater for others than for the polluted person herself. Pollution powers are powers that are not vested in humans, but which can be released by human action - giving the woman of child-bearing age a very powerful position. These are powers which inhere in the structure of ideas itself and by which the structure is expected to protect itself. Such beliefs mirror the danger that surrounds the social body (Sanday 1981: 93). Pollution is a type of danger which will only occur when the

lines of structure are not clearly defined (Douglas 1966: 113). The unclear is the unclean. This kind of danger is represented by female fertility. Furthermore, bodily emissions associated with reproductive situations are dangerous ritual forces which imply power and can be harmful. Bodily emissions must be removed, that is, usually through washing oneself. By its removal the purity of social categories has symbolically been preserved.

Leach (1976: 62) says that whatever has been removed from the body is 'matter out of place', it is dirt. The orifices of the human body have traversed the boundary of the body. Concerning the question of why bodily refuse should be a symbol of danger and of power, Douglas (1966: 120, 121) argues that all margins are dangerous and that it is a mistake to treat bodily margins in isolation from all other margins. The boundary of the body presents a perfect symbol that can be used to mirror certain social margins and then become a focus of taboo as is the case here (Douglas 1982: vii). In other words, powers and dangers focus on the margin of the society - in the anomalous, the marginal, mirroring social threats and dangers (Keesing 1981: 339).

People's sense of danger to the social order is projected onto the female body and acted out 'on the stage'. In Fukula and the neighbouring subwards, ritually impure states like during menstruation, after sexual intercourse, giving birth and after a miscarriage, necessitate the observance of certain avoidances. Bodily substances are controlled through pollution avoidances, and boundaries are drawn round the above-mentioned reproductive

situations. Danger attributed to her bodily emissions can harm and weaken animals, crops, and people, and give them umkhondo. In other words, it can harm positive healing and fertilizing forces.

Bodily substances (blood, placenta, semen, a discharge) represent dangerous social forces; like an anomaly in the social structure which could endanger unity in a social group. Avoiding 'danger contacts', that is, keeping female bodily substances away from certain people, cattle, goats, sheep, crops and the medicinal herbs of the diviner, prevent the dangerous forces emanating from females from harming positive healing and fertilizing forces in the homestead and the wider society. Female fertility is dangerous representing a negative fertilizing force. In her husband's homestead, the polluted states are isolated, and 'kept away' from people, animals, and crops that could be contaminated by it. Through doing this, the positive fertilizing forces are not only being protected, but female fertility at the same time is turned into one of the positive fertilizing forces in the homestead. Sources of danger become sources of strength and well-being when controlled ritually, that is, by observing certain avoidances in connection with female reproductive situations (Sanday 1981: 97).

The dangerous social forces need to be controlled in the same way in which the dangerous ritual forces are being controlled 'on the stage': social categories need to be protected and kept pure like positive fertilizing forces are being kept uncontaminated. As Ardener (1981) argued, social boundaries are needed to divide the

social into areas with invisible fences. People are fitted into this 'social grid' according to the rights and duties associated with each social category.

The agnatic group must be protected against threats from 'outside' just as the positive healing and fertilizing forces in the homestead are being protected against the danger of bodily emissions. The purity of the agnatic group needs to be safeguarded, and women, who are in a marginal position, moving around on the margins of two agnatic groups, are distanced from both their father's and husband's agnatic groups - like their fertility which is being controlled within certain boundaries - and not allowed to upset the existing social order. In the same way in which pollution avoidances are separating negative fertilizing forces from positive fertilizing forces and turning them into positive forces, the position of the adult woman in the social structure needs to be defined clearly so that she holds no threat to other social categories. Creating the category of ritual impurity places her marginality into a category of its own. The purity of the agnatic group is ensured, and the woman has her fixed position in the social structure which entails certain rights and obligations. The danger her fertility holds to the social and moral order is controlled symbolically.

Attaching ideas of negativity to female fertility, reveals an important secret about her position in the existing structure of relations in society: her position is not only that of a subordinate; she also has a powerful position as she possesses supernatural power which is feared by the power holders in the

society. It influences their behaviour towards her, and, to a certain degree, gives her a means to exercise control over them⁷.

Avoidances are a mode of classification, they act as boundaries marking categories off from each other, and, in this way, are a ritual means of creating cultural order, and ensuring that social categories are kept uncontaminated. They are a symbolic representation of certain ideas (Schloss 1988: 5, 6), ideas that revolve around the all-importance of the ancestors, and kin solidarity. Keeping the agnatic group pure, and structuring their relations with each other, and 'others', according to gender and age distinctions, is pivotal to the structure of Gcaleka society.

This classification system is a structure built up out of lines, margins, and boundaries that are 'charged' with power. External and internal lines, and boundaries, form a grid. External lines have to do with collectivities differentiating themselves from other collectivities, and internal lines ways in which subgroups or individuals are differentiated from one another (Wuthnow et al 1984: 78). People must not move beyond the boundaries of the social categories they are identified with. If this is not done, a powerful force, like a short circuit, is released, damaging the boundaries and lines holding social categories and groups

7 The distinction between voluntary and involuntary forms of power is important here: women involuntarily trigger-off these powers as their bodies undergo biological changes, for example, when they start menstruating. It happens to a woman; she does not make it happen at will. However, she can instrumentally employ the supernatural power once she possesses it. Through refusing to observe the prescribed avoidances associated with the polluted state her body finds itself in, she is voluntarily releasing the supernatural power she possesses and deliberately attempting to bring harm to, for instance, the positive fertilizing forces in her husband's homestead.

together. Polluted states reveal more about systems and rules of classification, and about relations between parts of society, as mirroring designs of hierarchy which apply in the larger social system (Douglas 1966: 4). Order in social life is reinforced by the presence of symbols which demarcate boundaries or lines of division.

AVOIDANCES, SOCIAL CATEGORIES AND POWER RELATIONS

According to Schloss (1988: 4), a large literature in anthropology documents how ideas of pollution are often an aspect of the classification of male and female categories. For instance, among the Ehing, a farming people of southern Senegal, he found that pollution ideas were an aspect of classification of male and female categories. Mary Douglas (1966: 172) suggests that paradoxes in the social structure are a clue to certain types of pollution, especially that emanating from sexual contact, and she sees them as reflecting tension between the sexes. Likewise, Sanday (1981: 91, 105) found that notions that women should be secluded during menstruation and that sexual intercourse pollutes men, enforce the physical separation of the sexes. She says that menstrual taboos clearly separate men from women.

Among the Gcaleka in Fukula and the adjoining areas, pollution taboos do not merely reflect a male/female separation which symbolically expresses a series of dualistic oppositions like female/male, impurity/purity, left/right. Both age and gender differences are being expressed. Through observing pollution

avoidances, the form social relations are supposed to take, which would be a patriarchal structure of relations, is symbolically being constructed. It shows a difference between younger and older women, between younger and older men, between men and women, and, that the solidarity of the agnatic group needs to be protected against 'intruders from outside'.

Older women, and men, do not attract polluted states to themselves as the young woman does. To women, increasing age brings with it increasing rights and responsibilities. Contributing towards this, is the menopause, and not being able to bear children anymore she stops observing these avoidances. Males are affected the least by pollution avoidances. The only time they are in a polluted state is after sexual intercourse. Furthermore, being in a polluted state, does not represent as great a danger to the social and moral order as is the case with women. When the young woman is in seclusion after, for example, having given birth, men (except her husband) are not allowed to enter the hut. Here a distinction is made between older and younger men: older men do go into the hut if the situation necessitates this.

Pollution avoidances reveal more about the relationship between adult women and the father-son-brother constellation. As Fox (1967: 121) says about patrilineal systems, the father-son-brother constellation dominates, with women's real role being that of wife and mother. Women of child-bearing age are kept away from the animals, crops, and people (men in the agnatic group) that represent the positive fertilizing forces in both their

fathers' homesteads as well as their husbands' homesteads. It is the father-son-brother constellation and young women in the group who are being distanced from each other.

As Pina-Cabral (1993: 117) found in rural Portugal in his analysis on genital symbolism, the instituting of the authority of the father-son-brother constellation requires a measure of control over the process of integration between biological reproduction and social reproduction. This also holds true for the Gcaleka in this study, and is only achieved by curtailing the free expression of female sexuality and fertility.

Women of child-bearing age are being kept in their place, in a group of their own and subordinated. Boundaries are drawn round reproductive situations. The powers believed to emanate from adult women and their reproductive capacities confines them. Symbolic behaviour associated with reproductive situations includes the setting of boundaries on the ground and the limiting of physical movement to certain areas or space (Ardener 1981: 11). For instance, while she is menstruating, a woman must avoid entering the cattle-byre, and, after giving birth, she has to stay in the hut, and must neither drink milk nor eat meat. However, avoidances are also protecting her, for instance, after giving birth, she has free time and can rest for ten days.

The supernatural power the young woman possesses, prevents the power holders in her husband's group from ever obtaining complete control over her reproductive capacities which causes tension in the social structure. In Fukula and the neighbouring areas, as

Pina-Cabral (1986: 92) also found in rural Portugal, the great danger to the moral and social order represented by female fertility is never fully eradicated. The potential independence of female sexuality and fertility represents a threat to the existing order and, therefore, to men's basic source of authority in the society.

The enactment of pollution beliefs portrays more about hierarchical relations and the subordinate position of the young woman in the authority structure in the society. A closer look also reveals the 'power in the lines'. The young wives have a powerful position too: they are empowered by their reproductive capacities. The 'power in the lines' protects the system. The system controls the position of each individual. Through placing the young wife in her own category she is being restricted within certain boundaries. It also gives her 'freedom' and a space where 'others' are not allowed to interfere and intrude too much. It creates a space around the individual that needs to be respected by 'others'. The system protects the interests of all parties and every individual. It sees to it that even the lowest-ranking persons in the structure are empowered, and that the highest-ranking persons do not abuse their power. The social categories individuals find themselves in are kept 'pure'. In other words, distancing different types from each other gives each type a space of their own where they are in control. A system of authority based on the importance given to agnatic descent is being constructed and protected. Everyone is subordinated to the power in the system: if you submit to the power, you are entitled to protection and, according to your position in the hierarchical

order, to a certain degree of freedom of movement.

Pollution avoidances and beliefs are working for the social good, emphasising the importance of agnatic descent. Both parties are being restricted as well as protected. Among the Gcaleka in the area where this study was undertaken, avoidances owe much to a vested interest of all involved parties in a generalized preference for clear-cut social types. As Douglas (1966: 4) insists, the study of taboo belongs to an exploration of conceptual principles. She says that ideas about separating, purifying, demarcating, and punishing, have as their main function to impose system on an inherently untidy experience. It is only by exaggerating differences that a semblance of order is created. In Fukula and the neighbouring subwards, pollution beliefs represent the structure of patriarchy as it is supposed to work on the ground: clear-cut social categories based on gender and age differences and the importance given to agnatic descent.

CONCLUSION

Pollution beliefs revolved around ensuring kin solidarity, keeping the agnatic group pure, and in this context emphasised the importance of health and fertility in the homestead. In chapter two, age, gender, and kinship distinctions that form the basis of the social structure in Gcaleka society, were viewed, as well as the avoidances/restrictions that safeguard these social groupings. In this chapter pollution beliefs and avoidances revealed more about the in-built contradictions

arising in this classification system. Enactment of pollution beliefs portrayed the form social relations are supposed to take. Through viewing contradictions in the social structure, matters of great concern to people in Gcaleka society were brought on the foreground. Innermost secrets of the moral order were revealed.

Boundaries and clear lines of division are threatened by the marginal position of women. In order to eliminate cognitive confusion, the desired order is safeguarded through pollution avoidances. As Moore (1986: 113) observed, female fertility both stands for the socially essential productive and reproductive powers of womanhood and the threatening, potentially destructive nature of female power and sexuality. 'Fertility' in women needs to be controlled, as her fertility is desired on the one hand, and is dangerous and charged with power on the other hand. Controlling female health and fertility is a way of symbolically controlling social dangers 'on the stage' and emphasises the importance of agnatic descent.

Female fertility is a threat to success in the homestead, a dangerous force 'from outside' affecting the 'closed group' of the husband. A system of classification is being safeguarded. Avoidances surrounding reproductive capacities of women are the direct expression of a well-structured social order and world-view concerned with agnates, that is, a social order where subordination of individual personalities to categorical proprieties is the order of the day (Mayer 1975: 278). The individual (especially agnates and their wives) is in the grip of iron-hard categories of thought which are heavily safeguarded

by rules of avoidance and by punishments (Douglas 1966: 5). This social and moral order is symbolically enacted and represented by the female body. Powers are attributed to the structure of ideas, and rules of avoidance make a visible public recognition of its boundaries (Douglas 1966: 159). The power in the structure of ideas both restricts and protects each individual. Pollution avoidances act in both the interests of the 'polluted' wife as well as those persons who are attempting to control her fertility.

Pollution avoidances reinforce the authority structure rooted in the belief in the ancestors and the gender, age and kinship distinctions on which it is based. In other words, it is symbolically constructing the structure of patriarchy. And, as Pina-Cabral also argued:

underlying an entire imagetive complex like this, is an attempt to construct symbolically the necessity of patriarchy (1993: 116).

In the hard-edged social order which is safeguarded by avoidances and other restrictions the wife possesses power. In the next chapter the power dimension is discussed and analysed; we turn to an examination of the female sphere of activities and the power of wives.

CHAPTER 5: PRODUCTION, REPRODUCTION AND THE POWER OF WIVES**INTRODUCTION**

It has been established that among the Gcaleka of Fukula and the surrounding areas, a formal, kinship-based authority system exists whereby senior male agnates are given the right to dominate the junior persons (male and female) in their descent group, as well as wives who are the outsiders entering their group. Senior female agnates, of course, also have authority, but they usually do not live there or are at this stage in their lives too involved in what is happening in their husbands' homesteads. In the daily life of the married woman, the authority she experiences is affected by the social division by gender and seniority, as well as her 'outsiderness'. The authority she is up against, is that of persons who are older than herself. They include, the males, who have more authority over her than females do, as well as her husband's parents and siblings who daily restrict her behaviour tremendously when she is a young wife. During the earlier years of her married life she, therefore, has little access to authority. Only through growing older, and at the same time becoming more of an insider in her husband's descent group is she able to gradually achieve higher status and figure more prominently in the formal authority structure.

In this chapter the formal authority structure concerned with the spheres where women figure prominently - production, domestic activities and reproduction - is illuminated through utilising Meillassoux's (1981) materialist model, bringing relations of

production and relations of reproduction into the foreground. However, in Meillassoux's model the manipulative role of the wife is hidden. He ignores the fact that women can also possess power. To complement this approach it is supplemented by the transactionalist viewpoints of Barth (1966) and Bailey (1969, 1971).

In the above authority structure and hard-edged social order, power relations play an important role. It is the power element that 'electrifies' the system, brings changes about, allows people to bend rules, gives the individual (even the young wife) a certain degree of freedom and an own space, and at the same time holds the existing structure intact. Wives in Fukula and the neighbouring subwards possess power in the authority structure; the formal power which protects their position and interests, even when they are young and subordinated; and the informal power they exercise in a hidden structure of relations. Differences in personality and seniority preclude any stereotypic view of 'Gcaleka women'. This contradicts the liberal feminists' view of women who find themselves in stereotyped relations of power that function as a social structure, as a pattern of constraint on social practice (Connell 1987: 33).

The power holders in the husband's descent group attempt to control power and resources. The wife's labour and procreative powers are resources - important in the context of building the husband's homestead and ensuring kin solidarity in his group - which they are trying to control. They are not fully able to implement their ideal of authority. The formal structure empowers

the wife. Her reproductive capacities are potentially dangerous to 'others', she possesses supernatural power which protects her against the exploitation of her reproductive capacities and safeguards her position in that homestead (see chapter four). In the sphere of agricultural and domestic activities she is protected too: affines must respect each other and keep their distance. Hlonipha avoidances help to bring this about. If the wife's superiors in the husband's group and homestead do not look after 'the outsider', do not take her interests to heart, exploit either her labour or procreative power, it could cause conflict between the descent groups of the wife and the husband. Both parties must show respect towards each other. The system is restricting and protecting both power holders and their subordinates (like the father-in-law and his daughter-in-law) and keeping them apart.

Within the existing authority structure the individual actors, as both power holders and subordinates, try to further their own interests in a constant power struggle. Power usually involves the exercise of an individual's will over another's. According to Bailey (1969: xiii, 5) this kind of power play reveals regular patterns; actors play by certain set rules. In any culture there are regular and accepted ways of getting things done and prevailing over others. Each person in the game knows what his limits as well as rights are. There are choices the individual can make; choices regarding the most efficient tactics and manoeuvres which will make it possible to win the social game. The acting out of this relationship entails domination, acquiescence and resistance (Arens and Karp 1989: xv).

In their daily lives Fukula women (old and young) are attempting to resist the control of 'others' over them. In general, when they are young and have lower status they tend to submit to authority more than when they are older and more respected. When they have senior status and feel more confident about their position, women tend to behave in a more dominating manner towards other people. The wife has no wish to overthrow the existing order, but merely wants to better her own life. In this regard, Boissevain (1974: 223, 231, 232) argues as follows:

there is an asymmetrical relationship between those with more and less power. There is a process of continual competition between them. Each strives for power and honour: each side continually seeks to bend, modify and innovate laws and customs that restrict its behaviour in a way which benefits itself rather than its rival. It is ... the attempt of people who are mutually interdependent to be able to live the kind of lives they wish. Some wish to achieve prestige and fame. Others prefer inconspicuously to wield power. Yet others prefer to be left alone to pursue a quiet life. Because people are mutually dependent on each other, a person's own goals can never be achieved without helping and harming people, for the goals for which he strives - even that of just being left alone - are scarce and valued ends for which he must compete with others.

No human-being, as is the case in Fukula and the adjoining subwards, therefore, will ever be happy to be subordinated unless there is something to be gained out of the situation. For instance, in Fukula young wives tolerate submission because this is part of the process of becoming an authoritative figure as time passes. Furthermore, their superiors have the obligation towards them to take good care of their well-being and happiness.

POWER, AUTHORITY AND AUTONOMY

Power becomes a social reality when it is put into action (Foucault 1983: 219). Asymmetrical relations in the power dimension are composite phenomena of power, authority, and autonomy, and are usually not separable when people are acting out these relations (Schlegel 1977: 8). Schlegel (1977: 8, 9) holds the view that power is the ability to exert control, whatever the means to this control may be within the domestic, political, economic, or religious spheres. Weber's view (1968: 152, 153) is that power arises from relationships between social actors, human agents who exercise their rationality to calculate the costs and returns in the relationship. Power is exercised for the achievement of practical ends. To Foucault (1983: 221) power is the way in which the conduct of individuals or of groups might be directed. He says that the exercise of power consists in guiding the possibility of conduct and putting in order the possible outcome. Basically power is less a confrontation between two adversaries than a question of government, structuring the possible field of action of others.

Foucault (1983: 221) argues that when one defines the exercise of power as a mode of action upon the actions of others one includes an important element: freedom. Power is exercised only over free subjects. By this he means individual or collective subjects who are faced with a field of possibilities in which several ways of behaving and several reactions may be realized. In Fukula, in the hard-edged, social order that restricts people so much, there is a field of possibilities in the choices wives

make. They could decide to behave submissively, resist control over them or try to dominate the other person/s. These are strategies that women employ to circumvent the effects of dominance; they can even do this by being submissive. The way in which she deals with the situation depends on factors like the kind of personality she has, her force of personality and whether she is young or old.

Authority is one form of power; it is accepted without reflection and is the legitimated right to make decisions concerning others (Schlegel 1977: 8; Weber 1968: 152, 153). Autonomy, on the other hand, is freedom from control by others. In the acting out of relations of authority, power relations are revealed. There is an interplay between authority, autonomy and power which manifests itself in the form of relations of domination, resistance, and submission. According to Foucault (1983: 223) a certain number of points must be established in the analysis of power relations: what divisions are there being made between people in the existing authority structure, what are the rules governing conduct in this structure of relations, how is this structure of relations institutionalised, what objectives are people working towards, and, how do people bring power into play which entails relations as action in a field of possibilities.

Relations of power include relations of strategy. The word strategy is employed in three ways; the rationality functioning to arrive at an objective, the way in which one seeks to have the advantage over others and the means destined to obtain victory (Foucault 1983: 224). This corresponds with Bailey's (1969: 5)

idea that players in the game of power are always trying to win. For example, in Fukula the junior wife in homestead 25¹ is always trying to find ways to influence her mother-in-law's behaviour, like gossiping about the 'wrong things' she does. She knows that the story will soon reach her mother-in-law and make her change her behaviour towards herself and other people. In homestead 4 there is a wife with married children who does not tolerate it when someone tries to dominate others too much. She soon speaks up when the opportunity arises, getting people on sides, and getting them to air their views on the matter. She does this in a very sensitive way so as not to cause too much upset.

One can interpret the mechanisms brought into play in power relations in terms of strategies and tactics. According to Foucault:

Every strategy of confrontation dreams of becoming a relationship of power and every relationship of power leans toward the idea that, if it follows its own line of development and comes up against direct confrontation, it may become the winning strategy (1983: 225-226).

Strategies are, therefore, concerned with a good plan and its implementation. There is an important distinction between strategies and tactics. Tactics are usually not so premeditated and are turned to on the spur of the moment as the situation arises.

The above variables must be taken into account when asymmetrical relations in the power dimension are examined. First, in what

1 Homesteads referred to by number are all found in map 4, p.44.

spheres and under what conditions are women or their male and female superiors in control of their own persons, activities, and products of labour, and the persons, activities, and products of labour of the other person/s? Women may have considerable control over their own lives without necessarily having much control over the lives of their seniors; that is, both parties may have a large measure of autonomy. This is the case with junior wives in Fukula - they usually do not attempt to enforce their will on their superiors at this stage in their lives. This can be seen in the following case study:

Case: Three junior wives in Fukula

In Fukula, three junior wives, Noayinethi (homestead 11), Nosizwe (homestead 12), and Nolitha (homestead 21), are living alone in their husbands' new homesteads. Their husbands are away most of the time, doing migrant labour. Noayinethi and Nolitha have their children with them. Nosizwe lost her baby through a miscarriage in July 1990, and has no other children. Although their in-laws are still nearby, they experience more freedom in their daily lives. As their husbands are also not there, they have more time to themselves. They have a good reputation of being conscientious, and of obeying their elders. However, Nosizwe and Nolitha have seized the opportunity that has come their way to live an easier life to its full: they go and visit friends and only return home late, as they do not have to rush home to prepare food for their husband and other in-laws; they often visit each other, and secretly smoke cigarettes when their husbands are not there. They go and visit their own parents only returning a couple of weeks later. They give an appearance of being submissive; they appear to listen and respect their male and female seniors and then do what they like behind their backs.

The third one of these wives, Noayinethi, has no wish to leave her new 'little home' which she is proud of. She is busy with 'home-improving': she started their own garden in October 1990, has harvested their first crop out of the garden, and in March 1991 wanted to start with the building of a second hut. Although she respects and listens to the opinions of her seniors regarding all her plans in the homestead, she in the implementation of the plans is attempting to get things done with as little interference by others as possible.

In this regard Schlegel (1977: x) says that:

What one finds is that ... women do not simply accept or adjust to a subordinate status, but may strive to check dominance in some way, thereby achieving a measure of autonomy for themselves.

Three other wives also try to be free of control by others. In the following case study it can be seen how they allow themselves to be restricted by norms set by society in their pursuit of this goal:

Case: Three wives with married children

There are three wives (in homesteads 26, 28, and 30) living across the Lwalwane river, who team up against the other women and their seniors in the subward. They often refuse to join the other women when they work in each others' fields, saying that they are very busy elsewhere. The three of them then would go and work together in their own fields for the day: working, eating, resting, chatting, and gossiping. All of this is done very subtly, and in order to avoid annoying people, and jeopardising their good reputations, they from time to time join the group again and make sure that they attend ritual and other gatherings in the subward.

There is an interplay between restrictions and the freedom the individual has in the structure of power relations. In playing the social game - resisting authority, trying to influence people's behaviour - the individual is simultaneously obeying and bending rules. It is done in such a way that one does not affect one's position in a negative way. In other words, in the choices each person makes about the actions to be taken he/she is attempting to maintain a good reputation. An attempt is made to achieve a balance between the interests of the group and of the individual. As Barth (1966: 2) observed, the following also applies to Fukula:

The cumulative result of a number of separate choices and decisions made by individuals interacting with each other, trying to maximise their own position, generates patterns of social form; maintaining and changing the existing structural relations.

People exercise choice while influenced by certain constraints. Constraints on choice are effective through the way they determine what can be gained and lost. It can be seen as a game of strategy: the rules of how to play the social game and how to win it (Bailey 1971: 2, 3; Barth 1966: 4). While managing your reputation, attempting to earn yourself a good reputation through conforming to societal norms and values, you are also at the same time attempting to manipulate the situation having your own goals in mind. It is a matter of knowing how to preserve one's individuality while at the same time serving the interests of the community to which one belongs (Bailey 1971: 2, 3).

THE MANAGEMENT OF THE FEMALE SPHERE OF ACTIVITIES

How are outsider women and the spheres where they figure prominently - production, domestic activities and reproduction - being controlled among the Gcaleka in Fukula and the surrounding areas? According to Meillassoux (1981: 49), power in this mode of production² rests on control over the social and biological reproductive process, and not over material production. If the level of the productive process remains constant, the level of the reproductive process then becomes the variable which would

2 The mode of production being represented by a constant interaction between forces of production (acquired knowledge, land, and labour) and the relations of production (Meillassoux 1981: 34).

be controlled by the power holders in the society (Meillassoux 1981: 47, 48). In Gcaleka society men are dependent on women in certain ways, and, as Moore (1986: 68) also observed in Endo society, women bring three things to a marriage which the husband's group would like to have full control over: their agricultural labour, their domestic labour and their reproductive potential. A man has rights over the sexual, domestic, and reproductive services of his wife (Fox 1967: 121). In Gcaleka society this is the case if lobola cattle - by which the marriage is contracted - have been transferred from the husband's people to the wife's people. Outsider women are negotiated into the group of the husband because of their reproductive capacities, and then 'placed into' a pre-existing structure of relations of production: they must manage the material production in the homestead, and will be supplied with the means of production. With regard to this, Meillassoux (1981: 45) says the following:

... the elder's authority depends less on material than matrimonial management: political authority gained through the control of women can be extended to a larger community than can an authority gained through the material management of subsistence. The community can expand and integrate several productive cells by decentralising control over subsistence goods. Segmentation can now take place at the economic level of production and distribution by the formation of autonomous productive cells, while cohesion is maintained and reinforced at the matrimonial level which defines a larger exogamous political cell (the extended family, the lineage, the clan)

In Fukula and the neighbouring areas the senior male representatives of the local agnatic cluster are the power holders; they seem to control the outsider women, and their reproductive capacities in this way. This appears to correspond with the view held by Meillassoux (1981: 77) concerning similar

modes of production in patrilineal societies. The way in which outsider women are indirectly being controlled on the productive level can be expanded to other daily and domestic activities in the homestead. The further question that arises, which is neglected by Meillassoux, is the one of how much control the wife has over this situation and her own domain of activities. Meillassoux seems to ignore the fact that it is possible for wives to also possess power and that they are not always subordinated by others.

Production in the homestead

As Meillassoux (1981: 45) suggests, one could say that the respective homesteads of brothers, and fathers and sons, in Fukula (e.g., the Mzangwa homesteads, the Ngqosini homesteads, the Mvulane homesteads, and the Khuma homesteads - see map 4, p.44), constitute productive units which are managed by the outsider women in their husbands' homes: a way through which senior males who live in that homestead, act as representatives of the local agnatic cluster, and control production indirectly. On the matrimonial level, the productive units unite under the authority of the elders of each of these particular agnatic groups, enabling them to directly control reproduction and other matrimonial matters (as was seen in the case where they chose my interpreter as a new wife - see chapter three, p.110).

The productive units are not independent as they combine forces through cooperative labour, and in this way women manage to keep the agricultural cycle going in their individual homesteads. This

corresponds with what McAllister (1989: 18) says about the ward adjacent to Qwaninga:

The maintenance of local economic activity in Shixini depends on cooperative labour and pooling of resources. Each homestead is dependent on others, especially its immediate neighbours, for its economic survival.

The relations of production can be viewed against the above setting, in order to illuminate the relations of authority. The relations that exist between producers are concerned with who produces what for whom, and with the social relations which are necessary for setting the forces of production to work. In Fukula, the following relations of production are found: the husband (homestead head) gives land to his wife to cultivate, and, although he controls the land and resources, she is usually in charge of what is going to be planted in the garden. Women say that their husbands sometimes interfere, though - not admitting to me that they can become most difficult in the homestead if men meddle too much with their management of this sphere of activities. Other men (younger men who have less rights) living in the homestead usually do not own land yet, and have less control over resources. If they are migrant labourers, they would, for instance, send money home which would pay for materials like fertilizer and seed. Their wives make their contribution through labour. Only when they start their own homesteads, will the men own land, and their wives have their own gardens. Seniority therefore plays a role in being able to own and control land and resources.

Decisions concerning the field the homestead head and his

wife/wives make together. As the major source of energy is human energy, it is wives who labour the most in the productive process. A woman works hard as she also has interests in that homestead. Should her male and female seniors dare to interfere too much, she will soon show her dissatisfaction in some way like being uncooperative. Wives, therefore, are resisting control by their seniors in their own domain and are fighting for autonomy.

As mentioned before, wives do not overwork themselves. When they are young and if their in-laws make them work too hard, they would, for instance, seek help from their own parents and go home. Even when they are young, they already are telling their juniors who visit there and children in the homestead to do certain chores - they have been raised in this hierarchical structure of relations based on the making of age differences. Since their childhood they have been acting out age differences among themselves, their siblings and other children.

When they grow older in their husbands' homesteads they usually become the head of the team of workers in the homestead. As Mayer (1978: 54, 56) also found in his study in the neighbouring administrative area, Shixini, a woman can usually count on junior and/or dependent members of their own household to share in the work of the homestead. To the senior woman the husband is only one member of the work team of the homestead. The most productive workers in the team are the woman's juniors - her daughters, her daughters-in-law and her sons until they go to work. A woman with several unmarried teenage daughters and a young son or two need do little else but manage her team if she prefers it that way.

She may, for instance, just attend beer drinks then. For example, in Fukula the older wives living in homesteads 2, 4, 13, 18, 24, and 25 easily leave members of their team to continue with the work and, for instance, go and visit somewhere for a while. On other occasions they prefer to stay at home working hard themselves and keeping a watchful eye over the work team.

The available labour in the community is distributed by means of work parties, 'companies' and informal working teams. For instance, during the planting season their husbands and other men who are there plough the soil, because oxen (domain of men) are involved in this activity, and men also hoe in the fields and gardens from January to March. They would, however, not hoe at the expense of their pastoral activities. The produce from the field is used in their homestead, part of which is stored for use during the non-productive period: produce being controlled and owned by the respective productive units. This, as well as cash obtained through migrant labour (independent sons often not giving part of their money to their fathers anymore), is leading to the accumulation of wealth in some homesteads, and is starting to threaten the power held by the male elders over their juniors.

The above brings the question of the extent of women's exploitation to the fore. According to Meillassoux (1981: 77) it is exploitation of their labour, in that they lose their claim to their produce: what they produce, enters the domestic sphere through the mediation of a man. Direct exploitation of women in the domestic community is often alleviated by the fact that they are given gardens, all or part of whose produce is theirs. In

Fukula, female informants say that crops from the garden, are, in this way, hers, and the wife controls the distribution of it: be it for her own domestic use, for neighbours, friends, or family; to be sold as is often the case with tobacco from the garden, or to exchange it for something else (e.g., salt, maize kernels). Contrary to what Meillassoux (1981: 77) maintains, produce from the field does not enter the domestic sphere through the mediation of a man, nor do the eldest male agnates in the group redistribute the product (Meillassoux 1981: 47). As Kuckertz (1990: 102, 161) also found in his study among the Mpondo, a kinsman in the agnatic group among the Gcaleka cannot decide on the domestic affairs of an agnatically-related homestead. The local agnatic cluster does not hold produce in common. According to the women in Fukula, the husband and wife make decisions concerning the produce together (he, of course, 'formally' has the right to have the last say). It is brought from the field to their homestead where it is kept in a granary: a large wicker container or in an empty hut. It is fetched there during the following weeks and months by women in the homestead, and processed into food for the persons living in that homestead. The husband and wife are supposed to discuss matters concerning production with each other first, in order to ensure mutual co-operation. Through discussing matters, it enables her to influence decision-making. Furthermore, this is her sphere of activities - men know better than to interfere too much with the activities she likes to feel she is in control of. If they do, it could lead to unnecessary tension and upset in the homestead.

Should she obtain cash through selling vegetables out of the

garden, the money is hers. When women hoe for other people they are 'paid' with sugar, beans, maize, and even paraffin. A junior wife in Fukula explained to me that you would be given four one rand bottles of paraffin if you worked from seven o'clock in the morning to one o'clock in the afternoon. Women need extra money and at the same time are trying to be more economically independent. In July 1990 many women in Fukula and the neighbouring areas were cutting grass (for huts' roofs) and making mud bricks which they would receive payment for in cash. This, as well as finding other ways of gaining access to cash (for instance, through having a secret boyfriend who will give her money as a gift), contribute to the undermining of the power of the elders. Furthermore, she is no longer a mere labourer in the productive process, but is forced to make certain decisions concerning production on her own as the men who are members of her husband's agnatic group are often away doing migrant labour. This corresponds with Mayer's finding (1978: 53) in Shixini. He says that wives who have little support from their husbands are in charge of the homestead's subsistence economy for long periods, and develop great self-reliance. Although she is, therefore, being exploited to a certain extent, she is also continually finding ways to 'fight back' and to exercise more control over the persons and activities she is involved with daily.

The wife, as she is growing older, is attempting to control other persons and their activities in the economic sphere of activities. She rarely tries to dominate her seniors. However, she now feels confident enough in that home to air her views more

freely which, of course, could influence persons (even senior persons) and their activities. Out of respect towards each other she and her in-laws have to remain distanced from each other. The wife achieves this through observing hlonipha avoidances. Isolating her in this way gives her power. Creating boundaries around her which she and others must respect, surrounds her with a personal space which protects her against exploitation by her superiors and gives her the opportunity to employ certain strategies; whether it be to submit to authority for the time being (as this could seem to be the best winning strategy in the long run) or whether it be to enforce her will on people.

In Fukula and the surrounding areas, wives are striving towards economic independence and to control other persons and their activities in the economic sphere of activities. They are managing to achieve these goals in the absence of their men. They have started to be the decision makers in the productive process and even use their own money to, for instance, buy seed and implements for the garden.

The agnatic group and reproduction

The social role of a woman begins at puberty with her potential reproductive capacities. 'Mating' usually requires the association of individuals whose social membership is different (Meillassoux 1981: 23). This being brought about by the rule of clan exogamy in Gcaleka society. It is the procreative powers of a woman that are the subject of negotiation and object of political action when a woman is taken into another group

(Meillassoux 1981: 22, 43).

The relations of reproduction among the Gcaleka in Fukula and the neighbouring subwards can be viewed through looking at the relations of subordination and domination that have to do with who reproduces children for whom. As Meillassoux (1981: 75, 76) says about other societies where women are wanted for their reproductive capacities, once she is married in Gcaleka society, a woman's situation is subordinated to the rules which govern the placing of her children. The problem which is raised in societies concerned with long-term reproduction is that of the social membership of their offspring. In patriliney, a woman's children are filiated to the community of her recognised husband (Meillassoux 1981: 23). Wives reproduce the agnatic descent group of the husband. The essence of patrilineal organisation is 'gaining control over the wife'. Marriage is no casual mating arrangement. Descent group members must find outsider women if they wish to perpetuate the group. They have to get a woman and 'hold onto' her in all probability until she has reared the children (Fox 1967: 44, 120). The process of reproduction therefore necessitates very long-term commitments (Meillassoux 1981: 38, 39).

The male elders in each agnatic descent group who are responsible for the management of the group, also control the group's reproduction (Meillassoux 1981: 22, 43). Where alliance acts as a means of regulating matrimonial relations, ensuring structural reproduction depends on the political capacity of its leaders to negotiate an adequate number of women (Meillassoux 1981: 25, 33).

The reproduction of individuals, incorporating them in the husband's group - in other words institutionalising male filiation, controlling the wife's reproductive capacities; and the places the children occupy from birth throughout their lives, become the object of political action (Meillassoux 1981: 38).

In Fukula and the adjoining subwards, subordinating the wife to the rules which govern the placing of her children entails that she must live at her husband's home where her in-laws attempt to exercise control over her, and she also has to observe pollution avoidances that create boundaries around her reproductive capacities. The group restricts inheritance to the children of its men, and a man has complete rights over the possessions of his children: property and control will be passed from fathers to sons. As is the case in Fukula, a father, therefore, wants to make sure that the children - particularly males - that are born to his wife, are definitely under his control and are legally his children (Fox 1967: 45, 46, 115, 121). Fox (1967: 115) argues that one can expect much more fuss being made over marriage and the rights over the wife and children in these societies. The reproduction of individuals and the places they occupy from birth throughout their lives are the object of careful social control which dominates social relations as a whole. Kinship relations are imposed by birth; they are lifelong, statutory and intangible (Meillassoux 1981: 18, 38).

Are wives in Fukula and the neighbouring areas really so subordinated and powerless when it comes to control over the children and their reproductive capacities? The answer seems to

be no. Although the children she gives birth to do belong to her husband's group, she has a great influence over them concerning the norms, values and rules the child is socialised into, as she is directly involved in the socialisation process of her children. The senior male agnates are not able to exercise as much control over the wife's reproductive capacities as they would like to. In the sphere of reproduction she possesses supernatural power which she could turn against them should they attempt to exploit her reproductivity and abuse their power. This power she possesses influences the behaviour of her superiors in her husband's group towards her. Furthermore, isolating her through pollution avoidances gives her time for a deserved rest and to be free from her superiors' control, especially if they are men. Her husband, for instance, has no sexual rights over her when she is menstruating and for some time after she has given birth or has had a miscarriage. As Strathern (1987: 290) observed, female reproductivity cannot be conceived as simply put to male use. Keesing's (1987: 57) observation among the Kwaio concerning menstrual isolation also holds true for Gcaleka women when it comes to taboos and reproductive situations in general:

[There are] further contradictions that allow of counterinterpretation. Women in menstrual isolation are by their marginalisation placed temporarily out of men's control; thus they are able to establish and use solidarity ... for their own ends.

Wives and power

There is no doubt that the role of women in their own sphere of activities is very influential. Mayer (1978: 4) states it as follows:

Women carry the main burden of reproducing the rural system. They bear the children, they bear the responsibility for keeping the subsistence economy going, they maintain the home and look after the old and infirm, they bring up the children and inculcate Red values.

As Keesing (1987: 57) found among the Kwaio, the same is also busy happening among the Gcaleka; women are slowly breaking free of constraints. They are freer to act independently with respect to their economic pursuits, their domestic interests and even to a certain extent their sexuality.

In Fukula and the surrounding areas women are not only labouring and reproducing for their husband's group. They are also working towards their own ends which is possible because they are being given a space of their own and being isolated by hlonipha and pollution avoidances. Marginalising her furthers her own interests. The ideal of control by senior male agnates is not realized. The power holders have discovered that if they do not meddle with her sphere of activities too much, it is less likely that problems will arise in the homestead.

Furthermore, in the male sphere of activities which includes ritual and political activities, matters in this regard are often discussed at home with their wives, making it possible for the wife to give him her opinion which could influence his ideas and decisions. If a husband wishes to hold a ritual in their homestead, it is not possible without the support and assistance of his wife. He needs to consult her before he starts making any further plans and can only hold it if his wife has agreed that he can go ahead with arrangements. If her husband does not listen

to her and take her feelings into consideration, problems soon arise. Being uncooperative plays a big role in Fukula if the husband ignores the 'voice' of his wife.

In Fukula and the adjoining areas dominance is linked to seniority and subordination to persons (male or female) with junior status. The assumption often being made that women are subordinated and that men are the power holders, therefore, is an oversimplification of the true situation where both gender and seniority are variables that need to be taken into consideration when power relations are looked at.

On the informal level the hidden structure of relations reveals that women do not always behave according to stereotyped behaviour expected of them, as is the case with men. Some men like to receive advice and to have their behaviour influenced by their wives but are not allowed to let this show, and must hide behind the pretence of being the dominators. As Mayer (1978: 63) observed, careful efforts are made to keep the image of male control and responsibility at all times.

That women can have important roles in the ritual sphere in the capacity of diviner, adds a further dimension to the power of women. This is illustrated in the following case study. Being a diviner is one of the most powerful positions any person can have in this society:

Case: Women in their capacity as diviners:

During my second field trip to Qwaninga in February 1990 we one day met a female diviner, Nowize, living in the subward, Mhlisela (see map 3, p.18). After a while we made friends with her and started visiting

each other. When I returned to the field for one of my later field trips, she on that day killed a chicken for us when we went to see her.

One of the reasons why Nowize became a diviner was because she was not able to bear children. She still seems to be experiencing problems with her health. She never got married. In 1990 her sister's child was living with her.

As time passed, Nowize started informing us of rituals - where diviners would be meeting and dancing (called intlombe³ by her) to be held in the area. She used to send a child to tell us about the ritual a few days before the time. On that day she would then send a child to call us to accompany her. She, of course, also wanted me to be present because it is considered lucky if a white person attends a ritual held by diviners - the colour of the diviners mainly being white and making its appearance in their garments and beads.

I attended at least six or more of these occasions, one being held over a weekend at Nowize's father's homestead (which was the neighbouring homestead to her own). It was a ritual held to ask the ancestors to help with the problem of Nowize's ill-health. After speaking to the ancestors in the cattle-byre, a goat was slaughtered late on Friday afternoon. Many people stayed there for the weekend. There were a few 'diviners in training' present at the occasion. During the course of the weekend one of the young girls graduated into the next stage of training.

We stayed there on the Friday night and were given a place to stay in the hut of the diviners. After all the guests had been given tea and freshly-baked bread, the night's proceedings started. The diviners would dance (xhentsa) while the bystanders would clap and sing. The diviners would rest and after a while start dancing again. While dancing they would rotate in a circle in the center of the hut.

At these gatherings there usually were more female diviners than male diviners; male diviners were never more than three, while the female diviners numbered seven or more persons.

Nowize and the other diviners' high status in the society soon revealed itself. As Hammond-Tooke (1980: 348) observed, the status of the diviner is closely associated with the ancestral spirits as is

3 Kropf (1899: 394, 447) describes intlombe as an evening or night party accompanied by music and dancing: throwing the body in contortions, while keeping time to the singing and clapping hands of the bystanders.

the case here. People would treat the diviners with respect, almost seemed afraid of them and to speak to them. They would only go into the hut set aside for the diviners if they were called there. The family at whose homestead the ritual was being held had to make sure that there was more than enough food and drink for the diviners. People would rush to fulfil the wishes and to obey the commands of the diviners when they were called by them. In their capacity as diviners Nowize and her female friends (who were also wives) were acting out their powerful position through exercising control over people and their activities at these gatherings.

POWER RELATIONS: POWER AND STRATEGIES

Wives among the Gcaleka in Fukula and the surrounding areas, do not readily submit to authority. Apart from the avoidances they need to observe as outsiders, some of the norms and values which act as constraints on their behaviour, are: an emphasis on being hard-working, on mutual help, not having a boyfriend, sharing, and showing goodwill towards your fellowman. They are continuously making use of informal channels of 'working through' or 'around' their seniors, whereby they are assessing their options and manipulating their seniors and the given situation to further their own interests. They impose their will through utilising noninstitutionalised forms of power like, for example, bluff and gossip. The imbalance the formal structure creates is evened out through their invisible role in an informal power structure, where they are constantly working towards gaining more control over their own lives. For instance, in Fukula, it is possible for a woman, should her husband make her unhappy, to gossip about him to other people which may cause the society to pressurise him into changing his ways. Interviewing both women and men, I was told that a husband and wife are supposed to

discuss things together, and cannot just do as they please. Discussing things together, gives the wife the opportunity to try and influence her husband's decisions. Furthermore, should her husband not take her wishes into consideration and not discuss things with her (this being justified by the formal structure, whereas she does not have the right to neglect discussing matters with him), she finds ways of showing her dissatisfaction through an informal power structure and her 'invisible role'. For example, she becomes uncooperative in small ways he is not able to pinpoint. Furthermore, a woman may resist her husband's efforts to acquire more wives should he ignore her wish not to marry a second wife (Tiffany 1978: 44). This happened in Fukula in the 'Giqwa' homestead (homestead 1), where his first wife returned to her parents' home after he had insisted on marrying a second wife without her consent.

In a society with as close-knit relationships between people as is found in Gcaleka society, it is possible for the group to enforce its will on the individual, and it makes it all the more surprising to see how in the above context, married women, and especially fairly newly-married women, go about getting their own way with women and men who are their seniors. How they manage their own sphere of activities, employing certain strategies, using authority, informal power and attempting to achieve autonomy, can be illustrated through viewing the following case studies in Fukula:

Case: The 'tired' wife

In this homestead the wife, Nophindile, is constantly finding ways to impose her will, and to undermine her seniors. Her husband, who is working in East London most of the time, is in his early fifties, and she is

forty eight years old. They have a teenage daughter and son who live at home, and a married daughter who lives in Johannesburg.

Her husband, Siphiwo, may interfere with the decisions she makes, whereas she does not have this right. She, however, influences his 'decisions' 'informally': playing on his emotions, making him listen to her. Siphiwo helps Nophindile a lot, for instance, with the cooking, as she is always telling him how tired her body is, and often says that she is not feeling well. He tells the children to do many of the chores as their mother is feeling too tired. With an ox-drawn sledge, he fetches the wood she goes to chop in the forest. It seems as if he is controlling everything that is happening in their homestead, however, when he tells his wife to do certain chores, she would either ask the children to do the work, or she would disappear to the neighbours or to a beer party. He allows her to sometimes dominate him as they are in love with each other.

Nophindile is managing her reputation of being hard-working well: she is always telling people that she is working too hard and is tired because of this. She is constantly striving towards achieving autonomy and to exercise control over others. She has a great influence over her teenage son and daughter in the homestead. She manages her team well. When Siphiwo one day took down the garden fence as it needed to be repaired, she was most upset and angry with him saying that he will be responsible if the pigs eat the crops in 'her' garden.

When her husband is away from home, she has a boyfriend. She keeps this a secret. We, however, purely by accident, discovered this. She immediately afterwards tried to explain that she was not doing anything wrong, but finds it necessary to have a boyfriend in her husband's absence, as she can always turn to him for help, and when she is in need of money, he will give it to her. She would not be able to cope otherwise.

Other ways in which she supplements her money is through 'going to work' some days, cutting grass and making mud bricks. Her husband's father's younger brother, who is one of the senior representatives of her husband's agnatic cluster, and who lives alone in the neighbouring homestead (homestead 17), finds that she is often not eager to help him - this not being too noticeable, as she out of respect towards him, is supposed to avoid him. When he, however, in July 1990 started brewing beer for a beer party at his home, she soon agreed to help him after he had offered to pay her. She is therefore undermining the authority of one of the elders, and through her behaviour is contributing to a slow-moving process which is

bringing changes about in the existing authority structure in society.

Nophindile often visits an old lady living in a nearby homestead (homestead 32) with her grandchildren, and then helps her with the chores she is busy doing. If the old lady, however, asks her to do something she does not feel like doing, she soon says that she is in a bit of a hurry, and then quickly leaves - a strategy through which she is maintaining her good reputation and is also achieving autonomy. The old lady did not even realise that Nophindile was refusing to submit to her authority. Nophindile's strategy of evasion was a way of freeing herself from the control of her elder.

Nophindile is constantly furthering her own interests and at the same time allowing herself to be constrained by societal values and norms: as soon as someone either criticises something she has been doing, or she hears people have been gossiping about her, she instantly changes her ways or gives a good enough explanation in order to justify her behaviour. She one day accused the sub-headman's first wife of neglecting us, as we were staying in that homestead. The result was that the sub-headman's wife afterwards every day came to enquire about our well-being. Nophindile was placing herself in a favourable light in this situation, and said that she was 'looking after the guests' as one is supposed to do. She was influencing the other person's behaviour and hoped to rise in my esteem.

Nophindile is constantly resisting authority, trying to impose her will and at other times submitting to authority in her attempt to achieve autonomy and to be in control of people.

Case: Women in the homestead of the sub-headman

In the homestead of the sub-headman (homestead 13), all the women have ways of getting their own way. His two wives have different ways of approaching him. The second wife, Nobuyisile, whom he favours, has a great influence over him, as she knows he is in love with her. For example, she once used much more fertilizer in her garden than the share she had been given by him, taking for granted that he would not mind. His first wife, Nokhawuleza, simply disregards his wishes sometimes, as she is feeling anger towards him because he is neglecting her. For example, she had their huts' roofs fixed on her own when he refused to help her. Both wives are undermining the authority of their husband. Their behaviour is contributing to a process whereby the authority structure in society is gradually undergoing changes. True to their reputations, they are hard workers, which often 'covers up' their other shortcomings. Nokhawuleza

tries to influence people's behaviour through insulting them, or gossiping about them.

The two sisters, Vangaye and Zimela, say it is not necessary to tell their father everything, and seldom ask his permission to do something, undermining his authority in this way. As she and her husband were not getting along, the older sister, Vangaye, defied her husband, through, in his absence, having a boyfriend. She justifies this action by saying that he was neglecting her.

Both the daughters-in-law were 'taken by force', and are not formally married to their husbands. They have not slaughtered any animals for them yet. Their older sister-in-law, Vangaye, says it is hard to slaughter something for these daughters-in-law, as they are always either going to their husbands, or going home to their own parents, and are not working and contributing enough to the running of their father-in-law's homestead⁴.

In July 1990, the younger daughter-in-law, Nothando, had been working very hard for days on end. Each time she wanted to rest, she was told to do something more: her two mothers-in-law were busy elsewhere brewing beer, joining beer parties, and only returning home late at night. Her younger sister-in-law and the other daughter-in-law were away in Cape Town at the time. The older sister-in-law did not feel like working very hard, and told Nothando to do her chores: this caused silent resentment from Nothando. Two days later she was told to start grinding maize to brew beer with, as a ritual was to be held at that homestead two weekends later: an ox would be slaughtered, and they would have to bake a lot of bread on the day before the time. Nothando suddenly went to visit her parents the next day, and did not return that night. This probably being her way of rebelling, and 'fighting back'. Three days later, she was brought back to her husband's home before eight o'clock in the morning by her mother. She and her mother sat on a sleeping mat behind the door. Nothando's mother was received by her father-in-law, and two mothers-in-law. Their behaviour towards each other was very formal, and they spoke in very serious tones. Nothando's mother had come to speak to them on her behalf about her working too hard at this homestead. They were given tea, and her mother left to go home.

In February 1991, Nothando's husband neglected to send

⁴ This is not entirely true. Vangaye was probably just showing the resentment she was feeling because she has to work harder when the young wives go away; Nokhawuleza and Nobuyisile often leave their team of workers and, for instance, go to a beer party. She probably also wishes to have more control over them.

her money when she ran out of money. She again returned to her parents' home, and stayed there for three weeks. She refused to return until he had, in person, brought the money. She was not jeopardising her good reputation (that is, of being conscientious and hard-working). This behaviour was justified, as no bridewealth has yet been given to her parents, and her in-laws therefore have no claim over her duties. These limits on their power over her she uses to benefit herself and to be free from their control sometimes.

The structure of relations as it is supposed to operate in this homestead, therefore, manifests itself in unexpected forms because of the women in the homestead who are trying to manipulate power. The older women and older sister are undermining authority and are trying to dominate relations in the homestead. On the other hand, the junior wives are also resisting authority but they are behaving in a submissive way and not trying to dominate people. Seniority's effect on power relations reveals itself here.

Case: The lazy young wife and her mother-in-law

A fifty year old widow, Nomight, whose husband died twenty-two years ago, lives in this homestead (homestead 25) with her daughter-in-law, Nosandile, and her two year old granddaughter. Her son, Dupass, is her only child, and is away working in Johannesburg most of the time. He, from time to time, gets epileptic fits, which causes his worried mother to blame his illness on her two older brothers who are, according to her, using witchcraft against her son. The two older brothers are close to their nephew. However, their sister seems to be envious of them in some way, and this accusation has something to do with the tension in their relationship. Nosandile is the neighbour's daughter (homestead 24), and was 'taken by force' by Nomight's son in 1987. They have not married yet.

There is a constant tug-of-war going on between the daughter-in-law and her mother-in-law: Nosandile seems to be getting the better of her mother-in-law. Although she is supposed to obey her (her mother-in-law being her senior in the hierarchy among women) and do the chores she is given, Nosandile is a very lazy person. She works as slowly as she possibly can, often sitting down to rest. Furthermore, she asks people who are her juniors to help her. She pretends to listen, and then does things her own way, for instance, giving the baby dry porridge which resulted in having to take the child to the hospital. Nomight is possessive over the baby, and both she and Nosandile are fighting to have control over the child.

Nosandile often goes to her parents who live next

door, which is sometimes her way of escaping from her mother-in-law. As they are constantly in a power struggle with each other, the mother-in-law is telling everyone how cheeky her daughter-in-law is. When people visit there, Nosandile tries to prove her mother-in-law wrong and to earn a good reputation through acting like an obedient, hard-working daughter-in-law.

Nomight has a secret boyfriend who does many favours for her, and gives her money. She seems to be jealous of her two older brothers (living in homesteads 18 and 33), and her older sister (second wife of the sub-headman). She does not submit to the authority they have over her. Disagreeing with her sister one day, she started hitting her. When her one brother (homestead 18) told her to inform a few of their 'family members' of a funeral to be held, they did not turn up, because they had not been told this by her. When her brother called her about the matter, that evening, she acted very submissively, dropping her eyes, and saying that she had forgotten and was very sorry.

She has driven her one brother's wife (homestead 33) away to town after accusing her of witchcraft against her son, and almost, in July 1990, succeeded in driving her other sister-in-law (homestead 18) away after accusing her of stealing her eight chickens and saying that she would die because of this. If women who are her seniors try to make her do things she does not feel like doing, she simply withdraws (fighting off the control they have over her). People are not always able to trace her daily movements, as she would sometimes disappear for the whole day, for instance, going to a beer drink. She would leave the management of the homestead to her daughter-in-law. However, she still manages to uphold a good reputation, for instance, at ritual and other gatherings she is among those who work the hardest, people comment on this and know that they can always rely on her help in times of need.

CONCLUSION

In Fukula and the surrounding areas, as in all societies, the social situation is structured through the creation of categories and concepts. In the hard-edged social order social categories must be kept apart and not become blurred. Each social category has certain rights and obligations attached to it, rights that

empower the individual (even the young wife) and obligations that subordinate the person. This is the case if the person is male, female, old or young. He/she is given power which is not allowed to be abused. Isolation from other groups and people creates a space around the individual which protects him/her against exploitation and unfair treatment by his/her superiors and other people.

The individual in Gcaleka society is subordinated to a system which is rooted in the belief in the ancestor cult, and in authority held by senior persons, especially if they are males. As the system at the same time empowers and restricts the individual, this means that he is operating within a field of possibilities where there are limits and freedom. This is summed up by the words of Hoernle (1937: 67). The findings she made in earlier days also applies to the current situation among the Gcaleka where this study was undertaken:

there was an ordered group-life, with reciprocal rights and duties, privileges and obligations, of members, determining behaviour patterns for each individual member towards other members, and moulding the feelings, thoughts, and conduct of members according to these patterns, so that it is only in and through them that the individual can achieve his personal self-realization and participate in the satisfaction offered by the life of his community

Fukula women exhibit a degree of autonomy in their everyday lives which probably is providing the foundation for change in the structure of the society in regard to the relationship between men and women, and young and old. Furthermore, independent women who rely on themselves rather than men are arising. Power relations affecting actions of people entail roles of submission,

domination and resistance. People give the appearance of submitting to the system. However, they are also bending rules as far as the system allows them to do so. They are not only 'bending rules' but can exploit inconsistency in the rules, by invoking one rule against the other and claiming a clash of obligations. As Wolf (1972: 169) observed among Taiwanese women, Gcaleka women must also appear to stay within rules, and while manipulating them must not appear to be doing so.

In Gcaleka society and Fukula the distinctions being made are not only based on males versus females. Relations of power are not only based on the male/female distinction, but also on seniority and kinship differences. Male power versus female subordination would be an incorrect way of looking at the world of the Gcaleka if age and kinship differences are not also taken into consideration. As Keesing (1987: 59) suggested, perhaps in the long run we can develop a set of theoretical concepts less bluntly crude than 'subordination', 'exploitation', or 'oppression' to examine the social uses of cultural ideologies in comparative perspective. Ideas of equality and inequality should be re-examined in these societies looking at the people's behaviour and own views. A Western viewpoint should not be projected on their beliefs and values as easily as it has been done in the past.

CONCLUSION: RECONSIDERING THE POSITION OF THE MARRIED WOMAN

The situation depicted by Western-orientated studies on women in non-Western societies like Gcaleka society, is often of women who find themselves in a system that subordinates them to such an extent that they, for the rest of their lives, will never be freed of these oppressive bonds. One of the motivations to undertake this study was to determine whether ideas projected onto non-Western societies by strangers hold true when the actual situation of people interacting with each other on a daily basis is looked at more closely. This, of course, is a difficult task, to detach oneself from Western ideas and bias that one has been raised and socialised into; not to stand back but to attempt to portray the situation 'from inside' as the people see their world and give meaning to their existence.

In the studies in the past the main problem for women has been their invisibility in any serious study of history and society (cf. Rosaldo and Lamphere 1974; Reiter 1975). Women have been 'analytically invisible' (Moore 1988: 3). In this regard Obbo (1981: 2) argues as follows:

Anthropology as a whole has provided an essentially male view of Third World societies. It gives an account of only one half of the world and transgresses the anthropological ideal of letting people speak for themselves. Male reality tends to be presented as equivalent to the whole group's reality.

According to Moore (1988: 1) the main problem was not one of empirical study, as women have always been present in ethnographic accounts, primarily because of the traditional anthropological concern with kinship and marriage. The main

problem was, therefore, of representation. As Evans-Pritchard (1965: 39) maintains, the measure by which the early anthropologists judged the status of women in non-Western societies was their own mothers and sisters; situations that are incomparable. Evans-Pritchard continues:

On the whole, the findings of modern antropologists are in agreement that women's status among primitive peoples has been misunderstood and underestimated. The most authoritative accounts of primitive peoples of recent years have tended to emphasize the influence of women, their ability to hold their own, the esteem in which they are held, and their important roles in the social life (1965: 42).

In the early 1970s the problem of how women were represented in anthropological writing was confronted. This grew out of a specific concern with the neglect of women in the discipline (Moore 1988: 1). The initial problem was quickly identified as one of male bias; bias of the anthropologist who brings to the research various assumptions and expectations about the relationships between people, and bias inherent in Western culture. Moore (1988: 2) argues that:

when researchers perceive the asymmetrical relations between men and women in other cultures, they assume such asymmetries to be analogous to their own cultural experience of the unequal and hierarchical nature of gender relations in Western society ... even where more egalitarian relations between women and men exist, researchers are very often unable to understand this potential equality because they insist on interpreting difference and asymmetry as inequality and hierarchy.

Anthropologists concerning themselves with 'the world of women' in different cultural settings, have set themselves the large task of reworking and redefining anthropological theory, whereby new data on women and women's activities are being built up by

studying and describing what women really do and by recording and analysing the statements, perceptions and attitudes of women themselves (Moore 1988: 2).

In this study of Gcaleka women in the Fukula subward and surrounding areas, an attempt has been made to contribute towards the building up of new data on women and to bring 'the world of the women' into the foreground. In studies in the past female power was often hidden behind male dominance. In this study, from the start, the assumption was made that women do possess power although they find themselves in an existing social structure that oppresses them in many ways. The formal and informal power they possess needed to be illuminated as well as 'the strengths and idiosyncrasies' in the lives of women as Obbo (1981: 16) puts it.

With this background to the study, I entered the field, feeling quite concerned about the 'oppressed' Gcaleka women who are so restricted by a system they have no formal control over. My first encounter with women in the area where the study was undertaken, revealed a situation where women - the mother-in-law and two daughters-in-law - seemed to be fairly in control of their own situation. This especially seemed to be the case with the mother-in-law who was behaving like someone who has an authoritative position. Their men were away doing migrant labour. The mother-in-law was behaving like someone who has a domain of her own that she is in charge of. I was staying next door. They came to introduce themselves and invited me to eat samp and beans with them. While I was there, the mother-in-law's behaviour and

actions seemed to be affecting everyone in the homestead including adults, children and even animals. I was also surprised to find that although the young wives were submitting to the authority of their mother-in-law, they both had a proud bearing and behaved in a dignified manner which almost made them seem untouchable.

Visiting another homestead, I found a situation where the husband and wife (who were in their early seventies) were having a conversation while he was allowing her to behave in a dominating manner towards him. Women I met would assert themselves through ordering their juniors to do things (this even being the case with newly-married women). After this, it became a challenge to attempt to reveal more about the true situation of Gcaleka women in the power dimension, and to show that these women also possess power in the existing social structure found in Gcaleka society.

The next step was to take a look at the formal structure of relations of authority affecting married women in Gcaleka society. It was found that in its implementation the authority structure in Fukula and the surrounding areas organised relations between people hierarchically through the social division by gender and age. In the case of wives, a further social division based on affinity arose: the rights and obligations structuring their relationships with their affines are aimed at distancing them from each other. It was seen that the authority structure affecting the position of women is not only based on a distinction being made between males and females; a finer authority structure operates whereby gender as well as age and

kinship distinctions are being made.

Symbolic boundaries are demarcated between social categories in order to keep categories apart. Here, women in their capacity as outsiders are forced to adhere to boundaries which often take the form of avoidances. Avoidances constitute part of the control system whereby wives are being kept separate in a category of their own. Three forms of avoidances were identified. They were found embedded in:

- the everyday male/female division in society
- the ways in which the wife shows respect towards her husband and in-laws
- reproductive situations a woman finds herself in from time to time.

Authority as it operates in the daily lives of married women is reinforced and maintained by these avoidances and other restrictions married women need to observe. In the above authority structure kinship figures prominently and sanctions in the structure are governed by the ideology of the ancestor cult. When contradictions arise in the social structure these restrictions/avoidances need to be made more explicit - as was the case with pollution avoidances.

One can easily assume that the above situation is proof of subordination of certain persons, particularly women, and advantaging of others who hold power. Avoidances can be seen as constituting part of the control system in the society whereby

wives are being restricted and subordinated.

Authority, avoidances and marriage are closely bound up with each other in a system of classification which is simultaneously a system of meaning and a system of action. Certain ideas about the social and moral order are being expressed, and relations between the different categories of people are being ordered. These social distinctions constitute a system of classification which is safeguarded and protected by the avoidances and other restrictions imposed on women. Avoidances back up the authority structure that is rooted in authority attributed to the ancestors. The structure of patriarchy, the importance given to kin solidarity and agnatic descent, and respecting the idea of seniority are represented in different ways by the symbolism inherent in the avoidances and other restrictions affecting the daily lives of married women. Through acting out avoidances and other prohibitions, their image of the world was being constructed.

People operate within the given structure of lines, boundaries and restrictions imposed on them. The social grid it creates places each individual, especially wives, into a category/space of their own. Being fitted into hard-edged social categories, as is the case here, distances people from each other, especially subordinates from their superiors. Giving each person 'a space' of their own gives them some degree of protection against exploitation and intrusion 'from outside'.

In this study it became apparent that beliefs and practices

associated with avoidances do not necessarily contribute only to a subordinate position of women in the society. Avoidances also safeguard her position and empower her. Instead of only looking at the restrictive nature of the structure women find themselves in, the ways in which the system advances their situation should also be taken into consideration. It is a distortion of reality to only highlight the oppression of women which makes it seem as if they have no power and freedom at all.

It was seen that the patriarchal structure in Fukula and the neighbouring subwards has mechanisms built into its structure that also allow women to have dominant roles and protect them against power abuse by their superiors. In different contexts women have dominant and submissive roles. For instance, as an agnate she has more freedom of movement, as an affine she is subordinated; as a junior wife she is subordinated, and as a senior wife she dominates others. Wives possess power in the authority structure; formal power which protects their position and interests, even when they are young and subordinated, and informal power they exercise in a hidden structure of relations.

The formal structure empowers the wife. Her reproductive capacities are potentially dangerous to 'others', she possesses supernatural power which protects her against the exploitation of her reproductive capacities and safeguards her position in her husband's homestead. In the sphere of agricultural and domestic activities she is protected too: affines must respect each other, keep their distance and must not attempt to exploit her labour power. Hlonipha avoidances help to bring this about. Furthermore,

the wife is acquiring higher status and power as time passes, and, even as a newly-married, subordinated wife she is already exercising control over her juniors.

In their daily lives Fukula women (old and young) are attempting to resist the control of 'others' over them. When they are young and have lower status they tend to submit to authority more than when they are older and more respected. When they have senior status, women tend to behave in a more dominating manner towards other people. Furthermore, the influence of the wider society and absence of men are making women even more independent. They also are constantly striving towards achieving autonomy in their lives.

The individual in Gcaleka society is subordinated to a system which is rooted in the belief in the ancestor cult, and in authority held by senior persons, especially if they are males. A system of authority based on the importance given to agnatic descent is being constructed and protected. Everyone is subordinated to the power in the system; if you submit to the power you are entitled to protection and, according to your position in the hierarchical order, to a certain degree of freedom of movement. People give the appearance of submitting to the system. However, they are also bending rules as far as the system allows them to do so.

This study has dealt with the authority structure and classification system in Gcaleka society which is based on the making of gender, age and kinship distinctions. The social

categories being kept apart by certain avoidances and other prohibitions affecting wives, represent a hard-edged social order wherein blurring of categories is found intolerable. People are expected to submit to the system. In doing so it ensures their secure place in the social structure; the system will protect them and take care of their needs.

APPENDIX 1: BASIC HOUSEHOLD SURVEY AND GENERAL QUESTIONS**BASIC HOUSEHOLD SURVEY (women were interviewed)**

1. How many people live in this household? How many are not here?
2. How many men, women and children live here?
3. Do you have a cattle-byre and a small stock byre.
4. Do you have a field and a garden?
5. Are there cattle and other animals here?
6. What crops do people grow?
7. How many huts are there in this homestead? Are they round or four-cornered?
8. In what years (as people do not always know the specific year in which they were born) were you born?
9. When did you arrive here? Where did you come from?
10. How long have you been married?
11. Are you an umfazana, umfazi, or umfazi omkhulu?
12. What is the clan name of this home?
13. What are the clan names of wives in this home?

GENERAL QUESTIONS

14. Does Fukula have its own grazing areas, land, and places for gathering wood and thatching grass?
15. Name the subwards in Qwaninga.
16. What churches are there in Qwaninga?
17. What subjects are taught at Mathumbu High School?
18. Discuss the history of the area (only old people were asked about this).
19. What changes have there been here in the last 20 years?
20. How is it different when the men are away doing work in town?

APPENDIX 2: QUESTIONS ON HIERARCHICAL RELATIONS

1. Are there different female stages?
2. What are the Xhosa names for the different female stages?
3. Are there different male stages?
4. What are the Xhosa names for the different male stages?
5. Who are the people who give you rules and instruct you about what you must do?
6. Question answered by me:
List all the married women in Fukula and indicate who must obey/listen to whom. Do the same with the men in Fukula. Arrange the women and men in Fukula according to who has to obey/listen to whom.
7. Describe who does what work among women.
8. Is there a spatial division among women? And men?
9. Describe the work and spatial division between men and women.
10. What does a wife own? And her husband?
11. How is beer divided among women at a beer drink?
12. Who is given sips at a beer drink?
13. Do women wear different clothes when they are young and when they are older?
14. Describe the different female stages.
15. What are the things a woman is allowed and not allowed to do during the different stages of her life?
16. Do you feel as if you are being prevented from doing many things by older people who are always telling you what to do and giving you rules?
17. As a married woman grows older, what are the things she is allowed to do that she was not allowed to do before? What rights do old women have which young women do not have?
18. After menopause does a woman's status change a lot in relation to her older sisters-in-law?
19. After menopause does a woman's status change a lot in relation to men?
20. As an ancestor, is a married woman 'brought back' in her husband's clan group?

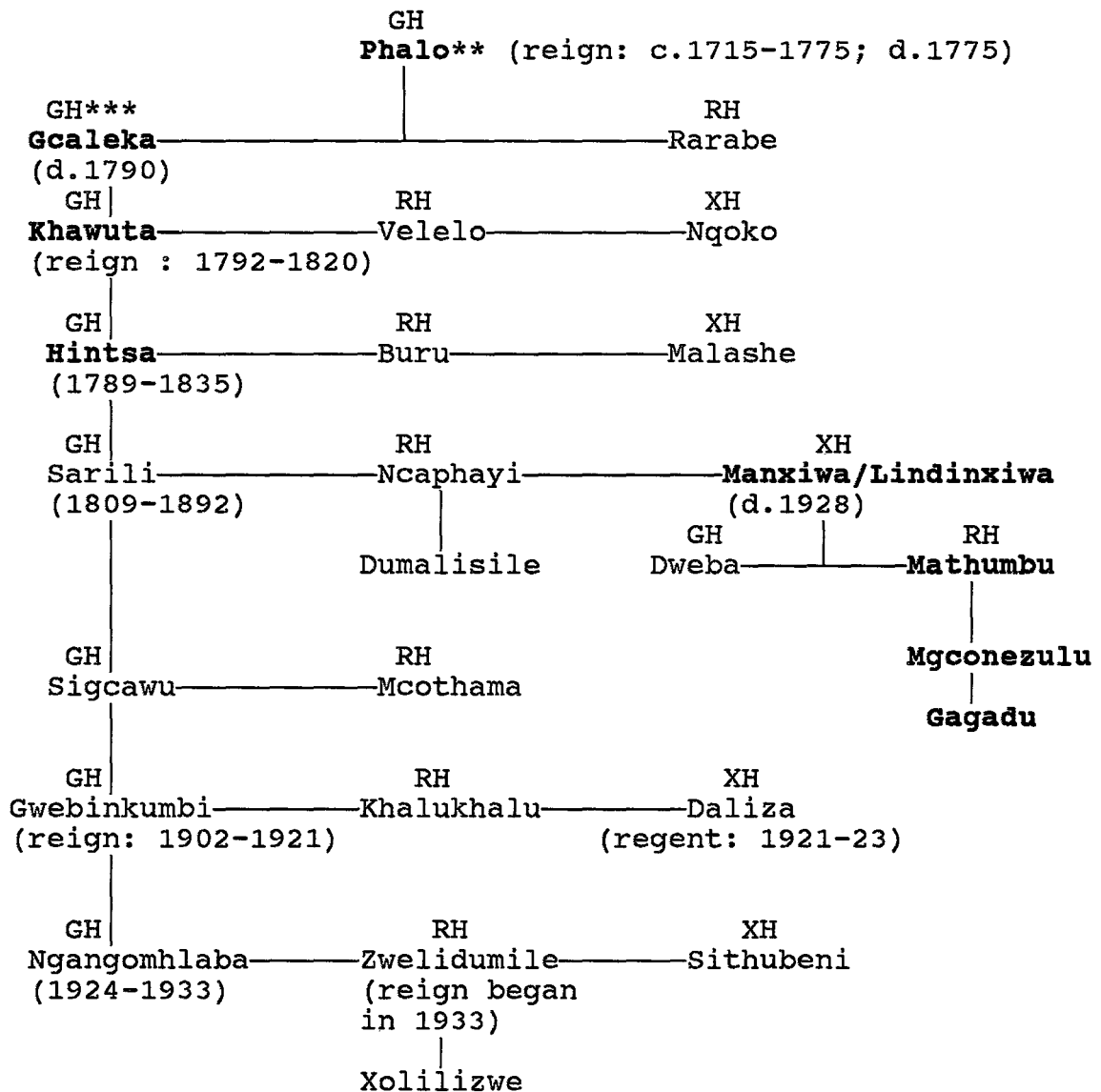
APPENDIX 3: QUESTIONS ON MARRIED LIFE AND HLONIPHA

1. When a woman gets married, why are there certain things she is not allowed to do?
2. What are these things? Do men have to avoid anything?
3. What is hlonipha?
4. Who controls the new wife?
5. Who controls the new husband?
6. How do women feel about not being allowed to do many things?
7. Do married women still obey these rules today? What happens if they disobey the rules?
8. At what age do women in Fukula get married?
9. How do parents choose a wife for their son? Does the status of the woman's family influence this choice at all?
10. Describe the marriage negotiations.
11. When are the lobola cattle given to the bride's father?
12. Why are lobola cattle given to the bride's father?
13. Can cattle belong to women?
14. Describe the relationship between the husband's people and the wife's people. Does any tension exist between these two groups?
15. How do the husband and his people show respect towards his wife's people?
16. Describe how a wife shows respect towards her in-laws.
17. Does the wife have to show respect towards her husband's younger brothers and sisters?
18. Wedding proceedings:
 - i) what happens before the bride leaves her parents' home?
 - ii) who accompanies the bride to her new home?
 - iii) are gifts given to the bride?
19. What form did your marriage take? Describe the wedding.
20. What animals do they slaughter at a wedding?
21. How are weddings changing in Fukula today?
22. How and when is the new wife introduced to her husband's ancestors?

23. What is said to the ancestors in the speech in the cattle-byre at a wedding?
24. Where do a husband and wife live after their marriage?
25. When are rules given to the new wife?
26. Who gives her the rules?
27. Who gives the wife her new clothes and when are these given to her?
28. Why is a woman given a new name?
29. When is the bride allowed to start drinking sour milk in her new home?
30. What is ukutyiswa amasi?
31. When is the new wife allowed to drink beer and to go to beer parties?
32. What are married women not allowed to eat?
33. Are there places in and around the homestead the new wife must avoid?
34. If a wife is not allowed to go into the garden, what must be done before she may enter the garden?
35. Does (i) the husband use his wife's name?
(ii) the wife use her husband's name?
36. Hlonipha language:
Give examples of the word, sound, and in-law's name being avoided. What substitute word is being used?
37. Is a wife sometimes given permission to go into the cattle-byre at her husband's home?
38. Do the cattle belong to the ancestors? What else belongs to them?
39. Where are the sacred places of the ancestors in the homestead?

APPENDIX 4: QUESTIONS ON RITUAL IMPURITY

1. What is umlaza? Give examples.
2. If a person does not wash after sexual intercourse:
 - i) why is he/she not allowed to touch anything?
 - ii) why is a woman not allowed to give anyone food before she has washed?
 - iii) before she has washed, why is she not allowed to visit a delivered mother who is in seclusion?
3. When must a man and woman not sleep together?
4. Describe what you are not allowed to do when you are menstruating and why not.
5. What is umkhondo/umthothovane?
6. Who can get umkhondo/umthothovane?
7. What is a delivered mother (umdlezana) not allowed to do and why not? Is this the same for a woman who has had a miscarriage.
8. Are men allowed to enter the hut where the mother and the baby are staying in the first ten days after she has given birth?
9. Describe the restrictions surrounding pregnancy.
10. Is a woman more important among people when she has given birth to children.
11. Why are certain things avoided after sexual intercourse, a miscarriage, giving birth, and while menstruating? What makes the woman dangerous to others under these circumstances?
12. Question asked to school girls:
How do you feel about avoidances and reproductive situations?

APPENDIX 5: GENEALOGY OF THE CURRENT CHIEF IN QWANINGA*

* This genealogy is identical to the one found on a plaque at the entrance to the Catholic church in Qwaninga.

** Highlighted names show the genealogy of the current chief (Gagadu) in Qwaninga.

*** GH, RH, and XH respectively stand for great house, right-hand house, and xhiba house.

(Hammond-Tooke 1956: 15, 27, 33, 34, 52; Wilson and Thompson 1969: 88)

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